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MARCH/APRIL 2026

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52 | BEYOND THE BLUFF

Kyle and Tonya Francis built a stunning contemporary residence near Wildcat Bluff, managing construction and designing the home themselves.

52



PHOTOS BY TIM BARNES WITH 41 PRODUCTIONS

BRICKANDELM.COM 4 MAR/APR 2026



12 *The Horizon* TAKE FIVE

BY THE NUMBERS
NEW IN TOWN
CONVERSATIONS
George Jackson
Prom DJs
Betty Wedgeworth
THE HOT LIST
With Chip Chandler

23 *Food + Drink* BUFF'S

ELEVATE YOUR PLATE
With Ruthie Landelius

28 THE DIRT Get the scoop

30 MUSINGS WITH MAGGIE By Maggie Burt

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PLAN**
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83 | SACRED SPACES

From light-filled cathedrals to weathered chapels, we explore the deeply meaningful aesthetics of Amarillo and Canyon churches.

96 | PLANT PEOPLE

Inside the plant-focused boutiques and independent greenhouses serving the Panhandle's obsession with greenery.

83



ST. ANDREW'S
EPISCOPAL
CHURCH

PHOTO BY SHANNON RICHARDSON

96



ANNETTE TRIMBLE AND
CALEB JAMES WITH LILY,
NETTIE'S GREENHOUSE

PHOTO BY ANGELINA MARIE, SHORTEARED DOG PHOTOGRAPHY

32

BIZ

Get up in the city's business

34

THE CHASE

With Andy Chase Cundiff

36

THE CALL

With Melodie Graves

38

LOOK UP!

With Aletta Davis-Pitre

106

RESTAURANT
LISTINGS

112

BACK WHEN

With Wes Reeves

114

TAKE THE
OFF-RAMP

With Nick Gerlich

116

FINISH

Maria Pasillas

PLUS:



41



65



69

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Brick&Elm

AMARILLO'S PREMIER
LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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My dad was a church architect. Mike Boyett designed several local churches, including Coulter Road Baptist, St. Hyacinth Catholic Church, and Southwest Church of Christ. I spent my childhood exploring church buildings in various stages of construction. I've spent much of my career writing about religion—many of you have read my books—and I hope my dad's devotion to the architecture of worship is reflected in that passion. I love theology, but I also love the way theology is embodied through physical art and imagery, from the intricate carved details of First Baptist Church to the stained glass of Polk Street Methodist to the icons of St. John's.



I've dreamed of writing about church interiors since we launched *Brick & Elm*, part of my desire to use sacred architecture and design to explore Amarillo's deep religious roots. But it's also a way to honor my dad, who died in December 2021 from a form of brain cancer. He had just retired from a career that applied his talent and vision to create buildings used weekly by local people.

As we toured these sanctuaries, I was deeply touched to observe the yahrzeit memorial boards at Temple B'nai Israel, where bulbs are lit each month to honor those who have passed. It's part of a tradition that believes a person is eternal as long as their community remembers them and speaks their names. I drive past my dad's churches every day. When their sanctuary lights come on, I guess they're my own version of a memorial board. They speak to his legacy, and so does my feature about sacred spaces. I wish my dad was here to read it. I wish he could have toured these churches with us. I wish he'd been here to answer my architectural questions. I wish he was here. This is for him.

I can assume that you're touched and tearing up after reading Jason's vulnerable, beautiful letter about his father. I know I certainly was when he shared it with me.

So, I don't want to muck up the page with much more than to say that meeting this year's 18 Under 18 Award winners filled me with hope. No matter how short or long their resumes are, no matter how high up the class rankings, every student greeted us with brilliant eyes and eager faces filled with promise. Each one was polite and respectful. Each one expressed how they felt so honored to be selected. I was truly touched.

These bright stars are the future of our area, and we're delighted to feature them again this year. Learn about their accomplishments and read about their good character starting on page 41. I bet you'll be as encouraged as I was.





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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.



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.



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*. See her work at shorttearedog.com.



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.



JULIE THOMPSON

Julie is a Texas-based freelance writer with a background in radio, television and print journalism. Her work is now focused on longform features and human-centered storytelling in the Panhandle.



JOE GARCIA

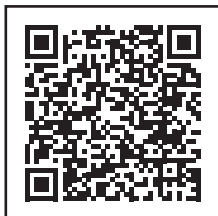
Joe Garcia is the chief revenue officer of a software company, but he's best known as jpegJoe, a photographer and sports media professional based in Amarillo. With more than 15 years' experience, Joe specializes in commercial portraits, senior and sports photography across the Texas Panhandle and beyond.

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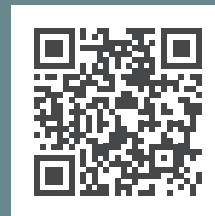
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The Horizon

Take Five

WITH MATT GRIFFITH, VICE PRESIDENT
ROCKROSE DEVELOPMENT, LLC

1. How does your past work for the City continue to impact your career?

My 11 years with the City of Amarillo provided me with a variety of opportunities: land use planning methodology, importance of zoning and land use strategies, interactions with land developers, exposure to City Council approval procedures, and a firm knowledge of development criteria. I also interacted with community focus groups, and learned the most important quality-of-life issues for many Amarillo citizens.

2. What do people not understand about what you do?

Not everyone understands that developers are responsible for the expense and construction of neighborhood infrastructure: drainage, dirt work, utilities, streets and alleys. That cost does not come from taxpayer dollars. We design and build all the interior infrastructure to meet city specifications. Once complete,

inspected, approved and accepted, the city takes over ownership and maintenance. This infrastructure also provides a revenue stream for the city through water and sewer sales to individual home and business owners.

Another thing that tends to surprise people is how long it can take from concept to completion. In 1997, I spent three years designing what we know today as The Colonies. Our portion of The Colonies' residential phases began in 2001 and were finally completed with all infrastructure and residential lots sold out in late 2025, with many homes still under construction or yet to be started. More than a quarter century later, we have a neighborhood that is still not completely built.

3. Beyond sales numbers, how do you define a "successful" neighborhood?

When we set out to plan a new development, we must be able

to predict what about this neighborhood will be relevant in 20 or 50 years from now.

Ultimately, homeowner quality of life is our No. 1 priority. We now have the luxury of seeing an entire generation of families creating their story in our neighborhoods. We know before we sell the first lot where the parks, schools and



PHOTO BY SHANNON RICHARDSON

New in Town See what's launched and landed.



Panhandle Community Services

The longtime nonprofit is constructing a new transportation and maintenance facility at 10921 S. Coulter St. The new site will support PCS's 26-county transportation operation as a part of a 60th anniversary expansion project.



Panhandle Apparel

The locally owned custom apparel shop opened early this year in Canyon. Dedicated to the "Panhandle way of life," the shop offers custom transfers, clothing and promotional items at 301 N. 15th Ave.

churches will be, and then ultimately the non-residential neighborhood amenities such as grocery and convenience stores, medical offices and other businesses that can not only serve our neighborhoods, but also the surrounding areas.

4. Amarillo is growing and changing. How do you think about development/housing trends without losing what people love about the city?

As a native Amarilloan, I am very biased in my love for this city. I try to stay in my lane and remain focused on creating the highest quality neighborhoods, providing the highest quality experience for the home buyer. Having said that, we pride ourselves in evolving our neighborhoods. For example, increased focus on pedestrian safety and a focus on walking trails, landscaped common areas and a general invitation to get outside and walk or ride your bike to your neighbor's house, the coffee shop or restaurant, or play tennis or hang out on a park bench and read a book.

5. When you imagine a Rockrose development 20 years from now, what do you hope people say about it?

Our hope is that our neighborhoods have created and will continue to create lasting memories and a high quality of life for Amarillo families. And that our legacy is recognized not only in the efforts to accommodate growth in a healthy and sustainable way, but also in our contribution to our community through the partnerships and gifting of land for schools, parks, churches and the Kids, Inc. Rockrose Sports Park.

By the Numbers

PUBLIC SAFETY

Amarillo's first responders are ready to serve around the clock. Here's a quick look at the data behind local safety.

Amarillo Fire Department



13

Fire stations across the city

90

Approximate number of firefighters working each of three daily shifts citywide

2,763

Calls in 2025 to the downtown Central Fire Station No.1, making it the city's busiest



23,681

Total AFD calls in 2025

4.2%

Percentage of callouts that are actually fires (65% are EMS, 31% are "other"—smoke scares, alarm malfunctions, severe weather events, cats in trees, etc.)

(Source: AFD)

Amarillo Police Department

23

Total "beats" across the city (staffing differs per shift and beat)



1,250

Hours of police academy classroom instruction for a recruit

379

Body-worn cameras currently in use by APD officers



683

DUI/DWI arrests made in 2025

5

K9 units (4 in the field for narcotics/patrol, and 1 for explosives detection)

(Source: APD)

Fort Worth Barber Supply

Initially located in Wolflin Village, Fort Worth Barber Supply has moved to 2640 SW 34th Ave. in the Coronado Shopping Center. The barber supply store also houses professional barbers who provide specialized fades, shaves and cuts.



Wink Boutique and Gift Shop

Amarillo's newest boutique celebrated its grand opening on Valentine's Day. Wink is owned by three local business women: Ashley Marsh of Marsh Market, Jessica Roper King of Simply Adorable Gifts and Nicole Ballin of CB Boutique.



Treasure Hunt Games

Treasure Hunt Games has expanded into the Amarillo market from Clovis, New Mexico. Dedicated to tabletop game enthusiasts, Treasure Hunt offers space for deck building, painting miniatures, and instruction inside its storefront at 3801 Olsen Blvd., Unit 2.

George Jackson

A GLOBAL CONDUCTOR DETAILS THE ARTISTRY OF THE GLOBE-NEWS CENTER

BY CHIP CHANDLER

In 2021, when George Jackson explored interviewing to become the music director and conductor of the Amarillo Symphony, one of the first things he learned about was the orchestra's majestic home, the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts. Now in his fourth season with the orchestra, Jackson helped plan the Symphony's official celebration of the concert hall's 20th anniversary, held in January. Jackson took time during a trip to his home country of England to reflect on the anniversary concert and what the Globe-News Center means to the city on a local and international level. *(This interview has been edited and condensed.)*

Chip Chandler: When did you first learn about the Globe-News Center, and what were your initial impressions when you first saw it?

George Jackson: I first learned about the Globe-News Center when I was actually researching the Amarillo Symphony ... back in 2021 when the music director search started. And as part of my research, I looked into Amarillo and the demographics, and of course saw this amazing concert hall. And then my first trip to Amarillo, which was January 2022, when I first came and conducted the Symphony as part of the music director search. I remember waking up on a Sunday morning in Amarillo, and telling myself that I would walk to the concert hall. And I remember very clearly just sort of turning the corner off Polk Street and walking down Sixth Avenue toward the center and realizing just how incredible it looks seeing it in the skyline. And then, of course, the second impression, which I think is also the most poignant, is the idea of actually being in this place. There's something quite magical about ... seeing an empty concert hall because there's much potential and you wonder what's going to be the next performance.

CC: Tell me about your first concert experience in the hall.

GJ: For me, I think the important thing about the hall is the clarity of what you hear, first of all, from the podium. The thing that amazes me is how well



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I think one of my favorite things about the Globe-News Center is actually a little bit like Amarillo as a town. It has the feeling of a big city, or a big concert hall, but it also has the intimacy and community of a smaller space or a smaller town.

—George Jackson



balanced the orchestra sounds from the stage when you're actually standing on the podium. You get a very nice balance of sound. That was one of the first things I experienced as a conductor. I think one of my favorite things about the Globe-News Center is actually a little bit like Amarillo as a town. It has the feeling of a big city, or a big concert hall, but it also has the intimacy and community of a smaller space or a smaller town.

CC: That's a really great way to think about that.

GJ: I mean, actually, it's the perfect concert hall for Amarillo, because it's not too big and it's not too small. One of the things that I love about the Globe-News Center is that even if you're performing big symphonic music with hundreds of people on that stage, you always feel connected to everyone on stage and every single person in the audience. You feel close to them. And I know that a lot of musicians in the orchestra have commented in the same way. You never feel disconnected because of the space or feel you're very far from the audience. It feels quite intimate.

CC: How does it compare with other venues in which you've worked?

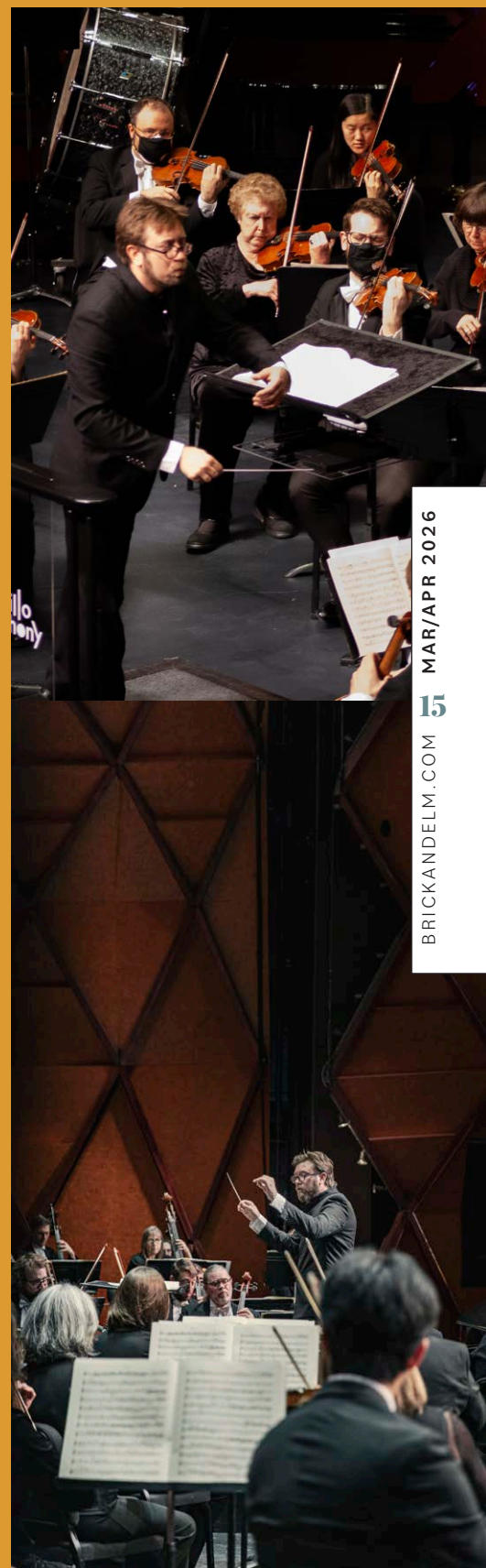
GJ: I've been lucky enough to work in many different countries, all across Europe and also the United States. To me, the Globe-News Center feels like a happy region between all the different extremes. For example, I used to work as an assistant conductor at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, and that's a very dynamic acoustic. In fact, they have to put a curtain in the concert hall to dampen the sounds. I've also experienced in London, we do a lot of concerts in churches. And, it's interesting because churches are designed for a very different space than necessarily for a concert. As a musician in the orchestra, you can really hide within the sound of the orchestra if the acoustic is resonant. What I love with the symphony is there's a clarity of sound in the building that you don't get in concert halls all over the world. That actually asks the musicians to play at a higher level because they know that they will be heard on that stage because of the clarity of sound.

CC: How do you think the GNC has impacted Amarillo's reputation on the international scene?

GJ: Well, it's definitely one of the things that I love to talk about when I travel, talking about Amarillo to other musicians and to other people across the world. One of the things I love to do with our guest artists is show them our concert hall before we start rehearsing, and there's always a real sense of awe when they see that hall for the first time. I'm very proud to see that. Musicians and artists across the world, they talk, and one of the great conversations that I know a lot of people have is that Amarillo has one of the most incredible concert halls. That's a positive message that goes out into the world, because actually, I think what lies behind the Globe-News Center is quite simply the fact that our community is very unique because they take music and arts, more widely, very, very seriously. It's very clear that people absolutely love the arts and are willing to be part of it and to actually make something fit for the future. That's a blessing.

CC: Talk about the 20th-anniversary concert. What was that weekend like?

GJ: JJJJ, the guitarist, it was her first time and she absolutely loved it. I wanted to see something not necessarily too classical, because I wanted to remind everybody that the Globe-News Center is not just a classical music concert hall. It's a community space. Then also we performed Anton Bruckner's *Symphony No. 7*, which was the first time the symphony played a Bruckner symphony. People often say that his music is actually very architectural in style. It's almost built with big blocks of harmony, big blocks of sound. So, in that sense, it was a celebration of the hall and this important event in our orchestral history. We also commissioned Gavin Higgins' "Fanfare Americana," specifically written to celebrate our hall. What's exciting about that is shortly after our commission, an orchestra in London got in touch with us at the Amarillo Symphony to ask permission to take on the British premiere of that fanfare. It helps put the Globe-News Center on the map. 🍷





Artist Betty Wedgeworth



PROVIDED PHOTOS

Every week, *Brick & Elm* receives press releases about local events, from ribbon cuttings and political town halls to art exhibitions. We're a small team and unable to attend everything, but one February event recently caught our eye. It was a traditional, curated art show at Trustwell Senior Living at Plum Creek Place, a community for senior adults, located behind the Walmart near Tascosa Road.

The gallery-style show featured several dozen original paintings by 93-year-old resident Betty Wedgeworth, who has lived at Plum Creek for the past six months. And her work was beautiful! Betty no longer describes herself as an active painter, but we were truly drawn to her still lifes, portraits and dramatically lit western landscapes. It turns out she was a prominent artist in the 1970s and '80s, exhibiting her work from New Mexico to Oklahoma. We even found mentions of her shows in publications like the *Ruidoso News*.

"We wanted to honor Betty not just as a resident, but as an artist with a story worth sharing," says Savannah Shields, community relations director at Plum Creek Place. "A gallery-style show felt like the right way to celebrate her talent, her legacy and

the beauty of creative expression at every stage of life. Betty is a joy to have in our community."

With Savannah's assistance, we asked Betty a few questions about her life and creative career.

Tell us about your upbringing. What brought your family to Amarillo?

I was born in Wheeler and moved around a lot as a child. I came to Amarillo after the loss of my father at age 14.

When did you first realize you wanted to make art?

I started getting interested in art in first grade, and began drawing.

Your work includes still life, portraits and nature scenes. What are your favorite subjects to paint?

All of it!

What does it mean to you for your work to be featured in this art show?

It's an honor to me and my family. I have had my work showcased all around Texas and New Mexico.

What is your relationship to painting now?

Although I no longer paint, I still do crafts at Plum Creek Place.

Can you share details about your work career, volunteering or other interests beyond your art?

I was a stay-at-home wife and mother. I reupholstered furniture and made my two daughters' clothes and both of their wedding dresses by hand.

What have you come to appreciate about living at Plum Creek Place?

My friendships, dominos and bingo.

What advice would you give anyone who is thinking of learning to paint or pursue other creative activities?

Just do it! And don't give up. Not every piece is a masterpiece, but it's worth it.

Local artist Betty Wedgeworth has four grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren, and four great-great-grandchildren. Her family members are among her biggest fans. 🍷



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18

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Rhythm of the Night

WITH PROM SEASON ON THE HORIZON,
AMARILLO'S TOP DJs DETAIL THE ART OF THE SETLIST

BY CHIP CHANDLER

It's sequins and cummerbund season again as high school students across the region prepare for that most sacred rite of passage: Prom Night. We stepped behind the turntable with three of Amarillo's hottest DJs to get their inside tips on how to make prom night slap. *(These interviews have been edited and condensed.)*

JAMES ERIK MCMURRY

Chip Chandler: Why'd you get into DJing?

JEM: Just fell in love with music as a kid, from collecting cassettes to CDs, especially records. (Plus) the thrill of performing and the rush of getting the crowd moving to your mixes.

CC: What about DJing proms is fun for you?

JEM: It's a night to remember, and I get to make it unforgettable. I also get to make the party, not just attend it!

CC: How do you keep up with new music?

JEM: Spotify Discover Weekly, YouTube Music, and friends with better taste than me.

CC: What's your secret to get them on the dance floor?

JEM: Definitely got to read the crowd and make it one long mix throughout the night.

CC: How do you figure out the balance for the night? How many fast versus slow songs? Do kids even slow dance anymore?

JEM: I balance the night with more upbeat tracks to keep it going and slow jams to give them feels and a break. Again, crowd reading is a must. Kids absolutely do slow dance! It's prom night!

KATIE LYNN EDDINS, NEON PINK MEDIA

CC: How did you get into DJing?

KLE: I was working in radio as an on-air personality and attending college as a broadcasting major, and had done a couple DJ gigs for friends and other companies. I was also a performer, and someone suggested

I start my own company. So I just did. I've always enjoyed audio production so it was seemingly a natural progression.

CC: What do you love about DJing proms?

KLE: I have done tiny small town proms and big city proms, and they are all fun and unique in their own way. The themes that kids come up with are amazing, and it's especially impressive what some of the smaller towns are able to execute on a smaller budget.

CC: What's your secret to connecting with young people?

KLE: Teenagers, especially modern day, are all glued to their phones and social apps like TikTok. Over the last couple years, it has been challenging to unplug them from the Matrix. Their attention span is also shorter than any other generation, so when it's time to open up the dance floor, appealing to their love of capturing moments they might see on the 'gram and high-energy songs are key to engaging them.

CC: What's the song that always hits?

KLE: "Cupid Shuffle" by Cupid

CC: How do you put together a playlist?

KLE: The balance is the most important part. You have so many different personalities and you have to somewhat avoid slow songs until the end of the night. You really have to pay attention to what the kids are requesting. You also have to adhere to the rules of minimizing explicit [lyrics] in songs, which can also be a major challenge in modern music.

EDDIE MALDONADO, JUST 7 MEDIA

CC: What keeps DJing proms fun for you?

EM: Proms are fun because we are able to create a safe but fun environment for the kids to let loose and enjoy themselves. Proms are supposed to be unforgettable and the music is a big part of that. We put a lot of thought into our set lists and we love to see the hype moments, all the memories in the making.

CC: How do you keep up with new music?

EM: We update our playlists constantly, and we also visit with the prom committees and students beforehand to allow them to share playlists and song selections. This way we know they are hearing music they want to hear.

CC: How do you keep your audience engaged?

EM: Keeping them on the dance floor is all about sets and watching the crowd. We also interact with the crowd so they know we are not just there to push a button.

CC: What's the song that always hits?

EM: "Baby" by Justin Bieber

CC: How do you manage the energy of the night? Have you figured out the right mix between fast and slow songs?

EM: Balancing the night is just about watching the dance floor. We definitely want it hype, but we try to keep a flow and mix in a set of two or three slow songs every now and then, mostly country. They absolutely like the slow dances. After all, prom is a time to take chances! 🍀



EDDIE MALDONADO,
JUST 7 MEDIA

2026-2027

TUCUMCARI



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As Route 66 marks its Centennial year, Tucumcari, New Mexico, stands at the heart of the celebration, embodying the nostalgia, grit, and charm that made the Mother Road an American legend.

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This milestone year isn't just a commemoration—it's a reminder that the spirit of open-road adventure is still alive and thriving on the streets of Tucumcari.

NOSTALGIC
TUCUMCARI
NEW MEXICO

The Hot List

Spring entertainment options are blooming all over, from rocking concerts to top-notch arts offerings. Here's a glance at the can't-miss options over the next two months, but don't forget to subscribe to the weekly *Brickly* newsletter and the biweekly *Flavorillo* newsletter for even more tips.

Restaurant Roundup: Amarillo's top eateries take over the Rex Baxter Building on the Tri-State Fairgrounds, 3301 SE 10th Ave., on March 5 for this annual fundraiser for the Panhandle Chapter of the Texas Restaurant Association.

Oscar Movie Week:

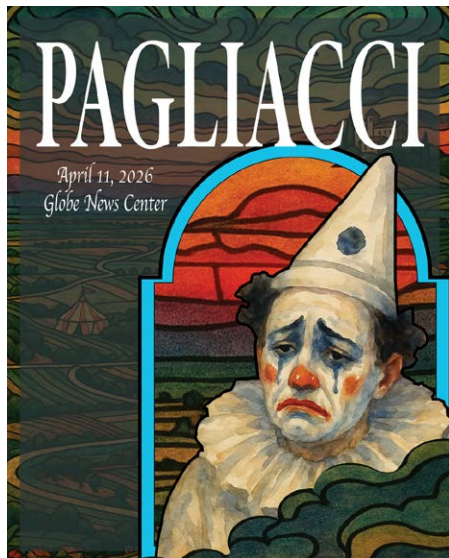
Cinemark Hollywood 16 once again will help cineastes catch up before the Academy Awards with this week-long marathon of Best Picture nominees, scheduled for alternating screenings from March 9 to 15. Movie fans also will want to watch for *The Bride!* on March 5; *Project Hail Mary* on March 20; *The Drama* on April 3; and *Mother Mary* on April 17.

Rene Vaca: The rising star comedian hits Amarillo for a March 12 show at the Globe-News Center for the Performing Arts, 500 S. Buchanan St., ahead of his headlining show at the 2026 Netflix Is a Joke. Fest in Los Angeles.

ZZ Top: Though founding bassist Dusty Hill died in 2021, the hirsute Texan rockers have kept burning down the road. They'll return to Amarillo for a March 22 concert in the Civic Center Auditorium. On the other end of the spectrum, curly-headed saxophone star Kenny G will offer an April 10 show, also in the Civic Center Auditorium.

Harlem Globetrotters: The stunningly athletic and delightfully goofy basketball team brings its centennial tour to Amarillo on, appropriately enough, April 1 in the Civic Center Coliseum.

Pagliacci: Amarillo Opera closes out its season with this tale of a sad clown on April 11 in the Globe-News Center. Even for people who don't necessarily like opera, this is probably the world's most recognizable opera. We guarantee you've heard its "Vesti la giubba" aria.



Tracy Lawrence: The '90s country star brings his "No Alibis" tour April 17 to The Lumberyard, 850 N. 23rd St. in Canyon. The venue's spring season also includes Stoney LaRue on March 27, Whiskey Myers on April 10 and Flatland Cavalry on April 30.

1887 Fest: Red Dirt favorite Bart Crow headlines this new music festival, set for April 18 at Shark Beach,

1505 E. Farm-to-Market Road 1151. Eight Amarillo bands will battle it out for awards, while attendees can also enjoy food trucks, vendors, family activities and more. ☺

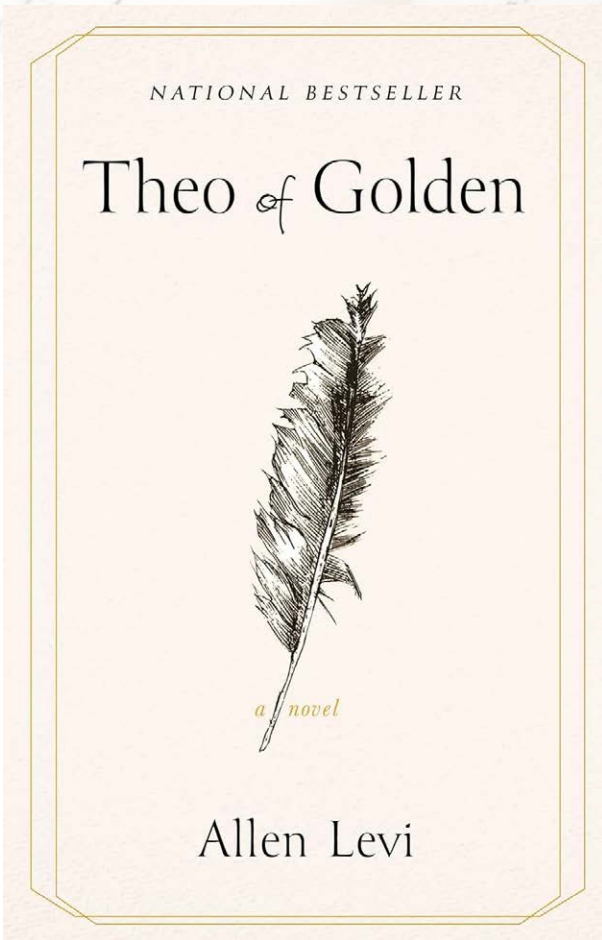


CHIP CHANDLER

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

Burrowing Owl

RECOMMENDS



THEO OF GOLDEN BY ALLEN LEVI

One spring morning, a stranger arrives in the small southern city of Golden. No one knows where he has come from ... or why.

His name is Theo. And he asks a lot more questions than he answers.

Theo visits the local coffeehouse, where 92 pencil portraits hang on the walls, portraits of the people of Golden done by a local artist. He begins purchasing them, one at a time, and putting them back in the hands of their "rightful owners." With each exchange, a story is told, a friendship born, and a life altered.

A story of giving and receiving, of seeing and being seen, *Theo of Golden* is a beautifully crafted novel about the power of creative generosity, the importance of wonder to a purposeful life, and the invisible threads of kindness that bind us to one another.

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PHOTOS BY SHANNON RICHARDSON

BUFF'S EMPLOYEES
LACIE STEPHENSON,
EMMA PEÑA, AND
JORDAN TURNER

Buff's

In Canyon, Buff's keeps evolving, from burgers to all-day breakfast to Bloody Marys →

When Buff's opened in Canyon in 2018, it brought an old-school diner vibe to students and local families. The original building—the old Cope's Coney Island on Fourth Avenue—had been a local fixture. Buff's brought burgers and milkshakes back to the location.

Midway through 2022, new ownership took over in the form of Panhandle Restaurant Group, the locally owned parent company of Joe Taco and other local restaurants. PRG expanded the space to seat around 100, added a full bar, boosted the number of TVs and refocused the menu on local favorites.

The start of this year brought another change: breakfast all day, which got the attention of the community after the closure of Buenos Dias this past September.

The breakfast burritos have been popular for years. So are the chicken and waffles.

But don't replace the burgers just yet. "The green chile cheeseburger's my favorite," says Nikki Dustman, general manager.

She's been with Buff's for four years and is a veteran of PRG operations. Dustman started with the company 20 years ago, working at Cattle Call on Interstate 40, then at Joe Daddy's. After a stint in the Metroplex, she returned to the Texas Panhandle restaurant scene.

"Most of our stuff is handmade," she says about Buff's. "All our sauces are handmade. Everything is hand-battered. The fries are fresh-cut."

And, like many of the region's best burger restaurants, the buns at Buff's come from local bakery The Bread Box.

That's not the only local product. The fried pies on Buff's menu—which serve as an amazing chaser for any burger—are produced by The Cake Company of Canyon, right down the street. "We try to stay local," Dustman adds.

Many of the employees come from the nearby student population.

Meanwhile, Buff's enjoys a regular stream of local families, and the smaller population means the regulars are easy to recognize. "We can get a lot of first-timers, though," especially during the summer travel season.

The addition of the bar brought a major upgrade to the location, but locally, Buff's is known more for its brunch cocktails and alcohol-to-go than as a destination for drowning any sorrows. "The mimosas and Bloody Marys are special on the weekends, so they get ordered quite a bit. We make our own Bloody Mary mix," Dustman says.

New menu items include a club sandwich and chicken avocado BLT salad, which was a monthly special that got so much attention it was promoted to the regular menu.

Beyond the burgers and breakfast, Buff's preserves the friendly atmosphere that residents love about Canyon: real food, family vibes and the local satisfaction of familiar faces. 🍷



THE WESTERN BURGER
AND COOKIES &
CREAM SHAKE

For the most
comprehensive
dining guide
in the Amarillo
area, turn to
page 106.



***“All our sauces
are handmade.
Everything is
hand-battered.
The fries are
fresh-cut.”***

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The Color Wheel Kitchen

MAR/APR 2026

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This year, I went back to school to study food, pursuing a master’s in gastronomy and food studies, and I’ll be honest, I find myself balancing school, my business and life with a little less grace than I had hoped. It’s been a challenge. It’s forced me to ask myself: *When life feels this full, how can the kitchen become a place of grounding rather than one more demand?*

Even for someone who loves to it, cooking can feel rushed when life is stacking up around you. It can feel like something to get through rather than something you are excited to do. When this happens, we’re approaching food from a place of exhaustion. That realization nudges me to think more deeply about how we enter the kitchen in the first place.

My background is in fine art. About the same time I began cooking professionally, I was trained to *look*: at balance, contrast, composition and mood. Color mattered. Space mattered. When I decided to stay in the kitchen, I wondered how I could utilize the fine art degree I had earned. Then it hit me: Plates could become canvases. Meals could become arrangements. Flavor is essential, of course, but how food feels and looks is just as important as how it tastes.

As I’ve returned to school, I’ve been thinking about food in a new way. I want to understand where it comes from, how culture and history shape it, and why certain meals lodge themselves in our memory while others disappear the moment the table is cleared. How does food make us feel grounded? I’ve learned that it’s weight and warmth rather than freshness, like a beautiful bowl of creamy mushroom soup. It’s gentle with its muted colors, silky in its puree, and comforting in its texture and tone.

It’s All About Color

As winter loosens its grip, I keep returning to the idea of color. We talk so much about recipes, techniques and meal planning, but not nearly enough about the emotional entry point that cooking evokes.

That’s where what I think of as The Color Wheel Kitchen comes into play. Instead of starting with the question, “What should I make?” it asks something softer and far more intuitive: *How do I want this meal to feel?* When you ask yourself whether you want it to feel calm, fresh, bright, cozy or energizing, color bridges that feeling to the food itself.

When you choose a color first, decision fatigue slips away. You’re no longer scrambling to make a meal work; you’re editing and choosing with care rather than urgency. What flavors will complement each other? What colors will excite your taste buds?

Green: Spinach, fresh leafy kale massaged with an avocado, or crispy green *haricots verts* feel alive and restorative.

Yellow: Roasted golden beets, buttery polenta, saffron-scented risotto or squash casserole feel comforting.

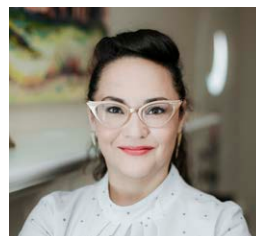
Red: Beef ragu, ossobuco with tomatoes and wine, or roasted paprika chicken thighs show up with depth.

Purple: Purple potato gnocchi, braised purple cabbage, or roasted grape crostini exude a sense of earthiness and mystery.

Once you choose a color, the rest becomes intuitive. You’ll notice shape and texture—soft against crisp, creamy against fresh. Your plate will come alive through contrast.

From Color in Food to Color on the Plate

Color doesn’t stop at the ingredient level; it shapes how a meal is experienced before we ever take that first bite—the way colors sit next to one another, the way something deep or rich is softened by contrast, or the way a muted base comes alive with a small accent.



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



PROVIDED PHOTOS

You're not simply cooking at this point, you're composing!

Scatter your ingredients instead of stacking them. Layer instead of heaping. Let your food dance together, not coexist. It feels different to drape asparagus ribbons across a plate than to lay them to rest whole. When food looks good, it feels better to eat. When it feels better to eat, we naturally slow down. That small pause, that moment of presence, is what you've been missing all along.

Plating With Contrast

Plating doesn't have to be complicated to be effective. In fact, the most satisfying plates often come from restraint. When a dish leans heavily into one color family, a thoughtful contrast can bring it into balance. A deep-red, slow-braised dish feels lighter and more inviting when paired with something pale or fresh, like a spoonful of yogurt, a soft mash, or scattered fresh herbs. Yellow and golden foods benefit from a darker counterpoint, like wilted greens. Moody purples come alive when softened by cream, grains or something gently warmed, like soft cheese or polenta.

It's not about making the plate fancy. It's about giving your eye a place to rest. Most of the time it's the small adjustments—like drizzling instead of pouring, scattering instead of piling—that can shift the whole experience.

Bring It Home

At its core, The Color Wheel Kitchen isn't about following rules or memorizing combinations. It's about paying attention to what you're craving and what the moment asks for.

Spring shifts into a crisp new energy. Starting with color gives you a simple way forward when time feels short and your brain is kaput. If dinner feels a little calmer and more intentional because of it, you're doing it right. 😊

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

I just moved to the Panhandle, and I miss looking forward to bluebonnet season. Are there local flowers or plants I can anticipate seeing around here instead?

Neighbor, this dirt talker understands the feeling. It's unforgettable to sit on a Texas hillside in spring, breathing in the perfume from blankets of bluebonnets. But we don't live in the Hill Country.

However, we're both in luck! The Texas Panhandle has dozens of native flowers that start to unfurl in early spring and last through the end of summer. Our elevation and unique climate also allow us to enjoy species found in other parts of Texas, as well as closer to the Rocky Mountains.

If you're looking for a similar shape to a bluebonnet, you might like our variations of blue sage, horsemint or cardinal flowers. Meanwhile, we also have butterfly weed (it's pretty, so don't let the name fool you!), golden tickseed (same!), false foxglove, Texas bluebells, and prairie sunflowers, among many others.

For those looking for native flowers with multiple uses, I'd be remiss not to mention prickly pear cactus and sand plum. Prickly pear flowers from April through June and sand plum blooms between March and April. Variably throughout June to September, both plants also offer fruit for things like drinks, jams and desserts! (Unless a late-April snowfall frosts our forage like it did in 2025, but that's how it goes sometimes, leaving everybody, uh, plum out of luck.)

Where does one see this fabulous foliage? Prickly pear likes to be where it's dry and sunny, and sand plum is found often along creek beds and rivers like the Canadian.

Meanwhile, we're flush with options for wildflower walks, including Wildcat Bluff Nature Center, Lake Meredith, Palo Duro Canyon, or Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

If you'd rather take a drive, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center has published maps of two local loops catering to roadside flower spotting, including routes around Lake Meredith (via Highway 136), and southward to pass through both Buffalo Lake and Happy.

I really want one of those horse statues. How do I get one? Can I commission someone to paint it?

As it happens, both individuals and businesses have adopted "Hoof Prints" horses since the project began in 2002. While it might

not be the best fit for your apartment patio, a 125-pound, life-size, fiberglass statue could suit your lawn—if you're in the market for an American Quarter Horse but don't want to shell out for things like boarding and food. (Pro tip: Make sure your HOA allows equine front-yard installations.)

Also, it will cost you \$7,500 per statue. At that rate, you might even be paying within the range of what you would to purchase an *actual* American Quarter Horse, minus continuing care costs. Instead, that covers the statue, artist fee, concrete slab, installation, a dedication event (if desired), plaque recognizing the artist and owner, and photo on the Center City of Amarillo website. (Center City facilitates the project.)

If you'd like your own "Hoof Prints" horse, you'll first need to contact Center City. After signing a contract and putting down a deposit of \$3,750, you'll be matched with an artist to start creating a design for the horse. Then, while it might take a few months depending on scheduling and statue supply, you'll be well on your way to contributing to one of Amarillo's most iconic community art projects. 🐾



PHOTO BY JASON BOYETT



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.



Creative Mind Lecture Series is sponsored by the AMARILLO COLLEGE FOUNDATION.

P R E S E N T S



Joy Harjo, the 23rd U.S. Poet Laureate and member of the Muscogee Nation, is the author of numerous books of poetry, several plays, children's books, two memoirs, and seven music albums. Her honors include Yale's 2023 Bollingen Prize for American Poetry, National Book Critics Circle Ivan Sandrof Lifetime Achievement Award, the Ruth Lily Prize from the Poetry Foundation, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Tulsa Artist Fellowship. She is a former chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and Chair of the Native Arts & Cultures Foundation, and is the inaugural Artist-in-Residence for the Bob Dylan Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where she lives.

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“I just want to be OK today.” – Ingrid Michaelson

Friends, I’ll be honest, I didn’t have a lot to say in this issue, or rather, I didn’t think I did. But, who are we kidding? I always have plenty to say. After tossing around a few half-baked ideas, I started to think about why I didn’t have a recent revelation or inspiring anecdote to change my thinking.

Have I stopped learning? Seeking? Striving? Who am I if I allowed myself to take a pause on deep introspection and intense observation of the world around me? I’ll tell you what I came up with: I’m human. I’m a human in the late stages of winter, navigating the post-holiday slog, and I’m keeping my ship afloat. And ya know what? That is just fine.

In a romantic comedy, I would be the sarcastic, clumsy sidekick. Historically, I could easily spill coffee on a white shirt, run out of gas, lose my wallet, and wear mismatched shoes on the same day. I once sprayed hand sanitizer in my throat because the bottles were similar, and I applied travel-size deodorant to my lips for a similar reason. My mind has often been in a different location than my body, and this has caused a fair amount of panic and a decent number of small crises over the years.

I’m still that girl to some extent. I’m still a daydreamer, and always the slightest bit late to every single thing. (I try so hard. I really do.) But could it be possible that I have landed in some unprecedented state of calm? Of presence in my own life? What a concept! I’ve been experiencing this unfamiliar absence of frantic energy for a while now. I imagine this can be attributed to several things, including the simple fact that I am older. Everything used to feel so big. So urgent. I’m able to sort it out now. I can tell the difference between what matters and what doesn’t.

Spending my days with children has a positive impact on my perception of each minute that passes. Moments are important. Memories are made in moments. That’s why, several years ago, I started documenting humorous things my students say. I might have missed these precious memories had I not learned to be present.

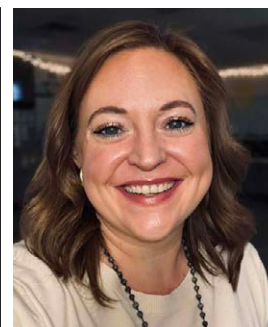
Meditation has a massive impact on my sense of self, and my ability to stop and smell the proverbial roses. I won’t spend time trying to convince you of its merits, but I will say, there’s really no wrong way to do it. I used to think I had to position my body like Rafiki from *The Lion King* (which is wildly uncomfortable for me) and trick myself

into some mystical state of nothingness. I would get progressively more irritated that my brain wouldn’t stop talking. This seems to be the experience of many people. I am the furthest thing from an expert, but I would recommend Yoga Nidra or another form of guided visualization to any beginner. Get yourself an app. Lie down and be comfortable. Give your brain something to do while your body gets accustomed to being still. Just try it.

If you think meditation is a little woo-woo, you may as well stop reading, because this next one sounds bananas. I talk to myself. On purpose. It’s even weirder than that: I speak words of affirmation to parts of myself as if they were separate entities. If I begin to feel anxious, I say to my nervous system, “Thank you for trying to protect us. I know you think we’re in danger, but I’ve got this.” If I become aware of my heartbeat, I’ll simply place a hand over my heart and say, “You’ve been working really hard every day of my life. You’re doing a great job.” If my knee creaks or my hip pops, I’ll say something like, “Oh gosh, you needed that, I guess! I haven’t been paying attention to you today, so let’s do some movement.” I’m immediately back in my body, and back in the moment. No panic, no urgency, just living.

Have I lost you? Come back, I’ll be normal again, I promise. Or at least as normal as I ever manage to be.

I’ll never finish working on myself, pondering my place in the world, wondering what to do next, and trying to figure out this life. But I’m proud of these largely uneventful months. I’m grateful that I just feel ... fine. Fine is good. Fine is peaceful. I am not so naive as to think I’ll stay this way. There will be a new season, a new challenge, a new revelation. And I’ll be ready. Fine is enough. I hope you’re doing fine, too. ☺



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 Fire Department recently announced a number of promotions:

- Jarrett McAffrey** promoted to Captain;
- Tully Robinson** promoted to Captain;
- William Cooper** promoted to Lieutenant;
- Evan Benner** promoted to Lieutenant;
- Micah Ladd** promoted to Driver; and
- Ian Margrave** promoted to Driver.



Alan Coe, director of golf at **Tascosa Golf Club**, retired in February after 34 years at the club.



Matt Edwards, store director at **Market Street United on Georgia Street**, retired in February after 40 years with the company.



Maggie Burt has been honored as **South Lawn Teacher of the Year**. Burt, who is a columnist for *Brick & Elm*, teaches music to kindergarten through fifth graders.



The 2025-2026 Teacher of the Year at **Tascosa High School** is **Nelson Bishop**.



Underwood Law Firm announced the appointment of new firm President **Stephanie James**. James is the first female president in the firm's 114-year history.



Randy Rikel will retire at the end of December 2026 as **West Texas A&M University's** vice president for business and finance.



FirstBank Southwest announced the promotion of **Cayla Maestas, CPA**, to chief financial officer and executive vice president.



Xcel Energy marked the opening of its new **Bushland Service Center**, a 45,000-square-foot facility that will accommodate about 70 employees across various departments.



Mindi Bozeman Zanowiak with **Sprouse Shrader Smith, PLLC** has been elected to membership in the Fellows of the Texas Bar Foundation. Election is a mark of distinction and recognition of Zanowiak's contributions to the legal profession.



Brown & Fortunato welcomed three new attorneys to the firm: **Rafay Nadeem** joined the firm's corporate group; **Grace Ansah** is a member of the firm's corporate group. **Jacqueline Niba** joined the litigation team.



Brown & Fortunato announced the promotion of two attorneys to shareholders. **Amanda F. Hobbs** is a member of the healthcare group; **Eric J. Matthews** practices in the firm's corporate group.



The Amarillo Symphony appointed **Cara Hunt** as its new development director in January.



The Amarillo City Council confirmed **Thomas Hover** as chief of the **Amarillo Police Department**. Hover began his duties in January.



City of Amarillo Assistant City Secretary **Jonni Glick** recently graduated from the Texas Municipal Clerks Certification Program from the University of North Texas in Denton.



The **City of Amarillo** was awarded the **Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting** for the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the fiscal year ended Sept. 30, 2024. COA was also awarded the **Popular Annual Financial Reporting Award** for the same period.



The RANGE announced that **Jay L. Barrett** has joined its team to lead Horizons, its workforce development initiative. The program is focused on preparing the Texas Panhandle's workforce for the future.



Elly Whitehill recently joined the **Amarillo Chamber of Commerce** as its digital marketing manager.



Amarillo College has named **Stephen Crandall** as the dean of liberal arts.



AC theater students earned multiple recognitions from the **Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival** for the recent production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The production received honors across acting, design, stage management and ensemble work.

AC's Communications and Marketing Team earned six honors from the **2025 Educational Digital Marketing Awards**, celebrating excellence in digital strategy, storytelling and student-focused communication. The team received three Gold Awards, one Silver Award, and two Bronze Awards.



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ONE MORE DAY AND A WAKE-UP

One more day and a wake-up.” That’s how we military brats always said it when we were on an overseas assignment. It was part of a unique language that we spoke, and still do.

The “wake-up” meant a wake-up call, and the day you got back on the plane to the States, or back to the “world” as we put it. So we counted backwards: “37 days and a wake-up.” One of us would say to the other, “How short are you?” meaning *How many days do you have left?*

Even the kids who had just arrived were already counting. “728 days and a wake-up,” they would say, with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

We were so young and innocent, but tried to be jaded and cool. It was the ’70s after all, and coolness was the unspoken rule. We heard how the veterans talked. We thought they were cool, and we emulated them.

Inside, I think most of us had a sense of what a gift it was to be a visitor in a strange land, but being teenagers, we tended to make things a little drabber than they actually were. In those days, it was permissible to go with our folks anywhere they chose on a vacation in-country, and write off the school day(s) as an “educational field trip” with full attendance credits. We basically took that for granted.

My family lived in Turkey, the bridge between Europe and Asia, historical bastion to an amazing number of dominant empires and home to so many New Testament churches of the Apostle Paul’s letters, as well as his missionary journeys. The country was rich in prehistoric, ancient and modern-day culture, an ethnic mix of peoples, and a delightful place to live.

It took me years to fully appreciate this gift. I smile when I think back to some of our conversations. We would say things like, “Man, when I get back to the world, the first thing I’m gonna do is go get a McDonald’s hamburger, some fries and a chocolate shake!” This was coming from kids that lived in a place where U.S. dollars, especially in those days, could put you in a Michelin Star restaurant five days a week.

We lived in Ankara, the capital of modern-day Turkey, also the ancient city of Angora. We had lived there two years—out “on the economy,” away from the American airbase—in a beautiful house that I still think about. After Ankara, we stayed in Turkey, stationed at a tiny perimeter base not far from Istanbul. A small band of terrorists in Turkey made things a little dicey for us, but that’s a story for another day.

Our little base at Karamursel, Turkey, was a Common Defense Installation. At that time, satellite defenses were not well developed, so the country was one gigantic listening post. Turkey, from multiple cities and towns, bristled with antennae of all kinds: microwave, radar, short



wave, long wave, permanent wave. You name it, we had it. Of course, back then, all this was classified, and most of us had only a general idea of what was happening. Within yards of all this, American kids were playing baseball, goofing off with friends, fishing, swimming and carrying on a life that looked like Smallville, USA. And there was a little guy named Andy in the middle of all that, sitting on the porch of KCDI housing, trying to learn how to play guitar.

At the end of about four years, we had nothing left but a wake-up. My dad had been called back to the States. We spent our last few days in a transient quarters quonset hut. I decided to walk around the base, which was what most of us did at night anyway. My friends joined me in a strange little send-off that had become a tradition of sorts. The group would go by a house, and one of our friends would come out, walk a while with the group, and return home when they had to. We were happy and sad on those walks. I remember thinking *I’m not so glad to leave this place, after all.*

My girlfriend, Deb, promised she would never forget me. I guess that was true: She came back into my life, 40 years later, as a flight attendant. She said she didn’t remember being my girlfriend. But she had been crazy about me, I’m sure of it.

The little parade of friends in bell-bottom jeans, hand-me-down combat boots and field jackets, baseball caps, and shared memories ended with hugs and well-wishes. We ended our walk back at the quonset hut. My heart had a strange tug that I had never felt before while changing to another airbase. I didn’t realize it, but I was growing up, and friendships were starting to mean more to me.

“See you back in the world!”
Man, what we didn’t know. ☺



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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EXHIBITION & SILENT AUCTION

April 2nd | 6:30PM - 8:30PM

The Amarillo Museum of Art presents the 20x20 Exhibition and Silent Auction, an annual fundraiser designed to celebrate art and support innovative education programs as well as our local artist community.

Bidding on all artworks begins March 27th online at amoa.org/20x20

In-person viewing during regular museum hours starts March 27th and ends at close of the reception.

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OVERCOMING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

A Personal Journey

After graduating from West Texas A&M University with my master's degree, I continued studying for a Ph.D. Everyone I knew was pursuing advanced degrees. I had two options: Howard University, a historically black university, or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

I chose Nebraska. I fought through that first semester and earned Bs in my classes. But I hated it!

I came home for Christmas that year and begged my mother not to make me go back. She said, "You started this, and you at least have to do it for a year. After that year, we'll reassess." I remember getting ready to return, looking back at her with tears streaming down my face. She hugged me and told me I could do it.

I managed to make it through the spring semester. When I came back, I was broken. I felt like I'd let everyone down.

Searching for a job, I applied to one institution 14 times before getting an interview. When I finally did, they were so impressed they hired me on the spot. After four years, I learned the difference between "hard money" and "soft money" when our grant wasn't renewed. On Aug. 1, we were told Aug. 30 would be our last day. At that point, I had a 2-year-old to care for, and thoughts of everyone who had doubted me came flooding back. But eventually the experience pushed me toward becoming the person I am—someone who had answers and resources.

Imposter syndrome comes when you least expect it, even when you've built yourself up to believe you belong. I encourage you to find your calling and to know that in any situation you're in, you belong. You bring life and growth, and you deserve to be there.

Find what fulfills you. Where is your passion? What do you want to do? Most importantly, what is keeping you from doing what you want to do? The answer is right there: You just have to believe you can do it.

As Frederick Douglass reminded us, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

One day you'll be able to look back over your life, and when you think you haven't touched anyone, you'll see all the seeds you've planted have turned into beautiful trees that are budding. You'll know that progress has been made.

This reflection is dedicated to everyone who has ever felt like they didn't belong. You do. You are enough. You are built for this. ☺

Those of us working toward becoming better versions of ourselves find ourselves at different points in the journey—some still going strong, others having lost momentum. No matter where you are, there is always either a blessing or a lesson in everything you've experienced.

In my 45 years, I've encountered many difficulties, consistently feeling inadequate, overlooked and most importantly, lacking confidence in who I am and what I'm capable of achieving. Sometimes the best way to help others is to present them with situations you've encountered, show them how to navigate through those challenges, and talk about tools they can use when facing similar circumstances.

Let's talk specifically about imposter syndrome. As many women—and even men—can attest, we've dealt with this in depth for most of our lives. By definition, imposter syndrome is feeling like you don't belong or don't deserve to be in a certain place, position or role.

For me, imposter syndrome emerged when I decided to pursue higher education. This story deserves to be told—what I encountered, what I overcame, and how exactly those situations shaped the person I am today. More importantly, it shaped who I aspire to be as I move forward.

I remember graduating from Amarillo High School in 1998, thinking everything would be easy sailing. I wasn't always the smartest person in class, but I knew I was going to college to pursue an engineering program. For the past four years, I'd felt that engineering was going to be my passion. But when I started looking around, I saw very few people who looked like me in engineering—few women, and hardly any women of color. I began to think: Maybe this isn't for me.

I had grown to tolerate myself rather than embrace myself. The foundation of imposter syndrome is low self-esteem. What I didn't know then was this: The only way to beat imposter syndrome is not only conviction that you deserve a seat at the table, but that the seat was made for you.



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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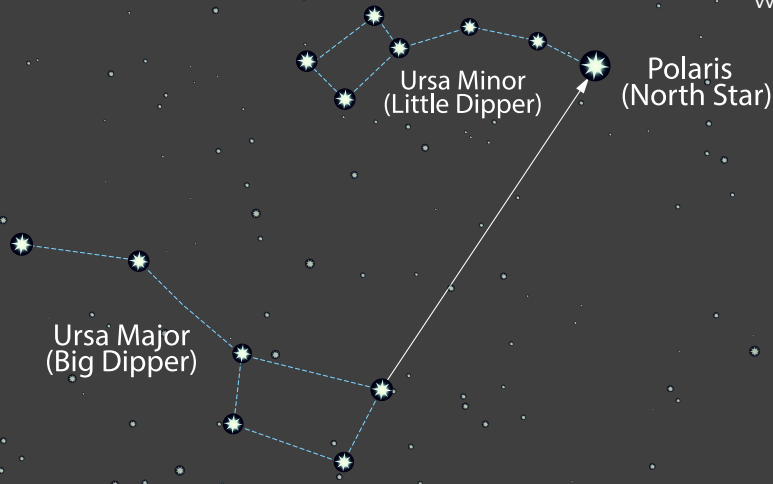
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Last year, we kicked off this column by learning how to star hop, and in the process, found the Big Dipper asterism in Ursa Major (the Great Bear). It feels timely to revisit this mama bear, show her some love that is absent from her story, and include her child, Ursa Minor (the Little Bear, naturally, aka the Little Dipper).

Being circumpolar, the Big Bear watches over us year round as any good mama bear does.

Humankind has linked the stars to our destiny, used them to guide exploration, and relied on them to inspire our many tales. In Greek mythology, Zeus, Callisto and Artemis (goddess of the hunt and protector of women) share a sordid history. Legend has it that Zeus was quite taken with Callisto, Artemis's hunting companion and follower, and after Zeus took Artemis's form to seduce Callisto, she gave birth to their son. This angered Zeus's wife, and in that anger, she transformed Callisto into a bear (Ursa Major). Once grown and not recognizing his own mother, Callisto's son nearly killed her during a hunt. Zeus then transformed him into a little bear, so he'd recognize his mother, and placed them both into the sky to protect them for eternity.

To find Ursa Major—our third largest constellation—and Ursa Minor in the sky, first find the Big Dipper. The cup forms the Great Bear's body, and the handle makes her tail. A string of stars courses downward from each of the two stars at the cup's bottom to create her front and back legs, and a trapezoid-like shape of stars extend from her body to outline her head and neck.

To find her son, Ursa Minor, return to the two

stars that form the front of the Big Dipper's cup farthest from the handle and draw an imaginary line through these two stars, extending it north. The next brightest star the line meets is Polaris, which is the end of the handle of the Little Dipper. From there follow the handle to the cup, much like the Big Dipper but on a smaller scale.

Together, they guide humankind all year on their journeys as they help explorers find North. Perhaps they'll team up with Artemis for the (aptly named) upcoming NASA mission, guiding our astronauts on their lunar expedition and protecting the crew. One of the four astronauts is a woman, after all. Keep a close eye on this long-awaited, exciting return to the moon, with launch dates scheduled for March or April.

Want to travel the universe but stay closer to home? Recently designated a Dark Sky Park by DarkSky International, Caprock Canyon State Park offers skies free of light pollution, easily illuminating Ursa Major, Ursa Minor, the Milky Way spiral and countless stars we can't see under city lights. A short 90-minute drive from Amarillo makes it a great place to hike during the day, enjoy a picnic dinner, stargaze and then restfully sleep under the stars. 🌌

Perhaps you can peer through a telescope and see some of the many galaxies protected by Ursa Major at one of our local astronomy club's upcoming public star parties.

- March 21 at Caprock Canyon State Park
- April 11 at Alibates Flint Quarry
- April 18 at Clayton Lake State Park

Follow us on Facebook for updates on our star parties, monthly meetings, and other events @ Amarillo Astronomy Club.



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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Leadership isn't a matter of age, but of action. The next generation of Panhandle leaders aren't waiting on some future timeline. They are shaping our schools and neighborhoods today. Last year, we introduced 18 Under 18, a special collaboration with Junior Achievement of the High Plains, and are excited to continue this tradition for 2026. From the studio to the stadium, and from the classroom to the community, these high schoolers represent the most ambitious, talented and service-oriented students in the Texas Panhandle. Each recipient has been nominated by teachers and administrators who've observed their impact firsthand.

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



Finn Archer

Amarillo High School | Age 16 | Son of Dr. Richard and Natalie Archer



What do you love about your school?

Most of all, I love the community of fellow learners who inspire me not only to grow academically, but also to become a kinder and more generous person every day. The teachers and school staff put in so much effort to make the school a wonderful place to be.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?

I love competing against other students (such as the national science bowl and debate). I also participate in my school through clubs (like the service-oriented Red Cross Club).

What things are you involved in outside of school?

I play the piano, volunteer at the

High Plains Food Bank, and have worked on a research project at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center.

What are your plans post-graduation?

After attending university, I will pursue a career in research or medicine.

“Finn bears witness to career struggles and fears of change with a quiet strength and dignity that indicates a character and focus of steel. He may seem to lead a charmed life, but his family has faced some difficulties that test the resolve of anyone.”

—Nominator Leslie McCaslin

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Pake Babbs

Gruver High School | Age 18 | Son of Kevin and Julie Babbs

What do you love about your school?

Gruver High School students are afforded the opportunity to be involved in many activities, yet we work with a competitive edge in all we do. Growing up in a small, rural school district has taught me about time management and choosing a personal path. I am blessed to be able to take with me the values this community has taught me.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?

Student Council president, National Honor Society president, senior football captain, yearbook editor, Superintendent’s Leadership Council, two-time class president, THSCA Academic All-State 1st Team (football), All-District (football), All-District (baseball); FFA welding certification, Gruver Green Cord program, UIL (number sense, calculator applications), Best of Texas 2A 1st place team, Gruver Ag/Business Practicum with portfolio, Graduation Honor Guard, Student Council treasurer, All-A honor roll, currently ranked second in graduating class.

What things are you involved in outside of school?

Founder of Gruver’s Give Back Literacy Program, First Baptist Church (usher), Hansford County 4H and Stock Show 2026, Oklahoma’s Panhandle Showdown and Kody Keylon Memorial stock show, Hansford County Rodeo Association and Stock Show Showdown volunteer.

What are your plans post-graduation?

I plan to attend Oklahoma State University with a major in construction engineering technologies. This field combines principles of hands-on learning with technology applications that parallel my interests in engineering, project development and fabrication. I hope to one day own and operate my own business.

“When Pake sees something that needs done, he does it. He has a ‘never quit’ attitude, and I know it will continue to open doors for him his entire life.”

—Nominator Rachelle Shirley



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Collin Bryant

West Texas High School | Age 18 | Son of James and Melodie Bryant



What do you love about your school?

Since I was new to West Texas High School this year, it has been a blessing that everyone has been so welcoming and kind. I like that West Texas High allows its students to participate in multiple student activities and be successful in those events.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?

Football, basketball, track and One Act Play.

What things are you involved in outside of school?

Church youth group, plus I volunteer at church and community events. I also have summer jobs at school and a local store.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan to attend West Texas A&M University to major in education. I hope to become a teacher and a coach.

“Collin’s ability to navigate a difficult transition with maturity, optimism and determination demonstrates how he uses hardship to strengthen—not weaken—his leadership. His example shows that true leadership emerges not from comfort, but from facing challenges head-on and choosing to grow through them.”

—Nominator James Bryant

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Cheryl Phebe Daniel

Canyon High School | Age 16 | Daughter of Daniel Bhaskaran Raju and Anitha Sarah Subburaj

What do you love about your school?

One aspect of my school that I enjoy is the community created through extracurricular activities. For example, football and other sports are honored and celebrated at school pep-rallies and home games. Fine arts, like band and choir, create bonds and memories through rehearsals, competitions and concerts.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?

Varsity and All-State choir, Student Council, Key Club, National Honor Society, Canyon High School’s All School Musical, Team Leadership Amarillo and Canyon, Science Bowl.

What things are you involved in outside of school?

I serve as a group leader for children’s ministry at Hillside Canyon Church (fourth and fifth grade) and was an Engineering Summer Camp leader at West Texas A&M University. I shadowed Dr. Christine Partheepan at Bethel Medical

Center For Foot & Ankle. I attend the youth group at First Methodist Church (Canyon) and volunteered as group leader at Women in Science Endeavors. I participated in the Summer Enrichment Program at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center.

What are your plans post-graduation?

I hope to pursue my current passion in the medical field at Texas Tech University. I am looking to specialize and become a physician after med school and residency.

“Cheryl is deeply invested in serving both her school and wider community. Through every act, she builds bridges between people and uplifts her community. She has not only overcome language and cultural barriers, but turned them into strengths that allow her to connect across generations, settings and disciplines.”

—Nominator Dr. Emily Hunt



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Abigail Hanna

Tascosa High School | Age 18 | Daughter of Michael and Taira Hanna



What do you love about your school? I love getting to learn new things, especially when it is related to science or math.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? National Honor Society, animal science, Certified Veterinary Assistant internship with AmTech career academy, volunteering at Amarillo Animal Welfare.

What things are you involved in outside of school? I love horseback riding, painting and drawing, reading, volunteer work at the local shelter, and learning about archaeology.

What are your plans post-graduation? After I graduate, I would like to attend Texas Tech University and pursue a degree in animal science, and then I would like to further pursue a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

“Abigail has turned her love for animals into a career path in veterinary science and has spent hundreds of hours volunteering with Amarillo Animal Welfare. She continues to be a top academic performer and is in the top 3 percent of her graduating class.”
—Nominator Michael Hanna

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Rhyan Hedrick

Tascosa High School | Age 17 | Daughter of Chris and Ashlee Holden, and Nic and Meredith Hedrick

What do you love about your school? I love the diversity and the ability to experience different cultures.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Rebel Tennis (two years), AmeriCorps

What things are you involved in outside of school? I volunteer for Snack Pak 4 Kids, at High Plains Food Bank, and at Hillside Christian Church.

What are your plans post-graduation? I hope to attend Amarillo College, and then transfer to Texas A&M University to major in speech pathology. Eventually, I would love to open my own speech therapy practice—one that specializes in helping people with physical or mental disabilities.

“Rhyan has an uncommon ability, especially for someone her age, to truly listen and anticipate the needs of others. It makes her wise beyond her years, and it’s particularly evident in the way she interacts with the elderly, children and individuals with special needs.”
—Nominator Debbie Johnson



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Boston Ladd

West Plains High School | Age 18 | Son of Micah and Heather Ladd

What do you love about your school?

West Plains High School feels like a family. Our school came together brand-new, with kids from different schools, areas and backgrounds, and we created traditions and a place we can call home. We are truly a pack and we love each other and support each other. It's a really special place.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?

Varsity football, basketball, and baseball (four years each); Student Council (Senior Class President); UIL Accounting Team; National Honor Society.

What things are you involved in outside of school?

Hillside Church volunteer, Teen

Leadership Amarillo and Canyon, Faith City Mission, Colorful Closets.

What are your plans post-graduation?

I plan to attend college and play baseball while pursuing a degree in finance.

“Through his intelligence, athletic talent and natural leadership, Boston has played a pivotal role in establishing the culture and traditions that define WPHS today. His service on numerous campus and district committees has strengthened the school community, and his dedication in the classroom has set a standard of excellence for others to follow.”

—Nominator Randi Willard



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Bella Mason

Tascosa High School | Age 17 | Daughter of April Mason and step-father Dave Goad



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What do you love about your school? I love Tascosa High School because of its diverse culture, inclusive environment, strong school spirit, and extensive extracurricular opportunities. I'm able to meet so many different people and express myself through the various clubs and organizations offered.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? National Honor Society, Swim Team, National Technical Honor Society, SkillsUSA Medical Assisting, Key Club, internship program.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Good News podcast, Amarillo Worship Nights; Young Life (president), Hidden Falls (camp counselor), Westminster Youth Group social media and youth leader.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan to attend Abilene Christian University in the fall and earn my degree in psychology. I also want to earn a minor in biblical studies. I plan to use that degree to aid me in becoming a biblical counselor.

“Over the past three years, Bella has truly blossomed into a confident and capable leader, one who doesn't shy away from difficult conversations. She leads with courage, conviction and a deep sense of purpose, embracing every opportunity to pursue her calling.”

—Nominator Kristin DeRight

Gunnar McConlogue

Canyon High School | Age 18 | Son of Marlene and Scott McConlogue



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What do you love about your school?

The opportunities for extracurricular involvement and success, and our communities' willingness to serve.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?

Canyon FFA (president, vice president, reporter), Speech and Debate (captain, creative director), Texas FFA Ford Leadership Scholar Program, Key Club, Student Council, National Honor Society, Chick-fil-A Leadership Academy (captain), Varsity Wrestling (captain), National Speech and Debate Association Honor Society Degree of Superior Distinction.

What things are you involved in outside of school?

I created a scalable program for delivering food to homebound seniors in Canyon. I am a guitar worship leader at

Hillside Canyon, a sports graphic designer and compete in Jiu-Jitsu.

What are your plans post-graduation?

I'm committed to Texas Tech University for Meat Judging and plan on studying Applied and Agricultural Economics. In my career, I hope to continue exploring marketing, economics and service work and further leverage my communication skills.

“Gunnar is making his community better by identifying real needs, mobilizing people around solutions, and creating programs that leave a lasting impact.”

—Nominator Jessica Ray

Aimeé Sofia Monárrez

Caprock High School | Age 17 | Daughter of Juan Monárrez and Claudia Pizaña

What do you love about your school? The amount of opportunities and resources available to students. There are so many programs, events and extracurriculars to be part of, and the staff there offers great guidance and advice. The support and opportunities I have received have made me feel like I belong at Caprock.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?

Student Council president, National Honor Society secretary, UIL (Academics/Journalism), yearbook chief editor, Superintendent's Ambassadors, Advanced Academics Ambassadors, internship at Potter County 320th District Court.

What things are you involved in outside of school?

I love to volunteer at different places, such as High Plains Food Bank,

Snack Pak 4 Kids, and elementary schools helping with fall festivals. I also entered my photography in the art competition VASE. I work at T-Anchor Flea Market with my parents, as well.

What are your plans post-graduation?

My plans post-graduation are to attend UT Arlington and obtain a bachelor's degree in English. I also want to complete a two-year court reporting/stenography online program and become a court reporter.

“Sofia is a role model whose unwavering commitment to finishing every responsibility ensures reliability and credibility, making her a leader by example. She views leadership as empowering others, rather than just controlling them.”

—Nominator Linda Wilson



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Natalie Pearson

Bushland High School | Age 18 | Daughter of Dawn and Kyle Pearson

What do you love about your school?

The supportive relationships that I have with my teachers. I also love that Bushland teachers, coaches, sponsors and administrators work together to allow students the opportunity to participate in many different extracurricular activities.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?

Band/drumline co-captain, theater production/One Act Play, robotics manager, varsity bowling; UIL Academics (science), National Honor Society, International Thespians Honors Society.

What things are you involved in outside of school?

I attend Hillside Christian Church, am a self-employed pet/house sitter, and love bowling.

What are your plans post-graduation?

I have been accepted into the Honors College at Texas Tech University and will

study pre-speech and hearing sciences, as well as American Sign Language. I plan to attend TTUHSC in Fall 2027 to earn a bachelor's degree in speech, language and hearing sciences. I also plan to earn my master's in speech-language pathology. I hope to stay in the Texas Panhandle and work as a pediatric speech therapist in a hospital or rehabilitation center. I would also love the opportunity to work with the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

“When I remember Natalie’s time at Bushland High School, I will remember all of the times that she chose not to let challenges slow her down in her personal and academic successes. Natalie is always unapologetically her true self, is unwavering in her confidence and always acknowledging and kind to others.”
—Tiffany Fisk



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Isabella Rodriguez

Caprock High School | Age 17 | Daughter of Calissa Splawn



What do you love about your school?

At Caprock, I've been able to create relationships with everyone on campus, from the principals to counselors, and most of all, the students.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?

Volleyball; softball; Caprock Kind; Superintendent's Ambassadors; Student Council; Student Leadership.

What are your plans post-graduation?

I plan to go to college after high school. My chosen career path is either a dental care specialist or a financial advisor.

“Bella’s exceptional capacity for positive resilience and cultural leadership is not confined to the classroom; she actively uses her influence to improve her school and surrounding community. She consistently demonstrates her personal drive to be a catalyst for good, improving her community one positive action at a time.”
—Nominator Shannon Bertrand

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Azul Sanchez

Palo Duro High School | Age 17 | Daughter of Leonel Sanchez and Diana Urias



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UNDERWOOD
UWLAW.COM

What do you love about your school?

The diverse community you can find within our halls. Our differences have made and continue to make every student and staff member more empathetic, understanding and respectful of each other’s backgrounds and circumstances. We also have many extraordinary educators, whose guidance fosters confidence, growth and shapes students beyond classroom doors.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?

UIL (Math and Science), Science Bowl, National Honor Society vice president, Senior Committee, National Technical Honor Society, AmTech Ambassadors.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Volunteering at

High Plains Food Bank and 2025 Walk to End Alzheimer’s event. I am also a blood drive donor.

What are your plans post-graduation?

I will attend the University of Texas at Austin to major in neuroscience. I hope one day to become a pediatric neurologist—I have two little brothers with autism who mean the world to me, and I’d love to one day be able to help kids like them.

“Azul is a truly exceptional young woman who embodies natural intelligence, unwavering drive, profound honesty, and the qualities of a positive role model. She is one of the most dedicated, hardest-working students I have had in my career.”

—Nominator Serena Goerz

Briggs Satterfield

Gruver High School | Age 18 | Son of Andi and Jason Shoulders and Andrea and Cody Satterfield

What do you love about your school? The thing I love most about Gruver High School is the high expectations both inside and outside the classroom that are instilled in us and expected from us.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Football, basketball and baseball (four years), track (three years), UIL Academics and National Honor Society.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Hound and Pups mentor program, Ag Partners Farm help, volunteer youth sports coach and youth sports referee.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan to attend Oklahoma State University to major in sports and exercise science,

become a student assistant for the OSU Cowboys football team, and achieve my career goal of being a coach at the collegiate level.

“Briggs doesn’t recognize hardships; he thrives in the challenges of life to be the very best person he can be in all aspects of life. Servant leadership is what sets him apart from others.”

—Nominator Kimberly Irwin



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Benjamin Silvey

Sanford-Fritch High School | Age 18 | Son of Nolan and Salem Silvey

What do you love about your school? I love that we have small classes, which allows everyone the opportunity to be involved in not only extracurricular activities, but also all around our community.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Business Professionals of America, UIL academics (accounting), varsity cross country, golf and basketball, UIL band, Homecoming King court.

What things are you involved in outside of school? I have been involved in my church, as both a youth leader and the volunteer who livestreams the Sunday services. I have also been involved in community service with fire relief after the wildfires in 2024, fire prevention with the American Red Cross, mission trips in the Philippines, canned food drives, and

cleaning our local fire station. I have had a full-time summer construction job at Mesneak Construction LLC for the past three years.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan on going to West Texas A&M University to pursue my bachelor's and master's in accounting. After that, I plan on getting my CPA license. I also look forward to being involved in my community and finding ways to give back.

“Benjamin has earned the love and respect of his community due to his friendly, caring disposition and his pursuit of excellence in everything he does. He is recognized by his peers, by faculty, and by community members as someone they trust to do a job well done and enjoy calling a friend.”
—Nominator Brenda Gray



Sponsored by:



Brailyn Skipworth

Amarillo High School | Age 17 | Daughter of Derek & Kyra Skipworth



What do you love about your school? AHS is such a big school. I have friends and opportunities to be involved with people in many different activities. Whether it is music, art, athletics or community service, there is a group of peers that enjoy being a member of that specific community.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Cheerleader, track, Student Council, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Teen Leadership Amarillo & Canyon, A&O Kids Ministry.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Competitive All Star cheerleader, tumbling.

What are your plans post-graduation? I plan to attend the University of Florida to earn a degree in architecture. I also hope to be a cheerleader at UF! Go Gators!

“Beyond her success in academics and athletics, Brailyn’s interpersonal skills, kindness and strong faith make her a role model for peers and family alike.”
—Nominator Heather Woolley

Sponsored by:



Abel Torres

Caprock High School | Age 16 | Son of Roselia Esquivel and Abel Torres



What do you love about your school?
I love the sense of community and togetherness that we share at Caprock.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career?
Wrestling, cross country, tennis, orchestra, UIL (science, computer science), Student Council, TRIO-College Talent Search, WT Rising Scholar Council.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Church and El Barrio Leo’s Club (founding member).

What are your plans post-graduation?
I want to join the Navy to become a SEAL and be a mechanical engineer.

“Abel is known in his community as a young servant. He spends most of his free time volunteering throughout the city of Amarillo. At such a young age, he does not care for the things typical teenagers are interested in—he would much rather spend his time being a help in the community.”
—Nominator Dr. Jessica Adame

Sponsored by:



Kambree Wilkerson

Caprock High School | Age 17 | Daughter of Krystal Wilkerson

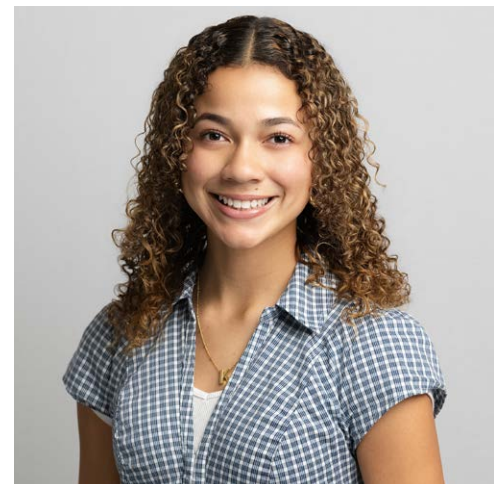
What do you love about your school? At Caprock, I love the supportive community, the culture of inclusivity and kindness, and the opportunities to excel academically.

What extracurricular activities have been part of your high school career? Basketball, volleyball, track/cross country, Student Council (junior class president), National Honor Society, Akademia, Superintendent’s Ambassador, Caprock Kind, Science Bowl, UIL (vocabulary writing); Choir; Snack Pak 4 Kids Ambassador, five-time Superintendent Scholar.

What things are you involved in outside of school? Outside of school, I am a Young Life president and I work at Chick-fil-a.

What are your plans post-graduation?
After high school, I hope to attend Stanford University, where I will major in electrical engineering. I hope to get a job at NASA.

“Kambree’s work ethic is extraordinary; she balances a top-five class rank with part-time employment and extensive service commitments, showing discipline, maturity and resilience well beyond her years..”
—Nominator Dr. Meagan Foster



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ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

GOLF

Tournament

**27 APRIL
2026**

**TASCOSA
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*La Paloma
Course*

Registration: 8 AM
Shotgun start: 9 AM



We're proud to partner with the Amarillo Women's Network for this golf tournament, where every swing supports scholarships for women across the top 26 counties pursuing their educational goals.

4 LADIES SCRAMBLE

\$400

Don't golf?
Join us for lunch -
\$40 lunch ticket includes
lunch and open bar.



Scan to register:



Kyle and Tonya Francis don't necessarily like the coldness of the word "modern" and instead prefer to describe their home as one with a "southwest flair." It definitely has a minimalist, warm, desert vibe.



BRICKANDELM.COM 52 MAR/APR 2026

BEYOND the Bluff

A ONE-OF-A-KIND SANCTUARY NEAR WILDCAT BLUFF

BY JASON BOYETT

Nestled in the landscape west of Wildcat Bluff, a contemporary new home stands out against the mesquites and rugged mesas. The segmented geometry of the home allows it to hug the hills behind it. The low-slope roofing and white stucco exteriors offer a crisp contrast to the surrounding landscape. The floor-to-ceiling windows and glass corridors prioritize dramatic views of the eastern sky, surrounded by a low-water xeriscape of rocks, boulders and native plants.

Late last year, Kyle and Tonya Francis completed their custom home on Wildcat Trail, moving in right before the holidays. The finished home itself stands out in the rural neighborhood, but so did the construction process: They managed most of the subcontractors themselves as owner-builders, giving them direct oversight of the project.

“This is not a typical house,” Tonya says. “we just decided to take it on and did a lot of the work ourselves,” hiring out contractors only when necessary.

She’s an interior designer and photographer, and her father ran a custom cabinet shop for years. Kyle, a Pampa native, is a manufacturer’s rep for submersible motors used in petroleum and agriculture. But neither had much experience as home-builders. That didn’t stop them.

“We talked about buying a house and just completely remodeling it, but then after you buy and remodel, it’s still not your whole vibe, right?” Kyle explains. “Either the outsides or insides are not going to be exactly what you want. So we just said, ‘Let’s tackle it.’”

The end result is breathtaking, and feels unlike most new construction in and around Amarillo. “There’s some beautiful homes [in Amarillo] but ... we wanted something that was a little different,” Tonya says.

During construction, the family of six—Kyle and Tonya have four children—lived in a 1,500-square-foot house in the Olsen neighborhood. The new 4,400-square-foot home sits on five acres, giving them plenty of room to spread out.



PHOTOS BY TIM BARNES WITH 41 PRODUCTIONS

The large boulders on the property were unearthed during the site-planning process, then used as part of the landscaping. “We designed all the landscaping and hired Rusty Stevens’ West Texas Landscape for the rock and the edging,” Kyle says. This included 24 truckloads of river rock and nearly 400 plants.



Located on the southernmost end of the home, the main bedroom features a focal wall with a geometric patterned wallpaper. Due to the high ceiling, it required a scissor-lift for installation. Like almost everything else, the couple did the work themselves. "I have done wallpaper for a long time," Tonya says, laughing. "Kyle was, like, I think we're taking a break from wallpaper for a while."



This breezeway connects the garage with the kitchen and open, walk-in pantry.

An interior decorator, Tonya says doing most of the work themselves allowed the couple to spend more money on decor. "I love to design spaces and change things," she says. "And if you spend a lot of money, then you don't have the option to change out often."



Some of the best views are available in the couple's home gym, thanks to the massive windows. Building up a sweat feels effortless. "It makes our workout a lot more fun having a view," Tonya says. "This room does get warm. It's nice in the mornings."





"I thoroughly love my entryway," Tonya says. Next to windows that allow light to kiss their cactus collection, the geometric blocks separate the entry from the living area. She and Kyle located the concrete patterned blocks in Lubbock thanks to a Facebook Marketplace listing.

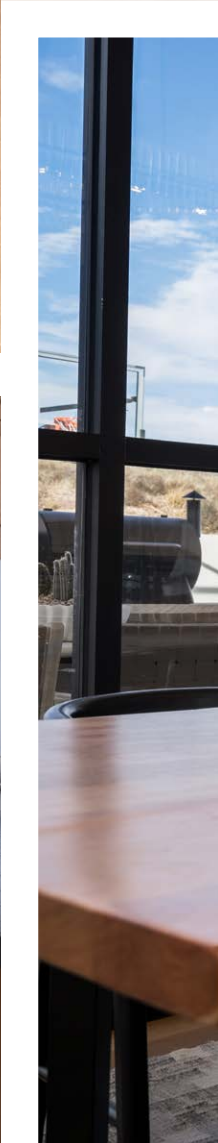
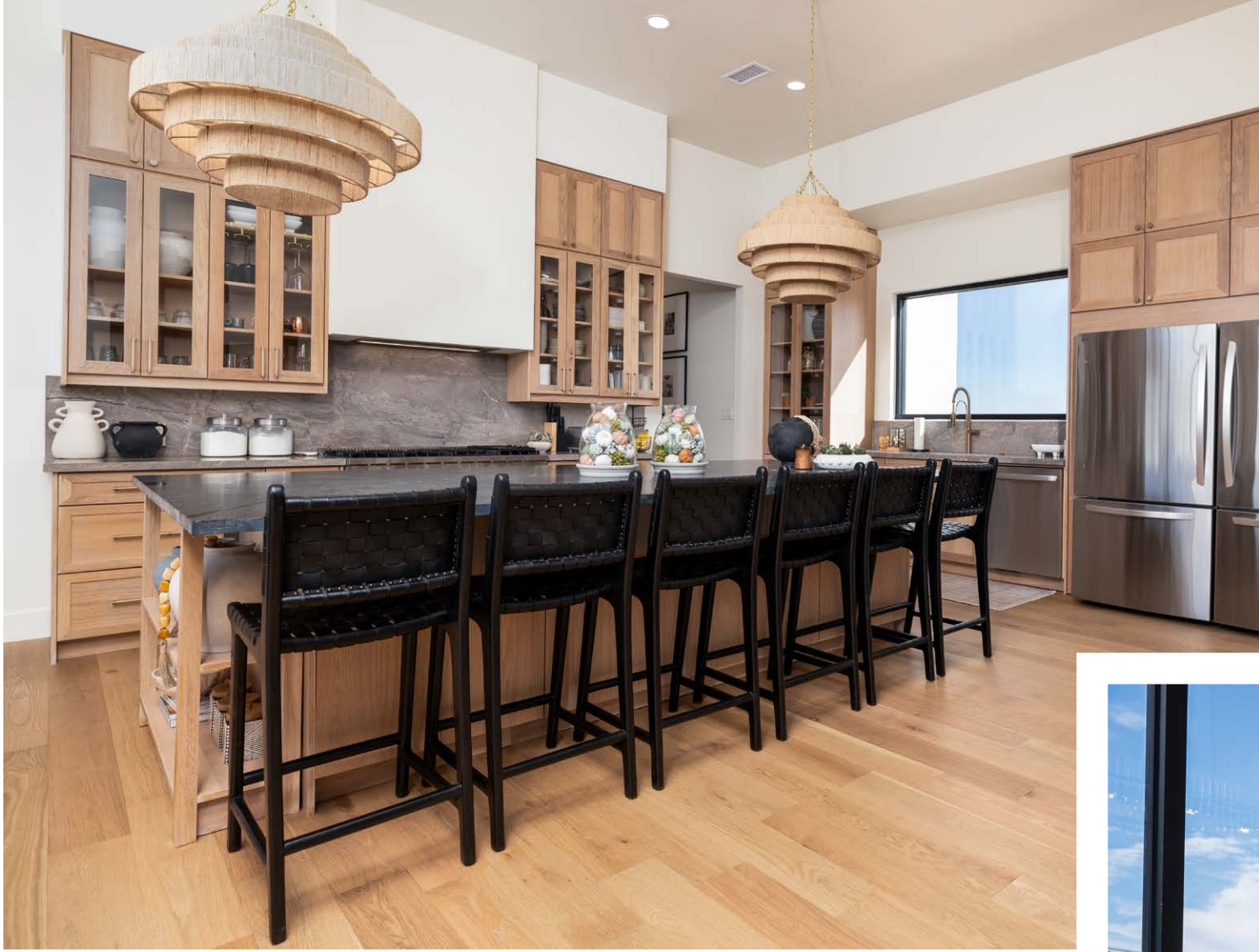
Known as "breeze blocks," the repeating pattern preserves privacy while still allowing light to pass through the wall. Each block weighs at least 10 pounds.





Tonya saw the teakwood root coffee table blocks in a design magazine and loved their appearance as functional sculptures. Each of the two blocks weighed around 600 pounds. Getting them into the home was a challenge. “They were very heavy. We thought we were gonna die carrying them up the hill, over all that rock,” she laughs.

The open-concept living room, entryway and kitchen are home to around 34 live plants, by Kyle’s count. “There are probably close to 50 in the house,” Tonya adds.



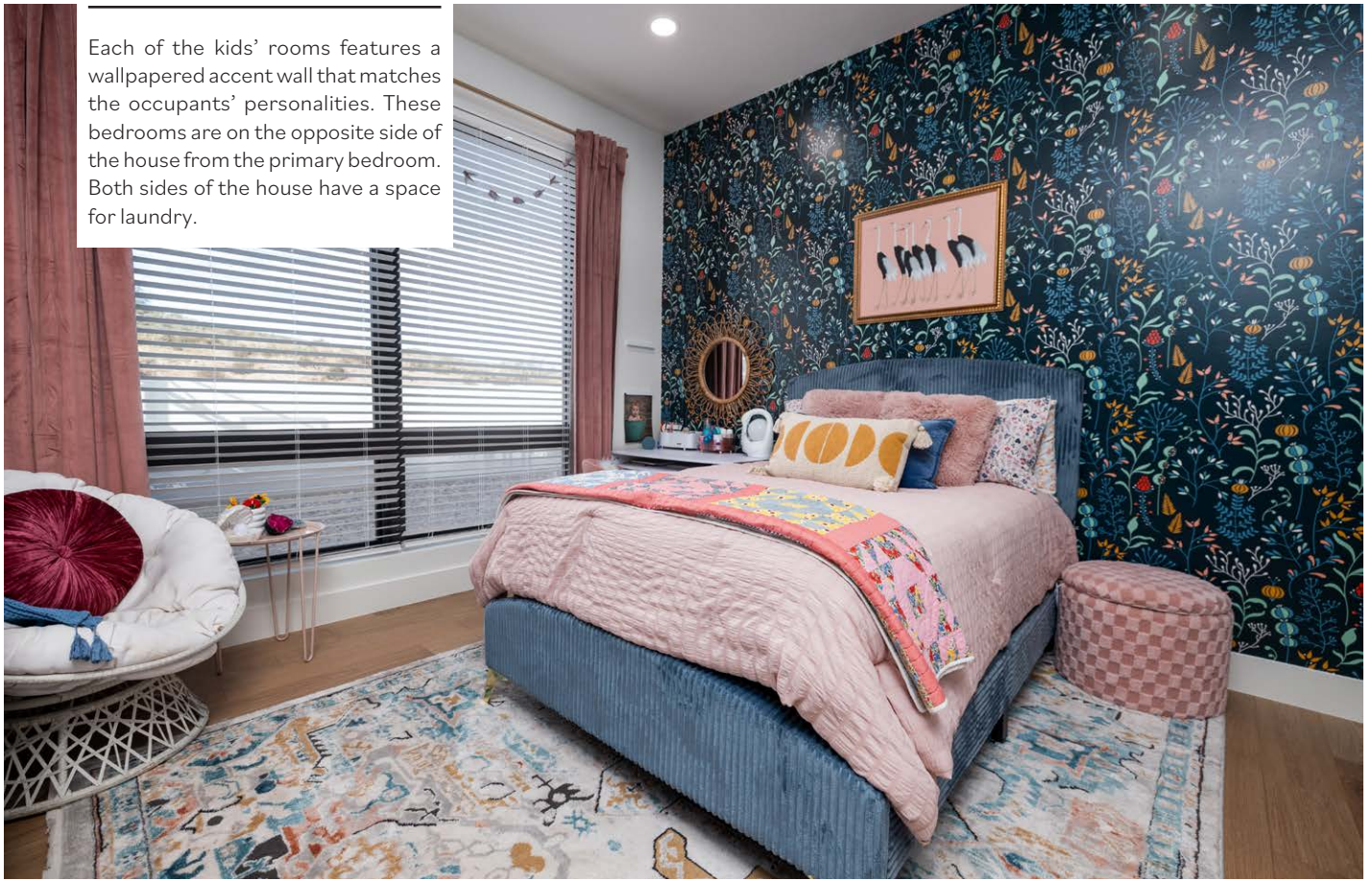


All the cabinets in the kitchen are white oak. A massive quartzite slab serves as the island countertop. The picture window above the sink helps break up the monotony of dishwashing with eastern views. "I never really enjoyed cooking or doing dishes, but [now] I love it," Tonya says.

Tonya and Kyle traveled to Denver for the gorgeous reclaimed wood dining table, which they purchased at Rare Finds Warehouse, a furniture business featuring imported and salvaged items. "We had that slab in our truck, and the inside of the vehicle was full of cactus," Tonya says, because they stopped to pick up several plants purchased through Facebook Marketplace. "We hauled cactus from all over," she adds.



Each of the kids' rooms features a wallpapered accent wall that matches the occupants' personalities. These bedrooms are on the opposite side of the house from the primary bedroom. Both sides of the house have a space for laundry.

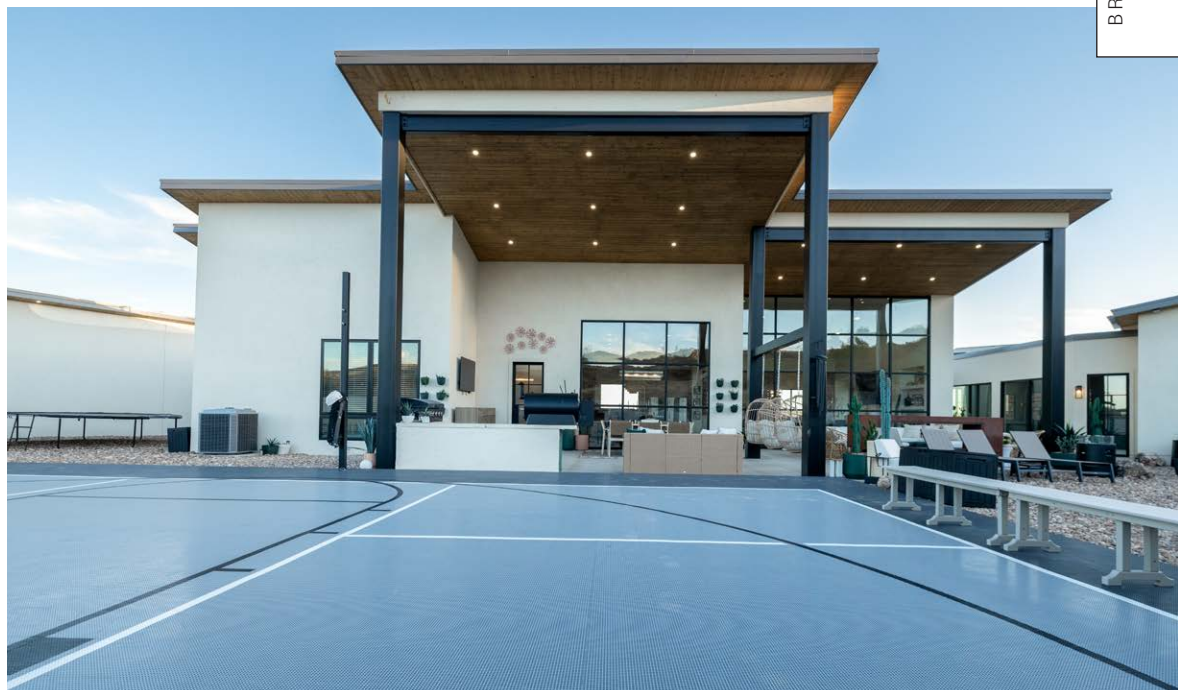






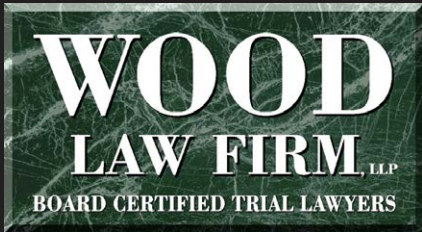


The back patio features live cacti, custom cactus sculptures, and plenty of covered outdoor spaces for entertaining. A tiled sportcourt is marked for basketball and pickleball. 🌵





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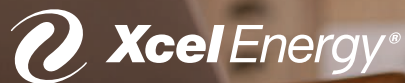
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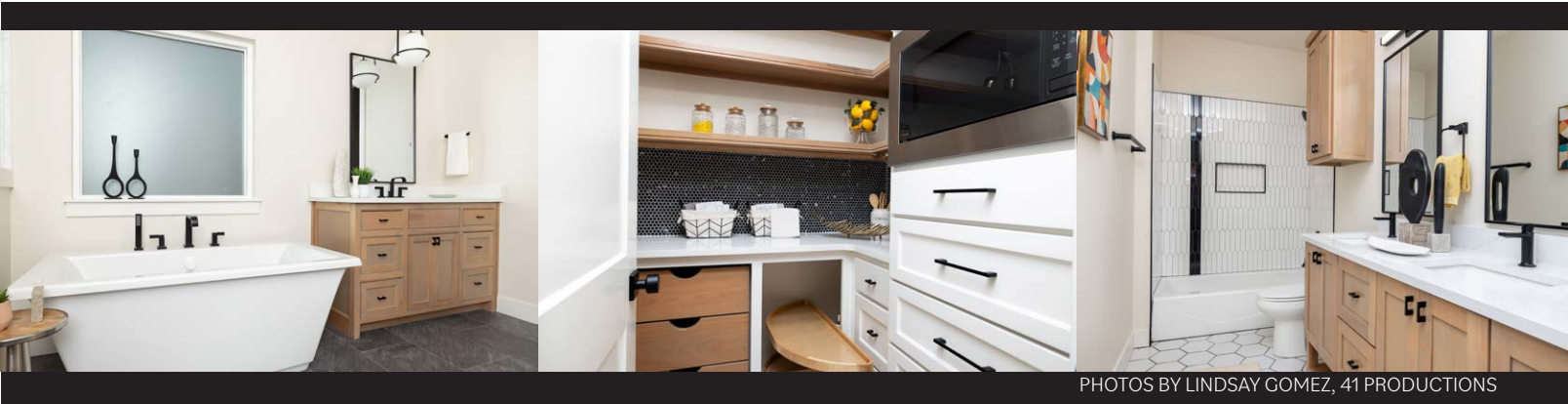




2026

PARADE OF *Homes*™

This year, the Texas Panhandle Builders Association proudly celebrates 71 years of the Parade of Homes in the Texas Panhandle—seven decades of showcasing quality craftsmanship, innovative design and the builders who make it happen.



PHOTOS BY LINDSAY GOMEZ, 41 PRODUCTIONS



“The Parade continues to be one of the largest housing events in our area,” says Mirna Fewell of the MGroup real estate brokerage and co-chair of this year’s Parade of Homes. She is also a past president of the Texas Panhandle Builders Association, which is celebrating its 80th year in 2026. “It brings together builders, industry professionals and thousands of attendees each year, and it continues to reflect the strength of our local housing market and the level of craftsmanship we have here in the Panhandle.”

For seven decades, the Parade has served as a showcase for quality craftsmanship, innovative design and the talented builders who shape the homes and neighborhoods of the Texas Panhandle. This year’s event is set to continue that legacy with an exciting lineup of featured properties open to the public across two consecutive weekends.

“You can expect beautiful luxury homes that really showcase the level of craftsmanship we have here in the Panhandle,” Fewell adds. “These homes highlight thoughtful design and the details that set all builds apart.”

Those details change year to year, and that’s one thing local people love about the Parade, whether they’re in the market for a new home or just hoping to see which designs are trending. “We are definitely seeing warmer earthy tones and richer colors. And more color in general,” says Parade of Homes co-chair Chance Beasley of Cornerstone Fine Homes. “A lot of inspiration includes ‘color drenching,’ which is painting everything in the room the same color,”

he says. Color drenching includes painting trim, cabinets, walls and even ceilings the same color.

The simple, bold trend creates an immersive look that can make small rooms feel even cozier. “When combined with warm woods, it looks amazing,” Beasley adds.

Attendees who register their tickets this year can enter to win impressive prizes. The Gold Prize, valued at \$7,500, includes shopping sprees with Casey Carpet One and Marble Depot, Inc. The Silver Prize offers a \$3,000 shopping spree with ProLift Garage Doors of Amarillo, and the Bronze Prize is a \$1,000 shopping spree with Sound By Design.

To qualify for the Gold and Silver prizes, visitors must check in at all Parade homes. The Bronze Prize requires a check-in at just one.

Meanwhile, this year’s Parade will also give back to the community. “This year we’re partnering with a local nonprofit,” says Beatriz Kimball, TPBA Director of Operations. The organization will officially announce that partner soon. “We’re excited about the opportunity to raise funds and give back through the Parade,” she says.

AT RIGHT: TPBA MEMBERS VOLUNTEER AT HABITAT FOR HUMANITY BUILDS



2026 Amarillo Parade of Homes

April 23 to 26
April 30 to May 3

Thursday & Friday:
5:30 to 8 p.m.
Saturday & Sunday:
1 to 5 p.m.

TICKET PRICES

\$10 per person
Children under 12 FREE

BUILDERS

B & M Homes
Bluehaven Homes
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Christie Homes
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Leidy's Homes
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Reign Homes
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21 PROPERTIES AND GROWING!

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80 Years of the Texas Panhandle Builders Association

Representing 26 Panhandle counties, the Texas Panhandle Builders Association connects builders, trade partners and related professionals to strengthen local standards while supporting smart growth in the region. Among its goals is keeping the housing market moving in the right direction.

“TPBA brings the building industry together across the Texas Panhandle,” Fewell says. “We advocate for housing at the local and state level because housing affects jobs, growth and the overall health of our communities.”



TPBA
TEXAS PANHANDLE
BUILDERS ASSOCIATION

The organization was founded on May 15, 1946. At that time, Joseph Meyerhoff was the President of the National Association of Home Builders. The first Texas Association of Builders’ president was Frank Buchek.

In Amarillo, K.S. Reynolds served as the first president of the new TPBA, leading an exceedingly small number of local builders and tradesmen. In comparison, today the Texas Panhandle Builder Association represents more than 300 members from all sectors of the building industry across the 26 counties of the Panhandle.

That roster includes builders, remodelers, realtors, lenders, suppliers and other associated trades and businesses that support the housing industry. Membership gives access to multiple levels of support, along with networking, advocacy and other business resources.

“Practically speaking, members gain access to industry programs and tools,” Fewell says. These include safety resources, rebate-style programs, contracts through the nonprofit Texas Association of Builders, along with broader benefits from the National Association of Home Builders trade association. “Plus, consistent networking through events that keep relationships strong across the building ecosystem,” she adds.

Members are also eager to get involved in the community, awarding several scholarships annually to local students. “We volunteer with Habitat for Humanity and support other local efforts throughout the year,” Kimball says. “Giving back is important to us, and we love to make it part of what we do.” 🇺🇸

2026 TPBA Leadership Team

Lindsay Reynolds, President
Kline Rosenbach, First Vice President
Jordan Duggan, Second Vice President

Chad House, Immediate Past President
Chance Beasley, Executive Committee Appointee
Mark Marrs, Treasurer

TPBA Past Presidents

Chad House (2025)
Mirna Fewell (2024)
Brennan Connally (2023)
Chance Beasley (2022)
Brennan Connally (2021)
Raymond Roberts III (2020)
Brad Stark (2019)
Chris Lyons (2018)
Chris Lyons (2017)
Brandon Dumas (2016)
Paul Davis (2015)
Paul Davis (2014)
Mandy Cartrite (2013)
Paul Lyons (2012)
Boyd Johnston (2011)
Muff London (2010)
Brent King (2009)
Brian Watson (2008)
Jeff Bryant (2007)

Gary Rogers (2006)
Rod Fielding (2005)
Kenny Click (2004)
Paul Lyons (2003)
Matt Griffith (2002)
Owen Bybee (2001)
Joe Norman (2000)
Mickey Comer (1999)
Ron Connally (1998)
William Branson (1997)
Barry Bedwell (1996)
Bill K. Wolfe (1995)
Dean Bedwell (1994)
Gary Purser (1993)
Sam McAlexander (1992)
Jay Oakley (1991)
Kenny Click (1990)
Tommy Ford (1989)
Ray Oppel (1988)

Ray Ault (1987)
Ken Howell (1986)
Fred Wilson (1985)
Anthony Saikowski (1984)
Jack Green (1983)
Burt Brinson (1982)
Bob Fenley (1981)
Rusty Fuqua (1980)
Bill Roach (1979)
David Merchant (1978)
R.F. DeShazo (1977)
Carl Mitchum (1976)
Bob Fenley (1975)
Gerald Boggs (1974)
Bill Simpson (1973)
I.W. Tinney (1972)
George Thorton (1971)
Price T. Smith (1970)
Marvin Winton (1969)

Ed Wheeler (1968)
Ken Lee (1967)
Raymond Mitchell (1966)
Ray L. Autrey (1965)
Bob Ferrin (1964)
Franklin Jeffers (1963)
Clay Willis (1962)
Earl Maxwell (1961)
Don Mason (1960)
Dan Boston (1959)
Robert W. Bauman (1958)
Charles Bates (1957)
E.E. Warnick (1956)
Frank Rapstine (1955)
B.R. Jones (1954)
Jake M. Munday (1953)
Jack Seale (1952)
E.L. (Mick) Campbell (1951)
M.O. (Oscar) Lawhon (1950)
G.W. (Mickey) Maguire (1949)



B&E

HOME

It's 2026, and the local real estate market is still complex. What hasn't changed is the role a home plays in our lives. More than an address, it's the backdrop to our morning coffee, weekend celebrations and quiet moments of rest. But behind every comfortable home is a series of smart choices. The right expertise makes all the difference. In this guide, we've gathered the region's most trusted home specialists to help you buy, build and maintain the life you've envisioned.

ALLIANCE
CREDIT UNION



SANGIE GONZALEZ

MORTGAGE
LOAN OFFICER
NMLS#1578335

ALLIANCE CREDIT UNION

What are your focus areas? My focus is helping people feel confident and informed when buying a home. The process can feel intimidating, especially for first-time home buyers, so I spend a lot of time trying to educate, answer questions and make sure people truly understand their options. I want clients to feel comfortable, knowledgeable and empowered throughout the homebuying process.

How does Alliance Credit Union stand out from its competitors? Alliance is different from other lenders because we are truly local and responsive. When you call us, you will talk to a real person. We take the time to understand our clients' goals and situations instead of treating them like just another number. For me, and the rest of the Alliance team, fostering long-term relationships with our clients is the end goal.

What changes are coming to the local market in 2026? Amarillo is growing, and smart planning will matter more than ever. I am here to help buyers be more prepared and strategic. Educated buyers who understand the value of planning ahead, asking the correct questions and taking into consideration things like getting a free rate or paying discount points will benefit the most in this growing market. Buyers who start their homebuying journey early will have a big advantage.

What are the most common challenges you see for local residents? The main issues I hear about from buyers surround affordability worries and misinformation about homebuying. Many people assume that buying a home is out of reach based on things they hear online or from friends, when they're often closer than they think. A lack of clear, local guidance can stop people from even taking the first step. My advice is talk to a local mortgage loan officer to get the correct information before counting yourself out.

What's one thing you wish local homeowners understood? People should know that they don't need to have it all figured out; they just need to start the conversation. A quick call can change the whole game. That's what a huge part of my job is: answering those first questions and showing people that homeownership is much more accessible than they might have thought.

What do you love most about working at Alliance? Helping people put down roots right here in Amarillo is what motivates me and makes being an Alliance loan officer a great job. Buying a home isn't just a transaction. It's where memories are made, families grow and futures start to take shape. I get to walk alongside people during a process that can feel stressful or overwhelming and help turn it into something exciting. Being trusted with such a big decision never gets old, and that feeling is what keeps me passionate about what I do every single day.



Credit Union membership is required. All loans are subject to credit qualifications and approval. Each account insured up to \$500,000. By members' choice, this institution is not federally insured.



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ALLIANCECUTX.COM

PUBLIC PLUMBING LLC

When did Public Plumbing begin operating? After almost a decade in home remodeling, we saw firsthand how difficult it was to find a plumber who showed up on time, did quality work and charged fair prices. Instead of continuing to work around that problem, we decided to become the solution and create a plumbing company homeowners and contractors could truly rely on.

How do you stand out from your competitors? What truly sets Public Plumbing apart is our focus on honesty, reliability and customer trust. From clear pricing to straightforward recommendations and quality workmanship, we believe in doing things the right way. We treat every home with respect and every customer like a long-term partner—not just another job.

We also have Master Plumber Michael Boggs as part of the Public Plumbing staff. Michael brings a lifetime of hands-on experience and expertise. He began working in the trade at just 14 years old, developing a strong foundation and deep understanding of plumbing systems from an early age. Known for his attention to detail and commitment to doing the job right the first time, Michael sets a high standard of quality on every project. His leadership and technical knowledge help ensure Public Plumbing delivers high-quality, reliable service on every project.

What new technologies are coming to the local market in 2026? In 2026, we're seeing more smart, water-saving and preventative technologies entering the market. This includes advanced leak-detection systems, water usage monitoring tools and intuitive fixtures that help homeowners protect their property and conserve resources. We stay current with these innovations and bring solutions to our clients that are practical and cost-effective. At the same time, we want to provide long-term value.

What challenges have you overcome as you've built your business? Like any new business, we've faced a learning curve. From understanding industry regulations to developing strong teamwork and problem-solving skills, building a plumbing company from the ground up has presented challenges. Over time, those challenges have helped us grow into a more efficient, knowledgeable and reliable organization.

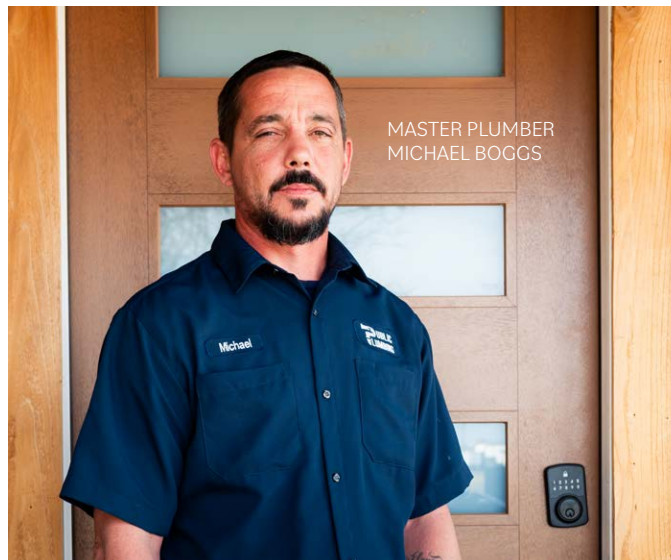
What's one thing you wish local homeowners understood? Not every plumbing issue requires a major repair. Having a trusted professional assess a problem early can often prevent unnecessary damage and help homeowners make informed, cost-effective decisions.

What do you love most about what you do? The ability to give back to our community while building something meaningful with our team. We've had the opportunity to help customers who couldn't afford critical plumbing services—whether that meant covering a simple service call or providing major repairs for those on fixed incomes. At the same time, we've built a strong team of people we truly care about and consider family, and we're excited to continue growing together while serving our community.



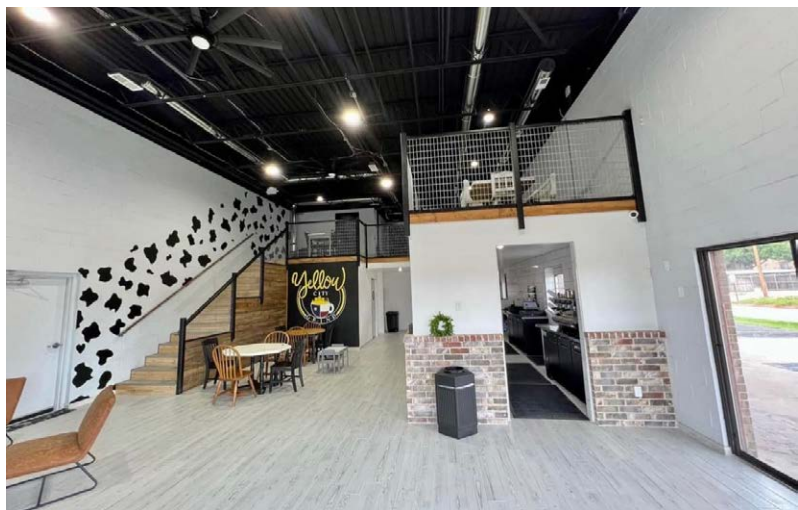
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TORI AND ANTONIO
MIRANDA, OWNERS





VINTECH ROOFING & CONSTRUCTION LLC

How did you get started in the home improvement business?

I got started when I was little working on projects with my dad. Putting on metal roofs, seeing things being fixed or built around the house just drew my attention. I always liked to see what was happening and being involved.

How long have you been in the industry?

Since 2016. I built my first house with my dad when I was 21 years old. I learned a lot when we built that house from the ground up. We built each truss for the roof by hand and transported each one on the side of an F250 about a quarter mile to my house. I got to run electrical wire, HVAC ducts and see every part of the process of a home build and how it evolved into a completed structure.

How does VinTech stand out from its competitors?

We are always striving to use the highest quality materials and trade professionals in the industry. We do not skimp on quality, and we continually seek out and find the best people to help accomplish this goal.

What changes are coming to the local market in 2026?

With an increase in people moving into the area for jobs, we see a boom coming in new housing and people wanting to remodel. VinTech is prepared to meet this increase in demand, and we are excited for what 2026 holds.

What challenges have you overcome as you've built your business?

I think the biggest challenge is just getting our name out there and showing what we can do. We really focus on integrity and professionalism and work as hard as possible to make sure VinTech is a trusted name in home improvement.

What's one thing you wish local homeowners understood?

Many homeowners focus on the exciting end result, but don't realize that rushing into construction without a detailed plan is the leading cause of budget overruns, delay, and stressful, undesired outcomes. At



DANNY GOVER, OWNER

VinTech we take our time to make sure no detail is overlooked with each customer, so each project goes smoothly.

What do you love most about what you do? Getting to either build something new or take an existing space and transform it into what the customer envisions. It's what keeps every project fun and exciting.

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RSM BUILDERS SUPPLY, INC.



KRISTEN CLAY AND
MELISSA CLAY



How long has RSM Builders Supply been in Amarillo? Thomas Reyman, James Slagle and Randy Martin acquired the business in October 1979, establishing RSM Builders Supply, Inc. The company initially focused on commercial products but expanded its offerings in 1990 to include residential products.

How does RSM stand out from its competitors? We specialize in custom homes. If we don't have exactly what you're looking for, we will source it. Our goal is to help create truly distinctive and thoughtfully designed spaces.

What changes are coming to the local market in 2026? In 2026, home design is shifting away from stark minimalism toward Modern Traditionalism—a movement focused on creating cozy, storied spaces that feel layered and authentic. This trend prioritizes comfort and personality through the use of heritage elements updated for contemporary living.

What challenges have you overcome as you've built your business? One of the greatest challenges we have overcome in our industry has been learning how to grow and evolve with each generation while continuing to honor and uphold our family legacy.

What's one thing you wish local homeowners understood? We are open to the public—there's no need to work through a designer or builder to shop with us. In addition to our core offerings, we also provide a curated selection of wallpaper, fabric and select home decor items to help complete your space.

What do you love most about what you do? Building meaningful relationships with our clients and having the opportunity to see them transform their spaces into homes.

1800 W. EIGHTH AVE.
806.372.8322



AMARILLO NATIONAL BANK

What are your focus areas? I specialize in working with first-time homebuyers and repeat customers. Both types of clients provide unique opportunities to educate and guide them through the process, ensuring we work together toward a common goal.

How does ANB stand out from its competitors? At Amarillo National Bank, we prioritize what matters most: our customers. As a locally owned bank, we have the flexibility to make quick, informed decisions that better serve our clients. Building trust and strong relationships help us keep our customers as our top priority.

What changes are coming to the local market in 2026? 2026 is shaping up to be a promising year for real estate. Interest rates and home prices are expected to remain stable, offering a great opportunity for those looking to enter the market.

What are the most common challenges you see for local residents? Credit issues are often a significant hurdle for potential homebuyers. It's never too early to meet with a loan officer to discuss options and ensure you're in the best position to make a purchase when you're ready. With the right guidance, this is a challenge that can be overcome.

What's one thing you wish local homeowners understood? Who you work with matters! There are a variety of programs available to help tailor solutions to individual financial situations. Don't hesitate to reach out for support. There is always a way forward!

What do you love most about what you do? I cherish the relationships that develop throughout the home-buying process. Purchasing a home is one of the most significant decisions in life, and it's truly rewarding to be there every step of the way.



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KELSEY LLOYD
VP/MORTGAGE
LOAN OFFICER

BAR J SERVICES



L-R: JOHN PAETZOLD,
JEFF PAETZOLD AND
JUSTIN WILKINS

How did Bar J get started in the construction industry?

We started with a simple goal: to make septic work feel straightforward instead of stressful. From day one, we have tried to do the basics really well and to do the work right, explaining it in plain English, and making sure customers always know what is happening next. Septic is one of those things homeowners don't want to think about, so our job is to make it a hassle-free experience from the first phone call to the final walkthrough.

How long has Bar J been serving the area? Since 2018. Over that time, we have worked on everything from new installs to repairs and ongoing system care. We have built our process around consistency so the customer experience stays strong no matter the job.

How does Bar J stand out from its competitors? We stand out because we treat septic like a customer experience, not just a construction task. We answer our phone, communicate clearly, and take time to guide clients through decisions without pressure. We also emphasize clean workmanship and professional documentation so there are fewer surprises later. Much of the work we do helps homeowners recover from a frustrating experience, so we do it right the first time.

What changes are coming to the local market in 2026? Homeowners and builders are expecting a higher standard with better communication, better documentation, and fewer surprises. Expect more attention on preventative maintenance and early warning, especially on aerobic systems. Catching small issues early is what keeps them from turning into expensive problems later.

What challenges have you overcome as you've built your business? The big challenge is growing without letting quality slip. In this industry, it is easy for companies to get stretched thin and let communication or consistency fall. We are intentional about building standards, checklists and processes that keep the work dependable. Trust is hard to earn and easy to lose.

What's one thing you wish local homeowners understood? We wish homeowners knew two things. First, they are allowed to ask questions and they should. Septic isn't something most people deal with often, so confusion is normal. Second, most septic systems don't fail overnight; they fail slowly when routine maintenance gets overlooked. Pumping on time and basic preventative maintenance protect the system and avoid failure. The best outcomes happen when homeowners understand the basics and feel comfortable reaching out early instead of waiting for a problem to get worse.

What do you love most about what you do? We love taking something that feels uncertain and stressful for homeowners and making it simple. When people call us, they usually want clarity and a plan. It is rewarding to bring calm to that situation by doing what we say we will do, communicating clearly, and leaving them with a system they can trust.

806.414.0665 | BARJSERVICES.COM

Hassle-free Home-buying with Education Credit Union

Buying your first home is exciting, but can also feel overwhelming. Between unfamiliar terminology, looming financial decisions and paperwork, many first-time buyers aren't sure where to start. The good news? You don't have to figure it out alone. Here's a step-by-step look at what the homebuying journey typically looks like.

Get Preapproved

Before you start scrolling listings or attending open houses, it's important to get preapproved for a mortgage. A preapproval gives you a clear picture of how much home you can afford and shows sellers you're a serious, qualified buyer. During this step, a lender reviews your income, credit, assets and debts to determine loan amount and interest rate. With a preapproval in hand, you can shop confidently and competitively.

Start Home Shopping

Once you know your budget, the fun part begins: finding the right home. Many buyers work with a real estate agent to tour homes, compare neighborhoods and navigate the local market. It's normal to look at several homes before finding "the one." Keep your must-haves, nice-to-haves, and budget top of mind, and remember that your lender is there to help you understand how different price points affect your monthly payment.

Make an Offer

When you find a home you love, your agent will help you submit an offer. This includes the purchase price and any conditions, such as a home inspection or financing contingency. If the seller accepts your offer (or you negotiate to an agreement), congratulations—you're officially under contract!

Home Inspection and Appraisal

After your offer is accepted, you'll schedule a home inspection. A licensed inspector evaluates the home's condition, checking things like the roof, foundation, plumbing and electrical systems. If issues are found, you may be able to negotiate repairs or credits with the seller. This step helps ensure there are no big surprises after you move in.

Next comes the appraisal, which is ordered by your lender. An independent appraiser determines the home's market value to make sure it aligns with the purchase price. This protects both you and the lender by ensuring the home is worth what's being paid for it. If the appraisal comes in lower than expected, your lender and agent will help guide you through next steps.

Closing

Closing is the final step before the home is officially yours. You'll review and sign loan documents, pay any remaining closing costs and



finalize the mortgage. Once everything is signed and recorded, you'll receive the keys and officially become a homeowner!

After closing, it's time to move in, unpack and start creating memories in your new home. From setting up utilities to shopping for furniture, this is where the journey truly begins.

Ready to take the next step?

At Education Credit Union, our mortgage team understands that buying your first home comes with questions, and we're here to answer every one of them. From preapproval through closing, our experienced lenders guide you through every step, explain your options clearly, and help you feel confident in your decision. For qualifying first-time homebuyers, ECU also offers the HELP Funds Program, which provides up to \$25,000 in down payment assistance and/or closing cost support. The program is designed to make homeownership more accessible by reducing the upfront costs that often stand in the way of buying a home.

If you're considering homeownership, ECU's mortgage team is ready to help. With personalized guidance and competitive loan options, your first home may be closer than you think. Homeownership is a journey—and ECU is proud to walk it with you.



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Hugo Hernandez NMLS# 1341461
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[EDUCATIONCU.COM/MORTGAGE-LOANS](https://www.educationcu.com/mortgage-loans)



FIRSTBANK SOUTHWEST MORTGAGE CENTER

What are FirstBank Southwest Mortgage Center's focus areas? FirstBank Southwest Mortgage's focus is on people first. We work together to deliver a borrower experience that is simple, educational and as stress-free as possible. Buying a home is personal, and we want every customer to feel supported, understood and confident throughout the process.

How does FBSW stand out from its competitors? Customer service is at the heart of everything we do. We offer fast pre-qualifications and a straightforward process, but more importantly, we focus on building long-term relationships. We don't see mortgages as a 30-day transaction—we see them as the beginning of a lasting partnership.

What changes are coming to the local market in 2026? We're excited to be opening a new FirstBank Southwest branch in Canyon. Canyon's housing market continues to grow rapidly, and having a dedicated Mortgage Loan Originator there allows us to better serve that community and support its continued growth.

What are the most common challenges you see for local residents? One of the biggest challenges is aligning expectations

with reality—helping borrowers understand what they think they can afford versus what truly fits their financial situation. The housing market has shifted significantly since Covid, and those changes have altered how many borrowers approach homeownership.

What's one thing you wish local homeowners understood? There are two big things. First, when the Federal Reserve lowers rates, it doesn't automatically mean mortgage rates will drop—mortgage rates are influenced by broader market factors like Treasury yields and mortgage-backed securities. Second, it's OK to shop around. Applying with more than one lender allows borrowers to compare products and closing costs. While many loans offer low down payment options, closing costs are still part of the equation—and asking questions is always encouraged.

What do you love most about what you do? We love helping people—whether that means supporting our team members through a complex loan or helping a borrower purchase a new home. At the end of the day, we're in the people business, and treating our customers and colleagues with care and respect is what matters most to us.



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82

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Beneath *the* Steeples

BY JASON BOYETT
EXPLORING SACRED SPACES

ST JOHN'S
EASTERN
ORTHODOX
CHURCH

OUR LADY OF
GUADALUPE
CATHOLIC CHURCH

BY JASON BOYETT

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“Where do you go to church?”

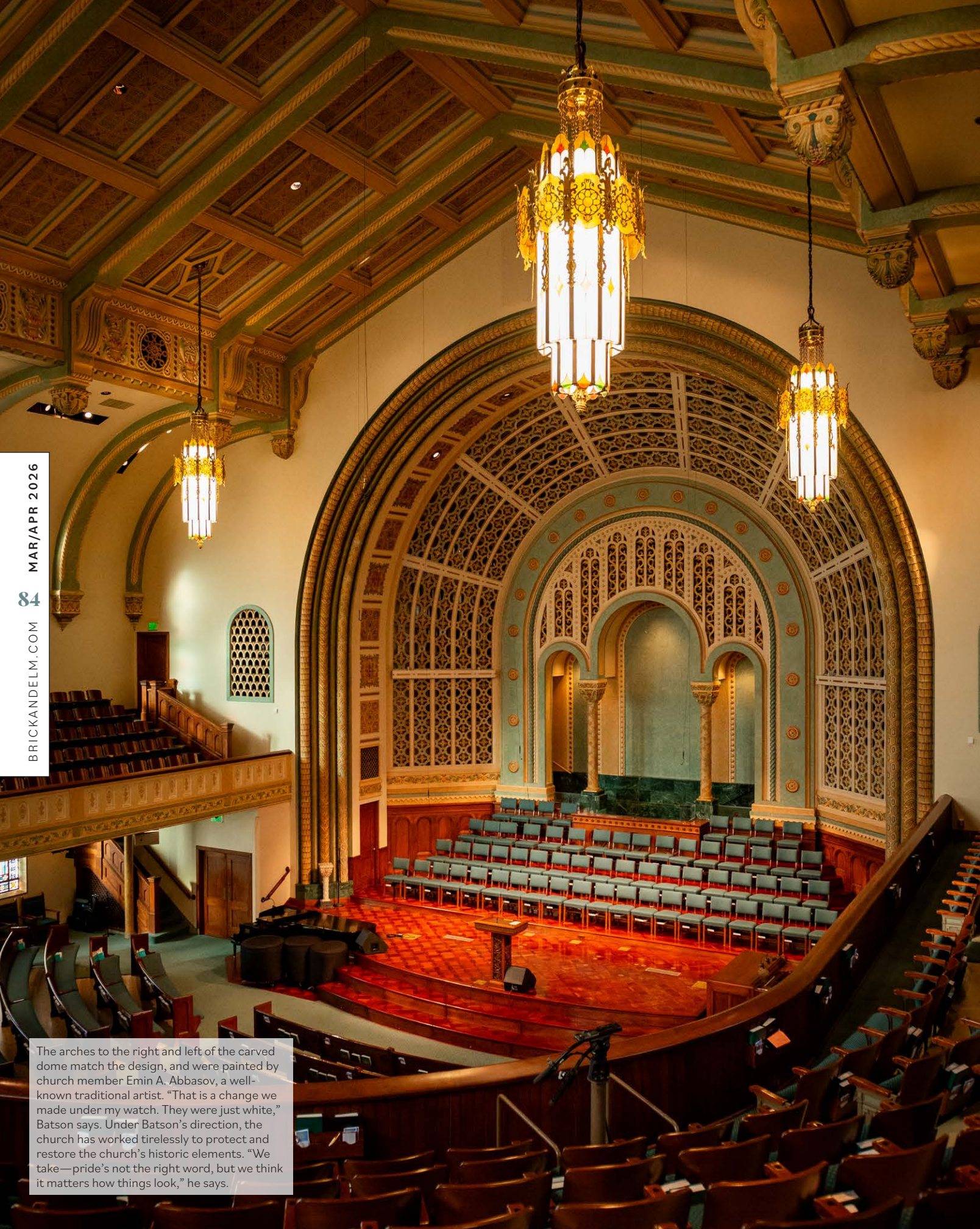
Some circles consider that an extremely personal question. But in the Panhandle, it's a question you're likely to hear not long after meeting someone new. Religion is the cultural currency of this region, and we're as comfortable talking about it as we are the weather.

But while local people are intimately familiar with their own faith traditions or denominations—their “home church” or “home parish” in religious language—they tend to know very

little about the church next door. “Church” can be a singular aesthetic: the specific grain of a church pew, the hardware of a pendant light, the way the sun hits the carpet at 11 a.m. on a Sunday morning. Yet the church across the street, or a couple blocks over, remains a mystery.

In this feature, we step into that mystery, exploring the sacred spaces of Amarillo and Canyon. From light-filled cathedrals to weathered chapels with scuffed pews, we guide you through sanctuary doors into the faithful heart of our community.

PHOTOS BY SHANNON RICHARDSON



The arches to the right and left of the carved dome match the design, and were painted by church member Emin A. Abbasov, a well-known traditional artist. "That is a change we made under my watch. They were just white," Batson says. Under Batson's direction, the church has worked tirelessly to protect and restore the church's historic elements. "We take—pride's not the right word, but we think it matters how things look," he says.

First Baptist Church

1208 S. Tyler St.
Dr. Howie Batson, Pastor

The cathedral-like sanctuary of First Baptist is truly a marvel. Its original meeting house at 500 S. Pierce St. in the city's first decade was replaced by a stately sanctuary at Ninth and Polk in 1909. In the late 1920s, FBC began planning its current home on Tyler, which now encompasses multiple blocks in downtown Amarillo.

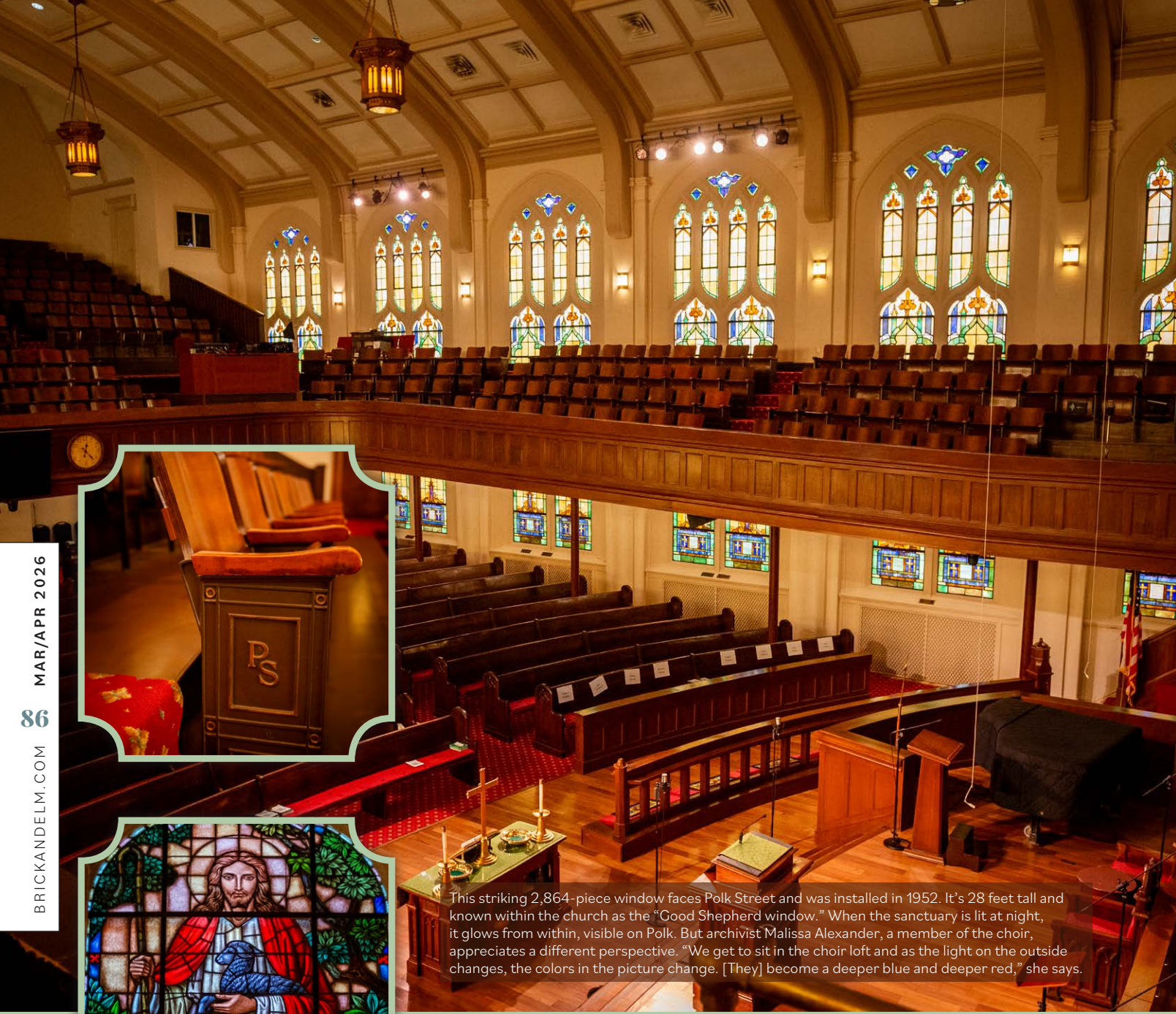
Then-pastor G.L. Yates hired Gabriel Ferrand, a prominent French-born architect from St. Louis, Missouri, to design the building, with legendary Amarillo architect Guy Carlander overseeing the construction. Ferrand eventually left the project, but his European-inspired vision resulted in a worship space unlike any in Amarillo, with Italian Romanesque arches, carved and painted terra cotta forms, and Byzantine Revival pillars. It's now part of the National Register of Historic Places.

"I love the color," says Howard K. Batson, who has pastored FBC since 1995. "Normally, you think of cathedrals as being very gray, a lot of stone, but I just love the Italian colors. You've got turquoise and coral and red. The reality is this would never be done again."

The tiled ceiling includes a unique tile featuring a painted eye. Batson says he's heard it represents the all-seeing eye of God—something of a hidden element the architects included without permission. "It's the only tile like that. It's caused a stir over the years," he says, acknowledging a few rumors and conspiracy theories. "People who don't know anything about our sanctuary know about the eyeball."



"One thing I really like is the intimacy of the room," Batson says. "We seat about 1,500, but the reality is, I'm very close." The architecture situates balcony worshipers very near to the pulpit area, and there's almost as much seating in the balcony as on the ground floor. Around 4,000 members attend FBC on an average Sunday, including its ethnic churches.



This striking 2,864-piece window faces Polk Street and was installed in 1952. It's 28 feet tall and known within the church as the "Good Shepherd window." When the sanctuary is lit at night, it glows from within, visible on Polk. But archivist Malissa Alexander, a member of the choir, appreciates a different perspective. "We get to sit in the choir loft and as the light on the outside changes, the colors in the picture change. [They] become a deeper blue and deeper red," she says.

Polk Street Methodist Church

1401 S. Polk St.
Rev. Lesly Broadbent, Lead Pastor

Like other prominent downtown churches, Polk Street Methodist built its current home in the late 1920s, after outgrowing other smaller buildings. The modified Gothic sanctuary was finished in 1928, complete with a carillon tower, 1,000-seat sanctuary and pipe organ containing 4,000 pipes.

Interestingly, very little of the stained glass is original to the building. A severe storm struck shortly after the new church opened, with accounts of baseball-size hail. "My daddy remembers my grandfather sitting on the curb crying, because the hailstorm had broken out so many of the windows," says Lynn White, a third-generation member and one of Polk Street's archivists. "He'd never seen his daddy cry before." The church couldn't immediately afford to replace the windows and opted for the amber-tinted cathedral glass that fills the sanctuary today.

Behind the altar and choir loft, this 2,500-piece window depicting the Last Supper was installed in 1974. It was created by the Stained Glass Institute of Santa Fe, New Mexico. The seven panels only show 11 of the 12 disciples, reflecting the absence of Judas.



The wood pews are original, but not all of the dark wood in the sanctuary is actually stained wood. In the 1950s, Dr. Eugene Slater had the inside of the sanctuary painted white, including the balcony paneling. The pillars and front panels of the balcony have since been repainted with wood texture to match the original pews. "It's back to looking like wood," White says. "But it's not the wood—it's been painted."

AMARILLO'S FIRST CHURCH

The congregations that became First Baptist Church, First Presbyterian Church, and Polk Street Methodist all initially met at Parker's Chapel, the first church in Amarillo. Built in 1889, when the city was little more than muddy roads and tents, it served as a "union church." For several years, the Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians rotated Sunday mornings. It was named for lumberman G.A.F. Parker, who donated the materials to build it.

First Presbyterian Church

1100 S. Harrison St.

Rev. Dr. Howard Griffin, Senior Pastor

The downtown church now known as First Presbyterian started as the Cumberland Presbyterian Church at Seventh and Fillmore, then became Fillmore Street Presbyterian, then Central Presbyterian (located in a new building at 10th and Taylor). As the city grew, church members secured the existing location and opened the current sanctuary in 1927. The congregation became known as First Presbyterian in 1943.

Its exterior design includes English Gothic revival elements, including arches and lancet windows. The sanctuary's unique wooden vaulted ceiling, chandeliers and arch design extend that Gothic revival influence. "It has a sense of awe," says Murray Gossett, associate pastor of outreach and adults, a staff member for more than three decades. "You hope people feel like they're preparing to worship when they come into a space."



The warm, vaulted wood ceiling stands out among most local church interiors, creating a wave-like rhythm as your eye moves toward the chancel. It helps project sound forward and outward while softening acoustics reflecting off the stone walls.



Gossett points to the enormous stained glass windows which serve as a focal point above the altar. These jewel-toned windows are not original to the building, but were added during a renovation in the 1960s. They were created by the Willet Stained Glass Studios in Philadelphia.

The three sections of the window subtly depict the Trinity. The left lancet includes Old Testament scenes, which tell the story of God the Father. The central section depicts the life of Jesus, and the right lancet highlights scenes from Acts and the early church, guided by the Holy Spirit.

Most of the interior statues were purchased and donated by local families. This devotional statue of Mary dates back to the church's first year. It was painstakingly restored for the 100th anniversary by Chris Clifford of Sorellas Studio in Clarendon. Formerly positioned in a central niche behind the altar, the statue was moved during the 2018 renovations. The painted rays of light were added at that time. "Mary is [now] looking up at her son being crucified," Gloria says.



The stained glass windows were added around 30 years ago by an artisan near Lubbock. The "falling roses" in the design reflect the classic Guadalupe miracle narrative, in which Mary tells young Juan Diego to gather roses blooming out of season and carry them in his cloak as a sign to the bishop. When the roses spill out, they miraculously reveal an image of Mary in the fabric of his cloak.



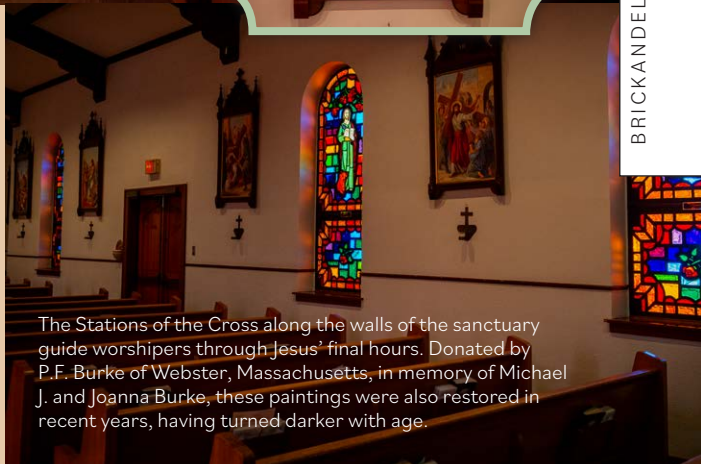
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church

1210 SE 11th Ave.
Fr. Taylor Elzner, Pastor

Dedicated as Sacred Heart Cathedral downtown in 1918, the oldest Catholic church in Amarillo moved into the Barrio later that year and was renamed Our Lady of Guadalupe. It's actually older than the local Catholic diocese, which wasn't established until 1926.

"It started because of the Hispanic population," says Gloria Alonzo-Carlile, who has been worshipping at Our Lady since childhood. The arrival of the Santa Fe Railroad to Amarillo brought many workers of Mexican heritage. The local Catholic church was established to serve them. It's named for the 1531 apparition of the Virgin Mary in Guadalupe, Mexico, now a powerful symbol of Mexican Catholic identity.

Gloria says her grandfather and great-grandfather helped build the current church building, which has been at this location since 1927. "It's part of my heritage. To me, it has that old church feeling, like churches in New Mexico or downstate, like an old Mexican church." Around 500 households are served by the parish, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2018.



The Stations of the Cross along the walls of the sanctuary guide worshippers through Jesus' final hours. Donated by P.F. Burke of Webster, Massachusetts, in memory of Michael J. and Joanna Burke, these paintings were also restored in recent years, having turned darker with age.



The vaulted, curved timber rafters in the ceiling of the sanctuary follow the traditional symbolism of the Ark. Known as the Nave, from the Latin navis (“ship”), the sanctuary is thought of as a ship carrying the faithful through the stormy seas of life.

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

1601 S. Georgia St.

The Rev. Jared Houze, Rector

The Episcopal Diocese of Amarillo formed St. Andrew's as a mission in 1891, just a few years after the city's founding. Early members worshipped in homes before a brick building was built at Ninth and Fillmore in 1918. Church growth led to new construction at its current location on Georgia Street. But in 1996, a devastating fire consumed the main worship building, fellowship hall and other parts of the church.

The community rebuilt and, in 2002, began worshipping in a new sanctuary. Highlights include its stone walls, the morning light that streams through the massive windows, and the historic Aeolian-Skinner Opus 1024 pipe organ.

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90
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Most of the walls are made of Austin stone, but a narrow band of rock every few feet was quarried from the Canadian River. "You can look around and find pieces of petrified wood and fossils in there," says longtime St. Andrew's member David Stidham.



The sculpted figures in Italian marble on the baptismal font were carved by sculptor Tracy H. Sugg after the previous font was desecrated during a 2023 break-in. The faces depict St. Paul, St. John the Baptist, St. Andrew and St. Mary Magdalene.

Johnson Chapel AME Church

1910 N. Washington St.
Rev. Darrell E. Turner, Pastor

Johnson Chapel African Methodist Episcopal traces its history back to 1927, when members gathered in a local home on Van Buren Street. Prof. Silas C. Patten, a prominent educator and pastor in the North Heights, was one of the founders. Notably, the church was led in the 1950s by the Rev. Mrs. I.Z. Chance during some of the most turbulent periods of segregation. Female-led congregations of any kind were rare and significant in the Panhandle, but hers faced something of a “double glass ceiling,” given the traditional gender roles and racial hostility of that era.

“I’ve been here for many years,” says Gloria Roberts, a trustee of the church. “It’s just always felt like home. I think that our church is probably one of the prettiest churches in the neighborhood over here.”



The original church building is now a small chapel behind the current sanctuary, which was built in the 1950s. Rev. Chance oversaw the construction.



B.C. Austin, a relatively new member of Johnson Chapel, returned to Amarillo after several decades in Colorado. “I walked in, and there is a quiet, peaceful stillness that I felt when I opened those doors,” she says.

The tapestry behind the baptismal font was purchased and framed by a member long ago. The beautiful stained glass windows are protected by a plexiglass shield on the exterior. “You should be here first thing in the morning when the sun comes up and shines through,” Roberts says.

Paramount Baptist Church

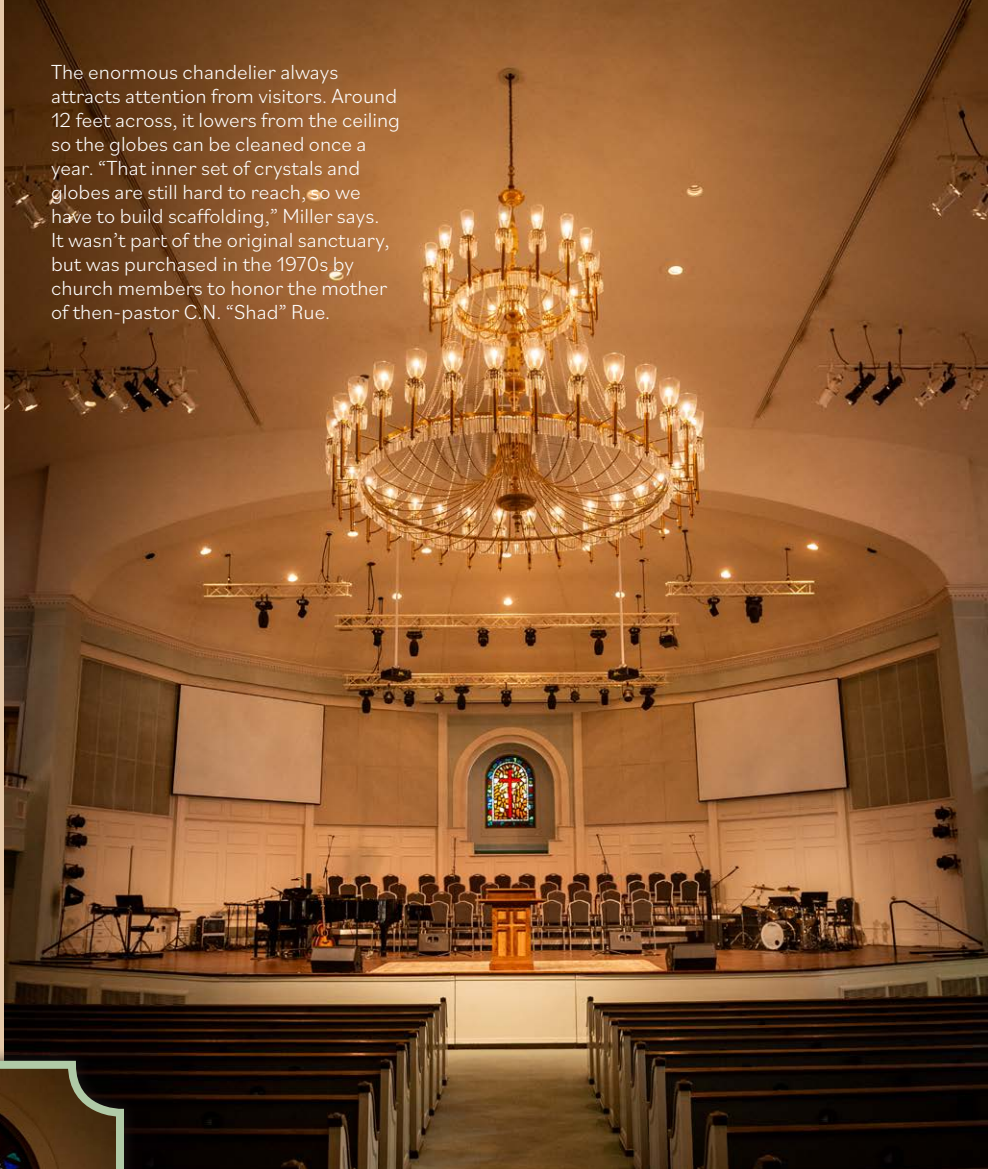
3801 S. Western St.
Dr. Jeremy McMorris, Lead Pastor

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Established by First Baptist Church on what was the southwest edge of town in the late 1950s, Paramount first met in the nearby Paramount Terrace Elementary School. It built a small chapel in 1960 and expanded into its current auditorium in 1972.

“I like the simplicity of it,” says Victor Miller, Paramount’s executive pastor, of the worship space. He grew up in the church in the 1970s and has been on staff since 1988. “It’s not ornate, but I like the stained glass windows. Each window is different and tells a story,” Miller says.

The enormous chandelier always attracts attention from visitors. Around 12 feet across, it lowers from the ceiling so the globes can be cleaned once a year. “That inner set of crystals and globes are still hard to reach, so we have to build scaffolding,” Miller says. It wasn’t part of the original sanctuary, but was purchased in the 1970s by church members to honor the mother of then-pastor C.N. “Shad” Rue.



Miller appreciates the intimacy of the space, thanks to its wraparound balcony. “Even though it holds 800-plus people, from the stage it doesn’t feel like you’re in a huge auditorium,” he says.



Paramount’s sanctuary is known locally for the bright morning and evening light that streams through its thick, colored-glass windows. Architecturally, these are known as *Dalle de verre* (French for “glass slab”) and are much thicker than traditional stained glass.



St. John the Prodomos Eastern Orthodox Church

1101 Bell St.

Many Amarillo residents have driven by St. John's without realizing it's home to the only local church aligned with the Christian Orthodox tradition. Orthodoxy is one of the three branches of Christianity, alongside Protestantism and Catholicism—the result of a schism in which theological differences split the East (Orthodox) and West (Catholicism).

Officially called Saint John the Prodomos, the Amarillo community belongs to the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese but serves all Orthodox families in the region. Right now, the local parish doesn't have a permanent, resident priest, though a visiting priest comes once a month from Lubbock. Meanwhile, the growing congregation is lay-led by chanters Rusty Hanson and John Stell, who guide the Divine Liturgy.

"When I first started coming to this parish, it was kind of dying," Hanson says. "There were maybe only three other people here for one of the first services I attended." Nationally, the tradition has experienced a boom in recent years, including in Amarillo. "We don't have enough room for the people that come in here on a Sunday," he says.



This particular altar is a special one used by the local Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox community, who are part of the Oriental Orthodox tradition and meet separately on Sunday mornings. While we were unable to confirm this with the church leadership, the altar typically covers a consecrated altar tablet handled only by clergy.

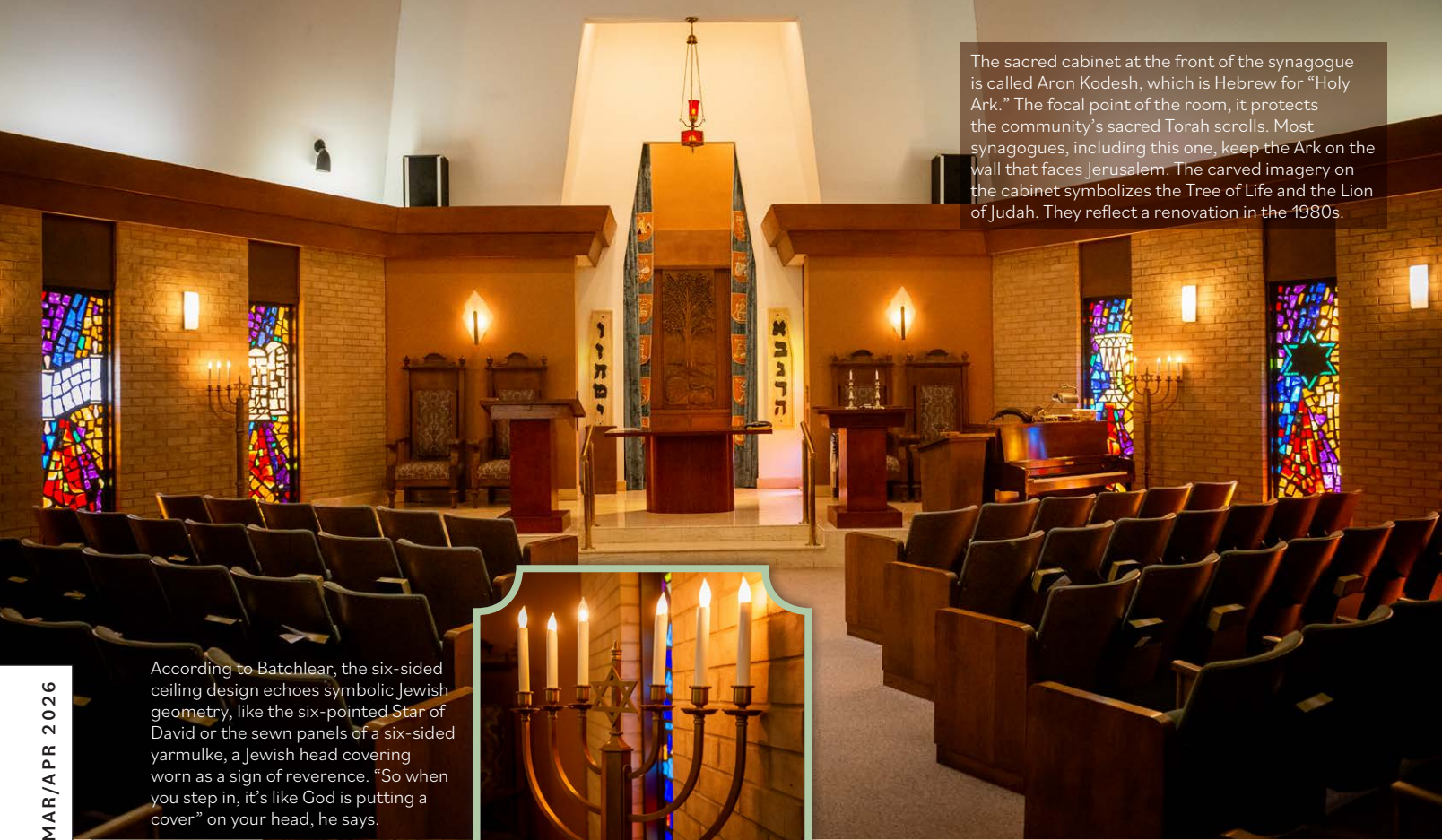


In the Orthodox tradition, the solid wall behind the altar is known as an iconostasis. "That's the holy altar, like the Holy of Holies, where the priest mainly presides. Very few people are actually allowed back there," Stell says. The icons on the iconostasis come from Amarillo's first Orthodox church, built in 1948 on Taylor Street. The current structure dates to the 1960s.

"The icons are—I guess, a modern way of saying it is that they are windows to heaven. We believe in Orthodox theology that the icons make present those who are depicted," Hansen says. More than art or decoration, they represent the "great cloud of witnesses" described by the author of Hebrews. "We are all in liturgy together, worshiping at the same time."



The sacred cabinet at the front of the synagogue is called Aron Kodesh, which is Hebrew for “Holy Ark.” The focal point of the room, it protects the community’s sacred Torah scrolls. Most synagogues, including this one, keep the Ark on the wall that faces Jerusalem. The carved imagery on the cabinet symbolizes the Tree of Life and the Lion of Judah. They reflect a renovation in the 1980s.



According to Batchlear, the six-sided ceiling design echoes symbolic Jewish geometry, like the six-pointed Star of David or the sewn panels of a six-sided yarmulke, a Jewish head covering worn as a sign of reverence. “So when you step in, it’s like God is putting a cover” on your head, he says.



Temple B’nai Israel

4316 Albert Ave.
Larry Dov’ Batchlear, Chaplain

Amarillo’s three original Jewish families organized this community in the early 1900s, holding services in available buildings before constructing their first synagogue at Tyler and 24th. By 1968, a new temple had been built on Albert in west Amarillo. Its stained glass windows were installed later in the 1970s.

The synagogue belongs to the Union for Reform Judaism but strives to meet the spiritual needs of all Jewish worshippers. “We’re the only temple in the Panhandle area,” says Larry Dov’ Batchlear, who leads the community’s day-to-day spiritual care and programming. He’s affiliated with the Neshama: Association of Jewish Chaplains and serves as a Jewish Community Had’rachah Leader for the Temple. Batchlear says fewer than 50 local Jewish families are served by the temple. “We’re down to just a few people who keep things going,” he says.

The “In Memoriam” panels installed in the sanctuary contain the names of community members who have passed, and date back to some of the original Jewish families in the Panhandle. These are yahrzeit memorial boards (yahrzeit refers to the anniversary of a person’s death). “In Jewish custom and tradition, a person lives forever as long as your name is mentioned one time a year on the anniversary of your passing,” Batchlear says. While many Jews will light a 24-hour memorial candle at home, the synagogue mirrors that tradition by publicly illuminating the bulb next to a person’s name during the month they died. The glowing bulbs make grief communal, bringing “to light” the name of the loved one. (This photo was taken in February 2026.)



St. Ann's Catholic Church

605 38th St., Canyon
Fr. Scott L. Raef, Pastor

The Canyon history of St. Ann's dates back to the 1920s, when it was considered a mission parish. It became its own parish in the 1950s. The original St. Ann's building still stands at the intersection of Sixth Avenue and 21st Street, now a Church of Christ. Fr. Scott Raef, who has served this parish since 2019, affectionately refers to that old adobe building as the "Taco Bell church."

St. Ann's current nave and sanctuary were built in the 1960s to serve the Canyon Catholic community, which includes around 750 households. "What's really special about St. Ann's is [that] it has the traditional kind of cruciform look to it, the shape of a cross," Raef says. "The sanctuary is very grand and elevated and it looks more like a traditional Catholic church than a lot of churches in our area."

He points out an important distinction. "Protestants usually call the entire church 'the sanctuary,' but for us, the sanctuary is the elevated area where the altar is," he says. As in other liturgical spaces, the seating area is known as the nave. In the Catholic tradition, St. Ann is the mother of the Virgin Mary and the maternal grandmother of Jesus. ☺

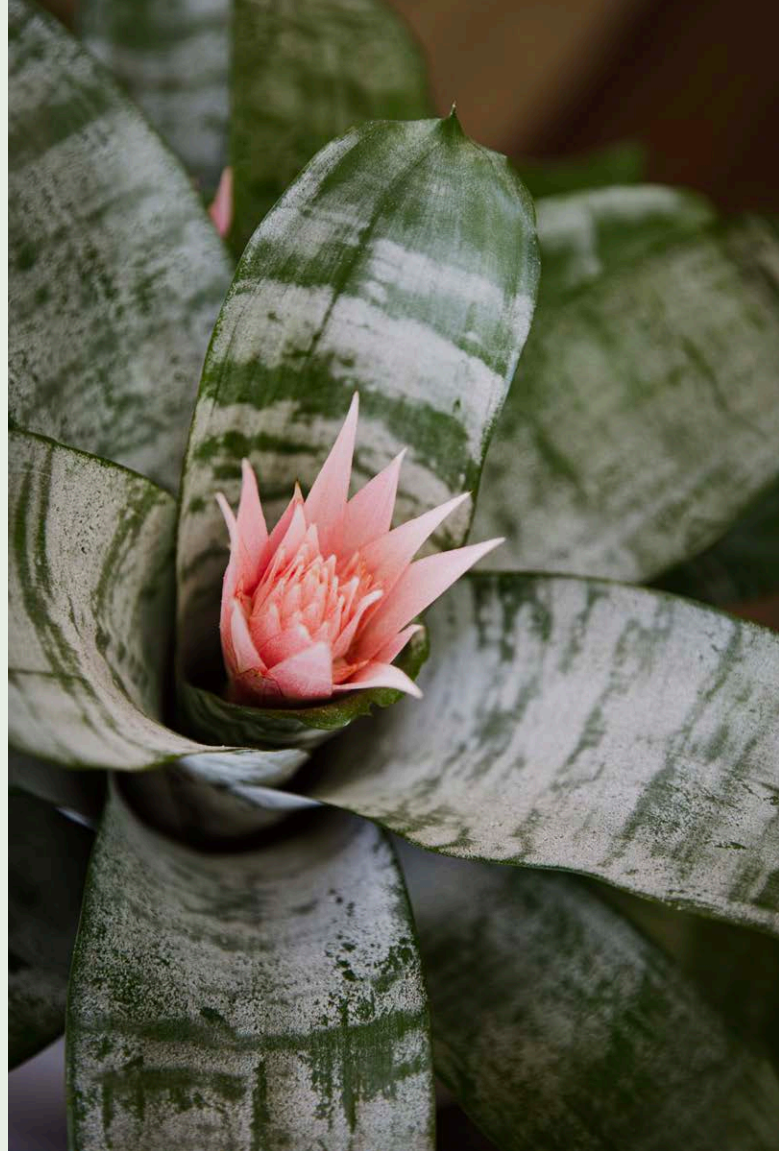


"Our pipe organ is pretty special for Catholic churches in the area," Raef says. It was designed by a former parishioner and moved to the new building from the previous St. Ann's.

Mounted near the altar, the statue of St. Ann dates back to the early 1900s, and was purchased from an ecclesiastical salvage company that repurposes art from decommissioned churches. "They redo them or salvage them from old churches in Detroit or Chicago or New York," he says, then restore the art or sculpture for existing church communities.



The floor of St. Ann's slopes downward toward the altar, a subtle architectural element that increases visibility from the back. "I've been told that women wearing high heels can have their calves get sore when they're standing," due to the slope, Raef says.



PLANT *People*

Inside Amarillo's Indie Greenhouses

BY JULIE THOMPSON



PHOTOS BY ANGELINA MARIE, SHORTEARED DOG PHOTOGRAPHY

During the pandemic, as people searched for new hobbies to fill their time, plant people found their coping mechanisms in shades of green. Six years later, it's become a lifestyle. From propagated pothos cuttings traded among friends to curated plant shelves filling Instagram feeds, Millennials and Gen Z have turned caring for greenery into a small but meaningful ritual.

In Amarillo, that cultural shift is fueling a quiet but growing ecosystem of small, plant-focused boutiques and greenhouses. These local plant shops compete with national chains by offering knowledge, curation and community, tapping into a generation hungry for a connection to living things.



NETTIE'S GREENHOUSE

“Before we opened this place, we were just like everybody else,” Caleb James says from his chair at a small wrought-iron table inside Nettie’s Greenhouse. “I mean, we had no experience, no knowledge other than just keeping our house plants alive.”

Annette “Nettie” Trimble, James’s mother, business partner and co-owner, kept a little greenhouse in her backyard that her kids helped put together. Every winter, her plants would freeze. She was sick of it. So, she asked her son—who had been running a heating and air company for five years—to quit his job and help her renovate the greenhouse that would become Nettie’s. James agreed to it. They got certified through the horticultural program at Amarillo College, which took them two and a half years.

Nettie’s is located in one of Amarillo’s original greenhouses, built on South Washington in the early 1940s and run by the Howard family. The Howards closed the place around 2010 and it changed hands a few times until it ultimately sat dilapidated. Nettie and James bought the place in 2021.

“It was bad,” Trimble says. “All the ceilings were busted out, full of weeds.”

According to James, they passed on the building twice, but reconsidered after evaluating the land costs to build their own greenhouse. “Everything you see in here, we’ve literally had our hands on,” James says. “If you can look at it, I’ve either repaired it, replaced it, or renovated it in some way, shape or form.”

The original greenhouse was completely rotted out, and one corner had been crushed when a truck backed into it. It needed new gas lines, water lines and heaters. Trimble got a contractor’s license from the City of Amarillo and got bonded so they could legally tear down the old greenhouse themselves.



ANNETTE TRIMBLE AND CALEB JAMES WITH LILY





With YouTube tutorials to guide them, they re-textured half the interior surfaces, installed new baseboards, crown molding and doors. They ripped out all the ceiling insulation.

After three years of renovations, Nettie's finally opened.

The duo's love of plants and their willingness to get creative and literally roll up their sleeves is apparent in the layout of the shop. James learned how to make a koi pond, now situated in the back next to a full-size mermaid made completely of plants. A wall of tropicals leads the way there, with an assortment of plants rarely seen in any big box chain. A few aloe vera plants are so large they have blooms.

Nettie's has gained a local reputation for their terrariums, a new trend in the plant world. They create their own for sale and sometimes offer classes for newcomers to the hobby.

Do they ever question this dream they've brought to life? "Every day," James says with a laugh.

"I'm still questioning myself," Trimble adds. "In the winter, you don't make anything, you know, and last spring, nobody really knew we were open yet. So, buying inventory, thinking what people want versus what they actually bought was very tricky."

But it's clear the plant community is growing in Amarillo. Every week, they meet people buying their first plants. Some have greenhouses themselves—and still have questions.

"I'll help you the best I can," Trimble says. "And it's so cool to see the old generation—the ladies that are in their late 80s, early 90s, that come in here and say, 'I shopped here as a girl with my parents. We grew up coming to this place.' And they thank us for saving it."

When the holidays roll around, customers tell them they remember the poinsettias from the original greenhouse, which came wrapped in golden foil. In fact, the original owners have stopped by to meet the new mother-and-son team bringing the place back to life.

"There's a guy that came in with his mom and his mom's name was in here. His grandma's name is in the concrete," James says, pointing out names and initials etched into the foundation 60 years ago. "Our names are in there, and then underneath this big fern she scribbled 'Nettie's' into the concrete. So, our names will be here forever."



PLANT BABIES

Julie Fullington spent six months retired from the plant shop life. She missed it too much and had to come back. “It’s just interacting with the people and, you know, they tell you about their plants and you compare stuff and they buy from you,” Fullington says. “You see them all the time. They’re like family.”

The former owner of Windswept Prairie Plants, Fullington created Amarillo’s first “plant truck” a few years back, but her career began years ago in Dalhart. She and her husband developed three greenhouses from which she sold outdoor plants. When the couple moved to Amarillo, she found employment, but missed the freedom of her previous career.

“You have so many limitations as opposed to working for yourself, so I started the plant truck,” Fullington says.

With the plant truck, she was able to set up a small greenhouse in Bushland and meet customers through pop-ups. The truck’s limited space also limited her interactions with customers. That’s when she leased a building on Sixth Avenue and moved everything from Bushland to create Windswept Prairie Plants.

After four years, she decided it was time to retire. “Well, I retired for six months and then—oh, I just missed it so much. I missed the plant community,” she says.

Enter Plant Babies, her new location closer to home in City View. With her husband’s help, Fullington painted the building, installed new shelving and built a wall to hide the bathroom.

“He does all the technical stuff,” Fullington says of her husband, Kerry. “My labels and inventory control. He cut out the Plant Baby sign on a CNC router and I painted it.”

Fullington says rare plants were just becoming popular right after Covid. At that point, they weren’t tissue-cultured—a cloning process used in mass production of plants—and were “actual rare plants.” Her new shop features tropical plants, including many “rare” varieties. She has small carnivorous plants that eat bloodworms and fish food, and imported and specialty plants like variegated peace lilies. She offers air plants that include “jellyfish” made from Tillandsia shells, succulents, cacti and a wall of orchids, which she tries to always keep in stock.

“Everybody’s got access to a lot of this stuff, but sometimes it’s nice to come into a shop and really to be able to look at it,” Fullington says. “You know, there’s a lot of people that are just starting their plant journey and they need help. What kind of soil does this plant take? How do you care for it? What kind of light?”

These conditions make a difference in choosing a plant, she adds.



JULIE FULLINGTON

Some plants are picky. Some need to be watered with filtered water so their leaves won't turn brown. "And trust me," she says, some plants come with a steep learning curve. "I have trial-and-error, still."

She offers custom potting for those who aren't sure how to transplant. Fullington is a veteran of the local plant swap page on Facebook and has even met people—often former customers—in parking lots to exchange plants. She says the Amarillo plant community is diverse. "There's a lot of people that love the out-of-the-ordinary, unusual plants," she says. And they're all ages. "I have a girl that came to the previous store and bought a plant. She sends me texts every couple months to let me know how her plant is doing."

Fullington laments that the plants in the big box stores are sometimes so sad. Nobody's caring for them, she says. Nobody's playing music for them. Sometimes they're cold. That's the kind of care she hopes to give them at Plant Babies. Though not a greenhouse, it's a shop dedicated to house plants and the people who love them.

Fullington is one of those people, and she thinks she might be addicted. "I feel a great sense of calm. It's intense, like on plant shipment day when you get all these plants in, but it's so rewarding," she says. "I really love it, and truthfully, I can't think of anything else I want to do, especially at this point in my life."





TANNER IRWIN

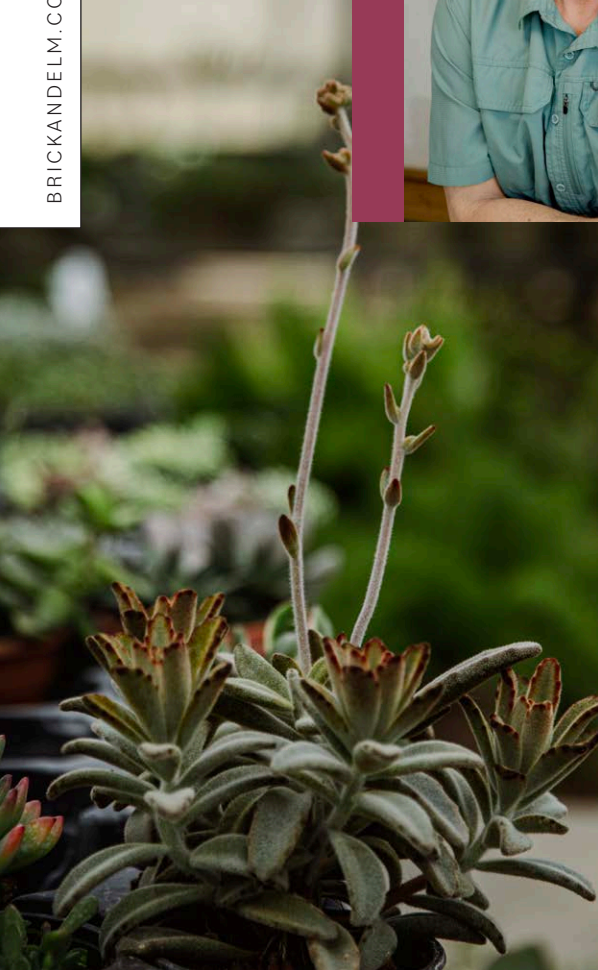


YELLOW ROSE PLANTS

“CW e’re kind of like the dive bar of greenhouses,” Tanner Irwin says. Nearby, a Yellow Rose Plants employee leans around the corner. “No! Don’t say that!”

Irwin grins. “You don’t like that. My wife doesn’t really like it either. But we really try to have some good prices and good plants,” he says. “I really try to be a plant store more than a boutique. I don’t sell a whole lot of pesticides or anything like that. I just try to focus on plants.”

Irwin’s family has been in the wholesale greenhouse business since the 1960s. His grandfather came to the area from Guthrie, Oklahoma, and started Irwin Greenhouse in Canyon. His father and two aunts were also in the business, and his father launched his own greenhouse operation in the late 1970s on Osage Street. Ten years ago, Irwin started working there, learning wholesale, growing and business operations.



“I’ve kind of always wanted to have a retail spot,” he says. The previous business at this location, Jeff’s Greenhouse, was a customer. “For a couple of years I was chatting them up saying I’d love to buy this place.” In 2023, it finally happened.

He says he wanted to follow in his family’s footsteps because he enjoys growing and seeing people “getting a nice, good plant.” Having gathered a host of connections with suppliers, he’s in a position to pay close attention to pricing.

“Almost all of my prices are lower than the big box stores,” Irwin says. “I know what everybody’s charging for everything. I try to have a good, consistent plant at a consistent price. We run specials all the time, but without specials, without discounts, we try to have a solid, good place to get local plants.”

Getting the facility operational was a challenge. That first spring was a mess, he says, as they balanced retail sales while doing repairs and watching weeds growing through the tables.

“It’s a very seasonal business, especially the way we operate, so April/May is an absolute mad house. Probably 75 to 80 percent of our money we make in two or three months, so budgeting was important. Still is,” Irwin says. “But Amarillo has been great. I think we’re growing slowly. People are learning about us.”

Irwin’s approach to plants is straightforward: He

focuses on plants that will do well in the Amarillo area, and while he hasn’t offered a large selection of indoor house plants in the past, he recognizes those get a lot of attention.

“Some of them are a little more finicky, a little more demanding, coming from mass production,” Irwin says. “I’m having to learn to give every plant as much care as we can individually, even though it’s hard sometimes.”

He’s interested to see plant trends coming back around from their heyday in the 1970s. “All the stories growing up, being in the greenhouse business of the ’70s, we call it foliage tropicals,” Irwin says. “And now this is kind of like the millennial generation really jumping on. It’s definitely growing.”

Irwin grows a lot of his house plants from plugs— young plants grown in individual cells, with leaves and developed root systems. While many will grow into full house plants, Irwin also sells these starters, pricing everything by pot size.

“We sell starter plugs for \$2.99. It wasn’t something I intended to do, but when I opened and we have our trays out, people are like, ‘How much are those?’” Irwin says. “So plant people that are wanting to get out a little cheaper really like to do that. You can buy your starter plug, plant it up and kind of go from there.”

Like Yellow Rose Plants, starting small leaves plenty of room to flourish.





WINDSWEPT PRAIRIE PLANTS

Windswept Prairie Plants used to be Petra Kommavongsa's favorite plant store. "I would come in and just kind of browse around and would always be like, 'Hey, if you ever want to sell, let me know. I'd be interested,'" she says.

And then owner Julie Fullington was ready to sell. Petra has continued offering re-pots, like the former owner. She points at a tricky work-in-progress that will take some thought to keep the root system intact. "But that's what I love to do. That's the fun part."

A 24-year employee of Amarillo National Bank, Petra recently resigned to work at the shop full time. She points to plants as a positive source for her attention. Instead of doom-scrolling on her phone, she would research different plants and the types of soils they needed. She learned to make her own essential oils and bug sprays. Her plant knowledge is self-taught.

"I'm one of those hippie people. I just think this is what the Lord was calling me to do and I feel that complete joy from there," she says. Alongside Windswept Prairies' plant truck, repotting services and plant rehab, the business now offers 3D-printed plant products, including humidity trays and stackable moss poles with built-in water reservoirs. Her husband and kids are passionate about 3D printing, and assist with production. "It's become a whole business, and so we're just actually getting to live out our dream." 🌿





Krissy Hurt, MSN, RN, Executive Director



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



Dr. Ron K. Rankin, Medical Director

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

– **Dr. Ron K. Rankin - Medical Director - Family Medicine Physician specializing in Geriatric Medicine, Hospice and Palliative Medicine offers these important tips.**

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

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AMARILLO

575 PIZZERIA

Owned by an Amarillo native, the two local 575 locations 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 \$\$

AY CARAY

Ay Caray serves authentic Mexican food from its brightly colored storefront just off I-40 and Grand. Savor favorites like menudo, tamales, tacos and enchiladas, or swing through the drive-thru for breakfast on the go. 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

After a brief hiatus, Beef's is back with its Irish pub vibe, popular wings and drink specials. This spot in the Summit Shopping Center gives parents a little downtime to watch the game. Kids can entertain themselves for hours in the arcade while the adults relax with a daily meal deal. 7306 SW 34th Ave., Suite 7, 806.437.1419, beefobradys.com \$\$

THE BRUNCH TRUCK CAFE

Open until late afternoon, this downtown brunch spot serves breakfast and lunch, offering vegan-friendly and gluten-free options. Family recipes fill the menu; in-the-know diners love the Kitchen Sink Burrito designed to eat with a fork and knife to capture all the rich flavors. 213 SW Seventh Ave., 806.373.4199, thebrunchtruckamarillo.com \$

BUFFALO WILD WINGS

This popular chain is the spot if you love wings. It's the ultimate sports fan hangout with Wing Tuesdays and Boneless Thursdays and more than 20 sauces and dry rubs to explore. 5416 S. Coulter St., 806.359.4386 / 9511 E. I-40, 806.335.2204, buffalowildwings.com \$\$

CADA VEZ COCINA MEXICANA

This reliable Town Square restaurant continues to get raves for its classic Tex-Mex fare. The savory birria tacos are wonderful, and

so are the salsa selections—with 22 beers on tap and excellent margaritas to wash it all down. Try the weekend brunch! 9200 Town Square Blvd., Suite 1000, 806.418.6976, cadavezamarillo.com \$\$

CASK & CORK

The rooftop patio in southwest Amarillo offers unparalleled views of Panhandle sunsets. It's also a great spot for live music and cocktails. And while we love the shareable apps, we're most impressed by the attentive service here. Every employee seems eager to please. 5461 McKenna Square, Suite 101, 806.410.1113, caskncorkamarillo.com \$\$

CHARLIE'S BURGERS AND BREWS

Featured in our July/August 2025 Burger Tour, Charlie's has possibly the spiciest burger in town—one that requires a waiver before eating it. There are tons of other burger options that won't catch your tongue on fire, though. To finish off the meal, try a delicious dessert special that changes daily. 4515 S. Georgia St., Suite 100, 806.678.8647 \$

CHUY'S

With a fun, colorful interior, this chain restaurant celebrates Tex-Mex flavors. The famous steak burritos are stuffed with fajita steak and topped with cheese and hatch green chile sauce. Chuy's signature creamy jalapeno dip is a crowd favorite. Order a tangy margarita or mojito to quench your thirst. 8400 W. I-40, 806.310.0900, chuy.com \$\$

CREAM OVER WAFFLES

After tempting locals with its homemade ice cream from a food truck, Cream Over Waffles opened a storefront on Soncy close to Westgate Mall. Complement your frozen treat with a decadent from-scratch waffle, served warm and topped with ice cream, or as a savory snack with melted cheese and pepperoni. Grab a stuffed baked potato and soup for a quick meal and finish it up with a perfectly blended Moo shake. 201-M Westgate Parkway West, 806.877.1485 \$

DAVID'S MEXICAN RESTAURANT

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

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

THE DRUNKEN OYSTER

The opulent, moody atmosphere of The Drunken Oyster feels like you've stepped out of the Panhandle and into the heart of the bayou. The Louisiana-style cuisine includes fresh oysters, jambalaya and crawfish étouffée. It's also a great spot for live music. 7606 SW 45th Ave., Suite 100, 806.418.6668, drunkenoysteramarillo.com \$\$

DYER'S BAR-B-QUE

Locals are loyal to Dyer's, and the Dyer family has been serving its original recipes in the Panhandle for decades. (In addition to the Amarillo fixture at Wellington Square, there's also a location in Pampa.) Come for the family-style, all-you-can-eat lunch on Fridays and Saturdays. Or eat your fill of premium smoked prime rib. 1619 S. Kentucky St., Suite E526, 806.358.7104, dyersbbq.com \$\$

EL BRACERO MEXICAN GRILL

This family-owned restaurant has multiple locations but this one on Grand is the original and legendary for authentic Mexican *comida*. Appropriately, it's painted red on the outside and green on the inside. We recommend the carne asada or spicy green chile enchiladas. 2116 S. Grand St., 806.373.4788 \$\$

EL MANANTIAL RESTAURANT

This Amarillo Boulevard dive is regularly recommended as a favorite restaurant or 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. 3823 E. Amarillo Blvd., 806.383.1852 \$-\$

THE FALCON

The Falcon has taken off with Bushland's recent growth. The home-style restaurant serves burgers (100-percent ground brisket patties!), loaded baked potatoes, tacos, sandwiches and chicken platters. Don't miss the special shakes or malts. The "Teddy Dust" on the fries is worth a return trip. 2300 Wells St., 806.803.0219 \$

FREDDIE'S FISH & GRILL

Remember FatCat? That's the heritage of this fry shack, and the catfish is still the best thing on the menu. (Good news: It's actual, freshwater catfish.) The new incarnation serves beer and boasts an updated interior. The menu feels familiar to the FatCat of old: Lots of fried seafood,

The Panhandle's Premier Smile Artist



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WOLFLIN SQUARE

hushpuppies, fries and the popular Build-Your-Own-Bucket boil. 1309 Dumas Drive, 806.373.3581 \$

FUN NOODLE BAR

A relative newcomer to the city's Asian restaurant scene, this is one of just a few places with decent ramen, dumplings and bao in Amarillo. The lunch specials are served until 3 p.m. and the orders arrive fast. 2219 S. Georgia St., 806.803.2219, funnoodlebaramarillotx.com \$\$

GIRASOL CAFE & BAKERY

We are huge fans of Girasol, where the weekly specials are always creative, filling and delicious. The Saturday brunch never disappoints either, especially in the outdoor dining area on a sunny morning. Girasol is lunch-only, so grab some baked goods or bread when you leave. 3201 S. Coulter St., 806.322.0023, girasol.cafe \$

GOLDEN ROSE TEA ROOM

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

HOFFBRAU STEAK & GRILL HOUSE

Locally owned for three decades, Hoffbrau is exactly the kind of steak place you'd expect to find in a city like ours—no-fuss and delicious. The I-40 location is both family-friendly and traveler-friendly, with Texas steaks, comfort food, outdoor dining and a separate bar area. 7203 W. I-40, 806.358.6595, hoffbrausteakandgrill.com \$\$

HOUSE OF DONUTS

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

HUD'S

Drive past either of the Hud's locations before 10 a.m. and you're likely to see a drive-thru line that sometimes extends into the street. Customers are either clamoring for its famous limeades or breakfast burritos. Later in the day, the burgers and chicken nuggets are amazing, too. 7311 W. Amarillo Blvd., 806.351.1499 / 4411 Bell St., 806.331.4837, hudsama.com \$

INDIAN OVEN

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

JASON'S DELI

We know why this deli chain is always busy. It's definitely its amazing salad bar. And probably the free, family-friendly soft-serve ice cream. Or maybe it's all the other generously-portioned menu options, including sandwiches, paninis, wraps, baked potatoes and soups. (We recommend the muffalettas.) 7406 SW 34th Ave., 806.353.4440 / 2600 Wolflin Ave., 806.803.9160, jasonsdeli.com \$

JOE TACO

This Amarillo stand-by has a solid reputation for fast service and great Tex-Mex, with Amarillo and Canyon locations. The bar and outdoor patio at the Wallace location, near the hospitals, are always hopping with live music on weekends. 7312 Wallace Blvd., 806.331.8226 / 5700 S. Georgia St., 806.350.8226, joe-taco.com \$\$

KOP JAI THAI-LAO STREET FOOD

One thing Amarillo doesn't lack is good Thai food. But people are raving about Kop Jai'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., Suite 300, 806.803.1235 \$

LA BELLA PIZZA

With four locations in Amarillo and Canyon, La Bella's offers more than just pizza. Feast on pasta, sandwiches, salads or wings. They even deliver outside the city limits so you can always satisfy your cravings. 2300 E. 34th Ave, Suite 100, 806.331.2200 / 2601 SW Sixth Ave., 806.437.1441 / 7230 Hillside Road, 806.352.1600, labellaonline.com \$\$

LA FUENTE

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 very small and cozy neighborhood place located on Grand. 511 S. Grand St., 806.444.6761 \$

LONE STAR BAR & GRILL

"No small steaks, no hot beer" is the motto of this Texas-style hideaway on the road out to Lake Tanglewood, and its steaks and burgers never disappoint. In fact, the steaks are quietly some of the best in the Panhandle. Plus: Pool tables! Avoid the big chain steakhouses and try this one, in business for more than 30 years. 935 E. FM 1151, 806.622.9827 \$

LOTIS BAKESHOP

The bad news? This locally owned bakery is only open on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. The good news, however, is that Lotis creates the most buttery, flaky, irresistible pastries. Croissants that melt in your mouth, apple strudel, cruffins and pan au chocolat. Order online and pick up to-go. Hurry, because the bakery often sells out of customer favorites. 7028 S. Western St., 806.231.6500 \$

MAC JOE'S KITCHEN & CELLAR

Always a popular date-night choice, Mac Joe's is an Amarillo institution known for elegant ambiance and attentive service. The menu relies on Italian dishes but also offers fantastic steaks. 1619 S. Kentucky St., Suite D1500, 806.358.8990, macjoesamarillo.com \$\$\$-\$\$\$\$

MY THAI

One of the original Thai food restaurants in a city famous for them. My Thai has been family-owned since 1986 and is a local favorite. In fact, My Thai is probably the standard for comparing the quality of the rest of the city's Thai restaurants. Lunch specials daily. 2029 Coulter St., 355.9541, mythaiamarillo.com \$

NORTH HEIGHTS DISCOUNT & CAFE

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

OVR-EZE

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

PAN-HANDLERS CAFE

The best restaurants never seem to shout their presence, and that applies to this tasteful lunch spot hidden in the basement of Amarillo National Bank Plaza One. It's locally owned and has a fantastic salad bar, plus sandwiches and daily specials. It's always, always good. 410 S. Taylor St., 806.352.2590, thepan-handlers.com \$

PORK N THINGS BBQ

Owner Denny Antel has expanded his successful food truck business into the old Outlaws Supper Club building east of town. Summer visitors to Pork n Things BBQ will enjoy a beer garden, outdoor activities like cornhole, a fantastic open-

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air patio and a lot of televisions. Patrons rave about Antel's brisket, Kansas City-style ribs, burnt ends and green chile hominy. Everything on the menu is tender and flavorful thanks to the massive smoker out back. 10816 SE Third Ave., 806.699.7675 \$\$

RISE 'N' SHINE DONUTS

The doughnut wars are a thing in Amarillo, and we're ready to proclaim at least one victor: Rise 'N' Shine has the best doughnut holes in the city. Really! Beyond the usual glazed, cake or filled doughnuts, you can grab fresh pastries, kolaches and croissant breakfast sandwiches. 3605 SW 45th Ave, 806.398.9622 / 5901 S. Coulter St., 806.437.1511 \$

THE RUFFLED CUP

It all started with cupcakes, but now this beloved bakery also serves a daily lunch menu of straight-up comfort food, including soups, salads, and hot and cold sandwiches on fresh-baked bread. Grab a to-go order, and don't forget to order some of those cupcakes for dessert. 3440 S. Bell St., Suite 100, 806.318.3961, theruffledcup.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 \$\$

SHELBY'S DINER

Never had a reason to go out to Tradewinds Airport? Now you do. This fun, home-cooking menu comes with runway views of private-plane takeoffs and landings. Locals love the breakfast options—served from 7 a.m. until 11 a.m.—as well as the burgers on the lunch menu. Open for dinner on Thursdays and Fridays. 4105 Tradewind St, 806.699.1008, shelbysdineramarillo.com \$

SIX CAR PUB & BREWERY

One of the best things to hit downtown since the Sod Poodles, this Polk Street restaurant is known for its craft beers, amazing outdoor patio and rooftop, and its trendy vibe. The Nashville chicken sandwich is one of the best in the city. Like IPAs? Make Good Choices. 625 S. Polk St., 806.576.3396, sixcarpub.com \$\$

SUNDAY'S KITCHEN

Everyone loves Chef Ron, but they especially love his West Texas twist on Gulf Coast and Cajun cuisine. This downtown dive is open for lunch and dinner Tuesday through Friday. It's closed on Saturdays, but don't miss the Sunday brunch. Try the Pit Master Mac & Cheese. 112 SW Sixth Ave., 806.418.6477 \$\$

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 and off Tascosa Road. 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, tapatiotx.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 \$\$

TOSCANA ITALIAN STEAKHOUSE

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

WEST TEXAS FRESH

West Texas Fresh is located north of the AISD Rod Schroder Education Support Center, with a drive-thru format serving salads, wraps, smoothies and breakfast burritos. Order ahead using the app, customize your salad or wrap with add-ons, pick it up and go. Menu highlights include the popular PanHandle salad, Roasted Peach salad and Super Green smoothie. 7210 W. I-40, 806.463.9014, westtexasfresh.com \$

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 \$\$-\$\$\$

YOUNGBLOOD'S CAFE

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

CANYON

ALOHA KITCHEN

Spam is on the menu at Aloha Kitchen, an authentic Hawaiian eatery located inside Ranchers Storefront on the Square. Aloha Kitchen serves breakfast items like Moons Over Spammmy, a breakfast sandwich with Spam, and egg and cheese on delectable malasada, a type of frybread. The Aloha Kitchen menu changes frequently, so check the menu before you visit. 1505 Fourth Ave., 806.557.8036 \$

HONEY BUZZ WINERY

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

MICKEY'S PLACE

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

RANCH HOUSE CAFE

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

ROCKIN' ZEBRA SODA SHOPPE

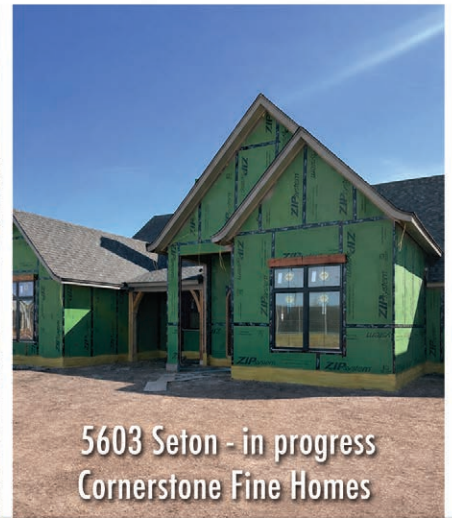
The motto here is "life is short, eat dessert first" and we can't disagree with that. Everything at Rockin' Zebra is pure nostalgia, from the '50s-era barstools and soda fountain to the abundant signage on the walls. (Not to mention Canyon's Square right outside the diner.) An ideal setting for a classic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

SAYAKOMARN'S RESTAURANT

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



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DUST ON THE LENS

In the years leading up to the 1930s, photographs of the people and places of the Plains reflected our aspirations and boosted our confidence. Everything was new and possible.

But dust, the great equalizer, rolled in by the middle '30s and clouded the lens through which we viewed our success. When government photographers showed up to document this new reality, their images scratched the veneer of our invincibility and found us looking quite vulnerable at times.

One of the most unsettling photographs from that era shows a woman crossing a central Amarillo street in April 1936 as a dust-choked wind attempts to indecently rearrange the thin skirt clinging to her backside. This unidentified Amarillo lady likely started the day with an extra hat pin, fully intending to defy the wind as plainswomen are wont to do. As she made a break for the opposite curb that day, a 20-year-old government photographer named Arthur Rothstein stepped outside and snapped a photo of her mad dash. Anyone who grew up around here can almost feel the wind just by looking at the image he captured.

A year earlier, Rothstein had been the first photographer hired by the U.S. Resettlement Administration to document the hardships of rural Americans coping with the double blows of economic depression and extreme weather. Over the ensuing years, several other talented photographers joined Rothstein in this undertaking. Drawn by the dust, more than one found their way to Amarillo and the Panhandle.

The Resettlement Administration, or RA as it was known, was a 1935 creation of the Roosevelt Administration tasked with assisting farmers with loans, conservation support and a way out if the first two didn't work. No doubt the RA had its political detractors from the beginning, so one way the agency sought to survive was to employ visuals in proving the urgency of its mission.

In addition to photo documentation, the agency released a film in the spring of 1936 titled *The Plow That Broke the Plains*. In short, the film blamed farming practices and technology for unleashing the monster dust storms that were choking the region's vitality. But the idea that we had caused our own disaster was not popular locally, and many of the RA's policies were perceived by some as veiled attempts at establishing socialism on the Plains.

Ralph Bray, the Amarillo-based regional information director for the Resettlement Administration, made headlines shortly after the release of the documentary film when he resigned his post, disgusted by what he saw as the agency's portrayal of the plains as a wasteland. On his way out, he castigated the agency's leadership under Roosevelt brain-truster Rexford G. Tugwell in a fiery statement in the Amarillo Daily News.

"The people on the Plains don't want charity or they don't want a lot of communistic philosophies foisted upon them, and

they don't want their country, which is one of the finest on earth, with tremendous possibilities once its lands are put to their best use and extended deserving credit, maligned and pictured as an American Sahara by a bunch of Tugwellian sophists," Bray told the reporter.

The Amarillo newspapers had only recently reported that Bray was accompanied by a government photographer on a fact-finding visit to New Mexico, which was part of the RA's Amarillo region. It's likely Arthur Rothstein was that photographer, based on his travels during that same period. In April, around the time he took the photo of the Amarillo woman, Rothstein captured the iconic image of a farmer and his young sons running for the cover of a half-dugout during a sudden dust storm in Cimarron County in the Oklahoma Panhandle.

We don't know what Bray thought of Rothstein or his photos, but he was not alone in his criticism of Tugwell and the direction the government was taking. By the end of 1936, Tugwell was forced out. The RA was moved under the Department of Agriculture and rebranded as the Farm Security Administration, but its photography division managed to survive and the amazing photos kept coming.

In 1937, FSA photographer Dorothea Lange, who was already well known for her haunting images of migrant farm workers, made a pass through the Texas Panhandle. Her images of flood victims walking on a road near Lakeview in Hall County capture the immensity of the land and sky, making the human subjects appear quite small but strangely dignified in their suffering. And a photo of four bedraggled men sitting on the stoop outside of the First National Bank of Memphis tells a thousand stories of stumbling, falling and standing up again, punctuated by a battered wooden crutch propped at their feet.

Like Rothstein's photo of the Amarillo woman charging against the wind, Lange's subjects and situations would not have been handpicked by the local chamber of commerce. But the government photographers happened upon everyday people in real predicaments and the photos they shot were mostly honest, which is what makes them so memorable. Likewise, the much-maligned documentary film released in 1936 took on some taboo subjects and focused attention on practices that were harming the land, even if its conclusions were somewhat one-sided.

But I can also understand how the government's editorial focus might've garnered bad reviews. It's human nature to complain when the camera highlights our rough angles, and it's easy to think someone intentionally captured us in the worst light. More than once I've griped about state and national media only paying attention to the Panhandle when something bad happens. But our pastures are only as secure as the weakest link in the barbed wire fence, so to speak. Long term, seeing ourselves through the lens of objectivity is a solid strategy for meeting the dust and wind head on, as sure as a full can of Aqua Net. We're nothing out here if not defiant.. ☺

NETFLIX HOUSE: IMMERSE YOURSELF

If any company can lay claim to having completely disrupted how we consume entertainment media, it is Netflix. Launched in 1997 with mail-order DVD rentals, it subsequently evolved into streaming services in 2007, and quickly came to dominate what was an entirely new way for viewing content.

But now the company has stepped into a different pond with its Netflix House Dallas, which opened last December. One of only two in the nation (the other opened in suburban Philadelphia), it occupies the space vacated by Belk department store at the Galleria. It completely fills the two-story building, and features attractions based on the streamer's iconic shows, along with arcade games, merchandise, and a cafe and bar with menu items inspired by its impressive catalog.

If cool merch is your thing, bring your credit card (the facility is cashless), because the *Bridgerton*, *Outer Banks*, *Squid Game*, and *Stranger Things* apparel, collectibles and accessories will have you drooling. I couldn't resist.

The Galleria is located adjacent to the intersection of I-635 and the Dallas North Tollway. Lodging, dining and shopping options are abundant.

Immersive entertainment is all the rage these days, including destinations like Cosm Dallas, the shared reality sports viewing venue in The Colony, and the Museum of Illusions Dallas and Meow Wolf Grapevine's The Real Unreal. It's about inserting yourself into a time and space that suspends reality.

But Netflix House takes that immersion and stirs in a huge dollop of brand-name reinforcement. In a strange kind of way, the company has now embraced brick and mortar. Funny how things have a way of circling back.

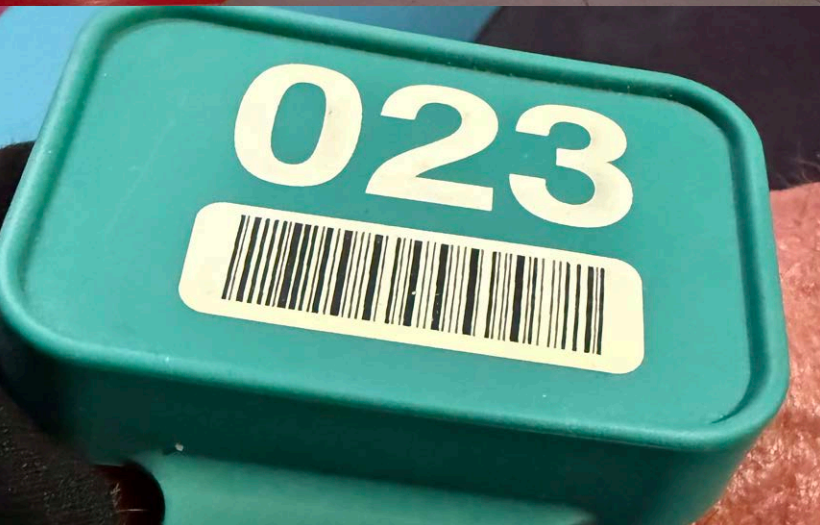
Admission to the building is free. The cafe, bar, arcade and gift shop occupy the top floor and can be accessed from the mall's interior. However, the fee-based marquee attractions are located on the first floor, with access from the outside as well as an interior stairway.

Squid Game: Survive the Trials and *Stranger Things: Escape the Dark* are on tap for the moment, but Netflix promises to revise the offerings periodically, ranging from updates to completely new attractions.

MAR/APR 2026

114

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take the off-ramp

WITH NICK GERLICH

Tickets for each attraction range from \$39 to \$45, depending on the time and day of week. I strongly advise buying tickets online prior to arrival, because availability is limited for the various time slots. The newness of Netflix House means this place is packed.

The *Squid Game* attraction allows 24 guests to enter at a time, with each person getting a numbered bracelet that has a chip. It truly is a competition, with a winner of the five challenges declared at the end. That winner gets a small gift, but that is not the purpose of participating. No, it is to get the feeling of being in *Squid Game*, but without ... ahem ... the bullets.

Photos are allowed inside the game rooms, but with discretion. The Pink Guards lend an imposing air of authenticity, and the recognizable squares, triangles and circles on their masks make you feel like you just stepped onto a film set. Or a life-and-death game.

I won't spoil it too much, but I will concede that Red Light Green Light is one of the games. Just like on the show, you have to be on point. That chip bracelet you're wearing can detect every tiny movement, and let's just say I heard, "Player No. 23, you have been eliminated." No points for me in that game, and I lost some ground

on the leader board. All told, the attraction lasted about 45 minutes.

As for *Stranger Things*, it is more a quest than a competition. No photos are allowed because it is played in near darkness. Forty guests are allowed at a time, each one with a tiny flashlight to help navigate through earthquake-stricken Hawkins, Indiana, in search of three young people. Clues are left everywhere in what essentially is a miniature film set, including houses and outdoor scenes. The attraction then morphs into what feels like a haunted house, encountering Vecna along the way. After an hour, the adventure ends.

We spent five hours at Netflix House, including the two marquee attractions, wait time to get into each, shopping for merch, playing arcade games, and having an adult beverage. We skipped the cafe, which is arguably the weakest link in the whole proposition. It was rather basic, while everything else left us in awe.

The burden is on Netflix to change things up on a regular basis, to keep people coming back. The immersion was good, and I will return. Brush up on your knowledge of these shows, and make your way to Dallas! 🍷



MARIA PASILLAS

Morning Weather Anchor, KAMR Local 4 News-TV, KCPN My Network TV, Nexstar Media Inc.

The best advice I ever heard is: Show up consistently, work hard and treat people well. In the long run, integrity and reliability will take you further than talent alone.

My three most recommended books are: *The Bible*, *Atomic Habits* by James Clear, and *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* by John Boyne.

To me, success means: Working hard, staying true to my values, and being able to take care of the life my husband and I have built together. It also means helping others when I can, giving back to my community and leaving things better than I found them.

People who know me might be surprised that I: am more introverted and reflective than I appear, and I truly enjoy quiet moments—being at home, helping with ranch chores and appreciating the slower pace of life—just as much as being involved and engaged.

My biggest pet peeve is: clutter and disorganization. I believe an orderly space brings clarity and efficiency.

Everyone in Amarillo needs to experience: a ranch rodeo at least once. It's a proud Texas Panhandle tradition that highlights our agricultural roots, strong work ethic and sense of community.

If I could change any one local thing it would be: I would love to see the city continue to grow in evening entertainment and dining, creating even more ways for families to gather and enjoy Amarillo.

This city is amazing at: taking care of its own. Amarillo shows up in times of need, and the spirit of generosity and neighborly support runs deep here. I've witnessed it firsthand during natural disasters—like the floods here—and in surrounding communities when they've been hit by tornadoes or wildfires.

My favorite place in Amarillo is: the Tri-State Fairgrounds. It's where so many great memories are made—from rodeos to monster trucks to the annual fair—my family and I absolutely love all the events there.

A local organization I love right now: Homeless Heroes. It's one of my favorite organizations in Amarillo because of the work they do helping house and support homeless veterans in our community. ©



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