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*Happy Holidays from everyone at INSITE!
May your days be merry and bright...*

*For additional copies, call (979) 823-5567 or email
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COOKING UP RENOVATIONS

Local Remodelers Offer Kitchen Trends & Tips

By MEGAN RODRIGUEZ

PHOTO BY MICHELLE WAGNER YEATTS



With housing trends constantly changing, it can be difficult for homeowners to know what is best for their next remodeling venture. Stearns Design Build and Beck Construction Inc. weigh in on recent trends in kitchen remodeling.

In recent years, kitchens have received more attention because they are such a popular room for guests to socialize in, according to Hugh Stearns, president of Stearns Design Build. Stearns earned The Big50 Award and the Guild Quality Service Excellence award at the 2017 Remodelers Summit in September.

"One thing we do frequently is remove walls to connect the kitchen to the rest of the house," Stearns says. "The kitchen is sort of the heart of the house, and it is

typically where a lot of activity goes on and people want to be connected."

According to Stephen Beck, owner of Beck Construction Inc., recent changes in consumer priorities are driving new trends with homeowners. Beck has been in the remodeling business for 30 years and is a founding member and past president of the Greater Brazos Valley Builders Association.

"People are going with more commercial-type ranges and hoods," says Beck. "I think people are interested in cooking these days, so they get appliances that are commensurate with that."

Some recent developments in remodeling are tied to homeowners' desire to be environmentally friendly and to get the most out of their kitchen. From

planning to aftermarket additions, there are many ways to make kitchen spaces more efficient.

"I have built a lot more recycle bins because people are a lot more conscious about recycling, and so they want things that help with that," says Beck. "They are more conscious getting efficiency out of their cabinets. There are a lot of built-ins and different ways to utilize the space."

Lucky for homeowners, many trends offer high-quality materials that are more readily available than they have ever been.

"Countertops are really improving the quality and variety of countertop materials, most notably in quartz," says Stearns. "For over 10 years now, we have had good quartz, which is an artificial stone, and even though it felt and looked



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PHOTOS BY MICHELLE WAGNER YEATTS

like stone before, now it's almost indistinguishable from granite, and the advantage of quartz is that it is more durable and requires less maintenance."

The overall style of kitchens are also changing from top to bottom, according to Stearns.

"There are lots of different options in flooring in terms of engineered flooring," says Stearns. "With our clients, cork flooring is a popular option in the kitchen and even tile and the ability to create tile that looks like wood. The most trendy place is typically color. It is almost whimsical with how quickly color schemes change in kitchen trends. We are trending away from the white, but they're still quite popular."

People seem to prefer clean lines, clean space, and less clutter for an overall more beautiful kitchen, according to Beck.

"We rarely put in two-handle faucets anymore; everyone wants a pull-down spout instead of the sprayer on the side," says Beck. "The cabinets are a lot more involved these days with adjustable shelves and all the things you can do to make cookie sheet dividers, and they are rarely just flat on the outside. They have depth with different heights and crown molding."

While there are many important details that go into a renovation, Stearns says many remodelers who are not focused on design overlook lighting. However, there is so much innovation in this area it should be seen as a top priority. One of the many changes in lighting is the shift to LED.

For those considering a renovation, a clear vision of what you want is essential, says Stearns, though he cautions to be wary of where these ideas originate. "Some of the first steps are identifying what it is you want to achieve," he says. "What is it you want from your kitchen? Lots of times trends are not in a good direction, so do the research and hire a professional to make sure it's something that is durable and will last in your kitchen."

Beck suggests calling a remodeler to get an idea of what the cost of the job will be and asking for an extensive list of references. Beck says he always gives 30 to 40 references so every customer feels at ease putting their home in his hands. Most problems can be alleviated by proper communication, according to Beck, which is why people need to find remodelers who they are comfortable with and fit their personality. *i*

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Kathy Scott, owner of Real Estate BCS and a lifetime career member of both the BCSAA and TAA. After 22 years managing multifamily properties, I opened Real Estate BCS, a real estate brokerage that specializes in residential sales, leasing, and property management. The best part about being a member of the BCSAA is the lifelong friendships that have been made over my career. One great thing about BCSAA members is that they are members for life! The association is wonderful and offers so much value that the members become lifelong members and friends.

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The purpose of the BCSAA is to further the professionalism, and integrity of the rental housing industry, through professional education, community awareness and affirmative legislative representation.



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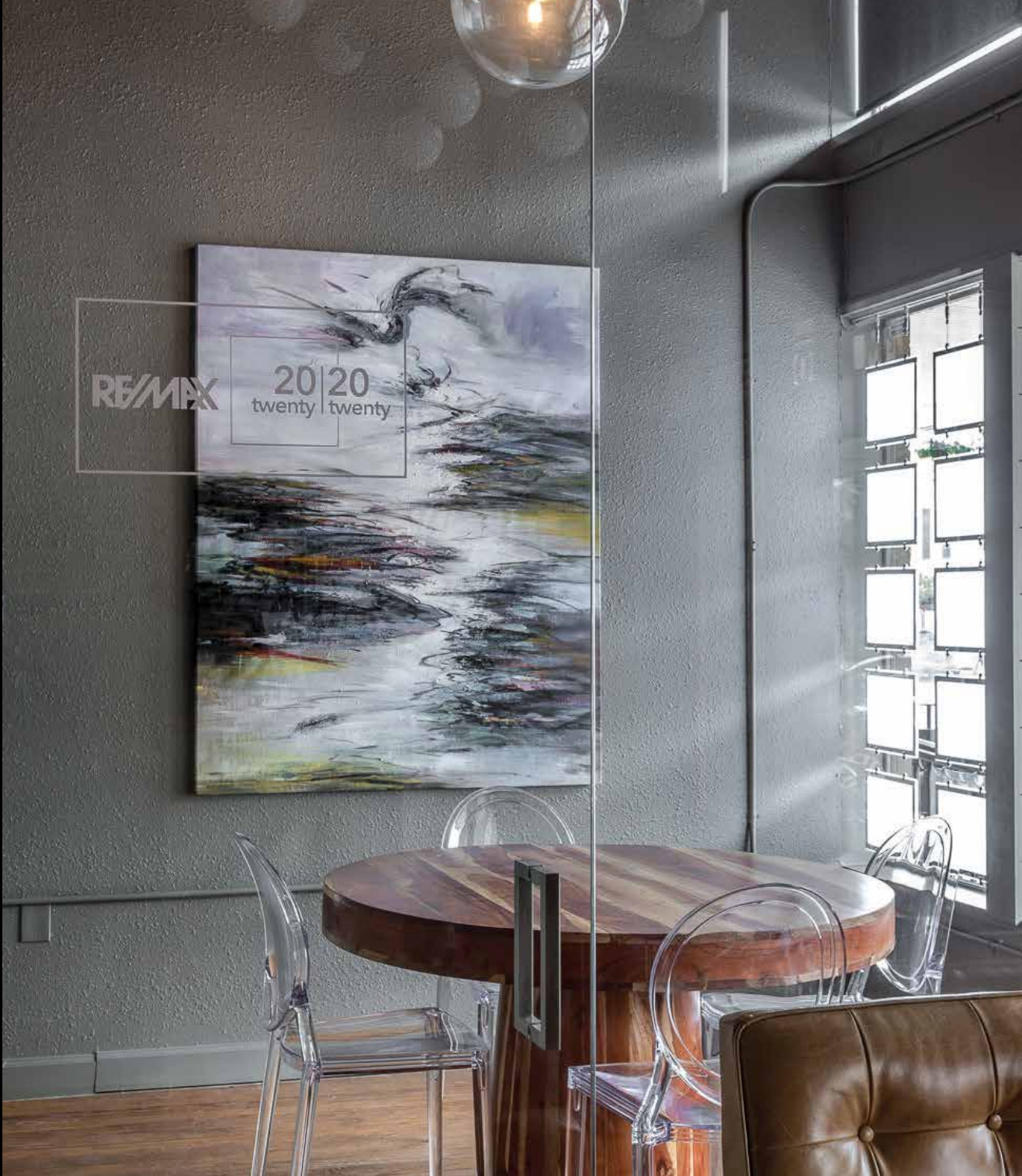


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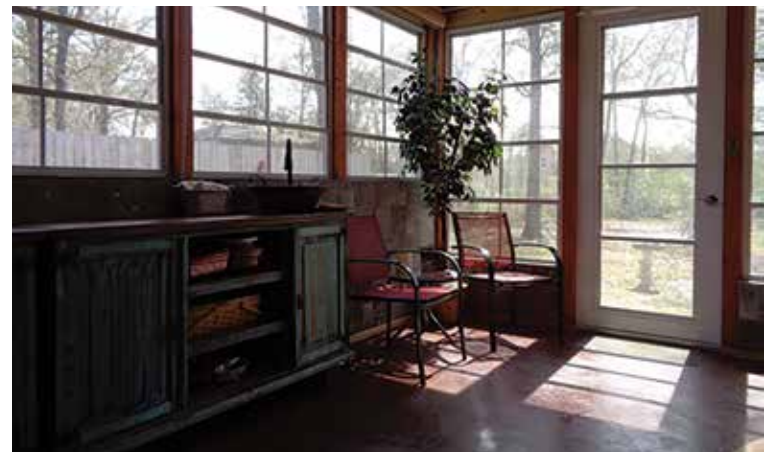
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Check the easy directory on page 14 for fast finds!

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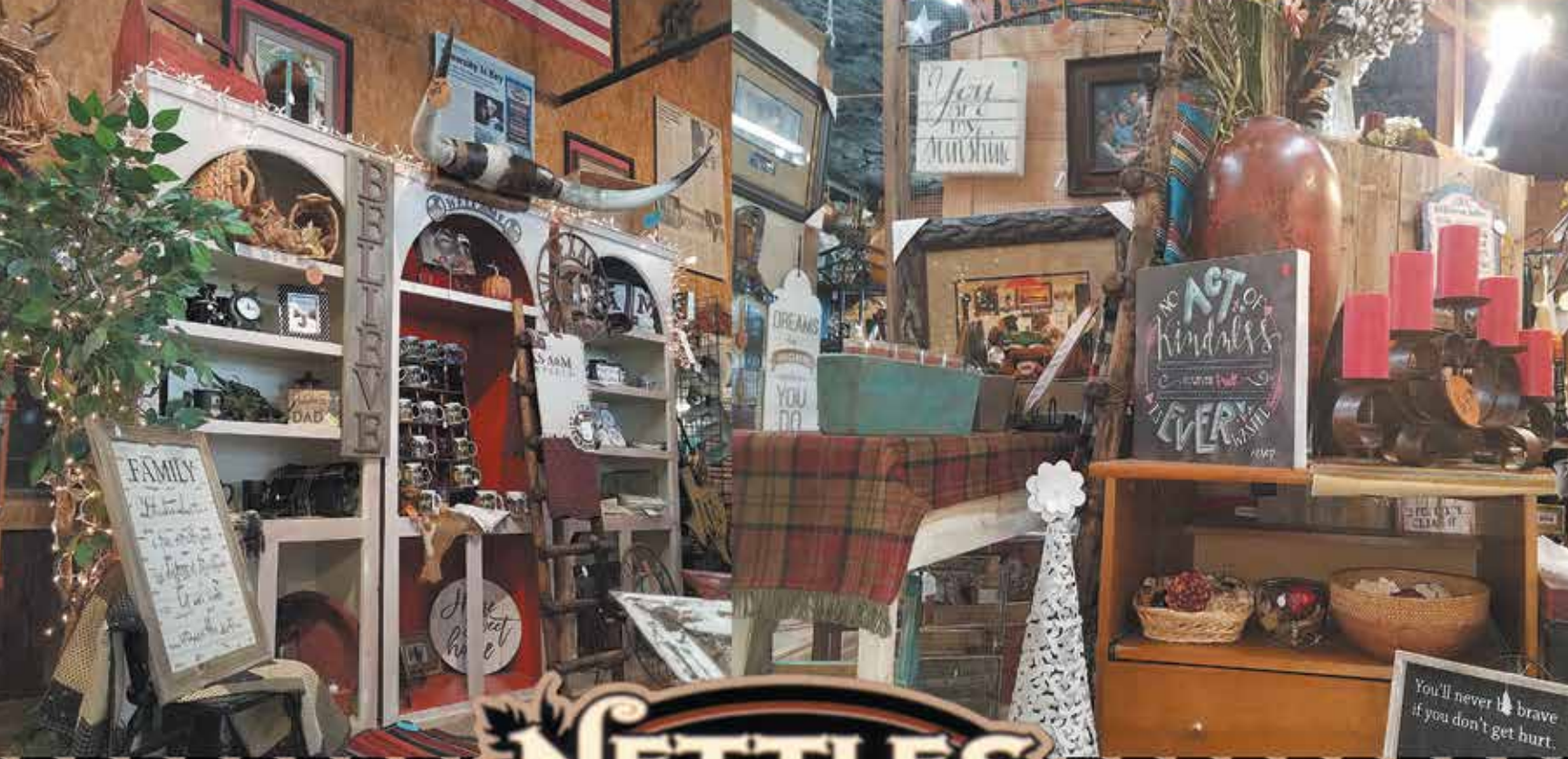
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2017-18 HOLIDAY PLANNER

Winter Activities for the Whole Family

Compiled By **RACHEL KNIGHT**

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA



CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK



Anderson

Twilight Firelight

wheretexasbecametexas.org
Nov. 25, 4:30 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Board a replica stagecoach in downtown Anderson and travel back to 1850. Tour the Fanthorp Inn State Historic Site, restored to its 1850s candlelit appearance; ride a replica mule-driven stagecoach; enjoy period music; dance; visit with interpreters in period clothing; and learn about the rich history and culture of the site.

Christmas on the Brazos

wheretexasbecametexas.org
Dec. 9, 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Kick off the holiday season at Washington on the Brazos with a day full of historical Christmas fun. Starting at 10 a.m., the Star of the Republic Museum will host “make-and-take” period crafts, and will extend their hours to 6:30 p.m. From 1 p.m. – 3 p.m., staff dressed in period clothing will be entertaining visitors with tales from Charles Dickens (Independence Hall).

Brenham

Holiday Movies at Simon Theatre

thebarnhillcenter.com

Nov. 25, 2 p.m. & 7 p.m.;
Dec. 1, 7 p.m.; Dec. 2, 7 p.m.

Take a break from the hustle and bustle of holiday shopping while still enjoying the holiday spirit with Christmas movies showing at Simon Theatre. On Nov. 25, *Elf* will show at 2 p.m. and National Lampoon’s *Christmas Vacation* will start at 7 p.m. The *Polar Express* will hit the screen on Dec. 1 at 7 p.m. *It’s a Wonderful Life* will show on Dec. 2 at 7 p.m.

Blinn College: Snowkus Pocus

blinn.edu/boxoffice

Nov. 26, 7 p.m.

Blinn College will bring an enchanted winter wonderland to center stage when they perform *Snowkus Pocus*. This fantastical tale is told through dazzling cirque, breathtaking ballet, and incredible acrobatics sure to melt the audience’s hearts.

Unity Theatre: The Best Christmas Pageant Ever

unitybrenham.org

Nov. 29 – Dec. 3

This Christmas-themed comedy is sure to add a little cheer to this holiday season. Five performances of *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* will take place this season. The show starts at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 29 through Dec. 2 and at 4 p.m. on Dec. 3.

Jingle Bell Market

visitbrenhamtexas.com

Dec. 1 & 2, 10 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Ant Street Inn will host a holiday crafts market in their ballroom. Here shoppers can find crafts, handmade items, and rare gifts. Downtown shops and boutiques will be open late in celebration of Brenham’s Christmas Stroll & Lighted Parade. Parking and admission are free.

Brenham Christmas Stroll & Lighted Parade

downtownbrenham.com

Dec. 1, 5 p.m. – 9 p.m.;

Dec. 2, 8 a.m. – 9 p.m.

Enjoy live entertainment and holiday shopping as you stroll

along the beautifully lighted downtown streets. A parade will take place Saturday, Dec. 2, at 6 p.m.

Caldwell

Red & Green Chili Championship Cook-Off

caldwelltx.gov

Dec. 9

Gather your cooking team, grab some cooking utensils, and head to Caldwell for the 5th Annual Red & Green Championship Cook-off.

Categories for entries include breakfast tacos, hot chocolate, Bloody Marys, dip your chip, beans, exotic chili (venison, elk, etc.), green chili, red chili, and margaritas.

Mad Hatters Tea Room

madhatterstearoom.com

Dec. 9, 11 a.m., 12:30 p.m., & 2 p.m.

Get into the holiday spirit at Mad Hatters Tea Room. Enjoy a three-course tea time with savories, scones and pastries, and your choice of hot tea. This year’s event has a new twist with a chocolate tea pairing that is sure to satisfy your sweet tooth.

Christmas on the Square

caldwelltx.gov

Dec. 9, 3 p.m. – 7 p.m.

This event provides Christmas fun for the entire family with elf school, pictures with Santa, Downtown shopping, a wreath contest, a gingerbread house contest, lighted window displays, and more.

Chappell Hill 2017 Christmas Home Tour

chappellhilltx.com

Dec. 9, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Tour beautiful historic homes and gardens at this year’s Christmas Home Tour hosted by Chappell Hill Garden Club. Tickets are \$20 pre-date or \$25 at the door. For more information call (979) 337-1200.

Crockett

Piney Woods Fine Arts Association: The Nutcracker Ballet

pwfaa.org

Dec. 8, 7:30 p.m.

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Brides!

The Essential Planning Guide

Navasota Artist in Residence Program
The Navasota Artist in Residence Program (AIRP) is a unique project developed by the City of Navasota in collaboration with the Arts Council of Brazos Valley to increase art and culture throughout the county. The program is housed at the historic Art Center and nearby business. A large studio space is reserved for artists that feature their work in gallery spaces, a local museum and art center. Each artist contributes to the program by providing artwork and participating in the local art scene. The program is open to all artists and is free of charge. The program is open to all artists and is free of charge. The program is open to all artists and is free of charge.

Art in Brazos Valley Edition of Insite

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www.navasotatx.gov

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Pinterest f t i

Space Reservation Deadline: January 12, 2018

Grand Ballet's dancers. This holiday classic will be performed at the Crockett Civic Center and is sure to become a Christmas favorite for all who attend.

Montgomery Christmas in Montgomery
experiencemontgomery.com
Dec. 9, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Enjoy a day full of Christmas festivities in historic Montgomery. Enjoy Breakfast with Santa, a holiday marketplace, a Christmas Parade, the 40th Annual Candlelight Home Tour, and more!

Bryan College Station Santa's Wonderland
santas-wonderland.com
Nov. 10 – Jan. 7
The biggest Christmas attraction in Texas brings Christmas cheer to the Brazos Valley each year. Santa's Wonderland is composed of Santa's Town, a nostalgic Texas Christmas Village, and a magnificent trail of lights. Stroll through more than 3 million lights, listen to live music entertainment, shop until you drop, and participate in their myriad activities for all ages.

Wine Dinner
veritaswineandbistro.com
Nov. 16, 6 p.m.
Treat yourself and your loved ones to a fabulous wine dinner featuring Domaine de Cristia wine. Award-winning wine maker Jean Baptiste Adam from France will be at Veritas for this holiday themed event. Don't miss the opportunity to get into the holiday spirit with amazing food and unbeatable wine.

Thanksgiving Day Rehearsal Dinner
cstx.gov
Nov. 17, 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Adults age 55 and up are invited to test their Thanksgiving recipes at

this potluck Thanksgiving celebration located at the Southwood Community Center. Bring a side dish or dessert to share. Turkey will be provided.

Lights On!
downtownbryan.com
Nov. 17, 6 p.m.
The annual lighting of Downtown Bryan is sure to put you and your family in the holiday spirit.

Cafe Eccel
cafeeccelbryan.com
Nov. 18, 11 a.m. – 11 p.m.
Start your holiday feasting early at Cafe Eccel with a five-course meal paired with Spanish wines and liquors. Then, avoid the stress of cooking on Thanksgiving Day and enjoy a platter of light and dark meat with all the fixings from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Fun Run at Santa's Wonderland
santas-wonderland.com
Nov. 18 & 19
Participants will run or stroll through three million Christmas lights and end with a one-of-a-kind finish in the heart of Santa's Town, a Texas Christmas village that features unique shops, music, food, and Santa. The Christmas 5K Fun Run will take place on Nov. 18 and will start at 5:30 p.m. The Christmas Mile Fun Run will start at 6 p.m. on Nov. 19.

Thanksgiving with Messina Hof
messinahof.com
Nov. 23, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Messina Hof will provide a three-course meal this Thanksgiving with food ranging from a traditional turkey dinner to a delicious pumpkin cheesecake. Reservations are required. For more information call (979) 599-7339 or email event@messinahof.com.

Turkey Trot
bcsturkeytrot.com
Nov. 23, 8 a.m.
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College Station Medical Center
 the **MED**★



CHRISTMAS ARTS & CRAFTS SHOW

of Thanksgiving dinner, and enjoy the holiday spirit in the annual Turkey Trot 5K race and 1-mile fun run. Start a new tradition and bring the whole family to the race that starts at 8 a.m. on Thanksgiving Day. The race starts and stops in the Baylor Scott & White Medical Center and Hospital parking lot off Rock Prairie and Highway 6.

Christmas in the Park

cstx.gov

Nov. 23 – Jan. 1

Guests have the opportunity to view more than one million lights decorating the beautiful 47-acre Stephen C. Beachy Central Park from 6 p.m. to 11

p.m. each day starting on Thanksgiving and ending on New Year's.

Wine & Wassail

downtownbryan.com

Nov. 25, 4 p.m. – 8 p.m.

This holiday sip and shop event takes place in Downtown Bryan. Each store will feature one wine tasting and one holiday beverage (hot chocolate, wassail, cider, or something warm). Advanced tickets for this event are available through Nov. 19 in Downtown Bryan stores for \$25 and online through Nov. 24 for \$30. The day of the event, tickets will be available at participating stores for \$35.

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Brazos County Expo Center
 Dinner | Auction | Gaming | Dancing
 Texas Unlimited Band | The Casino Connection

HOSPICE HAPPENING 2018
A Salute to Those Who Serve!

Christmas Wonderland Holiday Spectacular

mscopas.org

Nov. 28 & 29, 7:30 p.m.

This delightful and enchanting Christmas show will hit the Rudder Auditorium stage to get the Brazos Valley in the holiday spirit. Glittering costumes, a dazzling cast, and the highest kicking chorus girls this side of the North Pole set the scene as Santa and his merry helpers take you on an unforgettable nostalgic journey.

George Bush Presidential Library Community Tree Lighting Ceremony

bush41.org

Nov. 30, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

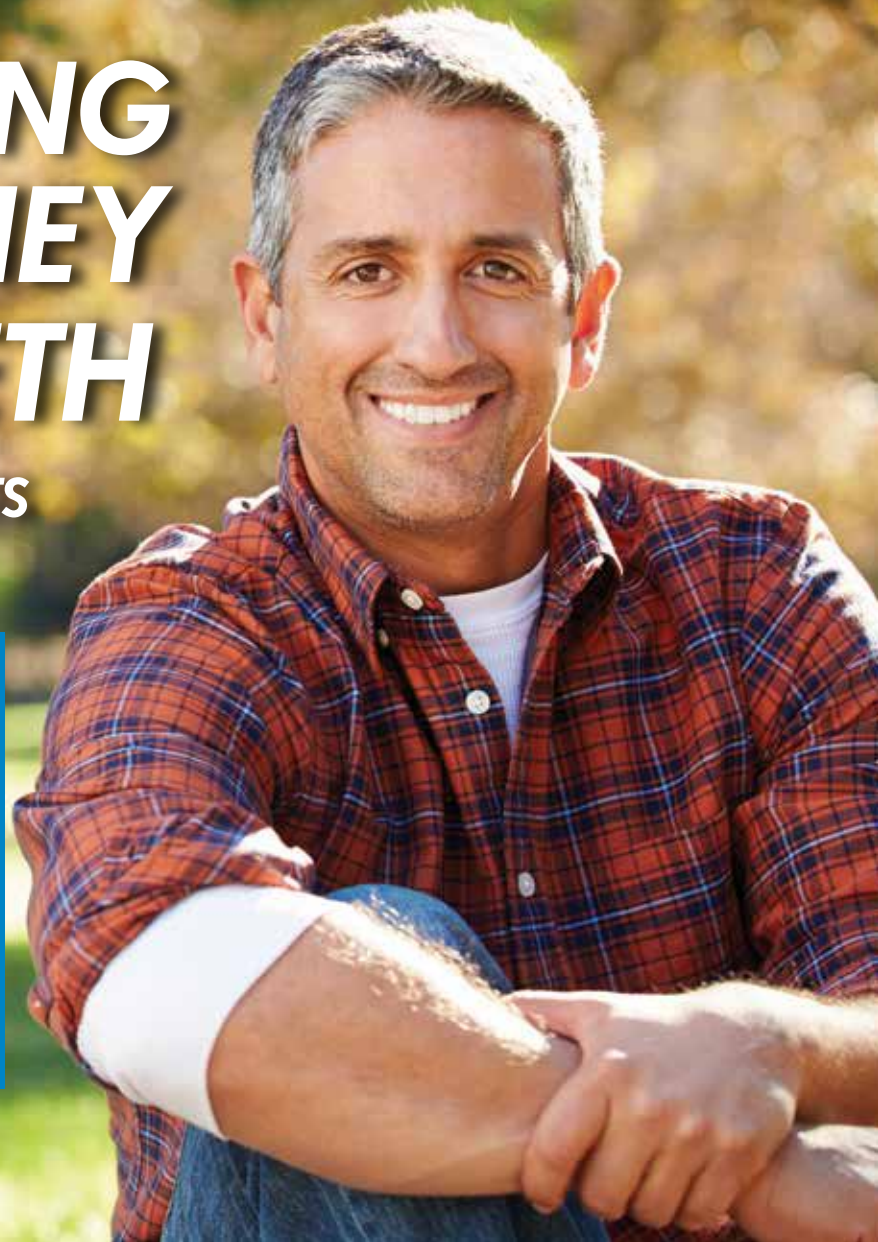
Modeled after the tree lighting ceremony that takes place annually on the White House grounds, the ceremony will include musical entertainment, a celebrity guest tree lighter, and a public reception.



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Holiday Magic

bryantx.gov
 Nov. 30, 5:30 p.m.
 Sue Haswell Memorial Park will be filled with holiday magic and fun for all ages. This free event will feature Christmas lights, classic carols sung by local student choirs, hot chocolate, warm cookies, bounce houses, and a real snow hill.

Blinn College: The Happy Journey/The Long Christmas Dinner

blinn.edu/boxoffice
 Nov. 30 – Dec. 3
 Blinn College will perform two holiday themed one-act plays by Thornton Wilder to put the audience in the holiday spirit. Performances will take place Nov. 30 through Dec. 2 at 7:30 p.m. and on Dec. 3 at 2 p.m.

Stagecenter Theatre: The Game's Afoot or Holmes for the Holidays

stagecenter.net
 Nov. 30 – Dec. 16, Thurs. – Sat., 7:30 p.m.
 In this Christmas play, Sherlock Holmes has invited his fellow cast members to his Connecticut castle for a weekend of revelry. When one of the guests is stabbed to death, festivities quickly turn dangerous. Danger and hilarity abound in this murder mystery set during the Christmas holidays.

36th Annual Christmas Arts & Crafts Show

elmoreproductions.net
 Dec. 2 & 3, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.
 The Christmas Arts & Crafts Show offers shoppers a truly remarkable and one-of-a-kind shopping experience held in the Brazos Center. This year's show will feature more than 100 booths offering unique Christmas gifts including jewelry, wearable art, ceramics, homemade jellies, salsa, sweets, and more.

Holidays in the Rotunda

bush41.org
 Dec. 2, 10 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
 This free event takes place in front of the museum's magnificently decorated



19-foot Christmas tree in the rotunda of the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum. Live entertainment and Santa's workshop will get you in the yuletide spirit. There will be cookies, hot chocolate, and punch served during the activities.

Holiday Crystal Wine Trail

texasbluebonnetwinetrail.com
 Dec. 2 & 9, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.;
 Dec. 3 & 10, 12 – 5 p.m.
 Jump start your holiday season by touring the Texas Bluebonnet Wine Trail during this holiday event. Participants will partake in two specially selected wine tastings paired with a terrific holiday food sample at each winery on the trail and will receive a commemorative crystal champagne flute at the sixth winery they visit.

Jingle Bell Fun Run and Bryan College Station Christmas Parade

cstx.gov
 Dec. 3, 1:15 p.m.
 The College Station Parks & Recreation Department will kick off the holiday season in B/CS with their 28th Annual Jingle Bell Fun Run. Register before Nov. 26 for the fun run or before Nov. 19 to receive a t-shirt. The two-mile run starts at 1:15 p.m. and will be followed by the B/CS Christmas Parade.

Parmeson Wine Dinner

maddenscasualgourmet.com
 Dec. 7
 This holiday themed dinner will warm your Aggie wine-loving heart as Aggie wine maker Tom Parmeson from Sonoma, California, pairs his fabulous wines with a gourmet holiday meal at Madden's in Downtown Bryan. Call (979) 779-2558 for reservations and times.

Downtown Bryan Lighted Parade

downtownbryan.com
 Dec. 8, 6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m.
 The only lighted Christmas Parade in B/CS will hit the streets of downtown Bryan

and bring holiday cheer to all who attend. Floats, vehicles, fire engines, and more will join the parade line up creating a night of fun.

Breakfast with Santa

cstx.gov
 Dec. 9, 9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
 Children of all ages are invited to join Santa for a free hot breakfast at the Lincoln Recreation Center. Activities will include song and dance performances from local youth groups and Christmas-themed carnival games. Ages 15 and under will receive a gift from Santa.

Magic of Christmas with CHI St. Joseph Health

chistjoseph.org
 Dec. 9, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
 Find the magic of Christmas with CHI St. Joseph Health at the Brazos County Expo Complex. This family friendly holiday event will feature continuous activities, crafts and refreshments, live performances, snow slide, appearance from Reveille, strolling magician, bounce houses, train rides, face paintings, and more.

B/CS Kids Marathon

bcsmarathon.com
 Dec. 9, 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
 B/CS Marathon weekend will kick off on Saturday with a 1.2-mile race for kids at Wolf Pen Creek. The event is open to any child under the age of 12. All participants will be greeted with a custom medal at the finish line. The race is divided into two waves. Wave one is for 3-7 year olds and starts at 12:30 p.m. Parents are permitted to run with their children in wave one. Wave two is for 8-12 year olds and starts at 1 p.m.

B/CS Marathon

bcsmarathon.com
 Dec. 10, 7 a.m.
 The full- and half-marathon races will begin at 7 a.m. Groups and relay team divisions will be offered. All participants will receive

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23

Leave your aprons & dirty dishes behind, and make reservations with your friends and family for Camp Allen's Thanksgiving Celebration! Thanksgiving Buffet served from 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM. The menu includes roasted turkey and ham with all the trimmings, dressing, freshly baked rolls, traditional vegetables, and assorted pies. Over night packages are available.

TO REGISTER OR LEARN MORE
VISIT CAMPALLEN.ORG OR CALL 936.825.7175



a participant shirt. Race finishers will receive a finisher's jacket and custom finisher's medal. Food and beer will be served following the race.

Brazos Valley Symphony Orchestra: Holiday Pops Concert

bvso.org

Dec. 10, 5 p.m.

Outstanding BVSO Brass and Percussion musicians, organist James Faith, The Sanctuary Choir of Canticle and The Canticle Ringers of Christ United Methodist Church, and the College Station High School Varsity Women's Choir will bring classic holiday favorites to the stage at Christ United Methodist Church.

Brazos Valley Choral: A White Christmas

bvchorale.org

Dec. 11, 7 p.m.

The St. Joseph Catholic High School choir will join Brazos Valley Choral at this concert at Christ the Good Shepherd Chapel in Bryan. Familiar holiday songs and an invitation to join in the sing-along make this concert a family favorite event.

Holiday Open House

cstx.gov

Dec. 13, 10 a.m. – 12 a.m.

Adults ages 55 and up are

invited to enjoy holiday treats, browse information tables highlighting available programs, take photos with Mr. and Mrs. Claus, and more at the Holiday Open House at the Southwood Community Center.

Bryan Viking Band Winter Concert

bryanvikingband.com

Dec. 14, 7 p.m.

The Bryan High Viking Band will spread holiday cheer and showcase their talents at this year's winter concert. The performance will take place at Margaret Rudder High School Auditorium.

Wreaths Across America

wreathsasscrossamerica.org

Dec. 16, 11 a.m.

Wreaths Across America will place wreaths on veteran gravestones at Aggie Field of Honor and the College Station and Bryan Cemeteries to remember and honor those who died serving their country. This event is open to the public, and donations for wreaths are welcome. Volunteer opportunities are available.

Christmas Cellar Tours

messinahof.com

Dec. 16 & 23, 6:30 p.m.;

Dec. 17, 5 p.m.

Celebrate the holiday season while sipping a glass of warm mulled wine and strolling

the estate. Learn about the history of the winery, including Christmas traditions from Italy and Germany. Four different varieties of wine will be available for tasting directly from the tanks and barrels in the festive Cellar Room.

New Year's Eve Party

messinahof.com

Dec. 31, 7 p.m. – 1 a.m.

Ring in the New Year at Messina Hof for an evening of glitter, wishes, and midnight kisses. Dinner in The Gallery will be followed by dancing, an open wine bar, dessert, a countdown to midnight, and a sparkling wine toast to the New Year at midnight in the Estate Wine Cellar.

Franklin Mistletoe Market

Nov. 18, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Get a jump-start on your holiday shopping at this one-day market in the Pidgeon Center. Clothing, wreaths, baked goodies, home décor, jewelry, and more will get holiday shoppers in the spirit of the season.

Navasota

Navasota Theatre Alliance: Tuna Christmas

navasotatheatre.org

Dec. 7 – Dec. 17

This holiday themed comedy is both an homage and a satire of small town southern



BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

living during the holidays. The show starts at 7 p.m. Thursday through Saturday with Saturday and Sunday matinees starting at 2 p.m.

Round Top

Round Top Christkindl Market

roundtop.org

Dec. 1, 5 p.m. – 10 p.m.;

Dec. 2, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.;

Dec. 3, 11 a.m. – 4p.m.

The first Christkindl Market is sure to get holiday shoppers in the spirit of the season. During this time The Compound's barns and grounds will be transformed into a holiday market reminiscent of those found in Europe. Get ready to explore all kinds of unique gift ideas, seasonal foods, warm winter drinks, and festive music with free entry.

Round Top Christmas Parade

roundtop.org

Dec. 2, 6 p.m.

Celebrate the Christmas season and enjoy a festive parade around the Town Square. Get in the holiday spirit with parade floats, Christmas carolers, animals, classic cars, and vintage tractors.

19th Annual Christmas Tour of Homes and Historical Places

roundtop.org

Dec. 2, 11 a.m.

Stroll through Round Top admiring homes on display, featuring beautiful Christmas decorations inside and out. Light refreshments and holiday drinks will be served

at each home.

3rd Annual Santa Paws

roundtop.org

Dec. 9, 12 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Get your pets in the holiday spirit with pet parades, prizes, holiday food, and pet adoption at Bybee Square. Bring a pet product or gift including treats, food, toys, cleaning supplies, and litter for shelter dogs and cats. The event benefits the Gardenia E. Janssen Animal Shelter.

Round Top Festival Institute: The Nutcracker Ballet

roundtop.org & festivalhill.org

Dec. 9, 4 p.m.

This encore performance of Tchaikovsky's holiday classic, The Nutcracker, is always a crowd pleaser. Danced by children for children of any age, this performance is expected to sell out once again, so plan to purchase tickets early. Visit festivalhill.org or call (979) 249-3129 for ticket purchases or more information.

New Year's Eve Community Party

roundtoprifle.com

Dec. 31, 6 p.m. – 12 a.m.

With a toe-tapping band, community snack table, toasts to the New Year, and traditional New Years Eve midnight snack of cornbread and black-eyed peas for good luck, your whole family can enjoy ringing in the New Year at the Round Top Rifle Association. Doors open at 6 p.m. so attendees can decorate their tables. Music starts at 8:30 p.m. *i*

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WWW.WHERETEXASBECAMETEXAS.ORG

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HOLIDAY HACKS

Surviving the Season

By HANNAH GERKEN



PHOTO BY CRYSTAL LITRELL PHOTOGRAPHY



FARM PATCH GIFT BASKET



PHOTO BY CRYSTAL LITRELL PHOTOGRAPHY

Garland around the fireplace, the smells of home-cooked food wafting from the kitchen, music and laughter, a chill in the air ... and an endless to-do list. It's the holidays! Eliminate the stress and make more room for joy as you take back your holidays – one hack at a time!

Pick Out a Live Tree as a Family Tradition

Branch out from an artificial Christmas tree and pick out a live tree from the Farm Patch Market. Fresh trees, wreaths, and garland arrive from the North and bring a new dimension to family fun, says Molly Ward, Farm Patch marketing manager. "No matter what is going on in life, to have that ritual of picking out a tree brings people together," says Ward. Nervous about having a live tree for the first time? No fear. Farm Patch provides care tips, including giving the trunk a fresh cut so it is ready to take up water when you get home. They also wrap the tree for transport. Wreaths and garland are sold by the foot for an always perfect fit. Trees can be purchased at the Farm Patch store on South College Avenue in Bryan and at the tree lot on University Drive behind the fountain in College Station. The tree

lot opens the day after Thanksgiving on Friday, Nov. 24.

Gifts That Gather No Dust

For a knockout gift for a coworker or that uncle who already has everything, Farm Patch has seasonal cheer that won't become clutter after the holidays. Fresh poinsettias, wreaths, and beautiful plants inspire smiles and come wrapped with ribbons and holiday items to make it special. Fruit baskets are always the perfect fit and can either be customized and pre-ordered or grabbed pre-made on the go. Farm Patch carries local and imported delicacies for gift baskets, including always popular pecans. Whole or shelled, pecans are perfect for shipping to far-flung family or in holiday meals. Go straight for the best and buy mini and regular pecan pies that are baked in-store with the fresh pecans. Pre-order pies for just-baked deliciousness.

Circle X Country Store in Bryan also offers a selection of gifts, wide enough to cover your entire shopping list. From home décor items, Christmas signs, and rockers to popular clothing lines, like Cinch Jeans and Dear John denim, they can help accommodate your shopping. They

also offer Sweet Tea Lotion & Soaps, a great gift for someone in your office or as stocking stuffers. Circle X Country Store can also help satisfy your family's sweet tooth with homemade pecan pies, cakes, and Granny Vych's cinnamon rolls and kolaches. Store manager Greg Duewall says the cinnamon rolls and kolaches are made from special recipes passed down from his grandmother, Granny Vych. There's no shame in needing to test-run these delicious gift ideas, so stop by and eat a cinnamon roll while relaxing in the rockers on their front porch. You can pre-order the homemade pies, cakes, and goodies, or you can purchase locally grown in-shell or shelled pecans to bake pies yourself.

If pecans are the way to the heart of your friends and coworkers, you can also visit Royalty Pecan Farms for more great gifts. From pecan halves and pieces for baking to gift sets and pies, they have a wide variety of gift-worthy items. They offer both regular and flavored pecans. The most popular flavors are Cinnapecan, Tex Mix, and Dulce de Leche. Gift sets make great gifts to ship to family members you aren't able to see over the holidays. You have the option to buy in

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PHOTO BY CRYSTAL LITRELL PHOTOGRAPHY

bulk and have them shipped. You can also pre-order the pies and set your store pick-up time.

Lighting Your Home Bulb-by-Bulb

Shine a light on the Christmas holidays with decorative lights on your home or business. The tradition of driving around to see lights while drinking hot chocolate is a joyous memory for many. Avoid the stress of storing, untangling, hanging, and worrying if the lights work when you let the pros from EcoZapp take over. Joshua Zapalac, owner of EcoZapp, says the goal is to provide “hassle-free Christmas light installation.” LED lights means the strands can last five to seven years and are more energy efficient. They can customize the design for your home and are known for using a variety of color schemes. The ability to change out individual bulbs allows them to make any color pattern that fits your style. EcoZapp will maintain the lights throughout the season and then take the lights down and store them for you until next year. So stay off the ladder, and let the professionals bring the lights to you!

Memorable Meals Minus the Work

Are you nervous about cooking a large meal and getting everything done on time? If so, consider taking on only half of the cooking battle by pre-ordering your main dish, sides, or desserts. Only you will know your holiday classic meal didn't all originate in your kitchen!

At Readfield Meats, opt for one of their popular holiday items: the spiral sliced ham, smoked turkey, or beef tenderloin. Or try the Cajun fried turkey, tur-duc-en, or a chicken that can be stuffed with different options. Along with the ready-to-serve meat, you can also order pans of broccoli and rice, sweet potato casserole, or baked potato casserole.

If your family loves some good ol' Texas BBQ, you can order meats from C&J Barbecue. With packages available to customize your dinner plans, their most popular holiday main dishes are brisket, sausage, turkey, and ham. You can even bring in your own turkey or ham and they will smoke it for you. For side dishes, choose from homemade cornbread dressing, green bean casserole, and sweet potato casserole by the pan to feed your whole family/party. If you aren't hosting a dinner party, but just want a homemade Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner for two, you can purchase individual meals that are ready to go.

With Kreuz Market, you can order your Thanksgiving meal ahead of time or even come by on Thanksgiving Day to solve those day-of emergencies. They offer full meals, either hot and ready or cold to save for later. With traditional holiday entrees and BBQ, they have options for everyone. Their most popular main dishes include turkeys, hams, brisket, and smoked turkey breast, sliced or whole. Pair these with one of their signature sides: macaroni and cheese, white cheddar macaroni and cheese, German potatoes, or sauerkraut. You can also take part in the holiday spirit of giving by participating in their canned food drive that started on Nov. 1. Kreuz Market will match the number of cans you bring in, so give back to those in need while taking the stress out of holiday meals.

For many families, ham is a staple entrée when it comes to the holidays. HoneyBaked Ham offers fully cooked and ready to serve hams, so that you can spend less time in the kitchen and more time with your family. You can choose to have it bone-in or boneless, and can also choose from other options like turkey, pot roast, and ribs. Pair this with a side

of potato salad, broccoli bacon bliss, mandarin pineapple dream, or many other options and you will be ready for any family meal.

Everyone knows the holidays are never complete without dessert. Must Be Heaven can help satisfy your sweet tooth with delicious pies. Owner Donna Morrow says the five most popular holiday pies are pecan, dutch apple, buttermilk chess, chocolate meringue, and pumpkin. Along with pies, they also offer cookies and vegetable/fruit party platters.

Make sure to contact any restaurant early to secure your meal fresh and on time. Plan ahead with no do ahead!

Hire Help to Elevate Your Event

If you are planning a large corporate holiday celebration or even a small home gathering, consider hiring a party planner or rental company to make the evening less stressful. Party Time Rentals and Details Party Rental both offer options to de-stress and make your event more comfortable.

Rent cocktail tables or consider tenting your outdoor space. This can help a small area seem less crowded and give guests more room to mingle.

Think outside the Christmas party box! Take a Pinterest peek for new themes, which is a trend, according to Delores Crum, president and chief inspirational officer of Party Time Rentals. She reports return customers strive to theme the party differently each year to keep their guests guessing. From “Cowboy Christmas” to “Flannels & Frost,” make your event represent you. Then visit places like Details Party Rental and Party Time Rentals to supplement with linens, dishes, and more.

Depending on the age group of your guests, you can add dimension to your



PHOTO BY CRYSTAL LITRELL PHOTOGRAPHY

holiday party by adding stations. For kids, rent a popcorn machine, plan games, and offer things like a hot chocolate bar or a cookie/candy dessert bar. To spark the interest of your adult audience, Party Time Rentals can also help you plan a station for whiskey or scotch tastings with the specialized glassware you will need.

For those hosting a large Thanksgiving or Christmas family dinner, renting your dishes and glassware is a great option. Then once you finish with the linens and glassware, there is no clean-up required. Just give the dishes a quick rinse and Party Time Rentals will take care of the rest.

Even decorating is a snap. Details Party Rentals offers lit trees with basic ornaments. With specialty items like birch trees, glass vases, and more, they can capture any theme without a million trips to the craft store.

Details, Details, Details

A little time planning ahead reduces stress at party time. Script the event and the times you want things to occur. Rent a few extra plates and glasses in anticipation of unexpected guests or things breaking. And if you are planning to have a hot chocolate bar or other station, remember that kids make messes and plan for this to occur outside.

Remember to think beyond decor and logistics to make sure your event appeals on all sides. Do you have a signature scent for the party? Pine and birch are two classic scents for the holidays. Also, decide if you want to have any Christmas music playing in the background. All of these little details can help round out your party to make it the best it can be. *i*

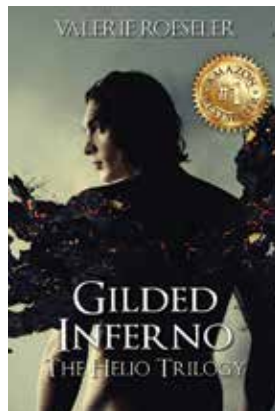


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BRAZOS READS

Winter Break Binge

By **SHELBI LEMEILLEUR**



The Helio Trilogy by Valerie Roeseler

Book 1: Midnight Divine

In the first book of The Helio Trilogy we meet Ivy. She's a college student with a troubled past who loves to drive fast, rock out in a band with her roommate Alice, and is trying not to fall for bad boy Jack, who isn't all he appears to be. Ivy's world will soon be flip-turned when she learns more about Jack, her friends, and Ivy's own past.

In her debut novel, "Midnight Divine," Valerie Roeseler spins an epic tale revolving around angelic mythology. The Paranormal Urban Fantasy is reminiscent of others in the genre. The action is packed, the body count is high, and the love triangles are complex. Can Ivy control her own fate, or will she be subjected to the destiny laid out by her parents?

Book 2: The Gilded Inferno

When Ivy Harris returns in "The Gilded Inferno" she must face two battles: a war of love and a war between darkness and light. She finds herself in nearly impossible situations as she continues to transition into her true angelic form.

Ivy has to learn to adapt to situations quickly as the war between darkness and light is fast approaching. She wonders if there is a grey area in some matters or if everything really is black and white. On top of that, she wrestles with feelings for two men, loving both equally, but in different ways. How can she love one without hurting the other? How could she ever choose between the two of them since life without one or the other seems impossible? It's up to Ivy to decide as she prepares for the impending war.

Book 3: Vermillion Horizon

Roeseler's final book in the trilogy is nonstop action until the last page. Ivy has many difficult choices to make – between darkness and light, and between one love or another – to determine her fate and so much more.

"Vermillion Horizon" follows the pattern of the previous books, with Ivy facing mountains and valleys along with many climaxes and calms before the storm. There is little rest for Ivy and her friends as they prepare for her to fulfill her destiny. Just when they think they are in the clear, another obstacle presents itself. The ending and Ivy's choices may surprise you, but Roeseler does a great job of tying up all the loose ends and creating a memorable story.

The books in the Helio Trilogy by Valerie Roeseler are available on Amazon as paperback or ebook. *i*

Are you a local author? Would you like your book to be featured in Insite Magazine? Email shelbi@insitebrazosvalley.com for more information.

WHITE CHRISTMAS

Brazos Valley Chorale Annual Christmas Concert

By MEGAN RODRIGUEZ



As December approaches, two local choirs are preparing for a concert that is sure to excite even the grumpiest Grinch with the replication of a famous performance and an audience sing-along. Brazos Valley Chorale is preparing for their annual Christmas concert, which will be a joint performance with the St. Joseph High School Choir.

The Brazos Valley Chorale's entire season pays tribute to a famous musician, and the White Christmas performance is no exception.

"Our overarching theme for the whole year at the Brazos Valley Chorale is the celebration of Leonard Bernstein," says Don McAvoy, Brazos Valley Chorale artistic director and conductor. "2018 will be the 100th anniversary of his birth, so our whole season has focused in on Bernstein's music. He only did one Christmas album in his whole career and that was with the Mormon Tabernacle choir and they recorded it October of 1963 and it was called Joy to the World ... I wanted to connect with the Bernstein celebration by replicating that Joy to the World album he made with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir."

The performance also aims to be fun for the whole family with opportunities for attendees to join in and sing along to "Oh Come All Ye Faithful," "Joy to the World," and "Silent Night." In addition to the Brazos Valley Chorale and St. Joseph High School Choir, there will be selections for the women's chorus, the men's chorus,

Join Brazos Valley Chorale and St. Joseph High School Choir on Dec. 11 at 7 p.m. at Christ the Good Shepherd Chapel

and the chorale's chamber singers, according to McAvoy.

Songs selected for the St. Joseph Catholic High School Choir were hand-picked by the group's director Roger Boening.

"My choir is going to be doing an arrangement called 'Bethlehem' and it's based upon 'Oh Little Town of Bethlehem,'" says Boening. "We are going to be doing an arrangement of 'Joseph Dearest, Joseph Mine' which just seemed to fit my group really well, so those are the two that I picked that we are going to do by ourselves."

As the Brazos Valley Chorale's most popular concert of the season, the Christmas performance has been known to fill their former venue to capacity,

leading to the need for a larger host site. For this year's concert, Reverend Monsignor John A. McCaffrey of St. Joseph Catholic Church generously opened the doors of Christ the Good Shepherd Chapel, which has a seating capacity of approximately 2,400 people.

While preparing a concert for a crowd this size requires countless hours of hard work, McAvoy says the end result is what he looks forward to the most.

"There is a lot of preparation that goes into planning big events like this and the thrill and excitement of the actual event makes all that worthwhile," says McAvoy. "The music comes alive and the audience reacts to it, and it's just a wonderful thing for music to connect with people and to bring to life the spirit of Christmas."

The concert will be held on Dec. 11 at 7 p.m. at Christ the Good Shepherd Chapel, located at 600 South Coulter in Bryan. Tickets may be purchased online at bvchorale.org, at the door on the day of the concert, by calling (979) 476-8199, or from any Chorale member. Student tickets are \$5; adult tickets are \$15 if purchased in advance or \$20 at the door.

"Even though it is early in the month of December, people are so busy between thanksgiving and Christmas with a lot of different preparations," says Boening. "I think these concerts are just a really nice time for people to sit and think about what's important during this time of year and in the midst of all the busyness, just take a breather and enjoy the season." *i*

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BOOTS & BBQ

Arts Council of the Brazos Valley

By JOHN MCGEE



Jump into your dancing boots and bring a large appetite to the Arts Council of the Brazos Valley's 5th Annual Boots and BBQ. The fundraiser is on Saturday, Jan. 13, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and promises to be an afternoon of fun.

A live music performance from The Great American Boxcar Chorus kicks off the afternoon. Barbecue from Hans Hammond, beverages from Messina Hof, and more are available to quench everyone's hunger and thirst. Local artists will sell their creations to the public, classic cars will be on display, and a silent auction will take place.

Boots and BBQ began as an alternative way to celebrate the Arts Council's anniversary, according to Chris Dyer, CEO of the Arts Council.

"We realized we already had our big annual dress-up event every September, so we thought we wanted to do something that's a lot more casual and relaxed for our general membership," says Dyer. "It's more of a fun, relaxed afternoon event."

It's also a great way to support the organization.

"We are always working hard to support our programs and the things we do in the community, so it helps us raise funds for that as well," says Dyer.

Tickets are \$40 and include a meal ticket, two drink tickets, and door prize tickets. The private event address is enclosed within the reservation confirmation; reservations are mandatory.

Proceeds from the event will support the Arts Council's general programs such as Art Reaching Teens for Life and Artist Connect.

"We try to focus this event on funding for the kids programs that we do here," says Dyer.

Art Reaching Teens for Life is an artist-mentored youth program that provides individuals in juvenile detention and on probation with a foundation for making better life choices. Artist Connect places artists in local schools to work directly with the students at no cost to the school. More information on both programs is available on the Arts Council's website.

To RSVP or for more information on the event, visit acbv.org or call (979) 696-2787. *i*



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