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Mollie & Noah Fry
June 29, 2019
Story by Katie James
Photos by Audrey Spiars Photography
Page 6

Bailey & Jaxton McNair
March 16, 2019
Story by Brandi M. Gomez
Photos by Grace Photography
Page 10

Carey & Joe David Scarpinato
July 22, 2019
Story by Shelbi LeMeilleur
Photos by Zeke's Photography
Page 14

Shannon & Mark Deskin
September 28, 2019
Story Courtesy of Inn at Quarry Ridge
Photos by Audrey Lane Photo
Page 20

Mackenzie & Kyle Sewell
October 5, 2019
Story Courtesy of 7F Lodge
Photos by Photo by Joy
Page 24

Home & Garden Expo Guide
Greater Brazos Valley Builders Association
Special Section
After Page 24

Supporting Pink Alliance
Spring Bridal Show
Compiled by INSITE Staff
Page 28



Brazos Valley Art League
The Fine Art of Friendships
By Chris Rogers
Page 32

The King's Singers
The Magic of Human Voices
By Katie James
Page 34

Kids Helping Kids
Empty Bowls, Jr.
By Shelbi LeMeilleur
Page 36

Brazos Reads
By Shelbi LeMeilleur
Page 38

Who You Gonna Call?
2-1-1 Texas
Courtesy of United Way of the Brazos Valley
Page 40

Take a Bite
Support a Cause
By Jackson King
Page 42

Heart of Champions
Annual Heart Ball
By Brandi M. Gomez
Page 44

Hospice Happening
A Roarin' Good Time
By Nicole Shair
Page 46

Cover Credits: Photo by Audrey Spiars Photography.

INSITE Magazine is published monthly by Integ, David Anderton, President & CEO, 123 E. Wm. J. Bryan Pkwy., Bryan, Texas 77803. (979) 823-5567 InsiteBrazosValley.com; email: admin@insitebrazosvalley.com Volume 35, Number 9.
Publisher: Kyle DeWitt; Editor: Shelbi LeMeilleur; Editorial Assistant: Katie James; Account Executive: Dave Marsh; Editorial Interns: Brandi M. Gomez; Jackson King; Nicole Shair.
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Integdoes.com, contact Kyle DeWitt. Bryan Operations Manager: Molly Barton; Production Manager: Tim Huschka; Office Manager: Wendy Seward; Sales & Customer Service: Bailey Ashcraft; Candi Burling; Lilly Chilek; Rose Robinson; Sylvianne Velasquez-Misztal; Barbara Wyss. Production: Stephen Beatty; Norris Carnes; Tonya Chitwood; Don Coburn; Mark Eaton; Arnel Estuaria; Dennis Leach; Brandon Prouse; Mike Seward; Martin Tapia; Kelli Weber; Stephen Woodruff.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DIXIE CHICKEN



From the President/CEO

Dear **INSITE** Readers,

Our community has grown to become a place that you don't have to drive far to find entertainment. The community calendar on our website always has so many events going on around town. I found several events that I want to put on my own calendar.

Our community has many events that focus on the arts, food, health, the outdoors, and fun things for the family to attend. One event that is fun for all ages is karaoke. I'm not sure all karaoke is classified as good, but it is always entertaining to watch people become stars in their own minds for one song. My sons say this is a great way to meet people as well.

One of the perks of living in a college town is the world-class events Texas A&M University has to offer. The university often brings in top-of-the-line speakers and music. The conferences are mostly in the evenings and have such a unique blend of topics that everyone will find a topic that fits their interest. Most of these events are open to the general public, as well as students!

Dining out has become an event of its own, and our community has so many choices of restaurants from casual dining like Sodalaks to a nice, sit-down restaurant like Madden's Casual Gourmet – and the list is constantly growing! Some of the best conversations happen around dinner on the town or a casual drink, relaxing and enjoying each other's company.

My favorite time is finding a sports bar, such as the Dixie Chicken, and watching a game with a cold drink. This is not good for your body, but it really works to get your spirits in the right place. You will always find someone to talk about Aggie sports and what they would do if they were the president, athletic director, head coach, coordinator, or even the guy who runs the camera at the games.

Get out there and enjoy our community; there is a lot going on and you will miss out if you stay on that couch with a remote control in your hand all the time. — **David Anderton**



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Mollie & Noah Fry

June 29, 2019

Story by **KATIE JAMES**

Photos by **AUDREY SPIARS PHOTOGRAPHY**





When Mollie McGehee and Noah Fry tied the knot at the Ice House on Main on June 29, 2019, it was romantic, peaceful, and personal. They met on the dating app Bumble, and after dating for eight months, they were ready to get married.

Noah proposed in the backyard of Mollie's parents' house, where her three older sisters had all had their wedding receptions.

"I thought it was a normal day; I didn't look good at all," says Mollie. When she got to her parents' house, she found Noah in what her family calls "the chapel," an outdoor kitchen with a cross hanging above it. "He was under the cross and our song was playing. He forgot all the things he planned to say, but he waited for our favorite part of the song and asked me to marry him."

While planning the wedding, Mollie says things just fell into place. They only toured two venues before deciding on the Ice House in downtown Bryan.

"The Ice House was perfect because it wasn't super modern," says Mollie. "We loved the feel of it and the story of the place. It has the red brick, columns, hardwood floor thing, and the lighting was cool. They flipped it between the ceremony and reception while we were taking pictures."

Taking pictures between the wedding and the reception led to one of the most memorable moments for the couple: Mollie and Noah sneaking across the street to Blackwater Draw afterwards.

"Our photographer told us we had plenty of pictures, but we still had 30 minutes before we were going to be presented at the reception, so we ran across the street and had a beer and some time to ourselves," says Mollie. "It wasn't planned and no one knew where we were but our photographer. Blackwater Draw didn't charge us for our drinks and they were so excited for us."





The wedding was full of personal moments and touches like that one. Their party favors were bumblebee cookies as a nod to their start on Bumble, Mollie wore the veil that all her older sisters had worn to get married, and they had Whataburger deliver fries to the reception because their last name is Fry. Noah's 6-year-old daughter from his previous marriage also got to share in the fun.

"They did a daddy-daughter dance instead of a mother and groom dance because his mother passed away," says Mollie. "That was really sweet. Piper loved that; she was twirling everywhere."

Rather than doing a first look, Mollie and Noah exchanged letters around a corner and prayed together before walking down the aisle.

"One of my favorite parts of the day was walking down the aisle and seeing him," says Mollie. "My knees buckled because his faces were just the best. My dad had to ask me if I was okay."

As for advice she'd give to brides-to-be, Mollie notes she regretted not hiring a videographer to capture footage of the day, but overall, she was glad she used local vendors.

"[The Ice House] had a built-in coordinator that was amazing," says Mollie. "She took care of pricing and things beforehand, but she was also a day-of coordinator and made a very detailed schedule with every little thing. ... Because we did all in-town people, they all know each other and were used to working with each other, so it was very easy. It was very personal, and everyone was so sweet."

Ultimately, what was most important to Mollie was how personal and intentional the wedding was itself.

"It was very intimate — just our people. We couldn't stop giggling all day," says Mollie. "When you're planning, you want to think about everyone else and try to accommodate them all, but it's the one day in your life that can be about the two of you. It's your wedding!" *i*

Fry Vendors

Dress Coreena's Bridal

Cake Sandee's Sweets

Flowers Postoak Florist

Venue Ice House on Main

Music Downtown Event Services

Balloon Bubbleloon

Photographer Audrey Spiars Photography

Catering Admiral Catering

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Bailey & Jaxton McNair

March 16, 2019

Story by **BRANDI M. GOMEZ**

Photos by **GRACE PHOTOGRAPHY**



Bailey Brinkman was 18 years old when she and Jaxton McNair began their relationship. However, Jaxton didn't ask Bailey to marry him until after dating four years.

Bailey is from Caldwell and Jaxton is from Snook, but their families were close before they met, sending each other holiday cards every year. The two did not know they would be more than faces on a card until they met each other for the first time at Hurricane Harry's.

"You're a Brinkman girl," Jaxton said. "And you're Jaxton," Bailey replied, remembering Jaxton from the Christmas cards that hung on her family's refrigerator, and they started talking from there.

The story gets sweeter when Jaxton proposed during a family picture day for 2017's holiday cards.

"I did not expect it, but my mom told me that year that Jaxton could be in our Christmas card," Bailey says.

This took Bailey aback because her parents have a rule about being featured in her family's holiday cards.

"If you don't have a ring, you don't get to be in the picture," says Bailey.

Bailey says her mom dispelled suspicion by saying it was okay because they had been together for four years. Jaxton's mom asked to join Bailey's family on the day they were taking pictures, explaining it was because they wanted to do Christmas cards as well.

On Nov. 12, 2017, both families took the pictures behind Bailey's grandparents' house in the pasture. Once the family pictures were taken, it came down to her and Jaxton in their own shots.

"He was whispering something in my ear, and I could not hear him, so I turned to read his lips and he was getting down on



one knee," says Bailey. "My face was like, 'Oh my God,' and I started crying."

For Bailey and Jaxton, choosing a wedding date was an act of narrowing down the best date. They are big hunters and Texas A&M University fans, which effectively did the date selection for them.

"We couldn't do it during hunting season," says Bailey. "We couldn't do it on any Saturdays on a football game, and I was in school, and in my hardest semester ever, so I just found the week we happened to be on spring break and so it just became the day."

When the day came, her entourage included her two sisters as her matrons of honor, eight of her friends, a junior bridesmaid, and a flower girl. On her groom's side, there were 10 groomsmen and a ringbearer, her nephew.





“He called rings ‘knuckles’, so we called him ‘Knuckle Bear,’” Bailey says.

When choosing vendors, Bailey wanted to stay local to her small town.

“I wanted to be traditional, so I knew I wanted to get married in my church,” says Bailey. “That was something that I had set since when I was a little girl.”

For her dress, Bailey went in saying she wanted a Cinderella type, but she was encouraged to try on others.

“[The bridal gown retailer] said usually when you come in and say that is what you want, it isn’t what you really want so, I was open to try on anything,” says Bailey.

After trying on the few dresses she knew she did not want, Bailey finally tried on the Cinderella dress she saw when she first walked in, and it was the one.

“I went out to my mother and mother-in-law and they just knew that that was the one,” she says.

Bailey chose the biggest expo center to have their reception and fit the 500 guests and more than 800 people who were fed. The Burleson County Expo was perfect after decorating it how she wanted.

The couple chose Texas Unlimited Band, one of their favorite bands, to be their entertainment for their special day.

“Oh, it was beyond what I thought it was going to be; it was the best day ever,” says Bailey. “I know everyone says that, but it really was. Everything just seemed magical to me. It was our type of wedding; it was just perfect.” *i*

McNair Vendors

Church Elizabeth Lutheran Church, Caldwell

Reception Burleson County Expo

Photographer Grace Photography

Videographer Smart Video Services

Hair The Cottage (Sonja Brinkman, Ashlee Telschow, Mariah Sandner, and Brooke O’Brien)

Makeup Mariah Sandner

Bride Dress Georgio’s Bridal

Bridesmaid Dresses David’s Bridal

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Cakes Sandee’s Sweets

Band Texas Unlimited Band

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Carey & Joe David Scarpinato

July 22, 2019

Story by **SHELBI LEMEILLEUR**

Photos by **ZEKE'S PHOTOGRAPHY**



Living in a small town, Carey Crabtree and Joe David Scarpinato had known each other for a while, but it wasn't until January 2019 that they really connected. Less than six months later, the couple were married at the Calvert Gazebo on June 22, 2019.

Carey is a teacher, so they knew a summer wedding would be ideal. "We kept it kind of simple," says Carey. "We did a lot of stuff on our own, but we did it together and that was what was nice."

The ceremony was at the Calvert Gazebo and the reception was over at Jake's in downtown Calvert. Jake's used to be a bar — and even a bank at one point — but now is a rental hall.

"It was just a neat, rustic, kind of country wedding," explains Carey. "That's what we wanted."

It was also important for Carey and Joe David to incorporate their family into the wedding. Carey adopted a daughter and Joe David has three sons. From the beginning, the boys have taken Carey's daughter, Ryelah, in as their own sister. The interactions throughout the day made the wedding even more special and memorable.



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“When they pronounced us husband and wife and to kiss the bride, when we went to kiss, [Ryelah] got in the middle of us and tried to separate us,” Carey laughs. “It was a family type wedding. I had my maid of honor and one of my best friends, but then [Ryelah] was the flower girl, but he had his three sons as the best man, groomsmen, and ring bearer.”

To add to the family incorporation, Joe David did a father/daughter dance with Ryelah. Carey’s wedding ring also has family significance. “My ring is my grandmother’s wedding ring,” she says. “The band and ring — it’s beautiful. ... Not only is it memories of us, but I get to remind myself with my grandparents’ marriage and their happiness. I feel like she kind of knew when she left it to me that something special was going to happen with it.”

The personal touches don’t end with family.

“The pastor that married us actually baptized me three years ago, so that was kind of special to have him involved, too, because he’s seen me throughout the

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years," Carey says. "I haven't always lived here; I moved from Houston. Moving here, adopting my baby girl, now we have a family — I feel like I was brought here."

For future brides, Carey says not to sweat the small stuff.

"The small things don't matter," Carey stresses. "You're not going to remember the food, how it was prepped. You're not going to remember the exact flowers. Enjoy. Be comfortable in your dress. It's the most wonderful day. Don't let the process get to you." *i*

Scarpinato Vendors

Rehearsal Dinner En Gedi Vineyards

Catering Amas, Hearne

Cakes and Cupcakes Tina Cole, family friend

Sibling Cookie Cake Nicole DeStafano, family friend

Flowers Hearne Flower Shop

Reception Jake's, Calvert

Ceremony Calvert Gazebo

Dress David's Bridal

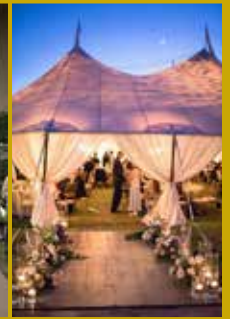
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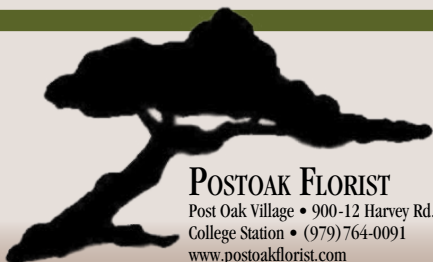
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PHOTO BY MICHAEL KELLETT PHOTOGRAPHY



Shannon & Mark Deskin

September 28, 2019

Story Courtesy of **INN AT QUARRY RIDGE**

Photos by **AUDREY LANE PHOTO**



While working for the Republic Brewing Company back in November of 2016, it was fate that would have Shannon Seelye representing RBC at the Dixie Chicken. The Chicken was hosting a few Veterans Week boot walks in celebration of the heroes who have served our country, and due to the large number of veterans in Shannon's family she volunteered for seven of the 10 walks.

While there, a good-looking Marine caught her eye: Mark Deskin. After the walk, they were hanging out at The Chicken when one of their friends decided he wanted a tattoo. They all piled into their cars to go watch him do it, and although he didn't go through with it, the most important part was Shannon seeing

Mark's willingness to drive their friend to the parlor.

Even though she found him intimidating, they started to make reasons to see each other more, whether it was Shannon doing more events for The Chicken or Mark going for drinks at RBC. She found out one day that Mark was planning to go see Clayton Gardner at the Lakeside Icehouse in Bryan, and communicated that she would go, if and only if he went so she wouldn't be alone.

On March 25, 2017, Shannon found herself at the Lakeside Icehouse waiting for what seemed like a lifetime for Mark to fulfill his promise of accompanying her to the event. When he finally showed, they talked it up, and the rest is history.

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Exactly a year later, Mark and Shannon walked down the shore of Galveston Beach looking for seashells in the early morning sand. “Look!” Mark shouted, “I think I found the prettiest one!” As Shannon turned around, she saw Mark down on one knee with the ring in his hands, and he asked her for her hand in marriage.

The ceremony was short, sweet, and just how they wanted it. Shannon’s most cherished moment of her big day was walking down the aisle after the rings were on and everything was said and done. Mark took the end of the veil that the wind was pulling out of her hair and wrapped it around himself.

The reception was a blast. With fajitas from their favorite hometown restaurant and the best mix of music that they’ve ever heard from a local DJ, everyone had a good time. One of their favorite touches was the non-traditional cake shaped like the very restaurant where they met.

Shannon chose The Inn at Quarry Ridge because it fit perfectly with the vision she had in mind. Stonehem Hall was exactly what she was looking for to partner with the maroon, blush, and sunflower theme she dreamed about.

Shannon wants to let every future bride know a few things as well.

“The biggest thing for brides is to take it in,” says Shannon. “Take a step back when sitting down to eat and look at all the people who came to celebrate your marriage. It will be a fast-paced day, but take a second to stop and enjoy everything and everyone who came. Also, make sure that you get family photos, especially with you and your brother or sister!” *i*

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Mackenzie & Kyle Sewell

October 5, 2019

Story Courtesy of **7F LODGE**

Photos by **PHOTO BY JOY**



When Mackenzie Snyder and Kyle Sewell first met, it wasn't exactly love at first sight. In fact, the Amazon coworkers weren't interested in each other at all.

"We quickly realized we did like each other... so much that we actually dated in secret for six months because dating another employee at the same fulfillment center was not allowed," says Mackenzie.

Although Mackenzie didn't want a wedding at all and Kyle wanted a big wedding, they were able to settle on a small, family only wedding.

"We really wanted a venue that was going to be beautiful but also felt cozy and quaint enough that the vibe of the wedding would be more like a backyard barbecue, and that's exactly what we got with 7F Lodge," says Mackenzie.

When Oct. 5, 2019, came around, the couple ended up loving how their wedding day turned out, especially because they had the Cody Ray Henry Band there to perform.

"The day of was great," says Mackenzie. "It was so fun to see the venue

Home & Garden Expo Guide

Published in Partnership with the
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Home & Garden Expo 2020

February 15 & 16, 2020



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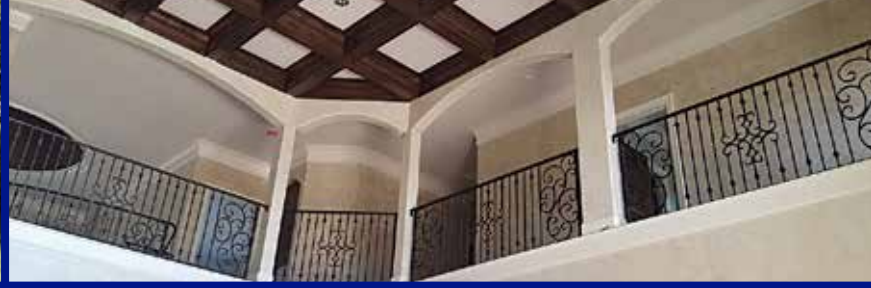
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February 15 & 16

We are excited for all of you to join us for the 41st Annual Home & Garden Expo Feb. 15 and 16. Over the past year we have been hard at work to bring you experts in the home and garden industries. We would like to thank our title sponsor EcoZapp A/C Efficiency for being the title sponsor once again this year. The Home and Garden Expo is your one-stop shop to learn about building, renovation, banking, insurance, flooring, lighting, cabinets, HVAC and energy efficiency systems, windows, doors, fixtures, gardening, pools, outdoor tools, patios, and so much more. With many experienced vendors to visit, you're sure to leave with new ideas and inspirations.

We have a great list of seminars in the ballroom that are lined up for you. You can hear about things from vegetable gardening to remodeling realities. You can gain lots of insight from the experts and then walk right out of the seminars and meet with the professionals who can make your dream projects a reality.

Located at the Brazos County Expo Complex, we have something for the whole family. Make sure you don't miss the seminars by the Brazos County Master Gardeners, and if you come to the Expo with an appetite... you might even find a few food trucks hanging around the exterior of the Exhibit Hall!

The Greater Brazos Valley Builders Association invite the local and surrounding communities to come and be a part of the 41st Annual Home & Garden Expo Feb. 15 and 16.

Randy Ripple, Senior Vice President, Commerce National Bank

*Brian Windham, Owner, Sunspace Texas
2020 Home & Garden Expo Co-Chairmen*



Brian Windham



Inside the Guide:

- Seminar Schedule..... 6
- Exhibitor List: Booth Assignments 8
- Exhibitor Booth Map..... 10
- Renovations that Add Value to Your Home..... 12
- Best Bets for Happy Pets..... 16
- Five Tips for a Modern Mudroom Makeover..... 20
- Bright Ideas for Home Interior Lighting..... 22
- Go Green, Reduce Energy Bills with Smart Technology 26
- Remodeling Right: DIY or Professional..... 30
- How to Recycle Unwanted Household Items..... 32
- Tips for Porch and Deck Maintenance..... 34



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SEMINAR SCHEDULE

Saturday

10 a.m. Creating a Backyard Habitat

Presented by Molly Harris, Texas Master Naturalist and Master Gardener

Backyards don't have to be dull. By learning how to use both native and adapted plants to attract wildlife, home gardens can be both beautiful and lively. Planting a variety of herbs, flowers, groundcovers, vines, shrubs, and trees that do well in the Brazos Valley and encourages visitors such as bees, butterflies, birds, and other species, adds interest to your garden and provides color as well.

11 a.m. Year-Round Vegetable Gardening

Presented by Michael Vidrine, Master Gardener

In our area vegetable gardens can be productive throughout the year. Planting a diverse variety of vegetables appropriate for the changing seasons can yield a bountiful and almost continuous harvest. Gardening in every season can also broaden your appetite for vegetables that may be new to you. A garden full of vegetables leaves little room for weeds.

1 p.m. Healing Through Horticulture

Presented by Katie Loewe, Master Gardener, and Victoria Bailey

Using evidence-based techniques, horticulture therapy has shown to help improve memory, sensory processing, cognition, task initiation, and socialization while simultaneously reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, PTSD, and more. Research-based education in a judgment-free atmosphere encourages healthy habits, coping skills, and a positive self-image for survivors.

2 p.m. Rose Pruning in the Age of the Rose Rosette Virus

Presented by Maggie Boriski, Master Gardener

Feb. 14 is the traditional day to prune roses. Timely and careful pruning encourages good health for roses, gives them a good structure and size, and helps prevent Rose Rosette virus. It is also important to control mites carrying the virus, and experts are in the process of developing and breeding resistant roses.

3 p.m. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Building an EarthKind Supply Chain for the Kitchen Garden

Presented by Dr. Sarah N. Gatson, Texas Master Gardener.

In this talk you will learn about several small food garden styles built with low-cost and free (repurposed and recycled) materials that are largely crowd-sourced through the community. The talk will showcase raised beds and container gardens — recommended styles for Brazos County — and will include a discussion of existing demonstrations in the local community.

Sunday

1 p.m. How to Select Materials for Raised Beds and Initial Landscaping

Presented by Sam Feagley, Bachelor of Science in chemistry, Master of Science in soil fertility, PhD in soil chemistry, and a Master Gardener

Preparing and managing raised flower beds and initial landscaping will be discussed. How to select raised bed materials and whether to use native soil or purchased landscaping materials will be evaluated along with ways to determine the amount of nutrients available in the initial prepared soil.

2 p.m. The Realities of Home Remodeling: How to Do it Right!

Presented by Dan Bawden, President, Legal Eagle Contractors, Co

If you are thinking about a remodeling project at your home, big or small, don't miss some very sound advice and practical steps from an expert! The more you know, the more prepared you will be and can set reasonable expectations. Your home is your biggest investment and making sure any remodel done properly can save time, money, and headaches.

Dan Bawden holds many building certifications including Certified Aging in Place Design Specialist, Graduate Master Builder, and Certified Graduate Remodeler. He has been named Texas Remodeler of the Year four times, Houston Remodeler of the Year Twice, and voted Best of HOUZZ three times.

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Aggieland Bathtub & Shower Repair/ Steve's Refinishing Services	Bathtub & Shower Repair	203
Aggieland Carpet One	Flooring	301
Aggieland Overhead Door & Fireplaces	Garage Doors/Openers & Fireplaces	109
Aggieland Roofing	Roofing Products	101
Airline Vacuum	Central Vacuum Systems For Homes	412
Art's Fencing And Custom Doors	Iron Door, Fencing & Railing Samples	405, 407
Audio Video	Home Entertainment	208-307
AW Flag & Flagpole Company	Flags & Flagpoles	906
Barkers Heating And Cooling	HVAC Sales, Service	508, 607
Bath Expo & Window Expo	Bathroom & Window Replacement	709 & 711
Batteries Plus	Batteries & More	202
Bingham Construction & Remodeling/As Solatube	Remodeling, Solar, Energy	201
Boral Roofing	Roofing Products	505
Brazos Valley Groundwater Conservation District	Water Conservation	512
Brazos Valley Schools Credit Union	Real Estate Loan Services/Financial Inst.	606
Brazos Valley Floor & Design, Premier Countertop Design & Kent Moore Cabinets	Flooring/Lighting/Countertops/Cabinets	East Wing
Bryan Broadcasting	Welcome Home Brazos Valley Magazine	TBD
Bryan Texas Utilities	Utility Services	112
Budget Blinds Of College Station	Window Treatments	807-808
Built Green Custom Homes	Custom Home Builder	611
BV Master Gardeners	Horticulture	Ballroom
Cabinet Expressions	Cabinets	708
Century 21 Beal	Real Estate Sales	103
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Dailey Company	Residential Electric & Hvac Services	303
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INSITE Magazine	Media	Front Entrance
Invisible Fence	Invisible Fencing	206
Hob Knob Interior Hardware	Home Hardware	614
J5 Tractors	Agricultural/Outdoor	901-902, 1 Outdoor
Kessler Insurance Agency	Insurance	411
Kevin's Landscapes	Landscape Design, Installation, Maintenance	713
Kitchen Craft	Cookware	602 & 604

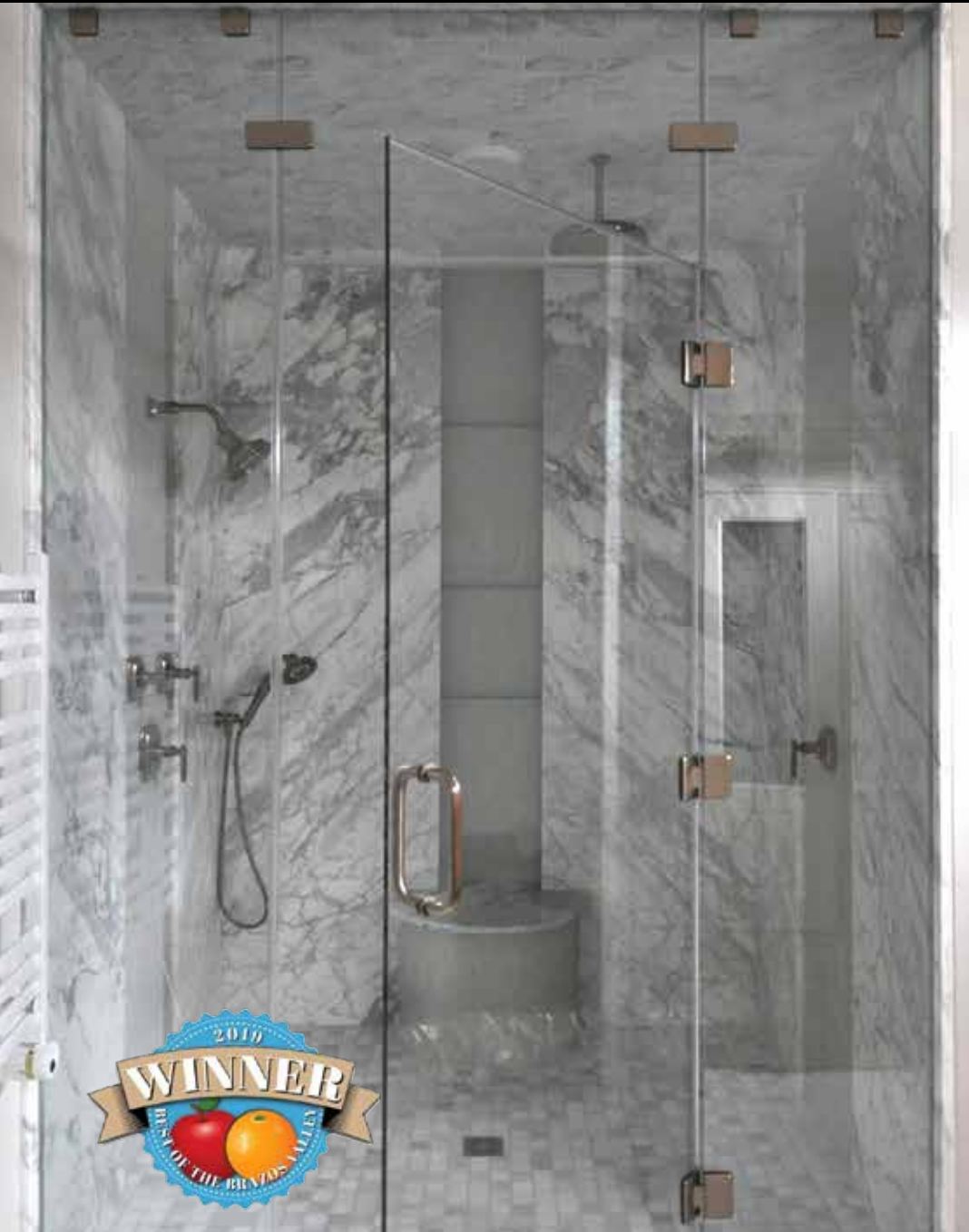
Leafilter North Of Texas	Gutter Protection	114
Legacy Ace Hardware	Outdoor Equipment & Barbeque	715
LP Building Solutions	Building Products	210
Made In The Shade	Window Coverings	305
Magnolia Outdoor Living	Outdoor Furniture	803-804
Majeza Jewelry Cleaner	Biodegradable Jewelry Cleaner	312
Miracle Method of Bryan-College Station	Refinishing	404-406
My Massage Pillow	Decorative Massage Pillows	213
Oakwood Custom Homes	Custom Home Builder	205
Pella Windows & Doors	Windows & Ext. Doors	108, 207
Power Home Remodeling Group	Exterior Retrofits	702 & 704
Premier Pools And Spas	Swimming Pool Construction	801-802
Program Insurance Group	Insurance	705
Rebath of Central Texas	Bathroom Remodeling	504-506
Renewal by Andersen	Windows	314
Richmon Homes	Home Builder	710 & 712
RM Mullinix HVAC	HVAC Sales & Service	310, 409
Rock-Crete Foam Insulators	Foam Insulation	514
RV Source	RV Sales Parts & Service	1 Outdoor Space
Sharp Propane	Propane & Accessories	309
Siegert One Hour Heating & AC	HVAC Service/Install	701 & 703
Sit Means Sit Dog Training	Dog Training	805-806
Sleep Number	Adjustable Beds	204
Solar X Of Texas	Solar Screens	110 & 209
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Stampede Coating	Concrete Floor Coating	408,507
Suddenlink by Altice	Tv & Internet	212
Sully Power Wash	Power Washing	603
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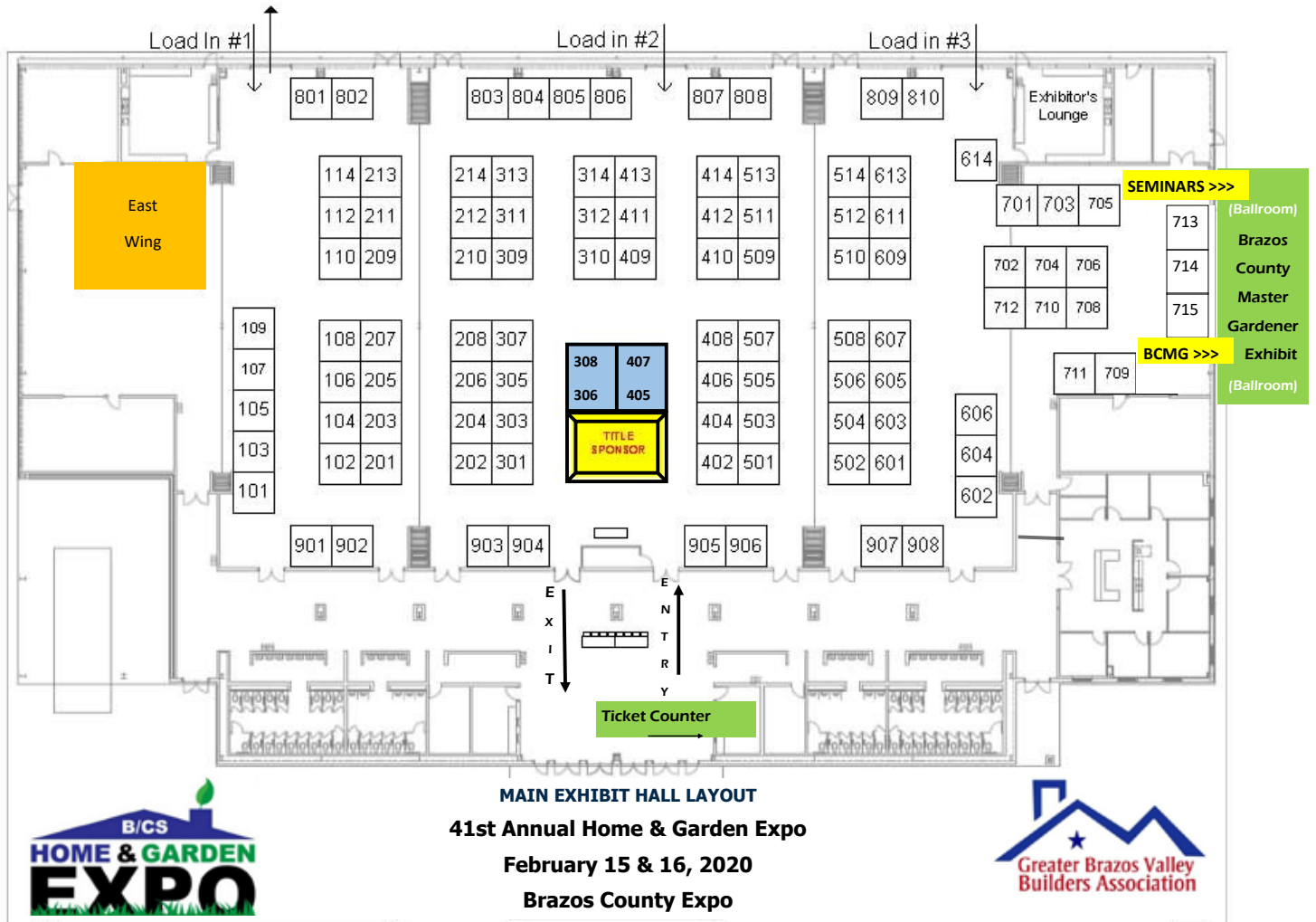


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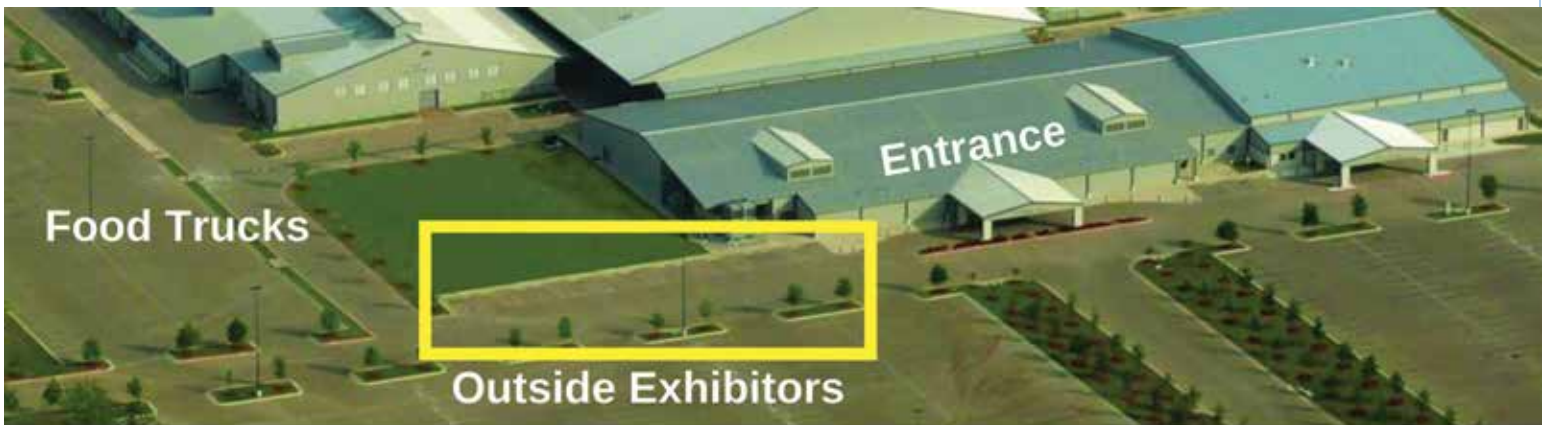


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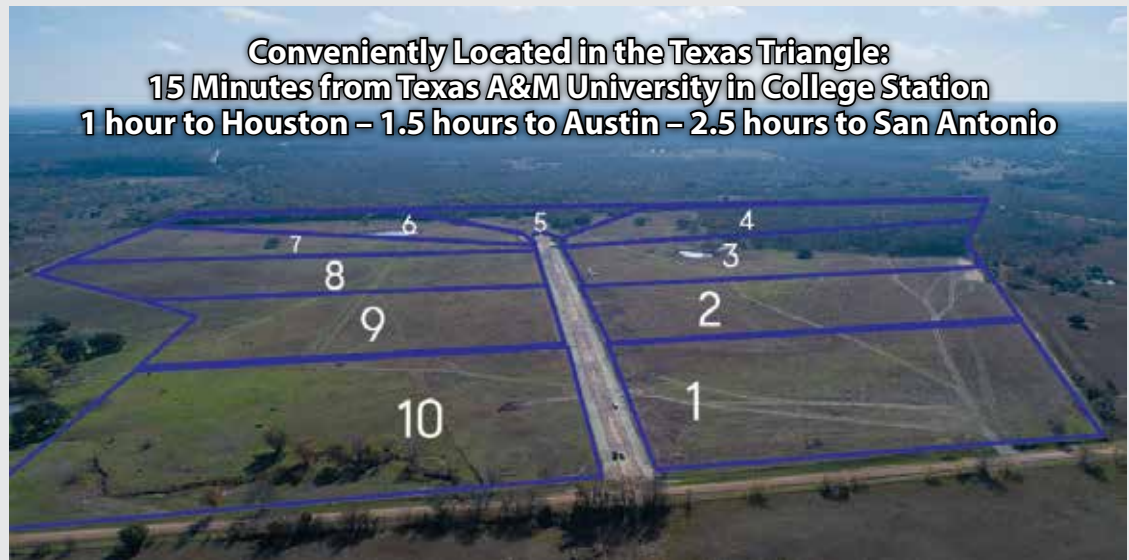
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RENOVATIONS THAT ADD VALUE TO YOUR HOME

BY NATHANAEEL COOK, COOK AND SONS KITCHEN AND BATHS, GREATER BRAZOS VALLEY BUILDERS ASSOCIATION REMODELERS COUNCIL CHARIMAN



Making home improvements will enhance your home's comfort as well as add to its value. However, not all home improvement projects are created equal. If you plan on selling your home in the near-future or long-term, take the time now to focus on those projects that offer the best return on your investment. While the cost and value of your home improvements will vary based on many factors, if you have an older home, the following projects often have the biggest impact when the time comes to sell your home.

Kitchen. From cooking to catching up with friends and family, the kitchen is the heart of the home. Not only will you enjoy a new kitchen, potential home buyers are attracted to a modern, functional space. According to Remodeling magazine's 2019 Cost vs. Value Report, home owners can recoup about 80 percent of the cost of a minor kitchen remodel. So, while a gourmet kitchen would be nice, it isn't necessary from an investment standpoint. Moderate updates such as replacing outdated appliances or cabinets are great ways to makeover a kitchen. Even small adjustments such as changing out old hardware or adding a new faucet can add up in a big way.

Bath. If you have bigger underlying issues such as mold or water damage, you should consider a complete bathroom remodel. Homes with these types

of issues will likely not pass a home inspection. You may end up paying for repairs — now or later. Your bathroom does not need to be completely gutted to add value to your home. Dated materials or fixtures can make a big difference with first impressions. A recent National Association of Home Builders survey of home buyers revealed that more than half (63 percent) preferred a white toilet, tub, and sink.

Curb Appeal. First impressions are key for home buyers. A fresh, inviting look can be achieved with a well-maintained landscape. Mature trees and trimmed grass can draw prospective buyers to a home. Beyond the landscaping, installing new hardware, doors, and windows can greatly enhance your home's exterior appearance. If you have panels that are loose, rotted, warped, cracked, or molded, it is time to consider



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having them replaced.

Interior Paint. A fresh coat of paint with a personalized or bold hue is a welcomed choice, but only if you're not looking to sell your home soon. If you are putting your home on the market, neutral colors are ideal. The color of your walls is only a small part of your home, but it can influence a potential home buyer. When buyers walk through a home, they often visualize what it would be like to live in the home, so it's best to use paint colors that won't distract potential buyers.

Roof. Another big-ticket home improvement — but one that will add significant value to your home — is a roof replacement. Remodeling magazine estimates that home owners can recoup about 68 percent of the cost of an asphalt shingle roof replacement, and 61 percent of the cost of a metal roof replacement. There are many roofing options available for homeowners, from a variety of colors and textures to longer warranties and enhanced energy efficiency.

To learn more about remodeling projects that improve value or to find a remodeler in the Greater Brazos Valley, visit gbvbuilders.org/remodeler.



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BEST BETS FOR HAPPY PETS

BY THE GREATER BRAZOS VALLEY BUILDERS ASSOCIATION



Eating a good meal, taking a nap, or playing outdoors are just a few of the simple pleasures in life that most pets and humans both appreciate. There are several ways you can show your pet how much they mean to you by incorporating certain design elements into your home. Many features will not only cater to your pet's lifestyle, but they also can enhance your home's appearance and add to its value.

Whether you're looking to buy a new home, remodel your existing home, or just need some inspiration for how to use your current space, here are a few ideas to get started.

Improving Comfort and Convenience

Designing areas within your home where your pet can eat, sleep, and bathe tells them they are just as much a member of the family as everyone else. Having these dedicated locations can also help reduce the amount of time you spend cleaning up after your pet.

Built-in eating areas are among the most popular design concepts

for homeowners with pets. Beneath the kitchen counter, under an island, or within a pull-out drawer are all great options to help save space and minimize spills.

Custom nooks provide your pet with a quiet retreat to nap or play. Look for opportunities to incorporate these nooks beneath bay windows, or convert a cluttered crawl space beneath stairs into your pet's private refuge.

Pet-washing stations in laundry/mudrooms can significantly improve the cleanliness of your home. An enclosed tiled area with an extended faucet can be used to give your pet a full bath or simply to clean paws after a romp outdoors.



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Selecting the Right Flooring

With the appropriate flooring, both you and your pet can live amicably without pointing fingers (or paws) at one another whenever a new scratch or a spill is discovered. Flooring options today are seemingly endless, and each type comes with varying levels of durability, so you'll want to do your research as well as consult with a professional before making the investment.

Bamboo flooring is becoming increasingly popular, especially among pet owners, for its hardness and resistance to stains. For those who are trying to be green, both bamboo and cork flooring are also good for the environment.

Hardwood floors have long been among the most desirable options, though many different types of wood and finishes are highly prone to showing wear over time.

Laminate, stone, and tile floors might not be your best option if your pet's comfort is a top priority. While they are much more durable and typically resist scratches better than other flooring, some pets will find them to be uncomfortably hard and exceedingly slippery.

To find a homebuilder, remodeler, or designer who can help you make the best home design choices for your pets, go to the member directory at gbvbuilders.org.



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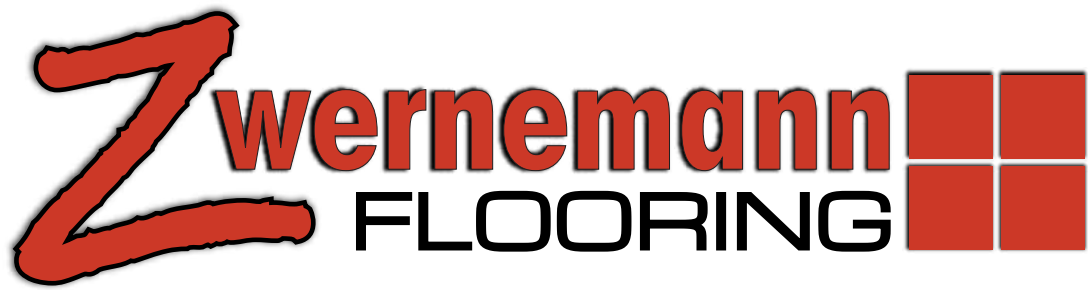
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FIVE TIPS FOR A MODERN MUDROOM MAKEOVER

BY THE GREATER BRAZOS VALLEY BUILDERS ASSOCIATION



A well-organized mudroom can reduce clutter near the entryway of your home. For some home owners, a mudroom is an actual built out space to store everything from gloves to sports gear. If you do not have a separate “room” in your home there are still plenty of ways to maximize the storage space near your entryway.

A well-designed entryway is also attractive to future home buyers. Keep the area near your home entrance organized and clutter-free with these tips.

Focus on functionality and space.

Before building out shelves or picking out wall art, think about how you plan to use the space. If you have an entire room, you may opt for more shelving to store household gadgets or hobby supplies. A closet without

the door near your entryway can be easily decorated and outfitted with hooks. A wall, not a room, will require an organized system with some items displayed or hidden, based on your preferences.

Think about your floor before the décor. This area of your home gets the most foot traffic (and mud!) so you'll need a durable, moisture resistant flooring option. Heavy duty flooring material is your best bet, such as tile or stone. You'll want something that is easy to clean since this space will be dirty often. If upgrading your flooring isn't an option, adding a wool rug can increase the functionality of the space since it is naturally resistant to mold and moisture.

Size up your seating options. Adding a built-in seating area or bench can be helpful for taking off your shoes. You can also place items or shoes in a tray or cubby underneath a seat. A flip seat can hide items away while making them accessible. Footstools can also serve as a

seating option for smaller spaces.

Get organized. Storage options are infinite, from hooks to bins to adjustable shelves and lockers. Before adding unique organizing options to your space, take an assessment of what you have. Do you have more hats or sports gear? Maybe you'll opt for more hooks than shelves or vice versa. Smaller items can be easily tucked away in bins and baskets. Once you've taken inventory you'll want to keep the most used items near your door.

Create a color palate. Since the mudroom will be the first area you see as you enter your home, you'll want to find a color or pattern that speaks the most to you. If you're adding new wall color, select a paint that is stain resistant or easy to clean.

For more information about the latest designs or to find a home remodeler in your area to help you create an inviting entryway, go to gbvbuilders.org for directory listings.

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BRIGHT IDEAS FOR HOME INTERIOR LIGHTING

BY THE GREATER BRAZOS VALLEY HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION



It's hard to beat the great natural light of spring and summer, but fall and winter do not have to be dark and gloomy. Take the opportunity to add interest, comfort, and function to a room with lighting.

A lot of rooms are really a blank canvas when it comes to lighting. You may have recessed lights already installed, but not much more. The multitude of styles of lamps and fixtures give you the chance to set a specific tone for the room, in addition to helping tie together existing chairs and furniture. Bulb choice makes a big difference as well.

Lighting can be classified into three types:

- Ambient lighting creates a base layer to establish the tone of the whole room.
- Task lighting illuminates a certain area to address the room's specific function.
- Accent lighting draws attention to the decorative features you love most.

Here are some ideas to help give you a little illumination inspiration for each room of your home.

Ambient Lighting

For a room that is truly a blank slate with no lighting, recessed ceiling lights are an excellent addition for filling the room with light without taking up what is sometimes precious floor space. The number of lights, the direction of the lights, and a dimmer switch make it easy to customize the amount and intensity of light.

Pendant lighting comes in many different shapes and sizes and is a great way to create ambient light with fixtures that make a statement. You can suspend multiple light fixtures from the ceiling at varying heights, which adds dimension and visual interest to a dining area, kitchen island, or hallway.

Task Lighting

Task lighting might include a table lamp as a focal point to establish an inviting

conversation area, or you may want a source of strong, white light over your office table to give you full view of your latest project. A floor lamp next to a comfy chair is just the thing for curling up with a magazine or book.

You can also use energy-efficient LED light strips to softly illuminate rooms from hidden sources. By placing an LED light strip under each overhead cabinet in your kitchen, you can brighten up the countertops where you chop vegetables or make a sandwich, or use it as a way to keep the room gently aglow after your big meal prep for the day is done.

Accent Lighting

Use accent lighting to draw focus to details in a room or attract attention to the lighting fixtures themselves. A chandelier can be a classy and fun addition to a room, and these days they come in a variety of price points and styles from funky to retro to ultra-modern.

Don't forget there are also ways to update or give a fresh look to existing



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fixtures and lamps, either with a new shade or globe or perhaps by removing the covering altogether and using a lower-intensity, industrial-style light bulb for that old-timey feel.

With lighting alone, you can transform your space and spark new use and interest in the rooms of your home. Maybe they'll inspire some other changes as well, such as an antique furniture piece or reupholstering a chair.

Do take care to install any fixtures properly, both to ensure safety and to ensure they look their very best. For an installer or remodeler you can trust, visit gbvbuilders.org/directory.



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GO GREEN, REDUCE ENERGY BILLS WITH SMART TECHNOLOGY

COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS



From “learning” thermostats to energy saving smartphone apps, it has never been easier to monitor and control your home’s energy use. While we all love doing our part to help the environment, the real draw here is how these simple solutions will help you save money by keeping those monthly energy bills low. Here are just some of many easy home energy-monitoring tools that can help your home run as efficiently as possible.

Smart Thermostats

With the dog days of summer fast approaching, many homeowners worry they won’t be able to keep their homes

comfortable without their energy bills going through the roof. Luckily, innovations in smart thermostat technology can help you keep your house cool and refreshing without breaking the bank.

Nest Labs offers the Nest Learning Thermostat. This sleek, minimally designed wall thermostat can be adjusted manually in your home or wirelessly from any location through your computer or smartphone. Each time you adjust the thermostat, Nest learns about your temperature preferences and daily life. It then uses this information to help you keep your home at a consistently comfortable temperature while simultaneously saving money on energy costs. For example, it learns to automatically adjust the temperature when you’re away at work, asleep at night, or when the weather unexpectedly changes.

Other similar programmable thermostats include the Ecobee Smart

Thermostat, the Honeywell Wi-Fi Smart Thermostat, and the Venstar ColorTouch Thermostat.

Smartphone Apps

Nowadays it seems like there is an app for everything, and home energy management is no exception. Among the many smartphone apps that monitor your home’s energy use is the highly rated Kill-Ur-Watts. It’s a free app that comprehensively monitors your home’s electric energy use by gathering data from your energy provider and relaying that information back to you through user-friendly, easy-to-understand graphs and charts.

Although this information has always been available to the inquisitive consumer through your energy provider, apps like Kill-Ur-Watts make it instantly accessible and easily digestible so you can actually put it to use. For example, it can help you identify what time of day it is cheapest to do your laundry or what appliances are

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getting neglected and should therefore be unplugged. These simple tips will not only improve your home's efficiency but also cut down on your electric bill.

Similar smartphone energy management apps include PlotWatt, WattBuddy, and Bidgely.

Meter Sensors and Smart Meters

Unlike the smartphone energy monitoring apps, meter sensors, and smart meters feed you information directly from your home's existing energy meter instead of sending data from your energy provider. They monitor every aspect of your electric energy use and continuously send information back to you. This helps you learn exactly when and where your home uses the most energy so you can make informed decisions about how to better manage energy consumption and keep costs down.

Blue Line Innovation offers two different meter sensors. The PowerCost Monitor tracks the cost of running specific appliances and shows where power is wasted, perhaps in electronics

you thought were turned off overnight or while you are at work. The Blue Line Optical Sensor uses optical readers attached to your home meter to monitor your energy use comprehensively, and alert you to any problems that could reduce your system's efficiency, such as clogged air filters.

Smart meters are only available through your utility company and make your home part of the "smart grid." The smart meters connect homes and utility companies in a two-way information stream with the goal of optimizing energy efficiency for homeowners and utility companies alike. They allow the utility to read the meter remotely so they can then offer you "smart" pricing based what time of day energy is cheapest. Homeowners can also look online or use apps to assess their home energy usage and reduce bills on



their own.

These are just a few home energy management products that can help you be a little kinder to the environment, not to mention your wallets, without sacrificing comfort or convenience in the process.

To get more great tips on how to go green and save on energy costs, visit gbvbuilders.org or contact a Certified Green Professional from the directory at nahb.org.



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REMODELING RIGHT: DIY OR PROFESSIONAL?

COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOME BUILDERS



It's fun and inspiring to watch TV shows about home design and remodeling – everything from the latest looks in countertops to whole-house remodels. YouTube and other online video sites are chock-full of helpful how-tos and demos to assist homeowners through countless do-it-yourself projects.

There are relatively simple home projects that can be completed by DIYers, such as hanging pictures, interior painting, caulking, and changing doorknobs and cabinet pulls. Homeowners with the correct tools and a higher skill level should be able to tackle some aesthetic work such as installing crown molding.

However, it's also important to know when to stop and hire a professional.

Remodelers can tell you lots of funny stories about siding installed upside down — and sometimes scary stories involving do-it-yourself electrical wiring gone awry. So before you buy the latest or trendiest gizmo

for your home, ask yourself a few questions.

How much do you know? Replacing the exhaust fan over your oven with a built-in microwave looks like a reasonably simple swap. But if you notice your kitchen lights are dimming when you zap your popcorn, you've probably forgotten that the microwave, unlike the exhaust fan, uses a lot more energy and likely needs a dedicated circuit. A remodeling professional knows that.

What if it doesn't work? That YouTube do-it-yourself video may make a tilework project look doable, but will YouTube give you your money back if you don't lay it straight? Professional remodelers may not know everything, but they do take responsibility for everything they do.

Are there any unintended consequences? In today's increasingly efficient and more air-tight homes, it's more and more important to look at the house as a system. Your new windows are keeping out drafts, but how are they affecting your home's air quality once the "natural ventilation" of the leaky old ones are gone? Do you need to look at mechanical ventilation systems? If so,

how big? A professional can tell you.

How do you know if it's right for your home? A professional remodeler can advise you on products, finishes, and appliances that match your lifestyle, location, house size, and budget and help you avoid spending money without a reasonable payback on either resource expense (energy and water, for example) or the sale of your home when you are ready to upsize or downsize.

How do you find a professional remodeler? There's a question with an easy answer. Contact the Greater Brazos Valley Builders Association, look on their online directory at gbvbuilders.org/remodeler, or search the National Association of Home Builders' Directory of Professional Remodelers, nabh.org/remodelerdirectory, to find a remodeler with the experience, educational qualifications, and knowledge to do the job right — the first time.

Find out more in person from a nationally recognized expert by attending the Remodeling Realities seminar presented at the Home & Garden Expo on Sunday, Feb. 16, beginning at 2 p.m.



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HOW TO RECYCLE UNWANTED HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

BY CHAD MURPHY, PRESIDENT OF THE GREATER BRAZOS VALLEY BUILDERS ASSOCIATION



Your home may be filled with items that are no longer useful but can potentially be manufactured into new products. Not only will getting rid of household items declutter your home, it also will help reduce waste sent to landfills, conserve natural resources, and create jobs in recycling and manufacturing industries in the United States. Before you toss out your unwanted household items, consider recycling the following:

Glass: Bottles, jars and non-food glass containers such as perfume or face

creams are recyclable. It is important to clean and dry items before recycling them. Leftover particles or liquids can contaminate other recyclables. Corks should be removed from bottles and can be composted. Larger glass items such as vases, glass drinking cups, window glass, and glass cookware cannot be recycled. Lightbulbs are also not recyclable.

Paper: Beyond documents, many types of paper can be recycled. Mixed paper is a common household item and can include discarded mail, magazines, and cardboard. Your home office may contain recyclable content such as letterhead, files, phone books, copier paper, or envelopes. Shredded paper is recyclable. Do not recycle paper that is wet, greasy, or soiled. Tainted paper is unsuitable for reuse.

Large Appliances: Even if a household item does not fit snug in a curbside pickup container it still may be acceptable for recycling. Large household appliances such as stoves, washing machines, refrigerators, or dishwashers are eligible for recycling. Appliances contain metal that can be reclaimed. You may be eligible for a rebate from a local retailer or utility company if you turn in your old appliance for a new energy-efficient unit. Your local waste management or public works department may have curbside pick-up available. Local scrap metal recyclers may be interested in your old appliances as well.

Hazardous Materials: Toxic materials should be carefully disposed of to prevent harm to people or the environment. Older materials found in your home,



garage, or shed can be considered dangerous, such as paint stripper with the newly banned toxic chemical methylene chloride. This type of toxic substance should be removed from your home with the appropriate personal protective clothing such as gloves. Empty containers may have hazardous residual chemicals. If your community does not have a local hazardous material recycling center or designated days for pickup, some businesses could properly dispose the substance. For example, some garages may accept used motor oil for recycling.

Plastic: Plastic jugs, jars, and bottles can be recycled. Like glass, plastic items must be cleaned and dry before it can be recycled. Keep in mind that plastic cannot only be found in the kitchen. Your bathroom may have items that can be recycled as well such as shampoo, liquid soap, or mouth wash. Empty plastic detergent or cleaning bottles in your laundry room or utility closet are also ideal for recycling.

For more information on how to recycle your household items in Brazos Valley, contact your City's Waste Management Department.



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TIPS FOR PORCH AND DECK MAINTENANCE

BY THE GREATER BRAZOS VALLEY BUILDERS ASSOCIATION



Summertime provides ideal weather to enjoy the porch or deck at home. Like your home's interior, you should keep your exterior clean and in good shape for optimal comfort. To help you enjoy your outdoor living space, here are some tips for porch or deck maintenance.

Cleaning: Sweep your deck and remove debris trapped in between your deck boards. A simple spray of water with a garden hose can remove dirt. Bleach will discolor your deck and wire brush can damage wood. To remove mold and mildew purchase a deck cleaning solution. Some cleaners can be harmful to plants so make sure they are removed or covered before applying a solution.

Repairing: Wear and tear from weather

can damage your porch. Conduct a visual inspection for loose boards and nails. Small issues can be repaired by removing, flipping, and refastening the boards. Splinters in wood can be sanded down. If you see rotting wood under the boards, you may need to consult a professional for repairs. If your boards are cracked, it is a sign it needs to be stained. If boards on your deck are split, you will need to completely replace the damaged board.

Staining: If your deck is cleaned and repaired you may want to consider adding a stain for a refreshed look. It is time for a new stain if your deck does not repel water easily. You should follow the manufacturer's directions for any stain or seal you apply. Drying time depends on the temperature and humidity level. Avoid applying any product to your deck or porch in the direct sun, which will dry out the finish too quickly.

Decorating: New patio or deck décor can liven up any outdoor space. Avoid selecting natural fibers such as jute or bamboo. This type of material absorbs moisture and could lead to mildew on your deck or porch. Add rugs and mats made of recycled plastics to maximize longevity and avoid mildew. Select furniture constructed with materials designed to withstand the elements, such as cedar or teak, which are also resistant to insect damage. Metallic furniture made from iron, especially with rust-resistant coating, is another durable option. You can top off any style of furniture with pillows and cushions made of synthetic fibers, which can starve off mildew or harmful UV-rays from the sun.

For more home maintenance tips to tackle early in the summer, contact info@gbvbuilders.org.

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completely transformed in a way that was unique to Kyle and I. We could not have been happier with the look and style of the venue. It's seriously everything I ever imagined and I'm so glad we were able to host our wedding at 7F Lodge. The venue is rustic yet elegant and the little chapel is the cutest ever!"

Since she did not want a wedding to begin with, Mackenzie relied heavily on her wedding planner from Alice and Apricot, Leslie Ochs.

"[Leslie] seriously did everything for me. I have no idea what I would've done without her," says Mackenzie.

More than any of the details of the wedding, Mackenzie was grateful for the people who made the day special. "Honestly, the best part about the wedding — other than marrying Kyle, of course — was just getting to interact with all of our family in a casual yet beautiful setting." *i*

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Supporting Pink Alliance

Spring Bridal Show Benefits Breast Cancer Support in the Brazos Valley

Compiled by **INSITE STAFF**



The 2020 Spring Bridal Show and Benefit will be held at the Brazos County Expo Complex on Sunday, March 1, from noon to 4 p.m.

Attendees may browse more than 100 vendors at the event and visit one-on-one with wedding professionals who can personalize your ceremony, reception, or honeymoon. Proceeds from ticket sales to the show benefit Pink Alliance, a nonprofit dedicated to providing support to breast cancer patients in the Brazos Valley.

Tickets are \$10 per person when purchased in advance online at babv.org; tickets are \$15 per person at the door and every person, including children more than 2 years old, must have a ticket to enter the show. Organizers note that no strollers are allowed in the show due to safety reasons. All tickets are non-refundable.

Prize drawings held throughout the show are intended for brides or grooms only, and all prize awards are subject to verification, according to show organizers.

In the past two decades, The Bridal Association of the Brazos Valley has donated more than \$165,000 to local charities in the Brazos Valley. The designated charity for the 2020 spring show is Pink Alliance — Breast Cancer Support of the Brazos Valley. Formed by five women who experienced the overwhelming emotions that come with the diagnosis of breast cancer, the mission of the organization is to provide educational resources to women in the community who receive a breast cancer diagnosis.

For more information about Pink Alliance — Breast Cancer Support of the Brazos Valley, including phone numbers for immediate information, visit PinkAlliance.org.

Check out these local businesses for all your wedding needs.

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BRAZOS VALLEY ART LEAGUE

The Fine Art of Friendships

By CHRIS ROGERS



Soon after French artists Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir became disillusioned with the traditional approach being taught in art schools and began sharing ideas with other artists, a movement known as Impressionism was born. When Spanish painter and sculptor Pablo Picasso and his friend Georges Braque shared an interest in taking apart objects to reassemble, Analytic Cubism was born.

Similarly, friends and members of the Brazos Valley Art League share ideas, discoveries, and opportunities when they come together. Originating in 1975, as two local art leagues merged into a single nonprofit organization, BVAL has grown and developed by opening its arms to artists of every style, opening doors to community locations where those artists can display their works.

BVAL President Nancy Schaan was recently pressed to find a new meeting location, so member Dary Dega, owner of one of our area's most successfully inclusive art schools and an exhibitor of art from around the world, promptly opened the

door to her gallery. "Come on in," Dega said. Her gracious hospitality, both unexpected and immeasurable, is the sort of friendship that art seems to arouse. Now, artists and art lovers gather monthly at Degallery to engage in fellowship and snack on munchies. Meanwhile, they enjoy a free demonstration by a BVAL member or a visiting artist, such as Marsha Wilson revealing her amazing process of pyrography.

Similarly, when BVAL's Wednesday Painters needed a location, Hobby Lobby opened its doors and said, "Come on in." Now, every Wednesday, artists gather at the store to create art together. There's no lesson or group activity. Instead, each person brings a project-in-progress — drawing, painting, quilting, you name it — to work on while sharing ideas and companionship.

Periodically throughout each year, members' works are displayed at local venues such as Downtown Uncorked, the Brazos Center, or Perrine Winery. Judged art shows and art sales are held at locations such as Post Oak Mall in College Station, The Gallery Downtown in Navasota, or St. Andrew's Episcopal

Church in Bryan. When BVAL needed a place for the annual Starving Artist sale in October, St. Andrew's said, "Come on in." Not only was the event financially successful for artists, for the church, and for BVAL, it was also a brilliant opportunity for art collectors to scoop up a bargain.

In 2019, four BVAL artists — Charles Wallis, Jay Schaan, Iva Banik, and Michael McHugh — engaged their unique talents to create an elegant sculpture commissioned by CHI St. Joseph Hospital. The Tree of Life is permanently located in the hospital's main lobby, located in Bryan at 2801 Franciscan Drive, serving as an enduring tribute not only to medicine but to the exceptional friendships that art inspires.

Joining BVAL is incredibly easy. Visitors are welcome at all member meetings, which are held on Mondays at Degallery, 702 University Drive, and memberships are available for individuals, students, or families. For more information, follow BVAL on Facebook or visit bvartleague.com. *i*

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THE KING'S SINGERS

The Magic of Human Voices

By KATIE JAMES



PHOTO BY REBECCA REID

This month, locals will get to experience a singing sensation from the United Kingdom that has been around for more than 50 years. The King's Singers, a six-man choral group, is coming to Rudder Theatre on Thursday, Feb. 27, at 7:30 p.m. thanks to MSC OPAS.

The King's Singers formed in 1968 as a group of recent grads from King's College, Cambridge. When they started doing concerts, they sang a variety of songs because they didn't have a big enough repertoire of any one style. Today, their range of styles is a hallmark of the King's Singers and one of the reasons they have found worldwide success.

"Our repertoire has an enormous amount of variety; we try to bring everything from super old to super modern in one concert," says bass singer Jonathan Howard. "Certain songs are fan favorites. We like to innovate and change, but we also sing those old favorites like Beatles songs, folk songs. We have a lot of popular Billy Joel arrangements. We don't sing them all in every concert, but we do want to honor that part of our heritage."

Howard has been part of the group for almost 10 years. The King's Singers have rotated through members through the years but carefully maintain the quality and the spirit of the original group through a selective audition process. Howard was invited to audition based on the recommendation of his old choirmaster.

"Somehow, I got the job," says Howard. "I was really lucky. I was 23. They have exactly the same line up — two countertenors, a tenor, two baritones, and a bass — and the bass before me had been in there for 23 years. He was retiring, and they wanted someone young. I was in the right place at the right time with the right people."

Although occasionally accompanied by an orchestra, the King's Singers almost always perform a cappella and without the help of any kind of amplification. Howard says their goal is to provide the magic you achieve with human voices alone.

"We create harmonics that make the sound much louder," explains Howard. "It's amazing how you can make something travel much further than the sum of its parts. It's a quirk of acoustics."

Between putting on 120 concerts in a year all over the globe and conducting summer schools and residential workshops, the King's Singers' schedule could be overwhelming, but Howard enjoys all the places he visits and the connections he makes.

"For me, my favorite thing to do at a show is to stand on stage and not just sing but sing to people," says Howard. "I look out and see people and make eye contact. That personal relationship I love more than everything else."

At their concert on Texas A&M University's campus, the King's Singers will have something for everyone, young and old.

"Our audiences are so mixed, and I love that," says Howard. "It really depends country to country: in the UK, we have a lot of older people come because they remember seeing the King's Singers on TV. In the States, there's been a resurgence in the popularity of a cappella, so we see many college students and high school students because of our variety."

Among the variety of songs performed, attendees of the concert will likely get to hear selections from the King's Singers' latest album, *Finding Harmony*, which came out at the end of January.

"[The album] has music from all over the world that shows the identity of the countries," says Howard. "Music is a really powerful force in the world right now. ... It's an important project for us. The world needs it right now. We want people to see the value singing has and get people to sing or listen to others singing."

All of the songs in the concert will showcase the King's Singers' pitch-perfect precision and show the audience why they have a loving, loyal fanbase around the world, says Howard.

"There's something incredibly intimate about six people on stage with nothing else," says Howard. "The program is emotionally charged. Human voices singing expresses something nothing else can. I'd love for people to come and share the experience."

Tickets for this MSC OPAS Intimate Gathering performance are available to purchase at boxoffice.tamu.edu. *i*

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KIDS HELPING KIDS

Empty Bowls, Jr.

By **SHELBI LEMEILLEUR**



Every year since 2013, students kindergarten through the 12th grade have helped other students fight hunger in the Brazos Valley through The Art Council's Empty Bowls, Jr. event. On Feb. 29, locals can be a part of this campaign at Allen Honda from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

For each \$10 donation at Empty Bowls community members can take home a bowl made by local students and teachers. Local restaurants provide a cup of soup and a slice of bread for each donation. Each bowl is meant to remind the community of all the empty bowls in the Brazos Valley community, and as such proceeds support in-school food pantries across the Brazos Valley as well as other Arts Council programs.

"This event has been really successful," says Amy Salvaggio, deputy director of The Arts Council. We have seen a lot of support from the community and see growth every year. I think the community gets behind supporting school food pantries and they can see where their donation is going."

Jody Gougler manages the school food pantry at A&M Consolidated High School. Their food pantry opened in 2013 — the second in Texas and first in the Brazos Valley.

"A lot of people don't realize that the need is in our community and Empty Bowls, Jr. raises awareness directly," says Gougler. "You have kids willing to create, put their heart and souls into the bowls, and donate to raise money and raise awareness — it's huge!"

You have to be 18 to utilize a food pantry, says Gougler. The Brazos Valley Food Bank and other partners provide backpacks with food for students younger than 10. So that leaves a gap between the two programs, which in-school food pantries can help fill. The funds from Empty Bowls allocated to the food pantry allow schools to stock their shelves and help students with a variety of needs. Gougler says each campus handles their pantry differently, but could include non-perishable food items, toiletries, household supplies, and more.

"A lot of people don't realize how prevalent food insecurity is and it's fluid," Gougler says.

The Arts Council Executive Director Sheree Boegner has been participating in Empty Bowls since before taking over the role of executive director last year. She has seen the impact not only on the food pantries, but the students donating their art as well.

"These bowls — they are creating art, then it goes to an event, and their bowl sells," Boegner explains. "Think of the confidence that goes into a kid that they know someone bought their art. We are building that creativity, building their confidence, and helping provide for services they need."

Empty Bowls also falls right into The Art Council's mission to make arts accessible to all residents and visitors of the Brazos Valley.

Everyone has the opportunity to further this mission on Feb. 29 with a \$10 donation for a bowl. For more information, visit acbv.org.



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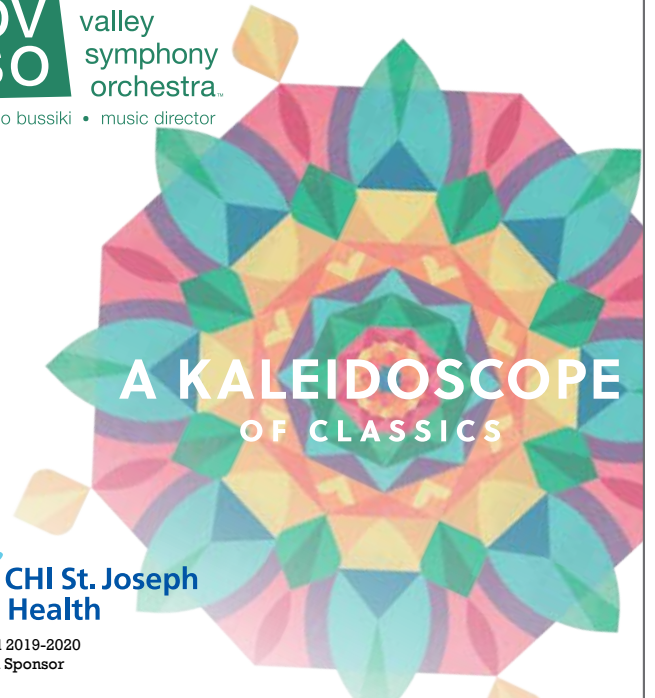
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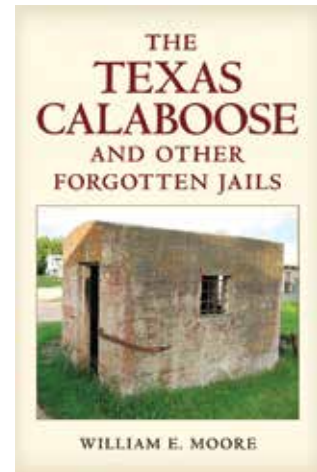
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BRAZOS READS

By **SHELBI LEMEILLEUR**



The Texas Calaboose and Other Forgotten Jails by William E. Moore

If you love quirky Texas trivia, then this is the perfect book for you. After extensive research and a lot of time spent driving through Texas, William E. Moore has compiled *The Texas Calaboose and Other Forgotten Jails*.

What is a calaboose? The simplest definition is a tiny jail, but there's so much more to it than that, which Moore chronicles through his descriptions of the jails and history behind many of them. Calaboosees were mainly used to house prisoners for a short period of time, whether they needed to be held until transport to a larger city jail could be arranged or just locked up overnight due to drunkenness or another petty crime. Most of these jails were rather primitive, with no electricity or bathroom facilities. However, one common thread among the calaboosees is the deep history the cells hold.

From Arp to Wortham and everything in between, Moore chronicles every known calaboose in Texas. Each description includes the location of the calaboose, owner, date built, size, and physical description of the property. Notable entries from the Brazos Valley include Caldwell, Wellborn, and Bedias!

The Texas Calaboose and Other Forgotten Jails is available through the Texas A&M University Press. [i](http://www.tamupress.com)

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Courtesy of **UNITED WAY OF THE BRAZOS VALLEY**



“Thank you for calling 2-1-1 Texas Bryan College Station. My name is Hilda, how can I help you?” asks Hilda Salazar at the 2-1-1 Texas call center at United Way of the Brazos Valley. Salazar is part of a team of people ready to answer the call to help residents who don’t know where to turn. 2-1-1 Texas is a free information hotline available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to all Texas residents. Anyone can dial 2-1-1 to receive information about local health and community resources. This call center, located in Bryan, is one of 25 call centers creating a network covering 100 percent of Texas residents.

“Last year, United Ways of Texas released a report on individuals who live above the poverty line, but might not have the resources to remain financially stable if they experience a crisis like losing a job or a major injury or illness, and if a financial disaster strikes, 2-1-1 Texas is there to answer the call for help,” says Alison Prince, president & CEO of United Way of the Brazos Valley.

Prince is referring to the ALICE report, which stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed individuals. These are hardworking families, but they might not be able to afford basic necessities, like child care or transportation. According to this report, 26 percent of Brazos County households are in the ALICE category, and 25 percent of households are living in poverty. For friends and neighbors in crisis, voices like Salazar’s and others at 2-1-1 Texas can offer hope.

In 2019, Brazos Valley residents placed 19,217 calls to 2-1-1 Texas. The top reasons Brazos Valley residents called 2-1-1 Texas were for housing assistance, utility assistance, and support services, like case management and holiday assistance, respectively. 2-1-1 Texas compiles this data to send to city and county leaders to share the needs of the community with them.

2-1-1 Texas plays a vital role in disaster response by providing information to those affected. When disasters like

floods, hurricanes, and tornadoes strike, residents can call 2-1-1 Texas for information about where to find shelter, food, clothes, donation sites, and many more recovery efforts. In 2017, 2-1-1 Texas’ disaster response services were deployed to help those affected by Hurricane Harvey. In order to handle the influx of calls during a disaster, 2-1-1 Texas uses increased staff time and volunteers to answer calls. 2-1-1 Texas holds regular trainings to teach the public how to be 2-1-1 Texas Disaster Volunteers.

Each year, 2-1-1 Texas celebrates national 2-1-1 Day on Feb. 11 by raising awareness about this vital community resource. This year, 2-1-1 Texas is planning multiple outreach events, including a booth at First Friday, city proclamations, and presentations at local businesses, as well as an online drawing to win prizes donated by Crossfit Obey, Grand Station, and Panera Bread with a combined value of more than \$400. To learn more about 2-1-1 Texas, visit uwbv.org/211texas. *i*



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TAKE A BITE

Support a Cause

By **JACKSON KING**



With a focus on raising money for local culinary arts, the Taste of Aggieland is a great way to sample a diverse palette of local restaurants, while also supporting a great cause.

The Bryan College Station Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the Brazos Valley Restaurant Association, hosts the 25th annual Taste of Aggieland event on Feb. 18 from 5 to 8:15 p.m. at the Brazos County Expo Complex.

Those who attend can sample a variety of food from local restaurants, including Campfire at the Stella Hotel, Rudy's BBQ, and Blake's Steaks.

The main focus of the event is to showcase area restaurants while raising money for the culinary arts. The event also features a culinary competition between five area schools: Rudder High School, Bryan High School, College Station High School, A&M Consolidated High School, and Franklin High School.

Helping fund local culinary arts programs is the best part of the event, says Clayton Rhoades, owner of Chicken Express, B/CS Chamber of Commerce member, and Brazos Valley Restaurant Association member.

"We look at the youth as the future of the world and the future of our businesses," says Rhoades. "If we can help mold them and teach them early that they can have a thriving career in the food industry, then it's good for all of us."

General admission tickets are \$30, and can be purchased in groups at a discounted rate. Tickets can be purchased at the door, or in advance at the Chamber of Commerce website. For more information, visit bcschamber.org. *i*

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HEART OF CHAMPIONS

Annual Heart Ball

By **BRANDI M. GOMEZ**



The Annual Heart Ball is on Saturday, Feb. 22, at 6:30 p.m. at the Miramont Country Club. This year's theme is Heart of Champions and honors Lauri Evans, who at 24 went into cardiac arrest and today lives to tell her unique and compelling story.

For the first time, the presenting sponsor for the event will be CHI St. Joseph Health. Various medical, business, and philanthropic leaders and organizations gather to celebrate what the community has done for heart research and treatments in the Brazos Valley.

This year the theme is based around the Olympics in Japan, wanting to create an experience of surviving and thriving in the world of heart disease and stroke.

"[The Brazos Valley] has over \$2 million of research grants and we work with a lot of programs in our schools and in our hospitals," says Brittany Cervantes, the corporate market director for the Brazos Valley American Heart Association.

The Brazos Valley American Heart Association benefits from this event, hoping to raise more than \$300,000 to aid in their research.

"A lot of people think that a heart disease is an old man disease and it is not that at all," says Cervantes of Evans' story.

Lauri Evans is a wife and mother who suffered a heart attack, but was saved by a

'I have learned that our community is home to some amazing hospitals and doctors offering truly exceptional health care'
— Evans

bystander who performed CPR until first responders arrived.

There will be a video presentation to tell her story and an opportunity for Evans and the first responders at the scene to say a few words about the experience.

"What we are hoping, having all of them there, is that it will make it impactful," says Cervantes. "We really hope to strive on the importance of CPR, because it truly does save lives and a lot of people don't know it."

Annually this event is filled with dancing, auctions, and speeches that promote awareness. This year, there will be entertainment by The Argyles all night long.

"One of our raffle items is a trip to Japan, which is very exciting," says Cervantes. However, winners have a choice of a trip to Japan or a necklace donated by David Gardner's Jewelers priced at \$10,000.

One of the changes this year is a plated meal provided and donated by Ben E. Keith Company, unlike the buffet guests had been served previously.

This annual event, with the help of Brazos Valley organizations and supporters, will help you learn about how you can help bring hope to the world of heart disease.

"I have learned that our community is home to some amazing hospitals and doctors offering truly exceptional health care," said Evans.

For more information or to buy tickets, visit heart.org.

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Physical Therapist Susan Hill started to experience the beginnings of osteoporosis after she went through chemotherapy treatment for cancer.

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After she started using the Strong Bone Health program, Susan noticed her balance had improved. Her spine bone density and her left hip had improved significantly. “When my bone density and balance improved, it gave me confidence to do the things I hadn’t

been able to do,” she says.

Susan enjoys the Strong Bone Health program because it is convenient and provides a positive environment for her to exercise. Each session is equipped with a personal instructor and professional grade machines for safe, effective exercise.

“My instructor, Hanna, is my cheerleader. She is so friendly and supportive and even the other clients will cheer me on. It’s so convenient because I can get it done in 15 minutes once a week and I can wear whatever I want because I don’t sweat. They keep it cool in the room I work out in and they’re always on time ... I can fit it in my schedule and go about my day like normal.”

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For more information about the New Strong Bone Health Program, call (979) 693-6100 or visit superslowzone.com/collegestation

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HOSPICE HAPPENING

A Roarin' Good Time

By **NICOLE SHAIR**



PHOTO COURTESY OF HOSPICE BRAZOS VALLEY

Hospice Brazos Valley, the only community-owned nonprofit hospice in the Brazos Valley, kicks off the new decade with their annual fundraiser, Hospice Happening. Founded in Bryan in 1989, Hospice Brazos Valley was the first hospice established in the Brazos Valley and has since served thousands of patients with award-winning hospice care and grief support services, according to the Hospice Brazos Valley website.

Hospice Happening is on Saturday, Feb. 22, at 6 p.m. at the Brazos County Expo Complex. Keeping with the theme of the Roaring 20s, the event features dancing to live music entertainment from Uptown Saxman, Edmond Baker, Jr., and the Texas Unlimited Band; a specially prepared three-course dinner; casino table games such as Blackjack, Texas Hold'Em, Craps, and Roulette; as well as interesting and unique silent auction items, according to the Hospice Brazos Valley website.

This event helps provide the funds and support needed to continue to provide the high-quality end-of-life care to those with limited resources.

"In order to be able to service the end-of-life care for patients and offer support to the families, we have to have support from the community to help us fund our mission," says Dianne Lero, Hospice Brazos Valley fund development supervisor.

To become a sponsor or purchase event admission, call (979) 821-2266 or visit hospicebrazosvalley.org.



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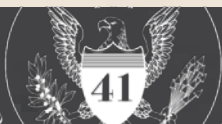


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Photo by: Mickey Hoelscher

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