

Issue 25
Spring 2024

East Texan

The Last Cotton Gin



*Best of East Texas
winners revealed inside!*



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Dear Readers,

As I experienced the vibrant celebrations of the Chinese New Year for the first time, I was struck by the profound connections between the deep meaning of the Year of the Dragon and our communities here in Southeast Texas. The energy and excitement of the festivities resonated deeply with the spirit of our own communities, highlighting the shared values and traditions that unite us all.

As I witnessed the colorful parades, the lively dragon dances, and the joyful gatherings, I couldn't help but feel a sense of unity and camaraderie that transcends cultural boundaries. In Southeast Texas, much like the Chinese New Year, we value and celebrate our cultural diversity, yet find strength in our shared experiences and values.

Like the dragon, we embody resilience and a fierce determination to overcome challenges, guided by a sense of community.

Speaking of community, I am overwhelmed by the response we received from our East Texan readers during the 2024 Best of East Texas nominations and awards. We are excited to reveal the winners in this spring edition of the East Texan.

Warm regards,

~ Debbie Dickerson
East Texan editor

On The Cover



*Charles Brown with son Mack in the cotton field.
See story page 12. Photo by Rhonda Brown.*

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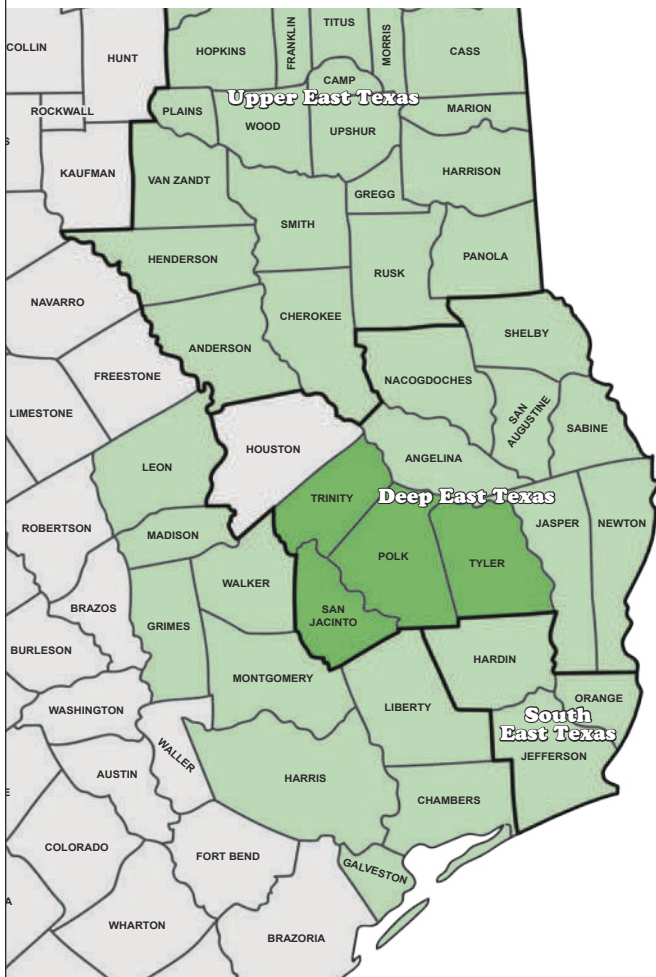
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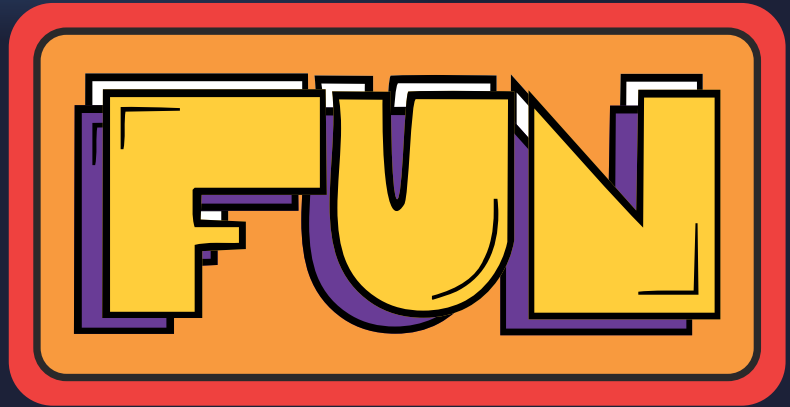
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Food &



By Brian Besch

As kids, my group of friends occupied themselves the same way as most youth in America from the 1980s. Sports were a big deal and we spent daylight and some of dark out playing whatever was in season. Baseball cards and bicycles were really popular, and if you had a trampoline or pool, you probably didn't have problems making acquaintances.

When forced indoors, the magnet pulling us all toward the television was video games. Endless hours were spent with some of the oldest systems like Pong, Atari 2600, and even one ordered out of a Sears catalog called Nintendo.

Movie theaters, bowling alleys, skating rinks and restaurants all had arcade games. Those most fortunate lived in a town that had an arcade room filled with choices.

Just as those days a short 40 years ago, such a place exists in

Houston. Actually, Cidercade is a chain with spots in several cities, but for the purposes of this magazine, it's in Houston.

Located at 2320 Canal Street, if you have attended an event at Minute Maid Park or eaten at the original Ninfa's on Navigation, you may have passed this hidden gem.

Cidercade holds 275 retro and modern arcade games, pinball machines, skee-ball, rhythm games, ping pong, air hockey and more. Patrons pay a fee \$12 to get in, then enjoy the games set to free play. If you can't get enough of the place, a membership for \$20 per month is available. Conceivably, you can play here for less than a dollar per day.

The name is a little strange, but more understandable once you learn of the beverages they make and sell. A large selection of hard ciders include flavors like dreamsicle, pecan pie, caramel apple, peach tea or cinnamon roll, to name a few.







The nerd that I married isn't really into video games, but found plenty to make her afternoon fun — we even played a few together. She is way too into Shark Week (or at least was, you know, before it got all commercial) and found a two-player underwater shooting game to her liking. She named the types of sharks ready to attack on the screen, while the mean kid she married rolled his eyes and told her to shoot it in the mouth.

We also shot hoops, rolled some skee-ball, tried to hit a ping-pong ball somewhere around the table, and played multiple driving games.

During our time in Cidercade on a Wednesday afternoon (thank you, newspaper hours), we saw adults from their 20s all the way to Social Security collectors, parents with small children, and business professionals having a group event.

Cidercade allows outside food to be brought in. There are tables for eating and couches for parents who have had enough. A food truck also sits in the parking lot for convenience.

We already had plans in mind for lunch/dinner. Keeping with the theme of things I did in the past, we drove through way too much traffic to reach a buffet. It would be our second trip ever to Mikoto, which is a Japanese restaurant serving ramen and sushi.

Back when I could burn thousands of calories, I worked to send my parents into debt at the grocery. I could name more than a few all-you-can-eat joints, and “dinner for two” was more of a challenge than helpful suggestion.



**Sushi,
housemade
hard cider
and retro
arcade games
in the state's
largest city**





My wife ordered a few drinks and a couple of sushi rolls with hot and sour soup. The meal would be plenty for most, but I've got goals to reach. Mikoto offers an endless sushi option, and I had been deep in training by not eating all day.

There are a lot of places to fill up on sushi, but Mikoto offers quality rolls, and as many as you can take down for \$30. After ordering five rolls, I was warned — the same as the time before — just how much sushi would be on the platter. I nodded and began explaining my superhuman abilities.

A mixture of tuna, salmon and yellowtail all came with friends like steak or shrimp, and topped with different sauces and extras.

Just to show off, I enjoyed a few bites of ice cream, both green tea and red bean, afterward. If you are into sushi or ramen, Mikoto is well worth the drive to 12155 Katy Freeway. ■



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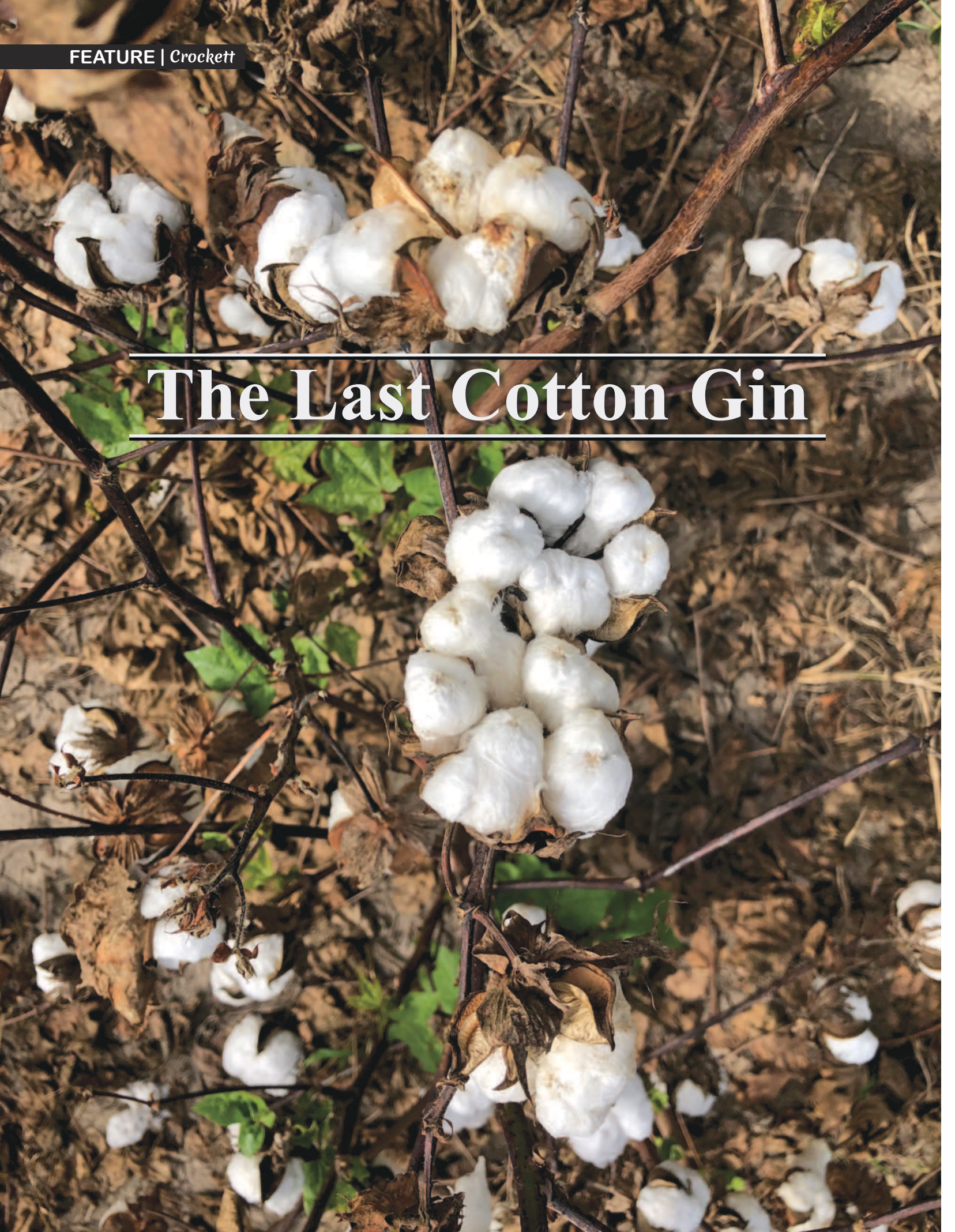
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The Last Cotton Gin



“When I was a kid, there were four or five gins just here in Crockett. Today, the Crockett Gin is the last working cotton gin in Deep East Texas.”

– Michael Brown

By Jan White

“White Gold.”

“King Cotton.”

Anyone who has studied history knows that cotton was the backbone of the U.S. economy in the 19th century and that the rich Texas soil was ideal for growing it. As the demand for cotton grew, so did the need for a more efficient way of separating the seeds from the fibers so it could become a marketable commodity.

In the early days of cotton growing, cleaning the seeds from the fiber was tedious and time-consuming. A picker could only remove seeds by hand at a rate of only about a pound of cotton per day. But Eli Whitney’s cotton engine, or ‘gin’ as it became commonly known, revolutionized the process. The gin worked something like a strainer or sieve. Cotton was run through a wooden drum embedded with hooks that caught the fibers and dragged them through a mesh. The mesh was too delicate to let the seeds through, but the hooks could easily pull the cotton fibers through. Whitney’s hand-cranked machine could remove seeds from 50 pounds of cotton daily, and horse-powered gins could clean even more.

According to historians, the first cotton gin made its way to Texas from Georgia in 1825. By 1860, there were approximately 2,000 gins in Texas. In an article published in 1934, local writer Pauline Sherman stated, “The first cotton gin [in Lovelock, Texas] dates back to 1874. It was run by a horse, and after a hard day’s work, three bales of cotton were ready for market.”

The cotton gin became a status symbol. Every community had at least one.

The Texas Historical Commission in Crockett published a book in 1979 listing some of the cotton gins in and around Houston County – the Dailey Gin, Lively Gin, J.J. Brooks, Mose Spence, the Worthington Brothers, Woodard Standley, and the list goes on.

Houston County resident Michael Brown knows firsthand about some of the local cotton gins. He comes from a long line of cotton farmers. Brown’s family migrated to the area from Mississippi in the 1800s. “As soon as they settled in, they began to grow cotton, as did most of the people in the area,” Brown said. “It was the cash crop of the day.”

[above] Brown with ginner and son.

[right] Harvesting the cotton.

Photos by Jan White.



Brown could write a book about his experiences growing up in a cotton-farming family in Houston County. And he remembers quite well what it was like during the ginning season, which can last from late August through late December. At the height of cotton harvesting, gins would operate between 18 to 24 hours a day. Brown recalls that in its heyday, the Buck Berry Gin, located on Second Street in Crockett, did a booming business.

“Wagonloads of cotton would be lined up, waiting to be ginned. Sometimes, a farmer might only have a bale or two’s worth, but they’d go ahead and have it baled. The farmers would take a sample from their bales and place it into a paper sleeve listing the bale number and weight. Then, on Saturday, the farmers would park their trucks around the courthouse square downtown, and the cotton buyers would grade the samples and then make their offers to purchase the cotton.”

Brown says that in 1948, Pete Caprielian purchased the Buck Berry Gin, and he and his son, Jake, managed the day-to-day operations. Jake operated the Berry Gin Company until 1980, when he sold it to the Melder family out of Natchitoches, La. The Melder family, which owned several gins in Louisiana, disassembled one and transported it to Houston County. “It was rebuilt about nine miles west of Crockett at Mustang Prairie. We always called it the Crockett Gin. And that’s the gin we run now.”

When Brown and his wife, Rhonda, married in 1974, “There were still about 30 cotton farmers in the area.” But the cotton-growing economy diminished as cattle ranching increased and the oil boom moved in, forcing gins to begin closing. When asked how Brown came to run the Crockett Gin, he said, “In 1996, Caprielian, who had been running the Crockett Gin for the Melders, announced he was going to retire. So Mr. Melder came to Crockett to convince me to run it. I’ve always liked a challenge,” Brown said, grinning, “so I accepted the offer.

“Even though I grew up around cotton, I knew nothing about ginning operations. I had to learn the hard way. If I didn’t know something, I had a couple of good friends in Texas that ran gins, and I could call and ask them, ‘Where do you buy this, or where do you get that?’ They’d tell me. It was definitely a challenge to learn to gin.”

While the basics of Whitney’s gin are still used today, the process has been refined. Cotton arrives at the Crockett Gin in compressed modules, where a manually operated pipe swung over the cotton vacuums it up into the facility. The cotton goes through several processes to remove the seeds, leaves, and debris. After the fibers are separated, they are compacted into bales using a press, then strapped and bagged for shipping.



Cotton growing on the Brown farm. Photo by Rhonda Brown.





The method of sampling and grading the bales is still used today, but this, too, has been updated. Before wrapping the bales for storage and transport, a sample is cut from each bale and sent to the USDA office in Corpus Christi for classing. Samples are given a grade based on criteria such as fiber length, uniformity, the fineness of the fiber, and leaf and trash content. After the sample is taken, the bale is weighed and given a "PBI," or permanent bale identification tag, and shipped off to sale or storage.

Brown ran the gin by himself off and on for many years but recently hired a ginner to help with the process. And Brown says he uses parolees to work with the ginning. "I believe in giving people a second chance. Probably 99% of my hires have been incarcerated. I don't care what they've done as long as they do a good job for me. Many of these men can't get employment elsewhere because of their records. Plus, a lot of people don't want to do this kind of work. It's hot, it's dusty, it's hard labor. So it's difficult to find help willing to work in those conditions."

And Brown's son Charles is helping to carry on the family business. "After high school, I let Charles have about 150 acres of land next to mine," Brown said, "and he farmed on that. It's how he paid his way through college. He graduated with a couple of degrees, but he came back to farming."

Over the past few years, the price of cotton farming has skyrocketed. "When I first started farming," Brown said, "a bag of certified seed was about \$22 a bag. I just paid \$482 for certified seed. Back in the '70s, '80s and '90s, I could produce a whole crop on \$20,000. Today, \$20,000 doesn't even pay my diesel bill. Nowadays, once you invest, there's not much return on your money."

Brown laments that cotton farming in the Houston County area will never return to its former profitability. "These days, people divide up the land and sell it to developers. Those of us who still have cotton farms are hanging on by a string.

Brown is determined to continue his cotton-growing business, but the future of the Crockett Gin is unsure. The cost of operations is high, and other cotton farmers in the area no longer use the local gin. "It's sad that as many gins as there were here in the 1800s, this is the only one left operating."

And now it seems even that is questionable. ■

[above] Crockett Gin in Mustang Springs.

[below far left] Cotton dumped into trailer.

[below left] Brown transports bales of cotton.

[above right] Working the gin control panel.

[below right] Piping cotton into the gin.

Photos by Jan White.





PLANTAHOLICS ANONYMOUS

By Jolene Renfro

Being a gardener is almost like being a recovering alcoholic; buying just one special plant can set off your addiction and cause you to want to add more and more plants to your collection. Going to a garden club meeting is like attending an AA meeting where people with a common addiction gather. I almost want to greet people in the Crockett Garden Club with “Hi, I am Jolene, and I am a plantaholic,” and expect them to respond, “Hi, Jolene, welcome to Plantaholics Anonymous. Tell us about yourself.”

Then I would confess to the group that it all started with

a daylily given to me by my mother-in-law. It was a lovely plant that bloomed much of the summer with multiple orange blossoms, each with a double row of petals. This plant grew with little care and was, after all, free. So I took it home and planted it. It gave me my first taste of gardening success, and I craved more.

This craving led to my visiting The Lily Farm on Highway 7 in Center. Acres and acres of the most beautiful hybrid pink, red, purple, and salmon-colored flowers (along with the more common yellows and oranges) you may have ever seen on this side of heaven. The petal arrangement could be single, double,

or even triple rows, and the petals themselves could be ruffled and multicolored. And these gorgeous plants even came in nice-sized clumps (enough plants for friends to share!).

I was hooked! I wanted every color and petal arrangement, but my bank account would only allow me to buy a few. Oh, how I labored making the decision – which to take home and which to leave behind. After all, which of your children would you leave behind? What could I give up in order to save money to purchase more of these beauties? Would Jim mind eating peanut butter sandwiches every night for weeks? I have a friend, Sandy, who even came out of retirement and went back to work to be able to support her daylily habit. Maybe if I robbed a liquor store, I could get the money for more daylilies – ah, the irony!

I did manage to pick five spectacular hybrids for planting in a section of my garden dedicated to daylilies. I followed the planting instructions given to me, which said to cut the leaves back in a fan shape and remove the current blossoms so that all the energy of the plant would go into building a sound root system. I dug bone meal into the dirt to encourage good root development, and later, I added a fertilizer higher in nitrogen for good leaf production. I bought fancy ceramic tags from a local gift shop on the square in Crockett so I could write the names of these new “children,” lest I forget their names by the following summer when the blooms returned.

I weeded, watered, and waited.

First, my darling “Lord of the Wind” started getting shorter and shorter. I had never heard of a plant growing smaller. What is going on?? Gophers were pulling it into the ground and eating it. Had they ever done this to my free plant? NO! Gophers have good taste in plants.

Next, “Picot Ripple Ruffles” sent up a massive bunch of blooms that year. Or I guess the blooms would have been massive. Except that the deer ate the buds. Had they ever eaten buds off my free plant? NO! Deer also have good taste in plants.

Did these disasters teach me to give up my addiction to growing daylilies? Absolutely not! That is why I joined Plantaholics Anonymous – to have someone to call in a weak moment who could talk me out of buying more plants. So when the urge hit me to go back to the The Lily Farm, I called my sponsor, Barbara. She said, “Let me change my shoes, and come by and pick me up on your way to the farm. I have a space in my garden I need to fill, and I know just the daylily plant to buy that will fill it.”

Both of us had fallen off the wagon.

So much for Plantaholics Anonymous. ■

The Lily Farm is only open to the public during the blooming season (May and June). Call 936-572-1962 or email thelilyfarm@gmail.com for more information. Crockett Garden Club meets the first Thursday of each month at First United Methodist Church of Crockett if you need to join a support group for your own plant addiction.



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A beautiful day of wine and music at Bernhardt Winery

By Emily Banks Wooten

Although we have some friends that go fairly regularly, we recently took our first trip to Bernhardt Winery in Plantersville and we are already looking forward to going back.

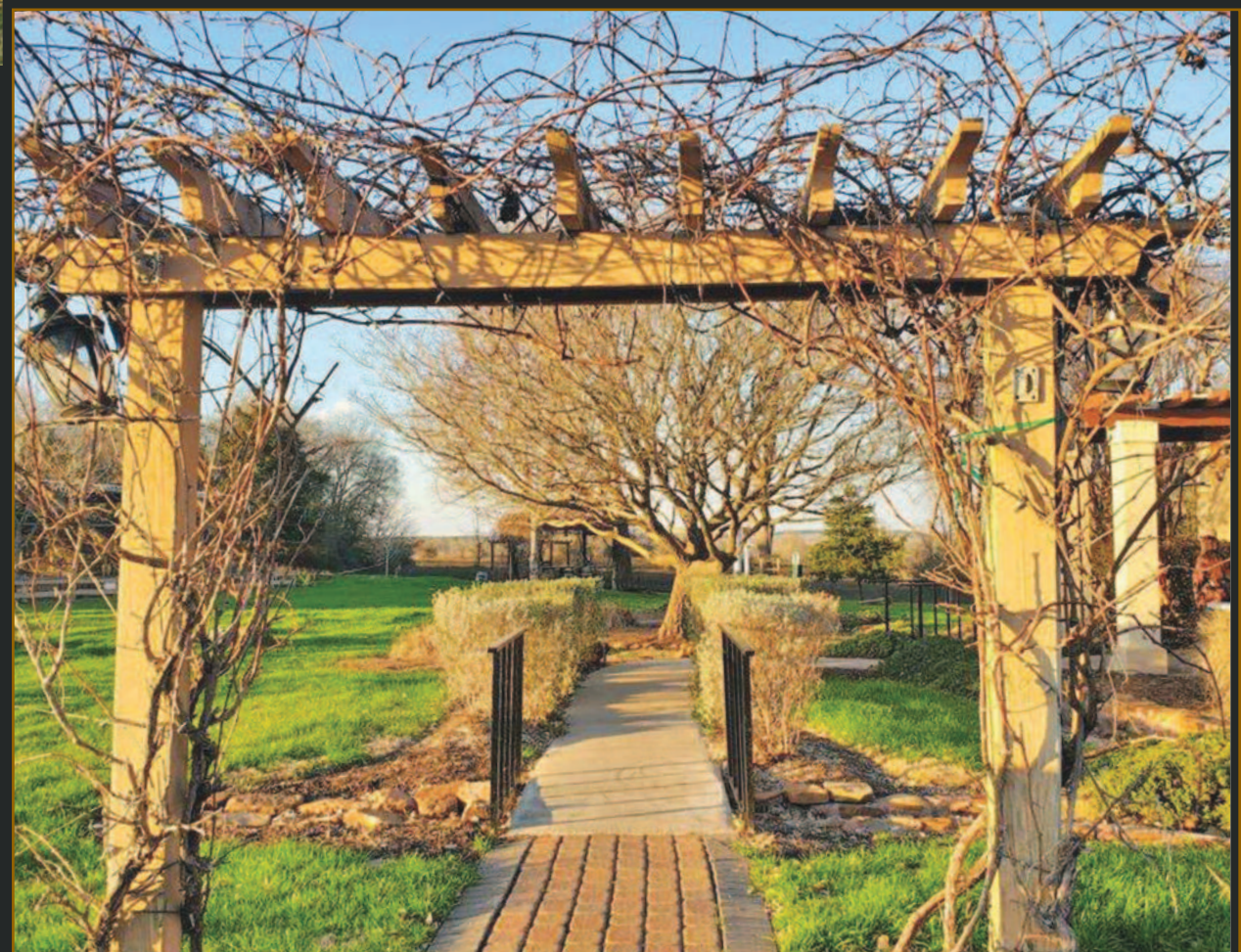
Knowing that we're fans of Singer/Songwriter Shake Russell, our friends suggested the outing when it was announced that he would be performing one Sunday afternoon as part of Bernhardt's weekly concert series. The drive was about an hour and a half from Livingston and the day we went was a beautiful day, the first we'd had in quite a while, so it was nice to see some pretty scenery on the back roads.

Jerry Bernhardt and his wife, Jerri, bought the property in 2001 and opened the winery in 2005, putting their heart and soul into it. The grounds are beautiful, with rolling hills and a large grove of pecan trees. Constructed in a Tuscan style, there are ample spots, both indoors and outdoors, to enjoy the wine and music.

Bernhardt Winery produces 100% Texas wines, American classic varietals and unique blends, including the newly released ancient Antiquity Wine Curation series. Set atop a rise overlooking rolling hills and valleys in "the Hill Country of Houston," the winery and vineyard are at the heart of the 20-acre estate.

The Bernhardts are dedicated to providing quality wines, a fun tasting experience and warm hospitality. The winery hosts a variety of special events such as tours and tastings, live acoustic music, Sunday lawn concerts and artisan vendor markets.

*This is an example of the cheese and charcuterie boards that may be ordered.
Photo by Emily Banks Wooten*



Bernhardt Winery is constructed in a Tuscan style and the grounds are lush and beautiful. Photos by Kevin Wooten

The place is both family friendly and pet friendly. The Bernhardt's own three dogs – Jonesie, a yellow lab, Clifford, a red dog, and Truffles, a little ball of fur – have the run of the place and mosey in and out around the people, always welcoming a little scratch on the head.

Wine may be purchased by the glass, bottle or flight. Knowing the concert was expected to last a couple of hours, we chose two bottles of wine for the two of us. We selected a Texas wine called Texas Sarah. It was a traditional Bordeaux blend with a bright nose of toffee, toasted almond and caramel continuing on the palate, finishing with a light spice. We also selected an American wine called American Cabernet Sauvignon Reserve 2019. It had a cherry, coffee and nutmeg nose, complex vanilla and dark fruit flavors with a French oak finish. They both were excellent and I would gladly purchase them again.

Anthony Klonaris, another Texas musician, joined Shake Russell for the sold-out show. Shake performed all the favorites as well as a few that were new to us. He said he's getting ready to release a new CD that was recorded in Rockport. He's also getting ready to perform for The Big Barn Dance Music Festival May 3-4 in Bryan.

Bernhardt Winery offers its Sunday Sunset Lawn Concerts every Sunday evening, March through early December. Guests gather under the century-old native pecan trees for the live music as well as the breathtaking panoramic views.

There are a variety of tours and tasting experiences available. Some require reservations and some do not, so I'd recommend checking out the website prior to your visit. The full menu of bottles and select wines by the glass are available for purchase. Logo wine glasses and tumblers are also available for purchase, along with traditional wine merchandise and jellies, jams and sauces.

Guests may order cheese and charcuterie boards or hot and cheesy charcuterie sliders to enjoy with their wine. Wine-infused cupcakes are also available. Guests are welcome to bring their own picnic basket or cooler but are not allowed to bring in outside alcohol per TABC law. ■

• *Bernhardt Winery is a proud Go Texan member and avid supporter of the Texas wine industry. It is also one of the participating wineries on the Texas Bluebonnet Wine Trail.*

• *Bernhardt Winery is located at 9043 County Road 204 in Plantersville. The telephone number is 936-894-9829 and the website is bernhardtwinery.com. Hours of operation are noon to 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 6 p.m. Saturdays and 1-6 p.m. Sundays.*

[below] A sold-out crowd enjoys the musical stylings of Anthony Klonaris and Shake Russell. Photo by Emily Banks Wooten
[right] The Bernhardt Winery logo is featured on the exterior of the building. Photo by Kevin Wooten





MURDER MYSTERY

DINNER THEATER



By Kelli Barnes

The Kirby Hill House has been home to a murder mystery dinner theater each weekend during the months of March and September for 23 years. According to producer Nancy Gandy, who has been affiliated with the theater group since its inception, there is a sellout crowd for each performance.

“It hasn’t always been this way, but these days, tickets are sold out within 48 hours,” Gandy said.

Tickets go on sale a couple of months prior to each performance month. To secure tickets on time for September shows, follow them on Facebook: Kirby-Hill House Murder Mystery Dinner Theater.

“All our efforts here are directed toward maintaining this

122-year-old mansion,” Rose Hall, president of the not-for-profit organization, said.

Guests are invited to dress in vintage attire, specifically from the 1940s. The doors open sharply at 6:30 p.m., and seating is assigned in advance. If you have special requests, please let them know when you purchase your tickets. For example, if you need a couples table for celebrating a special occasion, or a table large enough to seat your entire party and/or would like to keep your party together, they will do their best to accommodate.

The event from start to finish is three and a half hours, ending at 10 p.m. Attendees are invited to look around the mansion before and after the performance.

[below] On the set of Murder Me Once!

[right] Spuds Idaho (Daniel Warrick) is putting the clues together despite the flirtings of Myra Fontaine (Angela Warrick).

Photos by Amy Holzworth







Meet the cast of Murder Me Once!, which played at Kirby Hill House in March of 2024. (back row) Daniel Warrick as Spuds Idabo, Noah Warrick as Uniformed Cop, Angela Warrick as Myra Fontaine, Aveta Hough as Chantel Fontaine, Brenda Eatman as Saphron Fontaine, Director Sheryl Brocato, James Raglin as Lieutenant Brogue. (front row) John Decker as Tony the Thug, Duke Youmans as Grieves. Photo by Amy Holzworth

While dining, guests enjoy a four-course meal catered by Mama Jack's "Almost Famous" Restaurant located in Kountze. A sample menu includes seafood deviled eggs, spicy pineapple dip served with crackers, and charcuterie cones for appetizers. The soup course is "the legendary" cream of baked potato soup with spring salad and raspberry vinaigrette dressing. Chicken piccata with lemon and capers in a white wine sauce, herb and garlic roasted mashed potatoes, Mama Jack's famous green beans, Tuscan tomatoes, and a roll round out the main course. A dessert of chocolate mousse with coffee completes the evening meal. Tea and water are provided. Guests are allowed to bring in their own dinner wine, one bottle for every two guests.

Between courses, the space in between tables becomes the stage for the murder mystery performance. Each season has its own new play, so guests can continue to be surprised about "whodunit" season after season.

"We always ask our guests to keep the murderer to themselves, so it is not spoiled for the next group," Kacey

Sammons, Master of Ceremonies and Technical Director, said. During the fourth scene, the audience is asked to guess the identity of the murderer. "Pay close attention to the clues," Sammons said.

Everyone who attends is included in a drawing for a prize at the end of the evening, and those who guess the murderer correctly, have a chance to win a second prize.

The cast practices twice a week for a few months prior to each production. Tryouts are open, but there are more than just actors needed. They also need dedicated stagehands, food handlers, and hostesses who live nearby. In the most recent production, nine actors made up the cast. Three of them family members, and one has been acting with the group on and off for 20 years. He is a leukemia survivor who recently underwent a stem cell transplant and is now in remission. Six cast members are first timers onstage with a Kirby Hill House production. All of them are volunteers. Sheryl Brocato, a Kountze resident for 25 years, is serving her first year as director of the performances.



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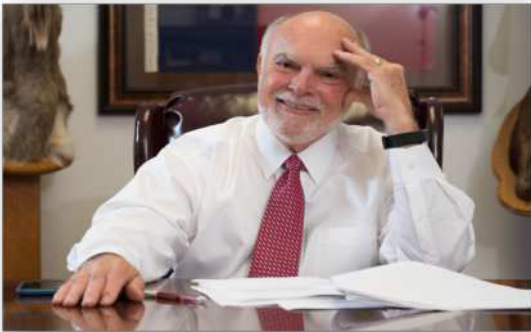
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The Kirby-Hill House was built in 1902 by James L. Kirby, brother and business partner to John Henry Kirby, a pioneer in the lumber industry. The property was purchased in 1992 from the last surviving family member, using donations from local businesses and individuals, and a 501c3 was officially established.

According to Gandy, a set of the original fine china from the home was recently discovered and sold to the organization for display.

“We have a picture of the china as it was displayed in the hutch when the home was new, and were able to place each piece back into its original position on the shelves. There is so much history preserved here.”

In addition to the murder mystery events, each Christmas they host a “Vegas-style” Christmas musical dinner show, and the mansion is fully decorated for the holidays. Other musical shows are planned throughout the year. For information on upcoming shows, you are encouraged to

follow their social media.

The mansion is also a bed and breakfast, and can be rented overnight, or for weddings, parties, and other events. ■

*The Kirby-Hill House Museum
210 West Main, Kountze, TX
Website: kirbyhillhouse.com
409-246-8000*

[above] A front view of the 122-year-old house.

[above right] The narrow staircase in the house.

[above far right] The home's original fine China, arranged exactly as it was when the home was new.

[right] Guests can also rent rooms, such as this one.

Photos by Amy Holzworth



EAST TEXAS AUCTION BARN

By Janice R. Edwards

Two ten, two ten, going once going twice – sold to the man in the black cowboy hat. Get your paper and see the front desk to finish your transaction. Congratulations! You are the proud owner of a calf. Next lot...” the auctioneer at the Kirbyville Auction Barn was on his game this morning. People and trailers were lined up to view, sell or buy a part of their ranching, FFA project, urban ranching or homesteading dreams.

Recently, I had the opportunity of accompanying Kristin Shirley to the auction to witness the sale of her hogs and piglets. The piglets took considerable corralling and some effort to crate for the journey from Jasper to Kirbyville. And weeks later – let’s just say her hogs were not thrilled or up for a road trip to the auction barn at Kirbyville. Weeks earlier, she successfully transported her bull and cow to the barn for sale. It was the first time I had ever been to that kind of livestock auction. As a kid, I went to some of the auctions at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo – but those auctions mostly supported scholarships which artificially inflated the bids, and this was real life.

As she and her husband aged – and feed costs increased – it was time to find a new livestock source that would be easier to handle and could be utilized in different ways for a better return on their investment. The Shirleys decided on goats. So many things can be done with the smaller, easier to handle livestock. In addition to growing them for meat, they can be bred, and the kids sold, and can be milked for use in making both feta cheese or goat’s milk soap.

The auction barn we went to in Kirbyville was established

in 1954 and matches buyers and sellers to quality livestock. It is located on U.S. Highway 96 in Kirbyville (for GPS – 802 North Margaret). Their Saturday livestock sales begin at 10 a.m. and feature goats, hogs, chickens, and farm-related items. The cattle auctions start at noon (between 12 – 1 p.m.) Horses and mules – when available – will be right before the cattle sale starts. They post an iMarket report every Monday morning at: <https://www.facebook.com/KirbyvilleAuctionBarn/>

You can reach them for information at:

Kirbyville Auction Barn

P.O. Drawer 400 Kirbyville, Texas 75956

(409) 423-2612 office

But Kirbyville is not the only auction barn in East Texas. In fact, according to an article written by Horace McQueen, back 30 or 40 years ago local livestock auction barns were in almost every East Texas county – some counties even boasting two. Auction barns in Lufkin, Jacksonville and Tyler had sale barns that sold many cattle in the ‘80s and ‘90s – but they are gone now. Other barns that are just a flicker of a memory are Palestine, which had had a thriving sale east of town for several years, Henderson and Sulphur Springs which both had two action barns during that time. But time marches on and owners have decided to close their auction barn doors for many reasons – aging out, property tax increases, or simply increased competition for a dwindling market.

But don’t think auction barns don’t still have a presence in East Texas. Maybe you can find one of these to locate that chicken, goat, or calf you have been wanting to raise. If you’re lucky, you might also find that pony you’ve been promising your child.





The Kirbyville Auction Barn
Market Report - Sale Date 02.17.2024
Next Sale Day 02.24.2024 Head # 308

BULL CALVES
 000-299-\$ 2.58-4.25 lbs
 300-399-\$ 2.45-4.20 lbs
 400-499-\$ 2.30-3.85 lbs
 500-up-\$ 1.90-3.35 lbs

HEIFER CALVES
 000-299-\$ 2.38-3.85 lbs
 300-399-\$ 2.30-3.60 lbs
 400-499-\$ 2.15-3.05 lbs
 500-up-\$ 1.80-2.75 lbs

PREGNANT COWS-S 800.00-1750.00 PH
COW/CALF PAIRS-S 850.00-2100.00
SLAUGHTER COWS-S 0.85-1.17 LBS
BULLS-S 1.10-1.32 LBS

GOATS/SHEEP-S 35.00-320.00 ph

HOGS
BOARS-S 0.20-0.35 lbs
SOWS-S 0.47-0.70 lbs
TOPS-S 0.75-0.90 lbs
PIGS-S 35.00-60.00 ph

HORSES-S 200.00-800.00


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A sample of what animals went for 2-17-2024.

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According to texasagriculture.gov, below is a list of livestock auction barns in East Texas today:

- Anderson County Livestock - Elkhart, TX
- Athens Commission Company - Athens, TX
- Canton Horse Sale - Canton, TX
- Center Auction Company - Center, TX
- Columbus Livestock Company - Columbus, TX
- Dayton Huffman Horse Center - Dayton, TX
- Emory Livestock Auction - Emory, TX
- Groesbeck Auction & Livestock - Groesbeck, TX
- Henderson Livestock Commission - Henderson, TX
- Jacksonville Livestock Market - Jacksonville, TX
- Kaufman County Livestock - Kaufman, TX
- Longview Livestock Commission - Longview, TX
- Madisonville Livestock Sales - Madisonville, TX
- Nacogdoches Livestock Exchange - Nacogdoches, TX
- Palestine Livestock Auction - Palestine, TX
- Paris Livestock Auction - Paris, TX
- Rusk County Livestock Auction - Henderson, TX
- Sulphur Springs Livestock - Sulphur Springs, TX
- Tyler Livestock Auction - Tyler, TX
- Van Zandt County Livestock - Wills Point, TX
- Wood County Livestock - Quitman, TX

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list, and there may be other livestock auction barns in East Texas as well.

Gotta go - I hear that auctioneer warming up and I have my eye on that brown and white Nanny goat in the next lot! ■





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Two-Bean Tomato Salad with Honey Vinaigrette

By Barbara White

Easy, pretty, healthy and economical, this salad is a great way to welcome spring! Plan a little ahead to allow time for the white beans to marinate. Makes about 8 cups.

INGREDIENTS:

2 15-ounce cans white beans
(great northern or cannellini),
rinsed and well-drained

½ teaspoon salt

½ cup minced red onion

¼ cup cider vinegar

4 teaspoons honey

1 teaspoon canola or peanut oil

½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper

8 ounces fresh green beans, trimmed
and cut into 2-inch pieces

1 pint cherry or grape tomatoes,
halved or quartered

DIRECTIONS:

Combine the salt, onion, vinegar, honey, oil and pepper in a large bowl. Add the white beans. Stir, cover and refrigerate to marinate for at least an hour or overnight.

Cook fresh green beans in a large pot of boiling water until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Drain and rinse in cold water to stop the cooking process. Drain again. Pat the green beans dry and add them to the marinated white beans. Gently stir in the cherry or grape tomatoes and basil and season with additional ground pepper to taste.

(For a pretty presentation, place the salad in the center of a platter or shallow bowl lined with lettuce leaves or sliced tomatoes.)



WUNSCHÉ BROS CAFÉ & SALOON

*Offers a combination of
historical and modern-day appeal*

By Emily Banks Wooten

Wunsche Bros Cafe & Saloon is not on my beaten path so I don't make it there as often as I'd like. But that's going to change. Having had the opportunity to stop and eat there twice in recent months, I've been reminded how exceptional it is. No matter what you order, the food is consistently excellent, the ambiance is fun and enjoyable and the unique history of the place palpitates all around you.

If you're not familiar with Wunsche Bros, it is a Texas Historical Landmark that opened in 1902 in Old Town Spring. Although a fire broke out in 2015, fortunately, the original historic saloon was left intact. In 2018 the Kosh family purchased the building and restored it back to its glory days.

The cafe is known for its hand-formed burgers, Texas-sized chicken fried steak, homemade beer bread, legendary whiskey cake, strong bourbon, ice cold beer and the fact that the old saloon is haunted. It is also known for its live music. In the old days, it was a stepping stone for the likes of Clint Black and Lyle Lovett. I had the distinct pleasure of seeing one of my all-time faves, Shake Russell, perform there circa 1989. More recently, I've enjoyed the musical stylings of CC & the Road Dawgs there.

[right] Sausage sauerkraut balls with a side of okra and tomatoes. The sausage sauerkraut balls are crafted with beef and pork sausage, sauerkraut, cheddar and onions, hand-rolled and crisply beer-battered and served with homemade chipotle ranch.

Photos by Emily Banks Wooten





Local brothers Charlie and Dell Wunsche opened originally as a hotel, brothel and saloon built for railroad workers and travelers. It was built from lumber milled from the Wunsche Family Mill. The business thrived until Prohibition and was sold in 1949 and turned into a cafe. To this day the brothers, Charlie & Dell, are still pretty famous for being the ghosts that haunt the old saloon.

As the tale goes, in 1919, on the night before Prohibition would make consumption of alcohol illegal, folks had traveled to Spring from miles around to help drink the bottles dry and dance the night away. The next morning, the bleary-eyed Wunsche brothers stirred with a proprietary urge to inspect the inventory. Was there any whiskey left? "A ha! Just a few drops here, and a few drops there – let's leave none to waste," Dell said. "Here's to you my dear 'ol brother," Charlie replied, pouring the leftover whiskey into Aunt Pearl's cake. When the first wobbly customer arose and asked, "What's a feller to eat?" the two Wunsche brothers looked at each other, grinned, and offered their very first slice of Chocolate Whiskey Cake and that is how Texas legend was born.

Located at 103 Midway St. near W. Hardy Rd., the half of the building that was added on to the original site in the early 80s burned during the fire and was essentially leveled down to start over. Although the place suffered smoke damage, they were able to save the entire building. All of the wood floors are the originals from 1902 and the entire building has been rewired with new lighting to bring it up to code. The fixtures installed are not original to Wunsche Bros but are still appropriate for that time. The newer part of the building features a state-of-the-art keg room with 15 beers on tap, a full bar and a giant smoker that will cook 1,000 pounds of meat at a time.

In 1984, the Texas Historical Commission recognized the business as a historic Texas landmark with an official historic medallion marker. The marker reads, "This building was constructed in 1902 by one of Spring's earliest families, the Wunches, who came here from Germany in 1846. Built to accommodate railroad workers, the Wunsche Bros Saloon and Hotel, later known as the Spring Cafe, has served as a community gathering place throughout its history. The structure, which exhibits typical turn-of-the-century commercial detailing, is Spring's oldest existing commercial building on its original site." The site was also named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984. ■

Wunsche Bros Cafe & Saloon is located at 103 Midway St. in Spring. The telephone numbers are 281-350-CAFE and 281-350-1902. Hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays and 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

[above] The wedge salad is composed of fresh iceberg lettuce, tomato, blue cheese crumbles, chopped boiled egg, smoked bacon, hand-cut scallions and homemade blue cheese dressing.

[left] The famous chocolate and Texas pecan "bourbon-kicked" cake finished with a whiskey infused salted caramel sauce is to die for.

Photos by Emily Banks Wooten

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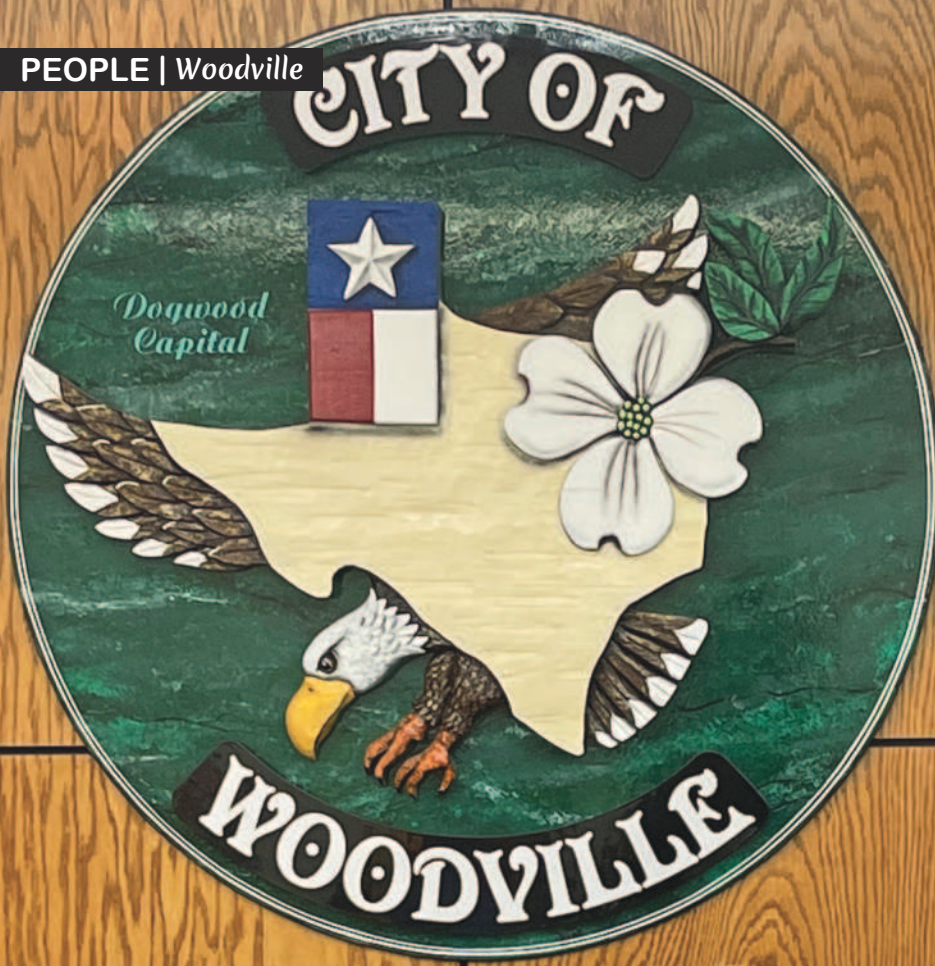
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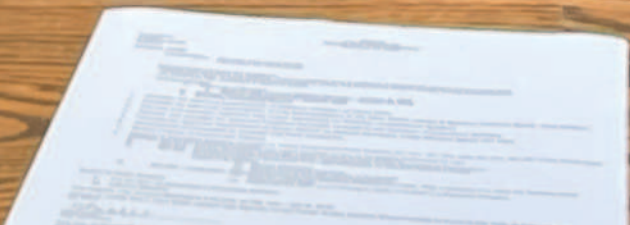
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AMY BYTHEWOOD
MAYOR



The First Lady of Woodville

Amy Bythewood leads her city
with style, grace and fabulous shoes



By Mollie LaSalle

Amy Bythewood has a servant's heart. I guess you could say it runs in the family. Her late husband Ben was of the same inclination. Amy is the second member of her family to serve the City of Woodville as its mayor, taking office in December 2022. Ben led the city as mayor for six years, from 2008-2014. Amy said, "Ben did such a wonderful job for his city and community because he loved it, and because it was who he was. Everything he did was with style and grace; he helped change Woodville for the better." Amy and Ben were always a civic-minded duo. They both shared a love for this charming town and wanted to see it grow and prosper.

Amy served one term as a council member for the city after Ben died, from 2016-2018. She then decided to run for the office of criminal district attorney of Tyler County in 2018. Amy came up short in that election, but ever graciously accepted defeat, and continued practicing law in her office on the courthouse square. The bug hit her once more in the fall of 2022. While cleaning out a shed at home, she found several of Ben's signs when he first ran for mayor. She took that as a sign from Ben that it was her turn. Amy threw her hat in the ring for mayor and won, defeating the incumbent mayor and two opponents. Finally, it was time to give back to the city she had grown to love.

The fall of 2014 would prove to be the beginning of the end of a beautiful partnership for the Bythewoods. Amy and Ben celebrated their anniversary, their adored grandson "Mr. Blue Eyes" was born, and they were anticipating Ben's re-election for a fourth term as mayor. As it sometimes happens, the voters decided to elect someone else. Amy recalls the phone call she got from Ben that night, "When he called and told me that he had lost the election, my first thought was, this man's going to die, I don't have him for very long. I don't know why that was my first thought, but it was pretty accurate. We had our

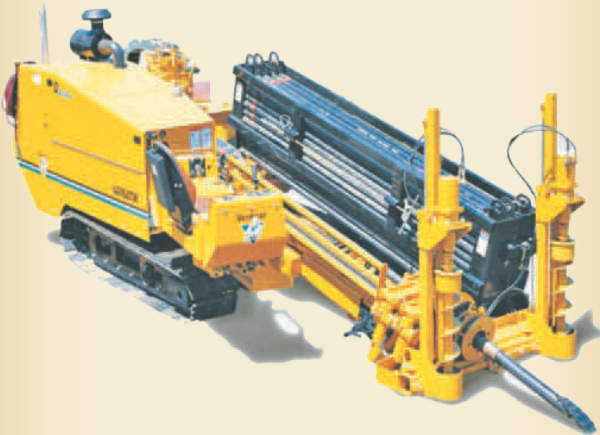
grandchild, spent some major quality time together, and eight months later, he was gone." Amy and Ben left port at Galveston on their first cruise May 31, 2015. Prior to leaving, Ben had been experiencing some health issues, but was adamant on going on the trip. Once they boarded the ship, he began feeling worse, and by that evening, his condition quickly deteriorated, and he passed away the next morning, at the young age of 48. Ben's obituary stated that he "sailed into eternity."

Amy had no time to rest, let alone grieve Ben's passing. She had a law office to attend to. She has run her law office out of the same building on the courthouse square for 18 years. The story of how she got to where she is today is remarkable, considering she was a young wife and mother when she decided she was going to continue her education with the ultimate goal of becoming a lawyer.

Amy explained, "It's hard to go to school and raise kids at the same time. Ben and I moved to Woodville, and when my daughter started kindergarten, I would drive back and forth to Houston every day. My schedule was their schedule. I was there when they got off the bus, for girl scouts, for soccer, and I was able to still be their mom. When I was a little girl, people would ask me what I wanted to do, I told them I wanted to be a lawyer. I've always wanted to be a lawyer. I don't know I always knew what that was, but I always wanted to be one." She graduated with a degree in political science from the University of Houston. "I minored in Russian Studies and majored in I'm gonna go to law school." However, in the grand scheme of things, Amy did go to law school, graduating from South Texas College of Law with a Doctor of Jurisprudence in 2005. Upon passing the bar exam in 2006, Amy opened her office in Woodville, and has been there for 18 years. Ben had a successful career with several dealerships by this time, and in 2004, he started his own business, Bythewood Network Consulting. Amy said of Ben, "He was always the salesman."

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Amy shared that before she got her bar exam results, she had interviewed for a job as a CPS Investigator, and got offered the job, but never went to work for them. She had to call them (after she passed the bar exam), and politely decline the job offer. Then it was suggested that she apply for a job as a CPS attorney, and she was put on an appointment list. "I had been an attorney for about two seconds," she said. She eventually became an advocate for abused and neglected children through her practice. Amy has helped several children find their voice when they have none. "I get to tell the judge what they want, even if it's not a good thing. They deserve to have that voice, even if you're not on the right side, sometimes you just need somebody on your side," she said. Amy was officially board-certified in child welfare law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization in December 2020, joining an elite group of only 97 attorneys in the state who were board-certified in this area.

Amy added, "I don't know where the child welfare angle came in. I am an only child. I didn't have a whole lot of interaction with other children. Day care doesn't count. School doesn't count. I don't know what drew me into that, maybe giving a voice to somebody who doesn't have one. Because when you're representing children, they need to know that somebody's on their side, no matter what, and your job is to tell them the truth. They don't get a lot of that either." Amy estimated that she has been involved in hundreds of adoptions over the years, averaging about two a month.

When Amy has adoption days, she always makes sure she wears the most sparkly and fabulous shoes. It's kind of a tradition for her. Adoption days take her all over East and Southeast Texas, helping children become part of a loving family. Amy's shoe collection actually began with one last Christmas present from Ben in 2014, a pair of black patent leather pumps with red soles, which she



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has on display in her office. “Ben started my shoe obsession,” she said. She went on to explain, “When Ben died, the joy went away, there was no sparkle, no glitter. Shoes were pretty, and shoes made me feel better.” She explained that she was alone in the house for the first time in ages. Ben had died, and her children had moved out. She had nothing else to spend money on, so she bought shoes.

When Ben was alive, he dressed very well, and Amy made sure the kids had nice things. Now it was her turn. Thus, the infamous shoe obsession began in the summer of 2015. She joined a lady lawyer group called “Hell on Heels;” several thousand lady lawyers across the state are members. It’s all about women supporting women. At one point, she had an impressive and extensive shoe collection. She has donated shoes and even had a shoe sale. She estimated that as of today, she owns about 150 pair.

She debuted her newest pair of boots at the Texas Independence Day Celebration held March 2 at Heritage Village. She painted the boots to look like the Texas flag. March 2 was Ben’s birthday and he loved everything about the day. Daughter Bryanna commented, “He had a heart as big as Texas.” Amy said in a Facebook post that evening, “We celebrated Ben’s heavenly birthday at Heritage Village honoring

the brave Texans who fought for our independence in 1836. We got to hear Mr. Blue Eyes sing with his classmates at St. Paul’s and toast to Texas Independence. Afterwards we had Pickett House chicken and watched movies with our Texas blanket. Ben would have loved this celebration”.

The following words from Amy seem the perfect way to bring this story to its conclusion. “The older I get, the more forgiving, caring, and believing in others’ grace I become. I don’t think you need to get harsher, the closer to death you get. I’d like to think that I’ve learned something about this world, and how to deal with people, and I don’t think we are here to make things worse for each other, I think we are here to make things better. Because of Ben, I am who I am. He loved me and wanted me to be happy, no matter what. I was lucky to have such a man. He loved me enough to take care of me after his death as he did before. He brought new love into my life and a healthier perspective. I thank him for making sure I appreciate those who love me, even the most unexpected ones. He always wished me to be loved. I know he placed people in my life to help me and to love me. He was a gentle giant with a quiet sweet spirit, and I am better for knowing him. This is the only life you have. Live it and be kind.” ■

[left] Ben’s grandson, Braden (Mr. Blue Eyes), holding one of his grandpa’s signs from his first run for mayor in 2006, repurposed for Mimi Amy’s run in 2022.

[below left] Proud grandpa Ben and grandson Braden.

[below right] Ben and Amy in May 2015, one of their last photos together .

[right] Just a sample of Amy’s vast shoe collection.

Photos courtesy of Amy Blythewood.



Someone to Lean On

A mentor to many continues to inspire through new endeavors

By Chris Edwards

In all his years as a pastor, educator and all-around guiding light to many who crossed his path, Mark Martin made it his life's work to encourage others to make good choices.

Throughout that course, Martin has instilled in generations of students, as well as his flock who he has pastored, that everyone has gifts to use, but that it is ultimately up to the person to realize that they need to use those gifts.

"You need to use what you have, because who else will?" he said.

Martin admits at age 71 that the years, as well as the residual effects from a brain tumor that was removed in 2005, might have shaken up the particulars of many of the stories running through the deep reservoirs of his memory. However, a mere casual conversation would throw doubt on that admission.

He is a historian and consummate storyteller, one blessed with a phenomenal memory, and not only can the man of letters recall specifics about his whereabouts when he heard of President John F. Kennedy's death, for example, but he also has an uncanny ability to recall numbers, as well. His innate ability with numbers is something that did not always find him favor

with math instructors who wanted him, as a young man, to show his work.

In his teaching career, his pastoral title carried over, and the man known to more than a generation of students as "Brother Mark" has found a new way to influence people to make good choices, and to obtain some heartfelt life lessons, chock full of large dollops of humor, in the process. He made his debut as a published author last year with the first volume of a series of personal memoirs titled "His Story, Her Story, by the way, My Story!" A second collection of stories, "By the Way II," as well as a workbook titled "The Witness Road" have also been added to Martin's bibliography since the initial publication.

Initially, the impetus came from family members who'd heard Martin's stories for many years. His wife, Karen, was a big motivator for him to begin writing the stories down, he said, and she said that she has long encouraged him to do so. Martin, who enjoys a low-tech lifestyle unencumbered by the constant connectivity of most of the rest of the world, so much so that his office does not even feature a computer in sight, had a cousin in Bastrop type his manuscripts.

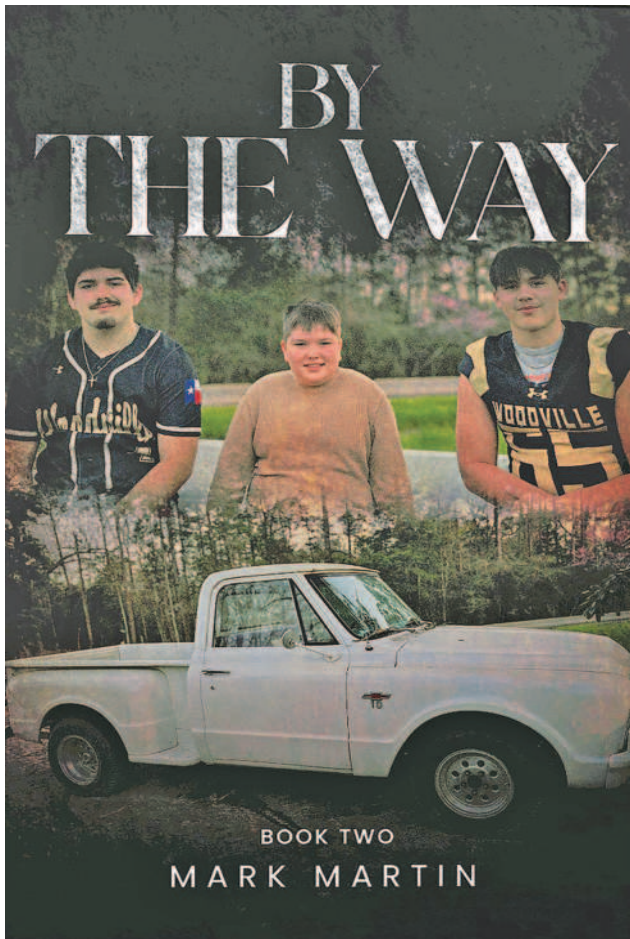
The stories in Martin's books are presented as a random

[below left] Bro. Mark Martin practices baptism on his friend Bro. Chris. Photo from the Mark Martin collection.

[below right] Mark Martin and his sister Christy as young children. Photo from the Mark Martin collection.

[right] Mark Martin looks over a hardcover copy of his first book. Photo by Chris Edwards.





collection and range from family histories to slice-of-life chronicles, in which Martin, usually the lead character and narrator, ranges from hapless (“Damn Big Butt”) to hero (“High Speed”). Martin’s stories could be taken from anyone’s life, but his ability to think creatively and his powerful observational and analytical mind have allowed him the perspective to really get into his life’s journey and reflect, and to use those reflections and ruminations to continue teaching and ministering to others.

The roots of Martin’s drive to chronicle his family’s history in his books is spelled out in a story from the first “By the Way” book, in which he details his summers as a young man spent in Oklahoma with his grandparents. “Each of my grandparents had unique stories that filled the evening hours. I learned of my ancestors’ hopes and dreams as they lived. My goal is that their stories will be remembered,” he writes.

Alongside his passion for history, Martin’s faith, which has led him in all his endeavors, is a central theme in his books, as is his love of teaching young people, but aside from his teaching school curricula all those years in his career, Martin realized early on that life is all about choices.

When he was a young law student, a chance encounter in Houston with a drunken man, who he discovered underneath his car, led to that epiphany: that he was called to teach, and to implore all of whom he taught, that life is about choices.

Martin can recall with stunning clarity, as if it happened the day prior, about former students and their tragedies, triumphs and laugh-out-loud moments in between. In one story from the first book, titled “Eddy Joe,” he recalls some of the antics of a backwoods young man whom he taught.

He admits that his life has been one teachable moment after another. “Everything I’ve done, all the people I’ve encountered, are all lessons,” he said.

In the books, Martin provides a disclaimer up front that the stories that follow are works of fiction, although inspired by true events and real people; that his walk down memory lane has, “over time, suffered many potholes and washouts,” and that “No two people ever remember any event in the same way.” Names are changed, but the lessons remain the same.

The relatable nature of Martin’s storytelling on the page, with the stories rendered in a folksy, plainspoken manner, is the same style that made him such a favorite in classrooms and pulpits for so many years. He is a gifted communicator, and beloved by all of those who he has taught, coached or ministered to. As a classroom teacher, Martin says he always encouraged his students to think creatively and wanted the material to be something the students could relate to. He still owns a history textbook from his grade school years, which he points to as a good example of being of a time when textbooks were more about telling a story and less about regurgitating numbers and dates. Modern textbooks, especially for history, he said, are more akin to encyclopedias.

One former student, Elizabeth Grammer, said “his class was the one class where I was never bored,” and added that Martin always made the material relatable to the students’ lives and called him a great role model for young people.

Martin recalled one end-of-the-year comprehensive exam he was working on for a class and said that he was having a hard time formulating one last question, so he ponied up an open-ended, easy five-point question, asking the students what their

favorite activity was during the school term. Every answer was different, Martin said, and made him realize that on any given day, the activity on the agenda might not be one student's favorite thing, but it was someone's favorite.

His knack for storytelling came in handy in the classroom whenever there was time to fill, he said. When the day's lessons were done, he would tell tales, many of which are included in his books.

Being able to reach a varied population of learners is a credit to Martin's patience and gifts as a communicator in his teaching career. That career took him from Baytown to the deep East Texas pineywoods, a move he credits to a higher power. He spent many years as a teacher and counselor at Colmesneil ISD, and also had stints at Chester ISD and finished his career in the classroom at Woodville.

Early on in his time at Colmesneil, his ability to help a foster son find numerous scholarship monies led to the administration offering him a step up from the sixth-grade history classroom to a role as guidance counselor. In the dedication page to the 2003 Barker annual from Colmesneil ISD, that year's edition is dedicated to Martin, and the inscription notes of how Martin's "astounding work and dedication" not only led to his long career as the guidance counselor of that district, but also of the amount of scholarship monies that Colmesneil graduates were awarded with Martin's help.

The copy on the page states that Martin "talks with every senior about plans for their future and helps them with every aspect of college planning, including applying to college, scholarships, financial aid, and choosing a college and major."

Although Martin had never served in such a capacity, he said he gladly took on the role, and helped succeeding classes attain bushels of scholarships. Martin was instrumental in helping Colmesneil High School grads earn record numbers of Smith-Hutson scholarships when the program was in its early stages. Early on, the scholarship opportunity, from Sam Houston State University, could only award 12 scholarships, total. One year, for the CHS class of 2000, six of those 12 went to CHS graduates.

Martin said he had wished that he could have made it to 50 years in the classroom. After 46 years in the classroom, mobility issues forced Martin to retire, but in spite of his self-deprecating description of himself as "old and crippled," conversations with the man, along with the stories in his books, reveal a life marked by an iron will. He admitted that if there is a goal to reach, he will find a way to get to the finish line.

His determination and faith are qualities that have carried over to his family members. His daughter Sarah Russell said he has been one of the biggest supporters in everything that she does. "He's always there for the good and the bad. He always encourages all of us to reach for the stars and we can do anything," she said.

Martin distills many of his teachings and sermons down to a few key points. "The secret of anything is in getting to the heart of the matter," he said.

Through the stories in his books, and in conversation, it is clear that Martin is a survivor, after all he has lived through everything from being hit by a car as a child to being shot in the leg by his grandfather (while the older man was trying to kill a rattlesnake that bit young Mark) and a brain tumor, the excision of which resulted in a near-death experience. That last experience, which is journaled in the final six chapters of the first "By the Way" book, is far more compelling than those few words in the previous sentence can possibly convey.

If there is a goal, Brother Mark Martin will stay the course and in the process affect the lives of everyone around him in positive ways, and the resulting stories to come will likely make you laugh and offer you wisdom. ■

The "By the Way" books, along with "The Witness Road," by Mark L. Martin, are available from Amazon.com.



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Unexpected Results

Take a chance. It might change your life.

By Kevin Wooten

For the most part, I'm a happy and contented guy. I've got a great family and a job that I enjoy. It hasn't always been that way, though.

About 25 years ago, my life wasn't as rosy. I was in a funk. After graduating high school, I proceeded to aimlessly stumble through life. I first joined the military. That experience was unexpectedly valuable, as the structure and discipline helped me to mature and become somewhat responsible. It was after I left the military that things got a bit distorted. I worked many different types of jobs without ever finding one that was truly fulfilling. I dabbled in construction, sold cars, waited tables, bartended, managed retail stores, and even attempted to sell home fire-alarm systems. None stuck.

My personal life wasn't much better. I wandered in and out of relationships, not finding what might be considered my soul mate. Continuously shifting between loneliness and heartbreak, while remaining unfulfilled in my work life, was quite a toxic recipe that cooked up a big bowl of unhappiness. Something had to change.

Then, one fortuitous day, I was sitting around the kitchen island at a friend's house. There was maybe a half dozen of my favorite people there, eating good food, drinking cold beverages, and just shooting the bull. One story that a friend of mine told was about his father, and how my buddy thought

his dear old Pops had lost his mind. It seems that his dad had the realization that it would be a great idea to through-hike the Appalachian Trail.

For the uninitiated, the Appalachian Trail is a 2000+ mile continuous hiking trail that traverses the Eastern states from Springer Mountain in Georgia all the way to Mount Katahdin in Maine. The trail winds its way through multiple mountain ranges including the Great Smoky Mountains and the Shenandoah Mountains, as well as stretches of flat land that give the hiking legs a much-needed reprieve. People who live near the trail, as well as visitors from parts unknown, often take advantage of the natural beauty and day-hike whenever they can. Some also make a bigger adventure of it and camp out for a night or two ... or more.

Through-hiking, though, is something entirely different ... and difficult. If one chooses to through-hike the Appalachian Trail, they have committed to hiking the entire length of the trail from Georgia to Maine in a single attempt. It is an enormous undertaking. One must be physically fit, have appropriate supplies, and if one is a working person, be unable to do one's job for approximately five to six months. The through-hike season runs from roughly early April until late September. Remote work is not an option because there is basically little to no internet service available on most parts of the trail. Camping shelter, good footwear, food and water



become the only items that truly matter in your life.

Approximately 3,000 optimistic and daring souls attempt this mighty adventure annually. Only about one-fourth complete it according to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy website (<https://appalachiantrail.org/explore/hike-the-a-t/thru-hiking/>).

Back to my story. Being in the midst of an existential crisis, this story of danger, nature and self-sufficiency piqued my interest. My sense of daring reared its head. My friend went on to say that his father lasted only a few days on the trail, defeated by disillusionment and (especially) the frigid weather. No matter to me. The next morning, I began my own research on the "A-T" through-hike. The internet was still in its relative infancy, but I was able to gather enough information to persuade myself that this was something I not only wanted to do, but something I HAD TO DO. It was the escape that I needed.

Full disclosure: prior to this point in my life I had never camped out more than two nights in a row and had never spent any significant time hiking in the mountains. But something deep inside me wouldn't leave me alone. Every time my mind began to talk me out of this crazy idea, my gut feelings shut it down. After a few weeks of research and soul searching, I decided that this was something I was required by the universe to do.

I had saved up some money so there was a way to make it happen. In March of the year 2000, I gave my one-month notice to the job I was working at the time and trekked down to Houston to the outdoor specialty store REI. I explained to the young employee that approached me why I was there. He proceeded to fit me out with all the gear I needed ... and some I didn't. Nonetheless, I left ready to hike.

When the last day of work arrived, I had already purchased my airline ticket to Atlanta, and it was just a few days later that


my journey began. I hailed a cab after spending the night in Atlanta. The taxi drove me to Springer Mountain.

There are two very different versions of being in "hiking shape." One is having physical strength and cardio health. This I had. The second type is mountain hiking stamina. I discovered on the first day that I was severely lacking in this. About two hours into the first day of hiking up trails and switchbacks I began jettisoning much of what I brought with me. I needed the bare minimum in my backpack. Any non-essentials quickly found a new home, either with other hikers or in receptacles. (Note: the greatest sin on the trail is to leave any trace that you were there. In other words: "no trash whatsoever.") Once I had lightened my load, I managed to hike approximately four miles that day. Not much in the scheme of things and, with sore legs and a cold wind in my face, some regret was already creeping into my brain. I camped at a shelter and fell into a deep sleep. I was up bright and early and trekked all the next day. After a few days of this I finally got into hiking shape.

A routine began to develop. Wake up. Eat whatever food I have available. Pack up my tent. Hit the trail. Stop as night began to fall. Set up the tent and sleep. Repeat. It was a wonderful and eye-opening experience. I met some amazing people on the trail. Most were there for the same reason I was: an escape of sorts. WHAT they were escaping varied greatly. Some were slipping away from toxic relationships or failed marriages. A few were trying to beat addiction. A handful were retirees with time on their hands. All of us were, in some sense, looking for answers.

This little adventure of mine became my entire existence. Depending on the terrain, I would hike anywhere from 10-15 miles per day. As mentioned above, I met some amazing people. I also pushed myself physically, and especially mentally, in ways that I had never thought possible. I would estimate that approximately 95% of my time hiking was spent by





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myself, alone. For those that have never experienced extended periods of time alone with your thoughts, it can be a revelation ... and frightening. There are no more excuses for not putting your life in perspective. Confronting my own unhappiness, insecurities and issues became a daily routine. I began to analyze and relive myriad experiences in my life. I would think about all the people and events that shaped me, for good and bad. Literally, for hours on end, I would be my own psychologist. In the end, I guess you could say I truly became "self-aware." I had no other choice. There is no reason to lie when it is only you who is listening.

I had spent about five weeks and almost 300 miles on the trail when it happened. "It" was the answer I had been seeking. Much of my time in my own head was an attempt to recognize why I was so unhappy in my life. Why did I not enjoy my work? Why did all of my relationships fail? What is the purpose of all this? Why am I here?

It hit me so quickly and so clearly that I literally stopped in my tracks. I sat down on a nearby log and took stock of what I had discovered. It was so simple, yet so profound, that I was mad at myself that it took this long to figure it out. The true root of my unhappiness in life was that I had never completed, or really attempted, my education. Now, this may sound ridiculously mundane and trivial to many. But to me it was the holy grail.

I had always wanted to go to college but never thought I could, for a variety of reasons. One, I grew up in a family that had no concept of higher education. Neither of my parents graduated from high school, so the very thought that their child could go to college seemed like a fantasy. My parents were smart, and books were ubiquitous in our house, but higher education was a foreign concept. Two, we had no real knowledge of the opportunities and the financial assistance that was available. As I made my way through the world as a young adult, I was continuously amazed and frustrated that, in whatever job I was doing at the time, I was at the mercy of an "educated" boss who I sensed I was smarter and more capable than. My superiors made decisions and managed people simply because they had a college degree. I always thought to myself that I was just as smart, clever and skilled as they were, yet I was not given the chance to show it. Or, more likely, it was my own lack of self-confidence. But my lack of confidence and the insecurities that come with "not knowing" what I didn't know about higher education became my own anchor in life that kept me from setting sail. I had to go back to school and get my degree. I was in my early 30s at this point. There was no time to waste.

I immediately left the trail near the beautiful town of Hot Springs, N.C. I strolled into town like many other through-hikers, smelling ripe and looking quite rough. I came across a wonderful little bed and breakfast that was owned by a couple who had discovered Hot Springs almost a decade before while attempting their own Appalachian Trail through-hike. They fell in love with the beautiful little town and came back to start a business and put down roots. One thing you will find among those who attempt the full hike, past and present, is that they look out for their own. A-T though-hikers are a fellowship. I explained over a delicious vegetarian breakfast about my epiphany while on the trail, how I was done hiking and needed to get back home. They understood and kindly offered to drive me to the nearest town with an airport, which was Asheville.

Once back home in East Texas, I immediately contacted Sam Houston State University, the closest university to where I was living, and began the application process. I was accepted and began college in the fall of 2000. The poor kid without any belief that he could go to college took the leap. And my intuition, gut feeling, revelation, or whatever you want to call it that occurred on that day in the mountains of North Carolina, was absolutely correct. I took to college like a fish to water. I graduated with a bachelor's degree and a 3.54 GPA. As my graduation approached, I wasn't sure what I was going to do with this degree, but I did recognize that I thoroughly enjoyed college and was also good at it. Figuring I had nothing to lose, I applied to graduate school and was accepted. While in graduate school I had the opportunity to teach an introductory class

to freshmen. I had never even considered teaching as a possible career path, but once again, I took the leap. Nervous doesn't even come close to describing the first day in front of the class of young (and a few not-so-young) college students. I almost threw up. But I got through that first day, and like most things, the more I did it the easier it became. Then, about three weeks into the semester, it hit me like a punch in the face. THIS was what I was meant to do. THIS was what motivates me. Standing in front of young people wanting to learn and realizing that I was good at teaching them. Once the nervousness subsided, the place that made me happiest was in a college classroom. I graduated with a master's degree in political science with a minor in history.

I have now been teaching in college for eighteen years. The disillusionment that weighed upon me throughout my early adult life subsided. When one positive thing happens, it often leads to others. I call it karma. Others have different terms for it, but it is still the same thing. Happiness and positivity attract more of the same. While attending graduate school I began dating an old friend from junior high and high school with whom I worked. We eventually married and started a family.

Life, as they say, is good. I can trace my current happy situation to many different decisions that I have made. But the first step in my current journey began with a simple conversation with friends. It created an unexplainable need to follow up on the improbable failed adventure of someone else's father. That single story, and my gut reaction to it, changed my life.

The moral of my story then, is to listen to everyone, consider everything, never rule out anything, and most importantly, follow your gut. And while I didn't actually finish the through-hike of the Appalachian Trail, the attempt and the journey, and what resulted from it, were what really mattered. Just take the leap. ■



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Angler's Prayer

By Sandy Carroll

*I thank Thee, Lord, for these hands of
mine that can lift a rod and reel*

*For the solitude on the river bank
as I fix myself a meal*

*Thank you for each starry night
that I have pitched a tent*

*Where catfish ran, a full moon rose
for all these times you've sent*

*I thank Thee, Father, for these eyes of
mine that caught a sunset's gold*

*These memories I will treasure
when I take to growing old*

*You've protected me when the tide was high
and the strong winds began to rise*

*And guided my rig to a harbor safe
beneath dark, violent skies*

*You've taught me, God, through the great
outdoors to see that life is fair*

*So I thank Thee, Father, on bended knee
as I send this 'Angler's Prayer'*



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SQUIRREL HUNTING WITH DOGS

- an East Texas tradition -

By Luke Clayton

Back in the fifties and throughout much of the sixties, before the whitetail deer boon, squirrels were the primary game animal hunted in east Texas where I was grown up. Oh, there was a huntable number of deer and a season for hunting them but the majority of hunters back then were targeting small game; squirrels, rabbits and before the die off, bobwhite quail. Camps were set up by squirrel hunters and several days were often spent 'at camp' hunting and cooking squirrel. These camps were the predecessor to present day deer camps. Squirrel fried, smothered with rice and gravy or in a stew were as common back in the day for the centerpiece of a Sunday dinner as roast beef is today.

I grew up hunting and eating squirrel and on occasion, usually a couple times each year, I had the opportunity to hunt them with a borrowed squirrel dog. My brother in law was friends with Mr. Guthrie, and old gentlemen that lived near us who owned a big raw boned mixed breed hound that most closely resembled a black and tan but had traits of several breeds, everything from the ears of a beagle to the markings of a Walker. We hunted the woods near Mr. Guthrie's home place and the old dog knew the woods well. Once we set out on a hunt, he would head straight to old den trees where he expected to sniff out the scent of squirrel. These hunts were exciting and usually productive. The hound, we'll call him Tolar but honestly I've forgotten his name, was what old houndsmen called a 'big running' dog. I can still remember watching Tolar disappear into the brush and hear that deep bellowing baying informing us that he had treed a squirrel.

I, like many folks from the eastern part of the state,

became enamored with deer hunting in the seventies and largely left the squirrels alone, we didn't wish to disturb the deer we hunted in the fall. This remained the trend to the present day and the woods are now full of squirrels, both fox squirrels in the higher elevations and 'cat' of grey squirrels down in the bottomlands.

I still pursue deer at a serious level and have hunted them from Canada to Mexico and lots of places in-between but thanks to a longtime friendship with a lifelong squirrel hunter and squirrel dog trainer, Donny Lynch, my interest in hunting and setting down to a plate of smothered squirrel and gravy has been rekindled.

I first began visiting with Donny almost three decades ago when I was doing a weekly fishing column for what was then the largest newspaper in the state. Donny was guiding fishing trips on several east Texas lakes and he supplied me and my readers with current, accurate fish catching tips. But even back then, after I gleaned the needed fishing tips, our phone visits often morphed into discussion on hunting and cooking squirrel.

I recently invited Donny to be a guest on my radio show and was very pleased at all the positive response he received from our informal chats. I was happy to learn that there are still folks around interested in hunting squirrels, especially hunting them with dogs. Donny grew up in southeast Texas back in the same era as I when every young boy had either an iron sighted .22 rifle or a single shot shotgun and a passion for putting squirrel meat on the family table.

In our interviews, Donny pointed out that hunting with dogs is an 'action' sport and ideal for youngsters. "I've exposed a great number of young hunters to squirrel





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Donny Lynch with one of his prize winning squirrel dogs. Photo courtesy of Donny Lynch.

hunting with dogs and without exception, they all enjoy the fact that they are on the move and actively pursuing squirrels rather than setting and waiting for them to become active in the tree branches. The smaller dogs I train and hunt with are well suited for hunting smaller tracts of land and they are easy to for younger (or older) hunters to keep up with”.

Donny’s dogs are trained to basically hunt in a circle of about one hundred yard diameter. When one area is thoroughly covered by his dogs, he moves them to a new area and they again put their nose to the ground. A well trained squirrel dog also uses its eyes as well as nose to locate squirrels on the ground or in the trees.

Squirrel dogs come in all sizes and mixes of breeds but Donny’s dogs, now named Lynch Dawgs, are small in stature but long on squirrel hunting instincts. As he points out there are two types of squirrel dogs, the cur and feist. As a rule cur dogs are a bit larger than the feist and tend to range a bit farther out. Some say it takes a cur a bit longer to bond with their owner but once that bond is made, it never leaves. Feist are smaller dogs and as a general rule, tend to range in closer than the cur, making them ideal for hunting small tracts of land. Lynch Dawgs are silent when scent trailing squirrels on the ground and only bark when the squirrel is treed.

A few friends and I are eagerly awaiting a squirrel hunt with Donny. One of my good friends has a few acres loaded with native pecans trees which are home to countless squirrels that have previously not been hunted. We are planning a hunt in mid January followed by a midwinter cookout, probably a big fish fry or barbeque. We might even plan on dressing and cooking some of the squirrels we harvest.

Squirrel meat is very flavorful and as Donny says, “If you like chicken, you have to like squirrel”. Newby squirrel cooks are quick to learn that older squirrels, just like older chickens, can be a bit tough and are turned off the first time they set down to a stack of crispy fried and VERY tough pieces of fried squirrel. Older squirrels can be tasty fried if par boiled first, then fried or baked as smothered squirrel and gravy. Young squirrels, just like fryer chickens, are tender when fried. I plan to write a mid January column that focuses on our hunt and camp cooked meal afterwards.

Donny is very particular about who purchases his dogs and targets homes where the dogs are not only used to hunt but also as family pets. For more information, Contact Donny Lynch at 903-601-0671.

Email outdoors writer Luke Clayton through his website www.catfishradio.org ■

I would really like to help, but...



By Barbara White

Common sense and my bank say that I cannot possibly give money to every worthwhile cause that asks for my help.

I think it would be a whole lot of fun to skip through life scattering donations like bread crumbs in hopes that goodness and mercy will follow. Life just doesn't work like that – at least not my life.

I have to choose who gets a piece of my mostly-hard-earned money. It is a struggle. I give what I can when I can and generally try to keep my donations local. Some people apparently just don't understand that and seem intent on sending me on no-expense-paid guilt trips.

Online solicitations are easy to ignore. I can delete those without a second thought. I am cold and heartless, a regular Vladimir Putin in relaxed-fit clothing.

Commercials are tougher. When I see the faces of the disabled children, the wounded veterans, the hungry both here and abroad, my inner Vlad disappears, replaced by some quivering softy.

Those commercials featuring homeless and abused animals get me every time. Throw on a soundtrack of Sarah McLachlan singing "Arms of an Angel" and I really have to fight to keep from pledging just \$19 a month to save that sad-eyed puppy with the matted fur. My inner struggle goes something like this.

Me: What about the homeless animals?

Common Sense: What about that pesky "SERVICE VEHICLE SOON" light on the dashboard?

Common sense usually wins.

If you have lived in the same place for any length of time, those rascally solicitors have found you and reach out by mail. At least a half a dozen organizations have been vying for my affection for years by sending me small, unsolicited gifts to win me over. I have sent money to exactly one of them, but apparently word got around that I could be bought. I am not that kind of girl.

The gift-givers are persistent. I understand what they are thinking: They have sent me something, so I should feel obligated to send something, preferably money, in return, right? I refer you to the opening line of this column.

One organization recently sent me a large envelope containing a wall calendar, a pocket calendar, a monthly planner and a copy of "The Old Farmer's Almanac." That seemed a little show-offy to me, so I felt less guilty than usual when I set aside the almanac to read later, pocketed the pocket

calendar and threw the other stuff away, including the return envelope they had enclosed so I could send a donation.

I have received a ton of greeting cards and enough return address labels to pave a bridge from here to Australia. I don't know about you, but I don't use many return address labels anymore, yet I have return address stickers for every holiday and season. They just keep coming. I am convinced that somewhere there is a huge warehouse packed with return address labels, all with my name and address, which they will keep sending until I leave this world, address unknown.

I do like the little 10-page notepads I get from some of them. Those I use. They become my grocery lists. I keep a couple at bedside to jot down those great ideas that arrive at 3 a.m. and often make little sense after sunrise.

I have a stack of them next to my recliner so I can keep up with the names of TV shows I would like to recommend to friends. Okay, it is so I can keep track of what I have watched so that I do not accidentally attempt to watch it again. It has happened. There is so much programming out there now, they are running out of titles so I don't feel too bad if I know that the title of a show I liked had the word "little" or "tiny" in it, but can't recall if it was "Big Little Lies," "Little Fires Everywhere," "Tiny Beautiful Things," "The Little Things," "Tiny Pretty Things," or "A Million Little Things."

I mean, really. I knew it was something with "little" or "tiny" in the title. What more do you want?

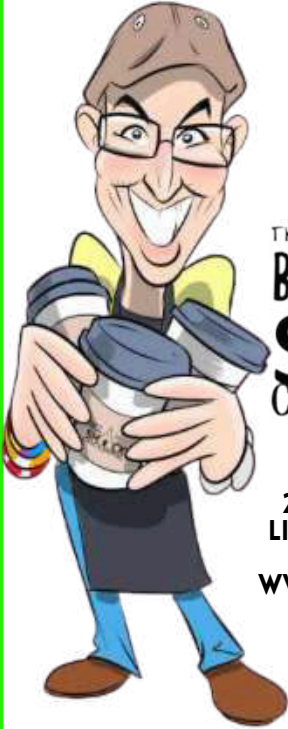
Anyway, I use those little notepads a lot and since they are probably one of the few things standing between me and a cognitive test, the organizations that send them are more likely to receive a few bucks from someone like me, who, come to think of it, should probably be channeling some of the money spent on streaming services to charity. I promise to give that serious consideration someday when there is nothing on TV.

One worthwhile organization recently sent me a donation request with a nickel glued inside. Common sense and my bank say that I should not throw away money, no matter how small the denomination, but I felt guilty as I peeled off the nickel and threw the rest of the stuff away. I felt like a thief. I swear that nickel felt hot.

A convenience store that I frequent near my home has a little dish on the counter to collect loose change for any customer that comes up a little short. I tossed the tainted nickel in the dish.

Common sense and my bank didn't care, but I felt better. ■

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Financial Advisor
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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Art Gallery

Tyler County Art League	1
Handmade Studio & Supplies	2
Johnson's Rock Shop	3

Artist

Sam Haney	1
Karaoke Joe and DJ Services	2
Karaline Shores	3

Band

The Fabulous Knight Krawlers	1
Texas Crossroads	2
Mama Earl Revival	3

Cultural Event

Polk County Hometown Christmas	1
Dogwood Festival	2
Harvest Festival at Heritage Village	3

Dance Hall

Banita Creek Hall	1
Yours, Mine and Our Place Club	2
VFW Post 8568	3

DJ

Joe LeBlanc	1
Bill Powell	2
DJ Alan Vazquez	3

Entertainment Venue

Black Creek Ranch Event Venue	1
Ramsey Ranch Events	2
Pearls In The Pines Venue and RV Park	3

Event Venue

Black Creek Ranch Event Venue	1
Ramsey Ranch Events	2
Pearls In The Pines Venue and RV Park	3

Festival

Hometown Christmas	1
Dogwood Festival	2
Harvest Festival at Heritage Village	3

Fundraising Event

Purse Bingo	1
The Annual Lions Club Rodeo	2
Wolf Creek Car and Bike Show	3

Kids Party Venue

Lake Tejas	1
Ellen Trout Zoo	2
Handmade Studio & Supplies	3

Live Music Venue

Emporium for the Arts	1
Across The Tracks	2
Wet Deck Bar & Grill	3

Local Event

Dogwood Festival	1
Hometown Christmas	2
Alabama-Coushatta Pow Wow	3

Museum

Heritage Village Museum	1
Allan Shivers Museum	2
Polk County Memorial Museum	3

Musician

Kim Cruse	1
Renee Vore	2
Laci Kaye Booth	3

Wedding Venue

Black Creek Ranch Event Venue	1
Ramsey Ranch Events	2
Pearls in the Pines Venue and RV Park	3

AUTO & TRANSPORTATION

Auto Body Shop

J&C Auto Livingston	1
Woodville Collision Repair	2
White-Starr Collision, Restoration & Custom	3

Auto Parts Store

O'Reilly Auto Parts	1
ABC Auto Parts	2
Big Texas Auto Parts	3

Auto Repair

Woodville Collision Repair	1
J&C Auto Body	2
A2Z Automotive	3

Mobile Car Detailing

Dust' N Wash Mobile Detailing	1
Spot Free Hand Car Wash	2
Foster's Detailing	3

New Car Dealership

Classic Toyota Tyler	1
Clifton Chevrolet	2
Kramer Chevrolet GMC	3

Oil Change

Eason Service Center	1
Grease Monkey	2
Take 5 Oil Change	3

Rims/Wheels Store

Discount Tire	1
Casa Della Tire Services L.L.C.	2
David Norton Tire Center	3

Tire Dealer

Discount Tire Store (TXH 91)	1
Lakeway Tire & Service	2
Casa Della Tire Services L.L.C.	3

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2nd - Best Take-out

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Woodville, TX 75979

Kingwood
2313 Timber Shadows
Drive, Ste 102
Kingwood, TX 77339

Marlin
101 Live Oak
Marlin, TX 76661





Towing Service	
Lakeview Towing	1
East Texas Towing	2
Larry's Towing and Recovery, LLC.	3

Window Tinting	
Cool Shades Window Tinting	1
Texas Truck Accessories	2
Mickey's Tint & Car Audio	3

BUSINESS & FINANCE

Accounting Firm	
Brian C Jones, CPA, PC	1
Tucker's Professional Services Inc.	2
Axley & Rode	3

Auto Loan Provider	
Citizens State Bank	1
First National Bank	2
Education First Federal Credit Union	3

Bank	
Citizen 's State Bank	1
First State Bank	2
First National Bank of Livingston	3

Bookkeeping/Tax Service	
Tucker's Professional Services Inc.	1
Aubrey & Barichello Tax Service Inc	2
Total Sum, LLC	3

Cleaning Company (Commercial)	
Vickery Home Cleaning	1
S&S Cleaning	2
Superior Cleaning and Restoration LLC	3

Commercial Real Estate Agent	
Craig Jones, Eastex Real Estate	1
Stanley Cleburg, Old Soldier Realty	2
Michelle Martindale, Martindale Real Estate	3

Full Service Ad Agency	
Ariel Digital Marketing	1
AdTrax Local Media Marketing	2
Savvy, the Agency	3

Professional Head Shot Photographer	
Free Spirit Photography	1
Shores Photography	2
Angela Marie Photography	3

Social Media Management	
Ariel Digital Marketing	1
Design Geek Graphics	2
Social Elevation	3

COMMUNITY

Boss	
Larry Redden, LEAT Properties LLC	1
Dr. Brent Hawkins, Livingston ISD	2
Michael Farmer, Michael Farmer Insurance	3

Chamber of Commerce	
Livingston - Polk County Chamber of Commerce	1
Tyler County Chamber of Commerce	2
Nacogdoches Chamber-Commerce	3

Church	
First Baptist Church of Livingston	1
Fellowship Church	2
Church in the Country	3

Community Activist	
Chrissy Reynold's, Lacy's Legacy in Colmesneil	1
Kaycee Hendrix	2
Karen Dixon, ROTC, Trinity	3

Fire Department	
Woodville Volunteer Fire Department	1
Livingston Volunteer Fire Department Station #4	2
Scenic Loop Volunteer Fire Department	3

Library	
Allan Shivers Library & Museum	1
Livingston Municipal Library	2
Kountze Public Library	3

Local Author	
Gloria Russell	1
Carrie Hendrix	2
Jami Johns	3

Local Cause	
Sleep in Heavenly Peace	1
G.R.A.C.E. Pregnancy Outreach	2
Trinity Tabernacle Diaper Pantry	3

Local Hero	
Troy Costello, Woodville PD	1
Kevin Grimm Texan EMS	2
Corky Cochran	3

Local High School Athlete	
Audrey Rios, Livingston HS	1
Jace Morris, Livingston HS	2
Lewis Petty, Warren HS	3

Local Legislator	
Congressman Brian Babin	1
Rep Earnest Bailes	2
State Senator Robert Nichols	3

Local Politician	
Judge Sydney Murphy	1
Judge Milton Powers	2
Dr. Audrey Young, State Board of Education	3

Local Website	
easttexasnews.com	1
www.alabama-coushatta.com	2
Tyler County Chamber of Commerce	3

Mail Carrier	
Carla Lester	1
Stephen McBride	2
LeAnn Littlejohn Ruggles	3



New Business (opened in 2023)

Lakeside Oasis	1
J-Bird's Dogwood Diner	2
Nordic Pressure Washing	3

Non-Profit Organization

iServe 365	1
Sleep in Heavenly Peace	2
Center of Hope Polk County Mission Center	3

Pastor

Brett Lester, First Baptist Church of Livingston	1
Chris Houghton, Fellowship of Woodville Church	2
Milton Powers, First Baptist in Doucette	3

Place to Work (less than 20 employees)

Texan EMS	1
Michael Farmer Insurance Agency	2
J-Bird's Dogwood Diner	3

Place to Work (more than 20 employees)

Citizen's State Bank	1
Livingston ISD	2
Naskila Casino	3

Preschool

Wee Wisdom Pre-School	1
Pine Ridge Primary	2
Great Beginnings	3

Private School

Livingston Montessori School	1
St. Paul's Episcopal School	2
Eastside Christian School	3

Public School

Cedar Grove Elementary School	1
Timbercreek Elementary	2
Warren High School	3

Public Servant

Kevin Grimm Texan EMS- Livingston	1
David Morris	2
Brent Hawkins, Livingston ISD	3

School Board Member

Kevin Grimm, Livingston ISD	1
Bea Ellis, Livingston ISD	2
Josh McClure, Woodville ISD	3

Teacher, grades K-5

Bria Morris, Cedar Grove Elementary	1
Miranda Peters Cedar Grove Elementary	2
Mrs. Lea Dean, Woodville Elementary	3

Teacher, grades 6-8

Kristina Miller, Livingston Jr High	1
Renee Vore, Livingston Jr High	2
Julie Borel, Woodville Middle School	3

Teacher, grade 9-12

Renee Vore Livingston HS	1
Sara Ege, Livingston HS	2
Laura Gokey, Livingston HS	3

Scenic Spot

Wolf Creek Park	1
Martin Dies, Jr. State Park	2
Lake Livingston State Park	3

Staycation Location

TRA Wolf Creek Park	1
Two Creeks Crossing Resort	2
White Oak Manor Bed and Breakfast	3

Waste Management

Elite Environmental Texas, LLC	1
Local Sanitation, LLC	2
Piney Woods Sanitation	3

Youth Leader

Jacob Adaway, First Baptist Church of Colmesneil	1
Kelsey McDonald FBC Livingston	2
Todd Pounds, Church in the Country, Rayburn	3

DINING

Asian Restaurant

Sakura	1
China Cafe	2
Hunan	3

Baked Goods/Bakery

Marsha's Main Street Bakery	1
The Mad Batter Bake Shop	2
Champagne Cakery	3

Bar

Big Fish Icehouse	1
Bullet Grill House	2
Hilltop Icehouse	3

Barbecue

Slaughter's BBQ	1
Florida's Kitchen	2
Luling Smoke House BBQ and Taqueria	3

Bartender

Chris Rodgers, Where's Rufus Sports Bar	1
Courtney, Blue Duck	2
Tasha, Lakeside Oasis	3

Beers on Tap

Bullet Grill House	1
Fredonia Brewery, LLC	2
Redbone Magic Brewing	3

Breakfast

Wild Bill's Grill	1
Lone Star Charlie's	2
Hillister's Hitchin Post	3

Brewery

Fredonia Brewery, LLC	1
Cypress Creek Southern Ales	2
ETX Brewing Company	3



**We are humbled
and honored to be voted
BEST IN EAST TEXAS!
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Brad Elrod

Attorney At Law

Areas of Practice

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- Family Law
- Probate and Wills

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(Woodville Veterinary Clinic)

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Brunch

The Bull Shack Coffee & Smoothies	1
Pickett House	2
Lakeside Oasis	3

Cajun Restaurant

Vinny's Cajun Kitchen	1
LeBlanc's Cajun Kitchen	2
Indulge Kitchen & Lounge	3

Catering Service

Sadler's Kitchen	1
Country Boy's Smoking	2
Joe's Italian	3

Chef

Regan Pearson, H&B Kitchen	1
Lance McWhorter, Culture ETX	2
Paul Escamilla, The Blue Duck Kitchen & Bar	3

Coffeehouse

The Bull Shack Coffee and Smoothies	1
Everything U	2
Hard Bean Lumberton	3

Deck/Patio/Rooftop

Lakeside Oasis	1
Big Fish Icehouse	2
Wet Deck Bar & Grill	3

Dessert

Marsha's Main Street Bakery	1
The Mad Batter Bake Shop	2
Happy Camper Sips & Eats	3

Donuts

Warren Donuts	1
The Mad Batter Bake Shop	2
Fresh Donuts	3

Family Restaurant

Pickett House	1
Whistle Stop	2
Big Smith's Bar-B-Q & Catfish	3

Fine Dining

The Blue Duck Kitchen & Bar	1
Lakeside Oasis	2
Dakota's Steaks - Seafood - Chops	3

Food Truck

Country Boy's Smoking	1
El Trompo Villarreal	2
Tacos Xplosivos	3

Fried Chicken

Pickett House	1
Brookshire Brothers	2
Culture ETX	3

Hamburger

The Burgerhouse	1
Big Fish Icehouse	2
J-Bird's Dogwood Diner	3

Happy Hour

Patron Grill	1
Wet Deck Bar & Grill	2
Bullet Grill House	3

Italian Restaurant

Joe's Italian Grill & Pizza	1
San Remo Restaurant	2
Romas Italian Restaurant	3

Kid-Friendly Restaurant

Chick Fil-A	1
Pickett House	2
Ralph & Kacoo's	3

Lunch

Ritual Luncheonette	1
Restoration Bistro	2
Alma's Courthouse Whistle S top	3

Mexican Food

Patron Grill	1
Señor Toros	2
Pueblo Viejo - Livingston	3

Pizza

Joe's Italian	1
Fat Boys Pizza	2
Bullet Grill House	3

Place to Feed a Crowd

Slaughter's BBQ	1
Pickett House	2
Krazy Cajun	3

Seafood

Red Tailz	1
Shrimp Boat Manny's	2
Floyd's Seafood	3

Server

Shelly Vaughn, J-Birds Dogwood Diner	1
Oneta, Patron Grill	2
Jana, Big Smith's Bar-B-Q & Catfish	3

Soul Food

Indulge Kitchen & Lounge	1
Pickett House	2
Culture ETX	3

Soup & Sandwich

My Place	1
Katie's Cafe and Bakery	2
Plain & Fancy Sandwich Shoppe	3

Sports Bar

Where's Rufus Sports Bar	1
The Whirlwind	2
Muddy Jake's Sports Grill & Pub	3

Steakhouse

Big Jake's	1
The Blue Duck Kitchen & Bar	2
The Barrel House Bar & Grill	3



Sushi

Sakura	1
Sake Cafe	2
Kyonekko Sushi	3

Takeout

Vinny's Cajun Kitchen	1
Chick Fil-A	2
Big Fish Icehouse	3

Winery

Tempe Creek Vineyard	1
Phinisse Farms Winery	2
Canyon Creek Vinyard	3

HEALTH & FITNESS

Assisted Living Facility

Tall Pines Assisted Living	1
The Bradford at Brookside	2
Pine Ridge Health Care	3

Chiropractor

Kenneth Dominguez, D.C.	1
William Wall, DC	2
Dr. Walker, Lumberton Chiropractor	3

Clinic

Dedicated Medical Center & Urgent Care	1
West Park Primary Care	2
Dr. G Medical Solutions	3

Day Spa

Wall's Wellness Massage and Spa	1
Madeline's Salon & Day Spa	2
Revival Drip Bar	3

Dentist

B&G Family Dentistry	1
Dr. Charles C. Spurlock, DDS	2
Today's Dental	3

Gym

Livingston Fitness Center	1
Vickery's Sweat Shop	2
Anytime Fitness	3

Home Health

East Texas Home Health	1
TheraCare Home Health - Livingston	2
A Pinewoods Home Health Care	3

Hospice

Gentiva Hospice Care	1
Traditions Health Hospice	2
Choice Hospice - Sulphur Springs	3

Hospital

St. Luke's Health Memorial Livingston : Emergency Department	1
Exceptional Emergency Center - Livingston	2
Tyler County Hospital	3

Massage Therapist

Heather Ellis, Walls Wellness Massage and Spa	1
Carmella Grubbs LMT Heavenly Hands	2
Amy Smithey, LMT, Wall's Wellness Massage & Spa	3

Nurse

Tara Wigent RN, Gentiva Hospice	1
Rachel Clamon, Gentiva Hospice	2
Jessica Oates Bowen, Traditions Health & Hospice	3

Nurse Practitioner

Maegan Yeates	1
Colton Placker	2
Richard Cain	3

Personal Trainer

Coby Piper, Livingston Fitness Center	1
Adamas CrossFit	2
Tiffany Vickery	3

Pharmacy

Woodville Drug	1
Brookshire Brother	2
Livingston Pharmacy	3

Physical Therapy

Livingston Physical Therapy P.C.	1
Lambeth Physical Therapy	2
East Texas Physical Therapy	3

Physician

Dr. Elias T. Kanaan, MD, St. Luke's Health	1
Dr. Sandra Hutchison, St. Luke's Health	2
Dr. Paula Denson	3

Urgent Care

Dedicated Medical Center & Urgent Care	1
Urgent Doc	2
Aurora Concepts, LLC - Center TX	3

HOME

Abstract Company

Polk County Abstract Inc.	1
Tyler County Title	2
Community Title	3

Air & Heating Service

All Weather A/C & Heating	1
Best Air Conditioning and Heating	2
Lewis Air Conditioning & Heating, Inc.	2

Cleaning Company

Vickery Home Cleaning	1
S&S Cleaning Services Livingston, Tx	2
The Welcoming Company	3

Deck/Porch Contractor

Neal Construction	1
Fletcher Construction	2
Tight Line Construction	3

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- Physical Therapy
- Home Health Aide
- Smoking Cessation Therapy

Service Area

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| Greg County | Montgomery County | San Jacinto County |
| Hardin County | Nacogdoches County | Shelby County |
| Harris County | Newton County | Trinity County |
| Harrison County | Orange County | Tyler County |
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**Best Teacher
(grades 6-8)**
1st Place
Kristina Miller



**Best Teacher
(grades 6-8)**
2nd Place
Renee Vore



Best Boss
2nd Place
Brent Hawkins



**Best
School Board
Member**
1st Place
Kevin Grimm



**Best
School Board
Member**
2nd Place
Bea Ellis



**Best
Athlete**
1st Place
Audrey Rios

Best Public School

1st Place
Cedar Grove Elementary

2nd Place
Timber Creek Elementary



**Congratulations
Livingston ISD
winners**



2024

**Best of East Texas
Contest**

Best Community Public Servant

1st Place - Kevin Grimm
2nd Place - David Morris
3rd Place - Brent Hawkins

Best Pre-School

2nd Place
Pine Ridge Primary



**Best Teacher
(grade K-5)**
1st Place
Bria Morris



**Best Teacher
(grade K-5)**
2nd Place
Miranda Peters



**Best Teacher
(grades 9-12)**
1st Place
Renee Vore



**Best Teacher
(grades 9-12)**
2nd Place
Sarah Ege



**Best Teacher
(grades 9-12)**
3rd Place
Laura Gokey



**Best
Athlete**
2nd Place
Jace Morris



Gas/Propane Provider	
Tyler County Propane LLC	1
Vickery Propane LLC	2
Consumer's LP Gas & Appliance	3

Homebuilding Company	
LEAT Properties LLC	1
K&A Construction	2
Vences Custom Homes	3

Landscaping Company	
Poole's Lawncare & Landscaping	1
Stanley's Landscape Management	2
401 Farm & Nursery, Groveton TX	3

Mortgage Lender	
Citizens State Bank	1
First National Bank of Livingston	2
First State Bank	3

Plumbing Company	
Plunge-It Plumbing	1
So-Low Plumbing & Septic	2
Leggett Plumbing	3

Real Estate Agent	
Craig Jones, Eastex Real Estate	1
Hailey McClendon, The Cox Company	2
Kelton Farmer, JLA Livingston	3

Real Estate Firm	
Eastex Real Estate	1
JLA Realty Livingston	2
Martindale Real Estate Investments	3

Real Estate Title Company	
Polk County Abstract Inc.	1
Hooks Title Co.	2
Patron Title of Polk, LLC	3

Roofing Company	
Jay Lott Roofing	1
Neal Construction	2
Gilmore Roofing LLC	3

Septic Services	
Lee's Septic Services	1
Sinks to Septic	2
T & A Septic Tank Services	3

PETS & LIVESTOCK

Farrier	
Mark Johnson	1
Durmon Hoof Services	2
Bill Clymer	3

Feed Store	
Tolar's Feed & Outdoor Supply	1
Livingston Feed & Farm Supply	2
Richardson Ag & Outdoors, LLC	3

Mobile Veterinarian	
Milton Thiel, DVM	1
Dehart Veterinary Services	2
MyVet Tyler	3

Pet Boarding/Day Care	
GBA	1
R Texas Star Grooming & Boarding	2
Trusted Companion Grooming and Dog Training	3

Pet Grooming Company	
GBA	1
Texas Star Grooming & Boarding	2
Trusted Companion Grooming and Dog Training	3

Veterinarian Clinic	
Woodville Veterinary Clinic	1
Arena Veterinary Clinic	2
Livingston Animal Hospital	3

SERVICES

Bank Teller	
Kathryn Hudson, Citizens State Bank	1
Dallas Smith, Rave Woodville	2
Orleann Wells FNB Livingston	3

Barber	
Chrissy Bumstead, B' Groomed Men's Salon	1
Lauren Stewart, Studio 59 Salon	2
Justin Baggett, Pillow's Barber Shop	3

Barber Shop	
The Blanchard Barber Shop	1
B' Groomed Men's Salon	2
Pillow's Barber Shop	3

Child Care	
Wee Wisdom Pre School	1
Noah's Ark Academy	2
Livingston Montessori School	3

Contractor	
LEAT Properties LLC	1
TDH Builders	2
Arocha Enterprise Inc	3

Custom T-shirts	
Kenzi's Kloset	1
Chics Dig It	2
East Texas T-Shirts & More	3

Dirt Contractor	
Richardson Construction LLC	1
Vickery Dirt	2
Riley's Dirt	3

Dumpster Rental	
Pro Star Waste	1
Trash Dashers LLC	2
Arocha Land Service LLC	3



Electrical Contractor

Piney Woods Electric	1
3B Electrical	2
M-G-T Services	3

Electrical Provider

Sam Houston Electric Cooperative	1
Entergy	2
Houston County Electric Co-Op	3

Funeral Home

Cochran Funeral Home	1
Riley Funeral Home	2
Stringer & Griffin Funeral Homes	3

Hair Salon

K&P Salon	1
The Beauty Lounge of Livingston	2
Madeline's Salon & Day Spa	3

Insurance Agent

Michael Farmer, Michael Farmer Insurance Agency	1
Jared Jernigan, Anco Insurance Livingston	2
Robert Borel, Texas Farm Bureau Agent	3

Law Firm

Brad Elrod, Attorney at Law	1
Phillips & Andreas, PLLC	2
Bythewood Legal Services, PLLC	3

Liquor Store

Longhorn Liquor Beer & Wine #4	1
Old House Beer Store	2
Zipps Liquor Store	3

Meat Processing

Fleming's Processing	1
J & M Meat Market	2
Moye's Taxidermy	3

Nail Salon

Happy Lashes & Nails	1
Gail's Boutique & Nail Salon	2
Karaline Shores Bliss Private- Livingston	3

Pest Control

Ed's Pest Control	1
Broken Arrow Pest Control	2
East Texas Exterminating Company	3

Photographer

Free Spirit Photography	1
Kay's Photography	2
Shores Photography	3

Pressure Washing

Nordic Pressure Washing	1
East Texas Pressure Washing	2
Absolute Washing Service	3

Retirement Facility/Nursing Home

Pine Ridge Health Care	1
Dogwood Trails Manor	2
The Bradford at Brookside	3

Sewing/Alterations

Destiny Kennedy Pennigton, The Quilt Penn	1
Country to Classy Boutique	2
Grandmama's Alterations	3

Storage Facility

Arena Storage	1
Got Storage	2
Crossin Moving & Storage	3

Tanning Salon

Chics Dig It	1
Island Time Tan	2
Texas Tan	3

Tattoo Artist

Edgar Delacruz, Texas Brandz Tattoo Shop	1
Rex Findley, Black Bird Tattoo	2
Seth Blood, Bloodlines Tattoo	3

Tractor Service

Precision Tractor Service	1
Livingston Lawn and Garden	2
Polk County Tractor & Motorsports	3

Tree Removal

Elite Tree Services	1
Dandy Bergman Tree service and Construction	2
Steve & Sons Tree Service and Land Clearing	3

SHOPPING

Antique Store

Dixie's Vintage Vogue	1
Gokey's Old Town Emporium and Creamery	2
Downtown Treasures	3

Appliance Store

McClure's Furniture and Appliances	1
Lowe's	2
Pedigo Furniture	3

Auction Company

Family Traditions	1
Estates By Lou	2
Bright Star Antiques Auction House	3

Boutique Store

Kenzi's K closet	1
Bend the Trend-Dare to Dazzle	2
Gokey's Old Town Emporium and Creamery	3

Children's Clothing Store

Miche's Mercantile	1
Bend the Trend-Dare to Dazzle	2
Peek A Boutique	3



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JESSALYN JONES, FNP-C

Urgent Care Providers

MEAGAN YEATES, APRN, FNP

CURTIS EVANS, APRN, FNP

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Consignment Store

Country to Classy Boutique	1
Steel Willow Consignments	2
Crystal's Small Town Glamour	3

Flea Market

Liberty Faux Real Trade Days	1
Canton Trade days	2
Nacogdoches Trade Days	3

Flooring/Carpet Store

Owen Furniture	1
Parker's Building Supply	2
Tejas Paint & Flooring	3

Florist

Sheryl's Flowers & Gifts	1
Silsbee Flowers of Love	2
Woodville Florist & Gift Shop	3

Garden Store/Nursery

Betty's Bloomers Nursery	1
River V Growers	2
Cook's Nursery	3

Gift Store

Sheryl's Flowers & Gifts	1
Gokey's Old Town Emporium and Creamery	2
Sullivan's Hardware	3

Hardware Store

Sullivan's Hardware	1
Tractor Supply Co.	2
Red Barn Builders Supply INC	3

Home Furnishing Store

McClure's Furniture and Appliances	1
Pedigo Furniture	2
Owen Furniture Co.	3

Jewelry Store

Barry Coats Jewelers	1
Lufkin Jewelry	2
Charles E Dickens Jewelry	3

Liquor Store

Longhorn Liquor Beer & Wine #4	1
Zipps	2
Andy's Liquor	3

Lumber Yard

Parker Lumber	1
Red Barn Builders Supply, Inc.	2
Thomas Supply	3

Mattress Store

McClure's Furniture and Appliances	1
Pedigo Furniture	2
Owen Furniture	3

Pawn Shop

Bob's Pawn Shop	1
Richard's Pawn Shop	2
Gulfway Pawn Shop	3

Western Wear

Tyco General Feed and Ranch Supply	1
Boot Barn	2
At Your Feet	3

Women's Clothing Store

Pink Blush Boutique	1
Crystal's Small Town Glamour	2
Nikki's Resale Shop	3

SPORTS & RECREATION

Cabin Rental

Bean's Creek Ranch	1
Yellow Rose Cabins	2
Two Creeks Crossing Resort	3

Campground

Wolf Creek Park	1
Camp Tonkawa Springs	2
Jellystone Park	3

Golf Course

Livingston Municipal Golf Course	1
Garden Valley Golf Club	2
Cherokee Ranch Golf Club	3

Guided Fishing

Big Crappie	1
Caddo Lake Fishing & Fellowship Guide Service	2
Capt. Dan's Fresh Water Guide	3

Guided Hunting

Cavender Whitetail Hunts	1
Elk Meadow Game Ranch	2
C4 Ranch	3

Lodging

The Fredonia Hotel	1
Ethridge Farm B&B	2
Rosevine Inn Bed & Breakfast	3

Marina

Beacon Bay	1
Browder's 3278 Marina	2
Pope's Landing Marina & Hotel	3

Outdoor Outfitters

Eaton's Hardware	1
Burris Farm & Home	2
Timber Ridge Firearms	3



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SHOP EAST TEXAS

Montgomery Shopping, Spring 2024

By Kelli Barnes

Downtown Montgomery has exploded in the best possible way. It is a unique combination of an easy-going East Texas environment, mixed with upscale shopping and dining, all merged into a wonderful opportunity for a park and walk day trip. I can honestly say it was so enjoyable ... even by myself. The store clerks were friendly and knowledgeable, and I felt like me, and the other shoppers were on vacation together – everyone was friendly and enjoying the day.

The stores are well stocked with quality merchandise and are independently owned. I look forward to going back soon with friends and family. Expect to find a store selling Wisconsin smoked meats and cheeses and on Saturdays, they serve gourmet grilled cheese sandwich baskets with the fresh cheese of your choice. They are made using sourdough bread, grilled with Amish butter, and include chips, a pickle spear and drink for only \$11. There are wine tasting rooms, restaurants, craft stores, antiques shopping, and my personal favorite, a clothing and jewelry store selling wine by the glass while you shop. They also have a large variety of Texas wines for purchase, including a sugar free variety.

A few years ago, the East Texan magazine featured H-Wines, and French winemakers Steve Hari and Philippe Legrand from Coldspring in San Jacinto County. They had recently acquired an old bank building in downtown Montgomery for a tasting room. The plan was to provide a place to sell their wines and offer wine tastings with upscale snack plates. Today, the business is thriving, and has grown to include a gourmet food and wine pairing ... a dining experience with Chef Anthony from Urban Terra Catering every Wednesday night, by reservation.



SIGNS \$16.95
The Rancher's Daughter



52 WEEKS BOOKS \$65.43 EA.
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Rustic Cashmere Gifts Antiques & Home Décor

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The Modern Skein Knit • Crochet • Yarn

208 McCowan St. Unit 100, Montgomery
936-436-3615 | themodernskein.com



STORES FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE



CLAY MEASURING TAPE/BAG \$15
The Modern Skein Knit • Crochet • Yarn



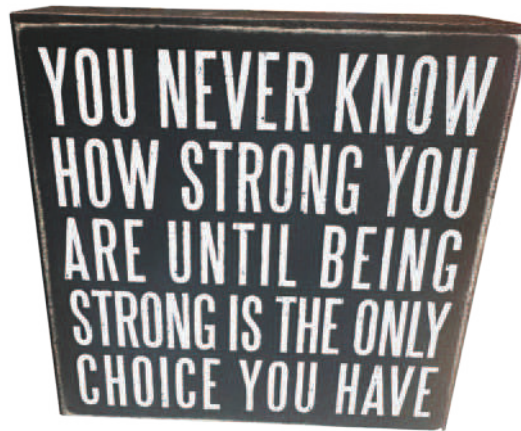
DIP MIXES/SWEET AND SAVORY \$3
Slice of Amish Wisconsin Cheese & Smoked Meats



TRASH TALK TEA TOWELS \$14.99
Rustic Cashmere Gifts Antiques & Home Décor



GOURMET OLIVE OILS \$22
Rustic Cashmere Gifts Antiques & Home Décor



STATEMENT SIGN \$16.99
Rustic Cashmere Gifts Antiques & Home Décor



YARNS \$32
The Modern Skein Knit • Crochet • Yarn



SHOP EAST TEXAS



MINI TOOL TAG \$9.50
The Modern Skein Knit • Crochet • Yarn

PROJECT BAG \$32
The Modern Skein Knit • Crochet • Yarn



PIT SMOKED GARLIC SUMMER SAUSAGE \$12
Slice of Amish Wisconsin Cheese & Smoked Meats



DRINK SET \$74.95
Rustic Cashmere Gifts
Antiques & Home Décor

SALT & PEPPER SHAKERS \$29.99/SET
Rustic Cashmere Gifts
Antiques & Home Décor



Slice of Amish Wisconsin Cheese & Smoked Meats

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936-588-4340 | sliceofamish.com

The Rancher's Daughter

14387 Liberty St., Montgomery
936-449-4100 | ranchersdaughtertx.com



STORES FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

CORDUROY BLOUSE \$96.95

The Modern Skein
Knit • Crochet • Yarn



PICKLED BEETS AND PICKLED EGGS \$12/JAR

Slice of Amish Wisconsin
Cheese & Smoked Meats



STITCH MARKERS \$14.99

The Modern Skein Knit • Crochet • Yarn



READERS \$19.99 – 24.99

Rustic Cashmere Gifts
Antiques & Home Décor



GLASS TRAY \$168.95

The Rancher's Daughter

1957 DIE CAST CHEVY BEL AIR STATION WAGON \$45

Rustic Cashmere Gifts Antiques & Home Décor





SHOP EAST TEXAS



AMISH STYLE ROLL BUTTER \$25
Slice of Amish Wisconsin Cheese & Smoked Meats



GREEN GLASSWARE PLATE \$10
Rustic Cashmere Gifts Antiques & Home Décor



HOW TO KNIT BOOK \$19.95
The Modern Skein Knit • Crochet • Yarn



SIGNS \$16.95
The Rancher's Daughter

ZERO SUGAR WINE \$16.95
The Rancher's Daughter



MID CENTURY FONDUE POT \$49
Rustic Cashmere Gifts Antiques & Home Décor



STORES FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE



SUMMER WEIGHT LEATHER DRESS,
COLOR/SEASIDE \$206
The Rancher's Daughter



LOUIS VUITTON PURSE \$379.99
Rustic Cashmere Gifts
Antiques & Home Décor

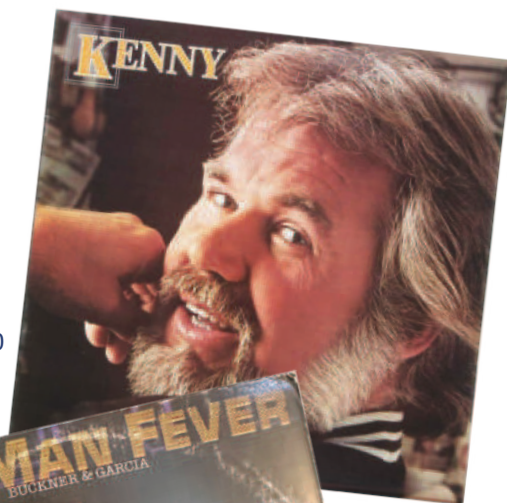
HUGS & KISSES EARRINGS \$12.95
The Rancher's Daughter



FRESH WISCONSIN CHEESES STARTING AT \$9/LB.
Slice of Amish Wisconsin Cheese & Smoked Meats



ALBUMS: KENNY ROGERS \$27.50
AND PACK MAN FEVER \$100
Rustic Cashmere Gifts
Antiques & Home Décor



CALFENAR

APRIL 2024

Orange

Annie at the Lutcher Theater
APRIL 4

Tomball

Janie Fricke at Main Street crossing
APRIL 5

Galveston

Galveston Steampunk Festival/Railroad Museum
APRIL 5-7

Beaumont

Zack Williams: A Hundred Highways Tour/Ford Park
APRIL 5

La Marque

10th Annual Big Crawfish Bash/Mainland City Center
APRIL 6

Woodville

81st Annual Dogwood Festival and Parade
APRIL 6

Lufkin

Joe W. Elliott House Benefit Car Show
APRIL 6

Port Arthur

Cajun Heritage Festival/Bob Bowers Civic Center
APRIL 6

Nacogdoches

Spring Brew Fest 2024
APRIL 6

Mineola

Eclipse Texas Festival 2024
APRIL 6

Lufkin

Artrageous at the Temple Theater
APRIL 7

Conroe

The Buddy Holly Story/Crighton Theater
APRIL 7

Nacogdoches

Red Dirt Mud Run
APRIL 8

Newton

Newton County Fair
APRIL 9-13

Lufkin

Jimmy Fortune in concert at the Pines Theater
APRIL 11

Houston

Lauren Daigle at the Toyota Center
APRIL 11

Conroe

Montgomery County Fair
APRIL 11-21

Dayton

Dayton Old Time Days Festival
APRIL 12-14

Conroe

CPRA Professional Rodeo
APRIL 12-13

Lufkin

The Oak Ridge Boys and Dylan Scott/Expo Center
APRIL 13

Nacogdoches

Nacogdoches Wine Swirl 2024/Downtown
APRIL 13

Kirbyville

Kirbyville Country Music Show/Palace Theater
APRIL 13

Spring

Gene Watson at Dosey Doe, The Big Barn
APRIL 14

Vidor

SETX Blueberry Festival/Creekwood Farms
APRIL 19-20

Palestine

Wiggy Thump Festival 2024/Anderson Cty Livestock Arena
APRIL 19-20

Lufkin

The Great Dubois at the Pines Theater
APRIL 19

Huntington

Huntington Homestead Festival/Centennial Park
APRIL 20

Lufkin

Spring Fest 2024/Cotton Square Park
APRIL 20

Nederland

2nd Annual Spindletop Showdown and BBQ Cook-off
APRIL 20

Kirbyville

Kirbyville Magnolia Festival
APRIL 17-20

Gladewater

39th Annual Gusher Days
APRIL 20

Diboll

Spring Fest and Car Show
APRIL 20

Katy

2024 Houston Country, Folk and Blues Festival
APRIL 20

New Caney

4th Annual Crawfish Boil and Fish Fry
APRIL 20

Beaumont

41st Annual SETX Gala with the Goo Goo Dolls/Civic Center
APRIL 20

Houston

The Cher Show/Hobby Center
APRIL 20-21

Orange

Mauriceville Crawfish Festival Crawl 5K
APRIL 22

Gun Barrell City

Athens Quilt Show/CR Legacy Event Center
APRIL 26-27

Conroe

Texas Mineral and Fossil Show/Lonestar Expo center
APRIL 26-28

Houston

The Sound of Music/Worsham Theater Center
APRIL 26-MAY 12

Houston

Kane Brown at the Toyota Center
APRIL 27

Houston

Jane Eyre at the Alley Theater
APRIL 27-30

Athens

Henderson County PRCA Rodeo
APRIL 27

Nacogdoches

Do Dat BBQ/Expo Center
APRIL 27

Houston

The Rolling Stones/NRG Stadium
APRIL 28

Lufkin

Angelina Civic and College Symphonic Bands/Temple Theater
APRIL 28

Galveston

Chicago/Grand 1894 Opera House
APRIL 28-29

Port Neches

Port Neches Riverfest Fun Run
APRIL 29

MAY 2024

Canton

Canton Trade Days
MAY 2-5

Paris

2024 Hell of North Texas/Eiffel Tower, Paris Texas
MAY 3-4

Houston

May Fest 2024/Main Street Market Square
MAY 3

Jefferson

2024 Big Bass Bonanza//Lakeside Park
MAY 3

Tyler

Red Dirt BBQ & Music Festival 2024
MAY 4

Conroe

Houston Country, Folk, & Blues Festival/Heritage Place
MAY 4

Houston

2024 Soul Flower Music Fest/Discovery Green
MAY 4

Texarkana

Twice as Fine Texarkana Wine Festival/Spring Lake Park
MAY 4

Huntsville

Dale Watson at the Old Towne Theatre
MAY 4

Nacogdoches

Red Dirt Mud Run 2024/County Expo Center
MAY 4

Houston

Shaky Knees Music Festival/Bayou Music Center
MAY 5

Nacogdoches

Fredonia 5K/10K
MAY 6

Lufkin

The Rocket Man Experience: Elton John Tribute/Pines Theater
MAY 8

The Woodlands

Kenny Chesney at Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion
MAY 9

Galveston

Texas Crab Festival/Festival Park
MAY 10-12

Jacksonville

Tops in Texas PRCA Rodeo
MAY 10-11

Conroe

Big As Texas Fest/Montgomery County Fairgrounds
MAY 10-13

Rusk

2024 Tops in Texas PRCA Rodeo
MAY 10-11

Mineola

Darrin Morris Band/Mineola Civic Center
MAY 10

Houston

Shaky Knees Music Festival/Bayou Music Center
MAY 10

Lindale

Pineywoods Wine Festival 2024/Pickers Pavilion
MAY 11

Kirbyville

Kirbyville Country Music Show/Palace Theater
MAY 11

CALENDAR

Sugarland
Sugarland Jazz Festival 2024/Crown Festival Park
MAY 11

Gladewater
The Ultimate Elvis Tribute/Jackson's Theater
MAY 11

Lufkin
Jeff Allen "Are We There Yet"? Tour/Pines Theater
MAY 11

Sugarland
Sugarland Jazz Festival/Crown Festival Park
MAY 11-12

Houston
Itzhak Perlman/Houston Symphony at Jones Hall
MAY 12

Houston
Luis Miguel at the Toyota Center
MAY 15

Houston
Paula Poundstone at Hobby Center
MAY 15

The Woodlands
Brooks & Dunn Reboot Tour/C W Mitchell Pavilion
MAY 17

Nacogdoches
Summer Squash/Nacogdoches City Park
MAY 18

Texas City
Big Ass Crawfish Bass/Mainland City Center
MAY 18

Shepherd
Chili Cook-off Fundraiser/Shepherd Public Library
MAY 18

Kirbyville
SETX Renaissance Faire
MAY 18-19 & 25-26

Tomball
The Bellamy Brothers at Main Street Crossing
MAY 24

Kilgore
Darrin Morris Band/The Back Porch
MAY 25

The Woodlands
Dave Matthews Band at C W Mitchell Pavilion
MAY 31

Houston
Josh Abbott Band at White Oak Music Hall
MAY 31

Livingston
54th Annual Alabama Coushatta Pow Wow
MAY 31-JUNE 1

JUNE 2024

Conroe
The Sinatra Experience/Crighton Theater
JUNE 1

Longview
Pirate 5K, 10K, & Half Marathon
JUNE 1

Humble
2024 Humble Bacon Festival
JUNE 1

Houston
Strauss Festival/Houston Symphony at Jones Hall
JUNE 2

Longview
Ark-La-Tex Tattoo & Art Expo
JUNE 2-3

Waxahachie
Chad Prather at the Texas Theater
JUNE 7

Orange
Scott McGill/Sunset Grove Country Club
JUNE 7

Galveston
Jason Eady at the Old Quarter Acoustic Café
JUNE 7

Beaumont
2024 All about Wheels Weekend/Ford Arena
JUNE 7-9

Kirbyville
Kirbyville Country Music Show/Palace Theater
JUNE 8

Nacogdoches
Annual Blueberry Festival/Downtown
JUNE 8

Jacksonville
40th Annual Tomato Festival
JUNE 8

Lufkin
Bridal Expo Show/Civic Center
JUNE 8

Pasadena

Pasadena Gun Show/Pasadena Convention Center
JUNE 8-9

Conroe

The Billy Joel Experience/Crighton Theater
JUNE 8--9

Tyler

The Wizard of Oz at the Tyler Civic Center
JUNE 9

Houston

Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons/Worham Center
JUNE 9

Lufkin

Running of the Blueberries 5K
JUNE 10

Galveston

Larry Gatlin at the Old Quarter Acoustic Café
JUNE 13

Lufkin

Vertigo at the Pines Theater
JUNE 14

Longview

Great Texas Balloon Race/Cobb Convention Center
JUNE 14-16

Houston

The Music of Abba at the Hobby Center
JUNE 15

Houston

Alanis Morissette at the C W Mitchell Pavilion
JUNE 16

Houston

Houston Jewelry Show/NRG Stadium
JUNE 21-23

Nacogdoches

G & S Nacogdoches Gun Show/Expo Center
JUNE 21-23

The Woodlands

Styx & Foreigner at the C W Mitchell Pavilion
JUNE 22

Houston

Texas Trucking Show/NRG Center
JUNE 22-23

Hockley

Radney Foster at 2920 Road House
JUNE 22-23

Carthage

Linda Davis at the Texas Country Music Hall of Fame
JUNE 22

Waxahachie

Waxahachie Gun Show/Civic Center
JUNE 22-23

Huntsville

Dailey & Vincent at the Old Towne Theatre
JUNE 22

Houston

The Music of the Rolling Stones at the Hobby Center
JUNE 29

Conroe

Main Street Market/Downtown
JUNE 29

Huntsville

Sons of Bocephus at the Old Towne Theatre
JUNE 29

JULY 2024

Houston

4th of July Festival and Fireworks/Miller Outdoor Theater
JULY 4-5

Livingston

Fireworks over Lake Livingston, Onalaska Side
JULY 4

Kilgore

4th of July Extravaganza/Kilgore City Park
JULY 4

Groveton

Fireworks at the Y
JULY 4

Tyler

Freedom Fighter 5K/Bergfield Park
JULY 4

Corsicana

4th of July Freedom Festival
JULY 4

Houston

July 4th Freedom Run/Eleanor Tinsley Park
JULY 6

Sugarland

Sarah McLachlan/Smart Financial Center
JULY 6-7

Tyler

Grease at the Tyler Civic Center
JULY 9

Houston

Bridal Extravaganza Show/G R Brown Convention Center
JULY 13-14

Kirbyville

Kirbyville Country Music Show
JULY 13

The Woodlands

New Kids on the Block with DJ Jazzy Jeff/CW Mitchell Pavilion
JULY 13

Paris

Gene Watson at Love Civic Center
JULY 13-14

Houston

Sara Evans at the Arena Theater
JULY 19

Conroe

Beauty and the Beast at the Crighton Theater
JULY 21

Houston

Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus/NRG Stadium
JULY 21

Corsicana

Gene Watson at the Palace Theater
JULY 26-27

Huntsville

William Lee Martin at the Old Towne Theatre
JULY 27

Houston

Zach Bryan at NRG Stadium
JULY 27

Pedigo's 71st Anniversary!

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Thank you Polk County and the surrounding areas! Pedigo Furniture is a third generation furniture store since 1953. We want to thank everyone who has supported our business and helped us grow since that time. The help and dedicated services our employees provide is very important to us and our success.

~ Jason Pedigo, President | Pedigo Furniture



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OCTOBER 14-15 & NOVEMBER 18-19

2024 SPRING MARKETS

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2024 FALL MARKETS

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AMERICAN RESALE
BARDS LLC
BARRY COATS JEWELERS
CHAMPAGNE CAKERY
CONSIGNORS CENTRAL
DOWNTOWN TREASURES
FITZ X ANNIE
GOBEL WEST
GOKEY'S OLD TOWN EMPORIUM
GOODEYE VINTAGE & COSTUME
GOOD GOLLY MISS MOLLY'S
HAPPY CAMPER BAKERY & GIFT SHOP
HOME GROWN
JUNK IN THE TRUNK
KENZI'S KLOSET
LIQUIDATION STATION
LIVINGSTON FEED & FARM SUPPLY
LIVINGSTON TRADE DAYS
MADONNA'S RESALE & FLEA MARKET
MAINSTREET MERCHANDISE
MARSHA'S MAIN STREET BAKERY
MICHE'S MERCANTILE
PETALZ BY ANNIE
PINK BLUSH BOUTIQUE
POTS, PANS & MORE
RAINDANCE DESIGNS
RESTORE
RICHARDSON AG & OUTDOORS
RUBY CATTLE COMPANY MARKET
RUDY'S HONEY
SEW FANCY
SHERYL'S FLOWERS AND GIFTS
THRIFTY CHIC RESALE STORE
VINTAGE ROSE 190
YAYA'S COLLECTIBLES

DINE

AARON'S TACO SHOP
ALMA'S COURTHOUSE WHISTLESTOP CAFE
BLUE DUCK KITCHEN & BAR
THE BULL SHACK COFFEE & SMOOTHIES
EL BURRITO MEXICAN RESTAURANT
EL TAQUITO MEXICAN RESTAURANT
FLORIDA'S KITCHEN
HITCH-N-POST BAR-B-Q & MORE
INDULGE KITCHEN & LOUNGE
KATIE'S CAFE & BAKERY
MYLI'S SWEET ICE
SHRIMP BOAT MANNY'S

STAY

BLUE SKY LAKE LIVINGSTON RV PARK & CABINS
WOODSY HOLLOW CAMPGROUND
THE YELLOW ROSE CABIN BED & BREAKFAST
AMERICAS BEST VALUE INN & SUITES
HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS HOTEL SUITES
LA QUINTA BY WYNDHAM
MOTEL 6

PLAY

CITY PARKS & RECREATION
ACROSS THE TRACKS
DOUBLE CREEK FARM
HERITAGE PARK
LIVINGSTON MAIN STREET
LIVINGSTON PIECEMAKERS QUILT GUILD
LIVINGSTON POLK COUNTY CHAMBER
POLK COUNTY COMMERCE CENTER
POLK COUNTY MEMORIAL MUSEUM
TEMPE CREEK VINEYARD & FARMS
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2. Not available with lease and some other offers. Take new retail delivery by 4/30/24. ©2024 General Motors. All rights reserved. Cadillac®