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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025

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PHOTO BY ANGELINA MARIE

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PHOTO BY SHANNON RICHARDSON

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Brick&Elm

AMARILLO'S PREMIER
LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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Why do we cram our calendars full of as much activity as possible as the year draws to a close? Even while nature gives her clues for us to slow down. The leaves change and let go, nights grow longer and temperatures plummet, bidding us to nestle in and rest a bit. Every year I marvel at the flood of event invites that start in September and don't let up until after the new year. And then there are the "goals" we're meant to accomplish: Plan huge holiday meals, shop for everyone on our list, decorate (first for Halloween, then briefly Thanksgiving, and then all out for Christmas), stay thankful through it all, host hoards of friends and family. It can be exhausting if we're not careful.



But you know what? These to-do lists are trivial in the big scheme of things. There are more important goals to achieve. Our area nonprofits labor all year without showing that infamous holiday fatigue. They work passionately to meet the needs of our neighbors, and we're privileged to help them tell their stories in our annual Giving Guide (see page 65). These pages reveal the heart and soul behind each organization. They're full of success stories and earnest requests for help at the end of what has been a particularly challenging year. Please spend time reading each profile. And then give: time, talents or funds. It takes all of us to foster change.

Happy Holidays!

Michele

As a kid, the Boots'n Jeans on Georgia was one of my favorite places to "shop." My grandparents bought me a new pair of boots every birthday during several of my little-kid years. As an adult, though, I've only ever owned a pair of Tony Lama ropers, which I dust off about once a year. (I'm more of a hiking boots guy.) Matt Morgan's excellent cover feature, however, makes me want a custom, hand-crafted pair from any one of these bootmakers. What a fascinating look at their uniquely western craftsmanship.



And speaking of shopping destinations, I was a teenager in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and I spent *hours* at Hastings. In high school, I bought rap single cassettes there and wore them out in my brown, 1977 Chevrolet Caprice Classic. Then I got a CD player, gravitating toward bands like REM and U2 and King's X—all purchased at the Hastings store on SW 45th Avenue, not far from where I grew up. Hastings is one of those business names that elicits intense nostalgia, and it was such a pleasure to hear John Marmaduke and others speak about its origins, influence and legacy.

One story celebrates the kind of artistry that still shapes our culture. The other revisits a business that helped define culture nationally. Both remind me why I love living in the Texas Panhandle.

Jason



KAYLA MORRIS

Kayla has been designing professionally for 15 years. She was raised in the Panhandle and graduated with a design degree from West Texas A&M University.



SHANNON RICHARDSON

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



PRESLIE BENTLEY

Preslie was raised in Amarillo and is a journalism major at Texas A&M University. She plans to graduate in December.



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.



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 in search of vintage signage and other outdoor advertising.



ANGELINA MARIE

Angelina has been a photographer in the Amarillo area for 15 years, working with publications such as *Texas Living*, *Texas Tribune* and *Texas Monthly*. She specializes in commercial, creative and fine art photography.



MATT MORGAN

Matt was born and raised in Amarillo, and his love for the city and roots here are deep. He currently serves several community organizations like Storybridge, Outdoor Amarillo, the Public Arts and Beautification Board and the Friends of the Public Library.



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The Horizon

Take Five

WITH VERONICA ARIAS, PH.D.

It's been a challenging year for Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, which has been temporarily closed since March of this year while it addresses safety issues highlighted in a fire marshal report. Currently West Texas A&M University, the museum and the Panhandle-Plains Historical Society are discussing solutions to the closure. In the meantime, we checked in with Dr. Veronica Arias, the museum's curator of anthropology and natural history. Arias graduated from Boston University before earning a master's and doctoral degree in anthropology from the University of New Mexico. She's been part of the PPHM team since 2014.



PROVIDED PHOTO

1. How did you first become interested in history and archaeology? I have always been interested in history. It wasn't until I was in college that I first visited some significant archaeological sites and was introduced formally to the science of archaeology. It was a different way of understanding the past, and I've been hooked ever since.

2. What's something most people may not realize or understand about your work? There are no two days that are alike. The work is so varied, and we field all sorts of questions and requests. Much of my work is behind the scenes and under the radar, but it's important to our mission and the public we serve.

3. Tell us about one of your favorite artifacts at PPHM. There are so many incredible objects here. One that still takes my breath away is a fully beaded Comanche cradleboard from the late 19th century. It is so intricately beaded and finely crafted that it is impossible not to think about the time and care it must have taken to make.

4. This is a difficult moment for the museum. What does your work look like right now? Our work continues. Researchers still need access to artifacts and data, and the collections still require attention. Right now we are in the long process of digitizing our collection so our artifacts remain visible even if patrons can't see it in person.

5. What is the best way for people to support PPHM at this time? We encourage you to stay engaged in all the things PPHM still has to offer. While our doors may be closed, your support keeps us moving forward. Renew your membership, make a gift or join us at community programs to help preserve the stories of the Panhandle-Plains.

We greatly miss the help and support from our dedicated volunteers, donors and visitors.

New in Town See what's launched and landed.

Back Nine Golf

Back Nine Golf will open a new golf simulator in Wolflin Square. The U.S.-based franchise offers 24/7 access to golf simulator technology, with individual and corporate membership packages.



Mediterranean Food

Two Mediterranean food options have (finally) reappeared in Amarillo: build-your-own bowls from the Lubbock-based MotoMedi, and the Babylon Mediterranean food truck at 7410 W. Amarillo Blvd. @motomedi @babylonmediterraneanfood



Cowboy Statue

The City of Amarillo took steps to establish a new policy to accept public artwork, after delays related to the gift of the Hill family's "Amarillo Cowboy" sculpture at City Hall. @cityofamarillo



By the Numbers

WATER USAGE

The proposed Fermi America AI data center near the Pantex plant has been a frequent topic of conversation since the project was announced earlier this year, with plenty of questions about water scarcity and the impact on the Ogallala Aquifer. These data centers need a lot of water to keep servers cool. The big question: Does the potential economic boon of AI and these data centers outweigh the water drawdown? We looked into some of the numbers.

5,800 acres

The planned size of the Fermi data center

5,024 acres

The total size of Canyon, Texas

50 million gallons

The amount of water Amarillo uses per day



2.5 million gallons

The daily water capacity Fermi has requested from Amarillo (with the potential to negotiate for up to 10 million gallons/day in the future)

95%

Agriculture's current share of all annual water use in the Texas Panhandle



\$8 million

Fermi's proposed annual payment to the City of Amarillo for water

1.33 feet

The average annual decline of the water level of the Ogallala Aquifer

400+

An estimate of the number of data centers in various stages of planning statewide

\$60 billion

Fermi's reported cost to build the campus. As of late October, Fermi had raised \$1.3 billion.

Adam & Eve

A controversial new retail chain has opened near Tascosa High School, prompting concerns among residents about its adult-oriented products.
[@adamandevestores](#)



Lash Academy

Bella Bonded Academy has become the first (and only) state-licensed lash school in Amarillo. Courses are offered with "affordable weekly payments."
[@bellalash806](#)



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Sit, Stay, Fly

HOW KESLYN AND KHLOE CONQUERED PORTUGAL

BY PRESLEIE BENTLEY

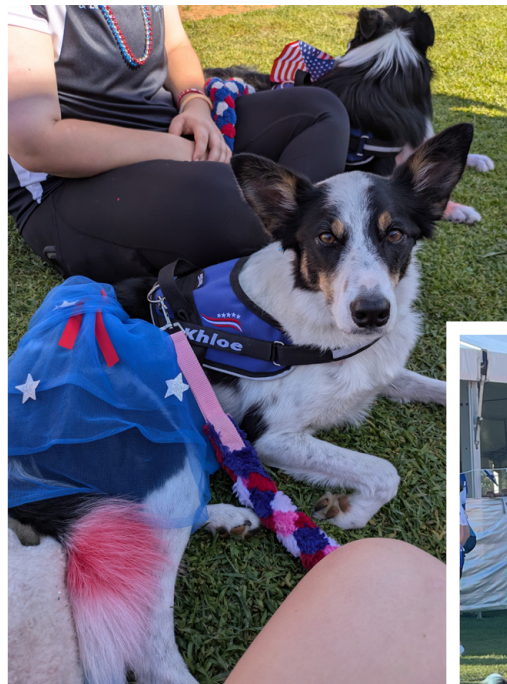
Over the summer, 17-year-old Keslyn Kampschroeder of Canyon, along with her border collie Khloe, competed in the Junior Open World Agility Championship in Portugal. Keslyn was 1 of only 2 Texans in the competition, among the 24 handlers and 29 dogs on the American team..

Keslyn grew up in Aubrey, near the Denton area, before moving to Canyon. Around that time, at age 9, she became serious about dog training in order to convince her parents to let her keep her misbehaved dog. Obedience training led to tricks and then agility training. A homeschooled student, Keslyn now provides all three of those training services for others.

She always wanted a border collie because they are, in her words, “arguably the best” in competitions. After researching breeders and rescues, her competition dog ended up living right next door: Khloe spent the first 18 months of her life working livestock with Keslyn’s neighbor. “Khloe did not like it and she was not very good at it,” Keslyn says. As boredom took over, Khloe began misbehaving and often ran away. The neighbor hired Keslyn to train the border collie, and the two built a strong bond.

As a 13th birthday surprise, her parents and neighbor gifted Khloe to Keslyn. “Now she has a job, and she is so excited about everything,” she says about Khloe.

Keslyn’s training process starts with what drives the dogs themselves. “You want them to want to work with you and love toys and treats, so that’s where I start,” she says. Agility training, of course, involves more complexity



“Eventually, they just love it so much that it’s rewarding for them even if you don’t have toys or treats. They just love doing it.”

—Keslyn Kampschroeder

PROVIDED PHOTOS

than “sit” or “stay.” It means piecing together two to three obstacles at a time, then adding to the sequence. Eventually, a competition dog can handle 10 or 20 obstacles.

“It’s just starting with them wanting to work with you and building it up to them wanting to actually interact with the obstacles and run the full course,” Keslyn says. “Eventually, they just love it so much that it’s rewarding for them even if you don’t have toys or treats. They just love doing it.”

Keslyn competes at least once a month, often traveling several hours away on the weekends. After Khloe succeeded in obedience competitions and won trick and temperament titles, the duo turned their focus to agility. Khloe isn’t always efficient on those courses, but she’s very fast. Due to her excitement, she’s known to jump higher than necessary and make wide turns. “She does fine here in the U.S., competing against the top dogs that are turning as tight as they can, not wasting any space,” Keslyn says.

In order to try out for the junior world championship in Portugal, Keslyn and Khloe had to win at least one open title in their organization. That meant three clean runs without faults—like knocking down a bar on a jump or taking an obstacle out of sequence. When it was time to apply, Khloe had achieved only two out of three required clean runs. Keslyn began entering multiple trials, until the U.S. coach asked her to try out despite not having the title. “We made it!” Keslyn says. “Once that happened, I started trialing less and just doing more things to prepare her, like working on her skill sets and making sure that she would be ready to travel and be out in public.”

Traveling with an agility dog is not quite like traveling with a carry-on suitcase. During their trip

to Portugal, Khloe was comfortably muzzled and rode in “doggy first-class” underneath the plane, Keslyn says. Khloe was overjoyed when the flight ended, but “she handled it a lot better than I thought she would,” she explains.

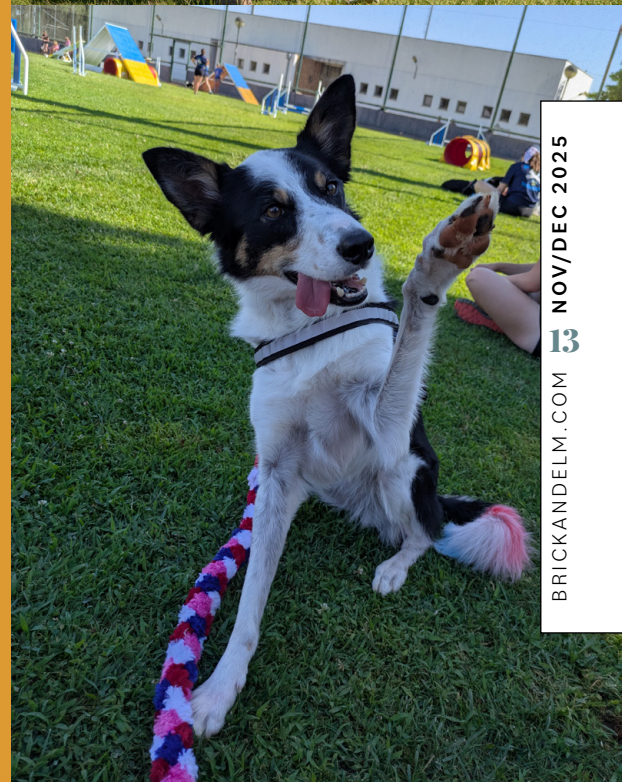
Like any trainer, Keslyn carries treats at all times and prefers for strangers to leave Khloe alone to prevent overstimulation. Being in new places and around new people can be nerve-racking for anyone but especially for a dog who is not used to it.

When not competing, Khloe spent a lot of downtime napping in their hotel room. Keslyn prioritized Khloe’s comfort “even if it meant we couldn’t socialize or sightsee as much,” she says.

The championship included team and individual events. Its judging process is strict—a five-point fault in U.S. competition would be considered elimination on the global stage—and courses included 20 to 25 obstacles with and without contact equipment. Although Keslyn and Khloe did not place individually, the American team competed well and finished in seventh place.

Khloe exceeded their expectations, Keslyn says, and the duo walked away grateful for the experience.

The two continue training for bigger competitions here in the U.S. while Keslyn prepares to pursue a degree in accounting in college beginning next year. Depending on where she decides to go to school, Khloe may have to stay back in Canyon while Keslyn focuses on her education. If Khloe does move with her, the two will slow down on competing. Training or not, the K-9 and her companion truly understand each other and it’s evident that they equally needed each other from the start. 😊



Redemption and the *Rebel* Road

AMARILLO SINGER TRAVIS ROBERTS ON HIS BREAKTHROUGH YEAR

BY CHIP CHANDLER

In September, Amarillo native Travis Roberts was, somewhat unusually these days, close to home.

“I was playing in Lubbock at Slade Coulter’s Big Damn Family Jam. It was a ton of fun, but the coolest part about it was that my dad got to come to the show,” Roberts recalls. “My dad had never seen me play live since I was in high school playing open mics. He flew in from Idaho to see this show.”

Later, father and son were relaxing at a Lubbock hotel.

“He was just like, ‘Man, I really think that the fact that you’re able to look back at your life with a new set of glasses is what makes you a good writer,’” Roberts says. “You know, I really take that to heart.”

That new set of glasses is working out. Roberts is exploding on the national scene, with features and reviews in *Rolling Stone*, *American Songwriter*, *Americana Highways*

and others accompanying his debut album, *Rebel Rose*, which dropped in August.

(This interview has been edited and condensed.)

Chip Chandler: So the last time I saw you, you were playing a free gig at WT for some students. Now, you’re being featured on Sirius XM, playing major music festivals and were signed to a pretty big label. So catch us up!

Travis Roberts: It’s kind of been crazy. It all kind of happened this last year. We had finished *Rebel Rose* in, gosh, I’d say 2023, so we sat on that thing for a while, and so we were playing gigs just based off of, you know, a couple singles that we had put out four years ago. Now that the record’s out, it feels like everything’s kind of ripped into high gear. We signed a deal with New West, and those guys have been fantastic for us. We

picked up a great booking agent at Atomic Music Group who’s been helping us get on gigs and do real stuff, you know?

It’s been kind of crazy to see how much just a little bit of legwork on a bunch of ends just kind of pays off. I still have a day job. I still work for Tarpley [Music] in Amarillo, but one of the coolest things about it is like some days I’m at Tarpley and I’m just restringing violins or making sure trumpets are clean and ready to go. And then some days it’s like, hey, here’s an article in *Rolling Stone* about your record.

CC: You had some pretty tough times getting to this point, right? Tell me a little about it, but more importantly, what kind of perspective does that give you on your career now?

TR: It took me a long time to get really, really honest with myself. The fact that I was sick,

the fact that I was dealing with alcoholism and drug addiction and realizing that nobody does drugs like a gentleman and nobody can drink the way I did like a gentleman, you know? Being an actual contributing member of society pushed me to being a musician because it was pretty much the only thing that I could do. You know, I'm not good at a lot of stuff, but I can write a song and I can put on a pretty good rock 'n' roll show. Nowadays, I'm just making sure that whatever I'm doing, I'm doing it with honesty and integrity and making sure that it's something that would make my dad proud if he was to see my name on it.

CC: Knowing the highs and lows—and the lows, maybe especially—of where you've been, does that give you more clarity on being in *Rolling Stone* and all these other things?

TR: Man, as much as that stuff is really, really cool, none of it really matters that much. The real clarity is being able to see things from a perspective that isn't just what's right in front of me or what just happened to me. I'm looking at this trying to build a 10- to 25- to 50-year career. So I'm just happy that I get to feed my family doing this, and that I get to be in an elite class of Panhandle artists who have been doing this for longer than I've been alive, making some of the best music, the best country music, the best rock 'n' roll music in the country. I'll look up to guys like J.D. Souther and Terry Allen, who did this for a really, really long time and found a way to do it for a really, really long time and keep themselves successful.

CC: What are you excited for folks to hear on *Rebel Rose*?

TR: A lot of people really love the rock 'n' roll edge of it. A lot of people really love the songwriting side of it, where they're able to just dig into the words underneath, which is always my goal. And a lot of people love how not cohesive it is. It comes from kind of a hodgepodge of playing clubs like Leftwoods before it closed and playing Golden Light, playing Hoots, playing Smokey Joe's.

CC: Tell me why you're looking forward to coming back to play at the Golden Light in November.

TR: Man, it's good to be home. I mean I've been everywhere, going to New York City and to Tennessee and getting ready to launch a real tour next year and getting ready to cut another record. I really owe a ton to Angela (Corpening, Golden Light owner) and Wade (Tosh, music booker) because there was a time, especially when I first got sober, that I didn't know what to do to make money, because the world was shut down. It was the middle of 2020. Wade would book me to open for practically anybody. There's just so much of me cutting my teeth day in and day out on Sixth Street that really made me the artist that I am today. ☺

Travis Roberts will perform Nov. 7 at Golden Light Cantina, 2908 SW Sixth Ave.



PROVIDED PHOTOS

Cowboy Songs, Movies, and Pool Cues to the Head

R.W. HAMPTON ON HIS 'SPIRIT OF TEXAS' AWARD

BY CHIP CHANDLER

Cowboy musician R.W. Hampton, who ranches in New Mexico but has made Amarillo his home for the past several years, has 15 IMDb movie credits to his name. But it's likely that one clip that has been viewed more than any other. At least by his own family.

It's a moment in the 1985 film *Wild Horses*, starring his buddy Kenny Rogers. Though Hampton originally signed on to be featured only in a campfire scene, he was asked to stick around and film more shots.



"One of which was a barroom fight where I get knocked out with a pool cue," Hampton laughs. "My kids used to rewind that back and forth, all the time."

Forty years later, Hampton is still appearing on screen (his latest, *Sod and Stubble*, premiered this year) and, more importantly, is still keeping alive the tradition of cowboy music: "I don't want to ever sound boastful," he says. "I'm a cowboy who sings."

Earlier this year, the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame honored Hampton with its prestigious 2025 Spirit of Texas award.

(This interview has been edited and condensed.)

CC: How'd you start playing music?

RWH: I always had a love for music. I grew up north of the Dallas-Fort Worth area with music, whether it was with church, or just listening to records in the evening. I started playing the guitar and singing. We'd had a family tragedy when I was 14, just a terrible car wreck where four people perished, including my sister, who was 9 at the time. So, during that time, I'd just go shut my bedroom door and sit on the edge of the bed and play music. When I started working for ranches for a living, along with my saddle and my gear and my bedroll, a guitar always followed me. I've always joked, but it's true, that I never was good at cards or dice or anything in the evening. And so I just played the guitar, and I learned a lot of the old cowboy songs, and then I learned to write

songs about the things that we experienced every day just out in the big open country.

CC: Why is it important for you to keep the tradition of cowboy music alive, and how hard is that to do in 2025?

RWH: I'm so proud of our heritage, especially here in Texas, the cattle industry here around the Amarillo area. And I think there's people here that you might see at United, but they just don't even really realize—and it's not their fault—but they don't realize where their beef comes from. And I think it's important to know that there are men and women still doing the job that cattle folks did 150 years ago. I enjoy taking the lifestyle that is so near and dear to us here in the Texas Panhandle, and I love to share it all over the United States.

CC: How often are you in Amarillo or the area? What drew you here?

RWH: We would often, as ranch people, come in maybe once a month. We would load up after school on Friday, get the kids, come to Amarillo and stay in a motel, see the latest movie, eat a couple of meals, then we'd go to Sam's and Walmart and get the supplies we need. Maybe we had doctor's appointments or something. And then Sunday evening, we'd head back. My wife, Lisa, said, with the money we spend on motel rooms here, we could buy a house. I really warmed up to the idea, so we bought a neat 100-year-old house in the Oliver-Eagle neighborhood.

There's a sense of history here.

CC: What did it mean to you to win the Spirit of Texas Award?

RWH: If you look back on the people that have been awarded that Spirit of Texas Award, you know, talk about humbled. The "Spirit of Texas," sounds kind of corny and cliché-ish, but you talk to people from other parts of the world and other parts of the country, and Texas is its own place. And so being given an award because people feel that you embody the qualities of the Texas spirit, that just meant so much to me.

CC: Tell me a little about *Sod and Stubble*.

RWH: It's a beautiful story. I play a doctor by the name of Doc Poole—yeah, I'm not a doctor, but I have played one on TV. But anyhow, I think it's a great story of faith and family. They lost children, they lost crops, but, as we used to say, they made a stand. And it's just an important story [saying] that things don't generally happen overnight. They take time and persistence and commitment and conviction. I'm really proud of that film. We've got another film project, and I don't think that I'm cleared to give you the name, but it's by the same company and we're going to be finishing it in the spring. It's kind of a Panhandle story. ☺

***Sod and Stubble* is available to rent now on digital platforms.**

The Hot List

November and December are bursting with entertainment options, from the area's biggest rodeo to theatrical premieres to wickedly anticipated new films to favorite holiday traditions. Here's a glance at the events you can't miss in the next two months. For a deeper dive, subscribe to the weekly *Brickly* newsletter and the biweekly *Flavorillo* newsletter.

Working Ranch Cowboys Association World Championship: WRCA's 30th annual ranch rodeo storms back into the Amarillo Civic Center Complex Coliseum, 401 S. Buchanan St., for performances Nov. 13 to 16. Don't miss the after parties, trade shows, cowboy poetry showcase and a special birthday party.

Ragtime: The acclaimed musical, adapting E.L. Doctorow's novel, gets its debut staging at Amarillo Little Theatre from Nov. 6 to 16 on the Allen Shankles MainStage, 2019 Civic Circle (full disclosure: I'm on the production team). ALT Academy will stage *Junie B. in Jingle Bells*, *Batman Smells!* from Dec. 5 to 14 in the ALT Adventure Space, 2751 Civic Circle.

Amarillo Wranglers: The professional hockey team returns to the ice with home matches against division rivals on Nov. 1, 21 and 22, and Dec. 5, 6, 12, 13, 27 and 28. Games are played in the Budweiser Bull Pen, otherwise known as the Civic Center Complex Coliseum.

Happy Holiday Pops: The Amarillo Symphony's beloved Christmas concerts return Dec. 19 and 20 in the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts, 500 S. Buchanan St. The orchestra also will get spacey with Gustav Holst's iconic *The Planets* on Nov. 21 and 22. Plus, Chamber Music Amarillo will give its "Painting with Notes" concert Nov. 15 at Arts in the Sunset, 3701 Plains Blvd.; Harrington String Quartet will welcome new violist Brenton Caldwell at its Nov. 7 concert at The Church in Austin Park, 2525 Wimberly Road.; and Amarillo Opera will host Mariachi Los Camperos on Nov. 7 in the Globe-News Center.

The Nutcracker: Lone Star Ballet's traditional performance of the Tchaikovsky work is a generations-long highlight of the holiday season, this year set for Dec. 12 to 14 in the Amarillo Civic Center Complex Auditorium. Other Yuletide highlights include Center City's Electric Light Parade on Dec. 5 in downtown Amarillo, Celtic jazz singer Erica Lane's *Here We Come a-Caroling* on Dec. 5 in the Globe-News Center, West Texas A&M University's *Music of the Christmas Season* on Dec. 7 at Mary Moody Northen Recital Hall, and *An Aaron Watson Family Christmas* on Dec. 12 in the Globe-News Center.

Wicked: For Good: The hotly anticipated sequel to the gravity-defying box office success of last year's original hits theaters on Nov. 21. Also coming to the big screen are historical drama *Nuremberg* and action-thriller *Predator: Badlands* on Nov. 7; sci-fi thriller *The Running Man* on Nov. 14; cartoon sequel *Zootopia 2* on Nov. 26; Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill: The Whole Bloody Affair* and Broadway musical revival *Merrily We Roll Along* on Dec. 5; historical drama *Hamnet* on Dec. 12; sci-fi sequel *Avatar: Fire and Ash* and animated comedy *The SpongeBob Movie: Search for SquarePants* on Dec. 19; and ping-pong comedy *Marty Supreme* and karaoke drama *Song Sung Blue* on Dec. 25. ☺

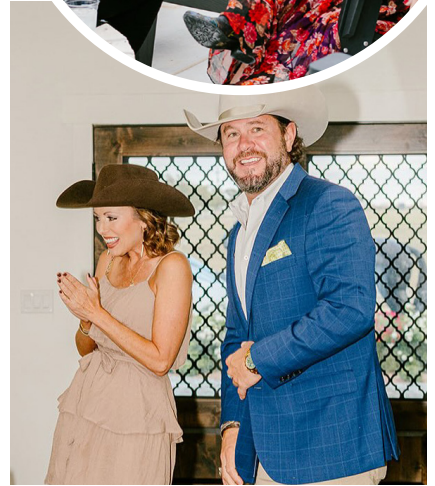


CHIP CHANDLER

Chip is the city's arts and entertainment expert, having covered area events since 1998.

HATS & HEARTS

Heart Gallery of the Panhandle Plains hosted Hats & Hearts on Sept. 18 at The Lodge at Cadillac Creek. The “country-chic” fundraiser featured singer R.W. Hampton and a live auction. (Provided Photos)

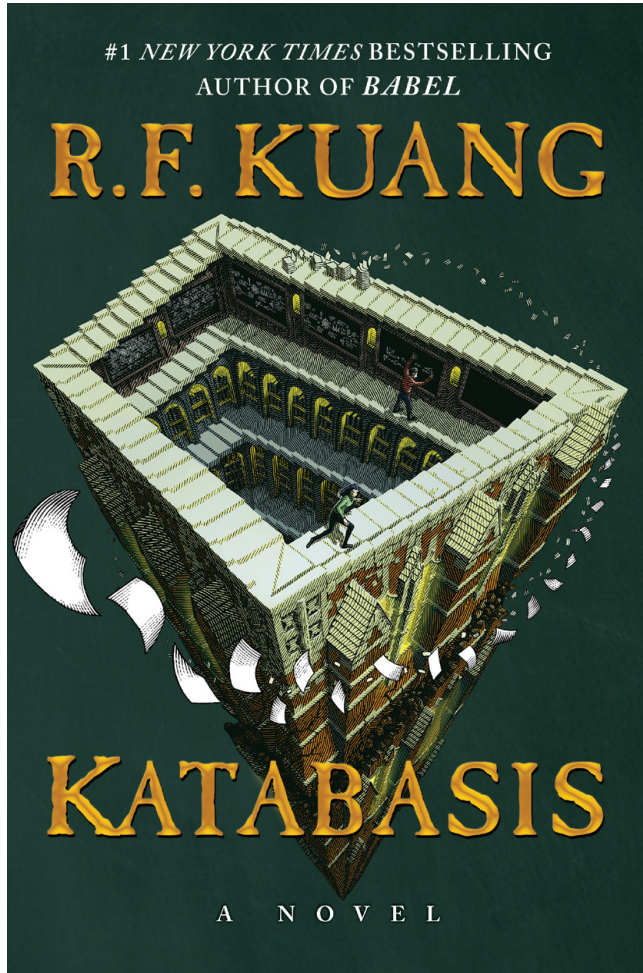


SANDCASTLE DAYS

Shark Beach Burgers teamed up with Virginia Beach and South Padre Island Sandcastle Days in September to bring the first-ever Sandcastle Days to Amarillo. The multi-day, family-friendly event featured immense sand sculptures, live music, and served as an educational experience for thousands of area elementary school students. (Provided Photos)



Burrowing Owl RECOMMENDS



KATABASIS, BY R.F. KUANG

Two graduate students must set aside their rivalry and journey to Hell to save their professor's soul, perhaps at the cost of their own.

Alice Law has only ever had one goal: to become one of the brightest minds in the field of Magick. She has sacrificed everything to make that a reality—her pride, her health, her love life, and most definitely her sanity. All to work with Professor Jacob Grimes at Cambridge, the greatest magician in the world—that is, until he dies in a magical accident that could possibly be her fault.

Grimes is now in Hell, and she's going in after him. Because his recommendation could hold her very future in his now incorporeal hands, and even death is not going to stop the pursuit of her dreams. Nor will the fact that her rival, Peter Murdoch, has come to the same conclusion.

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HOODOO MURAL FESTIVAL

The city's only public art festival changed locations this year from its previous spot downtown to Arts in the Sunset. The festival featured 13 musical artists on two stages, 13 muralists, food trucks curated by *Brick & Elm*, and art-related activities and a vendor market. (Provided Photos)



NOV/DEC 2025
20
BRICKANDELM.COM

COCKTAILS IN THE GARDEN

Square Mile Community Development hosted a garden party Oct. 2 featuring locally sourced hors d'oeuvres from Black Fig Food. The fundraiser raised funds for Square Mile's refugee programs, urban farming and business development for underserved communities. (Provided Photos)





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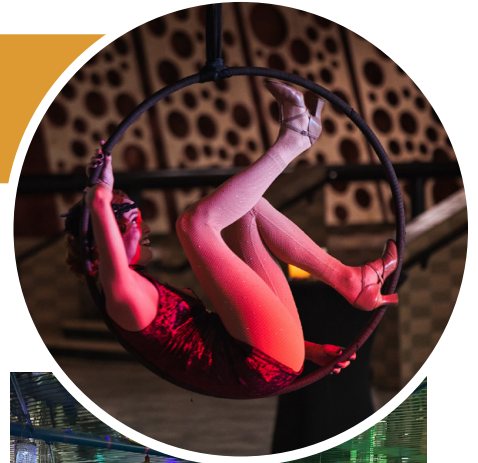
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DANCES OF THE DECADES

Acts Community hosted its annual Dances of the Decades fundraiser Oct. 4. The 1920s-themed party featured music by DJ Saga, a costume contest, silent auction and 50/50 raffle. Funds raised will support the organization's after-school programs and senior citizen center. (Provided Photos)



SUNSET DINNER

The annual Sunset Dinner at Dove Creek Equine Ranch was held Oct. 18. Themed "A Western Elegance Affair," guests wore 1920s western-inspired styles while listening to music from The Electric Gypsies, meeting rescue horses, and bidding in a live auction. (Provided Photos)



ALERAGROUP

99 YEARS STRONG AND JUST GETTING STARTED

NCW prepares for its 100th birthday with a brand evolution and a familiar commitment to Amarillo clients.

As NCW celebrates 99 years of serving the community, it is stepping confidently into the future. NCW joined Alera Group three years ago, joining a nationwide network of offices. Since then, this collaboration has led to broader industry expertise, enhanced service offerings, and more comprehensive support to clients.

For nearly a century, the agency has been a trusted presence in Amarillo, providing generations of businesses and families with tailored insurance solutions built on relationships, expertise and integrity. This people-first approach ensures clients receive guidance and protection designed to meet their unique needs today and well into the future.

“We’ve had name changes all along, and this is just another one of those,” said Jeff Neely, whose family helped found the agency in 1926. “At every change, it’s been the people who make our agency.”

From the beginning, the agency has lived by a simple principle: put people first. “If you take care of your customer and you do the right thing, everything else takes care of itself,” Neely said. “The lasting relationships we’ve built with clients reflect the strength of this principle in action.”

New Name, Same Commitment

Casey Posey, Growth Leader of the Amarillo office, noted that being part of Alera Group has only strengthened the team’s ability to deliver.

Posey is also leading the agency through a period of growth, with plans to expand the Amarillo team. “We have almost 40 employees here in Amarillo, and I expect that number to continue to grow. There are so many businesses that can benefit from working with us.”

Still, Posey emphasized, what matters most won’t change. The team remains dedicated to building relationships, strengthening businesses, and serving the Amarillo community with the same care and consistency clients have always known. Be on the lookout for our Alera Group brand throughout the community, continuing the same tradition of service, with an even greater reach.



A Brief History of Rich Heritage



1926



1946

NEELY-LOWNDES & NEELY



1962



1977

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1992



2011



2019



2022

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SAI
GONPARTHI
AND SIVA
SEELAM

Sai INDIAN CUISINE

At Sai Indian Cuisine on Olsen Boulevard, experienced operators from the Dallas scene embrace a simpler life in Amarillo. →

Amarillo's restaurant culture tends to circulate rather than regenerate. Prominent chefs move from one kitchen to another. Servers at one location pop up at a new restaurant. Reliable, successful operators may introduce new concepts, but they're often drawing from the same creative energy.

That's not a complaint. It results in a reliable and surprisingly robust restaurant scene. Nevertheless, in a mid-sized city like ours, it's rare that someone arrives from outside and introduces something new.

That's exactly what happened in early 2024 with the launch of the family-owned Sai Indian Cuisine at 3701 Olsen Blvd. Suddenly, Amarillo's Indian culinary scene—long dominated by Indian Oven and It's a Punjabi Affair—had a new flavor.

That year, Siva Seelam and his nephew Sai Gonparthi, along with their families, moved to Amarillo from the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex, where they had been managing Indian restaurants since the 1990s. Seelam immigrated to the U.S. from India in 1980, and entered the restaurant business in 1988 after moving to Texas from California.

Ultimately, the family was drawn to the Texas Panhandle by a simpler lifestyle and reduced competition—especially compared to the Metroplex.

"When I opened in 1996, at that time, there was no Indian restaurant in Dallas," Seelam says. "Right now, it's almost 300 restaurants." The increasing competition made it harder and harder for the family to relax. They were hustling. "I lived 25 years worrying, then I said I can go [to Amarillo] for a religious, peaceful life. That's why I can move here."

The family had a friend in Canyon who kept inviting them to check out the area, knowing that the market could support another quality Indian restaurant. They visited, found the Olsen location—which was once home to the late, great Brent's Cafe and already had a fully equipped kitchen—and decided it was time to make a move.

Sai opened in March 2024 and, within just two weeks, captured attention right out of the gate. They offer a robust evening menu and, at lunch, a traditional Indian buffet.

"People like the buffet," Seelam says.

The family hails from Andhra Pradesh on the east coast of southern India. Because of its proximity to the coast, the South Indian culinary tradition is more coconut-based, with tangy and spicy flavors. Amarillo diners have reacted with enthusiasm. "It's very good," Gonparthi says about business. "To be honest, you



TANDOORI
CHICKEN



MANGO
LASSI



For the most comprehensive dining guide in the Amarillo area, turn to page 125.

are overwhelmed. People are so nice and just different [from the Dallas area]. We get a lot of travelers and the reviews are also very nice, very positive.”

Popular dishes include a variety of curries (vegetarian, chicken, seafood, and lamb and goat), along with *tandoori* and *biryani* dishes. The weekday buffet offers plenty of opportunities to sample these.

The real standouts, however, are some of the uniquely South Indian sides from the menu, like *idli* (steamed rice cakes) and enormous, crepe-like *dosa* (made from a fermented rice batter). The *naan*, baked in a clay oven, is perfectly soft and doughy, accompanied by flavorful dipping

“People are so nice and just different [from the Dallas area]. We get a lot of travelers and the reviews are also very nice, very positive.”

sauces, including a coconut chutney.

Customers in the know wash the rich flavors down with Sai’s specialty mango lassi, a sweet, smoothie-like drink made from mango pulp and homemade yogurt. During one recent lunch buffet, about 75 percent of the tables seemed to be sipping on lassi.

“God blessed me,” Seelam says. “I’m a lucky guy.” ☺

3701 Olsen Blvd.
806.437.1399
saiindiancuisine.com

The Morning After

The day after the holidays, the kitchen tells the story. Counters are covered in half-eaten pies, the floor's littered with wrapping paper, and that poor turkey carcass lingers in the fridge. After all that planning and cooking, nobody's ready to start again just yet.

The good news is you don't have to. The "morning after" has its own kind of meal, a quieter one that's less about impressing anyone and more about feeding the people you love without wearing yourself out. It truly needs to be practical and comforting because people still want to eat. And somehow, these meals often end up feeling just as special as the feast itself. They're not about putting on a show. They're about keeping it easy, comforting and real. Good food brings everyone back to life again.

When my kids were little, I used to wake up the morning after to the sound of cartoons and cereal being poured. These days, now that they're living on their own, it's much quieter. There's just the hum of the coffee maker and snores from my dog, who refuses to wake up before 8 a.m. That's when it hits me: the holidays shift, but I'm here to tell you that feeling of wanting to feed the people you love never really goes away.

Black Friday Breakfasts

The day after Thanksgiving looks different for everyone. I've done the Black Friday chaos exactly once. It was 28 degrees, and the parking lot was full by 5 a.m. I remember thinking a breakfast sandwich and a heated seat would've been worth more than any time spent in that store. Now I stay home, make coffee and let everyone else chase the deals.

Whether you're one of those who braves the cold, long lines and an elbow to the face or would rather stay in your PJs all day long, you still gotta eat!

- An overnight breakfast casserole is perfect: bread, eggs, cheese and whatever meat or roasted veggies you've got left over. Mix it up, cover it and leave it in the fridge until morning. It can bake while you search for your keys.
- Hand pies and turnovers are another easy hack. A little cranberry sauce or sweet potatoes tucked into puff pastry makes a tidy, portable breakfast. Good for one-handed eating while shopping or couch-sitting. And if it all feels like too much? A donut and the biggest cup of coffee you can find will carry you through.

Christmas Morning: Keep It Simple and Festive

A little later in the year, Christmas morning is all about movement: presents, batteries and tiny people running on pure sugar. Nobody's waiting for you to plate scrambled eggs. This is when food that feels festive but isn't fussy can step in to save the day.

- Cinnamon rolls make the entire house smell like the holiday season. They don't have to be homemade. Dress up a can of dough with orange zest and extra glaze, and no one will know the difference or even care.
- A simple quiche, baked the day before and rewarmed, feeds everyone while the wrapping paper's flying. No flipping, frying or babysitting. (The quiche recipe to the right is one of my favorites.)
- For something lighter, parfaits layered with granola, yogurt and pomegranate seeds look beautiful and give everyone a break

from the sugar avalanche.

- And for the rest of us who've survived the years of cutting toys out of plastic packaging, breakfast burritos are the reward. Eggs, potatoes and a little green chile wrapped in foil. Eat one standing by the tree with coffee in hand, and savor the quiet miracle that no one needs batteries this year.

With my brood now grown and gone, I suspect the morning will look a little different this year. The chaos will soften into something slower. There'll still be music, coffee and maybe a cinnamon roll (or two), but the toys will be replaced by stories and texts that say, "Mom, I made your strata this year." Those moments are the gifts I won't have to unwrap.

Pie for Breakfast: Don't Fight It

Somewhere between the casseroles and cinnamon rolls, someone always wanders into the kitchen, cuts a slice of pie, and calls it breakfast. Pumpkin, pecan, apple: it doesn't matter. Pie in the morning is practically an unwritten holiday rule. No judgment here!

Why the Morning After Matters

The big holiday meal gets all the glory. But the morning after is the one I look forward to most. There's a different kind of grace in those small, ordinary moments when the house exhales: a casserole reheated while you pull on your slippers, a cinnamon roll eaten in silence, coffee reheated twice but still perfect somehow. These are the meals that carry us.

Food doesn't have to be a production to matter. Sometimes it's the simplest morning-after meal that reminds us what the holidays are really about. ☺



RUTHIE LANDELIUS
Ruthie owns Black Fig Catering and is proprietor of a food blog at blackfigfood.com.



Mushroom, Red Pepper and Tarragon Quiche with Gruyere

For the crust:

1 cup flour
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup cold unsalted butter
3 to 4 tablespoons cold water

Cut butter into small cubes (about ¼th-inch pieces) and process into flour and salt using a standing mixer until the mixture begins to look coarse. Add water and continue to mix until dough forms. Remove dough, shape into a ball, cover with plastic wrap, and chill in the refrigerator for 2 hours.

(Hear me when I tell you that no one is going to shame you (or know) if you decide to make your life easier by using store-bought dough.)

For the filling:

8 ounces portobello mushrooms
½ red bell pepper (seeds removed), diced into cubes
½ red onion, finely chopped
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
Kosher salt and pepper
12 eggs or 2 cups cooked scrambled eggs
2 cups heavy cream
1 cup finely grated Gruyere cheese
1 tablespoon fresh dill, chopped
1 tablespoon fresh tarragon, chopped
A few fresh tarragon sprigs for garnish
1 teaspoon kosher salt
½ teaspoon fresh cracked pepper
Sprinkle of nutmeg

Melt butter in a medium nonstick skillet and sauté mushrooms, peppers, onion, salt and pepper until water from the mushrooms has evaporated and they are golden brown.

Meanwhile, whisk eggs, cream, cheese, dill, tarragon, salt and pepper together in a large mixing bowl. Set aside.

Heat oven to 375 degrees. Remove dough from refrigerator and roll out into a pie crust. Press dough into a pie pan, then add pie weights or dried beans. Bake for 10 to 15 minutes.

Remove crust from the oven and spoon mushroom mixture into shell. Pour egg mixture over mushroom mixture. Top with salt, pepper and tarragon sprigs, and then sprinkle with nutmeg. Bake for 30 to 45 minutes, or until egg mixture is completely cooked and golden brown.

Makes 6 to 8 servings

Eat This, Drink That

Dining-out snaps and recs from the *Brick & Elm* team.



1 2



3 4



1 / TAQUERIA TACOS

Joe Taco in Amarillo is one of our favorite places to meet friends or family thanks to the dog-friendly patio, the all-day Saturday happy hour and the reliable selections. I go for the Taqueria Tacos (flour tortillas: one with fajita chicken, one with picadillo beef, one with Mexican brisket). They're big. I only eat two and take the third home for lunch the next day. —*Jason Boyett*

2 / STRAWBERRY FRENCH TOAST

The Amarillo Club only serves Sunday brunch once a month. It's worth it for the sunshine and city views. But check out the size of this chunky slab of brioche French Toast, smothered in a strawberry glaze. Who needs syrup when it comes like this? (Bonus: The black coffee served at the Amarillo Club is always dark, rich and flavorful.) —*Michele McAffrey*

3 / WOODY'S REUBEN

I love sauerkraut, which is probably why I'm such a fan of a classic Reuben sandwich. The best one in the city, hands down, is at The Pan-Handlers Cafe in the ANB Plaza One basement. I'm frequently tempted by the amazing salad bar and chef Livia Woodburn's scratch-made soups, but I always go back to that Reuben. —*Jason Boyett*

4 / CHILAQUILES CON GUISADO

The chilaquiles con guisado from El Tejavan III on Sixth Street, with pork and green sauce, is so good I eat it at least once a week! These are the best corn tortillas in the world. —*Angelina Marie*

5 / RAY'S SASHIMI

The food at Sushi House's Wolflin location is the perfect balance of flavors. This sashimi dish is salmon with lemon, chili crisps and jalapeño. (Choose white tuna if you wish). —*Angelina Marie*

6 / LEMON SALMON

I wasn't prepared for how good the lemon salmon at Cask & Cork would be. A light panko crust with the faintest crunch, silky center and that lemon tarragon aioli? A revelation. Paired with jasmine rice and veggies cooked just right, it's the kind of dish that makes you rethink your dinner plans for the rest of the week. Do it. —*Ruthie Landelius*

Flavorillo

Want more dining tips and restaurant recs? Subscribe to Flavorillo, our food-and-drink newsletter: brickandelm.com/flavorillo



5



6



elcome 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.

PHOTO BY SHANNON RICHARDSON



Why do so many people eat tamales at Christmas here? (And where can I get some?)

Tamales are not only a tasty treat, but an anthropological staple dating back to several Mesoamerican cultures, for whom corn was an iconic ingredient in daily life and spiritual traditions. Over time, tamales evolved into a festive favorite for all sorts of special occasions, from weddings and birthdays to major holidays like Christmas.

Beyond allowing families to connect with their history, tamales are popular during the holidays because of the labor-intensive process used to make them. They tend to be made in bulk with large pots full of fillings, pounds of hand-kneaded masa, and stacks of systematically-folded corn husks. It can easily turn into a big, production occupying an entire day (and kitchen, and dining room, and maybe a folding table or two). This means an opportunity for *tamaladas*—tamale-making parties—when families and friends gather to turn production into its own celebration. That's why it has become a seasonal tradition.

As for where to get tamales this season in Amarillo, you've got several options. If you're lucky, you can arrange to buy them from friends, coworkers or community members. However, La Super Economica, Tortilleria Lupita, Bracero's, Diana's Tamales Burritos & More, and several other stores and restaurants have highly-rated tamales on offer around town as well. Pro tip: Get those orders in early.

How did the Candy Cane Lane tradition start on Gainsborough Drive?

The Amarillo tradition of Candy Cane Lane is the result of a happy coincidence and a whole lot of holiday cheer more than 20 years in the making. According to a few longtime locals, Candy Cane Lane started around 2002 on Gainsborough Drive, in the Belmar subdivision. That's when late neighbors Ernie McAnally and Dan Reed began lighting up their yards for their grandchildren. They brought the whole block in on the idea of custom candy canes in 2006. After that, things really started to snowball.

To err is human, but so is to take an idea for a fun project and run with it. After those early decorations popped up, neighbors asked for more, or built their own. Families began elevating their holiday decor game, then surrounding streets got into the action. In the following years, this little section of town became a holiday destination, complete with its own live Santa (Hi, Santa Chrysl!) and a lot of inflatables.

These days, Candy Cane Lane has expanded into everything from food trucks to charity fundraisers. But the tradition has remained largely uncoordinated. It's as organic as any holiday filled with LED lighting and blower fans and inflatable polyester fabric can be. Every year, those in the neighborhood keep choosing to create festive displays for others to enjoy, even if it means several weeks of nightmarish traffic.

Candy Cane Lane is, as the youth might say, an "aura farm." (Or as their trying-to-keep-up parents might say: "It's lit.") No matter the phrasing, it shows a kind of home-grown holiday dedication this dirt talker can respect. ☺



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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“All great achievements require time.”—Maya Angelou

It isn't exactly breaking news that teaching is hard. And saying so doesn't mean we don't love it. We do. If we didn't, it wouldn't just be difficult, it would be impossible. We love our students, and we believe what we do is deeply important.

There are many afternoons when I reflect on the events of the day and feel great. I remember wonderful music-making, hilarious things my kids said, or meaningful moments shared with a class. But gosh, some days it's hard to feel like I've done much of anything. Some days my lesson plan just didn't work like I imagined. Some days I wish I'd handled a situation differently. Some days I'm just tired. Some days I wonder whether what I'm doing matters at all.

Recently, I went to the Fannin Middle School Choir Fall Concert. I have been teaching at the same elementary school for seven years now, so I have the immense privilege of seeing some of my students grow all the way through my program, moving on to become musicians in higher grades. I was very kindly invited by a former student, and I saw many more of my former students there. They sang beautifully, looking so tall and composed on that stage. I cried, obviously, but the music was not even the best part. The best part was their faces when they saw me. The best part was all the hugs and shouts of, “Ms. Burt!” and the way they told me all about their middle school experience so far. I told each and every one how proud I am, and assured them that yes, I will come to the Christmas concert, too.

That feeling is enough to get through quite a few hard days. It made me thankful for the hard days I survived to receive that blessing. In this culture of instant gratification, add to cart, ChatGPT and putting our lives on social media for immediate feedback, have we lost our way a bit? Have we forgotten that making lasting change, seeing the fruits of our labor, and reaching goals requires time? How can this lesson of patience and perseverance apply to other aspects of life?

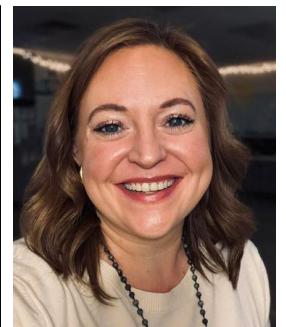
Consider personal finances. It takes a heck of a long time to save money, and even longer to get out of debt. (Hello, student loans and credit cards.) So long, in fact, that many people don't bother doing it because it feels impossible. Because each and every step feels so miniscule and meaningless that you want to give up. Because you're working so hard, it feels unfair to make sacrifices. Because our phones, and sometimes our friends, are constantly showing us what to spend money on to feel happier or triendier or skinnier or healthier or more put-together. I will not pretend my own various group chats don't contain Amazon links, both sent and received. It's just so easy. My mother always says, “Five dollars is just five dollars, but even

five dollars adds up.” I hate that, but she's right. Spending money frivolously feels good in the moment, it really does, but not spending it feels even better if you're willing to wait.

Our health is certainly another area of life that requires immense grit and determination. Anyone who has tried to lose weight or quit smoking can testify to this. I've done both with varying degrees of success and, holy moly, it's easier to overeat and have a cigarette than it is to eat mindfully and resist the craving. It's easier to sit on the couch than it is to go for a walk or drive to the gym. As someone who has reached “this will all catch up with you one day” years old, I'm relieved to tell you that I quit smoking nearly eight years ago and haven't looked back. I have nothing to report on the whole going-to-the-gym situation, but I'll keep you posted.

When preparing my students for a performance, I often tell them that right now, weeks or months in advance, in this classroom, we have to decide this show is going to be great. When we finally see the sets and costumes, and the audience is in place, and we get that rush of excitement, it will be too late to decide if we haven't put in the work. Rehearsal cannot always be fun. It is work. But nailing a performance, hearing those cheers from our community, feeling the pride of their grown-ups and friends in the audience, THAT is absolutely always fun. Basketball drills are not always fun, but winning a game is the MOST fun. Staying home from a night out, or saying no to that purchase I've been eyeing might not be fun, but seeing that debt decrease or savings increase is beyond worth it. Turning down dessert isn't fun, but achieving health goals is an amazing feeling. Dusting and vacuuming isn't fun, but lighting a candle in that spotless living room is incredibly satisfying.

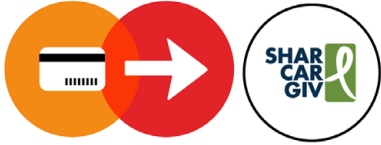
Having fun is important, of course. Little treats, lazy days and spontaneous outings are a few of my favorite things. We must remember that small, unseen and uncelebrated steps are important, too. True reward, satisfaction and achievement takes time. ☺



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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Amarillo College honored this year's distinguished alumni in October. This year's honorees were the late **Captain Jim Dick Miller**, U.S. Navy retired; geologist and community leader **Jim J. Brewer**; and nonprofit executive and education advocate **Katharyn Wiegand**.

The RANGE has named **Jacob Cates** as its new executive director while founding leader Matt Garner transitions to a board role.

Leadership Amarillo & Canyon recently appointed **Missy Macon** as its new executive director.

West Texas A&M University's Office of Military and Veteran Services has earned a gold **Veterans Education Excellence Recognition Award**, recognizing the University's commitment toward ensuring the academic success of veterans and the military community.



WTAMU has been named one of the best regional universities in the West in new rankings from *U.S. News & World Report*. WT rose to No. 4 among **Best Value Schools** in the West, marking a significant increase from its No. 20 placement just three years ago.

Bowden Jones, Jr., chief consumer officer of **FirstBank Southwest**, has been appointed to the American Bankers Association's Emerging Leaders Council for the 2025-2026 association year.



The Independent Bankers Association of Texas has recognized **FirstBank Southwest** with two Silver Eagle **Best of Community Banking awards** for outstanding achievements in Community Service and Bank Culture.

Dr. Jamelle Conner, president of Amarillo College, was recently honored with the **Career Achievement Award** from the Amarillo Women's Network. The award recognizes women leaders who have made significant professional contributions.



Dustin Meyer has been named the director of planning and development for the **City of Canyon**.



After more than 20 years of service, Chief Financial Officer **Laura Storrs** has announced her retirement from the **City of Amarillo** effective February 2026. Storrs began her COA career in 2003 as an intern while attending WTAMU, and has held numerous positions with the City, most recently as CFO since 2020.



City of Amarillo Special Advisor **Floyd Hartman** was recently presented with the prestigious **Beelee Goodwin Public Administrator Award**. Hartman has 30 years of service and experience in local government, including 20 years with the City of Amarillo. He will retire in January.



The Amarillo Harley Owners Group and Tripp's Harley-Davidson recently presented a \$12,000 donation to the **Texas Panhandle First Responders' Memorial** to honor the area's fallen law enforcement, firefighters and EMS personnel.



Ascension Academy has been nationally recognized as one of the **Best Schools in America** by Niche, the country's leading college and school search platform. Niche ranked Ascension Academy as the Best Private High School, the Best High School for STEM, and the Most Diverse Private High School in the Amarillo Area for 2025.



The Amarillo Symphony recently announced the appointment of **Dr. Kathleen Carter Bell** as the new artistic director for Chamber Music Amarillo.



Louise Rice, DNP, RN, has been named regional dean of the **Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Nursing** on the Amarillo campus. Rice brings more than three decades of nursing and health care education experience to the role.



The **TTUHSC's School of Nursing Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing** program has been ranked the **No. 1 accelerated nursing program** in Texas by RegisteredNursing.org.



Amanda Kenner, general manager of the McDonald's Restaurant at 2000 S. Western St. in Amarillo, has been honored with the **Ray Kroc Award**, which recognizes the top-performing McDonald's Restaurant Managers worldwide.



Northwest Texas Healthcare System has received the American Heart Association's **Get With The Guidelines-Coronary Artery Disease STEMI Receiving Center Silver Plus** recognition for its commitment to offering rapid, research-based care to people experiencing an ST elevation myocardial infarction (STEMI), known to be more severe and dangerous than other types of heart attacks.



After a nationwide search, the **Amarillo Area Foundation** Board named **Keralee Clay** its President and CEO. She had been serving in an interim leadership role since the death of Clay Stribling.



Pantex donated \$81,000 this year to nine nonprofit groups, distributed with the assistance of the **Amarillo Area Foundation**. The Pantex Community Investment Fund has awarded a cumulative \$1.42 million dollars through 173 grants to nonprofits in the Texas Panhandle. The Fund is a partnership between PanTeXas Deterrence LLC, the managing and operating contractor of the Pantex Plant, and the Amarillo Area Foundation.

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

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It's that time again to start planning for the seasonal dishes we love. We start making jokes about nervous turkeys and trying to remember where that cranberry stuff is located at Market Street. Time to start digging around for Grandma's recipes and trading cooking secrets back and forth with neighbors. While I was growing up, my family had some crazy dishes, including oyster dressing, macaroni and tomatoes, and that greenish white jello salad stuff that I never ate because it always seemed to be looking back at me. (There was, however, a pink one that tasted like cherries.)

The 17th-century Pilgrims, as you know, joined the indigenous Wampanoag people to enjoy a feast that is echoed in our Thanksgiving tradition. But, depending on where you live, their little shindig may not have been very much like your basic family holiday turkey, gravy and dressing.

For one thing, their protein dishes weren't exactly the same. That Norman Rockwell turkey on a platter was likely not something you would have seen at the "first feast." They ate deer meat. In addition to the venison brought by the Wampanoag, they most likely had duck and/or goose for their main dishes, and not turkey. I have never found a way to eat a duck, though I shot a few of them when I was younger. I quit hunting them because killing just for sport is against my belief system, and I found them inedible. I have had some tasty goose, but only on occasion. It is beyond me how to cook one.

Speaking of inedible, my research indicates that another coastal delicacy was likely at the first feast: eels. I would have to be in a very bad way before considering eels for dinner. Lobster? Definitely! Crab? Yes, though not quite as definitely. Eels? Big no. The Pilgrims came from across the pond, of course, where eels were a common dish. Eel pie? Another reason for American independence.

It's interesting that many of the original feast dishes were contributed by the native people, and were only found, up to that point, in the New World. Corn (maize) was prevalent in the Americas, having found its way up from central Mexico centuries earlier, and was evidently developed from a form of wild grass called teosinte. Potatoes were also a new world crop, having been first developed by the Incas in what is now South America, but it is unlikely they were present in

the first feast. Wild beans and tomatoes were also first found in the Western world. Pumpkins were included in what the pilgrims would have called "pompions," their word for squash.

Those recipes were much more austere than our fancy casseroles and sweet dishes. They had no sugar as we know it, so their sweeteners were probably honey or maple syrup. So no candied yams or sweet potato casserole. Drag.

But some decadent holiday foods may have been present. Even 400 years ago, fry bread was an indigenous treat. Cheese curd dishes were starting to resemble modern-day pancakes and crepes. Fruit jam—sweetened with honey—may have made appearances.

No discussion of holiday foods would be complete without poking the elephant in the room. (Mixing metaphors is art if you do it on purpose.) I'm talking about the ever-present and often derided fruitcake. Though fruitcake may have started as early as ancient Egypt, it has become a popular staple treat in America around the holidays.

The idea of mixing dried fruit, berries and nuts with some natural sweetener goes back to the dawn of civilization, when it was a sort of pre-historic energy bar. To me, the bounty of a good harvest was originally reflected in what would have been considered luxurious dessert foods in survival days.

My other point is this: My grandmother made the best scratch fruitcake in mankind's history, in two varieties—what she called white or dark. The dark one with molasses was my favorite. My beautiful mother-in-law still makes a delicious dark fruitcake, and guess who she gets extra visits from this time of year?

Happy holidays! ☺



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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IT'S TIME FOR ACTION

End-of-Year Recalibration

This has been one of the most challenging years of my life. Looking at social media and talking with friends, I know I'm not alone. That's why I'm using these final two months of 2025 to recalibrate my life and set concrete plans to make next year what I truly want it to be. I'm committed to healing from this year's hurts and emerging stronger than ever. Resilience isn't just about surviving hard times—it's about how you come back from them.

This year, many of us have experienced profound loss: family members, jobs, homes, relationships or things deeply meaningful to us. We grieve significant losses, and we must move through that grief to reach better days. Those "better days" are what I'm fighting for—days when I can look back and think: *You've been remarkably resilient. You made it through and came out better.*

These final months of 2025 should be a time for taking stock—time to center ourselves so we can start strong. I'm not talking about typical New Year's resolutions or the tired "new year, new me" clichés. I'm talking about genuine, internal change that will make 2026 our year. We're not chasing fantasy versions of ourselves, but learning to be content with what we have, while striving for what we truly want. We're going to fight to ensure we're happy every single day.

Recalibration means recognizing that people will try to remind you of who you used to be. As my pastor says, we all have old versions of ourselves, but we don't need others throwing them in our faces. We've already lived through those times and survived them. We're better because of them.

So in 2026, when someone says, "I remember when you," respond like this: "I remember that too, and that was the fuel I needed to get where I am today."

Then, we're going to stop playing the martyr. Nobody asked us to sacrifice ourselves, but we did it anyway. While caring for others matters, losing ourselves in the process is the most damaging journey we can take. This next year, we will focus on ourselves. We will love ourselves as much as we love others. We deserve the same happiness, attention, love and forgiveness we freely give to others every day. We will see ourselves as the most vital part of this journey and learn to love ourselves completely.

Next, we are going to understand that "no" is not a bad word. "No" means I have learned to preserve myself; overextending myself only causes me harm. No doesn't require any other explanation, justification or apology. It is powerful. So in 2026, "no" will be our word. For the first time in my life, I'm going to be OK with that.

If we want 2026 to be our year, it can only be different if we make the changes necessary to create what we deserve. There will still be challenges—moments of defeat, heartache and pain. But with an open mind and a healed heart, the outcome changes.

The Call for you is to recalibrate who you are and what you want to prepare for 2026. The moment we declare 2026 to be our best year yet, we must prepare for everything life will throw at us to prove us wrong. We have to be smarter, rise above the doubt and know that we're capable of reaching the goals we have set. When we do, we will deserve it. ☺



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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Let's continue our journey across the sky by visiting a popular winter constellation, the mythical Orion. Known for his trademark belt, the boastful hunter kneels in the sky just across from Scorpio, eternally separated after their deadly battle. As the story goes, Orion bragged that he would kill all the animals, angering Earth goddess Gaia, who then sent Scorpio to kill Orion. After a fierce battle, Orion succumbed to the monstrous scorpion's fatal sting. In remembrance, Zeus placed them on opposite sides of the sky to ensure Scorpio could never hurt Orion again.

Ever ready for the hunt, Orion is easy to spot, holds his own delights, and guides stargazers to other winter constellations.

First, find the three, distinct stars lined up to create his belt. Above and below the belt is a misshapen rectangle, representing his upper and lower body. As bright blue giants and supergiants, all but one star of Orion is visibly blue when viewed in darker skies, with the exception being the red giant Betelgeuse. (Don't worry: It's safe to say this name three times.)

Orion keeps his sword handy, represented by a string of stars hanging from the left side of his belt. The Orion Nebula, appearing as a smudge spot, rests in his blade. This smudge is faintly visible in city lights and, of course, is more apparent in darker skies (where I suggest also viewing the nebula through binoculars or a telescope for an even more breathtaking view of this stellar nursery).

Orion also hosts the annual Orionids meteor shower in October and November, provided courtesy of debris from Halley's Comet.

Following an imaginary line up and to the right from his belt lands you in Taurus. Follow an imaginary line up and to the left from the left shoulder, and you're in Gemini. If you follow an imaginary line down and to the left of his belt, you will be in Canis Major, and if you follow a line extending to the left from his shoulder stars, you will find Canis Minor. Mighty polite of him to acknowledge his canine hunting crew. These are just a few of the winter constellations Orion guides stargazers to view as we star hop across the night sky.

The cooler weather offers us a great time to check out nearby dark skies. Alibates Flint Quarry offers some fantastic walking trails during daylight hours, with dark skies rife for spotting Orion and his friends after a picnic dinner. Grab your blankets, some hot chocolate, and enjoy spotting all Orion has to offer! ☺



ALETTA DAVIS-PITRE
Aletta, an Amarillo native, is a physical therapist by day, and stargazer by night. She found her stargazing kindred in the Amarillo Astronomy Club and now serves as the club's secretary. Founded in 1981, the club helps the public peer into the heavens at public star parties or safely view the sun at daytime events, and provides ongoing education about the night sky.

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LEATHER LEGACIES

Inside the Region's Custom Boot Shops

BY MATT MORGAN

The cattle industry created Amarillo in the late 1880s, and cowboy boots took the first steps down the city's earliest dirt roads. They could withstand harsh terrain, unpredictable weather and long hours in the saddle, and it didn't take long for bootmakers to set up shop in the growing city.

Boot repair shops popped up on Polk Street in the early 1900s. Custom boot orders became big business, and they didn't just come from cowboys. Boots entered the culture. Customers from across the nation, including Hollywood legends like Clark Gable, were drawn to stitch patterns and other hand-crafted details that became known in the industry as "Amarillo Flare." Suddenly, it seemed, the bootmaker had become the legend.

Amarillo is still home to an array of talented bootmakers. These artisans weave craftsmanship, fashion and function into every stitch. Amarillo boots find their way onto the feet of hardworking farmers and ranchers across the country. Hollywood has its demands as well. You can see the work of Amarillo makers in nearly every arena of pop culture, and you can literally get your kicks here on Route 66.

From shops with a century of history to startups by young entrepreneurs, Amarillo is rich with creators whose craftsmanship makes feet happy around the world.



FROM THE EDITORS:

We were so impressed by the western style and craftsmanship of these bootmakers that we had to see those beautiful boots on an equally beautiful model. Enter our friend Lauren Pawlowski.

What better setting than The Barfield downtown? Our friends there graciously welcomed us late one Friday afternoon as we explored the hotel's historic charm—shooting on the preserved history of its 10th floor, relaxing in the private Derringer Room (where Lauren appears on our cover), and turning heads in the elegant lobby (shown here).

Special thanks to **Monkee's of Amarillo** for the gorgeous clothing, **Aurora Luxe** for the stunning furs, **Bustamante Boots** (seen on the cover), and **Beck Boots** (shown here). See more of Lauren's Barfield photo shoot at brickandelm.com.

AMERICAN BOOT COMPANY

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It might be surprising to hear that one of the best-known boot shops in West Texas is run by a Chicago-born proprietor named Giovanni within sight of Westgate Mall. But Giovanni Meraz is serious about cowboy boots. “Boots are in my blood,” Giovanni explains, “My grandfather was a lifelong bootmaker and my parents ran a western-wear store for a long time.”

When he was 14, Meraz’s family left Chicago and moved to the Texas Panhandle. He graduated from Highland Park High School and started making boots to help pay for college, where he became a criminal justice major and wanted to be a police officer. “I thought my future was pretty well laid out,” he says. He even went on a few ride-alongs with the Amarillo Police Department. Bootmaking was just a hobby.

Then, in 2016, he walked in to pay his cell phone bill at a wireless provider on Westgate Parkway. “On the way back to my car, I saw this place for rent,” he says.

Meraz never became a cop, and American Boot Company is almost 10 years old.

“Bootmaking isn’t a job for me,” he says. “I love it.” He learned particulars of the craft from his grandfather, but has developed his own reputation and style. Customers from Tennessee to Arizona have found their way into American Boot Company, and nearly 70 percent of his business comes from outside the Amarillo area.

“The highest compliment I can get is when someone tells me that their boots received compliments out in the world,” Meraz says. Like the Ross Brothers (see page 57), his work includes making boots for residents of Boys Ranch, thanks to a generous donor. “I want to make sure all the kids out there have what they need.”

His boots may be made for walking, but a lot of them have traveled the world before anyone wears them. “There are animals from three different countries in those boots,” he says, pointing to several pairs on a nearby shelf. “I once made boots and belts for brothers who had actually hunted the alligator I used in construction.”



GIOVANNI
MERAZ





JEREMY POOL



CARLOS QUIROZ



VICTOR SAMANIEGO



MIGUEL MARTINEZ

BECK COWBOY BOOTS

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The history of Beck Boots runs almost exactly parallel to Amarillo history. In 1916, twin brothers Earl and Bearl Beck opened a boot shop in Dalhart. They moved to Amarillo in 1921. A century later, the Beck name remains a standard in the industry. “Harry Beck himself hired me in 2009,” says Jeremy Pool, the current owner. “I think it was one of those ‘right place, right time’ kind of things.”

Pool grew up in Stratford, and received a degree in aeronautical technology from Kansas State University. He served as a pilot for Hastings for several years before they closed [see our feature on p. 104], followed by what he describes as “a brief misstep” as a financial advisor.

He was ready for something different. So 16 years ago, Pool walked into Beck Boots looking for work. “I just thought [bootmaking] looked cool,” he recalls. Harry hired him first as a clerical administrator. Pool excelled in customer service and business management and, in 2016, had the opportunity to buy the shop. He partnered with Carlos Quiroz, who’d been making boots with Harry for several years. “We had both the boots and the business [sides] taken care of,” Pool says.

He jokes that his shop is “kind of a one-trick pony.” They just happen to be really good at that one trick: creating working

cowboy boots, true to the Beck name. “Our boots are known for their durability and functionality,” he says.

Beck Boots supplies three categories of boots. The first are what Pool calls “in-house” boots, available in standard sizing for walk-in customers. A level up from that is the “Cowboy Special,” a custom boot with certain options made for the working cowboy. “These boots take us nearly eight weeks to construct,” he says. They are truly custom, taking into consideration not only a cowboy’s foot length, but measurements like instep height, toe shape, and ankle and calf circumference.

Pool then categorizes his topmost level of boots as “Full-Blown Custom.” They can take up to a year to make, and he describes them as “a joint design venture between us and the customer.” Those customers include celebrities. He doesn’t always identify them by name, but at least one is familiar: “I really love the ones we made for Nolan Ryan.”

Pool and Quiroz have expanded shop operations since 2016, including a move to a new home at 7200 Canyon Drive, which was formerly a rental event venue. In fact, the barn-like building served as a horse stables in the 1950s—another one of those “right place, right time” situations.



FELIPE
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BUSTAMANTE COWBOY BOOTS

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In an unassuming shop south of town, near the Claude Highway, Vidal Bustamante is surrounded by dogs and cats. They rarely leave his side, even on days like a recent one when he arrived at 4 a.m. to finish 12 pairs of identical boots for a wedding party. “It’s a passion for me,” Bustamante says. “We all just want our customers to be happy.”

Raised in southern Mexico, his family moved to Juarez when Bustamante was 14. He dropped out of school to help his family pay the bills, and found work in a Juarez boot shop. “I think the owner just didn’t want me wandering around outside his shop,” he says.

Under the watchful eye of his new boss, Bustamante learned to make highly stylized “dancing boots”—also known as *botas picudas* or “pointy boots.” These boots are more cultural than practical, he says, adding that they are “much lighter than cowboy boots and they have less quality in the durability.”

Bustamante saved enough money to move to Texas in 1998, and soon found himself in Amarillo. Like so many others, he was

given a job by Harry Beck. The demand for dancing boots was almost nonexistent here, but Beck taught him how to make working cowboy boots.

“When I left Beck, I opened my garage to friends and neighbors so I could make them cowboy boots,” he says. “Some of my customers here got their first pair of boots from my garage.”

Today, Bustamante continues to specialize in made-to-order, working cowboy boots. “Each pair of boots starts with a piece of paper and a ruler,” Vidal says. Each pair is designed by the customer and made by hand, but the shop is surprisingly prolific: Bustamante says he averages up to 1,500 pairs of custom boots each year, all courtesy of “some little machines and a good knife,” he says, bending over to pet his dog.

When possible, he delivers boots in person and enjoys interacting with customers. “I love to meet someone, have a cookout, get to know them, and then go to work.”



VIDAL
BUSTAMANTE



DEAN RANDOLPH

DEAN RANDOLPH CUSTOM BOOTS

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What do hip-hop mogul Snoop Dogg, country music legend Randy Travis and rock-god Steven Tyler have in common? They all own boots or shoes made by Dean Randolph, owner of Dean Randolph Custom Boots in Canyon.

His upbringing was about as far from the world of celebrity as you can get. “I grew up pretty simply in Mobeetie on a cotton farm,” he says. Randolph attended Frank Phillips College and later Texas Tech University on his way to becoming a rodeo cowboy. He spent 15 years on that circuit and remains a Professional Bull Riders judge.

“I had to retire from bull riding in the mid-’90s after I broke my leg,” he says. “I had just ordered a new protective vest for riding, but after I got hurt, I decided to just start making them myself.”

Randolph opened a leather shop in 2000, producing vests and other products. Then, in 2006, he made a pair of boots for his young son. Shoe construction followed soon after. “I’m a sneakerhead,” says Randolph. Some bootmakers are inspired by decades of cowboy tradition. Randolph was inspired by Air Jordans.

In 2012, Randolph opened his shop in its current form, and the best way to illustrate his work is to describe products like a custom pair of baseball cleats—made from actual baseballs and baseball mitts. “I can be the first to do things in the sneaker business,” he says.

Business is booming. Randolph’s connections in the rodeo business keep orders for boots and chaps flowing in. But thanks to social media, the world of custom sneakers has grown from a street-level subculture into a luxury niche. A random call from a leather vendor in Florida introduced his work to the Hollywood elite. “I bought leather and other stuff from this guy, but he had been making specialty shoes for people like Beyoncé and Snoop Dogg for years. He basically didn’t want to do it anymore, and he asked if I wanted to,” Randolph recalls.

He relished the opportunity to take over the portfolio—not necessarily for the celebrity connections, but for the chance to work with the unique materials his famous customers wanted. “I’ve done foot measurements in Arby’s parking lots and the locker room at Madison Square Garden,” he says.

Much like Snoop Dogg, Randolph hasn’t forgotten his roots. “I still love when I see rodeo riders in my boots,” he says.





LEVERETT BOOTS

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LEVERETTBOOTS.COM

It's easy to drive past Leverett Boots without noticing the quiet, nondescript shop run by its equally introspective owner, Carson Leverett. "I've always been around boots, literally," Leverett explains. "I was born to a farming and ranching family, and I'm a rancher now, myself. That's what helps me pay for this place."

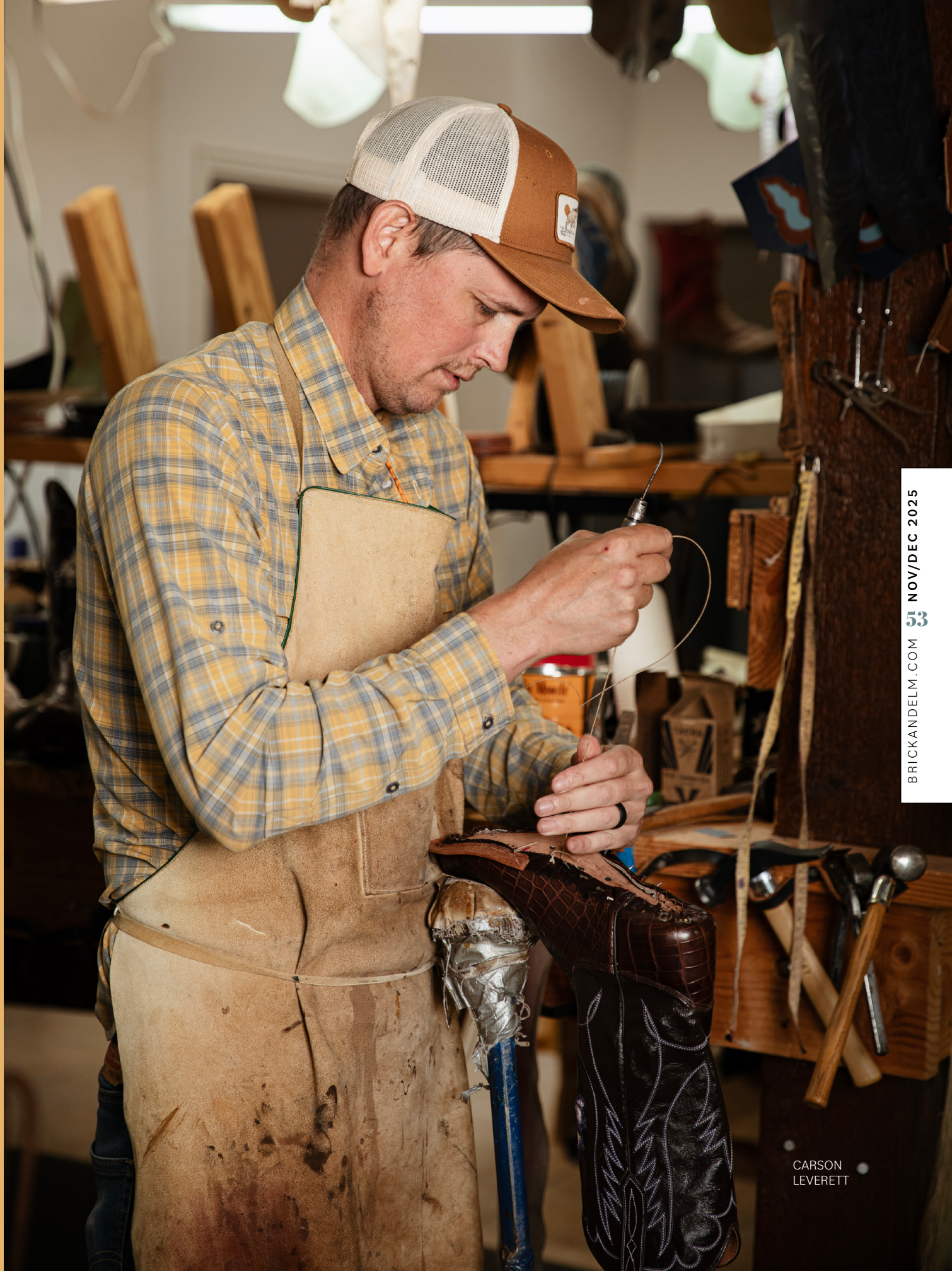
A graduate of Amarillo High, Leverett earned a degree in philosophy and audio engineering from Belmont University. Those don't exactly scream "bootmaking career," but when his path took him to Abilene Christian University for graduate work, he needed help to pay for school. He found it in an Abilene boot shop. "Bootmaking became that rabbit I just had to chase," he says.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Leverett is also part of the Beck bootmaking heritage. He and Harry Beck first worked together in 2011. "Harry had limited opportunities for shadowing, so he sent me to Edwin Martin in Las Animas, Colorado," he says. Leverett trained at E.P. Martin Boots for six months, commuting from Abilene to Colorado every weekend during that time. The late Martin had a

local connection, having worked at Ingerton Boot and Saddle on Polk Street in the 1940s. "I still have an Ingerton saddle out at my ranch," Leverett says.

Having learned from a legend, Carson opened his current shop in 2013 and has been crafting incredibly intricate and beautiful boots since. "Boots are basically works of art to me and I love being a creative partner" in their design, he says. "Each pair of boots I make is like a commissioned painting or portrait." They're not just made from classic cowhide, either. "I've got boots made from kangaroo, caribou, alligator, water buffalo and ostrich in here," he explains, pointing out a few high-end, exotic materials. "I refuse to lose touch with the trade, though. I always incorporate some stitch pattern or other feature that nods to that Amarillo style."

He adds that Amarillo's local bootmakers are "more of a community than a group of competitors." Each pair can take from 40 to 100 hours, so Leverett Boots only takes orders once a year.



CARSON
LEVERETT



072576



JORGE LUCERO



LUCERO'S BOOT REPAIR

1009 N. APACHE ST. | 806.517.7500

Jorge Lucero was born in Juarez, Mexico, to a working-class family. As a teenager, he worked in factories and was comfortable using his hands. He married at 18, and Lucero and his new bride moved to the United States. After six months in Artesia, New Mexico, the young family moved to Amarillo.

Lucero found work at a boot shop, and spent the next seven years learning the trade. "I knew there were people who needed [repair] work we didn't offer," he remembers. "I wondered, where are all the other boots?" Wanting to serve more customers, he opened a small, backyard shop out of his home near Forest Hill Elementary.

The work came slowly, and Lucero supplemented his income by also working as a mechanic. "It was hard to build trust with people at first, so I started to do repair work for friends and family," he says. Those early customers became walking advertisements. As business picked up, little by little, he would add equipment to his operation.

"I would get a 'boot call' so I would leave the car shop and come here to meet the customer," he says, laughing. "However long it took for the boot job, I would make up later at the car shop."

Repairs soon grew into custom bootmaking, and today Lucero balances the two. His reputation for repair work, however, is legendary. Other local bootmakers often hire Lucero for detailed repair work when they don't have capacity, and he's never seen a repair he felt inadequate to handle. "Oh, I can do it," he says. That's basically become his business motto.

"People tried to talk me out of this business," he adds, but he's always enjoyed the independence of what he does. "I don't cut corners. Sometimes work is good enough for the customer and still not good enough for me," Lucero adds. Surrounded by order slips and stacks of boots, he swivels his chair back to the sewing machine in the corner. "I am always busy because I'm always trying to be the best."



TEXAS BEST BOOT & SHOE REPAIR

5106 S. WESTERN ST. | 806.358.2701

Three years ago, Robbie Browning, dissatisfied with his construction career, walked into Texas Best Boot & Shoe Repair asking owners Janet and Gaylen Harden for a job. He didn't have any bootmaking experience, but he was a quick learner. He wanted to learn a trade.

"I've always been good with my hands. If you show me how to do something once, I can do it," Browning says. The Hardens had been thinking about closing the shop, and had another offer for him. Would he be interested in buying the store?

He took the offer to his wife, Monica, who works for the corporate office of United Supermarkets. "I trusted her business savvy," he says. "We had what I would call a collective good feeling, so started six months of intense training."

Browning took to the trade quickly. "I have always been a details guy," he says. The Tascosa grad grew up playing bass guitar and drums and first pursued a music career, stepping away after a few years. He ended up working as a tile finisher and painter in the construction business.

But with bootmaking and leatherwork, he found his true calling. "I'm in this business to help people," he says, leaning over the counter. "I recently modified a boot for an older cowboy who had several foot and ankle injuries, and he couldn't flex his foot anymore. My sister hand-made a leather jacket for a customer who had lost an arm in a traffic accident." He shows off other unique modifications, like a boot with a hidden zipper and removable heel cap.

The "shoe" part of Texas Best Boot & Shoe is intentional, and Browning is one of the few local craftsmen who will perform repair work on any pair of boots or shoes. "A majority of my business is actually ladies' shoes and accessories," Robbie states. He brought in Kat, his sister, because of her skill with sewing. The duo also works with purses, jackets, and belts, and the retail side of Texas Best offers hand-made Amish belts, Italian purses and leather jackets made in Japan. All are products designed for durability. "Put your money in up front and wear them til the wheels come off," he says.

Despite being relatively new to the industry, Browning has found his niche. "I don't want to live in a place where cowboys and all these other people have to do without a service like this," he says.



ROBBIE
BROWNING

ROSS BOOTS WESTERN LEATHER CRAFT BOOT CO.

1950 CIVIC CIRCLE | 806.355.0174

In 1919, D.V. Ross found himself on a train coming home from fighting in World War I. A young volunteer walked up to him with a plate of cookies. “Mama,” D.V. soon wrote to his mother, “I found the woman I’m going to marry.” He followed that woman to Amarillo, and started making cowboy boots.

At least, that’s how D.V.’s grandson, Bob Ross, tells the story. He and his brother, Charles, run Western Leather Craft Boot Co. and Ross Boots.

The two brothers grew up making boots, and Bob, now in his 80s, remembers sweeping the floor in the original Ross store at 110 Polk St. in the top floor of the Maddox Leather Shop. Over the past century of business, a staggering 29 family members have worked in the business, which the brothers’ parents, Charlie and Neldehn Ross, managed until Charlie passed away.

“The cowboys always just called my mom Mrs. Ross. That was the rule,” Bob says.

The family tradition continues. Charles and Bob are currently training Phil Baldner—who recently married into the family and, therefore, the bootmaking business. “This business was fun until my son-in-law got involved,” Charles jokes.

Bob gestures to a stack of forgotten scraps of leather and tools behind him. “Everything that has no place to go just ends up with me. Some just see sheets of leather. I see boots,” he says. He taps a Singer sewing machine at his work table. “I think this is the oldest sewing machine in Amarillo.”

Like the two brothers, it still works just fine.

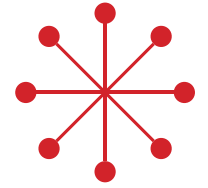
Custom work dominates their production these days. “For years, we’ve made the boots for the seniors of Boys Ranch High School,” Charles says. Bob admits that most of those young adults probably don’t realize how significant it is to have a custom pair of cowboy boots. “For many of them, it’s the nicest thing they’ve owned,” he says.

His voice cracks a little, and Bob apologizes for it. After more than five decades as a radio disc jockey and announcer, that’s the kind of detail to which he’s always paying attention. That, and bootmaking details like measurements, leather grain and stitch tension. “I love seeing folks from all walks of life, and I get to share this with my kids,” Charles says. The brothers hope bootmaking stays in their family for generations to come.☺



BOB ROSS

Making Spirits Bright



A Guide to Local Toy Drives and Giveaways

BY JASON BOYETT

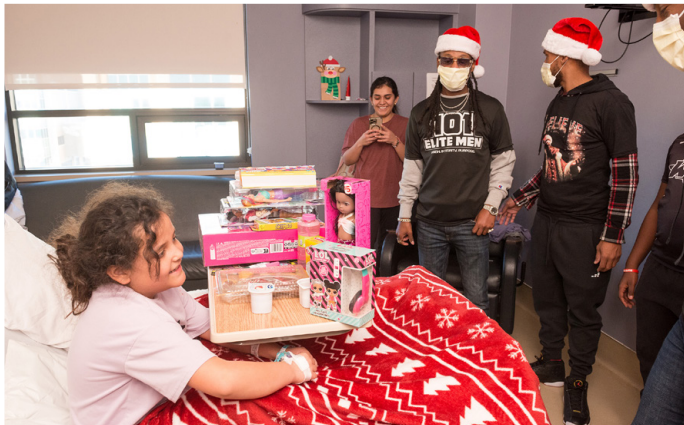
“The generosity of our community is one of my favorite things I get to see,” says Dawnette Lusk as the season of giving gets underway in Amarillo and Canyon. Lusk is the local Toys for Tots coordinator in Potter and Randall Counties—a national program run by the United States Marine Corps Reserve, now in its 78th year.

But Lusk’s comment applies far beyond the program she manages. Every December, the Panhandle comes alive with a generosity that shines as brightly as any Christmas-lit home in Wolflin. Across the city, toy drives and charity programs work quietly and faithfully to reach families that need a little extra help.

These efforts are as varied as the organizations behind them. Some, like A Christmas Gift, began as individual efforts just a few years ago. Others, like Toys for Tots, have a history dating back decades. They all take a slightly different approach as they work to ease burdens for struggling families and bring joy to children.

But each of these programs tells the same story: It’s the story of a community that refuses to let its most vulnerable neighbors go unseen during the holidays. In every toy donated and in every volunteer’s smile, they display the spirit of Panhandle generosity.





A Christmas Gift

Now in its 12th year, A Christmas Gift brings together the local service organization 101 Elite Men with the Amarillo Fire Department to collect gifts for children who have to spend the holiday season in the hospital.

Starting in November, Amarillo fire stations will set out collection boxes for toys, inviting community members to fill them up until Dec. 23, when those toys will be distributed to Northwest Texas Children's Hospital. "We do it for the kids going through tough times," says Rondell Campbell, who founded the toy drive event. When he first had the idea to distribute toys to children in need, Rondell's father—an X-ray technician at Northwest who has since retired—connected him to Becky Imel, the child life specialist for Northwest Texas Healthcare.

Imel pointed out that the Northwest Children's Hospital includes the only pediatric oncology center in the area, which means children undergoing cancer treatment may have to spend Christmas in a hospital bed. Campbell loved the idea of bringing a little comfort and joy to those young patients.

"We just ran with it," he says. "Being able to bless them and give them gifts has been great."

Beyond serving as a toy collection location, the fire department adds another level of excitement to the Dec. 23 distribution event. Along with members of 101 Elite Men, the firefighters deliver the toys to four floors worth of kids—typically 25 or so, Campbell says, though the number varies from year to year.

"We'll do a parade and the kids can look out at the fire trucks," he says.

Campbell is friends with former NBA star and current ESPN analyst Kendrick Perkins, who manages his own Christmas giveaway event in Beaumont. The two have been discussing ways for Perkins to get involved with A Christmas Gift this year in Amarillo. "We've been coordinating each year to make it better and better," Campbell adds.

Starting in November, drop off toy donations inside the foyers of these local fire stations:

- Station #5: 3200 S. Washington St.
- Station #9: 2015 Paramount Blvd.
- Station #11: 2401 N. Coulter St.
- Station #12: 3100 SW 58th Ave.
- Station #13: 6383 SW 45th Ave.

The Kettle Campaign

“When people start seeing the bell ringers out, that’s when they know it’s Christmas time,” says Major Andrea Ellis of the Salvation Army. Those kettles have become one of the most recognizable holiday traditions, not just in the United States, but all over the world: The Salvation Army serves in more than 133 countries.

The practice began with a Salvation Army officer in San Francisco who was trying to raise money for a Christmas dinner for the poor. Today, the “Kettle Campaign,” as the organization calls it, has grown to symbolize the holiday spirit.

It serves as the primary fundraiser for the Salvation Army of Amarillo, and every dollar given locally in Amarillo stays in Amarillo unless designated otherwise. Many bell ringers are volunteers. “We have families that sign up, volunteers, groups, kids that are trying to get [service] hours for school. We’ve had clubs and friends that get together,” Ellis says. “We’ve just had all kinds of people come together who want to ring those bells.”

However, if the organization doesn’t have enough volunteers, it hires bell ringers from the community.

The first day of kettle displays and bell ringing is set for Nov. 14.

Beyond that campaign, the Amarillo Corps of the national organization gives to local families through its Angel Tree program, which serves more than 1,000 local children every year from more than 300 families. Families apply for Angel Tree gifts, based on need, until the end of October, with the organization vetting each applicant to verify that they aren’t receiving duplicate services from another agency.

Tags are then created with the name of each child and a list of desired gifts. “You’ve probably seen them around town in the mall or at Walmart,” Ellis says of the trees. Community members are given the opportunity to purchase gifts and return them to the Angel Tree. The Salvation Army then organizes gift distribution a couple of weeks before Christmas.

In addition to those public trees, the organization also works with around 25 churches, businesses and civic groups that display private trees with Angel Tree tags.



Volunteer for Salvation Army kettle duty at [registertoring.org](https://www.registertoring.org), which allows you to pick a time and location during the Christmas season. The Angel Tree program also has an online component, with virtual adoption at [tsamm.org/angeltree](https://www.tsamm.org/angeltree).



NORTHSIDE TOY DRIVE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Northside Toy Drive

This annual event started when Elton Bradley invited a few friends to a Christmas party and asked them to bring toys. They filled a small trailer with the toys and gave them away in the North Heights neighborhood, at what is now the Warford Community Center.

That small beginning kept growing until the Northside Toy Drive has become one of the highest-profile toy giveaways in the city. This year's event is Dec. 13 at the Palo Duro High School Activity Center, when around 4,000 kids will be able to choose a Christmas gift within a five-hour time period. It's supported by the Black Tie Affair fundraiser the night before, Dec. 12, which always sells out and—with around 1,500 in attendance—has built a reputation as Amarillo's largest formal event.

"Our mission is to be the helping hand that lifts low- to moderate-income families during the Christmas holidays," says Bradley, ensuring that every child who wants a memorable Christmas gets to have a memorable Christmas.

The toy giveaway, by this point, is an efficient, well-structured event. Families start lining up at 8 a.m. Kids sip hot chocolate while moms and dads visit booths from local service organizations, learn about bill assistance and even hear from companies offering employment. As the families enter the gym, a volunteer takes the child to the gym floor, while parents watch from the bleachers. Kids receive a book from the Leaders Readers Network, then get to select three gifts of their choice.

Briefly separating the children from their parents is intentional, Bradley says. "This allows the child to select whatever gift they want—what they truly want for Christmas, not what the parents want for them. When you have a parent walk with a child, the parent sometimes picks out what they wish they could give a child, or what they would have wanted at their age," he says.

The gifts include everything from Barbie dolls and bikes to iPads, science kits and basketball goals. "Some kids want perfume and cologne. We have a complete section of board games. What we encourage our donors to do is give the gift they want their child or relative to have," the founder says. "We want great gifts, not average gifts."

He adds that, in the years since the Northside Toy Drive first came together, he's begun to recognize just how much generosity characterizes the people of this region. "This city is a giving city. Amarillo is fully a city that takes care of each other," he says. "The reason [the Northside Toy Drive] has grown to this size is because the community has continued to invest in itself."

A few years ago, the organization introduced a Toyathon toy collection and fundraiser event to kick off the giveaway season. This year's Toyathon is Nov. 14 in partnership with NewsChannel 10, FirstBank Southwest, the Amarillo Sod Poodles, the Amarillo Warbirds, Amarillo College's Athletics Department and Texas Blue Lake Pools.

At this event, Northside Toy Drive asks local people to make donations or deliver unwrapped toys (for children ages 2 to 12) to FirstBank Southwest's WolfIn Banking Center at 2401 S. Georgia St.

"With the local economy and the impact that everyone's facing this year, we really need to do as much as we possibly can to raise funds and gather toys," founder Elton Bradley says. "We've all seen the [price] increases and the need for financial assistance."

Supporters can also make monetary donations at northsidetoydrive.com.

Sharing Tree

When most locals think of toy drives, they probably picture a stranger (or an organization) distributing toys to children they don't necessarily know. That's not what happens at Sharing Tree, a partnership between Hillside Christian Church's Amarillo North Grand campus and Mission 2540, an apartment ministry that works with families living in low-income apartments.

Sharing Tree is a pop-up Christmas "store" featuring toy donations from local people. For \$5 per child or five cans of food, a mom or dad can shop for two gifts for each of their children. They can have those gifts wrapped on-site or take home wrapping paper to do it themselves. This process enables those parents or caregivers to give presents to their children—which the adults paid for and picked out themselves.

And these are not dollar-store gifts. They include everything from Nerf guns and Apple AirPods to purses and air-hockey tables.

"It's a powerful thing for the parents because they want to provide Christmas gifts for their families but are on very fixed incomes," says Brooks Boyett, founder of Mission 2540. [Disclosure: Brooks is the brother of *Brick & Elm's* Jason Boyett.] "Parents get to pick out the presents their kids want and come home with wrapped presents and say, 'These are the presents I've purchased and wrapped for you.' There's a lot of dignity in that."

Hillside started the program in 2018, about a year before Mission 2540 got involved. That first year, the program was

called Shepherd Tree. "We realized a real need," says Juan Maldonado, pastor of the Hillside Amarillo North Grand campus. The church wanted to empower parents to give rather than performing the act of giving on their behalf.

Those parents begin lining up early on shopping day, which this year is Dec. 13 at the North Grand campus. Church and community members donate the toys or purchase from an Amazon wish list that ships gifts directly to Hillside. Around 150 volunteers participate every year, and close to 1,200 children end up receiving gifts. Hillside has had to invest in patio heaters to keep parents warm while they wait to enter.

Parents' canned food payments are passed along to High Plains Food Bank. Every dollar paid by the parents goes to Mission 2540—and many of those families are already being served by the organization, which works with apartment complexes in the surrounding neighborhood. "It allows them to give back to the community, and then that money goes right back to serve those families," Boyett says.

The event has grown significantly over the past few years. Volunteers hear multiple languages spoken and see excitement and relief among the moms and dads who are being empowered to take care of their families.

"It's a partnership with them, the parents," Maldonado says. "The toys are not the main thing. We wanted to invest in families."

Find links to purchase gifts from Hillside's Amazon wish list for children of all ages at mission2540.org/christmas-outreach.



Together We Can

The long-running, annual holiday food drive for High Plains Food Bank may not involve toys, but it does allow generous local people to spread Christmas cheer. This high-profile tradition began in 1992. “It brings together local businesses, churches and schools for one mission: to alleviate hunger in the Texas Panhandle,” says Zivorad Filipovic, the food bank’s director of marketing and communications.

This year’s drive takes place Dec. 1 through 5 in the parking lot of the Market Street United on Georgia Street, where volunteers and HPFB staff collect food donations and funds in an attempt to raise \$250,000.

Most locals will recall the days of contributing canned food for this event—it’s right there in the name. But Filipovic says the focus of the event has shifted over the years from physical, nonperishable food items to monetary donations. “Any nonperishable food item is always needed at our warehouse, but monetary donations make a bigger impact,” he says. That’s due to the buying power of the food bank, thanks to relationships with manufacturers and suppliers. “We can take \$1 now and stretch it to provide up to nine meals. It allows us to stock our shelves better.”

That kind of efficiency is necessary because the food bank has been busier than ever in 2025. “We’re serving more people recently than we did during COVID or during the last recession,” Filipovic says. As of this fall, High Plains Food Bank was assisting

more than 13,000 families a month. “That’s the highest [number] we’ve ever served, and we’re seeing that need across all the 29 counties we serve. A lot more folks are reaching out to us about how they can get help.”

Those residents aren’t all coming directly to the Amarillo warehouse. HPFB works with frontline partner agencies across the Texas Panhandle, including churches, food pantries and community nonprofits. These partners distribute the food, while the food bank buys and warehouses it. This makes sure the families who need food the most are able to receive it.

HPFB also accepts donations online, and beginning Nov. 14, shoppers at United can scan a code at the register to make donations. (The United Family will match the first \$10,000 raised in this manner.) Other local schools and businesses will make their own contributions during the campaign.

“We get such strong support from the community,” Filipovic says. He recalls a woman who came to the Together We Can event a couple of years ago with a five-dollar bill. She apologized because it was all she had to give.

“But every dollar counts. Add her gift to thousands of others and it becomes incredibly powerful. The generosity here is incredible and it really does add up.”

Bring canned food or monetary donations Dec. 1 through 5 or give online at hpfb.org.





Toys for Tots

In 1947, the wife of a Marine Corps Reserve Major in Los Angeles asked her husband to deliver handcrafted dolls to an agency supporting needy children. The officer couldn't find an appropriate agency, so his reserve unit collected and distributed toys. By the next Christmas, Toys for Tots was on its way to becoming a national community action program for the Marine Corps Reserves, complete with a logo designed by none other than Walt Disney.

Amarillo's Marine Corps Reserve detachment was deactivated in the late 1990s. That's when John and Carol Hamlin took the reins of the local program. "If there's not a Marine Corps [presence] in a community, then a civilian will do it, and Carol Hamlin and her family did it faithfully for years," says Dawnette Lusk, who became the local Toys for Tots coordinator in 2023.

Today, the holiday program works mitten in mitten with another local nonprofit, Citychurch, where Lusk serves as outreach coordinator. Toys for Tots provides toys to more than 5,000 needy children in this area, and Citychurch collects toiletries, blankets, clothing and other comfort items. "It's not just one toy," Lusk says. Children receive three toys each, plus books, puzzles, games and a lot more, which the parents can distribute according to their own Christmas schedule. "Our community is amazing to donate to," she adds.

Those donations arrive via cardboard boxes placed at local businesses, where residents began dropping off toys as early as October. Large employers like Affiliated Foods and Dillard's contribute money and toys collected from employees.

Parents apply for their children to receive Toys for Tots gifts until Nov. 22. Previously, parents would request certain items for each child, but this year—similar to the Hillside/Mission 2540 Sharing Tree program—parents will get to "shop" for their children. They'll make an appointment in early December to browse a toy shop set up at Citychurch.

The program culminates in a series of Citychurch Christmas banquets for these families the second week of December. "They love the dinner," Lusk says of the families who attend. "It gives them a chance to dress up. They'll sit at a table and be served." That's when the children receive their comfort items and other necessities.

Lusk has been working with Citychurch for two decades, and she doesn't discount the joy that even those comfort items bring. She describes encountering a single mom who was raising six young children. That family had received gifts from the program, and Lusk asked the kids what they liked most. "All of them immediately said, 'the toothbrush.'" Because they had all been sharing a toothbrush, and now they each had their own. 🍷

Volunteer, give or apply to receive toys at toysfortots.org.

B&E

GIVING

In every November/December issue, *Brick & Elm's* popular Giving Guide elevates local nonprofits and charitable organizations during a season when they have come to depend on local generosity. The annual Panhandle Gives begins Nov. 24. The holidays are approaching. The needs are great. And the organizations featured here are serving the Panhandle in creative, meaningful ways. We invite you to learn more about their work, and consider how you might assist them with your time, resources and support.

Opportunity School

Since 1969, Opportunity School has equipped low-income children and their families with tools to succeed in school and life by providing affordable, high-quality early childhood education and caring family support. Our nationally accredited program creates a learning environment based on each child's individual needs, while simultaneously helping their family understand how they can support their child's learning. Our students, who range in age from 6 weeks to 5 years old, also benefit from Early Intervention Services that include developmental, social, emotional and health screenings to help pinpoint issues and provide referrals for the family. The sooner we get these services in place for young children, the less likely they will need special services later in their education.

We believe low-income families should be able to choose high-quality child care and early learning programs. We are hopeful that families with young children can benefit from Senate Bill 2, which goes into effect for the 2026-2027 school year. Under the new legislation, eligible families will be able to use state funds to pay for private school tuition and other approved educational services. This opens the door for parents to choose high-quality pre-k programs for their children, such as Opportunity School, ensuring they benefit from small class sizes, learning based on play, developmentally appropriate practices, and curriculum that aligns with what they will need for public school.

By implementing a two-generational approach, Opportunity School is able to successfully assist working parents, providing another level of support for our little learners and their families. During the 2024-2025 school year alone, we proudly served 148 families, which represent 166 children. A full 100 percent of those families said Opportunity School's whole-family support helped their children learn at home, while more than 85 percent said it resulted in less worry, anxiety and stress about their child while at work. Additionally, more than 48 percent of families said the support they received from Opportunity School led to greater job stability or school attendance.

Not only is this providing support for parents, our little learners are thriving. Last year's students once again met or exceeded student progress goals in math, literacy, language and social, emotional and cognitive skills.

We need your help:

Opportunity School relies on monetary donations to help us provide affordable, high-quality early childhood education and family support. Opportunity School must raise approximately \$5,000 per child each year to sustain this level of quality. There are several ways to make a monetary gift including planned giving and legacy gifts. In-kind donations and gifts of time are also a great way to support our cause. We have opportunities for guest readers, classroom helpers, baby huggers, gardeners, and more.

Opportunity School also has a wish list of common items needed to help create a brighter future for our children. Information on all forms of benevolence can be found on our website at OpportunitySchool.com.



CENTRAL CAMPUS
1100 S. HARRISON ST.
806.373.4245

EDWARDS CAMPUS
406 S. OSAGE ST.
806.381.0551

OPPORTUNITYSCHOOL.COM





Cal Farley's Boys Ranch

What is your organization's history? Cal Farley's Boys Ranch was founded in 1939 by Cal Farley, a successful businessman and former professional baseball player who had a heart for helping children in need. What began as a single home on a working ranch northwest of Amarillo has grown into a nationally recognized residential community that provides hope and opportunity to boys and girls from across the country. For more than eight decades, Boys Ranch has combined education, counseling and spiritual development with the values of hard work, integrity and service.

What is its mission? Cal Farley's Boys Ranch provides a Christ-centered, nurturing environment where children and families in crisis can find healing and purpose. Our mission is to equip young people with the skills, values and confidence they need to lead fulfilling, independent lives.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Our greatest challenges center around meeting the growing and changing needs of children and families who come to us from increasingly complex situations. Maintaining the resources necessary to provide individualized care—academic, emotional and spiritual—while continuing to attract and retain dedicated staff members is an ongoing priority. Additionally, we are continually working to strengthen family connections and ensure long-term stability for each child after they leave Boys Ranch.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? Over the past year, Cal Farley's Boys Ranch has experienced significant growth, allowing us to serve more children and families. We've opened additional homes and expanded our programs, giving more youth a safe, nurturing environment to learn, grow and thrive. In addition, our community-based services have supported numerous families, helping them stay together and navigate challenges. A highlight of this expansion is our newly opened building for community-based services, which provides a dedicated space for families to receive guidance and support—keeping children safely at home whenever possible. This growth exemplifies our mission in action, bringing hope and opportunity to even more children and families each day.

How can the community get involved? Cal Farley's Boys Ranch does not seek federal or state funding, so community support is vital to sustaining our mission. Individuals and organizations can get involved by making financial contributions that directly support our children's care, education and development. We also encourage community members to help by spreading the word about the life-changing work happening at Boys Ranch and by referring families or children who could benefit from our programs. Every act of support helps us continue offering hope and healing to those who need it most.

800.687.3722 | CALFARLEY.ORG





Downtown Women's Center

What is the Downtown Women's Center's history?

For 36 years, Downtown Women's Center has been the only long-term—two years and often longer—recovery program for women with or without children in the Amarillo area. Women are placed in one of our four shelters based on each woman's progress in DWC's Level 9 Recovery Program. Last year, we served 98 women and 28 children in our shelters with an additional 78 children visiting and receiving services. For those graduating from our Recovery Program in the fiscal year ending August 2024, 100 percent are still clean and sober one year later!

DWC also operates three retail thrift stores: Thrift City, Uptown Shoppe and Thrift City Too, all located on 10th Avenue in Amarillo. Women in our recovery program gain valuable job training and work experience through employment at the stores.

What is DWC's mission? To provide housing and services to overcome homelessness and addiction. Our vision is "A community where a pathway toward self-sufficiency exists for women, children and families."

What are DWC's greatest challenges right now? Addictions do not happen overnight. Likewise, recovery is the retraining of physical and psychological responses. It takes tough love and a balance of care and structure. Getting women into recovery is step one. DWC provides women and children with therapy to overcome traumas and life issues related to their addiction. Our wrap-around services like housing and basic necessities, along with assistance in helping secure an education, job training or employment, are crucial to their success.

DWC is receiving a record number of calls from women needing assistance. Our Haven House and Haven House Too shelters have a waiting list. This is our greatest challenge.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? Here is Ashlee's story, in her own words:

Before coming into this program, I felt like an empty shell of a very broken individual. A two-year program was the last thing I wanted to do. When I was court-ordered to Downtown Women's Center, I was terrified. I spent the first two to three weeks trying to find a way out of it without going to prison. Finally, one day after RAD (Rethinking Alcohol and Drugs) class, I realized I had everything I needed and a support system that would walk with me through anything. I surrendered completely and started taking steps, putting my all into this program. I found out I could trust this program. When I felt stuck or

overwhelmed, I had people who loved me and helped me push through.

The most important thing I learned in level 3 was that even though this program is great for accountability, it is up to me to be accountable. We all have scars and trauma, but the strength to rise above them defines who we are. I look at myself in the mirror and no longer see a bunch of broken pieces. Life is not about the past, but about what I choose to do with the future. I had to start with forgiving myself for the mistakes I made. Every stumble has brought me to this moment. With every step forward, I'm creating my new life full of hope, resilience, strength and courage.

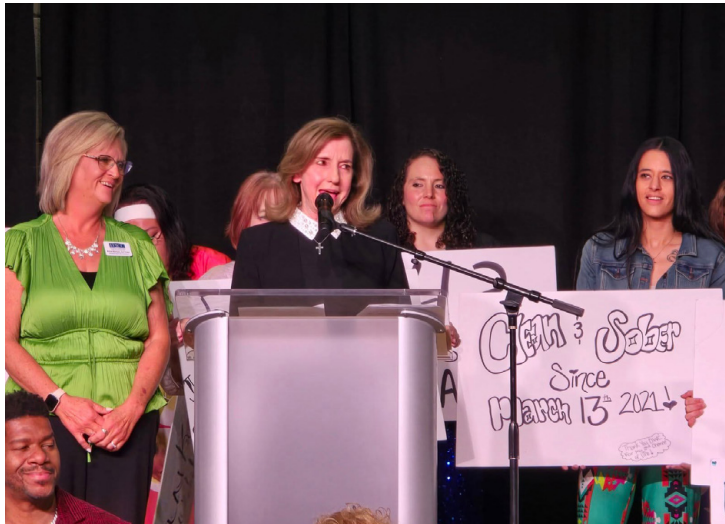
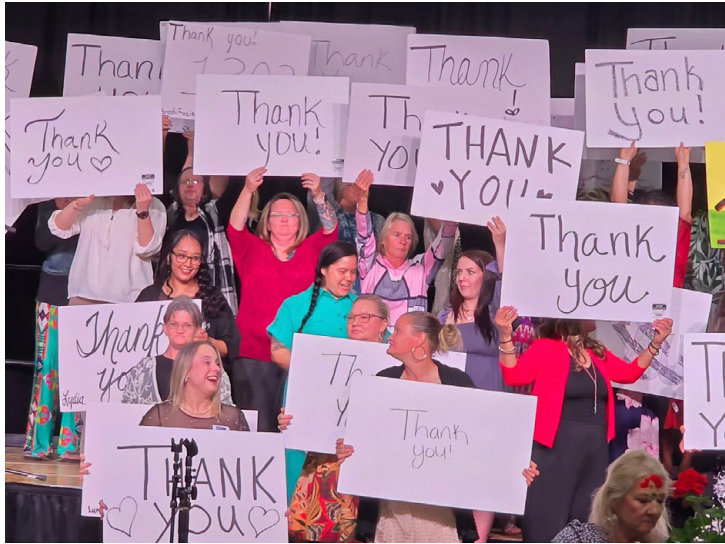
2025 AGENCY INCOME



409 S. MONROE ST.
806.372.3625
DWCENTER.ORG

SPONSORED BY:





How can the community get involved? A donation to Downtown Women’s Center helps women in Amarillo take their first steps toward recovery. The community’s generosity allows DWC to grow our shelters, strengthen our recovery programs, and reach more women and children in need.

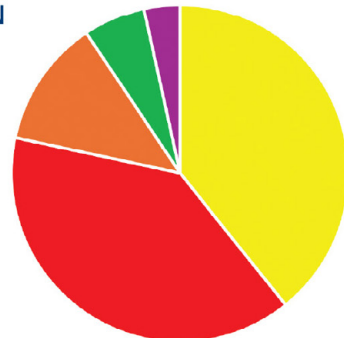
Please consider giving to DWC through The Panhandle Gives. Donations made to DWC from Nov. 24 to Dec. 2 through this campaign are eligible for additional funding.

DWC encourages the community to donate gently used items or shop at one of our thrift stores.

Whether you volunteer or donate, DWC welcomes your support in helping women and children rebuild their lives. Please help us break the chains of addiction one woman and child at a time! Visit our website for more information.

2025 AGENCY EXPENSES

- SHELTER/CLIENT SERVICES
- RETAIL STORES
- ADMINISTRATION
- FUNDRAISING
- MERIDIAN



Window on a Wider World

WOWW traces its beginnings to the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts, a downtown landmark supported in its earliest stages by philanthropist Caroline Bush Emeny. The Globe-News Center was imagined as both a stage for world-class performances and a hub for arts education. WOWW became the educational component of the Globe-News Center, a bridge between the performing arts and classrooms across the Texas Panhandle. It connected touring artists with students, aligning programs with classroom standards and expanding horizons.

Educational Mission from the Start

As part of its core mission, the center cultivated educational programming, inviting schools, teachers and youth to engage directly with music, theater and performance. These early initiatives created fertile ground for a structured educational arm to grow, and from this framework WOWW was born.

Lasting Legacy

Today, the Globe-News Center remains a cornerstone of regional arts and education infrastructure, with WOWW as a testament to its founding vision. Students and teachers still benefit from programs first imagined at its founding—a legacy proving how cultural investment ripples for decades.

WOWW's immersive, TEKS-aligned programs include museum visits, business tours and hands-on STEM activities that foster curiosity and real-world learning. The organization reaches students who might otherwise never see a botanical garden, college campus, or what it's like to be on a beach learning about our ecosystem. Educational engagement leads to improved test scores, deeper classroom participation, heightened career awareness and long-term motivation.

By exposing students to new environments and possibilities, WOWW strengthens their sense of belonging in academic and professional spaces, increasing the likelihood they'll pursue college, trade certification or skilled careers.

Confronting Barriers

Roughly a quarter of students in the Texas Panhandle are economically disadvantaged. They face food insecurity, limited technology at home and reduced parental support. These challenges reduce graduation and postsecondary success rates.

Did you know WOWW makes educational field trips possible for these students? Parents only know their child is "going on a field trip," but don't understand that WOWW is the reason those opportunities exist. This lack of visibility makes it difficult for us to receive the recognition and support we need to operate.

Another challenge we face is the misconception that field trips are simply recreational outings. Donors and other funders often don't see the educational value these experiences bring to students. When people don't connect field trips to real learning, they don't invest in WOWW.

Current Success

This past year, WOWW partnered with Xcel Energy, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Don Harrington Discovery Center, Amarillo Fire Department, Pantex and Meteorologist John Harris to provide more than 600 fifth-grade students the opportunity to attend the Science Collaborative. Over a four-day period, students explored matter, fire safety, native birds, electricity and meteorology. For many students, it was their first time talking with scientific professionals. Teachers noted that students returned to the classroom more energized, with new vocabulary and excitement about future career possibilities.

Help WOWW Grow

As we gear up to celebrate 20 years of WOWW and the Globe-News Center, we recognize both institutions were born from a shared vision of citizens who understood that access to the arts enriches lives and strengthens communities. Because the community built this vision, it must also shape its celebration. With your help, WOWW and the Globe-News Center can gather fresh ideas, identify needs and inspire new support.



806.350.9599
WOWW.ORG



United Way of Amarillo & Canyon

What is the United Way's history? For more than a century, the United Way of Amarillo & Canyon has been at the heart of community impact, connecting people, resources and purpose. Celebrating 100 years in 2024 marked a legacy of compassion and collaboration. In our 101st year, we began redefining what it means to serve through modernization, intentionality and innovation. From a refreshed campaign identity to a new website, streamlined systems and restructured leadership, we're building on our past while shaping a stronger future.

What is UWAC's mission? United Way of Amarillo & Canyon fights for the Health, Education, Financial Stability, Basic Needs and Youth Success of every member of our community. We unite people and organizations to create lasting change and ensure every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Our greatest challenge is balancing *need* and *impact*, *identifying* where we are most needed and how we can make the greatest difference. While financial support is vital, we're also focused on mobilizing time, talents and voices to strengthen our community from every angle. As we continue to modernize and grow, ensuring that the community truly sees and understands our impact remains essential.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? This year, our reimagined Emerging Leaders program inspired a new generation of community champions, empowering workplace giving and leadership growth. Through intentional engagement and collaboration, these leaders help strengthen local campaigns and deepen impact across our partner agencies, showing that when we unite with purpose, meaningful change follows.

How can the community get involved? Get involved by giving, advocating or volunteering. Join a campaign at your workplace, participate in community events, or lend your expertise to one of our initiatives. Every contribution (big or small) helps advance health, education, financial stability, basic needs and youth success for all. Together, we are a community living united: all of us helping all of us.



**United Way
of Amarillo & Canyon**

2207 LINE AVE.
806.376.6359
UWAMARILLOCANYON.ORG



Sister-Bear Foundation

Hope is the Anchor of the Soul: The Story and Impact of the Sister-Bear Foundation

Nestled in the heart of the High Plains, the Sister-Bear Foundation began with one family's determination to turn tragedy into purpose. What started as a small, heartfelt effort has grown into a powerful nonprofit dedicated to restoring hope, independence and neurological care for adults living with a neurological injury or illness.

Our History

The Sister-Bear Foundation was born from love, resilience and a promise. After witnessing the difficulties of navigating the medical and emotional aftermath of neurological illness, the founders set out to create a support network so that no family would ever have to walk that journey alone. From its early grassroots fundraising efforts to provide assistance for medical equipment and therapy to the expansion of specialized therapy programs and community outreach, the foundation has steadily grown—touching countless lives across the region. The end goal of a neuro rehab center right here in Amarillo is a much-needed resource for our region and the driving force of the Sister-Bear Foundation.

Our Mission

Sister-Bear Foundation's mission is to provide hope and independence through neuro rehab and wellness resources for adults living with a neurological injury or illness.

Current Challenges

Like many nonprofits, the Sister-Bear Foundation faces the ongoing challenge of meeting increasing needs with limited resources. The demand for specialized neurological care continues to rise, particularly in rural and underserved communities in our region. Access to rehabilitation services, adaptive equipment and travel for medical appointments can create financial strain for families already coping with overwhelming circumstances. Sustaining these programs requires community generosity, creative partnerships and constant advocacy to ensure that every individual receives the care they deserve.

A Story of Hope

This past year, the Foundation had the privilege of supporting Steve, who had suffered a stroke and was struggling with foot drop. His

inability to lift his foot to safely walk put a strain on his work duties in a warehouse. Through the Sister-Bear Foundation's Anchor Point Wellness Program, Steve received access to the Bioness L300, specialized neuro-rehabilitation equipment that provides muscle and nerve stimulation to limit the effects of foot drop. This gave Steve the opportunity to continue working and supporting his family after his stroke. Steve's journey reminds us why the Sister-Bear Foundation continues to do what it does every day and how grateful we are for each of our supporters that make success stories like this possible!

How the Community Can Get Involved

The Sister-Bear Foundation thrives because of the compassion and generosity of its community. There are many ways to join our mission:

- **Donate:** Every contribution directly funds therapy, equipment and care for individuals in need right here in the Texas Panhandle.
- **Volunteer:** From events like our annual shoot and gala to community outreach and family support programs, volunteers play a vital role. We are operated by one full-time employee and rely on our volunteers as we expand into our next phase of growth.
- **Partner:** Businesses, faith-based organizations, educational groups and other civic organizations can help expand access to care through sponsorships, fundraisers or collaborative projects.
- **Advocate:** Share the message of hope—tell others about the foundation's mission and help raise awareness about neurological care needs in the region. Join our Accessible Amarillo or Barrier-Free Business movements.

Every act of kindness, every dollar given and every hour volunteered helps write another story of recovery and resilience. Together, we can continue to bring neurological hope to the High Plains.



DONATE TO SISTER-BEAR



HEAR RON & SHELBY'S STORIES



HEAR STEVE'S STORY



806.335.5401
SISTER-BEAR.COM



Catholic Charities of the Texas Panhandle

Catholic Charities of the Texas Panhandle traces its beginnings to 1932. It was created by the first Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Amarillo, Bishop Rudolph A. Gerken. But it wasn't until 1935 that the second Bishop of Amarillo, Bishop Robert E. Lucy, organized the Catholic Welfare Bureau and tied it to the Amarillo Community Chest.

The lessons learned during the early, formative years of CCTXP helped craft what is now a multiservice social service organization, helping people of all faiths and ethnicities. Our priority is to help those in most need, strengthen families and accept the challenge of the Gospel message of service.

Because of our unique role as a multiple service agency, we offer a variety of services to the old, young, disabled and poor. Over the past 12 months, we have served nearly 8,000 individuals and their families across most of the 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle.

Catholic Charities of the Texas Panhandle supports the value and dignity of human life, promotes self-worth and independence, and strives to meet the ever-changing needs of our community. But what does that really mean? It means that preserving human dignity is of paramount importance to us. We strive to lift people up, with a helping hand, in a judgment-free environment. We empower people to change their lives in positive, healthy and meaningful ways. We hope that by engaging with us to navigate difficult situations, people will discover a path forward toward true independence from programmatic support.

Currently, CCTXP has 10 individual programs or services housed within six divisions:

- **Community Services**
 - InterFaith Hunger Project (Client-choice food pantry for low-income 50+ or disabled)
 - Adult Eyecare Program
- **Education Support Services**
 - ESL
 - School Impact
- **Refugee Support Services** (No longer includes reception and placement)
 - Employment
 - Social Adjustment
 - Cash Assistance
- **Immigration Legal Services**
- **Joseph's Project** (Pregnancy Resource Center)
- **Affordable Housing** (Three, single-family units)

We are facing a number of challenges as we navigate declines in funding. A rising number of people are seeking help in a time of higher costs and fewer resources. Our concern is that, as our local donor base begins to feel less fiscally secure, our ability to continue to meet those rising needs may diminish. We are actively planning how we will address potential future shortfalls.

One of the most exciting new programs at CCTXP is Joseph's Project – A Pregnancy Resource Center. We launched the program in 2022 to address excessively high infant and maternal mortality rates in northeast Amarillo. One of the leading causes of these high rates was the extremely low rate of prenatal care. The program helps moms determine their pregnancy status, then navigate and apply for programs that help them receive prenatal care. We help families with parenting, pregnancy and childbirth classes; material assistance (diapers, formula, wipes, clothes, car seats); case management and mentoring; referrals for housing, healthcare, education and career support; and by creating safe, stable and supportive environments for families. Our service continues until the child turns 3.

Last year, we intentionally expanded our services beyond Amarillo and Canyon, driving these increases:

- 214,220 diapers distributed in 2024 vs. 138,725 in 2023
- 5,948 Pullups distributed in 2024 vs. 1,625 in 2023

We need your help! Learn more about us at cctxp.org or call to set up a visit to one of our locations to see our work first-hand. Then, advocate for our mission. You can volunteer, offer financial support or raise awareness about our programs.

We want people who can help us, as well as people who need our assistance to be aware of what we have to offer. When people talk about Catholic Charities, we want them to replace "I never knew they did all that" with "I'm amazed they can do all that!"



2004 N. SPRING ST.
806.376.4571
CCTXP.ORG



West Texas A&M University Foundation

The revitalization of campus landmarks. The naming of schools in nursing and business. The beginnings of a new state-of-the-art research feedlot and an institute dedicated to engineering research. The launch of a scholarly institute promoting Panhandle values. The establishment of dozens of professorships and chairs. And millions in new scholarship funds for students.

These—and more—are the success stories of West Texas A&M University's One West comprehensive fundraising campaign, which will end in historic fashion in December.

“Fundraising endeavors such as the One West campaign should not only improve a University, but it also should expand its reach and impact to benefit the people and communities where it is located,” said President Walter V. Wendler. “Donors to the One West campaign have done all of that through their generous philanthropic support.”

The campaign—the largest fundraising campaign in Texas Panhandle history—fuels the University's long-range plan, **WT 125: From the Panhandle to the World.**

It's not too late to give, and there are countless ways to make an impact, said Dr. Todd Rasberry, vice president for philanthropy and external relations and executive director of the West Texas A&M University Foundation.

“One West is a comprehensive campaign, which means that every dollar donated to the University makes an impact not only on the campaign, but also for WT itself,” Rasberry said.

Donations from \$20 to \$20 million and more have propelled the campaign past two major goals: an initial \$125 million goal that was reached 18 months after One West publicly launched in September 2021, and a second goal of \$175 million that was surpassed in September 2025.

Gifts of all sizes have continued to flow to the University. For information on how to give, visit wtamu.edu/OneWest.

“It is incredible how generous donors have supported the vision and mission of WT as the Panhandle's university,” Rasberry said.

Among the major gifts that will have long-reaching impact:

- Paul Engler's historic \$80 million gift to establish the Paul Engler College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences and the Paul and Virginia Engler College of Business, about a third of which is counted in the One West campaign

- Cheryl and Alex Fairly's \$20 million gift to fund The Hill Institute
- Gifts totaling \$5 million from Lubbock businessman Dr. Gordon W. Davis and Caviness Beef Packers to fund two chairs in meat science
- Gifts totaling \$5 million from two families to rename the Bain-Schaeffer Buffalo Stadium, the premiere football stadium in all of Division II Athletics
- An anonymous \$5 million gift to establish an institute for research in the College of Engineering
- High Plains Christian Ministries Foundation's \$3 million to fund the Baptist Community Services Education Floor and \$1.5 million to renovate the Joseph A. Hill Memorial Chapel
- Amarillo National Bank's \$3 million gift to establish the ANB School of Accounting, Economics and Finance
- A \$2.5 million gift from the Stanley Schaeffer family as part of a wide-ranging effort to bring back to life the Geneva Schaeffer Education Building
- A \$2.5 million gift to rename the Terry B. Rogers College of Education and Social Sciences
- A \$2.5 million gift to establish and name the Laura and Joe Street School of Nursing

Millions more have been given to establish or enhance scholarship funds. And about 60 new professorships and chairs have been endowed throughout the University—an increase of more than 200 percent during the campaign.

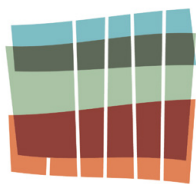
The One West campaign dwarfs WT's landmark 2012 fundraising campaign, which raised \$53 million, 76 percent more than its announced goal of \$30 million.

“Meeting and far surpassing the goal of this campaign is a source of great pride for the Panhandle's university,” Wendler said. “Just look at WT students and talk to a few of them, and you will agree with me: We need to make WT the best it can be for them, and we need to give students and families many reasons to stay in this region after graduation to work, lead, live and serve.”



WTAMU.EDU/GIVING/FOUNDATION





AMARILLO AREA
FOUNDATION

Amarillo Area Foundation

How and when did the Amarillo Area Foundation begin? The Amarillo Area Foundation was founded in 1957 by a group of individuals who knew that a community working together brought strength that any one of them working separately could not. Formed as only the second community foundation in Texas, the early focus on health care and the subsequent development of the Medical Center transformed the future of the industry in this region. In 1976, the bequest of Don D. Harrington enabled the Foundation to hire a professional staff and begin to distribute grant funding to address additional needs of the Texas Panhandle.

What is AAF’s mission? We strive to achieve our mission of “improving quality of life for Texas Panhandle residents” through a variety of efforts, and think the community would be surprised to find out the sheer variety of work our team is involved with. AAF is more than a place to apply for scholarships and grants—our team regularly partners with local, state and national organizations to find innovative ways to solve issues and disrupt the status quo to affect change on a larger scale.

The Amarillo Area Foundation is the only nonprofit community foundation serving 26 counties and more than 400,000 people in the Texas Panhandle. As a leader in philanthropic, nonprofit and community issues, the Foundation is a catalyzing force that addresses the community’s most critical challenges by providing significant, shared and lasting results.

What are the Foundation’s greatest challenges right now? One of the greatest challenges facing the Amarillo Area Foundation today is the urgent need to address profound social issues across the Texas Panhandle. The Foundation has identified mental health, food insecurity and the shortage of childcare as critical priorities, each of which carries deep implications for the well-being and stability of families in the region. In particular, the lack of accessible childcare creates systemic barriers that limit workforce participation and economic opportunity, underscoring how interconnected these challenges are. Meeting such pressing needs requires not only financial investment but also collaboration, innovation and long-term commitment—qualities the Foundation continues to bring to its work as we strive to create lasting impact for the communities it serves.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling AAF’s mission from the past year? This year, we witnessed the generosity of our region in honoring the memory of our fearless leader through contributions to The Clay Stribling Legacy Endowment Fund—created both to celebrate Clay’s life and to sustain the Amarillo Area Foundation’s work for years to come. At the same time, we saw the resilience of our nonprofit community shine through in the face of federal funding losses. Most importantly, we were reminded that relationships matter. Because of the long-standing connections AAF has built with donors, nonprofits, students and the broader community, we have been able to stand with the Texas Panhandle during challenging times and continue to foster impact where it is needed most.

How can the community get involved? Right now, the Foundation is working hard to serve as a powerhouse for convening and collaboration. With the recent shift to our strategic focus areas, it quickly became apparent that tackling systemic issues would take more than simply granting funds to individual organizations. As such, our staff regularly attends professional development trainings so that we can serve in this capacity more.

919 S. POLK ST.
806.376.4521

AMARILLOAREAFOUNDATION.ORG

The Bridge Children's Advocacy Center

The Bridge connects Texas Panhandle children to resources when they experience trauma or abuse.

Since 1989, more than 30,000 children have walked through the doors of The Bridge to begin their journey toward healing and justice in the wake of abuse. The first Children's Advocacy Center in the state of Texas, The Bridge serves the largest geographical area of any CAC in the nation and is a founding member of Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas.

Thanks to the support of generous donors, we work in the community to break the silence around abuse and confront the idea that it only happens in other places. We work so abusers will have no place to hide. We guide children to speak out, recover from abuse and not be defined by it. We help a child tell their story only one time so they aren't traumatized again, even by the very system that is trying to help them. By bringing multiple agencies together under one roof, we provide healing, resilience and power for the children of our community. Because every child deserves love, hope and innocence.

Child abuse is happening all around us. Do you know the signs? We also offer prevention education for children and adults. Together we can make the Texas Panhandle a safe place for children. Contact us to set up learning opportunities with your church, preschool or school. All services are provided free of charge, thanks to our generous donors.

Mark your calendar for our annual Pinwheels for Prevention Ceremony on Wednesday, April 1 at The Bridge Children's Advocacy Center. We will honor the 937 children who bravely told their stories of abuse in the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

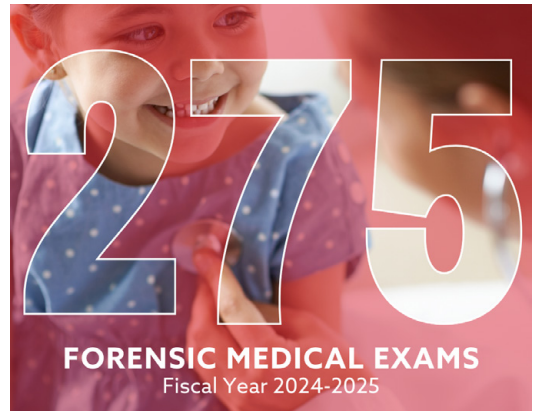
If you suspect a child is being hurt or neglected, please make a report to the Texas Abuse Hotline Number: 1-800-252-5400.

Offer healing and justice to a Texas Panhandle child with your gift to The Bridge during The Panhandle Gives, Nov. 24 through Dec. 2.



804 QUAIL CREEK DRIVE
806.372.2873 | BRIDGECAC.ORG

B&E | GIVING





Friends of the Amarillo Public Library

What is your organization's history? Friends of the Amarillo Public Library was created in 1951 as part of a national Friends of the Library movement. Since then, the organization has helped improve library services and quality of life for Amarillo residents by funding APL projects not financed through taxpayer dollars. These include programs like the Summer Reading Club, language classes, author visits, craft programs and teen services.

The APL MakerSpace was created with initial support from the Friends (in addition to grants from the Amarillo Area Foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services) and the organization provides ongoing support for the project.

The Friends also supply funding for the Southwest Branch Library's certification as a Sensory Inclusive location where people with sensory issues can feel safe and comfortable.

The organization has even purchased storytime rugs for branch libraries, a colorful wrap for the APL van, beautiful murals on the Downtown Library, and APL's new mascot, Fable, the Library Dragon!

What is its mission? The Friends support the Amarillo Public Library through fundraisers including annual book sales, a Books to Broadway concert and AMA-CON, a celebration of everything geeky and awesome, held yearly in August. Friends' fundraisers also offer low- or no-cost options for reading and entertainment.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Like every nonprofit organization, the Friends must decide which programs it can support. New projects for 2026 include The Studio @ APL and a new Library of Things.

The Studio will be a self-contained audio studio suitable for podcasts, oral histories and even small group music recording. APL hopes to expand the studio to include other technology for preserving memories, such as a scanner and equipment for converting analog photos and video to a digital format. The Studio was partially funded by a grant from the Amarillo Area Foundation, with a commitment for additional support from the Friends.

The Library of Things will be a collection of practical (and not-so-practical) objects patrons might want to use occasionally, but which are costly to purchase or cumbersome to store, such as specialized cookware or niche technology items. The Library expects to offer objects related to baking and cooking, crafts and hobbies, entertainment, wellness, science, gardening, outdoor adventures, and more. This is a project that will only be possible with funding from the Friends.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? APL's success in helping Amarillo residents improve their education and quality of life can be seen every day in kids learning to love reading, teens learning coding and STEM skills through Girls Who Game and Girls Who Code, individuals learning English through APL's free ESL classes, and seniors finding opportunities for connection and improved physical and mental health.

One program in particular is APL's new Memory Café. Created by APL Program Specialist Cynthia Hunt, the Memory Cafe is based on research documenting the importance of staying active and making social connections to lessen the impacts of dementia and other forms of memory loss. On the second Saturday of each month, Hunt, working with Literacy Coordinator Lisa White, offers people dealing with memory issues and their care partners an opportunity to participate in enrichment activities in a safe and supporting atmosphere. Future activities include MIND Diet cooking lessons with a "Kitchen a la cart" unit financed through a grant from the Mary E. Bivins Foundation. While the program is planned and implemented by APL staff, all supplies and refreshments for the Memory Café are funded through the Friends of the Amarillo Public Library.

How can the community get involved? Become a Friend of the Library! The main reason to join the Friends is to support the Library, of course, but Friends members also get to attend a special Friends-Only night at Friends of APL book sales. The Friends participate in The Panhandle Gives, and support during that giving window is especially appreciated. This year's campaign will focus on raising funds for the Library of Things!



AMARILLOLIBRARY.ORG

Colorful Closets

A Decade of Dignity and Confidence

What is your organization's history? Colorful Closets began 10 years ago with a simple but powerful idea: that every child deserves to feel confident, valued and ready to take on the world. What started as a small grassroots effort to provide gently used and new clothing to students in need has grown into a thriving nonprofit serving hundreds of children across our community each year. Over the past 10 years, Colorful Closets has clothed more than 7,800 students in both AISD and CISD. Through partnerships with local boutiques, businesses and volunteers, Colorful Closets has transformed the way families experience generosity and dignity—one outfit at a time.

What is its mission? Our mission is to collect, organize and distribute clothing for children and adolescents throughout the Amarillo, Bushland and Canyon areas. We aim to meet their needs while also ministering to them by spreading the love of Jesus Christ. We believe that something as simple as a new wardrobe can make a profound difference, boosting self-esteem, inspiring hope and helping every child walk into school with confidence, ready to learn and belong.

What are your greatest challenges right now? As our reach expands, so does the need. Meeting the growing demand for clothing, socks, underwear and toiletries while maintaining a personal, dignified experience for each recipient is our greatest challenge. We are also working to strengthen sustainable funding so we can continue providing quality clothing and meaningful community partnerships well into the future.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your mission from the past year? This past school year, we served a record number of students. One middle school student shared that receiving new clothes from Colorful Closets made her feel “ready to be herself again.” Stories like hers remind us that we’re not just giving clothes, we’re blessing students with confidence, comfort, community support and the love of Jesus Christ when it’s needed most.

How can the community get involved? This year marks our 10th anniversary, and we’re celebrating with a bold goal: to gather 10 sponsors at \$10,000 each to help us continue dressing children for success for the next decade and beyond. We’d love to partner with you! Join us for a Lunch & Learn to hear inspiring stories, see the impact firsthand, and explore how your support can change lives. If you’re interested in celebrating our 10th year with us, please e-mail info@colorfulclosetsama.org.

YOU can be the thread of change for a child by spreading confidence and care throughout our community.



COLORFULCLOSETSAMA.ORG
FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM TO STAY UP-
DATED ON CURRENT EVENTS AT THE CLOSET
@COLORFULCLOSETSAMA





Amarillo Habitat for Humanity

What is your organization's history? Founded in 1981, Amarillo Habitat for Humanity has dedicated more than 40 years to building safe, affordable homes for families in need. Habitat partners with low-income families who contribute hours of "sweat equity" and complete financial education before purchasing their homes through zero-interest mortgages. To date, Amarillo Habitat has built more than 120 homes in neighborhoods including the North Heights and El Barrio. In 2007, the Habitat ReStore opened—a home improvement store that supports Habitat's mission by selling donated goods. Rooted in community and empowerment, Amarillo Habitat continues to transform lives one home at a time.

What is its mission? Amarillo Habitat for Humanity's mission is to put God's love into action by bringing people together to build homes, communities and hope. Amarillo Habitat focuses on helping low- to median-income families achieve strength and stability through affordable homeownership. By involving volunteers, donors and partner families in the building process, Amarillo Habitat fosters a sense of community while addressing the need for safe and decent housing.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Amarillo Habitat for Humanity currently faces several key challenges as it works to provide affordable housing in the community. One of the biggest obstacles is acquiring suitable land—finding affordable lots is increasingly difficult. Rising construction costs and limited funding also strain the ability to build homes while keeping them affordable. In addition, demand far outweighs supply, with hundreds or more families seeking affordable housing and only a limited number of homes built each year. These challenges, combined with fluctuating donations and economic pressures, make it harder to meet the growing need for safe, stable housing.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? One way Amarillo Habitat for Humanity has advanced our mission in the past year is by returning to build homes in the historic North Heights neighborhood. After focusing in El Barrio in recent years, Amarillo Habitat made a purposeful decision to reengage with this part of the city. Through new home construction in North Heights, Habitat is not only helping families achieve affordable homeownership, but also contributing to the neighborhood's revitalization and long-term strength. This work reflects a deeper commitment to community, honoring the history of North Heights while building a foundation for its future.

How can the community get involved? The community can support Amarillo Habitat for Humanity in many meaningful ways. Volunteers are always welcome to help with home construction, ReStore operations and special events. No experience is needed, just a willingness to contribute. Donations of money, building materials or gently used furniture and appliances to the ReStore provide essential support to keep projects moving. Shopping at the ReStore also makes a big impact, as proceeds directly fund Habitat's home-building efforts. Local businesses and organizations often support Habitat through sponsorships, team-building volunteer days or in-kind donations. Every contribution, big or small, helps build stronger families and neighborhoods. Whether you choose to volunteer, donate, shop or simply share our story, your involvement helps Amarillo families secure safe, affordable homes.



2700 S. WILSON ST.
806.383.3456



2626 PARAMOUNT BLVD.
806.373.1185

AMARILLOHABITAT.ORG

Refugee Language Project

What is the Refugee Language Project's history? Dr. Ryan Pennington started Refugee Language Project as a ministry out of Redeemer Christian Church in 2017, after nearly a decade overseas with Wycliffe Bible Translators. RLP became its own nonprofit in 2018, then opened a multicultural community center, The PLACE, in collaboration with two other organizations in 2021. Today, we provide English education, interpreting and translation services, and culture training to local organizations and groups.

What is its mission? RLP's mission is to use language as a doorway to welcome displaced people for the flourishing of the community and the glory of God. We do this through programs that overcome language barriers and honor cultures.

What are RLP's greatest challenges right now? With the major changes that have taken place to refugee resettlement, our organization has been working to address the impact of national policies at the local level, maintaining our focus on the people and communities we've always served in Amarillo. Despite a reduction in revenue streams, our programs, classes and impact have grown more than ever. We are currently working to secure additional funding sources, building on our innovative and award-winning fundraiser, Taste the World, and connecting with new donors who want to see the flourishing that happens when we invest in displaced people in our community.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? We are encouraged by stories like that of Winta*, a refugee from Eritrea and widowed mother of three. She joined our English program a couple years ago in search of education and community. Once her youngest started school, Winta needed to find a job. Our staff and partner organizations advocated for her through the application and interview process with multiple companies, offering language support and cultural understanding along the way. Now, she is able to provide for her kids while still being present as the sole parent, and she's becoming more confident in English by the day. Our programs serve displaced people like Winta by welcoming them into the community through English education, and bridging the language gap to provide access to resources, all while honoring their home cultures. *name has been changed

How can the community get involved? We have opportunities for people to help through volunteering in our English classes, both at the community center on Plains and at a new satellite campus in northeast Amarillo. For more information email betty@refugeelanguage.org. For those interested in supporting our mission financially, we appreciate both one-time and recurring donations at refugeelanguage.org/give. A monthly gift of \$84 supports one student in all of our programs for an entire year.



3107 PLAINS BLVD., SUITE 200
806.553.5160
REFUGEELANGUAGE.ORG

B&E | GIVING





High Plains Food Bank

What is High Plains Food Bank's history? High Plains Food Bank was founded in 1982 to fight hunger across the Texas Panhandle. What began in a small warehouse has grown into a regional distribution network serving 29 counties through 130+ partner food pantries and meal programs. Over more than four decades, HPFB has become a cornerstone of hunger relief, distributing millions of pounds of food every year while standing ready to respond in times of crisis.

What is HPFB's mission? Our mission is simple but powerful: to alleviate hunger in the Texas Panhandle by providing a consistent, equitable and nutritious food supply to neighbors in need. We pursue this goal through food distribution, targeted feeding programs, disaster response, nutrition education and strong community partnerships—ensuring that no one in our region has to go hungry.

Hunger relief is not just about food—it's about hope, stability and compassion in the hardest of times.

What are HPFB's greatest challenges right now? We are facing a perfect storm of rising need and shrinking resources. In 2024, demand for food assistance jumped more than 25 percent compared to the previous year. Some months, we served more than 14,000 households. At the same time, the cost of food, fuel and transportation continues to climb, stretching every dollar further than ever before.

Food donations—both retail and large-scale—have become more limited in recent months, leaving fewer surplus items available to distribute through our partner network. With these traditional donation channels restricted and the cost of purchasing food steadily increasing, High Plains Food Bank must work even harder to keep pace with community needs.

Despite these challenges, our team and partners remain committed to ensuring that nutritious food reaches every corner of the Texas Panhandle. The need continues to grow, but so does our determination to meet it.

What is one example of hope from the past year? Kayli is a devoted wife and mother of four daughters and two bonus kiddos. She works incredibly hard, balancing multiple jobs—at the high school in Fritch, at the Family Dollar and cleaning houses—to support her large family.

Two years ago, after encouragement from her best friend, Kayli visited Connect Community Services, one of HPFB's partner pantries. At first, she was nervous and embarrassed. "Now it seems so silly," she says. "That first visit changed everything. Now I look forward to distribution days, and my kids light up when they get to look through the food."

With such a large household, CCS has been a tremendous help in relieving financial pressure. "Without the pantry, our grocery bill would definitely increase," Kayli shares. Her children especially love the fresh produce and desserts, and she notes how seasonal or holiday items add joy to her family's celebrations. "These aren't things in our budget, but they help us make memories with our kids."

She also remembers how CCS supported her family after a house fire in 2020, providing much-needed clothing during a difficult time. Today, she encourages anyone in need not to hesitate: "Just do it! Don't be embarrassed. This is the most amazing group of people. I can't say enough good things."

Kayli is now working toward earning her realtor license, with the goal of achieving financial stability—and one day being able to help others, just as she's been helped.

How can the community get involved? The fight against hunger is a community effort. People can donate funds, volunteer their time, host food and fund drives or advocate for hunger relief. Every gift of time, food or funds makes a difference and helps ensure that Texas Panhandle neighbors, children, seniors and families don't face hunger alone.

Visit [HPFB.org](https://www.hpfb.org) to join us in our mission to alleviate hunger in the Texas Panhandle.

1910 SE EIGHTH AVE.
806.374.8562 | [HPFB.ORG](https://www.hpfb.org)

Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum

What is PPHM's history? For more than 100 years, the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum has stood as the first museum of its kind in the State of Texas. Across 10 decades, the museum has preserved the stories and memories of the people and places that make this part of the world great. The museum's mission has always been to educate and inspire a diverse public with the cultural and scientific heritage of Texas, specifically the Panhandle region. PPHM not only offers an inviting and informative gateway to the City of Canyon and the campus of West Texas A&M University, but it also connects tourists and visitors with some of the most dramatic historical events of this part of the world.

What is PPHM's mission? PPHM promotes the stories of this region in order to build community, enhance learning and nurture creativity.

What are PPHM's greatest challenges right now? Our greatest challenge right now is maintaining awareness and support while our building is temporarily closed. Without a physical space for visitors to experience the museum firsthand, it's vital that we continue reminding the community that PPHM's mission and work hasn't stopped. Through outreach programs, partnerships and events across the region, we're finding new ways to share our stories, keep PPHM visible and inspire people to stay engaged until we can welcome them back through our doors.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? Even without a public building, PPHM has continued to bring history and art to life across the Panhandle. Through partnerships with organizations like the Amarillo Museum of Art and West Texas A&M University, we've been able to present meaningful exhibitions that keep our collection and mission visible. From family-friendly events like Movie on the Lawn and Dino Day to educational outreach with local schools and community collaborations, our work continues to promote the stories of this region, building community, enhancing learning and nurturing creativity — just as our founders intended.

How can the community get involved? Stay connected with us by attending PPHM events, following our updates and supporting our ongoing work through donations or membership. Every contribution, whether time, participation or financial support, helps ensure the stories of the Panhandle continue to inspire generations to come.

PPHM

PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM

2503 FOURTH AVE.

806.651.2244 | PANHANDLEPLAINS.ORG

B&E | GIVING



Amarillo College Foundation



What is your organization's history? The Amarillo College Foundation was established in 1962 to provide financial support that strengthens Amarillo College and its mission of transforming lives through education. For more than six decades, the Foundation has served as a bridge between generous community donors and the students, faculty and programs that make AC a driving force for opportunity and progress in the Texas Panhandle.

What is its mission? The AC Foundation exists to solicit and administer gifts and grants for the benefit of Amarillo College, its students, faculty and staff, programs and facilities. Every gift helps open doors for students and sustains the College's commitment to educational achievement and community enrichment.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Our greatest challenge is meeting the growing needs of students with limited resources. As more students face financial and personal hardships, demand for our Food Pantry and Emergency Aid Program continues to rise, but funding has not kept pace. The Foundation is working tirelessly to secure sustainable support so every student can access the help they need to stay enrolled and achieve their goals.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? In the past year, Foundation support has made it possible for hundreds of students to receive emergency assistance that kept them in class rather than dropping out due to financial strain. Foundation funding has also enhanced academic and cultural opportunities. For example, it helped create the STEM Scholars program that includes internship opportunities connecting employers and students. The funding also supports the *Keep Us Live* Arts Performance Series, where proceeds are reinvested into Amarillo College's arts, music and theater programs. These efforts reflect how community generosity fuels both student success and the creative energy that enriches campus and community life.

How can the community get involved? Community members can make a powerful impact by giving their time, resources or advocacy. Monetary donations directly support student aid and campus programs. Other opportunities include hosting food drives, attending athletic events or attending and promoting Foundation-supported arts and academic events. Every act of generosity—large or small—helps strengthen the programs that keep Amarillo College vibrant and removes barriers for students to build better and brighter futures for themselves and our region.



ACTX.EDU/FOUNDATION

Texas Panhandle Heritage Foundation

What is your organization's history? The Texas Panhandle Heritage Foundation, founded in 1965, is a nonprofit organization that relies on financial support from donors, businesses and grants to maintain the standard of excellence that has entertained more than 4.5 million audience members since its inception. Our show began before the foundation in 1960, when Margaret Harper read an article in *Reader's Digest* about a playwright and author named Paul Green. Mr. Green had recreated the history of several regions across the nation in tremendous dramas with pageantry and music. Mrs. Harper wrote to Green and began corresponding with him about the land, people and beauty of Palo Duro Canyon. As interest in the prospect of an outdoor theater began to grow, a small group of Canyon families funded the first trip for Green to come to the Panhandle later that year. Mr. Green immediately dedicated himself to the project of bringing the history of the High Plains to the stage. The support organization eventually came to include Amarillo and the surrounding area.

What is its mission? The mission of TPHF is to preserve and present the history and culture of Texas through education and entertainment in the outdoor musical theater of the Palo Duro Canyon.

What are your greatest challenges right now? As a seasonal outdoor production, our greatest challenges are the rising costs of production, weather-related uncertainties and maintaining year-round engagement and funding. Each season requires months of preparation, and sustaining the show's legacy while evolving for new audiences takes both creativity and community support.

What is one example of successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? This past summer, *TEXAS* celebrated another unforgettable season beneath the stars of Palo Duro Canyon, welcoming audiences from across the nation and giving young performers and technicians hands-on experience in professional theater. Seeing families return year after year reminds us why preserving this Texas tradition matters.

How can the community get involved? Support *TEXAS* by attending a performance, becoming a member or making a donation to help us continue this 60-year legacy. Volunteers, sponsors and advocates all play a vital role in keeping the story of the Texas Panhandle alive and inspiring generations to come.



TEXAS-SHOW.COM



PHOTOS BY JIM LIVINGSTON

JOE AND LAURA STREET DAY CENTER



The Guyon Saunders Resource Center

What is your organization's history? The Guyon Saunders Resource Center has facilitated resources for homeless people since 1993. More than 1,600 men, women and children are served annually. The GSRC provides daytime shelter, showers, laundry, mail services and resources for developing necessary skills for self-sufficiency. It also prepares clients for possible housing by providing assistance with paperwork and funds to obtain their Texas IDs, including bus passes to issuing agencies to obtain needed documents.

What is its mission? To provide a safe daytime refuge, offering basic services in a respectful environment that fosters dignity, trust and hope for those experiencing homelessness and poverty.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Our homeless population continues to grow, just as it does nationwide.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? We are currently operating in a 70-year-old building on the north end of downtown. In August, we began construction on our new day center. It will be right-sized and properly configured to offer services in a more secure and safe environment. We will share space with the City of Amarillo's Community Development Department, which includes the Coming Home program that transitions unhoused people to housing. The new Day Center will be across the street from Amarillo City Transit, and be in addition to the temporary overnight shelter at Transformation Park. We will serve three meals a day year-round and offer vital daytime services.

How can the community get involved? The programs and services of the GSRC would not be possible without the generous support of our caring community. Sometimes people like to give something tangible instead of money. We always need coffee, creamer, sugar, ramen noodles and oatmeal.

Donate to the GSRC at our website and during The Panhandle Gives (Nov. 24 to Dec. 2).



GUYONSAUNDERS
RESOURCE CENTER

200 S. TYLER ST. | 806.373.0704
GUYONSAUNDERSRESOURCECENTER.COM



SPONSORED BY:



**Joe and Laura Street Day Center, 460 S. Parker St.
Expected completion Fall 2026**

It will include:

- A dining/day room that seats 144 people
- Three meals a day, year-round
- Showers and laundry facilities
- A safe place to provide life enrichment opportunities: (Bible studies, book clubs, creative writing or movie nights)
- A safe place to offer life survival opportunities: (counseling, Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, CPR)
- Computer lab and library

100 Club of the Texas Panhandle

What is The 100 Club's history? The 100 Club of Amarillo was founded in 2004, became a 501c3 organization in 2006, and expanded to the top 26 counties in 2011, becoming known as the 100 Club of the Texas Panhandle.

What is The 100 Club's mission? The 100 Club provides assistance to public safety personnel and their families at a moment's notice. Without the brave men and women who risk their lives for our sake, our lives would be very different. When tragedy strikes firefighters and certified peace officers in the line of duty, the 100 Club immediately responds with financial support to help lessen the devastating effects. Money can never replace the loss or serious injury of a loved one, but these funds can be extremely helpful in easing financial burdens. The 100 Club also provides life-protecting equipment and group mental health and wellness educational opportunities for firefighting and law enforcement agencies that cannot be secured through budgeted funds.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Our greatest challenge right now is growing pains. While we have been a relatively unknown organization in the past, the 2024 wildfires changed that. Recognition from our work during that tragedy brought opportunities to speak to groups and an expansion of local events and fundraising possibilities. We hired a full-time event manager last year, which led to the need for a larger office.

We also started two new programs in 2025: the 100 Club Heroes Program (for kids ages 6 to 15) to build rapport with first responders at a young age, and Mental Health and Wellness Conferences to provide support opportunities for first responders.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? Our biggest success story of 2025 occurred in February when 500 first responders attended our first-ever Mental Health and Wellness Conference at WTAMU. Travis Howze, the internationally touring speaker and motivational wellness educator for first responders, spoke on the epidemic of post-traumatic stress, which plagues many of the heroes in our communities. Attendees gave us generous positive feedback and appreciation. We will be bringing Travis Howze back for area first responders on Feb. 7, 2026.

We have also been able to support one police officer and two firefighters injured in the line of duty this year.

How can the community get involved? We can never predict when tragedy will strike. The wildfires in 2024 were a perfect example. Thanks to our existing members and supporters, we were able to respond with speed, transparency and generosity. The more members and donations we have, the more we can do for those who protect and serve.

Please become a member of the 100 Club to support first responders year-round. Sign up at texaspanhandle100club.org, give big during The Panhandle Gives, tell others about us to help garner more awareness and support, and pray daily for the safety of those who protect and serve.



7480 GOLDEN POND PLACE, SUITE 300
806.331.4100
[TEXASPANHANDLE100CLUB.ORG](https://texaspanhandle100club.org)

B&E | GIVING



Transformation Park



Amarillo has the highest rate of homelessness per capita in the state of Texas—a statistic that demanded action. Transformation Park was born out of compassion and a bold idea: that in a country overflowing with food and resources, no one should be hungry or homeless. Although our city has numerous helpful resources for unhoused and hungry individuals, several years ago our founders at Transformation Park saw gaps in care that needed to be addressed. Many unhoused individuals refused shelter due to limitations and rules that were difficult to comply with.

Realizing the need for a low-barrier homeless shelter, Transformation Park became a landmark initiative to address homelessness in Amarillo. In partnership with the City of Amarillo, local churches, and commerce, we opened the Cabin Community in April 2025, then expanded just a month later with the launch of the Safe Space. The Safe Space offers immediate overnight shelter, while the Cabin Community serves as a more structured next step—where Residents prepare to transition out of homelessness.

As a low-barrier shelter, Transformation Park removes many of the obstacles that make shelter feel out of reach. We offer amnesty lockers so Residents can store personal items that might otherwise have to be left outside or thrown away, and secure cart storage so they don't have to choose between their belongings and a safe night's sleep. With pet-friendly guidelines and minimal conditions for stay, Transformation Park was designed to meet people where they are.

Together with our Shelter, the Kitchen makes up the heartbeat of Transformation Park's mission. Since July 2023, it has prepared and delivered hot, nourishing lunches to organizations across Amarillo five days a week, and has served three meals a day to the Shelter since its opening. Though it often works behind the scenes, the Kitchen plays a vital role in our community, ensuring no one is left hungry.

Since April, we've had several Residents "graduate" from our Cabin Community and transition into the next chapter of their lives. One Resident, Billy, had clear goals. After uprooting his life in San Angelo to pursue a fresh start in Amarillo, Billy wasted no time—interviewing for one of our cabins the same day he interviewed for a job. Not only did he get the job, but he received an award for excelling in it. After months of hard work and determination, Billy saved enough to purchase a vehicle and move into an apartment. Billy is a great example of how we empower our Residents by taking care of their basic needs—freeing them to focus on rebuilding their lives.

As the new organization on the block, we're in a season of growth with two new sites already under construction, and we need your financial support to sustain it. We're excited to be part of **The Panhandle Gives** this year, where every donor dollar is amplified during **November 24–December 2**. We need the support of the whole community to reach our goal of raising \$250,000! If you or someone you know would be interested in partnering for a donor match or sponsoring one of our shelter spaces, please contact us at info@mytransformationpark.com.

In addition to financial gifts, Transformation Park runs on Volunteer power. We're always looking for helping hands to keep serving and growing alongside our community. Whether it's preparing meals in the Kitchen or greeting Residents at the Shelter's front desk, there's a place for every individual or group to get involved.

Together, we're not just changing lives—we're transforming Amarillo. **Learn more or get involved at mytransformationpark.com.**



MYTRANSFORMATIONPARK.COM

Square Mile Community Development

What is Square Mile's history? Square Mile Community Development was formed in 2016 by a small group of pastors and community leaders with more than 30 years of combined experience in community development, food insecurity, health, education and alleviating poverty. This team recognized the incredible work already being done by many local organizations to meet immediate needs but also saw a gap: few were focused on long-term, sustainable solutions that help communities thrive. Square Mile was created to fill that gap. What began in Amarillo's San Jacinto neighborhood has since expanded across the city, throughout the Texas Panhandle, and even internationally, empowering communities to rebuild from within.

What is Square Mile's mission? We believe in creating opportunity through connection—bringing together community organizations, nonprofits, entrepreneurs, small business owners and residents to revitalize under-resourced communities. Our empowerment-based model focuses on five key areas that define a thriving community: economic development, housing, health, education and spiritual care. Whether it's one of our urban farms addressing food insecurity, our work with refugees at The PLACE, or our PATH Program that helps create economic opportunities, everything we do is geared toward create lasting change.

What are Square Mile's greatest challenges right now? Like many nonprofits, Square Mile faces the ripple effects of recent government cuts to programs that support social services. With less funding available, needs in vulnerable communities are growing faster than any point in our history. We're seeing increased demand for assistance while funding resources are stretched thin. It's a challenging time, but we are committed to our calling to bring hope and opportunity where it's needed most.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your mission from the past year? This year, one of the most inspiring stories of hope began with a South Sudanese refugee here in Amarillo. Through Square Mile's mentorship and the support of our PATH program, she launched a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating opportunity for women and girls in South Sudan, giving families alternatives to the devastating practice of selling their daughters just for survival. We helped launch a woman-owned, woman-led farm in South Sudan, providing jobs, economic opportunity and fresh food for women and girls with little hope. Her story reflects what Square Mile is all about: empowering people to transform their own lives and communities through opportunity, hope and shared strength.

How can the community get involved? There are so many ways to make a difference with Square Mile! Volunteer at The PLACE or one of our urban farms, provide a meal for refugees attending English classes, become a monthly donor or help spread the word about our mission. Your support turns compassion into action and sustains this vital work for years to come.

3908 SW SIXTH AVE.
806.337.0683
SQUARE-MILE.ORG



B&E | GIVING





Heal the City Free Clinic

What is Heal the City's history? Heal the City Free Clinic was founded by Dr. Alan Keister in response to the significant lack of access to affordable health care in the community. The organization began by offering free health screenings at local schools, which quickly highlighted the need for accessible medical care and prompted the creation of the clinic. Since opening on September 8, 2014, the clinic has expanded both its facility and its programs, now serving thousands of patients annually with a range of services.

By 2015, Heal the City had outgrown its original space and relocated to its current home at 609 S. Carolina St. This move allowed the clinic to expand, providing more comprehensive care to the uninsured and underserved residents of the Texas Panhandle. Since its inception, Heal the City has treated more than 15,000 individuals, solidifying its role as a vital resource for those without access to quality health care.

The clinic sees patients five days a week and offers many services, including acute and chronic medical care, mental health support, pharmacy services and wellness programs. The Shalom chronic care program is a cornerstone of its care, serving patients with long-term health conditions who do not qualify for other community resources. HTC currently serves as a medical home for 669 chronically ill individuals and continually provides care for those with acute needs.

What is Heal the City's mission? To provide free, quality medical care and referral services with dignity and compassion to the uninsured of our community.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Heal the City faces ongoing challenges related to meeting increasing demand despite limited resources. Key struggles include securing sufficient funding and donations to sustain and expand services, managing high patient volumes, and keeping up with the costs of providing comprehensive medications and preventive care.

What is one example of hope and successfully fulfilling your organization's mission from the past year? A recent example of hope and success for Heal the City is the continued growth of our programs and direct impact on patient lives. This year, the on-site Jerry Hodge Pharmacy will fill more than 50,000 prescriptions, ensuring that vulnerable patients receive essential medications. The Shalom Chronic Care Program continues to enroll patients, providing care to those most at risk. These developments exemplify the clinic's mission in action, offering life-changing medical intervention and support to people who might otherwise go without care.

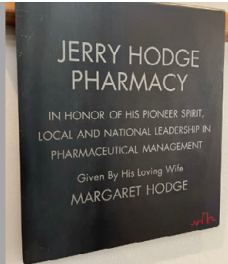
How can the community get involved? To continue providing these essential services, Heal the City relies on the generosity of volunteers and donors, who serve in many ways.

For those interested in supporting Heal the City, whether by volunteering or donating, more information can be found on our website healthcityamarillo.com or by calling Development Director Lisa Lloyd at 806-437-9485.

Together, we are transforming health care and providing hope.



609 S. CAROLINA ST.
806.231.0364
HEALTHCITYAMARILLO.COM



45,927
Prescriptions Filled In
On-Site Pharmacy

1,584
Social Services
Encounters



2,196
Unique Patients

11,220
F.I.T. Center
Check-Ins



2,146
Dental Care Visits



The numbers reflected are from services provided on-site at Heal the City Free Clinic in 2024.

Cody Owens Memorial Foundation

What is your organization's history?

Cody Owens grew up in the Panhandle and later Oklahoma, raising horses and working cattle with his family, and then went on to a 22-year career at BNSF until his passing in 2016. Five years after his passing, we formed the foundation as a way to give back to the community in the areas that he truly cared about.

In the years prior, Cody, his sisters, and their mother helped his father, Merle Owens, navigate through the last years of his life living with dementia. We began the Shoot to End Alzheimer's in 2021 to raise funds for Alzheimer's and dementia research, and have now expanded into creating the Dementia Care Advocates grant fund to provide respite care for family members who care for a loved one with dementia or Alzheimer's.

In 2022, we began a scholarship fund for local students, as well as donating to youth ag, rodeo and sports programs, and have continued to expand by hosting

the Cornhole for a Cause fundraiser for the past two years. We also expanded into Pampa with a fall golf tournament to benefit our respite care grant. We continue to fundraise and expand our programs in every way possible.

What is its mission? To raise funds for those living with dementia and Alzheimer's, for scholarships and other youth programs, as well as building a crisis fund for any railroad families that may be in need.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Hands down, our largest program is our dementia respite care grant and our greatest challenge over the past few years has been finding donors other than those who have been directly affected by dementia or Alzheimer's.

How can the community get involved? Visit our fundraisers throughout the year or join our fundraising committee. We'd love to have new members. Visit our website, codyowensfoundation.org, to donate and learn more about the foundation.

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Cody Owens
CODY OWENS MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

CODYOWENSFOUNDATION.ORG

Mission 2540

What is Mission 2540's history? Mission 2540 was founded in 2004 to meet the needs of kids and families living in affordable housing communities. We've steadily grown over the past 21 years from working in two apartment complexes to now working in 10 communities in Amarillo, plus two communities in Lubbock.

What is its mission? Our desire is to "Feed, Clothe, and Love" our neighbors in need. We work on a daily basis in multiple affordable housing communities in Amarillo through after-school programs on each property, a benevolent assistance program and a variety of outreaches, camps and special activities throughout the year.

What are Mission 2540's greatest challenges right now? As the number of families we reach continues to grow, the number of needs we are trying to meet each month has never been greater. Many of our families struggle with rising energy costs and are trying to keep food on the table. We receive requests for assistance daily, and we want to meet as many of those needs as we can. We can only do that through the support of our community. You can give online at mission2540.org/give. In addition, we provide snacks to close to 200 kids every week, so we are always happy to take non-perishable snack items!

How can the community get involved? We are always on the search for volunteers willing to serve in our after-school programs, whether that is once a week or once a month. We're reaching more than 200 kids through our after-school programs, and having volunteers to assist us in this is vital. Email info@mission2540.org or visit our website.



MISSION 2540

P.O. BOX 20771
AMARILLO, TX., 79114
806.681.6334
MISSION2540.ORG

Amarillo Art Institute

What is your organization's history? The Amarillo Art Institute was founded in 2004 by artist and philanthropist Ann Crouch. Her vision was to create a space where local artists could grow their skills by learning from master artists and each other. Since then, the Institute has expanded into a comprehensive art center, offering private artist studios, community galleries, classes, workshops and outreach programs to the broader Amarillo community.

What is its mission? To inspire, educate and enrich lives through art.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Though we have grown so much over the past few years, we still meet people every day who say "I had no idea this was here!" So we really always need help spreading the word about everything that is offered at Arts in the Sunset. We want to reach more people and create more access to the arts.

How can the community get involved? The Institute invites the community to participate in First Friday Art Walks, markets, classes and open studios—whether as visitors, volunteers or artists!

3701 PLAINS BLVD., SUITE 117
806.354.8802
ARTSINTHESUNSET.ORG



Panhandle Down Syndrome Guild

What is Panhandle Down Syndrome Guild's history? The Panhandle Down Syndrome Guild was founded in 2002 to promote a greater understanding and acceptance of people with Down syndrome in the Texas Panhandle. The PDSG works to increase public awareness about Down syndrome, assist families caring for people with this genetic condition, and sponsor community networking and engagement activities. The Guild also works with national organizations to dispel the myths associated with Down syndrome, while helping people with Down syndrome in the community achieve their full potential. PDSG develops and disseminates the most current information to families, educators and the medical community.

What is PDSG's mission? We serve people with Down syndrome, their friends and families, and those who support them in everyday life. PDSG encourages fellowship, fosters community and promotes public awareness of the dignity, promise and potential of all persons. A major focus of the group is to reach new families of someone with Down syndrome and provide encouraging and uplifting literature, positive stories, personal experiences and a wealth of information and support. Each year we host the local Buddy Walk, a registered walk of the National Down Syndrome Society. The Buddy Walk is our only fundraiser of the year.

What are PDSG's greatest challenges right now? PDSG needs technical assistance digitizing our messages of hope and acceptance. We need to raise funds to assist people with Down syndrome who need tutoring, therapy or other education or developmental help. Any webmasters out there? Our website, pdsg.org, needs to be updated with events. We would love to partner with anyone willing to help. If you have ideas, please reach out. Call Vicki at 806-670-1568, Jeff at 806-678-4450, or email us at panhandledsg@yahoo.com.

How can the community get involved? Follow us on Facebook @panhandledsg and subscribe to our emails to be informed of group news and events.



PDSG.ORG

HOODOO Mural Festival

What is your organization's history? The Hoodoo Mural Festival started in 2019 with six murals in the downtown area. Since then, it has placed more than 30 murals across the city of Amarillo and featured more than 100 artists, both musical and visual.

What is its mission? Inspiring communities to unite through public art, creativity and urban beautification.

What are your greatest challenges right now? One challenge we faced this year was the move to a new location, Arts in the Sunset. Now that we have overcome that challenge, we are looking to see how we can best utilize our new home to create more community impact.

How can the community get involved? Artists, vendors, musicians, funders and attendees all support the Hoodoo Mural Festival each year. We always need help spreading the word when we are looking for mural locations, muralists, volunteers and funding.

HOODOO
MURAL FESTIVAL

HOODOOMURAL.COM



Amarillo Children's Home

For more than a century, Amarillo Children's Home has been a place of safety, belonging and transformation for children in need. In the late 1940s, the Home purchased 10 acres of land from Charles Wolflin and established its campus at 34th and Bowie, right in the heart of Amarillo's historic Wolflin neighborhood. Here, children experience restoration through family-style living with compassionate house parents—building trust, healing hearts and shaping bright futures.

Our Greatest Challenges

Meeting the comprehensive needs of every child in our care is both our calling and our greatest challenge. Each day, we provide individualized, trauma-informed care that addresses mental health, emotional healing, education and spiritual growth. Our team is committed to helping children rebuild trust, strengthen resilience and discover their inherent worth.

As we expand our work to license, train and support foster families across the Panhandle, we

face growing needs for funding and community partnership. Sustained support allows us to keep sibling groups together, implement best practices in trauma-informed care, and provide the specialized testing and therapeutic interventions that help each child thrive.

How You Can Help

Amarillo Children's Home thrives because of the generosity and compassion of this community. You can make a difference by:

Giving: Every gift directly supports housing, counseling and care for local foster children.

Becoming Involved: Join our Foster Care Homes Program through fostering, respite care, babysitting or delivering meals.

Volunteering or Advocating: Share your time, skills or voice to uplift local children and families.

Together, we can ensure that every child in the Texas Panhandle knows they are loved, valued and never alone.



ACH est. 1924
AMARILLO CHILDREN'S HOME

3400 BOWIE ST.
806.352.5771

AMARILLOCHILDRENSHOME.ORG

Harrington Cancer and Health Foundation

What is your organization's history?

Harrington Cancer and Health Foundation carries forward the legacy of Don and Sybil Harrington, visionary philanthropists whose generosity shaped healthcare in our region for decades. Today, their legacy lives on through programs that provide survivorship support, cancer prevention, and more for residents right here at home.

What is its mission? Serving Amarillo and the upper 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle, the mission of the Foundation is to reduce the burden of cancer and to promote and serve the healthcare needs of residents living in Amarillo and surrounding communities. HCHF serves local cancer survivors, regardless of where they receive treatment, through programs focusing on survivorship, prevention, and patient assistance.

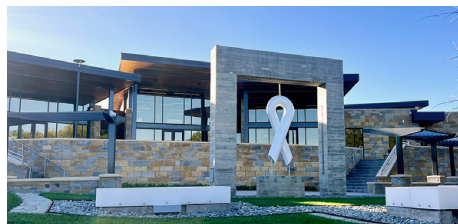
Whether offering free survivorship resources and financial assistance to cancer survivors or free PSA screenings, HCHF is focused on one goal: improving lives and strengthening the health of our community for generations to come.

What are your greatest challenges right now?

Our motto is, "No one fights alone." One of our greatest challenges is awareness. The Cancer Survivorship Center provides financial assistance, counseling, oncology massage, exercise, nutrition services and more. Many in our community are still unaware that these life-changing programs exist and are available at no cost. Sustaining and expanding these vital services requires consistent funding and community engagement. While generous donors make incredible things possible, ongoing giving is essential to ensure no survivor has to go without free support to restore their strength, hope and quality of life.

How can the community get involved? A gift of even \$15 provides a ride to an oncology appointment for cancer survivors. Every donation stays local, helping reduce the burden of cancer on survivors in our area. To make a donation or to learn more, please visit hchfamarillo.org.

A survivor is defined as anyone who has had a cancer diagnosis, from the time of diagnosis ... for life!



HARRINGTON
CANCER and HEALTH
FOUNDATION



CANCER
SURVIVORSHIP
CENTER
POWERED BY 24 HOURS IN THE CANYON

1732 HAGY BLVD.
806.331.2400 | HCHFAMARILLO.ORG

Panhandle AIDS Support Organization

What is PASO's history? Panhandle AIDS Support Organization was founded in 1987 by local health professionals seeking to address gaps in AIDS-related services in Amarillo. Initially an all-volunteer effort, PASO quickly grew—with nonprofit incorporation, grants and community support fueling its expansion. By 2008, PASO became a Local Performance Site for a national HIV/AIDS education program, and in 2011 it moved into a donated 9,000-square foot building to better serve nearly 300 clients. Currently serving about 350 individuals and their families each year, PASO provides support to people living with HIV in the Texas Panhandle with case management and care plans, financial assistance with medical appointments, labs, medication, housing and utility assistance, dental care, vision care, transportation to and from medical appointments, mental health care, and more.

What is PASO's mission? PASO provides services to people living with HIV in the 26 counties of the Texas Panhandle, regardless of ability to pay, and without discrimination because of age, ethnicity, sex, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability.

What are PASO's greatest challenges right now? One of the greatest challenges facing our community is stigma. In this era of advanced medication, two-thirds of people living with HIV in Texas are virally suppressed, meaning they cannot transmit HIV to anyone regardless of the mode of transmission. We are now seeing many people grow older while living with HIV—something that was not thought possible in the past. HIV is no longer a death sentence.

How can the community get involved? Come to our events! Educate yourself about HIV and talk to your teens about it. Follow us on social media, consider volunteering with PASO, or donate to PASO through The Panhandle Gives. All the donations we receive stay in the Panhandle, supporting our neighbors.



1501 SW 10TH AVE.
806.372.1050
PANHANDLEASO.ORG

Heart Gallery of the Panhandle Plains

What is your organization's history? Heart Gallery of the Panhandle Plains was created in early 2024 after an existing Central Texas Heart Gallery caught the attention of the First Lady of Texas, Cecilia Abbott. Subsequently, the 88th Texas Legislature committed funds to expand the Heart Gallery model across the state.

Every child in Region 1—the 41 counties surrounding Amarillo and Lubbock—who is waiting to be adopted and wishes to be featured in a Heart Gallery will have that opportunity, while adoptive families will gain access to the post-adoption support they need to build and sustain healthy, lasting families.

What is its mission? To connect waiting children to adoptive families through the power of innovative photographic storytelling. Using beautiful, professional photographs, Heart Gallery highlights the individuality and worth of each child seeking a family. Throughout the past 18 months, 34 percent of the children and youth featured in Heart Gallery displays have been placed in adoptive homes!

What are your greatest challenges right now? While Heart Gallery of the Panhandle Plains received initial funding from the State of Texas,

that funding was decreased by 40 percent for 2025-2026. With more than 300 children and youth from our region awaiting forever families, it is essential that Heart Gallery funding remain intact so each child has an opportunity to be connected to a forever family.

How can the community get involved?

- **Photographers:** Heart Gallery relies on volunteer photographers to capture the beautiful images of our waiting children.
- **Display locations:** Heart Gallery utilizes donated space to display photographs at businesses, churches and organizations throughout the top 26 counties of the Panhandle.
- **Awareness:** Host a Gallery Gathering with a group of friends, Sunday School class, church, civic club or any other organization. This gathering allows Heart Gallery to share its mission and gain support.
- **Volunteer:** Help Heart Gallery staff maintain and change photo displays monthly.
- **Financial support:** Become a Heart Gallery supporter through one-time or monthly giving.



806.231.1276
HEARTGALLERYPTX.ORG

Children's Miracle Network of Amarillo

What is your organization's history? Children's Miracle Network, a program of the Harrington Cancer and Health Foundation, has supported local children and families for more than 30 years. As part of the national Children's Miracle Network Hospitals organization, CMN ensures that every dollar raised stays here in our community to help sick and injured kids across the High Plains. Through community partnerships and donor support, CMN provides funding for medical equipment and family assistance, helping children receive the care they need to heal, grow and thrive close to home.

What is its mission? To change kids' health and change their future. By partnering with the community, we ensure that every child has access to the best possible care, close to home.

What are your greatest challenges right now? Many people don't realize that every dollar given to CMN directly supports kids in Amarillo and outlying areas we serve. Another challenge faced by CMN is keeping pace with the growing number of families who rely on support each year. The need continues to rise, and ongoing donor support is critical to ensure every child has access to the best possible care close to home.

How can the community get involved? The most powerful thing we can do as a community is make sure families facing a medical crisis know that Children's Miracle Network is here to help. Applying for assistance is simple. Just visit cmnamarillo.org. Equally important is the continued generosity of local donors and businesses. To make a donation or to learn more, please visit cmnamarillo.org.



1732 HAGY BLVD.
806.331.2400 | CMNAMARILLO.ORG



Martha's Home

Martha's Home began in 1987 with a small house and a big dream to provide a safe, welcoming place for women, and their children, who were facing homelessness. That humble beginning has grown into five homes that offer not only shelter, but also a path toward lasting stability. For more than three decades, Martha's Home has stood as a beacon of hope in Amarillo, walking alongside women as they rebuild their lives with courage, dignity and faith in a brighter future.

Martha's Home provides shelter, support and hope to homeless women and their children while empowering them to become self-sufficient and build stable, successful lives. Beyond meeting immediate needs, we focus on equipping families with the tools and opportunities to thrive through housing, education, life-skills training and strong community partnerships.

Many women come to Martha's Home with dreams of finishing their education or gaining job skills, but those dreams are often met with real roadblocks: access to affordable housing, quality childcare, transportation, mental health care and especially education. As the need for our services continues to grow, we know that removing these barriers is key to creating lasting change.

The community plays a powerful role in helping women and children create new beginnings. There are many meaningful ways to get involved by volunteering your time, donating funds or essential items, or partnering with us to remove barriers that hold families back.

One of the most exciting ways to get involved is through Present Needs Future Success, our collaborative community initiative focused on breaking down educational barriers for women at Martha's Home. This effort brings together leaders, organizations and individuals to brainstorm creative solutions and take real action so education becomes a bridge, not a barrier, to independence.

Whether it's lending your voice, your resources or your expertise, your involvement makes a lasting difference. Together, we can create a community where every woman has the opportunity to learn, grow and build a future full of hope.

To learn more about Martha's Home visit marthashome.org or email us at info@marthashome.org.



1204 SW 18TH AVE. | 806.372.4035 | MARTHASHOME.ORG

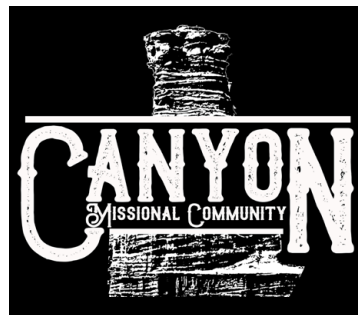
Canyon Missional Community

Canyon Missional Community was launched in Canyon in 2023 by the leadership and elders of First Presbyterian Church of Amarillo, for the purpose of connecting WTAMU students with local families to form a Christ-centered community.

Our mission has grown to include multiple small groups on the WT campus and throughout Canyon. A major focus of Canyon Missional Community, "**ServeCanyon,**" is a daily mission that provides food, clothing, job assistance, transportation, furniture and other resources to students—especially international students—and others in need within the Canyon community.

As we grow, we aim to become fully self-supporting, with a long-term goal of developing sustainable financial independence. We would like to work alongside local churches, missions, nonprofit groups and student ministries so we can reach as many students and residents of Canyon as possible. For those already connected to a faith-based community, we welcome your partnership in prayer and encouragement.

We invite students or individuals seeking a community to join us for dinner, worship and small groups every Monday at 6:30 p.m. at the Cole Community Center (300 16th St.). Small group Bible studies take place on Wednesday evenings at various locations. Once a month, we host Sunday gatherings at Sad Monkey Mercantile, 575 Pizzeria, or The Gathering (13150 S. Coulter St.). We also participate in yearly mission trips to serve other cities and countries. Please visit our website or social media accounts for the latest information.



105 N. 28TH ST., CANYON
CANYONMISSIONALCOMMUNITY.COM

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Friday Nights at Hastings

Stories from the Stores that Defined a Generation

BY JASON BOYETT



SAM AND JOHN MARMADUKE WITH WALMART FOUNDER SAM WALTON (CENTER)

PROVIDED PHOTOS



JIM WHITTEN (LEFT), SANDRA VANDIVERE (CENTER) AND JOHN MARMADUKE

PHOTO BY JASON BOYETT

Few Amarillo-based cultural exports had as much influence as Hastings Entertainment. There are generations of Americans who have distinct memories of browsing new music at the local Hastings on a Friday night in the 1970s, buying the latest Stephen King thrillers during the horror heyday of the 1980s, and renting VHS movies at Hastings during the 1990s.

At one point, Hastings had nearly 150 retail stores across 23 states, with nearly 4,000 employees—and it was headquartered in Amarillo. Many of today’s prominent musical acts, in a very real way, owe their careers to Hastings. From Willie Nelson to Jimmy Buffett, they used to come to Amarillo to give private performances for Hastings employees, hoping to capture retail magic.

The magic lasted until Hastings sold and closed its doors in 2016, putting an end to a uniquely Amarillo story. Many of those former employees returned to the region this fall for “Hastings Homecoming 2025,” a much-anticipated reunion event.

In mid-October, not long after the reunion, *Brick & Elm* sat down with John Marmaduke, former Hastings President and CEO, to hear about the history of his family’s company. Joining us for the conversation were Sandra Vandivere, Marmaduke’s long-time assistant, and former Hastings marketing executive Jim Whitten.

What’s in a Name?

In 1961, pioneering wholesaler Sam Marmaduke turned his father’s small magazine distribution enterprise, West Texas News Agency, into the expanded Western Merchandisers, which distributed books and music.

In 1968, Marmaduke opened the first Hastings Books & Records in Amarillo at a brand-new shopping center called Western Plaza. He intended it to serve as a test market for the wholesaler.

John Marmaduke: My dad was a wholesaler. He started with magazines and later got into this new thing called “records” when Elvis Presley broke and rock ‘n’ roll became a reliable business. So we

had magazines, books and music. Every wholesaler would love to be a retailer and every retailer would love to be a wholesaler. The grass is always greener.

So he had this brainstorm of putting all those products together. He had seen a newsstand in London that had them all together. He just thought, “Bingo.” It really made a lot of sense.

That [London] newsstand was called Hastings. Later, he said [the Hastings chain was named for] the Battle of Hastings, and that was certainly his privilege. But the real issue was we wanted a name that wouldn’t tie us back to Western Merchandisers, because we were afraid our good customers might get mad at us.



Early Contraction

For three years, that Amarillo location was the only retail store in the company. In 1971, Sam Marmaduke added three additional stores: one in Plainview, one in Wichita, Kansas, and another in Del City, outside Oklahoma City. A second store in Wichita opened in 1973. Four of the five stores were unprofitable. After the Del City store closed, it was moved to Roswell, New Mexico, where business tripled.

Marmaduke: I was graduating from the University of Texas and interviewing with some other companies. [My father] wanted me to come back. So I took over five Hastings stores, only one of which was making money because they didn't really understand retail. The one in Amarillo was doing really, really well. The one in Plainview showed some promise.

By the process of elimination, I closed all the losers and started focusing on the small markets. Plainview and then Roswell [New Mexico], those were our first small-town stores. They were underserved. It's the Vince Lombardi school of retail: You run to daylight. There was nobody serving those people. When we would open up, [customers] would ask to borrow our phone so they could call their friends.

I was just talking to Nate Duckett at our reunion. He's now the mayor of Farmington [New Mexico]. He was the manager at our Hastings there. He said every week somebody tells him they miss Hastings, because in

Farmington, that's where everybody met on a Friday night. We were going where we were needed.

Acquisition and Growth

John Marmaduke became president of Hastings in 1973, which opened its second Amarillo store in Wolflin Village and spent the 1970s expanding into other small, regional markets like Snyder, Kerrville, Abilene and College Station. Hastings then began to acquire music-store chains, like Record Town (25 stores), Mr. Music (6 stores) and Flipside (15 stores). It closed the unprofitable stores but continued to expand its footprint, with a retail presence from Texas to Colorado to Florida. By the end of the 1980s, Hastings had become the fifth-largest retail chain of music stores in the United States.

John's brother, Steve, worked for Western Merchandisers during this period. Sandra Vandivere joined the company in 1983.

Sandra Vandivere: I actually was on the payroll for Disc Records. I worked for Hastings but my payroll came from Disc Records.

John Marmaduke: We made a lot of acquisitions.

Vandivere: We had Disc Records and Record Town and later we combined all those stores and made them Hastings. When I first started, we didn't even have computers in the



PROVIDED PHOTOS

office. We had to look up everything on paper. We had an operations manual but it was all hand-typed. Later, we acquired one computer and you had to fight for that computer to use it.

[Stores] always had to call in sales to keep track of what kind of sales they were doing during the holiday season. There were four of us who would go in at 6 a.m. in the morning. The store managers would get up, figure their sales from the week, and call it in to us. We would talk to each and every store manager. All of the stores all over the nation. It was manually intensive.

Marmaduke: A lot of those old-fashioned systems worked really well, they were just labor-intensive.

Music Influence and Video Heyday

Western Merchandisers grew into one of the largest music distributors in the United States. In 1989, Garth Brooks released his self-titled debut album as a relative unknown from Oklahoma. Within just a few months, mostly through Hastings stores, Western Merchandisers reported sales above 100,000 units, which was a huge music-industry milestone.

But those numbers didn't show up on the Billboard charts because Hastings wasn't included among the reporting retailers, most of which were large urban stores. It became a famous example of how some record sales in secondary markets—sometimes known as “heartland sales”—remained invisible to the industry, despite careers like that of Garth Brooks. Because of this, Hastings helped transform how labels and chart services thought about data.

Garth Brooks often credited Hastings for helping him break out. He wasn't the only one.

Marmaduke: We basically started the hat band trend in College Station. That's where it first broke out. We were the first people to even get on the George Strait bandwagon. I remember doing an autograph session [in Salt Lake City] with George Strait and only about 12 people showed up, and I just said, “Hang in there. It's going to take awhile.”

Vandivere: I remember George Strait coming into the office. There was a tap on my shoulder and I turned around and there he was. He had just made a hit and had come into the office that day.

VHS video rental also boomed in the 1980s, but most were independent mom-and-pop operations until Blockbuster arrived. By the late 1980s, Blockbuster was opening new stores almost daily, mostly in large markets. Hastings added video rentals alongside books and music, serving the smaller markets Blockbuster ignored.

That kind of cross-merchandising was central to its business model. As John Marmaduke once said in an interview with another publication, the company wanted to sell books to people who came in to buy music, and music to people who intended to buy books.

Around that time, in the early 1990s, Jim Whitton joined the executive team at Hastings. He and his wife, Barbara Harter Whitton, had been living in New York City and were ready for a change. Barbara is the sister of Marty Harter Marmaduke, John's late wife.

Jim Whitton: I remember coming from back east, I had lots of friends talking about “You're going where? What kind of company?” I finally figured out that the best way to describe it was small and medium towns that didn't really have much of a bookstore or a record store or a video store. That was Hastings.



It was Blockbuster and Tower Records and Barnes & Noble under one roof. It really worked.

Marmaduke: We really didn't need a lot of advertising because we had the wow factor. When you have something that people really want, you don't have to advertise it very much.

Vandivere: News traveled fast.

Marmaduke: Remember, if you were living in Farmington, New Mexico, what were you doing on the weekend? Those markets were our very best markets. They were isolated. They often had extreme weather. We did really well in Arizona and really well in Montana. In Montana, they were watching movies five months out of the year because it was really cold.

We were the place everybody went to on Friday night. If you look at our transactions, around 3:30 or 4 on Friday evening, it just shot off like a Geiger counter detecting uranium. We had to have all these part-time people come in and work that crunch time. People would try to rent all the movies for the weekend.

And inclement weather? If they were forecasting big snows, you couldn't find a movie to rent.

In 1991, Western Merchandisers became a wholly owned subsidiary of Walmart and began distributing books and music through that rapidly growing chain as well. Steve Marmaduke retired at this point, having served as VP of purchasing. Walmart was beginning to dominate nationally and would become the world's largest retailer by the end of the decade, but Hastings continued to thrive in small markets. This made Western Merchandisers, as well as Hastings, extremely powerful in the music industry.

Marmaduke: We had broken so many acts that we were sort of golden. Remember Tracy Chapman and "Fast Car"? We broke her out, believe it or not, in Colorado of all places. Here was a Black lesbian singer and we broke her out in Hastings stores because she was really good. That means the first significant sales they had anywhere were with us, and that encouraged the record label to put more marketing dollars behind [the artist], which they did, and they were successful.

Everybody has to break out somewhere. You don't break out nationally if you're a new act. It was very regional.

Throughout the companies' history, major record labels would send their artists to the Hastings and Western Merchandisers headquarters in Amarillo—for management conferences and eventually the two companies' combined annual meetings—to perform private concerts in front of some of the most powerful music retail buyers in the nation. Willie Nelson introduced his music at a 1977 conference during his rise to superstardom. Publishing companies got into the act, too. A young novelist named Stephen King once spoke to employees at a meeting in the early 1980s.

Founder Sam Marmaduke spent 20 years on the board of the Country Music Association, which increased the companies' stature among country acts. Over the following decades, the roster of artists who quietly performed in Amarillo is astonishing.

Marmaduke: Managers from every store, middle management, all our rack sales people would come in [for these meetings]. The first one, we had Waylon Jennings, Ronnie Milsap and Dottie West all in a small little room at one of the I-40 hotels which is no longer there. They were all nervous, because they're playing for people who sell their product—not fans, not people in bars. But we had a really good time.

It was like a who's who of country music in those days because that was what we sold.

Vandivere: Alabama was one of my first ones.

Whitton: Brooks & Dunn was a favorite. There were so many.

Vandivere: I remember The Judds playing. They came into our office and set up in the warehouse and we all went out there.

Marmaduke: Then we moved it to the Civic Center and they brought their whole road show. The record labels would sponsor them. As Hastings got to be a bigger piece of the pie and as Walmart became more ubiquitous as a record store, then we had a lot more pop acts come through.

Whitton: As an employee, it just made you think *I'm working for the coolest company that ever was.*

Marmaduke: Jimmy Buffett was a funny story. I was just by chance reading one of these esoteric southeastern quail hunting magazines at a friend's house, and there's an article by Jimmy Buffett about quail hunting. He was really different. But he was coming here [to perform] for our convention during quail season, so I wrote him a letter and said, "Would you like to hunt wild quail in the Texas Panhandle?"

And he wrote back and said, "Hell, yes. I'd love to. Let's do it the day before the concert."

I locked my calendar but never heard from him again. Getting ahold of someone like that, when they're touring, is impossible. So as the day approached, I tried to get ahold of him. I never reached him.

That night, at the hotel in Amarillo, the band was having a drink and [complaining] about the fact that they were booked in Amarillo 48 hours before the concert. Jimmy Buffett had booked everything, then got busy and forgot all about quail hunting.

We didn't end up hunting.

Fundamentals of Business

Founder Sam Marmaduke was 73 when he died of a heart attack in 1993, after which Walmart sold Western Merchandisers to Anderson News Corp. Hastings became a fully independent company in 1995 and went public on the NASDAQ in 1999.

Whitton: Hastings had a private plane and they wore it out. I mean, John and three or four other folks—maybe from another store, another department—were, twice a week, going to these far-flung places and engaging with all the employees and managers and learning, teaching, visiting stores. It was this ongoing process. In some ways, John spent very little time in his office.

The next decade brought a series of seismic shifts to the entertainment industry, as the rise of online retail competed with brick-and-mortar stores. Then digital streaming arrived. Amazon, Netflix and iTunes transformed the ways people consumed books, movies and

music. Famously, Blockbuster had 9,000 stores worldwide in 2004 but had to file for bankruptcy in 2010.

Hastings was hit hard, too, though its ongoing attempts at diversification kept it profitable into the early 2010s. By 2013, Hastings had pivoted into toys, gifts, skateboards and comics—making it, at one point, the largest comic book chain in the nation.

Marmaduke: It was really obvious what was happening, and once you're in the river, you can't get out of it. The last five years were sort of, "Houston, we have a problem" once a quarter. We would have to do some heroic thing just to keep our heads above water. And that's exhausting.

When you work hard and you're opening stores and successful, that's reinforcing. You go to sleep at night and wake up in the morning, ready to go. But when you're [constantly] drowning and have to save yourself one more time, and then know the same thing is coming up again in another three months, that's hard.

I was so exhausted when we sold that I really didn't do much for the next six months but rest. It had been brutal.

During that period, John's wife, Marty, had suffered a stroke, which dramatically reduced his ability to travel. [Marty eventually passed away in 2019.] So when a buyer came along in 2014, Marmaduke sold Hastings and retired. Hastings Entertainment filed for bankruptcy protection in 2016 and closed all 126 stores—including its two remaining stores in Amarillo—that year. It also closed its corporate headquarters, which at that point still employed more than 400 local people.

Today, those alumni remain in touch and were thrilled to relive the good old days at the recent reunion. They still represent some of the brightest business minds in Amarillo, having transferred their hard-earned skills to new employers, from Caviness Beef Packers to Panhandle PBS.

Vandivere: I stayed until the very end. It was very depressing to me because it was my family. When [John] walked out of the door, I walked out of the door. [Note: She still works as Marmaduke's personal assistant.] Everybody was looking for jobs and some of them got better jobs with the vendors we had dealt with all those years. They went to music companies and book companies and still have good jobs, because of all the training and experience they had.

Whitton: The kind of meaning and loyalty that brought this many people back [for the reunion], I don't know too many other companies that can do that.

Marmaduke: Some of those people [at the reunion] worked for us 25 years ago.

Vandivere: From the '90s.

Whitton: That really says something about the company.

JOHN MARMADUKE AT THE FIRST HASTINGS LOCATION IN WESTERN PLAZA (BELOW)



Marmaduke: It was built out of necessity. Because we were in Amarillo, we didn't have a large labor pool, a skilled labor pool, to draw from. So we had to create our own. We really taught those people the fundamentals of business.

I hear, over and over again, "The lessons I've learned at Hastings, I've used in all of my business career."

The great thing about young people is you've got a blank slate. They're open to [instruction]. How to be organized. Why you should answer your email on a timely basis. How to treat people. How to reprimand someone. What was the rule?

Vandivere: Three to one.

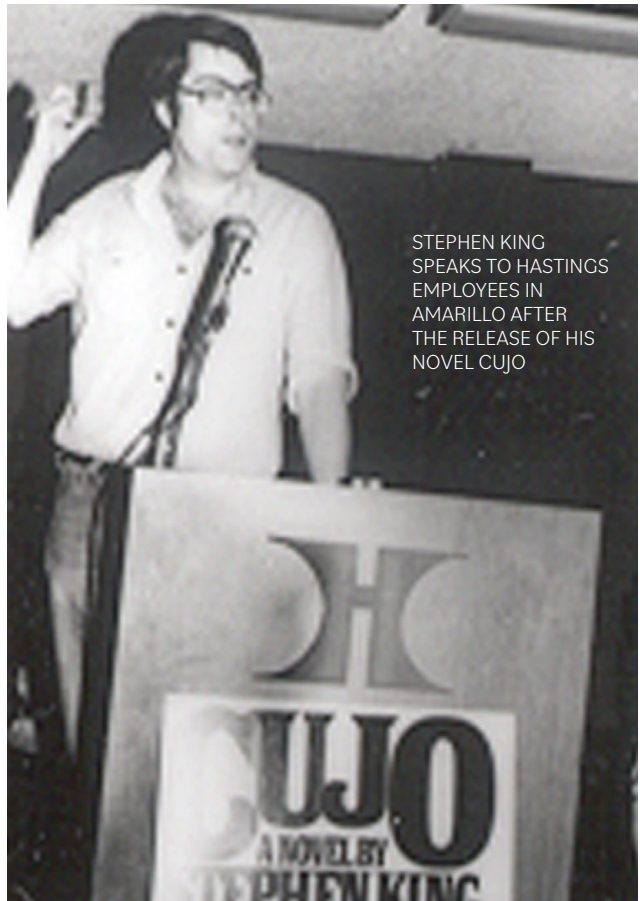
Marmaduke: You've got to compliment someone three times as often as you criticize, or people are going to resent you.

Vandivere: You weren't just thrown into the company and given a job. They were always giving you training and supervision. [John] had an open-door policy. If you had any questions or problems, come to him.

Marmaduke: I ran into a lot of CEOs who didn't have facetime with their employees and I was sort of shocked by it. But I'm reminded of when Sam Walton was being interviewed by a reporter from the *New York Times*, and he said, "Mr. Walton, you're in the stores three or four days a week. How can you possibly do that?"

And Sam said, "Stores is what we do."

He was right: Stores is what we do. 😊



STEPHEN KING SPEAKS TO HASTINGS EMPLOYEES IN AMARILLO AFTER THE RELEASE OF HIS NOVEL CUJO

10

Things to Do at the Public Library

BY JASON BOYETT

The library isn't just about books anymore. In fact, "reading" is just one reason among many that local people step into any of the city's five public libraries. Some of those reasons might surprise you.

"Libraries have always adapted," says Stacy Clopton, coordinator of PR and programming for Amarillo Public Library. In most cases, that expansion of services has to do with the demands of patrons. "It is very much the library ethos to [ask] what is the community need? And then how can we help meet that need?"

Beyond the stacks, here are 10 things you can do at the Amarillo Public Library.

1

Read.

This is the obvious one, so let's make it clear from the start: The Amarillo Public Library still wants you to read. Check out books. Research a school project. Browse through magazines. (You can find free copies of the latest *Brick & Elm* on display at all five local libraries.)

Clopton estimates patrons have access to around half a million items across the library system—mostly books. That's not changing anytime soon.

2

Download ebooks, audiobooks and comics.

With a library card, users can access a staggering number of digital titles using free, downloadable apps. CloudLibrary and Boundless both allow access to huge collections of ebooks and audiobooks—just log in with your library card and PIN. "They are free and you can listen or read wherever you are," Clopton says. "We share those collections with other libraries in Texas, so that means our patrons have access to hundreds of thousands of titles. It's much larger than it would be if it was our collection alone."

Clopton is a big fan of comics and graphic novels, and the Comics Plus app gives library patrons access to those products. "They're good for your brain," she says, because integrating words while interpreting visual images requires higher-level thinking. "Everyone should read comics," she says. The Comics Plus app offers separate collections for children, teens and adults, sorted by age. It includes manga, nonfiction graphic books and graphic novels from a broad selection of publishers.

3

Visit art organizations and nature attractions.

Amarillo Public Library cardholders are able to "check out" Amarillo Little Theatre tickets and passes to the Amarillo Zoo, Wildcat Bluff Nature Center and the Don Harrington Discovery Center.

The latter three organizations offer week-long passes. "You can check out those passes for a week at a time, and during that week,

you and your entire family—two adults and up to two kids—can visit that attraction as often as you want," she says.

ALT provides the library a certain number of tickets to each of its productions, and patrons can check out tickets on a first-come, first-served basis. "I always tell people I'm putting 'check out' in air quotes because they don't bring them back," Clopton adds. Each household is allowed to check out tickets to every other show, to make the arts organization available to as many people as possible.

"These are really great programs we have with our partners. We're very grateful to them for making it work," Clopton says.

4

Stream movie and television content.

Digital streaming services seem to be raising prices every month, but the library offers a free alternative. Using the app Kanopy, cardholders can access an ad-free streaming service that gives public library members access to a large catalog of films and documentaries—including A24 films, independent cinema, critically acclaimed documentaries, foreign films and classic Hollywood movies.

Some titles are available all the time. Others become available in bundles. "There's a British cinema bundle, a kids' bundle and a family-friendly bundle," she says. Patrons have a certain number of play credits every month they can use to stream features. (Some collections offer unlimited access.) The app is downloadable to smart TVs, allowing users to watch them just like they would Netflix or Hulu.

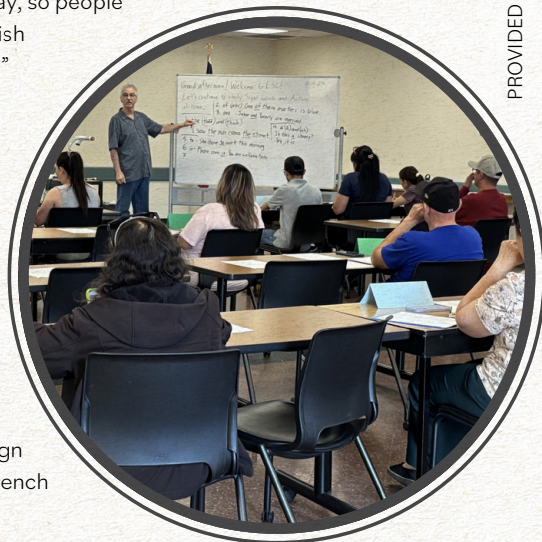
5

Learn a language.

The library offers free English as a Second Language classes at its East Branch (2232 E. 27th Ave.) and at the Downtown Library (413 SE Fourth Ave.). The East Branch also teaches a Spanish as a Second Language class. "That's a great opportunity for people who've always wanted to learn Spanish, or maybe they studied it in high school and have let some of that training slide," she says. "The East Branch even offers a conversation hour every other Wednesday, so people can practice the Spanish they've been learning."

Around 15 to 25 people attend each weekly class.

Another digital app, Transparent Language, offers at-your-own-pace language learning software for more than 110 world languages, including American Sign Language, Chinese, French



PROVIDED PHOTOS

and German. It's appropriate for learners at all levels. Transparent Language requires registering for a free account.

6 Repair old things and create new things.

The Amarillo Public Library officially opened its MakerSpace in the downtown location in the summer of 2021, and the public continues to discover its wonders. "Our MakerSpace is so busy," Clopton says. Around 12,000 people accessed it over the past fiscal year. "People do all kinds of things there."

Some use the tools and materials to pursue hobbies like knitting, 3D printing and scrapbooking. And while Clopton loves seeing patrons make new things from scratch, she's also noticed an uptick in people using the MakerSpace to repair products. "We had a family who used the leatherworking tools to repair a beanbag chair," she says. "We've had people repair straps on their backpacks or hem a skirt."

Using the MakerSpace requires a library card from Amarillo Public Library or any other member of the Harrington Library Consortium. Some tools have to be "checked out" from the MakerSpace for use, and some have age restrictions. The long-arm quilting machine is extremely popular and requires an appointment.

7 Start a garden.

This may not be the best time to plant a garden, but it's early enough to begin thinking about one. The Seed Library at APL is one of its most unique features, courtesy of a partnership with the High Plains Food Bank. Patrons can withdraw up to five seed packets a month from the library. (Like ALT tickets, you don't have to return them.)

"It's a great opportunity to try something new. If you're thinking, 'I might try a garden but I don't want to make a big investment in case I'm bad at it,'" then the Seed Library is for you, Clopton says. It includes a variety of flower seeds—which tend to go quickly—along with vegetable seeds that work well in this area, including radishes, carrots, cucumbers, okra and more.

Those seeds are available now and are regularly restocked by the food bank.

8 Find a job.

Almost everyone has a smartphone these days, but some tasks are easier on desktop computers. All five local branches offer public-access computers. "There are certainly times when it's really nice to have a full-size keyboard and a full-sized monitor," Clopton says.

These include access to resources that patrons can use to help format a resume, write an effective cover letter and complete online job applications. These resources are also available on the APL's website. "You log in with your library card number and your PIN and you can get assistance for that job search," she says.

Patrons can use library computers for 90 minutes at no charge. Free Wi-Fi is also available within the premises.

9 Entertain and inspire children.

Storytime at APL branches has been popular for decades. Every branch offers at least one regular Storytime during the week. These are open for children of all ages and are absolutely free. The East Branch offers a bilingual Storytime on Friday mornings, and the Southwest Branch (6801 SW 45th Ave.) even hosts one for babies and prewalkers (ages 2 and younger) on Tuesday mornings.

"These are just great for kids," she says. "They're learning their colors and numbers and letters, but they're also learning things like how to be part of a group." Children who attend Storytime learn to sit and listen, or to wait their turn to ask questions. This prepares them for the structure of school—which can be overwhelming without some experience in that kind of setting. "And they can really help parents make the most of their time that they spend reading with kids at home," Clopton adds.

10 Get social.

Most librarians still like patrons to keep quiet while browsing the stacks, but Amarillo's library branches can also serve as social gathering places. They host craft groups, book clubs and other social activities. "We have book clubs where people get together and talk about books once a month, and a craft group at our East Branch library. They all just bring their craft projects and sit around and work on their projects and talk together.

That's a great social opportunity," she says.

The book clubs include one at the Southwest Branch dedicated to inspirational fiction, along with a general-interest book club at the same location.

A women's book club meets at the Northwest Branch (6100 SW Ninth Ave.), focusing on themes like "women in politics" or "women in Texas history."

Furthermore, the Northwest Branch hosts a free yoga class every second Saturday and the East Branch offers a dance aerobics class every fourth Saturday.

Last year, Amarillo Public Library launched its Memory Café, a resource that offers enrichment activities and social interaction once a month at the Downtown Library. "This is an opportunity for people who are dealing with memory loss to come and take part in enrichment activities in an environment that is nonjudgmental and supportive. Their care partners come as well, so it's a great opportunity for them to be able to talk with people in the same situation," Clopton explains. Activities often include music and craft projects for people who can easily become isolated. "And there's usually a therapy dog there," she adds.

The Memory Café is free and open to the public, scheduled for the second Saturday of each month at 9 a.m.

Clopton says Amarillo Public Library intends to continue growing its services in the future, whether that means providing access to digital apps or supplying tangible products like seeds and MakerSpace tools. "We're always looking for new and innovative ideas," she says. "We're happy when people are surprised by the library." ☺





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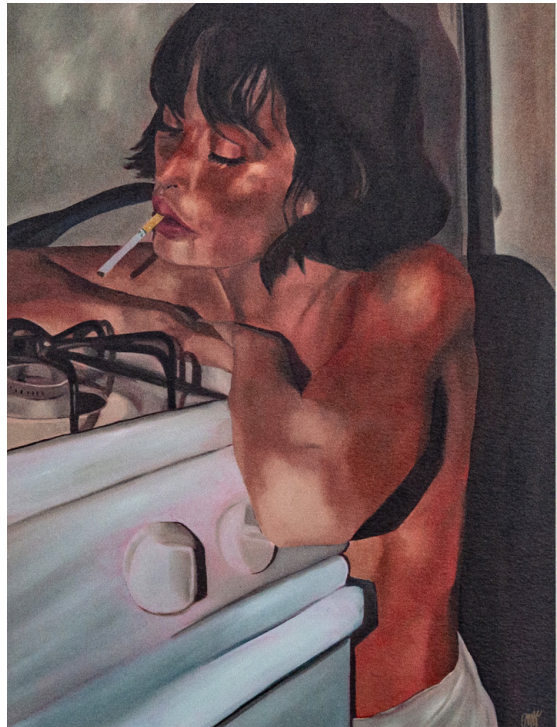
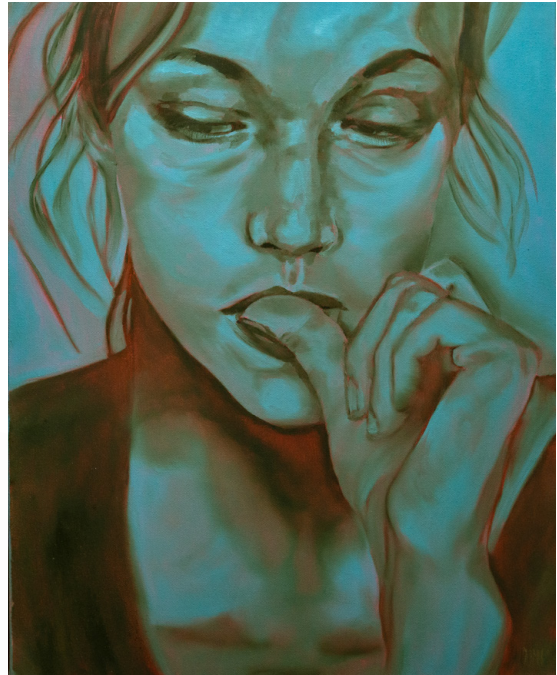


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575 PIZZERIA

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 \$

APPLEBEE’S GRILL + BAR

Look, it’s Applebee’s. You don’t need an introduction. You already know about the inexpensive family meals and daily lunch specials. You know it’s got a full bar and a drink of the month. You know it’s a decent spot for dates. But you may not know it now has food to-go and delivery. 2810 Soncy Road, 806.351.2810, restaurants.applebees.com \$\$

ASPEN CREEK GRILL

This comfort casual chain has very few locations, but ours on I-40 is constantly busy. The appetizers are great for sharing and the popular Happy Hour is ridiculously affordable. Each location offers a signature menu. Try a Black Angus steak or pizza. 4110 W. I-40, 806.398.2776, aspencreekgrill.com \$\$

AY CARAY

Serving traditional Mexican plates, the restaurant strives to keep the authenticity and culture of Mexico through their food, staff and style. The tacos are popular and can be topped with your preference from their fresh salsa bar. 1508 S. Grand St., 806.699.1057 \$

THE BAGEL PLACE

This beloved breakfast and lunch spot introduced bagels to the Panhandle years ago, and locals have been grateful ever since. Grab a fresh bagel to go and choose from a variety of cream cheese flavors. Or try the oversized homemade sweets. (Look, everything here is delicious.) 3301 Bell St., 806.353.5985, bagelplace.net \$

BEEF O’BRADY’S

The typical spot for post coach-pitch baseball games, this Irish joint is the perfect family spot to throw the kids in the arcade area while the adults debrief at the bar with a game on. Known

most for their wings, they have 18 different sauces and dry rubs to choose from. 7306 SW 34th Ave., Suite 7, 06.437.1419, beefobradys.com/amarillo \$\$

THE BRUNCH TRUCK CAFE

Open until late afternoon, this hidden brunch spot serves breakfast, lunch and specialty drinks. Almost everything on the menu can be made vegan or gluten free. All of the kitchen sink items are popular, especially the breakfast burrito. 213 SW Seventh Ave. 373.4199, thebrunchtruckamarillo.com \$

BUFFALO WILD WINGS

If you love wings, this has always been the spot. It is also the ultimate sports fan hangout spot at an affordable cost with weekly Tuesday night specials. On Thursdays, boneless wings are buy one, get one free for takeout and delivery. 5416 S. Coulter St., 806.359.4386 / 9511 E. I-40, 806.335.2204, buffalowildwings.com \$\$

BULSHO SOMALI RESTAURANT

Off of the Fritch highway, this halal restaurant serves Middle Eastern and East African meals. Make sure to get there before 2 p.m., when they typically run out of rice and meat dishes. 2380 Fritch Hwy. \$\$

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 \$

CASA JALISCO

Open for breakfast until late lunch, this river road Mexican restaurant has a chill and casual atmosphere. The chile relleno and chilaquiles with homemade tortillas are some of their most popular dishes. 5608 River Road, 806.803.2827 \$\$

CALICO COUNTY RESTAURANT

This Amarillo favorite isn’t fancy—the rusty farm tools on the cabin-style walls make that clear—but the homestyle food is always good, from breakfast fare to chicken-fried steak. This is the kind of friendly place where you always order the same thing (and you’re happy you did). 2410 Paramount Blvd., 806.358.7664, calicocountydiner.com \$\$

CHARLIE’S BURGERS AND BREW

Featured in our July/August Burger Tour, Charlie’s has possibly the spiciest burger in town—one that requires a waiver before eating.

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

There are tons of other burger options that won't catch your tongue on fire though. To finish off the meal, they offer delicious desserts specials that change daily. 4515 S. Georgia St., 806.678.8647 \$

CHILI'S GRILL & BAR

Somehow, the Triple Dipper is just now getting recognized for how much of a steal it is—it seems as though you can get one of everything this way. Everyone still has a favorite menu item at Chili's—like the chicken crispers, guiltless grill items, meal for two, margaritas, or molten chocolate cake. 5016 S. Coulter St., 806.353.2992 / 3810 W. I-40, 806.359.5000, chilis.com \$\$

CICIS PIZZA

Cicis Pizza seems like it has been around forever with their clean and full all-you-can-eat buffet of pizzas, salads, sides, wings and desserts. The endless plates of food and arcade games make for a very kid- and family-friendly space. 6605 W. I-40, Suite 1, 806.359.8000, cicis.com \$

CREAM OVER WAFFLES

Holy COW! After starting as a food truck, Cream Over Waffles is now open in the old Marble Slab location. Serving more than just homemade ice cream, the shop uses waffles from scratch instead of just grabbing them from a box. Sweet and savory are the perfect combination and COW nails that with their fresh panini sandwiches. 201-M Westgate Parkway West, 806.877.1485

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

DAYVASOS JN AMARILLO

As our cover of the July/August issue, Dayvasos JN in Amarillo is a chain that started in Chihuahua, Mexico and has to be one of the cleanest restaurants ever. With something for everyone, you have to snack and try multiple things. The drinks themselves could be an entire meal—topped with protein, fruits, vegetables, tomato juice and a drink. 1104 E. Amarillo Blvd., 806.632.7243 \$\$

DILLOS CRAFT BURGERS

Of course a restaurant located on historic Route 66 has flavorful burgers that are stamped with its logo on the buns. Not only do they have great burgers, the "crack" fries are served with the house seasoning and the sweet potato sweets just got sweeter with toasted marshmallows. 2806 SW Sixth Ave., 806.356.0024 \$\$

DIRTY DOUGH COOKIES

Rapidly franchising across the country, Dirty Dough Cookies is now baking treats on Western. They feature a rotating menu each week with different cookie flavors. Gorgeous on the outside, they are stuffed with mouth-watering layers, mix-ins or fillings on the inside too. 2201 S. Western St., Suite 60, 806.318.3011, dirtydoughcookies.com \$

DJ'S BURGERS

From the inside and out, this old-fashion restaurant is known for their cooked to order cheeseburgers, huevos rancheros breakfast and the California burrito. 2309 SW 3rd Ave, 806.372.3134 \$

EL CARBONERO RESTAURANTE Y PUPUSERIA

Amarillo isn't exclusively a destination for Tex-Mex food. This joint on the Boulevard offers authentic Salvadoran cuisine, including pupusas, plantains, salvadoran sausage and pan con pollo. If you're into flavorful grilled meats—or Salvadoran beer like Regia Extra—this is the place. 1702 E. Amarillo Blvd., 806.373.1973 \$

EL MANANTIAL RESTAURANT

This Amarillo Boulevard dive is regularly recommended as a favorite restaurant or



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ideal place to take out-of-towners. El Manantial serves the best chips in Amarillo, alongside fantastic salsa and a bowl of charro beans. On weekends you'll hear mariachi music. The restaurant is closed on Wednesdays. 3823 E. Amarillo Blvd., 806.383.1852 \$-\$\$

THE FALCON

The Falcon is taking off as Bushland continues to grow. Known for their ground brisket patties, the restaurant also serves loaded baked potatoes, tacos, sandwiches and chicken platters. You cannot have a burger without one of their special shakes or malts. 2300 Wells St., Bushland, 806.803.0219, thefalconinbushland.com \$

FAZOLI'S

For a fancy-feeling to-go meal, enjoy fast Italian food like pasta, salads, build-your-own items, submarine sandwiches and pizza. Carbs are basically the source of joy, so people naturally love the complimentary bread sticks 2512 Soncy Road, 806.457.9996, fazolis.com \$

FEED ME

Occasionally, diners have low expectations for vegan food. Feed Me redefines expectations with 100% meat- and dairy-free meals, such as burgers, hot dogs, chicken wings and sandwiches. Not just a casual eatery, Feed Me also includes a cozy coffee shop. 3407 W. Amarillo Blvd., 806.600.0986, veganrestaurantamarillo.com \$\$

FENG CHA BUBBLE TEA

Tea is a big deal in the Panhandle, but this isn't just another place for blueberry green iced tea. Feng Cha offers bubble tea and milk foam teas with decidedly not-quite-Texan flavors like cream cheese, matcha, taro and durian. Add-ins include boba, lychee jelly, grass jelly and more. Enjoy the sleek Instagrammable atmosphere, and try the dessert menu. 5611 Gem Lake Road, 806.437.1556, fengchausa.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



1400 W. Wilson St., Borger, Texas
806.273.7171 | webbchevroletgmc.com



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AMARILLO CLUB

amarilloclub.com | 806.373.4361

equipment. 1901 S. Georgia St., 806.418.6651/3450 S. Soncy Road, 806.398.0056, firehousesubs.com \$

FOUR POINTS BAR & GRILL

Located inside of the Four Points Hotel, this high-end restaurant is open for dinner serving American food with a pub feel. Enjoy daily food and drink specials, including happy hour. 1911 E. I-40, 806.242.6777, marriott.com

GOLDENLIGHT BEER & WINE GARDEN

GoldenLight is one of the most iconic restaurants on Historic Route 66. Its sister restaurant, The GoldenLight Beer & Wine Garden, offers the same delicious burgers and fries on the southwest side of the city, hosting live music in the outdoor area. 6014 S. Western St., 806.221.2337 \$

GOOD DAY BURRITOS

The name fits perfectly. You're bound to have a good day with one of their burritos and service. Offering a great value for your money, the burritos can be built with more than just your typical breakfast meat and eggs. Good Day is more than just a burrito restaurant though; it also offers other breakfast platters and even lunch. 3609 SW 45th Ave., 806.358.8226 \$

GRANDPA'S DONUTS

Everyone has a go-to donut shop, but no one cooks as good as grandpa. Grandpa's Donuts has two locations serving donuts, pastries, kolaches and other breakfast items. Don't miss the flat, crispy apple fritters! 2700 S. Grand St., 806.418.4994 / 5512 Gemlake Road, Unit 11, 806.803.0660 \$

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 \$\$

HACIENDA MECHE

Sixth Street and the Boulevard are known for their delicious and authentic Mexican food. But people often forget about downtown. If you're a fan of spicy salsa, then this is your place. The shrimp tacos also come recommended in this fun atmosphere. 626 S. Polk St., 806.236.4288

THE HANDLE BAR AND GRILL

Yes, it's a biker bar, but don't let the fact that you drive a Subaru keep you from this Texas-style comfort food. The fried bologna sandwiches are **chef's kiss** and the gigantic Bloody Mary might as well be a meal. The outdoor dining on Sixth Street really gets our motors running. 3514 SW Sixth Ave., 806.803.9538 \$

HOOK & REEL

This Cajun/Creole seafood franchise offers mix-and-match seafood boils, allowing customers to pair a favorite catch (think crab legs, lobster tail or crawfish) with their favorite sauces, spices and add-ons. The breaded-and-fried baskets are also made to please, including fresh flounder, catfish, oysters and more. 5807 SW 45th Ave., Suite 310, 806.803.3133, hookreel.com \$\$

HUMMERS SPORTS CAFE

Hummers is an Amarillo landmark dating back to the early 1980s, before sports bars were all the rage. This institution and its environs on Paramount have evolved since then, but the burgers are still fresh and delicious, the beer is still ice-cold and the good times are still really good. Our tip? Order the steak bites. 2600 Paramount Blvd., Suite B2, 806.353.0723, hummerssportscafe.com \$\$

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IT'S A PUNJABI AFFAIR

This hut across from Sam Houston Park takes a friendly, youthful approach to Indian-style street food. Our go-to orders include butter chicken, lamb curry, and marinated and fried tilapia—plus options for vegans and vegetarians. 4201 Bushland Blvd., 806.414.2114, itsapunjabiaffair.square.site \$

JERSEY MIKE'S SUBS

This chain promotes its high-quality meats, cheeses and fresh-baked bread. In the mood for something even more fresh? Turn your favorite sub into a bowl—just the sandwich without the bread! Order in-store or online and pick it up. 2311 S. Georgia St., 806.731.0731, jerseymikes.com \$

JORGE'S MEXICAN BAR & GRILL

The always-packed Tex-Mex restaurant is known for the chips and queso, fajitas and margaritas. You'll get great service, with the restaurant's owners working as servers, too. A separate bar area is available to wait or eat in when the dining room is full. 6051 S. Bell St., 806.354.2241, jorgesmexican.com \$\$

JOURNEY POLK ST. COFFEE

As an inviting and comfortable space for a coffee break or study spot, Journey's downtown Amarillo location has hot, iced or frozen lattes with a plethora of pastries and snacks. Need an extra boost? Order something from the espresso bar section. 817 S. Polk St., Suite 102, 806.403.2900 \$

KATHY'S KITCHEN

Breakfast is drive-thru only from 5 to 8 a.m., then the dining area opens at 10 a.m. for breakfast and lunch only. The northeast Loop location and homestyle food are perfect for drives up to Lake Meredith/Borger or northeast to Pampa. Low prices and generous portions. 4517 Highway 136, 806.268.1465 \$

KOP-JAI THAI-LAO STREET FOOD RESTAURANT

One thing that Amarillo does not lack is Thai restaurants, but people are already raving about this new option's noodle dishes, especially the Pad Thai. In a twist on the typical Thai or Lao offerings, Kop-Jai serves street food like short ribs, chicken wings and sausage with sticky rice. 6014 S. Western St. \$\$

LA BELLA PIZZA

This local restaurant might have the cheesiest pizza in town. With three restaurants within Amarillo and Canyon, La Bella's offers and delivers more than just pizza. For those wanting something different, they also have pasta, sandwiches, salads and chicken. They now deliver outside of city limits. 2300 E. 34th St., Suite 100, 806.331.2200 / 2601 SW Sixth Ave., 806.437.1441 / 7230 Hillside Road, 806.352.1600, labellaonline.com \$\$

LA CAMPANA

This homestyle Tex-Mex spot is especially beloved for breakfast on the weekends, but its diverse menu seems endless. The menudo comes highly recommended, especially with the homemade tortillas.



With a cost of living 17% below the national average, Amarillo offers the perfect balance of affordability and opportunity. Whether you're looking to build a career, raise a family, or simply enjoy more breathing room in your budget, Amarillo makes it easier to come home and *thrive*.

SCAN TO >>>
LEARN MORE



Photography by Bryan Brumley.

Don't miss Friday's breakfast and lunch buffet specials.
2220 Canyon Drive, 806.373.4486 \$

LA FUENTE TORTERIA

The name in English translates to "the source"—probably the source of tradition and amazing food. Just looking up photos of this restaurant could make your mouth water. Focusing mainly on tortas (which look like a thin burger), this cozy neighborhood place also serves street tacos, tamales and, on weekends, menudo. A small and cozy neighborhood place located on Grand. 511 S. Grand St., 444.6761 \$

LA MARISCADA DE CHARLY

Though the Panhandle is hundreds of miles from any ocean, you must try the seafood options here. Or enjoy Latin American and Mexican options, or even steak and comfort foods. 3500 E. Amarillo Blvd., 806.584.9472, decharlyamarillotx.com \$\$

LAZY GATOR

Cajun food with a Texas twist! Dine on seasoned pasta, seafood, fresh oysters, frog legs, burgers, gumbo or po' boys, and don't miss the drink specials. Not a huge Cajun fan? Try a tasty burger with a buttery bun alongside this neighborhood hangout's many regulars. 6103 Hillside Road, Suite 200, 806.418.6768 \$\$

LOS PICUCHOS

This hidden Mexican restaurant located in Happy State Bank downtown is worth searching out. It offers tons of soup options, all-day breakfast items, and popular lunch platters such as enchiladas, tacos, carne asada, gorditas and fajitas. 701 S. Taylor St., Suite 500, 806.437.1495 \$\$

MALCOLM'S ICE CREAM & FOOD TEMPTATIONS

The place we all used to go to with our grandparents, this locally owned iconic restaurant has been serving scoops and comfort food since 1986. People love the burgers, chicken fried steak and egg salad sandwiches. And no matter the age, no one can resist the malts and mundaes. 2100 Paramount Blvd., 806.355.3892 \$

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 \$\$

NOMAD NAPOLETANA

Nomad Napoletana has turned up the temperature on an iconic stretch of Polk Street. Diners can expect East Coast-style pizza in an upscale dining area and bar. Beyond pizza, feast on a complimentary dish of stecca, a Sicilian version of the baguette drizzled in olive oil and served with tender, spreadable garlic confit. Don't miss the

scratch-made meatballs, braised all day in California tomatoes and tomato sauce, then served with a dollop of ricotta. 614 S. Polk St., 806.376.4700, nomadnapoletana.com \$-\$\$

OISHII JAPANESE SUSHI & SAKE

Oishii elevates the local sushi experience with creative flavor combinations and presentation. The menu is huge. The seafood is fresh. The dishes are designed to induce gasps as they arrive at the table. All the sauces are made from scratch in-house. If sushi's not your thing, the traditional Asian staples are just as worthwhile. 2721 Virginia Circle, 806.877.2464 \$\$-\$\$\$

THE PLAZA RESTAURANT & BAR

If you remember its original strip-mall location with the indoor, lighted fountain, then you're already a loyal customer of this longtime Tex-Mex favorite. The menu is still affordable, with excellent fajitas, enchiladas and sopapillas—with a full bar. 2101 S. Soncy Road., 806.358.4897, theplazarestaurant.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 \$\$

PUBLIC HOUSE

Known for one of the best brunches in town, this southwest side hangout boasts inventive cuisine and an upscale, service-oriented atmosphere. The Happy Hour menu is extraordinary, as are the whiskey and wine lists. Give one of the daily bar and food specials a try. 3333 S. Coulter St., 806.398.7777, publichouseamarillo.com \$\$

ROOSTERS CAFE

This coffee, breakfast and lunch stop near 34th and Bell is quietly one of the best dessert places in the city. (That apple pie: Whoa.) But the quiche, sandwiches, soups and salads are also worth an order. Be advised: The dining room fills up quickly for lunch, but we love the cute outdoor area. 3440 S. Bell St., Unit 110, 806.353.7309 \$

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 \$\$

SCOTT'S OYSTER BAR

There are dives and then there are places like Scott's Oyster Bar, a legit, shackety-shack hidden in a mostly residential area off Paramount. This tiny place has been here forever, though the interior and menu have changed slightly since Scott sold it a few years ago.

Fresh oysters, tasty shrimp creole and classic Amarillo hospitality.
4150 Paramount Blvd., 806.354.9110 \$\$

SHI LEE'S BARBECUE & SOUL FOOD CAFE

We love this place. One of the owners calls his chicken-fried chicken the "comeback kid," because if you order it, you're guaranteed to come back. He's right. But everything on the menu is good. (The portions are always big.) 1213 SW Third Ave., 806.220.0032 \$

SPICY MIKE'S BAR-B-Q HAVEN

The spice is nice at this popular barbecue joint in southwest Amarillo, known for chopped brisket sandwiches, tender pork ribs and more. We also love the daily specials—like Saturday's smoked turkey sandwich—and homemade cobbler for dessert. 6723 S. Western St., 806.358.8550, spicymikesbarbqhaven.com \$

TAQUERIA EL TAPATIO MEXICAN RESTAURANT

Most locals assume the most authentic Mexican food is on the city's east side, but this joint also serves authentic Jalisco-style Mexican food near 34th and Coulter. The menu is huge, but we love the breakfast, massive parrillada meals and seafood. (There's also a Dumas location.) 3410 S. Coulter St., 806.331.6248 / 5630 W. Amarillo Blvd., 806.803.3220, tapatitx.com \$

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 \$\$

THE WESTERN HORSEMAN CLUB

In the 1980s, the Western Horseman Club was one of the hottest country-and-western bars in the city. Now, prominent local chef Rory Schepisi has taken on the task of breathing new life into the storied club. Schepisi has transformed the once-dingy, sprawling space with a swanky, modern-saloon vibe. The menu is western-focused, with options like Angus Beef burgers and sandwiches, Prime Certified Angus Beef steaks, chicken-fried steak, catfish and more. 2501 E. I-40, 806.877.1600, westernhorsemanclub.com \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

X- STEAKHOUSE

The name is a play on cattle brands—say "X-Bar"—and this Town Square steakhouse definitely knows beef. It's locally owned, has a full bar, and the prices are extremely reasonable for such a swanky atmosphere. We hear great things about the weekend brunch, too. 9181 Town Square Blvd., Suite 1311, 806.322.4227, xbarsteakhouse.com \$\$-\$\$\$

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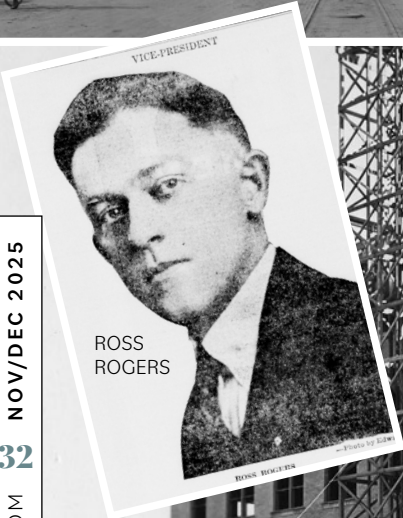
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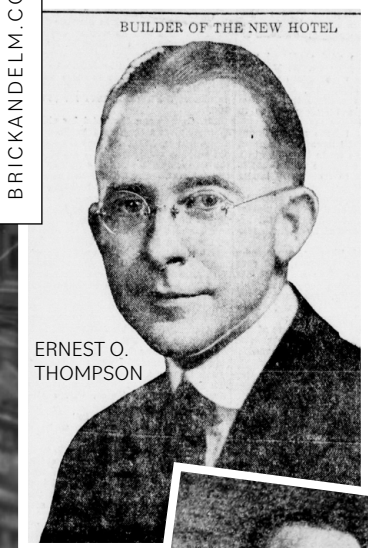
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UPSIZING DOWNTOWN



“skyscraper” was a fitting accessory for Amarillo’s 1920s ambitions.

A century ago, Amarillo was experiencing an oil boom. But at the beginning of 1925, Polk Street, the showplace of the city’s ambitions in those days, looked largely the same as it had a decade before.

That wasn’t the case outside of town. The continued development of enormous reserves of natural gas that were first tapped in Potter County in 1918, combined with 1923’s big oil strikes in nearby Carson and Hutchinson counties, was transforming the scrubby ranch land that once surrounded the city like an ocean of grass.

As 1925 headed to a finish, a select few decided the time had come to look the part of a booming city. And what better place to start than Third Avenue, at Polk Street, where Henry Sanborn first laid out his audacious plans for growth in the late 1880s? It was in this lower downtown area that Amarillo got downright citified that year, more accurately reflecting the city’s growing financial status and setting the stage for a rapid transformation of the skyline in the years to come.

Just a year before, C.T. Herring (known honorifically as Col. Herring) erected the five-story Palo Duro Hotel a few blocks east at Third and Fillmore. Its size and modern look no doubt piqued the interest of his fellow business and civic leaders who wanted in on the action. Back on Polk, another hotel owner who answered to colonel, Col. Ernest O. Thompson, couldn’t let Herring outdo him.

Thompson’s military title was not honorary—it was attained in the service of Gen. John “Black Jack” Pershing in World War I when Thompson was promoted to lieutenant colonel. After the war, he purchased the Amarillo Hotel, which had grown up with the city from humble, timber-framed beginnings to a stately brick edifice fronting Polk. With business booming and his hotel suddenly feeling dated, Thompson decided it was time to play the Kansas City card. He called up the architectural firm of Shepard & Wiser to design a sizable addition to the existing Amarillo Hotel structure that would welcome guests by September 1925.

The Kansas City architects were no strangers to Amarillo. The firm had already designed several stately homes in the city, and with the Amarillo Hotel addition, architect Albert C. Wiser saw an opportunity to stick around and play an ongoing part in fashioning a skyline that would properly advertise Amarillo’s big city ambitions.

What Amarillo lacked was a skyscraper, which in those days could mean a building with as few as eight to 10 floors. With so much oil flowing in, exploration companies and related businesses were proliferating in Amarillo by 1925 and seeking out modern accommodations. And likely these companies wanted to work close to one another to keep an eye on the competition. Building up was the best way to go.

Things moved fast, and though he was already overseeing a big construction project at the hotel, Thompson revealed in January 1925 that he was also building an office tower across Polk Street with Wiser’s firm handling the design work. With help from

investors that included future Amarillo Mayor Ross Rogers and noted businessmen such as Guy C. Saunders, Thompson envisioned a building that would be Amarillo’s tallest structure, briefly anyway.

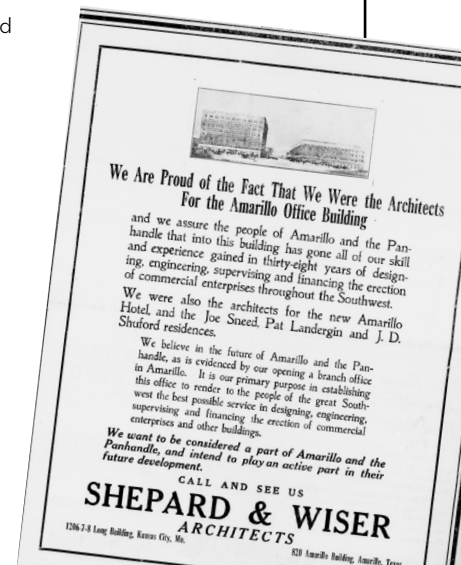
On New Year’s Eve, Thompson’s Amarillo Building opened as a single tower with Polk Street frontage and a main entrance along Southeast Third Avenue. Within a year, another virtually identical tower would rise to the south, joined to the first through a common ground floor and a bridge spanning all floors midway across the length of the rectangular towers. It created an H-shaped building that was both functional and easy on the eyes.

The Amarillo Building’s big opening on Dec. 31 competed with, or possibly merged into, a New Year’s Eve bash across the street at the newly expanded Amarillo Hotel. Surely someone danced in the streets that evening. The following Monday, Amarillo’s top business professionals rolled up their sleeves inside new, modern high-rise offices. Just about every profession a boom town required was represented: doctors, lawyers, insurance agents, financiers and of course, oil and gas companies. Wiser even opened a branch of his Kansas City office in the Amarillo Building. His work in the Panhandle’s capital city wasn’t done.

Though the Amarillo Hotel and the Amarillo Building didn’t wind up as Amarillo’s grandest and tallest architectural monuments of the 1920s, Thompson’s 1925 contributions to the skyline rose like stakes on a claim of promise that felt more sure than ever before. Just one New Year’s Eve later, C.T. Herring would go on to win the blue ribbon for building height with his 13-story Herring Hotel several blocks east at Pierce Street. Herring must’ve been impressed with what he saw at Third and Polk because he picked Wiser to design the Herring Hotel and Thompson to run it.

In 1926, Thompson expanded the Amarillo Hotel once more with a 12-story tower that made for good TV when the venerable old hotel was imploded in a live broadcast in 1978, making way for an expansion of T. Boone Pickens’ Mesa Petroleum. It was Pickens, however, who rescued the neighboring Amarillo Building from oblivion with a 1980s makeover. Current owners, former Mayor Ginger Nelson and her husband Kevin, have put even more shine on Amarillo’s first tall building, highlighting its historic details and earning it Texas landmark status and a listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Herring Hotel, later refitted for offices, emptied out in the 1980s and still awaits redevelopment. Meanwhile, downtown has seen an upswing in fortunes and has plenty of room for a future architectural statement to back up our ever-changing ambitions. Keeping Amarillo dressed for success is a multigenerational task. ☺



NOVEMBER IN DALLAS WITH JFK

Tourism is big business, to the tune of nearly \$12 trillion worldwide last year. Within that huge industry is a small, growing sub-category: dark tourism. It is tourism directed at locations known for death, disaster, suffering and the macabre. These run the gamut, from 9/11 sites in the east, to the Buddy Holly airplane crash site in Iowa.

One of the closest dark tourism destinations to our region is best visited in November. In 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on Nov. 22 while on parade in downtown Dallas. No matter whether they believe Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone or are conspiracy-curious, people want to visit where this American tragedy took place.

It is possible to make a weekend out of visiting the key sites associated with the event. Plan to spend time reflecting, re-creating familiar scenes from grainy vintage photos, and otherwise trying to wrap your mind around the shots that put an end to what Kennedy's widow Jackie called "Camelot."

While 62 years have passed, there are still many JFK/Oswald related

sites to visit in the area, and most within relative proximity. These can be visited in a day, leaving plenty of time for the usual DFW shopping, dining and entertaining.

First and foremost is **Dealey Plaza**, a sprawling expanse of grass and trees sandwiched into the odd convergence of three streets (Elm, Main and Commerce). The former **Texas School Book Depository Building** sits at the corner of Elm and Houston; Oswald's sniper's nest was on the sixth floor in the southeast corner, from which he fired three shots at 12:30 p.m.

The Sixth Floor Museum occupies the entire floor, and has the most detailed historical presentation of the assassination that can be found anywhere, for "Oswald did it" historians or conspiracy fans alike. If you haven't been, you must.

Be sure to walk **west on Elm** to the famous **grassy knoll**, where a concrete pedestal stands in front of a pergola. It was upon this point that Abraham Zapruder stood with his 8mm Bell & Howell movie camera, capturing the assassination. Walk farther west to the **triple underpass**, where you can survey the entire area looking east. Finally, be sure to cross over Elm into the open area, and look back to the



take the off-ramp

WITH NICK GERLICH

northeast like the “Babushka Lady” did, toward the approaching Kennedy entourage..

If you're not worn out after several hours of playing crime scene investigator, it's time to chase Oswald.

Following his three shots, Oswald took off on foot and by city bus at 12:33 p.m. During this period, President Kennedy, who had been rushed to Parkland Memorial Hospital (5200 Harry Hines Blvd.), was pronounced dead at 1 p.m. Fifteen minutes later, Oswald shot and killed Dallas Police Officer J.D. Tippit (corner of 10th Street and Patton Avenue). He quickly continued on foot to the **Texas Theatre** (231 Jefferson Blvd.), which he entered without paying, and sat down to watch the double feature, *War Is Hell* and *Cry Of Battle*.

Someone identified Oswald, though, as the man fleeing Officer Tippit's shooting. Dallas police were summoned and arrested Oswald during the first movie. He was hauled off to jail at what was then **Dallas Police Department headquarters** (101 S. Harwood St.). Two days later while being transferred, Oswald was shot by Jack Ruby outside a basement exit. He died that day.

For historical context, you'll next want to visit **214 W. Neely St.**,

where Oswald and then-wife Marina rented the second story apartment of a small duplex. That's where Oswald posed for his famous backyard photos from 1963, brandishing the Mannlicher-Carcano he used to shoot Kennedy, as well as leftist literature. Marina took the photos, which can easily be re-created if the house, as is often the case, is empty. (It's privately owned, however, so please respect the property.) By the time of the assassination, the couple had separated, and Oswald had moved to a rooming house nearby at **1026 N. Beckley Ave.**, also worthy of a quick snap.

The last stop on the tour is at **Rose Hill Memorial Park** in east Fort Worth (7301 E. Lancaster Ave.). This is where history intersects pop culture. Flanking Oswald's nondescript tombstone (GPS: 32.732435, -97.203264) is a similar marker bearing the name Nick Beef, which appeared in 1996. No one is buried beneath it. A *New York Times* article in 1997 revealed that an unemployed actor who went by that name had bought the plot and marker to memorialize his childhood connection to seeing JFK the day before he was shot.

Sometimes dark tourism takes an even stranger plot twist. ☹️





PROVIDED PHOTO

“SANTA CHRYS”

“Santa Chrys” is a beloved Amarillo resident and member of the Panhandle Sleigh Riders/Lions Clubs International, Lone Star Santas, and the International Brotherhood of Real Bearded Santas (IBRBS).

The best advice I ever heard is: “Trust God with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5)

My three most recommended books are: the Bible, *Atlas Shrugged* and *The First Christmas Night*.

To me, success means: at the end of the day, I can say that my family is safe and taken care of and that I have found a way to honor God.

People who know me might be surprised that: the only time that I am outgoing is when I am Santa Chrys. Most of the time, I am very quiet.

My biggest pet peeve is: all the construction all over town at the same time.

Everyone in Amarillo needs to experience: Candy Cane Lane at Christmas. Both Thanksgiving night and Dec. 23 at 8 p.m., you can watch the annual snowball fights between Team Santa and Team Grinch. Hundreds of families meet to throw cotton snowballs at each

other. At the end, Santa and the Grinch shake hands and hug it out. There’s always lots of laughs and fun!

If I could change any one local thing it would be: to have more local restaurants like Tyler’s BBQ, Pancake Station, Delvin’s, Green Chile Willy’s, Pescaraz and Mickey’s Place in Canyon.

This city is amazing at: coming together to help other communities and Panhandle families in need.

My favorite place in Amarillo is: with my family and our new grandson.

A local organization I love right now: Panhandle Sleigh Riders, newly chartered by The Lions Club. Following disasters, home fires, floods and tornados, this group of Santas and Mrs. Claus, elves, The Grinch and other Christmas performers come alongside the affected community to focus on helping the children involved. They bring toys, bikes, toiletries and other supplies to help kids get back to a semblance of normal and take some of the stress off the families. 😊

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Mon., Nov. 17: 9 - 11 a.m.
Tues., Nov. 18: 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.
Wed., Nov. 19: 9 - 11 a.m.
Thurs., Nov. 20: 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.

December

Mon., Dec. 1: 9 - 11 a.m.
Tues., Dec. 2: 9 - 11 a.m.

We hope to see you at a seminar!
Questions? Call 806-513-2451 (TTY:711).

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