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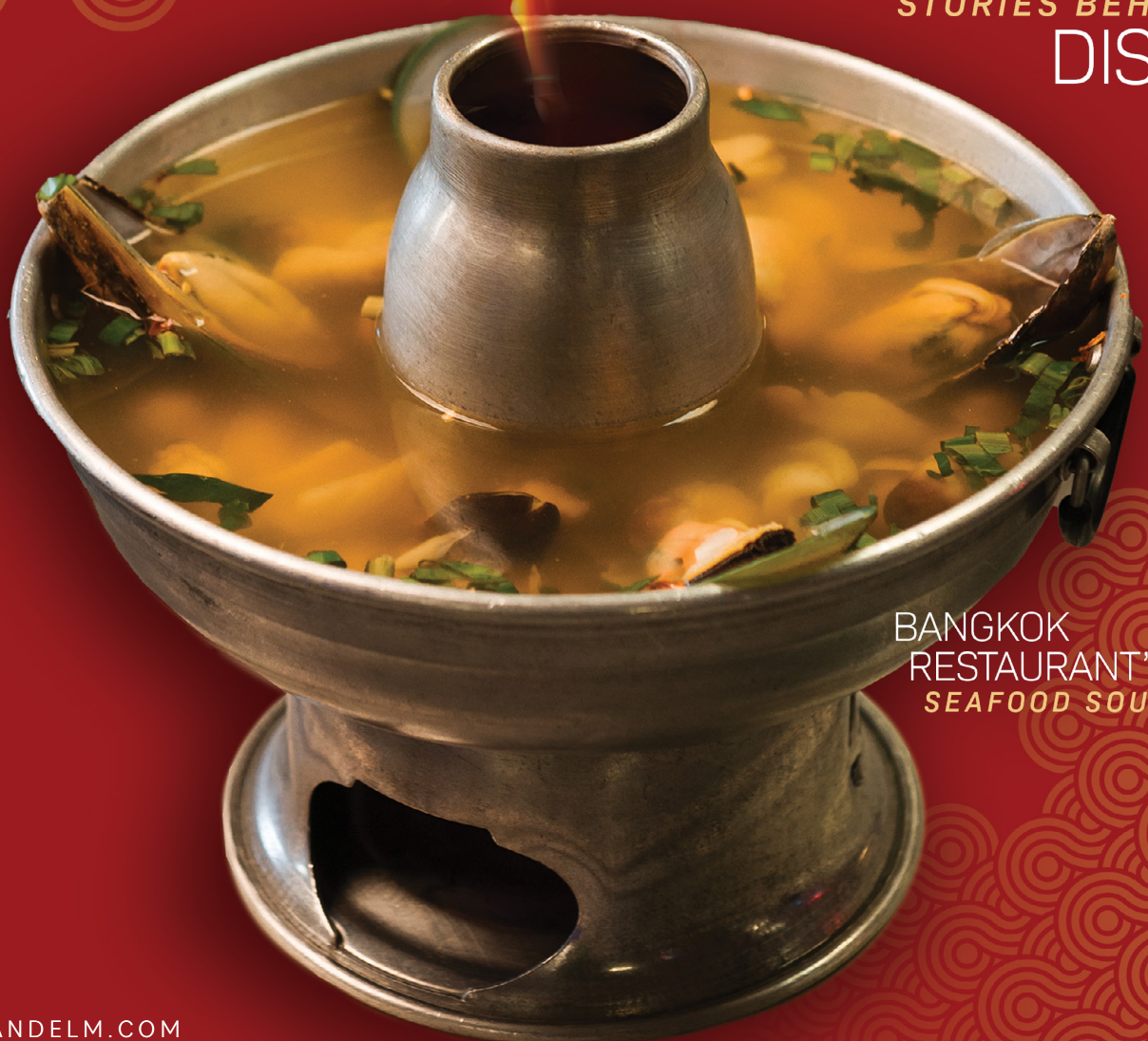
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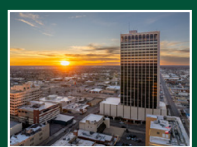


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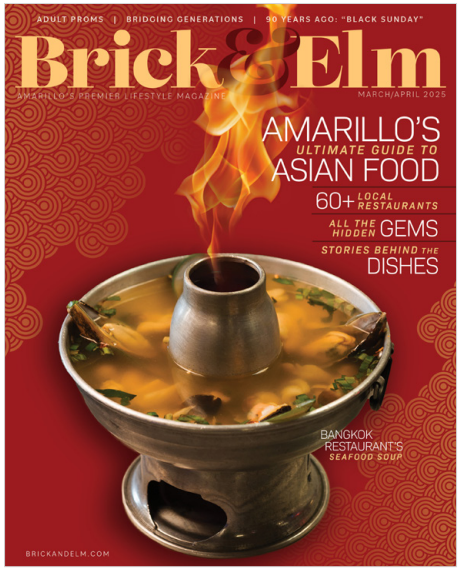
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Restaurant by restaurant and culture by culture, we document Amarillo's Asian Food Boom.





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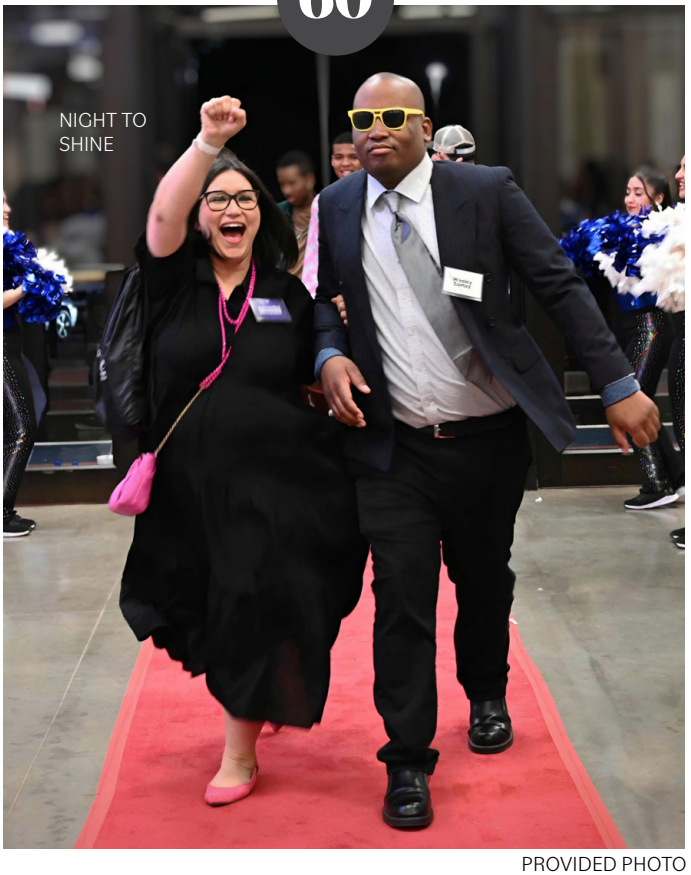
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CRMA CITY AND REGIONAL MAGAZINE ASSOCIATION

PLEASE RECYCLE



I've been reading and thinking a lot about *connection* lately. It's a term I often include in my letters here or when talking to others about our work at *Brick & Elm*. And it's not just a clichéd marketing term or a flippant tag line. These days, our lives are full of modern "conveniences" designed to separate us from others. Why bother to meet face-to-face when you can hop on a Zoom call, DM friends and family, or stare at a screen for hours on end? We're more connected to the world at large than ever before, but not with social circles that could challenge us, encourage us and draw us out of our self-imposed lonely lives.

And connection *matters*. We saw this firsthand at our recent Brickly Awards presentation. And I have to tell you, I was so encouraged by the many young people in attendance who truly connected with our recipients, often to the point of tears. I am so grateful for that.

This sense of purpose, of helping people to connect with each other, drives everything we do as we produce *Brick & Elm*, our newsletters and our new event initiatives. While we planned our March/April issue, we hosted Turkish cooks and learned about their culture and their experiences coming to America. We took a tour of some of the city's Asian food restaurants and were treated with gracious hospitality as each restaurateur shared family traditions and recipes with us.

We are grateful for the opportunity to share these experiences with you, and we're hopeful it fosters a sense of community. Thank you for continuing on this journey with us as we celebrate new facets of Amarillo in every issue.

Michele



For about five days straight in late January, I consumed Asian food for every meal. This is not a complaint. When our team arrives at a restaurant to shoot photos and interview the owners, they always know we are coming. They are busy preparing dishes for us. And because these are family-owned establishments, they want us to eat their food and engage with what they love.

After photography, when Michele and I were unable to finish all the dishes on our table, our hosts would lovingly package up the meals and send them home with us. That week of sushi and sashimi and fried rice and ramen and pho and dumplings and piles of noodles reminded us not just about the delicious Asian food options in this area, but the pride behind them. These families—many of whom arrived as refugees or immigrated here for opportunity—have chosen to build their lives here.

They invest their money and time. They contribute to the economy. They are influenced by generations of their own traditions as well as the West Texas culture surrounding them. Meals encourage conversation and food carries stories. It's a gateway into understanding. We didn't just find favorite new restaurants or flavors. We found joy in meeting these generous families over so many delicious meals.

Jason

20x20

EXHIBITION & SILENT AUCTION

The Amarillo Museum of Art presents the **20x20 EXHIBITION & SILENT AUCTION**, an annual fundraiser designed to celebrate art and support innovative education programs as well as our local artist community.

Bidding on all artworks begins March 28th online at *amoa.org/20x20*

In-person viewing during regular museum hours starts March 28th and ends at close of reception.

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KAYLA MORRIS

Kayla has been designing professionally for more than 10 years. She was raised in the Panhandle and graduated with a design degree from West Texas A&M University.



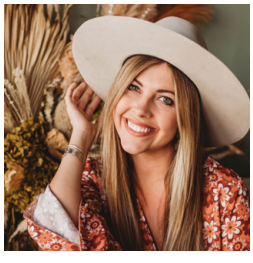
JOE GARCIA

Joe Garcia is the chief revenue officer of a software company, but he's best known as jpegJoe, a photographer and sports media professional based in Amarillo. With more than 15 years' experience, Joe specializes in commercial portraits, senior and sports photography across the Texas Panhandle and beyond. As co-owner of *Press Pass Sports*, he combines business acumen with a love of storytelling, supporting schools and brands across the region.



SHANNON RICHARDSON

Shannon has been a commercial/advertising photographer for almost 35 years. His work can be seen at shannonrichardson.com.



KAIT BRADFORD BELLMON

Kait is the owner of Three Feather Photo Co, a local lifestyle and wedding brand that specializes in destination elopements. See her work at threefeatherpho.co.



NICK GERLICH

Nick is the Hickman Professor of Marketing at West Texas A&M University, where he has taught since 1989. In his spare time, he travels around the country, including his beloved Route 66, in search of vintage signage and other outdoor advertising. He can be found on Instagram @nickgerlich.



WES REEVES

Wes was raised in Wellington and has lived in Amarillo since the early '90s. He serves as chairman of the Potter County Historical Commission and as a member of the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission board of directors.



VENICE MINCEY

Venice is a natural light photographer, specializing in senior, family and child photography. Venice has been taking photos for more than 20 years. See her work at venicemincеyphotography.com.



MEAGHAN COLLIER

Meaghan works in communications and marketing for Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Amarillo and spent 15 years as an anchor, reporter and producer in local television news. She and husband Cody live in Amarillo with their dog, Bradford.

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The bustle of spring arrives, with plenty of arts productions, fundraisers, parties, concerts, movies and more throughout March and April. To make sure you're totally up to date, subscribe to the *Brickly* and *Flavorillo* newsletters.

March

Bonnie Raitt: The iconic blues singer and guitarist will make us love her when she performs March 11 in the Amarillo Civic Center Complex Auditorium, 401 S. Buchanan St. Other musical highlights are scheduled to include Colorado country favorites The Barlow on March 8 at The Western Horseman Club, 2501 E. Interstate 40; pop singer Andy Grammer on March 9 at the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts, 500 S. Buchanan St.; "The Complete Beatles Experience" featuring Fab Four reenactors March 15 in the Globe-News Center; Noise Pollution, offering an AC/DC experience March 15 at The Bliss Horizon Live, 9700 Farm-to-Market Road 1151; touring rockers The Alma's and Crashing Wayward on March 23 at Skooterz Bar & Grill, 4100 Bushland Drive; and singer-songwriter B.B. Palmer on March 27 at The Golden Light Cantina, 2906 SW Sixth Ave.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT LIVE: Come on down and give your best shot at Plinko when the beloved TV game show returns March 14 to the Amarillo Civic Center Complex Auditorium. Other events on the calendar include the new Bomb City Con, featuring actor Sam Jones and others, from March 1 to 2 in the Amarillo Civic Center Complex; Amarillo Angels' Mom Prom 2025 on March 1 in the Civic Center Complex North Exhibit Hall; the Harlem Globetrotters March 1 in the Amarillo Civic Center Complex Coliseum; 40th annual Make A Wish Car Show on March 8 in the Civic Center Complex; controversial comedian Chris D'Elia's "Straight Outta the Multiverse" tour on March 14 in the Globe-News Center; annual St. Patrick's Day festivities around the Panhandle, but particularly in Shamrock, on March 15; kiddie tour "Blippi: Join the Band" on March 26 in the Civic Center Complex Auditorium; and comedian and podcaster Theo Von's "Return of the Rat" tour on March 30 in the Civic Center Complex Coliseum. Plus, don't miss hockey team Amarillo Wranglers take on the Lone Star Brahmas from March 14 to 16 and indoor football team Amarillo Dusters versus the Beaumont Renegades on March 21, both in the Civic Center Coliseum.

Amarillo Symphony: The orchestra goes on an *American Journey* in its March concerts, featuring trombonist John Shanks and music from Charles Ives and Samuel Jones, on March 21 and 22 in the Globe-News Center. Other arts events to watch for include the West Texas A&M University Symphonic Band on March 6 at Mary Moody Northen Recital Hall; the First Friday Art Walk on March 7 at Arts in the Sunset, 3701 Plains Blvd.; Chamber Music Amarillo's emotion-laden *Metamorphosen* on March 8 at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 1601 S. Georgia St.; Amarillo Little Theatre Academy's musical *James and the Giant Peach* from March 21 to 30 in the ALT Allen Shankles MainStage, 2019 Civic Circle; Japanese American visual artist Nishiki Sugawara-Beda's exhibition at WT's Dord Fitz Formal Gallery from March 24 to April 26; WT Opera's comic production of *Albert Herring*, featuring Harrington String Quartet and Chamber Music Amarillo, on March 29 and 30, in Northen Recital Hall.

MICKEY 17: Director Bong Joon-ho (*Parasite*) returns to the big screen with this sci-fi comedy starring Robert Pattinson as a broke worker who volunteers himself as a disposable clone recruit, opening March 7. Other films set to hit the screen include sports biopic *Queen of the Ring* on March 7; drama *Opus,* sci-fi adventure *The Empire* and action comedy *Novocaine* on March 14; thrillers *Ash* and *Locked* on March 21; and fantasy thriller *Death of a Unicorn*, thriller *A Working Man*, biopic *Being Maria* on March 28.

April

Yellow City Comic Con: Voice and live actors will headline the annual pop cultural celebration, set for April 11 to 13 in the Civic Center Complex. Other events on tap include the Lone Star Reptile Expo from April 5 to 6 in the Civic Center Complex; opening home games for the Amarillo Sod Poodles from April 8 to 13 and April 22 to 27 in Hodgetown, 715 S. Buchanan St.; the 16th annual Power of the Purse Luncheon featuring Amy Purdue on April 10 in the Civic Center Complex Heritage Ballroom; Amarillo's all-day 420 Fest at The Bliss Venue, 9700 Farm-to-Market Road 1151; the North Plains Iris Society Show on April 19 at Amarillo Botanical Gardens, 1400 Streit Drive; Ronald McDonald House's Wine, Women & Shoes on April 24 at Arts in the Sunset; Pickleball Bash raising funds for Amarillo Habitat for Humanity on April 26 at Amarillo National Tennis Center, 5000 S. Bell St.; two performances of the reimagined *The Wizard of Oz on Ice* on April 26 in the Civic Center Complex Coliseum. Plus, the Amarillo Wranglers wrap up their home season with games April 4 and 5 and April 6, all in the Civic Center Complex Coliseum.

Handel's *MESSIAH*: Amarillo Master Chorale celebrates its 45th anniversary with a blowout production of this beloved masterpiece, featuring an orchestra, soloists and dancers, all on April 12 in the Globe-News Center. Other arts events to watch for include beloved native piano star John Bayless returning for a concert April 1 at the

Amarillo College Concert Hall Theatre; AMoA's perennially popular 20x20 on April 3; WT Dance's *Portraits of Dance* from April 3 to 6 in the Happy State Bank Studio Theatre; Amarillo Opera's staging of the mariachi opera *Cruzar la Cara de la Luna* on April 5 in the Globe-News Center; WT School of Music's performance of Mozart's *Requiem* on April 6 in Northen Recital Hall; WT Jazz concerts April 10 in Northen Recital Hall; ALT's piercing drama *33 Variations* from April 10 to 19 in the ALT Adventure Space, 2751 Civic Circle; Chamber Music Amarillo's *A Love Letter of Music* on April 11 at the Amarillo Botanical Gardens; WT Theatre's staging of the classical musical comedy *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* from April 24 to May 4 in the Branding Iron Theatre; Amarillo College Theatre's *Between the Lines*, based on a Jodi Picoult YA novel, from April 26 to May 3 in the Experimental Theatre; Lone Star Ballet's production of *Cleopatra* on April 25 and 26 in the Civic Center Complex Auditorium; the Amarillo Symphony's celebration of *The Firebird* from April 25 to 26 in the Globe-News Center; and the Harrington String Quartet and WT's World Music Festival, both on April 27 at Mary Moody Northen Recital Hall.

Randy Rogers Band: One of the all-time greats of the Texas country scene, the band makes a welcome return April 25 with a show at Azteca Music Hall, 500 Farm-to-Market Road 1912. Other concerts to look out for include indie touring band The Brown Mountain Lightning Bugs on April 2 at The 806 Coffee + Lounge, 2812 SW Sixth Ave.; touring folk singer Caroline Cotter on April 4 at Buffalo Grass Music Hall, 123 Main St. in Panhandle; country band Lowland Revelry on April 12 at Hoot's Pub, 2424 Hobbs Road; metal band Upon A Burning Body on April 17 at Rockwell Event Center, 16301 Interstate 27 in Canyon; Tummyache on April 17 at The 806; and Latin band Hermanos Espinoza on April 19 at Azteca Music Hall.

A MINECRAFT MOVIE: The appeal escapes me, but this silly-looking video game adaptation could be a hit when it opens April 4. Also on tap for theaters are action horror film *Wake Up* and thriller *The Luckiest Man* in America on April 4; mystery *Drop* and action film *Warfare* on April 11; horror sequel *The Exorcist: Deceiver* on April 18; and family adventure *The Legend of Ochi* and horror film *Until Dawn* on April 25.

Brickly

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CHIP CHANDLER
Chip is the city's arts and entertainment expert, having covered area events since 1998. Stay up to date on local happenings with Chip's *Can't Miss* picks in every issue.

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Welcome to The Dirt. In every issue, our anonymous writer gives you the dirt on your burning questions about the Amarillo area. Got something you're just dying to know? Drop us a line at **info@brickandelm.com**, and our intrepid writer will dig up the answer.



How do they set up the Civic Center for hockey games? Do they just turn on a faucet and let it run for a few days?

While the Amarillo Wranglers may be lesser-known compared to the Sod Poodles, evidence of hockey's place of honor in the local sports scene can be traced to the literal foundation of the Amarillo Civic Center. Where is the Civic Center hockey rink? Though it shines best when polished up for regional tournaments after being refreshed under a set of hoses, dear reader, it's actually the coliseum's default floor.

Hockey rinks are built with several layers of complex concrete and plumbing. At the very base is sand and gravel able to drain water, covered in a heated concrete slab that keeps temperature changes from damaging the ground or the rest of the structure. That heated concrete is covered with insulation, then topped with cold concrete containing a pipe network. Those pipes function like an open-faced refrigerator, circulating coolants like hyper-chilled salt water to keep the inch-thick layer of ice used by skaters frozen solid.

When the rink isn't in use, other materials like turf or arena flooring are layered over to make a decent space for other sports. So, to the question: Yes, setting up the hockey rink does involve flooding the floor and freezing it over, because all the intricate engineering for its design has already been done. As it turns out, the real headache with setting up the hockey rink is sweeping aside all the dirt from the rodeo.

Wasn't Matthew McConaughey supposed to be moving to Amarillo? What was the source of that rumor?

Life in the Texas Panhandle comes packaged with certain constants: breezes that fill the air with the pungent perfumes of feedlots 100 miles away, sunsets that are breathtaking in different ways, and the immutable desire to share a neighborhood with one of the state's own Hollywood heartthrobs.

The rumor that Academy Award-winner and Texas darling Matthew McConaughey is looking to make a home in Amarillo has been recirculating for more than a decade. It didn't start with a bragging real estate agent or McConaughey himself, but rather the sense of humor of one of Amarillo's most well-known local writers.

Jon Mark Beilue made his career at the *Amarillo Globe-News* from 1981 to 2018, starting as a sports editor and ending up a general columnist. In the process, he received 16 statewide and national awards, published five books—and made a tradition of pulling the community's proverbial leg every April 1st.

On April Fools' Day in 2011, Beilue published a 'report' that McConaughey intended to move to Amarillo for the sake of family and fraternity brother Matt Martindale. Amarillo didn't exactly get the joke, and clung to the story with an iron grip.

This likely wasn't helped when the story got republished online in December 2014—long after April Fools' Day—the same year McConaughey moved to Austin.

(Joking aside, Beilue still regularly writes for his Amarillo neighbors. These days he's published by West Texas A&M University and right here at *Brick & Elm*, alongside The Dirt.)



The anonymous writer behind 'The Dirt' is a sharp observer of the Amarillo-Canyon metropolitan area. If they don't know the answer, they know where to get it and who to ask.

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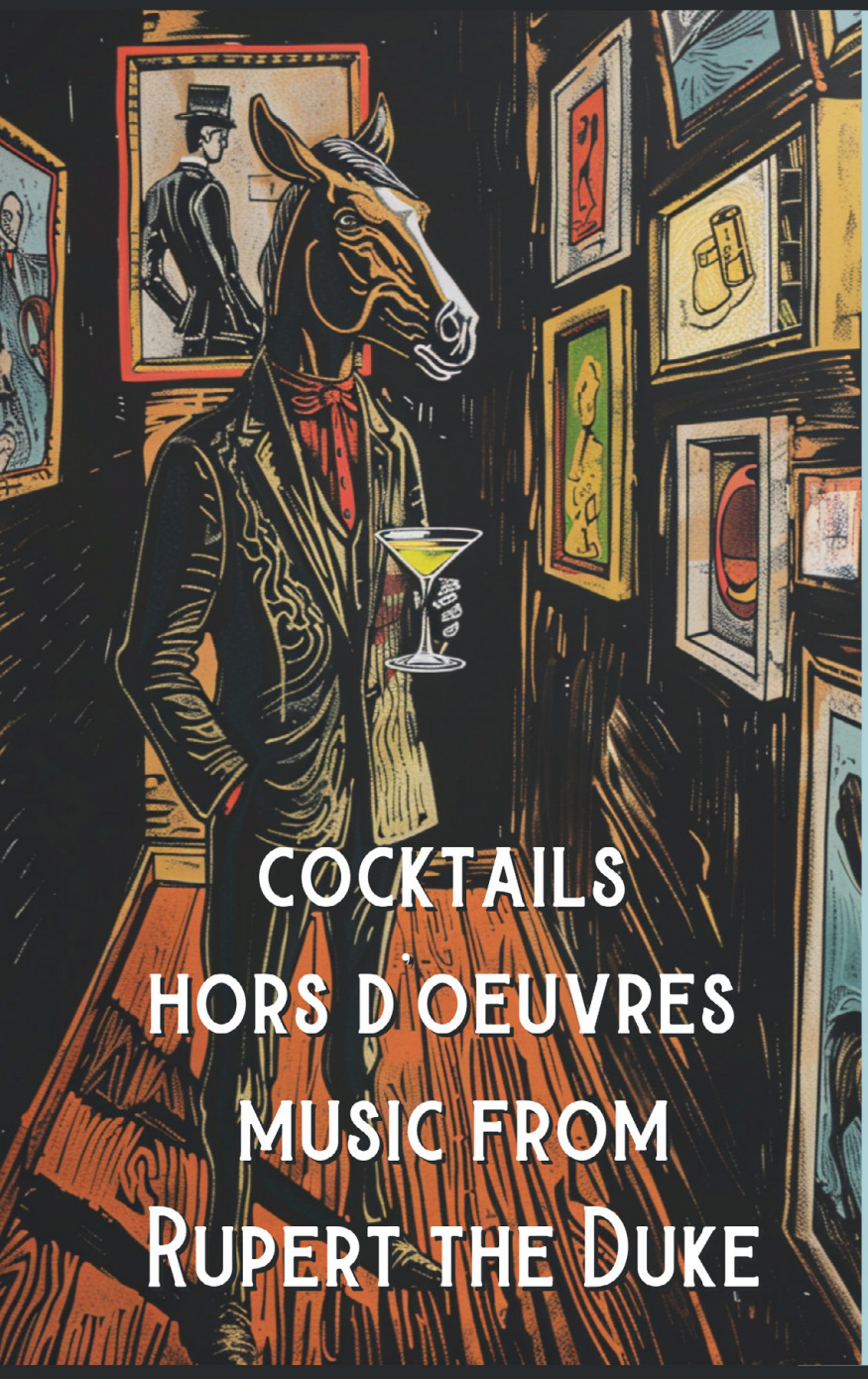
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Musings with Maggie

"Today is the oldest you've ever been, and the youngest you'll ever be again."—Eleanor Roosevelt

I joyfully, peacefully and comfortably turned 40 last year. I rang in my birthday in a charming house in Colorado with my dearest friends. We made delicious food, wore comfy clothes, went for long walks, laughed and cried, sang songs, went to bed at a reasonable hour and had early morning coffee on the patio. It was perfection.

I reveled in saying "I am 40 years old …" usually followed by something sassy about not caring what people think (false) or something I'm too old for (true) or something about which I should be taken seriously (debatable).

Two brief months later, I suffered a herniated disc in my neck. On my best days, I see every bit of the humor in it. Of course I turned 40 and immediately fell apart! On more difficult days, I wonder if this is the beginning of the end. What's next, arthritis? High blood pressure? Help, I've fallen and I can't get up? (Showing my age with that reference, aren't I?) But every single day, I am grateful.

Most of us can name a handful of friends and acquaintances whose birthday celebrations were too few. We think of them often, more with each passing year. What a privilege and a gift each day becomes when we remember the fragility of life. How trivial each ache and pain, and how welcome each new line in our faces. How wonderful each moment with our loved ones, and how cherished each day we are given.

How fortunate I have always been to be surrounded by "old" people. All four of my grandparents lived well into my teenage years, and two of them lived to be 90. I was raised in rooms full of grandparents, great aunts and uncles, even a few great-greats. As I sit here today, I hear their voices, recall their stories, and their faces frequent my dreams. Now, firmly planted in middle-age, I treasure the close relationship I have with my parents, aunts and uncles, as they have become the elders. I have learned invaluable lessons from each of them, and I continue to absorb their well-earned wisdom and humor every chance I get. I am blessed to witness a new generation of nieces, nephews and cousins making their own place in our family heritage. Stories we share will one day become theirs to tell. The rooms are different now, but they are every bit as full.

Sometimes, I glance at my own hands, and realize they look like my mother's. I hear the voices of beloved aunts in my words, and I see my grandmothers in my eyes. Each of them lived in service to others, in thoughtful and creative pursuits and in constant laughter. I'm not sure what "aging gracefully" means, but if it doesn't involve lots of laughing, count me out. George Bernard Shaw said, "You don't stop laughing when you grow old, you grow old when you stop laughing." I hope that's true.

My days are spent with a few hundred students ages 5 to 11, and their perspectives on aging never fail to entertain. Periodically, I am asked, "Ms. Burt, how old are you?" to which I usually reply, "How old do you think I am?" I have heard everything from 18 to 80, but the truly humorous part is that they are almost never in the neighborhood of a correct answer. Recently, I was using a heating pad on my desk chair, and a first grader very sweetly said, "I think you are maybe getting old. Yep. I see white hairs." I told him he was exactly right, I am getting old. What a beautiful thing. Herniated discs aside.

Please don't think for one minute that I am immune to the allure of youth. I am faithfully moisturizing just like everyone else. But do I wish to be young again? A resounding and whole-hearted *no thank you*. I have rediscovered myself countless times, and will do so countless times more.

Middle-age has its challenges, but there is something inspiring in the knowledge that I have as much life ahead as behind. I have learned and experienced so much, and have much still to learn. With each new year, we become someone different and somehow, at the same time, a truer version of who we have always been. We grow more confident, more resilient, and more purposeful. We learn to let some things go, and stand up or speak out when the situation calls for action. As they say, aging is not for the weak, but I intend to keep doing it as long as I can. I am resolved to cherish my time on this earth, love fiercely, appreciate beauty, remember those who have gone before, be mindful of those who will come after, and never forget to laugh. After all, I am 40 years old.



MAGGIE BURT
Maggie was born into a family heritage of musicians and educators in Amarillo. She spent several years as a performer and songwriter in Amarillo and Austin, before becoming an elementary music teacher in 2019. Maggie's column draws from her experiences in and out of the classroom.

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THURSDAY

5 PM to 10 PM
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5 PM to 11 PM
CARNIVAL

6 PM
KICK-OFF BANQUET AND MISS IRISH ROSE DEBUT

8 PM
COUNTRY CLUB DANCE FEATURING SETH WARD AND THE SILENCE
(DOORS OPEN AT 6 PM)

SATURDAY

8 AM
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS 5K RUN FOR LIFE AND 1 MILE WALK

10 AM
DONEGAL BEARD CONTEST

10:30 AM
78TH ANNUAL ST PATRICK'S PARADE AND BAREFACE JAIL

11 AM to 6 PM
LUCKY PEDDLER CRAFT SHOW

12 PM
CARNIVAL OPENS

12 PM
GREEN BEER POUR

12:30 PM KSU
3:30 PM LBI
MOTORCYCLE RALLY AND POKER RUN

1 PM
CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT

1 PM to 3 PM
ST. PATRICK'S DAY PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING MATCH

2 PM
ST. PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATION CAR SHOW

3 PM
RUSTY'S WING EATING CONTEST

3 PM
RANCH RODEO AND GOAT ROPING

3 PM
CROWNING OF MISS IRISH ROSE

8 PM to 1 AM
THE BIG DANCE FEATURING OPENER SLADE COULTER AND HEADLINER DYLAN WHEELER

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SUNDAY

11 AM to 4 PM
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12 PM
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JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT OF THE HIGH PLAINS







Junior Achievement's first *18 Under 18* Award winners start on page 35.

PROVIDED PHOTOS

It's all about growing the student and creating that successful young person," Kasey Long says about Junior Achievement of the High Plains, the local chapter of the national nonprofit organization. Junior Achievement enlists volunteers to supplement classroom teaching on topics like financial literacy, entrepreneurship and readiness for the workplace. "So when they leave high school, they have these pillars instilled in them to have success in their future," Long says.

In Amarillo and on the High Plains, Junior Achievement delivers specialized curriculum for fifth-, seventh- and 12th-grade students. The organization's volunteers spoke in 14 different school districts this past year—from classrooms inside the Amarillo and Canyon city limits to school districts in Booker, Darrouzett and Hutchinson County—impacting 6,300 students.

Technically, the Junior Achievement of the High Plains chapter extends all the way to Lubbock, "but we can't grow too quickly," Long says. "We have to match volunteers to go in and deliver the curriculum."

She describes Junior Achievement volunteers as professionals from various fields who enter seventh- and 12th-grade classrooms for one hour a week to "enhance and elevate" districts' education topics. Some districts don't have specialty curriculum that addresses how to build a good credit score or the power of compound interest, for example. Volunteers lead students using worksheets and interactive digital resources to teach these award-winning lessons.

"We have all different jobs and careers" represented among volunteers, Long says. "A person in accounting at a construction company, a store manager from a grocery store, a sales consultant. Sometimes the best volunteers are parents themselves."

As for fifth graders, they participate in JA BizTown, an immersive simulated community located on the campus of AmTech. This simulated town includes miniature versions of local businesses sponsored by enterprises like Sparkman Orthodontics, Amarillo National Bank or Amarillo City Hall. More than 3,000 students this year will spend a day in BizTown, guided by their teachers, as they learn jobs within those business operations.

"They get the experience of what a healthy economy looks like," Long says. "Volunteers work inside the storefronts and help. They learn to pay their bills, open a savings account, fill out check deposit slips, even read meters for Xcel." Workers "get paid" and then pay their own taxes through the city. They can even apply for college. "It goes really in-depth," Long says.

These real-world experiences help encourage innovation and community involvement as kids approach graduation. To get involved, visit **highplains.ja.org**.

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Coldwell Banker First Equity Amarillo recently announced new ownership after 40 years. **Justin Kite** holds CCIM certification. **Rachel Shreffler** will serve as the broker for both Coldwell Banker First Equity and Coldwell Banker Commercial First Equity.



Street Toyota recently named **Jamaica Richard** its 2024 Employee of the Year.



Dr. Naruki Hiranuma, associate professor of environmental science in the **WTAMU** Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, was awarded the **Presidential Early Career Award** for Scientists and Engineers in January.



Brown & Fortunato announced that attorneys **Dusty A. Abresch, Jesse K. Fishman,** and **Michael K. Gawargi** joined the firm. Abresch is a member of the Corporate Group. Fishman is a senior attorney in the firm's Labor and Employment Group. Gawargi also joined the firm's Corporate Group.



Brown & Fortunato announced that former shareholder **Mary M. Bearden** was named Distinguished Alumna of the State Bar Health Law Section at the final meeting of the section in 2024.



Krystal Bradley recently joined **Blumologie** as the online business manager.



BSA Health System launched its **OB Hospitalist Group**, which is comprised of board-certified, hospital-based OB/GYN physicians from the nation's leading provider of dedicated OB/GYN hospitalist services.

For the 13th straight year, the **City of Amarillo** has earned the Government Finance Officers Association Award for **Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting** for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2023.



David Palmer, founder of Chamber Music Amarillo, announced that he will step down from his position as CMA's artistic director for the **Amarillo Symphony** at the end of June 2025.

Workforce Solutions Panhandle awarded **Education Credit Union** the **2024 Local Employer of Excellence** award. Nationally, ECU was also named, for the second year in a row, one of *Newsweek's* 2025 Best Credit Unions.



FirstBank Southwest has welcomed **Chris Jensen** as executive vice president associate general counsel. Jensen brings nearly 30 years of legal experience to the institution.



FirstBank Southwest recently announced the appointment of **Kelsey Ward** as a commercial lender. With 14 years of banking experience, Ward has 14 years of banking experience.



Molly Davis, RYT, has earned **Stott Pilates Certification** in Mat-work, Reformer, Cadillac, Chair, and Barrels Level 1. Davis teaches classes at Re-Form and private sessions.



CFRE International announced that **Amy Landess Juba, CFRE, MBA**, has been recertified as a **Certified Fund Raising Executive**. Juba is an Amarillo-based nonprofit consultant and owner of Amy Juba, CFRE Nonprofit.



Amarillo National Bank recently announced multiple employee promotions: **Roxanne Grabbe**, senior vice president; **Aleisha Malone**, vice president; **Jason Gross,** vice president; and **Cara Day**, vice president.



The **Amarillo ISD Board of Trustees** named **Dr. Deidre Parish** as the lone finalist for superintendent in February. Dr. Parish recently served as superintendent in Sweetwater ISD.



Price Miller has joined **BOC Bank** as its new chief technology officer. Price brings more than 13 years experience in the tech sector.



Emily Merryman was recently promoted to the **Amarillo Club** food and beverage manager. Merryman has been with the Amarillo Club for more than two years.



David Lovejoy has begun a new career as the Community Relations Director at **Panhandle PBS**.

To highlight your business briefs, promotions or awards in this section, email a press release or your information to ***mm@brickandelm.com.***


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Steven Rosas has joined **Executive Realty** as a real estate agent.



Arien Williams was recently named the **George Washington Carver Teacher of the Year 2025.**



Longtime presidents of Pampa's banking community have joined **FirstBank Southwest: Kevin Hunt**, senior vice present commercial lender; **Kim Hill**, Pampa Branch market president; and **Alan Eubank**, commercial banker.



Jacob Cates is the new digital initiatives coordinator at **The RANGE. Matt Loftin** is the new workforce lead contractor.





The **Texas School Counselor Association** recently recognized **Region 16** school counselors as recipients of the Counselors Reinforcing Excellence for Students in Texas (CREST) Award: **Tonie Crawford**, Dumas Intermediate School; **Abrie Castillo**, Hereford Junior High; and **Kalyn Taylor**, Hereford Junior High.



Erica J. Reese has joined **Keller Williams Realty Amarillo.**

AmTech Career Academy's DECA has achieved **Gold Level Certification/Recertification** for the 2024-2025 school year.



The **Downtown Athletic Club** announced that **Karie Mueller** has joined the club as its general manager. Mueller has more than 30 years experience in the fitness world as a personal trainer, and group fitness instructor.





AMARILLO EDC JOINS REDI SITES PROGRAM

to Boost Economic Development and Attract Investment for CenterPort Business Park

Amarillo Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) is proud to announce its participation in the **REDI Sites program**, a first-ever national standard for site readiness assessments.

CenterPort Business Park, a 440-acre, rail-served development owned by the AEDC, received a **REDI Sites silver designation** making it the **first REDI site in the state of Texas**. It is also one of the first six sites certified in the United States.

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JUST CHECKING ON YOU



There seem to be three stages of man (and by man, I mean mankind, which includes women). These stages are: *Untamed, Growth* and *Checking on Stuff*. These can overlap in degree from minuscule to colossal, but in general, that's what we are dealing with.

The Untamed Stage: This includes infants and small children, who are out of control until someone trains them. If you have ever been around toddlers for any amount of time, this needs no explanation. They are unintentionally destructive (at least typically). They are also disproportionately high maintenance. The Untamed Stage has an alternate designation: Limit Tester. It's actually their cosmic JOB to test the limits of everything around them. A job at which they excel. It is with a kind of awe, tinged with terror, that the rest of us on the planet strive to help these untamed people progress out of, and away from, that dreaded stage.

The Growth Stage: On paper, this is the most wonderful stage of life. The origins of understanding of problems and solutions, subjects that are taught in school, spiritual awareness, discovery of gifts and talents of our own and of others. Building of personality, and interactive relationships. However, this is a stage that can really get sideways. Distractions are an integral part of this stage, but entirely necessary. (Physical attractions, football and faster vehicles were a few of my distractions.) We should actually never stop growing, but unfortunately some do—stuck on one or more of the aforementioned distractions. This is the stage that we normally mature, become "adults" and rise to some sense of responsibility.

The Checking on Stuff Stage: This is the stage in which I currently reside. I have completed, or at least outlived the other stages. My beautiful wife sometimes tells me that I have a tiny bit of vestigial Untamed Stage, but that's just one woman's opinion, of course.

This is the stage where you just go around checking on the stuff you spent your Growth Stage learning about, achieving, attaining and purchasing. No judgment here, but some of these acquisitions have been great, fruitful, edifying, productive. (Some not so much.) I get up in the morning, and check the weather. Around here, of course, you have to do that multiple times daily, because this is the weather update capital of the world. Doppler Dave is one of my favorite people. He rides herd on this crazy High Plains weather like a buckaroo.

Next, I check on the news. Make sure nothing heavy is falling out of the sky, no fire in the area, and what kind of puppy is available today through the animal shelters.

Check the thermostat. Can't have too much heat (or AC) wasted through inefficient climate control settings. This is why I check with Doppler Dave first.

Check the coffee supply. I do this while I am making my coffee. No, it isn't included in the "check groceries" category. This is about seven notches above food on the checklist. My worst nightmare is no coffee in the house. Thank the Good Lord and my wife that almost never happens.

Check the checkbook. Check on the checks, check the balance, check the general fund. This is one of the things I had real problems with in my Growth Stage.

Check the bills. Who's ahead today: Us or them? Are we caught up, or is that one straggler still out there? You never know until you ... check.

I never worry about checking cat food. There's only one thing on the Checking-On List for my cat, Miko: Food. If you have a cat, no further explanation is needed. If you don't, get one. Why should I be the only one who gets nagged by a creature who is one-fiftieth my size?

Check on toiletries and grooming supplies. Normally, my beautiful wife takes care of these, but she has a tendency to over-feminize our bathroom with fragrances that, in my opinion, shouldn't be found on a man. Nor earth. Many of them are in the vicinity of our bathtub. Some make my nose run. Some give me a headache. Some I have actually returned home to wash out of my hair.

Check on the cars. Check the gas, check the oil, check the transmission fluid, check the tires, and in the case of my mate's car, check the interior. Being from whatever planet she came from, she does not possess the ability to remove the debris from her car. She will be actively angry at me the day I hire an archaeologist.

Nonetheless, she is the very first on my Checking on People list. She is top priority. Then the kids, the folks and the friends.

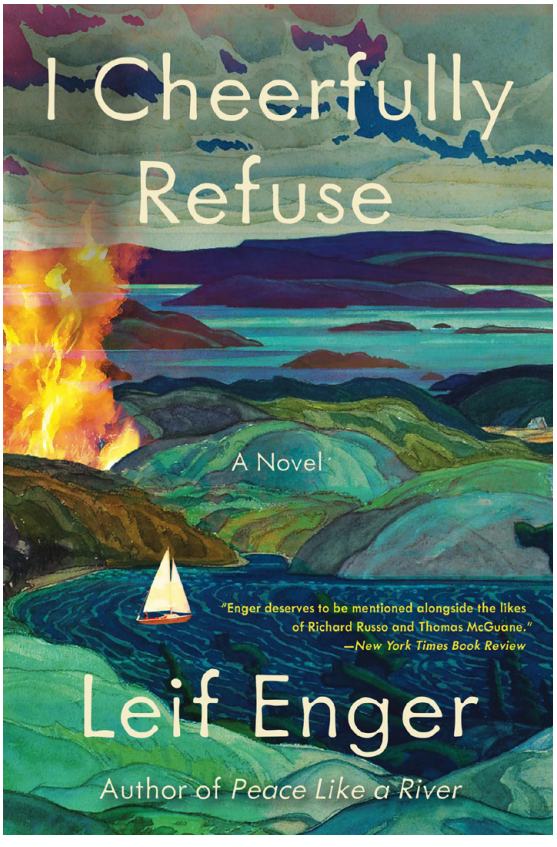
It's an exhausting job, but you know what they say: Somebody has to do it. I have lived my life for this Stage. Paid my dues, and I very heartily enjoy the position of Checker of All Stuff.



ANDY CHASE CUNDIFF
Andy is an artist, singer-songwriter, music producer and musician. In every issue, his column explores the parts of his life that don't always make it into his songs, accompanied by his own illustration.

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Burrowing Owl RECOMMENDS



I CHEERFULLY REFUSE, BY LEIF ENGER

Set in a not-too-distant America, *I Cheerfully Refuse* is the tale of a bereaved and pursued musician embarking under sail on a sentient Lake Superior in search of his departed, deeply beloved, bookselling wife.

Rainy, an endearing bear of an Orphean narrator, seeks refuge in the harbors, fogs and remote islands of the inland sea. Encountering lunatic storms and rising corpses from the warming depths, Rainy finds on land an increasingly desperate and illiterate people, a malignant billionaire ruling class, crumbled infrastructure, and a lawless society.

Amid the Gulliver-like challenges of life at sea and no safe landings, Rainy is lifted by physical beauty, surprising humor, generous strangers and an unexpected companion in a young girl who comes aboard. And as his innate guileless nature begins to make an inadvertent rebel of him, Rainy's private quest for the love of his life grows into something wider and wilder, sweeping up friends and foes alike in his strengthening wake.

I Cheerfully Refuse epitomizes the "musical, sometimes magical and deeply satisfying kind of storytelling" (*Los Angeles Times*) for which Leif Enger is cherished. A rollicking narrative in the most evocative of settings, this latest novel is a symphony against despair and a rallying cry for the future"

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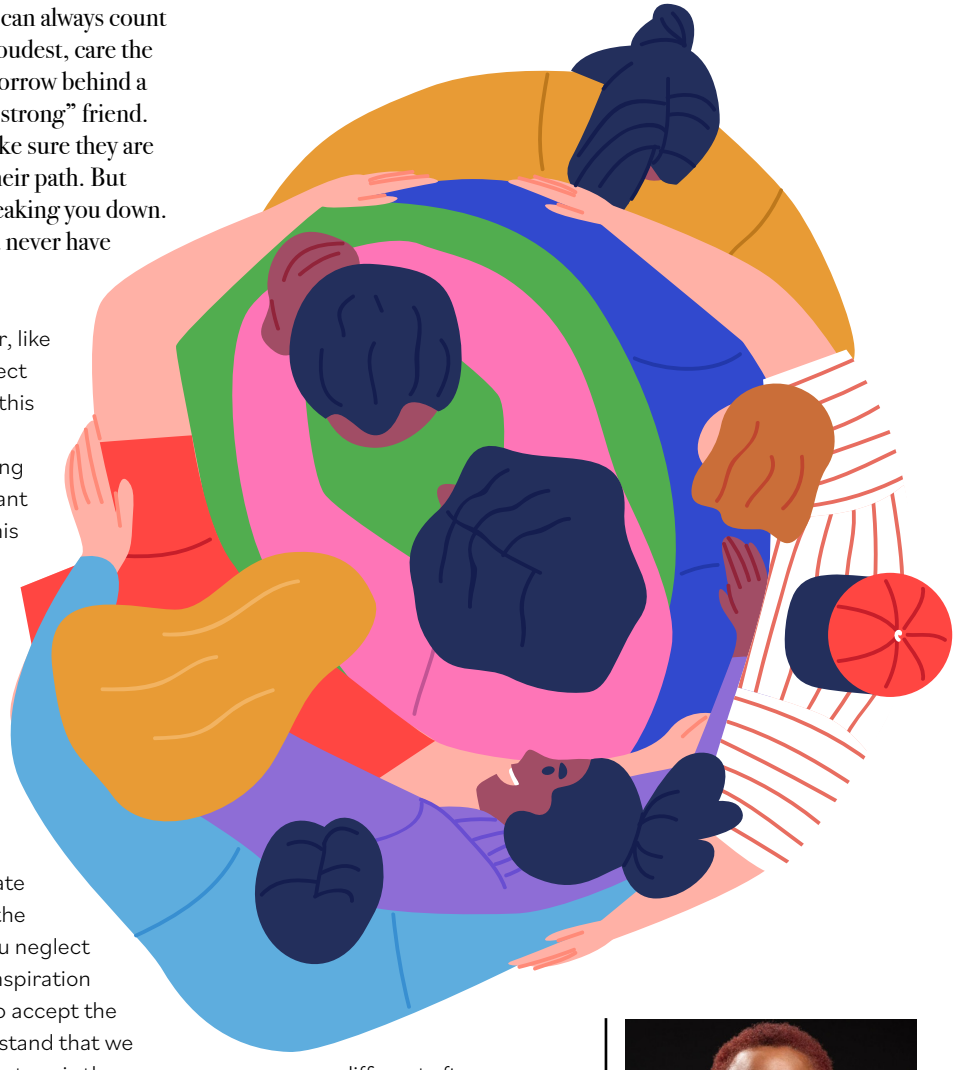
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We all have that one person we know we can always count on. They are the ones who speak the loudest, care the hardest, and often carry sadness and sorrow behind a huge smile. We think of them as our "strong" friend. They can maintain a smile as long as I-40 just to make sure they are available as a resource to all the people who cross their path. But over the years, being the strong one has a way of breaking you down. People start to depend on you to be strong, and you never have the opportunity to just take a break and rest.



Strong friends often appear to have it all together, like they're perfect. But the truth is, no one can be perfect and shouldn't try to be. If I just described you, then this column is for you. I see you and can relate to your struggles. It is so crucial that, if you are the one taking care of others, you learn that you are just as important and that you also need to take care of yourself. At this moment in our society, it is imperative that we take care of each other, and also allow others to take care of us. While strong people can endure an extreme amount of pressure, at times they, too, have to step back and take a breath. Then they can be ready to continue going forward to speak into other's lives.

You might be the strong friend—the friend that never breaks, the friend people can go to with all their problems, the friend who never turns others away, the friend willing to help people navigate troubled waters—and you might also find yourself the most tired friend. You might be helping so much you neglect caring for yourself. You need encouragement and inspiration too, but you are left with no one. We have to learn to accept the help of others and be vulnerable. We need to understand that we can be strong, but allowing others to care for us in return is the way to build a blueprint for a better life.

Four years ago, I decided I wanted to be that strong friend. I wanted to be an advocate, and I wanted to be able to solve problems. What I found is that in my pursuit to help others I neglected myself. That's what strong friends often do—they feel they can't be vulnerable with other people because not being strong is not an option. I found myself worn out, wanting to give up, irritable and wanting to be left alone.

I had to make the decision to be a smart friend and take care of myself so I could continue taking care of other people. I had to see the value in letting others help me. Yes, we have to position ourselves to be helpful, but the goal is to develop servanthood in others, and then they're able to help someone else, too. After a while, you have created a system of helpers, this system of strong people who want to encourage other people. That's what this journey is about.

So The Call this time is this: If you're that strong person, I'm asking you to take a step back and give the people around you the chance to take part of your burden. I assure you that you will feel different after you take care of yourself. When you decide to rest and let others step into the fray, it will ensure your longevity in serving while teaching them how to lead. If you know someone who continuously helps you with your problems and concerns, please check on that person. Make sure they're not just smiling on the outside and breaking on the inside. They're probably too afraid to show people what really goes on inside their mind, so make sure you're present for them. Give them the same care they give you. Take care of each other! Even strong friends need someone to be strong for them, too.



MELODIE GRAVES
Raised in the North Heights, Melodie is dedicated to service that goes above and beyond her career in higher education. She has worked at Amarillo College since 2010, currently serving as the Associate Director of Academic Advising, Foster Care Liaison and Justice-Involved Advocate. Melodie shares her thoughts about inclusivity, inspiration and answering The Call.

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TRI-STATE OPEN CHILI CHAMPIONSHIP



The annual Tri-State Open Chili Championship sizzled on Jan. 11 in the Rex Baxter Building at the Tri-State Fairgrounds. Ninety-seven cooks competed for bragging rights, with awards given to individual cooks and corporate teams. (Provided Photos)









ACHIEVEMENT IN ART GALA

The Amarillo Museum of Art recently honored art collectors Terri and Steven Certilman at the annual Achievement in Art Gala on Jan. 25. The event was chaired by Michele and Anthony Agostini. (Provided Photos)









HEART OF CASA 2025

Hosted by Amarillo Area CASA, the annual art show featured artwork from foster children, who expressed their personal stories through drawings. Local artists then recreated those drawings into art pieces for auction. The event took place in January at the Amarillo Area Foundation.(Provided Photos)







BANDFEST

The 100 Club of the Texas Panhandle hosted its 2025 BandFest fundraiser on Feb. 1 at Cornerstone Ranch Event Center. The event featured music from A-Town Rockers and Next to Kin. (Provided Photos)











THE BRICKLY AWARDS

Brick & Elm honored the recipients of our inaugural Brickly Awards with a celebration Feb. 4 at the Amarillo Area Foundation. Custom engraved bricks served as trophies, and community winners also received framed profiles from our January/February issue. (Photos by Tanner Beggs)



















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We're no longer just responding to problems—we're tackling them at the source. We're no longer waiting for change—we're leading it. We're no longer sitting back—we're stepping up, louder, stronger, and more determined than ever.

Some might say we've changed. We say we've evolved. Because real impact demands action, and we're here to make a statement: United Way is not just a name—it's a force.

This isn't about tradition. It's about transformation. It's about breaking old molds and building a future where every person has the chance to thrive.

The work isn't done. The need is still great. And the future? We're just getting started.

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18 UNDER 18

Brick&Elm

Junior Achievement™ of the High Plains

The future leaders of the Texas Panhandle are already making a difference in their schools and communities. In January, we highlighted two of them with Brickly Awards. But we're not finished. Our brand-new 18 Under 18 special section —in collaboration with Junior Achievement of the High Plains—celebrates the area high school students who are leading by example and excelling in academics, athletics, the arts and service. Nominated by educators and other community members, these individuals and role models prove that leadership has no age limit.

Special thanks to these businesses who have partnered with us to make this special section possible:

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18 UNDER 18

Carsyn Allen

Caprock High School | Age 16 | Daughter of Shonda and Paul Allen



What do you love about your school? Everyone feels included and no one feels left out.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Girls basketball; softballl; choir; Student Council; Akademia.

What things are you involved in outside of school? I like to volunteer for choir, softball and Student Council activities.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan to go to college and get a bachelor's degree in the arts (photography or music). I am also interested in pursuing a math major, social work or business degree.

"Carsyn is academically gifted, showing judgment and critical thinking skills above most people her age. Carsyn's dedication, work ethic and drive make her more than qualified to be nominated for this award."
—Nominator Casey James

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Kevork Assadourian

Age 16 | Amarillo High School | Son of Assadour and Lara Assadourian

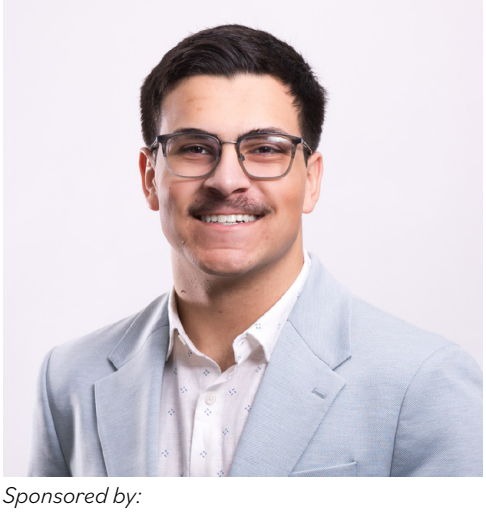
What do you love about your school? The eclectic community that it presents; you always feel welcome wherever you are or whomever you meet. I am thankful for every one of my friends and the teachers who strive to help students achieve their goals and dreams.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Amarillo High JV travel swim team; Amarillo High Debate; Student Council Secretary; Chick-fil-A Leader Academy Student Ambassador; AHS band; Spanish Club; Ken Club; International Forum; AHS canned food drive.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Amarillo Swim Team Club; Snack Pak 4 Kids; High Plains Food Bank; volunteer at the Armenian church in Dallas; soccer; basketball; volleyball; playing piano and clarinet; working at my grandfather's company over the summer.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan to attend the University of Texas at Austin, majoring in business and finance. After obtaining my bachelor's degree, I would like to get my MBA. My ultimate dream is to own a company or manage a well-known business.

"Kevork is one of the most engaging, intelligent and talented students that I have met in the last seven years. His academic excellence is highlighted by being named a two-time Superintendent Scholar. This recognition reflects his exceptional work ethic and intellectual curiosity."
—Nominator Marwan Touma



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Merari Castillo

Age 18 | Caprock High School | Daughter of Maria and Edgar Castillo



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What do you love about your school? I love that my school has been able to give me and so many others the opportunity to grow and to explore different interests.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Robotics First Tech Challenge Robotics Team (Bomb City Bots), Amtech Ambassador, National Technical Honor Society, Longhorn Life, Caprock Kind, Rotary Club

What things are you involved in outside of school? Horse riding; gardening; folklorico dancing

What are your plans post-graduation? My career goal is to become an engineer that works on robots to improve the agricultural and oil industries.

"Merari Castillo exemplifies the extraordinary qualities that contribute to her road to success. As a dedicated student at Caprock High School and AmTech Career Academy, she has honed her skills in 3D modeling through her proficiency in Onshape and certification in Fusion 360, showcasing her commitment to technical excellence. Merari's fluency in Spanish not only enhances her communication skills, but also broadens her ability to connect with diverse communities. As Merari prepares for her future educational endeavors after high school, her unique blend of talents, skills and community involvement positions her as a role model and a promising leader in her field."
—Nominator Ty James

Leslie Del Fierro

Age 18 | Caprock High School | Daughter of Daniel Del Fierro and Rocio Del Fierro

What do you love about your school? I love Caprock High School because the staff members and students are always willing to help one another.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Student Council; Science Bowl (captain); National Honor Society (secretary); Longhorn Life; Caprock Kind; Akademia; tennis; National Technical Honor Society; Science UIL.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Texas Ramps Project; LIPS Fundraiser for Opportunity School; Buddy Walk for Panhandle Down Syndrome Guild; election clerk; High Plains Food Bank.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan on going to Texas Tech University to major in biology, and then I will go to medical school to become a general surgeon.

"Leslie Del Fierro is an exemplary candidate whose extraordinary skillsets and unique qualities set her on a remarkable path to success. With a perfect 4.0 GPA, Leslie demonstrates exceptional academic prowess, ranking fourth out of 457 students at Caprock High School. Leslie's blend of intelligence, compassion and initiative not only reflect her personal character but also position her as a future leader capable of making a significant impact in her community and beyond."
—Nominator Ty James



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Jace Fisk

Age 18 | Bushland High School | Son of Gary and Tiffany Fisk



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What do you love about your school? Bushland manages to keep a small school feel while still offering the opportunities of a larger school. It has allowed me the opportunity to partake in multiple sports, activities and leadership roles with an incredible staff that encourages students who manage multiple commitments. Due to our competitive nature, Bushland takes every activity very seriously and never settles for less than our very best. We prioritize serving others and taking care of our community. I'm extremely proud to be a Falcon because we strive to excel in all of our endeavors.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Football; track; robotics; Student Council; Lead Council; NHS; band; UIL Academics.

What things are you involved in outside of school? I attend Hillside Christian Church and work for a lawn-care company in the summer. In my free time, I really enjoy watching movies, listening to music and podcasts, traveling and spending time with friends and family.

What are your plans post-graduation? After high school, I plan to attend Texas Tech University and major in mechanical engineering with a minor in robotics and aerospace engineering. I was also accepted into the honors program at Texas Tech University and hope to be able to study abroad. I hope that my time in college provides me with the skillset needed for a successful career in engineering.

"Jace Fisk does not bend to the pressure of others. He has a strong personality and is humble in his accomplishments. He is active in many service organizations and is always willing to arrive early or stay late to help others. Jace adds value to Bushland High School and makes our school a better place to be for all students. He will leave a mark when he graduates as someone others look up to and strive to be like."
—Nominator Kristi Culpepper

Nicolas Gaston

Age 18 | Caprock High School | Son of Julie Allegretti

What do you love about your school? I love the teachers at Caprock. They truly care about their students and have made all the difference in my education.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? National Honor Society; National Technical Honor Society; Key Club; Caprock Kind; Citizen Bee; Science Bowl; Akedemia; SkillsUSA; Amtech IT internship at Baptist Community Services; FirstBank SouthWest Banking Advisory Council member.

What things are you involved in outside of school? D&D Club.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan to start at Amarillo College for computer engineering since I've already completed most of my college basics. In about a year, after I receive an associate degree, I plan on transferring to UT Dallas or Texas Tech to complete a bachelor's degree and ultimately a master's degree in computer engineering.

"Nicolas Gaston stands out as a remarkable candidate for recognition due to his extraordinary skillsets, talents and unique characteristics that have paved his way to success. With an impressive GPA of 98.440 and a class rank of 7 out of 457, Nicolas has demonstrated not only academic excellence, but also a profound commitment to his field of study in Information Technology ... Nicolas embodies the qualities of a dedicated learner and innovator, making him an exemplary candidate who is poised for future success."
—Nominator Ty James



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Hattie Gifford

Age 17 | Gruver High School | Daughter of Holly Venneman Gifford and the late Justin Gifford

What do you love about your school? Gruver High School has presented me with amazing opportunities. The community is so supportive in everything we do, and our staff makes sure to put their students first and help us excel.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? FFA (horse judging, job interviews, skills competition, chapter conducting); National Honor Society (secretary); UIL Academics (persuasive speaking and calculator); Greyhound Theater Department; One-Act Play.

What things are you involved in outside of school? I volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters and the Hansford County Horse Club. I also show market steers and horses, and have participated in the John Maxwell Leadership and I Lead program. I enjoy being involved in Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Spearman.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan to attend Texas Tech University to major in agribusiness and minor in animal science. After college, I hope to get a license in artificial insemination, embryo transfer, and preg checking to continue to breed and raise registered Angus cattle. I am also interested in pursuing pharmaceutical veterinary sales.

"Hattie is the kind of person I hope my daughters grow up to be like. She's even more beautiful on the inside than she is on the outside. She gives me great hope that the next generation is kind, well-spoken and hard working. There is not a more outstanding youth than Hattie Gifford."
—Nominator Rachelle Shirley



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Gabrielle Gonzales

Age 18 | Caprock High School | Daughter of Tammie Gonzales and the late Manuel Gonzales



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What do you love about your school? I love the community that is at Caprock, and the teachers there.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Varsity Choir (three years); Choir president senior year; Show Choir (two years); National Honor Society; Marching Band; Color Guard; Superintendent Scholar

What things are you involved in outside of school? I have volunteered organizing charity drives and community clean-up events. I also work as a cashier at Home Depot.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan to attend Baylor University and major in international affairs. Then I plan to attend law school to pursue a career as an attorney.

"As a dedicated student at Caprock High School, maintaining a flawless 4.0 GPA, she exemplifies academic excellence and commitment. Gabrielle combines her academic prowess with a strong work ethic and a passion for leadership, making her a deserving nominee for any accolade that highlights outstanding students."
—Nominator Ty James

Isabel Hunt

Age 18 | Canyon High School | Daughter of Emily and Aaron Hunt

What do you love about your school? The incredible range of opportunities it provides for students to explore various career paths. Whether you're interested in computing, engineering, medicine, agriculture, trade programs, or something else, there's something for everyone. Canyon High School does an amazing job of helping us figure out our next steps after high school while also helping us understand our passions and potential career interests. It's a place where we can prepare for the future and feel supported in finding our path.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Canyon High School volleyball team; Women in Computing; LEAD Council; National Hispanic Honor Society; National Honor Society; National Center for Women in Computing; Information Technology

What things are you involved in outside of school? Next Level Volleyball Club; student researcher with Wagner Peyser Energy Program; Engineering and Computing Camp counselor; intern with Buffalo Technology Group; Hillside Christian Church.

What are your plans post-graduation? After graduation, I plan to study computer science and minor in Spanish at Texas Tech University. I'm excited to join the Honors College and Growing STEMS programs while continuing to improve my Spanish—something I've enjoyed sharing with my dad. I also look forward to studying abroad in Spain to immerse myself in the culture and enhance my fluency. My ultimate goal is to pursue a career in data science, combining my passion for technology and problem-solving.

"Isabel is an elite student-athlete who stands out as one of the best students I have known. I am astounded every time I speak to her and am blown away by the maturity and intellect she shows. Isabel can create and invent products that are tangible and that will change the future."
—Nominator Jessica Ray



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Luke Mahan

Age 18 | West Texas High School | Son of Michael "Bubba" and Shawna Mahan



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What do you love about your school? West Texas High gives a great sense of community, which is rewarding through different relationships with my fellow classmates, teachers and coaches. With it being smaller, we are exposed to an environment where we feel called to try different things and that is fulfilling.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Phi Theta Kappa member; band; cross country; baseball; track, Class Officer; Student Council; National Honor Society; welding; 2 ½ years of dual credit classes through Frank Phillips College. I will graduate Frank Phillips College with my Associate of Science with honors, two weeks before I graduate high school.

What things are you involved in outside of school? On my Youtube channel, I post drum covers of favorite songs (@TheMaskedDrummer25). I am the drummer on the youth worship team at Faith Covenant Church in Borger, learning guitar, getting into DJing for local events, and producing music digitally. I enjoy extreme sports, such as BMX, skateboarding, scootering and snowboarding.

What are your plans post-graduation? Upon graduation, I will attend Texas Tech University where I will major in computer engineering. I also intend to try out for the marching drumline. My plans are to get a master's degree and become an embedded systems engineer at a music company like Roland, Yamaha or Tama. Throughout college, I am also going to train for marathons. I plan to run these races as long as I can. Another goal is to attend flight school after graduating college with my master's, so I can learn to fly commercial or cargo planes.

"For as long as I have known Luke, he has always had a drive and desire to make the world and his community better. Even if it is nothing spectacular, he understands the value of a kind word or action and how that can impact someone. He treats everyone with kindness and respect, regardless of who they are or what their role may be."
—Nominator Jared Straight

Grace Danae Morales

Age 16 | Caprock High School | Daughter of Jerry and Branda Morales



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What do you love about your school? Caprock holds a special place in my heart because I come from a long line of Caprock graduates. I love that it offers so many clubs and organizations for me to be involved in. I appreciate how the staff not only allows, but also encourages us to participate in multiple sports and activities, working with our schedules to make it possible. The safe and welcoming environment created by both the staff and my peers has made my experience even more meaningful. I have met incredible people and built lifelong friendships here.

What extracurricular activities have you been a part of during high school? Varsity volleyball; Varsity softball; Superintendent Scholar; IPET; tutoring first-grade students at Tradewind Elementary.

What are you involved in outside of school? Attend Hillside Christian Church; play club softball; volunteer coach for Xtreme (9s and 12s); volunteer for BOOM Adventures.

What are your plans after graduation? I plan to continue my athletic career by playing softball or volleyball at the collegiate level, and am currently attending several exposure camps. I also want to pursue a degree in education/coaching or psychology to become a counselor. Mental health in sports is something I have become passionate about, and I want to make a difference in that area.

"Grace stands as a remarkable role model in our community. Through her commitment to service, she has significantly improved the lives of those around her. Grace's unwavering efforts exemplify the impact one individual can have on their community, inspiring others to give back and make a difference."
—Nominator Casey James

London Morrison

Age 18 | West Texas High School | Daughter of Kenny and Krista Morrison

What do you love about your school? My favorite part about West Texas High School is the faculty. They work hard for students to have a quality education while also taking time to develop relationships with us. I believe our teachers want their children to be successful in whatever path they may choose in life, and encourage us in our dreams and ambitions.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? UIL Speech Team; UIL Band; UIL One-Act Play; volleyball; cross country; track; tennis; Class President for the past three years; Student Council representative; National Honor Society (current vice president); Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Worship team volunteer for Faith Covenant Church Youth Worship Team; Inspiritus Disaster Relief; HOPE; Hutchinson County United Way Day of Caring; CareNet; Helen's Kids; Toys 4 Tots; Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips CISD.

What are your plans post-graduation? I will be pursuing an architecture degree at Harding University while competing on their track and cross country athletic teams. This five-year program includes a summer studying abroad. After graduation, I intend to earn my architectural license. Building and designing homes or industrial offices would be a fun way to express my creativity. I would like to create a mix of modern efficiency and historical design to bring back the beauty of architecture.

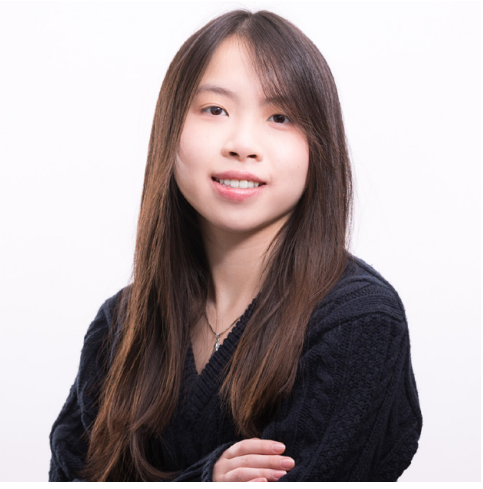
"London's skills range from acting and singing to athletic talent, with the brains to match. Her competitive drive and determination really shine through in her athletic performance, as she has advanced to regionals in her two individual sports, and been a varsity player in volleyball all four years."
—London's nominator



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Darlene Nguyen

Age 17 | Caprock High School | Daughter of Doan Nguyen and Can Le



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What do you love about your school? I attend two campuses: Caprock High School and AmTech Career Academy. I appreciate how Caprock teachers go above and beyond for their students. I also love how AmTech is genuinely invested in guiding students to their full potential.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Student Council; National Honor Society; National Technical Honor Society; SkillsUSA; UIL competitions.

What things are you involved in outside of school? I enjoy doing online Capture the Flag information security competitions, music production, and have recently started bug bounty hunting. This is a program for ethical hackers who discover and report vulnerabilities and bugs to developers.

What are your plans post graduation? I plan to attend Amarillo College, and then transfer to the University of Texas at Dallas to get a bachelor's degree in computer science. I'd like to work in the offensive field of cybersecurity where I can help secure systems by identifying vulnerabilities before threat actors do.

"As a student at Caprock High School and AmTech Career Academy, she has maintained an impressive cumulative GPA of 97.63 while immersing herself in a rigorous Cybersecurity Pathway. Darlene's extraordinary talents and qualities not only set her apart as a student, but also position her as a promising leader in the ever-evolving tech landscape."
—Nominator Ty James

Oziel Olivas

Age 17 | Caprock High School | Son of Fabian and Nidia Olivas

What do you love about your school? The support from my teachers. They have helped me develop into the student that I am now. Thanks to the guidance of my mentor teacher, I have discovered I can achieve more when I have a supportive community of wisdom like I have found at Caprock High School.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Baseball; Science Bowl; my architecture internship with 1to1 Plans Design Lab; community service through National Technical Honor Society.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Member of St. Joseph's Catholic Church Youth Group; Knights of Columbus of Santo Toribio Romo; works of mercy, like mowing lawns for the elderly; student tutor, Amarillo Independent School District in ESD program serving students at Ridgecrest and Paramount Terrace Elementary Schools.

What are your plans post-graduation? Post-graduation, I plan to pursue my career in Architecture Design through Amarillo College and Texas A&M University, and in the future come back to serve my community here in Amarillo.

"Oziel Olivas exemplifies the spirit of community service through his unwavering dedication to helping others and his proactive involvement in various initiatives. Through these impactful actions, Oziel is not only bettering his own community, but also empowering those around him to strive for a brighter future."
—Nominator Casey James



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KT Radavong

Age 17 | Caprock High School | Son of Alex Radavong and Noudeang Souvannakhily

What do you love about your school?
The people and community.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?
Science Bowl; UIL, National Honor Society; Longhorn Life; Homecoming parade cleanup crew.

What things are you involved in outside of school? I have volunteered for the LIPS fundraiser for Opportunity School and Meals on Wheels. I am also involved in gaming.

What are your plans post-graduation?
Post-graduation, I plan to pursue a major in aerospace engineering, but I am not sure what college yet.

"KT Radavong, a remarkable 17-year-old student, embodies a unique blend of extraordinary skills, talents and qualities that have paved the way for his success. With a cumulative GPA of 99.021 and a class rank of 6, KT is a dedicated and disciplined scholar. ... Not only is he an adept student, but he also embraces challenges, demonstrating resilience and a willingness to step out of his comfort zone."
—Nominator Ty James



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Isaac Romero

Age 17 | AmTech Career Academy | Son of Nichole Romero and Ray Romero



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What do you love about your school? AmTech is an award-winning, world-class institution that gives high school students real, hands-on experience in their career field—all for free. The opportunity to learn from industry professionals, work with advanced, state-of-the-art technology, and gain certifications makes it the ideal place for all students to take charge and "Innovate your future!"

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Chapter president of the National Technical Honor Society; vice president and principal violist for Amarillo HS Orchestra; AmTech AmBassadors; AISD Superintendent's Ambassadors and Leadership Council; Health Occupational Students of America; National Honor Society; District-wide Educational Advisory Council; AmTech Leadership Team member.

What things are you involved in outside of school? I am a 2024 Bank of America Student Leader. I have also volunteered for High Plains Food Bank; Snack Pak 4 Kids; Storybridge; Colorful Closets; Panhandle Down Syndrome Guild; Coffee Memorial; Junior Achievement of the High Plains; and I attend and volunteer at Hillside Christian Church.

What are your plans post-graduation?
Post-graduation, I plan to attend university and major in business. During my undergraduate studies, I hope to minor in finance and gain a deep understanding of social impact initiatives. After earning my master's in business administration—which will equip me with the strategic and analytical skills needed to drive meaningful change—I aspire to pursue a career in corporate social responsibility, philanthropy, or in the nonprofit sector, where I can use my education to create lasting impacts.

"Isaac Romero is one of those students who come around every 10 years whom you know will be a success in life by the way they conduct themselves. Isaac is already a professional in every way. No matter what he does, Isaac does it all the way—more than he is asked to do. I can't wait to see what's next for Isaac—whatever it is it will be amazing!"
—Nominator Jay Barrett

Perry Steph

Age 18 | Tascosa High School | Daughter of Tamara and Rodney Steph

What do you love about your school? Tascosa is diverse and accepting; the staff strive to uplift and recognize each student and their triumphs; students show gratitude for their teachers through nominations for the teacher "GOAT of the Week;" nobody is ever left behind and each student is loved and cared for! The tradition of Tascosa is truly inspiring. Being a Rebel has changed my life for the better, and I will forever be grateful.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Varsity soccer; Varsity choir; FISH Club (Friends in Service for Hunger); Tascosa Hygiene Program; National Honor Society president; Rowdy Crowd (THS student spirit club); FFA; Key Club.

What things are you involved in outside of school? I am an acolyte at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, and have served as a camp counselor at Camp Allen near Houston. I'm also a member of the Rush Soccer Club, an usher for the Nutcracker Ballet and Amarillo Symphony, and I serve on the breakfast team at St. Andrew's.

What are your plans post-graduation? I have been accepted to Texas A&M University and will major in mechanical engineering in the fall. I hope to get involved in my university through Freshman Leadership Organization, club sports and Canterbury. Then, I will apply to graduate school to further my career in engineering.

"In every interaction, Perry's kindness, empathy, and genuine nature shine through. She is a student who greets each day with enthusiasm and a smile, leaving a positive impact on everyone she meets. Perry's genuine care for others and her passion for making a positive impact make her an exceptional role model for her peers."
—Nominator Emily Cook



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Surya Yalamanchili

Age 16 | Amarillo High School | Son of Kishore and Chandana Yalamanchili



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What do you love about your school? I love the connections I have made there with my friends and my teachers. I also like how there are many things to compete in that are very different from other schools, such as Latin Competitions.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? One of two students in the AHS IB Program; EcoBots Club president; Latin Club officer; Latin League team captain; Red Cross Club member; Students for Change Club member; Science Bowl Team member.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Keep Amarillo Clean Representative; bookkeeper for Contagion Athletics; Interact Club member; currently designing a STEM research website with students from Wisconsin.

What are your plans post-graduation? My dream after high school is to attend the University of Pennsylvania's M&T program. Being accepted to this program will help me delve into the world of molecular and cell biology while also learning business management skills. With this expertise, I intend to become immersed in the world of genetics—specifically gene editing—and aspire to create a company that helps people adapt as we become a more advanced species. Some of my visions surround human regeneration and human longevity. My goal is to make my mark on the world and help human civilization while I'm at it.

"Surya started a STEM research website for posting research papers in order to give easier access to the type of research most public high school students can't find on their own. He is always trying to dig a little deeper into subjects that fascinate him, and finding academic papers is frustratingly difficult."
—Nominator Leslie McCaslin



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ASIAN FOOD IN A-TOWN

Documenting Amarillo's Asian Food Boom

BY **JASON BOYETT**



In the 1960s, Kavee Kaewdang worked in Thailand's government. He lived in Nonthaburi, Thailand—a smaller city about 12 miles from Bangkok, known for a huge fresh market offering all kinds of street food. Kaewdang and his family struggled to live on a low government salary, but had a cousin who had relocated to Amarillo, Texas. The idea of a move, and a fresh start, intrigued him.

"We had to visit them," he says today in heavily accented English. His niece, Apple, helps translate for him. Kavee came to Amarillo in 1970, looking for a new chance. "That's where everything started."

By 1985, Kaewdang had opened Bangkok Bar on a property at 5901 E. Amarillo Blvd. Over the years, it became Bangkok Restaurant and Lounge, offering "home-style Thai food the way you'll find it in Thailand." It's located within the incredibly diverse Eastridge neighborhood, surrounded by big business and industrial buildings. The Amazon Fulfillment Center is nearby. Pacific Cheese and the local Coca-Cola distributor are in the neighborhood. Pantex is that direction, a few miles outside the city limits. So are the big processing plants.

"I thought this was the best location, because people from Tyson, this is the first restaurant they see coming back to town," he says. "People are gonna stop here, eating and drinking and enjoy."

Kaewdang turns 90 this summer. He and his wife, Somying, still work at the restaurant. She's central to the kitchen. Their daughter, Kasorn, bustles around the dining area. Kavee inspects the appearance and plating of food before it's delivered to the restaurant's loyal diners, who have been eating and drinking and enjoying themselves at this restaurant for four decades now.

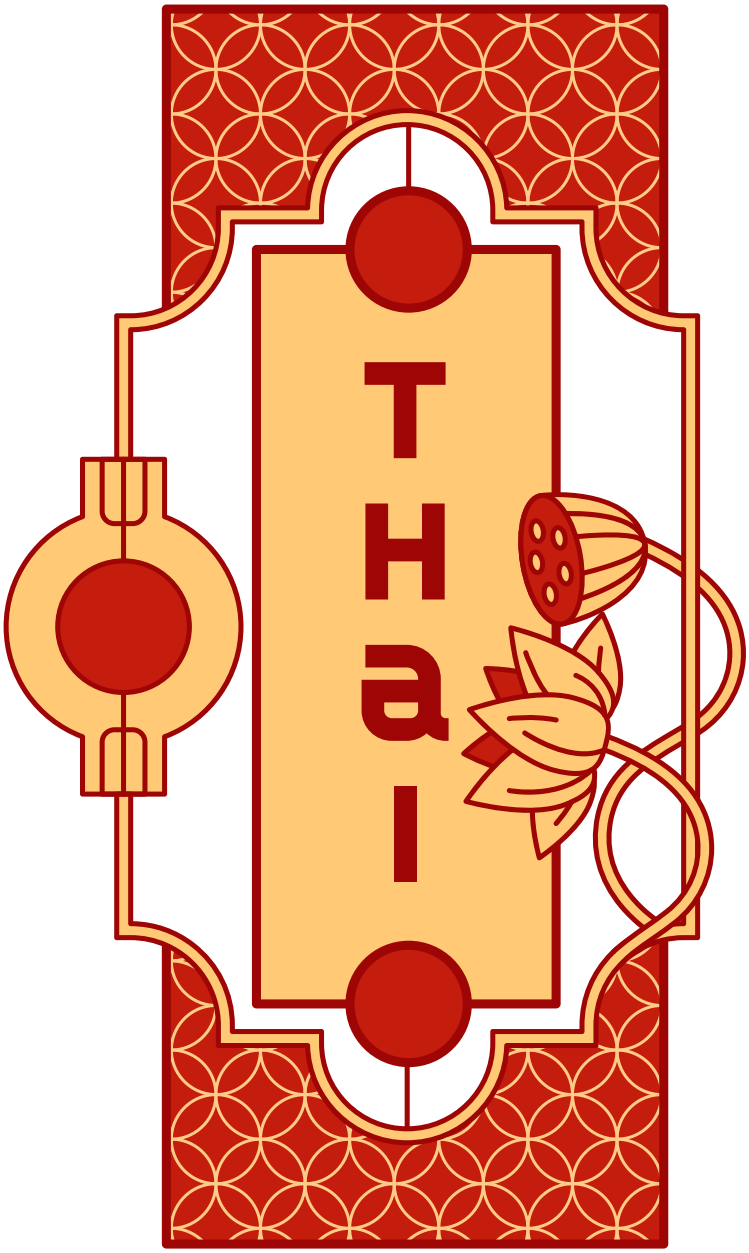
Though it started as a bar, Bangkok was likely the first Thai restaurant in Amarillo and may have been one of the first Asian restaurants here. That was in the 1980s, and dishes like pad thai or thai curry must have felt truly exotic on Amarillo's east side. But today, in what has become an increasingly diverse culinary scene, Asian flavors and foods seem to be everywhere.

The Texas Panhandle may not be the first place that comes to mind for bold Asian flavors, but 40 years after Kavee Kaewdang opened his doors on the Boulevard, our streets are filled with family-run eateries and modern fusion spots alike. Each location brings unique flavors, traditions and family stories to the table.

As winter began to give way to spring, *Brick & Elm* embarked on a tour of the local Asian culinary scene. We weren't interested in generic buffets or chains along I-40. Instead, we wanted to unroll the unique flavors and preparations favored across our diverse Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese and Korean restaurants. All of these cultures share common ingredients, like rice and noodles, but each also offers distinctive techniques and dining experiences.



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KAVEE KAEWDANG AND HIS FAMILY AT BANGKOK RESTAURANT


PAD THAI

Bangkok Restaurant & Lounge

Amarillo's Eastridge neighborhood is a true melting pot of cultures, and home to a number of families who have arrived in the Texas Panhandle from Asia. The first Vietnam War refugees who resettled in Amarillo in the 1970s found homes here. There are two Buddhist temples in the area, and multiple Asian markets. Eastridge Elementary School, at last count, had 38 different languages and dialects spoken by its students.

Kavee Kaewdang loves his location because of that broad diversity, but remains committed to authentic Thai food in a city that now boasts dozens of options. Kaewdang says a lot of those competitors serve more "Americanized" food that's simply not as good as his authentic Thai food. He's proud of what he and his family have built.

"I like to show every flavor," Kaewdang says about the dishes on the Bangkok Restaurant menu (shown on this spread). "Sweet, sour, salty. It's kind of tasty."

He's right, of course, and those flavor combinations—along with spice from Thai chili peppers—are unique to Thai cuisine. "We use authentic herbs and original ingredients," says Kaewdang.



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Kop-jai Thai-Lao Street Food Restaurant
Opening soon at
6014 S. Western St.

Little Laos
3811 SW Sixth Ave.
806.803.0373

Munchies
2509 SW Third Ave.
806.803.3267

My Thai Restaurant
2029 Coulter St.
806.355.9541
mythaiamarillo.com

Sayakomarn's Restaurant
421 16th St., Canyon
806.655.2698
sayakomarns.com

Sticky Chikky
8700 Clinton Glenn Road
806.484.1793
stickychikky.com

Taste of Thai
1900 SE 34th Ave.,
Suite 1100
806.373.9995
amarillotasteofthai.com

Thai Arawan
2834 Wolflin Ave.
806.463.7167
thaiarawan.com

Thai Cuisine
4041 S. Washington St.
806.803.2174

Thai Diamond
1653 N. Grand St.
806.383.1900

Thai House
5601 E. Amarillo Blvd.
806.383.0003
thaitx.top

Thai Kitchen
713 23rd St., Canyon
806.655.4741

Thai Koon
7030 S. Western St.
806.353.4444
facebook.com/ThaiKoonAmarillo

Thai Menu Restaurant
6204 Hillside Road,
Suite 900
806.418.6824

Thai Palace
4723 S. Western St.,
Suite F
806.331.6011
facebook.com/thaipalaceamarillo

Thai Taste
7710 Hillside Road,
Suite 100
806.352.4444
thaitasteamarillo.com

Thai Thai
2515 S. Grand St.
806.803.9090
facebook.com/thaithaiamarillo

Thai Town Restaurant
1300 Ross St.
806.372.6675

Thai Yoshi
3314 S. Washington St.
806.367.8885

Toom's Restaurant
3416 NE 24th Ave.
806.381.2568
facebook.com/Tooms-Restaurant-Amarillo-TX

JAPANESE



SUSHI AND SASHIMI PARTY BOAT

Oishii Japanese Sushi & Sake

From interactive hibachi-style preparation at Kabuki Romanza or Tokyo Japanese Steakhouse to impeccably rolled sushi and sashimi, Amarillo's exposure to Japanese favorites has exploded in recent years.

In this environment, Oishii Japanese Sushi and Sake is a standout. Owned and operated by La Pham and James Bouamidi—who apprenticed at a prominent sushi restaurant in Florida before making his way to the High Plains—Oishii prioritizes the freshest fish possible. Three times a week, they fly in seafood from vendors in Japan and Hawaii.

Bouamidi, whom most employees call "Uncle James," says patrons can tell the difference. "They say, 'Why is your fish not so fishy?' It's because it is fresh," he says. "Frozen makes it smell fishy."

Not only is the fish not overly fishy at Oishii, but it looks unlike any other restaurant. The dramatic presentation of his dishes (shown here), right down to the bonito roe on some sashimi dishes, is intended to get attention.



PANANG CURRY



TUNA TOWER ROLL



CHICKEN TERIYAKI

Bangkok-Tokyo
2413 S. Western St.
806.353.4777
bangkoktokyoamarillo.com

Chop Chop Rice Co.
3300 S. Coulter St., Suite 1
806.457.0700

2818 Wolflin Ave.
806.731.4499
chopchoprice.com

Ichiban Noodle Bar & Asian Cuisine
3309 Wimberly Road, Suite 3444
806.355.5031

Kabuki Romanza Japanese Steakhouse & Sushi Bar
8130 W. I-40
806.358.7799
kabukiromanza.com

The King and I of Canyon
104 15th St., Canyon
806.655.2491

Lemongrass Sushi & Wok
2207 S. Western St., Suite 800
806.352.5535
facebook.com/lemongrasssushiandwok

Oishii Japanese Sushi & Sake
2721 Virginia Circle
806.877.2464

Rain Premier Sushi Bar & Lounge
817 S. Polk St.
806.331.1155
rainamarillo.com

Sushi House
2630 Wolflin Ave.
806.803.9470

1160 Time Square
806.318.3029
sushihouse.top

Sushi Yama
3562 S. Soncy Road, Unit 261
806.877.1636

Texas Chicken Bowl
3011 E. Amarillo Blvd.
806.383.9038
texaschicken.top

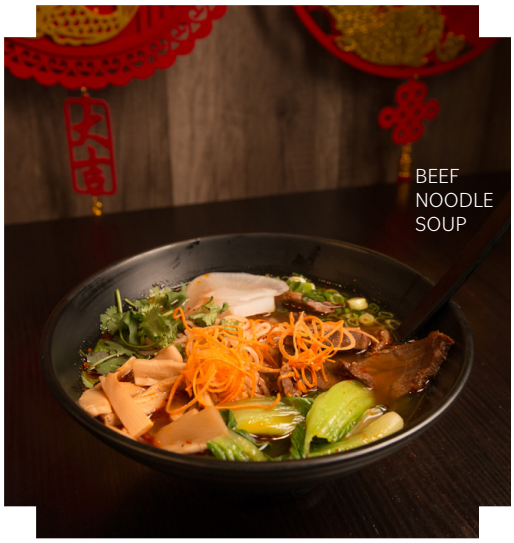
Tokyo Japanese Steakhouse
5807 SW 45th Ave.
806.358.8888

Tsunami Japanese Steakhouse & Thai Cuisine
1108 Bell St.
806.352.2688

Yanagi Hibachi
Opening soon at
6721 W. I-40

Young Sushi "Rocks!"
202 SW 10th Ave.
806.371.7200
facebook.com/OfficialYoungsSushiRocks

CHINESE


BEEF NOODLE SOUP


KIMCHI RAMEN


GREEN CHICKEN CURRY

Fun Noodle Bar

In a cozy booth at Fun Noodle Bar, manager Jery Zheng describes how he was born in southeastern China and immigrated to the U.S. when he was 12. His cousin, Steve Ling, developed the concept of a noodle bar serving Chinese and Japanese food—think sushi, ramen and traditional Chinese dumplings—and enlisted Zheng to operate the small, regional chain's Amarillo location. At the time, Zheng had been living in Pennsylvania but moved to Amarillo to open the restaurant in 2021.

Everything is handmade (photos on this page). The open kitchen stretches the length of the dining area, where the fresh preparations of noodles and dumplings are visible behind plexiglass.

Customers seem to love the sushi and ramen, but what truly sets Fun Noodle Bar apart are its dumplings. "The dumplings are the same as the ones in China," Zheng says, including the delectable, thin-skinned soup dumplings—filled with a rich, flavorful broth—and the soft, fluffy steamed bao (see page 47).

While some Asian restaurants are known to "Americanize" their foods by toning down the spice, Zheng says that approach does not apply to true Chinese food. "The food in China is more bland because the people [there] don't like extreme flavor," he says. "The people here like more flavor, so it's more sweet or more salty or more spicy. It's more extreme on the levels."

Chiyo's
4313 Teckla Blvd.
806.468.9385

810 N. Pierce St.
806.374.6146

Fun Noodle Bar Amarillo
2219 S. Georgia St.
806.803.2219

Pacific Rim
2061 Paramount Blvd.
806.353.9179
pacificrimam.com

Super Bowl Noodle
810 Columbia St., Suite 300
806.418.8580



KOREAN-INSPIRED BEEF RIBS



KIMCHEE SHRIMP TACOS



Gooney's

The arrival of a Korean BBQ chain on I-40 attracted local attention last year. (Yes, cooking your own meat at the table is an authentic Korean-restaurant experience. No, all-you-can-eat dining is not generally authentic.)

But locals in the know have been enjoying Korean-inspired dishes for 13 years from restaurants like Gooney's, located downtown on Polk Street (photos on this page). Owner/operator David Keomoungkhoune was inspired to open his fusion-style restaurant after having grown up around his parents' operation, the beloved Kitchen Express. (David's mother, Susi, is 56 and recovering from a recent heart surgery. His father, Praseuth, passed away in early 2023.)

"I can still hear him yelling at me, every time I'm cooking food," David says. "He's just there, breathing [down] my neck," encouraging David to make it perfect.

David and his parents' background is Lao—the family arrived as refugees in 1980 to join family already in Amarillo—but he says there's a lot of overlap between his family's culinary culture and Korean cuisine. The Korean-style short ribs at Gooney's emphasize spicy and fermented elements, including key ingredients like Korean chile peppers (*gochu*) and fermented chili paste (*gochujang*).

Kimchi is also prominent. "It's actually a pickled cabbage where we use the chili [paste] and then the garlic, and then you let that ferment," David says.

For David, sharing these flavors and preparations remains a way to hold on to his family traditions. "When he passed away, I wanted to quit," he says. "But then everything he taught me, everything's going to be gone, people won't be able to enjoy it. I love cooking." His dad loved cooking, too. "So that's why I do it."

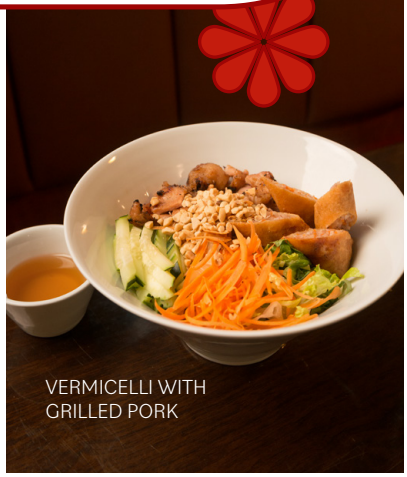
Dae Gee
Coming soon to 2207 S. Western, Suites 20 and 30.

Gooney's
705 S. Polk St.
806.367.9585
facebook.com/GooneysAmarillo

Volcano Korean BBQ
8518 W. I-40
806.803.0424
volcanobbqamarillo.com

VIETNAMESE


GRILLED PORK CHOP & EGG


VERMICELLI WITH GRILLED PORK


SAIGON PHO WITH PORK


EGG ROLL CHA GIO

Saigon 84

When Hai Pham says, "I've been in the restaurant business since I was 15," you picture the ambitious young Vietnamese restaurateur learning traditional recipes and methods from his elders. But Pham's entry into cooking wasn't a small, ethnic restaurant.

It was the Country Barn Steakhouse. The original one, out on Lakeside. He also cut his teeth managing the local Applebee's, plus a few years with Sysco, the food services company. "Basically, I like this business. I like this industry," he says.

Pham was 12 when he arrived in Amarillo in 1996. And though the Palo Duro grad may have learned the restaurant business in a local steakhouse, he never abandoned his roots. Saigon, the restaurant he started with his sister, first opened near Ross/Osage before it moved west along I-40 more than a decade ago. It served authentic Vietnamese dishes until closing last summer. Pham turned his attention to a smaller concept, Pho 84, at 34th and Bell.

Early in 2025, Pho 84 merged with the larger Saigon concept to become Saigon 84, offering Asian fusion fare in Wolflin Square (photos on this page). Pham says the flavors are still traditional and says "fusion" describes his insistence on offering premium beef products. "Here is the place you can go to an Asian restaurant and you can get a better cut of beef," he says. "From rib-eye to New York Strip or Filet Mignon." In fact, he just returned from a trip to Vietnam, where he missed quality Texas-raised beef. "They use the chewy meat and no flavor," he says.

Beyond that, almost everything at Saigon 84 is made from scratch, with Pham simmering beef bones for hours to create his traditional pho broth. Pham comes from south Vietnam, a region where the food's bolder, sweeter flavors were influenced by French and American visitors.

"South Vietnam people care about their food," he says. "It's a real good meal."

Asian Bistro
1006 E. Amarillo Blvd.
806.418.6143

Saigon 84
2401 W. I-40
806.803.0366

THE BEST OF BOBA

Bubble tea, also known as *boba*, originated in Taiwan in the 1980s. It was decades, of course, before the worldwide sensation arrived in Amarillo. But it's here now and readily available at a variety of locations. Locals love the endless customizability of the drink, which blends tea, milk and fruit flavors with chewy tapioca pearls or juice-filled poppers.

One local favorite with a sophisticated and decidedly Asian vibe is Feng Cha on Gem Lake Road, which opened in 2023 and continues to see steady business. Feng Cha has franchisees across the United States, but the Amarillo location is owned by Dr. Mai-Vy Hoang, a Vietnam-born optometrist at Broome Optical.

Highlights of the local Feng Cha menu include Classic Milk Tea, Taro Milk Tea, and the indulgent Créme Brulee Dirty Boba. If you're never tried Vietnamese Coffee, theirs is the best in town.



CRÉME BRULEE DIRTY BOBA FROM FENG CHA

Bubble Bar
2203 Fourth Ave., Canyon
806.510.7207
gobubblebar.com

Feng Cha Amarillo
5611 Gem Lake Road, Suite 500
806.437.1556
fengchausa.com

Leaf & Bubble
4137 SW 34th Ave.
806.420.9657
leafandbubbletea.com

Revolve Lounge
3703 Wolflin Ave.
806.559.3603
facebook.com/Revolve-Lounge

ShareTea Amarillo
2612 Wolflin Ave.
806.877.2623
shareteamarillo.com

WOK & ROLL: THE FOOD TRUCKS

Amarillo's current food truck renaissance isn't confined to barbecue or burgers. Some of the most beloved trucks in town are definitely Asian-influenced, from the hibachi preparation of Hibachi Kingdom to the unique flavors of the bus-sized Seoulmate Korean Snack House. (Pro tip: Go for the Gochujang Bulgogi spicy pork.)

The food truck world in this area is notoriously dynamic. We continue to see new trucks appear, with vendors constantly rolling in and out. Despite the evolving landscape, here are a few of the tried-and-true trucks that proudly serve Asian dishes.

Chop Chop Rice Co
806.433.9458
chopchoprice.com

Hibachi Kingdom
806.316.1487

Hood Eats
2801 Duniven Circle
806.599.3603
facebook.com/@hoodeats806

Kham Yum Yum
806.570.4760
facebook.com/khamyumyum

Saigon Senorita
806.884.0400
facebook.com/saigonsenorita

Seoulmate Korean Snack House
806.346.0833
facebook.com/seoulmatetexas

Sushi Bomb
806.220.6493
facebook.com/itstheBom

Thai Dragon
806.290.5276

Yum Yum Hibachi
806.324.3405

Crossing Generations

How a few local organizations are building more authentic relationships between young and old

BY **MEAGHAN COLLIER**

Picture the last time you stood in the security line at the airport. Whether a smaller airport like Rick Husband Amarillo International Airport or something much bigger like Dallas Fort-Worth International Airport, it's a perfect microcosm of life. Overachieving travelers work to impress the TSA agent with their efficiency. Stressed-out families juggle strollers, backpacks and snack-filled carry-ons. There are nervous flyers, seasoned pros and revelatory adventurers. There are young people, and there are older folks, too.

For those born after 2001, this experience of the security line is all they've ever known. They instinctively have their travel documents ready—often digital—know how to position themselves for the full-body scan and understand exactly what to remove from their bags. They've grown up in an era where identifying liquids, preparing for pat-downs and maneuvering through ever-evolving security measures are second nature.

For older generations, the experience can be overwhelming. The uncertainty is palpable. Papers and passports, shoes and water bottles, electronics and snacks tumble into bins in a rush of organized chaos. Then, there's the inevitable disclosure of knee, hip and shoulder replacements, adding yet another layer to the process.

The security line is a striking metaphor for generational differences. Culture and technology shape how people engage with the world, and oftentimes, those differences exist based on a person's age.

Of the more than 200,000 people who live in Amarillo, about 16 percent are considered older adults, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Called Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) or the Silent Generation (those born between 1928 and 1945), these residents grew up during economic expansion, were privy to significant social change and saw a great technology shift.

Across the age chasm, you'll find members of Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) and Generation Alpha (born from 2012 to the present) making up a much larger portion of the city's population. This highly connected group is generally considered the most diverse population ever and markedly focused on social issues.

While both groups have witnessed a changing technological landscape, Katheryn English, operations manager for the Area Agency on Aging in Amarillo, says technology has become the greatest digital divide between these two groups.

"Many older adults have expressed they feel left behind and can be deeply apprehensive about embracing new technology," she says. "Unlike the younger generations who have grown up with tablets and smartphones, many older adults built full lives and careers before computers and the internet became widespread. For younger people, it's almost unimaginable to navigate life without instant access to technology, but for older adults, learning and adapting to these tools can feel overwhelming."

Colby Currie, curator of education at the Amarillo Museum of Art, says he's noticed that generation gaps like these can sometimes make for extraordinary differences in people, and that can make it challenging to find common ground.

"I think we naturally gravitate toward people we relate to—people that share common interests and have similar backgrounds," he says. "It takes extra effort to step out of our comfort zones to connect with someone who doesn't fit that model. Perhaps, if we stepped beyond our ordinary limits and opened our minds to people we consider different, those connections could make larger impacts on people, even if the experience is more fleeting."

The desire to find common understanding has pushed many local groups to curate space intentionally—stepping beyond those "ordinary limits"—to bring generations together. The intergenerational meetups look different across the region, but organizers say it's working to build better understanding and more authentic relationships between these broad segments of the population.

"When you pair the energy and enthusiasm of youth with the wisdom and life experience of seniors, something special happens," says Chad Conner, the founder and executive director of Acts Community. "It's easy to get caught up in overthinking and overplanning, but when everyone is smiling, it's an easy decision to try to recreate those moments."

Amarillo Museum of Art's Senior Portrayals

Leadership at the Amarillo Museum of Art was inspired by an exhibit last year called *In Their Own Words: Native Impressions*. Currie says the exhibition featured two artists collaborating to conduct interviews with Native Americans from North Dakota. One artist interviewed the sitters, and another painted their portraits, which were later turned into carved woodblocks and printed. The exhibition amplified the voices of a marginalized group and brought



DRAWING SESSIONS AT AMOA







PROVIDED PHOTOS

greater awareness to the struggles and triumphs of contemporary Native Americans.

"We wanted to mimic the artists' process of combining life drawing and written interviews," Currie says. "We also wanted to expand upon the empathy garnered in the processes of both drawing someone from observation and listening to another's point of view."

AMoA staff invited Amarillo College art students to tour the exhibition to introduce them to the work and the scope of the assignment. Then, they invited them back to join a group of seniors from Jan Werner Adult Day Care for the drawing session and interviews.

"In this scenario, students had the experience of slowing down and looking closely at another human, as well as listening carefully to their stories," Currie says. "The seniors had a great experience being the center of attention but also made art themselves. It was special to witness a situation where people interchanged positive and basic human emotions through art and just being open to one another."

Currie says AMoA plans to host another iteration of the program next fall, now called *Senior Portrayals*. It will coincide with the upcoming summer exhibition, *Home, Love, Loss*. Additionally, the museum offers its Young@ART program each year to hundreds of seniors in retirement, assisted living and nursing centers. Programs combine art history lessons and hands-on art activities.

The Loft at First Baptist Church Amarillo

"In the New Testament, the church is presented as a family," says Howard Batson, Ph.D., pastor of First Baptist Church Amarillo. "Perhaps too often, modern churches segregate their congregation, keeping generations apart."

Batson clarifies that offering different styles of services at different times isn't wrong; it's just not what he wants to see at the church he leads. All services at First Baptist Church Amarillo are the same because, among other reasons, he says it brings all generations together to sing traditional hymns, contemporary praise and worship music and hear sermons that apply to all ages.

"We've had great results," he says. "This new building is evidence of that."

The new building he's referring to is a 77,000-square-foot

Other Efforts to Bridge Generations

These examples aren't the only local opportunities for generations to mingle:

- Students at **AmTech Career Academy** assist older adults at **Park Central** with technology, helping them feel more connected and fostering meaningful relationships between generations.
- The **Amarillo Wesley Community Center** regularly takes older adults to **Snack Pak 4 Kids** to volunteer. This allows them to interact with fellow volunteers, providing meaningful engagement, a sense of purpose, and a stronger community connection. Additionally, older adults directly contribute their time and efforts to a program that benefits young children in need.
- The **Area Agency on Aging** is working to bridge the technology gap by offering education programs through AARP's Senior Planet initiative. These programs equip older adults with skills to recognize and avoid online scams, use social media and navigate basic computer and smartphone functions. These classes help ease seniors' hesitancy toward technology and open the door to communication with younger generations.







RENDERINGS OF THE LOFT AT FIRST BAPTIST



PROVIDED PHOTOS

ministry center called The Loft, designed to reach students in the Amarillo area. Batson says church leadership wanted to build a Christian community in a safe place for students to gather. It will house a two-level parking garage that will be shared with Park Place Tower employees and guests during the week and provide additional parking for Sunday activities.

The unique aspect of The Loft is how it connects to Park Central, a nearby senior adult community.

"Quite literally, The Loft bridges generations via a 115-foot-long sky bridge traversing Harrison Street," Batson explains. "Providing seniors and teenagers with specific opportunities to do missions together will break down barriers that naturally keep generations apart."

Still under construction, the multimillion-dollar center will feature a large worship space, classrooms, an artificial turf field for recreation, coffee shops, gathering space, sports courts and even a three-story corkscrew slide. Batson says church leadership is focused on growing the student ministry by providing area youth with a place to gather outside of traditional scheduled church services and youth group times. This expansion allows for that while providing space to also engage seniors in meaningful activities.

"Imagine 40 seventh-grade girls sitting side by side with 40 senior adult ladies as they prepare Christmas bags for our prison ministry," he says. "Our new sky bridge will allow our Wednesday evening preschool mission groups to safely cross Harrison Street and visit their adopted grandparents at Park Central. Scripture tells us that we're to treat those in the community of faith who are our own age as brothers and sisters. We are likewise to treat our elders as our mothers and fathers in the faith family."

Upon completion of this walkway, Park Central residents living in Park Place Towers, Moore Assisted Living, the Harrington and the Continental will be able to walk from their facilities to the sanctuary of FBCA without ever stepping outdoors, avoiding inclement weather and potentially hazardous traffic.

"At First Baptist Church Amarillo, senior adults are a vital part of everything we do," Batson says. "As younger generations engage with seniors, they are likely to gain more than they give. Seniors offer wisdom, encouragement and a few tales about the good old days. Every healthy faith community should seek to build bridges between generations."

A Gift of Music

When asked what she loves about teaching music, Jodie Johnson, a 28-year teaching veteran, quickly responds.

"How long do you have?" she says with a smile. "I just love sharing my love of music with the kids, but also, I get to see them from kindergarten through fifth grade, and I love watching how they become these wonderful people."

While she certainly teaches them music fundamentals, Johnson is most proud of teaching her students about giving the gift of music. Each spring, her fifth-grade honor choir goes on a community tour to area nursing homes and hospitals. The students perform a variety of songs—some patriotic, some homages to past eras.

"Last year, we were at BSA, and this sweet man was coming off the



VOLUNTEERS AT ACTS COMMUNITY



THE RIDGECREST HONOR CHOIR

PROVIDED PHOTOS



elevator when we were singing a song—kind of a '60s-era song—and he started dancing," she says joyfully. "I think they see maybe a glimpse of what these people were like when they were younger. I try to explain this is what they were listening to on the radio when they were their age. They think that's so funny, and they don't believe me until older people start dancing or singing along."

Johnson says that while her students are learning soft skills like shaking hands and engaging with people they might not traditionally spend time with, these music lessons are also an opportunity to teach about history and culture.

"I remember one young man just walked up to this man at the veterans hospital, shook his hand, looked him in the eye, and said, 'Thank you for your service,'" she says. "It really touches the people we're singing for, but also touches our kids. I hope what I'm teaching them is community service, that there's always something we can give, whether it's a song or something else. I hope it inspires them to do more good."

Johnson's honor choir at Ridgecrest Elementary isn't the only school in the Amarillo Independent School District participating in efforts to deliver an intergenerational experience. She says the district encourages it, and while efforts are relatively organic, music teachers across the district work to coordinate their efforts so students can reach many different communities of older Amarillo residents.

"What I hear from my kids is, 'They reminded me of my grandma,' or, 'They reminded me of my grandpa.' But also, I've heard them say that they went home and asked their grandma about something based on what we did, and that makes me super happy because then that's opening up conversations within their own family. That has made my heart happy."

Generations of Smiles

At Acts Community, more than 70 kids served a Thanksgiving meal to more than 100 seniors last year. Executive Director Chad Conner says the kids value being given important roles in the event, and the seniors exhibit a deep sense of appreciation for their time and care.

"The key to this working so beautifully is that both generations feel seen and special," he says. "It's not just about the meal. It's about the connection, the kindness and the joy that comes from knowing that each person's presence truly matters."

Conner says that the continued volunteerism from the kids during the summer at senior programs creates bonds that make everyone feel valued and helps combat an epidemic of loneliness that exists in the senior population.

Acts Community has launched its new after-school programs, so Conner anticipates more opportunities for seniors to serve and mentor kids. Acts Community provides seniors with a free and nutritious meal every weekday. Seniors can also participate in a variety of activities each week, including fitness and art classes, Bible study and games.

"Many of our seniors have led rich, fulfilling lives, but after retirement, they often struggle to find purpose," he explains. "Bringing seniors and kids together gives both generations a chance to make a real difference in each other's lives."



PHOTO BY KELSEY'S PHOTOGRAPHY



Prom Season





PROVIDED PHOTOS

BY **JASON BOYETT**

It's coming. Spring in Amarillo is the season of sharp tuxedos, glamorous dresses and prom night photo shoots. Good or bad, everyone seems to have a story about high school prom. The concept features prominently in most films about teenagers and remains embedded in the memories of today's adults, years and even decades after the experience. For some, prom was everything it should have been. But others missed out on those positive memories. They didn't attend, for one reason or another. Or maybe they did attend and had a bad experience beyond the awkward dancing.

In recent years, a number of local organizations have given Amarillo people the opportunity for a prom season do-over, introducing grown-up prom-style events that allow locals to revisit this high school rite of passage with fun, music and community—and hopefully without the drama.

For those who want to dress up and celebrate, it's prom season again, and it's no longer just for high school students.

Elder Goth Prom

The origin story for this unique event started at Aunt Eek's Books and Curiosities, a shop along historic Sixth Street. "A group of us were sitting around Aunt Eek's, talking about our experiences with our high school proms," says Angelina Marie, a local photographer and occasional *Brick & Elm* contributor. "Each of us expressed how disappointing the event was for kids that didn't fit in." As far back as the early 1990s, they had all experienced high school as part of









PHOTOS BY KELSEY'S PHOTOGRAPHY

the alternative crowd. Sequined prom gowns and top-40 pop music weren't really their style.

Someone joked, "What if we threw our own prom?"

It was a proverbial lightbulb moment. "We all looked at each other and thought the same thing: What if?"

That was more than three years ago, and Feb. 15 brought the third installment of Amarillo's Elder Goth Prom, which took place at the Khiva Shrine building. (The "Elder" part of the name reflects the fact that the organizers are all in their 40s and 50s.)

That first year started small and invite-only, with only 50 attendees. The organizers prepared the food themselves.

Last year's event grew to 250 people and required catering.

This year drew a crowd of 300—including attendees from as far away as Colorado and New Mexico—and sold out months in advance.

The vibe of the event is decidedly different from the pinks and pastels of high school proms. The goth cultural phenomenon emerged in the 1980s, influenced by the post-punk music scene. Black is a prominent color within the subculture, as are themes of melancholy, mystery and the macabre. Back then, bands like The Cure and Joy Division featured prominently. Goth fashion featured dark clothing, Victorian-inspired elements and dramatic makeup.

This year's theme: "La Lune Noire," which is French for "the black moon." As described by the online event listing: "Think art nouveau meets romantic vampire with a pinch of stardust."

All elements were on display this year. "You don't have to dress specifically goth," explains Angelina Marie, "but there's a lot of black, alternative fashion." Guests go all out, designing their own costumes and sewing their own creations, from elaborate headpieces and makeup to dramatic footwear.

A "Goth Prom Royal Court" presents an opportunity for attendees to display their fashions. Prom-goers have the option to purchase a boutonniere-sized corsage that puts them in the running for royalty. "Each [corsage] has a number, and attendees vote for their favorite number," says Angelina Marie. The winners receive a bouquet of roses, crowns and tickets to next year's event.

Beyond the fashion, the music, and the Royal Court, the organizers view the rapidly growing event as a way to connect others and build community within Amarillo's diverse and lively cultural landscape. "We quickly realized how desperately needed this was for our area," Angelina says. "We have been amazed by the enthusiasm and support. It's an honor to create a gathering where folks can fully be themselves without fear of judgment."

Mom Prom

Two weeks after the Elder Goth Prom, a much more conventional prom took place. This one, featuring brighter colors and musical accompaniment, brought more than 900 women to the Amarillo Civic Center Complex for a fundraising gala hosted by Amarillo Angels. The nonprofit, which assists children and families in the foster care system, scheduled its first-ever Mom Prom in 2022.

The organization initially had modest plans that year, but the response was so staggering that it quickly had to switch venues.

"It was an overwhelmingly positive experience," says Sarena Carpenter about that first event. She's the co-executive director for Amarillo Angels. "We originally booked the Grand Plaza [at the Amarillo Civic Center], but it sold out in just a few days, so we moved to the North Exhibit Hall." A total of 600 women attended in 2022. Last year's Mom Prom attracted an astonishing 930 participants.

This year's event, on March 1, had similar community interest.

Gwen Hicks, founder of Amarillo Angels and Carpenter's co-executive director, launched the ladies-only gala after researching multiple fundraising concepts. It has since become the organization's largest fundraiser of the year. It's not just for mothers, either. All women older than 20 are welcome.

Local businesses donate raffle products, and the raffle ticket drawing then serves to select the prom queen via the last ticket drawn. Participants also look forward to a "dance off" as the evening winds down, with organizers selecting five participants who appear to be having the most fun on the dance floor.

Established in 2017, Amarillo Angels provides programs to assist









foster children and their foster families.

Another initiative continues the prom focus. For teenagers in foster care, the Fairy Godmother project provides them with formal wear and accessories for their own high school proms. Foster families can make appointments with Amarillo Angels to "shop" for dresses, tuxedos, shoes and accessories from a collection of donated items. "We're always looking for donations for this project—physical items mostly," says Carpenter.

Carpenter says some of this year's attendees spent months shopping for their dresses. Suggesting that the event is a "two-for-one special," Carpenter explains, "It's a night where a woman can go, get all glammed up, and forget about everything." At the same time, it helps improve the lives of local foster families and kids in the foster care system.

Night To Shine

In communities worldwide, the Tim Tebow Foundation's annual Night to Shine event has become a global movement "centered on God's love, honoring and valuing people with special needs," according to the Foundation. That includes Amarillo's own Night to Shine on Feb. 7.

Unlike the previous Mom Prom or Elder Goth Prom, this prom-style event is open to children (13 and older) and adults with special needs. The first local Night to Shine gala, in 2019, began at The Loft Church with 175 guests. This year, 500 attendees and 800 volunteers occupied Amarillo Civic Center's Regency Room, Heritage Room and the North and South Exhibit Halls.

For those with special needs, community donations and sponsorships make this event free.

Volunteers play a critical role. "This is a completely volunteer event," says Kyndra Munsell, local Night to Shine logistics coordinator. "The biggest number of volunteers is for our buddies."

Each child or young adult is paired with a "buddy" at registration, and that volunteer escorts the guest throughout the evening. Additional volunteers are present in every room of the event, including a special Sensory Room.

It's more than just an opportunity to dress up and dance. After registering, each guest may choose a limousine ride that drops them off at an elegantly decorated entrance, complete with flash photography and paparazzi. The Palo Duro High School Don Diamonds and Tascosa High School Cheer team welcome each guest.

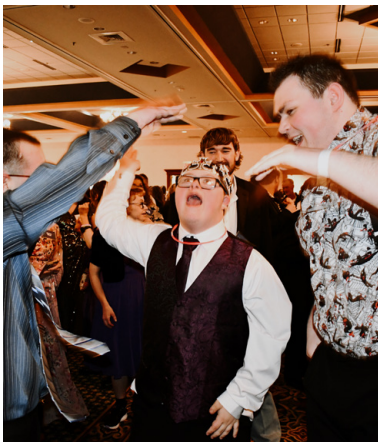
After walking the red carpet, young men may opt for a shoe shine while the women are treated to hair, makeup and jewelry in the Glam Room. Photographers take professional portraits. Each guest and buddy enjoy a catered meal, with music, karaoke and a dance floor nearby.

The event also provides a much-needed break for moms and dads. While the buddies accompany the guests for the evening, parents and caretakers relax in the lavish hospitality of the Respite Room—complete with door prize drawings and a catered steak dinner.

Amarillo's Night to Shine event took place at the same time and date of hundreds of other similar events across the United States, and at the end of the Feb. 7 event, Heisman Trophy winner Tim Tebow delivered a recorded message to all of the prom guests around the world. After that, the prom king and prom queen are named—and everyone wins. The young women are given tiaras and the young men receive crowns.

Munsell says the event, now in its seventh year, has given her a new perspective and made her more grateful. "It's something I didn't know I needed until I volunteered for it," she says. "It made me realize how much I took for granted."











Second Chance Prom

A final local prom experience offers young women the opportunity for a do-over, giving them another chance to create positive memories through a prom experience. A Night on the Town, scheduled for this fall, even made that intention explicit with its previous name: Second Chance Prom. Martha's Home hosts this gala, which is slated for Oct. 11 at the Amarillo Civic Center.

Even though most prom nights occur in springtime, the calendar date is intentional. "The one thing we didn't want to compete with were other proms," says Sharon Miner, director of development for Martha's Home. The organization serves as a shelter providing support for homeless women and their children as they work toward stability and self-sufficiency.

It's a place of refuge, safety and encouragement, Miner says, empowering women in tough circumstances toward a new, better life. "We move you on to your future," she says. "We're not a scholarship program."

The prom, however, is definitely a big event. Last year's prom included a live band and comedian. Additionally, 20 different restaurants catered—taking up half the venue—serving steaks, barbecue, bakery items and more, along with a sizable silent auction to raise money for the organization.

Attire for the event is varied. You're as likely to see attendees wearing formal wear and sequins as you are jeans, boots and blazers.

"It's a time of celebration," explains Miner. "It's a time that we tell our story." Beyond the community's traditional ideas of a homeless shelter, Martha's Home provides a warm, loving atmosphere that removes barriers to success for its residents.

Miner describes A Night on the Town as a second chance for young women who may have missed their high school prom due to a variety of circumstances. It's an opportunity to dress up, as Martha's Home receives donations of formal wear and accessories for each attendee, along with opportunities to glamorize their hair and nails.

"They always look beautiful, just fabulous," she says.

Most women and families spend an average of three to five months at the shelter, getting back on their feet in a secure environment complete with mentorship, individual case management, assistance with community resources and vocational training.

A portion of that self-empowerment is education, Miner says. "Ninety-five percent of our current residents are in school," she says. And attending prom should be one of the highlights of the educational experience.

For local teenagers in the High Plains, this spring's prom season represents a high school rite of passage—a milestone with the potential for magic, of course, but also the possibility of less desirable moments marked by social anxiety or financial pressure. Prom-style "memories that last a lifetime" aren't always good memories.

Amarillo's adult proms are proving, however, that these diverse celebrations aren't reserved for high schoolers. They look like the embrace of less mainstream interests at the Goth Prom. They take the form of moms unwinding in support of foster families at the Mom Prom. They look like overcoming hardship at A Night on the Town and celebrating individuals with disabilities at A Night to Shine.

More than anything, these events transform the sequins and punch bowls of prom into something deeper and richer: a welcoming community experience. It's never too late to find a reason to dance or a place to belong.



HIT PARADE

As the Parade of Homes celebrates 70 years in Amarillo, this year's houses return to timeless designs

"It's spread out across Amarillo this year, and there's something for everyone," says Mirna Fewell, the 2025 Parade of Homes co-chair and founder of the independent MGroup real estate brokerage. This is the 70th anniversary of the annual Parade of Homes, which the Texas Panhandle Builders Association first brought to Amarillo in 1955.

Those early decades of the event took place in a single city block. Over the course of two weekends in 2025, this year's Parade of Homes—April 24 to 27 and May 1 to 4—will stretch from Bushland to North Amarillo to new developments almost to Canyon.

The brand-new homes on display from local builders aren't exclusively high-end homes, either. "The Parade is for everyone," Fewell says. "We'll have a million-dollar property out in the Woodlands and normal-size homes around a $300,000 price point."

Fewell's co-chair, Hanna Podzemny, a Realtor at MGroup, says the term "luxury"—when applied to homes in this year's Parade—isn't necessarily a statement about a home's price. "You can have a luxurious new home in the $250,000 price range. It's about affordability. It's not just high-end homes," she says.

New homes at more affordable sizes don't just impact a mortgage payment, Fewell explains. "You'll have more affordable insurance with a smaller home. You have lower maintenance costs, because you're buying a new home instead of upgrading something older," she says. Today's buyers have to ask themselves if they'd rather spend $300,000 on a fixer-upper or the same amount on brand-new construction.

For some, that's an easy answer. Not every buyer wants to endure the headaches of giving a facelift to an older home. In selling real estate, Fewell and Podzemny both continue to encounter buyers eager for a move-in ready home.

Goodbye Farmhouse, Hello Homestead

One of the draws of the Parade of Homes is the opportunity to see new trends, innovative ideas, and how different builders in this area approach living spaces and design. Fewell says to expect a lot of diversity. "Because of the pandemic, home-buyers became interested in creative work-from-home spaces," she says. "You see a lot of open spaces and big patios. I've seen some that are taking us back to a more geometric, mid-century modern design. And some that are a lot more vintage or cottage-style—like some of the cozy homes in Wolflin or Bivins, but a brand-new house."

Podzemny describes it as a shift away from the ultra-modern styles of architecture and design magazines, and back toward traditional designs. Podzemny, Fewell and Beatriz Kimball of the TPBA all judged the Lubbock Parade of Homes last year, and say that event to our south had a similar stylistic feel. "We saw more timeless designs, which you might have seen 20 or 30 years ago. They looked so good," Fewell says. "We're going to see some of that this year [in Amarillo]."

Another change they expect to be reflected in this year's home designs is a noticeable shift away from the modern farmhouse aesthetic. "That look got overused a few years ago with all the white and black. The style now has turned into rich colors, warmer tones, sophistication and elegance," Fewell says.

It reflects not just changing trends but a younger generation of homebuyers. "New generations come into the market and the workforce as they reach adulthood," says Podzemny. Builders are



PHOTOS BY LINDSAY GOMEZ AND TIM BARNES, 41 PRODUCTIONS

hoping to appeal to those homebuyers—and they have a much different mindset. "Everyone's into homesteading," she says, reflecting another trend driven by the post-pandemic years. "Chickens and homesteading and sourdough are such a thing right now."

That means multi-functional living spaces, kitchens designed for homemade food production (think deep sinks, walk-in pantries and double ovens), larger backyards and even dedicated gardening spaces or outdoor workspaces.

"Every builder is different," says Fewell, and one of the highlights of the Parade, for her, is seeing the creative ways builders approach these national trends—and what that looks like in the Texas Panhandle compared to other parts of the country.

Prizes and Technology

The large geographic spread of this year's Parade, which features several homes in new developments along the city's edges, means mobile-friendly mapping is critical. Fewell, Podzemny and the TPBA team are working on that technology now. "We want to make it easier for every attendee to navigate around the city and look at every house," says Kimball.

As in previous years, paradegoers who accomplish this—by h aving their ticket scanned at every home in the event—will be entered to win one of several attention-getting prizes. The event's Gold Prize includes a combined $7,000 shopping spree from Casey Carpet One and Marble Depot. Silver and Bronze Prizes, respectively, include shopping sprees at ProLift Garage ($3,000) and Sound by Design ($1,000).

Tickets for the 2025 Parade of Homes are $10 a person, and children younger than 12 are free. Tickets can be purchased at Pak-A-Sak locations and the TPBA Office at 5601 Enterprise Circle, as well as online at **amarilloparadeofhomes.com**.

"It's going to be a milestone year," Fewell says—a Parade 70 years in the making.



PARADE OF Homes



1966 Parade of Homes on Gainsborough Road

70 YEARS ON PARADE

ADVERTISING FOR THE FIRST PARADE OF HOMES RAN IN THE AMARILLO SUNDAY TIMES ON SEPT. 11, 1955


AMARILLO'S FIRST
PARADE OF HOMES
OPENS TODAY
2-10 P. M.
WESTERN AVE.
34TH AVENUE
FLEETWOOD DRIVE
PARADE OF HOMES
GEORGIA ST.
DORIS DR.
14 NEW HOMES ON DORIS DRIVE
SPONSORED BY
TEXAS PANHANDLE HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION
OPEN EVERY EVENING THIS WEEK — ADMISSION: ADULTS—50c EACH, CHILDREN—FREE

The combination of sleek new construction and mobile mapping may make the Parade of Homes feel like a distinctly of-the-moment event, but this year actually marks the 70th year of this local tradition. On September 11, 1955, the Sunday morning edition of the local newspaper touted "Amarillo's First Parade of Homes" in which local builders in the Texas Panhandle Home Builders Association had planned a unique way to observe National Home Week.

From 2 to 10 p.m. that day, 14 new homes—most of them furnished—were open for public inspection. (The homes remained open each evening that week and all day the following Sunday.) And it truly was a parade: All the 1955 homes were located within the 3600 block of Doris Drive, in the up-and-coming Paramount Terrace neighborhood. Families would visit one home after another, walking their way down the block. Streets were closed to traffic.

The city made a big deal of it, and Amarillo Mayor Art Jordan brought an interesting twist to the Parade's opening ceremony. "Instead of the usual ribbon-cutting," the newspaper explained, "the city's chief executive will saw through a pine board at the gate to make the official opening."

The Parade of Homes chairman that year was B.R. Jones. "Home building, like any competitive industry, must manufacture an improved product each year. And it must offer its product at a competitive price. Builders in the Panhandle have been hard at work planning how to do just that," he told the newspaper.

Among those mid-century improvements was a modern concept introduced by Joe Glover, Jr., at 3613 Doris Drive. Built with what came to be known as "Fabricon" house design, that home was built as a single large room, "completely free of interior partitions," with steel trusses and slab flooring. Once the floors, walls and ceiling were completed as a 1,450-square-foot shell, the home was divided into rooms and living areas with prefabricated, non-load-bearing interior room dividers. The process was the brainchild of an Austin architect named Ned A. Cole, who began designing and constructing prefabricated walls and efficient interior storage units after World War II.

Glover went on to build several other partially prefabricated homes using that method in Paramount Terrace and other local neighborhoods throughout the 1950s.



Other builders showing homes on Doris Drive in 1955 included A.R. Fulton, E.O. Milburn, R.G. Hughes, Howard Lawson, Norman Penhall and Herb Staloch. Many of the homes boasted modern conveniences like evaporative coolers, electric clothes dryers and built-in electric ovens.

That first Parade of Homes was the culmination of an exceptionally busy post-war period in Amarillo. Driven by the opening of the Amarillo Air Force Base in 1951—which employed 15,000 people at its peak—builders erected nearly 18,000 new homes in the area from the late 1940s into early 1950s. New developments were planned, neighborhoods sprang into existence, and home ownership skyrocketed.

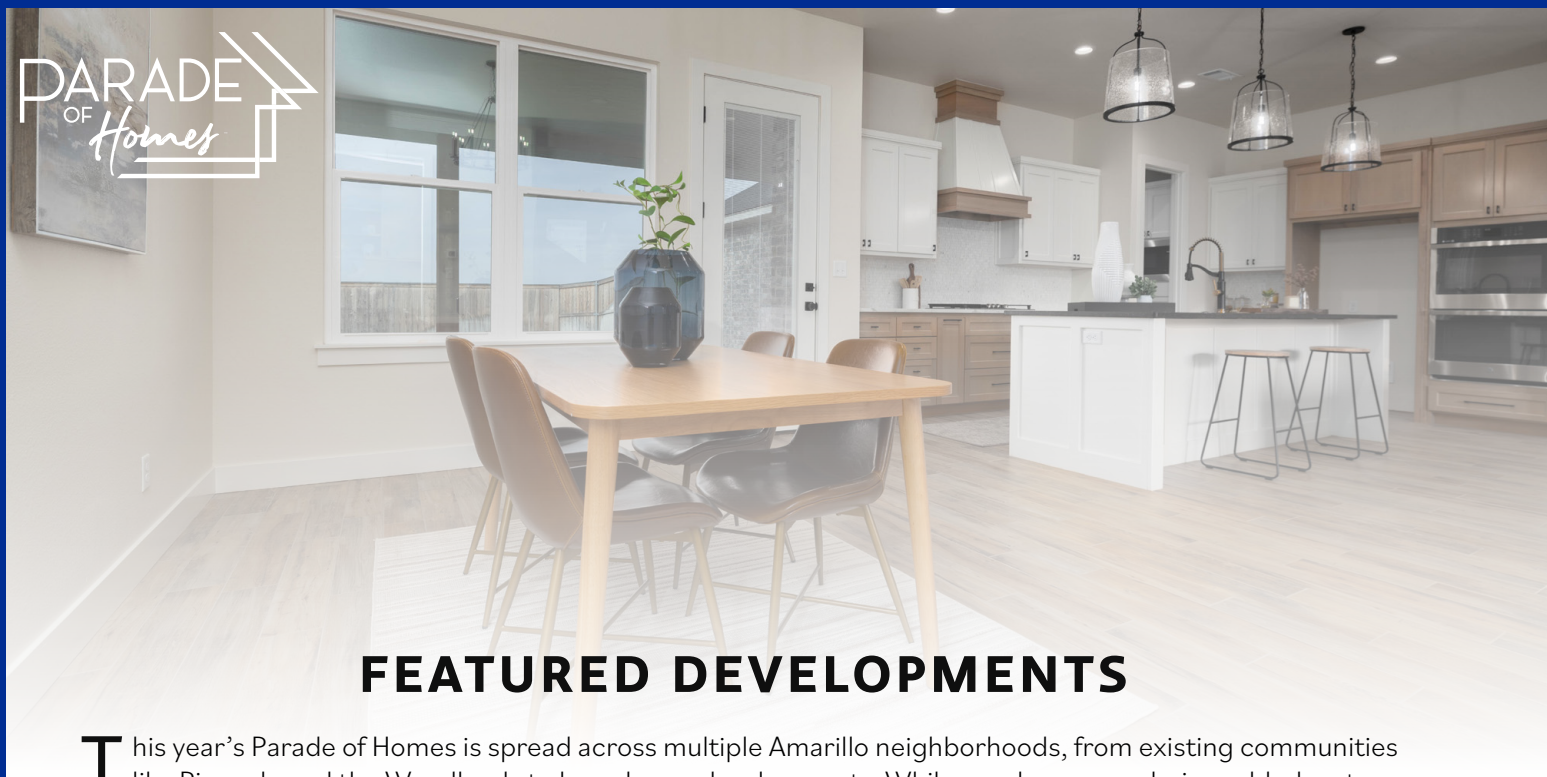
The Parade of Homes was one way developers found builders and builders found new owners. "The developer would offer a discount on the lots for everyone who built in the parade," says Bob Fenley, past president of the Texas Panhandle Builders Association. Now 87, he started building houses in the area in 1972. Back then, developers would offer to install the fencing or sod in order to attract participating builders to blocks designated for that year's Parade of Homes. "The homes were all in one location and all within a comparable price range," he says.

New-fangled innovations—from Joe Glover's "Fabricon" to other new technologies—were significant elements of each Parade. "We used a lot of new things people hadn't seen," Fenley remembers. "People could come through and see a brick fireplace or an air conditioning system that had just come out. They wouldn't see those things otherwise."

In the following decades, Parade of Homes blocks would include destinations like Gainsborough Drive and Jameson Drive in Belmar in the 1960s, and Pinehurst Drive in Puckett Place or Ethan Lane in the Estacado Estates neighborhood in the 1970s. Eventually, it evolved into what it is today, with individual properties spread across the area.

That allows this year's paradegoers to see multiple neighborhoods and communities. A lot of things have changed in seven decades, so don't be disappointed if you don't see any city luminaries sawing through a pine board.





FEATURED DEVELOPMENTS

This year's Parade of Homes is spread across multiple Amarillo neighborhoods, from existing communities like Pinnacle and the Woodlands to brand-new developments. While new homes are being added up to the date of the event, as of press time, the 2025 Parade includes homes in the following neighborhoods:

Bushland
The Trails
The Woodlands
Wedgewood of Amarillo
Homestead Ranches
Hunter Estates
Pinnacle by Rockrose
Spring Canyon
Heritage Hills







PARADE PARTNERS

For the first time, local businesses, boutiques and other community partners are invited to showcase their products as vendors inside Parade Homes. Want to be a Partner of the Parade? Contact the Texas Panhandle Builders Association at **806.353.3565**.



PHOTOS BY LINDSAY GOMEZ AND TIM BARNES, 41 PRODUCTIONS

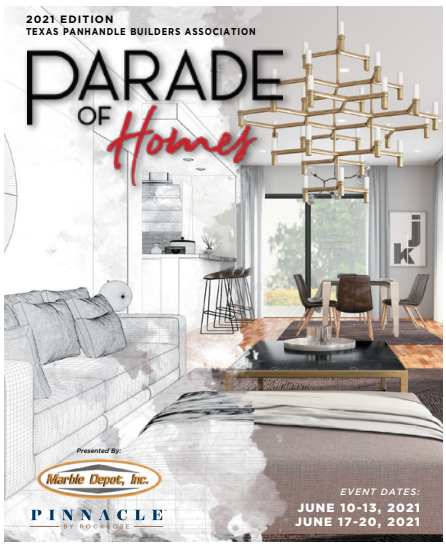
PARADE IN PRINT

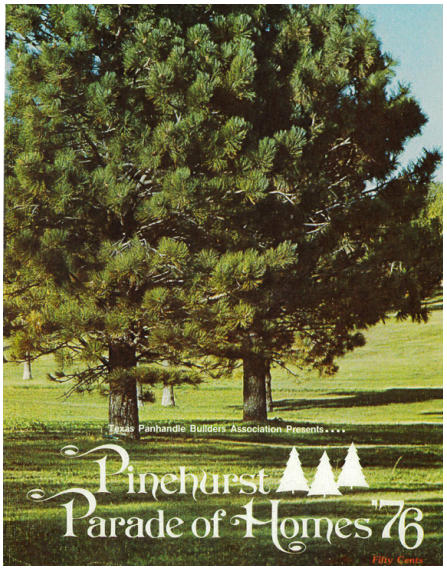
Every year, the Texas Panhandle Builders Association showcases its homes and builders in a full, printed magazine (or, in the past, as a newspaper insert). This popular resource serves as a reference, keepsake and physical guide paradegoers use to remember the featured houses, adding to the immersive experience of touring newly built homes.

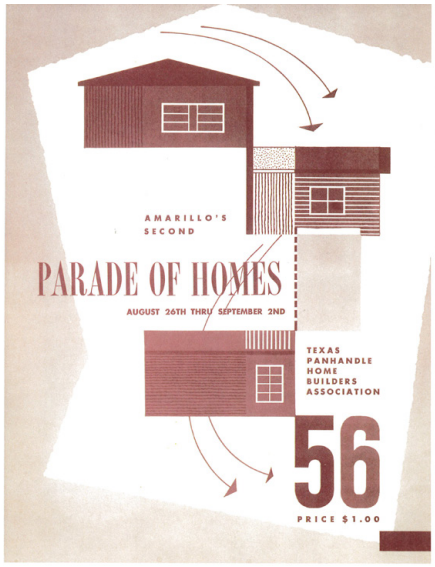
















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5 KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT AMARILLO'S HOUSING MARKET

It's been a weird few years in the housing market, even in the Texas Panhandle, which sometimes feels isolated from national trends. A complex chain of cause and effect that started with the pandemic still ripples through the local real estate sector.

Stuck inside for work and school, people started thinking they might want to live in a different home. That started a home-buying frenzy in 2020 and 2021. Demand outpaced supply and prices surged. Remote workers wondered why they were living in expensive coastal cities when they could get a bigger house somewhere like Amarillo, so relocating remote workers moved to Texas. Prices jumped further. Pandemic-related supply chain issues and labor shortages hit the construction world and made housing inventory plummet. Then interest rates went up in response to inflation.

The high prices and high mortgage rates made homeownership less affordable—those monthly payments got too high—so people turned to renting, and then rental demand surged. Big investors started buying up smaller homes to turn into long-term rentals or short-term Airbnbs.

And here we are in 2025, on the back side of all those falling dominos. Housing prices have steadied, but affordability is still a big issue. At the same time, more lower-priced houses are being built because "Americans are starting to see the value in investing in their own future by purchasing instead of renting," says Realtor Frances Frost of Rev Realty Group. Still, mortgage rates are high. Stabilizing inflation might help—if it happens—but we still have a lot of questions.

So *Brick & Elm* took five of our biggest local real estate questions to the local experts.





1 RIGHT NOW IN AMARILLO, IS IT A BETTER TIME TO BUY A HOME OR SELL A HOME?

As long as interest rates are high, expect this year to remain better for sellers. "I believe we will stay in a seller's market in 2025, because homeowners who purchased at much lower interest rates a few years ago might be reluctant to list, which means fewer homes on the market," says Charli Rae Gause of Reside Real Estate Co. For instance, a family who bought a home in 2019 might have a 30-year mortgage rate around 3 percent. Five years later, they might be ready to move, but mortgage rates are more than twice what they got back then. (Last month, 30-year fixed rates were around 7 percent locally.) For some homeowners, that can be hard to stomach. Instead of house shopping, they might decide to just wait it out.



At the same time, Andy Justus of Lyons Realty points out that the average 30-year fixed rate mortgage in the U.S., since 1971, is 6.95 percent. Nevertheless, "we could use some help with interest rates," Justus says. "We would love to see rates go down, but don't expect it to move much in 2025."

If inventory stays low, those who do decide to sell could see home prices continuing to climb as they did in 2024, just at a slower pace. "We're expecting 2025 to be much like last year," say Leslie Cunningham and Mitzi Wade of KW Amarillo. They say to expect homes to stay on the market longer. "I believe the biggest trend we're going to see is increased inventory and slowed price growth," Frost says. Until rates change dramatically, fluctuation may be the new normal.

But it will eventually level out. Haley Sutter with Horton Neely Realtors points out that Amarillo's market remains unique compared to other parts of the state. "Our local economy, driven by strong job opportunities, continues to support housing affordability compared to larger Texas cities. This makes it an exciting time for buyers, especially for those who act now," she says.



PROVIDED PHOTO

2 WHICH NEIGHBORHOODS ARE SEEING THE MOST AVAILABLE HOMES ON THE MARKET?

"That's a really loaded question," says Haley Sutter with Horton Neely Realtors. "We have more houses for sale [right now] than we have had in the past several years. That's a good thing!" At one point last month, an astonishing 1,300 homes were on the market in the Amarillo/Canyon/Bushland area. "During COVID, we were lucky to have 300 homes for sale," she adds.

The most notable market activity has been among first-time homebuyers looking in the $200,000 to $250,000 price range. But rising prices and high interest rates have made this a challenging market for those shoppers, who are typically more interested in "what they can afford versus where the home is located," Sutter says. They are generally interested in south Amarillo neighborhoods, but for a price point under $250,000, "that's not always possible." As of mid-February, the centrally located Country Club/Avondale neighborhood had the most homes on the market.

Cunningham says that two of Amarillo's top markets at the start of the year were the Paramount/Mays neighborhood and the Colonies. From January 2024 to January 2025, sales in Paramount/Mays—where the average home price was right above $200,000—more than doubled. Demand was equally strong among the premium

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ECU prioritizes personalized service, strong community relationships and financial solutions designed with a member's best interests in mind. We offer competitive rates, lower fees and flexible loan options tailored to fit the diverse needs of our community. Most importantly, we stand by our members—not just during the mortgage process, but throughout your homeownership.

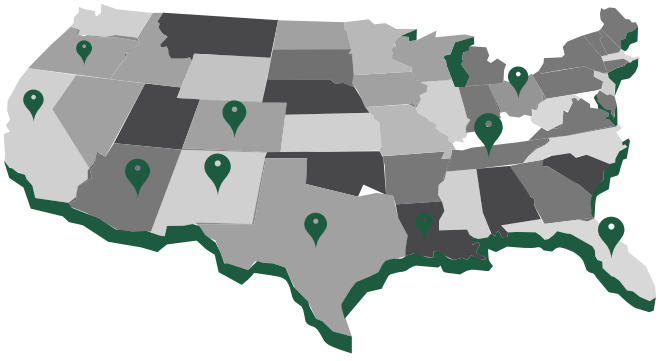
As we look ahead to 2025, we're excited about the growth and opportunities developing in our community. While market fluctuations often bring uncertainty, they also create unique opportunities for buyers and homeowners considering refinancing. No matter the market conditions, our experienced mortgage team is prepared to guide members and empower our community to make confident, educated financial decisions in an ever-changing market.

Our best advice? ECU's Director of Mortgage, Brittnie Aguirre, says, "Shop around. Don't rush the process. Know your options and work closely with a lender that truly has your well-being at heart." Here at ECU, we know every homebuyer's journey is different, and we're ready to navigate challenges with solutions that fit the goals of our members.

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homes in the Colonies, where the average price is almost $700,000. "Both areas demonstrated strong demand as properties sold near their listing prices," she says.



3 ARE PEOPLE FROM OTHER STATES REALLY MOVING TO AMARILLO?

According to Realtor.com, Texas has added more residents over the past decade than any other state. From 2013 to 2023, it grew by 4 million residents. The big metro areas may be attracting most of them, but Amarillo is growing, too.

"I work with a lot of relocation buyers, every single year, that are moving to our area," says Sutter. "We have diverse career opportunities in Amarillo so it only makes sense that we are having an influx of new residents from other states. I've had buyers from all over." The list of states is broad: Oregon, California, Arizona, Ohio, Florida, Tennessee, as well as neighboring states like Arkansas and New Mexico. Some are coming to Amarillo from other parts of Texas, especially the Metroplex area, drawn by the easier lifestyle and minimal commutes.

"We still have a strong out-of-state migration," Cunningham adds. Go down any major street, she says, and you'll see an array of state license plates. Job growth at Pantex and Bell are attracting more residents, and many people are choosing to retire to this area to be close to family. "The affordable housing, welcoming atmosphere and low cost of living make the Amarillo area attractive," she says.

As for concerns that this flood of "outsiders" will somehow change the city, Sutter isn't worried. "Generally speaking, the people moving here are also drawn to Amarillo because of how nice the people are," she says. "They fit in."



4 WHAT UPGRADES SHOULD I CONSIDER BEFORE PUTTING MY HOME ON THE MARKET?

Buyers these days are looking for homes that feel inviting and are move-in ready. That's why home improvements can always help compete in a crowded marketplace. But be strategic about those upgrades. "The idea is to remove as many negatives that buyers might see and really help polish things up," says Realtor Charli Rae Cause. "It's all about the small details that really make a listing shine."

The trick is to maximize your return on investment while staying in your budget. One of the best big cosmetic upgrades is simply a fresh coat of paint in high-traffic areas like the entryway, living room and kitchen.

Work on your curb appeal, too. "The first thing buyers see is the exterior, so make it count," says Andy Justus. He and his wife,





VIVIENDA HOMES

Lisa Fernandez



How did you get started in construction? My family has been in various aspects of construction since I was young. I've been around it basically my entire life, and learned the ins and outs of the industry from an early age. But for so long I viewed it as a business for men. It's still a male-dominated industry, but now I am determined to succeed as a woman-owned business.

How long have you been in the industry? I officially launched my business three years ago. I wanted to use my background in custom home-building, real estate and home remodeling to provide a unique blend of services for my clients.

How does your style stand out from other builders? I am passionate about design. I specialize in creating exclusive and unique homes that perfectly fit my clients' needs and desires. I like to focus more on a modern aesthetic. I am very detailed and put together a plan focused on quality rather than quantity. As a female-owned business, I can deliver what women want to see in their home. From small homes to larger projects, I stay on budget for every client. Our bilingual team enables us to serve a diverse clientele, ensuring that language barriers do not hinder our ability to provide exceptional services to all of our clients. We work hard to offer a seamless experience in buying, selling and building custom homes.

What excites you about the local market in 2025? Recent years have brought a lot of changes and fluctuation to the market, but Amarillo still offers a quality of life and inexpensive standard of living that other locations can't compete with. Amarillo has affordable housing and a lot of opportunities for growth. This makes us very attractive to people relocating from more expensive urban areas.

What challenges have you overcome as you've built your business? My biggest challenge was probably being brave enough to start my business as a single mother, based on my passion for design and quality building practices. In an industry dominated by men, I have to work extra hard to earn the trust of homeowners as I build their dream home.

What's one thing you wish local homeowners understood better? The value of a long-term investment and making improvements that make home values increase. Take the time to get the floor plan correct from the very beginning.

What do you love most about what you do? As a single mom, I love to show my boys that there are no boundaries when it comes to reaching your goals. I love style and keeping up with the latest trends. But my favorite part is getting to know my clients and going through all the detailed steps to create a personalized design for them and bringing a project to fruition.



VIVIENDA HOMES

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Michelle, are both agents for Lyons Realty. She offers concrete suggestions: "Add a few potted plants by the entryway, trim overgrown bushes, and ensure your yard looks inviting," Michelle says. Fresh mulch and flowers make your home look well-maintained and can make a strong first impression. If you have a front-facing driveway, consider power-washing it.

A kitchen refresh can also bring a good ROI. Paint boring cabinetry, swap out the old hardware for something new, and consider installing a new backsplash or under-cabinet LED lighting to add a little style.

As for larger upgrades, talk to a real estate agent first. Sometimes it's worth it to replace a roof or HVAC system near the end of its lifespan. But not always. "Bigger renovations, such as kitchen or bathrooms, won't see as big of a return unless you are planning on staying in the home more than a year or so before you list," Gause says.

Before listing your home, be sure to declutter. "Start the moving process early by thinning out unnecessary items. Pack up seasonal clothes, clear off countertops, and organize closets and cabinets," Michelle Justus says. "Trust me, buyers will take a peek." Even consider putting excess furniture into storage. This makes rooms seem larger, and allows prospective buyers to visualize themselves in them. Meanwhile, fix anything that's broken and deep clean everything—especially the floor—hiring professionals to help if necessary. "Every surface, from floors to ceiling fans, should sparkle," she says.



5 HOW HAVE DECOR TRENDS OR HOUSING MATERIALS CHANGED OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS?

The ubiquity of social media and pandemic-era lifestyle changes have shifted decor styles and materials significantly, even in places like Amarillo and Canyon that tend to be behind the national trends.

People are bringing the outdoors inside with natural light and indoor plants. Organic materials like stone and wood are popular, as are large windows and skylights. Functional outdoor spaces are also desirable for buyers, with covered patios, outdoor kitchens, pergolas and other elements creating entertainment areas. Home offices have become vital, too. "Buyers are looking for open layouts with defined spaces for work and relaxation, especially since remote work has become more common," says Lisa Fernandez, a custom home builder with Vivienda Homes, who also offers residential real estate services.

Timeless whites and grays have always been appreciated for their neutrality, but Gause says that trend may be changing gradually. "As a designer, I'm honestly so glad that the days of farmhouse everything and grey interior boxes are starting to fade away. There is a resurgence of putting character back into homes, adding color, having textures, wallpaper, patterns and natural wood elements," she says. "I'm seeing these items trend in both older home renovations and new construction. These are elements that I always find charming and buyers are excited to see."

Fernandez says transitional styles are becoming more commonplace. "While classic farmhouse aesthetics are still popular, the trend is shifting toward a blend of modern and traditional elements—clean lines, mixed materials and warm wood accents," she says. Low-maintenance materials like luxury vinyl plank flooring, quartz countertops and composite siding are growing in popularity due to their durability.

Matte finishes (black, gold or brass) are replacing traditional chrome when it comes to kitchen or bathroom hardware. Efficiency is also important: Buyers and builders alike are starting to choose large-format tiles and easy-to-clean slab backsplashes just to reduce the grout lines. Smart home integration is now commonplace, from smart thermostats to automated blinds. "In the Amarillo market, buyers prioritize move-in ready homes with modern, functional upgrades," Fernandez says.





B&E REALTORS®

Since the pandemic, the real estate market has been … complicated. Boom times and soaring prices. Supply chain disruptions and declining supply. Inflation. Interest rate changes. A lot of uncertainty at every level. This complexity has left a challenging environment for both buyers and sellers to navigate. That's why working with a trusted REALTOR® is so critical. We're honored to introduce readers to a few of the best in the business.

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Haley Sutter, REALTOR®

ABR®, CLP, e-PRO®, GRI, PSA, SRES®, TSAHC

Horton Neely Realtors, LLC

What trends do you foresee in the market in 2025? I expect to see more buyers and sellers entering the market in 2025. Although I don't foresee interest rates dropping significantly, Amarillo's market remains unique. Our local economy, driven by strong job opportunities, continues to support housing affordability compared to larger Texas cities. This makes it an exciting time for buyers, especially for those who act now. I believe the market will pick up later in the year. Right now, we're in a leveling-out period, when the market is stabilizing after a period of rapid change. Prices may become more steady, and the pace of transactions could slow down as buyers and sellers adjust to current conditions.

What are the advantages of using a Realtor to buy or sell a house? In times like these, it's even more important to work with an experienced agent who can navigate these shifts and guide you through the process. With the market stabilizing, having an expert to help ensure you make the right decisions is crucial. The process involves many moving parts, and you need someone who is familiar with all the steps and players involved. Without an agent, many transactions simply wouldn't close. I've seen it firsthand — without someone overseeing the transaction and keeping everyone on track, deals can easily fall apart. My role is to make sure everyone does what's needed at every stage to ensure we get to the closing table. The peace of mind that comes from having an expert advocate on your side is invaluable in today's market.

How did you get started in real estate? Years ago, my husband and I went through a nightmare experience with buying and selling a home. It was such a frustrating process. One of my massage clients, who was a Realtor, suggested I get my real estate license. Six weeks later, I had my license, and six months after that, I closed my massage business to become a full-time Realtor. Now, with more than 250 homes sold, I'm passionate about making sure no one else has to go through the kind of negative experience my husband and I did.

How do you communicate with clients? Communication is the foundation of a successful real estate experience. I'm always available to my clients via phone, text or email, and I make sure to keep them informed every step of the way. I tailor my communication style to fit each client's preferences, ensuring they feel comfortable and confident throughout the process. My goal is to make sure no question goes unanswered and no concern is overlooked.

What makes you stand out as a Realtor? My ability to combine professionalism with a personalized, approachable style. With more than six years of full-time experience and a strong background as a local real estate investor alongside my husband, I bring a unique perspective to the market. I'm highly data-driven, constantly analyzing market trends and property values to guide my clients in making informed decisions. I pride myself on thinking outside the box to find the right solution for everyone's unique needs. Whether it's offering a cash option for sellers in need, helping clients avoid foreclosure by selling quickly and as-is, or navigating the often tricky process of selling mobile homes, I'm committed to achieving the best possible outcome.

What technology do you use when trying to sell a property? In today's market, technology is essential for providing the best service to sellers. For my listings, I rely heavily on professional photography and video content to showcase a property's best features. High-quality visuals are crucial for attracting potential buyers, and I ensure every listing gets the professional treatment it deserves. I also use a variety of digital platforms to maximize exposure, including social media marketing, along with targeted paid ads to reach the right audience. I syndicate my listings across multiple websites for maximum visibility. Technology also plays a role in streamlining paperwork, making the entire process more efficient.

How do you stay up to date with market trends and changes? I make it a priority to continue my education. I regularly take extra classes beyond what's required to ensure I'm learning the latest strategies and industry updates. I actively seek out market trends and changes, reading articles, attending webinars and participating in industry events to keep my knowledge current. This ongoing commitment to learning allows me to provide my clients with the most relevant and accurate information, helping them make the best decisions in a constantly evolving market.

How are you involved in the community? I was born and raised in Amarillo, and I believe in giving back to the area I call home. I run a business networking group, West Texas Professionals, which connects local entrepreneurs and fosters professional growth. This year, I'm supporting the 100 Club of the Texas Panhandle, P.E.T.S. Clinic of Amarillo, and other local charities and small businesses through partnerships, events and donations. I'm passionate about making a positive impact in our community and believe in the power of paying it forward.

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Chancy Via,
Broker/Owner, REALTOR®

What trends do you foresee in the market in 2025? I believe our market will level out. I hope we get to a place where we have a healthy balance of buyers and sellers. I think interest rates will fluctuate, giving us periods of increased activity when rates are lower than the average.

What are the advantages of using a real estate agent to buy or sell a house? When I first started in real estate, someone told me a good REALTOR® takes the emotion out of the buying and selling process. I took this advice to heart. While the list of benefits in using an agent is long, I believe our most important job is to help our clients make decisions guided by facts and data during what is often an emotional time.

How did you get started in real estate? While I was in college, I worked in a bank. Our mortgage department was in the same building, and I met so many real estate agents, mortgage lenders, attorneys, and appraisers which I respected. I began investing after college graduation, and then eventually went full-time into real estate obtaining my broker's license as soon as I had met the five-year experience requirement.

How do you communicate with clients? Every client is different. That is part of what I enjoy the most about being a REALTOR®. I tend to be a little "old school," preferring telephone conversations and face-to-face meetings, but that is not what works best for everyone. When I first work with a new client, we talk about communication. I tailor my approach based on their preferences.

What makes you stand out as a REALTOR®? I try to be my authentic self. People like to do business with those they know and trust.

What technology do you use when trying to sell a property? It is all about the photography! While there are many great tools, nothing replaces quality pictures taken by an experienced photographer using the right equipment. Most of the time, this includes video and drone images.

How do you stay up to date with market trends and changes? I rely heavily on information and data provided by the National Association of REALTORS®, the Texas Association of REALTORS®, the Amarillo Association of REALTORS®, and the Texas A&M Real Estate Research Center.

How are you involved in the community? My business partner and I are members of the Amarillo and Canyon Chambers of Commerce, and supporters of Canyon Main Street and the CEDC. We mentor an intern from the Canyon ISD PRO Program, and make it a point to support the causes our agents are passionate about. I am also involved in my church.

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Annie Miller,
Owner, REALTOR®



What trends do you foresee in the market in 2025? I foresee a continuation of new builds and a healthy amount of inventory for buyers. There will be more competition for sellers to attract buyers as inventory grows. The past 18 months, buyers and sellers have pumped the brakes on moving up and down. These consumers are re-entering the market, so we will see an uptick in sales.

What are the advantages of using a real estate agent to buy or sell a house? As a seller's agent, I have the ability to market to a wide audience to attract qualified buyers. As a buyer's agent, I can help find the house you can afford and live the life you want. A REALTOR® is a fiduciary for their clients, meaning it's our job to do what is in the best interest of our clients. The homebuying process can be complicated and partnering with a qualified agent is important.

How did you get started in real estate? My degree is in design and architecture, but I have always had an interest in real estate. Job opportunities moved us from the Panhandle down south, and then back to the area. At the time, we had both sold businesses and I was looking for a day job. I started working in a local real estate office in 2016 and got my license in 2017.

How do you communicate with clients? Calling, texting, Facebook, email, carrier pigeon, morse code, telegraph—however they prefer to communicate is key. Sometimes they prefer to sit down and visit face-to-face, other times a quick text will do. Open and frank communication is a must—it's the only way for a smooth and ultimately successful transaction.

What makes you stand out as a REALTOR®? I do not have an off button. I love my profession. I get to advise individuals and families in making decisions that affect their future. That is so important to me. I work extremely hard to showcase a property and am willing to do what it needs to shine. I was once told that your talents are not for you; they are for you to share with others.

What technology do you use when trying to sell a property? I use professional photographers, videographers and drone operators for my clients' properties. When someone can see beautiful pictures online, it can make the difference between getting a showing or not. The extra time and money is always worth it.

How do you stay up to date with market trends and changes? I follow Amarillo National Bank statistics, follow the Fed, keep in touch with other brokers and REALTORS® statewide and nationally. I learn by listening and can multitask by listening to an informative podcast while on the go.

How are you involved in the community? I serve on the Board of Directors for the Amarillo Association, MLS Committee and TREPAC Auction Committee, on the Member Benefits Committee for Texas REALTOR®, the board of The Market on Tierra Blanca Creek, on City of Canyon Parks, Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee, Canyon ISD Advisory Boards and TPBA Parade of Homes Committee. I organize and lead the Garden Ministry at my church as well as serve on the Parish Finance Council. I participate in community events for the Chamber of Commerce (Amarillo and Canyon), CEDC, Amarillo Angels and Women in Business.

Leslie Cunningham,
GRI, TRLP, Associate Broker

Mitzi Wade, GRI, TRLP



Navigating the 2025 Real Estate Market with Leslie and Mitzi

Mitzi and Leslie teamed up for this interview to emphasize that buying and selling real estate involves two sides needing representation**.** As we step into 2025, the real estate market continues to evolve, presenting both challenges and opportunities for buyers and sellers. Leslie Cunningham and Mitzi Wade are highly accomplished Realtors in Amarillo, sharing their insights on market trends, the advantages of working with a real estate professional and what sets them apart in the industry.

Market Trends in 2025

In 2024, the real estate industry underwent its most significant changes in 116 years. National lawsuits forced Texas Realtors to redefine our business practices, establishing a clear distinction between seller and buyer representation. Buyers must now sign a Buyer Representation Agreement before viewing a property. These changes enhance transparency in dealing with compensation.

Looking ahead, Leslie and Mitzi foresee a market that remains dynamic with shifting interest rates and inventory levels. “We’re expecting 2025 to be much like last year. For homes in all price ranges, properties will see longer days on the market,” they explain.

Why Work with a Realtor?

Statistics show sellers realize the highest profits when collaborating with a Realtor. At the same time, buyers benefit from improved negotiating power and expert guidance. As experienced Realtors, Leslie and Mitzi will guide clients through every step of the process, ensuring smooth and successful transactions. “A professional real estate agent provides expertise, negotiation skills, and market knowledge that can make the process seamless and profitable,” Mitzi says. “We help clients avoid costly mistakes and ensure they get the best deal possible.”

The Importance of Technology

Leslie and Mitzi leverage various technologies to achieve optimal results when selling a property. “We start with the MLS for broad exposure and then utilize professional photos and virtual tours to showcase the property. Additionally, we promote through social media and email campaigns to reach potential buyers. We also implement online ads and SEO strategies to ensure the listing gains visibility,” Leslie says. “These efforts position your property in front of the right buyers.”

Client Communication: A Top Priority

Keller Williams offers professional-led education several days each week, helping Leslie and Mitzi stay sharp in the face of rapid industry changes. These solo agents take pride in providing concierge-level service to clients who are buying or selling homes, investment properties or commercial assets.

Effective communication is at the heart of both Leslie’s and Mitzi’s businesses. They ensure their clients are always informed through phone calls, texts, emails and even video updates when necessary. “Everyone has a different preferred way to communicate, and we adapt to what works best for them,” they note.

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Charli Rae Gause,

REALTOR®, GRI, SRES

Reside Real Estate Co.



What trends do you foresee in the market in 2025? 2024 brought much-needed adjustment and saw a return to a more normal market. New industry jobs are coming to the area this year, which means a population increase. I believe we will stay in a seller's market in 2025, because homeowners who purchased at much lower interest rates a few years ago might be reluctant to list, which means fewer homes on the market. We may see slow and steady interest rate cuts, which is great for buyers and the market. However, with a smaller inventory and higher demand, home prices could continue to climb. Our housing market is still strong and will continue to be strong.

What are the advantages of using a real estate agent to buy or sell a house? Realtors have expert knowledge, helping clients find the best properties or buyers at the right price. Agents also handle negotiations and paperwork, ensuring a smoother transaction. Our network of contacts—from other agents to professionals such as plumbers and roofers—can help streamline the process. Plus, we can offer advice on staging, pricing and making your property more appealing, saving you time and effort.

How did you get started in real estate? I went to art school and earned a BFA in Graphic Design, and have always been fascinated with art history, architectural styles and designing spaces. I went into web design, graphic design and marketing and ended up at Hastings Entertainment. After losing my job, I decided to go into real estate. Ten years later, I'm still bringing my marketing skills to real estate!

What makes you stand out as a Realtor? My background in marketing and design truly helps my clients. When listing their home, I help set up a marketing game plan. I'm able to do things other agents might have to hire out. With my sellers and buyers, I always apply my design degree in spaces to help them see potential.

What technology do you use when trying to sell a property? I use virtual tours or drone videography to give potential buyers an immersive experience. I also utilize social media marketing and email campaigns to reach a broader audience.

How are you involved in the community? I volunteer with Square Mile and Snack Pak 4 Kids. I love going with friends and co-workers to Snack Pak to help pack bags for kiddos. It's always a great time spent together and I love seeing all the good that it does in the community. Square Mile is an incredible local organization. Last year I designed their tablescapes for the annual Farm to Table dinner. Being involved brings me joy and pride in our community.

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Austin Sharp, CCIM
Mays Inc.

What trends do you foresee in the market in 2025? We see slow, steady growth for commercial real estate in 2025. Leasing has momentum, but tenants are cautious as inflation continues to be sticky. Occupancy across all property types is 91 percent, and asking rents grew 2.3 percent last year to $15.51 a square foot per CoStar Market Analytics.

On the sales side, the Amarillo market has seen a 34 percent decline in volume over the past two years. We see a marginal improvement in that for 2025. Sellers are finally starting to lower their expectations a bit, as higher interest rates and higher expenses like insurance have caused buyers to ask for a reduction. The market is starting to flow but there is still an expectation gap between buyers and sellers. The average sale cap rate for Amarillo is 7.6 percent and the average sales price per square foot was $154 in 2024.

What are the advantages of using a real estate agent to lease, buy or sell a property? Commercial transactions are very different compared to residential transactions. There are so many nuances that can impact a property's net operating income and therefore the value. Overlooking a few key elements can allow a buyer to overpay, or a seller to undervalue a property. We see a lot of local investors trying to do things themselves or even using a residential agent to complete a transaction. Often, that does not end well.

How did you get started in real estate? I grew up watching my great-grandfather, grandad, and dad working on commercial deals. My great-grandfather moved here in the 1920s and started working in the industry. I moved back to Amarillo in 2010 with my wife, Liz, and started working with Mays Inc.

What makes you stand out as a Realtor? I have worked in the industry for 14 years. Beyond that, I am excited to have completed my Certified Commercial Investment Manager Certification. This included 96 hours of training, and I learned how to evaluate deals from a financial perspective. I look forward to bringing that expertise to help our customers.

What technology do you use when trying to sell a property? CCIM offers property investment evaluation tools both for sales transactions and leasing. We also utilize CoStar for data, and LoopNet and Crexi for leasing. We spend a lot of time looking at data, but it's always good to pick up the phone and talk to other agents to understand what they are seeing in our market.

How are you involved in the community? My family attends Hillside Christian Church. We teach Sunday School at the second- to fifth-grade levels, and on Wednesday night at youth. We love and are so thankful for our church.

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Frances Frost,
REALTOR®
Rev Realty Group brokered by Inroote



What trends do you foresee in the market in 2025? I believe the biggest trend we're going to see is increased inventory and slowed price growth. I also see a shift happening in the number of lower-priced houses being built for lower-middle consumers. As the price of rent increases, Americans are starting to see the value in investing in their own future by purchasing instead of renting.

What are the advantages of using a real estate agent to buy or sell a house? Obviously, the first advantage is going to be the expert knowledge that comes from using a REALTOR®. An active agent will have insights on local market conditions, as well as home values and pricing trends. We offer the guidance to complete complex contracts, disclosures and deadlines to prevent costly mistakes. Using a REALTOR® removes the stress of juggling all the moving parts and allows you to focus on just making the move.

How did you get started in real estate? I was always interested in real estate but was afraid of trying to make a living with a commission-based career. But circumstances arose that gave me the opportunity to leave my 20-year career in medical office management to make a change I always dreamed of in real estate. It's been the best decision I've ever made.

How do you communicate with clients? I pride myself on being available to my clients when they have questions or panic is setting in. My calm, level-headed response helps my clients know they're in good hands and everything will work out like it's supposed to.

What makes you stand out as a Realtor? My why has never changed. I began this career because I wanted to help others. Growing up poor made me think that owning a home was something only wealthy people could do. I absolutely LOVE helping people buy a house they never thought they'd have. When it comes to selling, my goal is to promote the property to the best of my ability and net the seller as much money as possible.

What technology do you use when trying to sell a property? All agents have access to MLS, but using additional tools and websites makes my expertise more valuable. Using other systems allows me to generate an accurate market analysis and compare amenities between communities, as well as promote the property to a wider range of potential buyers.

How are you involved in the community? As an active member of the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce, I serve on the Redcoats. I am the vice president of Panhandle Powerhouse BNI. I serve on the Board of Directors for the Amarillo Association of REALTORS® and am a member of the Texas Panhandle Builders Association. I sponsor events for numerous nonprofits and donate regularly to Hatch Homes for Heroes, Intersection Community Church, Gracie's Project, Guyon Sanders Resource Center, Code Blue Warning Station, and many more.

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Andy and Michelle Justus,

REALTORS®
Lyons Realty

What trends do you foresee in the market in 2025? The key word for 2025 is stable. Housing prices have stabilized after seeing rapid increases in 2022 and 2023. Local inventory is finally up to a healthy number with about a four-month supply. The number of days on the market are up, meaning sellers have to be more patient. We could use some help with interest rates. As of today, ANB says their average 30-year conventional rate is around 7 percent. I know that seems high coming off rates under 3 percent, but the 30-year fixed rate mortgage average in the United States since 1971 is 6.95 percent. We would love to see rates go down but don't expect it to move much in 2025.

What are the advantages of using a real estate agent to buy or sell a house? Buying a home is one of the most important purchases you'll ever make—don't leave the outcome to chance. A real estate agent knows the local market and it's our job to make sure you don't overpay or underprice. We will save you time, reduce stress and get you to the closing table on time.

How did you get started in real estate? Michelle first started in 2004, when she was in her early 20s. She then paused her license to start a family. When our girls started school, she decided to dive back in. Andy then decided to give it a go and just fell in love with the business. Together, we make a unique team that can cover all the bases.

How do you communicate with clients? Our relationship with our clients comes first, which means we have to stay connected.

What makes you stand out as a Realtor? Every transaction is personal for us. We have been down this road and experienced it countless times with buyers and sellers. We love being a team, and it's our way of sharing our love for the community. Throughout the years, we have built connections with lenders, inspectors, plumbers, electricians, photographers and contractors, which help us feel confident in successfully getting a transaction to closing.

What technology do you use when trying to sell a property? Our user-friendly website showcases all of our listings. We also list with the MLS, which other platforms such as Realtor.com, Zillow and Homes.com pull from, and showcase homes on social media.

How are you involved in the community? We have a heart for Amarillo and love the relationships we have built throughout the years. We believe in helping our neighbors and community through volunteer and donation opportunities with several local nonprofits.

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Sabre L. Cofer,
REALTOR®, CLHMS, CRBS, CRLS, GRI, PSA, SRS, TRLP
Landi White
Living Texas Style Real Estate Group
brokered by eXp Realty, LLC



How long has your brokerage been in Amarillo? I've been a licensed Realtor since 2011 and started our team in 2015. I'm a seven-time Icon Agent with eXp Realty, achieving this production and leadership award since joining eXp in January 2018.

What trends do you foresee in the market in 2025? There is hope interest rates will improve, but most are saying they'll stay about the same—or we may see them go up again. The market is improving as buyers show more confidence and we expect this to continue. We've heard rumors the market may get pretty hot in 2025, which will help sellers immensely.

What are the advantages of using a real estate agent to buy or sell a house? It is imperative to have an experienced, professional Realtor to help you navigate the transactional process. For most people, selling and buying a home is the largest financial decision they will make, and having an honest and skilled professional Realtor you trust will help you make good decisions, whether buying or selling.

What skills are necessary to succeed as a Realtor? You must care more about your clients and their needs than yourself. The best Realtors need a calm, steady personality. They need to be patient and caring problem-solvers—we often work through many issues to get the transaction closed for the buyer and seller.

What makes you stand out as a brokerage? eXp attracts the best of the best in real estate, which means not only the best agents, but also the best leadership and training possible. We have several brokers in Texas, so there is always someone available to advise us quickly. Landi, who is also a registered nurse, joined our team after getting her real estate license in 2020. Sidney Homfeld joined our team in 2020 after being with another brokerage for years.

What technology does your team use when trying to sell a property? Our photography team showcases our clients' homes with beautiful photographs and aerial videography of the interior and exterior. We also have a staging and organizing team when selling a house becomes overwhelming. Our estate team can help develop a plan to get a loved one's house ready to sell. Our marketing team utilizes social media platforms to promote each property, including tools provided through our eXp Global community and eXp Luxury.

How does your team stay up to date with market trends and changes? One of the benefits of being under the eXp Realty umbrella is our team constantly keeps us up-to-date on the market. We are members of real estate groups and coaches, such as RATE and CPO Experts, that keep us apprised of ever-changing market trends and regulations.

How does your team give back in the community? Our team is spread across the Texas Panhandle, and we love to give back to our communities. We support our teams' and clients' interests, whether that is giving to a volleyball or soccer fundraiser, or a memorial or cause that is near to their hearts. One of my favorite events is the annual benefit rodeo in Pampa.

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FOODIE VS. EATER: WHY I'D RATHER JUST EAT

Once upon a time, being called a foodie felt like a badge of honor. It meant you were in the know when it came to all things food, with tons of bells and whistles. You could wax poetic about the delicate citrus notes of yuzu, sprinkle truffle salt on anything and everything, or debate the superiority of Neapolitan pizza crust versus New York style. Foodies curated their dining experiences like art collectors, obsessing over where to find the crispiest duck confit or creating asymmetrical balance when plating their food off-center and high to the sky with embellishments. Meanwhile, eaters? Well, they were just ... eating. Poor souls. Mere mortals eating their meals without ceremony or critique. At least, that's what I used to believe.

The deeper I got into my own culinary journey, the more I started to question this so-called hierarchy. Why was being an eater considered lesser? Why did the love of food have to be tied to a relentless pursuit of what's trendy, obscure or "elevated?" Wasn't the simple joy of tasting, savoring and experiencing just as meaningful, if not more?

Firstly, foodies, please don't come for me. I get it. In fact, as a chef who often cooks for private dinner parties, being a foodie comes with the territory. I love delivering all the glitz and embellishments for clients who crave that experience. And when I dine here in town or travel to larger cities, you bet your sweet hiney I'm spending some time and money on a fancy meal! There's something magical about enjoying a dish that makes me pause mid-bite with tears in my eyes, savoring every layer of flavor.

The beauty in what I do is that I can pivot from making smoked shiitake onion ash to a good ol' heaping plate of spaghetti and meatballs. That's the art of it all, and I respect the thrill of the chase. But I certainly don't eat like that at home unless it's a special occasion or a reason to celebrate. Most days, my joy in food comes from something far simpler: just good ingredients, cooked with care and eaten with appreciation. And after those long days of work, I happily snap open a can of bean dip and rip into a bag of Fritos.

So, what made me recognize being an eater as potentially more meaningful than being a foodie? Food isn't just a hobby or an aesthetic. It's connection. It's memory. It's survival. The best meals I've ever had weren't plated with tweezers or sourced from a chef with Michelin stars. Those stand-out meals were cooked by hands that knew love better than technique—just like my mother's homemade tortillas, slathered with butter. They were the perfect bite of something messy, eaten standing over the sink. Now that's eating. And it's sacred.

Foodies love to intellectualize, and there's nothing wrong with that. But I've learned that being an eater isn't about simplicity or sustenance. It's about presence. It's about relishing a ripe peach in summer without knowing its brix level. It's about letting a bite of something nostalgic stop you dead in your tracks—not because it's artisanal, but because it reminds you of childhood. Ahh, what I'd do to walk around today with a popsicle stain ring around my mouth for all to see.







> “I, too, am a lover of food, but I don’t need a foam garnish to prove it.”

So, by now, you probably know if you’re a foodie, an eater, or a little bit of both (like me). How does an eater embrace the eater’s life with intention? How does one stand tall in the face of the truffle-infused, sous-vide-loving foodies of the world and say, “I, too, am a lover of food, but I don’t need a foam garnish to prove it?” Simple. You pay attention. Cook and eat with presence, awareness, and the kind of appreciation that doesn’t need a tasting menu to feel special. It goes a little something like this:

Start with good ingredients, but don’t overthink it. Choose ingredients that look and smell good. A ripe tomato should make you weak in the knees. A loaf of fresh bread should make that crunchy sound when you squeeze it slightly. Find the beauty in simplicity because nothing ruins a meal faster than agonizing over whether your olive oil is “extra” enough.

Use your hands. No, really … touch the food! Before you even turn on the stove, take a moment. Feel the weight of an onion in your palm. Press your fingers into a cold stick of butter. Tear fresh herbs with your hands instead of chopping them into oblivion. Cooking is not just a visual art—it’s tactile, primal and gifts us with loads of sensory experiences. Engage with it. And yes, you have full permission to lick the spoon.

Season like you mean it. An eater knows that kosher salt is not just a seasoning, it’s a lifeline. Don’t be afraid of it. Same goes for fat, acid and heat (shoutout to chef and author Samin Nosrat). Taste as you go, and adjust. Trust your instincts. The beauty of being an eater is that you don’t need to intellectualize it. Your tongue already knows what it likes.

Eat with your full attention. (Put the phone down, Becky.) This is where the eater shines. Sit down. Breathe. Smell your food before diving in. Close your eyes for that first taste if you have to. Let your body register all of it—the crunch, the creaminess, the warmth, the spice. Because this meal, however simple, is an event. And the best part? No one’s judging your reaction except maybe your dog.

Find joy in the messy, imperfect and real. Not every meal has to be plated like it’s auditioning for Chef’s Table. A good eater knows that, sometimes, the best meals come from things thrown together with whatever’s in the fridge. Believe it or not, a slightly burnt edge adds character. And licking sauce off your fingers is a sign of satisfaction, not poor etiquette. Eaters aren’t bound by the constraints of food trends; they eat what makes them happy. And that, my friends, is a power move.

I’m just gonna say it: Eaters are the real MVPs. So, no, you don’t need to call yourself a foodie to prove your love for food. In my opinion, being an eater means cooking with heart, eating with intention, and embracing the beauty of every simple, unpretentious, finger-licking bite. It’s about connection, experience and, most importantly, joy.

Now go forth, fellow eaters. Cook something, taste everything and let yourself love it without a dissertation on its origins. That’s the real magic.



RUTHIE LANDELIUS
Ruthie owns Black Fig Catering and is proprietor of a food blog at blackfigfood.com. Learn more about her online classes at blackfigfoodprograms.com.


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Turkish Delight

When we began seeing Facebook posts touting authentic Turkish food available in Amarillo, we were intrigued. When we actually placed an order and had the opportunity to eat *sarma*—lovingly prepared by Vildan Işsever and Eyel's Kitchen—we were hooked. These rice bites rolled in grape leaves are somehow savory and tangy at the same time, with a deep, earthy flavor we couldn't get enough of. Wanting to learn more about their story, we invited the Işsever family to share their traditions with us—including a step-by-step guide to making this delicious dish.

PHOTOS BY SHANNON RICHARDSON



VILDAN IŞSEVER

PHOTOS BY ANGELINA [illegible] PHOTOGRAPHY

Originally from Turkey, Amarillo's Işsever family came to the Panhandle chasing wind. Cüneyt, the father, works for GRI Towers, which manufactures components for the wind turbine industry. The multinational business is headquartered in Spain and has facilities from South Africa to Argentina—including one in Amarillo, and one in Turkey.

When the company brought Cüneyt to Amarillo, his wife, Vildan, and their two daughters Eylul and Elifsu eventually followed. "When they call you to the USA from your country, it's an opportunity," he says.

Turkish food is almost non-existent in Amarillo, and the local Turkish community is confined to just a handful of families (many of whom are associated with GRI Towers). But when the outgoing Cüneyt began bringing some of Vildan's food to work, the response was tremendous.

Eylul, now a 16-year-old Amarillo High student who quickly achieved fluency in English, goes by the name "Ellie." She does a lot of translating for the family. "He just wanted his friends to taste it," she says of her mom's traditional cooking. "His friends really liked it. It's good."

That convinced Vildan to open Eyel's Kitchen Amarillo, a home business preparing Turkish food and dessert, mostly sold through Facebook. Eyel is a combination of the two girls' names. "People were interested," Ellie says. "We sell baklava and sarma almost every day."

Most locals will be familiar with the rich, sweet *baklava*, a dessert with roots in the Ottoman Empire, which influenced many traditional dishes in Turkey.

The other traditional dish, *sarma*, is less familiar. Ellie says the classic finger food was once considered a luxury dish, prepared by the Ottoman Imperial Kitchen for the banquets and feasts of royalty. Today, the rice-stuffed, grape-leaf-rolled food is much more commonplace, and frequently prepared by families for special occasions.

"It's more for holidays, when you go to elderly people's houses," Ellie says. "It's a dish we always make when people come to the house."

For Muslim families like the Işsevers (pronounced "Uhsh-seh-VEHR"), the next big holiday event is Ramadan, the month-long period of fasting that began at the end of February and will continue through March 30. Every day during Ramadan, starting at dawn, Islam's faithful fast from food and drink until sunset. The holy month concludes with Eid al-Fatr, a day of feasting and joy that marks the end of fasting. For most Turkish families, sarma will be part of that celebration.

The name, sarma, literally means "wrapping" in Turkish, and reflects the method of preparation. It's commonly eaten as a side dish when prepared vegetarian, or served as a main dish when served with ground beef or lamb. Vildan prepared for *Brick & Elm* a vegetarian version, generously walking us through each step in the process as Ellie narrated and translated.





Prepare the leaves. Made with brined, preserved grape leaves, these leaves have been softened by blanching in hot water. Unlike spinach leaves, the fibrous texture and cellulose structure of grape leaves keep them from breaking down when cooking. Vindal gets her grape leaves once a month when she travels to her favorite Turkish market in Dallas. "The international market [in Amarillo] sells them, too, but she doesn't really like those," Ellie confesses.





Create the filling. Sarma is filled with heavily seasoned rice, flavored with onions and a variety of herbs and spices (including paprika, oregano and mint). "People add different things sometimes for taste," Ellie says, like pine nuts or currants. The rice is blended with the seasonings on a stovetop, but not yet fully cooked.

Let the rice cool. The next step is to roll the rice preparation into the grape leaves by hand, so Vildan will often place the mixture in the refrigerator for a few minutes until she can comfortably touch it.





Roll the sarma. Vildan places a small amount of the filling at the base of each leaf, folding the sides of the leaf inward in order to roll it into a tight, closed cylinder—about the circumference of a short cigar. For our preparation, she rolled more than 40, based on the size of her cooking pot. "They have to fill the pot so they don't unroll," explains Ellie.













Cook the sarma. The individual rolls are then placed upright in the pot, packed tightly. Vildan pours water and olive oil over them, then tops with lemon slices. Covered with a lid, she allows the pot to simmer gently until the rice cooks completely inside the stuffed leaves. For the size of pot she used, this process took around 25 minutes. The tightness of the rolls in the pot means paying frequent attention to keep the simmer from boiling over. "It's kind of messy," Ellie says.

Let cool, then serve. Once fully cooked, sarma can be enjoyed as is—the rich, Mediterranean flavor stands on its own—but Cüneyt says the family also likes to dip them in plain yogurt or a mint yogurt sauce.

"It's good, right?" Cüneyt asks after the photos have been taken and the *Brick & Elm* team samples multiple rolls.

It's *very* good. Vildan sells sarma, baklava, homemade yogurt and traditional Turkish pastries like *pogaca* and *börek* via the Eyel's Kitchen Facebook page, and Ellie always helps with translation.

STRIKING OUT CHILD ABUSE

Heroes & Legends

An evening with ROGER CLEMENS

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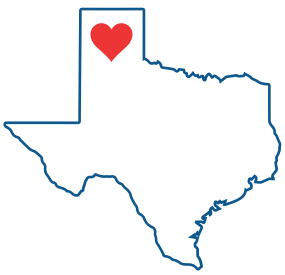
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1.800.252.5400

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GO BLUE DAY
Friday, April 4 Wear Blue for #GoBlueDay
Tag us on Facebook for a shout out!

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Saturday, April 26, 9:00 am
1 mile family friendly walk
804 Quail Creek Drive, Amarillo



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Chris Hazel, *Owner*


PANHANDLE WRAP


CRUNCHY SALAD


SUPER GREEN SMOOTHIE

PHOTOS BY SHANNON RICHARDSON

WEST TEXAS FRESH

Last year, when an artfully arranged stack of black-painted containers appeared just off the Coulter exit on west I-40, the massive green "WTF" painted on one side asked the right question. By August, the question had been answered.

West Texas Fresh opened west of the AISD Rod Schroder Education Support Center, with a drive-thru format serving salads, wraps, smoothies and breakfast burritos to the hospital employees heading down Coulter and another 60,000 vehicles per day on the interstate.

The concept was developed by Connor O'Rourke and Brian Singleton—both former owners of Crush downtown—and Alex Cunningham, whose family has owned and managed Eat-Rite for decades.

Everything is intentional about the design of the restaurant and its menu. "The idea was to make a super-small space, where everybody can see and you can hear each other so you can run with a really small crew," O'Rourke says. The container-framed size eliminates the need to meet certain commercial kitchen regulations, and a lean team minimizes the staffing struggles many restaurants are facing.

O'Rourke spent six years at Crush after several years in the Chicago wine industry. He and Singleton alike had begun to be frustrated by the demands of a large restaurant concept. "You saw the same people come in on the same day every week and eat the same thing," O'Rourke says. Given the consistent behavior of so many customers, a more minimalist approach could still meet expectations.

So they created a simple menu for a simple kitchen. Every ingredient at WTF is used in at least two or three other menu items, resulting in a 20-item menu built on fresh ingredients. Customers order ahead using an app, customize their salad or wrap with add-ons, pick it up and go.

The hospitals right down the street—their combined 5,000-plus employees, along with the Vet School and TTUHSC—represent the city's largest concentration of full-time employees. "People that work [there] maybe have 45 minutes at lunch," O'Rourke says. "They'll grab a smoothie in the morning and their salad for lunch." Some customers come two or three times a week.

Menu highlights include the popular PanHandle salad and the Roasted Peach salad—a holdover from Crush. Every salad can be turned into a wrap, and every breakfast burrito can be ordered as a bowl. The Super Green smoothie, with spinach, kale, banana, avocado, peaches and coconut milk, is another customer favorite.

But O'Rourke hesitates to describe the West Texas Fresh menu as "healthy eating," because he thinks that sounds unappetizing to some people. "People should crave or want whatever food they're going to get. Food shouldn't be a punishment," he says. "It should be good and the flavors should be good to start with. If it's healthy for you, that's just a bonus."

7210 W. Interstate 40
806.463.9014
westtexasfresh.com

Amarillo

575 PIZZERIA

Owned by an Amarillo native, the two local 575 locations (plus a food truck) serve the best pizza in the city. Locals rave about the incomparably thin crust, the way the thin-sliced pepperoni crisps up in the oven, and the fresh ingredients. Their easy to-go ordering includes craft beer and wine by the bottle. 2803 Civic Circle / 7710 Hillside Road, Suite 700, 806.322.5575, 575pizzeria.com $$

9TH INNING BREWS & BITES

Billing itself as "Amarillo's Newest Sports Bar," this west-side location represents the rebranding of what once was J's Bar & Grill in the Shops at Soncy. It offers 57 TVs, dozens of draft beers on tap, a reliable pub-style menu and a family-friendly environment for watching the game. 3130 S. Soncy Road, Suite 100, 806.358.2220, 9thinningsportsbar.com $

ABUELO'S MEXICAN RESTAURANT

This longtime chain has its roots in Amarillo and an incredibly dedicated local clientele. The Tex-Mex is flavorful but the true draw is nostalgia. Also: margaritas. As a bonus, Abuelo's offers some of the best event room and catering deals in the city. 3501 SW 45th Ave., 806.354.8294, abuelos.com $$

ASIAN BUFFET

This diverse 34th and Bell offers pickup, delivery and extra sanitization practices. Not interested in a buffet? The Mongolian Barbecue feature—prepared fresh, right in front of you—is unique to Amarillo. 3347 Bell St., 806.803.9588, amarillobuffet.wixsite.com/asianbuffet $

BEEF BURGER BARREL

Hands-down this is the most unique restaurant design in Amarillo, and this classic walk-up joint has held down the same spot since 1952. You can't miss it. Because, y'all, it's a giant white barrel. Not in the mood for beef and/or burgers? Try a fish, ham or grilled cheese sandwich. 3102 Plains Blvd., 806.374.0101 $

BELMAR BAKERY & CAFE

The Zaccardo family's beloved bakery has greeted its 60th year of existence with a transition to new ownership. As the community gets accustomed to the change, it's still churning out cookies, custom cakes, pies, breads and other sweet goodies. 3325 Bell St., 806.355.0141, belmarbakery.com $

BIG JIM'S PIZZA CO.

Formerly La Bella Pizza on Olsen, this locally owned pizza place has a dedicated clientele and a delightfully diverse menu. The pizza is great, of course—the 24-inch size is one of the biggest available in town—but they also serve burgers, gyros, calzones, subs, ribs, chicken and more. Full dining room and a full bar with live music. 3801 Olsen Blvd., Suite 9, 806.352.5050, ilovebigjimspizza.com $

BLACK BEAR DINER

Part of a restaurant chain mostly located west of the Mississippi, the Amarillo location takes advantage of the abundant traffic along I-40 headed east. It serves traditional, homestyle comfort food including burgers, sandwiches, chicken-fried steak, meatloaf and breakfast all day. Customers love the huge portions. We hear good things about the pie. 7000 E. I-40, 806.342.3080, blackbeardiner.com $$

BURRITO STOP

A mainstay for downtown workers, this small restaurant between Taylor and Polk offers special pricing for teachers and first responders, pre-order dinner packs and downtown delivery. The tortillas are always fresh and the breakfast burritos are some of the best in town. Open early for breakfast. 114 SE Ninth Ave., 806.418.2705, burrito-stop.square.site $

CARNICERIA LA POPULAR

You can't go wrong at an eatery tucked into the back of a family-owned supermarket. Do your shopping, then hit the counter for a lunch of barbacoa tacos and tamales. On the way back, grab traditional Mexican sweetbreads like conchas and marranitos. 1505 SE Third Ave., 806.374.6451 $

CELLAR 55

A splashy new high-end concept from Chris Hazel—who has a well-earned reputation for his wine expertise—Cellar 55 has grabbed residents' attention from its opening. Enjoy a sophisticated interior, indulgent meals and a truly impressive menu of wine and bourbon. A fantastic new entrant to Amarillo's fine-dining scene. 2800 Civic Circle, Suite 500, 806.322.7655, cellar55ama.com $$

COFFEE FIXX

This cute little coffee shop on historic Sixth doesn't just have a full coffee and tea menu, but serves breakfast items all day and a limited—but very affordable—lunch menu of sandwiches and burgers. Think of it as a coffee shop with a small grill, and really, really amazing breakfast burritos. 3020 SW Sixth Ave., 806.584.2445 $

CRUSH WINE BAR & GRILL

A fixture of fine dining downtown, Crush serves great steaks, pasta and shareable appetizers in an upscale, modern environment. We love the bar area downstairs as well as the rooftop bar, which overlooks a busy Polk Street and occasionally hosts live music. On weekends, enjoy a street-side brunch. The service is

This is not a comprehensive list of local restaurants. From issue to issue, we will try to include a wide variety of dining options based on the space available. If you notice an error, please email mm@brickandelm.com.

$	Most entrees under $10
$$	Most entrees $11 to $20
$$$	Most entrees over $21

consistently great and the wine menu extensive. 627 S. Polk St., 806.418.2011, crushamarillo.com $$

DAVID'S MEXICAN RESTAURANT

Maybe you haven't heard of this River Road mainstay. Also, the name "David" doesn't exactly scream DELICIOUS MEXICAN FOOD. But the hundreds and hundreds of reviews tell another story. This little dive needs to be on your radar, especially if you love fajitas, enchiladas and margaritas. 400 E. Hastings Ave., 806.418.6333, davidsmex.com $

THE DRUNKEN OYSTER

The opulent, moody atmosphere of The Drunken Oyster feels like you've stepped out of the Panhandle and into the heart of the bayou. The Louisiana-style cuisine never disappoints, from the fresh oysters to the jambalaya and crawfish étouffée. It's also a great spot for live music. 7606 SW 45th Ave., Suite 100, 806.418.6668, drunkenoysteramarillo.com $$

EL CHARRO MEXICAN RESTAURANT

The prominent I-40 location probably negates the title "hidden gem," but we suspect a large percentage of Amarillo's Mexican-food aficionados haven't visited El Charro. That's a mistake. The fresh-made salsa is wonderful and the food is flavorful and authentic. Travelers and locals alike rave about the friendly service. 4207 E. I-40, 806.373.4555 $

EL TEJAVAN

Plenty of locals identify El Tejavan as their favorite Mexican food restaurant in Amarillo, especially the original location on East I-40. The guacamole and salsa are fantastic, along with homemade tortillas, tacos and barbacoa made from recipes passed down for generations. 3801 E. I-40, 806.372.5250 / 3420 W. I-40, 806.354.2444 / 801 SW Sixth Ave., 806.437.1323, eltejavanmexican.com $$

FAVS

FAVs stands for "Fruits and Vegetables," and that's precisely the healthy focus of this small, family-owned shop. Beyond the smoothies and fruit bowls, FAVs serves





salads, sandwiches, wraps, soups and fresh pressed juice, now with two locations in Amarillo. 706 SW 16th Ave., 806.803.9171 / 3333 Coulter St., D4, 806.318.2243, favsworld.com $

FIREHOUSE SUBS

You probably think you know all the submarine sandwich places, but Firehouse does things a little differently. To start, the subs are steamed before serving, releasing a rush of flavors. Founded by firemen, this chain sets aside a portion of every purchase to donate to local first responders, helping provide life-saving equipment. 1901 S. Georgia St., 806.418.6651/3450 S. Soncy Road, 806.398.0056, firehousesubs.com $

FRUTILANDIA

It's easy to miss this tiny shop located right behind Fiesta Foods on Southeast 10th. Don't miss it! Inside you'll find beautiful ceviche, colorful fruit cups, gazpacho, shrimp cocktail, elote en vaso (corn in a cup), bubble tea and addictive Doritos chili pie. 1010 SE 10th Ave., 806.654.1224 $

FURRBIE'S

The owners at Furrbie's are quirky and fun, the burgers are delicious, and the desserts are definitely worth the extra calories. But the best thing about this downtown lunch stop is the fact that they've figured out how to replicate Char-Kel's cheese fritters from the 1980s and '90s. YES. 210 SW Sixth Ave., 806.220.0841 $

GEORGIA STREET TAPHOUSE

This locally owned sports bar in Wolflin Village offers a really solid bar and a nice outdoor patio. The craft beer selection is diverse, with daily drink specials, making it a popular place to kick back for Happy Hour. Foodwise, expect typical pub fare. The fries are tasty, and the pizza, burger and app menus never disappoint. 2001 S. Georgia St., 806.803.7000, georgiastreettaphouse.com $$

GOLDEN ROSE TEA ROOM

If you're searching for traditional British tea service, look no further. Golden Rose has carved out its place in this delightful niche, offering all the coziness and tradition of a delicate tea service. Expect three pours per meal, balanced alongside a three-tiered food service, including savory sandwiches and dessert. Reservations are required for meal service, but stop-ins for dessert and tea only are always available. Proper fun! 3314 Olsen-B, 806.803.1450, goldenrosetearoom.com $$

GREEN CHILE WILLY'S GRILL

This iconic location on I-27, tucked away between Amarillo and Canyon, is worth the short drive if you're a fan of chicken-fried steak, country music, and a homespun family restaurant feel. The green-chile gravy is amazing, as are the hand-cut grilled steaks, burgers, and grilled chicken. 13651 I-27, 806.622.2200, greenchilewillys.com $$

HAPPY BURRITO

A good burrito always makes people happy, and this small dine-in and takeout restaurant on the Boulevard does it right. Almost everything on the menu is less than $5, and loyal customers tend to order online and pick it up. Interestingly, we hear a lot about the burgers here. 908 E. Amarillo Blvd., Suite B, 806.379.8226 $

HOUSE OF DONUTS

Amarillo loves its donuts, and this little indie stop on North Grand has a faithful following, served fresh by an always-friendly team. Moms and dads will love the colorful gourmet options kids go crazy for, as well as more grown-up treats like kolaches, breakfast sandwiches and breakfast burritos. 1615 N. Grand St., 806.803.0845 $

INDIAN OVEN

Tikka bite at this long-standing Indian restaurant, where everything—from the homemade naan to each item in the lunch buffet—is worth a try. The samosas are crispy, and the chicken vindaloo tangy. A number of meals are offered as vegan options. 2406 Paramount Blvd., 806.335.3600, indian-oven.com $$

JACOBO'S CAFE

This cute, diner-style storefront on Olsen serves down-home meals with a focus on Mexican food. The pancakes and breakfast burritos are super-popular, as are the spicy chilaquiles. Family-owned, fair prices and always worth a visit. 3701 Olsen Blvd., Suite L, 806.418.8850 / 1300 S. Grand St., $

JOE'S PIZZA & PASTA

Technically, this venerable Bushland restaurant isn't in Amarillo, but it's absolutely worth the drive. You'll be surprised at the quality of this Italian food, from the New York-style pizza to the hot subs, pasta, lasagna and even the steak. The sauce is homemade, and you can tell. 19151 W. I-40, 806.356.8191 $

KABUKI ROMANZA JAPANESE STEAKHOUSE & SUSHI BAR

The first true Japanese steakhouse in Amarillo—vintage Amarilloans remember it from way before the move to the boat-shaped dining room on I-40—Kabuki always pleases. If you like flamboyant fried-rice prep interrupted by rain and light shows, this is your spot. Dinner only, with 2 p.m. openings on weekends. 8130 W. I-40, 806.358.7799, kabukiromanza.com $$

LA PASADITA

You don't really expect to find this little, walk-up restaurant in the middle of a residential area, but just get in line and go for it (the line moves quickly). The menu is limited but the Chihuahua-style food is fresh, traditional and fast. Takeout only. Try a breakfast burrito, menudo, barbacoa or chile rellenos. 2730 NE 16th Ave., 806.381.2309 $

LITTLE LAOS

The husband-and-wife operators of this Lao stop on Historic Route 66 are passionate about the flavors and freshness of Lao food,

which relies on fresh herbs like dill, mint, lemongrass and fermented flavors. That flavor comes through in the popular Green Curry Chicken, or Yum Seen Nam Tok, a beef salad. Be prepared for the spice. The max level, "Lao Spice," is not for the faint of heart. Cool off with a refreshing Thai Tea.
3811 SW Sixth Ave., 806.803.0373

MARHABA ERITREAN AND ETHIOPIAN CUISINE

With a menu marked by traditional spices and preparation methods, Marhaba introduces locals to authentic East African flavors and preparations—including meat and vegetarian dishes—served on a communal platter of *injera*, a spongy flatbread made from fermented teff flour. After the meal, don't miss the strong and flavorful coffee service.
2522 Paramount Blvd., 806.367.6077, marhabarestaurant.wordpress.com $$

METROPOLITAN STEAK & SEAFOOD

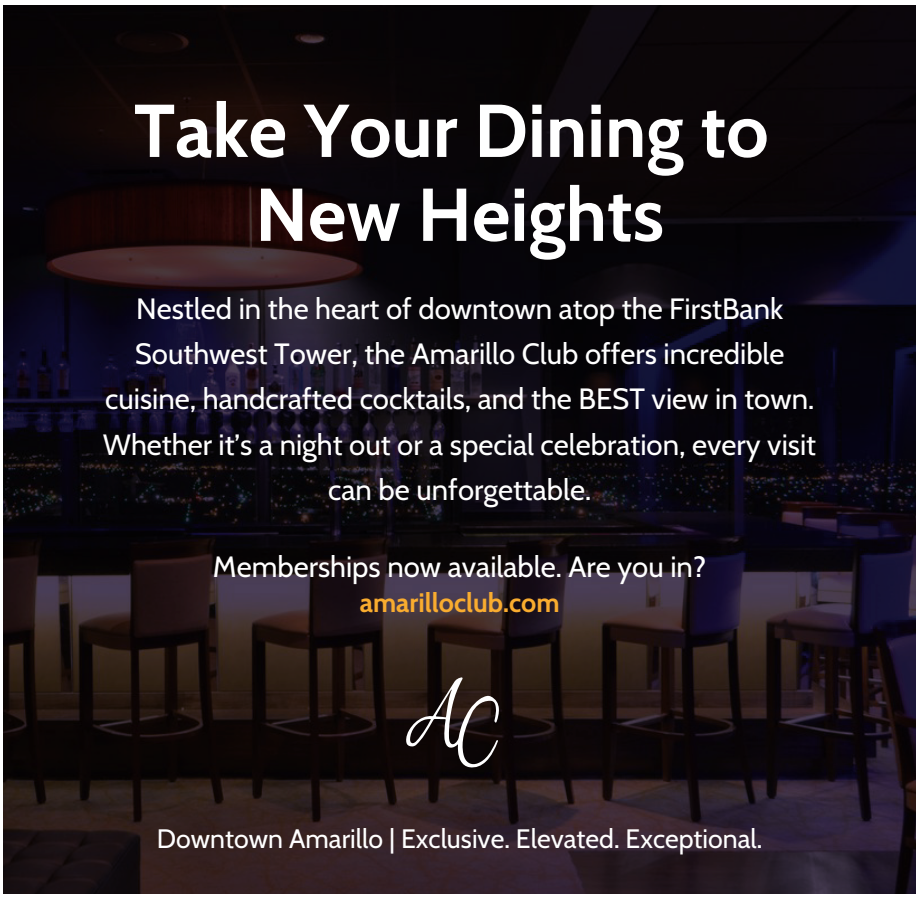
Part of Town Square from its 2016 beginning, this elegant environment offers great service, a full bar, and excellent cuisine. It's open for lunch at 11 a.m., but also makes for a delightful date night in the evenings. Metropolitan is a sweet spot to linger, with a seasonal menu, full bar and live music.
9181 Town Square Blvd., Suite 1201, 806.242.0117, metroofamarillo.com $$

MR. GATTI'S PIZZA

A longstanding pizza presence in Amarillo, Mr. Gatti's was popular with kids a generation ago, and now those grown-up kids are bringing a new generation to the unlimited pizza buffet, pasta, salad bar, and huge gameroom. On Sundays, bring your church bulletin and get a free drink.
4412 S. Western St., 806.355.5601, mrgattispizza.com $

NORTH HEIGHTS DISCOUNT & CAFE

If you've ever thought twice about dining inside a convenience store, this will change your mind. This place serves some of the best soul food in the city. It's known for huge portions—the nachos probably weigh three pounds—as well as its ribs, pork chops, fried catfish and breakfast items.
1621 NW 18th Ave., 806.418.6751 $





OHMS CAFE & BAR

The Fuller family has operated this eatery for more than 30 years, and it consistently offers Amarillo's best fine dining. We love the bar area and outdoor patio, as well as its buffet-style lunch and weekly specials from Chef Josh Fuller. Pro tip: The Bar Burger is the best burger in town. 619 S. Tyler St., 806.373.3233, ohmscafe.com $$-$$$

OVR-EZE

The locally owned OVR-EZE began to sizzle immediately after its 2024 opening, and continues to build a delighted clientele with its upscale breakfast and brunch menu. Don't miss the French Toast Breakfast or Croi-ffle Tennessee Hot Chicken, or the full bar: This is a place that encourages "EZE day-drinking" with on-tap prosecco, spiked coffee, and a variety of cocktails, mimosas and bloody marys. 5700 S. Georgia St., 806.877.7990, ovreze.com

PANCHO VILLA RESTAURANT

Amarillo's other restaurant with "Villa" in the name, this small place in River Road has exactly as much legacy and character as the faux-wood paneling suggests. Locals rave about the chips and salsa, along with the authentic barbacoa, enchiladas, menudo and low prices. 4601 River Road, 806.381.0105 $

PESCARAZ ITALIAN RESTAURANT

This locally owned Italian place is very involved in the community, has a full bar, and serves up the most irresistible free bread twists in the city. You'll eat so many, you won't be able to finish your pasta, pizza or calzone. In the evenings at Pescaraz, you'll almost always hear live music. 3415-K Bell St., 806.350.5430, pescaraz.com $$

PONDASETA BREWING CO.

Already popular for its craft beer, a new mobile trailer enables the brewery to serve a food truck-style menu. The focus is pub-style food like burgers, sandwiches and mac-and-cheese bites. Kids meals are available. The adults will want the charcuterie adventure board, with hummus, cheese, meat and crackers. 7500 SW 45th Ave., 806.418.6282, pondaseta.com $$

RED RIVER STEAKHOUSE

It's not hard to find a decent steak in the Panhandle, so when a local steakhouse earns a reputation for its hand-cut steaks, you pay attention. The Amarillo version of the owner's original Red River Steakhouse in McLean, this old-fashioned establishment may be one of the area's best-kept secrets. 4332 SW 45th Ave., 806.316.5082, redriversteakhouse.net $$

SAI INDIAN CUISINE

Established in 2024, Sai brought a new Indian lunch buffet option to Amarillo, seven days a week, along with a la carte menu items. The saag paneer and lamb curry are standouts, the hospitality is attentive, and the portions (off the menu) are really generous. 3701 Olsen Blvd., 806.437.1399, saiindiancuisine.com

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SAVÓR TAPAS BAR

A product of Chef Rory Schepisi, Savór offers a swanky, modern vibe in the Greenways, with a full bar and a delicious selection of small-bite plates. Order a bunch of everything for the table, and don't forget the dessert. 7669 Hillside Road, Suite 600, 806.310.2600, savortapasbar.com $$

SINALOA HOT DOGS AND MEXICAN FOOD

If you've never had a Mexican hot dog, then stop reading and head over to the Boulevard right now. This is a small place but the flavor is huge. We also love the fire-grilled chicken, tacos, tortas, carne asada, quesadillas, burritos and mulitas. But that hot dog! (You'll need napkins.) 2618 E. Amarillo Blvd., 806.367.8935 $

TEXAS FIREHOUSE SPORTS BAR & GRILL

Maybe it's the abundant TVs. Or the incredible number of beers on tap. But this locally owned sports bar is a lot bigger inside than the exterior would have you believe. It's pub grub all the way—pizza, burgers, paninis, fried pickles—and it's all good. Plus, it's divided up between the family-friendly restaurant side or the noisier bar side. 3333 S. Coulter St., Suite D1, 806.351.1800, txfirehouse.com $$

TOSCANA ITALIAN STEAKHOUSE

Housed in The Barfield Hotel, Toscana Italian Steakhouse offers authentic Texas steakhouse fare with savory Italian flair. Heavy on premium Panhandle beef and locally grown vegetables, Toscana's menu also includes scratch-made pastas and sauces made in house. Don't miss the melt-in-your-mouth zeppoles. Think of them as tiny Italian doughnuts, available with a variety of toppings. 600 S. Polk St., 806.414.2200, toscanaamarillo.com $$-$$$

WESLEY'S BBQ

River Road restaurants aren't always on the radar of every local resident, but Wesley's has been around forever and deserves its legendary reputation. Loyal customers return again and again for the genuine Texas-style barbecue, especially the baby-back ribs, brisket and—yep—the beans. 6406 River Road, 806.381.2893, wesleysbbq.com $

YELLOW CITY STREET FOOD

It started as a "food truck without wheels" and now this street food experiment is one of the city's favorite restaurants, and one of the only vegan/vegetarian places in town. Definitely try the animal fries and diablo shrimp tacos. The burgers, craft beer and wine list are all wonderful. 2916 Wolflin Ave., 806.353.9273, yellowcitystreetfood.com $

YOUNGBLOOD'S CAFE

An Amarillo classic, where you can grab a hearty breakfast starting every day at 6 a.m. or wait a few hours to try its illustrious chicken-fried steaks. Our favorite thing at Youngblood's? It's gotta be the free banana pudding for dessert (while supplies last). 620 SW 16th Ave., 806.342.9411, youngbloodscafe.com $$



ZENITH

A Celebration of Resilience and Empowerment in Native Women Artists

Zenith showcases the extraordinary talent of Native women artists, each a visionary in her own right. These artists not only embody the artistic spirit but also serve as ambassadors for their tribes, educating others about their heritage and the rich histories from which they come.

Co-curated by award-winning artist Brent Learned, this exhibition is a powerful celebration of resilience, creativity, and cultural storytelling.

Don't miss this inspiring showcase—visit Zenith today!

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$10 ADULTS
$8 AGES 65+
18 AND UNDER FREE

Canyon

BUENOS DIAS

There's a lot to love about a place that specializes in breakfast, and definitely a lot to love about a locally owned, small-town diner. Buenos Dias was born in 2018 as a home-cooking gem that specializes in breakfast. The cafe opens at 7 a.m. on weekdays and 7:30 on weekends serving up breakfast and brunch every Wednesday through Sunday. 1202 23rd St., 806.452.7277 $

HONEY BUZZ WINERY

The honey is made onsite from Creek House's hard-working bees, and those fresh, sweet flavors find their way into homemade items from cheese boards to salads, sandwiches and baked goods. Check social media for daily specials, and definitely try the impeccably brewed mead. 5005 Fourth Ave., 806.381.3446, honeybuzzwinery.com $

MICKEY'S PLACE

Family-owned, this restaurant offers Italian specialties and craft cocktails right off the Square in downtown Canyon. The two outdoor patio areas are perfect for warm evenings. The pizza is great and the rest of the homestyle menu offers fresh pasta specialties along with steak and salmon. The complimentary bread and sauce nearly steal the show. 1512 Fifth Ave. (Canyon), 806.452.7320, mickeysplacetx.com $$

RANCH HOUSE CAFE

Every bit what you'd expect from a small-town, home-cooking restaurant. This is comfort food at its best, with all-day breakfast, chicken-fry and steaks, Tex-Mex specialties and desserts made from scratch. You didn't hear it from us, but whole pies are available to order. 810 23rd St., 806.655.8785, theranchhousecafe.com $

ROCKIN' ZEBRA SODA SHOPPE

The motto here is "life is short, eat dessert first" and we can't disagree with that. Everything at Rockin' Zebra is pure nostalgia, from the '50s-era barstools and soda fountain to the abundant signage on the walls. (Not to mention Canyon's Square right outside the diner.) An ideal setting for a classic cheeseburger and milkshake. Or, splurge on a Monte Cristo and an ice cream soda. 404 15th St, Canyon, 806.655.3381 $

SAYAKOMARN'S RESTAURANT

This traditional Thai and Laotian place is extremely popular with locals, who mostly have given up trying to pronounce the name and instead call it "Soccer Moms." (It's … close.) We love the pretty dining area and separate to-go pickup entrance. We also love the Boba tea. 421 16th St., 806.655.2698, sayakomarns.com $$





OTCs or Over the Counter Medications, Vitamins, Herbs, Supplements and Inhalers can cause harmful side effects when mixed with certain prescriptions.



Krissy Hurt, MSN, RN, Executive Director

"People often assume if it's ***over the counter,*** it's safe to take. But it's often not safe when combined with prescription medications, especially in Seniors. That's why at **Jan Werner Adult Day Care,** we utilize the services of **Dr. Erica Dominguez** to monitor our participants and continually give a full medication review. Here's important information that could dramatically affect your well-being or your Senior loved one's health." **Krissy Hurt, Executive Director**

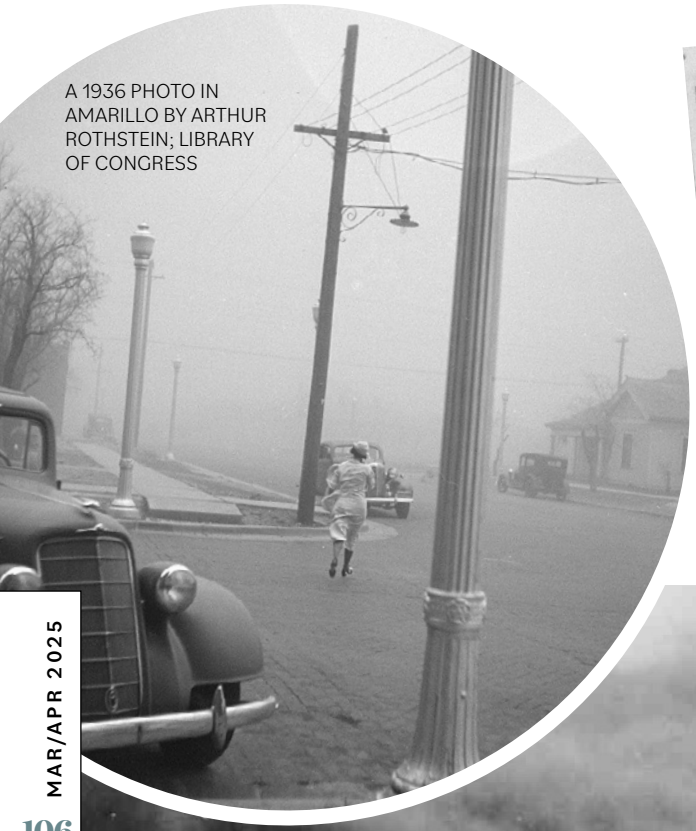
— **Dr. Erica Dominguez – Clinical Pharmacist** trained in Geriatric Care and Professor of TexasTech Health Sciences Center School of Pharmacy offers these important tips:

Benadryl – often used for severe allergies or to sleep, will completely dry you out and can cause cognitive impairment, especially if taken daily. Many memory problems in Seniors stem from Benadryl use. **Tylenol PM** – The "PM" in Tylenol is Benadryl. As we age, drugs accumulate in our body and we don't excrete them as often as when we were younger which inhibits the efficiency of other prescription drugs taken. **Ibuprofen, Aleve, Motrin** – These anti-inflammatory OTCs have harmful effects in Seniors and can negatively affect your kidneys, increase blood pressure and stomach bleeding. **St. John's Wort** – This herb interacts with many meds; inhibiting the metabolism of other drugs such as migraine and antidepressants. **Opioids** for pain • **Benzodiazepines** for anxiety or sleep • **Benadryl** – These drugs present major Fall Risks, especially in Seniors. **Supplements** – Surprisingly, supplements are not FDA regulated and often contain unreported additives. We recommend that Seniors don't take them, but if they do, discuss it with their health care provider.

Our **Basics PACE Program** at **Jan Werner** provides a comprehensive team: Analyzing meds, consulting, physical and occupational therapy, dietary and socialization that's stimulating and fun for our participants. Let us help you find answers for your Senior loved one.

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A 1936 PHOTO IN AMARILLO BY ARTHUR ROTHSTEIN; LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

FARMERS PRAY FOR RAIN BUT WIND ANSWERS

NORTHER STRIKES SUNDAY TO BLOT OUT SUN, TURN DAY INTO NIGHT



A DUST STORM APPROACHES PERRYTON, TEXAS

SPEARMAN, TEXAS

AMARILLO DAILY NEWS

AMARILLO, TEXAS, MONDAY MORNING, APRIL 15, 1935. HOME EDITION TEN PAGES PRICE FIVE CENTS

'WORST' DUSTER WHIPS ACROSS PANHANDLE

MORGENTHAU SAYS FINANCE LOG-JAM BROKEN

HAMLIN JURY REPORTS DEADLOCK

FARMERS PRAY FOR RAIN BUT WIND ANSWERS

RADIO SPEECH PREDICTS ERA OF PROSPERITY

LOST FOR NIGHT IN DUST

END 27 HOURS OF DEBATE ON DEATH TRIAL

McCarty To Lead Young Democs Here

SETS RECORD PACE

SEES 'CHEAP MONEY'

FRANCE WARNS AGAINST FORCE

WRITER CAUGHT IN DUST

Huey in High Humor Returns Home

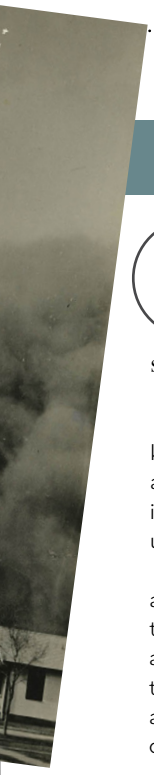
DUST WIDENS ITS PALL

NEW FUND FOR DUST RELIEF

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PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM



UNTO DUST ...

There's something Old Testament about a churning wall of dust appearing suddenly on the northern horizon. Something so terrifying about the prospect of being consumed by it. And somehow, we are strangely awed by what we see, unable to look the other way.

Almost anyone who's spent a few years in the Panhandle will know some of what I'm talking about. In our shared experience, a storm of dust is an archetype of our vulnerability and an inspiration to believe in something greater that frequently puts us in our place.

There are a precious few still living among us who can fully appreciate the punishment dust is capable of inflicting when there's nothing left to hold it back. Ninety years ago this spring, a scourge of dust unlike anything seen before was loosened on the Plains, blowing away whatever illusion of control remained in an area already stricken by economic hardship—but not yet fully dispossessed of hope.

We've seen some ferocious dust storms in recent years, but the dusters of the 1930s were different. Just a few years before the dusters began to roll, high wheat prices and a period of wet weather compelled area farmers to break open more and more native grassland for grain cultivation. But farming techniques of that time left the soil exposed and vulnerable in the wind. With the onset of the Great Depression, wheat prices fell dramatically just as an intense drought took hold. Crops failed, and with nothing to hold the dry soil together, the first big dust storms began to blow in 1931.

Then as now, it was the windy vanguard of an early spring cold front that would gather exposed soil into swirling clouds of dust that rolled south with the cooler air. But the dusters of the mid-1930s would grow to staggering heights and were so full of topsoil they would completely blot out the sun. The pulverized soil was then deposited as fine dust that not only covered everything on the ground but found its way into the homes—and lungs—of area residents. The 1930s dusters were as deadly as they were dirty.

The frequency of these "black blizzards" increased year by year. By 1935, there was some hope that a return to a more normal weather pattern might turn things around. Precipitation reports were front-page news in the Amarillo papers as March began to usher in a more springlike pattern. But on April 9 and 10, dust roared once again across the Plains and no one was spared the fury of this storm. Helen Virginia Varner, the wife of Cornelius Vanderbilt IV, was en route to Albuquerque to meet her newspaper publisher husband and "was compelled to halt her motor car trip" in Amarillo because of the low visibility. "I wonder how much longer these storms will have to keep up before everyone moves out?" she asked a reporter. She abandoned her Packard and took the train to Albuquerque, unwilling to face a dust-choked Highway 66 on her own.

The storm that sidetracked Mrs. Vanderbilt was considered the worst to date. "Dust Widens Its Pall" was the anguished bold-faced headline dominating the *Amarillo Globe-Times* on Thursday, April 11, where it was confirmed things were, in fact, getting worse. But no one could guess that by Sunday the 14th, the situation would deteriorate so soon, and in such a spectacular way.

The morning of the 14th—Palm Sunday—dawned clear with temperatures rising to shirt sleeve comfort as the day progressed. But the weathermen knew a cold front was bearing down and more dust was possible. The first reports of trouble came from Dodge City, Kansas, where, at 2:49 p.m., a great wall of airborne topsoil 500 to 600 feet high turned day to night. The cloud gained steam as it clocked almost 70 miles per hour and barreled through Canadian at 5 p.m. Amarillo was blacked out at 7:10 p.m., and the dust storm still had another 800 or so miles to go on its quest to visit all of Texas in a day.

National attention had been focused on this region for some time, especially after May 1934, when a Plains dust cloud drifted east and dropped its load over New York City and Washington, D.C. When the dust returned in April 1935, Associated Press reporter Robert E. Geiger made his way to the Oklahoma Panhandle to document this disaster as it unfolded. On the 14th, Geiger and photographer Harry G. Eisenhard were six miles outside of Boise City, Oklahoma, when the dust cloud appeared. They attempted to outrun it but a "flank movement" quickly blinded them. They spent two hours covering the six miles into town, navigating by looking down through an open door in order to stay on the pavement. The first known mention of the term "dust bowl" appeared in Geiger's news account of what he and Eisenhard endured.

Another name that stuck was "Black Sunday." The April 14 storm was remembered for its ominous coloration, spreading darkness across most of Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas and large swaths of Nebraska, Colorado and New Mexico before playing out around 5 a.m. April 15 near the U.S.-Mexican border. It was different enough from what came before to inspire Woody Guthrie to write the song "Dusty Old Dust" (*so long, it's been good to know ya ...*) based on his experience riding out the storm in "the city of Pampa, the County of Gray" where he lived at the time.

In a later interview, Guthrie spoke of the end-times angst experienced by those sheltering from the dust on Black Sunday. "So, we got to talkin', ya know, and uh, a lot of people in the crowd that was religious-minded and they was up pretty well on the scriptures, they said, 'Well, boys, girls, friends, and relatives, this is the end.'"

Thankfully for us, it wasn't. With support from the federal government and innovations such as the Graham-Hoeme Chisel Plow (invented by an Oklahoma Panhandle farmer and later manufactured in Amarillo), farmers learned to fortify their fields against wind and drought. The rains came back, war broke out and the Panhandle was called on to do the things the Panhandle does best, breaking the Depression's hold on the area. Then, as a people, we tried to forget about the dust, though it shows up now and then to remind us that we may have taught our hostile environment a few tricks, but it's not our place to subdue it. The dust, it seems, will always keep us honest.

HEAD FOR THE MOUNTAINS

One of Amarillo's greatest advantages is our strategic location. In six hours or less, we can get to the fourth-largest metro in the US, the third-oldest city in America, several national parks, ski slopes in Colorado, and the two largest cities in Oklahoma.

Oh, and Taos, New Mexico (elev. 6,967 feet), one of the most delightful all-season towns I have ever visited. It's only 297 miles (or 5 hours 8 minutes, so says Google Maps) from Amarillo, and as an added bonus, you get to visit the OG Las Vegas coming and going.

Taos is home to just shy of 7,000 residents, but you would never guess that on many weekends of the year. Ten thousand visitors arrive on Feast Day alone. Winter attracts many thousands to nearby Taos Ski Valley, where 75 percent of the runs are rated intermediate or difficult. Leaf peeping in fall starts in mid-September. Spring is a breath of fresh air.

It is seldom, if ever hot—given the elevation—and nights can be brisk even in summer. Even though winter may register chilly days and single-digit nights, it's a dry cold and much more tolerable than expected.

Better yet, no matter how you approach Taos—be it on the "high road" or the "low road" from the south, US 64 from the west or east, NM State 522 from the north, and NM State 518 from Las Vegas, the scenery is seldom less than epic. It's almost as if, when Taos was established as a Spanish village back in 1615, someone knew it would be known for more than just the alleged energy vortexes, as a magnet for all things aesthetic.

Lodging choices run the gamut, from mid-tier chains to historic inns and hotels, including **The Historic Taos Inn, Hotel La Fonda de Taos,** and **La Doña Luz Inn.** If architecture is your passion, and the budget permits, stay at one of these. They are either on or very near the Plaza, making it possible to tour the majority of Taos on foot.

And if art is your heart's desire, this is heaven, with more galleries than anyone could visit in a long weekend. Then there's the **Taos Art Museum, Harwood Museum of Art,** and **Millicent Rogers Museum.** Art and architecture alone make Taos a top-shelf gem.

But there are plenty of other things to do if these are not your forte. I have hiked to the top of nearby **Wheeler Peak**, New Mexico's highest at 13,167 feet, three times now. **The Williams Lake Trail**, which approaches the peak from the west, is an 8.6-mile round trip. I like doing this in September when there's a nip in the morning air. For those wanting a longer challenge, the **Bull of the Woods Trail** approaches from the north, and is 16 miles round trip.

And then there's the **Rio Grande Gorge Bridge** about 10 minutes west of town on US 64. A large rest area and parking lot is located just across the bridge; pedestrians can walk across it on either side. Built











in 1960, its total span is 1,273 feet long, and it stands roughly 650 feet above the river. It is not for the faint of heart!

A few miles farther west is the **Earthship Biotecture**, a completely off-grid residential community. Houses are constructed of natural, recycled and waste materials, ranging from old tires to bottles, cans, wood and others. The community is net-zero and fully sustainable. Self-guided tours are available for $9, and are required to get beyond the visitor center. Guided tours are available for $22.

If you are fascinated by Native American history, **Taos Pueblo** is a must-see. The main buildings were constructed between 1000 and 1450 C.E., and have been occupied continuously. When a detachment of the Coronado Expedition arrived in 1540, they thought the Pueblo was one of the fabled golden cities of Cibola. Admission is $25 for adults, and $22 for seniors and students. Children 10 and younger are free. Bring your camera, but be prepared to ask permission if you wish to include Pueblo residents in the frame. Otherwise, shoot away, and be sure to get some Navajo fry bread.

Get on it! Taos is spectacular all year long, and with only 113 miles on the freeway between here and there, you've got 284 glorious miles on old two-lanes. That's my kind of traveling.







Nick's Picks

Shopping: Taos has an amazing array of boutiques, outfitters and souvenir shops, most of which are walkable in and near the Plaza district. Bring comfy shoes and plan on spending a few hours strolling through this quintessentially New Mexican bazaar, or hit the shops in Taos Ski Valley.

Dining: One thing is certain: You won't go hungry in Taos! While there are a few chain outlets, it's always much more fun to dine locally, and Taos has a plethora of interesting places. As you might expect, New Mexican cuisine is always in season here. My faves are Doc Martin's at The Historic Taos Inn for dinner, and the Bent Street Grille for breakfast and lunch.

Drinking: Taos Mesa Brewing crafts a delightful array of house beers. They have two locations, one slightly out of town to the north, and the other—where they also make some mean pizza—a couple of blocks south of the Plaza.

Photography: This one should go without saying, because it is so self-evident. Whether you are a smartphone shooter, amateur or pro, you will find an endless amount of subject matter.

As always, check online for days and hours of operation.







PROVIDED PHOTOS

WYATT ELKINS

It started with a wood shop class at Hereford High School. Wood-turner Wyatt Elkins, who graduated from high school in 2023 and now attends Amarillo College, had made an exceedingly difficult chess board in the class. ("Never again on that," he says, deadpan.) His instructor challenged him to make chess pieces for the board, and taught him the art of wood-turning—using a lathe to rotate wood while using specialty tools to shape and smooth it.



Elkins was hooked. He started making pens. He created intricately shaped candleholders. He started experimenting with different types of wood and researching wood suppliers.

"I never did get around to those chess pieces," he admits.

Today, this student is slowly building up an inventory of products made from maple, walnut and cherry, along with more exotic woods like purpleheart and sapele mahogany. Right now his wood-turning is a hobby—"a little more than part time," he says—that he would love to see develop into a full-time career. "I'd love more than anything to be running my own wood shop, my own store, with shelves lined with things I've made," he says. Whether the business takes off or not, Elkins finds wood-working serves as a creative form of stress relief. "If I'm not having too great of a day, I'll go out and try to make something."

See more of Wyatt Elkins' work on Instagram at @wyatts_woodshop and YouTube wood-working videos at @WyattsWoodshop.










WYATT ELKINS
INDUSTRIES

ELIZABETH PAKRAVAN

Founder & Executive Director, Martha Root Community Building



PHOTO BY VENICE MINCEY

The best advice I have ever heard is: My dad used to tell me to always do the hard things in life, because the easy ones anybody can do. To challenge myself to see how far I could go and how much my soul could grow in the process.

My three most recommended books are: *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, by M. R. Garis; *Rich Dad Poor Dad*, by Robert Kiyosaki; *Portals to Freedom*, by Howard Colby Ives.

To me, success means: Being content with whatever befalls us and understanding that even the most painful circumstances are here to shape our lives beautifully. Success is the gift of learning to smile with our souls at every wonderful experience we have.

People who know me might be surprised that I: cry a lot—not because of sadness, but because of being in a constant state of awe, gratitude and joy. Every second in this life is full of miracles if we only pay attention to them.

My biggest pet peeve is: messiness! I like to keep everything clean and in its place.

Everyone in Amarillo needs to experience: The excitement of being alive under this fabulous blue sky! I hope everyone does that.

If I could change any one local thing it would be: Teaching our children and youth how to save and protect our natural resources. For example, avoiding waste of water, paper, electricity and food.

This city is amazing at: having many organizations and like-minded people who are working hard to improve our community.

My favorite place in Amarillo is: downtown at sunrise.

A local organization I love right now: The PLACE. Thanks to their loving support and visionary leadership, we and many other organizations are able to exist, serve and collaborate to improve the quality of life of local families.

WHEN IT COMES TO EMERGENCY CARE, WE'RE ALL IN.

NOW **OPEN!**

Northwest Emergency At Tascosa, a Service of Northwest Texas Healthcare System, is now open!

Located at 4207 W. Amarillo Blvd. in Amarillo, it is a freestanding emergency department open 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. It is staffed with the same medical professionals and equipment as the hospital-based emergency room.

Northwest Emergency at Tascosa offers treatment for medical conditions such as respiratory distress and fractures, and provides stabilizing treatment for heart attack and stroke.

If you're having a medical emergency, call 911 or get to the nearest emergency room.

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Northwest Emergency
At Tascosa

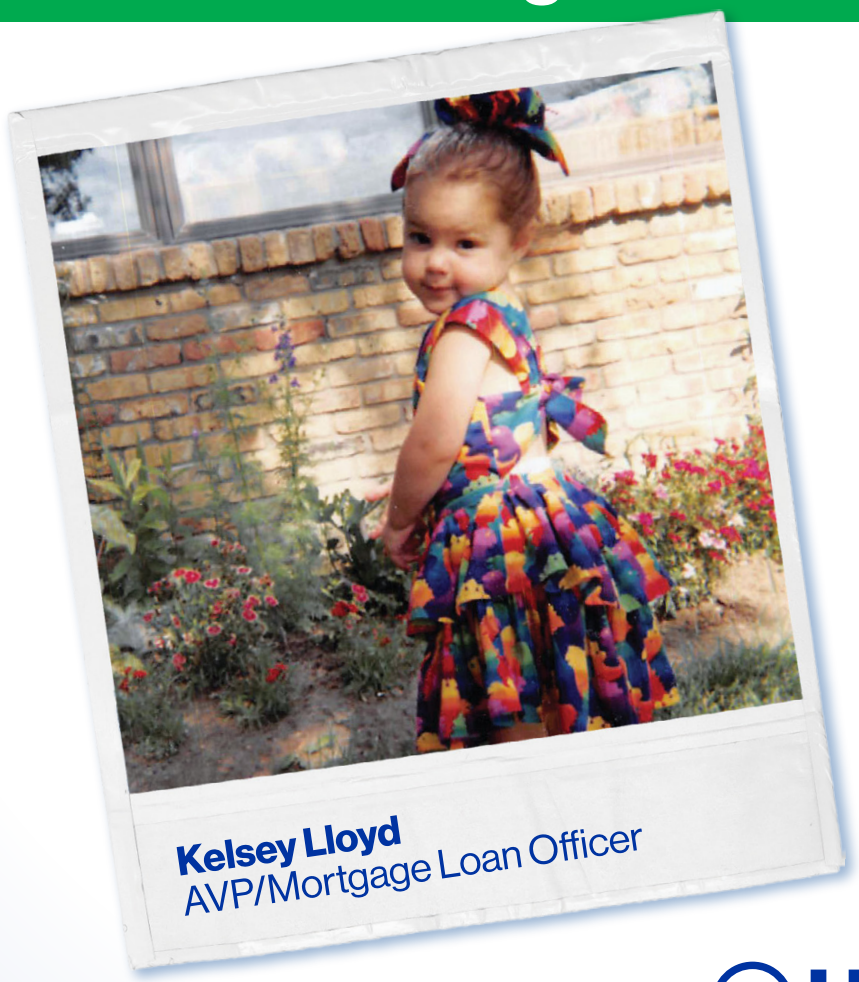
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