

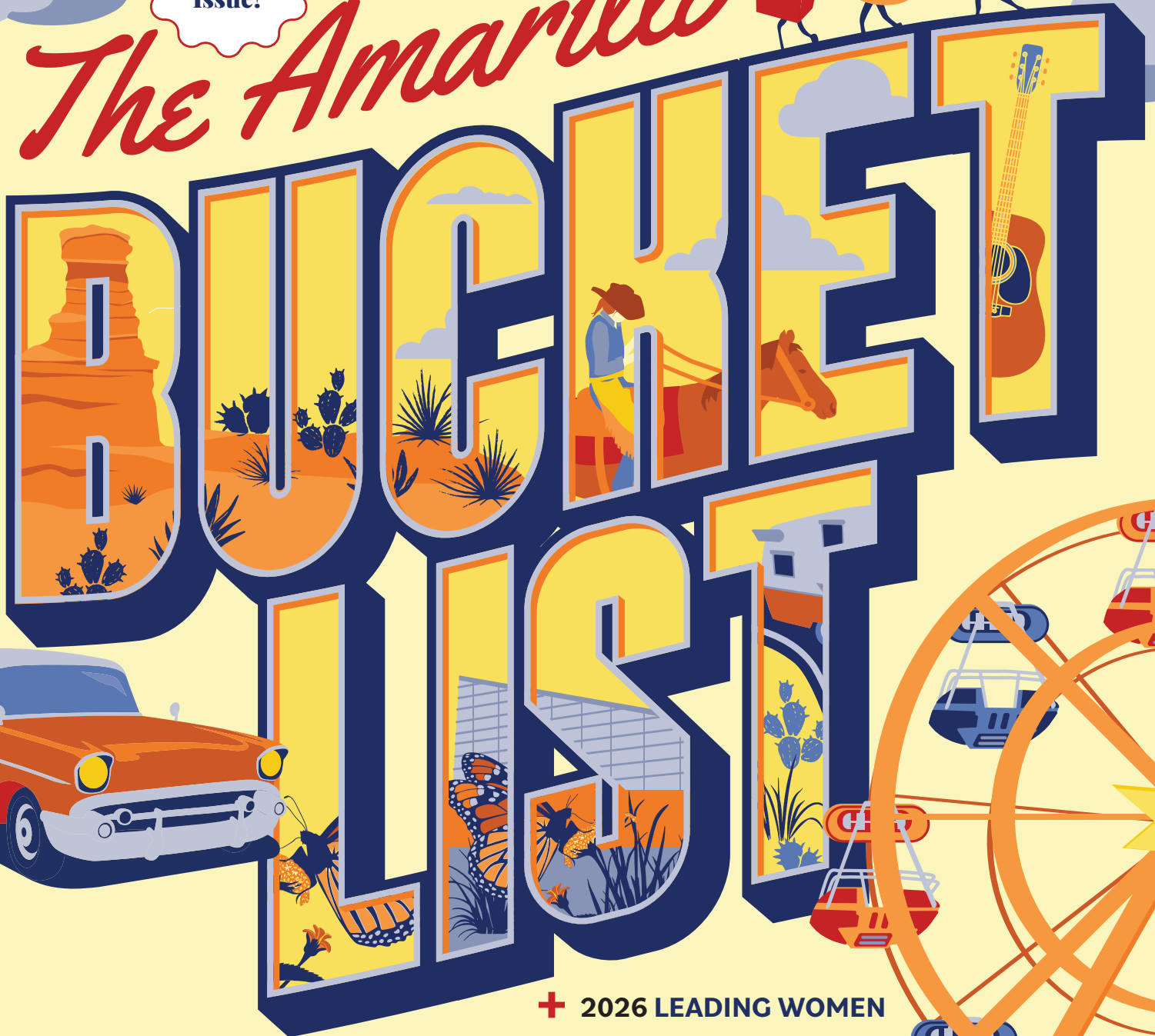
Brick&Elm

AMARILLO'S PREMIER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

MAY/JUNE 2026

5-Year
Anniversary
Issue!

The Amarillo



+ 2026 LEADING WOMEN
ROUTE 66 100-YEAR
CELEBRATION
SUMMER FUN

Street
TOYOTA

4500 S. SONCY ROAD

806.355.9846

STREETTOYOTA.COM



2026 Land Cruiser

Retro vibe. Modern drive.

LOCATED @ BELL
& HOLLYWOOD

HOMES FROM THE \$600'S

The Facts

Hollywood & Bell
750 homesites planned
Inside Amarillo City Limits
Canyon Independent School District
Landscaped areas and parkways
Homes priced in the \$600's and up
Custom built homes by Amarillo's top builders



P I N N A C L E

BY ROCKROSE



Schools and Education

Canyon Independent School District
Pinnacle by Rockrose residents will have access to the following schools:

K-4: Sundown Lane Elementary

5-6: Pinnacle Intermediate

7-8: Westover Park Junior High & Randall Junior High

9-12: Randall High School

RYAN PALMER
2003 Alum



JUSTIN THOMAS
2014 Alum



SCOTTIE SCHEFFLER
2019 Alum



IT'S ONE! PROFESSIONAL GOLF COMES TO AMARILLO

JUNE 8-14, 2026

OCCUNETCLASSIC.COM



YOUR JOURNEY, OUR SUPPORT

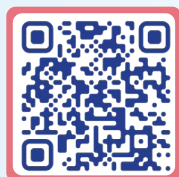
When it comes to behavioral health, we're all in! At Northwest Texas Healthcare System Behavioral Health, we believe mental healthcare should feel supportive, respectful and accessible. We partner with individuals and families to help them navigate life's challenges, build healthy coping skills and move forward with confidence.

When to Seek Help

A level-of-care assessment may help if you or a loved one experience:

- Destructive behavior
- Anxiety or depression
- Substance use
- Personality or behavioral issues

Ask about our outpatient programs, including individual therapy and telehealth services. Call **806-351-7150**.



SCAN THE CODE
TO LEARN MORE

VISIT [NWTHSBEHAVIORALHEALTH.COM](https://www.nwthsbehavioralhealth.com)



Behavioral Health

1501 S. Coulter Street
Amarillo, TX 79106

In case of a mental health crisis, CALL 988 or seek the nearest emergency room. Individuals cannot be acutely suicidal or homicidal. Model representations of real patients are shown. Physicians are independent practitioners who are not employees or agents of Northwest Texas Healthcare System. The hospital shall not be liable for actions or treatments provided by physicians. For language assistance, disability accommodations and the nondiscrimination notice, visit our website. 264391399-4439010 4/26



46 | THE AMARILLO BUCKET LIST

15 things every local needs to have experienced.
Your city is waiting for you to show up.

46



PHOTO BY GUNNAR MCCONLOGUE

BRICKANDELM.COM MAY/JUNE 2026



ON THE COVER: ILLUSTRATION BY KAYLA MORRIS

12 *The Horizon* TAKE FIVE

- BY THE NUMBERS
- NEW IN TOWN
- CONVERSATIONS
- 66 Stories from Route 66
- Tevae Vontrell Shoels
- THE HOT LIST
- With Chip Chandler

23 *Food + Drink*

- PRISSY'S BARBECUE
- ELEVATE YOUR PLATE
- With Ruthie Collins
- LOCAL MAKER TASTE TEST

34 THE DIRT

Get the scoop

36 MUSINGS WITH MAGGIE

By Maggie Burt



Banking for **EVERY** generation.

Bank your way – **mobile, online,**
or in-branch – with local bankers
right here in the Texas Panhandle
who are ready to help.

806.355.9661 **FBSW.COM**



**FirstBank
Southwest**

Faith. Family. Bank.®

Member FDIC 

AMARILLO • PERRYTON • PAMPA • BOOKER • HEREFORD • CANYON **COMING SOON!**

54 | FIVE YEARS LATER

Brick & Elm began publishing in May 2021. We reflect on and update some of our earliest stories.

84 | ANGELS AMONG US

Jon Mark Beilue is still alive because Jim Peavey was exactly where he was meant to be.

124 | CYD CHARISSE

From Tyler Street to the Silver Screen, how Tula Ellice "Sid" Finklea got her start in Amarillo.

54



84



124



PHOTO BY SHANNON RICHARDSON

PROVIDED PHOTO

38

THE CHASE

With Andy Chase Cundiff

40

THE CALL

With Melodie Graves

42

BIZ

Get up in the city's business

120

THE EXPLOSIVE CRIMES OF A.D. PAYNE

128

RESTAURANT LISTINGS

136

BACK WHEN

With Wes Reeves

138

TAKE THE OFF-RAMP

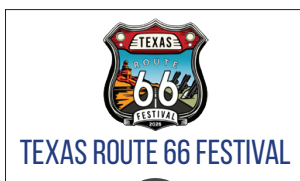
With Nick Gerlich

140

FINISH

Kenny Pigman

PLUS:



60



75



89



NEW! PHYSICAL THERAPY

REED BRANNON, PT, DPT



IT'S JUST WORK

SPORTS REHABILITATION SERVICES
DALLAS BASED LEADER IN PHYSICAL THERAPY EXPANDS IN AMARILLO!

**ELEVATING PHYSICAL THERAPY AND REHABILITATION
WITH SPECIALIZED TREATMENTS AND EXPERTISE.**

- POST-OPERATIVE REHABILITATION**
- CONSERVATIVE-CARE REHABILITATION**
- BRIDGE PROGRAM**

In-house, sport-specific, strength and conditioning for our athletes transitioning from rehab to return to playing sports. Allowing our patients to receive higher-level strength and conditioning within, and in accordance with physician and therapist-prescribed precautions. Featuring collaboration between our Doctors of Physical Therapy and Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialists, including Melvin Sanders, AJ Billings, Marc Cornell & Blue Baggett.

RECOVERY

Recovery sessions utilize state-of-the-art and traditional equipment to advance wellness, improve training, reduce inflammation and soreness, and maximize overall performance.



BOOK TODAY!



TASCOSA
GOLF CLUB

Brick&Elm

AMARILLO'S PREMIER
LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

PUBLISHERS

Michele McAffrey
mm@brickandelm.com

Jason Boyett
jb@brickandelm.com

DESIGNER
Kayla Morris

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
Mason Dudley

CONTRIBUTING
PHOTOGRAPHERS
Preslie Bentley
Gunnar McConlogue
Brittani Preece
Shannon Richardson

CONTRIBUTING
WRITERS
Maggie Burt
Chip Chandler
Ruthie Collins
Andy Chase Cundiff
Nick Gerlich
Melodie Graves
Michael H. Price
Wes Reeves
Clayton Trutor

INTERNS
Leilani Terrazas
Gunnar McConlogue

TO SUBSCRIBE:
brickandelm.com

Print subscription: \$34.99/year

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES:
mm@brickandelm.com
806.414.5235



All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part
without written permission is prohibited.

BRICK & ELM (ISSN 2770-2529), is published bi-monthly by
Edgebow Media LLC, 2920 Duniven Circle, Suite L,
Amarillo, TX 79109. Periodicals Postage paid at Amarillo, TX, and
at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes
to Edgebow Media LLC, PO Box 2104, Amarillo, TX 79105.



The photo to the right is the first one I ever had taken as co-owner of a magazine. We were close to downtown Amarillo, probably in early March, and 2021 Michele had no idea the wild ride that was in store for her. I can't believe it's been five years since we launched *Brick & Elm Magazine*, after a mad scramble to set up our website and social media accounts, establish an advertiser base, hire our trusted columnists, freelance writers and photographers, and finish the design of our very first issue.



I've been thinking about those early days as the official anniversary date approaches, recalling memory after memory of those first thrilling (and hard!) years. We've cataloged a few of these experiences in our feature "Five Years Later" on page 54. And as Jason wrote at the close of that feature, *we're just getting started*.

Thank you, *thank you* to our advertisers, subscribers, followers, writers and photographers for cheering us on and supporting us all along our journey. And to *Kayla Morris*, our uber-talented designer who's been with me for more than a decade. *Brick & Elm* simply wouldn't shine like it does without her.

Michele

A confession: I didn't hike Palo Duro Canyon's iconic Lighthouse Trail until I was in my 30s. I grew up in Amarillo and visited PDC every summer as a child. I spent my early adulthood camping and hiking and backpacking. But somehow, I never did those things *here*. Psychologists call this "novelty bias." It's the human tendency to overvalue things that feel new. That's why we undervalue our own region. It seems ordinary, but traveling elsewhere to explore, visit landmarks, and take photos is exciting. We're tourists everywhere except where we live.



We wanted to address this with our "Amarillo Bucket List" feature, which describes all the things you need to do (or have done) if you live here. I hope it gives you permission to be curious and experience some of the local things that definitely are on the minds of tourists.

Also, I'm delighted that this issue features a couple of fascinating history articles. Clayton Trutor, who last wrote about Art Bell's Amarillo connection, profiles another celebrity with local ties: Cyd Charisse (who grew up Tula Ellice "Sid" Finklea in Amarillo). And *Fort Worth Magazine's* Michael H. Price tells the story of the A.D. Payne case, which dominated Amarillo headlines in the early 1930s. I first heard this story when interviewing art historian Amy Von Lintel for our neighborhoods feature last fall, and it's bananas.

Finally, I hope you'll read Jon Mark Beilue's powerful account of his brush with mortality after collapsing in a stranger's yard. We love Jon Mark and are so honored to be the place where he tells this story. You won't forget it.

Jason



PRESENTING

WESTSIDE ROW

DOWNTOWN AMARILLO

COMING 2027

PRE-LEASE NOW OPEN



ELEVATED URBAN LIVING – REIMAGINED FOR AMARILLO

3 Bed • 3.5 Bath

SPACIOUS FLOOR PLANS

2-Car Garage

PRIVATE & REAR-ACCESS

Rooftop Deck

PRIVATE OUTDOOR LIVING

7 Units Only

LUXURY FINISHES

NOW ACCEPTING PRE-LEASE INTEREST

Get on the Priority Waitlist at
[yellowskygroup.com](https://www.yellowskygroup.com)



SCAN TO JOIN
THE PRIORITY LIST

300 SW 10TH AVENUE AT HARRISON • AMARILLO, TX



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.



BRITTANI PREECE

Brittani is an award-winning photographer whose work has appeared in national media including *Good Morning America* and *Inside Edition*. See Brittani's work at solo.to/brittanipreece.



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.



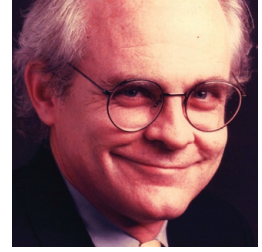
GUNNAR MCCONLOGUE

Gunnar is a competitive speaker and self-taught designer. Whether through a lens, keyboard, or conversation, his goal is to find what makes this region tick and make sure it doesn't go unnoticed.



CLAYTON TRUTOR

Clayton writes for many national and regional publications about American culture. He is the author of several books, including *Loserville* and *Boston Ball*.



MICHAEL H. PRICE

Michael spent the '70s as an editor and columnist with the Amarillo Globe-News. Since then, he's written for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, *Fort Worth Magazine*, and the *New York Times*.

BRICKANDELM.COM 10 MAY/JUNE 2026

Local Expert in Electronic Payments since 1997!

In an industry filled with faceless providers, we're still doing business the old-fashioned way: Face-to-face and one client at a time.



Call for estimates: 806-376-9950

Residential • Industrial • Commercial • Agriculture • Generators



We would like to recognize one of our local partners, Triangle Electric, for the milestone of 100 years serving the community.

Compliant Cash Discount & Surcharging Programs
 ★ Reduce Monthly Processing Fees by 80-100% ★
 ★ FREE STAND BESIDE TERMINAL ★ ZERO START UP COST ★

806.340.0658 | panhandlepossystems.com



Call today to start planning your dream home!
806.236.6863 | southhavenamarillo.com



Find South Haven on Osage Street
between 46th and 58th Avenues

Welcome to South Haven, a thoughtfully planned neighborhood in southeast Amarillo where new homes, smart design and everyday convenience come together

- Offering builders a unique opportunity for spec and custom homes with accessible mortgages
- Positioned to buyers seeking new construction, functional design and neighborhood appeal
- South Haven's back-entry garage community ensures neighborhoods with uncluttered streets and architectural appeal
- Lots ready to build within the city limits!

The Horizon

Take Five

BENDING LIGHT: CECIL WALKER OF SKYRITE SIGN COMPANY

1. How did you get into this work? It seems highly specialized.

Back in the late 1980s, I worked for a sign company called Sage Signs. At that time, the channel letters we made were illuminated by neon. The company purchased a neon plant so we could learn how to bend neon ourselves. We trained for one day to learn how to bend double backs, which is basically shaping a U in a stick of glass tubing. We learned how to weld electrodes onto glass—which is key to making neon light—and how to process a neon unit. A neon unit can consist of a straight piece of glass up to eight feet long, a letter or a series of letters.

I had no other schooling in the art of making neon. Most of it was on-the-job training, looking at other neon signs to see how it was made and bent and taking my best shot at it. I practiced putting two pieces of glass together and doing double backs. I broke a lot of glass and burned myself quite often. (Just by looking at a piece of glass, you can't tell if it's hot or cold.) In the early days, my neon wasn't pretty but it worked. When I first started, I was told I wouldn't be able to make a good unit of neon for years, that you had to bend neon under apprenticeship for 10 years before you could sell it. Within less than a year, we were making good glass and selling it, too.

2. What's something about working with neon that most people don't know or would be surprised to learn?

All neon glass is bent in reverse. I make a paper pattern of designs or letters backwards and put it flat on my table with a metal screen on top of it. The metal screen prevents burning the paper when I lay hot glass on the pattern. I have three different fires that I use to bend neon glass: a cannon fire burner, a ribbon, and a hand torch. The cannon burner concentrates heat at a single point, which is used to weld glass together and make tight bends. The ribbon burner has an adjustable flame on it, which is used to make long bends. The hand torch can also be used to make welds, but also is used for tipping off tribulation,

which connects the neon unit to a pumping station that processes it.

What makes neon work is an electrode at each end of a unit. One electrode is positive and the other is negative, which causes the molecules in the gas to race from one of the electrodes to the other 60 times a second. While doing so, the molecules run into each other, causing mini explosions, which creates the light you see. There are two common gases in neon: a red gas called neon, and a blue gas that is argon. While using argon in a unit of neon, you have to put a BB of mercury in the unit after processing, which helps intensify the light.



PHOTO BY SHANNON RICHARDSON

3. What's the difference between real neon and LED neon? Does this difference matter?

LED and neon both put off beautiful light. As an older technology, people love neon because it has a lot of history behind it. There are tons of people across the United States that are neon collectors and they keep me busy. Neon draws people in like a bug to a bug light. They just wanna look at it close up.

You don't see a lot of new neon jobs going up outside because it is fragile to point. LEDs have taken over that market. LEDs are durable and take less energy to run, but we'll see how long they last. I have fixed neon or come across neon that was from the '50s and '60s and still working.

4. Is there a particular sign you've made that you're most proud of? Why?

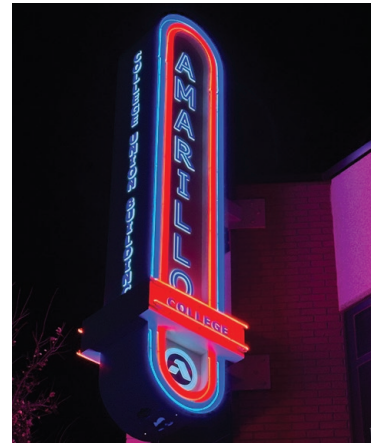
I'm proud of all of my work I've done over the years. There are too many jobs that I have done in more than 39 years of bending neon to single out just one job that's my favorite; they were all a blast to build or repair. To name just a few: the Paramount Sign, Amarillo National Bank parking lot sign, and Blue Swallow Motel in Tucumcari, New Mexico. I'm also proud to have helped the Route 66 association in New Mexico by repairing glass on their neon signs in Tucumcari after a hail storm came through there last year and wiped out a bunch of their neon.

5. Neon fell out of fashion for several years but seems to be coming back. What do you think is driving the resurgence?

Restoring old neon signs is good money. The driving force is neon sign collectors buying, selling and trading old porcelain neon signs. There is a market out there for old nostalgic neon signs. People love to have a few neon signs in their man caves. It just looks cool and is a great conversation piece. I have a customer that has more than 77 neon beer signs in his barn, and he is just one of many collectors. There are more than 60 to 70 years worth of neon signs, which neon benders and sign companies made over the years. So that means there's a lot of neon that needs to be repaired or restored. I don't see it fading into the sunset anytime soon. ☺



PHOTOS BY SHANNON RICHARDSON



PROVIDED PHOTOS

By the Numbers

LOCAL TOURISM

Especially during the summer, tourists to Amarillo represent a substantial piece of the local economy.



5.5 to 6 million

The average annual number of visitors to Amarillo

\$1,954

The amount of money those tourists spent per minute in 2025



\$1.1 billion

The total amount of money tourists to Amarillo spent at local businesses in 2025

\$1,211

The amount of taxes saved per Amarillo household as a result of tourism income

8,500

The number of local people employed in businesses that cater directly to tourists

1.4 million

The estimated number of people who visit Cadillac Ranch every year



50 gal.

Gallons of ranch dressing consumed in the Cowboy Hospitality Room over four days at the WRCA World Championship Ranch Rodeo

80 gal.

Gallons of chili consumed in the Cowboy Hospitality Room during the WRCA World Championship Ranch Rodeo



130

Countries represented by the membership records of the American Quarter Horse Association

(Source: Visit Amarillo)

New in Town

See what's launched and landed.



Urgent Care at Amarillo Medical Specialists

After opening its new location last year, Amarillo Medical Specialists has now introduced an urgent care clinic on its first floor. No appointment is required for nonemergency care Monday to Friday (8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) and Saturday (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) at 9092 Westgate Pkwy.



Sandra Ann's Boutique

Originating in Groom, this women's clothing store has opened a new location in Amarillo at 2416 Paramount Blvd., in the storefront that used to belong to Riley Blue. The shop offers everything from jeans and graphic tees to outerwear and plus-size styles.



Sollano Legends Boxing

Late last year, former pro boxer Martin Sollano moved his gym into a suite in the Valley Plaza Shopping Center (337 E. Hastings Ave.), bringing a legit boxing gym to the Pleasant Valley neighborhood and North Amarillo. The location offers classes for kids, teens and adults throughout the week.



Terracon Consultants

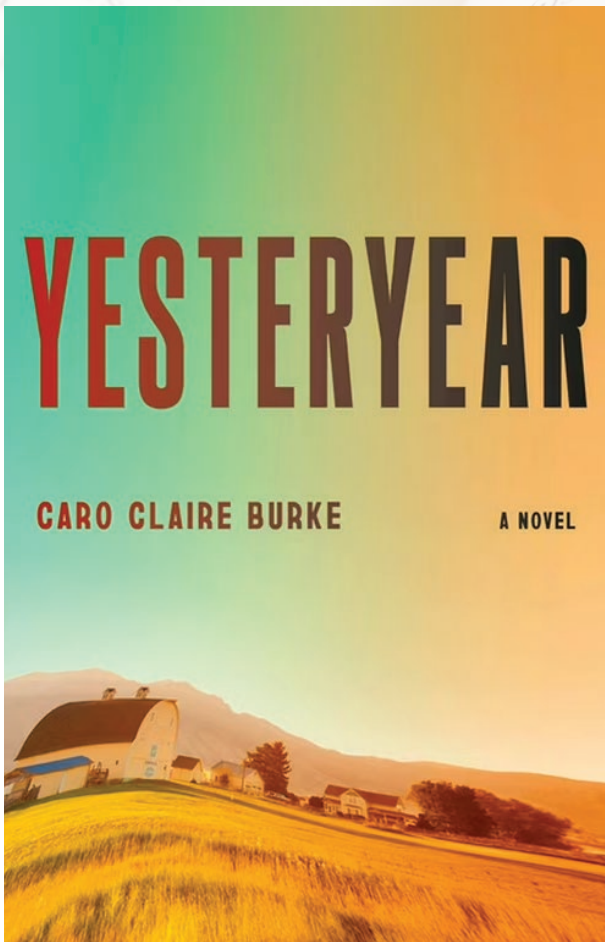
Major national engineering and environmental consulting firm Terracon was founded in Iowa in 1965 but now has more than 175 locations across the U.S., including a new office in Amarillo (3918 Canyon Drive). It offers geotechnical engineering, materials testing and more.



Connect Search

This boutique specialized recruitment and staffing firm has locations from Chicago to Houston, including a new Amarillo office in the Eagle Centre building (112 SW Eighth Ave., Suite 540). In addition to the Panhandle, this office serves the Lubbock and Midland-Odessa regions.

Burrowing Owl



YESTERYEAR BY CARO CLAIRE BURKE

A traditional American woman, a “tradwife” influencer, suddenly awakens in the brutal reality of 1855—where she must unravel whether this living nightmare is an elaborate hoax, a twisted reality show, or something far more sinister in this sensational debut novel.

Natalie lives a traditional lifestyle. Her charming farmhouse is rustic, her husband a handsome cowboy, her six children each more delightful than the last. So what if there are nannies and producers behind the scenes, her kitchen hiding industrial-grade fridges and ovens, her husband the heir to a political dynasty? What Natalie’s followers—all 8 million of them—don’t know won’t hurt them. And The Angry Women? The privileged, Ivy League, coastal elite haters who call her an antifeminist iconoclast? They’re sick with jealousy. Because Natalie isn’t simply living the good life, she’s living the ideal—and just so happens to be building an empire from it.

Until one morning she wakes up in a life that isn’t hers. Her home, her husband, her children—they’re all familiar, but something’s off. Her kitchen is warmed by a sputtering fire rather than electricity, her children are dirty and strange, and her soft-handed husband is suddenly a competent farmer. Just yesterday Natalie was curating photos of homemade jam for her Instagram, and now she’s expected to haul firewood and handwash clothes until her fingers bleed. Has she become the unwitting star of a ruthless reality show? Could it really be time travel? Is she being tested by God? By Satan? When Natalie suffers a brutal injury in the woods, she realizes two things: This is not her beautiful life, and she must escape by any means possible.

A gripping, electrifying novel that is as darkly funny as it is frightening, *Yesteryear* is a gimlet-eyed look at tradition, fame, faith, and the grand performance of womanhood.

LOCATIONS:

400 15TH ST.
CANYON
806.452.8002

2461 W. I-40
AMARILLO
806.367.8961



Burrowing Owl Books

Your Friendly. Neighborhood Bookstore



BURROWINGOWLBOOKSTORE.COM

66 Stories from Route 66

TURNING WORDS INTO ART

BY CHIP CHANDLER

MAY/JUNE 2026

16

BRICKANDELM.COM

As Amarillo prepares for the Route 66 Centennial Celebration, the outdoor art collective Blank Spaces Murals will unveil a project that translates tales of the Mother Road into a permanent artistic representation of what the highway has meant to Amarillo residents.

66 Stories from Route 66 is a collaborative venture between Blank Spaces and 2892 Miles to Go, a place-based education program supported by the National Geographic Society and named for the 2,892 miles that make up the contiguous United States. The project also was supported by Visit Amarillo, Center City and the City of Amarillo.

For the past 18 months, Blank Spaces has worked to capture stories from 66 volunteers on video. While 2892 Miles to Go translates that into an interactive digital story map, 12 high school and college students from Blank Spaces will transform the stories into a mural totalling more than 420 feet long on both sides of an underpass near Transformation Park, a public and private collaborative effort to provide shelter and resources for the unhoused. The underpass also is a path between downtown Amarillo and the city's Historic Route 66 area on Sixth Avenue.

I spoke with Blank Spaces founder Shawn Kennedy and Project Director Shanda Fletcher about the enormity of the task, the stories they heard for the first time, and how they hope the project will resonate for generations to come. *(This interview has been edited and condensed.)*

Chip Chandler: What are the origins of this program?

Shawn Kennedy: As you know, most tourists that come through Amarillo end up on Route 66 or on Historic Sixth Street, but they may not explore other parts of the community. So this gives them a reason to get off I-40, to go past the Historic Route 66 and head downtown to enjoy a lot of the offerings that we have down there, as well ... *66 Stories from Route 66* had a nice ring to it. Actually, we're going to complete it today. We're recording No. 66 today with [Amarillo Mayor] Cole Stanley. We were trying to figure out how to record 66 interviews in a day and, you know, it turned out it took a month. But we did do, like 40, 45 in a day, which was insane. We've got some remarkable people that we've interviewed. A lot of [the stories] were about the history of Amarillo and about prominent places and people and events that took place here, but a lot of it's sort of like

the lost history, untold stories, things that most of us don't know or don't remember or maybe we're not old enough to know. We wanted a multi-generational, multicultural experience. We worked really hard to find people from all over the community.

Chip: What happens with these 66 stories next? What's the next step after you finish recording them today?

Shawn: The stories have already been shipped to *National Geographic*, where they did some editing [in order to] publish a story map, which is a place-based storytelling website, an interactive website where you can click on a pin that's on Amarillo Boulevard and then, boom, such-and-such person's story comes up, because that's where their story takes place. Then what Shanda and I are trying to do with our group, too, is that from these 66 stories, we're pulling out visual representations of what those stories are, and that's going to be transformed into the 400-foot-plus mural that's going to go on that underpass.

Chip: How do you go from this storytelling aspect to your visual medium?

Shanda Fletcher: We assigned [each team member] five interviews. [We told them

that] we want you to ... become experts on these people ... and to draw something that relates to that interview. I think it showed a lot of growth in them because they produced things that we hadn't seen from some of our kids before. With those pieces, we have basically puzzle-pieced together a montage of things that are relevant to Route 66, not only back in like the '40s, but also today and how those things have changed. For all of us, it was a huge growing season ... We have a huge mission to make sure that this is well represented.

Chip: How did the partnership develop with 2892?

Shanda: When we first talked to 2892, the project looked totally different. It was on a much smaller scale. We were working very hard to figure out how to connect communities and connect neighborhoods. Through our discussions and many Zoom calls ... we decided that the Mother Road in our hometown was the best way to translate and to bring those communities together, because it goes through all these different neighborhoods that are kind of separated. It led to the biggest project we've ever had.

Shawn: I think this is a first for both of our organizations. 2892 has done story maps in different communities ... in different areas of the country, but this is the first time that they've ever tried to do this sort of visual representation. And this is the first time that we've linked our public art with journalism, to in-depth storytelling.

Shanda: To get to hear [these stories] was a really exciting experience for me and Shawn. These kids, I don't think that they recognized how exciting it is to be in the same room with these people, but they got to experience a little bit of that. So while me and Kennedy were over here fangirling about our citizens that we really look up to, our kids got to see how excited we were about them getting to have these conversations and ask them questions.

Chip: This is all being translated into the mural under Transformation Park, and that's going to be unveiled during the Centennial Celebration.

Shawn: So the official unveiling, I believe, will be June 12, the day before the big finale on the 13th. That's the goal. Cross your fingers.

We are doing a documentary with Panhandle PBS on the entire project, and we'll unveil the story map at that same time. We're going to invite every fellow that participated, every storyteller, every person that has emotionally or financially backed this, along with the rest of the community.

Shanda: And it's also, I think, important to note that this is the biggest collaborative piece of art in the Panhandle.

Shawn: It'll be the largest mural in the Texas Panhandle.

Chip: You also mentioned the largest collaborative project. Is that because of the number of people that are taking part?

Shanda: The other projects that we've done, it's just been inside our program.

Shawn: Sixty-six individuals telling very in-depth stories to help create this visual representation, which is also told in the story map form. I mean, it's nothing I've ever heard of.

Chip: How has your appreciation grown for Route 66? Did you have a relationship with the road necessarily before this project and how has that changed?

Shawn: We knew how important it was to people from abroad that you can travel, you know, the United States on this singular road. But to know it to the degree that we know it now, and to hear the stories about how it directly impacted someone's grandparents, or great-grandparents, or how it affected their life, or what growing up on Route 66 was like, I mean, it really brings the story to life. It resonates and it gives you an appreciation of how far we've come to get to where we are today. And I think it's had that same impact on our kids because it's opened their eyes to [how] it's a much different world that we live in today.

Shanda: There's a lot of things I didn't know. It's been nice to get to shake hands with people that own businesses on our stretch of Route 66. And also know that 66 stories is where we had to cap it, but that is not all of them. We could have done this for a year and probably still not gotten all the information that people wanted to say. And just to think that ... if everyone [along Route 66] did a project like this, can you imagine what kind of stories would come out of that? 🍷



PROVIDED PHOTOS



oor, wishes are granted.



PROVIDED PHOTOS



Tevae Vontrell Shoels

FROM AMARILLO'S ALT ACADEMY TO BROADWAY

BY CHIP CHANDLER

Amarillo native Tevae Vontrell Shoels made his Broadway debut in *Aladdin* in 2025 after growing up in theater programs at Amarillo Little Theatre and the Amarillo College Summer Youth Musical.

He'll return to the show this May as the standby for the roles of Genie, Babkak and Sultan. But just a month into that run, he'll come home to headline *From ALT to NYC*, a special fundraising concert for ALT. For tickets, visit amarillolittletheatre.org or call 806-355-9991. (Full disclosure: I'm on the ALT board of directors.)

Tevae spoke with me in April about growing up in the arts in Amarillo, the deep well of support he found here, and the full circle moment that performing in *Aladdin* represents for him.

Chip Chandler: How did you find ALT?

Tevae Shoels: I didn't get involved with it

until actually after Summer Youth Musical when I was in eighth grade. A bunch of the kids were from ALT, and (Palo Duro High School theater teacher and frequent ALT actress) Shannon Mashburn actually was kind enough to get me a scholarship to go to camp that summer.

Chip: You've talked about how hard it is for someone from a somewhat lower income background to find theater and the arts.

TS: None of my family was involved in any type of arts at all. My mom ... played basketball. My dad played football. For a lot of low-income kids in the south, specifically, sports is the way out, right? You go to college, go to the NFL, you get out and come back and help your community. For a while, I was like, maybe that would happen. I played football up to my freshman year of high school, but it really just started not to

feel like my thing. I didn't know scholarships [for the arts] were possible. I just thought all these kids have parents that can afford for them to do theater. I never thought that was something that was accessible to me. Even my mom was like, I would love for you to get to do theater, but I can't afford to take off work to take you to rehearsals. Jason [Crespin, ALT's managing/artistic director] actually used to pick me up for class at the Chili's right by Tascosa. And that's actually how Harrison [Stringer, now ALT Academy director] and I became very close because once he got a car, he was my ride to and from places. It's always the little things you don't think about. So I'm very thankful for that.

Chip: What has theater given to you?

TS: Just to be honest and be myself and be OK with what that person is. It has definitely taught me to be more social and really

connect with people on a deep level, because understanding people helps you act better.

Chip: So, then, what do you hope that you can bring to theater?

TS: We're so unique, so different. You know, there's a quote I read recently that was like, the world cannot exist as it does without you in it right now. And so just remembering that even who I am as a person influences the industry, it influences how one person perceives a story, right? Maybe what I have to say affects an audience member in a way that they really needed to feel it. Just existing with my background, with my lived experiences, I feel like I just bring something fresh and unique to the industry.

Chip: When did your New York dream begin?

TS: I came for the first time when I was 16. I came with my high school choir, and Linda Hughes [longtime Amarillo College Conservatory Theatre for Children director] sponsored the trip for me to go, because I was not able to afford to go. She just told me she believed in me. She said, "I just know when you get there, it's gonna feel right, and

you should experience it." As a young gay boy, it was so special to see, where people were just being themselves out on the street, just seeing what was possible for me. And then the first show we saw actually on the trip was Aladdin ... and immediately I was enamored with the genie.

Chip: After rediscovering your love of performing in Texas, performing at Disney World and elsewhere, and graduating from Baylor University, what was next?

TS: I left Disney in January of last year, moved to New York. I'm auditioning, auditioning, auditioning. I went to 77 auditions in the span of my first three months, and I booked three things. One of those was Disney Cruise, and so I was, like, I guess I'll go back to the Mouse. So I started rehearsals for that in the summer... and then right towards the end of rehearsals, I [auditioned] for *Aladdin* and then got [hired] the day before I was supposed to get on the ship. I had to leave Disney Cruise, but it was for a role I'd wanted to play since I saw it when I was 16, so it just felt very full circle.

Chip: How do you make a role like Genie your own? I mean, obviously, there's the cartoon, there's Robin Williams, but then it's had a long life on Broadway already. So how do you put yourself into that?

TS: I got a note from my director right before I opened, which was to find three moments in the show that were Tevae's moments, whether it be the way I read a line, the way I ad lib a line. [Genie's humor] is very different from mine, because I have a pretty dark sense of humor and the genie's very light and free. So there are lines that are a little bit more dry or dark that get a laugh out of people, and those are the Tevae moments, and I will tell you like, my Tevae moments get the biggest laughs in my show.

Chip: What does it mean to you to be asked to come back to ALT for this special event?

TS: I mean, I love that place. It's an honor to get to come back and perform in this capacity ... It's such a special place to me, knowing that that's where I started doing theater. Everyone at ALT just took such good care of me and supported me ... It's so formative to who I am today. 🙏



WE GET RESULTS FOR OUR CLIENTS

We hold wrongdoers accountable for catastrophic harm due to negligent, reckless choices and behavior.

Channy F. Wood
Leslie D. Owens

806.372.9663 | WoodLawFirm-Tx.com
610 SW 11th Ave.

The Hot List

From one mother of a birthday celebration to the sunny delights of outdoor concerts and festivals, Amarillo's summer entertainment season promises no end of hot fun. Check out these highlights, and be sure to subscribe to the weekly *Brickly* newsletter and the biweekly *Flavorillo* newsletter for even more tips.

Texas Route 66 Festival: This celebration is too big for one town. No, this 10-day party will stretch across all 178 miles of the Mother Road's path through the Lone Star State. From June 4 to 13, you'll enjoy concerts, cruises, a rodeo, car shows and more, culminating in a grand finale in Amarillo's Route 66 Historic District along Sixth Avenue. Watch for other summertime fests, too, like Cinco de Mayo, Juneteenth, Pride and more.

Outdoor concert season: What's more fun than enjoying music *al fresco*? Having your choice of tunes under the evening skies virtually all summer long. Bad Magik Music Festival kicks things off over Memorial Day weekend in Sam Houston Park, followed by the Jim Laughlin June Jazz series at Amarillo College, June Jams in downtown Canyon, and Music at Wellington Square Courtyard from May through July. Amarillo Parks and Recreation's Starlight Theater and Amarillo Botanical Gardens' Music in the Gardens stretch throughout the summer, and you can expect a full lineup of touring and local acts at such outdoor venues as The Lumberyard in Canyon and Shark Beach just outside Amarillo.

Amarillo Sod Poodles: The Soddies' season is already in full swing, with two weeks of home action set in May and three full weeks in June, all in hopes of bettering 2025's moderately successful season. Watch for such specials as Taco Tuesday, Thirsty Thursday and Firework Friday throughout the summer at Hodgetown, 715 S. Buchanan St.

Coors Ranch Rodeo: One of the region's most-loved rodeo traditions returns June 4 to 6, with working cowboys from Texas, Oklahoma

and New Mexico competing for bragging rights at the Amarillo Tri-State Fairgrounds, 3301 E. 10th Ave. Don't miss all the shopping opportunities at Cowboy Christmas, or the cattle drive and parade through downtown Amarillo.

Texas: Calvin Armstrong, Tucker Yelldell and all the rest return for the outdoor musical's 60th historic year June 11 to Aug. 1 in Palo Duro Canyon State Park's Pioneer Amphitheatre. Theater fans should also watch for a new production of *12 Angry Men* from the Pen & Shadow theater group from June 26 to 28 at Arts in the Sunset, 3710 Plains Blvd.

George Lopez: The standup, TV and film star brings his latest tour back to town for a June 5 show in the Amarillo Civic Center Complex Auditorium, 401 S. Buchanan St. Fellow comic John Crist brings the laughs, too, with a May 3 show, also in the Civic Center Auditorium.

Disclosure Day: Steven Spielberg is back in sci-fi mode with this June 12 release, presumably showing what happens when aliens come to Earth. Other potential summer hits include *The Devil Wears Prada 2* (May 1), *Mortal Kombat II* (May 15), *Star Wars: The Mandalorian and Grogu* (May 22); *Masters of the Universe* (June 5); *Scary Movie* (June 12); *Toy Story 5* (June 19); and *Supergirl* (June 26). ☺



CHIP CHANDLER

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

AMoA

art after **dark**

JUNE 26
7PM

ART + MUSIC + FOOD + DRINK

FOOD



LIVE MUSIC

*Rachel Sumner
& Traveling Light*

2025 TELLURIDE BLUEGRASS
BAND CONTEST WINNER

**FREE
CHEESE
PRINTS**

ART ACTIVITY



**GALLERY HUNT
WITH PRIZES**

EXHIBITION

ED RUSCHA + RON COOPER

STATIONS | BARS
WORDS | CARS

\$35 TICKET AT DOOR
AMoA MEMBERS FREE

TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR
PURCHASE AT THE DOOR OR
ONLINE AT AMOA.ORG/AAD



2200 S. Van Buren Street
Amarillo, Texas 79109
806.371.5050 | amo.org



DINE ABOVE ORDINARY

CELLAR 55

KITCHEN | WINE | SPIRITS



cellar55ama.com

food + drink

THE CREW (L-R):
JL'YN LEIJA, TERESA CORONA,
TINA FLORES, ANTHONY
SANDERS, JUSTIN NEW, ALEXIS
CEDILLO, AND NATE WELDON

Prissy's

509 BARBECUE

Eat

mor

Pris



Prissy's Barbecue

How Anthony Sanders' barbecue obsession spread from Texas Tech to Tulia to Amarillo →

PHOTOS BY SHANNON RICHARDSON

BY JASON BOYETT AND GUNNAR MCCONLOGUE

Like a lot of local residents, Anthony Sanders' barbecue obsession started in a backyard. Specifically, it took the form of a \$100 smoker from Walmart. "This was like back in college," he says. Sanders was pursuing an engineering degree at Texas Tech University, and his college accommodations didn't always welcome grills or smokers on the premises. "I remember getting kicked out of apartments [because] I just loved cooking barbecue so much," he says.

He graduated from college with an engineering degree, moved to Amarillo, got a full-time job at the Pantex plant and kept smoking meat. "Eventually, I started just doing little briskets here and there for people, little caterings, little birthday parties," he says. He started selling protein-based prepared meals—"steaks, chicken, salmon, turkey, beef, even ribs, whatever"—to 20 or 30 people a week.

As that side hustle grew, his full-time job switched to a Monday-to-Thursday schedule. That's when Sanders bought a food trailer and began posting up in parking lots on Friday and Saturday nights. "It was like, go to work and get off work, buy meat, prep meat, cook all night," he remembers. "We would sell out every place we went, every place we opened."

That was four years ago. The food truck generated catering gigs until an opportunity arrived to fix up a restaurant in Tulia, his hometown. Sanders sold the food trailer and, for two and a half years, operated that restaurant, which he describes as "elevated food" sold from a hole in the wall.

Even in Tulia, that hole in the wall welcomed a lot of familiar faces. "The regular customers were from Amarillo. The same people from the food trailer. Saturdays were our busiest day, because it was just full of people from Canyon, Amarillo," he says.

That's why he eventually turned his sights back north, making the leap to take over an old drive-up place at 2509 E. Amarillo Blvd. It was Tacos Don Miguel, and the original owner's health was failing.

"It was just a handshake and a sign of paper," Sanders says. All the equipment stayed. A few weeks later, last August, Prissy's had opened. The restaurant is named for Sanders' mom, Priscilla, who died from cancer in 2019. Everyone called her "Prissy."

The restaurant's logo is actually her handwriting, discovered on an old notepad he found while cleaning out her home. "Every time I look at it, it makes me happy," he says.

The hallmark of Prissy's menu is a deep, smoky profile achieved by burning oak in traditional offset smokers. "I don't have a style," Sanders insists. "We are really good at making it simple. The simpler, the better. This is how you cook Texas barbecue." He relies on seasoning salt and black pepper. He provides a regular sauce and a spicy sauce. He offers all the sides you'd expect, like beans and potato salad, plus a few you might not expect, like a BBQ elote bowl or baked potatoes.

On Fridays, he sells smash burgers using ground brisket. "I'm very resourceful," he says. Customers love them.

He also prioritizes shareable plates, like the Tour of Texas, which includes two pounds of meat, or the Prissy's Family Platter, with three pounds of brisket, spare ribs, pulled pork or sausage—along with three sides.

Sanders says cooking—and smoking barbecue specifically—is a skill he has learned over the years, and which anyone can learn. But what really makes customers come back for the barbecue is the meaning behind it. "You've got to be doing it for something right," he says. "If you just enjoy cooking barbecue, that's not enough. The secret to a good barbecue is really finding something that you're going to do it for and really just leaning on that."

For him, purpose comes from his customers. "I really try to create a culture for them."



ANTHONY SANDERS

For the most comprehensive dining guide in the Amarillo area, turn to page 128.



Somehow, Sanders has created Prissy's while still maintaining that position at Pantex. Officially, he's the lead engineer for systems integrations for Sandia National Laboratories—which is based in Albuquerque but shares offices at Pantex.

As an engineer, Sanders is always thinking about the finished system. As a cook, he's thinking beyond what goes on the plate, and even beyond customer satisfaction. What really drives him is the future. What will his restaurant become? "The most important thing is that this thing outlives me," he says. He describes his grandfather's plumbing business, which ended up providing careers for Sanders' own father, uncles and brothers. "They're all trade plumbers. They [make] good livings," he says.

He hopes Prissy's can become that for someone in the future. "That's the only goal I ever have in my head. Maybe my kids want it," he says, his eyes brimming with tears. He gestures at his employees. "Maybe one of these people want it.

“[Our] job is to just serve people, whether it’s just one person or a group of people, or a town, or the country. I fell in love with serving people.”

What my grandpa did is something I'm just trying to do right for whatever comes after me.”

Until then, he finds deep meaning in the act of providing good food for his East Amarillo neighbors, and anyone else willing to make the drive. “I’m spiritual,” Sanders says. “I believe in God, so it’s like [our] job is to just serve people, whether it’s just one person or a group of people, or a town, or the country. I fell in love with serving people.”

His eyes tear up once again. “I remember the best memories of my life as a kid were on Sundays, at grandma’s house, and we’re eating and all that stuff. I try as best I can to create a place where you can do that, right?” ☺

2509 E. Amarillo Blvd.
806.877.1457
prissysbarbecue.com



Hot Grill, Cold Sides

Summer is near, and so is the time to let our grills take center stage. And she knows it, too! Her name is Colette—at least at my house—and she is ready to be part of how we gather and cook when the weather warms up. There's something special about standing outside, working the grill, watching smoke billow into the air, and orchestrating a dance with your tongs and meat across the grates. But I have to tell ya, I think the most memorable part of any table is usually not the meat.

But the most memorable part of any table is usually not the meat. The June heat can place you in an uncomfortable situation. Standing over a grill for hours starts to feel less appealing, and you naturally begin reaching for foods that offer relief—something cooler and lighter, something that gives you a break from the heat of the grill. And before you say it, I know a nice cold beer would be the best companion, but I'm going somewhere else with this.

There is real magic in the dishes sitting off to the side. They are the ones that have been made ahead and are ready while everything else is still finishing. The salads, chilled bowls and simple combinations that feel refreshing in the heat—those are the bites people keep going back for.

Have you ever wondered why we tend to choose cold dishes for backyard gatherings? It isn't just to offer simplicity over the star of the meal (aka smoky grilled burgers). These sides actually make the whole meal work. They cut through the richness and keep everything from feeling too heavy. Once you start looking at your summer meals this way, the whole approach shifts; you are no longer just focused on what comes off the grill. Instead, you are building a plate that feels balanced, thoughtful and enjoyable from start to finish.

Living and Cooking in the Panhandle

Summer in Amarillo doesn't play around, so living here changes how you cook. You start leaning into foods that can sit for a bit and still taste good—things you can make ahead without stressing and dishes that can go from the kitchen to the backyard without falling apart. There's also something really nice about sitting down to a meal where not everything is competing for your attention, where you can take your time and not feel weighed down halfway through.

Why We Reach for the Cool Dishes First

If you watch how people move around a summer table, you will notice a pattern. Before anyone loads up on meat, they reach for the chips, dips and salads—the things that feel crisp and refreshing. It is easy to dismiss that as a habit, but there is something deeper at play.

When it's hot outside, your body naturally looks for contrast. It wants something that cools you down, something with a bit of acidity or crunch that wakes up your palate and makes you feel like you can

keep going. Grilled meats, as beautiful and flavorful as they are, carry weight. They are rich and satisfying in a way that can quickly become overwhelming without balance.

This is where cold dishes step in. They offer brightness where there is richness and texture where there is softness. When they are done well, they make the whole meal work.

Thinking Like a Chef (Without the Complications)

When I am building a summer menu, I think about how everything sits together on the table, much like I do when setting up a buffet line for 75 guests. There is a rhythm to it and a need for contrast that keeps things interesting.

You want something rich, something bright, something creamy and something crisp. The beauty of colder dishes is that they give you space. They can be made ahead, they hold their flavor, and in many cases, they actually improve with time. They also travel well, staying vibrant and structured without needing constant attention.

PROVIDED PHOTOS



Let the Grill Begin the Story

One of the easiest shifts you can make is to let your grill give your side dishes a “kiss.” Let it add a little char or smoke to the components before you turn them into something cooler and lighter. Here are a few dishes that are simple in their approach but intentional in how they show up.

Grilled Lemon Feta Whip with Cool Cucumbers: Cut lemons in half and place them cut-side down on a hot grill or skillet. Let them sit until they pick up some color and soften, then pull them off and let them cool. Once they’re cool enough to handle, squeeze the juice into a blender and add feta, a drizzle of olive oil, and just enough heavy cream to loosen the mixture. Blend until smooth and spreadable, then taste and adjust the brightness or salt. Spread the feta whip onto a plate and layer thinly sliced cucumbers over the top. Finish with fresh herbs and a drizzle of olive oil.

Chilled Elote Salad with Cilantro Lime Yogurt: Grill corn until it gets a little color, then cut it off the cob and let it cool completely. You want it cold before you mix everything together so it stays fresh. In a bowl, stir together a very small amount of mayonnaise, fresh lime juice, a little garlic, ground cumin, chili powder, salt and pepper until smooth. Add the cooled corn, then fold in chopped cilantro and crumbled cotija cheese.

Smoked Watermelon Poke: Cut watermelon into thick slices and place them on a hot grill. Let them sear just long enough to pick up a little color and smoke, then pull them off before they start to break down. Let the watermelon cool completely, then cut it into cubes and transfer to a bowl. Add a splash of soy sauce, drizzle of sesame oil, and fresh lime juice, along with whatever herbs you have on

hand, like cilantro or mint. Toss gently and chill until ready to serve.

Cold Orzo with Herbs and Charred Corn: Cook orzo according to the package directions, then drain and rinse it under cold water to stop the cooking process. Transfer to a large bowl and let it sit while you prep everything else. Grill or roast corn until it has a little color, then cut it off the cob and let it cool. Add corn to the orzo along with chopped fresh herbs, a squeeze of lemon, drizzle of olive oil, and a little salt and pepper. For more contrast, add diced red bell pepper, chopped Kalamata olives and crumbled feta. Give everything a good toss, then let it chill in the fridge for a bit before serving so the flavors have time to meld.

The Way It All Comes Together

When you step back and look at a summer table, it’s easy to give all the credit to the grill, but the sides make the meal work. The grill brings the flavor, but the cold dishes make the plate feel right. They lighten things up and keep you from tapping out halfway through. When it all comes together, the meal feels easy—and honestly, that should be the goal every time. 🍷



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



Local Maker Taste Test

By **JASON BOYETT**

It's almost farmers market season, the time of year when white tents sprout up on the Square in Canyon or the A.J. Swope Performance Plaza at Arts in the Sunset for Saturday markets. We tell ourselves we love the farmers market for the fresh vegetables and music and community.

But who are we kidding? We're in it for the carbs.

Arts in the Sunset has already hosted its spring market, and the Canyon Farmers Market officially opens in June. We decided to get a jump on the season by taste-testing some of the small-batch, baked-this-morning products you'll encounter there.

So in Michele McAffrey's kitchen, we sat down amidst a mountain of locally made pastries, breads and cookies. We gathered the hungriest members of our team and ate as much of it as we could, asking ourselves: Is this good? Would I eat more of this? Does this taste like it was made by a human who cares?

Here are the results of our very scientific process. But, let's be honest. It's our very casual but completely official field guide to your next market haul, the baked goods you simply can't pass up.

Extra credit goes to intern Leilani Terrazas for serving as project manager for this feature.

SIMPLY SWEETS MACARONS (L-R):
CHOCOLATE-COVERED RASPBERRY,
FRUITY PEBBLES, PISTACHIO, COOKIES & CREAM,
AND BANANA PUDDING



THE PASTRY NOOK
(CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP): CHOCOLATE
CROISSANT,
ALMOND
CROISSANT,
CREAM CHEESE
DANISH, REGULAR
CROISSANT, AND
HAM & CHEESE
CROISSANT

Simply Sweets

Brandy Aguirre's home bakery is known for simple wedding and birthday cakes, but we wanted to try her macarons. These aren't your average grocery store sandwich cookies, but the elegant divas of the pastry world: colorful, well-decorated and notoriously hard to make.

Also, when done right, they are notoriously easy to eat.

That's what we discovered.

Aguirre's cookies-and-cream macaron was the overwhelming favorite in terms of taste. The chocolate-covered raspberry one had a bright, jammy explosion of raspberry in the middle and was the most attractive cookie on the plate. We loved the color of the pistachio macaron but the pistachio flavoring itself was subtle.

The Fruity Pebbles one got the attention of Preslie Bentley, the photographer for this feature. "You can taste the Fruity Pebbles and the milk," she said.

The Banana Pudding macaron was divisive. Some of us loved the vintage banana flavoring, which reminded us of Circus Peanuts candies. Others felt it was too artificial. You'll have to break our tie and let us know what you think.

The Pastry Nook

Elizabeth Wood's made-from-scratch bakery is a fixture at the Canyon Farmers Market, offering everything from sourdough and Japanese milk bread to salted pretzels. We asked her to hook us up with *all* of the croissants, and she very kindly obliged.

We've learned from bingeing *The Great British Bake Off* that a truly great croissant is a feat of engineering. There's nothing like biting into one and feeling the outer layers shatter into a thousand buttery shards.

We bit into a lot of them just to make sure it would keep happening.

The Pastry Nook's plain croissant was not plain at all, unless you define "plain" as delicately buttery and flaky. It was definitely that.

Our favorite option was the ham-and-cheese croissant, which tasted like the finest kind of comfort food. The ham was real rather than processed and packaged in plastic. The swiss cheese was the right kind of gooey, and the interior paired well with the outer crusty crunch. The almond croissant was appropriately indulgent with a lingering sweetness.

We were delighted to tear into the chocolate croissant to find chocolate represented in every flaky layer. It was dark chocolate, too.

For something different, we chased all these croissants with a cream cheese danish, which had the ideal light, pillowy texture we hoped for.



BANANA
FOSTER BREAD



COWBOY
COOKIES

The Busy Baker

Lainie Thornton’s homemade baked goods are popular at the Canyon Farmers Market, including specialty breads. We chose her Banana Foster Bread, which sadly wasn’t served to us with theatrical flames. No matter.

It was very moist, though a few in our group of tasters wouldn’t be caught dead saying the word “moist.” The crumble on top was really buttery and provided a nice crunchy contrast with the texture of the bread.

The banana flavoring was real. (Interestingly, “artificial” banana flavor actually mimics the Gros Michel—a tastier banana variety that dominated the market until it was nearly wiped out by disease in the 1950s. While we now eat the milder Cavendish banana, Circus Peanuts still uses the bolder, original flavor profile from Gros Michel.)

Brick & Elm copublisher Michele McAffrey has requested that we stop repeating the name *Gros Michel*, so let’s move on to The Busy Baker’s cowboy cookies. They reminded us of classic Neiman Marcus cookies, with that kind of expertly chunky, hearty, buttery texture. “These are nice and chewy,” one of us said. Not too crispy. Not too soft. There were oats aplenty and little bits of coconut.



LAYER & BLOOM’S SOURDOUGH
CINNAMON ROLLS, WITH AND
WITHOUT ICING

Layer & Bloom

Alicia Ortiz at Layer & Bloom has a reputation for gorgeous wedding cakes and other custom cakes, but she’s also a regular at places like Sunset Marketown, where she serves up muffins, cinnamon rolls and other goodies.

We decided to sample her sourdough cinnamon rolls, which came with light, whipped cream cheese icing—and just the right amount of sweetness—and a lot of cinnamon in the dough. The sweetness of the sugar and cinnamon balanced well with the tang of the sourdough, giving the whole thing a delightfully complex flavor.

“I don’t like cinnamon rolls, but this is good,” Preslie said. We all wanted more.

Aussie Bakehouse

Sarah Day at the Aussie Bakehouse brings “treats from Down Under” to local people, and we’d been hearing buzz about her rolls for months. The cheese and bacon rolls did not disappoint.

These were extremely savory and very satisfying, made with real bacon rather than bits. The bacon and cheese were mixed into the layers of the dough, penetrating it with a smoky saltiness that we loved.

Then, for a truly authentic dose of Australia, we turned our attention to the Bakehouse’s notorious “Cheesymite Roll,” which contains that staple of Australian cuisine, Vegemite. For all of our taste-testers, this would represent their first exposure to the Aussie delicacy. Vegemite is a thick, brown food spread made from spent brewer’s yeast extract, blended with spices and other veggie-based additives.

The roll itself looked similar to the bacon-and-cheese roll, but the vegemite packed a savory soy sauce kind of vibe. It brought a concentrated punch of flavor, and we liked it! All of us definitely would eat it again. 😊



CHEESE-AND-BACON ROLL (LEFT)
AND CHEESYMITE ROLL (RIGHT)

Our Taste-Testers’ Fave Baked Goods:

Michele McAffrey: Layer & Bloom cinnamon rolls

Jerry McAffrey: Busy Baker cowboy cookie

Jason Boyett: Aussie Bakehouse cheese-and-bacon rolls

Preslie Bentley (photographer): Busy Baker cowboy cookie

Leilani Terrazas (intern): Layer & Bloom cinnamon rolls

Gunnar McConlogue (intern): Busy Baker cowboy cookie

Eat This, Drink That

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



1 / YANAGI BENTO BOX

We always love a hibachi-style preparation, but we were also pleased to discover that the relatively new Yanagi Hibachi on I-40 also offers traditional Japanese-style bento boxes on their menu—and not just at lunch! Aimee and I ordered the Bento Box A, which includes teriyaki salmon, four delicious pieces of sashimi, and shrimp and veggie tempura. —*Jason Boyett*

2 / CHILAQUILES TRADICIONALES

El Tejavan has an unquestioned reputation for amazing, authentic Mexican food (as opposed to Tex-Mex), but don't limit yourself to lunch or dinner. El Tejavan serves a really solid breakfast, as well. I recently tried the traditional chilaquiles—corn tortilla wedges fried and simmered in sauce. They were spicy, flavorful and still retained a crunch. There were plenty of potatoes to soak up the remaining sauce. El Tejavan offers several different chilaquiles preparations, including with *guisado* or *carne asada*. —*Jason Boyett*

3 / CHEESEBURGER

When we were photographing our burger issue last summer, we scheduled a mid-morning photo shoot at the Golden Light Cafe on Sixth Ave. During it, we photographed a Waller Burger with a basket of fries and a bottle of Lone Star beer. It was fast. Then we headed off to another burger place for another shoot, and I am not ashamed to tell you I took that burger with me and devoured the cheesy patty while driving. That's far from the ideal way to eat a cheeseburger from the Golden Light. (It was still amazing, though.) Anyway, here's an iconic GL cheeseburger, consumed like a normal person. —*Jason Boyett*

4 / FRYBREAD

On a Friday in March, while updating our comprehensive food truck list, I discovered FamilyFirst FryBread, an authentic Native American food truck run by Gila River tribal members. I was thrilled! Having never

tried frybread, and hearing stories about my husband Jerry's great-grandmother who cooked him frybread when he was a boy (she was an Oklahoman with a Native American/Irish heritage), we couldn't wait to compare it to one of his favorite childhood memories. A couple of hours later, we made sure we were the first people in line to order dinner. Did it taste like Jerry remembered? *Yes!* Should you immediately find FamilyFirst on Facebook to see where they're parked so you can try it too? *Also yes.* It's delicious, and savory and filling. —*Michele McAffrey*

5 / DECAF LATTE WITH OAT MILK

I take a lot of meetings at Palace Coffee Co. locations in Amarillo. And when I have time and want to treat myself, I order a "for here" drink to slowly savor instead of a throwaway cup. The art on my latte this particular day gave me joy, so I snapped a quick photo. Then I enjoyed every delicious sip. —*Michele McAffrey*

6 / TIJUANA-STYLE QUESADILLAS

We are big fans of the food and the family behind the recipes at La Fiesta Grande. Technically an appetizer, these quesadillas are my go-to when we visit. Served warm with melted cheese and full of flavor, the Tijuana version incorporates corn tortillas instead of flour, toasted on the grill, with a zesty marinade on the shrimp. They're messy, but worth every satisfying bite. —*Michele McAffrey* ☺

Flavorillo

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



5



6



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.

So, um, what exactly do they do in the Santa Fe Building?

Quite a bit, actually! Everyone knows the Santa Fe Building's unique profile in our skyline, but not everyone thinks about the fact that it's, you know, an actual building with offices and stuff.

Built in the late 1920s, the skyscraper served as regional headquarters for the Santa Fe Railroad until the 1970s. It sat empty until Potter County purchased it around 1995, and officially reopened as a government building in 2000.

The building's 14 stories currently house numerous Potter County offices, including the auditor, adult probation, one of the four county constables, election administration, human resources, purchasing, tax assessor/collector, and treasurer. If you're a Potter County voter, you might also regularly use the Santa Fe Building as a polling place during elections.

I'm confused about the pool situation. Where can I swim in Amarillo this year?

Neighbor, summer's coming and you're not the only resident hoping to cool off somewhere. To catch you up, Amarillo's government operates three outdoor pools: Southwest, Southeast and Thompson Park. But Southwest and Southeast are both closed for 2026. These pools are 50 and 60 years old, respectively, and dealing with issues like leaks, high maintenance costs and safety concerns. (The same challenges led to the 2018 closure of the original Thompson Park Pool, and its \$8 million renovation in 2021.)

The city hasn't yet decided if repairing either pool would be worth the expense, so it's spending the next few months figuring out next steps. That leaves us with two fewer options for cooling off this summer.

Thankfully, the new Thompson Pool is really nice! The city also manages the indoor Charles E. Warford Activity Center, though the sunbathing is decidedly not as good. Of course, you can also join private clubs with outdoor pools including the Tascosa Golf Club, Amarillo Town Club, Verdure and Amarillo Country Club.

You can also drive! The recreational pool at the Virgil Henson Activities Center at West Texas A&M University is a great option to the south. Drive the other direction and you can enjoy the Johnson Park Youth Center in Borger, the H2O Aquatic Center in Pampa and, toward Fritch, a little swimming hole we like to call Lake Meredith.

What's with buried soda cup with a red straw downtown? It's a Toot'n Totum thing, right?

We do love our funky-looking statues around here, don't we? Amarillo is like a grandmother lovingly curating her tchotchke cabinet. Ours contains disembodied legs, vandalized Cadillacs, and 100 decorated horses (give or take).

Yes, it's a Toot'n Totum thing. Our local gas station chain seems to share the city's taste for whimsical lawn decor.

TNT's corporate offices and hiring center make up the small business park at 12th Avenue and South Taylor Street, as you head south toward the I-27 and I-40 interchange. For at least the past 20 years, the big "straw" was just a lonely red pole with "1201" painted up the length in big blocky numerals. It announced the street address.

Then, in the last half of 2025, the Mitchell family apparently decided to upgrade. It became the top portion of a buried Tex Randall-sized fountain drink. It's subtle, but we love it. Once you see it, you won't forget it.

You might remember the Center City Gateway Arches getting revamped in 2025 as well, just a few yards away. Maybe that's around the time Toot'n Totum manicured their roadside space? As we've learned from Candy Cane Lane, one eye-catching neighborhood project can inspire others! 😊



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.

SUN'S OUT, SHADES ON

Whether you're hitting the trails, lounging by the pool, or running errands around town, quality sunglasses do more than look good—they shield your eyes from harmful UV rays and help prevent long-term damage.

Stop by BROOME OPTICAL for prescription and non-prescription sunglasses that combine fashion, comfort, and protection.

Your eyes deserve the best view under the sun.



Broome Optical
INDEPENDENT. LOCAL. GRATEFUL.

PROTECT YOUR EYES IN STYLE!



3408 OLSEN BLVD | 806.355.5633 | EYECAREAMARILLO.COM



**PROSPERITY
BANK**

Two locations proudly
serving your community.

You can bank with
confidence in Amarillo.

3900 S. SONCY | AMARILLO, TX
7100 HILLSIDE | AMARILLO, TX



✓ Checking ✓ Savings ✓ Online Banking ✓ And More!

Member
FDIC

“Time moves slowly, but passes quickly.” – Alice Walker

The passing of time has been on my mind recently. I don't think I can explain precisely what this quote means, but somehow, I know it is entirely true. Seconds can seem like an eternity, and years can go by in a flash. We often say things like, “It seems like only yesterday” or “that was a lifetime ago,” and somehow both of those statements are honest and valid.

I wonder if any of us truly understands time. We love to mention that it marches on, as though it were consistent, but in our minds, it sprints and crawls at its pleasure. We have measured it in seasons, lunar cycles, tides, sunrises and sunsets, and eventually mathematical units, but our sense of it remains fluid. At least mine does.

On a smaller scale, I have no concept of time at all. I can spend an entire day preparing to do something, and then be absolutely shocked when it is time to actually do it. I never have any idea where the time went. I fully believe it's possible to run five separate errands in an hour, and yet convince myself it will take seven hours to perform a 15-minute task. My brain thinks I can leave my house at the same time I'm supposed to arrive somewhere else. I'm getting better, but it does not come naturally.

I received a life-changing bit of wisdom on a front porch in Vermont on my 31st birthday. I was feeling stuck and couldn't quite figure out my next steps. I thought about starting a business. Starting a new band. Getting a new job. Moving to a new address. None of these felt like a resounding yes. I mused about finishing my degree, but immediately questioned whether it was ridiculous for a person in their 30s to be a college student. That night, one of my most cherished girlfriends said to me, “In five years, five years will have passed no matter what you did with it.” What a perspective this was! For me, a thoroughly new look at the way time can pass. I wasn't too old to go to college, I was too young to deem any ideas too ridiculous or time-consuming! That one sentence was all it took. As you know by now, I did, in fact, go back to college. It was difficult. It was expensive. (Still is, thanks to student loans, but I digress.) It was worth it, and I would do it a million times over again. I celebrated my 35th birthday in my first classroom, and six more birthdays have come and gone in that same room. I couldn't be happier about it.

There is a tall and expansive tree just outside my music room window. For seven years, I have watched this tree change from bright summer green to shocking orange, red and yellow. Barren in winter, a stunning explosion of white blossoms in the spring, and faithfully back to green again. If you catch it at the right time, the sun rises just beyond its branches. I try to notice this and take a moment to soak it all in when I can. What a breathtaking illustration of the passing of time.

One of the many joys of teaching music is getting to know students for six full years. An eternity in child-time, and yet, it goes by too quickly for my taste. I have been known to cry on the last day of school, and I imagine I always will. These are not tears of sadness. These are tears of pride and gratitude, of disbelief, of remembrance. Funny things they've said. The solo they sang in second grade. The way they used to pronounce certain words. And off they go into the world beyond my classroom. Beyond our little campus and its massive tree.

A dear friend of mine just had a precious baby girl. My nephew and niece are somehow in college. We lost my uncle after 78 years on this earth, the first of his generation to leave us behind. I am living in the middle of these immovable markings of time. Trying madly to soak it all in. Promising to savor moments, and striving to preserve memories. Knowing I was once that baby, and I will one day be the aunt who is gone. When you consider time in this way, any excuse to miss the sunrise beyond the leaves isn't a good one.

I still don't understand time and its relentless passing, or how our perception can be so subjective. But I know it is a gift. I know it is fleeting. Friends, may your times of trouble be brief and your times of joy be long. ☺



MAGGIE BURT

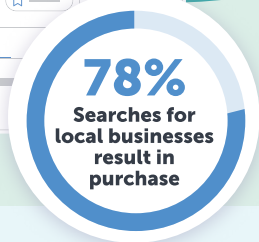
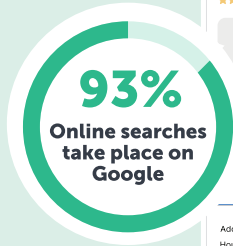
Maggie was born into a family heritage of musicians and educators in Amarillo. She spent several years as a performer and songwriter in Amarillo and Austin, before becoming an elementary music teacher in 2019. Maggie's column draws from her experiences in and out of the classroom.



YOUR MOST VALUABLE ASSET, HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Your Google Business Profile and online listings are your top source of visibility and customers.

Locl shows you where your online presence needs improvement and offers the tools to manage and optimize them for maximum performance.



Local SEO Automation
Locl AutoPilot combines programmatic local SEO and AI to enhance your local search visibility and save you time by automating the important local SEO tasks. Locl also enrolls and syncs your search directory listings, conscientiously handles review replies, and improves search rankings, more in-store visits, and removes the difficulty of local SEO.

Social Posting Automation
Locl's proprietary AutoPilot solution creates, schedules, and publishes social content for you automatically. AutoPilot does this without generative AI images, ensuring that this work is both taken off your plate and that your brand and businesses are represented accurately and positively.

GBP Profile Lock
Keep your Google Business Profile accurate and secure with Profile Lock by preventing unauthorized changes to your business details, ensuring consistent and truthful information across all platforms for better local search visibility and customer trust.

Customer Analytics & Insights
Gain actionable insights with real-time performance data. Track your business's local search rankings, customer reviews, and engagement metrics to make data-driven decisions that drive growth and boost your visibility in local markets.

Directories Automation
Locl Directory Sync enrolls and syncs your business listing(s) across GBP and top 50+ consumer search directories and publishes automatically. This ensures that your business information is accurate and consistent, driving better local search visibility and helping new customers easily find you.

Reputation Management
Monitor and manage your online reputation automatically on GMB and Facebook. Auto-Replies are personal and prompt, and give you time to review and adjust them before posting if you want to. You can even add your own replies and specific words to never use for additional personalization.

LOCL for amarillo visitor-facing businesses

Manage and Enhance Your Google Business Profile and Directory Listings From One Platform.

Everything you need to have the best online visibility and turn searches into sales.

- ✓ Elevated Google Footprint
- ✓ Accurate GBP Listing(s)
- ✓ Increased Online Visibility
- ✓ Attract More Customers

Sign Up Today!



Visit Amarillo has partnered with Locl to offer **free access** to their digital listing management platform for the first 100 Amarillo tourism businesses who sign up. This opportunity is available to restaurants, attractions, hotels, and other tourism-related businesses.

WHAT IS AI ANYWAY?

Yeah, yeah, I know, Artificial Intelligence. I despise “artificial” ANYTHING.

I mean, in the '60s and '70s, didn't we figure out a single thing? That we were putting carcinogens in our food in the name of “artificial” sweetener? Our Kool-Aid was deadly. My folks drank Tab, Coca-Cola's “artificially sweetened” diet soda. “It almost tastes REAL,” they would say. Artificial butter generally has a terrible number of potentially harmful ingredients. Artificial meat? Just give me a salad. Artificial deodorant ingredients: The big thing was “Aluminum Chlorohydrate! We've got it!” Now the first mention on any deodorant commercial is “Aluminum FREE!”

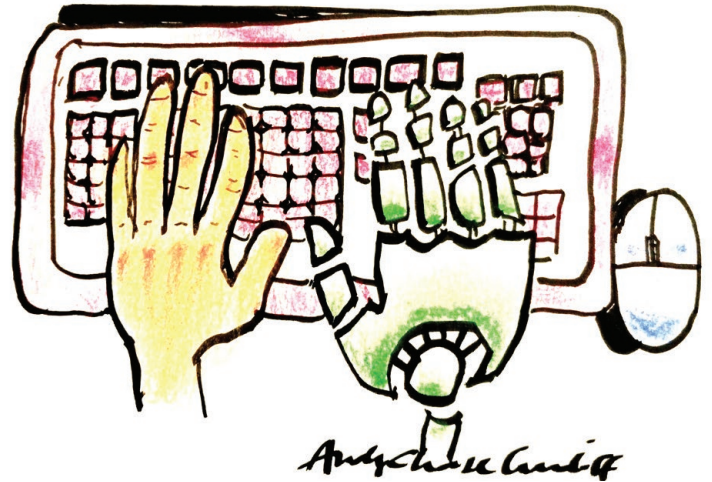
Artificial fabric: The polyester of yesteryear was the lousiest excuse for clothing material ever dreamed up. It was sticky, scratchy, hot in the summer and drafty in the winter. Everybody thought it looked good at the time. Mass delusion. Look at the clothing catalogs from back then. Have a good laugh!

So what's our obsession with the “artificial”? Is it just a poor word choice for “technology”? I don't think so. Technology, for instance, is robotic surgery that my doctor used to replace both of my knee joints—with titanium, and an amazingly low pain level, I might add. The surgeons had to program what the robotics were going to perform. That is NOT AI. AI is that annoying thing on my social media that pushes me every day to let it write what I, myself, am trying to write. Because it thinks it speaks English better than I do. “Manus” they are calling it on Facebook. I guess that's supposed to be some reference to a “universal artificial man.” Nothing could be more disgusting to me. If you read AI's writing, it only takes a minute to realize that it has no breath. Like a term paper copied verbatim from an encyclopedia, or, nowadays, from Wikipedia.

Manus knows how much I loath it. Daily, it says, “Meet your new AI writing partner, Manus.”

I've tried everything to put an end to Manus. I've made up goofy stories to see how Manus would write it. I have written blurbs about Manus, the idiot machine that thought it was human. I even said once, apparently to no one, that I didn't need a writing partner. All to no avail. The ridiculous creature still, infuriatingly, shows up every day. Can't get rid of it. It very much reminds me of Frankenstein, or something out of an Asimov nightmare. What have we come up with here? What have we pointlessly assembled? And, more importantly, WHY?

What is the purpose of AI asking questions about every personal transaction on social media? What concern is it of AI's? Why does AI assume that it knows the answers to questions that it poses on its own? Why does AI ask questions that are so off-subject that it looks like it came from another planet? What damage does AI do when it constantly



misspells, misplaces and misinforms?

Do you ever watch YouTube videos? Some are very informational, insightful, even inspiring. Plus, they match my attention span—mostly less than two minutes. There is an AI voice on a lot of those that must have been programmed to irritate the ear. It is a human-ish male voice, but contains a haughty, arrogant, sarcastic tone that crawls up one side of me and down the other. What is THAT all about?

I have astonishing kids. My brilliant daughter is married to an equally brilliant man. He's an IT guy. He speaks in languages I may never know. He works with technology daily. He informs me that most of my questions, at least the ones fomented in this little essay, can be answered in one phrase: information gathering.

The AI thing, apparently, is about getting into your business. I hate that. It wants to sell you more stuff. I hate that more.

So, this is starting to seem like the dreaded conspiracy theory, isn't it? If target marketing has blown all the way up from local (like it was when I was in radio) to global, then is AI about harvesting info on everybody on the planet? That is a question, because I don't know.

What I DO know is that there is a ton of incorrect information on all kinds of AI that I do not wish my grandchildren to be exposed to.

Probably the reason for my hostility toward AI is that I am a person of the arts. Humanities, they once called it. There's always been a sweet, shining thread through the history of man: our spirit! In the arts, we celebrate that spirit. I couldn't solve an algebra problem if you gave me all day. My reasoning ability has always been slightly suspect. I can find my way home if there aren't too many one-ways. The creative side is where I live. I can write a song in just a few minutes, or paint a picture you might hang in your house.

Things that come from the soul.

Which, yeah, Manus doesn't have one. 😊



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.

2026 JUNETEENTH



June 11

2026 Juneteenth Pageant

6:30 p.m.; Palo Duro High School

June 12

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity All-White Party

7:06 p.m.; Reed Beverage Center

June 13

Lisa Cherry Health Fair

10 a.m.-2 p.m.; Presented by Delta Sigma Theta; AmTech Career Center

June 15

Juneteenth Commemorative Kickoff

6:30 p.m.; Black Historical Cultural Center, 901 N. Hayden St.

June 16

Educational Resources Night

6:30 p.m.; Black Historical Cultural Center, 901 N. Hayden St.

June 17

Financial Resource Night

6:30 p.m.; Black Historical Cultural Center, 901 N. Hayden St.

June 18

Community Elected Officials Panel Discussion

6:30 p.m.; Black Historical Cultural Center, 901 N. Hayden St.

June 19

Second Annual Juneteenth Brunch

11 a.m.; Black Historical Cultural Center, 901 N. Hayden St.

June 21

Community Church in the Park

10 a.m.; Bones Hooks Park, 2000 N. Hughes St.

June 20

Juneteenth Parade

10 a.m. (line-up begins at 8 a.m.); Begins at the Black Historical Cultural Center, 901 N. Hayden St.

Juneteenth Park Celebration

11:30 a.m.; Bones Hooks Park, 2000 N. Hughes St.

Northside Toy Drive 4-Man Scramble "Father's Day Edition"

8 a.m.; Ross Rogers Golf Course, 722 NW 24th Ave.

Third Annual Brac's Swim Party

More Details to Come

For more information: Julian Reese 812-841-3295 | Melodie Graves 806-640-8184



THE *Broken* ONES

She wakes up not understanding why she can't sleep, not fully grasping the reason for the sadness, the heaviness, the discontent. Her mind races, which only pulls her deeper. She can't seem to get her footing.

Then the alarm goes off.

She is a parent, a caregiver, an employee, a leader, a spouse. She has other titles given to her, some voluntarily, some not. She hits snooze. It doesn't help. So she gets up, dresses and watches her mind fill with every worst version of the day ahead. Looking in the mirror, she already knows today is going to be another one of those days. A day when she has to put on a smile. She simply cannot afford not to.

The kids' alarm goes off and that's when her parenting begins. Even though she is breaking apart inside, she lays out clothes, fixes breakfast, packs lunches and keeps everything moving. She tries her daily affirmations while doing it, but deep down she doesn't believe them. She keeps smiling anyway. She doesn't want anyone to worry.

"I love you, have an amazing day!" She drops off her child, and then she is alone with her thoughts again.

On the drive to work, the tears show up. She tries to give herself a pep talk: *Today is going to be amazing, today is going to be great, today is going to be ...* She can't finish. She doesn't believe it. She pulls into the parking lot and puts the smile back on her face. One minute at a time, she pushes through her to-do list.

Roughly 12 percent of Americans deal with depression. A smaller group, around 1.5 percent, experience what is known as high-functioning depression: chronic depression symptoms that persist even while a person maintains daily responsibilities, like work, school and relationships. These are people who function on the outside while their insides are, as one description puts it, literally about to shut down.

I am one of those people.

I have dealt with depression for most of my life. And what I've learned is that when people encounter something they don't understand, they tend to minimize it. I've heard it all. *Why don't you just choose to be happy? You have everything! Why isn't that enough? Change your mindset. It's up to you!* These responses may be well-intentioned, but all they do is push people deeper into the performance. We learn to keep the exterior polished and the interior hidden.

As a society, we have been conditioned to push through, focus on the prize and trust that it will all work out. What we need instead is a culture where seeking medication or seeing a counselor are

considered as normal as treating any other illness. We need to give ourselves grace. We need to understand that good days and bad days come to everyone, and that how we come back from the bad ones is what shapes us.

If you are living with high-functioning depression, I want you to know that there is help.

Start by understanding that depression is an illness, and like any other illness, it requires medical attention. Getting on medication does not mean you are weak. It does not mean you'll be on it forever. It means you are getting the help you need to begin. Once you find a professional who can support you, start doing the work of identifying root causes. Learn to separate what you can control from what you cannot. Focus your energy on the former and practice releasing the latter. I learned the hard way that trying to control every outcome and every person around me left me exhausted and more defeated. That lesson took years.

It has taken me more than a decade to get to a place where I can admit I have depression. Some days are not good. Some days are. On the good days, I make the most of them.

For those of you who are living your best life on the outside while hanging on by a thread on the inside, please understand you are not alone. There is an entire community of people doing exactly the same thing. You are worthy of something better. You deserve real happiness. And you owe it to yourself to figure out what is keeping you from it.

The broken ones are everywhere. They are the doctors saving lives, the preachers leading congregations, the teachers inspiring children, the advocates fighting for their communities, all while carrying something no one around them can see. To those people, I offer this: Your struggle has not been in vain. Tomorrow can be better. And if you are willing to go on this journey, you can heal.

We are in this together. Don't give up. 🌟

If you are struggling with depression or mental health challenges, please reach out to a medical professional or call or text the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.



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.



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.

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

JAN WERNER ADULT DAY CARE

3108 S. Fillmore • Amarillo, Texas • 79110 374.5516 janwerneradultdaycare.org



Area schools received \$72,059.50 through **FirstBank Southwest's School Spirit Debit Card Program** during the 2025 program year. The annual payout reflects debit card usage by customers across participating school districts throughout the Texas Panhandle.



The **City of Amarillo** has named **Omolola (Lola) Ogunremi** as chief financial officer. Ogunremi began her duties this past April.



Jimmy Johnson has announced his retirement from the **Amarillo Police Department** after 38 years.



Ulrich Bickel, M.D., has been awarded the **2026 Chancellor's Council Distinguished Teaching and Research Award**. Bickel is a professor of pharmaceutical sciences and associate dean for sciences at the TTUHSC Jerry H. Hodge School of Pharmacy.



FirstBank Southwest announced that **Kevin Hunt** has been named its Pampa market president.



Stephanie Price recently received **The Next Wave** award from the American Advertising Federation 10th District.



West Plains head football coach **Adam Cummings** has been named the executive director for Schools and Leadership at **Canyon ISD**.



West Texas A&M University Dean of Engineering **Dr. Emily Hunt** is the recipient of the **2026 Canyon Chamber of Commerce Woman of the Year Award**.



Jeff Hamilton was recently selected the **2026 Canyon Chamber of Commerce Man of the Year**.



Creek Stone Integrated Medical announced the addition of **Cammye Ladd, FNP-C**, a board-certified family nurse practitioner.



Dr. Emilie Baker, an assistant professor of animal science in **WT's Department of Agricultural Sciences**, recently won a nearly \$600,000 USDA grant to study the molecular effects of liver abscesses in beef cattle.



WT recently announced that the **One West** comprehensive fundraising campaign officially has raised \$208.6 million—the most money raised in a fundraising campaign in Texas Panhandle history.

Kelsey Davis has joined **WT** as a communication and community outreach specialist.



Callie Hisek, **WT's** Royal R. Brantley Professor of Theatre, was awarded the **Region 6 Acting Teacher of Excellence Certificate** by the American College Theatre Festival.



Dr. Chris Thomas, **WT's** vice president for student affairs, was recently named chair elect of the **Texas Council of Chief Student Affairs Officers**. He will serve as chair elect through summer 2027, then serve as chair for one year.



Dr. Jim Rogers, **WT** professor of environmental science, and **David Prescott**, an Amarillo City Councilmember and doctoral student in agriculture from Amarillo, won a nearly \$200,000 grant from **Groundwater & Environmental Services** to find innovative approaches for brine-contaminated soils in the Permian Basin.



Dr. Audra Jones, clinical assistant professor at the Veterinary Education, Research and Outreach campus in Canyon, and **Dr. Maggie Murphy**, a former VERO researcher and recent graduate from West Texas A&M University, recently were named to **Cowgirl Magazine's 30 Under 30 Class of 2026**.



Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences Director of Research **Dr. Paul Morley** recently was inducted as the 2026 fellow of the **Conference of Research Workers in Animal Diseases**.



Lone Star Ballet officials have appointed **Roxann Seaton** as the new Lone Star Ballet artistic director.



The **Amarillo Economic Development Corporation** has chosen **Dr. Andreas Eckstein** as its new president and CEO.



Soaring Pride Marching Band Director **Eric Rath** has been chosen as the **Canyon High School Teacher of the Year** for the 2025-26 school year.

WE INSPIRE STUDENTS TO ...

TURN AMBITION INTO ACTION.

REGISTER NOW!



SCAN CODE

REGISTER NOW: actx.edu/enroll/

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Amarillo College Enrollment Center
(806) 371-5000



AVAILABLE

GAUT · WHITTENBURG · EMERSON
Commercial Real Estate

GWAMARILLO.COM

806-373-3111

Since 1899...

The Gaut name has been the leader in the Amarillo commercial real estate market.



Ben Whittenburg
Owner/Agent

Aaron Emerson
CCIM SIOR
Owner/Agent

Tara Biesboer

Sheril Fuller

Miles Bonifield

Meagan Brown

J Gaut
CCIM & SIOR

Bo Wulfman
CCIM

Cathy Derr
CCIM

Kristen Chilcote

Gabe Irving
CCIM

Jeff Gaut

Jennifer Webber

INVESTMENT | INDUSTRIAL | LAND | OFFICE | RETAIL | PROPERTY MANAGEMENT





Theresa Miller is the **2026 Chick-fil-A Leader Academy National Teacher of the Year**. Miller, an educator for more than 30 years, is the teacher for the Chick-fil-A Leader Academy at AHS.



Amy Henderson has been reappointed to the **Texas Governor's Commission for Women**.



Welcome Pardner owner **DJ Stubben** recently celebrated 45 years of connecting businesses with the Amarillo community.



Megan Reed is in a new role at **Bell Flight** as the military communications manager.



Xcel Energy has been named one of the **World's Most Ethical Companies** for the seventh consecutive year. The award recognizes the company's high-performing compliance program, culture and sustainability efforts.



Amarillo College Theatre students recently earned top honors at the **American College Theatre Festival**.



Amarillo College Student Media received Gold and Special Judges awards at the Amarillo chapter of the **American Advertising Federation's 2026 Advertising Awards**.



The Ronald McDonald House of Amarillo recognized the local **McDonald's store on Western Street** as its regional **Round-Up Champion of the Year**.



The **Amarillo Association of Realtors** announced the appointment of **Rick Bousquet** as its chief executive officer.



Elizabeth A. Brown has been sworn in as chief of police for the **Amarillo College Police Department**.



TEXAS Outdoor Musical recently announced **Cloyce Kuhnert** as artistic director for its historic 60th season. Dr. Kuhnert is a professor of music at WT.

Agriculture is Legacy

HELPING GENERATIONS OF PRODUCERS



The land tells a story of every generation that works it. Plains Land Bank is proud to back Texas farmers, ranchers, and rural landowners with ag financing decade after decade. Because the future of agriculture depends on the people who steward the land today.



RYBON CUTTINGS



2 SISTERS' STUDIO



AMARILLO NUVISION



BNPC - THE BARRIO
STREETSCAPE PROJECT



BSA HEALTH SYSTEM



CONNECT SEARCH, LLC



CROSSPOINT REAL ESTATE
GROUP



FARMERS INSURANCE - ANDY
STORMES AGENCY



GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF
NORTHWEST TEXAS



HÖHE DESIGN GROUP



LEGACY RENTALS &
EQUIPMENT CO.



LOCAL LEGEND OUTFITTERS



LOVE'S TRAVEL STOP



MOJO'S MISSION



PANHANDLE AUTO GLASS



STREET VOLKSWAGEN SERVICE
DEPARTMENT



THE TOASTED YOLK CAFE



WELCOME PARTNER!



WONDERLAND AMUSEMENT PARK

BRICKANDELM.COM 45 MAY/JUNE 2026

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

The Amarillo



BY **JASON BOYETT**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY KAYLA MORRIS
PHOTOS BY GUNNAR MCCONLOGUE

In conversations with local people, I am always surprised when someone speaks aloud a sentence I personally wouldn't care to broadcast. There are several of these, like: "Oh, I haven't gone downtown in years."

Also this: "What's the Golden Light?"

There's a certain kind of Amarillo resident who has lived here for decades and never once hiked the Lighthouse Trail. Never caught a show at the Tascosa Drive-In. Never dined on a Polk Street patio. Life gets busy, and somehow the city you call home becomes the place you keep meaning to explore—but you never get around to it.

Consider this your permission slip.

Compiled by the *Brick & Elm* team, the Amarillo Bucket List isn't about checking off the major tourist attractions. What it is about are the experiences that make Amarillo and Canyon places worth living. Once you've done these things, you'll wonder why you waited so long.

Some take an afternoon. Some take five minutes. All are worth experiencing at least once. Most are worth doing again and again.

These aren't in any particular order, so there's not a right place to start. All we ask is that you actually *do* start.



1

Hike the Lighthouse Trail at Palo Duro Canyon

I was a PDC regular as a kid but somehow didn't hike to the Lighthouse until adulthood. And once I got there, craning my neck after having climbed to the platform base of the 310-foot hoodoo, I felt like I had only then truly met Palo Duro.

The trail is about six miles round trip and, until the climb, is manageable for most fitness levels. But please plan accordingly. Apply sunscreen. Don't try it on a day over 85 degrees, or any summer day after 10 a.m. Bring water—a lot more water than you think you need. (Experts recommend at least a gallon per person.)

"It's the most dangerous of the PDC trails because it's so hot and so popular," says Darla Blackburn Wright, a frequent hiker. "I've never hiked Lighthouse and not seen someone hiking with too little water, at best. At worst, I've given away water to people who were so dehydrated they were disoriented and stumbling."

But the payoff is definitely worth it, supplying one of the most dramatic and iconic views in the Panhandle. "The vast majority of the hike is flat and easy, but the last quarter mile up to the Lighthouse formation will get your heart pumping," she says. "You'll need your hands—and arms, knees and possibly rear end—to help push yourself up to and onto the Lighthouse saddle. But it's just the right amount of challenge for folks who enjoy a playful scramble before they take their iconic hoodoo pic."

Once you've hiked the Lighthouse trail, explore the rest of the park. The Rock Garden trail is epic, as is the CCC trail from the rim to the canyon floor.



2

Ride Horseback at Cowgirls and Cowboys in the West

People from all over the world travel through the Texas Panhandle for an authentic Western experience, and there simply aren't that many places left where you can saddle up and ride through a genuine West Texas landscape. But that's exactly what you do at Cowgirls and Cowboys in the West. Owner Phyllis Nickum Golden has a background in hospitality and that's one reason this adventure tour is regularly the region's top attraction on TripAdvisor.

In explaining that appeal, Phyllis asks, "What could be more enjoyable, or authentically Texan, than riding a beautiful American Quarter Horse on an amazing Texas ranch?" That ranch, Los Cedros, is located on the rim of Palo Duro Canyon. The horses are well-trained, and her tour guides always impress with their knowledge of the region's Western history.

"Guests come from all over the world to enjoy our horses, our history, our hospitality and our beautiful views," Phyllis adds. "We are truly grateful to share our Western way of life with them."

If you live in Amarillo and you've never ridden a horse, you're already breaking a well-established stereotype. Get out there and rectify that, partner.

3

Explore Historic Route 66

This year is the centennial anniversary of America’s Mother Road, and that history runs right through Amarillo—the largest city on the Texas portion of one of the world’s most mythologized highways. Route 66 through the Panhandle is lined with neon signs, vintage motels, classic diners and the particular kind of nostalgia that only exists on roads that have been traveled by millions of people.

And right in the center of town, the Route 66–Sixth Street Historic District represents the best of that nostalgia.

“I love being a business owner on Historic Route 66,” says Amy Von Lintel, West Texas A&M University professor of art history and co-owner of Old Tascosa Brewery. Old Tascosa has plenty of local fans, but you’re likely to hear more than a West Texas drawl while inside. “It’s amazing to be in Amarillo, Texas, and hear someone order a beer or a sandwich with an Australian, English, French, German or Portuguese accent—which actually happens all the time,” she says. “I think it is such a privilege that Amarillo welcomes so many tourists because of Route 66.”

There’s a reason those tourists love this district, so if it’s not on your radar, drive on over this summer. If you haven’t been to Sixth Street lately, spend a weekend afternoon there. Walk it slowly. Stop at places that look like they haven’t changed since 1962. It’s entirely possible they haven’t, and that’s kind of the point.

Learn more about the Route 66 Centennial starting on page 60!



ARTIST TRISTAN EATON, 510 S. POLK ST.



ARTIST MALCOLM BYERS



ARTIST DAAS, 800 S. POLK ST.

Take a Downtown Mural Crawl

Amarillo’s art history is deep and vibrant, but one of its biggest stories is a relatively recent one: The arrival of public art, thanks to the City of Amarillo’s Mural Art Grant and the Hoodoo Mural Festival. Our downtown has turned into a gallery without a roof, as local and visiting artists—some with international reputations—have transformed brick facades into full-scale works of art.

Keep an eye out for photographers while you’re exploring. “People are always documenting their day or experience somewhere,” says Shanda Fletcher, cofounder and project director of Blank Spaces Murals. This public arts internship program is responsible for more than 120 local murals, including several downtown. “I learned early in my career that people are drawn to color, pattern and a perfect Instagram-able photo. Murals not only bring vibrancy and commerce, but a positive energy that ignites creativity and joy in people,” she adds.

Fletcher refuses to pick a favorite, but admits that Hiero Veiga’s mural on the north wall of the ACTS Community building is in her top three. “His techniques and color palettes are incredible,” she says. Fletcher and the Blank Spaces crew met the Florida-based artist when he participated in Hoodoo in 2024.

If it’s been too long since you’ve explored downtown on foot, that’s the perfect way to see these murals. Park the car, take a walk, and don’t be surprised when you turn a corner and catch your breath.

4

5

Drink a Cocktail in the Barfield Speakeasy

As Amarillo’s first true skyscraper, The Barfield Hotel holds secrets. The best one is behind a basement door you have to find first. It leads to a speakeasy tucked inside this historic downtown landmark, and it’s exactly the kind of place that makes Amarillo feel more interesting than you may have expected.

It might be the dim lighting. Or the upscale Western decor. Or the fact that you might walk in and see Beth and Rip from *Yellowstone* sipping a whiskey. (Yes, the Taylor Sheridan series filmed here, and the team at The Barfield has definitely taken advantage of that international spotlight.)

Even so, the original 1927 building was built by Amarillo legend Melissa Dora “The Duchess” Oliver-Eagle, and that building hosted a true, hidden speakeasy: The Paramount Recreation Club. It stayed quiet because The Duchess was associated with Amarillo’s temperance culture. Sipping a drink here is a way to connect with Amarillo from a century ago.

That makes it worth the find. Head inside, go downstairs, look for the double revolvers, and follow the path marked by bullets in the floor. We recommend the Julius. And cheers to The Duchess.



PHOTO BY JASON BOYETT

Enjoy a Meal on a Polk Street Patio

On the right evening—meaning, “when it’s not windy”—few places in Amarillo can compete with a Polk Street patio. This includes Crush Wine Bar & Grill, Six Car Pub & Brewery, Nomad Napoletana and The Barfield. And, sure, we’ll go ahead and include the small covered patio of O.H.M.S., even though it’s not technically on Polk. Call it literary license.

“My favorites are Six Car for a burger and dog-watching, or a fancy cocktail upstairs at Crush,” says Laci Scott, a program manager for community health for the City of Amarillo. “The patios downtown often feature music, a family- and pet-friendly atmosphere, and a fun place to hang out before other events downtown. Amarillo is a big small town, so it’s almost guaranteed you’ll see someone you know while you’re there!”

Each of these restaurants brings their own personality to one of the best stretches of downtown, but what they share is the simple pleasure of being outside in a city that’s beginning to do outdoor dining really, really well. (At least, when the weather cooperates.)

6

7

Visit the AQHA Hall of Fame & Museum

Amarillo is home to the American Quarter Horse Association, which means it’s home to the definitive museum dedicated to the most popular horse breed in the world—and the horse that settled the West. This brings the national and international equine community to our doorstep, but even non-equestrians tend to walk out impressed.

“I think everyone, regardless of whether you own a horse, is curious and often hungry to learn about horses because they are such magnificent and intuitive creatures,” explains Chris Sitz, chief foundation officer for the American Quarter Horse Foundation. “We want to share this story with the Panhandle community and inspire Amarillo-area residents to feel the connection with the American Quarter Horse.”

She also points out that AQHA represents the largest breed registry in the world, with more than 7 million horses worldwide and more than 200,000 members.

The Museum is in the middle of a multi-stage renovation, but its exhibits are beautifully done and there’s something genuinely moving about understanding how central the Quarter Horse has been to life in this region. This is a legitimately world-class institution. If your city has one, then it’s definitely worth a visit.



8

Eat a Meal on Amarillo Boulevard

Amarillo Boulevard doesn't ask for your approval. It just exists. There are wild stories here, and occasionally odd people afoot, and buildings that have most certainly seen better days. But this multi-mile stretch in north Amarillo also features the most authentic and interesting food in the city.

This is where you find the real Amarillo, the one that's been here longer than the new construction and the downtown revitalization. Want Somali food? A dozen different Thai options? Exotic ethnic markets? Around 30 different taco trucks? Welcome to the Boulevard.

"I love visiting the Boulevard for its authentic Mexican food that hasn't been diluted into Tex-Mex," says Jessica Higgins, owner of Girasol Cafe & Bakery. "One of my favorite places is Tacos Garcia—Betty and her team know me well." She also cites El Manantial and Flamingos Latin Bar & Grill as dependable destinations.

Those are excellent recommendations, and here's another one: Drive down the Boulevard around dusk on a summer night, or after a shift lets out at the packing plants. Look for a line of people at a food truck. Find a place to park, get in line and order something you've never tried.



See a Concert at the Golden Light Cantina

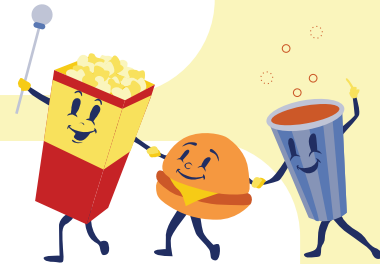
Joe Ely. Cross Canadian Ragweed. Cooder Graw. Band of Heathens. Uncle Lucius. Ben Kweller. They've all performed at the Golden Light. Located on historic Sixth, the original GL is one of the oldest continuously operating restaurants on Route 66, and the Golden Light Cantina next door has been pouring drinks and hosting live music for decades. It is, very simply, one of Amarillo's most essential institutions.

Wes Reeves says the Route 66 vibe is a big part of the appeal, but so is the intimacy of the space. "I can sit on a bench for a while, then go stand right by the stage just feet away from the performers, and nobody cares," he says. "Then there's the option of stepping out the back door to chat up whoever is playing next. There just aren't many rules there. No space is off limits."

Reeves recalls a particularly memorable Hayden Pedigo show right before the local guitarist's career took off. "Most of the performances at GLC are loud with a lot of people talking over the music. Some in the audience are focused on who's playing, but a lot of people are just catching up. But at one point during Hayden's performance, I realized everyone had stopped talking and moving around. It was dark with a single spotlight on him as I remember it, and everyone there was sitting or standing with their ears open and their eyes on stage, intensely focused on his captivating music. It was just one of those beautiful moments in time."

That's why live music exists, and those moments are common at the Golden Light.

9



10

Watch a Movie at the Tascosa Drive-In

These are tough days for Big Cinema. But Small Cinema experiences like Tascosa Drive-In are having somewhat of a renaissance. There's a charm to watching a movie from your car—windows down, speakers crackling, the big Panhandle sky visible over the screen—that no multiplex can replicate.

"You're under the Texas sky with family or friends, and it feels more like an event than just going to the movies," says Candy Dewitz, who owns and operates Tascosa with her husband, Jim. "There's something special that you just can't get in a regular theater."

The Dewitz family have lovingly repaired and restored Tascosa Drive-In, and seem to be continuously looking for ways to elevate the experience. Still, it is a genuine relic in the best sense of the word. Catching a double feature there on a warm Panhandle night, perhaps with lightning dancing on the horizon, is the kind of experience that younger generations didn't know they were missing until they tried it.

Also, Big Jim and Candy are restaurant people, so the snacks are always good.



11

Slow Down at the Jack Sisemore RV Museum

This one surprises locals. Older generations definitely know the Sisemore name, but still may not have any idea this museum exists. That's what makes it great. The Jack Sisemore RV Museum is open limited hours—definitely check rvmuseum.net before you go—but it is home to a remarkable collection of vintage recreational vehicles. It's a pure blast of road-trip nostalgia.

"The RV Museum is a hidden gem that even many locals don't know about," says Jackie Phommahaxay Murguia, marketing manager for Visit Amarillo. Astonishingly, the RV Museum actually lets visitors climb inside most of the attractions. "It's a glimpse into a slower era of road-tripping, when everything nowadays feels so rushed. You can tell travelers really took their time exploring, and that care shows in the thoughtful details, the belongings they packed, and the craftsmanship of the RVs themselves."

Also, and this is important: IT'S FREE, courtesy of the Sisemore family's passion for preserving the history that gave them career success. "It's not just a fun thing to do in town, it's also a chance to step into a different era of travel before smartphones and the constant rush of modern life," Jackie says.

This is the kind of place local residents drive past for years until someone finally drags them inside. You can be that someone this summer. Tell your friends *Brick & Elm* sent you.



Take a Ride at Wonderland

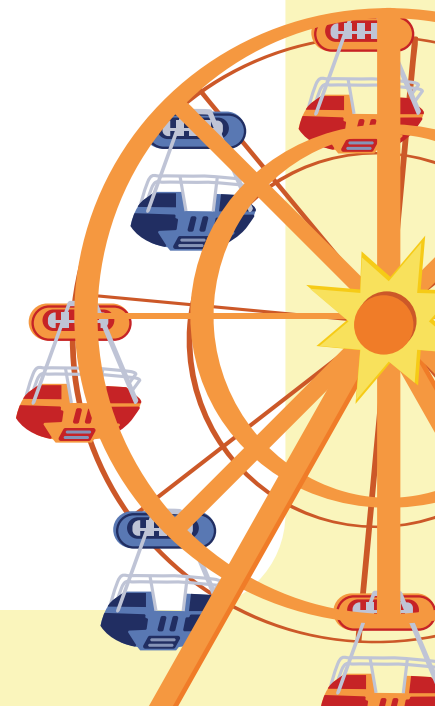
For multiple generations of locals, there is no more nostalgic Amarillo aesthetic than the sounds and smells and sensory stimulations of dusk turning to night at Wonderland Amusement Park. If you grew up here, this local institution is embedded into your childhood memories in a specific and vivid way.

"I remember Wonderland feeling very dreamlike when I was a child. I have definitely had dreams about it as an adult for reasons unknown to me," says musician Hayden Pedigo, who grew up in Amarillo. (In fact, we photographed him at Wonderland for a *Brick & Elm* feature in 2023. Those visions, at least, were not a dream.)

"There is something about it being this long alley of an amusement park, tucked on the side of the most forested, woodsy city park in Amarillo," he continues. "I think Wonderland always had a strange feeling floating around it." Pedigo identifies the Rainbow as his favorite childhood ride. "During the summers at night when it was dark, you could get to the top [of the Rainbow] and see the movie playing at the drive-in. I don't need to explain why that is magical."

Sadly, the Rainbow left the park a couple of seasons ago, and after decades in business, so did the Borchardt family. This year, Wonderland has new owners. So if you haven't returned as an adult, it's time. Bring the kids. Some things about Amarillo don't need to change, and this is one of them.

12



13

Visit Bill's Backyard Classics

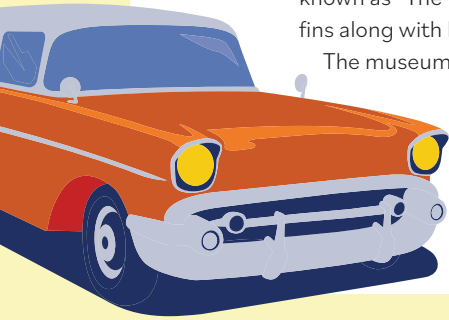
The Route 66 centennial will bring multitudes of motorists through Amarillo this year, and if it lands on their radar, Bill's Backyard Classics will be one of their favorite Amarillo destinations. It should be on your radar as well.

This classic car museum was founded by Bill and Linda Pratt after Bill sold his business more than a decade ago. The Pratts have since passed, but their legacy lives on in this showroom built around Bill's passion for vintage vehicles. It's now managed by the next generation.

"We're surrounded by my late father's passion for the classics and for living," says Glen Pratt, who counts a 1957 Cadillac Coupe DeVille as one of his favorites among the more than 100 classic vehicles on display. That Caddy, known as "The Yellow Rose," will serve as the official car of the Texas Route 66 Festival. It boasts those legendary tail fins along with Route 66 logos and the signatures of Bill and Linda Pratt.

The museum calls attention to the vehicles as well as to Bill Pratt's impact on the local agriculture community, including the beef business. "It's not just for tourists," Glen says. "Locals can get a hometown dose of the heyday of Route 66 right here in Amarillo at Bill's."

Other vehicles on display include Bob Seger's 1961 Pontiac Catalina convertible and World War II-era military Jeeps. Given the number of Cadillacs on display, he suggests Bill's is the "real Cadillac Ranch." Whether you agree with that or not, it's definitely the perfect amount of chrome and tailfins in one place.



Explore the Amarillo Botanical Gardens

Tucked into Medi-Park, the Amarillo Botanical Gardens is a very literal oasis: four-plus acres of cultivated beauty in a landscape that's, well, not always associated with greenery. The seasonal displays shift throughout the year, making it worth multiple visits. Even during the winter, the conservatory offers a humid, tropical contrast to the dry Panhandle air outside.

"The Gardens are the premier garden center in the Texas Panhandle, as well as extending into our neighboring states," says Elaine Hazlewood of the North Plains Iris Society. That group has had a close relationship with the Gardens for decades and supports it financially. "It is an invaluable asset to the community," she adds.

The Dusty McGuire Japanese Garden stands out as something truly surprising on the High Plains, but the entire grounds are worth a quiet walk on a calm summer morning when blooms are at the seasonal peak. Watch the birds and butterflies. Breathe deep. Despite its position near the bustling hospital district, the Gardens are quieter than you expect, and worth slowing down for.

14



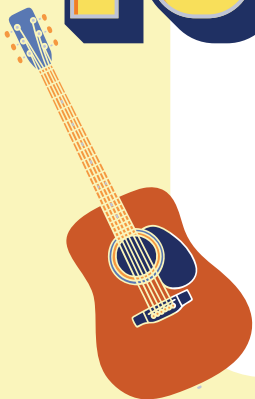
15

Go to an Outdoor Concert

Whether it's a tight jazz ensemble or a tribute act for an '80s-era hair band, Amarillo has no shortage of outdoor music options during the warmer months. Here's a short and not-at-all-comprehensive list: June Jazz, High Noon on the Square, Music at Wellington Square, Starlight Theater, and June Jams in Canyon. The Amarillo Botanical Gardens hosts an outdoor concert series. Also venues like the Lumberyard and Shark Beach. And, of course, the outdoor musical TEXAS at the Pioneer Amphitheater in Palo Duro Canyon State Park.

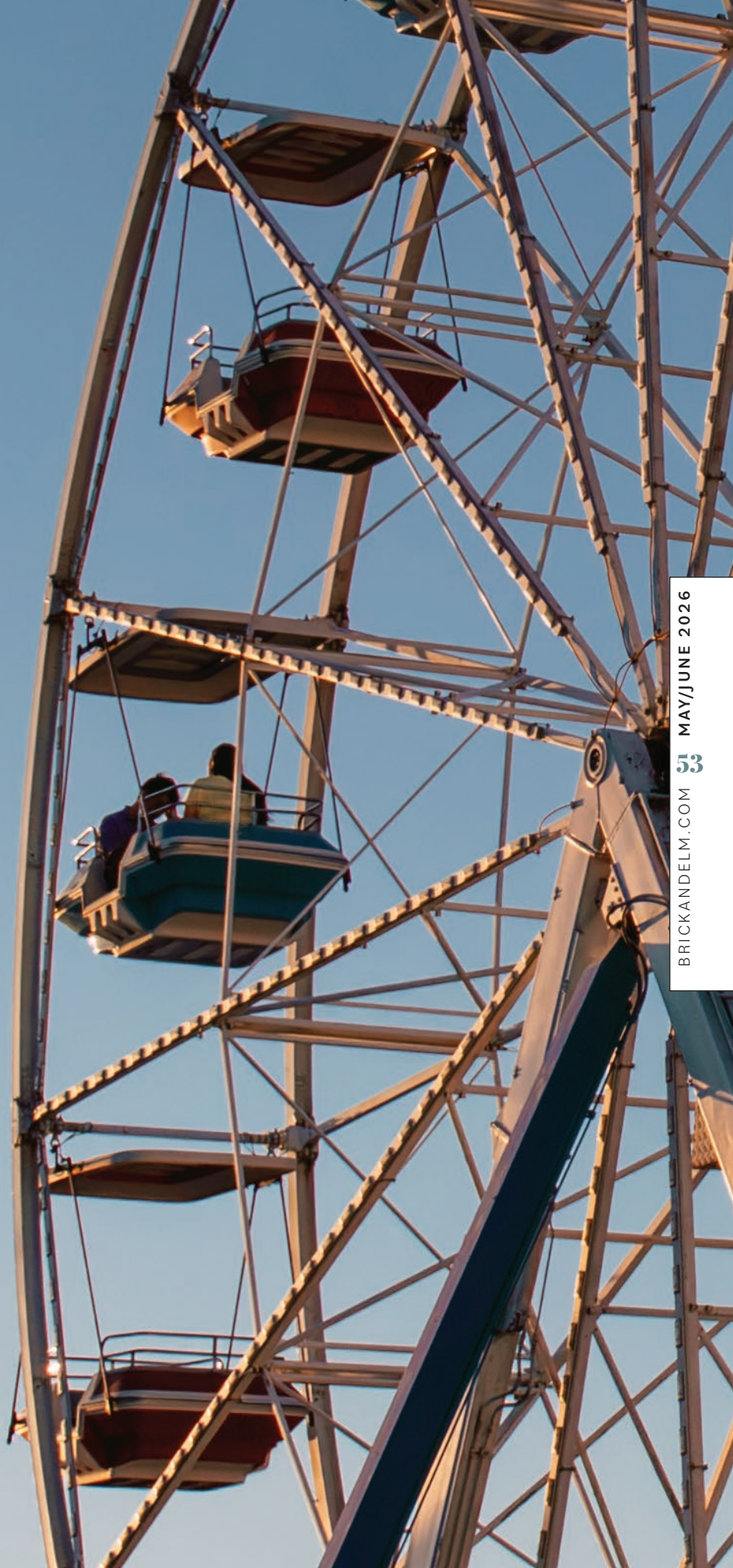
"The best part of seeing live music in Amarillo under an open sky is when the sun dips down just enough to look like a church postcard and the cicadas start pulsing that hypnotic drone, sometimes in time with the band," says Jenny Inzerillo, music director of High Plains Public Radio. She points to summer series like indie folk-rock shows on the back gravel lot at Caliche Co. or the concerts at Starlight Canyon Bed & Breakfast in the Palisades. "It's so peaceful and relaxed, but intimate, and there are always two or three kids shooting through the space like feral rabbits, to and from the cookie table."

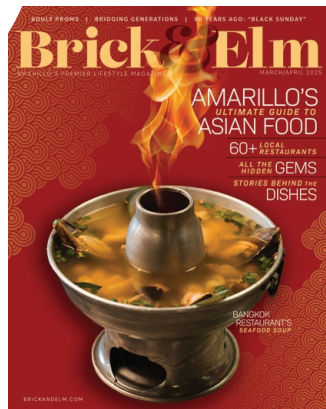
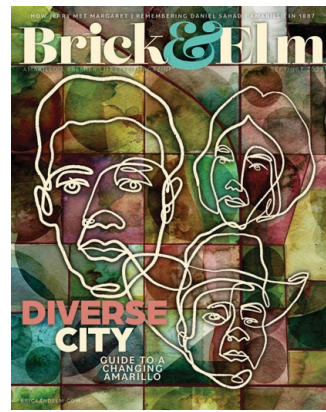
So pick a venue. Apply mosquito spray and grab a blanket. There is something particular about live music under an open sky in this part of the world, with the horizon stretching out behind the music, that earns its place on any honest bucket list.





Whether you've lived here for five months or 50 years, we imagine you'll find something among these 15 experiences that you haven't yet tried. For us, they remind us why we choose to live on the High Plains in the first place. So take the hike. Hit the Boulevard. Catch the sunset from a downtown patio, in view of a handful of murals. Your city is waiting for you to show up, and we promise the view is better in person than it is on a screen. 🍷





Five Years Later

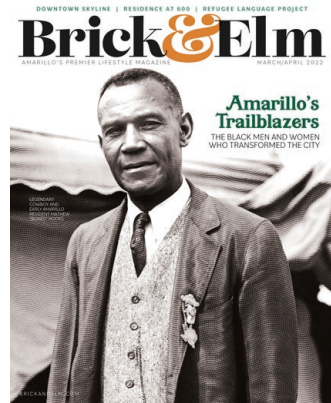
REVISITING OUR EARLIEST STORIES

BY JASON BOYETT

We launched *Brick & Elm* five years ago because we kept seeing people, places and projects shaping this city—but they weren't being covered by local print media. Amplifying those stories in a locally owned publication became part of our vision. We wanted to share with our readers what was happening and why it mattered.

Anniversary milestones invite reflection. To mark our fifth year in business, we decided to look back at some of the early stories that helped define the voice and focus of our magazine. We're revisiting them by asking one question: *What happened next?*

In other words, we're looking back in order to catch up. It reminds us how Amarillo has changed in just five years, and how the stories we told then continue to shape this region today.



“BUILT TO LAST”

It’s hard to believe, but our first issue came out before The Barfield was complete. Renovations to the downtown Amarillo hotel had been ongoing for months at the time we published, so we were only able to show architectural renderings. A few weeks later, the prestigious 10-story hotel finally opened. Since then, we’ve enjoyed its West Texas luxury vibe. You might have seen our team members dining at its restaurant, enjoying its outdoor patio, sipping drinks in its speakeasy and attending a variety of events on the premises.

Those early expectations were high, and over the past five years, The Barfield has met and exceeded just about all of them. Its recognition reaches well beyond Amarillo, especially as the Route 66 Centennial approaches. Recent guests have arrived from France, Australia, Germany and beyond. “We’re welcoming guests from across the country and around the world who have discovered The Barfield,” says General Manager Kelsey Pratt. “We truly enjoy sharing our story with each of them during their stay.”

The *Yellowstone* connection certainly helped. The blockbuster series was spotted filming in Amarillo in August 2024. To start, the cast of the prequel *1883* were regularly spotted staying at the hotel while filming in the Panhandle. Then, near the end of *Yellowstone*’s fifth season, Beth Dutton (Kelly Reilly) and Rip Wheeler (Cole Hauser) visit the hotel on-screen while Rip works with cattle in Texas. The production shot on location in downtown Amarillo, showcasing the hotel’s Paramount Recreation Club speakeasy (including its “secret” entrance) and its high-end atmosphere.

Like a good marketer, Pratt and her team jumped on the branding potential. “I love incorporating it into my spiel during site tours for potential clients,” says Director of Sales Chloe Shelton. “It always adds that extra ‘wow’ factor. It’s also common to see both locals and visitors making their way to the Paramount Recreation Club Speakeasy, hoping to recreate the iconic scene of Beth and Rip dancing.”

In the years since, the Barfield has become an important partner for us. Every guest at The Barfield finds a copy of *Brick & Elm* in their room. Beyond that exclusive placement, we’ve enjoyed collaborating with them on photo shoots, events and other shared opportunities.

BUILT TO LAST
THE BARFIELD RETURNS TO GLORY
BY JASON BONETTI

THE RESTAURANT
Chief Executive Officer of the Association of the City of Amarillo, the building's original developer, passed away in 2014. It's a building that stands as a testament to the city's history. The plans were designed by the architect and the building was completed in 1928. The restaurant was named after the woman who was the first to open a restaurant in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city.

THE TOSCANA BAR
The restaurant was named after the woman who was the first to open a restaurant in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city.

THE PARAMOUNT RECREATION CLUB
The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city.

THE LOBBY
The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city.

THE ROOMS
The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city. The building was the first of its kind in the city.

HOW THE DUCHESS MADE AMARILLO



“TRUCKIN’ DELICIOUS”

Brick & Elm has tried to maintain a working list of local food trucks since our second-ever cover story—a July/August 2021 guide to Amarillo’s growing food truck scene. Since that issue, our food truck list has literally tripled in size. We just updated it a few weeks ago. Food trucks in Amarillo/Canyon are alive and well.

But at least one food truck has mostly left the scene: Dirty Uncle Monte, which was operated by Chris Kizer and appeared on that issue’s cover.

By 2024, Kizer had turned his Airstream trailer and higher-end menu into more of a catering business and had begun consulting with restaurants including the Borger Country Club. That’s when he learned that Polk Street Methodist Church, where his niece attended the church’s child development center, was looking for someone to run its meal program.

Kizer applied and interviewed for the position, but also challenged the church to think bigger. Before long, Polk Street had established a dedicated food ministry, with Kizer as its director. “It’s something I didn’t think I would be doing, but the food truck segued me into the position,” he says today.

Last year, his ministry served 68,000 meals. Kizer describes the approach as something of a three-legged stool.

Internal church activities form one leg, from special events like Easter brunch to the weekly Wednesday meals before Bible study.

The second leg is the child development center, where hundreds of children receive breakfast, lunch and two snacks each day. Kizer takes what he calls a “nutritionist’s approach” to this responsibility, actually plating meals and introducing healthy foods like quinoa to kids, knowing they might not try those things at home.

The third leg is community outreach, including catering for Rotary groups, Lions Clubs, and other nonprofits. Like running a food truck, he says, “it’s about building relationships. It’s easy to see it has a good impact.”

“THE NEIGHBORHOOD”

Our cover feature for September/October 2021 was called “The Neighborhood” and we interviewed several local residents about Amarillo’s historic Barrio. One of those individuals was Teresa Kenedy, a retired AISD drug and violence prevention educator who had assumed leadership of the Barrio Neighborhood Planning Committee. That committee had multiple projects in motion at the time, including a \$6 million 10th Avenue streetscape beautification project passing through the heart of the neighborhood.

Less than five years later, on April 16, 2026, Kenedy and her team finally cut the ribbon on the completed project, officially opening it to the public. For seven blocks from Garfield to Ross, 10th Avenue now includes crosswalks, bike lanes, bike racks, ADA-accessible sidewalks, colorful benches with matching trash containers, as well as new trees and landscaping.

“This neighborhood is 137 years old,” says Kenedy, a Community Builder award recipient at our inaugural 2025 *Brickly Awards*. “Other than Habitat for Humanity homes, this is the biggest renovation in this neighborhood [in decades]. We’ve never had benches on 10th. We’ve never had trash cans on 10th. That’s exciting to see.”

Her work isn’t done. The BNPC is still raising money for La Plazita, a “pocket park” at 918 S. Houston St. that will become the city’s first park offering free Wi-Fi.

The space was purchased by the city, but construction won’t begin until the funds are raised. After that, Kenedy has another corridor in mind that could use some updating.

Kenedy points out that when our team interviewed her for our article in 2021, there were nine empty buildings along 10th Avenue. All but one of these buildings are now occupied. New businesses are opening or have moved into the now-thriving neighborhood. “We are truly just excited to share this with our families, to reflect our culture and show that our families want a better life for their kids. They wanted to be able to walk down 10th and be proud of it,” she says. “And I think they are. We had a dream and it has become a reality for us.”

BARRIO STREETScape RIBBON CUTTING



MAY/JUNE 2026

56

BRICKANDELM.COM





RANGE WRITER

How Taylor Moore brought international intrigue to the Texas Panhandle

BY JONATHAN BAKER

There's a new Panhandle author who appears to have taken the publishing world by storm. If you've been into local bookstore this month, odds are you've come across Taylor Moore's thriller, *Down Range*, the first in a series featuring DEA Agent and Panhandle resident Garrett Kohl. Taylor grew up on a farm and ranch northwest of Houston but now lives in the Texas Panhandle with his wife and two children, where he's a full-time author, screenwriter and speaker. He spoke with B&E's Jonathan Baker about his sudden fame—and about the importance of local writing groups in the Panhandle.

Jonathan Baker: First, let's start with the thing that everybody's going to want to know about, which is your background in the CIA.

Taylor Moore: I had a little bit more experience than your average person who works there because I worked in both analysis and in operations. I was hired right out of graduate school, brought in to be just an analyst. I did that for a couple of years and liked it, went through all the training programs, and then I had this neat opportunity to work in the CIA's operation center, which is on the seventh floor [of the George Bush Center for Intelligence], up there

with the director, helping to support the president's briefers. It's a 24/7, 365 day a year [job]. You're at the pulse of everything. It might be in the middle of the night, weekend, and something happened, and you're the one that's there. [After that, I ended up moving over to operations. They were looking for people to be what they call "taggers"—if you think of the Jessica Chastain character in *Zero Dark Thirty*, who's on the hunt for Bin Laden, that's an operational person. In some ways, you're an analyst, putting those puzzle pieces together, but you're [also] out in the field, meeting with assets, meeting with detainees. It gave me a really good insight as a writer because I knew both sides of the house. [I got to] brief executive-level leadership—but I also got to sneak around and meet assets.

You're a sixth generation Texan, but you're not from the Panhandle. How does a CIA agent end up in the Texas Panhandle?
My wife was originally from Hereford, and once we started having kids, we made this family decision that we're going to get closer to her family. Obviously, there's not a whole lot of jobs involving intelligence up here, other than Postco, but I'd grown up in Central Texas on a farm and ranch, and we had oil and gas, and so I knew that world pretty well. I'd been on the other end of a table with a land man.



KANIYA BARRINGER
IN 2021 AND 2026



“RANGE WRITER”

When Jonathan Baker first interviewed Taylor Moore for our September/October 2021 issue, Moore's debut thriller, *Down Range*, had just been released into the world. That series features DEA Agent Garrett Kohl and is set in the Texas Panhandle. Moore and his family are Amarillo residents, and much of *Down Range* was written inside various Palace Coffee locations.

Down Range was a success, and after that, Moore and his publisher released a new Garrett Kohl book every year through 2024. Four books and four years later, Moore finally got a chance to breathe. “It was a hard few years,” he says. “You have your whole life to write your first book, and then six months to write the next one.” And the next one after that. “Once you get in the hamster wheel of putting books out, meeting constant deadlines, promoting, editing, doing podcasts, doing the Hollywood part, you're working seven days a week and missing vacations with your family,” he says.

About that Hollywood part: At one point, the series had an option agreement with Universal TV to turn *Down Range* into a series on Peacock, but like many film and TV projects, it kept hitting production and financing roadblocks. “We still have a director attached, and still have Hollywood interest,” Moore says. He's even spent time recently working on multiple screenwriting projects apart from the Garrett Kohl series.

And this spring, he finished a new novel set in a completely different landscape. “It's a psychological thriller, hopefully a little mind-bendy,” he says. “My publisher asked me to do something new, with new characters. I'm pretty excited about it.”

He'll only reveal the book is set “five minutes into the future.”

Look for that one in a year or two. Until then, Moore is focused on “being a dad and being a writer, and enjoying life,” he says. As for the Panhandle-set Garrett Kohl series, he says, “I still have more of those books in me. I just don't know when.”

“A FEW WORDS ABOUT WORDS”

In our final issue of our inaugural year, November/December 2021, we assembled a sprawling cover feature about libraries, language and literacy. As avid readers ourselves, we found great joy in covering the ways reading and language influence local lives.

The feature highlighted the work of Storybridge, the local nonprofit that provides books for young readers. It looked into the intricacies and mysteries of the Research Center at Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum—a library of preserved letters, photos and books cataloguing local history. It discussed book clubs and the rambling, multi-tome home library of Philip and Judy Periman in the Wolflin neighborhood. We also profiled the public library system and our favorite places to buy books in Amarillo.

With such a broad subject matter, we faced a question: How do we visually represent a big idea that doesn't have a single location or face? How do we personify the quiet magic of getting lost in a book?

For that, we turned to Neighbors Creative, which represented our first collaboration with the Canyon-based, husband-and-wife photography duo of Jeremy and Lauren Pawlowski. And to serve as our symbolic reader, we had them photograph Kaniya Barringer inside the original Burrowing Owl Books location in Canyon. Kaniya became our first, true cover model.

At the time, she was a middle-school student (and, it should be said, an avid reader). Five years later, Kaniya is 18 years old and finishing up the final weeks of her senior year at Amarillo High School. She's still a passionate reader. This fall, she'll head off to the University of Texas at Arlington, where she intends to major in psychology.



BIG SWING

How a visionary principal and a vintage club collector brought golf to Hamlet Elementary

By Jon Mark Beule

The June 2023 celebration at Bono's Hole was the culmination of a year of hard work, sweat, and tears, with children eagerly to play and adults eagerly to help. Justin Thompson, principal of Hamlet Elementary through R.J. Soleyjack's vision, was the one to bring it all together. Thompson was the one to bring it all together. Thompson was the one to bring it all together.

Thompson says the conversation at Bono's Hole may have changed the course of his life. Those events later led to his job at Bay Beach, where he has a number of roles for seven years. From fundraising to writing grant proposals to managing planned giving accounts.

"I always have a bit of a bias but I never really know how I'm going to get them done," Thompson says. "Just know there are opportunities out there. It's not when you know what you think is a good idea and you're introduced to someone who can make it happen because they can help you through the same thing eventually."

"But what happened? When R.J. mentioned starting a golf club at Hamlet, the light bulb just went off. How could it be that to give golf opportunities to kids by using one of my passions? It's not like I'm a golfer."

THE 'A-HA' MOMENT

Soleyjack doesn't have to count how hard at some of the 300 students at Hamlet to see a glimpse of himself more than 25 years ago. He, too, could have fallen through the cracks, especially as he got older.

"I was on the other side once," he says. "I was getting into trouble as a young man and got an education for a living. I was close to being evicted."

Coming into sports helped stop the slide. Soleyjack was a standout running back at Highwood Park, playing on the best football team in school history—one that went three rounds deep into the 3A playoffs in 2003.

Soleyjack then played two years at West Texas A&M University. He quit football but did get his initial degree field of study—business. He was encouraged to be an after-school tutor in the Amarillo ISD. He

...and just off Hamlet's 300 students at Hamlet to see a glimpse of himself more than 25 years ago. He, too, could have fallen through the cracks, especially as he got older.

...and just off Hamlet's 300 students at Hamlet to see a glimpse of himself more than 25 years ago. He, too, could have fallen through the cracks, especially as he got older.

...and just off Hamlet's 300 students at Hamlet to see a glimpse of himself more than 25 years ago. He, too, could have fallen through the cracks, especially as he got older.

...and just off Hamlet's 300 students at Hamlet to see a glimpse of himself more than 25 years ago. He, too, could have fallen through the cracks, especially as he got older.



scientists to make educational content. He worked with Xbox to promote the space-based video game *Starfield*, and collaborated with Apple TV in helping explain the physics of the series *For All Mankind*.

Unfortunately, Guerrero is still finishing his undergraduate degree after chronic health issues slowed his academic journey. But he's still moving forward. "I still aspire to achieve higher educational credentials," he says. Eventually that pursuit will take him away from Amarillo. Until then, he'll hold the unique distinction of keeping a fairly low local profile while remaining one of this area's best-known residents.

"BIG SWING"

In 2023, for one of his first *Brick & Elm* features, veteran local journalist Jon Mark Beule visited Hamlet Elementary to highlight its Tiger Flight Golf Club. At the time, R.J. Soleyjack was the new Hamlet principal, Justin Thompson was a local golf enthusiast with a large collection of vintage clubs, and 35 students at the school were interested in using their Response to Intervention hour to learn how to hit a golf ball.

"This is about kids getting exposed to the world," Soleyjack said back then, pointing out the number of unfilled golf scholarships across the country. "What an opportunity this could be."

The shoestring organization was new then. It has since matured and evolved. Soleyjack is now the director of the Maverick Boys & Girls Clubs of Amarillo. Thompson spent the past couple years expanding the golf club out of Hamlet and into other economically disadvantaged schools, rechristening it the 107 Golf Academy in 2024.

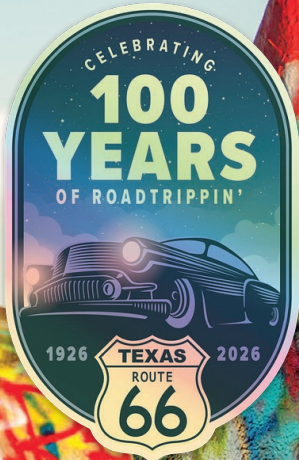
Then, in 2025, the organization merged with Acts Community, creating the Acts Community Golf Academy and hiring Thompson as its part-time golf director. He now travels to area schools with a portable, inflatable golf simulator that uses photometric cameras and an HD projector to help students learn the mechanics of a golf swing. "We are working really hard at the moment to expose kids to the game, teach them a basic swing and get them interested in golf," Thompson says. He has set up the simulator in school gyms, church parking lots, and even at last year's Hoodoo Mural Festival.

Hundreds of local kids have since gained confidence and experience swinging a golf club. "It's been pretty amazing," Thompson says. "I wouldn't have pictured it looking like this when we first sat down and talked about it, but it's evolving the way it needs to. It allows us to reach a ton more kids this way."

Revisiting these early features reminds us that a magazine is only as vibrant as the community it covers. We are grateful to the small business owners, nonprofits and local residents who let an upstart new publication into their lives years ago, and who continue to support us today. Amarillo is a city in the midst of transformation. Catching up with these familiar faces has only deepened our excitement for who we are and what we're becoming.

Thank you for reading, thank you for your story ideas, and thank you for being part of this first five-year chapter of *Brick & Elm*. We're just getting started. 🏌️

100 YEARS OF ROUTE 66 IN AMARILLO



This year, the Mother Road turns 100, and Amarillo is rolling out the red carpet for a centennial celebration unlike any other. The Centennial is more than a celebration of history; it's a call to hit the road, embrace adventure, and experience Texas-sized fun. Here, travelers step into the real Texas, where cowboy culture meets roadside Americana and wide-open skies stretch for miles. This is your cue to hit the gas, chase the sunset, and live the road trip you've been craving. Amarillo is waiting, the Mother Road is calling, and adventure lies up ahead.



Scan for the most up-to-date event schedule and information.



Scan for the most up-to-date event schedule and information.



100 YEARS.
10 DAYS.
1 LEGENDARY HIGHWAY.

Route 66 turns 100 this year, and you don't want to miss what Amarillo has in store. Cruise back in time and experience this iconic city and the Wild West-flavored Texas charm that rides with it. Dreamers, road trippers, and lovers of all things Americana – y'all buckle up. The communities of the Texas Panhandle are coming together to celebrate the Route 66 Centennial with 10 days of vintage car shows, guided bus tours, a cattle drive, a parade, live music, and local flavors in one big birthday bash.

The journey leads to an unforgettable grand finale on June 13 in Amarillo's Route 66 Historic District. If there was ever a year to bring your Route 66 road-trip dream to life, this is it. From classic cars to canyon views, the Centennial Texas Route 66 Festival is where music, nostalgia, and pure Americana meet for one wild ride.

THE GRAND FINALE

SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 2026

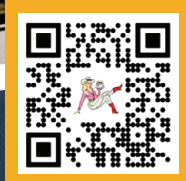
Be there or be square. The last day of the festival is Saturday, June 13, in Amarillo with an epic celebration on the city's historic 6th Avenue. This is one of the most iconic stretches of Route 66 in the state. There will be food trucks, live music, vendors, artists, and fun for the entire family. If you only make it to one event, make it this one. Classic cars line the road, live music fills the air, and Texas charm will be out in full force to celebrate what Route 66 is all about: living life to the fullest.



2025 Festival Finale Map*



PRESENTED BY
Amarillo National Bank
Awesome Service



Scan for the most up-to-date event schedule and information.

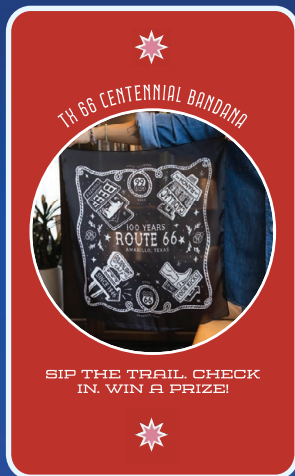
* Festival layout is being finalized. Please check our website or on-site maps during the event for up-to-date information.

VISITAMARILLO.COM



TX 66 Boots & Brews Trail: Sip the Trail & Win a Prize!

Celebrate the Route 66 Centennial one sip at a time on the Boots & Brews Trail. This self-guided drink trail highlights Centennial themed cocktails and beverages across Amarillo, giving travelers a fun way to explore local bars and restaurants while celebrating the Mother Road.



Check in and Win a Free Amarillo Bandana!

Be one of the first 100 to complete the Boots & Brews Trail and score a free TX 66 Centennial bandana (limit one per person).

1. Download the Visit Amarillo app
2. Navigate to the Challenges page
3. Select the Boots & Brews on 66 Challenge
4. Check in at five stops on the trail. The Visit Amarillo app uses geolocation for check-ins.
5. Once the 5/11 stops are completed, you will fill out a submission completion form. Be sure to fill out all the information to get your bandana shipped to you!



LEARN MORE





TEXAS ROUTE 66 FESTIVAL



The Barfield, Autograph Collection

The Barfield invites travelers to make their mark on Route 66's centennial journey. Standing tall alongside the iconic highway from the beginning, The Barfield is where the spirit of adventure is met with thoughtful design, rich storytelling and a stay that feels as memorable as the journey itself.

Celebrate the centennial year with our limited-time Mother Road Package, crafted for modern explorers chasing a touch of nostalgia. Inspired by wide-open skies and the storied history of Route 66, guests will enjoy valet parking, a \$66 food and beverage credit, 6,600 Marriott Bonvoy bonus points, and a Route 66 keepsake to remember the journey.

During the upcoming Texas Route 66 Festival Centennial Celebration, we're bringing the highway to life with a lineup of on-property activations from mixology masterclasses to parade watch parties and an exclusive open-air movie experience. Guests and locals alike can sip their way down the Route 66-themed cocktails featured in each of our food and beverage outlets.

This year, make your stop along Route 66 one to remember with a stay that feels welcoming, relaxed and distinctly Amarillo.



AUTOGRAPH COLLECTION®
HOTELS

600 S. POLK ST.
806.414.2200 | THEBARFIELD.COM



TEXAS ROUTE 66 FESTIVAL



Alley Katz Unique Emporium

Alley Katz Unique Antique Emporium is 20,000 square feet of shopping fun! Located on Route 66 in the heart of the shopping district, Alley Katz has been operating since 1985 in the same spot, originally named Country Coop.

The store was originally two buildings that were erected in 1924 and were storefronts on the street level with apartments above the shops. The upstairs area has been many things over the years, including a beauty school with living quarters where the students lived. Walls were cut through and hallways altered over the years, so that access to all spaces is a fun maze for shoppers to get lost in. Workers are there to assist the lost, and so far, no one has been left overnight ... yet.

Owner Cindy Miller started in the antique business in 1999 and was a vendor at Alley Katz. She purchased the store in 2017, and these days Cindy spends most of her time somewhere close to the action.

Alley Katz boasts more than 40 vendors, each with their own point of view, which makes for a very eclectic mix of merchandise to choose from. There is truly something for everyone. From timeless antiques to mid-century pieces and new items too, this is one store you don't want to miss.

At Alley Katz Unique Antique Emporium, you can explore the diverse selection of collector's items and antiques for sale

- Gas and oil signage
- Vintage children's books
- Retro home decor
- Vintage vinyl
- Antique glassware
- Collectible books
- Classic artwork

You'll also love our selection of non-vintage items like Texas-made specialty foods, Route 66-themed novelties, locally made furniture, and old-fashioned candy.

Clients come from all over the world to shop on Route 66, with Alley Katz as a fun destination on the route. Come in, browse the vendors, and if it happens to be Saturday, enjoy fresh popcorn, too. You will be surprised at what's in store!

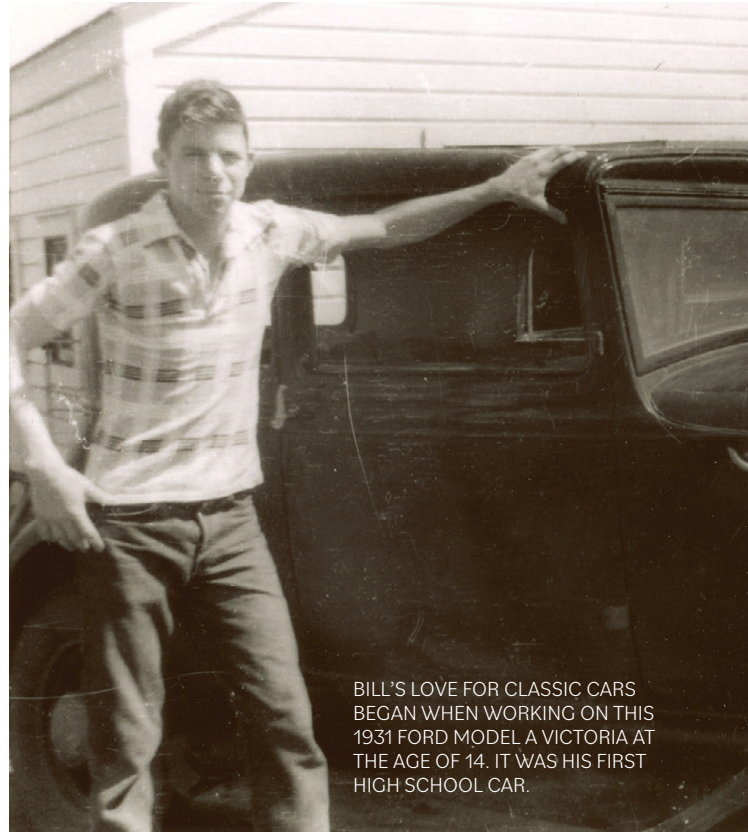
2807 SW SIXTH AVE.
806.342.5432
SHOPALLEYKATZ.COM



TEXAS ROUTE 66 FESTIVAL



BILL AND LINDA PRATT OPENED HIS PRIVATE CAR COLLECTION TO THE PUBLIC IN 2015.



BILL'S LOVE FOR CLASSIC CARS BEGAN WHEN WORKING ON THIS 1931 FORD MODEL A VICTORIA AT THE AGE OF 14. IT WAS HIS FIRST HIGH SCHOOL CAR.



THE FRONT SHOWROOM FEATURES OLDER MODEL VEHICLES LIKE A 1928 "PADDY WAGON," CARS FROM THROUGHOUT THE 1930S, AND EVEN A FULLY-RESTORED 1945 WILLYS U.S. ARMY JEEP COMPLETE WITH MACHINE GUN!



BILL'S SCCA FORMULA ATLANTIC RACE CAR IS ON DISPLAY WITH A VIDEO FROM HIS VERY SUCCESSFUL RACING DAYS.

Bill's Backyard Classics

Inventor Bill Pratt is known as “The Thomas Edison of the Beef Industry” for his transformative computerized and machinery management systems for which he was awarded 88 U.S. and foreign patents. His name ranks among the great Trailblazers of the West. And he had a passion for classic cars.

Bill's love for classic cars began as a boy of 14 in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, when he bought his first car, an old, beat-up 1931 Ford Model A Victoria. He worked on it for two years in his backyard, making it his first high school car. When he sold his company Micro Beef Technologies in 2011, Bill began collecting cars. But not just any old cars. He found cars with a connection to his and his wife Linda's lives—a 1931 Ford Model A Victoria of his youth; a black '57 Chevy, like the one he was driving when he first saw his future wife, Linda, crossing the street with a bag of groceries; a white '61 Pontiac like he had when they first married (complete with their ironing board between the seats); and Linda's first car, a maroon '67 Chevy. Bill enjoyed surprising Linda with these cars from their shared past. Then, Bill began collecting “pairs” of vehicles, meaning a stock version of a car paired with a street rod version. At 178 cars, Linda finally took the checkbook away from him! Undeterred, he slipped one last purchase under her nose for a total of 179. They opened his collection to the public in 2015.

Today, the museum features more than 100 autos from all over North America in two showrooms. The bulk of the collection centers on cars from the heyday of Route 66, dating from the 1930s to the 1970s. Visitors come into Bill's “backyard,” surrounded by residential yard fencing decorated with smiley faces reminiscent of the backyard where he got his first car running as a teenager. Classic rock ‘n’ roll plays from a 1949 Wurlitzer jukebox. Bill wished for generations of visitors' families to share happy memories evoked by the cars and their eras.

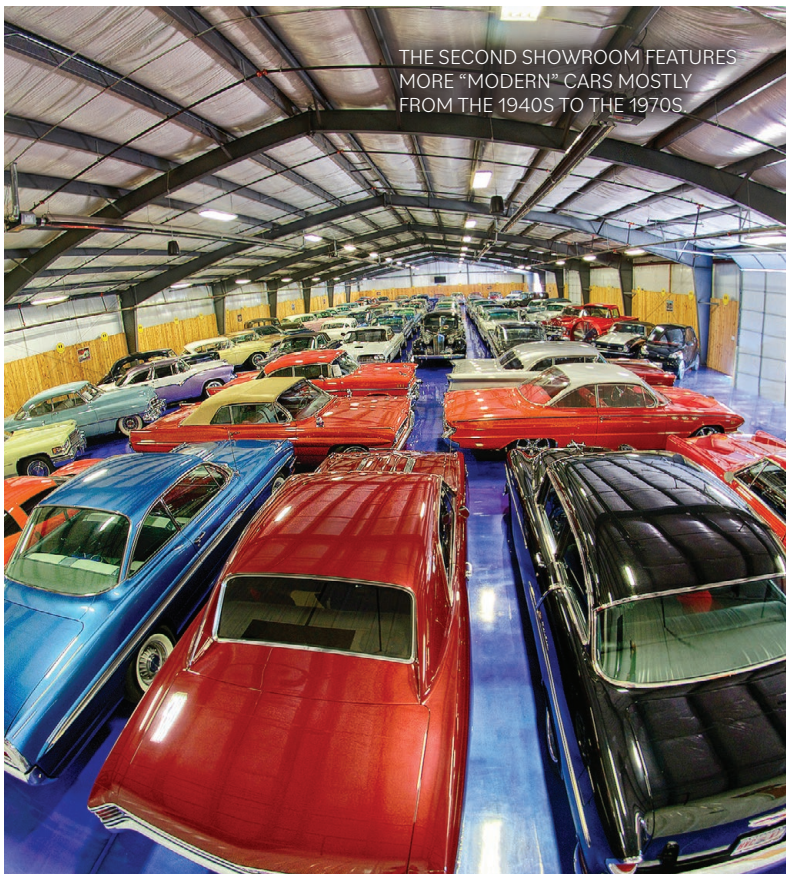
Route 66 is vital to the success of the museum, starting with Bill's memories traveling it from Oklahoma to California as a boy in the 1940s and '50s, to the interests of museum visitors today. Eighty-seven percent of the museum's traffic comes from out-of-towners “doing Route 66,” with 12 percent coming from other countries across six continents. The museum gives travelers a unique kind of Texas experience. It's becoming known as “The Real Cadillac Ranch” and “the best-kept secret in Amarillo.”

Amarillo is a great place not only for a Route 66-oriented classic car museum, but also a great place to live and work. Good people and their kindness and work ethic are at the heart of it. Bill always said, “There's something in the environment here that makes people want to work.” It's Texas, family, roots, the beauty of the plains and canyons, and the people. “It's the people that make the difference.”

5309 S. WASHINGTON ST. | 806.373.8194
BILLSBACKYARDCCLASSICS.COM



AN ORIGINAL LATE 1940S WURLITZER JUKE BOX SPINS OLD-TIME ROCK 'N ROLL AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF THE EXPANSIVE PRATT MEMORIAL MURAL.



THE SECOND SHOWROOM FEATURES MORE “MODERN” CARS MOSTLY FROM THE 1940S TO THE 1970S.



Texas Route 66 Visitor Center

Myer's Drumstick in Amarillo holds a special place in local history. The iconic restaurant, which operated from around 1948 to 1968, was a beloved spot along our famous Route 66. During the heyday of Route 66, Myer's Drumstick famously operated 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, serving travelers who journeyed along this historic roadway. The restaurant had a model train that circled the perimeter of the building, adding charming entertainment for its hungry crowd. While Myer's Drumstick is no longer in operation, its legacy lives on as part of Amarillo's rich history.

In this historic building, we opened our doors in 2019 as the Texas Route 66 Visitor Center. Visitors can expect a flood of wistful memories when they visit the Texas Route 66 Visitor Center, including nostalgia associated with Myer's Drumstick. Fifty-six years later, the Texas Route 66 Visitor Center takes its evocative place in the excitement, thrill and challenge of the American road trip!

Originally, our building had been envisioned to be an art gallery. It wasn't until a friend pointed out that the location was directly on historical Route 66 that the theme of the gallery began to change, as local artists started bringing their Route 66 creations to sell. Hundreds of Route 66 and Texas souvenirs now fill the space. Many items of Amarillo and Route 66 memorabilia were donated to the Visitor Center or inherited from long-time supporters for viewing and safekeeping.

According to our guest book, the Texas Route 66 Visitor Center has been visited by tourists from 46 different states and 18 countries from around the world.

The future is bright for the Texas Route 66 Visitor Center as we continue to expand our backyard experience and the celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of Route 66. We invite our community to come and celebrate with us!

If you're ever in the area, consider visiting the Texas Route 66 Visitor Center to learn more about this iconic establishment and explore other fascinating aspects of Route 66.

May your road be ever winding, and your stories forever told.

1900 SIXTH AVE.
806.310.9503
TXRT66VISITORCENTER.COM

Craft Beer in the Heart of the Route 66 Historic District

Locally brewed craft beer has built a big following in Amarillo, and now Old Tascosa Brewing Company is bringing it to one of the city's most popular destinations: Historic Route 66 along Sixth Avenue. The Old Tascosa Brewing Company is named for Tascosa, Texas—one of the oldest settlements in the Texas Panhandle and a ghost town on the property of Cal Farley's Boys Ranch near the Canadian River. Their building is a restored historic grocery store, Holly's Market, opened in 1948. They carry on the tradition of the Holly's deli counter: They serve loaded, made-to-order fresh sandwiches along with their beers, hard seltzers and many other drink options.

"The Old Tascosa name is steeped in local history and we aim to carry on the West Texas spirit with it," says Matt Welch, company president and brew master. "We have a back-to-basics mentality. We focus on non-gimmicky, professionally made lagers and ales for our flagship brand that have a wide appeal for both the adventurous craft beer enthusiast and the Bud-in-the-bottle stalwart. We're for everyone."

Welch co-owns the brewery with his wife Amy and his brewing partner Larry Mobley, along with several investors who are active-duty officers and veterans of the U.S. Air Force. Welch served in the Air Force as a meteorologist, and then worked as a brewing supervisor at Anheuser-Busch InBev, which owns global brands including Budweiser, Corona and Stella Artois. "My first batch of beer was actually in a thousand-barrel brewhouse, so that's a bit of an opposite track from what most crafters take," Welch says. "I learned the ins and outs of brewing from some of the best brew masters in the industry. We're fortunate to have that experience, and we're proud to bring that expertise to our own facility."

The brewery is earning rave reviews for its beers, from juicy IPAs to Belgian wits to English reds, and barrel-aged porters. The best-seller is their signature Honey Blonde ale, while "Honey" has become the cowgirl mascot who graces the retro-style lighted sign, brought to life with the help of a city grant. Live music, trivia and karaoke are common in the evenings, while art events and craft vendor fairs take place every season. They are committed to providing a family-friendly atmosphere where, Welch says, "everyone feels welcome and at home."

Old Tascosa takes seriously its collaborations with the city and other community partners, participating in many Route 66-related events, especially this year's Texas Route 66 Festival Centennial Celebration in June. They love being ambassadors for the many travelers who pass through town, and they embrace their role as a welcome center with open arms. "Our staff loves working with locals and out-of-towners. We take pride in serving as a place for people to gather," Welch says. In fact, the facility has the capacity to host events up to 140 guests for birthdays, reunions and celebrations of any kind.

Apart from the beer itself, Welch adds that the brewery's Route 66 location will always be one of its major draws. "Some might say Amarillo's in the middle of nowhere, but really, we're in the middle of everywhere. We're situated right along I-40. Millions of people travel to our area, many of them along Route 66, looking for local craft beer to try," he says. "Amarillo is growing fast, which is why we are so excited to have opened our doors on historic Sixth Street."

Tascosa is a name attached to Amarillo history, and this Route 66 brewery intends to provide hospitality and products that do justice to that Western mindset and culture. "We want to be the beer that's synonymous with this area," Welch says.

Old Tascosa Brewing Company

3100 SW SIXTH AVE. | 806.681.4050
OTBREWCO.COM





10 DAYS. DOZENS OF EVENTS. ONE LEGENDARY HIGHWAY.

Spanning multiple towns and communities along the Texas stretch of Route 66, the festival brings together people, places and stories that define the spirit of the open road. From car shows and cattle towns to pop-up shops, outdoor concerts, art walks and vintage roadside attractions, this is a road trip brought to life.

Visit these Texas Panhandle businesses to experience small-town hospitality, the best shopping around, homestyle food, craft brews, vintage cars, and a slice of Texas history along Route 66.



OPJ
Furniture
and Antiques
3215 Sixth Ave.
806.881.1121
@opjantiques


*Rustic and vintage
furniture and antiques
in the heart of Route 66*



★ 1926-2026 ★
ROUTE 66 CENTENNIAL

THE JERICO GAP
ROUTE 66
TEXAS

LEGENDARY MUD OF 66 www.thejerichogap.com



806.351.1331
3211 SW Sixth Ave.
portraits-by-tracy.com



*Capturing
memories for
more than
35 years!*



MAMA JO'S
pies & sweets

922 E. Main Street • Vega, Texas 79092
806.967.7437
MamaJosPies.com



Explore

OLDHAM COUNTY, TEXAS

Oldham County, rich in the history of Route 66 and Old Tascosa, is located 20 miles west of Amarillo. Large herds of cattle, miles of crops, wide open ranch and prairie land, cowboys, oil, wind energy, and genuine people. Home to the small towns of Adrian, Boys Ranch, Vega, and Wildorado, the stars really do shine brighter here! Come see for yourself and while you're here visit our many area attractions, eat at one of our home-grown restaurants, shop our specialty stores, and make plans to attend one of our annual events.

*Small Towns,
Big Stops!*



☎ 806-267-2828

🌐 oldhamcofc.org

Located at the geographical middle of Route 66
**WHERE EAST MEETS WEST
 AND THE PIE IS THE BEST**

305 HISTORIC ROUTE 66 in Adrian
806.536.6379

MILBURN-PRICE CULTURE MUSEUM

- Exhibits, relics and Route 66 artifacts
- Working 19th-century printing machine
- Hands-on activities
- Climb the Ankylosaurus!

COME SEE US! • 1005 COKE ST., VEGA, TEXAS

CELEBRATE 50 YEARS OF DISCOVERIES

Special exhibits for DHDC's
YEAR OF THE DINOSAURS

Become a
 member to
 save on
 discoveries.



Dinosaurs Around the World



May to Sept. '26

Ice Dinosaurs



Sept. to Jan. '27

SPECIAL EVENTS:

DiscoveryCenterCollective.org/events

SCAN TO LEARN
 MORE ABOUT
 DHDC'S 50TH
 YEAR EVENTS



PINK
 FLOYD
 LASER
 SHOW

EVERY 3RD
Sat.

DISCOVER!
 5.0

SEPT
5th

*Mad
 Scientist Ball
 2026*

OCT
24th

SKIP THE SUMMER SLIDE

No more learning loss with our camps!

WEEK 1



SPY LAB

WEEK 2



**MAKE IT &
 BREAK IT**

WEEK 3



**TO THE
 MOON**

WEEK 4



**BUGGIN'
 OUT**

WEEK 5



**DINOS OF
 THE DEEP**

WEEK 6



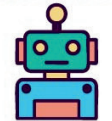
**SCALES, TAILS,
 & FEATHERS**

WEEK 7



**DINO
 MANIA**

WEEK 8



**CYBER
 ACADEMY**

WEEK 9



**INTO THE
 WILD**

TO BE FOLLOWED BY **SUMMER FUN DAYS** IN AUGUST!
 PLUS Wildcat Wednesdays every week through September 16th!



PHOTOS AND INFORMATION COURTESY OF VISIT AMARILLO



SUMMER FUN IN AMARILLO

Summer in Amarillo and Canyon offers plenty of ways to fill a calendar, whether you're looking for big-ticket entertainment or simple ways to get outside. With plenty of sunshine and cool summer nights, the season regularly provides a mix of culture, sports, outdoor adventure and family-friendly fun that makes it easy to stay busy all summer long.



HUNDREDS OF VENDORS PARTICIPATE IN AMA-CON EACH YEAR, MANY TRAVELING FROM FAR AWAY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE AMARILLO PUBLIC LIBRARY'S UNIQUE CON.



SUMMER READING CLUB PARTICIPANTS LEARN ABOUT TEXAS BUTTERFLIES AND MOTHS DURING AN SRC PROGRAM LAST SUMMER.



OFFERINGS IN THE APL LIBRARY OF THINGS INCLUDE A KARAOKE MACHINE, TOOL KIT, CAKE PANS, CROQUET SET AND MORE.

Summer at the Library

The Amarillo Public Library is always a busy place, but the activity dials up in summer.

APL Library of Things

APL cardholders have a new resource this summer because the library has just launched a new initiative, the Library of Things.

Director of Library Services Amanda Barrera says the library of things movement is a growing trend in libraries in many countries. "Libraries in the U.S. that offer a library of things have found it to be a useful service for their patrons, because people are able to borrow something they need to use but don't necessarily need to own. That can include items like a lawn aerator that is bulky to store, or a karaoke machine that is only needed for a brief time."

The LoT was largely funded through donations to Friends of APL during the Amarillo Area Foundation's 2025 Panhandle Gives campaign. "The Friends wanted to support the project and thought that donors would enjoy seeing exactly how their donations were being used," says Barrera. "We are grateful to the Friends, the Library Advisory Board, Panhandle Gives donors, and City of Amarillo leadership for helping make the APL Library of Things a reality."

Summer Reading Club

Amarillo Public Library has offered a Summer Reading Club to patrons for eight decades, offering fun, free activities for all ages and encouraging people to develop a habit of daily reading. APL Youth Services Coordinator Melody Boren says that regular reading is important at all ages but can make an enormous difference for students. "The 'summer slide' is real. There is evidence that shows some students returning to school in the fall do not pick up where they left off and could lose ground across all measures. But the research is clear that library summer reading programs can prevent summer learning loss and even help kids make significant academic gains."

SRC is open to all ages—the library likes to say that you've never too young (there's a Rubber Ducky Club for pre-readers) or too old to sign up for summer reading.

The theme for this year's SRC is *Unearth a Story*, so the Library plans to offer activities for all ages with a focus on archeology, paleontology, and storytelling. Sign-up starts on June 1, when participants receive a complete calendar of events, along with a



IT'S ALWAYS FUN TO CATCH SIGHT OF APL'S MASCOT, FABLE, THE LIBRARY DRAGON.



EAST BRANCH PATRONS ENJOY A KANGAROO-THEMED LIBRARY AT THE EAST BRANCH LIBRARY.



PARTICIPANTS IN THE ANIME CONTEST SHOW OFF THEIR COSPLAY AT AMA-CON 2025. THE VARIETY OF COSPLAY OPPORTUNITIES IS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT SETS AMA-CON APART FROM OTHER CONS.

reading log for marking every day with at least 15 minutes spent reading. Kids who read at least 30 days from June through July can earn a brand-new book as a prize, while adults can earn a voucher for a free bag of books at the Friends of the Amarillo Public Library Book Sale.

AMA-CON

The library likes to call Amarillo's original pop culture convention, AMA-CON, a celebration of everything that is geeky and awesome. The Con raises money for Friends of the Amarillo Public Library, but it also provides a low-cost, family-friendly activity for the community.

Assistant Director of Library Services (and Cosplay Coordinator) Shaun McDonald says AMA-CON allows families to enjoy a whole weekend of comics, anime, sci-fi and gaming for about the cost of a movie ticket. "Admission to AMA-CON is \$10 for two days and \$8 for one day, with kids 6 and under getting in free, but the low cost of admission doesn't mean it's a small con. We take over four giant exhibit halls in the Amarillo Civic Center with authors, artists, vendors, gamers, activities, and more."

AMA-CON 2026 takes place Aug. 1 and 2 at the Amarillo Civic Center. More information is available at libraryamacon.org.



PATRONS OF ALL AGES TAKE PART IN AN SRC PAINTING PROGRAM AT THE DOWNTOWN LIBRARY.



ROADSIDE/OUTDOOR ART

Amarillo's air-conditioned art galleries aren't the only places to see color and creativity.

Cadillac Ranch

Just west of town on I-40, 10 Cadillacs stand nose down in the earth, their bright layers of paint telling decades of traveler stories. Open year-round and free to visit, this popular destination represents an ever-changing canvas. Feel free to grab a spray can and add your own color to Amarillo's most iconic landmark.

Slug Bug Ranch

On Amarillo's east side, in front of the Big Texan RV Ranch, this playful roadside art stop is inspired by the Cadillacs a few miles west. It features half-buried Volkswagen Beetles and limousines ready for a fresh coat of spray paint.

Ozymandias

"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone," Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote in the early 1800s. He probably wasn't referring to these legs rising from the prairie east of town, but he definitely inspired this mysterious modern-day monument.

Floating Mesa

On the western horizon as you travel Tascosa Road past Bishop Hills, a painted white fence gives the illusion of a mesa hovering above the plains. It's part optical wonder, part land art, and all Amarillo.

Local Murals

Amarillo's mural renaissance over the past decade has turned city walls into colorful canvases, reflecting everything from Route 66 spirit to local pride. While you can spot them all over town, the highest concentration is downtown, where visitors can explore them easily on foot.

LITTLE BEE'S PLAYHOUSE

THE EASIEST BIRTHDAY PARTY YOU'LL ever THROW

AMARILLO'S ORIGINAL KIDS PLAY & PARTY VENUE
@LITTLEBEEPLAYHOUSE.COM



PERFORMING/ VISUAL ARTS

Amarillo's vibrant performing arts organizations regularly surprise newcomers and visitors alike.

Amarillo Museum of Art

Located on the Amarillo College campus, this free museum showcases regional, national and international works—from modern pieces to timeless collections.

Arts in the Sunset

Once a hidden gem, now a vibrant arts village where visitors can browse galleries, meet artists, and catch a West Texas sunset framed by creative energy. During the summer, check out the Saturday-morning Sunset Markettown.

Hoof Prints of the American Quarter Horse

A citywide sculpture trail celebrating the American Quarter Horse, these colorful equine statues connect art, heritage and the spirit of the West.

TEXAS Outdoor Musical

Set against the backdrop of Palo Duro Canyon, this legendary summer performance tells the story of Texas pioneers through song, dance and a sky full of stars.

**WHERE
"AWAY FROM IT ALL"
ISN'T OUT OF THE WAY**

**SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS SUMMER AT:
SADMONKEY.COM/EVENTS**

LIVE MUSIC

When the lights go down, Amarillo comes alive with music, cold drinks and good company.

Downtown

- **Butler’s Martini Bar:** An upscale lounge pairing craft cocktails with intimate live performances in a relaxed downtown setting.
- **The Barfield Patio Vista:** A stylish rooftop bar where the city skyline meets craft cocktails and acoustic guitar sets under the stars.
- **Crush Wine Bar & Grill:** fixture of fine dining downtown, Crush offers a rooftop bar, which overlooks a busy Polk Street and hosts live music.
- **Six Car Pub & Brewery:** This Polk Street restaurant is known for its amazing outdoor patio, which is pet-friendly and the perfect place to enjoy live music.

Route 66

- **GoldenLight Cantina:** One of Texas’ oldest music venues, where local legends and touring acts keep Amarillo’s original stage alive.
- **Smokey Joe’s:** A Route 66 favorite for cold drinks, casual bites and live music under the patio lights.
- **The 806 Coffee + Lounge:** A chill Route 66 staple serving coffee, cocktails and live music—with local comedy nights, walls full of art and a creative clientele.
- **Handle Bar & Grill:** A casual local hangout on Route 66 hosting live bands and acoustic sets through the weekend.

West Amarillo

- **Hoots Pub:** A longtime Amarillo favorite where Red Dirt bands, rock acts and road-tested musicians bring big sound to the west side.
- **The Atomic Yellow:** At Arts in the Sunset, a music series dedicated to live hardcore music.

East Amarillo

- **The Western Horseman Club:** Amarillo’s go-to spot for two-stepping and country music that plays late into the night.

South Amarillo

- **Whiskey River:** A honky tonk favorite where cold beer and live country draw a loyal local crowd.

Beyond Amarillo (but still close)

- **Shark Beach:** The “beach” part is literal. Expect great burgers, near nightly summer concerts, and a whole lot of sand.
- **The Lumberyard:** A lively outdoor venue blending honky tonk charm with modern Western energy, perfect for dancing under the stars.



BRICKS & MINIFIGS
AMARILLO, TX

SCHOOL'S OUT AND YOUR KIDS ARE ALREADY BORED?

- COME SEE US IN CORONADO SHOPPING CENTER TO BROWSE OUR VAST COLLECTION OF NEW AND USED LEGO® SETS AND MINIFIGURES.
- THIS SUMMER, WE WILL BE OFFERING KIDS' CLASSES IN CONJUNCTION WITH SNAPOLGY.

AMARILLO'S PREMIER LEGO® RESALE STORE

2626 SW 34TH AVE. | 806.437.1355
BRICKSANDMINIFIGS.COM



OUR LINKTREE



SHINING A LIGHT ON WHO JESUS REALLY IS

ILLUMINATION STATION JOHN 8:12

VBS AT FBC

JUNE 8-12 | 9 A.M. TO NOON

4 YEAR OLDS - 6TH GRADE
REGISTER TODAY!



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
Amarillo

PLEASE VISIT:
FIRSTAMARILLO.ORG/VBS

OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

Get outside and enjoy the wide-open beauty, rugged landscapes and big Panhandle sky.

Alibates Flint Quarries National Monument

Discover ancient quarries once used by early hunters on the High Plains.

Amarillo Botanical Gardens

Wander through colorful gardens and seasonal displays in the heart of the city.

Cowgirls & Cowboys in the West

Ride horseback along the rim of Palo Duro Canyon with sweeping views of the plains.

Lake Meredith National Recreation Area

Enjoy boating, fishing and camping surrounded by open skies and calm waters.

Merus Adventure Park

Tackle rugged terrain with off-road trails, camping and unmatched canyon views.

Palo Duro Canyon State Park

Hike, bike or drive through the second-largest canyon in the country. Hike the iconic Lighthouse Trail or challenge yourself on the rugged Rock Garden Trail. (A word

of caution: Always pay attention to temperatures and bring more water than you think you'll need.) Refuel at the Trading Post on the Canyon floor or visit the Sad Monkey Mercantile nearby on the way home.

Rock Island Trail

Walk or bike a scenic urban trail that connects key points across Amarillo.

Wildcat Bluff Nature Center

Explore native trails and wildlife just minutes from downtown.

NIGHT AT PPHM WITH A GLOW

A family-friendly evening full of glowing fun and hands-on discovery on the PPHM lawn!

Friday, June 12
8:00 – 11:00pm

PPHM East Lawn
Tickets \$5
PPHM Members Free
Weather Permitting

Glow art, face painting, games, dig box, glow-in-the-dark geology experience, T-Rex skull, and food trucks!

PPHM
PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM



FAMILY FUN

Amarillo is full of indoor and outdoor adventures alike.

Outdoor

- **Wonderland Amusement Park:** Now under new ownership, this beloved park features iconic rides, coasters and midway games that keep kids smiling from open to close.
- **Parks & Splash Pads:** Amarillo's parks are made for family time. Thompson Park offers creeks, trails and open green space—perfect for nature walks, bridge hopping and feeding the ducks that gather along Roger's Creek. Medi Park features a 1.6-mile trail circling two lakes with ducks, geese and a splash pad beside the Discovery Center. Memorial Park, City View and Westover Village Park are among the city's 15 free splash pads that stay open through late summer.
- **Thompson Park Pool:** Cool off at this public outdoor pool surrounded by shady trees and grassy lounging areas—a summer favorite for all ages.
- **Creek House Honey Farm:** Just south in Canyon, enjoy honey tastings, a peek at working hives, and locally made skincare and sweets.
- **Amarillo MotorSports Park:** Open for rental karts, pro racing, events and more, this 0.9-mile professional go-kart track is a precise, smaller-scale replica of Istanbul's iconic F1 circuit.
- **Putter & Pints:** Newly opened in southwest Amarillo, Putter & Pint caters to kids and adults alike. Play a round of mini-golf, hit the batting cages or race on the go-kart track. Refuel with pizza and something from the full bar.

Indoor

- **Don Harrington Discovery Center:** A hands-on science and creativity hub for kids of all ages. Indoor and outdoor exhibits, live experiments and dome theater shows make learning unforgettable.
- **Amarillo Museum of Art:** Led by AMoA's teaching artists, the Museum's popular summer programs teach kids how to look at, talk about and create art. Young artists explore drawing, painting, mixed media, clay, sculpture,

- printmaking and design as they visit the galleries to gather inspiration from exhibited artworks.
- **Amarillo Public Libraries:** Free and open to all. Toddlers can play with toys, puzzles and pretend food while older kids join storytimes and themed activities.
- **Warford Activity Center:** A year-round indoor pool on Amarillo's north side. Non-members can join in with a Punch & Play pass—three visits for \$10.
- **Little Bees Playhouse:** A bright, cheerful play area for kids 10 and younger—safe, clean and full of energy for rainy or windy days.
- **Snapology:** LEGO-based learning meets creative play. Drop in for open play or register for themed classes and camps.
- **Bricks & Minifigs:** At this Amarillo shop, browse Lego sets and minifigurines or take part in summer kids' classes.
- **Amp'd Adventure Park & Urban Air:** Amp'd features a massive ninja course and toddler-only hours on Wednesdays, while Urban Air adds zip lines, climbing walls and open-air play zones.
- **Skate Plex Amarillo:** Lights, music and a little nostalgia make this roller rink a classic for family nights and birthday parties.
- **Western Bowl:** Bowling, laser tag and arcade games in a retro setting that's fun for all ages. Bowl by the game or by the hour.
- **Amarillo Ice Ranch:** Take a spin at public skating or catch a local hockey game. Skate rentals and training chairs make it easy for beginners to join the fun.
- **Cinergy Entertainment:** Movies, arcade games, laser tag, virtual reality, bowling and escape rooms—all under one roof.
- **GameQuest:** A gamer's paradise with modern and retro consoles, tournaments and multiplayer fun for older kids and parents alike.
- **Fish Pros:** Explore giant aquariums, feed koi fish and meet colorful tropical birds.

DISTRICTS & HISTORY

Amarillo's story lives in its streets, architecture and creative spaces.

Route 66 Historic District

Antique shops, local cafes and vintage architecture keep the spirit of the Mother Road alive along Sixth Avenue.

The Barrio

One of the city's oldest neighborhoods, this historic area east of downtown is in the middle of a multi-year revitalization.

Amarillo Cultural District

The Cultural District ties together the city's historic downtown and vibrant arts community. Polk Street glows

under string lights as locals fill patios and restaurants. Nearby Hodgetown, home of the Sod Poodles, brings the roar of the crowd to the heart of the city. Anchored by Arts in the Sunset and the Amarillo Museum of Art, this district is where history, creativity and community meet.

Bivins, Wolflin & Plemons-Eakle

See some of the city's oldest and largest homes under the canopy of tree-lined brick streets of these historic neighborhoods.

WESTERN EVENTS

The Western heritage of Amarillo's past comes alive all year through rodeos and ranch traditions.

Coors Ranch Rodeo

June 4-6, 2026 (Amarillo National Center)

This rodeo event features real working cowboys from historic ranches in Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico. They compete in events that mimic actual daily ranch work, such as stray gathering and team branding. The rodeo kicks off with a massive Route 66 Cattle Drive & Parade on June 4. Watch longhorn cattle walk through downtown Amarillo.

Texas 66 Fast Draw Championships

June 5-7, 2026 (Rex Baxter Building, Tri-State Fairgrounds)

Part of the larger Route 66 Festival, this unique "Wild West"-style speed competition combines high-tech timers with shooters using single-action .45 caliber revolvers (and wax bullets). Who's the fastest draw in the region?

Will Rogers Range Riders Rodeo

July 2-4, 2026 (Will Rogers Range Riders Arena)

One of Amarillo's oldest traditions, this UPRA- and WRCA-sanctioned professional rodeo event also serves as a reunion for local ranching families. It is known for its authentic, grassroots feel and serves as a major fundraiser for the Range Riders Foundation.



THIS SUMMER AT

KIDS CAMPS
Pre-K - 9th Grade

ART WALKS
First Friday of the Month, 5-9 p.m.

SUNSET MARKETOWN
Saturdays 8 a.m. - noon

ARTS IN THE SUNSET

artsinthesunset.org

W

Webb & Company

CHEVROLET | GMC

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

GOT A SUMMER SONG ON REPEAT?

BEILUE AND
PEAVEY IN FRONT
OF PEAVEY'S
FLEETWOOD
DRIVE HOME

BRICKANDELM.COM 84 MAY/JUNE 2026

Angels Among Us

*Hearing God's whisper, Jim Peavey was where he
was meant to be that morning*

BY JON MARK BEILUE

PHOTO BY SHANNON RICHARDSON



s CEO of Alpha Polymers, a manufacturer of spray foam insulation, Jim Peavey's job has him on the road 260 days a year. Those mornings when he is home, he always—*always*—leaves his and wife Carey's home on Fleetwood Drive by 7 a.m. at the latest. Had he done so as usual on the cold morning of Jan. 30, 2026, I would have died right in front of his home.

Even then, as he got into his truck in the driveway at 7:45 a.m. that morning, there was no reason to wait on me. I was on my morning walk and had just crossed Mays Street. I was still 30 to 40 seconds away from Peavey's driveway. He should have easily backed out and taken off for his office on South Washington.

As the group Alabama first sang in 1993, there are angels among us, and Jim Peavey, 55, a man I'd never met, is mine. On what began as just another Friday morning for both of us, Peavey listened to God's whisper and did not ignore His gentle nudge. Because of that, neither one of us will ever be the same.

For the first time in his four years living on Fleetwood Drive, Peavey was still home at 7:45 a.m. Wearing a blue Texas Rangers World Series hoodie and a Kansas City Chiefs stocking cap, I walked toward Peavey's home after having run two blocks just as the sun rose. I had felt great since quadruple bypass heart surgery nearly a year earlier in February 2025.

Until that moment. At a quarter before 8 a.m., steps away from Peavey's truck, I went into electrical arrhythmia. I went down. I was dying. Every second was critical. An empty block of people and traffic at that early hour would have been fatal to me. So there was my angel, sitting in his black Ford F-150 truck at a time he never should have, waiting for me.

"I accept that," Peavey says. "I was there for you that morning. My biggest hurdle in all this is I didn't know why. Sometimes you don't have to know why. A good buddy told me you may never know why. We don't have to have a clear understanding. But when you live a certain way and believe in

certain things, it's easy to accept for me."

It was right at 7 a.m., time to head to the office except Peavey couldn't make himself leave. He couldn't put a finger on why. "The best way to describe it was I was convicted that I didn't need to leave the house," Peavey says.

He finished a cup of coffee, put his coat on and walked to the door—and then turned around and sat back in his chair. Peavey "messed around a little bit," and when he heard his wife, Carey, get up, he made coffee for her.

"It was like I was killing time," he says.

Confused and Convicted

He almost left after that. Then, inexplicably, he took his coat off again and poured another cup. It was nearing 7:45 a.m. and he was late.

"I told someone later I just felt confused, confused and convicted why I could not make myself leave," he says. "As I reflected back, it was odd I felt that way."

Climbing into his truck, which he'd started remotely, Peavey looked two houses north on Fleetwood and saw me walking. He had plenty of time to back out and leave.

"I told myself I'll just let this gentleman pass," Peavey explains, "but I had plenty of time to go. But I didn't back out and go, which is not like me. When I'm ready to go, I go."

Peavey waited but never saw me pass. Another look to his left revealed me lying on his front yard. He thought I might have turned an ankle or tripped, but as he ran to me, it was obviously something much more serious. My arm was drawn up. Peavey knew it was a heart issue. He called 911.

"Look at me, breathe, you gotta breathe," Jim said as he leaned into me.

My breathing was labored and delayed. Peavey says I took three breaths. Some time went by and then there was another long breath.

"It was that real deep exhale and you were not breathing at all after that," he recalls.

Peavey began life-saving chest compressions for three minutes. The seconds seemed like minutes before he heard the sirens. Not knowing what to do but wanting to do something, Carey put a blanket over my legs. In four minutes, an array of paramedics arrived.

These were skilled and determined professionals—about 15 on the scene and eight who worked feverishly to save my life. My pulse went in and out. They worked for an inordinate amount of time. They used a LUCAS chest compression device, a new state-of-the-art machine that was key in bringing me back. Finally, I was put into the ambulance, which left at a normal speed with no siren. A block later, the ambulance lit up

and raced to BSA Health System's ER.

Peavey, shaken and on an adrenaline rush, watched them leave. Later that morning, he ran into a police officer friend at a Toot'n Totum. The friend had heard his 911 call, and told Peavey he sounded calm.

"You think he's going to be OK?" Peavey asked.

"How long did they work on him?" the officer asked.

"Twenty to 25 minutes."

"He probably didn't make it. Protocol is to work on someone for about 20 minutes."

That morning, my wife, Sandy, had left earlier to run errands. She knew I should have been home when she returned a few hours later. Little did she know her husband was a John Doe at the ER with no identification on him.

At the suggestion of a friend, she called the ER, and charge nurse Jess

Weatherly asked her if I had been wearing the clothes she described, including blue running shoes. Sandy confirmed that.

"We have him at Cardiac Intensive Care," Weatherly said. "I want you to remain calm and meet me at the desk. He is alive."

No Longer Moment to Moment

At the ER, Dr. Imene Boumaza, a pulmonary/critical care doctor, directed at least a half-dozen highly skilled, highly trained, highly focused nurses whose expertise kept me alive. It was the third time that morning in three different instances I had been brought back from the brink.

"I want you to understand how critical he is," Boumaza told my wife. "It is moment to moment. He's so critical I cannot leave his bedside."

I was told no one is ever described as "stable" while in ICU, but the next day it was no longer moment to moment. Complicating things, I also had pneumonia caused by aspiration during life-saving CPR.

I was given a paralytic drug. The first time I knew anything happened was 72 hours later when a nurse asked me to squeeze her finger and nod my head at some basic questions. Prior to that, I remembered nothing even a week before my collapse.

"You must have prayed really hard," Boumaza told Sandy.

From the ICU, I went to a regular room. On Feb. 9, Dr. Lane Cox implanted a defibrillator (ICD) above my heart. Physical

therapists, occupational therapists, hospitalists, doctors, and many wonderful nurses all aided in my dismissal three days later for rehab.

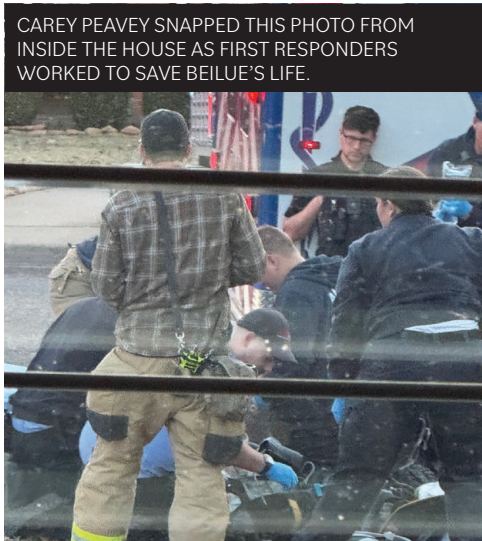
I went home on Feb. 16. That was 18 days after my massive electrical malfunction. I arrived home with the awareness of the many friends, family and strangers praying for me, which is beyond humbling, honoring—and powerful. Each day was built on the next, and by mid-March, I was a healthy miracle. I am blessed beyond measure.

On a lark, we visited the ICU 38 days after my collapse. I hoped to see Dr. Boumaza, though I figured she might be busy with a patient—or not there at all. She was there, and met me in the hallway outside Room No. 9, where I'd been more than a month ago. We had a teary hug.

"You saved my life," I managed to say.

"No," she said. "God saved your life."

"He did," I said, "but He used your hands."



PROVIDED PHOTOS

Good Things

None of this would have mattered, I'm convinced, without Jim Peavey, whose story I became aware of while in the hospital. We hadn't known it, but we attend the same 8:30 a.m. worship service every week at First Baptist Church. Since then, we've had several long conversations.

"Look up Ephesians 2:10," Peavey explains. "That best describes what I think my mission was that day. If you ask me why I was there when I shouldn't have been, that's the best I can come up with."

In the New Living

Translation, that verse says this: "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

We're both trying to process this circumstance. There's a lot to unpack. A lot of questions that may wait a long time for answers—if they come at all.

One thing I don't question is why Jim was there that morning when there was no reason to be, when he never had before. It wasn't randomness, coincidence, luck or fate. For two hours that morning, he was an angel in human form, being shaped and molded by the Lord for such a time as this. 😊

**"We have him at Cardiac Intensive Care.
I want you to remain calm and meet me at the desk. He is alive."**

THE JIM LAUGHLIN

JUNE

JAZZ

S E R I E S



TUESDAYS
7:30 PM 9:00

AMARILLO COLLEGE
WASHINGTON STREET CAMPUS
...OESCHGER FAMILY MALL...

JUNE 2

The Martinis

JUNE 9

Amarillo Jazz Society with
guest artist Drew Zarembo

JUNE 16

Polk Street Jazz

JUNE 23

Esquire Jazz Band

JUNE 30

Jim Laughlin



Amarillo College
Music Department



LEADING *Women*

**SAVE the
DATE**

Brunch with *Brick & Elm*
as we celebrate the area's
women business leaders

June 7

11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Amarillo Botanical Gardens
1400 Streit Drive
\$45 each | \$400 table

**After brunch, join us for
a self-guided nursery/
greenhouse crawl
(1 to 5 p.m.)**

- Nettie's Greenhouse
- Plant Babies
- Windswept Prairie Plants
- Yellow Rose Plants

Guests will enjoy:

- A brunch feast
- An encouraging message from keynote speaker **Shanna Peeples**
- A guided plant activity with the Garden staff

We can't wait to see you at the Gardens!



SCAN FOR TICKETS



LEADING *Women*

Since we published the first Leading Women section in 2022, we've envisioned a broader reach for it. And we're finally ready.

It's been four years, and we've shared the stories of 100 exceptional female business leaders. Each year, their answers inspire and teach us. They encourage us and give us hope.

And we wondered: How can we share this inspiration and encouragement in a more tangible way? If you follow us, then you've noticed our shift to more in-person events lately, in which our readers can meet and talk to the people we feature in our pages. It's been an extraordinary experience connecting with new faces and faithful supporters as we work to connect area people with local businesses, nonprofits, venues and activities. People long for connection, we're grateful the community sees us as the vehicle to provide that connection.

So this year, we're excited to announce our first-ever Leading Women Event (see the facing page for details!). We'll celebrate the accomplishments of the women featured in the following pages, enjoy a relaxing brunch, and hear from keynote speaker Shanna Peeples.

This newly rebranded special section is our largest to date. And we didn't just change the way the pages look. We offered these busy professionals a chance to unwind with a makeover at Mosaic Beauty + Boutique, and then a stress-free photo session with Brittani Preece Photography. Each photo has made me smile.

I encourage you to spend time with this section. Learn from these Leading Women, who share their challenges and the way they've grown from them. I guarantee you'll be uplifted by the stories they share.



Michele



LEADING
Women





Martha Del Toro

Marketing Director

Northwest Texas Healthcare System

What character traits make a good leader? This question is always interesting because I believe these must be in your nature—honesty, integrity, empathy and a genuine interest in building up those who surround you.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? Yes, early in my career I had strong women who showed, through example, how to navigate difficult situations. Most importantly, how to treat everyone you encounter with respect and love, regardless of their role in the organization.

What motivates you? I wake up every morning loving what I do because I know the impact we have on each other. Work is work but being a part of people's lives and finding ways to support them is even better. In health care you see all ages—people experiencing different emotions, from great joy to deep sadness. It puts one's life in perspective very quickly.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? In a workplace full of women, I work to find ways to connect. Initially, it can be professional, but getting to know someone's personal life is a joy. We all like to be asked about our lives, our kids, our aspirations. When I connect I often reach out and say, 'Hey, I was thinking about you and thought this might be of interest to you.' The fact that you remember someone and want to genuinely keep the connection creates a lifelong relationship.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? I moved to another community more than three hours away from home, family and my community for a couple of years. With the support and encouragement of my husband I knew this would be a great career move, and I moved to a city where I knew no one. I discovered that I could find new friends and love another community. I realized we can all find friends no matter where we go. There are so many caring people everywhere.

What has been your greatest challenge? Growing my employees. When you spend so much time with them and know they are on their own journey to build their career, and then you have to say goodbye, it's hard.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I have learned through my mentors and mentoring others that we are here to build each other up. I am a transparent leader; my team knows I am true to my word. I love to work as a team and create opportunities for growth so they feel empowered to take on projects that may seem daunting but, in the end, they learn about their own leadership style.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I want my family and work family to remember me as someone who did my best to have work-life balance, and I was someone who was respected and loved.

NWTHS.COM



LEADING
Women



DR. COURTNEY CARTHEL AND
DR. MANDIE BOOTHE-OLLINGER

Dr. Mandie Boothe-Ollinger Amarillo Dental Works

What character traits make a good leader? A good leader is honest and sticks to strong moral principles, even when it's difficult. People follow leaders they trust. Good leaders take responsibility for their actions and decisions. Instead of blaming others, they own mistakes and fix them. They also have understanding and care about others' perspectives. That is what builds stronger relationships and team loyalty. I do my best to follow this everyday, but I am also still learning.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you?

I have too many to list! I am built from the knowledge, writing and ideas of countless teachers, leaders and thinkers. So in a way, I reflect patterns from many "mentors" rather than just one.

What motivates you? My family, "work family," and my patients.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? Building and keeping strong relationships with other women usually comes down to simply showing up, listening and being present with them. Consistency, trust and genuine connection. It's less about doing something perfect and more about how you show up over time.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Buying a practice. I was terrified! And after that, building a building from the ground up.

What has been your greatest challenge? Maintaining a solid work-life balance and separating the two.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? Struggling with work-life balance has made me more aware of how important it is to take care of both responsibilities and personal well-being. Because of that, my leadership style focuses on understanding, flexibility and support. I try to be mindful of others' workloads and encourage a positive environment where people don't feel burned out. With an office full of women, I always want my team to have the opportunity to attend their kid's events, and be home at a decent hour everyday.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I hope to leave a legacy of simply being a good person who cared for her people fiercely. My legacy in dentistry is defined by compassionate care, excellence and trust. As a female dentist, I also want to help break stereotypes and show that leadership, skill and empathy can go hand in hand. I want to inspire future generations of women to pursue their dreams with confidence and to know that it's OK to be scared along the way, but to keep striving for the end goal. And NEVER stop setting goals for yourself!

7473 PENNSYLVANIA DRIVE, SUITE 100
806.352.8381
AMARILLODENTALWORKS.COM

[SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION]





LEADING
Women



Cori Burns, MBA, CEG

Chief Executive Officer | Certified Executive Coach

Estacar Companies

Kinetic Strategies Inc.

TGC Athletics

What character traits make a good leader? A good leader is grounded in integrity and resilience. They're able to take criticism without becoming defensive and, more importantly, they truly listen—not just to words, but to tone, body language and what's left unsaid. Leadership is about connection. When you can genuinely understand and relate to people, you build trust, and that's what everything else stands on.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? My parents have both influenced me in very different but equally important ways. My mom instilled confidence in me at a young age—she encouraged me to compete, play with the boys and never see gender, level or circumstance as a limitation. She's an exceptional athlete, and she taught me to show up, push myself, and not back down.

My dad, on the other hand, is an incredibly smart and relationship-driven entrepreneur. He taught me that failure isn't something to fear—it's something to learn from. He also showed me that people matter most. Family and relationships always come first, and success doesn't mean much if you don't have those.

As the oldest, I wasn't sheltered, but I also wasn't given anything I didn't earn. That balance shaped me. It created a drive in me to work for what I want, to value relationships, and to keep going even when things are hard.

What motivates you? I'm wired to always want to do more and be better. I'm motivated by creativity—by the ability to build something meaningful and help others accomplish what they couldn't do on their own. There's something powerful about finding ways to do more with less and still create impact. That challenge drives me every day.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? I think support among women is often misunderstood. It's not just about encouragement or surface-level connection, and it's definitely not about over-sharing without accountability. Real support means being willing to be honest, listen without judgment, and

sometimes say the hard things. It also means recognizing that as ambitious women, we can unintentionally get in our own way—cutting others out, competing for the wrong reasons or protecting our space instead of expanding it.

I intentionally build relationships with women who are different from me. That's not always easy, but it's where real growth happens. Because of that, I've built a diverse group of relationships, and one of my strengths is being able to connect people in ways they may not have considered. I've seen those connections turn into meaningful relationships that extend far beyond me.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Asking my husband to leave his long-time railroad job so we could fully commit to building our future through my business. That meant taking on the responsibility of our family's livelihood and bringing him into the company.

What has been your greatest challenge? Leading on my own in a small town like Amarillo has been incredibly challenging. I've spent my career in male-dominated industries, and stepping into leadership—rather than being overlooked or underestimated—has been a constant uphill battle. I'd say the greatest challenge has been managing teams in an environment that often resists change. There's also the weight of being judged by standards that aren't always equitable, and having my decisions misunderstood by people who don't see the full picture.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I've become more selective about who I trust, how I communicate, and how transparent I am. I've also learned to slow down—something that doesn't come naturally to me.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I want my daughters—and anyone who works with me—to feel genuinely cared for and supported. I want my presence to leave people better than they were before. I hope the businesses I've built continue to thrive long after I'm gone. If I can create something that strengthens both individuals and the community, that's the legacy I'm after.

806.676.9960



LEADING
Women



Haley King

Senior Relationship Manager

FirstBank Southwest

What character traits make a good leader? To me, the best leaders are those who serve and those who teach. It's those who put others first, never ask someone else to do something they wouldn't be willing to do themselves, and who pour into the people around them. Good leaders invest time and energy into the growth and success of others.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? I've been fortunate to have been surrounded by strong mentors my entire life, both in and out of the workplace. Of the many things I've been taught, the top three resounding lessons:

- Do the right thing, because it's the right thing
- Do it right the first time
- Family first, always

What motivates you? Opportunities to leave things better than I found them. Whether it's serving customers and helping meet their needs, volunteering in my community, or investing in the growth and success of an individual, I hope to make a lasting impact on those around me.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? With everyone in different stages of life and full calendars, it takes intentional communication. Face time is obviously preferred, but a phone call or a text just to let them know you're thinking about them or passing along an encouraging word goes a long way. "Showing up" doesn't always have to mean in person—I think we all just like to know we're seen, valued and have someone in our corner.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Several years ago, I was asked to take a different role within the same company. It was a role I had never considered, and one I thought would stunt my career growth. After some hesitation, I accepted, trusting that my best interests were in mind.

I learned and grew more in those few years than I had any other, and it opened more opportunities than I would have had if I had played it safe and stayed put. What felt like a risk at the time ended up being one of the best moves in my career.

What has been your greatest challenge? Time management is one of my great struggles. I love to offer help anywhere I can, and sometimes forget the capacity I actually have to be of service. I'm also a bit of a ball hog, and have a hard time delegating. My greatest challenge is pretty self-inflicted, and something I continue to work on.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? While I haven't quite mastered it myself, I try to be mindful of what I'm asking others to do. Considering their existing workload and if they have room for more, and also whether or not they have the tools and know-how needed to do it. I try to find the balance between over-extending capacity, and taking advantage of an opportunity to develop new skills.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I hope to be thought of and remembered as one who really cared. I try to take notice of my surroundings, listen with intent, and do what I can to improve them, no matter how small. A bad day, a life event, a career path—I hope someone will look back and know that my interest was genuine, the action that followed was heartfelt, and a positive impact was the goal.

FBSW.COM



LEADING
Women

Sydnee Venhaus

Marketing Director

Street Toyota

What character traits make a good leader? Great communication, trust, ability to change at any moment, integrity, empathy and the push to help others succeed at their highest level are just a few of the qualities I've seen in the amazing leaders in my life. My hope is to reflect each of these qualities daily.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? My parents have and continue to be the biggest influence in my life. Growing up, it was evident through their example of hard work and drive that you have to work for what you want in life, and that nothing just falls in your lap. If you want it, go out and get it!

What motivates you? The future. I have so much life left to live, so the unknown and limitless possibilities make me excited, nervous and ready for it all.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? Our nature as women is to care and connect over things that are deeper than the surface level. Keeping relationships with women means constantly making it a priority to ask more questions, listen more intently, and be a safe, positive light for any and everyone around you. Be the woman you wish someone was to you!

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Taking on a big and busy position for the largest, most well-known car dealership in Amarillo as my first career move!

What has been your greatest challenge? After graduating college at 20 years old, it was difficult to be taken seriously in interviews with little experience in the eyes of many employers. After being told I wasn't good enough over and over, I finally said that I just wanted someone to give me a chance to show them what I could do. Thankfully, Street Toyota allowed me that opportunity!

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? These challenges taught me to never underestimate anyone based solely on their age or "lack" of experience. Some of the most driven, creative and reliable people are those fresh out of school and ready to get into a career at full speed.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? Making peoples' lives better than before they met me. Whether it be from a kind smile, listening ear, or helping hand.



4500 S. SONCY ROAD
806.355.9846
STREETTOYOTA.COM



LEADING
Women



5500 PLUM CREEK DRIVE
806.242.4908
EDUCATIONCU.COM

[SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION]

Brianna Carrillo

Plum Creek Branch Manager

Education Credit Union

What character traits make a good leader? A great leader leads with integrity and vision. I believe strong leadership is about consistency, accountability and the ability to inspire others to see their own potential. The best leaders don't just manage performance, they build confidence and create environments where individuals feel valued and empowered to grow.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? I've been fortunate to learn from leaders who showed me that leadership is not about titles, it's about impact. They taught me the importance of staying solution focused, maintaining composure under pressure, and always leading with purpose. One of the greatest lessons I learned was that how you make people feel will always outlast any result or metric.

What motivates you? I am deeply motivated by growth, both my own and the growth of the people around me. Watching team members gain confidence, reach goals they once doubted, and step into leadership themselves is incredibly fulfilling. I'm also motivated by creating stability and opportunity for my family and community.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? I believe in collaboration over competition. I make it a priority to uplift other women by sharing knowledge, celebrating their wins, and creating safe spaces for honest conversations. Strong relationships are built on trust, authenticity and mutual respect. When women support each other, we create powerful networks that open doors for future generations.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? One of the biggest risks I've taken was stepping into leadership roles that pushed me far outside of my comfort zone. Choosing growth over fear required courage and belief in my abilities. That risk ultimately shaped my confidence and proved that betting on yourself is often the most rewarding decision you can make.

What has been your greatest challenge? Balancing performance expectations while maintaining personal well-being has been one of my greatest challenges. Leadership comes with responsibility and constant decision-making. Learning to set boundaries, prioritize mental strength and remain grounded has been essential to sustaining my long-term success.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? These experiences have made me a more compassionate and intentional leader. I lead with empathy because I understand the pressures people carry both professionally and personally. My leadership style focuses on clarity, accountability and encouragement, creating a culture where people feel supported but also challenged to grow.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I hope to leave a legacy of empowerment. I want to be remembered as someone who opened doors, developed future leaders and showed women they can lead with both strength and grace. My goal is to build lasting impact not just in business results, but in the confidence and success of the people I've mentored along the way.

Frances Frost

Rev Realty Group

Keller Williams Realty® Amarillo



LEADING
Women



What character traits make a good leader? In this business, leadership isn't just about the numbers, but about the relationships behind them. The best leaders don't just close deals. They build community. Leadership takes strategy, integrity, emotional intelligence and a real commitment to relationships. When you bring all of that together, it's very powerful because it keeps your head in the game, your heart on the people, and your execution dialed in.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? When I moved to Keller Williams after being already established as a successful Realtor®, I began coaching with our current Broker, Adrian Thomas. Under his direction and coaching through the Keller Williams "playbook," I discovered the best strategy for me to not only grow my business, but how to work *in* my business rather than *on* it. He showed me where my business was coming from and how to pinpoint the activities necessary to take my business to the next level.

What motivates you? Negotiating a real estate deal and helping people win in those big life moments matters to me, but so does building a reputation that truly reflects my integrity, skill and who I am. I've always had that internal push to prove that I'm capable, strong and not someone you underestimate. (I'm not just proving it to others, but to myself.) If I'm going to do something, I'm going to do it right.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? I am a "girls' girl" and will always celebrate other women. What you see is what you get. I build trust quickly because I'm open and honest up front about who I am. Other women know they are safe around me because I don't share secrets or entertain gossip. I lift women up, support them any way I can, and genuinely cheer for their wins!

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? I walked away from a 20-year career that offered stability, a steady paycheck and long-term security. My leap into real estate wasn't easy. It meant trading certainty for faith and comfort for growth. But I knew God was leading me in a different direction. I chose to trust, lean into my faith and bet on my own work ethic and determination. Looking back, that decision changed everything. It ultimately led me to a career I'm truly passionate about. It's a constant reminder that the biggest growth comes from the moments that ask the most of you. Trusting God (and yourself) can take you further than fear ever will.

What has been your greatest challenge? Carrying too much myself. I hold onto a lot of responsibility rather than distributing it. I want to oversee every detail of a deal, so I carry the pressure of negotiations, timelines, paperwork and all the expectations that go into successfully closing a transaction. My challenge is finding somebody I can trust to leverage my business.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? These challenges require me to lead from the front rather than delegate from the top. I won't ask somebody to do something that I don't understand myself. Details matter and things need to be done the right way. Mastery helps others respect my judgment and trust my guidance.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I want it to be clear that I didn't just go through the motions. I lived thoughtfully, made decisions

with purpose and stayed true to who I am. More than anything, I want to pass down the principles that have guided me: integrity, kindness, resilience and faith. I've tried to live by those standards even when it wasn't easy.

I hope people remember how I made them feel. That they felt seen, supported and encouraged to be better and do more. If I can be a source of inspiration to my friends, family and people I care about, that's the kind of impact that matters most to me.

806.626.2298
REVREALTY.NET



LEADING
Women



Brooke Alvis

CFO

Plains Land Bank

What character traits make a good leader? Compassion and humility (Colossians 3:12). I believe that being humble is so important in a leader. A leader who admits mistakes and takes ownership earns my respect.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? Every supervisor I have had has been a great mentor and teacher to me. One thing that each of them expressed was that you can fix anything. Sometimes you have to make mistakes to learn from them and correcting those messes brings a wealth of knowledge, and what not to do moving forward.

What motivates you? I love taking on challenges and solving problems to help others. There is something so rewarding about fixing a problem or making a process more efficient to help make someone else's job be less burdensome.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? Building healthy relationships takes honesty and prioritizing time for them. Life can be so busy but if you show up when they need you, it builds a great foundation for friendship.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? I am definitely risk averse and do not love stepping out of my comfort zone, but changing jobs after 13 years was one of the biggest risks I have taken. The role I took had more accountability and responsibility. I am glad I took a risk and trusted in myself.

What has been your greatest challenge? Striving to be a good leader and mentor to others. Being a leader takes intentionality and managing others can be challenging. Ultimately you want them to be as successful as possible. Knowing how to handle hard and difficult situations takes time to work through to provide what's best for the organization and employees.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? With every situation that comes up as a manager, it gives you the ability to try what works again or change it up to see if there is a better outcome. Sometimes, it is taking time for self-reflection on how to be more intentional with your direct reports or department or seek feedback to know how to improve.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? As a Christian, the most important thing I can do on earth is help people know Jesus Christ. I pray that my everyday actions reflect His love and heart.

PLAINSLANDBANK.COM

Caylor Brinkman

The Nourisher

Podcast



LEADING
Women

What character traits make a good leader? Empathy, authenticity and the willingness to sit in discomfort with the people you lead. The best leaders aren't the ones with all the answers. They're the ones who create space for others to feel seen and less alone.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? I've been truly blessed to have some incredible women walk alongside me, both professionally and personally. I honestly can't pick just one. What I can say is that the mentors who have shaped me most weren't the ones who handed me a roadmap. They challenged me, pushed me past my comfort zone, and stepped into the unknown right beside me. That's the kind of leader I want to be for others.

What motivates you? Connection. Knowing that someone else out there feels a little less alone because of a conversation, a story shared, or a moment of honesty. That's what keeps me going. I'm motivated by the women who are quietly carrying something heavy and need to know they're not the only one.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? Women can sense when something is performative, so I've always preferred real conversation over small talk. The relationships that have meant the most to me started over coffee or a long lunch, and we told the truth about where we were. I try to keep showing up honestly in that same way.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Starting over and doing it more than once. Whether it was stepping into a new career, launching a podcast, or walking away from something that no longer served me, starting over is always the scariest thing. And every single time, it's also been the most rewarding. I've learned that the willingness to begin again is one of the most courageous things a person can do.

What has been your greatest challenge? Putting myself out there for the whole world to see and hear. I've never been someone who wore her opinions or life experiences on her sleeve, so stepping into podcasting was a real leap of faith. The hardest part was convincing myself that the women who needed to hear it would be louder than the fear. Spoiler alert: They were!

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I lead with empathy because I know what it feels like to be scared and uncertain. I try not to pretend I have it all figured out, because the women I admire most never did either, but they just kept going anyway. Vulnerability isn't weakness. It's actually the whole point.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I want to be remembered for making people feel less alone. If the women who crossed my path through a conversation, a podcast episode, or a friendship walked away feeling more seen, connected and confident, then I did something right.



[THENOURISHERPOD.COM](http://thenourisherpod.com)

[SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION]



LEADING
Women



Mayra Noguez Reign Homes

What character traits make a good leader?

A good leader must lead with empathy and consistency while making decisions with confidence. Most importantly, leadership requires humility—being willing to learn, adapt and admit when you don't have all the answers.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you?

What did they teach you? Yes, I have been fortunate to have mentors I look up to. They taught me the importance of resilience, staying grounded under pressure, and treating people with respect regardless of the situation.

What motivates you? I am motivated by growth. Seeing an idea come to life and building something meaningful keeps me going. But my family is what truly drives me every day.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? I make a conscious effort to show up, check in and invest in their success. Trust is built over time through honesty and being present when it matters most.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken?

Entering the male-dominated construction industry. It required immense faith and courage. While it was uncomfortable and challenging, I felt a strong need to prove what I could accomplish.

What has been your greatest challenge?

Balancing many different roles requires a significant amount of discipline.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style?

These challenges have taught me to be more understanding, recognizing that everyone is carrying their own burdens. I've also learned to prioritize what truly matters and to lead with both strength and compassion.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind?

I want to be remembered as someone who created opportunities for others and led with passion.

806.316.1453

REIGNHOMESLLC.COM

Emily Braun The Hearing Haven

What character traits make a good leader? Clear communication, integrity, emotional intelligence, accountability, vision, and the ability to empower others. A great leader brings out the best in others and can leverage strengths and weaknesses in team members effectively.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? During my junior year of college I had a lot on my plate. I was taking 22 hours and working 20 hours a week all while taking care of horses and being on the rodeo team. I felt like I wanted to give up. I talked to my ag advisor and he helped me through a few really tough years. I ended up graduating a year early because he was there to tell me that I could do it and to not give up. I've carried that with me to this day.

What motivates you? This world needs more love in it! I try to show up and be my best for others everyday. I do this because I love it. If I don't show up today, I miss out on connecting and giving people part of their lives back. That is what keeps me going.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? I've always loved traveling and getting to know someone new. You never know how someone else's perspective and wisdom can positively influence your life. I've had some of the most wonderful conversations with strangers because I chose to say hello and start a conversation. I believe we have something to learn from everyone if we keep an open mind, and be friendly and kind to one another.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Starting a new business from scratch with no database or financial support. Just dreams and a hard work ethic! I'm proud to say it's been two years helping people hear the world. We are looking forward to many more years.

What has been your greatest challenge? Overcoming negative thinking, doubts and worrying about other people's opinion of me. Those little bad habits need fixing. Motivation, discipline, the will to keep going when it's hard—these are things I work on everyday.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I am more understanding and less quick to judge. I have also learned to make sure expectations are clear and stand firm in making decisions with integrity.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I hope to leave a legacy that continues to give back to others for generations. I want to be remembered for how much I loved, helped and how I treated people. The Hearing Haven is more than just a hearing loss treatment center. It is a place patients feel safe, loved, valued, seen and heard not just today, but everyday.

1901 MEDI PARK DRIVE, BUILDING D,
SUITE 2060
806.726.7813 | HEARHAVEN.COM



LEADING
Women





LEADING
Women



Karie Mueller

Downtown Athletic Club

What character traits make a good leader? A good leader acts with integrity and ethics, holding themselves accountable. A good leader has a clear vision and strategy to work toward accomplishing goals. It takes resilience, adaptability and remaining positive in stressful situations. It's important to have the skills and mindset to work through bad times and become stronger for it.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? I am fortunate to have had two people that influenced me in my fitness leadership career. Tony Rea, longtime successful owner of Gold's Gym, taught me the skills to be a good leader and how to manage through a thorough thought process. Suzi McKee taught me how to believe in myself and use my abundance of energy to grow and create. I admire them both so much.

What motivates you? Competition motivates me, whether it's on a mountain bike or the competitive health club/gym market in Amarillo. It encourages me to think out of the box to create new programming and ideas for our members, and attract new members.

How do you build relationships with other women? Resist the urge to gossip. Don't rush to pass judgment about anything. Let others live their life freely and admire their individuality. Try to always be encouraging and complimentary. Be excited when great things happen to a friend and support her unconditionally.

What is the biggest risk you have ever taken? Applying to the Texas Mountain Bike Racing Association to host a Texas Cup race in the Texas Panhandle. In doing so, I became one of the few female mountain bike race promoters. I took on the task to bring the race to Palo Duro Canyon and the surrounding area. That accomplishment led to a 20-year career of promoting bike races, running events, lifting competitions, triathlons and body-building shows.

What has been your greatest challenge? Joining the Downtown Athletic Club as the general manager in a saturated market of fitness centers. Believing in the gym, the staff and wonderful owners helped accomplish a magnificent place.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I have learned to be more patient, understanding, resilient, diligent and empathetic. It's important as a leader to have the capability to pivot, change direction and make it rock!

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? That anything is possible once you decide to work hard, be diligent, set a goal and cross the finish line. Most importantly, don't let anyone tell you that you can't!

320 S. POLK ST., SUITE 350
806.354.5204 | DA CLUB.COM

Nicole McWatters

Advisor

Upshaw Insurance



LEADING
Women



What character traits make a good leader? It sounds simple, but caring is one of the best traits for a leader to have. Wanting others to thrive guides my work, not only with clients, but with my teammates as well.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? My mother, Charla Rose, paved the way for me. For many years, she was the only woman in her role. She gave me the opportunity to work for Upshaw, and without her support and guidance, I would not have the career I do today. Through example, she has shown the impact of hard work and not to accept the status quo. She taught me persistence and tenacity. That persistence has helped in all areas of my life. I am forever grateful for her belief in me.

What motivates you? My family and, specifically, my daughter. I want her to know that women can do anything.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? Caring is the best foundation for my relationships with other women. There's a profound, often unspoken bond that comes from a shared understanding of what's expected at home or the office. A natural camaraderie forms, along with a responsibility to check in, listen and offer support. We lean on one another for advice and help when we need it.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Moving from an account manager into a consulting role. I didn't know if I could succeed. To start, I set small goals and gradually grew them over time, then suddenly it wasn't as overwhelming.

What has been your greatest challenge? The balance between family and work life. I never want anyone to feel they aren't a priority. Having a fantastic team to rely on when I am enjoying family time means I can be confident work is handled in my absence. Alternatively, when I have meetings or work priorities, my supportive husband and family make sure our home life isn't disrupted. It really does take a village, and I have been blessed with an amazing one.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I hold people to the same accountability as I hold myself. I can't do my job without my teammates, so we have a collaborative culture where people feel empowered to ask questions and discuss outcomes. No one is penalized for not knowing answers. We learn from one another and that has made for a friendly, relaxed working atmosphere that keeps us accountable.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I focus on having a daily impact on people in my life. I aim to make life easier in a frustrating industry, hopefully being thought of as someone who cared, did things right and helped when needed. For my family, I want to be remembered as someone who loved them fully.

801 S. FILLMORE ST., SUITE 300
806.468.0400
UPSHAW-INSURANCE.COM



LEADING
Women



Ruthie Collins

Black Fig Catering

their event special, that lights something up in me every time. I don't wake up motivated every day, but I show up the best I can. And when those moments hit, I run with them.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women?

Unconditional love and honesty. The women in my life know they're safe with me. There's no competition, no keeping score or any kind of judgment. We support and celebrate one another, and show up however we can in whatever season we're in. I try to be the sort of friend who shows up with kindness, consistency and a little bit of humor. Life is already heavy; our friendships certainly don't need to be.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken?

Leaving my private chef job without a backup plan. It was a beautiful job, and it gave me such incredible experiences I'll always be grateful for, but I was missing my kids' birthdays and time with them in general. That started to feel like a cost I wasn't willing to keep paying. So I walked away without knowing what was next. I had no safety net or clear plan. It felt like I was stepping off a cliff and hoping there would be something there to catch me on the way down. That season stretched me in every way. It forced me to trust myself, get resourceful and keep moving. It taught me that fear and clarity can coexist. I was absolutely terrified, but I also knew that I was making the right decision for my life and family.

What has been your greatest challenge? The inconsistency of this industry. There are seasons where everything is full and flowing, and then there are months where it slows down, but the bills don't. Learning how to navigate that without panicking has been one of my biggest challenges. It's forced me to get creative, plan ahead and trust that the work I've put in will carry me through the quieter months.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? It's definitely made me more grounded and intentional. I don't lead from a place of having it all figured out. I lead from having been through some things. I know what it feels like when everything goes sideways, so I try to be steady for my team even when I'm figuring it out in real time. I've also learned that communication matters more than I used to think, and a little preparation goes a long way.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I want people to remember how they felt. Not just the food itself, but the feeling of being taken care of. If something I made helped their table feel a little more thoughtful, or gave them a moment to slow down and actually enjoy where they were and who they were with, that's what matters most. I hope I've shown other women that there's no one right way to build something beautiful. You don't have to fit into a mold or do it the way anyone else does to be successful. I want my work to feel like me. The recipe is quite simple. All you need is honesty, creativity and care.

What character traits make a good leader? A good leader knows how to stay steady when everything around them isn't. In my world, things move fast, plans change, and something always needs fixing. Being calm, decisive and willing to step in matters more than anything. A good leader also listens. They've got to understand the people they're working with. And, a good leader takes responsibility. That kind of ownership builds trust, and trust is everything.

Have you had a mentor who influenced you? What did they teach you? I've been lucky to learn from many women in my life, especially friends in Amarillo who are building their own businesses. There's something powerful about being surrounded by women who understand the weight of what you're carrying without needing it explained. But my kids have been some of my greatest teachers. They've taught me how to stay present, pivot when I need to, and keep going when things feel uncertain. They're the reason behind all of it.

What motivates you? A good night's sleep helps more than anything. I'm a better cook, business owner, and human when I've rested. But real motivation comes from the people I'm feeding. When someone takes a bite and you can see it land, when a client tells me we made

806.236.0025
BLACKFIGFOOD.COM

Leslie Massey

Agency Owner

Farmers Insurance

What character traits make a good leader? Humility and honesty. As a leader, I am not always right, and I have learned that admitting mistakes and apologizing when I am wrong goes a long way.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? I have several people that I consider mentors. One common theme with all of them is the mantra to focus on the controllables and keep a positive mindset. This is true in any business, but especially in the insurance industry.

What motivates you? I love problem-solving and being there for my clients when they have a claim. Insurance is much more than paperwork. Making and keeping good relationships with my clients is important to me. And helping clients understand coverages so they can make an informed decision is a crucial part of what I do.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? We are all so busy. Being a good friend requires a lot of grace and being intentional and real with one another. I have longtime friends who have stuck with me since college, and every time we're together we seem to pick right back up, no matter how long it's been since we last saw each other.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Becoming a Farmers Insurance Agency owner. We have been in business for 17 years now, and I'm grateful for the support of clients in the Texas Panhandle

What has been your greatest challenge? I continue to learn how to work *on* my business and not in my business day to day. I think that's a common issue with any entrepreneur.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I realized recently that I tend to micromanage. But I know I can't have the level of success I desire by getting in the way of my team. As my business has grown, I continue to strive to grow as a leader and adapt.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I hope people think of me or my business and smile. I genuinely care for my community and the people in it, and I hope that comes across in everything I do.

2700 S. WESTERN ST., SUITE 700
806.352.7388
FARMERSAGENT.COM/MMASSEY



LEADING
Women



Aida Adams

Assistant Vice President Commercial Loan Officer

Amarillo National Bank

What character traits make a good leader? Being a visionary. Someone who leads by example, but is also an effective communicator. Someone who exemplifies respect, trust and competency. A person that leverages and fosters a culture of teamwork, while also empowering and developing individuals in their own roles, balancing empathy and accountability.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? Yes, my mother. She had a humble upbringing. Growing up, she would tell me and my siblings that the biggest inheritance she would leave behind would be raising children of character and integrity, with a strong work ethic, empathy and with an education. She embodied these traits daily, and as a single mother of four, she managed to put her children through college. She is one of the most resilient women I know. She also taught me the importance of faith in God as a moral compass and as a source of gratitude in all circumstances.

What motivates you? Stability, peacefulness, joy, providing for my family, learning, growth and a good challenge.

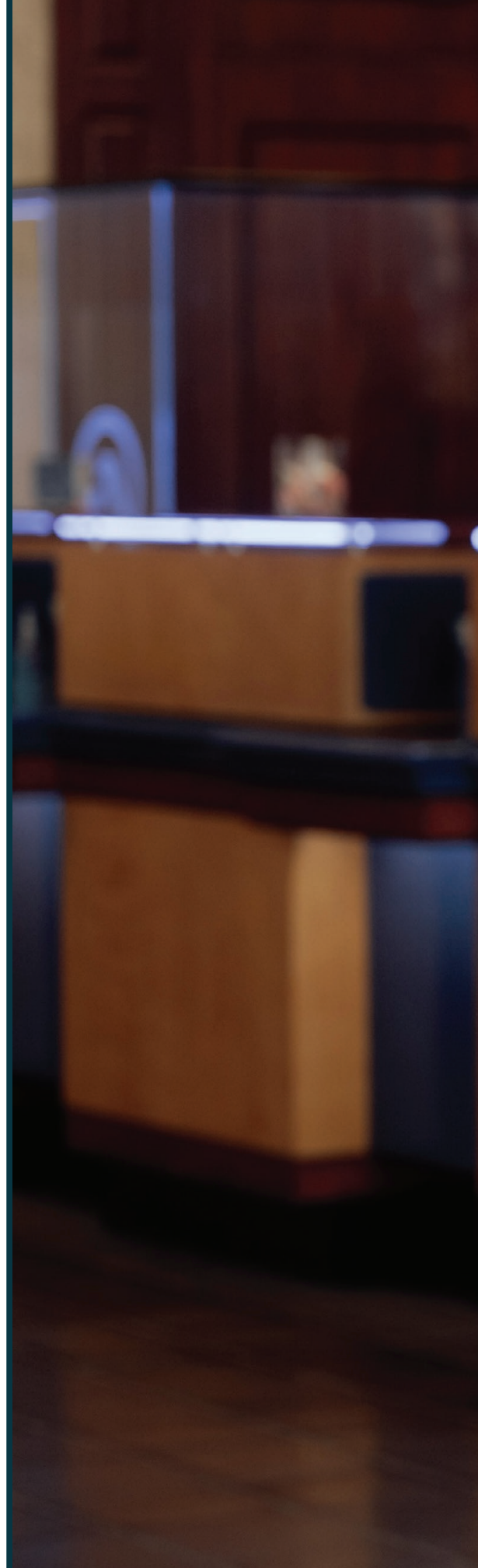
How do you build and keep relationships with other women? I like to think I'm always competing with a previous version of myself, not other women. Therefore, I approach relationships as opportunities to learn about them, encourage them and be a resource. Setting healthy boundaries and refraining from drama are also important to me.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Leaving my home country and family at 16 to pursue a dream and opportunities in the United States. As an immigrant from Bolivia and now a U.S. citizen, I realize taking that risk has blessed me in ways I'll never take for granted. It has shaped a trajectory I couldn't have dreamed of 22 years ago.

What has been your greatest challenge? Going back to school. In 2024, I earned an Executive Master of Business Administration from Texas A&M University. As a wife, mother of three children, and with a full-time career, I often felt it was an unattainable goal. Imposter syndrome is a real thing. During those strenuous couple of years, I remember doubting my potential and fearing my inadequacies in all those facets.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? As John Heywood once said, "Rome wasn't built in a day." Long-lasting goals take time, work and persistence. Since success often takes a village, I like to focus on teamwork and keeping things fun as a leader. It's important to find a good balance, be present and take care of my village, whether that is family, friends or my team at work.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? A life redeemed by Jesus. Kindness and gratitude. Excellence. Finding joy in the little things in life and loving my family fearlessly.





LEADING
Women





LEADING
Women



Kimberly Warminski Sprouse Shrader Smith

What character traits make a good leader? Integrity, empathy and accountability. Effective leadership means making sound decisions while listening to others and respecting different perspectives. A leader should inspire trust and create an environment where people feel valued and empowered to succeed. Humility is also critical. You have to be confident enough to lead, but self-aware enough to know you don't have all the answers.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? I've been fortunate to have several mentors throughout my career, particularly within my firm. Early on, I worked with attorneys who modeled both technical excellence and professionalism in client relationships. They taught me that your reputation is your most valuable asset, and that preparation and follow-through matter just as much as legal knowledge. Just as importantly, they showed me how to build a lasting career while maintaining high standards, integrity and accountability.

What motivates you? A genuine desire to help people, especially in a community like Amarillo, where the work we do is often very personal. Whether it's helping clients protect what they've built or guiding them through complex decisions, that's the most rewarding part of what I do. I'm also motivated by mentoring younger attorneys and helping them grow. Seeing that progress, both in our clients and within our firm, is incredibly rewarding.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? In my experience, the best relationships are developed over time. I try to stay connected with other women in a way that feels genuine by checking in, being reliable and making time for real conversations when it matters. That consistency is what turns into meaningful, lasting relationships.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Choosing to return to the Texas Panhandle after law school and build my career in Amarillo, rather than pursuing the larger firms and bigger markets many new attorneys chase. Coming back close to home felt right, but it also meant charting a path that looked different from what many of my peers were doing. In the end, it has allowed me to grow deep roots, develop long-term client relationships, and take on leadership roles that I might not have had access to otherwise.

What has been your greatest challenge? Learning to manage the pace and demands of a transactional practice. The work moves quickly, clients depend on us during critical moments, and the workload can fluctuate in ways that aren't always predictable. Learning to balance those demands has pushed me to prioritize more intentionally, set clearer boundaries, and give myself the same grace I extend to others.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I am a more intentional and steady leader. I try to focus on setting clear expectations, communicating openly and making thoughtful decisions. I also place a lot of value on creating a culture where people feel supported and trusted to do their best work. To me, leadership isn't just about managing the workload. It's about building a team that can grow, adapt and succeed over the long term.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I hope to leave behind a firm that is strong, respected and rooted in a culture of integrity, collaboration and genuine care for the people who make it succeed. On a personal level, I want to be remembered as someone who treated others with respect, delivered meaningful results for clients and helped create opportunities for the next generation. If the firm is better because I was part of it, and the people I've worked alongside felt supported and encouraged, that's a legacy I'd be proud of.

701 S. TAYLOR ST., SUITE 500
806.468.3328
SPROUSELAW.COM

Kashion Smith

Executive Director

Visit Amarillo

What character traits make a good leader? I believe a mixture of strong values, a sense of purpose, self-discipline and self-awareness are imperative. You should know who you are as a leader before you try to define someone's role in a mission. Great leaders also allow people to arrive at the goal in their own style, and then celebrate their successes with them. Set the expectation and get out of the way!

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? I have been lucky to have many mentors, mostly women. My biggest lesson from many of them has been to include people in the process and be willing to adjust your thinking as projects grow. If you are singularly focused, you miss opportunities to make things bigger and better.

What motivates you? I strive to continue learning and pushing for things that bring me joy, whether that's a new aspect of my career or a new opportunity that presents itself. I look at every new challenge as an opportunity to learn and do something better than it was previously done.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? We are in a primarily woman-led industry, particularly since COVID. Our roles often mean we must work with industries (or in politics) that are primarily led by men. It's important to have relationships with other women and be able to freely and openly speak about the challenges we face, which are usually very similar. Over the past several years, many of our industry conferences have had specific "women in the industry" or "women in leadership" components. Those are some of my favorite seminars, as they are often empowering and offer topics I can bring back to foster in my mostly female staff. Amarillo also has opportunities for women to get together and network, such as the Amarillo Women's Network.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Just a few months before COVID hit the world stage, our office suffered a major upset and was not prepared to handle the financial destruction we would face during COVID. During the pandemic, we made the very risky decision to transition into a stand-alone organization. After decades of being managed by the Chamber of Commerce and having the city act as our fiscal agent, we found ourselves forging a new path in a time when even the strongest norms were on uneven ground. Luckily, we had strong partnerships and a board of directors to help us set a plan for the future that has allowed us to thrive and grow in ways we never imagined.

What has been your greatest challenge? My greatest challenge came in 2019 when I was diagnosed with cancer. At no point did I feel like this was a battle I couldn't win. However, the timing of the diagnosis coincided with the disruption in our office. I was scared to let people know I was sick because I didn't want our stakeholders to have another reason to worry that our staff was incapable of overcoming the situation we were in. The true challenge was gaining the trust of our partners so I could have space to be vulnerable.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? They reinforced the value of strong partnerships and shared ownership across our community. I've become more intentional about engaging our board of directors and ensuring they feel confident and connected to our mission. They also pushed me to prioritize visibility and collaboration, recognizing that when organizations understand and support one another, the entire community benefits. As a result, I lead with a focus on connection, inclusivity and creating opportunities for diverse perspectives to strengthen our impact.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I want to build something that lasts and has created opportunities, partnerships and momentum that continues to grow long after I'm gone. I hope I've helped elevate other women into leadership, so the future of Amarillo tourism is even stronger, more inclusive and driven by confident voices at every table.





LEADING
Women



LEFT TO RIGHT: ASHLEY ROBERTS, STEPHANIE ANDREWS, LUZ ACUILAR, AMY TARR, KASHION SMITH, AMANDA GONZALEZ-FLORES, JACKIE PHOMMAHAXAY MURGUIA, BRALEY BECK, HOPE HOFFNER, SHERMAN BASS (NOT PICTURED)



LEADING Women



Jordan Herrera

Director of Social Services

Amarillo College

ACTX.EDU

What character traits make a good leader? Empathy, integrity and consistency. I believe the ability to truly listen to and understand others is just as important as decision-making. Strong leaders create environments where people feel seen, supported and empowered to succeed. For me, leadership is less about authority and more about service, showing up every day with a commitment to help others reach their full potential.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? The most impactful lesson my mentors taught me is to lead with confidence and compassion. They showed me the importance of advocating for others while also trusting my own voice. That balance has stayed with me and continues to guide how I support my team and the students we serve.

What motivates you? The opportunity to make a meaningful difference in people's lives. In my work, I see firsthand how access to the right resources and support can completely change a student's trajectory. Knowing that the work we do can remove barriers and open doors keeps me grounded and driven every day.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? I'm intentional about creating space for real, meaningful connection. Building relationships with other women is about forming genuine friendships rooted in trust, support and showing up for one another in both big and small moments. I believe it's essential to build and maintain these relationships because the next generation is watching us. It sets the example for what collaboration and community should look like for them.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Stepping into leadership and choosing to stay in it, even when others questioned my readiness or ability. I had to trust myself in a way I hadn't before. It pushed me into a season of deep self-development and exploration. It also meant leaning into difficult conversations, holding others accountable, advocating for what's right, and navigating challenges with honesty. While it hasn't always been easy, it has been incredibly meaningful, and it continues to strengthen both my confidence and my commitment to leading with purpose.

What has been your greatest challenge? Leading and advocating for our work in spaces where understanding hasn't been immediate. Much of what we do through the Advocacy & Resource Center addresses real, and sometimes complex, student needs. I ensure that others understand the value of our services and the real impact they have on students' lives. I also advocate for funding, engage with donors, and at times ask students to share their stories to help others understand the needs.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I am a more resourceful, resilient and purpose-driven leader. When resources haven't been accessible, I've had to think creatively and strategically to ensure students receive the services they need. I work to build strong partnerships, maximize what we have, and stay solution-focused even in uncertain situations. I've learned how to make decisions that are grounded in what is best for students. Those experiences have also deepened my empathy. I understand the weight of the challenges our students face, and I lead with that awareness at the center of everything I do.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I want to be known as someone who created pathways for others, especially students who didn't have access to the support they needed to succeed. I also think about legacy in a very personal way through raising my two daughters. I want them to see what it means to lead with compassion, work with purpose and give back to others. If I can leave behind stronger systems, empowered individuals and two daughters who carry those same values forward, then I will consider that a meaningful legacy.

Shanna Cameron

CFO

BSA Health System

What character traits make a good leader? Empathy, self-awareness, servant mindset, adaptability, honesty and ethics. People want a leader who is authentic and approachable—someone they can rely on to be consistent and genuine, who values the people side of leadership, and who doesn't take themselves so seriously that they forget to be human.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? I have been lucky to have had some great mentors. They all share the same characteristics, even though personality-wise they are very different. They are honest, transparent, encouraging (especially to speak up and ask questions), and really care about me as a person and a professional. They each taught me to be a "duck." First, to let things roll off my back like water. Second, to keep calm in appearance (a duck's legs do all the work under the surface). Third, to know when to take flight and when to stay on the water, grounded and present.

What motivates you? Personally, I'm motivated by my faith and family. My faith gives me clarity, perspective and a strong sense of purpose, especially when facing hard decisions or challenging moments. It reminds me to lead with integrity, humility and gratitude. My family is my daily motivation. They keep me focused on what truly matters and push me to lead in a way that balances achievement with presence. Professionally, I'm motivated by results. I love the challenge of solving complex problems. I am driven by continuous improvement, shared successes, and empowering and encouraging people to be their best.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? It's simple. The easiest way is to get to know them and understand what matters to them: career, faith, family, hobbies and more. Finding common ground is a great starting point. I often use the FORD approach (Family, Occupation, Recreation, Dreams) when getting to know new people. For established relationships, it can be as simple as being intentional—taking the time to reach out and stay connected, even if it's just a quick text to say hello and let them know you're thinking of them.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Leaving public accounting to get into health care finance. I knew nothing about health care at the time and had two small children. But I was offered an opportunity to get into the industry, and have been in it ever since.

What has been your greatest challenge? Losing both of my parents—my mother in 2015 and my father in 2017. Supporting them through their illnesses, grieving their loss and continuing to raise a family while pursuing a demanding career was incredibly difficult, but it shaped my resilience and perspective. It was a season that tested me emotionally and personally, but it also strengthened my perspective, priorities and capacity for empathy.



LEADING
Women



How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? Working in health care while navigating the health care system with sick parents deeply shaped my leadership style as a finance leader. It gave me a firsthand understanding of the patient and family experience behind every decision, reinforcing the importance of empathy, clarity and long-term thinking. I lead with a stronger sense of responsibility, knowing that financial decisions ultimately impact real people at their most vulnerable moments.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? One where people felt supported, respected and empowered by my leadership, and where my decisions contributed to stronger organizations and better outcomes for others. Most importantly, I want my legacy to reflect balance—being present for my family, grounded in my faith, and committed to leading with purpose and empathy.

1600 WALLACE BLVD. | 806.212.2000 | BSAHS.ORG



LEADING
Women



Prosperity Bank

Meredith Stover Market President

What character traits make a good leader? Integrity, resilience, communication and kindness.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? I have had many mentors both professionally and personally.

What motivates you? I am motivated by helping others, both employees and customers. Knowing my work has an impact on others is important to me.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? Mutual respect, support and grace. Life is busy, so having grace for one another helps keep long-lasting relationships.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? As a lender, every loan has a level of risk. I have made risky loans in the past because I truly believed in the client and wanted them to be successful. I find so much joy in seeing a client achieve their goals after taking a risk on them and their business.

What has been your greatest challenge? Time. There is never enough time.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I work hard to accomplish much in a short time, knowing time is limited. As a leader, I try to over communicate to ensure everyone on our team is on the same page and working together toward the same goal.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? Being a good wife and mom, and being known for showing kindness to others.

Reaghan Stevens Branch Manager

What character traits make a good leader? Integrity, empathy and consistency.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? I have looked up to many men and women in my career who have shaped me into who I am today.

What motivates you? Knowing I made a meaningful impact in the lives of my customers and employees.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? I strive to be intentional, supportive and genuine.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Moving into a leadership role as a young woman was a risk I did not take lightly. I knew customers and employees would be depending on me, and I was no longer able to focus solely on myself.

What has been your greatest challenge? Navigating family and work and not dropping the ball in either court.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I have realized that you cannot do it all. Everyone needs grace!

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I want my legacy to be one of impact—both in the lives of the people I've worked with, and the communities I've served. I hope to be remembered as someone who led with integrity, invested in others, and created opportunities for people to grow and succeed.

PROSPERITYBANKUSA.COM





Keralee Clay

President & CEO

Amarillo Area Foundation

What character traits make a good leader? I've learned that people don't follow a title—they follow someone they trust. And trust isn't built in big moments. It's built in the small ones. How you handle a hard conversation. Whether you do what you said you'd do. For me, it always comes back to integrity. You have to know what you stand for and live it out loud, especially when it's inconvenient.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? My longtime voice teacher in New York City, Elly Stone, changed the way I think about growth. In her late 80s, she was learning Sanskrit. That image has never left me. She taught me that the moment you think you've arrived is the moment you stop becoming. I carry that with me: Stay curious, keep stretching and learn for the sake of learning.

What motivates you? The people I have the honor to serve: our staff, our boards, our partners, and the families across the Texas Panhandle. As the first woman to serve as CEO of the Amarillo Area Foundation, I feel both the honor and responsibility of that deeply. Knowing our work has a real impact on real lives keeps me grounded and focused. I'm also motivated by the chance to build something that will outlast me.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? For a long time, I didn't make this a priority, and I felt the cost of that. I was focused on work and let these relationships fall to the margins. The past few years, I have made a real effort to change that. Once I started showing up more intentionally, other women showed up for me, too.

I've also found myself in a new season, more often the mentor than the mentee, and that comes with real responsibility. Now I try to be present not just when things are good, but also when they're hard. That means sharing what I know, being honest even when it's uncomfortable, and offering one another the grace to grow.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? In the late 1990s, my now-husband and I packed a 17-foot truck and moved to New York City with no jobs, an apartment we'd never seen, a handful of contacts, and only a few months of dating between us. Every variable was uncertain. That leap taught me something I still lean on: You don't need all the answers before you start—you just need confidence in your ability to figure it out. Having a wonderful partner along the way didn't hurt either.

What has been your greatest challenge? Watching a beloved leader and dear friend move from serious illness to death, while continuing to lead the organization through that uncertainty, was one of the hardest things I've faced. Holding that grief personally while staying steady for everyone else wasn't something I could have fully prepared for.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? Those seasons taught me that people don't need a perfect leader—they need a real one. Someone consistent, honest and present even when the answers aren't clear. I learned to hold space for the difficulty without letting it stop the work, and to stop waiting until everything was figured out before showing up fully. Leading with integrity, grace and courage isn't a destination, it's a daily choice. Most of the time, it's enough.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? I want to leave behind an organization people genuinely trust, one that listens well, shows up reliably, and responds to what the community needs. I hope our work opens more doors for people to shape the future of this region. Personally, I hope to be remembered as someone who led from a place of authenticity and love. And as a mom, I hope I've raised kind, hardworking kids who keep growing in their own right. That one might matter most of all.

919 S. POLK ST. | 806.376.4521
AMARILLOAREAFOUNDATION.ORG



LEADING
Women



Magi York, CCAP Executive Director **Panhandle Community Services**

What character traits make a good leader? Love, compassion, integrity and respect.

Have you had a mentor that influenced you? What did they teach you? I have had two individuals who were mentors. One was Margaret Washnitser, director of agency affairs with the Federal Office of Community Service. She taught me that life is all about the relationships you form, and the respect you give each relationship. The other was Gary Stokes, executive director of Move the Mountain, a leadership consulting firm. He taught me to believe in my abilities but surround myself with strong leaders. They will always make you better.

What motivates you? The need to be in service to others.

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? Being real. Not trying to be someone to impress them. Honesty in the relationship. Tell them what they need to hear, not what they necessarily want to hear. And love unconditionally.

What is the biggest risk you've ever taken? Starting my own consulting business and leaving a more secure position.

What has been your greatest challenge? Cancer and the fight to rid myself of its grip. I have been successful three times!

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? I believe these challenges have given my life purpose. Things which may have seemed important before now are not. I want those under my leadership to feel my faith in them and what they will do for the Panhandle community going forward.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? That I was a strong, loving individual who believed in serving others.

1309 SW EIGHTH AVE.

806.372.2531

PANHANDLEHELP.ORG

Jackie Kingston

CEO / Executive Editor

Amarillo Tribune



LEADING
Women

What character traits make a good leader? Curiosity, humility, integrity and fairness. Leading with curiosity helps to prevent jumping to conclusions. Curiosity is rooted in humility, which requires accepting that, as a leader, your highlight reel is other people's success. Humility and curiosity are intrinsically tied to integrity, which requires understanding and taking responsibility for your own motivations and values. Good leaders see fairness as a practice of discipline.

Have you had a mentor who influenced you? What did they teach you? Mentors or coaches have been with me through each stage of my career. Their advice has helped me hone my news judgement and interpersonal communication tactics, and set forward-thinking priorities. Others have indirectly mentored me because I learned through them what kind of leader I did not want to be. Identifying behaviors and traits I do not want to emulate has helped me to more clearly identify those I do.

What motivates you? My work aligns with my passion for serving our community and for learning, so although it's not always easy to maintain zeal for the work, it's helpful to remind myself why I chose nonprofit news. I'm grateful to work with people who are also passionate about our community and finding answers. It's always exciting to learn something new from them—which happens often!

How do you build and keep relationships with other women? I have learned to approach relationships with other women with a lot of grace and very little expectation of consistency. Friendships have seasons, and that is not a sign of weakness, it is a reflection of full and evolving lives. My closest friends and I may go through periods where we see each other often, and others where we barely connect, but there is never any resentment attached. We are genuinely excited to show up for each other in whatever way we can, when we can.

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? Leaving my job in TV, and then staying to build the *Amarillo Tribune*, but not for the reasons I first expected. It was a job change, certainly, with all the usual career change risks, but it also meant I had to build my self-confidence without the career that I had deeply intertwined with my sense of self. I had the opportunity to reassess who I was and who I wanted to be.

What has been your greatest challenge? Setting boundaries with my time and energy. I didn't realize at first how selfish it was to work so hard that I never had time to rest, recharge and show up refreshed for the people in my organization and those we serve. Or just how selfish it is to work through the evenings and weekends, which takes time and attention away from the people I love. Even how selfish it is to do everything myself and exclude others from opportunities where they could have learned something by pitching in.

How have those challenges shaped your leadership style? Learning to set boundaries has fundamentally reshaped how I lead. I used to equate overworking with commitment, but I've come to understand that it can limit both my effectiveness and the growth of others. I am more aware of the demands people carry outside of work and more intentional about building a culture that allows people to do their best work without sacrificing themselves to it.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind? If the only thing people ever said about me after I am gone is that I loved my husband and I loved my community, that would be more than enough.





PROVIDED ART

THE EXPLOSIVE CRIMES **OF** A.D. PAYNE

BY MICHAEL H. PRICE

Some crimes announce themselves with a bang. The A.D. Payne case announced itself with two. One on a residential street on a Friday morning in June 1930, and one in a jail cell sixty-four days later. What happened in between is one of the strangest and most disturbing episodes in Amarillo's history.

On June 27, 1930, Alfred Day Payne was at work, going through the motions at his law office in downtown Amarillo. He was tense with anticipation. Not far across town, at the Payne family's brick bungalow on Fountain Terrace, the lawyer's wife, Exa Johnson Payne, set out on an errand. Several children were playing in the yard. She summoned her own, A.D. Payne Jr., a freckled boy of 11.

The two of them settled into the family's late-model Durant coupe. Exa drove east, then turned northward to Line Avenue, and east again toward downtown.

A dense smoke roiled from beneath the seat. Exa pumped the accelerator, probably thinking the smoke would clear up at a higher speed. They had passed Mississippi Street, seven blocks from home, when the car exploded.

Doors, fenders and glass flew through the air. The boy was flung nearly 40 feet onto a lawn. The Durant sped on another 100 feet and crashed into a garage, pushing a car within through a wall. Burning fragments of clothing spiraled in the air.

In her dining room 20 feet from the explosion, the concussion threw Mrs. Jesse Smith to the floor. Her son had gone outside, and when she saw a blood-covered boy lying nearby, she assumed the worst. She collapsed in shock when her own son came running toward the house.

Sirens wailed for Exa Johnson Payne, 34, and A.D. Payne Jr.

The father, A.D. Payne, heard the sirens from his eighth-floor office at the Oliver-Eagle Building—now the Barfield Hotel—on Polk Street. His 9-year-old daughter, Bobbie Jean, had walked downtown with him. His 13-year-old daughter, Ladell, had remained at home to prepare lunch.

Moments later, Payne was informed that his wife had been killed by the blast. His son was in critical condition at Northwest Texas Hospital. At the scene, Payne regarded the mangled remains, then examined the wreckage to see if the gasoline tank had exploded. It had not, but the cap was missing. Policemen became suspicious of Payne immediately.

Chief of Detectives M.M. Scott discovered that Payne had carried on a flirtation with a former stenographer, and that the attorney had lately purchased \$18,000 in double-indemnity life insurance on his wife and son.

Origin Story

Alfred Day Payne was born in Williamson County in 1892 but came to the Panhandle to attend West Texas State Normal College in Canyon. He met Austin resident Exa Johnson in 1914, and they married the following year. Both taught in Canyon's public schools.

Before obtaining his law degree, Payne had become superintendent of schools. In 1926, the Paynes moved to Amarillo, where he made an unsuccessful bid for state representative. In 1929 he announced his candidacy for district judge, only to withdraw. In court, Payne seemed tireless and assured, but when idle he indulged in nervous habits—biting his fingernails or tugging at his face.

June 28 to Aug. 3, 1930

Questioned by the police, Payne guessed that neighborhood children might have hidden dynamite in the car, anticipating Independence Day. The police recalled that Payne had complained about anonymous threats. Payne insisted, "I could not associate even an enemy with such a terrible affair, but ... the explosive was meant for me."

Gene Howe, publisher of the *Amarillo Globe-News*, came to Payne's defense in his newspaper column, "The Tactless Texan," ordinarily an outlet for Howe's boisterous sense of humor. Howe offered a reward of \$500 for the capture of the murderer. Payne added \$5,000 to that, and J.E. Young contributed another \$250.

Payne asked for a thorough investigation by Howe's newsroom. "I am innocent. If the newspaper plunges into the case and prints everything, I will be vindicated."

Howe promised an all-out investigation, and telephoned A.B. MacDonald of the *Kansas City Star*—in Howe's estimation, the best crime reporter in the nation—and arranged for him to visit Amarillo.

MacDonald, hard-faced and brusque, started by calling upon Payne at home. "I must question you as to all the women you have known." As Payne listed his successive secretaries, his tempo hastened at mention of Verona Thompson. MacDonald demanded a description.

"Very plain and ordinary," Payne answered. Then he began a glowing description of his current secretary, Mabel Bush.

Payne's children entered, and MacDonald spoke with them momentarily. Abruptly, he turned to Howe. "Let's go." MacDonald would later explain to Howe, "There's something wrong. There's a woman, of course. He talks too much about how he loved his wife. ... Did you notice the children? They acted relieved that someone else was in the house. ... He has

VERONA
THOMPSONEXA JOHNSON
PAYNE

them coached.”

MacDonald was impatient to meet Thompson. The “plain and ordinary” stenographer, per Payne, proved to be an attractive blonde. Howe’s pleasant manner put her at ease. Not so with MacDonald’s gruff presence.

“How about those trips over the Panhandle?” MacDonald demanded. “You might as well tell the truth...”

“Yes,” Thompson replied, stammering. She told of Payne’s attempts to seduce her. She feared that Payne had murdered his own wife out of love for her. Then MacDonald overplayed his hand with a question about overnight traveling. Thompson realized she had been conned and became silent.

Aug. 5-10, 1930

Thompson appeared before District Attorney Edward W. Thomerson and dictated a 12-page statement of her dealings with Payne. She admitted she had “petted” with him on occasion, assuming estrangement from his wife. She sought other employment, but Payne lured her back. The lustful overtures persisted. Their last outing had occurred only days before the car-bomb murder; she had noticed a burlap sack in his car, a type used to contain chicken feed.

Mayor Ernest O. Thompson (no kin to Verona) dispatched Patrolman John Snider to Payne’s office. The arrest lacked the niceties of a warrant, lest Payne have time to destroy evidence. Payne’s clothing yielded several pieces of incriminating evidence, including an official-looking form so worded as to deflect suspicion from Payne.

Then, with Thompson in attendance, the assembled authorities confronted Payne with her statement. The lawyer’s face took on a jaundiced hue. No sooner had he said, “I have no statement,” than several policemen arrived with word of a lynch mob gathering outside. Payne was hastened to safety at Stinnett, site of the best-fortified jail in the Panhandle.

He professed innocence en route but spoke of suicidal intentions.

Payne prefaced a confession. “I realize it is the hot chair for me, and the sooner, the better. ... I’m just mean, and not crazy.”

A local newspaper reporter, Calvin N. Melton, attempted an interview but found Payne staring at him with, as Melton wrote, “the look of a trapped rat.”

At 2 p.m. Aug. 7, Payne began dictating more than 20,000 words as a confession. He seemed jovial, sometimes laughing at his schemes. He termed himself “the most fiendish individual that ever played a part in ... criminal procedure.” He eulogized Exa Payne as the ideal helpmate. Overwhelmed, he said, by business and household demands, he had begun embezzling from clients. Suicidal intentions evolved into a plot to “remove” his wife, lest she learn of his disgrace. Months passed, with various methods considered, before Payne formulated the infernal method.

He expressed dismay that Junior Payne was not killed. “I just feel that he was going to be enough like me ... in the same sort of circumstances.”

At about 4 a.m., Payne signed the 55th and final page. Newsmen found him calm and unruffled.

“That was the most terrible crime ever committed,”
Payne announced.

“Did you think you had committed the perfect crime?” asked
a reporter.

“No, but I didn’t expect to be apprehended so soon.”

Lawyer James Cade visited Payne, his former partner, and left
in an unnerved condition. Payne had sworn Cade to secrecy, but
Payne did announce that he had rejected Cade’s insistence upon
an insanity plea.

Payne declared, “I am going to end it all and join my wife.” He
asked for some books, including a small volume containing Oscar
Wilde’s narrative poem, “The Ballad of Reading Gaol.” The poem
tells of a man’s imprisonment for the murder of his wife.

*No need to waste the foolish tear
Or heave the windy sigh...
The man had killed the thing he loved,
And so he had to die.*

In the *Amarillo Globe*, Howe termed Payne’s confession “a
heinous alibi ... that his lawyers will attempt to present ... as
evidence of insanity.” Howe added, “There is no Heaven for anyone
if there is no Hell for A.D. Payne.”

Aug. 9-30, 1930

District Attorney Thomerson sought a prompt execution. Payne
wrote to Howe and MacDonald, raging against their investigative
manipulations and inviting them to watch him take the jolt. The
prisoner was brought to Amarillo, where open cell doors allowed
the inmates to prowl an enclosed catwalk.

Cellmates noticed that Payne had removed none of his clothing
since his arrival. Just before midnight on Aug. 30, Payne called to
one prisoner, R.L. Conder Jr., that he had “something hidden ... this
way of ending things.”

Payne drew from his trousers a bottle about three inches long
and little thicker than a pencil. A fuse protruded.

“Hell, man!” Conder said.

Payne chuckled. “I won’t hurt you.” He lit a bummed cigarette
and reached into his undershirt. The building shook with a
deafening blast.

Payne’s body lurched upwards, struck the ceiling, then
plunged. His burning corpse remained grotesquely suspended
from the bars.

Outside the jail, the mystery remained until reporter
T.E. Johnson bailed out Conder and persuaded him to reveal the
details. The nitroglycerine tube had been taped against Payne’s
crotch since two days before his arrest.

The couple’s surviving children were taken in by various
kinfolks. Thompson, scandalized, changed her name and
moved away.

At length, lawyer Cade revealed what Payne had told him in
Stinnett. “I don’t care to live ... knowing during my better moments
what I am like most of the time.” ☹️

PAYNE’S JAIL CELL
AFTER THE EXPLOSION
THAT KILLED HIM



REMNANTS OF THE
DURANT COUPE AT
THE CRIME SCENE



From TYLER STREET *to the* SILVER SCREEN

The Amarillo Upbringing of Cyd Charisse

BY CLAYTON TRUTOR

MAY/JUNE 2026

124

BRICKANDELM.COM



Amarillo's Cyd Charisse took part in some of the most astonishing scenes in cinema history. The long, lithe ballet dancer turned Hollywood leading lady whirled her way into the hearts of millions of moviegoers in musicals like *Singin' in the Rain* (1952), *The Band Wagon* (1953) and *Brigadoon* (1954). She partnered on several occasions with two of the biggest names in movie musical history: Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire. Through a long and varied career, Charisse spoke fondly of her hometown, citing the formative experiences of her Amarillo childhood that helped forge a strikingly resilient person and performer.

Cyd Charisse was born Tula Ellice Finklea during an Amarillo snowstorm on March 8, 1922. She was the younger child of Ernest Enos "E.E." and Lela (Norwood) Finklea. Tula's older brother, E.E. Jr., tried calling her "sis" but it came out as "Sid" and the nickname stuck.

The Finkleas were quiet and civically minded. They attended First Methodist Church and involved themselves in several local charities. Lela served as treasurer of the Potter County Tuberculosis Association for decades.

E.E. was a prominent jeweler, operating E.E. Finklea Jewelers at 410 S. Polk St. before moving down the block to 508 S. Polk St.

Billed as the "Jewelry Store of the Panhandle," Finklea Jewelers was the region's exclusive dealer for several prominent brands, selling everything from wristwatches to diamonds to fine china and glassware. Its Christmas 1921 advertisements included items as inexpensive as 98 cent pairs of gold cufflinks (roughly \$17 in 2026 dollars) to diamonds priced at \$921 (roughly \$15,700 today).

Despite the family's affluence, they resided in a relatively modest home at 1616 S. Tyler St. The VanShaws, relatives from her mother's side of the family, lived a block away. Sid remained close to her cousins Martha Lee and Gaynor VanShaw for the rest of her life.

Sid wasn't well for much of her childhood, battling polio as a toddler. She had difficulty standing for long periods of time, so her doctor recommended dance lessons to improve strength and balance. The Finkleas enrolled 6-year-old Sid in ballet lessons with Constance Ferguson, an accomplished ballerina who had studied in Los Angeles with a veteran of the Bolshoi Ballet.

"Up on the very top floor of a great old hotel, there was a big room that looked out over the city, and [Ferguson] turned that into her studio,"

Charisse told *Texas Monthly* in 1991. "I remember that first lesson like it was yesterday. I was 6 years old, and I fell in love with music," she continued.

Sid would later study at the Amarillo College of Music with Rosalie Raymond, another skilled dance instructor.

There was more to young Sid's life than dance. She took piano lessons from Grace Hamilton, one of her neighbors and cofounder of the Amarillo Symphony, starting at age 6. The name "Sid Finklea" appeared quarterly in the list of Honor Roll students at the Tyler School, and she participated in a Girl Scout troop based at First Presbyterian Church.

By the time she reached adolescence, Sid's dance instructors conceded they had little more they could teach her. At 12, she started traveling regularly with her mother to Los Angeles to study ballet in the studio of Adolph Bolm, who had once starred in the Russian Imperial Ballet alongside Anna Pavlova. Her primary instructor was a Greek ballet dancer named Nico Charisse. Fourteen-year-old Sid auditioned at Bolm's studio for Colonel Wassily de Basil and David Lichine, directors of the world-renowned Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. They were so impressed by her movement and expressiveness as a performer that they offered her the position of prima ballerina with the dance troop.

Even before she became a prima ballerina, Amarillo's newspapers covered Sid's dance career closely. They highlighted public performances on the West Coast, her subsequent tours with the Ballet Russe, and any visit she made to the Panhandle.

Between 1935 and 1939, Sid performed in a series of dance recitals across the Panhandle, often at the Amarillo College of Music or an area high school. A 1935 performance at Amarillo High School drew more than 1,000 spectators who paid 75 cents a seat to watch her perform selections from *Carmen* and *La Traviata*.

These performances were the closest her father got to seeing her as a star.

On March 1, 1938, E.E. suffered a stroke at his jewelry store. He died at home in April surrounded by his immediate family. Sid came home from Ballet Russe's east coast tour when she learned of her father's condition. She spent much of 1938 back in Amarillo with her family. The Finkleas closed the jewelry store in 1941.

War, Marriage & Hollywood

Sid returned to the Ballet Russe in 1939. She toured Europe with the company, performing in



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PICRYL.JPG

Aurora and *The Prodigal Son*. During the 1939 European tour, 17-year-old Sid became reacquainted with Nico Charisse, who was also performing with the company. She eloped with her 32-year-old teacher in France in August 1939. Their honeymoon in Monte Carlo was cut short by Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland, which led to declarations of war by France and Great Britain. As war enveloped Europe, the newly married couple headed for America in September 1939, settling in Los Angeles. They opened a dance studio in Hollywood as ballets shut down during World War II. Sid gave birth to a son, Nico Jr., or "Nicky," in May 1942.

During the early 1940s, Sid tried her hand at the movies, turning auditions into small roles that showcased her dancing skills. Her film career started slowly. She appeared as an uncredited dancer in several pictures, typically shorts that were shown before feature-length films. Her long, lithe look, dancing skill and graceful presentation brought her to the attention of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the undisputed kings of the movie musical. In 1946, she signed a long-term contract with the studio, and would spend the next decade making some of the most celebrated musicals in history under the auspices of producer Arthur Freed.

It was Freed who changed the spelling of her first name to "Cyd," which he thought sounded mysterious and elided nicely with the last name "Charisse." The name "Charisse" stuck but her husband Nico didn't. The couple divorced in 1947.

The Golden Age of Movie Musicals

Cyd made her first on-screen appearance with Fred Astaire in *Ziegfeld Follies* (1945) as one of the stage revue's top dancers. Her first speaking part came in the Judy Garland musical *The Harvey Girls* (1946). She then played supporting roles in a string of MGM hits, including *Fiesta* (1947), *Words and Music* (1948), and *East Side, West Side* (1949). In each picture, her dancing skills were the focus of her screen time.

The press took great notice of Cyd's figure, particularly her shapely legs. "I'm awfully lucky I have long legs and long muscles. That helps. And besides, I have good training. Only girls who were overworked develop large muscular legs," Charisse told the *Amarillo Daily News* in 1947. Years later, MGM garnered headlines by taking out a \$5 million insurance policy on Charisse's legs.

In November 1947, several members of the Hollywood press followed Cyd to Amarillo. She was returning home to be a bridesmaid at her cousin Gaynor VanShaw's wedding. Cyd left Los Angeles with ample time, but the flight was waylaid in Albuquerque due to engine trouble. She arrived in Amarillo an hour before the ceremony. Before heading to the First Methodist Church, Cyd was escorted at top speed by the Amarillo Police Department to White & Kirk's department store. The forest green velvet dresses which

her cousin had selected for the wedding had never arrived. They had been sent by air mail from New York and arrived mistakenly (and ironically) in Albuquerque. Cyd, the other bridesmaids, and the maid of honor, her cousin Martha Lee VanShaw, were fitted in forest green moire taffeta dresses, arriving at the church with minutes to spare before the ceremony.

While the Amarillo newspapers marveled at Cyd's whirlwind travel day, the Hollywood reporters were fixated on the divorcee's recent love life. At the time of the wedding, several stories linked her to Howard Hughes, which she denied throughout a week-long visit in Amarillo. Cyd had another performer on her mind.

While working on *Fiesta*, she met fellow MGM star Tony Martin and fell in love. The couple wed in 1948. In 1950, Cyd gave birth to their son, Tony Martin Jr.

The remarried Cyd impressed in a dramatic role in the *Wild North* (1952), a story about the Canadian Mounted Police starring Stewart Granger.

While *Wild North* was a hit, it was nothing compared to Cyd's next performance in a musical. *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) a moderate hit when it was released, later growing in critical estimation and now considered one of the greatest musicals ever made. Cyd dances with leading man Gene Kelly in "Broadway Melody," a showstopping performance which made Charisse a major star. Her sensuous and graceful performance was unlike the toe-tapping, chipper routines that filmgoers saw in other musicals. The characterization that Charisse created on screen was seductive art that seemed all the more titillating considering the widespread censorship of suggestive content in 1950s Hollywood.

Charisse followed up *Singin' in the Rain* with another major musical, *The Band Wagon* (1953), which reunited her with Fred Astaire. The pairing of Charisse and Astaire in numbers like "Dancing in the Dark" and "The Girl Hunt Ballet" produced some of the sleekest dances ever seen on celluloid.

When asked to compare Astaire and Kelly, Charisse sang both of their praises. She described Kelly as the more inventive choreographer and physically powerful performer but said Astaire had better coordination and rhythm. "It's like comparing apples and oranges. They're both delicious," Charisse wrote in her memoir.

She followed up *The Band Wagon* with a pair of Gene Kelly pictures, *Brigadoon* (1954) and *It's Always Fair Weather* (1955). In 1957, she co-starred with Fred Astaire in *Silk Stockings*, which was one of MGM's last Golden Age musicals.

An Evolving Legacy

When large-scale musicals began falling out of fashion in the late 1950s, Charisse adapted to the times.

Charisse performed dance routines on numerous television variety shows, including several appearances on the *Ed Sullivan Show*.

In 1960, she received her star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 1601 Vine Street.

Cyd and Tony toured as a nightclub song-and-dance act during the 1960s and '70s. She appeared in touring productions of musicals such as *Damn Yankees* and *No, No Nanette* during the same time period. After decades in musical theater, Charisse made her Broadway debut in *Grand Hotel* in 1991.

The couple stumped frequently for Republican politicians, making appearances on behalf of presidential nominees Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan.

During the 1970s and '80s, Charisse popped up as a guest star on many of the era's most popular television programs, including *The Love Boat*, *Fantasy Island* and *Hawaii Five-O*. Charisse was interviewed frequently in documentaries about Hollywood history.

In 1990, she starred in a home exercise video called *Easy Energy Shape-Up*. The video was aimed at older adults and incorporated variations on many of the exercises she learned in ballet. That same year, she performed a 30-second dance routine in the music video for Janet Jackson's "Alright."

As her schedule slowed during the 1990s, she returned to Amarillo from time to time to visit relatives. In 2006, Charisse received the National Medal of Arts and Humanities Award from President George W. Bush.

A month after she and Tony celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary, she passed away after suffering a heart attack in Los Angeles on June 17, 2008. She was 86 years old. Martin died in 2012 at age 98.

Throughout her long life, Cyd Charisse defied the odds and remained a grand ambassador for Amarillo. Her simultaneous resilience and charm can be traced back to the experiences and upbringing she had in the Texas Panhandle. 🍷

CYD CHARISSE, TONY MARTIN AND FAMILY, 1956



CYD IN 1950

THE 806 COFFEE + LOUNGE

Art meets coffee—and a surprisingly delicious vegetarian and vegan menu—at this locally owned, atmospheric shop on Sixth. (The brunch is especially good.) Time it right and you’ll catch live music or an art show. If you’re ready to ditch the minimalist coffee scene, start here. 2812 SW Sixth Ave., 806.322.1806, the806.com \$

ABUELO’S MEXICAN RESTAURANT

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

BANGKOK-TOKYO

The name should give you an idea of the Asian fusion available here. The dining area is very small—thanks, weird triangle roofline!—but you can get fantastic Thai food combined with even better sushi. Takeout orders are quick, and it also now offers an expanded gluten-free menu. 2413 S. Western St., 806.353.4777, bangkoktokyoamarillo.com \$\$

THE BIG TEXAN STEAK RANCH & BREWERY

This tourist destination is packed at all hours of the day. Everyone talks about the 72-ounce steak challenge, but other standouts include the popular “Mountain Oysters,” normal-sized steaks, chicken-fried steak and ribs. The onsite brewery recently added a hard seltzer to its menu. 7701 E. I-40, 806.372.6000, bigtexas.com \$\$

CAFE MARIZON

Lots of nostalgia here, from the daily desserts (BTS cake!) to the historic photos and Amarillo memorabilia on the walls. The down-home burgers are favorites, served on homemade bread. Try the French dip, spicy chicken salad, or lunch specials like green chile pie. 6151 Hillside Road, 806.352.2046, cafemarizon.com \$\$

CAUDILLOS MEXICAN FOOD

Authentic flavors made with heart define this drive-thru shack on 45th. Whether you’re stopping in for a hearty breakfast burrito or a Caudillos torta loaded with grilled chicken and queso fresco, the portions are as generous as the hospitality. (The Chile Verde is a must-try for spice lovers.) 4602 SW 45th Ave., 806.673.1772 \$

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

MAY/JUNE 2026
 128
 BRICKANDELM.COM

AMARILLO
 TRIBUNE

**Your City.
 Your Stories.
 Your Amarillo Tribune.**

**Sign up for our
 newsletter today**

Professional
 REPORTER
 NAME
 ADDRESS
 CITY
 PHONE
 EMAIL

TOPS
 PRODUCTS
 Paper 30% Recycled
 100% Recycled Ink
 100% Recycled Paper
 100% Recycled Cardboard

BUSINESS CONNECTION

Celebrating a Century of the Chamber and a Roaring Good Time of Connections
at the 33rd Annual Business-to-Business Tradeshow

Thursday, May 14, 2026 10 am - 4 pm
Amarillo Civic Center

1926

2026



Paul Simpson
Amarillo EDC

Heath Acker
Amarillo National Bank

Dr. Jon Bush
BSA Health System

Barbara VerWay
LifeGift

Peggy Bailey
Optimum Business

Josh Mask
Utility Trailer Sales
Southeast Texas, Inc.

Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors



Food Court Sponsor



Reserve a booth online or contact the Chamber for more information. The Chamber Office is located at 1000 S Polk.



VIP SHOW
10AM—4PM

CHAMBER MEMBERS MAY PICK UP **FREE VIP TICKETS FOR THE AREA'S LARGEST BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS TRADESHOW** AT THE CHAMBER OFFICE THROUGH 5PM ON MAY 13 OR SHOW YOUR BUSINESS CARD AT THE EVENT FOR FREE ADMISSION ON THE 14TH.

PUBLIC SHOW
1PM—4PM

\$5 ADMISSION OR SHOW YOUR BUSINESS CARD FOR FREE ADMISSION.

TRADE SHOW
FOOD COURT
11:30AM-1:30PM

ENJOY A VARIETY OF FOOD FROM LOCAL RESTAURANTS & FOOD PROVIDERS IN THE CIVIC CENTER REGENCY ROOM. PURCHASE FOOD COURT TICKETS FROM THE CHAMBER OFFICE FOR **\$10** EACH BY MAY 13 OR **\$15** AT THE EVENT ON MAY 14.



Amarillo-Chamber.org/BusinessConnection

806.373.7800 | AmarilloChamber on

2026-2027

TUCUMCARI



Cruisin' through a
century on Route 66!

visittucumcarinm.com

**As Route 66 celebrates its
Centennial, Tucumcari stands out
as one of the most authentic stops
on the Mother Road.**

**The town's legendary neon signs,
vintage motels and vibrant murals
capture the spirit of classic American
travel. Whether you're exploring its
museums, grabbing a bite at a diner,
or simply soaking in the New Mexico
sunset, Tucumcari offers a timeless
slice of 66 nostalgia.**

**No centennial tour is complete without
honoring the old promise that still
rings true today: Tucumcari Tonite!**

NOSTALGIC
TUCUMCARI
NEW MEXICO

COWBOY SUSHI FUSION

Where the Panhandle meets the ... Pacific? This Bell Street shop specializes in Texas-sized rolls that lean into the fusion theme. Expect bold flavors and inventive presentations that cater to both traditionalists and those looking for something a bit more adventurous. 2300 Bell St., Space 9, 806.803.0524, cowboysushifusiontx.com \$\$

DAYVASOS JN AMARILLO

Featured on the cover of our July/August 2025 issue, Dayvasos JN is a chain that started in Chihuahua, Mexico. Sample Mexican snack trays, wings or the generously portioned No Manches Burger. Signature Clamaron drinks are an entire meal on their own—made to order and topped with meat, seafood, fruit or vegetables. 1104 E. Amarillo Blvd., 806.632.7243, dayvasosjnamarillotx.com \$\$

EL AGASAJO

This vibrant I-40 spot brings the flavors of coastal Northern Mexico to the High Plains. Dive into fresh ceviches, citrusy aguachiles and Sonora-style grilled meats in a setting that feels as much like a coastal getaway as you can find in the Panhandle. (Order the fish ceviche tostada for a perfect crunch.) 3319 W. I-40, 432.901.7907, elagasjotx.com \$\$

FIRE SLICE PIZZERIA

A little hard to find—this pizzeria is hidden on the back-alley side of the Summit Shopping Center—but it's definitely worth the discovery. We love the fun atmosphere, calzones, paninis, craft beer and shareable starters. The brick-oven pizza toppings are inventive, too. 7306 SW 34th Ave., Space 10 Rear, 806.331.2232, fireslice.com \$\$

GOLDEN LIGHT CAFE

This doesn't need an introduction from us, but are you a real Amarilloan if you've never dined at this icon? In business since 1946 at the same location, it's the oldest-operating restaurant in Amarillo and maybe even along Route 66. Fantastic greasy burgers with outdoor dining and a music venue next door. 2908 SW Sixth Ave., 806.374.9237, goldenlightcafe.com \$

HOPE VILLAGE

Located on the property of the nonprofit Advo, this location offers a coffee shop, deli and ice cream parlor under one roof. You're likely to be served by adults who have intellectual and physical disabilities and are learning valuable workforce skills. The food is good. The smiles are even better. 5197 S. Washington St., 806.484.9257

IT'S A PUNJABI AFFAIR

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

JACKET POTATO

Part of the Toot'n Totum family, this little shop with a British name promises portions to serve a Texas appetite. You'll find 30-plus

toppings to choose from. Go for the “Brisket Boss” for a smoky BBQ fix or the “Pizzatato” for a quirky, cheese-filled mashup. 4631 S. Western St., 806.323.7783, eatjacketpotato.com \$

JOE’S PIZZA & PASTA

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

KABUKI ROMANZA JAPANESE STEAKHOUSE & SUSHI BAR

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

LA MEGA MICHOACANA

Tucked into a red shopping center on the Boulevard, this glorious snack shop has a little of everything: popsicles, ice cream, agua fresca, Maruchan preparada, loaded Takis and a lot more. “Mega” is accurate. 802 E. Amarillo Blvd., 850.602.5219 \$

LEAF & BUBBLE TEA CO.

Upscale, cozy, and incredibly Instagrammable, this teahouse is about more than just boba. With a dedicated “social bubble” room and high-quality loose-leaf brews, it’s a premium hangout for tea enthusiasts. (The Jasmine green tea is exceptionally refreshing.) 4137 SW 34th Ave., 806.310.7814, leafandbubble.com \$

LOS PICUCHOS

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

MALCOLM’S ICE CREAM & FOOD

The place we all used to go to with our grandparents, this locally owned iconic restaurant has been serving scoops and comfort




TWO KNIVES
CATERING

Two Knives Catering is powered by women

Let our full-service catering company provide thoughtful, excellent service and exquisite cuisine for your next event

806.674.5245
TWOKNIVESCATERING.COM

COSMETIC SMILE RESTORATIONS
BITE CORRECTION | TMJ | SLEEP APNEA



CHANGE YOUR SMILE, CHANGE YOUR LIFE, AND START LIVING!




ADVANCED
DENTISTRY OF AMARILLO

Aesthetic Smile Design • TMJ • Sleep & Airway

Trey H. Miller, DDS, FAGD, LVIF

806.358.8021
AmarilloSmiles.com

6834 Plum Creek Drive, Amarillo, TX
@AmarilloSmiles



food since 1986. People love the burgers, chicken-fried steak and egg salad sandwiches. And no matter the age, no one can resist the malts and mundaes. 2100 Paramount Blvd., 806.355.3892 \$

MARISCOS EL VICTOR

Formerly known as El Big Boy, this mainstay on Historic Sixth continues to dominate the local seafood scene. The atmosphere is casual, the shrimp cocktails are massive, and the fresh tostadas are the perfect remedy for a hot Texas afternoon. 2813 SW Sixth Ave., 806.803.2107 \$\$

MOTOMEDI

Healthy meets hearty at this modern Mediterranean kitchen. Build your own orzo rice or orzo salad bowl with grilled chicken, lamb and a variety of homemade dips like Pista Feta and Muhammara. (The pillowy-soft artisan bread is made fresh daily, and don't forget the soft serve!) 2301 S. Georgia St, Suite E2301, 806.410.2575, motomedi.com \$\$

NINE LINE BBQ

This veteran-owned smokehouse is a must for brisket purists. If you're feeling bold, try "The Medic"—a massive bowl of smoked mac-and-cheese topped with pulled pork. Time your visit for Friday or Saturday for a chance at the coveted burnt ends. (Get there early before they run out.) 5920 Hillside Road, 806.779.5463, ninelinebbq.com \$\$

OISHII JAPANESE SUSHI & SAKE

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

THE PALETA BAR

Cool down at Town Square with a customizable twist on a Mexican classic. Choose your handcrafted *paleta*—milk or fruit-based—then dip, drizzle and dust it with everything from pistachios to Tajín. (The Elote is the perfect savory counterpoint to all that sweetness.) It's as much an experience as it is a dessert. 9180 Town Square Blvd., Suite 1071, 806.803.1537, thepaletabar.com \$

PESCARAZ ITALIAN RESTAURANT

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

PONDASETA BREWING CO.

Already popular for its craft beer, a mobile trailer enables the brewery to serve a food truck-style menu. The focus is pub-style food like burgers, sandwiches and mac-and-cheese bites. Kids meals are

THE AMARILLO BOTANICAL GARDENS

MUSIC

Gardens

IN THE

7PM-9PM

**EVERY THURSDAY IN
JUNE, JULY & AUGUST**



RICK LOOBY HOMES
AT SUNSET ACRES

6/04: Insufficient Funds

6/11: Big G & The Tradewinds

6/18: Rien Nash Band

6/25: Tennessee Tuckness

7/02: Logan Ellis & The Fever Dream

7/09: Broken Echo



7/16: Old Dog Tray

7/23: Solano Project

7/30: Touching Voodoo

8/06: Cameron James Smith

8/13: Kickback 2

8/20: Joe Trevino Band

8/27: Geezers Gone Wild

SPONSORED BY:
RICK LOOBY Homes
At Sunset Acres

TICKETS: GENERAL \$10 | MEMBERS \$5 | CHILDREN 10 & UNDER ARE FREE

available. The adults will want the charcuterie adventure board, with hummus, cheese, meat and crackers. 7500 SW 45th Ave., 806.418.6282, pondaseta.com \$\$

RED RIVER STEAKHOUSE

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

ROSA'S CAFÉ & TORTILLA FACTORY

Owned by the same company that owns Taco Villa, locals can be forgiven for loving this regional Tex-Mex chain. The portions are big and the prices affordable. Patrons love the convenient drive-thru, queso, free salsa bar (inside dining only) and homemade tortillas. It gets really busy on Taco Tuesday. 4312 SW 45th Ave., 806.351.1194 / 3820 W. I-40, 806.352.8227 / 6007 S. Soney Road, 806.803.9145, rosascafe.com \$

SAVÓR TAPAS BAR

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

SHARK BEACH BURGERS

Shark Beach's location south of town isn't particularly convenient for Amarillo residents. But this shack is worth the bite. The big cheeseburgers are amazing, as is the busted-egg sandwich. (For a side, get the cheese curds.) Then grab a cherry-lime or Mexican Coke and enjoy it on the nice, outdoor areas while you listen to live music. 1505 E. FM 1151, 806.335.5644, sharkbeachamarillo.com \$

SHI LEE'S BARBECUE & SOUL FOOD CAFE

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

Breakfast cravings? At Girasol Cafe & Bakery, we believe in simple pleasures: a good cup of coffee, friendly faces, freshly baked pastries, and Texas hospitality. Stop in to satisfy your hankerings with homemade menu items like Corn Fritters with avocado or a fresh-made pastry.



girasol CAFE & BAKERY 
 3201 S. Coulter St.
 806.322.0023 | girasol.cafe
 Catering | Private Events
 Fresh Artisan Bread To-Go

AC
 AMARILLO CLUB
Stay late. Savor more.
 AMARILLOCLUB.COM

SOMALI RESTAURANT BULSHO

Located off the Fritch highway, this halal restaurant and market serves Middle Eastern and East African meals. Arrive before 2 p.m., when it typically runs out of rice and meat dishes. 2380 Fritch Hwy., 806.690.8422, somalibulsho.top \$\$

TEDDY JACK'S ARMADILLO GRILL

With a vast, no-frills menu, this regional restaurant concept was created by former NFL safety and Texas Tech standout Curtis Jordan, who turned to the food biz after retiring in the 1980s. The outdoor area is great and so is the brick-oven pizza. A fun place to watch the big game. 5080 S. Coulter St., 806.322.0113, teddyjacks.com \$\$

TOOM'S RESTAURANT

Experts know that a lot of "Thai" food actually has origins in Laos, and that fusion is on display at Toom's, one of our favorite spots on the northeast side. The family owners are super friendly, the space is incredibly clean, and the authentic flavors pop. Get the sticky rice and beef jerky. 3416 NE 24th Ave., 806.381.2568 \$

TYLER'S BARBEQUE

Amarillo has no shortage of authentic Texas barbecue, but Tyler's always seems to be residents' first choice. Maybe it's because he's got a reputation all over the Lone Star State. Or maybe it's secretly because of the Frito pie and green chile stew. Plan

ahead: Most menu items sell out. 3301 Olsen Blvd., 806.331.2271, tylersbarbeque.com \$\$

WESLEY'S BBQ

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

X- STEAKHOUSE

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

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 \$\$

MAY/JUNE 2026

134

BRICKANDELM.COM



HUMAN RESONANCE
PORTRAITS WITH PRESENCE

A collection of acclaimed artists exploring the complexity of the human experience.

NOW OPEN THROUGH JUNE 13, 2026



Human Resonance is organized in partnership with Chelsie Nicole Contemporary, in collaboration with The Citadelle Art Museum.

520 NELSON AVENUE • CANADIAN, TX 79014
 (806) 323-8899 • THECITADELLE.ORG





UNITED WAY
of Amarillo & Canyon

UNITED

on the GREEN

2 TOURNAMENTS 1 GREAT CAUSE

8:30 a.m.
Registration



9:30 a.m.
Shotgun Start



\$600 Per Team
4-Person Scramble



Prizes &
Raffle Items



Snack, Drinks, &
Lunch Provided



SEPTEMBER 10, 2026

Ross Rogers Golf Course Amarillo, Texas

AUGUST 27, 2026

Palo Duro Creek Golf Course, Canyon, Texas

Scan The QR Code

Register Today!

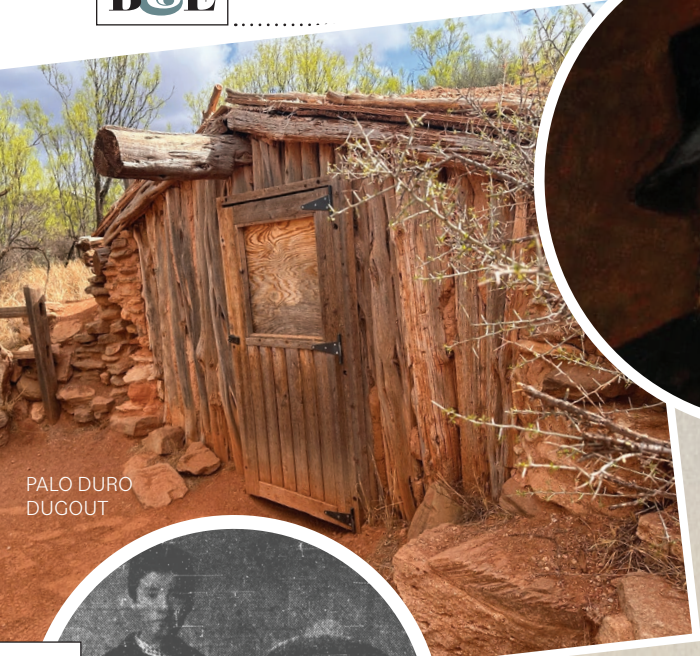


Scan The QR Code

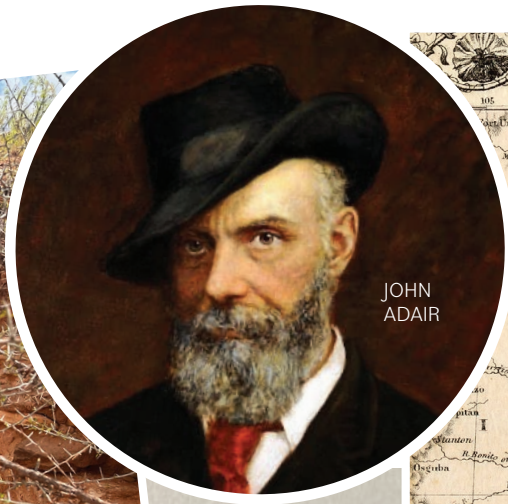
Register Today!



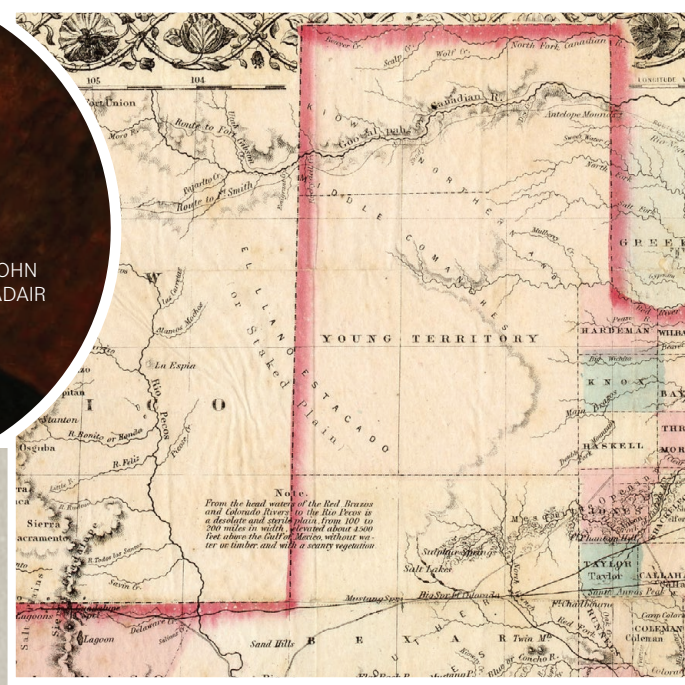
uwamarillocanyon.org



PALO DURO DUGOUT



JOHN ADAIR



A MAP OF THE PANHANDLE IN 1872



CASIMERO ROMERO

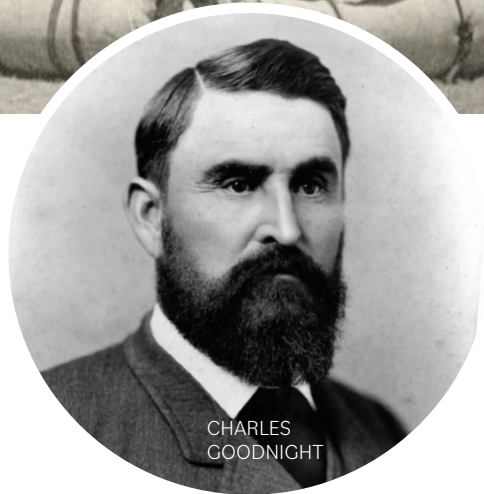
MAY/JUNE 2026
136
BRICKANDELM.COM



COWBOYS AT WORK ON THE JA



AN AERIAL OF THE JA RANCH



CHARLES GOODNIGHT

Presented by
PPHM
PANHANDLE-PLAINS HISTORICAL MUSEUM

THE GRASS WAS GREENER IN 1876

One of the stories my dad repeated many times was how Grandmother Reeves crossed the plains in a covered wagon “the year Custer was killed” as her family resettled from Arkansas to Arizona Territory.

Her name was Margaret, but everyone knew her as Recí. And the one thing Recí remembered about crossing the Texas Panhandle in 1876 was the emptiness, save for the occasional burial scaffolds left behind by native tribes that had only recently been starved out of their homeland and relocated to Oklahoma reservations. But it was the lonely nothingness of the grassy void that left the deepest impression on that 8-year-old Arkansas girl peering at the stark landscape through the canvas flaps.

Not only were the native people absent, but the great herds of bison, hunted almost to extinction, were gone, too. Aside from a few buffalo hunters’ camps and the newly established Fort Elliott in Wheeler County, the Panhandle was anything but crowded in 1876.

But trickles of new life were starting to spread across the high lonesome, gradually pooling into makeshift settlements faintly flickering in the darkened vacancy at the close of day. That spring, the brief solitude of the Texas Panhandle was noisily interrupted when Charles Goodnight drove 1,600 head of Longhorn cattle south from Colorado toward the Llano Estacado to stake his claim on the well-watered shelter of Palo Duro Canyon. Unlike Recí’s wagon train, Goodnight and his cowboys stayed. They claimed an empty land as their own.

Goodnight was somewhat familiar with the Panhandle, having served as a scout and Texas Ranger during frontier skirmishes with Comanches. But he steered clear of the Panhandle when he and his business partner, Oliver Loving, blazed their cattle trail in the 1860s. Flush with trailblazing success, Goodnight established a ranch in 1869 near Pueblo, Colorado, strategically close to Denver, where wealthy men such as the British aristocrat and financier John G. Adair were looking to cash in on the “beef bonanza” of Western ranching.

A financial panic in 1873 presented a rare setback for Goodnight, but also a golden opportunity. The greener grass of the Texas Panhandle beckoned. In March 1876, Goodnight’s signature on a loan—from Adair’s brokerage firm—to fund the Palo Duro venture effectively started the clock on our modern timeline.

With money in the bank, Goodnight set off for the Panhandle’s majestic canyon shortly thereafter, but he needed some help finding it. As recounted by J. Evetts Haley in his biography *Charles Goodnight: Cowman and Plainsman*, a Mexican guide was brought along to help navigate the way in, but with so many side canyons splitting open the caprock, the guide had trouble locating the canyon proper. After days of searching, the advance party rode to the brink of the grand Palo Duro and the guide shouted “al fin! al fin!” (at last! at last!).

A year into the Palo Duro business venture, Adair was

impressed enough with Goodnight to bring him on as a partner in the JA Ranch, building on Goodnight’s Palo Duro claim and eventually growing the holdings to more than a million acres filled with 100,000 head of cattle. Dozens of cattlemen followed Goodnight’s lead, and within a decade, the formerly empty Panhandle was virtually one large cattle ranch. But the conquest of the Plains by cattlemen was not a foregone conclusion at first.

Sheepmen from New Mexico known as *pastores* were also laying plans to relocate to the empty Panhandle in 1876, but only one is widely remembered. Casimero Romero, a sheepman from Mora County, New Mexico, likely had some knowledge of the empty land to the east where *comancheros* had been trading with native tribes for years. He was also aware of a particular Canadian River crossing at Atascosa Creek that would make a strategic base of operations.

In November 1876, a few months after Goodnight’s southward trek, Romero rolled into the Panhandle from the west with 12 ox-drawn wagons and close to 4,500 sheep—along with all of his family, all his possessions and a small army of hired help. The Romero party made camp on the banks of the Canadian River just east of Atascosa Creek, naming this first settlement Plaza Atascosa.

As cattle ranches began to proliferate in the western Panhandle, the town of Tascosa sprang up near Romero’s plaza. Romero and his family became part of the new community’s life, but his vocation increasingly became a problem for area cattlemen unwilling to compete with sheep for the available grass. By then, close to a dozen *pastores* had set up plazas built from native stone and adobe in the Canadian River valley. They were being pressured to either turn to cattle ranching or take their sheep with them back to New Mexico, which is what many did by the 1880s.

It’s interesting to think how things would look in 2026 had sheep won the day 150 years back. More of our towns might have Spanish names and would look more like New Mexican settlements with plazas and adobe homes. But the money in the 1870s and 1880s was on beef, and most of the Panhandle-Plains region, with its wide-open spaces, seemed made for large herbivores. And if anyone knew large herbivores, it was Goodnight. After he survived a winter in Palo Duro Canyon and formed the JA with Adair, he brought his beloved wife Mary Ann to their new forever home, ushering in the cowboy way that is still foundational to our Panhandle culture today.

Recí eventually made her way back, too. She arrived in Hall County by train as a young married woman in the 1890s after life got too hard in Arizona. I’ve always tried to imagine what she felt when she stepped off the train, surveying a landscape that was definitely less empty than before, but still delightfully uncrowded. She, too, found her forever home in the Texas Panhandle, but only because a few dreamers and opportunists in 1876 saw more than just an empty land. 🍷

IN THEIR TRACKS

Thus far in more than two years of *Take the Off Ramp* travel columns, I have focused on the present, and sometimes destinations a century old. In this episode, though, we're going back in time—waaay back—to when dinosaurs roamed the rolling hills southwest of Fort Worth. Archeologists say that 113 million years ago, during the early Cretaceous Period, Texas had some fairly large critters wandering around, long before oil men, bankers and northerners discovered the DFW Metroplex. Turns out they left behind some footprints.

The tracks primarily come from two types of dinosaurs: the massive, plant-eating *Sauroposeidon*, and the large, three-toed carnivorous *Acrocantosauris*. Both were unwitting contributors to what we know today as Dinosaur Valley State Park near Glen Rose. Created in 1972, it is the eighth most-visited state park in Texas, with 230,424 visitors in 2025. The park can reach capacity on weekends. Plan accordingly.

Long ago, dinosaurs stepped in soft mud, leaving behind indelible footprints. As the mud dried and hardened, it perfectly preserved the

prints. The passage of time—about a million years—brought about the erosion of these formations, the Paluxy River slowly wearing away the porous limestone. The result is a hard river bottom that is now a showroom of the geologic timeline.

Two giant statues near the visitor center provide fun photo opps. These were created for the 1964 World's Fair in New York City, and were donated by the Sinclair Oil Corporation. Although the statues are of *Tyrannosaurus* and *Brontosaurus*, which did not live in the park area, they are perfectly *apropos*.

The tracks were discovered in 1909, when a child stumbled upon the three-toed footprints of *Acrocantosauris* while playing in the river. Later, in 1928, a New York paleontologist discovered the large round prints of *Sauroposeidon*, the first proof that these creatures were terrestrial beings. Alas, this was all on private land, and it took until 1968 for Texas to acquire more than 1,500 acres through the state parks bonds program. Four years later, the park opened for all to enjoy.

I visited Dinosaur Valley this past February to participate in the MammothMarch, the local installment of a series of 20-mile, non-



take the off-ramp

WITH NICK GERLICH

competitive hikes held across the country. The event had sold out quickly for the Saturday date; a second day was added, and I was able to snag a ticket. I had the luxury of visiting the park on Saturday for the sake of trail recon, then got to see the vast majority of the park the next day during the event. (Info on next year's event can be found at MammothMarch.com. I'll be there.)

Long story short: There is no better way to embrace our state parks than by getting out on foot for a very long walk. Aside from roughly a mile to and from the start/finish, it was all unique trails the rest of the day. My visit on Saturday, though, allowed me to check out some of the tracks, as well as get accustomed to boulder hopping the Paluxy, something I would have to do twice the next day. Along the way, I fell in love with the park.

The best time of year to see dinosaur tracks—and there are many—is during summer, when the river runs low and rainfall is scant. Of course, it can be hot at that time of year. February provided delightfully mild weather, but because of a gully washer a week prior, there was still water flowing, and some of the best tracks were covered. They were still visible, albeit under several inches of water.

Check the park's website (tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/dinosaur-valley) for a downloadable map and to track viewing conditions.

The trails range from easy to challenging, with many short, steep climbs up and over the bluffs—they aren't bluffing—lining the river. There are more loose rocks than there are Texas residents. Still, mile for mile it is not as difficult as if you were to stitch together a similarly long course in our beloved Palo Duro Canyon.

Nearby Glen Rose offers numerous motels, from chains to mom and pops, along with a nice selection of local eateries. Camping is available in the park by reservation, as well as outside the park. The Glen Rose Brewing Company gets high marks, and is a nice place to relax after a long hike.

Dinosaur Valley is best accessed from Amarillo by traveling south to Lubbock, then to Sweetwater and Eastland, then farm-to-market roads to the park. It's less than 400 miles away, a short drive in these parts. Bring water shoes in case the river is up, and step into history. I'm betting you won't even come close to filling one of those tracks. 😊



KENNY PIGMAN

PGA, Director of Golf, Tascosa Golf Club

The best advice I ever heard is: Show up early, work hard and treat people the right way. Those three things will take you further than anything else.

My three most recommended books are: I'll be honest, I'm not much of a reader. Most of what I've learned has come from experience, mentors and time spent in the game.

To me, success means: building something you're proud of, helping others along the way, and enjoying the process—not just the end result.

People who know me might be surprised that I: have both an MBA and a degree in Turf Management. Not many golf professionals take that route, but it's given me a unique perspective on both the business side of the game and the agronomy behind it.

My biggest pet peeve is: a lack of effort and accountability, whether it's on the golf course or in everyday life.

Everyone in Amarillo needs to experience: a perfect West Texas sunset out on the golf course. There's nothing quite like it.

If I could change any one local thing it would be: the wind. Or, at least, I would create more outdoor spaces that are designed to block it and make being outside more enjoyable year-round.

This city is amazing at: building a strong sense of community. People here genuinely support each other.

My favorite place in Amarillo is: Tascosa Golf Club! It's hard to beat the atmosphere, the people and the experience.

A local organization I love right now: PGA Junior League. It's great to see kids getting introduced to the game early. Growing the game has always been important to me throughout my career. 😊



PHOTO BY SHANNON RICHARDSON



Trust
CHIEF METEOROLOGIST
JOHN HARRIS

YOUR LOCAL
WEATHER
LEADER



American Meteorological Society

Payday Hits Different with Direct Deposit!

Set and Forget It!



Learn More



anb.com | Member FDIC | Equal Housing Lender

 **Amarillo
National
Bank**
Awesome Service