

Brazos Valley

March 2010

INSITE

EATS & TREATS: A GUIDE TO FOOD & FUN

REAL ESTATE

BY THE NUMBERS

Why you should

1. BUY NOW
2. BUILD NOW
3. INVEST NOW
4. THINK COMMERCIAL

SNEAK PEAK

Annual Woman's Club Home & Garden Tour

TOP MARKS

The Best Companies to Work For





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Nathan Cook

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Mary Derkowski

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M. F. "Trey" Thurmond

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Fantastic opportunity in Oak Hill Acres, Washington County. Don't miss this 4 bedroom, 2 bath home on 1.3 acres with a pool. Also has a 1 bedroom, 1 bath mother-in-law home which overlooks the pool. Also has a formal dining area and an extra family room. #58769 \$264,900
Robert Adams

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Nathan Cook

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M. F. "Trey" Thurmond

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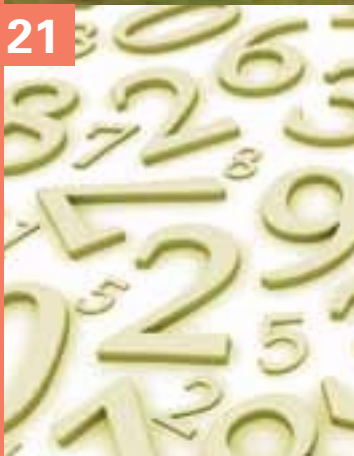
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For those whose favorite restaurant I'm about to offend ... well, **GET OVER IT**. After you work up an appetite reading about the positive (really) news about the local real estate market, you'll want to spend some time with Eats & Treats on pages 30-31 and The Guide dining and entertainment supplement in this month's Insite.

WARNING: READING WHILE HUNGRY MAY MAKE YOU WANT TO DRIVE TOO FAST TO A LOCALLY OWNED RESTAURANT.

Besides good food, the other important common denominator among restaurants in Eats & Treats and The Guide is these establishments are all **LOCALLY OWNED**. Okay, you can't order a plate of something that looks just like what you would order in Houston, Dallas ... or Scranton ... but that is an advantage in my list of good things. What you can do is talk to the owner and ask how their family is doing, what's new on the menu and have they ever considered adding a Gluten Free menu for wheat-sensitive guests? **TRY THAT LAST ONE WITH A CHAIN RESTAURANT.**

It would be unfair to start listing my faves out of Eats & Treats, but I can't help urging B/CS readers to **PLAN A DAYTRIP AROUND THE FOOD** at the end of a short Brazos Valley drive. Catepillar Pie at the Mad Hatters in Caldwell, burgers and shakes at Southern Flyer at the Brenham airport and anything from Funky Art Cafe in downtown Brenham are a destination unto themselves.

Excuse me. I need to drive somewhere, **POSSIBLY TOO FAST**, right now. — **Angelique Gammon**

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MARCH EVENTS

Beginning March 2 and continuing throughout the month, join **The Children's Museum of the Brazos Valley** for a variety of special programming and activities for children. Highlights this month include Healthy Kids programs, special nights at the Museum, and more. For specific program dates, times and more information, contact The Children's Museum at (979) 779-KIDS (5437) or visit www.mymuseum.com.

March 2-4 and 6, the **Brazos Valley Solid Waste Management Agency** (BVSWMMA) will offer a series of hands-on compost training

instructional materials, a t-shirt, and the Saturday lunch and field trip. To register, call Program Coordinator Shelia McQueen at (979) 764-3806 or download the registration form at cstx.gov/bvswma.

March 4 from 7 p.m. until 9 p.m., **Coalition for Life** hosts the **Annual Coalition for Life Benefit 2010** at the Brazos County Expo Exhibit Hall. Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush is this year's speaker. Contact the Coalition office for sponsorship information. Table Sponsorships are \$500 to \$10,000. Visit BrazosCountyExpo.com for more information.

Continues. For more information and tickets, go to www.navasotatheatre.com or call (936) 825-3195.

March 5 from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., the **Frame Gallery** hosts **First Friday**. Join the Frame Gallery in Downtown Bryan on the first Friday of every month for local art, live music, horse drawn carriage rides, and fun. Jazz band starts at 6:30 p.m. For more information, contact Greta Watkins at (979) 822-0496 or visit www.downtownbryan.com.

March 6 through March 30, the **Brazos Valley Art League** will host their **Juried Art**

March 6 from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m., **Voices for Children** hosts the **Art of Helping Children Dinner & Silent Auction** at the Brazos County Expo Exhibit Hall. Hosted by Voices for Children – Court Appointed Special Advocates of Brazos Valley, the event honors members of the community who are making a difference in the lives of children every day. Tickets are \$65 per person and include dinner by Global Event Group. Visit BrazosCountyExpo.com for more information.

March 6 at 10 a.m., the **Texas A&M Equestrian team** takes on the Oklahoma State Cowboys at the Arena. All A&M Equestrian events are free and open to the public. Visit BrazosCountyExpo.com for more information.

March 7 at 7 p.m., **StageCenter** presents internationally known storytellers **Bobby and Sherry Norfolk**. Tickets are \$15/adults and \$10/teens and college students and are available at the door or at the Arts Council, 2275 Dartmouth St., College Station. For more information, call (979) 823-4297 or visit www.stagecenter.net.

March 9 from 5:30 p.m. until 8 p.m., the **BCS Chamber of Commerce** hosts the **Epicurean Extravaganza** at the Exhibit Hall featuring more

than 25 local restaurants in one place. Tickets are available at the College Station and Villa Maria HEB and the Chamber office and are \$20 for general admission and \$40 for premium tickets.



March 4 at 7:30 p.m., MSC OPAS presents Groovelily: Sleeping Beauty Wakes at Rudder Theatre. For tickets and more information, call (979) 845-1234 or visit www.msccpas.org.



March 23 from 11:30 a.m. until 1 p.m., the Community Foundation of the Brazos Valley hosts the 2010 Tribute Luncheon to honor Kathy and Gene Joyce for their support of community organizations through the years. The event will be held at the Hilton in College Station. For reservations or table sponsorships, contact Reba Ragsdale at (979) 229-1200, or rragsdale@suddenlink.net.

classes. The classes provide demonstrations, guest speakers and instruction on the latest tools and techniques related to composting. Classroom instruction will take place on March 2-4 from 5:30 p.m. until 9:30 p.m. The field trip is on March 6 from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. Cost is \$15 per person, which covers a compost bin,

March 4 at 7 p.m., the **George Bush Presidential Library and Museum** presents **Classic Film Series: Rear Window**, with free admission, beverages and popcorn. Call (979) 691-4000 for more information.

March 4-7, the **Navasota Theatre Alliance** presents **Faith County II: The Saga**

Show. A reception for the artists will be held March 6 from 12 noon to 2 p.m. The Texas Gallery hours are Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, contact the Arts Council at (979) 696-2787.

You can also purchase them online at bcschamber.org. Visit BrazosCountyExpo.com for more information or contact Jordan Meserole at (979) 260-5200 or Jordan@bcschamber.org.

March 11 at 7:30 p.m., **Community Chamber Concerts** presents pianist **Jose Feghali** at the Bush Conference Center. This concert is free and open to the public. For more information call (979) 696-7410 or visit www.communitychamberconcerts.org.

March 13 at 10 a.m., the **Texas A&M Equestrian team** takes on the New Mexico State at the



Arena. All A&M Equestrian events are free and open to the public. Visit BrazosCountyExpo.com for more information.

March 18 at 7 p.m., the **George Bush Presidential Library and Museum** presents **Issues Forum: Bobby Koch**, who will speak on the California wine industry. Koch is the president and CEO of the Wine Institute and is married to President Bush's daughter, Dorothy. To make reservations for this free event, call (979) 691-4014.

March 19-21, the **Theatre Company** presents **Taking Liberty**, a new musical written and directed by the Theatre Company's own Artistic Director Randy Wilson, based on the life of Aaron Burr, hero of the American Revolution and our country's third vice-president. Performances are Friday and Saturday nights at 7 p.m., and Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. Tickets are available online at www.theatrecompany.com, at the Arts Council, 2275 Dartmouth St., College Station, or at the Box Office. For more information, call the Arts Council at (979) 696-2787.

March 21 from 3 p.m. until 9 p.m., **Escamilla Restaurant** hosts the **Gran Jarifeo Rodeo** at the Arena. Tickets will go on sale early March. Visit

GET IN TOUCH

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Deadlines: 5th of the month preceding publication date

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MARCH EVENTS AT THE EXPO

Coalition for Life Benefit March 4	Epicurean Extravaganza March 9	Equine Evening at the Expo March 23
TAMU Equestrian vs OSU March 6	TAMU Equestrian vs NMS March 13	Go Texan BBQ Cook-off March 26
Art of Helping Children Banquet March 6	Gran Jarifeo Rodeo March 21	Brazos Co. Youth Livestock Show March 26-30

BrazosCountyExpo.com for more information.

March 23 at 6 p.m., **Texas A&M University Veterinary Medicine** presents **An Equine Evening** at the Expo at the Exhibit Hall. This event is hosted by the College of Veterinary Medicine at Texas A&M. Contact Galen Pahl at GPahl@cvm.tamu.edu for details.

March 26-30, the **Brazos Valley County Youth Livestock Association** presents the **Brazos County Youth Livestock Show** at the Pavilion/Arena. Admission is free. Visit BrazosCountyExpo.com for more information and a schedule of events. <http://www.bcyla.net/>

March 26 from 8 p.m. until 12 a.m., **BCYLA** hosts the **BCYLS Queen's Dance** with the **Texas Twisters** at the Exhibit Hall. Tickets are \$8 in advance and \$10 at the door. Visit BrazosCountyExpo.com for more information

March 27, the **Brazos County Go Texas Association** hosts the **Brazos County Go Texan Cook Off** all day in the Expo's parking lot. Visit BrazosCountyExpo.com for more information

March 27 at 8 a.m., the **Junior League of Bryan/College Station** will have the first **Downtown Derby 5K Fun Run/Walk** to raise money to fund and support local community projects for the children and youth of B/CS. Registration is \$25. Visit <http://www.active.com/running/bryan-tx/junior-league-5k-fun-rundowntown-derby-2010> to register online. For more information go to www.jlbc.org.

March 27 from 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon, join the **George Bush Presidential Library and Museum** for their **annual Easter Celebration**, with activities including games, face painting, egg rolls and hunts, storytelling and photos with the Easter bunny. For more information, call (979) 691-4014 or visit www.bushlibrary.tamu.edu.

March 28 at 2 p.m. and 4 p.m., **OPAS Jr.** presents **Max and Ruby** at Rudder Theatre. For tickets and more information, call (979) 845-1234 or visit www.msco.org.

March 28-29 at 7 p.m., the **Theatre Company** will hold auditions for **Willie Wonka**. For more information, go to www.theatrecompany.com.

March 31 at 10 a.m. at Barnes & Noble, the **SCBWI** will hold their monthly **Schmooze**. This month's topic is "What's New in Children's Books." For more information, call (979)

(1101 Rock Prairie Road) and ending at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Downtown Bryan with a 12:15 p.m. Good Friday Service. Transportation will be available at each

Starlight Ballroom in Snook, Texas. Chilifest Inc. has been able to donate more than \$1 million to various organizations and worthy causes in the Brazos Valley. The entertainment line-



696-8158 or visit www.scbwi-brazosvalley.org.

location. For details on the walk or for directions, visit www.standrewsbcs.org or call (979) 822-5176.

up includes headliner Dwight Yoakam, Corrow Morrow, Roger Creager, Aaron Watson and the Eli Young Band. For more information, contact Chilifest Inc. at (979) 695-2998 or visit chilifest.org.

Plan Ahead

April 1, **Project Conant**, a group of students and professionals, are holding a benefit concert at Wolf Pen Creek featuring **Granger Smith**. All proceeds benefit the **Dr. Jeffrey S. Conant Memorial Scholarship Fund**. Tickets are \$10 and include a t-shirt. Tickets are on sale every Tuesday through Thursday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Wehner Building, Koldus Plaza, and the Commons at Texas A&M University. For more information, call (979) 571-1036.

April 2 at 7:30 a.m., the **Episcopal congregations and schools in Bryan/College Station** invite the community to a combined **Good Friday walk** starting at St. Francis Episcopal Church

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Hwy. 30 & 158, CS

Brookshire Brothers
Hwy. 36 N, Caldwell

Subway
Hwy. 6, Navasota
Hwy. 105, Brenham
Market St., Brenham



March 22-23 at 7:30 p.m., **MSC OPAS** presents **100 Years of Broadway**. For tickets and more information, call (979) 845-1234 or visit www.msco.org.

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OPAS at Texas A&M University presents professional productions of theatre, music and dance programs that enlighten, entertain and inspire audiences of the Brazos Valley. This season has been a license to thrill, but one thing's for sure—MSC Opas will have much more in store for the Brazos Valley!

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Go Fore It.

The Texas A&M Golf Course has been a fixture on the front of the Texas A&M University Campus since 1951. Change is good, and the course has recently renovated the cart paths with new six-foot wide concrete paths and

more improvements are already on the drawing board. There has never been a better time to enjoy the mastery of the Ralph Plummer designed golf course. The layout of the course is challenging yet playable for all skill levels.

The A&M Golf Course can meet all your golfing needs, from a fully stocked pro shop and an experienced professional to a diverse and lighted practice area to hone your skills. The A&M Golf Course is conveniently located on the southeast corner of campus with plenty of parking. Open to the public with special rates for seniors and A&M students the course is a great value that is only getting better. To stretch your golf dollar even more ask about membership. Call (979) 845-1723 for information.

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ANNUAL WOMAN'S CLUB HOME TOUR

For more than 25 years, the members of The Woman's Club have guided House and Garden tours each spring. Three fabulous home designs, furnishings, and gardens will be showcased for visitors' pleasure during the 2010 event.

Texas Historic

609 S. Ennis
Bryan Historic District



The 5,000-square-foot, two-and-one-half-story home of Julian and Dr. Mary Alfred in the Historic District of Bryan epitomizes the understated elegance of an early 20th

century home. Listed on the National Registry and identified with a Texas Historic marker, the Alfreds purchased the brick home several years ago when they relocated here from Florida. Julian is retired from the military and Mary is an Associate Dean in the College of Education at Texas A&M University.

Charlie Jenkins constructed the neoclassic and Georgian Revival style home in 1925 for just under \$24,000 for local merchant Eugene Edge. The house proudly contained the first "ice box" and air conditioner in town. The previous owners, the Hilers, were dedicated to preserving the integrity of the home,



Alfred house

and replaced the original pier and beam construction with concrete beams.

The front entrance is graced with rose beds that frame the historic marker. The arched brick-patterned doorway echoes the curved lines throughout the house and continues in the reception area where the oak floors are trimmed in mahogany with corners featuring the Greek key design. All walls and ceilings are plaster with ornate moldings. The doors all have the original glass knobs.

The stately dining room features hand-blown beveled glass pocket doors in the archway, adding their sparkle and glimmer to the crystal chandelier and the leaded glass and beveled-edged transom windows.

The original, but still functioning, kitchen is adjoined by a large butler's pantry, wet bar and a family breakfast room where the sun offers a warm embrace to the room.

The connecting hallway showcases the framed original house plans dating back to March 20, 1924. The living room and other downstairs rooms as well as upstairs quarters are replete with a collection of original paintings by artist Charles Bibbs from Riverside, California, and are reminiscent of the family's homeland of St. Lucia in the

Caribbean. Juxtaposing the ethnic art against the formal Victorian-style furniture makes each room a standout.

In contrast, the cozy and casual appeal of the second floor includes the master bedroom and additional guest quarters. The landing area, now a family room, was the bridge room where Mrs. Edge entertained her lady friends

at regular parties. A nearby pullout cabinet housed her bridge tables. Three sleeping porches, built originally to catch full breezes in the South, have been turned into studies/media areas for the owners and connect to the other bedrooms.

This is a house with a pedigree that must be seen to be appreciated.

Piano room (Alfred house)





Salzer pool

Texas Hill Country

6105 Pinto Run
River Run Estates



The comfortable and spacious home of Dr. and Mrs. Tom Salzer is in the River Run Estates of College Station. The sprawling 6,000-square-foot limestone estate was designed by Antonio Flamenco of Insite Architecture in Houston and built by Keith Ellis of Ellis Homes in 1997. An addition was made to the home in 2005. Tom and Martha Salzer have lived in the community, where Dr. Salzer is a practicing physician, for more than 14 years.

An extraordinary mix of Guatemalan and primitive antiques give the house a sense of warmth and purpose. Dr. Salzer has traveled

to Guatemala on medical missions for more than 10 years and Guatemala happens to be the native home of the designer. In fact, Tom and Antonio conceived the design for the addition to the home on one of their mission trips together. Guatemalan tapestries, wood carvings (retablos), masks, carved doors for the media room, iron chandeliers, wall sconces and wooden statues give a noticeable

distinction of antique Spanish flavor to this home.

The inspiration for the house was a natural limestone ravine that runs the length of the property. One hundred fifty-year-old heart of pine from old factories in New England is used throughout the house. Pecan wood in the game room and media room, mesquite wood in the study and wine cellar,

cedar in the outdoor kitchen and casita, and long leaf pine in the rest of the house all imbue the home with warmth and hospitality. Countertops are granite and Brazilian slate and several rooms in the main house and casita feature embossed tin paneled ceilings.

Dr. Salzer grew up in an old colonial house in New England and has always collected primitive antiques, so he wanted to incorporate that antique feeling in their new home as well. The home features pre-Columbian art collected by Tom and his father; mid-1800's household and garden/farm implements; an old pay toilet door in the study from Mystic, CT; an antique glass

door to the wine cellar; an English Victorian fireplace surround in the master bedroom, and many other antique accessories, collections, and furnishings in the house. Finding new uses for old objects is part of the allure of this hill country home.

Alan King of The Land Design Group originally landscaped the home with xeriscaping. The addition features a negative

Salzer living room





Guseman/Gerngross house

edge pool with stone walls and waterfalls, stained concrete and flagstone walkways, a boulder bridge, a blocked-glass lighted bridge with stone icons, and a bronze statue all created by Larry Schueckler. Also included in the addition are a billiard room with walk-in wine cellar, a media room and a two-story casita, exercise room, and outdoor kitchen.

This house provides a feast for the eyes and inspires a wealth of ideas.

Salzer house



German Texas Style

4710 Heron
Lakes Circle
Miramont Estates



Tucked into the woods and lake area of Miramont Estates in Bryan, the home owned by Dr. Pat Guseman and Clay Gerngross has an open-floor plan of 5,000-square-feet and is described by the owners as a restful, quiet and minimalist style.

Pat, a College Station demographer, owns Population and Survey Analysts, and Clay is the owner of GLP Technologies. The four-month-old home reflects their recent marriage and the blending of their two styles.

The two-story house was designed and built by Cornerstone Architects of Austin on a little less than an acre of land and includes a green space and lake in the back yard. Local builders Rick and Selina Colwell built the home and Bob Ruth, a local landscape architect, designed

the outdoor spaces. Mary Evelyn White and Susan Tremont of By Design Interiors and Gail Moore of Gail Moore Interiors designed the interior of the home.

The two-story entry features a massive hand-carved chandelier suspended from the beamed ceiling. Towering above is a bridge of bookcases and collectibles connecting the two upper wings containing a study alcove, media room, and guest quarters.

The entire home could be described as a historical romance. The foyer leading to the master suite showcases an antique model of a German castle enclosed in a custom-made glass armoire designed by the owner. The model was created by German prisoners for Pat Guseman's father, who was the director of German prison camps in East Texas during World War II. The prisoners even left buttons from their uniforms and models of tiny soldiers buried in the basement of their model.

The upper level offers an unexpected surprise at the top of the stairs. Balanced on the landing is a rotating museum of hidden treasures from the combined Guseman/Gerngross family estates that changes monthly.

The downstairs has an open concept

IF YOU GO

WHAT: Southern Hospitality ~Texas Style allows you to visit three fabulous homes on the 2010 Woman's Club House and Garden Tour.

WHEN: April 14, from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m.

HOW: Tickets for touring the three houses are \$15 and can be purchased from a member of The Woman's Club, at one of the homes on April 14, or by calling The Woman's Club at (979) 822-5019 Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.

In addition to the home tour, a salad luncheon will be offered on the day of the tour at The Woman's Club, 1200 Carter Creek Parkway, Bryan, with continuous seating from 11 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. Tickets are \$15 each and must be purchased in advance at the Club by calling (979) 822-5019 before April 7.

FOR MORE INFO:

The House and Garden Tour is the major fundraiser for The Woman's Club and profits are used to provide outreach to local charities. For more information, email thewomansclubbcs@verizon.net, call (979) 822-5019 or visit www.womansclubbcs.com.

kitchen that features blonde granite. Multi-dimensional subway tiles for the backsplash are glazed to give a mid-century look. The dining table was rescued from the Bryan Carnegie Library years ago at an auction and restored to its present old-world patina.

The living area features an array of hand-carved antique furniture from the Black Forest region of Germany, hand-knotted natural-dyed Egyptian rugs from a small village close to Cairo, and art wall tiles from a saloon in

Bryan, one punctuated with a bullet hole. The floors are pecan planks.

The first floor features not only a ladies' powder room, but also a men's powder room complete with hand-painted and textured reptile wall coverings. The room also includes "Michelangelo" style marble, a copper porcelain sink and copper fixtures.

Natural materials and nature steal the show in the master suite. The cast iron soaking tub, rain forest shower, marble surround, and

large "hand chipped" natural crystal prisms in the light fixtures of the master suite offer an oasis that delights the senses.

Beckoning from the back of the house is the fresh-air living of rust-colored limestone in the outdoor kitchen, fireplace and entertainment areas with custom fans that project a "molecular sized mist" to provide comfort on hot Texas days.

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REAL ESTATE by the Numbers:

- 1** BUY NOW
- 2** BUILD NOW
- 3** INVEST NOW
- 4** THINK COMMERCIAL

Home shopping anyone? Despite gloomy national news, local real estate professionals say this is a great time to buy or build a house. Low mortgage rates, buyer incentives and stable home values make the local real estate market the spring bloom after a long, cold winter.



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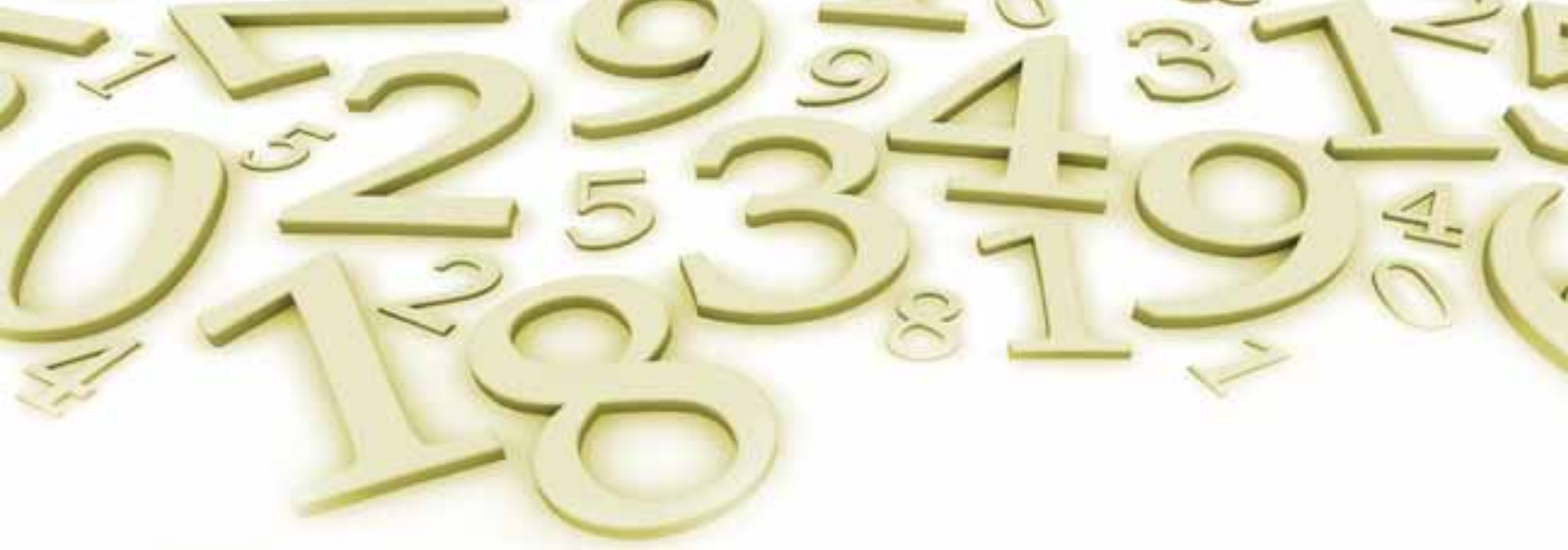
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1 BUY NOW

“I have been telling people for the last 12 months that if they are comfortable and secure with their jobs, then it is a great time to buy,” says Mark Dotzour, chief economist at The Real Estate Research Center at Texas A&M University. Most mortgage rates are currently at 5% or below, which he describes as “a gift from the government.”

“The stability in our market is due to Texas A&M and our strong medical community,” says Cherry Ruffino, realtor and vice president of sales of Coldwell Banker United. Ruffino echoes that interest rates are the lowest in a decade, but she foresees an increase of 1% to 1.5% in the next 60 days, making the incentive to buy now even greater.

“It is a once in a lifetime opportunity,” says Dotzour about buying a home in B/CS right now. Dotzour also says prices in B/CS are likely to remain stable and there is little risk they will decline. Ruffino concurs saying that our annual appreciation rate has averaged 5% to 8% over the years; in 2009, home prices appreciated just at 3%. “This is fabulous compared to the rest of the country,” says Ruffino, considering other areas in the country are seeing anywhere from 10% to 30% decrease in-home values.

Even in our stable market, the overall

number of homebuyers has dropped. “We had 17% fewer buyers because of the concern with the economy,” says Ruffino, mostly a drop in “move-up” buyers. “Move-up buyers made conservative decisions not to make a move for a larger, nicer home,” says Ruffino. “What has affected our economy in B/CS as well as nationwide are lending requirements,” she says.

Besides lenders now requiring a stellar credit score, according to Ruffino “in the next 60 days we will see another tightening

“This allowance really helps folks because so many times buyers have good credit, but need assistance with cash purchases.

“A buyer with good credit, low debt, and a secure job can obtain a loan and a very good rate,” says Ruffino. The tax credit extension, which is intended to bring and keep more buyers in the housing market, includes incentives for first-time homebuyers as well as for homeowners who have lived in their home five of the last eight years. “The amount

The extended tax credit applies to first-time homebuyers as well as homeowners who have lived in their home five of the last eight years. Deadline for both is to have a home under contract by April 30.



of loans, specifically FHA loans” aimed at first-time buyers. These loans require less money down and offer lower qualifying rates. “Currently, a buyer has to have a 3.5% down payment on their home; it is expected to go to a 5% down payment,” says Ruffino. Another benefit of FHA loans is that sellers can pay buyers’ closing costs, explains Ruffino.

of the credit is \$6,500. The deadline for both tax credits is to have a home under contract by April 30, 2010, and closed by June 30, 2010. There is still time,” says Ruffino. “We will adjust to all these changes. Historically the purchase of real estate has been a safe investment and it continues to be so today, especially here at home in B/CS.”

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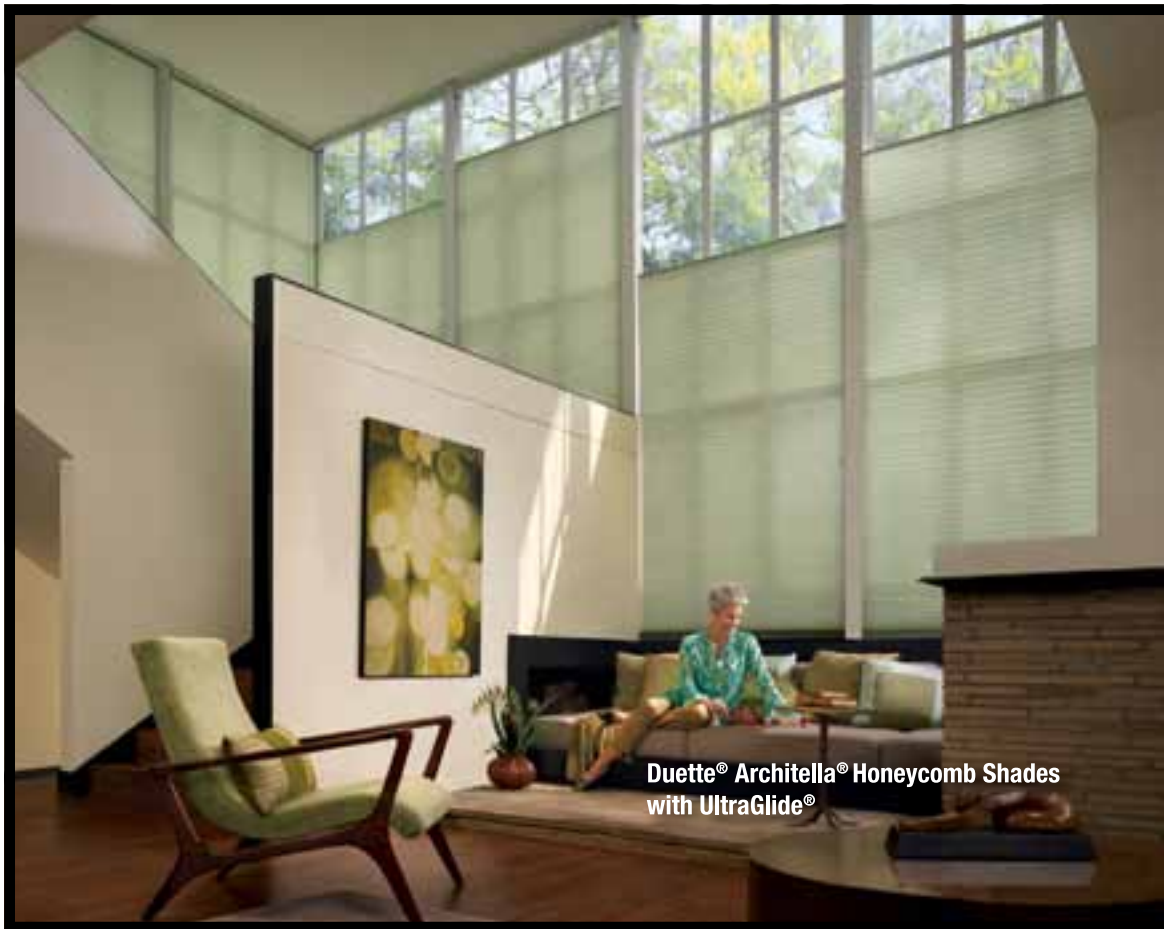
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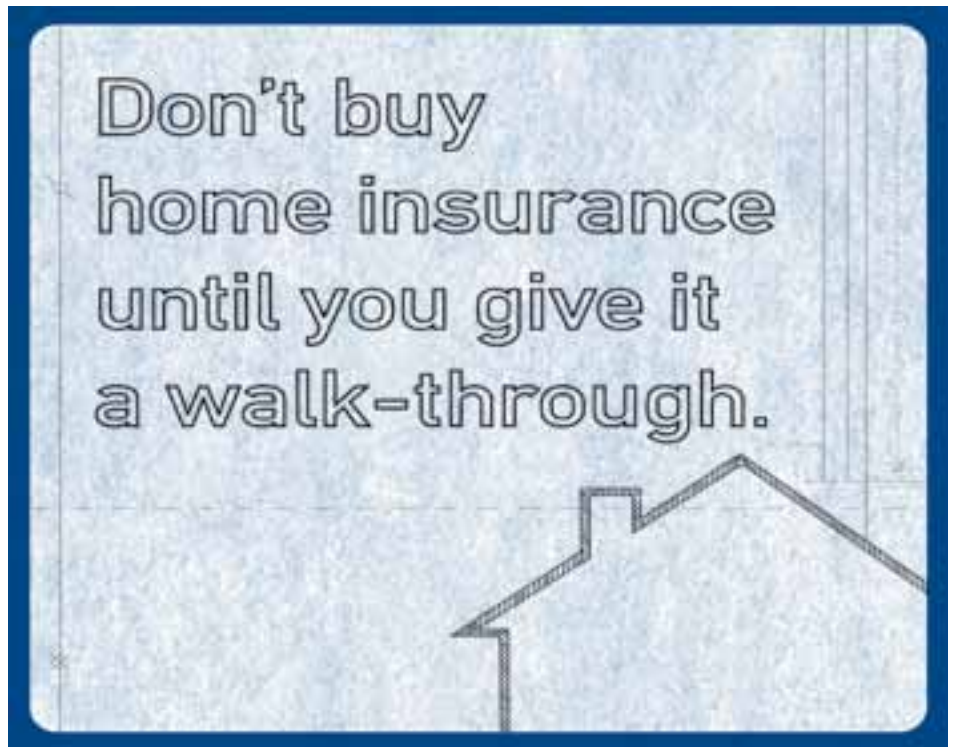
In addition to low interest rates, there are incentives for those who want to build a home, too, particularly an energy-efficient home. David Gwin, director of economic and community development for the City of College Station, says the city is currently building four new homes with all “green” materials including high efficiency hot water heaters and recycled materials. “All of these green methods will benefit the community,” says Gwin. Federal, state and local governments all provide different energy incentives for homebuilders including federal tax incentives for those seeking higher energy efficiency and city housing programs that are income qualified. Gwin invites anyone interested to make an appointment to talk about potential

College Station offers a Buyer's Assistance Program to provide long-term deferred loans to potential income-qualified buyers.

incentives tailored to individual needs.

He also encourages people looking to replace major mechanical systems in their homes to invest now in energy friendly systems. Despite the upfront expense, Gwin explains there are huge benefits down the road. “The city is trying to find ways to help people overcome the initial high costs of these systems because they will be very beneficial in the long run for the community,” says Gwin.

The city also offers a Buyer's Assistant Program to provide long-term deferred loans to potential income-qualified buyers. “There are a few limitations on the home, but most homes in College Station are potentially eligible,” says Gwin.



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3 MARKET VALUE

The local housing market is seasonal, says Marty Cangelose, owner and supervisory appraiser of M.G. Cangelose & Associates appraisers. Buyers look from March to August and it slows down from September to February. Cangelose says we are experiencing good stable growth in B/CS: "There is about 3% appreciation (in home values) and it has been like this for about 15 to 17 years," says Cangelose. The segment of the market that's been affected more are houses priced over \$400,000 especially those from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 or more. This price range has seemed to flatten out. Homes under \$400,000 are still experiencing growth, and Cangelose does not foresee much changing in 2010.

"People can still get financing because A&M provides a lot of jobs and we still have many businesses that are doing well," says Steve Harper, president and CEO of Brazos Valley Bank.

"Texas has been a bit more protected," says Melanie Motley, vice president of Mortgage Lending at The Bank and Trust. Motley says there are more people employed in Texas with good credit and savings, giving them better financing options. "With the high unemployment rate in the rest of the country, many people have been forced to live off savings and credit, which



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makes it difficult to obtain financing,” says Motley. Harper agrees that the economy in Texas is still solid, adding, “Bryan/College Station is probably one of the most reliable places to live.”

4

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Residential real estate is enjoying substantially higher volume than commercial real estate, due primarily to a lack of liquidity. It is “almost impossible to borrow money on commercial real estate,” says Casey Oldhan, chairman and CEO of Oldhan Goodwin Real Estate. “These transactions take a significant amount of time to complete,” he notes.

However, compared to the rest of the country, our local commercial real estate is doing quite well.

“We had good quality assets in 2000 prior to the economic meltdown, and we are still doing good today,” says Oldhan. The late 2000’s credit crashes were predicated by noise from the housing market, Oldhan explains; the poor housing market was responsible in part for the recent credit crash. While we are doing better than the rest of the nation, locally we have not increased our commercial market value, he says.

While Oldhan says the low number of commercial transactions makes it too early to make predictions for the future, the perception is that the commercial market is doing better than last year. *i*



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BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE NAMED ONE OF THE BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR IN TEXAS?

Each year 85 companies in Texas are accorded this honor by the publishers of Texas Monthly, the Texas State Council of the Society for Human Resource Management, the Texas Association of Business, and the Best Companies Group, an independent organization that manages the program and surveys companies around the state to determine which ones makes the cut. Participation is open to for-profit and non-profit companies with 15 or more employees. This year, K2Share, University Title Company and Capsher Technology, all located in College Station, made the list.

K2Share is no newcomer to Texas Monthly's list of Best Companies to Work for in Texas. A provider of information technology-based business solutions that specializes in systems engineering and integration, managed

services, and e-learning solutions, K2Share has made the cut on the Best Companies list for five consecutive years.

"In order to help our employees succeed, we pride ourselves in being a great place to work," says Tina Fleming, HR generalist for K2Share. "We value behavior that: encourages personal development, allows people to excel, and creates a workplace where sincerity and

THE BEST COMPANIES ORGANIZATION PROVIDES ANONYMOUS SURVEYS TO EMPLOYEES TO CRITICALLY EVALUATE THE COMPANIES UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR THE AWARD.

open communication are the norm." Fleming says what separates K2Share from other companies is that they are about more than just making a deadline; they live in a realm of solutions, not a realm of problems.

"After the results came out, some of our employees told us they already knew we were one of the best places to work," says Kevin

Sherry of Capsher Technology. "Each of us is proud to be able to say we work here." Capsher Technology is a custom software development company.

"Employees who like their jobs, who feel valued and empowered, produce better quality work," says Sherry of the award. "We find that our team spends less time trying to avoid work and more time creating results."

"Being one of the best companies to work for in Texas translates favorably to University Title's business and bottom line," says Dawn Bowers, customer advocate at University Title Company. University Title Company is the Brazos County's largest title insurance provider and has been around since 1973. "It is cost efficient because University Title

Company does not have the expense of constantly replacing and training employees,” says Bowers. In 2008, University Title Company closed more than 59% of the real estate business in the Brazos County, which Bowers says, “is a fantastic market share.”

Fleming says one of their biggest challenges heading into the next couple of years is to recruit and retain top talent, but being named one of the Best Companies to Work for in Texas gives K2Share a “competitive edge in recruiting activities.”

Being named one of the Best Companies to Work for in Texas “does not come without some cost,” for K2Share, says Fleming. However, notes Fleming, “Employee turnover and dissatisfied customers are more costly to us as a business than the efforts put into making K2Share a great place to work.”

“Capsher pays competitive wages with good benefits,” says Sherry, but notes “being paid well is only one facet of being treated well.” He adds, “Overall, we have a highly motivated group of talented individuals.”

Aside from their regular salaries, University Title Company compensates employees for recruiting new employees.

“Not only do employees help create and maintain an environment of potential-reaching energy,” says Bowers, “but they are rewarded monetarily for referring quality staff members to the company when employment opportunities exist and the recruit proves to be a beneficial new team member.”

Being named one of the Best Companies to Work for in Texas has also been good for reducing turnover. “The same practices that make University Title Company a Best Company to Work for in Texas, keep the rate of turnover incredibly low,” says Bowers. At Capsher, Sherry says, “Our strong employee commitment and growth opportunities are what help keep turnover low.”

All three companies are constantly looking for ways to improve processes, efficiency and environment. University Title Company implemented a system called IPower, or Idea Power, 10 years ago, an anonymous method for suggesting ways to improve the company. Solar screens for the many windows in the building, recycling shredded paper and methods of organizing archived information are all practices implemented from suggestions made through Idea Power.

At K2Share, “Specific goals for improvement are set and executive management provides some accountability back to our employees in our staff conferences to demonstrate that we take these items seriously and to demonstrate improvements.”

The Best Companies organization provides anonymous surveys to employees to critically evaluate the companies under consideration for the award. “Our primary objective was to learn from the employee survey and benchmark comparison,” says Sherry, “so Capsher can continually improve.” With the feedback from these surveys, the companies are able to work on their areas of weaknesses. “Because people like to work here, they responded enthusiastically enough to the survey to enable Capsher to be recognized,” says Sherry.

“We are honored to be ranked among so many great companies in the state and in Bryan/College Station,” says Sherry. Bowers agrees, saying, “Our employees have played a vital role in making University Title Company one of the Best Companies to Work for in Texas.” *i*

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Note: The Appraisal Foundation Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice prohibit Mr. Stephen from representing property owners as an MAI or real estate appraiser. He can, however, apply that knowledge and experience as a property tax consultant and become a uniquely informed advocate on his client's behalf.





Charlotte Standard, St. Andrew's parishioner and artist, displayed her decorated guitars at the recent **Art Step** hosted by **St. Andrew's Episcopal Church**. The show featured more than 50 artists with 200 people there to view the art, listen to the flute ensemble and tour the church.

Spoons Yogurt is a new venue for the Bryan/College Station community offering 12 flavors of self-serve frozen yogurt and more than 30 toppings. Located in the Central Station Shopping Center next door to Firehouse Subs, Spoons Yogurt has introduced their "Spooning With" program designed to benefit the community's schools, youth teams and organizations by donating a percentage of profits from all sales made during a group's designated time slot. Spoons Yogurt can also be found on Facebook and Twitter.



Larry Mariott was named the recipient of **The Research Valley Economic Development Leadership Award** for his numerous contributions to the regional economy. The award is given annually by The Research Valley Partnership to pay tribute to an individual who

has consistently exemplified the highest standards of professional excellence throughout their career and demonstrated effective leadership in executing economic development advancements making a significant impact on The Research Valley. Mariott is owner of Mariott Homes, Inc., a family homebuilding business located in the Bryan-College Station area. **(l-r) Todd McDaniel, president/CEO The Research Valley Partnership; Larry Mariott; Larry Hodges, chairman of the board, The Research Valley Partnership.**



Voices for Children announced its **Art of Helping Children** honorees at a recent reception hosted by **David Gardner's Jewelers**. Pictured above are **Friend of Children Jane Riley; Advocate for Children Bilaliah Hazziez; and Champions for Children Beverly and Steve Ogden**. The 7th Annual Art of Helping Children will be held March 6 at the Brazos County Expo in Bryan.

The Bryan Rotary Club is accepting nominations for the **2010 Bryan Rotary/Newman 10 Business Performance Awards**. For the seventeenth year, the awards will recognize the fastest growing small, private businesses in Brazos County. For more information and nomination forms, visit www.bryanrotary.org, www.bcschamber.org, or the B/CS Chamber of Commerce office.

Vance Goss, owner of **Brazos Record Storage**, an off-site

commercial records storage and management company in College Station, has been elected to the board of directors of **PRISM International (Professional Records and Information Services Management)**. PRISM International is the not-for-profit trade association for the commercial information management industry. Vance Goss founded Brazos Record Storage in 1995. As the owner and founder, he has experience in all aspects of running a Records Information Management (RIM) company and continues to work in every phase of Brazos Record Storage. Goss will serve a three-year term as a small business director.

Terrence Murphy, Texas A&M former student and retired Green Bay Packer football player, joins **Keller Williams Realty** in College Station as a realtor. Murphy has five years experience in the real estate industry as an investor and general contractor building custom homes and participating in residential development projects. For more information, visit www.TerrenceMurphy.com.

Chilifest 2010 Chairman Bryan Moore recently announced the entertainment lineup for **Chilifest 2010** along with **Vice Chairmen Cade Lunsford, David Towery, James Redfield, and Travis Hughes** at a press release at the Tap. The entertainment on April 9-10 will include headliners **Dwight Yoakam, Corrow Morrow, Roger Creager, Aaron Watson and the Eli Young Band**.

Chilifest has been able to donate more than \$1 million to several local charitable organizations. For more information on Chili Charity, call (979) 695-2998 or visit chilifest.org. *i*

BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION

DINING / CATERING

BLUE BAKER, www.bluebaker.com, 800 University Dr, CS (979) 268-3096; 201 Dominik, CS (979) 696-5055, Blue Baker is an artisan bakery and café featuring breads baked from scratch, pastries, sandwiches, soup, fresh tossed salads and brick-oven pizzas. Try some cookies for the perfect finish! M-F 7am-10pm, Sa-Su 8am-10pm

C&J BBQ, www.cjbbq.com, 105 Southwest Pkwy, CS (979) 696-7900; 1010 South Texas Ave., Bryan (979) 822-6033; 4304 Harvey Rd., CS (979) 776-8969. Voted Best BBQ in the Brazos Valley, C&J offers all your favorite Texas barbecue such as sliced beef, jalapeno sausage, pork loin, turkey, chicken, or ribs. Catering and banquet rooms are available. M-Th 10:30am-8:30pm; F-Sa 10:30am-9pm; Su 11am-3pm, Hours may vary among locations.

CAFÉ ECCELL, www.cafeeccell.com, 101 Church Ave., CS (979) 846-7908. Café Eccell really is a true grill and fresh seafood bistro. Located in College Station's Old City Hall, the café offers fresh seafood daily and a kitchen that fires up with food that excites the senses. Lunch M-Th 11am-2pm; F & Su 11am-5pm; Sa 12pm-5pm; Dinner M-Su 5pm-10pm

CAFFE' CAPRI ITALIAN RESTAURANT, www.theplaceforitalian.com, 222 N. Main St., Bryan (979) 822-2675. This award winning downtown restaurant has been serving creative and reasonably priced Italian dishes for 15 years. Enjoy their art deco interior, local art display and upbeat atmosphere. Lunch M-F 11am-2pm; Dinner M-Th 6pm-9pm; F-Sa 5pm-9pm

CASA RODRIGUEZ, www.casarod.com, 300 N. Bryan Ave., Bryan (979) 779-0916. Casa Rodriguez has been serving Bryan and College Station for more than 30 years. Their menu consists of traditional Mexican food recipes that have kept the locals and visitors coming back for more. Serving breakfast on weekends. M 11am-2pm; T-Th 11am-9pm; F 11am-9:30pm; Sa 8am-9:30pm; Su 8am-8pm

CHICKEN OIL CO., www.dixiechicken.com/chickenoil, 3600 S. College Ave., Bryan (979) 846-3306. Chicken Oil Co. opened in Bryan, Texas as a gas station and burger shop in 1977. Since then it has become one of the most unique restaurants in the world. It is most recognized for its delicious hamburgers, one uniquely called the Death Burger. Su-Th 11am-9pm; F-Sa 11am-10pm

CHRISTOPHER'S WORLD GRILLE, www.christopherworldgrille.com, 5001 Boonville Rd., Bryan (979) 776-2181. A trip to Christopher's World Grille, in the historic Andrews House in Bryan, is a fine dining experience that can best be described as food with Mediterranean, Italian, coastal French, and South Pacific influences with a touch of Louisiana thrown in. Lunch M-Su 11am-2pm; Dinner Su-Th 5pm-9pm; F-Sa 5pm-10pm

CENARE RESTAURANT, www.gotocenare.com, 404 University Dr E, CS (979) 696-7311. Cenare offers a variety of authentic Italian cuisine and beautifully presented dishes. Whether you are looking for an intimate evening, a nice place for the entire family or a place to host your next event, Cenare is a great choice. M-F 11am-2pm, M-Th 5-9:30pm, F-Sa 5-10pm

DIXIE CHICKEN, www.dixiechicken.com, 307 University Dr., CS (979) 846-2322. Thirsty beer drinkers regularly flock to the Dixie Chicken to play bones, shoot pool, listen to their favorite Texas music and be with good friends. Choose from a variety of menu options including made to order burgers, hang down sausage, and cheddar cheese on the wheel. M-Su 10am-2am

DOUBLE DAVE'S, www.doubledaves.com. Your neighborhood pizza works with 3 area locations: Boonville Rd., B; Texas Ave., CS; Longmire, CS, Try original items from Double Dave's legendary menu including Peproni rolls, stromboli, stuffers and handmade specialty pizzas. Su-Th 11am-10pm, F-S 11am-11pm, Buffet available at select times: 11am-2pm daily, M & W 5:30pm-9pm

ECCCELL STEAKHOUSE, www.eccellsteakhouse.com, 980 University Dr. E., CS (979) 268-4104. Eccell Steakhouse is meant to excite the diner's senses and entertain the lounge patron. With an excellent selection of steaks and other favorites such as seafood and burgers, this College Station gourmet restaurant is already becoming a favorite in town. Brunch Sa-Su 10am-2:30pm; Dinner M-Sa 4:30pm-10pm

EPICURES CATERING, www.epicurescatering.net, 2319 Texas Ave. S., CS (979) 695-0985. As a full service catering company, Epicures specializes in weddings, receptions, business functions, conventions, reunions, celebrations, bridal showers, company luncheons and more. Epicures also offers private dining facilities for parties from 20 to 200. Epicures is also equipped to handle last minute plans with our new line of Epicurean Packs, a complete meal featuring favorite dishes prepackaged and ready-to-go.

JOSE'S RESTAURANT, www.joses-zaraperestaurants.com, 3824 S. Texas Ave., Bryan (979) 268-0036; 308 North Main, Bryan (979) 779-8702. Discover the taste of Old Mexico at Jose's Restaurant. Choose from traditional dishes such as enchiladas and quesadillas, or savor specialties like pollo a la parrilla, steak ranchero, or carne asada a la tampiquena. Mixed drinks are also available. T-Su 11am-9:45pm

LA BODEGA, www.bodegatacos.com, 102 Church Ave., CS (979) 691-8226. La Bodega is a Baja taco bar located on Northgate. Choose from their wide selection of tacos made from the freshest ingredients alongside specialty drinks and other great menu options. Live music can be heard W-Su nights. M-Su 11am-10pm

LUIGI'S PATIO RISTORANTE, www.luigispatoristorante.com, Rock Prairie Rd. and Hwy. 6, CS (979) 693-2742. Luigi's is an Italian patio restaurant experience that transports you to Italy. You may choose to dine in a beautiful, cozy Italian villa-style home interior or eat "outside" on the patio where all the piazza town center activity happens—but it's all indoors! Tu-F 11:30am-2pm; Tu-Su open nightly at 5:30 pm; Brunch Su 11:30am-2pm

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

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

VERITAS, www.veritaswineandbistro.com, 830 University Dr. E., Ste. 400, CS (979) 268-3251. Classically-trained chefs offer creative cuisine in a casual, contemporary setting. Veritas embraces usage of organic and local produce, wild caught seafood flown in directly from the source, as well as poultry and meat raised naturally. Highly-trained associates and wine stewards can guide you through an award-winning wine list, which has garnered Wine Spectator's Award of Excellence (2007-2010). Lunch M-Sa 11am-2pm; Dinner Su-Th 5:30-9:30pm; F-Sa 2-11pm

VILLAGE CAFÉ, www.thevillagedowntown.com, 210 W. 26th St., Bryan (979) 703-8514. The Village is a wonderful cafe by day featuring local and organic foods and fabulous locally roasted "What's the Buzz" coffee. Art979 is an art gallery by night featuring local art, art events and Texas wine and beer. M 8am-5pm, T-W 8am-10pm, Th-F 8am-12am, Sa 8am-2am, Su 8am-8pm

SWEET TREATS

TRUMAN CHOCOLATES, www.trumanchocolates.com, 4407 South Texas Ave., Bryan (979) 260-4519. Truman Chocolates is your source for exquisitely handcrafted gourmet chocolates. Each chocolate is made of only the finest ingredients and carefully designed to maximize your sensory experience. M-F 9am-6pm; Sa 10am-3pm

ENTERTAINMENT AND ATTRACTIONS

BRAZOS COTTON EXCHANGE, www.brazoscottonexchange.com, Howell Building, 200 South Main, Third Floor Bryan (979) 575-4181. A venue of timeless beauty with picturesque views of historic downtown and the Bryan skyline, the Cotton Exchange is the perfect place for any occasion. Simplify your event planning by choosing the facility that has all amenities needed for your next function.

B-CS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, www.bcschamber.org, 4001 E. 29th St., Ste. 175, Bryan (979) 260-5200. "We can accomplish collectively what no one business can do alone." Spring and summer events include Epicurean Extravaganza, Chamber Day, Job Fair, Celebrity Softball Classic and Ladies Nite. Call for more event details or to request membership information.

THE THEATRE COMPANY, www.theatrecompany.com, Corner of Villa Maria and Texas Ave., Bryan (979) 779-1302. The Theatre Company is a community theater performance group dedicated to the presentation of high quality productions suitable for family audiences at an affordable price. The group strives to provide community enrichment for all ages. Call for production dates and times.

U PAINT-IT, www.upaintit.com, 900 Harvey Road, Ste. 5A, CS (979) 695-1500. U Paint-It is a contemporary paint-it yourself pottery studio. They provide the materials for you to design and paint your chosen ceramic piece. Then they glaze and fire your piece and in 5-7 days you'll have a personal masterpiece and keepsake! T 11am-8pm; W 10am-10pm Th-Sa 11am-8pm; Su 2pm-6pm

BURLESON COUNTY

DINING / CATERING

JP'S TACO EXPRESS, 410 SH 36 S, Caldwell (979) 567-0611. Homestyle Mexican food at its best! Enjoy delicious breakfast tacos made to order, mouth-watering fajitas tacos, gorditas and chalupas. JP's uses homemade tortillas and offers service with a smile in Burleson County. Try the M-F 6am-3pm, Sa 6am-2pm

MAD HATTER'S TEA ROOM, www.madhatterstearoom.com, 210 S. Echols, Caldwell (979) 567-3504. The Mad Hatter's cozy eatery provides tantalizing treats and generous portions bursting with flavor, a unique selection of gift items, gourmet coffees, and specialty teas. Open for breakfast and lunch and special events by appointment. W-Sa 8am-5pm

MASFAJITAS, www.masfajitas.com, 305 Highway 36 S., Caldwell (979) 567-4007. Masfajitas' Tex-Mex menu consists of all your favorites including a variety of fajita options, enchiladas, tacos, and nachos. Seafood entrees are also available for a taste tempting combination of flavors. Call Masfajitas for your next party or event. Su-M 11am-9pm

SHOPPING

MAD HATTER'S TEA ROOM, www.madhatterstearoom.com, 210 S. Echols, Caldwell (979) 567-3504. The Mad Hatter's offers a unique selection of gift items, gourmet coffees, and specialty teas. Ladies' apparel, jewelry and accessories make for a pleasant shopping excursion. W-Sa 8am-5pm

SLOVACEK'S, www.slovacek.com, 9423 Highway 60 W., Snook (979) 272-3333. In 1957, Uncle John Slovacek, a friendly guy from Snook, dropped his amateur status and

turned professional sausage maker. Today, Slovacek's offers their great sausage in retail locations around the Brazos Valley, including their retail store in Snook. You'll find it alongside fresh meats and gourmet gift ideas. M-F 6-8; Sa 7-8; Su 10-8

ENTERTAINMENT AND ATTRACTIONS

ROYALTY PECANS, www.royaltypescans.com, 10600 SH 21 E., Caldwell (8 Miles West of Bryan) (979) 272-3904. A brand new look for a Brazos Valley tradition. A new facility open to the public year-round offering items such as Texas fancy pecan halves and a line of gifts, gourmet breads and mouth watering flavored pecans. Excellent day trip from anywhere in the Brazos Valley. M-F 10am-4pm, Sa 10am-2pm. Cafe available for events only.

THEATRE GUILD OF BURLESON COUNTY, (979) 567-2308. The Theatre Guild of Burleson County is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to enrich, educate and entertain as well as create opportunities for community participation in a broad range of quality and affordable theatrical productions. For information about productions or auditions, please contact Texas Agrilife Extension Service, Burleson County.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

DINING / CATERING

FUNKY ART CAFÉ, 202 W. Commerce St., Brenham (979) 836-5220. Delicious and different, Funky Art Café in Brenham offers enticing entrees to please the palate. Or choose a sandwich or savory soup before shopping in its companion retail shop The Pomegranate to find trinkets, gift ideas and kitchen gadgets. M-F 11am-2pm; Sa 11am-3pm

SOUTHERN FLYER, www.brenhammunicipalairport.com, 3001 Aviation Way, Brenham (979) 836-5462. Whether flying in or driving up, Southern Flyer is a great place to land with waitresses who serve up your food in poodle skirts. Bringing together fun and food at a relaxing and enjoyable destination! Su-Th 11am-3pm, F-Sa 11am-9pm

ENTERTAINMENT AND ATTRACTIONS

WASHINGTON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, www.brenhamtexas.com (979)836-3695. Take a deep breath...and picture yourself driving winding country roads and visiting quiet villages — all in Washington County, located between Houston and Austin on Hwy. 290. Brenham, the county seat and home of Blue Bell ice cream, is a bustling small town of about 14,000 friendly folks with an historic downtown filled with shops and dining options. Many attractions for the entire family—come play with us!

AREA EXCURSIONS

OIL RANCH, www.oilranch.com, 23501 Macedonia, Hockley (281) 859-1616. A short trip from the Brazos Valley, Oil Ranch offers family fun, corporate events and school field trips. Conveniently located between Waller and Magnolia, it's the perfect place for birthday parties, family reunions and company picnics. Fun activities for kids include a pool, train rides, putt-putt golf, a petting zoo, hay rides and much more. Please call for group rates or corporate event planning.

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Liz Ylitalo, Owner