

# INSIDE



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Games of Texas Returns

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## From the President/CEO

Dear **INSITE** Readers,

With summer in full swing, kids are all about staying busy and many have moved outdoors. Our staff is more anxious about getting away from the office and thinking about summer vacations. I am always grateful this time of year that I have an air-controlled work environment.

We have been playing a lot of pool basketball at home lately and the house rules continue to change. In the beginning there was a no splashing rule and you couldn't foul similar to court basketball. We have progressed to hockey rules where it is ok to jump on your guy and hold them underwater as a defensive move. Calling a foul will not get you the ball — only insults and name calling. I get in there and play with them, but sore does not begin to describe my body afterwards. Debbie won't watch us play because we yell too much, but it's a great way to stay cool during the Texas summer heat while bonding with my boys.

Our house is full of kids most of the time. I have three groups of extra kids: Cooper, my Baylor senior, brings his hungry, broke friends over to use our media room and eat whatever Deb cooks them; Case, our Baylor freshman, still hangs with his high school friends and plays pool basketball every day; Carter, my 11-year-old, is the one on the computer and electronics all day. It keeps us busy and entertained all summer long.

No matter what your summer plans are, we've got great stories this month about ways to stay cool — outdoor living spaces, hobby sheds — and safe — vaccines, safety tips, and more!

On a serious note, I hope we all take some time this summer to reach out to at least one person and help make their lives better in some way. Happy Summer! — **David Anderton**

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# FOOD ALLERGIES

## Symptoms and Types

By MARY LEIGH MEYER, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER



It can be hard to recognize if you have a food allergy. Roughly 5.6 million children and 26.4 million adults in the United States have a food allergy. A food allergy is an abnormal response to a food triggered by your body's immune system. These responses, or allergic reactions, can potentially be life-threatening. The Food Allergy Research and Education notes 170 foods have been reported to cause allergic reactions. However, only eight types of food account for 90 percent of all food allergy reactions. Susan Andrew, MD, allergist-immunologist, clinical assistant professor at the Texas A&M University college of medicine, explains how you can recognize if you have a food allergy.

### Symptoms of a food allergy

"Although some allergies can lead to itchy skin or rash, other allergies can cause severe reactions such as swollen throat or anaphylaxis," Andrew says. "Anaphylaxis is a severe response that affects blood pressure and breathing and can even lead to death."

Symptoms of a food allergy manifest in the skin, gastrointestinal tract, cardiovascular system, and respiratory tract. Common symptoms of a food allergy include:

- Vomiting and/or stomach cramps
- Hives or a raised, itchy red rash

- Wheezing
- Trouble swallowing and swelling of the tongue
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Anaphylaxis

Just because an initial allergic reaction to a food allergy was mild, the second reaction to the food allergy can still be severe.

### How long do food allergy symptoms last?

Most food allergy related symptoms often start within minutes of ingestion, but some first symptoms can occur within two hours. Sometimes food allergy symptoms come in a second wave, which is called a biphasic reaction. The second wave of allergy symptoms can occur four to six hours after the ingestion of the allergen, so people, especially young children, need to be kept under close observation until then.

### Milk allergy: The difference between a milk allergy and lactose intolerance

A milk allergy is when the immune system does not recognize dairy and attacks it by releasing histamines. Someone with a milk allergy can develop severe symptoms, such as breathing complications or an uneven heartbeat.

"A milk allergy is not to be confused with lactose intolerance," Andrew says. When someone is lactose intolerant,

lactose — a type of sugar found in dairy products — moves through the large intestine without being properly digested. It can lead to uncomfortable symptoms such as gas, bloating, or indigestion. "When someone is allergic to milk and dairy products, the symptoms affect more than the digestive tract."

### Tree nut allergy: Which nuts are tree nuts?

Common tree nuts are walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, cashews, pistachios, and Brazil nuts. FARE suggests tree nut allergies tend to be lifelong. Only nine percent of children with a tree nut allergy will outgrow it.

Similarly, younger siblings of children who are allergic to tree nuts are at higher risk of developing the same allergy. Furthermore, 25 to 40 percent of individuals with a tree nut allergy are also allergic to peanuts.

### Peanut allergy: Peanut allergies on the rise

Although peanuts may sound like they are a tree nut, they are actually grown underground and are a legume. Peanut allergies are common childhood allergy that can linger into adulthood. However, studies show about 20 percent of children will grow out of their peanut allergy.

"Peanuts often come into contact with tree nuts during manufacturing and





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serving processes,” Andrew explains. “For this reason, some health care providers may tell their patients with allergies to avoid both peanuts and tree nuts.”

**Soy allergy: Soybean allergy is very common, especially in babies and children**

Often people hear soy allergy and think they can avoid it by skipping soy sauce and tofu. However, soy may be found in many unexpected places like mayonnaise, Worcestershire sauce, and vegetable broths.

“If you are eating at a restaurant, tell your waiter about your soybean allergy to make sure that the chef does not cross-contaminate while preparing your meal,” Andrew says. Soy is a common ingredient in Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese food, so cross-contamination is very likely at those restaurants.

**Fish allergy: A fish allergy is not the same as a shellfish allergy**

Although most food allergies develop early, fish is one of the few that often develops in adulthood. FARE reports about 40 percent of people with a fish allergy experience their first allergic reaction as an adult.

More than half of people who are allergic to one type of fish are also allergic to other fish. The most common fish that people with a fish allergy cannot eat are salmon, tuna, and halibut.

**Shellfish allergy: A shellfish allergy is not an iodine allergy**

If you are allergic to shellfish, then you are not necessarily allergic to fish or iodine. However, in many circumstances, cross-contamination between fish and

shellfish is likely, so take extra precaution when preparing or ordering fish.

People with a shellfish allergy should avoid crustaceans like shrimp, lobster, and crab. Many people who have a shellfish allergy can tolerate mollusks like scallops, oysters, clams, and mussels.

**Wheat allergy: A wheat allergy is different than celiac disease**

A wheat allergy is different from celiac disease, which is an immune reaction to eating gluten — a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye. While a wheat allergy includes an allergic reaction to gluten, other grains like barley, rye, and oats may be safe to eat. A majority of children who have a wheat allergy will outgrow it, whereas celiac disease will last throughout someone’s life.

A wheat allergy will cause your body to negatively react to the allergen. Celiac disease will cause your body to attack its own villi — components of the small intestine that are responsible for absorbing nutrients. It is important to get an accurate diagnosis of your condition, and a candid talk with your health care provider can get you on the right track.

**Egg allergy: Someone with an egg allergy can get a flu shot**

The American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology estimates as many as 2 percent of children are allergic to eggs. They also estimate as many as 70 percent of children with an egg allergy outgrow the condition by age 16. “Egg is a common ingredient in many foods, so people with an egg allergy must always remain

vigilant and carefully read food labels,” Andrew says.


In the past, the flu vaccine contained a small amount of egg protein. Now, the flu vaccine contains no egg, so individuals with an egg allergy can and should get the vaccination.

**Food allergy tests**

If you think you have a food allergy, speak with your health care provider. You may have only had a minor reaction the first time, but the reaction could be severe the next time. Avoid the suspected food and start a food diary until your appointment. Write down everything you eat as well as any symptoms you have and how long the symptoms last.

Your health care provider may suggest an allergy test. “Allergists or immunologists usually test allergies by a skin or blood test,” Andrew says. “Skin tests are more popular, because they give almost immediate results. However, if a patient is taking a medication that may interfere with results or has a severe skin condition like eczema, the blood test may be recommended.”

A skin allergy test consists of many small pricks of needles that barely penetrate the skin. Each needle has a different allergen on the tips. If your body reacts to one prick, then that identifies you are allergic to that specific allergen.

“If you think you have an allergy, speak to a health care provider. Food allergies can be dangerous if you are taken by surprise,” Andrew says. “If you have severe reactions, have a contingency plan like an epinephrine auto-injector ready in case you accidentally expose yourself.” 



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# THE MEASLES ARE BACK

## Vaccines Stop the Train of Transmission

By PAIGE BRAZIL



In recent years, vaccinations have evolved into a loaded subject packing tons of heat. There are people on both ends of the spectrum; some believe wholeheartedly that vaccines are great and preventative, while others do not support their effects for a variety of reasons. The measles, mumps, and rubella shot — more commonly referred to as the MMR vaccine — is declining throughout the U.S. despite several benefits. The disease has evolved over time.

Seth J. Sullivan, M.D., M.P.H. at Baylor Scott & White Health, explains that, by definition, a vaccine is a form of biological preparation created to build acquired immunity to a certain disease. Vaccines are typically comprised of an agent that closely resembles a microorganism that can cause disease. A vaccine is made from weakened or killed parts of the microorganism, whether it be part of the microbe, toxins, or surface proteins.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, in 1954, John F. Enders and Thomas C. Peebles collected blood samples from several ill students during a measles outbreak in Boston, Massachusetts. The two succeeded in isolating measles in David Edmonston's blood. From there, the two transformed their Edmonston-B strain of measles virus into a vaccine and licensed it in the United States. In 1968, an improved measles vaccine,

developed by Maurice Hilleman, began to be distributed. This vaccine, called the Edmonston-Enders strain, has been the only measles vaccine used in the U.S. since 1968, according to the CDC website.


"Before and during the 1950s, measles was everywhere; it was so contagious," says Sullivan. "Rash, fever, and neurologic complications could still happen even years after a person beat the disease. However, vaccination campaigns proved very effective, and we began to see fewer outbreaks." An outbreak means a disease is passed from person to person through a chain of transmission. An infected person must come into contact with an unvaccinated person and spread the disease, Sullivan explains. The measles case that came through College Station earlier this year, linked to Chuy's, was not an outbreak because the disease was not transmitted, says Sullivan.

Sullivan explains how in the early 2000s, the continental U.S. was declared measles-free. The only cases seen in the U.S. during this time were those imported from travelers coming from other regions of the world. However, over the years, the enthusiasm for the MMR vaccine has declined, and because of that, the U.S. no longer has a high rate of MMR vaccinations compared to the past. Because of the dropped rates, when travelers come to our country, the disease is easily spread through a chain of transmission.

Some believe vaccines are unhealthy and cause certain developmental disorders, such as autism. However, vaccines have to be licensed and tested for safety and efficacy before they are distributed, says Sullivan. A licensed physician cannot administer a vaccine until it has been proven safe and effective. The MMR vaccine has been through and passed these tests, which debunks the theory that the MMR vaccine is a risk factor and contributor to autism.

"When people were trying to figure out autism and what causes it, MMR was an impediment," says Sullivan. "Another challenge is some religious or spiritual beliefs that vaccinations go against. We've even seen measles cases in Amish communities that do not embrace technology."

Sullivan explains how the herd immunity phenomenon is an imperative factor in disease resistance and eradication. The idea of herd immunity is that if enough of the population is vaccinated, then a disease cannot take root and establish a transmissible circle. Due to lower vaccination levels, we have started to lose our herd immunity.

"This year has seen the most measles cases on record with more than 800 cases in the U.S. alone," Sullivan says. "This information needs to be a call to all of us and the importance of vaccination. They are so effective that we forgot about measles and now we are remembering." 





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# HEALTH FOR ALL

## A Band-Aid for the Current Situation

Stories and Photos by **ELIZABETH LIU**



Since 1987, every patient who has walked through the doors of Health for All has had a unique situation. Most have had a series of unfortunate events — either throughout their life or in recent times — but all have a story to tell, says Amanda Schrader, community relations specialist for Health for All. Her job has put those less fortunate in the forefront of her mind, and she says that some parts of her job keep her awake at night.

“When you genuinely want to help someone, but you know your resources only go so far, it’s hard, and it weighs on you,” says Schrader. “I lay in bed and think about this patient who just lost their spouse, or how they’re going to make ends meet, or even get here because they have no money for gas.”

Healthcare in America is expensive. For uninsured and low-income families, otherwise easily treatable illnesses can lead to death. Health for All’s mission is to provide primary care to those patients in hopes of giving them a healthier, productive life.

A small clerical staff and a rotating list of 200-plus volunteer medical professionals make the day-to-day activity of the free clinic possible. As the only full-time, free medical clinic in Brazos County, an increasing number of patients are seen annually. Through the generosity of community donors and fundraising events, this nonprofit organization provides free healthcare to the seven-county Brazos Valley region. Eligible clients must be low-income, uninsured, and ineligible for government assistance, says Elizabeth Dickey, executive director for Health for All.

Behind the welcome desk and down the hall is the heart of the operation. Elizabeth Dickey must decide how to best serve the community with the clinic’s limited resources. The current breadth of services offered includes primary care, and preventive screening, according to the Health for All patient handbook. They also provide ongoing care for chronic conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, and COPD.

Health for All functions because doctors, nurse practitioners, and other medical providers donate their time. There are 49 nurses and doctors who come in when they can, but the biggest struggle for the clinic remains getting more medical providers to volunteer, says Elizabeth Dickey.

“We tell them about our clinic and our mission in direct interviews to get them to come, or they get referred to help,” says Elizabeth Dickey.

There always seems to be a greater need than resources allow, but with the heartbreaks there is also hope. Weekly huddle meetings allow the staff to share uplifting stories. Elizabeth Dickey recalls a student in Bryan ISD who was doing exceptionally well until a sudden plummet in grades and attendance. A social worker learned the girl had started skipping classes to take care of her younger siblings. She was also running her mom’s cleaning business because her mother had gotten too sick.

“It turns out, her mom had diabetes but had been undiagnosed,” shares Elizabeth



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Dickey. “We got her mom medication and treatment. Now she’s back in school and planning to attend medical school.”

The clinic helps the community in other ways besides providing medical treatment. According to Health for All’s website, up to \$6 million in taxes are saved in Brazos County because the clinic provides uninsured and low-income families primary care instead of those patients going to local emergency rooms for treatment.

Nursing students, pharmacy students, public health students, and business students also come to the clinic to learn parts of their skillset, says Dr. Nancy Dickey, medical director for Health for All. She is also the executive director of the Rural and Community Health Institute and president emeritus of Texas A&M Health Science Center.

“[Health for All] is also a remarkable learning laboratory,” says Dr. Dickey. “It makes a positive partnership between the school, the clinic, and the community.”

The clinic offers a place for human interaction since patients sometimes come in for anxiety or depression. Many of the people don’t have anyone else outside the clinic, says Schrader. One man in particular was released from prison and was trying to make things right; he came and talked to her for a long time, says Schrader.

“They linger in the clinic a little longer because they need those interactions,” says Schrader. “I feel like those are the most impactful for me; whenever I have time I try to do that.”

A common topic among board members and staff is the need for affordable healthcare. Texas has the highest rate of uninsured, with one in three people in Brazos Valley uninsured, according to Health for All’s website. Elizabeth Dickey explained the cycle of being uninsured.

“Those who don’t have insurance are more likely to ignore a health problem and hope it goes away,” says Elizabeth Dickey. When this happens, the problem gets to a point where it is an emergency and the hospital is mandated to provide care regardless of the patient’s ability to pay. Insurance premiums go up, employers can’t afford insurance or health benefits, and the whole cycle starts over, she explains.

There is a common misconception about who the clinic serves, says Bill McGuire, chairman of the board. Many people think the majority of the patients are Hispanic or black, but that is not the case. McGuire has been in and out of the clinic countless times, and pointed out that there are people of all ethnicities and ages. The clinic serves individuals whose household income is less than or equal to 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, according to the Health for All patient handbook.

The Health for All team expects an increase in people needing their services. McGuire hints at a possible expansion in the works. McGuire, who has background in banking, has come up with other ways to expand the revenue.

“The challenge is finding new ways to make money, because we don’t want to turn people away for not having enough resources,” says McGuire.

Despite the problems caused by the Texas Legislature not expanding Medicare and Medicaid with federal funds, says Elizabeth Dickey, the clinic will continue to help those who are uninsured. The community takes care of its own, she says. Some members of the community are not able to see how impactful these services are for low-income families, but focus on the monetary value of clinic services, says Elizabeth Dickey.

“Some are blessed enough to afford healthcare, but as a community we have to be grateful and not resent a service,” says Elizabeth Dickey. “So many of the patients are so grateful, and it causes a ripple effect of good.” *i*





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# KEEP SUMMER FUN

## Summer Safety Checklist

By DR. DANIEL RANSOM, PEDIATRICIAN, BAYLOR SCOTT & WHITE



Summer is marked by hours of sunshine and longer days full of playing in the pool or backyard. Studies show that it's great for kids' health and development to spend time outside. However, it is important to keep in mind the following tips for keeping your child safe.

### Summer Sun Safety

You've probably heard sunscreen is a must for keeping your child's skin safe from the sun's damaging rays, but there are several other ways to protect them.

Apply sunscreen generously at least 30 minutes before going outside with SPF 30 or higher, reapplying every two hours.

Wear clothing with SPF built-in. Invest in some wide-brimmed hats, and try to avoid direct sun from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

Shop for sunglasses your kids love, so they'll be excited to wear them. Look for a pair that block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays.

Remember that just because you can't see the sun, doesn't mean the rays aren't getting through. Rays reflect off the sand and water at the beach or pool.

### Protection from Bugs

Bugs are on the uptick around the warm summer months. Many of them carry harmful diseases and viruses that have serious side effects.

Apply bug spray. Keep your kids safe from ticks and mosquitoes which can carry things like Lyme disease and the West Nile virus. Check to be sure your repellents are made with DEET and handle it with caution, avoiding contact with kids' hands or face to prevent ingestion. If you're uncertain or nervous about which one to choose, talk to your pediatrician.

Dress your kids in long pants and long sleeve shirts, especially if you'll be outside at dusk when more bugs are around.

Don't leave stagnant pools of water in your yard. These pools serve as the perfect breeding ground for mosquitoes.

### Dehydration Prevention

It's important to remember to encourage your kids to take frequent water breaks. Kids should drink water before they go outside to play and every time they take a break, about every 15 to 20 minutes. If it's especially hot or humid, you can bring a spray bottle to periodically spray kids.

### Add a Helmet

Any time your kid is riding something with wheels, remember to strap on a helmet to reduce head injury from crashes. Set a good example by wearing your helmet when bike riding.

### Keep their Food Safe

Bacteria grow best in warm and humid weather, so it's no surprise they grow more during the summer months. Eating meals outside is a fun way to change up your routine during the summer, but be sure to take the following precautions:

- Always wash your hands before preparing food.
- Don't cross-contaminate raw meats by letting them come in contact with other food.
- Check the temperature, and don't leave food unrefrigerated for more than one to two hours.

### Vigilance to Prevent Drowning

According to the CDC, there are around 10 drownings every day, and one in five are

children ages 14 and under. In the summer months, drownings increase as much as 90 percent. If you own a swimming pool, it's critical you put safety measures in place to protect your kids.

- Put a fence and self-closing gate around your pool with locks and alarms.
- Never leave kids alone or unsupervised by an adult.
- Remember drownings can be silent.
- Learn CPR — it could make a difference between life and death.
- Don't use flotation devices — they can give a false sense of security.
- Don't ever assume someone else will be watching and don't allow distractions like phones.

### Dodging Trampoline Danger

Tens of thousands of visits to the ER each year are trampoline-related injuries. Never let more than one child use the trampoline at a time, and don't allow kids younger than 6 to play on a full-sized trampoline.

### Be Careful when Working in the Yard

Don't allow children to ride on lawn mowers or play in the vicinity of lawn equipment. Children under age 12 shouldn't be allowed to use push mowers and children under 16 shouldn't be allowed to operate ride-on lawn mowers.

### Safeguard Playgrounds

If you have a playground, be sure the ground underneath it is soft enough to cushion a fall and absorb some of the impact. It's recommended by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission that you use at least 9 inches of mulch or wood chips. *i*



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# TOP FIVE

## Injuries and Illnesses of the Summer

By **TIM SCHNETTLER, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER**



**S**ummer is here, and with it comes an increase in outdoor activities. From cookouts to pool parties, Americans take advantage of warmer weather and longer days to relax and enjoy time with family and friends.

While families flock outdoors for fun, there is also a downside — injuries and visits to urgent care centers and emergency rooms tend to increase with the rising temperatures.

### **Heat-related illness**

One of the most common summertime illnesses is dehydration, which occurs when the body does not have enough water. It is also a condition that comes on quicker than most people think. When temperatures rise, the body loses more water, as individuals sweat more in an effort to stay cool. The easiest way to combat dehydration is to increase the amount of water you drink when spending time in the sun, especially when you are active.

### **Swimming injuries/drowning**

It's hot and steamy in the summer. What better way to combat that than by a nice refreshing dip in the pool or a lake? While

it may be the ideal summertime refresher, water-related injuries see a substantial increase during the summer months. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, drowning is the second-most common cause of death by unintentional injury, and children are more likely to drown in a swimming pool than anywhere else. Additionally, diving injuries are one of the leading causes of spinal cord injuries.

### **Sunburns**

We've all had a sunburn at one time or another. While it more than likely did not require a visit to the emergency room, many sunburns do. In 2013, there were nearly 34,000 emergency room visits in the United States related to serious sunburn, costing an estimated \$11.2 million, according to reports in *The American Medical Association's journal, Dermatology*. When spending time in the sun, sunscreen is your best defense, and you should choose one with an SPF of 30 or higher.

### **Bicycling related injuries**

While often relaxing and fun, summertime family bike rides can lead to severe

injuries and trips to the emergency room. The most common are injuries to extremities — arm and wrist fractures — as well as head injuries. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 26,000 bicycle-related injuries involve children and adolescents with traumatic brain injuries that are treated in emergency departments. To help prevent head trauma, it is recommended that individuals wear a properly fitted helmet that is U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission certified.

### **Bug bites**

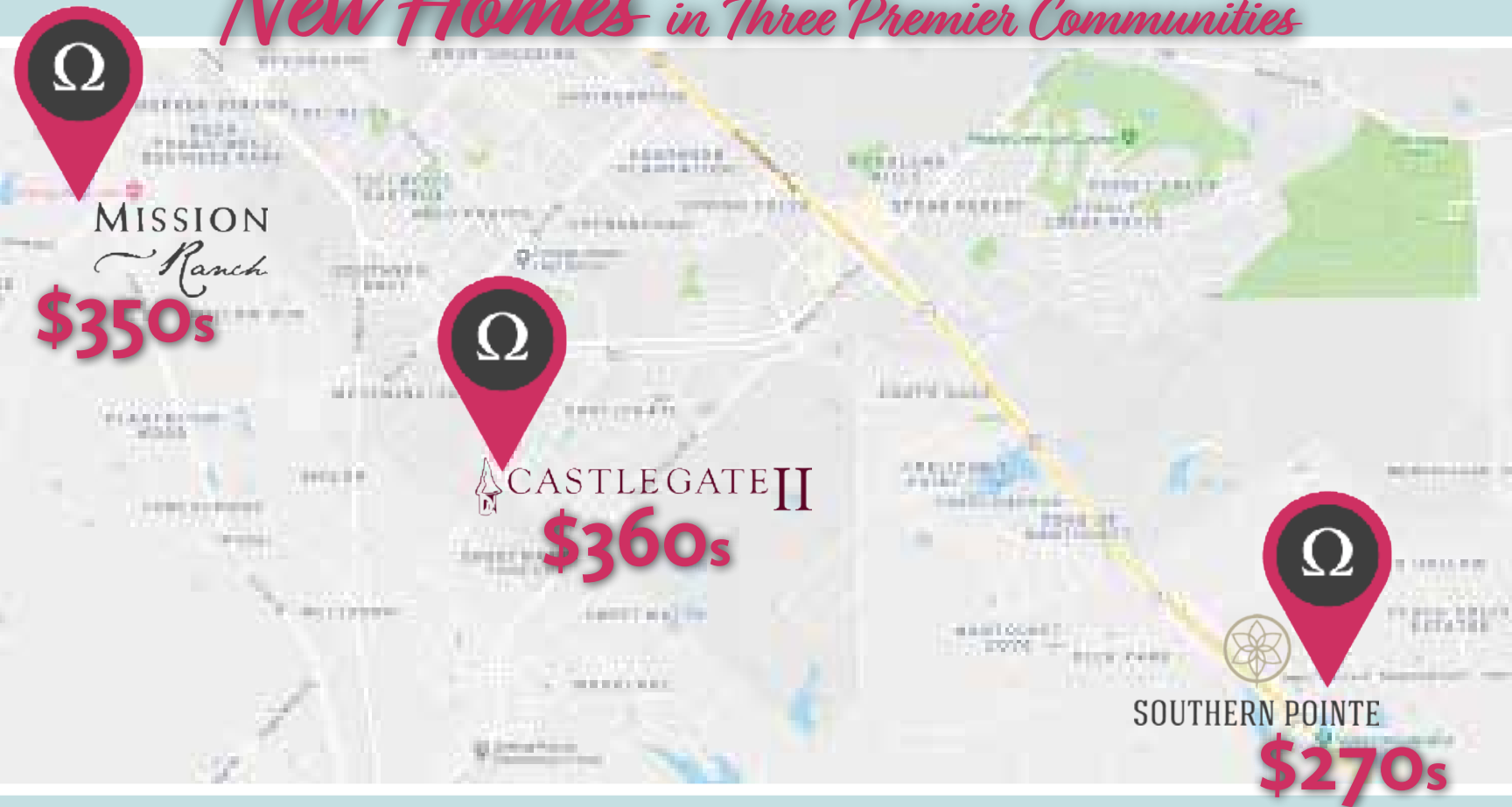
As much as we love summer, bugs love it just as much. Fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes pose the biggest threat when it comes to those summertime bites. Mosquitoes can carry West Nile virus as well as other diseases, while ticks can spread Lyme disease. The best way to combat insect bites is by using repellents that contain 20 to 30 percent DEET, which helps repel insects. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends repellents with no more than 30 percent DEET on children. *i*





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# INVOLVEMENT FOR ALL

## Meeting the Needs of Everyone in the Community

By HANNAH WALLS



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE BEE COMMUNITY

The hum of the paper shredder permeates throughout the room on a Thursday morning, fueled by the constant stream of papers fed in carefully by Cody Lewis.

"Go Cody, go!" he shouts after successfully loading each piece into the slot, grinning with all his might. His wheelchair is parked up close to the shredder, and his assortment of toy cows sits in a neat row on the table beside him.

Around him, other artisans carefully pour soap into decorative molds and create pieces of artwork. The smell of lavender drifts throughout the room from the soap station. Outside the door, a sign reads "The BEE Community," surrounded by words like "belonging" and "meaningful work." Initiatives like the BEE Community in College Station have altered the trajectory of Cody's life.

Cody Lewis is 23 years old and has Dravet syndrome, a severe form of epilepsy that has caused him to experience daily seizures since he was 6 months old.

"Basically he is 23, but he has a 2- to 3-year-old mental level," says Niki Lewis, Cody's mom. But he can talk and respond to basic things, as well as tell you what

he wants, she adds with a laugh. He has a sweet, simple personality and enjoys music, trains, and cows.

In addition to these things, Cody also has had the opportunity to participate in different organizations in the Bryan College Station community that exist to empower children and adults with special needs. Early on it was Project Sunshine, and today it is the BEE Community.

Cody goes to the BEE Community three days a week.

"He loves it," says Mallory Seidel, one of Cody's 13 caregivers. She joins him at the BEE Community every Tuesday and Thursday.

Cody's mom is grateful for the BEE Community and the benefits it provides for Cody. "It's really a great fit because Cody goes consistently," says Niki Lewis. "He gets to know the people, they know him, he has friendship relationships, he's actually doing something purposeful."

These are the effects Taylor Ellerbrock, founder and director of programs with the BEE Community, says she desired for the group to have upon its creation.

"Here in the Brazos Valley, about 1,300, at a very conservative number, of adults with intellectual and

developmental disabilities are also unemployed, and over 13,000 individuals over the age of 5 have been diagnosed with a disability," says Ellerbrock.

For the majority of adults with special needs in the United States, an experience like Cody's is not common. "Up to 80 percent of individuals with [intellectual and development disabilities] are unemployed nationwide," says Ellerbrock.

Additionally, 82 percent of caregivers of a family member with a disability worry that their family member will not have enough friends or social activities, according to the FINDS Community Data Report survey fielded by The Arc.

In her time as a special education teacher, Ellerbrock found that life after high school for many of her students often looked like a lot of time spent at home on the couch.

The Bryan College Station community contains numerous resources for children and adults with special needs and their families. One of these resources for adults lies with the Bridges Program, housed at College View High School.

"The Bridges Program is an 18+ program for young adults post-secondary,"





BRAZOS VALLEY MAGAZINE

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“We are so much more alike than different, and I think people have a really hard time seeing that. All they see is the different.”

— Sydney Barnhart

individual level, personalizing who they are partnered with and working alongside at different schools, Glass says.

“They not only take our students and train them, but they also give them opportunities for employment after they graduate,” says Glass. “We currently have three PATHS students employed there as paraprofessionals or substitutes.”

For children and adults with Down syndrome, there is the Down Syndrome Association of Brazos Valley.

The DSABV partners with CHI St. Joseph to provide free speech therapy classes for toddlers and elementary-aged children with Down syndrome, says Sydney Barnhart, program coordinator for the DSABV. They also provide courses for young adults about dating and communicating using technology, as well as host a variety of social events for their members.

Additionally, there is Texas A&M’s Project Sunshine chapter. It offers a holistic approach to serving families of children with special needs, says Aaron Wilson, treasurer and member of the officer board for Project Sunshine.

Not only do they partner with children who have special needs, but they also offer outreach and respite for parents as well as friendship and encouragement for the neurotypical siblings of their buddies, says Wilson. They provide childcare for parents who are in support groups as well as offer activities for the children like their annual Santa’s Wonderland trip.

Through different events and outreach, volunteers get to know the children on a personal level and provide emotional and social support while also having a ton of fun, says Wilson. “It really is an opportunity for them to step into a place of empowerment where, regardless of what society may call a disability, we are able to circumvent that and accommodate to make anything happen,” he says.

Many leaders in these groups and members of the community says there is still work to be done on the front of inclusion. “At the end of the day, it’s about your mindset,” says Carly Blustein Gilson, Ph.D., an assistant professor of special education in the department of educational psychology at Texas A&M.

Gilson says she aims to impress upon on her students that inclusion for people with special needs is not a place or a service, but rather a mindset and a lifestyle. It should not be a concept limited to just special education teachers in the process of their education at Texas A&M, she adds. “It should be something that we’re all thinking about,” says Gilson.

“We are so much more alike than different, and I think people have a really hard time seeing that,” says Barnhart. “All they see is the different.” *i*

says Bridges teacher Nikki Graff. “So they have completed their high school curriculum, and they are continuing their education to work on independent living and vocational skills.”

Students in the program are trained in skills that promote independence in daily life, such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, and using public transportation, says Graff.

The Bridges Program has access to different resources for learning that are extremely beneficial for students, says Graff. A variety of local businesses also partner with the Bridges Program and provide hands-on professional experience to students.

Involvement in the community is mutually beneficial for students as well as members of the community, Graff adds. Her students teach kindness while simultaneously learning about how to live socially and independently.

There is also the PATHS Certificate Program, a year-long program with three available tracks for adults interested in different areas of human services. It is offered through the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University.

“The end goal of our program, as the end goal should be for any training program, is employment,” says PATHS Program Director Tracy Glass.

The PATHS Program has had a similar positive experience with the B/CS community.

“Bryan ISD has been just instrumental in giving our students the hands-on experience that they need,” says Glass. The district has worked hard to set each student up for success on an



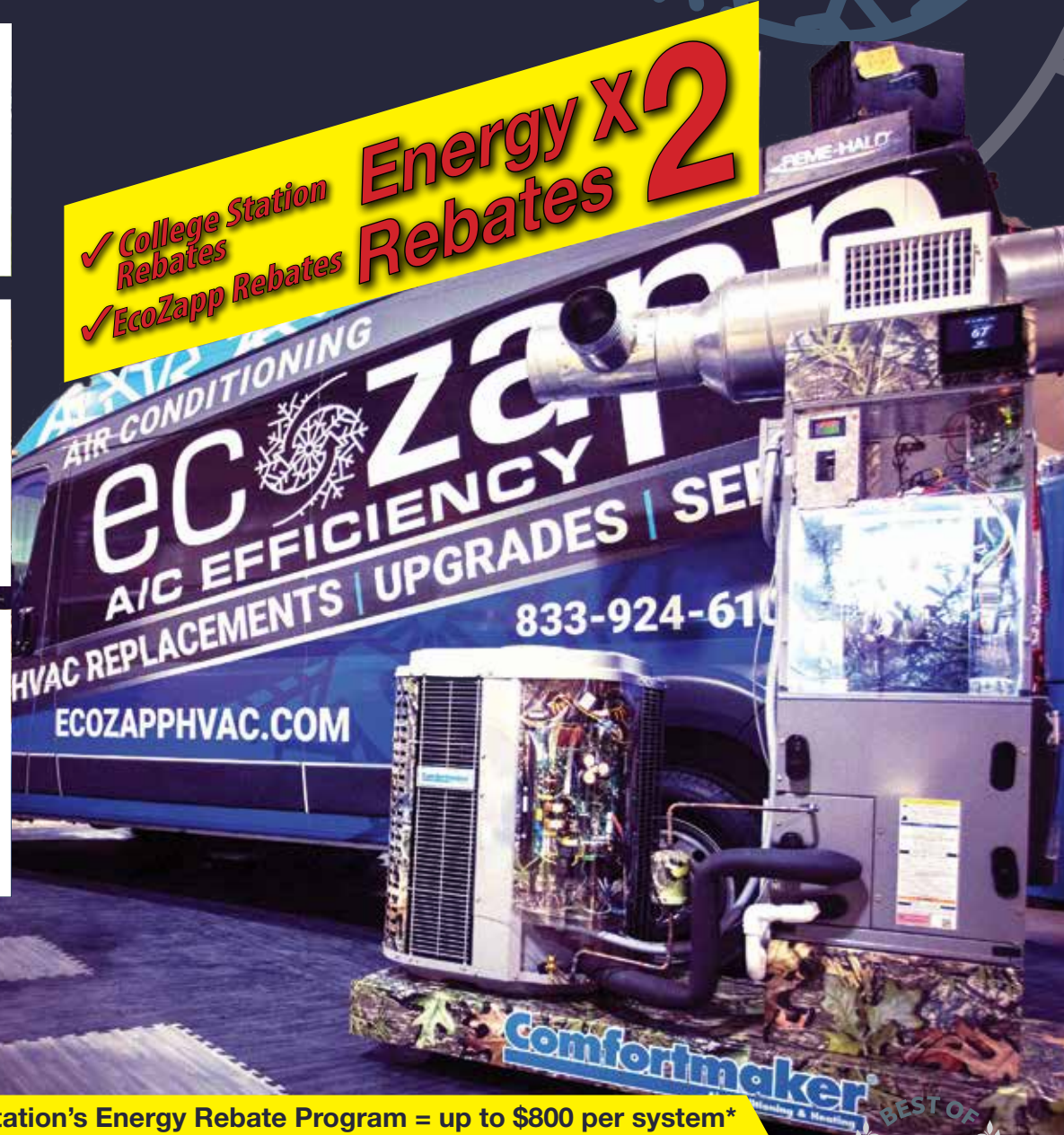
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# AN ALL-INCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE

## Star Cinema Grill Offers Open-Caption Films

By PAIGE BRAZIL



We are all familiar with the ambiance surrounding movie theaters — the smell of savory, buttered popcorn, the hallways lined with endless movie posters, the highly-anticipated previews, and the slight squeak of the leather seats. Now, imagine if you were not able to fully enjoy the movie-going experience due to degenerative hearing loss. This was the case for a local Bryan College Station resident until his wife contacted the Star Cinema Grill corporate offices asking if it would be possible to show movies for those with hearing loss.

Lindsay Steichen, manager at Star Cinema Grill, fielded the call from the corporate office and kept her customers updated on their request.

"I'd never seen a theater display open captions before, so I wasn't sure if it was possible," says Steichen. "Our corporate offices said we had the capability to do such a thing, so we immediately began planning and updating the woman and her husband on our progress. She told me she and her husband have always loved going to the movies together, but it has become a challenge in recent years with his hearing loss."

Much like captioning on your television at home, the open captions on the movie

screen appear toward the bottom. "We have very large screens so the captions are not intrusive to other viewers," Steichen says. As a character in a movie speaks or performs an action, the dialogue is presented in white lettering at the bottom of the screen, clearly visible, but not distracting or taking away from the scene at play.

"The first movie we showed with the open captions was the new remake of Stephen King's *Pet Sematary* because it is her husband's favorite classic horror film and it was released around the time of his birthday," Steichen says. "We were able to have captions on that movie and the new Avenger's movie. We show one to two movies per month with the open captioning and we try to pick the most popular releases to show."

To find out which moves are shown with open captions, visit [starcinemagrill.net](http://starcinemagrill.net) or call the theater directly at (979) 431-3800.


Despite the concept still being relatively new, Star Cinema Grill is working to develop a specific program dedicated to open-caption movies. The theater wants to harbor an all-inclusive environment by making each and every movie-going

experience welcoming and accommodating to all viewers, says Steichen.

"We have a similar program that accommodates to a different kind of sensory environment," says Steichen. "Our program called Bright Stars is for people who are autistic or have some sort of other sensory issue. We turn the lights up a little and the volume down so it's not so overpowering for them. We show movies in this setting every Wednesday and Saturday morning."

Bright Star showings can be found at [starcinemagrill.net](http://starcinemagrill.net). The movie is denoted with a red star and red lettering that reads "Bright Star" at the top of the digital movie poster.

The Bright Stars program is widely popular in the B/CS community, and Star Cinema Grill hopes the open-caption screenings become just as much of a staple.

"We typically fill 25 percent of the theater for two showings with captions," Steichen says. "We hope to grow the program greatly. We want to be able to reach out to the community and provide that service to those who need and want it. Not another theater, to my knowledge, does something like this." 





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# RONIN FULL MOON DINNERS

## Strangers Becoming Friends Over Farm Fresh Food

By TORI PFEIFER



Eating locally is a trend that's quickly swept through the restaurant scene of Bryan College Station, and as a part of that trend, Ronin Farm & Restaurant has started to bring people right to the source of the fresh food served at their restaurant. Every month, Ronin hosts a nine-course Full Moon Dinner in the welcoming, lush green forest at Ronin Farm to showcase the fresh ingredients used in their food and to bring people together in the most unsuspecting way.

Back in 2013 when Ronin was a simple catering company, owners Brian and Amanda Light had 18 people at their first Full Moon Dinner, and since then the event has grown and expanded into an event where strangers become friends and bond over great food and wine.

"Guests show up about an hour before sunset, so the start-times typically change as the seasons do," says Amanda. "About thirty minutes later, everyone is taken on a tour of the farm where they'll see all the animals and the gardens. Our farmer usually comes with us to talk about the farm and answer people's questions."

After the tour, guests sit down at long communal tables — hence, how strangers become friends — and have seven or eight savory dinner courses in the forested area of the farm, Amanda continues. The communal, farm-style seating gives

## Full Moon Dinners connect people through food

everyone a chance to socialize and get comfortable at their table, making the dinner a casual social gathering that's enjoyable for everyone.

"There have been multiple times where people have met for the first time there and then come back together," Amanda says. "There have been a handful of first dates, too. We had a couple that got married at the farm because it's where they'd had their first date, which is very sweet and special."

Choosing the courses usually happens the week of the dinner, and what's being grown at the farm will determine the menu, says Brian. Proteins are usually consistent, but the fresh, seasonal produce and vegetables are constantly changing at the farm.

"Depending on what produce shows up or is at the farm, I write down what's new and interesting, and pick and choose what would work best together," says Brian.

"I've trained myself to use what's available and work with what we've got, and it's been really great for us so far."

As if a moonlit dinner among old friends and new couldn't get any more special, the night concludes with a candlelit walk down a pathway leading to the open sky. Here, the full moon is perfectly seen through the trees in the Ronin Farm courtyard. Coffee, tea, and fresh desserts in the garden wrap up the evening while guests continue to mingle and enjoy themselves in the outdoor setting.

"To be able to share the farm with everyone and connecting people through good food has been the best part," says Brian. Amanda continues, "[the food] is from a genuine source and isn't commercially produced. We're feeding people honest food and that's something we take a lot of pride in. That's what's really important to us and is exactly why we're doing this."

Ronin Full Moon Dinners are held every month, with the usual exception of July, August, and January due to the extreme Texas weather, says Brian and Amanda. The next full moon dinner is the Harvest Moon Dinner on Saturday, Sept. 14, at 6 p.m. For more information on upcoming dinners and events, reservations, and pricing, visit [ronintx.com/full-moon-dinners](http://ronintx.com/full-moon-dinners).



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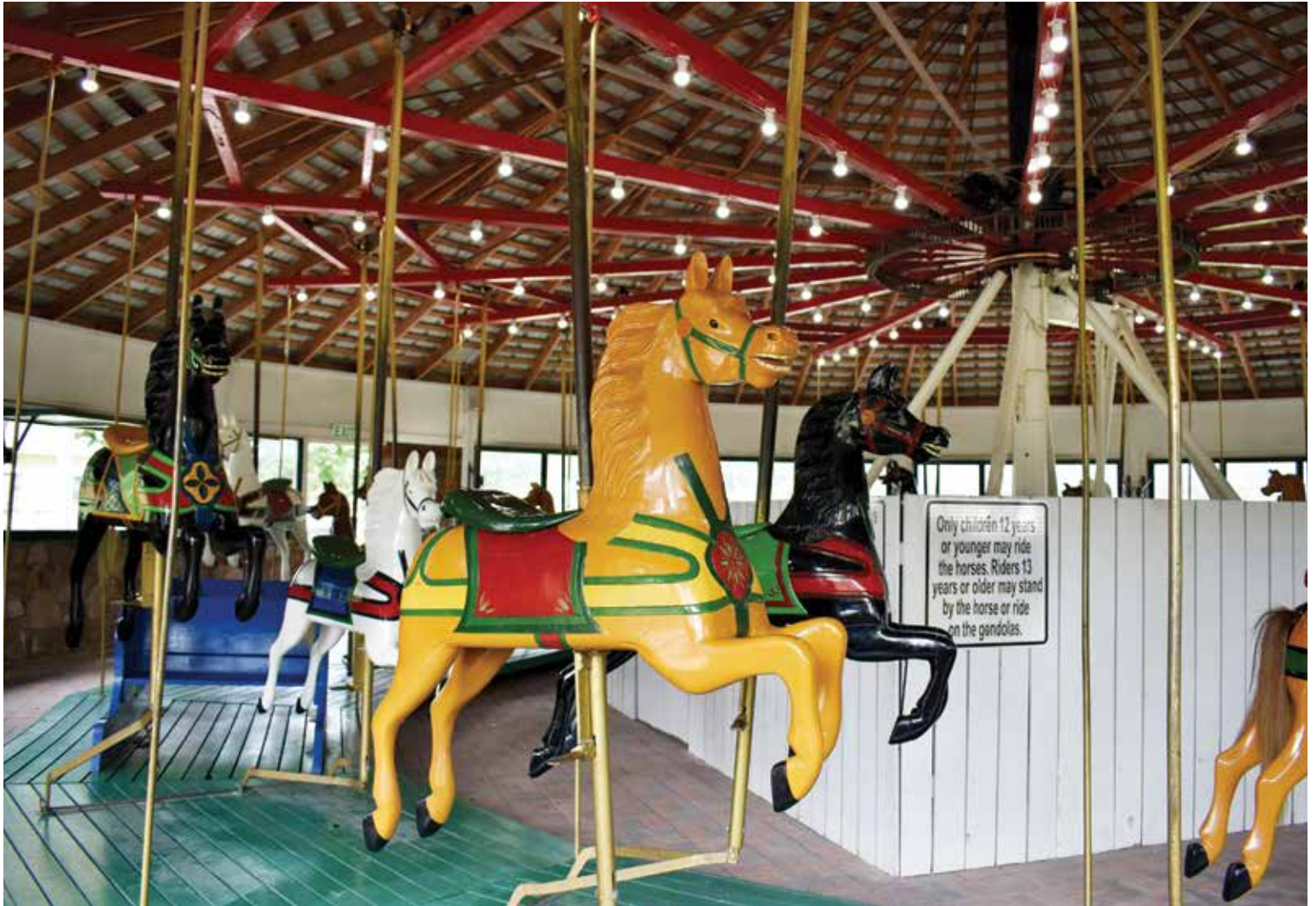




# WHIRLING THROUGH HISTORY

## The Oldest Carousel in Texas

Story and Photos by **RACHEL KNIGHT**



The year is 1930. The Great Depression grips America. A man named Hugh Darden is walking in a pasture adjacent to a railroad just outside Clay, a tiny town between College Station and Brenham. Something peculiar catches his eye. It looks like a little horse. He notices a whole team of 24 hobbyhorses surrounded by mechanical gears. He takes a second look. That's when he realizes he's just discovered a carousel.

This may sound like the beginning of a tall tale, but it's actually the start of countless memories made at the Flying Horses Carousel in Brenham since it was restored and first opened in 1932.

The Flying Horses Carousel in Brenham is the oldest carousel in Texas,

according to the National Carousel Association. Its charm is undeniable as the hand-carved wooden horses jump tirelessly in a circle. Riding this carousel is like floating on air in an antique artform that has been preserved by Washington County citizens for 89 years, according to Crystal Locke, community services specialist for the city of Brenham.

Locke has done extensive research on the Flying Horses Carousel. "After Darden found it, he saw this potential in this carousel and told the Washington County Fair Association about how it could serve the community," Locke shares. "It was purchased for somewhere around \$30."

The carver of the hobbyhorses, Charles W. Dare, and manufacturer of the carousel's

frame, C.W. Parker, make the Flying Horses Carousel a unique piece from the Golden Age of Carousels in America.

"[Charles Dare] began building carousels as early as the late 1860s, and was credited with establishing this country fair style of animal carvings that you see at our Flying Horses Carousel," Locke says.

Doug Baker, retired director of public works/city engineer for the city of Brenham, says the hobbyhorses themselves are worth taking a trip to Brenham to see. "Charles Dare's trademark was the simple little-bitty horses with the big smiles," he explains. "There aren't a whole lot of those around. All the horses are jumpers, which means





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every pony goes up and down as the carousel spins. It's something very special because of its age and uniqueness."

The Flying Horses Carousel was originally believed to have been manufactured by Dare, but during a recent restoration, the city discovered the frame was made by C.W. Parker in Leavenworth Kansas, Locke says. C.W. Parker used a different blueprint from other manufacturers to build his carousels.

"It is unique because it has a floating floor," explains Tammy Jaster, aquatic superintendent for the city of Brenham. "The whole structure is floating. There is not a track or anything underneath the actual floor, which makes it unique. A lot of them have a track or something underneath that helps them move around, but with this one, it all functions with all the gears and stuff on top."

The Flying Horses Carousel has been a focal point in Fireman's Park in Brenham since it was first restored. The Smithsonian came to Brenham and took pictures of the carousel while Baker was still working for the city around 1990. They told him the carousel was worth about \$250,000. With inflation, it's worth about \$500,000 today.

"There's a dilemma with antiques like this," Baker says. "When you have something this valuable, do you put it in a glass case, or do you put the money in it to let the kids have the same experiences we did?"

When you visit Fireman's Park, you might think the city chose to put the Flying Horses Carousel in a glass box, however the sixteen-sided building surrounding the carousel was actually built as a Works Progress Administration project in the Great Depression to protect the community gem, Locke shares.

Riding the Flying Horses Carousel is even more affordable today than it was in 1932. For \$1 you can ride the carousel all day during regular operating hours, which are March through October on Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. and on Sundays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

"I like preserving things," Baker says. "I don't like tearing things down just because it's built differently today. The carousel is the same thing. Those horses were carved by hand by a guy named Dare, who had a tremendous talent for that. It should never be taken for granted. It's part of who we are." *i*

## Flying Facts and Memories

The Flying Horses Carousel has a long-running history in the Brazos Valley. It has been enjoyed by all ages, and continues to make memories year after year. Below, Jaster, Locke, and Baker share several fun facts and memories about the Flying Horses Carousel:

- The Flying Horses Carousel was originally built in 1912.
- It is estimated that about 4,000 carousels graced the U.S. during the Golden Age of the Carousel, which lasted from 1880 to 1930. There are now only five surviving classic wooden carousels in Texas today.
- The second oldest carousel in Texas is located in Giddings, but can only be enjoyed during the Lee County Fair on the third weekend in May and during their annual Fourth of July Celebration.
- There are three styles of carousel animals. The Philadelphia and Coney Island styles are very elaborate. The country fair style is more simple, because it was designed to be easily transported in moving carnivals.
- The Charles W. Dare horses were identified by their running martingale, which is the leather thong that links the bridle to the chest strap.
- The men who moved the carousel to Brenham for its original restoration were F.C. Winklemann, Hans Schleider, and O.H. Fisher.
- When the carousel was repaired in the 1980s, Gail Baker, an artist, and her father, carpenter Jack Sommers, worked together to restore the horses. The horses were painted to reflect the names they had been given; for example, "Tex" had a Texas Flag on his side and "Daisy's" side featured daisies.
- The third time the carousel was restored, the city decided to try and match the original paint designs used by Dare. The original colors and designs are what visitors see on the carousel today.
- Thanks to a large donation from Blue Bell®, the third restoration also included replacing broken parts that could not be repaired. Luckily, original parts could still be purchased from Theel Manufacturing, the company who bought C.W. Parker Manufacturing Co. in the 1940s. The restoration also replaced boards that protected the carousel when it was not in use with bulletproof Lexan; so even when the carousel is not running, park visitors can admire the carousel.
- Dare originally used real horsehair to make the hobbyhorses' tails. Those tails were replaced by unbraided hemp rope during the first restoration of the Flying Horses Carousel. The Brenham Noon Lions Club was running the carousel during one of its subsequent restorations, and decided to replace the rope with real horsehair. With four veterinarians in the Lions Club, they joked that they never had a shortage of horsehair.
- Baker found a wooden horse carved by Charles Dare at the Round Top Antiques Fair while he was still working for the city. The city purchased the horse for \$2,000 so they would have a spare.
- Fireman's Park, the park in which the Flying Horses Carousel resides, is a Lone Star Legacy Park. In addition to seeing, riding, and learning more about the Flying Horses Carousel, visitors can read signage about the park itself.



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Courtesy of **THE VALENCIA GROUP**



Summer is sweeter at Valencia Hotel Group. The acclaimed portfolio of properties, including Cavalry Court and The George in College Station, are rolling out this year's "poptail" program with patio and poolside parties. Each Valencia hotel has put their own special twist on a seasonal menu of treats that combine premium spirits and popsicles.

Bring the party home with these Valencia Hotel Group "poptail" recipes:

### MEXICAN CANDY POPTAIL

*Courtesy of Texican Court*

(Makes one drink)

- 1.75 oz silver tequila
- 0.5 oz watermelon liquor
- 2 oz splash of Sprite®
- ice
- Tajin
- 3 dashes Texican hot sauce
- popsicle of your choice
- lime cut into wedges

In a cocktail shaker, combine tequila, watermelon liquor, Sprite®, and ice. Shake and strain into Tajin rimmed glass filled with ice. Top with 3 dashes of Texican hot sauce. Garnish with a popsicle and lime wedge.

### CHERRY MINT FREEZE

*Courtesy of Lone Star Court*

(Makes one drink)

- 1.5 ounces vodka
- 0.25 ounces lime juice
- 3 ounces Sprite®
- 0.25 ounces grenadine

- fresh mint
- cherry popsicle

Combine vodka, lime juice, and grenadine. Shake ingredients and strain into glass. Top with Sprite®. Garnish with fresh mint and cherry popsicle.

### STRAWBERRY GREYHOUND POPTAIL

*Courtesy of Hotel Alessandra*

(Makes approximately 20 popsicles)

- 5 ounces Absolut grapefruit vodka
- 8 ounces Reäl strawberry infused syrup
- 8 ounces ruby red grapefruit juice
- 8 ounces water

In a pitcher, combine all ingredients and mix well. Pour into a popsicle form or single serve bags. Freeze and serve when firm.

### MONNALISA & POPSICLE

*Courtesy of Hotel Sorella CITYCENTRE*

(Makes one drink)

- blackberry infused vodka martini
- 1.5 ounces vodka
- 0.25 ounces triple sec
- 0.5 ounces razzmatazz liquor
- 0.5 ounces cranberry juice
- 0.25 ounces lime juice

Shake all liquid ingredients. Pour on the rocks. Serve with popsicle.

POPSICLE

- 0.5 ounces lime juice
- 0.5 ounces simple syrup
- 0.75 ounces blackberry juice
- 0.75 ounces cranberry juice

- 0.75 ounces raspberry juice

Blend the ingredients, freeze in popsicle molds for 2 hours and serve with Monnalisa drink.

### MANGO CHILE MARGARITA

*Courtesy of Hotel Valencia Santana Row*

(Makes one drink)

- margarita salt
- chili powder
- Tajin
- Jalapeño (or milder pepper)
- 1.25 ounces Sauza® silver tequila
- 0.5 ounces triple sec
- 0.5 ounces fresh lime juice
- 0.5 ounces agave nectar
- mango popsicle

Rim glass with spicy salt (equal parts margarita salt and chili powder or Tajin). Garnish with sliced jalapeño or milder pepper if preferred. Shake next four ingredients and strain into glass. Serve with a mango popsicle.

### VALENCIA DREAM

*Courtesy of Hotel Valencia Riverwalk*

(Makes ½ gallon)

- 40 ounces orange juice
- 10 ounces vanilla schnapps
- 10 ounces water
- 6 ounces cherry juice
- prosecco

Mix first four ingredients and transfer into popsicle molds filling each mold just ¾ high. Served in a coupe glass filled with prosecco. **i**





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# FINDING YOUR HAPPY PLACE

## It's Closer Than You Think

Story and Photos by **RACHEL KNIGHT**



**A**fter you read this paragraph, close your eyes, take three deep breaths, and think of what it means to be happy. Next, picture a space in which you are surrounded by the things that make you happiest. When you're finished, open your eyes and keep reading.

Shelley Wilson, a retired teacher who currently works as an associate at Home Goods in College Station, is one of the kindest, most inspiring people you'll ever meet. She lives in Franklin, and has more hidden talents than "the happiest place on earth" has hidden Miceys. It's no surprise that her happy place, or Shelley Shed, is the perfect space for her creativity to flow.

"It's a place that I can go and I can do whatever I want to do," Wilson shares. "I can sew, I can craft, I can do paper things,

I can paint. If I'm not done with a project, I can close the door on the project behind me, and it still will be there ready to go when I'm ready to go back. I love that part. I even have a sign that says it's my happy place, and it is."

A happy place is something Wilson says she feels blessed to have. Her happy place is part of a barn that she and her husband turned into her Shelley Shed. It is a personal space where Shelley can simply be — or allow her imagination to engage in creative projects that make her happy. "Everybody needs a happy place," she shares. "Everybody needs to go somewhere where they can say, 'I'm good. This is a good place for me.' ... I think everybody needs to have, even if it's in your mind, a place to go to separate from

the world, because sometimes the world is a tough place to deal with."

Wilson's Shelley Shed is full of old treasures that have been given a new purpose in her life. For example, the desk she used for 26 years as a teacher in Franklin ISD is now her sewing machine table. "No one else wanted it, and when I retired they gave it to me," Wilson explains. "The first year I was there, they gave me this desk and I thought, 'Those people hate me. They gave me this old, awful desk and no opportunity or option for another one.' Then I started to use it, and I realized I don't ever want any other desk. It's a part of who I used to be, and I get to turn it into a part of who I am now."

Happy places should be like an ebenezer, or a reminder and





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remembrance, Wilson says. Every detail in her Shelley Shed has meaning to her. She even incorporates pieces from projects she has done in the past into the room's decor. As an example, scraps from paper projects that once brought her joy have been turned into decoupage on a door.

Sewing and crafting have been part of Wilson's life since her grandmother taught her to sew as a young girl. She says she loved sewing so much that she made clothes to wear to school as a kid and her bridesmaids' dresses as a young adult. Having a room for those activities to take place uninterrupted allows Wilson to pour herself into what makes her happy. The inspiration for her happy place even came from a portable sewing nook that her grandfather made for Wilson when she got married.

Wilson's advice for others looking to find or create their own happy space is to toss out any preconceived notions of what it has to look like.

"A closet in your house can be a Shelley Shed, a corner in a bedroom could be a Shelley Shed if you don't have the space to do a whole room," Wilson says. "Be open to the possibilities of where and how you can create the space. Only allow things in it that bring you joy. Don't think that you have to copy somebody else's. Make it yours. Make it what brings joy to you, and you'll want to be there." *i*



# BRAZOS READS

By **SHELBI LEMEILLEUR**



## EDITH'S WAR

Writings of a Red Cross Worker  
& Lifelong Champion of Social Justice

PETER A. WITT

Through diary entries, letters, and other historical explanations, Peter A. Witt culminates a book of his aunt's life before, during, and after World War II. Edith Witt was ahead of her time, and an advocate for peace and better living conditions for all in *Edith's War: Writings of a Red Cross Worker & Lifelong Champion of Social Justice*.

During the war, Edith joined the Red Cross as a staff assistant in Oran, Algeria. Her assignments took her throughout the Mediterranean and Europe. Post-war, she was an advocate for affordable living and social justice. It was a treat to see the war and its aftermath through the eyes of the Red Cross Worker in one of the most trying times of our nation.

*Edith's War* reads more like a novel than a memoir or biography, as Witt includes rich dialogue, letters, and Edith's natural voice throughout. Witt also adds personal notes to help fill in any gaps or historical context necessary.

*Edith's War* is available in hardback through Texas A&M University Press. [i](#)

Are you a local author? Would you like your book to be featured in *INSITE* Magazine? Email [shelbi@insitebrazosvalley.com](mailto:shelbi@insitebrazosvalley.com) for more information.

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We expect more than 30 new construction homes to be entered into the Parade. Detailed information on the homes will be available on [gbvbuilders.org](http://gbvbuilders.org), Thursday before Parade begins. Fall Parade of Homes™ will be published in Brazos Valley Insite Magazine October Issue in print and digital issue as well.



# SUNSPACE OF TEXAS

## Increasing Outdoor Living Satisfaction

By **SHELBI LEMEILLEUR**



**T**exans know that spending time outside can oftentimes be more of a nuisance than a luxury. With the summer heat, pesky bugs, and never-ending allergens, people are more likely to stay indoors. Sunspace of Texas offers a solution through their porch enclosures, sunrooms, and acrylic roofing systems.

"You can increase your outdoor living satisfaction," explains Alison Windham, marketing director at Sunspace. "You can take your outdoor area and make it into the room you want it to be."

One option for customers are the WeatherMaster® Porch Enclosures. "It's a window screen-in one," says Windham. "That means all the windows come with the screen in, and then you can take all of the vents out if you wanted to have just screen."

The porch enclosures are offered in five different colors and are custom-built to suit your needs. Sunspace uses a memory-flex vinyl for the WeatherMaster® products, which is a durable vinyl not easily damaged unless punctured.

"It's great for kids, dogs, golf courses," says Windham. "It does not absorb heat like glass, and ... you can tint them, so if you have western exposure, you can tint the bronze and that just helps keep you a little cooler."

The most popular product Sunspace offers is their sunrooms, which are

similar to the porch enclosures with some key differences.

"A sunroom is a glass product, so that would be fully insulated," says Windham. "If you just want something to block the wind and the rain and the bugs, you can do the WeatherMaster® Porch Enclosure, or if you need something to have HVAC and cooled all the time, do a sunroom."

Sunspace often comes in to install sunrooms and porch enclosures on or around preexisting porches. However, they have the ability to come in and pour a porch or concrete pad. For those who aren't looking for an enclosed outdoor space, Sunspace also offers acrylic roof systems.

"If you don't have a roof over your porch, then we can come in and put that acrylic roof system in," Windham says. "We have four different colors all the way from bronze to pearl-snap white. They all protect against UV as our vinyl does, too."

Windham reassures the acrylic roof systems are high-quality deterrents against the elements. "It's a high-rated, high-dense acrylic," she explains.

"This lasts much, much longer, and it's honeycombed, so it breathes and it also has a mildew resistant coating on it. So you can put your hose up there and wash it off and get rid of all the debris."

Sunspace offers free estimates to anyone interested in creating their perfect outdoor space. The entire process has a

seven-week turnaround. Sunspace experts come out and take measurements. The custom product takes about six weeks to finish, and the Sunspace team will frame one day and install the next, typically.

"We don't have to come in your house, we just come through the backyard, do what we gotta do, and then we are out," says Windham. "You can be at work, you don't have to worry about anything."

After installation, the Sunspace team makes sure the customer knows how to clean the product and always comes back if there is a problem or if a repair is needed.

"People enjoy being outside and they don't want to be burned and eaten alive, and things get filthy, so this allows you to just create a design and entertain, or have a place for your kids to be or pets," Windham explains. "I call it a flex room because people have made it into anything from catios [patios for cats] to a gameday room to a reading room to a playroom. There's just a bunch of different ways you can design it."

Windham encourages people to visit [sunspacetexas.com](http://sunspacetexas.com) to see examples of past projects, informative videos, and more.

"This is all just about quality of life and just making it all better," Windham says. "Just giving you another room — without having to build onto your house, we just take your existing porch and make it another living area." *i*



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## Strong Bone Health Strong Bones, Strong Body.



As a retired nutritionist, Dawn Blaschke, knows the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. She admits she is older than 50 and had tailored her diet and exercise regimen to ensure good bone health, but after a bone scan in June of 2016, it became clear that diet and exercise were not enough to prevent bone decay. Her physician called her into his office to discuss the results. "I remember thinking, 'This can't be good. They never call you in to tell you good news,'" Dawn recalls.

Dawn's initial thought was right. The doctor informed her that she was at risk of fracturing her right hip and recommended she start taking bone strengthening medication. Dawn read up on both hip fractures and the medication. She learned that 24 percent of people who fracture their hip die within a year, and the potential side effects of the medication include fractures of the femur and jaw bone decay. Dawn didn't like the idea of fracturing her hip nor

risking the side effect of the drug, so she talked to her doctor about trying a new program, SuperSlow Zone's® Strong Bone Health. Her doctor agreed to let her try the program but warned that she would have to start taking the medication if she didn't show improvement in her next scan.

Her most recent bone scan showed that Dawn's bone density in her hip and spine have increased to a healthy level. "The doctor told me that whatever I was doing, I needed to keep doing it," Dawn says. "I'm a Strong Bone Health participant for life now."

In addition to great results, Dawn says she goes back to SuperSlow Zone® because it is enjoyable. She goes once a week for a 15-minute session. She has a personal coach who makes sure she is getting the most out of each activity. "She has become my good friend," Dawn says. "I have a cheerleader right there saying, 'Come on, you can do this!'"

**For more information about the New Strong Bone Health program, visit [sbhcollegestation.com](http://sbhcollegestation.com) or call (979) 693-6199**

# ANYBODY HOME?

## Five Tips to Avoid Home Disasters While on Vacation

By **BRAD AND SUE AYERS, OWNERS OF DELTA RESTORATION SERVICES GREATER BRAZOS VALLEY**



**W**e recently received a call from a frazzled client who was panicked about a flood in her home. This client had an issue — she wasn't even at home to deal with it. In fact, she was calling us from the Charlotte airport.

The client had just left for vacation and her friend had stopped by that afternoon to check on her pet. Her friend, who might've been expecting a cute kitten or puppy to greet her at the door, was met with something much more alarming: the kitchen and living room were flooded.

Right before our client headed out the door, bags in hand, for a relaxing vacation, she started her dishwasher. Unfortunately, the dishwasher's water supply line had disconnected and caused major flooding of her home. The dry-out process alone on the job cost thousands of dollars. Talk about a trip killer.

Vacations are meant to be enjoyed, and sadly, our business receives these frenzied calls all too often. With decades of home restoration and water damage experience under our belt, we have some tips we've learned over the years on how you can minimize the likelihood of any home disasters taking place while enjoying your precious and well-deserved paid time off.

Do a walk around the outside of your property. There are many things to inspect on the outside of your home that could cause damage while you're

away. For instance, check the roof for any shingles that may be missing or askew. You don't want a leak starting if there are heavy rains at home while you're enjoying a sunny beach thousands of miles away. Also, check your deck or patio areas and secure any items that could get blown around in heavy winds. Loose items that get picked up by the wind could break windows and cause serious exterior damage to the home.

Minimize flooding risks by shutting off the water supply. To greatly reduce the chance of any floods or leaks while you're away, turn off the water supply to sinks, toilets, the dishwasher, and your laundry machine. Also, remember to set your water heater to the "vacation" setting. Finally, check the user manual for dishwashers, laundry machines, and other appliances that use water for instructions on how to drain them, so there's no water sitting in your pricey appliances while you're on vacay. These precautions are easy to take, won't take too much of your time, and could save you thousands in restoration costs.

Unplug before you go. While unplugging can be hard in today's technology-obsessed world, the old-fashioned kind of unplugging is easy. See, we're not talking about iPhones, work email, and Facebook — we're talking about appliances in your home. Before you leave for vacation, check to make

sure toasters, microwaves, coffee makers, alarm clocks, and even chargers for electronics like smartphones and laptops are unplugged. Leaving these items plugged in while you're vacationing can cause fires if there are faulty electrical outlets or if your appliances are older.

Do a walkthrough of your home to make sure all windows and exterior doors are firmly sealed and locked. The purpose of this precaution is two-fold. First, locking your windows and doors keeps out any unwelcome guests. Second, in the event of extreme rain or wind, making sure your windows and doors are properly sealed prevents water from entering the home and causing expensive water and mold damage.

Finally, rely on a trusted neighbor. Early detection is key to mitigating the damage of a home disaster. The earlier you catch a leak, for instance, the less likely you'll be to experience a flood. While you're away, have a trusted neighbor, friend, or family member stop by your home once a day to check on the property. This check-in will go a long way in the event that anything goes wrong while you're out of town.

Now that we've covered some tips and tricks to avoid home disasters, you should be prepared to enjoy your vacation worry-free. So, remember to run the dishwasher the night before and happy traveling! *i*



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# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

## How to Keep Your Pets Safe This Hurricane Season

By PAIGE BRAZIL



**P**ets are a part of the family, so when extreme weather hits, it's just as important to include your pet in your emergency plans. With hurricane season in full effect, it is important that you, as a pet owner, are fully equipped with the appropriate knowledge and skill set to help prepare your pet for a natural disaster.

Wesley T. Bissett, DVM, Ph.D., director of the Veterinary Emergency Team at Texas A&M University, says the specific steps owners should take to prepare their pets for natural disasters fall into two categories. The first is to make sure your pets are up-to-date on an appropriate wellness program.

"A good place to start is considering vaccines that boarding facilities require," Bissett says. "The reality is that disaster settings typically result in animals being provided emergency shelter. This can be a stressful time for pets as emergency shelters are often set up in facilities that were not designed specifically for the purpose of sheltering animals."

Emergency shelters also result in animals being congregated together at the shelter. Pets are exposed to animals they have never "met" before. Disaster settings often result in limited information on pets being provided emergency shelter, so the vaccination status may not be known. Good vaccination protocols help prevent illnesses resulting from exposure, explains Bissett.

The other part to this, Bissett says, is keeping your pets healthy by making

sure chronic conditions are well regulated and outside parasites are addressed immediately.

"If your pet has a chronic condition that requires daily maintenance, it is a good idea to have a case summary from your local veterinarian," says Bissett. "Keeping these types of records and making them part of your disaster planning provides valuable information on current problems and therapeutic plans to the receiving shelter and helps maintain consistency of care."

The third facet of this category is to consider having your pet microchipped and keeping all information up to date in the microchip registry.

"We have had several experiences where people and their pets were successfully reunited due to a microchip and current registration," Bissett says. "We have also seen numerous cases where an animal was microchipped but the owner's information was never registered."

The second category, explains Bissett, is proper emergency planning. Creating a well-thought-out disaster plan for your pet is extremely helpful.


"Additional steps that will be helpful in making these types of scenarios work are making sure that you have appropriate-sized kennels, that your animals are either crate-trained or house-broken, and that external parasites are not a problem. It is also a good idea to identify pet-friendly hotels," says Bissett. "The groundwork of identifying these types of evacuation destinations are worthwhile as this

will lessen the strain that is placed on receiving jurisdictions and keep your pet out of community shelters that may include numerous animals."

If you do not have the resources or ability to evacuate your area pre-incident, it is important to have the following on-hand:

- A kennel or crate that provides a safe and secure space for your pet
- Copy of your pet's medical records
- Preventive medications (heartworm and external parasite preventive)
- Two weeks' worth of medications if your pet is currently being treated
- Three to seven days' worth of food and water
- Photos of you with your pets. If your pet has what you consider unique markings or scars, make sure you have good photos of those markings
- Cleaning supplies, waste bags, litter, etc.

Your pet could experience a wide range of behavioral changes during a time of disaster, Bissett says. These changes may range from withdrawal to aggression and anywhere in between, which is understandable due to the abrupt change in environment. Your pet may also be subject to dietary changes, animals they have never met before, and unfamiliar people.

"Advance planning is the key to navigating the post-incident landscape with your pet," says Bissett. "The time you invest will be well-spent." 



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# BEETLE BOX

## An Experimental Experience

By SHELBI LEMEILLEUR




On July 19, Brazos Valley residents have a unique opportunity to experience a concert unlike anything they have ever seen before. John Pennington of Beetle Box makes his way to Bryan for a performance at Revolution Café & Bar as part of his summer music tour.

Beetle Box is an experimental music project, centric on piano music combined with electronic, acoustic, and other instrumentations. Although he starts by writing pieces for the piano, Pennington will add to it with the goal of curating a live performance, not just a music track.

"I wanted to write a project where I played the piano — that's what I know how to do — write music for myself as a solo project for myself," says Pennington. "I also discovered electronic music and wanted a project where I could blend that together and do it in a live setting."

Beetle Box's experimental music gives Bryan College Station residents something new and different to enjoy this summer.

"Whenever I make new music I try to do something that sounds really fresh to me and a little different," Pennington explains. "I try to make something that sounds a little edgy — little bit edgy, keeps you guessing, and a little bit surprised."

Beetle Box will be joined by performances of bands Rudical, Durhem, Mrsee, and DJ Bear at Revolution on July 19. The show starts at 9 p.m. and there is a \$5 cover at the door. Beetle Box music is available to stream on SoundCloud, Bandcamp, and [beetleboxmusic.com](http://beetleboxmusic.com). 





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# GAMES OF TEXAS

## Texas' Best Athletes Returning to Bryan College Station

By RACHEL KNIGHT



As the summer gets hotter in Texas, so do the sporting competitions making their way to Bryan College Station as the community prepares to host the 2019 Games of Texas.

More than 30,000 visitors will make their way to Bryan College Station from July 25 through 29 for the climax of state wide summer sporting competitions during this year's Games of Texas. Competitors are 5 years old or older with youth sports being the most popular.

Kelly Kelbly, assistant director of parks and recreation for the city of College Station, compares the Games of Texas to the Junior Olympics. "It is a statewide competition; kind of the best-of-the-best in youth sports," she says. "They had to come out of their home city, then through

a regional competition to even qualify to be here."

This summer is the seventh time B/CS hosts the Games of Texas. Based on the fiscal impact of the last few times the Games of Texas were in B/CS, the economic impact of hosting these events in 2019 is expected to be between \$7.5 and \$8 million, according to Kelbly.

In addition to having a positive impact on the economy, Kelbly says hosting the games provides an opportunity to showcase the facilities available in both cities and at Texas A&M University. More importantly, she says the spirit of the community is what keeps people coming back to this area.

"One thing that we continually get comments and compliments on as we

continue to secure bids for a lot of these larger events is our hospitality," Kelbly shares. "I would challenge any other entity to do it as well as we do."

The Games of Texas are a Texas Amateur Athletic Federation event. In order for the Games of Texas to be hosted in B/CS, the city of Bryan, the city of College Station, Texas A&M, and Experience B/CS work together to make a bid. The bid is a proposal put together by a city, or in this case cities, to host the event. Bids are made to host the event for two years, and must be submitted about three years before the games are actually hosted. For example, a bid was placed in September of 2014 to host the Games of Texas in Bryan College Station in 2018 and 2019. Once confirmation was received that





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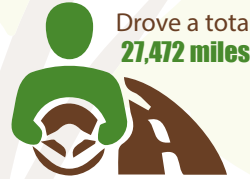
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the Games of Texas were coming to B/CS, a three-year planning process began.

Kelbly suggests coming to the Games of Texas this year while they are so close to home, because they go to Corpus Christi for 2020 and 2021 and to Brownsville for 2022 and 2023. The next possible time the Games of Texas could be in B/CS is 2024.

Those who wish to be more involved than the average spectator have the opportunity to volunteer at the games by visiting [taaf.com/gamesoftexas](http://taaf.com/gamesoftexas). "That can be anywhere from scoring at pickleball, helping with hospitality at boxing, to raking pits at track, timing at swimming," Kelbly says.

The number one reason to go to the Games of Texas is the level of competition, Kelbly shares. "It is fierce. It is entertaining. You have kids who have worked really, really hard to be here. ... We have kids who are swimming and running and practicing everyday to be here."

Getting to compete in the Games of Texas is worth celebrating, no matter how an athlete finishes in their sport. The Opening Ceremonies, which take place on July 26 at the Wolf Pen Creek Festival site from 6 to 8 p.m., includes a parade of athletes, ceremony, and live entertainment, to celebrate the athletes' achievement of competing in the games.

"It's amazing," Kelbly says. "When you see the kids come crashing across the finish line and you've got this 5-year-old just bawling, the impact is truly amazing." *i*



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# A PART OF THE PROCESS

## Messina Hof Harvest Festival

By SHELBI LEMEILLEUR



Lucille Ball ventured over to the vineyards of Italy to create one of the most iconic moments of pop culture history. Lucy gets up to her usual shenanigans on *I Love Lucy* when she has quite the comical turn trying to stomp grapes for an Italian movie role. Luckily for Bryan College Station residents, they don't have to travel across the Atlantic to try and recreate this moment.

Messina Hof Winery & Resort hosts the 42nd annual Harvest Festival this year, where guests can pick, stomp, drink, and be merry (sometimes even dressed as Lucy)! Every Friday and Saturday July 26 through Aug. 17, guests have the opportunity to be a part of Messina Hof's wine-making process.

"This is one of those traditions that we've kept the same over the years," explains Savannah Gaines, communications manager at Messina Hof. "Everyone can participate in this whether you're a family with small children or a girls group or you're just coming out with your spouse. We have all different kinds of people who want to come out and pick and stomp and that's what makes it so popular is that it appeals to everyone."

There are several ticket options to choose from, which allows festival guests to tailor their experience to their own tastes. The Daytime Harvest and Moonlit Harvest both allow guests to pick and stomp. The murder mystery dinners are always popular and sell out quickly. Cellar tours are available, as are wine pairing classes. The theme for the pairing classes this year is Farm to Table.

Two unique aspects of the harvest are the Big Kahuna Contest and the grape stomping. With the Big Kahuna Contest, guests search for the most interesting grape cluster, and a new winner is picked each day. The grape stomping is not only a fun activity, but leaves a lasting impression.

"Our grapes are unique that they bleed red juice," says Gaines. "You do get to put your feet on the t-shirt, which is fun, because it's something you can commemorate as well."

Grape stomping isn't just for the fun of it — everyone who stomps grapes is contributing to the vintage port for that year. Even if you've been to a Harvest Festival before, each vintage will be unique.

"Every year is different as far as how the grapes are growing that year,"

explains Gaines. "The grapes are always different; the climate affects it. If it's rainy that year — we've had a lot of rain this year compared to other years — that means the grapes are going to grow a little differently, and you get to be a part of that vintage. So every year you get to say, 'I helped make this bottle of wine.'"

Harvest Festival is also a family affair! "[Messina Hof Founders] the Bonarrigos are very much a part of this event," Gaines says. "We are on the second generation of leaders right now, and even their children are out here. So three generations of Bonarrigos, sometimes even Mama Rosa, who is our founder's mom, will be out here."

"You really get to be a part of Messina Hof and see what joining the family is about."

Tickets and more information can be found at [messinahof.com/harvest](http://messinahof.com/harvest).

"If you've never been then it is something you need to definitely take off your bucket list," urges Gaines. "Where else in the Brazos Valley can you come, pick grapes, stomp grapes, and be a part of the wine-making process at one of the original Texas wineries?" *i*



**BRYAN/COLLEGE STATION****C&J BARBEQUE**

cjbbq.com, 4304 Harvey Road, CS (979) 776-8969; 105 Southwest Parkway, CS (979) 696-7900; 1010 South Texas Avenue, Bryan (979) 822-6033. A family run business, C&J Barbeque serves sausage, pork loin, pulled pork, turkey, brisket, chicken, ribs, and more at each of their locations. Open M-Th 10:30am-8:30pm, F-Sa 10:30am-9pm, and Su 11am-3pm.

**CAFÉ ECCELL & LA BODEGA TACO BAR**

cafeeccellbryantx.com, 4401 S. Texas Avenue (979) 599-7929. For private parties, weddings, or any event off premise from buffets and mixers to fine dining for 25-1,000 people. Café Eccell plus La Bodega Taco Bar plus your imagination adds up to Eccell Group Catering and anything you want!

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**CAMPFIRE RESTAURANT AT THE STELLA HOTEL**

thestellahotel.com, 4100 Lake Atlas Drive, Bryan (979) 421-4444. Here guests are greeted with the rich aroma of smoke and seasonings used to serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner made with the best ingredients in Central Texas. Raise a toast to bourbon-fueled cocktails and magnum wine tastings at the Chef's Table, an outdoor perch by the fire pit, or a table in the main dining room with a view of the open kitchen!

**CASA DO BRASIL**

casado brasil.com, 1665 Greens Prairie Rd W, CS (979) 596-5586. The first Brazilian steakhouse in the Brazos Valley is now open! You can enjoy meat delivered to your table on hot skewers and carved directly onto your plate. The steakhouse also serves traditional favorites including the national drink of Brazil, the Caipirinha. M-F 11am-2pm, 5-9:30pm; S 4-10pm; Su 11am-2pm.

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luigispatoristorante.com, 3975 SH-6 S, CS (979) 693-2742. Luigi's Patio Ristorante offers genuine Italian cuisine in a cozy atmosphere that transports you straight to the heart of Italy. Live music, check website for schedule. Open for lunch Tu-Fri 11:30am-2pm. Open for dinner Tu-Su 5:30pm, call for closing times. Brunch Su 11:30am-2pm.

**MESSINA HOF WINERY**

messinahof.com, 4545 Old Reliance Rd, Bryan (979) 778-9463. Founded on the cornerstones of family, tradition, and romance, Messina Hof Winery & Resort has held its place as a Brazos Valley staple since 1977. Open M-Th 10am-7pm, F-Sa 10am-8pm, Su 11am-6pm.

**MADDEN'S CASUAL GOURMET**

maddencasualgourmet.com, 202 S Bryan Ave, Bryan (979) 779-2558. For catering and private party planning, call (979) 450-5334. Madden's Casual Gourmet is the perfect place for lunch or dinner, celebrations, and catering any event! Open M-W 11am-2pm, Th-F 11am-3pm, S 10am-4pm, Th-S 5pm-9pm.

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therepublic1836.com, 701 University Dr. E #406, CS (979) 260-4120. Recently receiving the designation of AAA four diamond steak house, The Republic offers a variety of gourmet steak options, seafood, wine, and whiskey. Their focus is on the use of fine, locally grown foods and simple Texas cooking in an elegant setting. Open M-Sa 5-10pm.

**THE TAP**

tapbcs.com, 815 Harvey Rd, CS (979) 696-5570. The Tap is a former train depot transformed into a sports bar and restaurant. This local favorite has more than 30 TVs, darts, pool tables, NTN trivia, dominoes, two huge porches, occasional live music specials, burgers, sandwiches, and free peanuts. M-Sa 11am-2pm.

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