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THE **ULTIMATE GUIDE** TO TRAVELING WITH YOUR PET IN **TEXAS**

FEBRUARY 2022

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EDITOR'S  
**NOTE**



Art Director Ashley Burch instructs her dog, Lady Bird, on a shoot for this issue.

## Artistic License

**T**he devil may be in the details, but in magazine publishing, that's also where the magic lies. Our resident magician, Art Director Ashley Burch, is passionate about the details. Whether it's styling dishes for a food story, baking multiple pies to create the perfect scene for a cover photo, or finding the ideal font to reflect the emotion of a piece of writing, her keen eye ensures every element is precise and contributes to a more beautiful whole.

For this month's cover story, Ashley wrangled her German shorthaired pointer, Lady Bird, for a pet product photo shoot (see Page 42). "I'm always looking for ways to be on set and get out from behind my computer screen," she says. "And I think with anything we do, the more people you get involved—editor, photographer, art director—better ideas and better photos happen."

Ashley spends the bulk of her time laying out stories in the magazine. With 12 years of experience in graphic design—10 at magazines—she says she mainly relies on instinct when it comes to conceptualizing pages. "I really love to read—my college minor was in English and creative

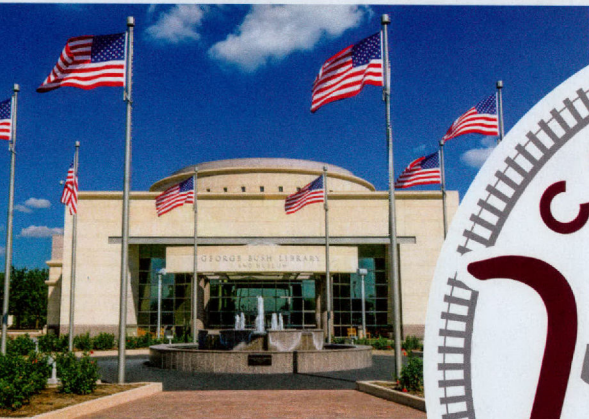
writing, and I have done some writing myself—so I get a lot of tone and perspective from the actual copy," she says. "It's not an exact science. It's more of an emotion that translates into fonts, colors, how we edit and filter the photos, and what the photos need to look like."

When she's not designing and detailing, Ashley loves to explore the state with her husband and two young sons. She especially enjoys visiting the restaurants we cover in the magazine. Before the pandemic, she traveled to Palo Duro Canyon for the first time with her then-nearly 1-year-old son and extended family to check out one of the canyon-rim lodgings we'd recently featured. "We had the best time exploring Canyon, going to the *TEXAS* Outdoor Musical, and just hanging out and playing board games," she recalls. "It's gorgeous there, and you can't beat the view."

*Emily R Stone*

**EMILY ROBERTS STONE**  
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VOLUME 69 . NUMBER 2

# FEBRUARY

32

## The Ultimate Guide to Traveling With Pets

Pet ownership skyrocketed during the pandemic. Check out our guide to bringing furry friends new and old along on a Texas adventure.

50

## Travels With Cleo

Inspired by John Steinbeck's 1962 memoir *Travels With Charley*, a new Texan sets off to discover her adopted state and bond with her dog.

By Madeleine Aggeler  
Photographs by Tiffany Hofeldt

### MONAHANS SANDHILLS

State Park allows leashed pets to explore the dunes.

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# FEBRUARY

**7**  
Merge

**8**  
Sightseer

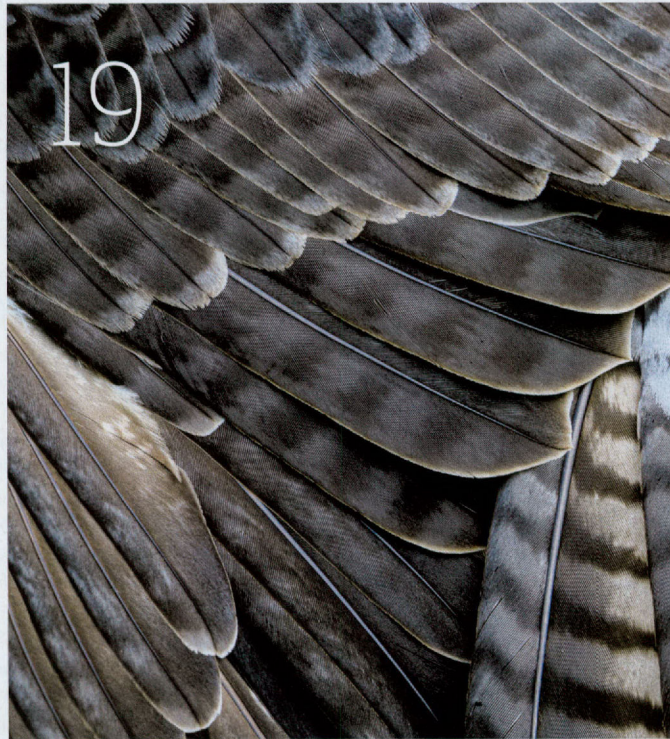
**10**  
My Hometown  
Victoria Harris shares  
Kendleton's rich African  
American history

**12**  
Open Road  
Finding community  
in a small town

**19**  
Drive/Wild  
Blackland Prairie  
Raptor Center rescues  
injured birds of prey

**24**  
Drive/Ticket  
Fort Worth's Kinfolk House  
makes art accessible

**26**  
Drive/Atlas  
How service dogs assist  
people with disabilities



**28**  
Getaway  
Matagorda offers a  
low-key beach vacation

**61**  
Plates  
Best Maid pickles; vegan  
soul food; red velvet cake  
courtesy of Adams Extract

**72**  
Texana  
I.M. Terrell High School's  
outsized jazz legacy

**78**  
Events  
Costumed dogs on  
parade at McKinney's  
Krewe of Barkus

**85**  
Daytripper  
Bounce on down  
to Spring, regardless  
of the season

**87**  
Speaking of Texas  
Ice skater Amber Glenn  
on the Winter Olympics

**89**  
Vintage  
The timeless appeal  
of stock shows



**ON THE COVER**

Photograph by Kenny Braun  
Shot at Monahans Sandhills  
State Park



64

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## Behind the Story



While on assignment to capture all the ways pets can enjoy traveling the state with their owners, some of the seven photographers who shot “The Ultimate Guide to Traveling With Pets in Texas” (Page 32) focused on their own dogs as subjects. Kenny Braun said his assistant’s dog, Wiley, who appears on the cover, enjoyed Monahans Sandhills State Park the most. “When it was time to go, he walked off and laid down in the cool sand and refused to leave,” Braun said. “It really is a special place.” Tom McCarthy Jr.’s dogs were more judgmental during their shoot. “My dogs were pretty confused about why I was outside the car in the drizzling rain trying to get them to stick their heads out the window,” he said. For Theresa DiMenno, the photo shoots revealed one big difference between canines and humans. “People care too much about how they look,” she said. “Animals could care less.”

## Featured Contributors



### Madeleine Aggeler

As an ode to John Steinbeck’s *Travels With Charley*, Aggeler embarked on a four-day road trip with her poodle mix in “Travels With Cleo” (Page 50). The pair, along with photographer Tiffany Hofeldt and her golden retriever, Charger, roughly traced the Texas leg of Steinbeck’s journey across America. “I think my dog, Cleo, would have rather skipped the whole trip and stayed at home, snoozing on the couch, but she was a good sport nonetheless,” said the Austin-based writer. Previously, Aggeler was a senior writer at *New York Magazine*’s *The Cut*. She has written for *Austin Monthly*, *Bustle*, and others.



### Stacey Swann

Growing up in Sealy, Swann felt sure she was a “big-city person trapped in a small town.” She wrote about how life proved her wrong in “Past the Edges of Town” (Page 12). “I spent more than a decade in Austin convinced that I would soon move on to somewhere even bigger,” said Swann, who now splits her time between Austin and Lampasas. “It took me a long time to understand that my desires were not so clear cut.” Swann’s debut novel, *Olympus, Texas*, was longlisted for the Center for Fiction’s First Novel Prize. Her writing has appeared in *LitHub*, *Electric Literature*, *NER Digital*, *Epoch*, and other journals.

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# MERGE

“Obscuring history does nothing to help us understand the Texas we are, the Texas we’ve been, or the Texas we’ll someday be.” The Irene Lara Silva article is filled with beautifully expressed statements. This is just one of them.

Allan Novak, San Antonio



### 100-Year-Old Haunt

My dad was a projectionist at the Majestic Theatre [“Century Club,” December]. I remember going up into the projection booth with him as a little kid. Great memories.

@rwdallas

### Stationed at the Springs

My grandfather was stationed at Fort Clark during WWII [“My Hometown: Bracketville,” December]. I took my father there on a recent road trip.

@frioenvy

### Hook 'Em Horns

I have worked in the oil fields of Texas since 1975, and in the old days I would see numerous horned lizards when working near Midland, Llano, and all the way east to Abilene [“Our Lovable Lizards,” January]. Now it is very rare that I see them darting across an oil field lease road. Also missing are the harvester ants and their large circular mounds that used to be so frequent in the mesquite, tall grass prairie, and sagebrush grasslands of Central and West Texas. My best of luck to the zoo in Fort Worth and the landowners who are assisting with the recovery program. My two sons and my grandsons have never watched a horned lizard run and then freeze to blend with its background. The horned lizard is as much a part of Texas as the Alamo, cowboy boots, or large rodeo belly shields.

James H. Sherrard, Plano

### Free-Range Childhood

I read this article with interest because autism is nothing strange to me [“Out of the Woods,” December]. I have Asperger’s syndrome, which is part of the autism spectrum. I’ve had it all my life, but was diagnosed as an adult because when I was a kid (I was born in 1952) nobody

knew what autism was. Everyone knew I was different, but they didn’t know why. My parents would make up things to try to explain my odd behavior. But I thrived in the very rural East Tennessee county where I was born and raised. We played in the fields and woods and the creeks all day, only coming home to have a midday snack of Saltine crackers with peanut butter and Kool-Aid, then coming back later for supper. (Yes, in East Tennessee it’s supper because we don’t have dinner.) It was the perfect place to grow up, as I can now see as I look back on my childhood with my almost 70-year-old mind.

Don Holloway, Tazewell, Tennessee

### Borderland Roots

What a beautiful story [“Stories Without End,” December]. I just had to reply and let you know you have truly touched my soul. I have enjoyed the magazine for years, and I must say you are in tune with the people and all cultures in Texas. I am a fifth-generation Mexican American with Indigenous roots in Central Texas and the borderland. When I read the story, I truly felt you were writing about me. As we sat down this past Thanksgiving to enjoy a beautiful Indigenous feast, the story in the magazine just connected all together.

Bravo for such a wonderful story.

Anthony Barron, Terrell

### A Diverse Texas

I grew up in Texas enjoying my parents’ subscription to *Texas Highways* magazine. My sister recently bought me a subscription because I now live in Wisconsin, but still take an interest in Texas. Now, we always start our planning for my next visit with the question, “What does *Texas Highways* say?” I really enjoy the variety of topics, the beautiful photography, and the diversity of people featured in the pages of your magazine. In the December issue, I especially enjoyed the articles on Deep Ellum and El Camino Real. Like many white people in the U.S., I’ve become increasingly aware throughout my adult life, but especially in light of more recent events, of the racist structures in our society that were hidden from me as a child and young adult. Learning the history of Native Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans in Texas is one way to spark the conversations needed to dismantle structural racism. Thank you so much for your efforts to educate readers about the rich, diverse, and often painful history of Texas.

Brenda Morris, Madison, Wisconsin





## Furry Friends

Photographer Tom McCarthy Jr. and his wife, Shawneen McCarthy, love traveling with their longtime companion, Chuy, a Chihuahua mix, and recent addition, Ranger, a black Lab mix. While shooting on an overcast November day for the cover story (Page 32), McCarthy came across a vibrant scene on Market Street, near its intersection with 28th Street, in Galveston. “The rainbow colors painted on the fence and sidewalk immediately caught my eye,” McCarthy says. “Then it was just a matter of composing and letting the trio walk across the rainbow.” The nearby Galveston’s Own Farmers Market, McCarthy notes, opens on Sundays and is “very pet friendly.”



# Kendleton

Veronica Harris reflects on her town's rich African American history

By Brooke A. Lewis



**VERONICA HARRIS'**  
family goes back generations in Kendleton, where her grandfather was a champion of civil rights.

**V**eronica Harris lives not far from Willie Melton Boulevard, the Kendleton road named in honor of her late grandfather. Melton, a farmer born in 1900, led a legal effort in the early 1950s to end Fort Bend County Democrats' informal whites-only primary elections. Melton's lawsuit went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in Melton's favor. The story is memorialized on a historical marker at the Kendleton Post Office and exemplifies the town's rich African American history. Freed slaves founded Kendleton in the 1860s after buying land from a plantation owner named William Kendall. Kendleton grew as a farming community, and a railroad came through in 1882, linking the town to Rosenberg and Victoria. Harris has lived most of her life in her hometown even as the agricultural economy waned and businesses moved away to places like Richmond and Houston. Harris held jobs with the city and county, and raised four kids with her late husband, before retiring. She now serves the community as a member of the Kendleton Floral Club.

### Melons for Miles

"You had your house, and you didn't have nobody next to you. My brothers would sneak off to the creek and do their swimming. At night, we would sit out and you could hear the crickets. We would catch light bugs in jars. That's the life that I love. I would go to the watermelon patches, sit up under the trees, nothing but watermelons for miles."

### Farming Roots

"Kendleton originally was on the San Bernard River. William Kendall divided the plantation into small farms, and then he sold the land for 50 cents an acre to the freed slaves. The land was very rich—mostly in that time cotton and corn and wheat. When Willie Melton and my grandmother, Carrie Melton, got married, they expanded into watermelon patches. My grandmother also had her own business on the side, which was raising turkeys and chickens."

### Family Legacy

"Willie Melton was very instrumental in helping people, making sure they were established in whatever their dream was. His dream was always to make sure we were comfortable and we had everything we needed. They tell me my grandmother used to get mad at him because he would be gone and taking care of people."

### Great Outdoors

"My late husband, Herbert Harris, was known for fishing and hunting. My neighbor and him would go hunting all the time—wild hogs, doves, rabbits, squirrels. That was their entertainment. He would take my boys out fishing. They would go right there down

to the San Bernard River. We enjoy walking down in Bates Allen Park. We can walk down to the San Bernard River. You have the boats sitting over to the left if you want to go canoeing a little bit. It's beautiful."

### Juneteenth Tradition

"We get together to remember that we were freed, and we talk about our history. We always have a speaker. People would come off the trains back in the day just to come to the Juneteenth celebration. We always have barbecue and the sides to go with it. We still go find us some watermelons."

### Fifth Sunday

"The churches are about us being able to come together. We love doing that. We have a fifth Sunday program, where all the churches worship together on the fifth Sunday. We rotate churches, and the pastors take turns preaching. It's always been so important. It just tickles me how many churches we've had in this little community."

### Resilient Heritage

"The Fort Bend County Heritage Unlimited Museum deals with the lifestyles of African Americans who settled from 1865 until the early 1960s. We can learn about people our parents talked about but you didn't really know, like Barbara Jordan. Her father was a minister at Oak Hill Missionary Baptist Church. The museum has a church setup like back in the 1800s. History keeps you going. If [our ancestors] persevered through all they went through, and I can read up on what they went through, then I should be able to press on and persevere and deal with what's going on today." 🐾



## TOWN TRIVIA



POPULATION:

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NUMBER OF STOPLIGHTS:

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YEAR FOUNDED:

1860s



NEAREST BIG TOWN:

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MARQUEE EVENTS:

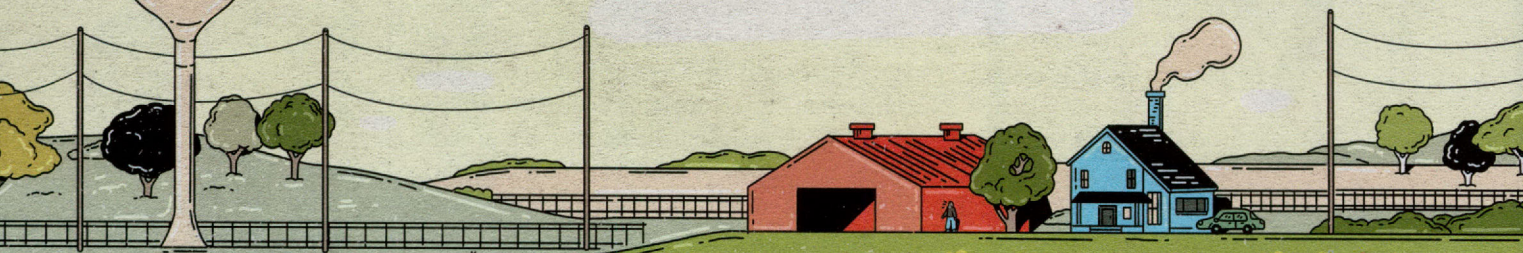
Juneteenth celebration at Bates M. Allen Park, held on the Saturday nearest June 19



MAP IT:

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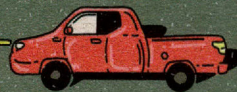
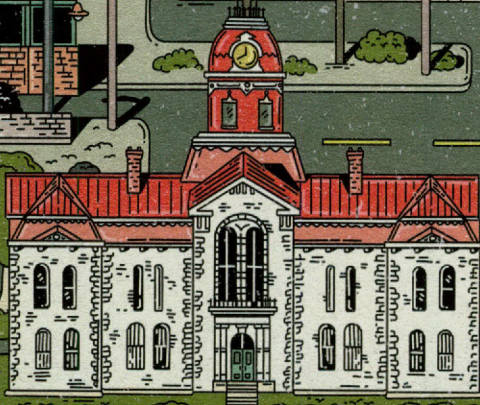
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EATS  
SINCE 1950  
DAIRY CUE  
EATS

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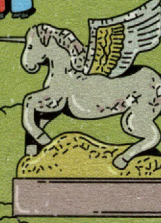
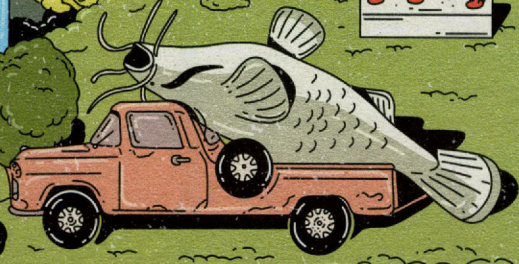
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# Past the Edges of Town

An introvert and her family embrace community in Lampasas

By Stacey Swann

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**M**

My parents raised my sister and me in a small town about 40 miles outside of Houston. But to say that I grew up in a small town isn't exactly accurate. My childhood home was in the country, on 10 acres of trees and pastures without another house in sight. I loved that land. I loved the Brazos River, the constant noise of it whenever we

opened one of the doors to our house. I loved the sound of the gravel road under my sneakers, the fences and trees eaten up by mustang grapevines. Though 15 minutes away from our home, Sealy was where I went to school from kindergarten through high school. It was where my family picked up our mail, where we went to the library, and where many of my friends lived. Sealy was my hometown.

My sister and I both headed to Austin after high school, excited to live in a city. Not long after, my parents moved to New Mexico. But when my dad hit 75, it seemed better for my parents to live closer to family. The traffic and increasing population of Austin made a second home in the country enticing to me, my sister, and my brother-in-law. In 2014, we pooled resources and bought a place 8 miles northwest of Lampasas, nestled between rocky Central Texas hills on the Edwards Plateau. The property—once a working dairy farm—came with a house, a garage apartment, a barn, various outbuildings, and almost 200 acres.

Before COVID-19, I spent two or three weekends a month there. After the pandemic hit, it was more like a 50-50 split—for safety, for fielding grocery runs for my parents, and for sanity, as my social calendar was a shell of its former self. The change of scenery kept stir-craziness at bay.

In the span of an hour, I could reverse out of my North Austin driveway and travel the straight shot of US 183 past strip malls and big-box stores in Cedar Park, past entrances to growing housing communities butting up to Liberty Hill, and into increasing fields and decreasing populations until I reached Lampasas: population 7,982. My shoulder muscles relaxed, and I began to breathe easier once I'd pull onto the dirt road that leads to our family place—the wide pastures and the shiny glint of distant stock ponds acting as a geographic Valium.

I had driven through Lampasas many times in my life, on my way elsewhere, but I looked at it through a different lens when I imagined spending chunks of time there. Eight years ago, when we decided to look for a house, we searched properties for months. I had cast a cautious

eye at multiple small towns in Central Texas. The high cost of Blanco and Hays counties kept us away from the area south of Austin, but we ventured out to small towns in other directions: Thrall, then over to Florence, San Saba, and Goldthwaite, and even as far out as Junction. Something about Lampasas made it feel promising right away, and the feeling was spurred by more than the patty melt and giant iced tea we got at Storm's Drive-In after viewing the property.

The basics in Lampasas are well-covered—an ample H-E-B, a Walmart with a pharmacy, a local hospital. It has charms, too, including a beautiful downtown square and 19th-century courthouse; an icy, spring-fed community pool; an outdoor sculpture garden featuring, among other art installations, a giant metal catfish atop an old truck

(which, honestly, I never get tired of seeing); and more than a dozen colorful murals scattered around town. There is good Tex-Mex, a Pizza Hut (a favorite of my parents), and a German restaurant with top-notch schnitzel and a plethora of gravies. Lampasas had all the essentials my parents would need, along with a generous helping of character.

Not long after my parents settled in, I subscribed to *The Lampasas Dispatch Record* to better know the community. Since we weren't in Lampasas proper, the town still felt unknown in a lot of ways. Reading the paper twice a week felt like doing research, something I was used to as a writer. But reading the paper also had the effect of transporting me back to Sealy. As a kid, I had read the local paper each week—the thorough coverage of high school sports and extracurriculars,

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the police blotters with loose-livestock reports, the goings-on in local government or new businesses setting up shop. Lampasas started taking up residence in my heart just by the sheer similarities to *The Sealy News*, a nostalgia transferred.

That nostalgia took me by surprise. My love for the landscape of my childhood was uncomplicated. But my love for my small hometown was just the opposite. Part of the appeal of life in the country is isolation, and I appreciated how solitary the country felt, considering Sealy never felt solitary despite its small population, back in the 1980s, of around 3,000. I couldn't shop the aisles of the Sealy grocery store or Walmart without seeing multiple people I knew, and likely having multiple conversations: a friend with her parents, a woman from church, my former third-grade teacher, my dog's

## My love for the landscape of my childhood was uncomplicated. But my love for my small hometown was just the opposite.

vet. So many folks to be audiences, or inquisitors, or simply roadblocks to accomplishing an errand with speed.

I didn't have the perspective then to see the positive roles these people played, but I'm getting better at it now. I'm my own sort of audience when I shop at H-E-B in Lampasas. I watch two women happily chatting each other up in the bread aisle, blocking the tortillas. Two older couples standing next to piles of bananas exchange news of relatives and mutual friends. I cruise through the aisle with anonymity. I'm not yet a known

quantity even after years of occasional shopping there. Despite that, the ratio of head nods and smiles from locals—the simple acknowledgement that I am a person there in close proximity to them—is always higher in Lampasas than it is in Austin. The Texas-friendly ethos is magnified by the small-town friendly ethos into something that feels like community, even as I stand at its edges.

**It's an old lament:** We've lost our way in America because we no longer value



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community. When I was young, I used to shrug it off, feeling confined by my community, so surrounded by it that I couldn't even begin to understand a world without it. There was the community of my school, especially the 100 or so kids in my grade, and within that, the community of my classrooms, of the junior high basketball team, the marching band, and the debate team. Outside of school, I was on a softball team, I took piano lessons and dance classes, and I participated in recitals. There was church on Sunday with Sunday school and vacation Bible school in the summers. It isn't that people don't do these things in cities. Of course they do. But typically, the things they do comprise a separate community, discrete units. In a small town, the kid whose piano lesson was before mine, who I could

hear play as I stood on the porch waiting, also sat behind me in my fifth-grade class. I always felt like Sealy was a single community, one large Venn diagram of folks who might not overlap in all things, but in some areas the overlap would be eight layers deep.

Back then, Houston beckoned me. Just a 30-minute drive from our house, the city had movie theaters and shopping malls. By high school, it also held things that made me feel like an adult: bookstores and music shops, art museums with famous paintings in them. I had read widely, starting early, and I understood how narrow a slice of life I could see in Sealy. I knew the world was elsewhere. Sealy was the type of place people left so they could become who they were meant to be. But the draw of Houston was even more than that.

Houston allowed anonymity. There was no running into your best friend's aunt or your softball coach.

As a child (and well beyond that, to tell the truth), I was incredibly shy. I was a legitimate introvert. I read a lot because books were, to me, the best company. They felt restorative, while navigating teams and classrooms felt like a constant drain. It wasn't that I wanted to be alone in my room. I liked being out in the world, walking through the Cullen Sculpture Garden or eating New York-style bagels in front of the Waterwall. I didn't mind being surrounded by other people; I just didn't want to talk to any of them.

Now that I'm older and have burnished off a lot of my shyness through the constant polishing of exposure, I can see that being shy in a small town was a convenient placement. The community

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is so inescapable, you're forced into extroversion. In a big city school, I might have had a hard time making friends or avoided conscription into team sports or marching band. But in a small town, the friends will find you eventually. It never occurred to me to refuse activities because I saw no examples of anyone else who did. Besides, how scary could it be when all the participants were already so familiar?

Even though I still enjoy the anonymity of going to Costco in Austin, I also enjoy going to literary events and seeing a half-dozen people I didn't expect to see. Though still an introvert, my shyness has lessened: I can teach a class of 40 students, give a reading onstage, and even do a radio interview now without too much stress. But my idea of hell is still attending a party where I only know the

**I can see that being shy in a small town was a convenient placement. The community is so inescapable, you're forced into extroversion.**

host, and Lampasas feels similar to that party. I may live nearby, but I am outside the community. Because community is more than location. Community means availability and extending yourself. And so, I keep waiting around, sure that one day soon I will take the leap.

**I recently read a lovely book** titled *The Joy of Movement*, by Kelly McGonigal. In it, she discusses the power of synchronous movement. When you move in rhythm with other people, like in a dance or aerobics class, your sense of personal

space enlarges to encompass all the other people too. We can get this feeling from singing together in church, or line dancing at a country-western bar. Sociologists describe what happens to us as "collective effervescence," a type of group joy. The enlarged feeling of personal space gives us a strong sense of belonging. I remember a version of this when I was in marching band in high school. Once I learned the music and choreography well enough that executing them no longer took 100% of my brainpower, I almost got the sense we were one unit—a single

continued on Page 86



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**Pictured: Brian & Amanda Light of Ronin Farm & Restaurant**

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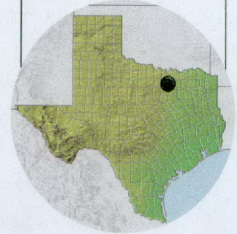
**BLACKLAND PRAIRIE**  
Raptor Center in North Texas treats injured birds as well as contributes to the restoration of the surrounding ecological system.



**EDUCATION MANAGER**  
Elizabeth Carter holds Cleopatra, an American kestrel.

**BLACKLAND PRAIRIE RAPTOR CENTER**

1625 Brockdale Park Road, Lucas, 469-964-9696; bpraptorcenter.org



It's a typical Thursday at the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center, which means there's a Cooper's hawk being treated for severe burns, an injured falcon, and a vulture in need of X-rays. The hawk, a wild creature that would normally fight its way out of this tiny room, lies on a table, completely still. Its damaged talons are covered in thick white burn cream. A falconry hood covering its eyes lessens stress by reducing visual stimuli to keep the bird calm. It's a strange sight: a stealth hunter in a rare moment of tranquility.

"We will not turn one down," says Hailey LeBaron, the center's rehabilitation manager, after the phone rings again and a volunteer rushes out to pick up yet another injured raptor in North Texas. The Blackland Prairie Raptor Center is a small but rapidly growing operation on 66 acres at the western edge of Lavon Lake, a tributary of the Trinity River, in Lucas. The flurry of activity makes me wonder just how many birds of prey are injured each day in the state. Turns out, a lot.

I was curious about the raptor center because of the hawks I saw soaring above Brushy Creek in Hutto, where I live. Going semirural and living among the wildlife in Central Texas had me wondering about the creatures surrounding me, like the four hawks—so large I mistook them for deer—I spotted one day on our lawn. Since my visit promised a special, up-close view of red-tailed hawks, American

# Fly High, Free Bird

Blackland Prairie Raptor Center heals birds of prey and returns them to the sky

By Dina Gachman

kestrels, Eastern screech-owls, Peregrine falcons, and more, I invited my sister Amy and her 8-year-old son, Jake, to join me and my 4-year-old son, Cole. When I tell Cole, who happens to be desperately in need of a pet, we're meeting hawks and owls, he asks, "Can we bring them home?"

In 2004, a group of nine North Texas bird lovers started the Blackland Prairie Raptor Center—a nonprofit fully reliant on donations—to help the injured animals and create a place where Texans could learn about and appreciate birds of prey, vultures included. In 2005, they invited master naturalist Erich Neupert—his grandmother, Dorothy McIlroy, was considered "the First Lady of Birding" in upstate New York—to serve as executive director. (Neupert was retiring the day following my visit.) After operating as a small group with good intentions but no permanent facility, the center partnered

with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 2007 and moved the organization to its current location in Brockdale Park.

The center began with eight non-releasable raptors. These were birds whose injuries prevented them from surviving in the wild or who were deemed a "human imprint"—a bird that has been cared for by a human and becomes unable to hunt for itself. The center's focus is North Texas, but it takes in birds from around the state. In 2015, the center saw 86 patients. In 2018, 764 patients. On the day I visit, LeBaron tells me they have 32 patients, and they've seen 625 in the first 10 months of 2021. Three staff members work with about 50 volunteers.

LeBaron "fell in love with birds of prey" when she volunteered at a raptor rehab facility in California as a teenager. There are approximately 40 species of raptors in Texas throughout the year, and LeBaron says she's released thousands of

birds during her time as a rehabber. Each time a bird successfully takes flight, she knows she's done the right thing. Still, it's her least favorite part of the job. What if the bird isn't ready?

"I get so in my head about it," she says. "I always hope I'm making the right decision and that these birds will succeed after their time with us."

**We stop in our tracks** when the tour leads us to an impressive array of huge flight cages, the large ones measuring 50 feet by 20 feet by 16 feet. When we peek inside one of them and spot a barred owl, my sister nearly breaks down in tears of joy. In Amy's mind, owls are adorable. Maybe this is because she's used to seeing the cartoon owl from the Duolingo language-learning app, or Harry Potter's owl buddy, Hedwig, or one too many photos online of sweet-looking owls wrapped in blankets like a burrito. In reality, barred



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Ellen Trout Zoo



**FROM LEFT:** An injured vulture undergoes an X-ray; volunteer Nikki Lefebvre with Sweet Pea, an Eastern screech-owl; cousins Jake and Cole.



## Bird's-Eye View

Blackland Prairie Raptor Center hosts events and programs year-round.

The center is open to the public the first and third Saturdays of every month. On **First Saturdays**, all ages can participate in a 20-minute prairie walk.

### Paint a Raptor Evenings

allow visitors to paint one of the ambassador birds with the coaching of local artists.

**Rods 'n' Raptors Kids' Fishing Derby**, a catch-and-release contest, occurs in the spring.

In October, the **Owl-O-Ween** event features trick-or-treating and food trucks.

owls are skilled hunters who've been known to swoop down, kill their prey, and swallow it whole. Cute? Maybe not. Formidable, definitely.

Afterward, LeBaron leads us into the mouse house. The center breeds its own mice and roaches to feed to the birds. My son and nephew love the mice. "I'm bringing them home to sleep in my bed!" Cole declares. We don't visit the roaches, thank goodness.

Finally, LeBaron tells us it's time to see the "fun birds"—the 15 non-releasable birds that call the center home. These are the birds we can see up close. Elizabeth Carter, the center's education manager, spends most of her time with them. There's Cleopatra the American kestrel, a human imprint, and Sweet Pea, a darling Eastern screech-owl who was living in a rabbit cage until the family who found her realized it was illegal to keep her.

"She's a great ambassador for us," Carter says of Sweet Pea. When she explains that

Sweet Pea is 18 years old, I ask how long owls like her would typically survive in the wild if they don't imprint on humans. "Six or seven years," she replies.

We step outside, and Carter and one of the longtime volunteers, Nikki Lefebvre, hold Cleopatra and Sweet Pea, respectively, on one of their arms, which is protected by a thick leather glove. When I comment how sharp their "claws" look, Lefebvre, a master naturalist, quickly chimes in. "Talons," she says. "Not claws."

After getting to know the birds, I would never want to offend such powerful creatures. Peregrine falcons are the fastest animals in the world. Their diving speed during flight reaches over 200 miles per hour in some cases. And if you've ever seen a bald eagle talon, you would probably be careful not to insult it with the word "claw" either.

Carter tells us 90% of the injured birds they see are harmed by things humans put into the environment. The top



offenders: cars, barbed wire, bullets. Or, like the poor Cooper's hawk we saw on the table with burn cream on its talons, colorless methane gas from landfills, which is another killer of birds of prey since they can't see the flames and end up flying right through the fire.

In addition to its work with raptors, the center devotes resources to restoring its environment. The surrounding blackland prairie is an endangered ecosystem of fertile, dark clay soils that used to cover 12 million acres. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department estimates only about 5,000 acres remain in true prairie condition. The center's involvement includes controlled burns and educational outreach. "Their work serves as a demonstration of how proper land management can help bring back one of the most threatened ecosystems in North America," says Chase Brooke of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Collin



County, a partner in the effort.

Blackland Prairie Raptor Center's future is bright. Its master plan includes a nature center and education facility, plus a state-of-the-art rehab facility that would be like a vet clinic but entirely devoted to raptors. It's important to make sure the public cares about all raptors and not just charming owls like Sweet Pea.

A few days after our visit, I drive back to Hutto with a newfound appreciation for the hawks soaring above the creek. I am awed by, and a little scared of, the owl who made its home in a tree by our house. I now understand it's a serious predator, and I definitely know not to call its talons "claws." Still, Cole, perhaps thinking of Sweet Pea, says, "Ah look, it's so cute." 🐾

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# Making Magic Happen

Artist Sedrick Huckaby brings creativity to his community at Kinfolk House

By Jonny Auping

**A**rtist Sedrick Huckaby has been hard at work transforming the 120-year-old Fort Worth house of his late grandmother—known affectionately as “Big Momma”—into a collaborative, multipurpose art space.


Each of the six rooms in the house were in varying states of reinvention when I stopped by in November. Huckaby was preparing for the February opening of Kinfolk House in the predominantly Black and Latino neighborhood of Polytechnic Heights near Texas Wesleyan University, where he began studying art in the late 1990s. Huckaby said he envisions the space providing exhibitions and workshops for local school kids while fostering and displaying “artistic ideas that operate at a high level.”

“We hope to be a bridge that can sit in the middle of people who don’t frequent museums or the art world and people who do,” Huckaby said.

Amid the renovations, it became apparent that family and friends who at some point lived in Big Momma’s house had not fully moved out. A number of Huckaby’s portraits of these very people, some of which he began working on over 10 years ago, were propped up against the walls as the Fort Worth-born artist continued to work on them. (Pictured in the painting: Huckaby’s cousin Roy Brown.) In this setting, the paintings represent the house’s past watching over its transition to the future.

Huckaby is a painter, sculptor, and social-engagement artist who was awarded a 2008 Guggenheim Fellowship and in recent years was a painting instructor to George W. Bush. He and his wife, Letitia Huckaby, a photo-based artist, purchased Big Momma’s house two years after her death. Kinfolk House will honor her and her legacy of connecting people by bringing artistic opportunities to the community around it.

“You ever watch that show *The Magic School Bus*?” Huckaby asked. “That school bus would come to the kids, and it would do whatever it needed to do to get them to the place of learning. It could shrink and go inside somebody’s body. It could fly into space. It could do whatever it needed. That’s how I think about this space.”

For more information, visit [kinfolkhouse.org](http://kinfolkhouse.org). 

# Service With a Wag

Assistance dogs can lessen the burdens of travel for people with disabilities

By Robyn Ross



**Travel poses extra challenges for people with disabilities**, but service dogs can ease the burden. Since the 1910s, guide dogs have assisted people who are blind, but the first known instance of service dog training wasn't until 1975. On a trip abroad in the '70s, California special education teacher Bonnie Bergin witnessed donkeys helping people with disabilities. When she got home, she began training dogs to complete similar tasks.

Today, dogs help veterans and civilians with a variety of conditions including physical disabilities, deafness, visual impairment, autism, epilepsy, diabetes, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Most are trained by nonprofits that provide dogs—typically Labrador retrievers, golden retrievers, and mixes of the two—to clients at little to no cost, although waiting lists are often years long. A person can also train their own dog, such as through the accredited program at The Dog Alliance in Cedar Park.

Service dogs can open doors, retrieve medication, prevent anxiety attacks, and even help visually impaired people find pieces of equipment in a gym. Most importantly, they give their handlers freedom. "These service dogs are trained to do amazing things, but the end result is deeper than just those physical tasks," says Courtney Craig, a spokesperson for the Irving-based regional training facility of Canine Companions, the organization Bergin founded. "It gives the client independence and confidence, and they're able to go out and do things on their own because they have a dog by their side."

## Old Dog, New Tricks

Tug open doors

Retrieve and deliver items

Turn light switches on and off

Alert deaf handlers to sounds like doorbells, smoke alarms, and ringing phones

Help blind or visually impaired people walk in a straight line and avoid obstacles

Guide their handler to the bathroom stall, sink counter, and trash can

Wake a person with PTSD from a nightmare



San Antonio's **Guide Dogs of Texas**, which trains dogs for the blind, offers facility tours every first Thursday. [guidedogsoftexas.org](http://guidedogsoftexas.org)

## On the Job

**Always assume a service dog is working. Follow these tips to interact with them.**

Ask before you pet the dog—and respect the handler's answer if they decline.

Avoid doing anything to distract the dog, including talking to the dog, making sounds, or making extended eye contact.

Take interest in the person, not just the dog. People who use wheelchairs or are visually impaired often welcome a friendly greeting and offer to help.

# 8-10

Average number of years in a service dog's career

# \$35,000

Minimum cost for nonprofits to raise and train a service dog

# 6

Number of Assistance Dogs International-accredited training facilities in Texas



## Know Your Animals

**Service animal:** a dog trained to complete tasks directly related to their handler's disability

**Emotional support animal:** an animal prescribed to a specific person by a mental health provider to provide comfort through its presence, not to complete specific tasks

**Therapy animal:** a dog or other animal trained to provide comfort to the public in settings such as schools, libraries, nursing homes, and hospitals

## Woman's Best Friend

Lou Ann Williams, a retired special education teacher from San Antonio who has been visually impaired since birth, had struggled with travel for years. In 2005, she received her first service animal, Labrador retriever Bonney, through Guide Dogs of Texas. Bonney led Williams around obstacles, found ticket counters and empty seats at airports, and led her to the restroom—guide dogs can smell the difference between the men's and women's.

"It's made travel wonderful when I'm by myself because you work as a team," says Williams, who is now on her third guide dog, Keller. "I talk to the dog, and he lets me know by understanding my commands that he's talking back to me. We can figure out new, unfamiliar places." With her second guide dog, Atlas, Williams was able to go on a 17-day cruise, visit Spain and Germany, and hike in coastal northwestern Italy.

Her dogs have also increased her social interaction. Before she had a guide dog, Williams says, people seldom asked if she needed help. "It can be kind of stressful when you're out on your own and you really need to ask someone a question and no one will answer," she says. "But when I have my guide dog with me, people are interested about the dog, and they'll come up to me and ask if I need help."



## A Dog's Life

**0-8 weeks:** Puppies in service programs meet other animals and humans early on and are immediately exposed to sounds—like cats meowing, children laughing, a hair dryer, a train—to get them accustomed to the world.

**8 weeks:** The puppy can be taken in by a volunteer puppy raiser who manages housetraining, teaches basic obedience, and

socializes the dog by bringing it everywhere.

**12-18 months:** Advanced training begins.

**2 years:** The dog is matched with a handler. It normally takes around two years to get matched with a dog. The dog is trained in skills customized to mitigate the handler's disability.

**10-12 years:** Dog retires. It sometimes remains with its handler as a pet, while the handler has the option to get a new service animal.



# Coastal Quiet

Matagorda attracts a reserved, nature-loving set

By John Nova Lomax

**F**ounded in 1827, Matagorda is one of Texas' oldest Anglo-settled towns. In the days of the Texas Republic and for decades thereafter, Matagorda was a bustling port and the seat of Matagorda County. The rise of Galveston and Houston lured trade away, and a series of destructive hurricanes in Matagorda prompted officials to build a new courthouse in Bay City in 1896. Today, Matagorda is home to fewer than 1,000 people year-round, and its relative isolation and miles of unspoiled beaches appeal to a more low-key crowd than, say, those who flock to South Padre Island. Fishing is king here—cast in the surf or waded in the bay; charter a boat or drive your own. During fall through spring bird migrations, well over 200 winged species live in or pass through town. The serenity of the coast helps visitors tune into the natural beauty around them.



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3



**1 / STANLEY-FISHER HOUSE**

Built in 1832 by Samuel Rhoads Fisher, the first secretary of the Texas Navy, this building stands as one of the few remnants of the town's heyday. Current owners Rik and Peggy Stanley converted it into a bed-and-breakfast in 2004. Nightly rates start at \$124 in the main house.



**5 / CASSADY'S COFFEE BAR & CAFE**

Texas-chic Cassidy's offers an array of coffee concoctions, including the butter pecan latte, the snickerdoodle latte, and the caramel and dark chocolate Mata-Getdown-Gorda drink. Baked goods, breakfast sandwiches, and breakfast tacos are also available.



2



**2 / WATERFRONT RESTAURANT**

An elder statesman on Matagorda's dining scene, the Waterfront Restaurant stands out with its mango-colored exterior and dishes like stuffed flounder, soft-shell crab, and steak done just right to honor Matagorda County's ranching history.



**6 / COASTAL QUE BBQ AND MORE**

House specialties include pork belly tacos garnished with jalapeño slaw, cotija cheese, and red onions; and the Frito Gorda, a variation on the humble Frito pie with brisket, beans, sausage, sour cream, and cheese. Head's up: The joint is open May through October.



8



**3 / PLUGGERS PUB**

The laid-back atmosphere, ice-cold beer, and specialty shots draw a crowd of regulars to this top-notch dive. If you are seeking a fishing guide, consider this your Tatooine cantina—a Han Solo of Matagorda's waters will likely be swapping fish tales on the premises.



**7 / HARBOR BAIT AND TACKLE**

This spot on the docks is a treasure trove of up-to-the-minute information on fishing conditions. Managers Kelly and Mark Holland—Mark is a charter captain—can hook you up with whatever you need, including beer, bait, and a spacious deck to unwind on when the sun goes down.



**4 / STANLEY'S GENERAL STORES**

Opened in 1964, this one-stop shop has groceries, beach toys, fishing tackle, and all the essentials you might have left at home. Stanley's is also home to the Gorda Grill, which dishes out hot breakfasts, fried oysters, and shrimp that were in the Gulf just hours before.



**8 / MATAGORDA BAY NATURE PARK**

Operated by the Lower Colorado River Authority, this park offers kayak rentals, guided adventure tours, and fishing. Two Airstream trailers come with a bathroom with shower, an equipped kitchenette, and a Yeti bucket for the length of your stay. Rates start at \$225 a night.



5







## Off-Roading

Matagorda County boasts 55 miles of unspoiled beaches.

Divided by the Colorado River, the beaches to the northeast are accessible by car, while those to the southwest are accessible by boat only. To reach the drivable beach, purchase a \$10 permit at Stanley's General Stores and look for a beach access sign three-quarters of a mile north of Farm-to-Market Road 2031's end at Jetty Park. The beach access road takes you to a small parking lot where you can decide to park or drive onto the beach. The sand is very soft—locals strongly advise using a four-wheel drive vehicle. All Matagorda County beaches offer free camping so long as you don't take up residence in the same spot for more than 72 hours at a time.

[matagordabeach.org](http://matagordabeach.org)

On the edge of Matagorda and the Colorado River, **Pelican Point RV and Boat Slips** offers a place to park your rig, lay your head, and stash your craft. Gated access, a lighted fishing pier, fish-cleaning station, and on-water boat fueling are available around-the-clock. 498 St. Mary St., Matagorda. 979-319-6660

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A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a grey hoodie and black leggings, is walking away from the camera on a dirt path. She is holding a leash for a large, fluffy dog. In the background, there is a wooden deck with tables and chairs, situated on the edge of a calm lake. The surrounding area is lush with green trees and foliage under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO  
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COMPILED BY MELISSA GASKILL, RUVANI DE SILVA, ANNA DAUGHERTY, & LUZ MORENO



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# M

More than 6 million Texas households—over half—have a furry (or scaly, or feathered, or gilled) friend to call their own. That number grew significantly during the pandemic with nearly one in five households in the U.S. adopting a new pet. Despite cautionary tales of owners abandoning their pets once workplaces opened back up, no such phenomenon has been recorded. It seems our four-legged, slithery, and winged friends are here to stay.

While new owners may have grown comfortable sharing a house with their animals, many wonder how they'll care for their pet while traveling. Boarding can cost a small fortune, and owners may be wary of leaving their animal with a stranger. Whether by car, camper van, or plane, people are increasingly opting to take their pets on the road.

This guide, while not comprehensive, features curated recommendations for pets and their owners seeking fun getaways across the state. From far West Texas to the Piney Woods, each region offers travelers a tailored stay, no matter their species. With this guide, traveling with a pet is more possible than ever.

**Note:** Although Texas is an easy place to travel with animals, it's still important to check the policy at each venue before arriving, and to have a leash or carrier on hand.





## LUCKENBACH DANCE HALL

LUCKENBACH

Pets are permitted at **LBJ National Historical Park** along the Johnson Settlement Trail and outside buildings on the LBJ Ranch. [nps.gov/lyjo](https://www.nps.gov/lyjo)

### HIKE

Hike through a variety of landscapes, then pitch a tent and stargaze at remote parks like **Hill Country State Natural Area**, rated 4 out of 9 on the Bortles dark sky scale. [tpwd.texas.gov](https://www.tpwd.texas.gov)

Leashed pets are welcome on the spacious grounds of the **San Antonio Missions National Historical Park**, but not in the four structures. A hike-and-bike trail along the San Antonio River connects all five missions, each about 2.5 miles apart. [nps.gov/saan](https://www.nps.gov/saan)

### STAY

Bunk with your pet in a cabin at the Lower Colorado River Authority's **Black Rock Park** on Lake Buchanan, where pets can swim, go out on a kayak or canoe, or snooze at a campsite. **Muleshoe Bend Recreation Area** offers almost 10 miles of trails through trees and along the Lake Travis shoreline. Campsites start at \$25 at both parks, while Black Rock's pet-friendly cabins start at \$75. [lcra.org/parks](https://www.lcra.org/parks)

**Lake Bastrop North Shore's** amenities include furnished safari-style tents, a shared bathhouse, watercraft rentals, and hiking trails. Tents sleep two or four and start at \$250/night. [lcra.org/parks](https://www.lcra.org/parks)

A boutique hotel overlooking Austin's Lady Bird Lake, **Line Hotel** has no weight limit on pets or additional fees. Courtesy waste bags, water bowls, and treats are provided, as are neighborhood recommendations for walks, parks, and pet-friendly bars and restaurants. Standard rooms start at \$179/night. [thelinehotel.com/austin](https://www.thelinehotel.com/austin)

**Hotel Ella** is housed in a historic mansion and hosts live music from local artists on its lawn. All pets are welcome, and complimentary treats are provided. Pets must be caged if left alone in the room. Standard rooms start at \$167/night. [hotelella.com](https://www.hotelella.com)

**Tapatio Springs Hill Country Resort** in Boerne has a golf course, a spa, hike-and-bike trails, and live music. Pet-friendly

## CENTRAL TEXAS

### PLAY

Kayak or stand-up paddleboard with your pet at the **Rowing Dock** on Austin's Lady Bird Lake, or at **Peace Paddling** on Lake Austin. [rowingdock.com](https://www.rowingdock.com); [peacepaddling.com](https://www.peacepaddling.com)

The historic Central Texas dance hall in **Luckenbach** is a great spot to catch country music legends with your pup in tow, as long as you keep it on a leash. [luckenbachtexas.com](https://www.luckenbachtexas.com)

**Lake Austin Spa Resort** offers dogs a special menu and pet-focused amenities like dog toys and cozy pet beds. [lakeaustin.com](https://www.lakeaustin.com)

Check the events schedule for occasional pets-welcome star parties at state parks like **Lost Maples**, **Enchanted Rock**, and **South Llano River**, which all rank a 2-3 on the Bortles dark sky scale (lower numbers equal darker skies; Big Bend Ranch State Park is a 1 out of 9). BYO water. [tpwd.texas.gov](https://www.tpwd.texas.gov)

**SALT LICK  
CELLARS**  
DRIFTWOOD





**SOUTH LLANO  
RIVER STATE  
PARK**  
JUNCTION

rooms are available, and pets are permitted on the property's trails. The resort allows for two pets per room, and cats and dogs are both welcome as long as they're under 75 pounds. Standard rooms start at \$127/night with a \$50-per-pet fee for the first night and \$25-per-pet fee for subsequent nights, capped at \$150. [tapatiosprings.com](http://tapatiosprings.com)

## EAT

Austin's **South Congress neighborhood** offers a slew of pet-friendly patios at eateries and cocktail lounges like seafood restaurant **Perla's**. [perlasaustin.com](http://perlasaustin.com)

A fenced-in dog park on the side of **Dog and Pony Grill** in Boerne allows pups to stretch their legs while their owners enjoy a drink, food, and live music. Leashed dogs can also sit on the restaurant's covered patio. The menu features a range of American classics including

burgers, hot dogs, and chicken-fried steaks. [dogandponygrill.com](http://dogandponygrill.com)

Stop in for a slice of pizza at **Home Slice's** two Austin locations. Dogs are welcome at sitting areas available on the patios of both its North and South Austin locations. [homeslicepizza.com](http://homeslicepizza.com)

## SIP

The **Waypoint at Infamous Brewing** near Lake Travis features live music, a food truck park, and a dog run adjacent to the brewery. [thewaypointatx.com](http://thewaypointatx.com)


Families and their dogs can unwind together at Cedar Park's **The Good Lot** with a calendar of weekly activities, from trivia to open mic night to live music. A play area and yard games are available. Guests can choose between the two dozen beers on tap as well as seltzers and wine. The lot is also home to four food trucks. [thegoodlotcp.com/beergarden](http://thegoodlotcp.com/beergarden)

In Fredericksburg, many tasting rooms, including mainstay **Becker Vineyards**, welcome dogs outside and provide water bowls. [beckervineyards.com](http://beckervineyards.com)

**Garrison Brothers Distillery** has a tap-room in Hye that features an outdoor area for leashed pups, as well as water bowls and dog treats. [garrisonbros.com](http://garrisonbros.com)

Sample fresh wines at **Salt Lick Cellars** in Driftwood, and enjoy barbecue and live music next door at **Salt Lick BBQ**. Leashed pets are allowed on the patio. [saltlickcellars.com](http://saltlickcellars.com); [saltlickbbq.com](http://saltlickbbq.com)

Operating out of an old barn-turned-microbrewery, **Barrow Brewing** in Salado welcomes friendly dogs on a leash. If pets need more space, they can run free in the field and creek just outside the brewery. And while you're sipping a craft brew, your pet can sip from a dog bowl or enjoy a locally made treat. [barrowbrewing.com](http://barrowbrewing.com)

A woman wearing a cowboy hat, a plaid shirt, and jeans is walking a dog on a leash across a sand dune. The sand has distinct ripples, and the sky is a clear, deep blue. The scene is captured during the golden hour of sunset or sunrise.

**MONAHANS  
SANDHILLS  
STATE PARK**  
MONAHANS



# WEST TEXAS

## PLAY

Let your pet help search for the **Marfa Lights**—a nighttime show of lights over the West Texas horizon with no known origin—at the viewing area 9 miles east of town on US 90. Who knows, maybe animals can better sense this mysterious phenomenon? [visitmarfa.com](http://visitmarfa.com)

Five miles outside Marathon, pets can enjoy a dip in **Post Park's** spring-fed pond, which is stocked with fish. Be vigilant for wildlife. [marahontexas.com](http://marahontexas.com)

Rent a plastic disc at the park's headquarters and slide down the dunes with your pet at **Monahans Sandhills State Park**. [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

## HIKE

The Closed Canyon and HooDoo trails in **Big Bend Ranch State Park**, off scenic Farm-to-Market Road 170 between Lajitas and Presidio, offer short hikes for you and your leashed pet. Both trails run about a mile, and high canyon walls keep Closed Canyon almost always shady. [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

**Fort Davis National Historic Site's** spacious grounds invite visitors to hike, picnic, and witness historic reenactments. Pets are not allowed in buildings. [nps.gov/foda](http://nps.gov/foda)

**Big Bend** and **Guadalupe Mountains national parks** allow leashed pets only in areas accessible by vehicle (not on trails or in the river). [nps.gov/bibe](http://nps.gov/bibe); [nps.gov/gumo](http://nps.gov/gumo)

## STAY

**El Cosmico** in Marfa offers tent campsites with access to a bathhouse, an outdoor kitchen, and a dining area. \$20/person/night, \$10 pet fee/night. [elcosmico.com](http://elcosmico.com)

Dating to 1929, Marfa's **Hotel Paisano** was designed by famed architect Henry Trost. Pets under 20 pounds are welcome, and complimentary water bowls and waste bags are provided. The Marfa Public Dog Park is two blocks away. Standard rooms start at \$189/night. Pet fees are \$40 plus tax per pet, per night. [hotelpaisano.com](http://hotelpaisano.com)

**The Plaza Hotel at Pioneer Park** in El Paso is housed in a historic art deco building dating to the 1930s. Pets are welcome and provided with pet beds, bowls, and a keepsake hotel bandana. Standard rooms start at \$175/night with a \$75 pet cleaning fee. [plazahotelepaso.com](http://plazahotelepaso.com)

El Paso's **Stanton House Hotel** hosts a gallery of changing modern artwork. Pets under 50 pounds are welcome, and treats are available on request. Standard rooms start at \$172/night with a \$100 pet fee. [stanton-house.com](http://stanton-house.com)

## EAT

At **Eloise** on the west side of El Paso, visitors can enjoy a meal, a cocktail, and a coffee alongside their four-legged companions on the patio. [eloiseelpaso.com](http://eloiseelpaso.com)

Leashed pets are welcome at the **Planet Marfa** beer garden, open on weekends from spring break to Thanksgiving. The site features a large rooftop deck and full-size teepee. [facebook.com/planetmarfa](http://facebook.com/planetmarfa)

## SIP

Sample wines fresh from the source at **Zin Valle Vineyards**, just 15 miles outside El Paso. Leashed dogs are welcome on the grounds, and they even have a namesake Man's Best Friend merlot. [zinvalle.com](http://zinvalle.com)

El Paso's **Aceitunas Beer Garden** boasts a koi pond and waterfall, plus an extensive cocktail menu and a regular live music program on its dog-friendly patio. [aceitunasbeergarden.com](http://aceitunasbeergarden.com)



**PALO DURO  
CANYON  
STATE PARK**  
CANYON

## PANHANDLE

### PLAY

Leashed dogs can roam the 4 acres of Amarillo's **Botanical Gardens** while their owners learn about native Texan and exotic plants in a beautifully landscaped setting. [amarillobotanicalgardens.org](http://amarillobotanicalgardens.org)

### HIKE

The 64 miles of the **Caprock Canyons Trailway** lure hikers, bikers, and horseback riders, and pets can hike or ride along in a bike trailer. Multiple access points allow for shorter outings. Camp anywhere along the trailway inside park boundaries. Composting toilets are available, but BYO water. [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

Let your pet experience the fresh air and wide horizons of the prairie—and an art piece made up of 10 upended cars covered in layers of paint—at **Cadillac Ranch** near Amarillo. Spray paint is for sale on-site. [facebook.com/1974cadillacranch](http://facebook.com/1974cadillacranch)

**Lake Meredith National Recreation Area** allows pets and offers boating, camping, hiking, mountain biking, and fishing. [nps.gov/lamr](http://nps.gov/lamr)

### STAY

**Palo Duro Glamping** provides furnished canvas tents for guests and a maximum of two pets inside Palo Duro Canyon State Park. Shared restrooms are on-site, and tents sleep six people. Rates start at \$299/night. [paloduroglamping.com](http://paloduroglamping.com)

Lubbock's **Woodrow House Bed & Breakfast** is a stylish boutique hotel with individually themed rooms, including a converted train carriage. Rooms start at \$130/night. Pet accommodations must be requested in advance and cost \$30 per pet per day. [woodrowhouse.com](http://woodrowhouse.com)

### EAT

**Twisted Root Burger Co.** in Lubbock serves up cold beers and juicy half-pound burgers made with locally sourced ingredients and house-made toppings and condiments. Water bowls are available on the pet-friendly patio, and guests can order a burger patty that staff will happily chop up for four-legged friends. [twistedrootburgerco.com](http://twistedrootburgerco.com)

At Amarillo's Old West-themed **Big Texan Steak Ranch**, you can attempt to eat a 72-ounce steak with your well-behaved

dog or cat on hand, as long as you sit in the outside beer garden. [bigtexan.com](http://bigtexan.com)

Buffalo Gap's **Perini Ranch Steakhouse** serves the best burger in Texas according to the Food Network, and it has 12 pet-friendly outdoor tables. [periniranch.com](http://periniranch.com)

### SIP

With beers that reference life in West Texas (like the Five Hour Drive ale), **Tall City Brewing** in Midland pours more than 16 brews in its taproom. Dogs are welcome on the large, covered patio. Food trucks rotate throughout the week, offering menus ranging from wings to pizza to hot dogs. [tallcitybrewing.com](http://tallcitybrewing.com)

Lubbock's **LBK Brewing** has some of the best beer in the Panhandle as well as a dog-friendly wrap-around patio. [thebrewerylbk.com](http://thebrewerylbk.com)

Pets are welcome at **The Garden** bar and live music venue in Lubbock, where you can enjoy happy hour specials and play patio games in the expansive beer garden. [garden-lubbock.com](http://garden-lubbock.com)

Amarillo's dog-friendly **Six Car Pub and Brewing** hosts trivia nights and has a rooftop bar serving craft cocktails made with local spirits. [sixcarpub.com](http://sixcarpub.com)

# TRAVELS WITH KIYOMI

**April Schupmann, an Austin-based drummer, has traveled across Texas and beyond with her cat, Kiyomi.**

**How did you start traveling with Kiyomi?**

I decided to go spend some time with my brother in California, but with the pandemic, I didn't want to fly and I didn't want to leave her behind. So, I just put her in the car.

**What were the biggest challenges?**

Making sure she'd be

comfortable in the car for long stretches. Also, a cat on a leash is not the same as a dog on a leash. You can't not pay attention for a second. I bought a cat carrier backpack for hiking. We were on the road together for three weeks, and she handled it fine.

**What activities have you done with her outdoors?**

We hiked at Palo Duro Canyon—that was really fun—and went fishing at Lake Colorado City State Park.

**What's her favorite activity?**

Sniffing around for lizards. She also likes rolling around on the ground in the sun.

**Any tips for others who want to try it?**

I turned the back of my hatchback into a mini-camper, with cubbies and parts of her cat tower, so we can hang out there. Before we left, I put the harness on her around the house and walked the neighborhood. I also started her young. Any cat is adaptable with enough patience.



# TEXAS PET TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

HELP YOUR PETS  
TRAVEL IN STYLE  
AND COMFORT WITH  
THESE PRODUCTS  
FROM TEXAS-BASED  
COMPANIES.



LINCOLN BRAND COLLAR, FROM \$65  
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ANKARA FABRIC BOWTIE (TO MATCH YOUR PET), \$37  
GABEJADE.COM



LADY BIRD IS WEARING  
ANKARA FABRIC DOGDANA, \$20  
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LARGE DUVET BED WITH INSERT, \$186  
MAJORDARLING.COM





**DISPOSABLE LITTER BOX SET OF 10, \$37.99**  
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**CALMING CANDLES, FROM \$9**  
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**BOOMER 8 DOG BOWL, \$49.99**  
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**DOG POOP BAG HOLDER, \$35**  
BOOTSANDARROW.CO



**LINCOLN BRAND DOG LEASH, FROM \$85**  
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## SCALES AND FEATHERS

From hawks at Renaissance festivals to snakes at reptile breeder expos, plenty of Texas events involve live animals—and those animals have to get

there somehow. Moving wildlife requires special considerations that other pets don't always need.

Just ask Kevin Gaines (pictured above with an aplomado falcon). The owner of Bastrop's Sky Kings Falconry and nonprofit Wildlife Revealed has a history of moving animals around, including a stint in the

2000s working with Jim Fowler, the host of the TV show *Wild Kingdom*. Part of that job involved traveling with large mammals like wolves, bears, and big cats. All of them were transported in welded, wheeled enclosures and loaded onto horse or cattle trailers. "It was quite the task," Gaines says. "With

mammals, you end up shoveling a lot of...things."

These days, Gaines mostly travels with raptors as part of his falconry programs, which include educational shows, guided hunts, and scaring the bejesus out of nuisance bird flocks. The raptors travel in modified pet crates with a perch in the middle, and don't much mind the swaying of the road.

Still, you have to take precautions. While some hawks are old hands at travel and hop right into their crates, newer birds require more preparation to prevent stress. "Sometimes you have to black out the doors and windows so that birds don't get overstimulated," Gaines says. You also have to keep the crates a fair distance from one another, and if you're transporting smart birds like ravens and vultures, make sure they can't reach anything from their crate. "They like to shred things," Gaines explains.

Transporting reptiles requires thinking very differently, says Maria Rodriguez, owner of Tip O' Texas Geckos. Rodriguez breeds a variety of gecko species from New Caledonia, from 50-gram crested geckos to 14-inch Leachie geckos. When traveling to reptile expos, she packs each lizard into a plastic deli cup with air holes and a wet paper towel on the bottom to



keep the humidity-loving geckos happy. The cups are then carefully packed into cardboard boxes before being taken on the road.

While the geckos Rodriguez works with don't mind hotel-room temperatures, people who travel with snakes or desert-loving lizards, like bearded dragons, need to keep them warm with electric mats, wrapped hand warmers, or hot water bottles. Some people travel with lizards in carriers or keep them in a vest and leash, but you absolutely cannot leave them unattended in a car.

Gaines has also worked with considerably larger animals: 4-foot caimans and adult alligator snapping turtles. These went into specialized plywood boxes or 4-foot oval horse troughs, with a bit of water on the bottom and hinged wire lids. "I prefer the snakes," Gaines says. "Some pack down so small that you can keep them in your vehicle."

The weather doesn't always cooperate during transports. Once, traveling between California and Texas, Gaines ran into deep snow. That night, he got up every hour to swap out the propane bottles in the animal trailer to keep them warm. Everyone made it back safely.

"It's definitely not like just throwing your dog in the car and going," Gaines says. —Asher Elbein



## NORTH TEXAS

### PLAY

At **Cooper Lake State Park**, pets can come along on kayaks available for rent, join you on the fishing piers, and swim in the lake outside designated swim areas (on leashes). Pets are also welcome at scheduled events such as geocaching, and the park has dog-friendly guided hikes and even, occasionally, hikes with animals from the local shelter. [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

**Dallas Heritage Village** is a 20-acre park with a collection of homes and structures from 1840-1910. Leashed pets are allowed outside in the park, and attractions include guided tours, blacksmithing classes, and children's programs. [dallasheritagevillage.org](http://dallasheritagevillage.org)

While pets are not allowed in buildings at the **Waco Mammoth National Monument**, they can enjoy the paved trail, picnic area, and grassy knolls. [nps.gov/waco](http://nps.gov/waco)

### HIKE

The hike-and-bike trail at **Cedar Hill State Park** southwest of Dallas has three options for a hike with your pet—3, 8, and 12 miles in length—winding through woods, up hills, and along the shore of Joe Pool Lake, which has lighted fishing jetties. [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

### STAY

**Vrooman Ranch** is a working farm with pond- and creekside campsites that have water, fire pits, and picnic tables. Beef, chicken, eggs, and firewood are available for purchase. The site offers ranch tours, and rooms start at \$40/night. [hipcamp.com/texas/vrooman-ranch](http://hipcamp.com/texas/vrooman-ranch)

**Texican Court Hotel** in Irving features a tequila bar and live music on weekends. Rooms with pet packages start at \$209/night and include a "pup snack box" of assorted dog treats, a \$10 credit toward the minibar per night, and a 2 p.m. checkout. [texicancourt.com](http://texicancourt.com)

A boutique hotel in downtown Fort Worth, **The Harper** offers standard rooms from \$179/night. There's no extra charge or weight limit for pets, and pet amenities include plush beds; food and water bowls; a concierge list of nearby pet-friendly restaurants and parks; and a designated director of pet relations. [theharperfortworth.com](http://theharperfortworth.com)

### EAT

**The Shacks Dining and Dog Park** in The Colony, a Dallas suburb, is a dog-friendly venue with a choice of six restaurants around a 1-acre off-leash dog park. [shacksaustinranch.com](http://shacksaustinranch.com)

At **Woodshed Smokehouse** in Fort Worth, breakfast and lunch items are available with foods like poached eggs, homemade butter-milk biscuits, and pulled pork sandwiches. Dogs are encouraged to try a variety of rawhide, bone, and treat options from the pup menu. [woodshedsmokehouse.com](http://woodshedsmokehouse.com)



**HUNTSVILLE  
STATE PARK**  
HUNTSVILLE

Nestled in The Colony, **Truck Yard** features a brewery and beer garden, a bar, a toilet seat museum, karaoke and poker game rooms, and live music. The venue also rotates two to four food trucks daily, and it welcomes fluffy friends to sit on the patio and at any seating areas outside. A variety of dog treats can be found at the bar counters. [truckyardthecolony.com](http://truckyardthecolony.com)

**SIP**

**Celestial Beerworks** in Dallas welcomes pets of all kinds, both indoors and out, at its bright taproom. The brewery provides dogs with treats made from leftover grains. [celestialbeerworks.com](http://celestialbeerworks.com)

Catch live music while enjoying local beer and pizza on the dog-friendly patio

at **Redbone Magic Brewing** in Texarkana. [redbonemagic.com](http://redbonemagic.com)

Experience live metal shows, sing karaoke, and drink until 2 a.m. at Deep Ellum's dog-friendly dive bar **Reno's Chop Shop**. [facebook.com/renoschopshop](https://facebook.com/renoschopshop)

**EAST  
TEXAS**

**PLAY**

Explore the **Village Creek Paddling Trail**, made up of 21 miles within the Big Thicket National Preserve, past sandy beaches and beneath towering pines. Multiple access points allow for shorter jaunts. **Jayhawkers**

**Canoe Trails** provides canoe and kayak rentals, shuttles, guided tours, and camping. [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov); [eastxcanoes.com](http://eastxcanoes.com)


**HIKE**

Pine forests surround Lake Raven at **Huntsville State Park**, where leashed pets are welcome on 20 miles of trails, including an 8.4-mile loop hiking trail as well as shorter routes. Canoe and kayak rentals and a fishing pier are available for use, although pets are not allowed in the lake. Check online for occasional hike-with-your-pet and local shelter animal events. [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

**STAY**

**Davy Crockett National Forest Ratcliff**





**HENRY'S  
CHARTERS  
DOLPHIN TOUR**  
SOUTH PADRE ISLAND

**Lake Recreation Area** campground has picnic tables, water, and restrooms with showers. The 20-mile Four C National Recreation Trail starts at the campground. Electric sites are \$20/day, and nonelectric sites are \$15/day. [fs.usda.gov](https://fs.usda.gov)

**Big Thicket National Preserve** offers a back-country camping experience with 10 hiking trails and three paddling trails. [nps.gov/bith](https://nps.gov/bith)

Amenities at **Hotel Zaza** in Houston's Museum District include artistic suites and guest rooms. Standard rooms start at \$240/night. All pets are welcome with a \$150 cleaning fee per pet and must be supervised or crated at all times. [hotelzaza.com](https://hotelzaza.com)

**Vineyard Court Hotel**, a boutique hotel in College Station, features a Zen garden and spacious suites close to Texas A&M University. Dogs stay free and have access to an on-site dog park. Suites start at \$89/night. [vineyardcourt.com](https://vineyardcourt.com)

## EAT

Situated in downtown Texarkana, **Hopkins Ice House** welcomes locals and visitors as well as their animal companions. Food options include burgers, sandwiches, salads, hot dogs, and hearty entrées. Dogs are welcome to join their owners on the patio, though they might try to snag a bite of a Coney Island chili dog or grilled chicken breast. [hopkinsicehouse.com](https://hopkinsicehouse.com)

Dig into bayou delicacies like fried alligator and enjoy local live music on the dog-friendly patio at **GuadalaHARRY's Bar and Grill** overlooking Lake Conroe in Willis. [guadalaharrysbarandgrill.com](https://guadalaharrysbarandgrill.com)

## SIP

The first craft brewery in Tyler, **True Vine Brewing** serves more than 15 craft beers on tap, as well as a selection of wines and nonalcoholic beverages. Both locations of the brewery are kid- and pet-friendly, though parents of either type may prefer the Earl Campbell Parkway location for its park, perfect for running off energy. Refuel with a pizza and stay for the live music on the weekends. [truevinebrewing.com](https://truevinebrewing.com)

**East Texas Brewing** in Tyler has an eclectic tap list, and you can enjoy a cold brew on their dog-friendly patio. [etxbrew.com](https://etxbrew.com)

Sip spirits distilled on-site while listening to live local artists at pet-friendly **Front Porch Distillery** in Nacogdoches. [frontporchdistillery.com](https://frontporchdistillery.com)

# SOUTH TEXAS & GULF COAST

## PLAY

The **South Padre Island Sealife Nature Center** welcomes dogs, cats, potbellied pigs, parrots, and even gerbils on its six-person boat for dolphin tours in the Laguna Madre. [spinaturecenter.com](https://spinaturecenter.com)

Hip Houston hangout **Axelrad** hosts regular live music shows, art installations, film screenings, and festivals where leashed and well-behaved dogs are welcome. [axelradbeergarden.com](https://axelradbeergarden.com)

Captain Henry Rodriguez of **Henry's Charters** on South Padre Island takes guests and their pets on dolphin tours, fishing expeditions, and more. [facebook.com/henry.charters.5](https://facebook.com/henry.charters.5)

South Padre Island beaches allow pets on a leash, and **SPI Sessions** welcomes pets for surf or SUP lessons and rentals. The business reports at least one surfing cat. (The cat's name was Occy—Instagram @iamsurfcats. Occy sadly passed away, but he had a proper surfer burial and celebration via the Hawaiian tradition of a ceremonial paddle-out.) [spisessions.com](https://spisessions.com)

Galveston's many beaches also welcome pets, and **Seawall Beach** hosts the Ohana Surf Dog Competition each July. [ohanasurfskate.com](https://ohanasurfskate.com)

Drive onto the **Galveston-Port Bolivar Ferry** from State Highway 87, roll down the windows, and spend the 18-minute ride inhaling the sea air with your buddy. The free ferry operates 24 hours a day; check wait times at [houstontranstar.org](https://houstontranstar.org).

The **Texas Transportation Museum** in San Antonio permits leashed pets to visit the museum and take a train ride with their families. The volunteer-led museum is home to a variety of model trains, railroads, and



**GALVESTON SEAWALL**  
GALVESTON

automobiles. Visitors can tour the museum's many exhibits and learn about the history of each model and artifact, and how developments in transportation technology shaped and continue to impact daily life. [txtransportationmuseum.org](http://txtransportationmuseum.org)

**HIKE**

Leashed pets are allowed on hiking and paddling trails, fishing areas, and beaches

in **Galveston Island State Park**, but not inside park buildings. [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov)

**STAY**

**Padre Island National Seashore** welcomes leashed pets in all camping areas and on its 60 miles of beach, but not in park buildings. Rinse-off showers are available near Malaquite Pavilion. [nps.gov/pais](http://nps.gov/pais)

**I.B. Magee Beach Park** in Port Aransas

offers RV and tent campsites with full hookups near popular fishing spot Horace Caldwell Pier. [portaransas.org/listing/ib-magee-beach-park/801](http://portaransas.org/listing/ib-magee-beach-park/801)

**The Fairmount** in San Antonio allows well-groomed pets under 35 pounds, and staff can recommend nearby pet-friendly activities. Standard rooms start at \$149/night, plus a \$75 pet fee. [fairmountsa.com](http://fairmountsa.com)

**La Posada Hotel** in the center of Laredo



has two award-winning restaurants on-site, housed in 19th-century buildings. Rooms start at \$121/night, and pets under 15 pounds are welcome with a \$35 fee per pet. [laposada.com](http://laposada.com)

## EAT

A stroll through Houston's **Montrose neighborhood** takes you past pup-filled patios where locals and visitors can enjoy a

casual brunch or cocktails in the company of their four-legged companions at venues like the **Empire Café**, open daily morning to night. [empirecafe.com](http://empirecafe.com)

**Executive Surf Club** in Corpus Christi is a dog-friendly venue that offers up American cuisine with daily drink specials that include beer and cocktails. Situated just off the Corpus Christi shoreline, guests can grab a meal and listen to

local musicians. On the patio, leashed dogs can join the fun. [waterstmarketcc.com/executive-surf-club](http://waterstmarketcc.com/executive-surf-club)

Overlooking the Laguna Madre, **Lobo Del Mar Café** on South Padre Island serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner daily. The restaurant features a variety of menu items, including seafood, burgers, soups, and salads. While there's no dog menu, pups are welcome to sit on the patio and patiently wait for someone to accidentally drop food. [lobodelmarcafe.com](http://lobodelmarcafe.com)

Houston's **Cottonwood** welcomes families and four-footed family members to the patio of the neighborhood restaurant that features live music, deck games, and TVs streaming live sports. The pub-like venue offers more than 40 taps and a full bar. Steaks and pork chops are on the menu, as well as burgers, sandwiches, and appetizers. [cottonwoodhouston.com](http://cottonwoodhouston.com)

## SIP

**Misfit Outpost** is a pet-friendly brewery and restaurant in northwest Houston featuring live music and TVs playing sports. [facebook.com/misfitoutpost](http://facebook.com/misfitoutpost)

Paying homage to owner Nathan Bitz's 26 years as a Navy pilot, **Aerodrome Distilling** in Corpus Christi features an aviation-themed tasting room that offers water bowls for furry guests. Aerodrome serves up small-batch bourbon, rye, rum, and vodka. [aerodistilling.com](http://aerodistilling.com)

Corpus Christi's mermaid-themed **Lorelei Brewing Company** pours some of the best beers in town and welcomes all animals to its indoor and outdoor spaces. Lawn, board, and arcade games are also available. [loreliebrewing.beer](http://loreliebrewing.beer)

Your leashed dog is in for a treat at **Galveston Island Brewing**, where doggie toys are provided in the yard and branded leashes and collars are available for purchase. [galvestonislandbrewing.com](http://galvestonislandbrewing.com)

With experimental beers like Mango Chamoy Gose and Green Apple Sour, **Brewsome Brewing** is putting McAllen on the Texas craft beer map. Leashed pets can watch their owners take on the 30-beer celebration flight on the deck lit with fairy lights. [brewsomebrewery.com](http://brewsomebrewery.com) 🐾



# Travels

On the 60th anniversary of John Steinbeck's *Travels With Charley*,



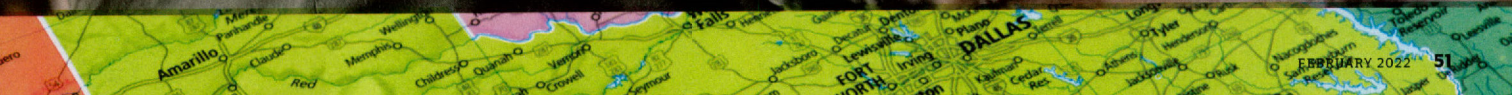
a new Texan travels across the state with a poodle of her own

# WICH



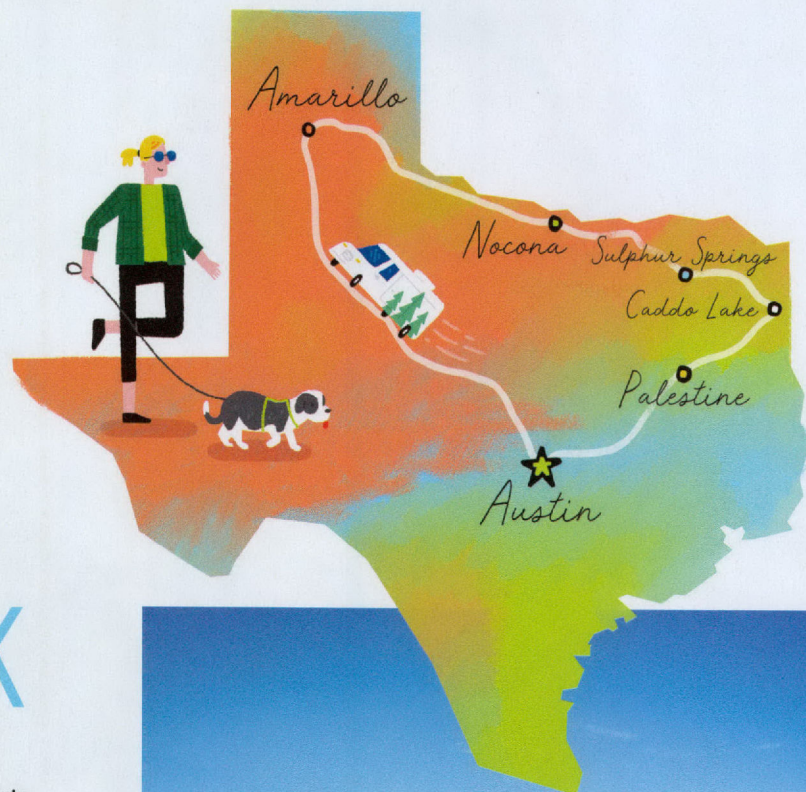
# CLEO

By Madeleine Aggeler / Photographs by Tiffany Hofeldt / Illustrations by Shaw Nielsen





# WHEN WRITER JOHN STEINBECK



set off with his poodle, Charley, on a 10,000-mile road trip around the United States in 1960, it was to rediscover a country he believed he had lost touch with in his years as a high-flying literary mega-celebrity. When I set off with my poodle mix, Cleo, to recreate the Texas leg of Steinbeck's trip—in honor of the 60th anniversary of his bestselling book *Travels With Charley: In Search of America*—it was to better acquaint myself with the state I had moved to only a year earlier. To honor both Texas and Steinbeck, I intended to greet every step of the journey with the warm heart, open mind, and sturdy stomach of a seasoned traveler. Still, I didn't expect to find myself in the middle of a bayou discussing Bigfoot's anatomy.

Ron Hollomon, a riverboat captain and co-owner of Captain Ron's Swamp Tours near the town of Karnack in East Texas, relayed the story on a cool, bright day in October. As Ron expertly piloted his pontoon boat through shallow waterways flanked by columns of bald cypress trees and lacy curtains of Spanish moss around Caddo Lake, an area supposedly crawling with Bigfoot (Bigfeet?), he talked about the annual Bigfoot Convention in nearby Jefferson. Apparently, a couple of years ago, one of the men behind the famous 1967 Patterson-Gimlin film—the grainy clip that shows a large, ape-like creature striding across a clearing in Northern California—attended the event to show an early, unedited version of it. A version where you can see the creature's ample bosom.

"I saw, for the first time, clear footage of that," Ron said, shaking his head in awe. "It's a female! I'd never seen it so clear. They call her Patty."

I could only guess what Steinbeck would have had to say about all this, as he never once mentioned Bigfoot in his book. Which is not to say he shied away from the fantastical. It's well-documented the author exaggerated, if not downright fabricated, parts of *Travels With Charley*. In one chapter, for example, Steinbeck claimed to have met an out-of-work Shakespearean actor in Alice, North Dakota, when in fact, that very same night he was actually tucked away in a motel in Beach, North Dakota, 300 miles west of Alice.

After all, Steinbeck had more pressing things to write about. When he embarked on his journey from his home on Long Island, America was undergoing massive changes.

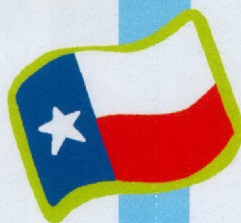




**OPENING SPREAD:** Madeleine Aggeler and her dog, Cleo, embark on a journey to discover Texas.

**THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Aggeler's camper van motors down a road in Slaton; Ron Hollomon checks out the van's quarters; Caddo Lake; Hollomon guides his boat.





# Day 1

## IN SEARCH OF TEXAS

It was the height of the Kennedy-Nixon presidential race, and a huge population of baby boomers were just starting to come of age, readying themselves to upend the social and cultural norms of the time. Steinbeck, meanwhile, was a 58-year-old in failing health who felt he had gone soft. After the massive successes of *Of Mice and Men*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *East of Eden*, the author spent much of his time jet-setting between New York and Europe. He began to feel like he no longer understood the country he built his career writing about.

“He had planned this trip for several years,” said Bill Steigerwald, a former journalist for the *Los Angeles Times* and *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* who recreated Steinbeck’s trip in 2010 and wrote about the experience in his 2012 book, *Dogging Steinbeck: Discovering America and Exposing the Truth About Travels With Charley*. “He wanted to stay out of cities and meet regular people.”

In an effort to reconnect with “regular people,” Steinbeck did what anyone would do: He got a lucrative book deal and commissioned carpenters to transform a GMC pickup truck into an elaborately outfitted camper van that he named Rocinante, after Don Quixote’s trusty but haggard steed. It came complete with maple interior, double bed, four-burner stove, and refrigerator. Due to financial constraints and my apartment building’s restrictive parking policy, I couldn’t order my own personalized camper van for the trip. Instead, I rented a tidy, well-outfitted vehicle from a company called Voyager Campervans, which had the benefit of being the first listing that popped up when I Googled “camper vans Austin.” I named it Rocinante 2.

There were other differences in our journeys, too. I wouldn’t be entirely alone on my trip, for one, though that’s not that different from Steinbeck. Although he claimed his was largely a solo journey—an opportunity to reflect, with only Charley, America, and the open road as his companions—the reality is Steinbeck’s third wife, Elaine Anderson Steinbeck, accompanied him for many stretches. Photographer Tiffany Hofeldt and her golden retriever, Charger, would caravan with Cleo and me to document our adventure and, later, help save us from a grueling schedule.

Steinbeck dreaded driving through Texas. He seemed concerned about having too much family there, through Elaine; and that Texas was too big, both physically and conceptually. “Writers facing the problem of Texas find themselves floundering in generalities, and I am no exception,” he wrote. “Texas is a state of mind. Texas is an obsession. Above all, Texas is a nation in every sense of the word.”

I too felt daunted by the task of drawing any meaningful conclusions about a state as big and diverse as Texas, especially in only four days. Nearly two years into a pandemic, though, I was desperate for any opportunity to travel, and eager for a chance to see more of the state I now call home.

STEINBECK DROVE ROCINANTE FROM HIS home on Long Island up to Maine, across the country to the Pacific Northwest, and down the curve of California. He approached Texas from the west, cutting across Arizona and New Mexico, and made it to Amarillo just in time to spend Thanksgiving weekend with wealthy family friends hunting, eating, sleeping, and generally indulging himself. He didn’t recount specifics, but according to Steigerwald, he and Eileen drove from Amarillo down to Austin before heading east to Louisiana, and then racing back home. I would be doing a reverse

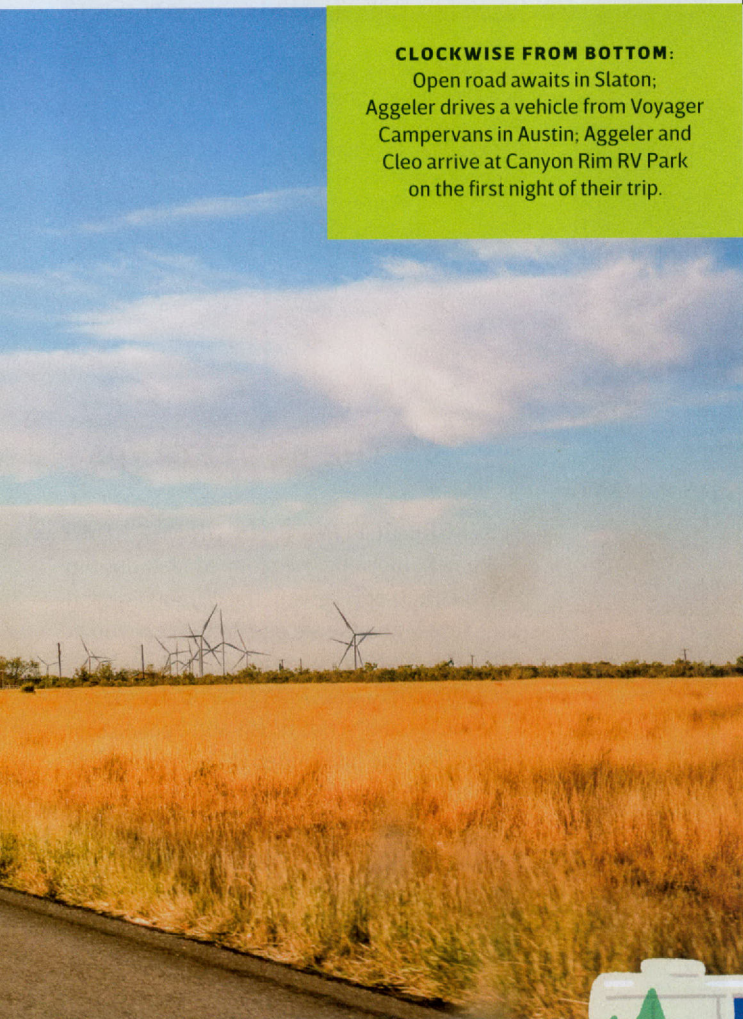






**CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM:**

Open road awaits in Slaton; Aggeler drives a vehicle from Voyager Campervans in Austin; Aggeler and Cleo arrive at Canyon Rim RV Park on the first night of their trip.



version that covered the same regions of Texas: driving from Austin to Amarillo, then from Amarillo over to East Texas, before heading back home to Austin.

Cleo appeared discomfited by everything that was going on. As soon as we picked up the camper van and forged north on Interstate 35, confusion and disapproval radiated powerfully from all 20 pounds of her. When I adopted her four years earlier, the shelter staff told me no one wanted her because she has a condition called “cherry eye,” a prolapsed tear gland on the inside of her left eye that indeed looks like a little cherry on her eyeball. They assured me it was basically a nonissue, though, and a week later, I brought her home. In the intervening time, she had come to feel like an extension of my own body, a fifth limb.

She is mostly a calm dog, if we stick rigidly and unwaveringly to our daily routine. Any deviation—like, say, a multiday road trip in a vehicle completely foreign to her—causes great consternation. After I clipped her into her dog seat belt (a thick strap with one end that you clip around a car’s headrest, and another that you clip to a dog’s harness), she immediately leapt up onto the leather couch along the wall of the van, behind the driver’s seat, to loudly and formally register her complaints with management. Eventually she grew bored of airing her grievances and settled down to stare wistfully at the scenery receding in the back window, presumably wondering about the sorts of lives she could lead with other, better owners.

For most of the drive from Austin to Amarillo, Texas





**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:**

Aggeler and Cleo take it all in at Palo Duro Canyon State Park; Aggeler and Cleo at three locations in Claude; an employee at Nocona Boots surveys materials.



## Day 2

### BY THE BOOTSTRAPS

zipped past me as if from a great distance. The names of towns would appear and disappear without me ever getting a sense of what they might represent: Briggs, Lampasas, Goldthwaite, Guthrie, Paducah, Childress, Goodnight. Steinbeck was ambivalent about highways. “These great roads are wonderful for moving goods, but not for inspection of the countryside,” he wrote.

Around 9:30 p.m., we pulled into our campsite at Canyon Rim RV Park, just outside the entrance to Palo Duro Canyon State Park. I was too exhausted to make the most of Rocinante 2’s kitchen—a tabletop that pulls out of the seat in the back, and a butane burner—so I slapped some peanut butter and jelly on bread and inhaled my sandwich steadily and aggressively, like a shredder devouring sensitive documents. Once I laid down on the bed, Cleo signaled she had forgiven me by curling up into a perfect sphere at my side and farting.

BEFORE GETTING BACK ON THE ROAD the next morning, we stopped next door to see Palo Duro Canyon, the “Grand Canyon of Texas” and the second-largest canyon in the U.S. At the viewing point, I held up Cleo so she could also enjoy the vast expanse of mesas and scrub brush and Technicolor rock, but she just sniffed disinterestedly. At one point, a French family who lives in Dallas stopped to admire Charger the retriever and, for the first time but not the last time on the trip, I became overwhelmed with jealousy on Cleo’s behalf and thrust her toward them so they could admire her too. They conceded





she was *tres mignon*—very cute.

On this trip, like previous trips I've taken with Cleo, I questioned whether she enjoyed the novelty of travel at all, or whether she just resented me disrupting her beloved routine. Steinbeck's Charley seemed to constantly lope off to joyfully make his mark on bushes, while Cleo periodically crouched indifferently by the van. Charley also suffered a number of medical issues on the trip, though, and I concluded I would rather Cleo remain nonplussed by the scenery as long as her urinary tract stayed healthy and intact.

As we made our way southeast on US 287, we drove through towns that appeared to be in various states of abandonment: Claude, Goodlett, Harrold. Some still had active restaurants and shops nestled in among the empty storefronts; some appeared to be nothing more than a collection of big-box stores with houses speckled around their perimeters; some were skeletons of towns that had once been.

"The big towns are getting bigger and the villages smaller," Steinbeck wrote. "Our treasured and nostalgic picture of the village store, the cracker-barrel store where an informed yeomanry gather to express opinion and formulate the national opinion, is very rapidly disappearing."

Steinbeck had believed that, over time, people would leave cities and return to small towns. It's unclear whether that has come to pass. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, cities and towns with populations of less than 5,000 saw uneven growth between 2010 and 2019. In the Northeast, populations in small towns decreased by 3%, but in the West, they saw an increase of 13.3%. In Texas, the fastest-growing towns were midsize suburbs like Leander, outside of Austin, and Little Elm, outside of Dallas.

In the town of Nocona, just east of Wichita Falls, we stopped in at Nocona Boots, a cowboy boot manufacturer that had closed back in 1991 but was revived last July. In an old art deco factory near the edge of town, staff was just getting its operations up and running again. The business, which is affiliated with Nokona baseball gloves, hoped to soon reopen to the public for Friday tours of the factory and tastings of beer from Nocona Brewery. As one manager put it: "People want to come see something really American: boots, baseball gloves, and beer."

That night, in the Shady Lake RV Park outside of Sulphur Springs, Tiffany and I used the butane burner to make quesadillas and ramen and stayed up too late swapping the adult equivalent of ghost stories—tales of past jobs, travels, relationships. The really spooky stuff in life. Cleo and Charger ate each other's kibble for dinner.





**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:**  
 In Jefferson, Aggeler dry shampoos her hair, walks downtown, and meets with Ed Haley outside of Fugler's Barbershop; Aggeler and Cleo ponder the road home after a night at Fig Tree Manor in Palestine.



## DAY 3

### CHANGE OF PLANS

TIFFANY SAT ME DOWN FOR A TALK THURSDAY morning. Would I be open to changing the itinerary? My current approach to the trip (driving until our butts go numb and our eyes start to bleed) was an effective way to cross huge swaths of the state in a short amount of time, but it wasn't a great way to get out into Texas and see its sights and talk with its residents. I agreed, grateful for the break from ceaseless driving. We would travel slightly north of where Steinbeck had cut across to Louisiana. I figured he would approve of some deviation for the sake of livening the narrative.

As it turns out, as soon as you make yourself available to Texas, it makes itself available to you. When we finally slowed down, people and places rushed out to greet us, as if the whole state had been holding its breath until we were ready to pay attention. And now it was reaching out to regale us with its stories.

In addition to Ron Hollomon, there was Ed Haley, who flagged us down outside of busy Fugler's Barbershop in Jefferson to see what we were up to and to ask us which haircut he should get. He was wearing a flannel tucked into electric-blue track pants and running shoes because, he said, "You never know when you're gonna need to run!"

There was Bubba Haggard, former mayor of Jefferson, who stopped to say hi to Charger because he reminded him of his own yellow lab who had recently passed. He told us





how much more complicated it was to be a mayor nowadays than when he first served in city government in the '70s. "I always used to say, 'You know you're in East Texas when you've got a mayor called Bubba!'" he said.

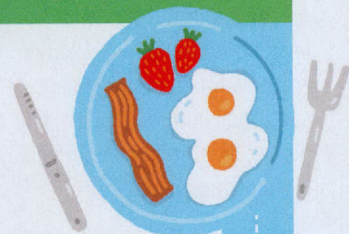
There were Rob and Becky Falconer, a couple we met at the Pint and Barrel Drafthouse in Palestine, who gently corrected our pronunciation (it's Pal-uh-STEEN, not Pal-uh-STINE). We spent the evening eating and drinking and chatting outside while the dogs jumped on our laps, chased stray cats, and generally misbehaved in the same giddy manner people do when it's late night at a bar.

Through Rob and Becky, we met Christy Thurber and Thomas White, who offered a room to us at their luxurious bed-and-breakfast, Fig Tree Manor, at the very last minute. They called it the "Chicken Room," and there, under the watchful, beady gaze of several chicken paintings, we collapsed into a deep sleep. It tires you out, Texas does.



## Day 4

### BRINGING IT HOME



IN THE MORNING, THOMAS MADE A BIG BREAKFAST OF coffee, yogurt parfaits, eggs, and sausage. Full, well-rested, and not smelling our best, Tiffany and I set off for home.

At the end of *Travels With Charley*, Steinbeck offered no big conclusions about America. He just wanted to get back to his bed, and to his wife. I wasn't sure I had any major conclusions to offer about Texas either. It would be hubris to think my four days on the road would qualify me to speak on it with any authority.

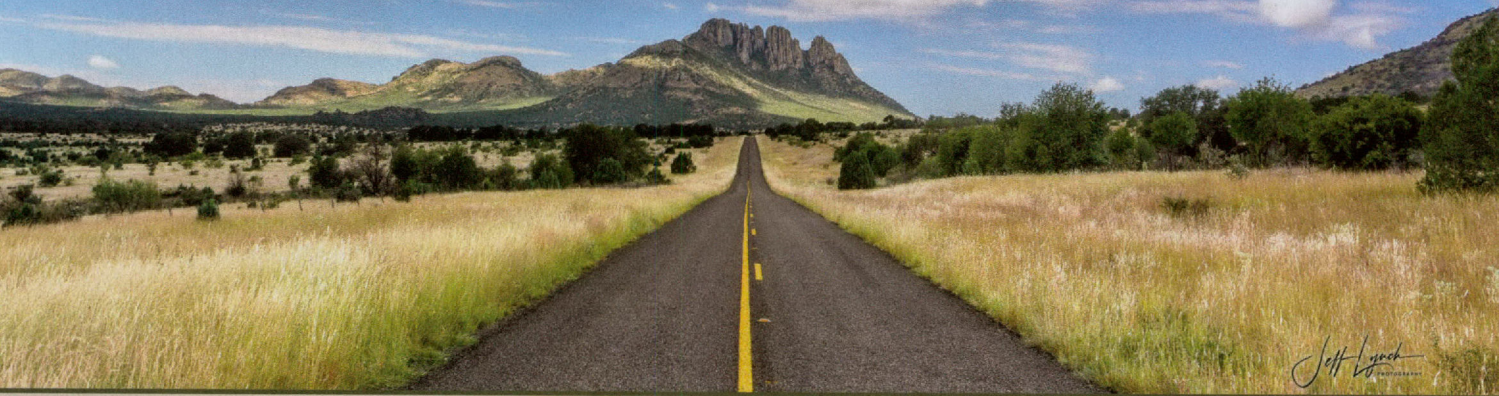
Still, I felt a degree of understanding would be available to me at some point, at least if I kept myself open to it. And what is knowing a place if not collecting more stories, experiences, and conversations from it? At the end of my trip, I had added more charms to my Texas bracelet, and I was eager to add even more.

There were a few things I did learn. I can say I know what the stars look like over Palo Duro Canyon; that I need to go down half a size in cowboy boots; and that however you initially think the name of a small Texas town might be pronounced, you're probably wrong. Also, however big you think Texas is, it's bigger.

After dropping off Rocinante 2 and saying goodbye to Tiffany and Charger, I collapsed onto my couch, exhausted but happy. Cleo, thrilled to be home, climbed onto my stomach to nap. That's all she ever wanted to do anyway. 🐾

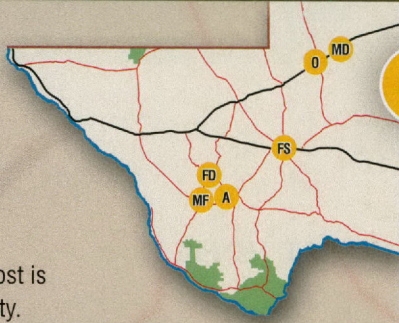


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A



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MF

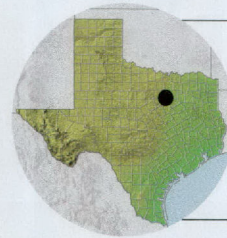
# PLATES



**FORT WORTH-BASED**  
Best Maid Pickles was  
founded nearly 100  
years ago.



**FROM LEFT:** Gary and Brian Dalton at the Pickle Emporium; Best Maid's partnership with Martin House Brewing Company resulted in a sour pickle beer.



**PICKLE EMPORIUM**  
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[bestmaidpickles.com](http://bestmaidpickles.com)

it," Brian recalls. "They didn't give me an office or a position. It was just come down [to the headquarters]. There I was, a 23-year-old man with a music degree from Baylor, walking around and following my dad every day."

Best Maid's pickles, salad dressings, and relishes have graced Texas tables for four generations. The company started as the side hustle of Brian's great-grandmother, Mildred "Millie Mama" Dalton, who baked meringue pies in her Mansfield home. She sold them door-to-door and at the small grocery store her family owned in the 1920s. "Everyone loved them; they were really popular pies," Brian says.

Naturally enterprising as well as thrifty, Millie Mama used the leftover egg yolks to make and sell mayonnaise. Homemade mayonnaise soon led to homemade sandwich spread packed with pickle relish. When Millie Mama's pickle supplier raised prices, she and her husband, Jessie Otis Dalton, decided to pivot the business. They began selling pickles in addition to the mayonnaise and relish. They transformed their backyard into a garden, growing their own cucumbers to keep the nascent family business moving forward. "The early products were just called Mrs. Dalton's," Brian says. "There was a lady in town, Mrs. Chase, who had a cooking school, and ads in the paper would say, 'Mrs. Chase recommends Mrs. Dalton's mayonnaise.'"

Somehow, though the family cannot recall exactly why, the popular items started being sold under the name Best Made, then eventually Best Maid in the early 1930s. The small crop of cucumbers expanded to meet a growing demand, and the family built a tankyard—a space with fiberglass tanks for curing the pickles—right near their family home in Mansfield, where it remains today.

# A Really Big Dill

Fort Worth-based Best Maid serves sour pickles with a sweet smile

By Andrea Luttrell

**B**rian Dalton did not want to go into the family business. By the time he was a teenager, he'd had enough pickle talk. "I don't think there was a single Thanksgiving or family meal where there wasn't a discussion about trucks or cucumbers or customers," says Brian, CFO and president of Best Maid Pickles. Besides, his aspirations were musical. A star trumpet player who made the McDonald's All American band his senior year, Dalton headed south from Mansfield to Waco to pursue a music degree at Baylor University. He thought his road might lead to the great performance halls of New York City, but after graduation, he decided a career in music might not provide enough financial support. So, he returned home to find a stable job. The pull of pickles was just too strong.

"I told Dad in 1993 I would like to come work at Best Maid, and that was the start of





“I really wish my grandmother, grandfather, and my dad were here to see what the company has grown into,” says Gary Dalton, Best Maid’s chairman and Brian’s father. “I mean it’s just unbelievable. Back in the day we had to save up all our nickels and dimes and quarters just to get a little oil to make the dressings out of.”

What started as a literal mom-and-pop operation in Mansfield has grown into a robust business. The company sells myriad products—bloody mary mix, jalapeño mustard relish, and hamburger pickles to name but a few—and has a farm in Hale Center in the Panhandle that grows 35 million pounds of cucumbers annually. The products are available throughout the Southwest, though Texas and its contiguous states are the biggest markets. While the company has grown exponentially, the connection to family hasn’t changed. Chris Dalton, Brian’s brother, manages the tankyard where a brine turns the cucumbers into pickles, and Brian leads day-to-day operations.

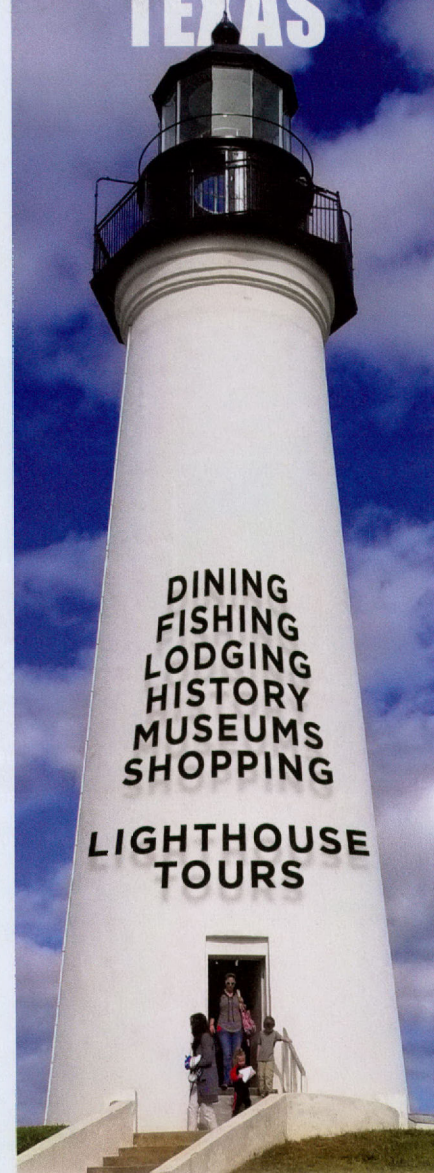
That commitment to family goes beyond the Daltons and extends to all Best Maid employees. Ali Carlton has been working for the company since he graduated from high school in 2008. He

**“I really wish my grandmother, grandfather, and my dad were here to see what the company has grown into.”**

works in IT and inventory control for Best Maid, alongside his mother, Julie Carlton, who handles order entry for the company. “There have been so many people I know who have had their sons and daughters or sisters or cousins work at Best Maid,” Ali says. “There are people in the area, when I’ll mention I work for Best Maid, who will say, ‘Oh, my mom used to work there.’ There aren’t a lot of companies that have been around as long as Best Maid, and there’s a reason for that. In order to keep that nostalgia and keep those local companies and businesses around, you gotta support the little guy.”

Part of that nostalgia is the iconic mascot—an image of a little girl with a black bob and her tongue sticking out—which hasn’t changed in over half

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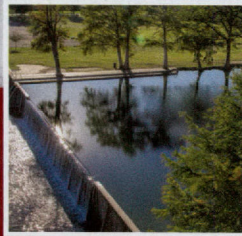
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
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*The Babe of the Alamo, 2017*  
Downtown Gonzales Mural, by Mez Data

a century. Much to the Daltons' delight, people have had the mascot tattooed on their bodies. "It really says something about the brand," Brian says, laughing.

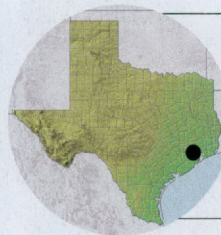
Recently, that mascot adorned a new and somewhat unusual product: a pickle beer made in partnership with Fort Worth's Martin House Brewing Company. "When we started Martin House in 2013, our first employee actually had a college friend who worked at Best Maid," says Shugg Cole, brand manager for Martin House. "Shortly after opening the brewery, we began some talks with Best Maid about a possible pickle beer or a beer pickle." In 2017, Martin House had its first Sour Fest, and the friend at Best Maid offered some pickle brine to experiment with a one-off sour pickle beer for the event. The beer was originally released as a limited beer, but after it caught a lot of attention in the media, the brewery decided to make it a permanent addition. "We love Best Maid pickles, and it turns out a lot more Texans do as well," Cole says.

Pickle lovers in search of other unusual offerings only need visit Best Maid's Pickle Emporium in Fort Worth's Near Southside neighborhood. Opened in October 2020, the Pickle Emporium features Best Maid merchandise and products. Visitors can find Best Maid-branded T-shirts, bloody mary mix, pickle-scented candles, green Frisbees, pickle-shaped dog toys, and pickle-flavored cotton candy. Colorful murals provide opportunities for photos, and exhibits on the walls outline the company's history and pickling process. Every purchase comes with a packet of cucumber seeds to start your own garden, just as Millie Mama did almost a century ago.

The Emporium isn't the only good news for pickle fanatics; Best Maid also plans to expand its production, in hopes to move into grocery stores across the Southeast U.S. The company won't change the century-old recipes to meet demand, though. "The most important thing to me is that the brand always continues," Brian says, "and that people can always buy Best Maid pickles and that the smiley face is there smiling back at them." 

**CHEF TRAMONE**

Terry tends a garden at his restaurant, Soul Food Vegan.

**SOUL FOOD VEGAN**

2901 Emancipation Ave., Houston.  
Open Mon-Sat  
Noon-8:30 p.m.  
soulfoodveganhtx.com

enjoying the moment—taking it all in.

“It’s crazy,” he concludes. “It was all a dream.”

His dream became a reality in January 2019, when his brick-and-mortar debuted. A more intangible part of his dream is also being realized: serving soul food that not only brings comfort but also healing.

Growing up on the east side of Houston in the late 1990s, Terry learned how to cook from his mom and grandmother, and he observed his grandfather’s participation in local barbecue championships. Terry started cooking at 8 years old, eventually making entire meals for his family of five by the time he was a preteen.

A couple of years after graduating from Channelview High School in 2003, Terry fractured his heel while playing basketball. The injury refocused his attention on his health and body, which inspired him to learn about wholesome foods and holistic healing, eventually leading him to become vegan.

Terry also used his newfound knowledge to help his cousin who was diagnosed with schizophrenia. He worked alongside his cousin’s doctor to create a treatment plan, changing his diet and introducing brain-stabilizing herbs like lion’s mane and baobab alongside his prescribed medication.

The success of the treatment grew Terry’s interest in helping prevent and treat illnesses that were common in his local community. African Americans ages 18 to 49 are two times as likely to die from heart disease as white people of the same age, and those 35-64 are 50% more likely to have high blood pressure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Terry started presenting to local groups about disease prevention, which often included a cook-

# Soul Soothing

Houston chef Tramone Terry shares his vegan take on traditional soul food

By Brooke A. Lewis

**S**oul food classics like fried chicken, collard greens, and mac and cheese are deeply rooted in African American history and culture, so it takes a daring individual to reinvent these beloved classics. At Soul Food Vegan in Houston’s Third Ward, chef Tramone “Taliak” Terry has done just that—modernizing the cuisine by making it entirely vegan and

incorporating unconventional ingredients like spelt and moringa.

On a bright October day, Terry sits in the tented patio of Soul Food Vegan. Behind the tent is the garden where he grows the collard greens the restaurant serves. Inside the restaurant, delightful smells and a smooth R&B soundtrack greet customers as they order at the counter. Reflecting on his journey to open the restaurant, Terry is



**“More than anything, I want to make sure my food tastes good, but I also want you to feel good after you eat my food.”**

ing demo. Food is known as the quickest way to someone’s heart, but Terry learned it could expand people’s minds, too.

The popularity of the presentations and cooking demos encouraged Terry to open a vegan catering company in 2015. He was backed up with orders for months, serving dishes that are now restaurant favorites, including the vegan fried chicken made from oyster mushrooms, vegan po’boy, and stuffed bell peppers. Terry visited other vegan restaurants across the country for research, but “you know, they’re not kicking flavor like me,” he says.

Terry’s tasty cooking is evident in dishes like his Cajun pasta melt, made with veggie rotini noodles, spinach, peppers, a spicy tomato sauce, and creamy almond-and-cashew cheese sauce. His smoky oyster mushroom salad features mushrooms seasoned with smoked paprika, kale, spinach, onions, diced tomatoes, homemade guacamole, and cashew ranch dressing. These are two certified hits at Soul Food Vegan.

The location of the restaurant is meaningful and intentional. It sits across from Emancipation Park, which was originally purchased in 1872 by community leaders and members of the Antioch Baptist and Trinity Methodist Episcopal churches.



**FROM TOP:** Boudin balls; Tramone Terry’s mother, Rene Terry, cooks red beans at the restaurant.

“It all starts in Third Ward,” Terry says. “It’s a good central location and it’s a historic location. It’s being gentrified right now. At the same time, a lot of Black businesses are sprouting up. We’re trying to buy our community back and create more jobs. That’s what I’m trying to do.”

Like Terry and his customers, Soul Food Vegan’s employees are beneficiaries

and proponents of the vegan lifestyle. Manager Jonathan Armstrong, who once weighed 450 pounds, lost nearly half his body weight by becoming vegan and exercising regularly.

“[When you have a] healthy life, wealth comes with it,” Armstrong says. “And it’s not even thinking about money or anything like that. It’s just the point of

working hard for yourself and making sure you're healthy. Everything else falls in place for you."

Armstrong, who has worked alongside Terry for a year and a half, describes the chef as knowledgeable and patient.

"He doesn't rush anything. He makes sure everything is done correctly," Armstrong explains. "He always interacts with people. If he has the time, he's going to do it."

Part of Terry's job is educating people about plant-based foods by discussing ingredients they may not be familiar with and explaining why he uses them. He uses Himalayan pink salt, for example, instead of table salt, which can cause inflammation in the body. He uses moringa—a native plant from India infused with magnesium, Vitamin C, potassium, and iron—as a seasoning base. He uses spelt flour to make sandwich bread because, as he says, "it's not something that will clog you up."

"More than anything, I want to make sure my food tastes good," Terry says, "but I also want you to feel good after you eat my food."

Terry's timing is apt as recent studies show more people of color are embracing plant-based diets. A 2019 Gallup poll showed 31% of non-white Americans reported eating less meat in the last year, compared to 19% of white Americans.

The growing popularity of vegan soul food galvanized Terry to share his recipes with a wider audience in his new cookbook, *The Evolution of Soul Food*. Published in November 2020, it includes beloved dishes from Soul Food Vegan, including the boudin balls and smoothies. He's also hoping to open new locations of his restaurant in Miami, Los Angeles, and Houston suburbs like Katy and Cypress.

Back at the restaurant, Terry compliments a customer on his outfit. He shouts, "You looking good right there!"

"That's what I live for," Terry continues. "Just interacting with the community, the people. That's what makes Soul Food Vegan different." 🐾



**R**ed velvet cake makes a fitting treat for Valentine's Day, with its traditional white frosting and brilliant red interior. But the cake didn't used to be so vibrant—not until one Texas company, Adams Extract, gave it its signature crimson hue.

John A. Adams launched his namesake food flavoring company in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1888. He initially produced a sarsaparilla extract and eventually expanded his product line to satisfy his wife's desire for flavoring that could endure baking or freezing. He formulated Adams Best, a potent vanilla flavor, to do just that. Seeking a better climate, he moved his family and operations to Beeville in 1905, at first selling his wares door to door. Eventually, his son Fred Adams took over the business and relocated it to Austin in 1922. It was his son, John G. Adams, who created its popular four-pack of red, blue, green, and yellow food colors in 1947.

To promote this new product, the company printed a recipe for red velvet cake (developed by John G.'s wife, Betty Adams) on cards to be distributed in stores, recommending its red food coloring to produce a bright ruby tint. Previous iterations of the cake tended to be a mahogany shade, said to derive from a chemical reaction between the cocoa powder and acidic ingredients like vinegar or buttermilk; some recipes called for beets to enhance the effect. With the introduction of Adams' food coloring, a truly bright red became possible, and the company's promotional efforts led to a boost in the cake's popularity.

"At the time, red velvet cake wasn't one of those items you could just whip up in the kitchen," says Dan Shannon, president and CEO of Adams Extract. "When you wanted to have one of these cakes, you went to a great hotel or fine restaurant. It signified a high-level eating experience, something people are always looking to replicate at home. Adams brought the modern-day recipe for red velvet cake to the masses."

The business stayed within the Adams family until 2002, when it moved to

## Piece of Cake

Adams Extract is known for giving red velvet cake its vibrant color

By Heather Brand

Adams Extract products are available in grocery stores across the nation. The company honors its long history by posting many of its classic recipes on its website. Several of those recipes, like the one for red velvet cake, originated with Betty. She concocted an elaborate five-flavor pound cake (combining vanilla and lemon extracts and butter, coconut, and rum flavors) in celebration of the company's 75th anniversary. A simpler version (minus the rum and coconut favoring) nabbed the grand prize in the baking contest at the Texas State Fair in 1965.

"We have a bunch of great recipes that we're known for, but by far the red velvet one is the most popular," Shannon confirms. In the past few years, the company has created a

**"Adams brought the modern-day recipe for red velvet cake to the masses."**

plant-based version of its food colors to meet consumer demand for more natural ingredients—the red color is derived from beet juice. Shannon says these natural options are part of Adams Extract's efforts to keep up with changing tastes and to keep recipes like red velvet cake relevant for generations to come. "Quite frankly, I still think it's the greatest cupcake flavor ever made," Shannon says. **L**

## RECIPE

### Adams "Original" Red Velvet Cake

This recipe was created by Betty Adams—the matriarch of Adams Extract—in the 1940s.

#### CAKE INGREDIENTS:

- ½ cup shortening
- 1 ½ cups white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon "Adams Best" Vanilla
- 1 teaspoon Adams Butter Flavor
- 3 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 1 ounce Adams Red Food Color
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 ½ cups all-purpose flour, sifted
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 tablespoon vinegar

#### ICING INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound confectioners' sugar, sifted
- ½ cup shortening
- 1 tablespoon "Adams Best" Vanilla
- ¼ teaspoon Adams Butter Flavor
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 5 tablespoons milk (approximately)

#### DIRECTIONS:

Cream shortening and sugar. Add eggs one at a time and beat vigorously. Add vanilla and butter flavors to mixture. In a separate bowl, make a paste of cocoa and food coloring and blend into shortening mixture. In another bowl, mix baking soda, flour, and salt. Add the flour mixture into the shortening mixture a bit at a time, alternating with splashes of buttermilk. Add any remaining buttermilk as well as the vinegar to mixture. Blend well. Bake in three greased 9-inch or 10-inch cake pans for 20 to 25 minutes at 350 degrees F. Let cool completely. To make the icing, mix half of the confectioners sugar with shortening, flavors, and salt. Add the rest of sugar a bit at a time, alternating with enough milk to get a smooth-spreading icing. To assemble, ice the top of each cake and stack them. Then, ice the outside of the three-layer cake completely.

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## Molding the Shape of Jazz to Come

The musical legacy of the historically Black I.M. Terrell High School in Fort Worth

By Michael Corcoran

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4	12	20	28	36	44	52	60	68	76	84	92	100
5	13	21	29	37	45	53	61	69	77	85	93	101
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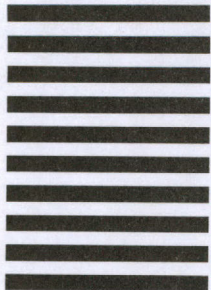
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**W**hile saxophonist Ornette Coleman's pioneering style won him a Lifetime Achievement

Grammy in 2007, the early iterations of his "free jazz" didn't fly when he was in the band at Fort Worth's I.M. Terrell High School. The Panther Band's loud volume usually masked his mischief, but one day during John Philip Sousa's "Washington Post March," band director Gilbert A. Baxter heard Coleman peppering the arrangement with sax riffs of his own invention. Baxter responded by sending Coleman to the principal's office.

"All of us who were into jazz probably got put out a few times," Coleman's cousin and manager, James Jordan, also a sax player at Terrell, told the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* in 2003. "Coleman, more."

Baxter was known for his stern and steady direction of the Terrell band, a position he held from 1946 to 1961. The only high school for Black students in segregated Fort Worth until the mid-1950s, I.M. Terrell High was a focal point of the city's African American community. Baxter viewed the band as a showcase of sophistication and forbade the popular styles of jazz, swing, and blues.

The irony is that Baxter's traditional approach inspired a remarkable generation of innovative jazz players. The director's focus on musicianship boosted the young players, who left high school well-equipped to embrace the intellectualism of free jazz. Exhibit A is Coleman, who forged his own style of jazz by abandoning the traditional notions of melody and chord progressions. In the spirit of improvisation, he encouraged his musicians to play what they felt, creating a blend he called "harmolodics."

I.M. Terrell opened in 1882 as East Ninth Street Colored School and closed in 1973 during the desegregation of schools. But it was only during Baxter's tenure as band director that the school produced nationally prominent musicians.

"The reach and impact of those Terrell graduates is truly remarkable," said Kim Teal, assistant professor of jazz

history at the University of North Texas. "It's a who's who of experimental jazz from the latter half of the 20th century."

A slight, bespectacled man with a thin moustache, Baxter ruled his band with an iron baton, drilling fundamentals into the students. During football season, the band donned gold and blue uniforms and played marches. The rest of the year was devoted to classical music.

"Mr. Baxter could play every instrument in the band," said James Mallard, 85, who graduated from I.M. Terrell in 1954 and played in a Fort Worth R&B band for decades. "He'd come over and show you what to play and how to play it." With choir director Adlee Trezevant teaching music theory, the I.M. Terrell players epitomized the school's unofficial motto during that time of segregation: "Separate but superior."

Baxter was still teaching at I.M. Terrell when Coleman, class of 1948, blew minds with a series of albums—*Something Else* (1958), *The Shape of Jazz to Come* (1959), *Change of the Century* (1960), and *Free Jazz* (1961). Coleman's chair in the Panther Band's saxophone section was subsequently taken by Curtis Ousley, who would become famous as King Curtis.

Upon graduating in 1952, Curtis turned down scholarships to music schools to hit the road. The sax on Aretha Franklin's "Respect" is perhaps Curtis' best-known solo, and his squealing, honking tenor sax on the Coasters classic "Yakety Yak" in 1958 made tenor sax the new lead instrument of rock 'n' roll. If you heard hot tenor sax on Top 40 radio in the '60s, you were most likely listening to Curtis.

Two other I.M. Terrell graduates—Ronald Shannon Jackson and Cornell

**"The reach and impact of those Terrell graduates is truly remarkable."**

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## Panther Band Greats

**Ornette Coleman**, 1930–2015: alto saxophonist and composer regarded as a master for his unconventional approach to jazz melodies, timing, and ensemble playing.

**King Curtis**, 1934–1971: versatile tenor saxophonist who helped define rock 'n' roll playing with the likes of Aretha Franklin and the Coasters.

**John Carter**, 1930–1991: clarinetist and composer who formed the influential New Art Jazz Ensemble in Los Angeles, where he also taught at USC.

**Julius Hemphill**, 1938–1995: alto sax player who co-founded the World Saxophone Quartet, prominent in New York's "loft-jazz" scene in the 1980s.

**Prince Lasha**, 1929–2008: free jazz multi-instrumentalist best known for his alto saxophone on 1960s recordings by Eric Dolphy and Elvin Jones.

**Charles Moffett**, 1929–1997: drummer who played on seven Ornette Coleman albums in the '60s, when he'd pared down to a trio.

**Dewey Redman**, 1931–2006: tenor saxophonist who often played in Coleman's bands, then became a crucial member of pianist Keith Jarrett's quartet in the '70s.

**TOP:** James Mallard, an alumnus of I.M. Terrell.  
**RIGHT:** An undated photo of Ornette Coleman.

Dupree—would go on to define jazz-rock fusion drumming and tasteful session guitar, respectively.

After graduating in 1958, Jackson went to Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, to study music. But, as he told *Musician* magazine in 1981, "They'd been teaching me out of the same books as in high school, and I'd been playing the same Sousa and Wagner. The teachers couldn't teach me nothing new." After a year at Lincoln, the drummer set off for New York City, where he received a musical education at "Coleman University," as he summed up his time in Coleman's band Prime Time.

As for Dupree, he joined Fort Worth R&B band the Red Hearts, a role in which he ended up jamming with Curtis. Not long afterward, Dupree was the newest member of Curtis' New York City band, the Kingpins. In addition to touring with Aretha Franklin, Sam Cooke, and the Beatles (opening the 1965 Shea Stadium show), Dupree played in his estimation, on 25,000 sessions.

Coleman, Curtis, Jackson, and Dupree



represented four distinctive styles, yet they all sprang from Baxter's band hall. In his later years at the school, Baxter eased his "no jazz" edict, recalled Jackson.

During lunch hour, Baxter would open the band hall for whoever wanted to jam. "We had access to all the instruments," Jackson said. In the 1981 interview with *Musician*, Jackson spoke of Baxter's dedication: "He loved to perfect a band. He put his whole life into music, to the point it would drive him mad."

Baxter left the high school at age 44 for unspecified health reasons and married in Dallas three years later. Then, the legend became a ghost. In a 1984 *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* article about the school's musical legacy, the teacher was referred to as "the late G.A. Baxter." But

## Evans Avenue Plaza

I.M. TERRELL HIGH SCHOOL was the pride of Fort Worth's African American community for almost 90 years before its closure in 1973. In the revitalized Near Southside neighborhood, Evans Avenue Plaza remembers Terrell students and teachers.

Sidewalk plaques convey stories of those who made a difference, including legendary teacher and administrator Hazel Harvey Peace, known as "Mama Hazel" during her 48 years at Terrell; and Isaiah Milligan Terrell, an influential educator and the school's namesake. Plaques also honor musicians Ornette Coleman, King Curtis, Dewey Redman, and Ray Sharpe ("Linda Lu").

Last summer, 95-year-old Terrell alum Opal Lee, class of 1943, celebrated Juneteenth by leading a 2.5-mile march from Evans Plaza to the Tarrant County Courthouse on June 19, 2021—the day "Juneteenth" was declared a federal holiday.

*Evans Avenue Plaza is at 1050 Evans Ave. in Fort Worth.*

Baxter lived until age 88. When he passed away in 2005 in his native Oklahoma City there was no obituary in *The Oklahoman* newspaper—just a death notice.

We don't know whether the mischievous Coleman ever worked his way back into Baxter's good graces. But the musical disobedience Coleman displayed at I.M. Terrell evolved brilliantly. Coleman's 2015 obituary in *The New York Times* credited him with "personifying the American independent will as much as any artist of the last century."

The musicians at I.M. Terrell High were like abstract expressionists who started off by painting in a traditional, realistic style. Baxter taught them the basics of rhythm, melody, and chords. Then, they struck out on their own, splashing and dripping new sounds over the American musical landscape. 🎸

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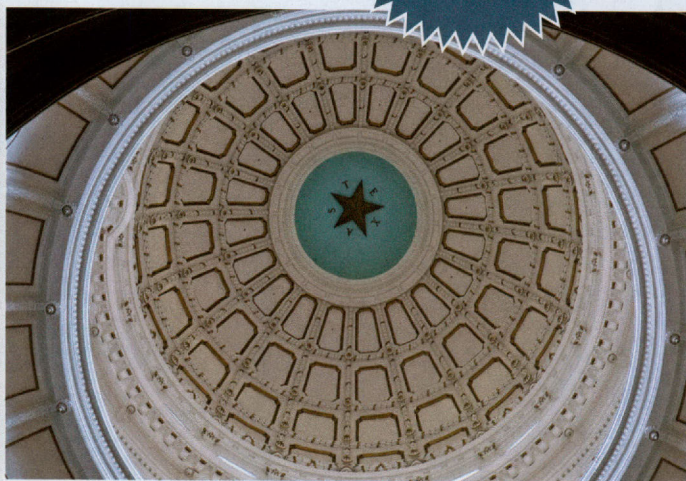
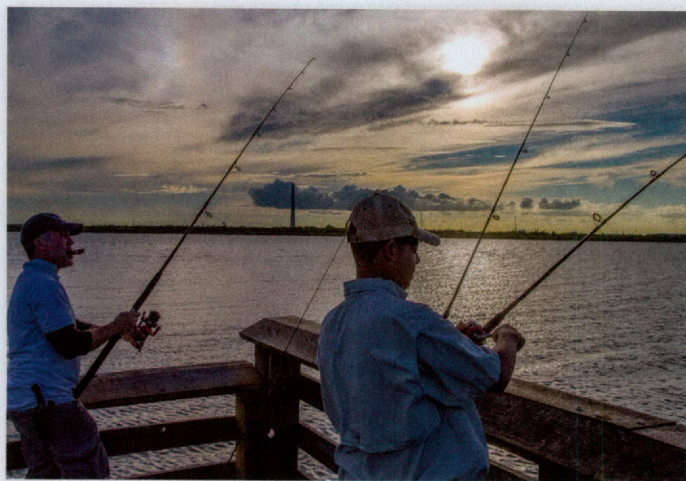
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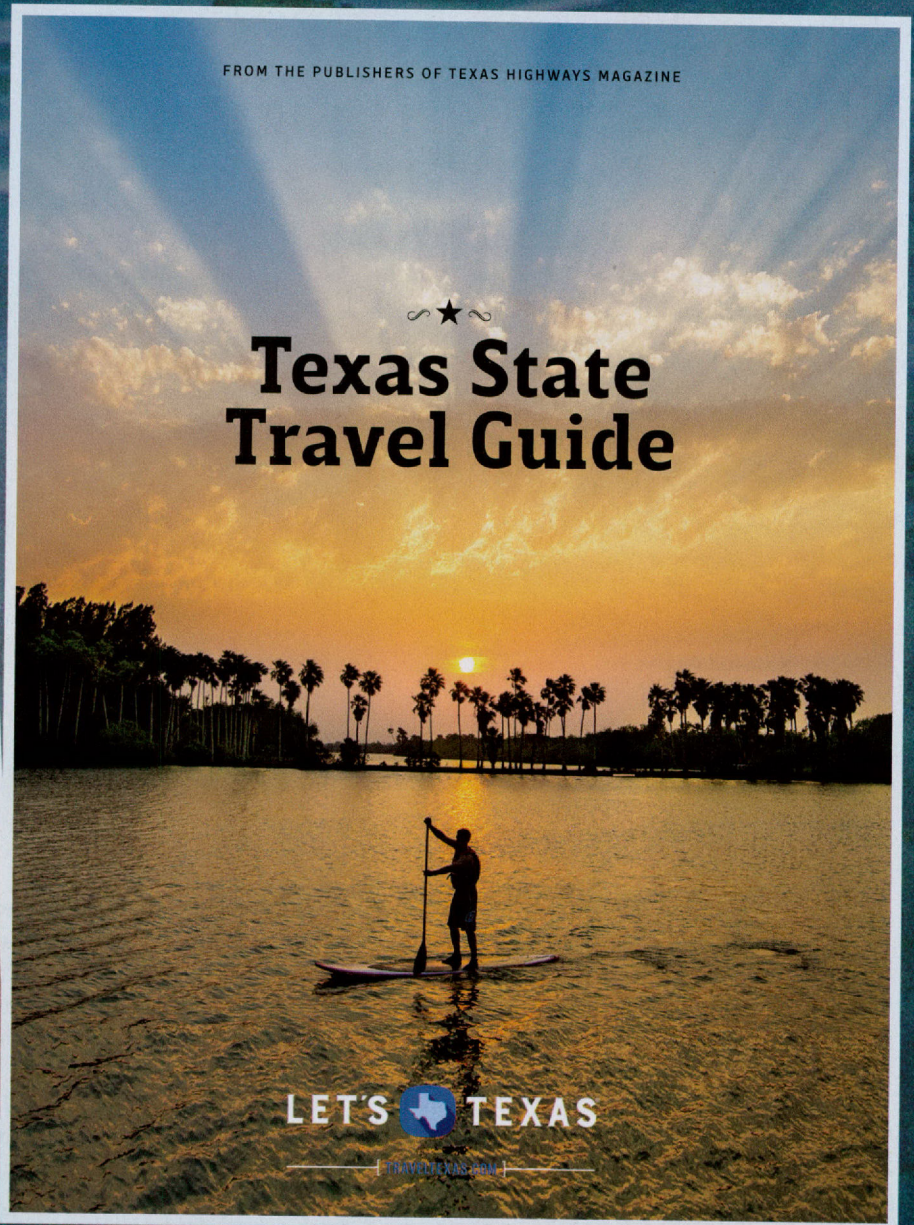
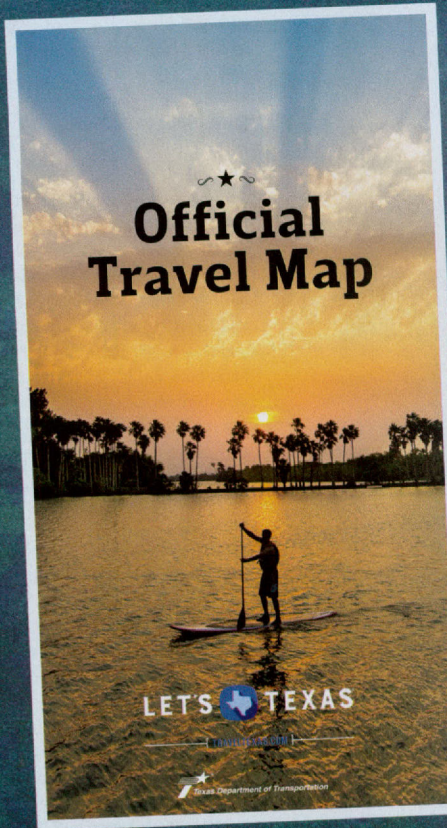


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- 9 Bullock Texas State History Museum
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- 11 Cedar Park Tourism
- 12 City of Bee Cave
- 13 City of Gonzales
- 14 City of Huntsville
- 15 City of Manor
- 16 City of Odessa/Starbright Village
- 17 City of Port Isabel
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- 21 Destination Bryan
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- 24 Graham Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 25 Grapevine Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 26 Greenville Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 27 Irving Arts Center
- 28 Kerrville Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 29 Laredo Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 30 LBJ Library & Museum
- 31 Lufkin Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 32 Mardi Gras of Southeast Texas
- 33 McKinney Convention & Visitors Bureau
- 34 Moody Gardens
- 35 MSC OPAS
- 36 Pearl Brewery
- 37 Rockport-Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce
- 38 Somervell County Tourism
- 39 Texas Historical Commission
- 40 Texas Parks & Wildlife
- 41 Texas Realtors
- 42 The Grand 1894 Opera House
- 43 Uvalde County
- 44 Visit Bay City
- 45 Visit Brenham/Washington County
- 46 Visit College Station
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# EVENTS



## Life of the Paw-ty

For 20 years, Mardi Gras in McKinney has gone to the dogs

Every year on the Sunday before Mardi Gras, McKinney residents and their dogs head downtown for the annual Krewe of Barkus dog parade, modeled after New Orleans' Mardi Gras dog parade of the same name. Owners dress their dogs—and themselves—in extravagant costumes and march around the square as a crowd of 5,000 humans applaud their creativity. After the parade, everyone heads to Mitchell Park for the dog costume contest and to shop from vendors selling canine goods.

Louisiana transplant Blynda Christian started the parade in the early 2000s to bring Mardi Gras to McKinney and Louisiana culture to Texas. "It's a feel-good kind of day, and Mardi Gras is always a bright spot after the holidays and during the cold winter months," Christian says. The inaugural parade featured about 25 dogs. Now, about 200 dogs stroll through the streets each year.

This year's 20th anniversary theme is "A Trip Down Memory Lane," and participants are encouraged to dress themselves and their dogs in their favorite theme from parades past. These themes include famous literary characters; classic television shows; favorite villains; and presidents, pioneers, and "pawtriot." Three judges award winners in the categories of Best in Show, Most Creative, and Best Dog-Owner Combo, and local merchants provide thousands of dollars in prizes. "It's become one of the most beloved festivals we have," Christian says. "There's nothing in the world like dog people." —Amanda Ogle

### Krewe of Barkus

Feb. 27  
Downtown McKinney  
and Mitchell Park,  
300 W. Louisiana St.  
facebook.com/barkusparade

### BIG BEND COUNTRY

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Feb. 18-19

Polish your boots and brush off your best hat. The Lone Star Cowboy Poetry Gathering has been preserving Western culture for 36 years with some of the best cowboy poets and musicians in the country. The free shows, chuckwagon breakfast, and open-mic sessions promise to be better than ever. *Sul Ross State University*, 400 N. Harrison St. 432-216-2167; [lonestarcowboypoetry.com](http://lonestarcowboypoetry.com)

#### DEL RIO

##### The Border To Badlands Ultra Race

Feb. 26

Experience the desert's distinctive wildlife and flora, be inspired by the incredible views of Seminole Canyon meeting the Rio Grande, and see cave art at a distance as you traverse this loop course over technical single-track trail and backcountry roads. Race routes vary from 5K to 50 miles. *Seminole Canyon*. [rungguides.com/event/12658/the-border-to-badlands-ultra](http://rungguides.com/event/12658/the-border-to-badlands-ultra)

#### EL PASO

##### Shen Yun

Feb. 5

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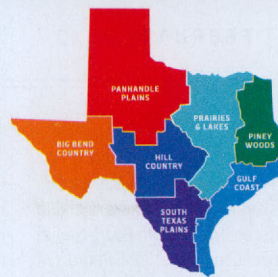
##### El Paso Marathon and Half Marathon

Feb. 13

This Boston Marathon qualifier begins on El Paso's east side and travels through various parts of the city. Runners enjoy sunrise over the Hueco Mountains as well as striking views of the colorful Chihuahuan Desert. The event

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#### Midessa Boat, RV, Sport, and Gun Show

Feb. 11-13

Check out new model boats and RVs, plus shop at the gun show and various vendors. The show includes seven buildings on 42 acres with everything indoors. *Ector County Coliseum Complex, 4201 Andrews Highway, 432-770-5165; midessaboatshow.com*

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Feb. 5

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#### BEAUMONT

##### Mardi Gras of Southeast Texas

Feb. 24-27

Beaumont celebrates Mardi Gras with parades, concerts, Cajun food, street entertainment, arts and crafts, carnival rides, and all the beads you could want. *The Event Centre, 700 Crockett St. 409-838-3435; beaumontcvb.com/events/annual-events/mardi-gras-of-southeast-texas*

#### CLEAR LAKE

##### Yachty Gras Grand Night Boat Parade

Feb. 22

The 23rd annual Yachty Gras features a family-friendly Mardi Gras yacht parade (the largest in the country) that proceeds through the Kemah/Seabrook Channel. Revelers receive beads and doubloons. *Kemah Boardwalk, 713-882-4040; yachtygras.com*

#### CLUTE

##### Planetarium Show

Feb. 1, 8, 15, 22

This show features a 30-foot

dome equipped with a Spitz Star Ball projector that reproduces a night sky as it appears to the naked eye and a variety of other high-tech equipment to give visitors a close-up feel for comets, exploding stars, and black holes. *Center for the Arts and Sciences, 400 College Blvd. 979-265-7661; brazosportcenter.com*

#### CORPUS CHRISTI

##### Texas Women: A New History of Abstract Art

Feb. 3-May 8

Twenty-seven artists seeking to expand both the modern and contemporary aspects of abstract art are featured in this exhibition. A wide survey of work is presented by Texas women from post-WWII to the present. Beginning with Dorothy Hood and Toni LeSelle, whose works from the 1950s and '60s employ rich color and energetic brush strokes, the exhibition moves through to decades to include work from artists who came of age in a more technological world, including Annette Lawrence, Constance Lowe, Susie Rosmarin, and Lorraine Tad. *Art Museum of South Texas, 1902 N. Shoreline Blvd. 361-825-3500; artmuseumofsouthtexas.org*

#### GALVESTON

##### The Doo Wop Project in Concert

Feb. 5

The ensemble sings its way through the tunes from groups like the Crests, Belmonts, Flamingos, Smokey Robinson, the Temptations, the Four Seasons, and more modern musicians like Jason Mraz and Maroon 5. Featuring stars of Broadway's *Jersey Boys* and *Motown: The Musical*, the Doo Wop Project recreates some of the most notable music in American pop and rock history. *The Grand 1894 Opera House, 2020 Postoffice St. 409-765-1894; thegrand.com*

#### GALVESTON

##### Mardi Gras! Galveston

Feb. 18-March 1

Galveston is home to the third largest Mardi Gras celebration in the country. The island's 111th Mardi Gras draws attendees for live concerts, parades, balcony parties, several elegant balls, and some

new festive additions. Events take place on the weekends and Fat Tuesday. *The Strand, 2302 Strand St. 409-770-0999; galveston.com/whattodo/festivals/mardigras*

#### HOUSTON

##### South Pacific

Feb. 8-20

The Rodgers and Hammerstein musical proves that even the backdrop of a tropical paradise cannot shelter its residents from the prejudices of World War II. *South Pacific* is the winner of the 1950 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and 10 Tony Awards, including Best Musical. *Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, 800 Bagby St. 713-558-8887; tuts.com*

#### LAKE JACKSON

##### Symphony Orchestra Concert: Playing with Fire

Feb. 5

Listen to the soaring music of Stravinsky and Beethoven, as well as John Williams' score to *Harry Potter* and *the Goblet of Fire*. *The Clarion at Brazosport College, 500 College Drive. 979-230-3658; brazosport.edu/clarion*

#### LAKE JACKSON

##### Bird Banding

Feb. 19

Watch volunteers collect baseline data on bird populations at the sanctuary. The banding station is an excellent opportunity to see birds up close and to learn about all the birds of the Brazosport area. *Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, 299 SH 332 W. 979-480-0999; gcbco.org*

#### PALACIOS

##### African American Heritage Day

Feb. 19

The Palacios Community Coalition presents local speakers to show contributions made and being made by the African American community in Palacios. Tours may be provided upon request. *City by the Sea Museum, 401 Commerce St. 361-972-1148*

#### PORT ARANSAS

##### Chocolate Crawl

Feb. 10

Shoppers are treated to beverages and a wide assortment of chocolate goodies throughout an

evening of shopping. *Various locations. 361-749-5919; portaransas.org/event/chocolate-crawl/667*

#### PORT ARANSAS

##### Whooping Crane Festival

Feb. 24-27

Each year since 1996, the Whooping Crane Festival has celebrated the annual return of the cranes to their wintering habitat at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. The event has renowned speakers, birding trips, boating trips, nature tours, photography workshops, and a trade show. *Port Aransas Civic Center, 701 W. Avenue A. 361-749-5919; portaransas.org/whooping-crane-festival*

#### ROCKPORT

##### Bountiful Bowl

Feb. 5

Potters from around the world display their works for sale to the public. The event is held at the Woman's Club in historical downtown Rockport and benefits the Council on Aging. *Rockport-Fulton High School, 1801 Omohundro St. 361-729-5352; aransascounty.org/counciling*

#### ROCKPORT

##### Clay Expo

Feb. 5-6

Come out for an art gallery walk, solo exhibits, pottery demonstrations, and the opening reception on Saturday. *Rockport-Fulton High School, 1801 Omohundro St. 361-729-5519; rockportartcenter.com*

#### ROCKPORT

##### Lamardi Gras

Feb. 11-12

This festival features food, entertainment, a parade, and other festivities on Lamar Peninsula to benefit the Lamar Volunteer Fire Department. *Lamar Volunteer Fire Dept and Downtown Lamar Peninsula, 302 Bois D'Arc. 361-205-7037; lamarvfd.com*

#### SOUTH PADRE ISLAND

##### Rio Grande Valley Quilt Show

Feb. 18-19

The 40th annual Rio Grande Valley Quilt Show displays more than 300 quilt projects and includes vendors, demonstrations, lectures,

a silent auction, and door prizes. This year's theme is *Wizard of Oz*, so find your way down the yellow brick road to South Padre Island to help celebrate. *South Padre Island Convention Centre*, 7355 Padre Blvd. 956-648-9709; [rgvquiltshow.org](http://rgvquiltshow.org)

#### SUGAR LAND

##### **Disney Princess: The Concert** Feb. 4

For the first time, the music of Disney's princesses is celebrated in one show. *Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land*, 18111 Lexington Blvd. 281-207-6278; [smartfinancialcentre.net](http://smartfinancialcentre.net)

#### SUGAR LAND

##### **Ricardo Montaner in Concert** Feb. 11

Venezuelan singer-songwriter Ricardo Montaner's career spans several decades and includes dozens of multiplatinum, platinum, and gold records. *Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land*, 18111 Lexington Blvd. 281-207-6278; [smartfinancialcentre.net](http://smartfinancialcentre.net)

#### SURFSIDE BEACH

##### **Surfside Beach Marathon and Half Marathon** Feb. 5

The Surfside Beach Marathon offers something for all runners with a marathon, half marathon, 5K, and Kids K. A post-run party includes barbecue, drinks, and games. The run starts as the sun rises over the water and follows the public beach to San Luis Pass, then returns. The entire course is on the firm, smooth sand. *Stahlman Park*, 2211 Bluewater Highway. [surfsidebeachmarathon.com](http://surfsidebeachmarathon.com)

#### VICTORIA

##### **Ring of Fire**

Feb. 18-20, 24-27

The songbook of Johnny Cash comes to life in this musical about struggle and success, love and faith, rowdiness and redemption, and home and family. More than two dozen of Cash's classics are included. *Leo J. Welder Center for the Performing Arts*, 214 N. Main St. 361-576-6277; [theatrevictoria.org](http://theatrevictoria.org)

#### VICTORIA

##### **Victoria Symphony Concert: Classical Blockbusters Meet the East** Feb. 26

Join the Victoria Symphony for a mashup of classical hits, including Rossini's *Barber of Seville* and Stravinsky's *Firebird* combined with an exotic concerto featuring Houston-based Changlu Wu on the

pipa, the Chinese version of the mandolin. *Victoria Fine Arts Center*, 1002 Sam Houston Drive. 361-576-4500; [victoriasymphony.com](http://victoriasymphony.com)

#### HILL COUNTRY

#### AUSTIN

##### **Mix 'n' Mash Las Flores—La Vida Exhibition and Art Sale** Through Feb. 6

This group exhibition displays artworks from over 200 local and regional artists created on quality panels donated by Ampersand Art Supply. The art sale increases awareness about the visual arts and art collecting in the community, and provides funding for the museum's exhibitions, supports educational programming for children and adults, and sustains upkeep and care of the permanent collection. This year's theme is "flowers and life." *Mexic-Arte Museum*, 419 Congress Ave. 419 Congress Ave. 512-480-9373; [mexic-artemuseum.org](http://mexic-artemuseum.org)

#### AUSTIN

##### **Without Limits: Helen Frankenthaler, Abstraction, and the Language of Print** Through Feb. 20

A key figure in the development of color-field painting, Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011) experimented with color, form, and technique during her career. When Frankenthaler began creating prints in 1961, she had to adapt to a medium that would involve collaboration and a new language of printmaking techniques. She, along with other artists, contributed to a printmaking renaissance in the mid-20th century. *Blanton Museum of Art*, 200 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. 512-471-5482; [blantonmuseum.org](http://blantonmuseum.org)

#### AUSTIN

##### **Daniel Johnston: I Live My Broken Dreams** Through March 20

This exhibit marks the first major museum survey of visual art and music by Austin artist Daniel Johnston (1961-2019). While Johnston is best known for his songs about love and loss, this exhibition pairs reflections on his music career with his drawings as well as film and video documentation, collected ephemera, and personal memorabilia, offering the opportunity to view the cross-disciplinary, holistic nature of his work and legacy. *The Contemporary Austin, Jones Center*, 700 Congress Ave. 512-453-5312; [thecontemporaryaustin.org](http://thecontemporaryaustin.org)

#### AUSTIN

##### **Terry Allen: MemWars**

Through July 10

Many artists work in multiple mediums, but for Terry Allen, music, performance, writing, and visual artwork are all part of the same practice. He grew up in Lubbock in the 1950s and then moved to Los Angeles, where he graduated from the Chouinard Art Institute in 1966. Although he has lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico, for many years with his wife and frequent collaborator, actress and fellow artist Jo Harvey Allen, his work is well known to Austinites through his public sculpture at Laguna Gloria, *Road Angel* (2016), and because of his recent annual concerts at the Paramount Theatre. His recent works mark No. 9 of the Blanton's Contemporary Project series. *Blanton Museum of Art*, 200 E. Martin Luther King Blvd. 512-471-5482; [blantonmuseum.org/rotation/terry-allen/](http://blantonmuseum.org/rotation/terry-allen/)

#### AUSTIN

##### **Diana Krall in Concert**

Feb. 8

Grammy Award-winning and multi-platinum jazz singer Diana Krall's show is part of a 34-city national tour. Krall is the only jazz singer to have eight albums debut at the top of *Billboard's* Jazz Albums chart. Her most recent release, *This Dream Of You*, has garnered critical acclaim from fans and press alike. *Bass Concert Hall*, 2350 Robert Dedman Drive. 512-471-2787; [texasperformingarts.org](http://texasperformingarts.org)

#### AUSTIN

##### **Russell Peters: Act Your Age Tour** Feb. 12

Russell Peters returns to the global stage with a world tour. After building his new comedy act in clubs across the U.S. over the past year, Peters tackles cancel culture, aging, and the current state of the world. *Bass Concert Hall*, 2350 Robert Dedman Drive. 512-471-2787; [texasperformingarts.org](http://texasperformingarts.org)

#### AUSTIN

##### **Tootsie**

Feb. 22-27

Broadway in Austin and Texas Performing Arts present this love letter to the theater that tells the story of Michael Dorsey, a talented but difficult actor who struggles to find work until one show-stopping act of desperation lands him the role of a lifetime. Featuring a Tony-winning book by Robert Horn and score by 2018 Tony winner David Yazbek (*The Band's Visit*, *Dirty*

*Rotten Scoundrels*). *Bass Concert Hall*, 2350 Robert Dedman Drive. 512-471-1444; [texasperformingarts.org](http://texasperformingarts.org)

#### BANDERA

##### **11th Street Cowboy Mardi Gras** Feb. 17-19

Four days of Cajun and cowboy festivities begin Wednesday evening with Cajun Steak Night. Thursday night features the Canine Cowtume Contest and top zydeco bands. Friday, the music starts early and readies the crowd for the grand finale on Saturday, which includes a gumbo contest, a Mardi Gras parade, costume contest, and a great lineup of music. *11th Street Cowboy Bar*, 307 11th St. 830-796-4849; [11thstreetcowboybar.com](http://11thstreetcowboybar.com)

#### BANDERA

##### **Cowboy Mardi Gras Bull Riding and Mini Bull Riding**

Feb. 19

See if these bull riders can hang on for a wild 8-second ride. There is also mini bull riding for kids. *Mansfield Park Rodeo Arena*, 2886 SH 16 N. 830-777-7129; [facebook.com/ridingonfaithrodeoseries](https://facebook.com/ridingonfaithrodeoseries)

#### BOERNE

##### **Bluegrass Jam at The AgriCultural** Feb. 12, 26

Every second and fourth Saturdays of the month (except in December), attendees can bring instruments and play along or come to listen to the Bluegrass Jam at The AgriCultural. *The Agri-Cultural Museum and Arts Center*, 102 City Park Road. 210-445-1080; [theagricultural.org/bluegrass-jams](http://theagricultural.org/bluegrass-jams)

#### BOERNE

##### **Market Days**

Feb. 12-13

Since 1850, Main Plaza has been a center point of trade for the people of Boerne. Now, on the second weekend of every month, Main Plaza hosts an outdoor market with hundreds of booths displaying everything from collectibles and remembrances of the past to modern innovations. *Main Plaza*, 100 N. Main St. 210-844-8193; [boernemarketdays.com](http://boernemarketdays.com)

#### BOERNE

##### **Gli Unici: Three Tenors Perform Songs of Love**

Feb. 12

This concert is part of Cave Without a Name's Music in the Cave series. For Valentine's Day, Gli Unici returns to the Throne Room with *Songs of Love*. The natural cave acoustics come alive as the tenor threesome (Donald

Braswell II, William Chapman, and Timothy Birt) sing opera arias and jazzy pop songs. *Cave Without a Name Throne Room*, 325 Kreutzberg Road. 830-537-4212; [cavewithoutaname.com](http://cavewithoutaname.com)

#### BOERNE

##### Spring Antiques Show

Feb. 26-27  
The antiques show features exhibitor booths overflowing with American antiques. Exhibitors gather treasures from estates across the country and save their best for this nationally acclaimed antiques show. Merchandise includes country furniture, baskets, stoneware, glassware, jewelry, textiles, early paper, toys, silver, quilts, pewter, American oak, and Southwestern items. *Kendall County Fairgrounds*, 1307 River Road. 830-329-2870; [ci.boerne.tx.us/calendar](http://ci.boerne.tx.us/calendar)

#### COTTONWOOD SHORES

##### The Carol Burnett Show

Feb. 11-March 6  
Hill Country Community Theatre presents an evening of sketches from *The Carol Burnett Show*. The show ran for 11 years, garnering 25 prime-time Emmy Awards and inclusion on *Time* magazine's list of "100 Best TV Shows of All Times." Associate producer Robert Wright and the entire staff of the show are donating their share of profits to the Navajo Indian Children's Scholarship Trust. *Hill Country Community Theatre*, 4003 W. FM 2147. 830-798-8944; [thehcct.org](http://thehcct.org)

#### FREDERICKSBURG

##### Wine Lovers Celebration

Through Feb. 25  
Take time this February to relax and say hello to a new year with a loved one or friend, discovering Texas wine and enjoying Texas Wine Country. *Various locations*. 872-216-9463; [texaswinetrail.com](http://texaswinetrail.com)

#### FREDERICKSBURG

##### Clue: The Musical

Feb. 11-27  
Fredericksburg Theater Company presents this musical based on the board game that brings the world's best-known suspects to life and invites the audience to help solve the mystery: Who killed Mr. Boddy, in what room, and with what weapon? *Steve W. Shepherd Theater*, 1668 US 87 S. 888-669-7114; [fredericksburgtheater.org](http://fredericksburgtheater.org)

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**FREDERICKSBURG****Luckenbach Hug-In and Valentine Ball**

Feb. 11-12

Luckenbach's 47th annual Hug-In and Valentine Ball features live music and dancing throughout the weekend. Luckenbach Texas, 412 Luckenbach Town Loop. luckenbachtexas.com

**FREDERICKSBURG****Trade Days**

Feb. 18-20

Shop more than 350 vendors in seven barns and acres of antiques, collectibles, tools, crafts, primitives, ranch furniture, hunting accessories, candles, clothing, jewelry, food, and other items. There is also a biergarten and live music. Trade Days, 355 Sunday Farms Lane. 210-846-4094; fbjtradedays.com

**FREDERICKSBURG****Lone Star Brass**

Feb. 20

The Lone Star Brass presents concerts that display the technical skill of each performer and the expertise involved in working together as an ensemble playing trumpets, horn, trombone, and tuba. Fredericksburg United Methodist Church, 1800 N. Llano St. fredericksburgmusicclub.com

**KERRVILLE****Renaissance Festival**

Feb. 5-6

Travel back in time to the Middle Ages and play games of skill, eat a turkey leg, shop in the marketplace featuring over 40 artisans, and enjoy headlining entertainers and musical acts on seven stages. River Star Arts and Event Park, 4000 Riverside Drive. 214-632-5766; kerrvillerenfest.com

**KERRVILLE****Classic Nashville Live**

Feb. 5

Not just a concert, this full-stage production has authentic period sets, costumes, comedy, and all the stories behind the songs dating from the 1940s-1980s. Step back in time with Jason Petty and Gail Bliss to when country music was king. Cailloux Theater, 910 Main St. 830-896-9393; caillouxperformingarts.com

**KERRVILLE****Symphony of the Hills: Heart of the Strings: Hidden Beauty**

Feb. 24

The professional symphony orchestra with musicians from the Hill Country and Central Texas fea-

tures the voice and hidden beauty of a lesser-known instrument, the viola. A wine and cheese reception precedes the concert. Cailloux Theater, 910 Main St. 830-792-7469; symphonyofthehills.org

**NEW BRAUNFELS****Love the Run You're With**

Feb. 12

Grab a spouse, friend, or furry loved one and come dressed as your favorite famous duo to the third annual Love the Run You're With 5K, presented by Comal Fit. Comal ISD's Comal Fit works to make getting healthy easier together for CISD students, staff, and surrounding communities. Gruene Historic District, 1281 Gruene Road. 830-629-5077; athleteguild.com or gruenetexas.com

**NEW BRAUNFELS****Game Day 5K and Tailgate Party**

Feb. 13

Burn off some calories in your favorite team jersey then join the tailgate party in Gruene. Participants earn a football trophy in their age group. The run is followed by music, food, and Texas-size tailgating. A new kids 1K has been added this year. Later, head to Mozie's to watch the game. Rockin' R River Rides, 1405 Gruene Road. 830-629-9999; athleteguild.com or gruenetexas.com

**NEW BRAUNFELS****Come and Taste It:****Meet Texas' Best Winemakers**

Feb. 17

On the third Thursday of the month, come to the Grapevine Garden and taste some of Texas' best wines and craft beers straight from the winemakers and brewers. Come and Taste It features complimentary tastings, live music, and door prizes. Sit back, sip, and relax in the heart of Gruene Historic District. The Grapevine, 1612 Hunter Road. 830-606-0093; grapevineingruene.com

**NEW BRAUNFELS****Old Gruene Market Days**

Feb. 19-20

Nearly 100 vendors offer crafted items and packaged Texas foods. Market hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Gruene Historic District, 1724 Hunter Road. 830-832-1721; gruenemarketdays.com

**NEW BRAUNFELS****Mid-Texas Symphony Concert:****The Soldier's Tale**

Feb. 20

Scored for seven instruments, a narrator, and a dancer, Stravinsky's

*Soldier's Tale* tells the dramatic story of a soldier who sells his violin to the devil in return for a book that will make him wealthy. Experience this soul-searching and gripping work in the intimate Brauntex Theatre. Brauntex Performing Arts Theatre, 290 W. San Antonio St. 830-463-5353; mtsymphony.org

**NEW BRAUNFELS****Friday Afternoon Club**

Feb. 25

A Gruene Hall tradition, now in its 24th year, brings hipsters, oldsters, suits, locals, and drifters to a Friday happy hour that celebrates the weekend with great beer prices, prize giveaways, and Texas tunes broadcast live by KNBT 92.1 FM Radio New Braunfels. Each week features a special guest interview. Some who have stopped by for a chat include Ray Benson, Steve Earle, Delbert McClinton, Radney Foster, Hayes Carll, and Ray Wylie Hubbard. Gruene Hall, 1281 Gruene Road. 830-606-1281; gruenehall.com

**TAYLOR****Victorian Valentine Gala**

Feb. 10

Guests enjoy wine and hors d'oeuvres inside the historical home of former Texas Gov. Dan Moody against a backdrop of live music played by local artists. Prizes are given for best Valentine-themed outfit in men's, women's, and couples categories. All proceeds go toward preserving and expanding museum collections and bringing educational events to the community. Moody Museum, 114 W. Ninth St. 512-352-8654; moodymuseum.com

**PANHANDLE PLAINS****ABILENE****Abilene Philharmonic Pops II: The Wonderfully Wicked Music of Oz**

Feb. 5

Relive all of the wonderful music of Oz in one concert. Hear your favorite melodies from *The Wizard of Oz*, *Wicked*, *The Wiz*, and *Return to Oz*. Join Abilene Philharmonic as it follows the yellow brick road. Abilene Convention Center, 1100 N. Sixth St. 325-677-6710; abilenephilharmonic.org

**ABILENE****Texas Farm Ranch and Wildlife Expo**

Feb. 22-23

Hosting more than 120 exhibi-

tors, this premier expo provides an opportunity to showcase the many aspects of agri-business and wildlife management. There are also agricultural demonstrations, continuing education units, and the Town and Country Women's Fair. Taylor County Expo Center, 1700 SH 36. 325-677-7241; abilenechamber.com

**CANYON****Southwest Abstractions****of Emil Bisttram**

Through March 19

Emil Bisttram (1895-1976) was one of the leading painters in the Southwest during the 20th century. His artistic talents were evident at an early age, and he studied at the National Academy of Art and Design and Cooper Union during the period when New York was emerging as the center of the art world and modernism was reaching its ascendancy; however, he moved to Taos permanently in 1931. With Raymond Jonson, an abstract painter living and working in Albuquerque, Bisttram founded the Transcendental Painting Group in 1938. Bisttram, Jonson, Agnes Pelton, and other members believed that color and abstract forms had a universal essence that they explored in their work. This exhibition is drawn exclusively from a collection of Bisttram paintings from the Ladd Family of Amarillo. This is the first time this group of works has been exhibited together in a museum or public setting. Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, 2503 Fourth Ave. 806-651-2244; panhandleplains.org

**SAN ANGELO****Majesty and Tenderness:****The Art of Maurice Schmidt**

Through March 20

An exhibit of paintings and works on paper by a skilled and prolific South Texas artist who explores daily life and religious subjects. Schmidt's work was created over the course of his long career and will be gifted by the artist and his wife to the museum following the exhibit. San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org

**SAN ANGELO****A Glimpse of Glory**

Through March 20

View art crafted by married Texas artists Sedrick and Letitia Huckaby. Sedrick was named Texas State Artist for 2018. Among other places, his work is in the collections of the American embassy in Namibia; San Francisco

Museum of Modern Art; Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth; and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City. Letitia's works have been exhibited at the Dallas Contemporary; the Galveston Arts Center; Renaissance Fine Art in Harlem; the McKenna Museum in New Orleans; the Camden Palace Hotel in Cork City, Ireland; and in the Texas Biennial. *San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. 325-653-3333; samfa.org*

**SAN ANGELO**  
**Livestock Show**

Feb. 3-20  
The San Angelo Livestock Show has grown to be one of the largest junior shows in the nation. The event features over 40 different contests, competitions, and events for youth. Livestock species include cattle, swine, sheep, goats, llamas, and rabbits. Students from across Texas compete for massive prize money and a spot in the coveted premium sale. *Foster Communications Coliseum, 50 E. 43rd St. 325-653-7785; sanangelorodeo.com*

**SAN ANGELO**  
**Buffalo Soldier Heritage Day**

Feb. 27  
Celebrate the contributions of the Buffalo Soldiers to West Texas and the military frontier with displays, living history, and special talks. Buffalo soldiers were Black soldiers who mainly served on the Western frontier after the Civil War. Their duties included protecting settlers heading West, building roads and infrastructure, and guarding the U.S. mail. *Fort Concho National Historic Landmark, 630 South Oakes St. 325-234-0316; fortconcho.com*

**SWEETWATER**  
**Applause Series: Lift Every Voice**

Feb. 5  
The Sweetwater Municipal Auditorium and Henderson Gallery presents Applause, an annual series of concerts and art shows. The *Lift Every Voice* art show features the work of multimedia artist Charmain Valentine-Rule. *Jo and Tom Henderson Gallery, 400 Locust St. 325-518-9407; sweetwaterauditorium.org*

**WICHITA FALLS**  
**Sculpture Garden Exhibit**

Through May 5  
Each year, the new pieces in the sculpture garden go on display for a full 12 months on the grounds of the Kemp Center for the Arts. The

artwork is juried by a nationally recognized artist and awards for first, second, and third place are given at the opening of the exhibit. *Kemp Center for the Arts, 1300 Lamar St. 940-767-2787; artscouncilwf.org*

**PINEY WOODS**

**JEFFERSON**  
**Queen Mab Ball**

Feb. 12  
Celebrate the crowning of the Mardi Gras king and queen with fun, food, music, dancing, costumes, and beads for everyone. *Jefferson Convention and Visitors Bureau, 305 E. Austin St. mardigrasupriver.com*

**JEFFERSON**  
**Mardi Gras**

Feb. 25-27  
The Krewe of Hebe presents this year's Mardi Gras, themed "Steampunk on the Bayou." The festivities last an entire weekend and feature parades, live music, food, vendors, a carnival, frosty beverages, and, of course, masks and beads. *Downtown Jefferson. mardigrasupriver.com*

**LUFKIN**  
**My Funny Valentine with Pat Hazell**

Feb. 10  
Comedian Pat Hazell, one of the original writers for NBC's *Seinfeld*, and comedian Karen Morgan, a finalist in Nick at Nite's *Search for the Funniest Mom in America*, join forces for an evening of hilarious and heartwarming standup comedy. *Pines Theater, 113 S. First St. 936-633-5454; angelinaarts.org/pines-series*

**TYLER**  
**Beautiful: The Carole King Musical**

Feb. 3  
Experience the true story of Tony and Grammy Award-winning artist Carole King and her rise to stardom from being part of a hit songwriting team with her husband Gerry Goffin, to her relationship with fellow writers and best friends Cynthia Weil and Barry Mann, to becoming one of the most successful solo acts in popular music history. This show contains adult subject matter. *R. Don Cowan Fine and Performing Arts Center, 3900 University Blvd., FAC 1120. 903-566-7424; cowancenter.org*

**PRAIRIES AND LAKES**

**BELLVILLE**  
**First Saturday Market**

Feb. 5  
Stroll through the market on the square and check out the nearby farmers market with more than 75 booths featuring craftsmen, woodworkers, retailers, rolling boutiques, produce, honey, and baked goods while enjoying live music, several food trucks, a photo booth, and activities. *Downtown Square and Jim Bishop Pavilion, 1 Main St. 979-865-3407; discoverbellville.com*

**BELLVILLE**  
**Chocolate Walk**

Feb. 10  
Walk the downtown square exploring the shops of Bellville and other local merchants while tasting a variety of chocolate confections at each stop. Redeem a punched card at the end of the evening for a chance to win prizes. *The Shops of Downtown Bellville, 1 Main St. 979-865-3407; discoverbellville.com*

**BRENHAM**  
**Hearth and Home Quilt Show**

Feb. 18-19  
The Brenham Friendship Quilt Guild's biennial quilt show features traditional and contemporary quilts. Many vendors from fabric stores to jewelry purveyors set up, plus there is a boutique for unique gifts. Some quilts are for sale, and hospice quilts are on display. *Fireman's Training Center, 1101 US 290. 979-661-4761; friendshipquiltguild.weebly.com*

**CORSICANA**  
**Art Faculty Annual Show**

Through Feb. 17  
The Western Art collection at the Pearce Museum has more than 250 works in a realistic style that directly relate to the historic and modern American West. The collection includes media such as oil, acrylic, watercolor, egg tempera, and gouache, as well as bronze and alabaster sculpture. *Pearce Museum, 3100 W. Collin St. 903-875-7438; pearcemuseum.com*

**CORSICANA**  
**Mimosas at the Market**

Feb. 12  
Sip mimosas while shopping in downtown Corsicana. Shoppers explore the tree-lined streets, historic buildings, and boutiques around town. *Downtown Corsicana, 301 S. Beaton St. 903-654-4850; visitcorsicana.com*

Eleventh Annual  
**COWBOY TRUE**  
Art Exhibit  
& Auction  
**April 1 & 2**



For those who want to experience all things cowboy, join us as we welcome emerging and established artists and craftsmen from across the country! This two-day exhibit and event will feature juried artists whose work represents and elevates the cowboy way of life. Admission is free and open to the public! For more info contact the Arts Council WF at 940-767-2787 ext. 111 or visit **ArtsCouncilWF.org**.



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## CORNICANA

**Texas Invitational Show and Sale**  
Feb. 24–March 25

Artists from across the state showcase their artwork. Pearce Museum, 3100 W. Collin St. 903-875-7438; [visitcorsicana.com](http://visitcorsicana.com)

## CORNICANA

**Artist and Writer Studio Tour**  
Feb. 26

Meet visiting artists and writers from around the world as they showcase the culmination of their residency work with the Corsicana Artist and Writers Residency, 100 West and Samuels buildings, 100 W. Third Ave. 480-824-3015; [corsicanaresidency.org](http://corsicanaresidency.org)

## DALLAS

**Harry Bertioia: Sculpting Mid-Century Modern Life**  
Through April 23

Italian-born American artist Harry Bertioia (1915–1978) was one of the most prolific artists of the postwar period. Trained at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, he went on to make one-of-a-kind jewelry, design iconic chairs, create thousands of sculptures including large-scale commissions for significant buildings, and advance the use of sound as sculptural material. This exhibit is the first U.S. museum retrospective of the artist's career to examine the full scope of his broad, interdisciplinary practice, bringing together nearly 100 works. *Nasher Sculpture Center*, 2001 Flora St. 214-242-5100; [nashersculpturecenter.org/art/exhibitions/exhibition/id/665/harry-bertioia](http://nashersculpturecenter.org/art/exhibitions/exhibition/id/665/harry-bertioia)

## DALLAS

**Towers of Tomorrow with LEGO Bricks**  
Through April 24

The Perot Museum of Nature and Science's newest exhibition features 20 iconic skyscrapers from across the globe constructed over 2,000 hours with more than half a million LEGO bricks. From the world's tallest building to the Empire State Building, the architectural wonders are constructed by Ryan McNaught, one of only 21 LEGO certified professionals in the world. All ages can get creative as they build upon a growing LEGO installation using thousands of the popular colored bricks. The Perot Museum of Nature and Science, 2201 N. Field St. 214-428-5555; [perotmuseum.org](http://perotmuseum.org)

## DALLAS

**Valentine's Chocolate Tour**  
Feb. 6–14

Bite into bonbons, savor a

chocolate shot, and enjoy a French chocolate pastry and other temptations found across the city. The ticket price includes transportation in a private, heated motorcoach, a wide variety of dessert samples, beverages (you can also BYOB), and a rose. Add-ons such as a dozen roses, a bottle of champagne, and a 16-piece box of chocolates can be purchased. *Dallas by Chocolate Tours*, 4925 Greenville Ave. 972-814-5997; [dallasbychocolate.com](http://dallasbychocolate.com)

## DALLAS

**The How To Be Project: 10 Plays for Racial Justice**  
Feb. 17–March 5

Directed by Morgana Wilborn and commissioned by Bishop Arts Theatre, this event features 10 one-act plays by 10 Black playwrights inspired by and in conversation with Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's book *How to Be an Antiracist*. At a time when Ta-Nehisi Coates, Nikole Hannah-Jones, and other prominent Black writers are engaged in a dialogue about America's racial reckoning, *The How To Be Project* seeks to present works that continue the dialogue in the enduring struggle for racial justice. The event is produced in partnership with PEN America. *Bishop Arts Theatre Center*, 215 S. Tyler St. 214-948-0716; [bishopartstheatre.org/theatre-series](http://bishopartstheatre.org/theatre-series)

## DALLAS

**Murillo: Picturing the Prodigal Son**  
Feb. 20–June 12

The Meadows Museum presents this painting series that illustrates the biblical parable—remarkably intact as a group for more than 300 years. It comes to the United States for the first time and reveals the Sevillian master Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (Spanish, 1617–1682) at the height of his talent. *Meadows Museum*, 5900 Bishop Blvd. 214-768-2516; [meadowsmuseumdallas.org](http://meadowsmuseumdallas.org)

## ELGIN

**Hatitudes, Black History Month**  
Feb. 5

Celebrate Black History Month with a program celebrating the unique contributions of African Americans in Elgin. COVID-19 precautions are in place, and events may be adjusted due to COVID-19. *Various locations*. [elgintx.com](http://elgintx.com)

## ELGIN

**Sip, Shop, and Stroll**  
Feb. 10

Sip a little wine and shop as you stroll through the stores in historic

downtown Elgin. Find diverse merchandise, eclectic décor, artwork by local artists, and live music in many of the venues. *Historic Downtown Elgin*, 109 Depot St. [elgintx.com](http://elgintx.com)

## FRISCO

**WOGA Classic and Liukin Invitational**  
Feb. 11–13

The 2022 WOGA Classic and Valeri Liukin Invitational brings together competitors from countries all over the world in women's and men's artistic gymnastics, acrobatics, trampoline, and tumbling. *Ford Center at The Star*, 9 Cowboys Way. 972-712-9642; [visitfrisco.com](http://visitfrisco.com)

## GRANBURY

**JazzFest**  
Feb. 26

A brand-new jazz festival in Granbury debuts this year. The all-day event has live jazz music in historic Granbury Square Plaza, Hulett Park, and the Langdon Center. *Various Locations*. 817-573-5548

## IRVING

**Las Colinas Symphony: Mozart con Amore**  
Feb. 19

The Las Colinas Symphony continues its *Mozart con Amore* season with pianist Raúl Canosa playing Saint-Saëns' Concerto No. 2 in G minor. Rounding out the evening, the orchestra plays Mozart's *Overture to Idomeneo* and Mendelssohn's *Symphony No. 3 in A minor*. *Irving Arts Center*, 3333 N. MacArthur Blvd. 972-252-4800; [lascolinassympphony.org](http://lascolinassympphony.org)

## IRVING

**Musical Treasures from the World Concert**  
Feb. 26

The Irving Symphony Orchestra has been a champion of new music and wonderful soloists. This concert follows in this tradition by presenting music from Argentina, Armenia, Hungary, Mexico, Italy, Germany, and Ireland, as well as the U.S. premiere of a work by ISO Southern Methodist University composer-in-residence Michael Boss. The guest soloist is 18-year-old Spanish accordion virtuoso, Sofia Ros. *Irving Arts Center*, 3333 N. MacArthur Blvd. 972-831-8818; [irvingsymphony.org](http://irvingsymphony.org)

## MCKINNEY

**Dinosaurs Live!**  
Through Feb. 21

Encounter the 46-foot tall T-Rex and nine new life-size animatronic dinosaurs along the nature trails

at the 15th annual exhibit. The exhibit gives families and friends a fun, educational activity to enjoy together. See the dinosaurs move and hear them roar. An outdoor fossil dig is available for kids. The dinosaur trail is great for jogging strollers, but not suitable for strollers with small wheels or wheelchairs. *Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary*, 1 Nature Place. 972-562-5566; [heardmuseum.org/dinosaurs-live](http://heardmuseum.org/dinosaurs-live)

## MCKINNEY

**Music in Motion Dance Concert**  
Feb. 5

The McKinney Philharmonic Orchestra collaborates with a local ballet company on dance choreography set to music by Stravinsky's *Dumbarton Oaks*, Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto*, and Debussy's *Afternoon of the Faun*. *Church Street Auditorium*, 306 N. Church. 940-594-8790; [mckinneyphilharmonic.org](http://mckinneyphilharmonic.org)

## MESQUITE

**Be Mine at the Ranch**  
Feb. 12

Bring your Valentine to the Florence Ranch Homestead, where guests can enjoy Valentine's Day crafts, goodies, and photo backdrops at the historic ranch house. *Florence Ranch Homestead*, 1424 Barnes Bridge Road. 972-216-6468; [visitmesquitetx.com](http://visitmesquitetx.com)

## MESQUITE

**Daddy Daughter Dance**  
Feb. 19

Fathers and their daughters can spend a fun and memorable evening together at the annual dance. *Mesquite Convention Center*, 1700 Rodeo Drive. 972-216-6260; [visitmesquitetx.com](http://visitmesquitetx.com)

## MESQUITE

**Mesquite Symphony Orchestra: A Toast to 35 Years**  
Feb. 19

To commemorate the Mesquite Symphony Orchestra's 35th season, the orchestra performs a program with Quinn Mason's *A Joyous Trilogy*, John Williams' *Escapades for Alto Saxophone and orchestra* from the film *Catch Me If You Can* (with saxophonist Sarah Roberts), and Brahms' *Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68*. *Mesquite Arts Center*, 1527 N. Galloway Ave. 972-216-8132; [mesquiteartscenter.org](http://mesquiteartscenter.org)

## NOCONA

**Mardi Gras Nocona Style**  
Feb. 19–26

It's all about beads and classic cars in this family- and pet-



friendly event. Enjoy three days of parades, Cajun food, live music, and beads. *Downtown Nocona, Clay Street. 940-825-3526; nocona.org/events*

#### TEMPLE

##### **Aliento a Tequila**

*Through March 16*

This exhibit explores and celebrates the landscape, culture, and traditions that gave birth to tequila. A series of photographs by Joel Salcido include the original distilleries that founded the industry, as well as several artisanal tequilerías committed to the ancestral ways of tequila-making, from harvest to bottle. *Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum, 315 W. Avenue B. 254-298-5172; templeparks.com*

#### TEMPLE

##### **First Friday**

*Feb. 4*

On the first Friday of every month, historic downtown Temple transforms into a party featuring street music and performances, drinks, food, and after-hours shopping. *Downtown Temple, Main Street. 254-298-5378; downtowntemple.com*

#### TEMPLE

##### **Geek Out Family Day**

*Feb. 5*

Dress up as your favorite superhero, cartoon, or video game character. Enjoy the nerdier side of life and geek out at the Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum. *Temple Railroad and Heritage Museum, 315 W. Avenue B. 254-298-5172; templeparks.com*

#### WEST TAWAKONI

##### **Catmasters Classic**

*Feb. 17-19*

Tawakoni, known as the Catfish Capital of Texas, hosts a three-day fishing tournament for some of the biggest catfish in the state. *West Tawakoni City Park, 1208 SH 276 E. 325-998-2191; thecatmasters.com*

#### SOUTH TEXAS PLAINS

#### SAN ANTONIO

##### **San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo Western Heritage Weekend**

*Feb. 5*

Step back in time and celebrate Texas at this kickoff to the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo. The weekend features the popular cattle drive and parade with a route that runs through the streets of downtown San Antonio and features participants who represent the heritage of the Lone Star State and the Old West. Fort Hood Ist

Cavalry Division, Fort Sam Houston Caisson, Texas Heritage Riders, and a herd of Texas Longhorns are just some of the highlights of the event that celebrate the legacy of the state. Parade route traditionally goes along Houston and Alamo streets ending at La Villita. *Downtown San Antonio. 210-225-5851; sarodeo.com*

#### SAN ANTONIO

##### **Stock Show and Rodeo**

*Feb. 10-27*

Since 1949, the San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo has grown to become one of the largest, most prestigious events in the city of San Antonio, with approximately 1.5 million visitors entering the grounds each year. The 18-day event includes a carnival, a charreada event (originally these were ranch work competitions between haciendas), tasty food, youth rodeo events, and live music. This year's concert headliners include Toby Keith, Tanya Tucker, and Brad Paisley. *AT&T Center and Freeman Coliseum fairgrounds, 3201 E. Houston St. 210-225-5851; sarodeo.com*

#### WESLACO

##### **Alfresco Weslaco**

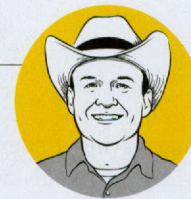
*Feb. 17*

The City of Weslaco and Weslaco Economic Development present Alfresco Weslaco—music and art on the street. Downtown businesses are open late alongside more than 60 vendors lining the street. An accompanying car show features classic cars. *Downtown Historic Weslaco, 200 S. Texas Blvd. 956-969-0838; facebook.com/alfrescoweslaco1*

#### DON'T SEE YOUR EVENT?

If you think your event might be of interest to *Texas Highways* readers, submit your information at [texashighways.com/submitevent](http://texashighways.com/submitevent)

## THE DAYTRIPPER'S TOP 5



# Spring

*A hidden gem north of the big city*

BY CHET GARNER

About 20 miles north of downtown Houston, Spring is a charming suburban area with a remarkable history and culture. While not an official town but instead a “census designated place,” the unincorporated Spring area has a population that tops 60,000 and plenty to attract visitors for one great day trip.

### Old Town Spring

Spring's history dates to the 1800s when it was established as a trading post on nearby Spring Creek. Today, the small buildings in Old Town Spring are occupied by mom-and-pop businesses selling everything from crazy hats (The Hat People) to handmade bath salts (Connie's Bath Shack). If you want to travel the world, check out Goodwoods British Market or The Little Dutch Girl for authentic food and gifts. And if you're hungry, look no further than Trilogy Brew, a coffee shop housed inside a former grocery store, or Wunsche Bros Café and Saloon, which occupies the old hotel and saloon.

### Corkscrew BBQ

If the line wrapping around the building doesn't give you an indication of how good the barbecue is, then the sweet smoke filling the air certainly will. This joint lives up to the hype with the Texas trinity of smoked meats—moist brisket, crisp sausages, and succulent ribs. I dare you to try and save room for the homemade cobbler of the day.

### National Museum of Funeral History

Morbid yet fascinating, this museum displays hundreds of artifacts showcasing how we honor and mourn our loved ones. The hearse collection will fascinate car aficionados, while the custom antique caskets might give you some ideas of how to plan your own ride into the afterlife. The largest exhibit takes a deep dive into the traditions of a pope's funeral, known as the most elaborate final farewell in the world.

### TGR Exotics Wildlife Park

Encounter exotic wildlife in the suburbs on the grounds of this 10-acre park. Pigs, llamas, and goats roam the park, and guided tours introduce visitors to porcupines, monkeys, and a hyena. What really makes this place special are its firsthand encounters that put visitors inside the cage. If you've never fed mango to a two-toed sloth while it steals your hat, then you're missing out.

### Inspire Rock Climbing Gym and 5.Ate Café

This indoor climbing gym boasts more than 18,000 square feet of climbing, including 40-foot walls that can put any bouldering expert to the test. After trying your hand on the wall, head to the café serving up one of the best burgers in Spring on a fresh-made English muffin. Even if you're only eating, the climbing walls make for great dinner entertainment.

**So whether you follow my footsteps or forge your own path,  
I hope to see you on the road.**

*Chet Garner is the host of The Daytripper® travel show on PBS.*

*To view the Spring episode visit [thedaytripper.com](http://thedaytripper.com).*

*Follow along on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter @chetripper.*

animal playing “Under the Sea” from *The Little Mermaid*—as we stepped and pivoted in perfect time.

I wonder, especially as the pandemic has added more isolation to our lives, if synchronized TikTok dance routines rack up millions of views because they scratch the deep itch we have for that feeling of belonging, of being part of a group we feel compatible with. If the loss of community in America is an old song we have heard too often, the paucity of true connection thanks to our growing time on social media is only the latest cover version. We direct message each other and scroll through Twitter rather than making a connection in a physical space, but the momentary scratch only seems to worsen the itch. We form communities online, increasingly along political lines, but that can just further fracture our real-life communities, the family members or childhood friends we’ve distanced ourselves from as our worldviews skewed off in different directions.

I suspect when my friends who were born and raised in cities think of small towns, they imagine intolerance for their own personal political views. It’s a fact, after all, that Austin is overwhelmingly blue while Lampasas is overwhelmingly red. Our polarized country feels like it has rendered us incomprehensible to each other. It has exacerbated our tendency to judge, to flatten people to what we see as their worst characteristics. I can’t shake the feeling that it’s our small towns that have a better chance of creating less siloed lives.

Growing up in Sealy—for all the limitations I felt at the time—offered a life with a wide spectrum of community members. I went to a church attended by farmers and cafeteria workers as well as bank managers. I visited friends in trailer parks as often as friends in two-story suburban homes. I could overhear conversations between their grandparents in Spanish or Czech. Sealy had a single public school system, which meant the demographics

of my classes roughly matched the demographics of the town—with all the racial and class diversity that entailed. The small town that felt limiting to me then was actually exposing me to a more varied community than I might have seen if I had grown up in, say, the Houston suburb of West University Place.

Because people in small towns have so much interaction, the other side is never an unknown. You may disagree with them, even stridently, over the issues of the day, but you can’t as easily see them as the bitter enemy, not if they recently

**If the loss of community in America is an old song we have heard too often, the paucity of true connection thanks to our growing time on social media is only the latest cover version.**

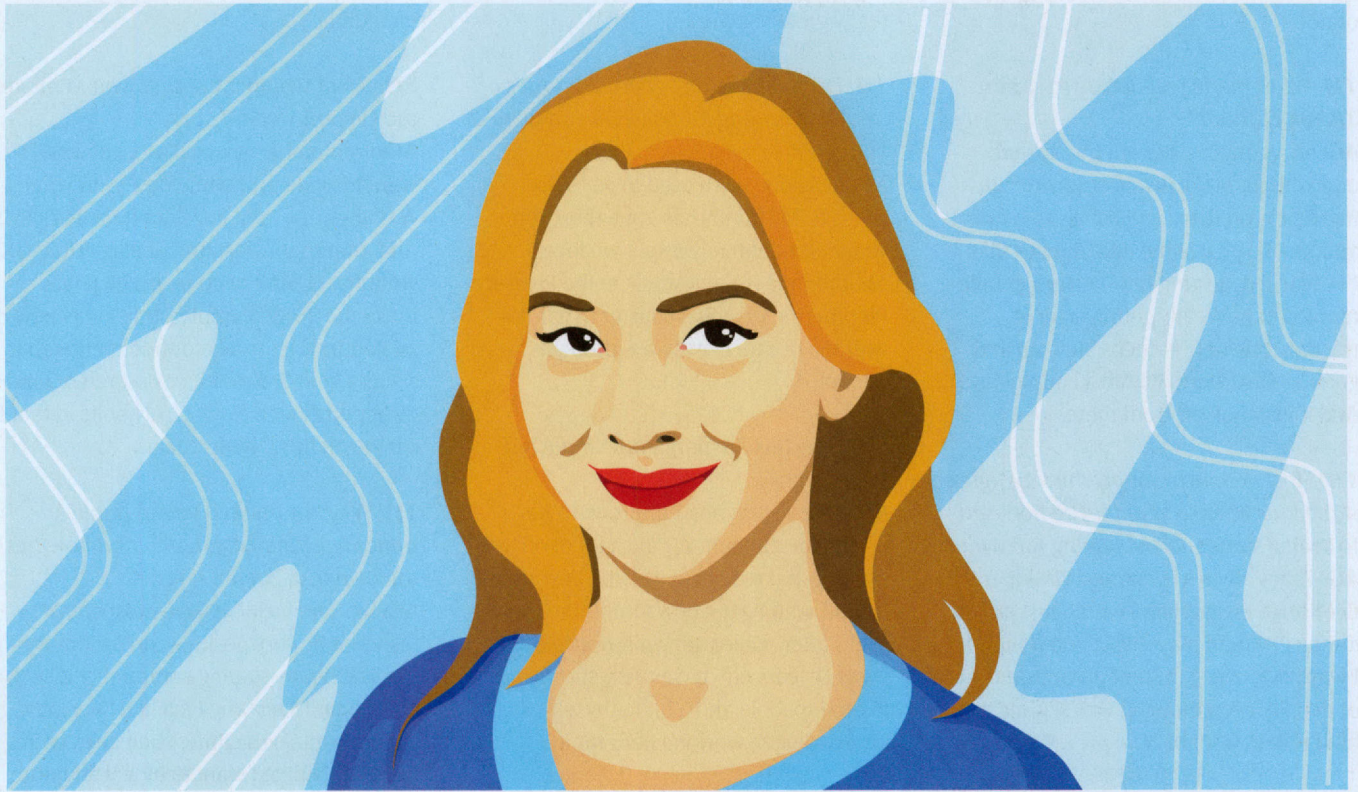
hosted a sleepover that your daughter attended or helped you jump your car when the battery died. It’s harder to write someone off as uninformed or intolerant when your interactions with them show their authenticity or compassion.

I don’t want to give too idealized of a picture. There are plenty of ways small towns can crush their citizens who fall outside the town’s norms, including discrimination by race, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Besides, if my hunch is true, why aren’t small towns already giving us more examples of decreased polarization? One reason is that homogeneity I mentioned above. If you’re feeling limited by your small town, if you feel like it’s not letting you be your full self, you can simply leave.

For a long time, the story of America has been one of a migration of people from rural areas into cities. But as cities nationwide face affordability crises and owning a home in them becomes impossible for huge sections of Americans, we could see that migration in reverse. It’s possible: Telecommuting is on the rise. People may choose to move back home to places they left, or perhaps more likely, move to new places, smaller towns completely unknown to them. There they can have a better quality of life and a lower cost of living.

The key to increased belonging may be in actively seeking new circles that will overlap. These transplants won’t necessarily have jobs that help ease them into the community, especially if they work from home. They may, like me, live past the edges of town, without neighbors to meet. They may not have children to tie them to the school system, or they may opt to have their kids attend school online. It will still take work, which might feel avoidable as technology keeps us synched up with preferred online communities that mirror our values and interests. But wouldn’t it be worth it to increase the collective joy in our lives, to feel a true sense of belonging?

It’s time for me to finally test this theory for myself. My sister and brother-in-law joined the local chapter of the Texas Farm Bureau years ago. And my brother-in-law, whose telecommuting job allows him to be in Lampasas full-time now, has made friends through selling the hay he bales. He’s been helping our neighbors repair their fences to keep everyone’s livestock in their proper places. I too need to take the leap and find ways—and there are always ways—to start to know the people in my community. To get past my trepidation of knowing no one at the party. To run the risk of being recognized in the post office, to hear the latest gossip standing outside H-E-B. To change Lampasas from the town I live near to the town where I live. **L**



# Power and Poise

Dallas figure skater Amber Glenn on breaking barriers

By Kimya Kavehkar

**W**hen Amber Glenn performs her figure-skating routines, her face radiates with emotion. Her gestures are delicate and expressive, her movements quick and powerful. Even if you're not knowledgeable about ice skating, she's just plain fun to watch.

The Dallas-based skater's 1.2 million TikTok followers would agree. The cachet she's built on the video app and her second-place finish at the 2021 U.S. Figure Skating Championships—combined with her announcing she is bisexual in 2019—make Glenn a compelling figure in the world of figure skating.

By the time you read this, we'll know if the 22-year-old who grew up in Plano is one of the six female skaters representing the United States at February's Winter Olympics in Beijing. Glenn was a

**“Ever since I was a kid, I would just put on a show. I would play music and pretend I was performing in front of thousands of people, even though I was skating at a mall rink in front of 20.”**

strong contender among the dozens of competitors through several fall and winter competitions, bringing a flash of modernity, charm, and personality to a sport that can be stiff and obsessed with perfection.

During the pandemic, while competitions were on hold, Glenn trained on and off the ice to perfect a triple axel—a jump with 3.5 revolutions. It's a rare move in women's figure skating and a bold development for Glenn. “Naturally, I am not the quickest or the fastest person,” she says. “I'm not like the younger girls who are 5-foot-2, 100 pounds. I'm a 22-year-old lady who is 5-foot-6 and *not* 100 pounds.”

Glenn's candid approach extends to her sexuality and mental health, topics she's discussed on social media and in press interviews. In a sport dominated by teens, Glenn's maturity is an advantage. She skates with the confidence of a woman who's going to be just

fine whether she makes the Olympic team or not.

**TH:** *What made you decide to start a TikTok account?*

**AG:** My younger sister got me started on it. I thought, I'll just post some training videos on there and have some fun, and maybe post some little dances that I've learned, just for kicks. After a couple months of not really getting a lot of traction, one of my videos blew up and got 600,000 views within a couple days. And it just took off from there.

**TH:** *Most people probably think of figure skaters as intense, and they're not used to seeing someone just having fun with it.*

**AG:** That's always been me as a skater. Ever since I was a kid, I would just put on a show. I would play music and pretend I was performing in front of thousands of people, even though I was skating at a mall rink in front of 20.

**TH:** *Many of your TikTok videos show you skating at the Galleria Dallas. How do you manage in such a crowded space?*

**AG:** For the first nine or 10 years of my skating career, I skated at a mall rink in Frisco, so I was pretty used to public sessions. Going to the Galleria really brings me back to those times of skating and having fun with my friends and just performing. I've been going to the Galleria ever since I was very young because of their annual Christmas show. And luckily, over the years, I've gotten to know the employees and the owner. When I skate there, they let me on a bit early to do some tricks and have the audience kind of "ooh" and "ah."

**TH:** *Do you see North Texas becoming a hub for professional skating?*

**AG:** I believe it's already pretty much there. We have plenty of national athletes who live and train here. It's really taken off within the last decade. And that's all because we have six or seven Star-Centers [ice rinks] in this area. That's rare to have that many ice rinks in just one place. We have a lot of hockey, we have

a lot of figure skating, and we have some really great coaches.

**TH:** *Do you have any good memories of traveling around Texas when you were younger?*

**AG:** A big one is we used to go to Port Aransas. My family has gone there for years—it's definitely a spot we love. Another one is Galveston. On the Pleasure Pier there's this roller coaster that goes over the ocean. I've always thought it was so cool.

**TH:** *How has the pandemic impacted your career?*

**AG:** Believe it or not, I improved a lot during the pandemic. I did a lot of off-ice training and really got into the best shape I could. And I got a new jump—the triple axel—after not learning a new triple since I was 11 years old. It was very surprising to other people and a bit to myself, but I know I'd been working hard for it.

**TH:** *Can you explain the significance of the triple axel?*

**AG:** It's a very rare jump. There's the fact that I accomplished this jump after I've already gone through puberty and have grown, rather than what's more common—for someone to get a triple axel when they're 12, 13, 14, 15. But to learn something completely new at my age—it's "old dog, new trick."

**TH:** *What was it like to win silver at the National Championships last year?*

**AG:** During the pandemic, I reassessed my goals and decided I don't want to be average, I don't want to be stagnant anymore with where I am because I had been constantly getting fifth, sixth, seventh place—in that range. Not the worst, not the best. I worked extremely hard during that time and realized if I'm going to do this, I need to work hard, but I also need to not make myself miserable. I need to continue to have meaningful relationships in my life with friends and family, while also focusing on trying to improve myself as a skater. And seeing the results after years of just being in

the middle, being kind of average, was incredible.


**TH:** *What would it mean to you to make the Olympic team?*

**AG:** I remember my goal as a kid was, "I want to skate on TV one day." And when I was about 15, I did it. I skated on live TV. And after that I was kind of like, "Huh, OK, what next?" And of course, a goal was to make the 2018 Olympics, but it was never something I truly felt confident enough to set as a goal because I was scared of the disappointment. Now, I truly believe that I can be on this Olympic team.

**TH:** *What motivated you to publicly announce your bisexuality and how has the response been?*

**AG:** I'm very lucky to have most of the response be very positive and encouraging. The figure-skating community is very accepting. That's why I felt like I was able to come out. At the time, I had been seeing a girl, and I didn't want to hide it anymore. I felt if I were to make it public, I could normalize it more, so there wouldn't be any stigma about it. I proved I can be a good skater, and it doesn't matter what I identify as, or what my sexuality is. It's about what I put out on the ice that they should judge me for and not my personal life.

**TH:** *Has that affected your confidence as you pursue your skating career?*

**AG:** One hundred percent. It really helped with the self-reflection aspect I went through the last two years. It definitely gave me a newfound confidence—just a little bit less like I was hiding myself. 

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Follow Amber Glenn on TikTok and Instagram @amberglenniceskater.  
The Beijing Winter Olympics  
air Feb. 4-20 on NBC.

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# VINTAGE

BY JAC DARSNEK, TRACES OF TEXAS



## Best in Show

SAN ANTONIO, 1950

**S**pring is livestock show season in Texas. Across the state, folks gather to compete for bragging rights when it comes to proving whose steer, chicken, goat, or pig is best. This young man proudly shows off his award-winning Hereford at the inaugural San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo, held in 1950. Over the years, acts ranging from Dolly Parton to the Beach Boys to John Legend have performed at the event. Even Lassie showed up in 1963. Taking place Feb. 10-27 this year, the San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo is expected to draw more than 1.5 million people and 70,000 animals for exhibitions, rodeos, the fairgrounds, and big-name musicians from country singer Toby Keith to rapper Ludacris. 🐾

*Know of any fascinating vintage Texas photographs? Send copies or ideas to [tracesoftxphotos@gmail.com](mailto:tracesoftxphotos@gmail.com).*

TEXAS HIGHWAYS

# MERCANTILE

TEXAS-MADE



CRAFT GOODS



Happy Valentine's Day  
We're going on a road trip!  
-XB

Newton  
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