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# In With the Old

**A**nother Halloween in the books... and I begin to clean up this year's porch decor, yesterday's joy, today's compost. Goofy's jolly face carved in my daughter's pumpkin has begun to buckle as the fruit ripens, an unavoidable condition for all of us living things.

Though, this aging process is not so permanent for you and I as it is for our porch pumpkins. I prefer the term refined, to ripened, or distinguished to old; just the ticket to enjoy these times and find peace in aging, as we become more ready than ever to live, laugh and love.

This issue is proof of the sheer resilience apparent in our community and its members. For me, the reminder awakens my soul and prepares me well for the holidays. I'm stronger now and better for it, bring on all the anxiety I tell you!

So, show off those laugh lines this season. Embrace all that is riddled with age and wisdom. Trust your fellow man and let us rejoice in the process all together now.




**Melissa McGavock**  
MANAGING EDITOR



## FROM OUR READERS

Let us know how we're doing:

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Granbury, Texas 76048

FOLLOW US  

Lake Granbury Living is the best looking, highest quality magazine in this area! I'm excited about everything they have going on! It's clean, current, and ALWAYS has great articles!

**- Zeke Dorr,**  
**Magnolia Realty Realtor**

Thank you so very much for making this hometown girl feel so special. Contributing to my community is a lifelong dream come true, and I cannot thank you enough for all you do at Lake Granbury Living!

**- Sara Miskovic,**  
**Owner of The Pan Handle**

"Jan and I love Lake Granbury Living magazine, and we appreciated the opportunity to share our story. LGL is a quality publication that beautifully showcases Granbury, Hood County and it's most important assets - the folks who call it home!"

**- Nin Hulett,**  
**Mayor of Granbury**

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10

## Gone Fishing

▶ BY ALAN SNAGG

Barry Stokes shares his life and passion.

18

## Let Them Eat Real Food

▶ BY JAN BRAND

A fresh perspective with Chef Curren Dodds.

26

## The Human Public Service Announcement

▶ BY JONATHAN HOOPER

All about GISD's Director of Communications.

34

## Home on the Range

▶ BY LM JOHNSON

Second Chance Farm is full of four legged characters and heartwarming stories.

44

## With Honor, Courage and Commitment

▶ BY CONNIE LEWIS LEONARD

Meet the Winning GHS Rifle Team.

54

## Can You Make a Narrow Escape?

▶ BY MARTHA HELTON

Big city mastery-room style entertainment in Granbury.

62

## Adoption - A Unique and Blessed Bond

▶ BY PEGGY PURSER FREEMAN

The labor pains of adoption last longer than natural birth, but the rewards are just as wonderful.

78

## Mindful Hoarding and the Power of No

▶ BY TUI SNIDER

In the mind of local Artist, Elise Techentine.

92

## Honest Answers to a Facebook Questionnaire

▶ BY DENA DYER

Beloved local writer and speaker answers the truth about her firstborn.





78



18

## Hometown Happenings

50 Fellas Foodfest

24

Paranormal Expo

52

Harvest Moon Festival of the Arts

76

Rubbish Revival Girl's Night Out

86

## Bundles Of Joy

Welcoming the newest additions to Hood County

60

## How to Get Involved

Philanthropic happenings to look forward to this season

72



26



10

# #TeamGoals



(left to right) Tori Townsend | Melissa McGavock | Jessica McElroy | Lindsey Haase | Andrew Heller  
Eric Wilkins | Lindsay Milson | Jared Latimer | Tim Justis | Jason Barbaree | Dawn Skinner

Colder weather brings us the joy of the holidays, a desire for coziness, and often the opportunity to spend quality time with those we care for most... oh, and sometimes too many baked goods from said loved ones. But that's what New Year's Resolutions are for, right?

Our GreenFox Marketing family has experienced a very exciting growth spurt this year. Like a large and diverse family gathering over the holidays, we too find ourselves feeling thankful. In our case, we are grateful to so many in the Granbury community who support us in business and in our adventures to come.

This Lake Granbury Living issue marks the first of many volumes to come that will be published by the team at GreenFox Marketing. Granbury deserves a beautiful and thoughtful publication that celebrates its unique people, places and stories - and we are confident that you'll find this issue reflects that.

We hope you'll join us in joy as we continue to grow as a company and as individual members.

*Eric Wilkins*  
Eric Wilkins, CEO

# LAKE GRANBURY *Living*

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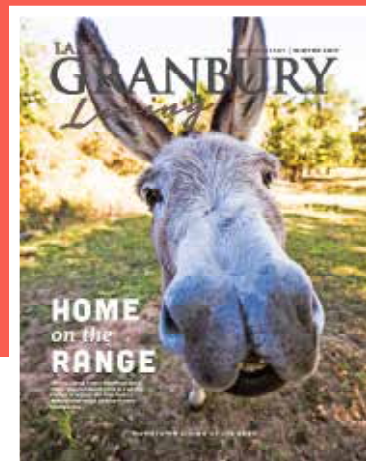
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### ABOUT THE COVER

Pictured is Junior the Donkey, resident of Second Chance Farms.

Photo By: Layth Taylor

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Barry Stokes has been on TV helping folks catch fish for more than three decades.



# GONE FISHING

Words by **Alan Snagg**  
Photography by **Layth Taylor**  
and provided by **Barry Stokes**

***BARRY STOKES LOVES TO  
BRING HIS FRIENDS ALONG  
ON HIS FISHING TRIPS.  
AND BARRY HAS LOTS OF FRIENDS.***

**T**he host of "Fox Sports Outdoors" fishing show is seen by viewers across 11 states. From Texas to Oklahoma, all the way to the Carolinas and Georgia, his show can be viewed from March through November. "We run three quarters (of the year). Most shows only run two," Barry said. "And it's current. We have 10 reporters...Our goal is for people to watch the show and be able to go out and catch fish that week."

Barry has been on TV helping folks catch fish for more than three decades. Prior to his current show, he hosted "Outdoor Trails", a nationwide broadcast, for 18 years. "The economy got us," Barry recalled of that show coming to an end. "It started in 1999. The business environment got terribly difficult and everybody cut their advertising, along with the dot.com bust. We had a nice little setup in Aledo."



March, 1972 Lake Holbrook

Barry was introduced to fishing when he was 5 years old.

But Barry is as happy as he's ever been doing "Fox Sports Outdoors." He is joined by wife Laurie as they hit the broadcast trail each February through October. In fact, she is an integral part of each broadcast. "My wife decided she would learn how to operate a television camera," Barry said. "She doesn't fish much, but she really enjoys running that camera, and she's great. She's the primary camera person on the show." Laurie also handles a lot of the paperwork and scheduling that goes with running the show.

"If he needs for me to troll a line behind the boat, whatever is best for the show, that's what I'm there for," Laurie said. "I love to travel, so my favorite part is being able to go with him. We are so blessed to be able to do this together."

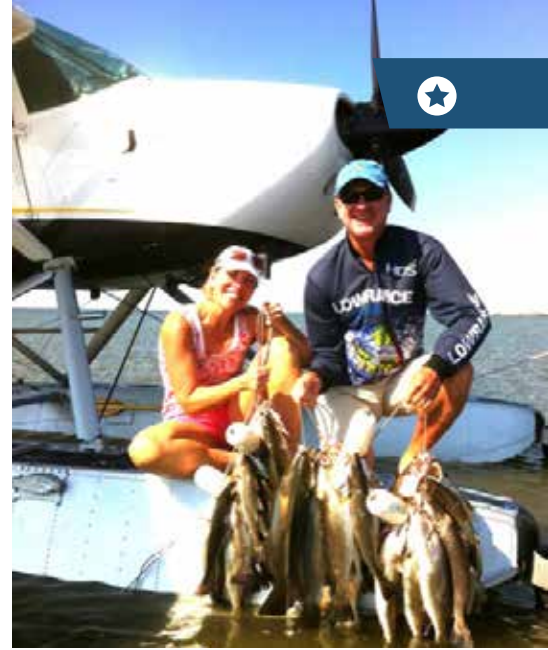
While Barry is the star, there are many other people who help make it happen, he stresses, including the aforementioned reporters, a full-time producer, and even someone who handles weather reports.

Though they spend much time away, the couple still call Granbury home. Their own office, as well

as their social media team are located in Granbury. The Stokes have lived on Lake Granbury for 21 years, where Barry will often escape in the show's offseason for some private time on the lake. "We came here and visited for our anniversary one year and just said, 'You know, this wouldn't be a bad place to live,'" Barry said. "It's a better environment to raise our kids, and I've spent hundreds of hours on the lake over the years."

Barry recently turned 60. He and Laurie have been married 39 years. They have two grown children and are "still waiting" on grandchildren, Barry jokes.

Barry was introduced to fishing when he was 5 years old. It was on a fishing trip with his dad. "I clearly remember. My dad took me to Lake Arlington," he said. "He bought some earthworms and we went out on the shore. We were perch fishing... It just hooked me. Watching that bobber go up and down, it connected with me. I realized that day I was destined to do what I'm doing now."



Gulf Shores red snapper

Barry has competed professionally, but more than that he loves communicating with viewers through his show. It was also early in life that he discovered his passion for broadcasting. "As a teenager I watched every Rangers and Cowboys game and I'd pay close attention to the announcers, listening to their every word," he said. "I would have my parents drop me off at TCU games, and I'd buy a ticket and sit in the top row. I'd broadcast into a recorder like I was doing the game live."

Barry went on to get a broadcast degree from Oklahoma Christian University. He worked at various radio stations, including hosting a fishing broadcast on WBAP for 15 years. "It was then I thought about giving TV a shot," he said, noting that he'd been inspired by the likes of professional anglers Jimmy Houston, Bill Dance, Freddie Grant, and even Curt Gowdy's "American Sportsman."

So, in 1985 he sold his pickup truck, bought some equipment and started his own show on Channel 27 in Dallas. "It wasn't a lightning bolt, just something

that, with persistence and longevity, paid off," he said.

Barry said the show involves more traveling now than ever before. He and Laurie are on the road much more, but with the children grown and moved out, they have turned it into an adventure. An adventure that includes a lot of work. "I spent 140 nights in a hotel last year," Barry said. "It's not glamorous. It's hauling cameras in and out of hotels, spending 12-13 hours in the water, getting up at 4 a.m., always changing batteries in cameras, cleaning equipment, transferring video. "We're exhausted at the end of the day. But we love it."

Barry said part of the show's continued popularity is connected to their willingness to experiment. And experiment they do; during the offseason Laurie is going to learn drone technology so that she can capture footage from the air. They also use Gopro cameras sometimes during filming.

In fact, Barry recently filmed an entire segment without a camera person. A regular TV camera

In 1985, Barry sold his pickup truck, bought some equipment and started his own show on Channel 27 in Dallas.

Barry said after all these years, his favorite part of it all is still teaching people to fish.





**"I LOVE TO TRAVEL, SO MY FAVORITE PART IS BEING ABLE TO GO WITH HIM. WE ARE SO BLESSED TO BE ABLE TO DO THIS TOGETHER."**

**- LAURIE STOKES**

was strategically placed, and he combined that footage with footage from a Gopro and his smart phone. "I was able to basically photograph myself with nobody else in the boat," he said. "I spent all day and was able to catch a lot of black bass. "It was extremely difficult. I don't ever plan to do it again, but it was fun."

Barry said after all these years, his favorite part of it all is still teaching people to fish. "I really get a thrill out of figuring out how to catch and relay that to the viewer," he said. "Then I'll run into one and they'll say something like, 'I watched your show, then I went out with my kid and we caught them'. I've caught tens of thousands of fish, but to me the most fun is watching others. I'll grab somebody around here sometimes and get them in the boat with me and take them out. That's the biggest thrill."

Laurie, on the other hand, still loves watching Barry fish after all these years. "It's fun for me to watch him catch some really big fish, some he's never caught before," she said. "It's funny when he stomps his foot when one gets away, too."

The challenge of finding fish is also one of Barry's biggest joys. "You've got thousands of acres of

water and the fish can go anywhere," he said. "When you launch a boat on the Gulf of Mexico and find fish, to be able to accomplish that, for example, is really exciting."

His favorite form of fishing is when he's on his own fishing for crappie in deep water. "Most people might think it would be big fish, bass, even swordfish, but I love crappie and the challenge they represent," he said. "I like to use all my electronic gear and find underwater ledges, find those structures on the bottom of the lake (where they hide)."

While Barry was successful for the two years he fished on the Bassmasters Tour, he found it kept him away from home too much and he enjoyed his hosting gig much more.

Barry is in no hurry to retire, but he said he realizes an exit strategy is prudent. "We're bringing in some young guys and easing them in a little at a time," he said. "I still hope to own the show, manage it, deal with all the sponsors, but to back off on the traveling and such over the next five to 10 years."

Then, he smiled, and said, "I am the most blessed guy, to catch fish and get paid for it for this long is an absolute dream". ■LGL





Photography By Layth



*Let's start at project together!*

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# LET THEM EAT REAL FOOD



Words by **Jan Brand** | Photography by **The Seventh Lens**

## CHEF CURREN DODDS IS A MASTER AT MAKING HEALTHY FOOD AND INGREDIENTS DELICIOUS AND ACCESSIBLE.

Whether it's huddling around a fire pit next to a chuckwagon, or eating at the iconic Delmonico's in New York City (which just celebrated its hundred-and-eightieth anniversary), it's all about the food.

More and more, people are beginning to understand that food, as nature made it, is healing and strengthening to the body. Shifts in the way we think about food and the ingredients we use to make our meals have given way to a new movement geared

towards real food and ingredients that many believe will not only help us live longer lives, but keep us healthy so we can enjoy the years.

The new "clean food" movement has attracted culinary experts and chefs world-wide, including Chef Curren Dodds, owner of Let's Eat at Hidden Oaks Golf Club. His name, Curren, is Gaelic for hero, a name which he has grown into as a champion of the healthy eating revolution.

Chef Curren doesn't remember a time he didn't love food. His mother was a hospital dietician who used her skills to provide savory meals for her family. At the age of eight he found his mother's cookbooks and began the journey that would make cooking his life's calling. He baked brownies. At sixteen he went to work for a national chain Italian restaurant as a scrapper, where he scraped and stacked plates. In time, he was promoted to making pasta and appetizers.

Chef Curren Dodds,  
owner of Let's  
Eat at Hidden  
Oaks Golf Club



In 2015, Curren toured Europe for seven weeks. Impressed by the European's respect for natural food, he came home with a new resolve to make his food better.



It wasn't until he went to work for a master baker at the Dutch Regal Bakery at Whole Foods in Dallas that he became captivated and knew he would do this for the rest of his life. Even though pastry is no longer the focus of his food, he values the time he spent learning the discipline of baking. Unlike cooking, where a recipe can be amended, baking is considered a science. If you leave an ingredient out of a pot of beans, you can add it later. If you forget an ingredient in cake, you might not want to eat it.

In 2015 Curren toured Europe for seven weeks and was stunned to see you could get fresh food and fresh pastries at convenience stores. Impressed by the European's respect for natural food, he came home with a new resolve to make his food better.

When he was asked to cater a dinner for forty he began to see the powerful impact his new appreciation for real food would have on his future. The woman giving the event gave him a list of things necessary for the meal - all organic, natural ingredients. To his surprise, out of twenty-thousand items in stock, the wholesaler had less than a hundred organic, unprocessed foods or that were not genetically modified organisms (GMO). In other words, not real food.



Patrons of the new Let's Eat can enjoy Chef Curren's exceptional food complete with family-style seating that allow diners to meet their neighbors.

The woman believe the requested food was what had healed her of cancer. The forty dinner guests had similar stories, and claimed that eating real organic food had healed them of deadly diseases. Curren experienced an epiphany about food that changed his life for the second time.

At the time, his mother was experiencing serious health issues, including diabetes and high blood pressure. He moved her to his house and began her days with whole-food juices, which always included green plant food. He made meals packed with nutrients. He used coconut cream and coconut oil to cook with. In seven weeks his mother had lost sixty pounds and her blood pressure was normal. Her eyesight had also improved.

The whole food revolution began in 1976. After curing himself of heart disease through diet and exercise, Nathan Pritikin founded the Pritikin Longevity Center to promote a healthy lifestyle of natural food and exercise to eradicate heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. Others soon found many kinds of cancer lost the battle to a high-nutrient diet. Pritikin considered diet the cause and the cure of many well-known diseases. He led the diet and health revolution that has gained

momentum in recent years.

In 1980, John Mackey and three friends opened the first Whole Foods Market, originally named Safer Foods, a parody on the Safeway brand. The natural food interest continues to grow today. Whole Foods has 473 stores, with ninety-one-thousand employees, and growing. Super markets are adding organic food sections to their inventory in record numbers as consumers flock toward better choices for themselves and their families.

After the success with his mother's health, Chef Curren was hooked on healthy food as a way of life. He became committed to making food that was both tasty and healthy. His all-natural corn-beef sandwich is without a doubt one of the best sandwiches I've eaten.

An all-natural diet means there are no chemicals, and no added hormones or antibiotics in the food chain. No pesticides, herbicides or insecticides. No additives to give the food a longer shelf life. The food is processed as little as possible to leave the maximum amount of nutrients to restore damaged cells - it's about food in its natural state.

During his years in Bluffdale, Chef Curren built a name for himself through exceptional food.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

The whole food revolution began in 1976. Today, Whole Foods has 473 stores, with ninety-one-thousand employees, and growing.



People drove for miles to enjoy the food at the original Let's Eat in Bluffdale, Texas.

Celebrities such as country singer Jewel, three-time Professional Cowboy Association Bull Riding Champion Tuff Hedeman, nine-time World Champion rodeo cowboy, Ty Murray, and Ruth Buzzi of Laugh-in and the Dean Martin Roasts-fame, became regular diners. People drove for miles to enjoy the food at Let's Eat.

When a disaster made it necessary to leave the Bluffdale location, April and Josh Wilks invited Chef Curren to move his restaurant to Hidden Oaks Golf Club.

Now, not only can residents enjoy a sumptuous meal, they can play a round

of golf and bring the whole family for a game of horse shoes, corn hole and golden tee. Patrons of the new Let's Eat can enjoy Chef Curren's exceptional food complete with family-style seating that allow diners to meet their neighbors and get to know people they wouldn't ordinarily have the opportunity to get acquainted with.

Let's Eat isn't just delivering delicious and authentic food, even though it's worth a visit just for that, it is now in a location that can make for a great family outing. Some of the best memories are made around family and food. ■LGL



 **LET'S EAT IS LOCATED INSIDE  
HIDDEN OAKS GOLF CLUB IN GRANBURY**

2791 HIDEAWAY BAY CT., GRANBURY, TX

*Hidden Oaks is the only golf course in Hood County  
that is open to the public.*





Best Appetizer: Marcus Bednarz and Brady Basil representing Lady Pirates Basketball Boosters, Bayou Blasters Crawdain Balls  
Best Entree: Damon Cumba and Kevin Willmeth, Sous Vide Bacon & Butter Beef Tenderloin

## 50 Fellas Foodfest

Granbury Reunion Grounds - Courts Cleveland Showbarn  
Saturday, October 21, 2017

Photography by Tori Townsend

This annual Granbury Education Foundation event that features 50 teams of two men each that prepare and serve an appetizer, entrée, or dessert in small one-bite samples. Cooks range from GSD superintendent Dr. James Largent and men from each school campus to elected officials and businessmen in the community. The food is judged by popular vote of those who attend.



Best of Show winners: Preston Cave and Brett Cook form Lakeside Students, Cheesy Dynamite Tator Tot Quesadillas





Best Dessert: Mark Jackson and Randy Harvey representing Granbury High School Science Dept., Carmel and Macchiato Crowned Brownie







# The Human Public Service Announcement

Words by **Jonathan Hooper** | Photography by **Shad Ramsey** and provided by **Jeff Meador**



**T**he road from Honolulu to Granbury is one less travelled—and it isn't even a road.

One can get here from there: it just takes a while. From one military base across an ocean to another, through stints in west Texas, Washington D.C. and Austin, the path is hardly a straight line, much less a wrinkling tesseract. But such was the path taken by

the Granbury ISD Director of Communications, Jeff Meador.

You may know Jeff, even if you have never met him. You may have seen him taking photos at Granbury schools. Perhaps you have received notices for bad weather days at school, or read about the recent construction and technology improvements at Granbury High School, or seen him on stage at the Granbury Opera House, or enjoyed his culinary style (or lack of it) at the annual 50 Fellas Food-fest. That's Jeff.

Jeff Meador circa 1974 on the beach in Hawaii with his aunt and mom, wearing a shirt that says "I'm a Little Tarleton Texan."



Jeff moved to D.C. in 1999 to work as a legislative assistant of education with Stenholm until 2002 when he became campaign manager for the 2002 election.



“The first thing people ask me is ‘where is your camera?’ If they can’t see it right away, they think I don’t care about the event. I have the camera. I always have the camera. But sometimes if the event needs to be up on media quickly, I can shoot it with my smartphone, and it is up on Facebook or whatever before people can finish their question.”

- Jeff Meador

Meador was born in Honolulu, where the family had moved following his father’s second tour of active duty in Vietnam. A few years later, the family moved to Ft. Hood, where the family settled in Copperas Cove. His dad later became an educator, teaching 5th grade Science. His mother was also an educator, first as a librarian, then later an educational diagnostician. They moved to McCamey, TX “because they paid a lot better in west Texas than Cove.”

“My sister had been in band in Copperas Cove, and she was a very good flute player. But I thought the saxophone was the coolest thing ever, so I joined the band.”

The band in McCamey was typical of many west Texas bands programs at the time. There were about 200 students in the school, and more than half were in band. “We went to State Marching Contest twice, and were runner up in the Honor Band competition for Class AA. We were energized to win, and had plenty of competition around us.” Meador later went on to attend Tarleton on a partial music scholarship.

As a Political Science major at

Howard Payne University and later at Tarleton State University, Meador had a goal of working in Washington D.C. Unfortunately, he did not know anyone there, and his family had no connections inside the Beltway. He applied for a summer internship with U.S. Congressman Charles Stenholm in 1993, and won it, leading to additional work after graduation with Stenholm as his assistant campaign manager for the 1996 election, and as campaign manager in 1998. He moved to D.C in 1999 to work as a legislative assistant of education with Stenholm until 2002 when he became campaign manager for the 2002 election.

Following that successful campaign, Jeff took a break from the life of public service and moved to Austin to work for Sprint for three years as a Regulatory Affairs Manager.

“Boring. But I was able to utilize some of my political skills working with the State Public Utilities Commission and with various groups on telecommunications issues. Still boring.”

Upon realization that the corporate world did not suit him, he took a position as the public policy information officer



In January 2017, Jeff's family established an endowed scholarship for public school teachers seeking graduate degrees.

in the Center for Agribusiness Excellence at Tarleton, working with studies regarding federal crop insurance program. His expertise gained from the Stenholm years in DC and west Texas fit nicely.

One year later, Meador found his way to public education. It had been lurking about for generations. In addition to his parents' involvement in public schools, his great-grandparents believed in the importance of education so much that they moved to the Rocky Point community near Stephenville for closer access to John Tarleton Agricultural College, now Tarleton State University. His grandmother enjoyed a career in public education that spanned from the 1930's to 1978, earning a Master's degree in Education at North Texas State Teacher College, now the University of North Texas. His grandfather started as a farmer near Stephenville, and later became a bus driver and custodian.

### Where Is Your Camera?

He began his career in the Granbury ISD as the Public Information Officer in 2007. As technology rapidly changed, so did his duties with the school district. The job today is more about establishing better communication with the teachers, students, and parents, and then on into the community.

"My role in 2007 was very similar to my role today, but the technology has changed the actual work so much since that time, particularly the various means



GHS Groundbreaking with GEF Board Members





of the transmission of information. So the job evolved with the demands of that technology, including social media, text messaging, automated phone calls, and other exchanges and interactions with parents and teachers that did not even exist ten years ago.”

A recipient of multiple awards and honored by critical acclaim for his educational reporting, Meador seems to be everywhere every day. Early mornings might begin at an elementary school event before breakfast, followed by meetings with parents or administrators or both, and an approaching press deadline to print media by noon. A quick lunch before taking photos at a middle school event leads to more meetings, then still more meetings, more writing, improving the various district web pages, more photos, and late afternoon travel to an out of town concert or game, and another deadline, perhaps to the local newspaper, or a media outlet in the Metroplex.

“The first thing people ask me is ‘where is your camera?’ If they can’t see it right away, they think I don’t care about the event. I have the camera. I always

have the camera. But sometimes if the event needs to be up on media quickly, I can shoot it with my smartphone, and it is up on Facebook or whatever before people can finish their question. But I always have the camera. Well, almost always!”

### **Nobody Likes Bus Duty...**

Working directly with teachers, parents, and students is the best part of Meador’s job. He is happiest when he can be a successful advocate for the students and for the programs in which they are involved. He does his best work promoting the numerous success stories found in every Granbury school. For him, those are the easy parts of the job. But there are also those trying times when he has to go strictly into “work mode” and deal efficiently with the confidential information related to sensitive topics or tragic accidents. “Those are so very tough, but must be done, and I am the guy who must do it. Those events, and bus duty. I actually do bus duty at the high school on an occasional basis. Nobody likes bus duty.”



In the ten years Jeff Meador has spent working for GIS, his role remained consistent, but the importance of technology in that role has increased dramatically. Each advancement creates a new communication tool for parents and students.



*"I can hardly imagine living without hope...  
Hope forces me to believe that those better  
alternatives will prevail, and above all it forces  
me to do something to make them happen."*

- Vaclav Havel

### **There Are No Small Roles...**

In addition to his work in the schools, Meador has been active in numerous community endeavors, and has served on the boards of Hood County YMCA, Operation School Supplies, GISD Education Foundation, Ruth's Place, Boys and Girls Club, and others. Since 2015, Meador has been also extremely active at the Granbury Opera House, serving as secretary on the board for the Granbury Theatre Company. Did his previous career in politics prepare him for the stage? He thinks that perhaps his behind the scenes roles in Washington politics is similar to his participation in the GTC, but his acting skills were not a part of the D.C. scene. He gets a lot of satisfaction from his role in finding the potential in the struggling organization and helping to turn it into a vibrant center for the arts, bringing

thousands of people to downtown and the greater Lake Granbury community.

"People have been kind to let me act on stage in five productions, and serve as assistant director for two more, but I do a lot more work in the areas of marketing, promoting, and communications for the GTC. There is a tremendous amount of talent, both local and imported, that finds its way to the Granbury Opera House stage. It's incredible for a small town and theatre of our size. And our theatre itself is remarkable!"

Promoting events and organizations while advocating for people is a way of life for Jeff Meador. His life has been a shared legacy of public service to the citizens of Texas, generation after generation, in the best Texas tradition of farm and education, always looking to the future while taking care of the present. ■LGL

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# HOME *on the* RANGE

Words by **LM Johnson** | Photography by **Layth Taylor**

## ***Amore is living up to his name.***

He grins and wiggles gleefully as I scratch his ears, then makes a sly attempt to nibble my hat, which is taking up the place on my lap that he would like to occupy. My host laughs as she comes to the rescue of my headgear. “Now doesn’t that look like a normal dog to you? He doesn’t know that there’s anything wrong with him. He’s as happy as he can be.”





The mission statement for Second Chance Farm is both a challenge and an admonition: "Let's Redefine Normal."

But there is something wrong—or at least different. Amore is an almost white Australian Shepherd, born permanently blind and deaf due to inbreeding. His owner and caregiver, Sandi Walker, explains, "He's a double merle. You should never breed merle to merle in any breed, but people do it, and this is what can happen."

The demand for lame, halt, and crippled animals is no greater than it is for humans. But for a dog like Amore, there is an option. This is Second Chance Farm, and its mission statement is both a challenge and an admonition: "Let's Redefine Normal."

A few miles west of Granbury, down a series of narrow roads that snake away from 377 south into the cedar, the seventy acres of what was once a family farm is the refuge and in many cases permanent home of a varying number of animals who have found a welcome they would likely have found nowhere else. At any given time, there are as many as a hundred assorted creatures—horses, donkeys,

pigs, sheep, cattle, birds, the occasional cat, and many, many dogs—enjoying lives that in most cases would have ended long ago for the sake of human convenience, or out of misguided compassion.

But twenty years ago, owner Sandi Walker had an epiphany. "I had a horse that went blind so I put him with a crippled cow. Then I put a bell around the cow's neck so the horse could hear her. So my horse got a seeing eye cow. And that worked out." The farm that she shared with her now 91-year-old mother became Second Chance Farm, a place dedicated to making the seemingly impossible animal rescues that almost no one else would consider, let alone attempt.

Second Chance is a comfortably sprawling place, with large dog pens interspersed with pasture land. Each pen is graced with what appears to be a Hobbit house-- a small, tidy, air conditioned and heated shed that typically shelters two residents, each with his or her own space and bed. There is a comfortable



***“...I think I could turn  
and live awhile with  
the animals....they  
are so placid and  
self-contained,  
I stand and look at  
them sometimes half  
the day long.”***

**—WALT WHITMAN**



Junior the donkey was born with a cleft palate that marked him for euthanasia.



Second Chance Farm is a comfortably sprawling place, with large dog pens interspersed with pasture land.



looking hen house for a small flock of once homeless chickens, a tank where assorted ducks paddle and preen, including one recent refugee from our storm-ravaged Gulf coast. A golf cart makes getting around easier, and as we roll past the various enclosures, an entourage of teasing, cheerful dogs trots beside us as Sandi greets the residents by name.

Everyone here has a backstory. Blossom the pig, a massive black and white sow who eyes us at the sound of her name but does not rise from the comfy shade of her sty, probably spent her earlier life as an ag project, a situation that commonly ends as expensive pork chops. The same is likely true of Leonard, a young Jersey steer who shares his paddock with Lopez, a massive and placid Brangus who began his life as a bottle fed orphan calf, and Wilber, a blind Hereford/Jersey mix. Junior the donkey was born with a cleft palate that marked him for euthanasia. His BFF is Jazzy, a pretty paint mare. Sandi laughs as we pass them, observing, “Doesn’t matter what you look like. You can still have a hot chick.”

Over the years, there have been many memorable cases, often courtesy of Hood County Animal Control. Demo, a Catahoula/beagle mix, was hit about a year and a half ago by a truck pulling a trailer on Pearl Street in Granbury. The truck kept going, and when Animal Con-



trol arrived, there seemed only one option for a dog with a shattered pelvis, hind legs all but flattened, horrific road rash, and a jaw so broken that it hung loose down his throat. Sandi recalls, “They had him on the table and were about to put him down, and then he wagged his tail. So they called me.”

Between Sandi and the several DVMs she keeps on speed dial, Demo survived and now makes it happily and handily on three legs and minus a lower lip, scarred but unbowed. He has plenty of canine company, like Forest, a big mixed breed who, if human, would probably register well up on the autism scale. Sandi explains, “He won’t attack humans, but he goes after inanimate objects. And he can’t handle any change in his routine—the food bowl has to be just where he’s used to finding it.” And Willow, a seven-year-old white Great Dane whose owners gave her up fearing harm to a new baby. She is another product of careless breeding, congenitally blind and deaf, but like all the animals here sleek, healthy, and happy.

The time, money, and logistics involved in running an operation like this are always a challenge. Initially, a business degree from Tarleton made Sandi a businesswoman. “I did nails for twenty years—

owned a nail salon and beauty supply store. Then I opened a tanning salon—still have it. And that’s how I funded this place. Now I’ve gotten us our 502(C)3. We’re 100% donation funded. My two businesses pay my personal bills.”

But as much as it matters, money is no substitute for hands on deck. Three volunteers and a part time employee help keep up with the daily and infinite details of life on this very unique farm. And then there’s the cyber approach to supporting a cause. “We’ve got 170,000 followers on Facebook, and they’re all over the world.”

Facebook came to the rescue when Sonora, a blind, pregnant mare, had to be transported from Oklahoma. “Within minutes of posting, I had \$600 in donations to cover getting her here. She gave birth two weeks later, and I filmed and posted it, and people were just blown away, they’d never seen that before.” Sonora’s daughter, Starla, now serves as her mother’s guide, to the delight of many. “People laugh with us and cry with us.”

The many permanent residents of Last Chance share their home with a rotating cast of guests. Ten dogs came as hurricane refugees, five of which have since been returned to their owners. And adoptions



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Every three weeks, a ton of horse feed is needed at \$850.00 a ton.



do take place; a deaf couple in Waco applied to adopt a deaf dog, and wound up taking two.

But the needs of the animals receive first consideration. Sandi introduces me to a tiny, shy, very pregnant dachshund who is one of the remaining storm dogs. “If her owners ask, I have to give her back. But I hope they don’t ask. She’s heartworm positive, and she’s been bred over and over because her owners want to make money off her. I’d like to keep her here.”

There is always another need and another success and another possibility. Inside the front gate, a building has just been added to serve as an onsite clinic. Next to the main house, a donated school bus awaits its resurrection. “It would be so cool. We could do adoption events, meet and greets, and loan it out for emergencies. I just need a mechanic to get it running and someone to do

the remodeling.” Donations have lately put a Tommy lift on the back of the van that made the run to Rockport in the wake of Harvey, making it much easier to load up large animals. It would be nice to find a grant writer willing to donate their services. The \$13,000 just raised on North Texas Giving Day will go quickly; every three weeks, a ton of horse feed is needed at \$850.00 a ton.

But there are no complaints here. In the distance, Comanche Peak stands against the late summer sky and Sandi glances at it, remarking of her overwhelmingly contented charges, “They don’t all come here this way, but they get gentle. I wonder if this isn’t like a sacred place.” She adds, “We’re not a tourist attraction, we’re a home. And we’re not out there for money. But I’m rich at heart from the smiles I get from animals—they’re just happy, happy, happy.” ■LGL

[WWW.SECONDCHANCEFARMGRANBURY.ORG](http://WWW.SECONDCHANCEFARMGRANBURY.ORG)



Willow, a seven-year-old white Great Dane whose owners gave her up fearing harm to a new baby. She is another product of careless breeding, congenitally blind and deaf, but like all the animals here sleek, healthy, and happy.



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# WITH HONOR, COURAGE, & COMMITMENT

MEET THE WINNING GHS RIFLE TEAM

Words by **Connie Lewis Leonard** | Photography by **Layth Taylor**



THE STUDENTS THAT MAKE UP GRANBURY HIGH SCHOOL'S RIFLE CLUB ARE LEARNING IMPORTANT LIFE LESSONS LIKE RESPONSIBILITY, RESPECT, SAFETY, AND DETERMINATION. **AS IF THAT'S NOT ENOUGH TO BE PROUD OF, THE TEAM ALSO COMPETES WITH THE TOP SHOOTERS NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.**

**M**arine Corps Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps, or MCJROTC for short, may conjure up images of screaming, yelling, and running. GHS Rifle Club shatters that mold. The ten girls and two boys who comprise the elite group want people to know that the physically and emotionally demanding sport is also fun. While many may assume it to be a male sport, girls dominate the team because they tend to mature at a younger age and are often better able to meet the demanding mental concentration required. At its core, MCJROTC is all about discipline and safety.

Lieutenant Colonel Scott Casey (Ret.) has served as the Senior Marine Instructor for the past six years. While attending Caprock High School in Amarillo, he participated as a member of the rifle team and color guard. After graduating high school, he attended college on a rifle scholarship and eventually graduated with a B.S. in Education from West Texas A&M.

# MARINE CORPS JROTC MISSION:

- > TO DEVELOP INFORMED AND RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS
- > TO DEVELOP LEADERSHIP
- > TO BUILD CHARACTER
- > TO TEACH ELEMENTS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR NATIONAL SECURITY
- > TO STRESS DISCIPLINE
- > TO RESPECT AUTHORITY
- > TO ENLIGHTEN ABOUT CAREER AND EDUCATIONAL CHOICES



Girls dominate the team because they are often better able to meet the demanding mental concentration required.



Lt. Col. Casey honorably served the Marines on foreign and home soil, receiving numerous awards and medals. He retired in May of 2012 to take the position as Senior Marine Instructor with GISD. He enjoys spending his spare time with his wife and three children. For him, it's all about the kids. He explained, "I love seeing the cadets grow in a sport that I love." And grow they have, both in their sport and as individuals.

Ninth grader M'Leah Lambdin said, "As a child growing up with two extremely athletic older sisters, I never really had a group I fit into." Then her grandfather taught her to shoot. "The second my finger pulled the trigger, I knew I had found



what I loved. Being on the rifle team forces you to be responsible. When everyone is on break, we're practicing, and there's nothing more rewarding than proving our hard work is seen when we place at matches." She competed with The International Team in Bristol, IN.

Allison Henry, a sophomore, said, "Shooting offers so many opportunities from simply satisfaction to scholarships. Whenever I qualified for the Junior Olympics as a freshman, I was overwhelmed with excitement. This was the match that really opened my eyes to my potential in the sport. While I was at the Olympic Training Center, I had the privilege of meeting other high school and

collegiate athletes. I also had the chance to work with Matt Emmons, a three-time Olympic gold medalist, and to meet the 2016 Olympic Gold Medalist, Ginny Thrasher." Allison's experiences have led her to set some exciting goals for herself, "I've set my sights on making the podium at the 2024 Paris Olympics", she says.

Junior, Makenzie Sheffield said, "The ultimate goal for any person that wants to do well in their sport is to get to the highest point, which for shooters is the Olympics". But she knows it won't be easy, "In order to get where I want to be in life, I have to work for it—that's how I was raised. You can achieve so much more by perfecting the little things that

LT. COL. CASEY HAS WRITTEN GRANTS AND RECEIVED \$100,000 TO PURCHASE RIFLES, SHOOTING JACKETS, PANTS, AND FOR OUTFITTING THE RIFLE RANGE WITH ELECTRONIC TARGETS, MAKING GHS ONE OF THE BEST HIGH SCHOOL RANGES IN NORTH TEXAS.



lead up to the big outcome you are wanting, because if you try to focus on just the outcome, you will miss a lot of important 'little details' that help you achieve the goal".

Brittney Pinckard, a senior, said of the NRA Nationals/International Team, "I learned a lot from the range officers, match directors, other shooters, parents, as well as myself. There is a lot to take away from others to form your own preparation and match routine". Being on the Rifle Team has taught her some valuable life lessons on perseverance, "What you do in shooting applies to almost everything you do in life. If you take a bad shot, you can choose to let it affect you the rest of the match, or you can move on and do the best you can with what you have left. It's all about making critical decisions and improving yourself mentally".

One of the two young men on the team, Jakob Rankin, a junior, said, "Some benefits and rewards of being on the rifle team are the opportunities to travel and meet people. I've had the privilege to shoot at the Civilian Marksmanship Program South Range in Alabama; Camp Perry, Ohio; the TCU Rifle Range

and the Olympic Training Center in Colorado. Also, our team was given a tour of the Murray State Rifle Facilities by head Rifle Coach Alan Lollar. Another benefit is physical fitness. Endurance is required in shooting a simple 40-shot standing match, and especially in 60-shot standing matches and 3x20 matches (20 shots in Prone, Standing and Kneeling)."

The core missions of the MCJROTC have clearly made an impression on senior Trinity Hathaway. She explained, "I've learned a lot over four years being on the rifle team: Things don't always turn out the way you planned. There are no shortcuts to success. I've known hardship in my shooting career. I have questioned myself as an athlete. I stand moving forward, growing stronger. I will never forget the frustrating days, for they have made me better on and off the range. I want to thank my coach, my teammates and friends, for they have molded me into the shooter I am. I will make them proud and will never give less than my best."

Freshman Andrea Puga is looking forward to her future on the team, "Being on the Rifle Team has been a fun experience. The opportunity to shoot with



All cadets exemplify the core values of honor, courage, and commitment as they develop leadership skills, self-discipline, and responsibility.

my team, which I see as a family, makes me happy. As a member on the team, I will be facing a lot of challenges throughout the journey, such as learning how to focus and concentrate, going against other teams, going to finals and trying to be the best I can. Hopefully this will help me reach my goal in the future by getting a scholarship to college and making my parents proud of me and my accomplishments.”

Elizabeth Plecity, a junior, has been active in Girl Scouts since age five when she started as a Daisy. She is currently working on her gold star project (Girl Scouts’ highest award). Elizabeth danced competitively for eight years. In January, 2016, she was invited to join the precision shooting team. She said farewell to dance and hello to the Rifle Team! Elizabeth practices every day. She is registered with the NCAA Eligibility Center and hopes to shoot on a collegiate level with her eye on the 2024 Olympics. After high school, Elizabeth would like to major in criminal justice, commission into the Marine Corps and eventually work at Homeland Security.

For many of the students, their rifle team days are far from over. Kelcy McGrath said, “I have known since my freshman year that I wanted to pursue and take rifle seriously. Around the end of my sophomore year, I really started looking at schools to narrow down where I wanted to go and what I was looking for in

## THE GRANBURY HIGH SCHOOL RANGE HOSTS:

- > JROTC SHOULDER TO SHOULDER MATCHES
- > USAS PTO MATCHES
- > ARMY MARKSMANSHIP UNIT SECTIONALS
- > CMP POSTAL MATCH
- > NRA SECTIONALS
- > AMERICAN LEGION SECTIONALS
- > 4-H TRAINING
- > SUMMER AIR RIFLE CAMPS
- > MARKSMANSHIP TRAINING FOR OVER 100 CADETS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR





an education. Murray State University stuck out and had everything I wanted. With Lt. Col. Casey's help, I was able to take an official visit to Murray State, where I verbally committed to the coach of the rifle team for the next four years of my career. Their team is currently ranked third in the NCAA."

Sophomore Clarissa Layland has gained valuable life skills on the team, "Being a Rifle Team member has more benefits than most people might think. You learn how to solve problems on your own. In football, if an athlete is having a bad day, the coach can yell from the sidelines to give advice. In shooting, coaching on the line is against the rules, so if the athlete doesn't come off the line, their coach cannot do anything. Getting off the line is a hassle, so it is much easier to fix the problem you are having by yourself. It teaches you to work through everything without getting frustrated or annoyed."

First year shooter Angel Mosco, a freshman, said, "I joined the team because I want to prove to people that what we do is really a challenge for us. I have enjoyed the few months I've been on the team. It has shown me great confidence and many ways to challenge myself as a person. I hope that within these next few years what I have accomplished on the team will bring me to getting a scholarship for college and take me on a successful journey."

Although the students certainly are maturing as individuals through their experiences on the rifle team, they also appreciate their teammates and Lt. Col. Casey, who they say is a great teacher who

"BEING ON THE RIFLE TEAM PRACTICALLY FORCES YOU TO BE RESPONSIBLE. WITH THE AMOUNT OF TIME WE COMMIT AND STILL BEING INVOLVED WITH COMMUNITY SERVICE, OTHER EXTRA-CURRICULARS AND KEEPING OUR GRADES UP, WE LEARN VERY QUICKLY JUST HOW IMPORTANT TIME MANAGEMENT IS."

- M'LEAH LAMBDIN

inspires and encourages his students. Peyton Smith said, "I have had a lot of fun shooting in matches and practices. I shot sporter rifles. Then I was introduced into the precision rifles. Without my team and Lt. Col. Casey, none of this would have happened. I thank them all for welcoming me onto the team, which is one of the best experiences I have had. We are all like family, helping and companionship, and that's the most important thing to have within a team. We all laugh and have a good time while we shoot and work on the things to make us better shooters." ■LGL



## Paranormal Expo

Historic Granbury Square

September 30 - October 1, 2017

*Photography by The Seventh Lens*

Locals and tourists alike flocked to the Historic Granbury Square to kick off the Halloween season at the Sixth Annual Granbury Paranormal Expo. This year's street festival included paranormal, sci-fi, fantasy, horror, cosplay, and nerd culture vendors and exhibits.

[www.granburyparanormalexpo.com](http://www.granburyparanormalexpo.com)





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# CAN YOU MAKE A NARROW ESCAPE?

BIG CITY ENTERTAINMENT IN GRANBURY

Words by **Martha Helton** | Photography by **The Seventh Lens**

**IF YOU LOVE TO SOLVE PUZZLES, PLAY STRATEGY GAMES AND ARE LOOKING FOR SOME ADRENALINE-FILLED, LIVE ACTION ENTERTAINMENT, SIGN UP FOR GRANBURY'S OWN ESCAPE ROOM ADVENTURE, NARROW ESCAPE.**

Inspired by popular escape-the-room video games, the first escape room opened in the United States in 2012 and now there are over 1,750 locations. Locked for an hour in a themed room, you are immersed in a different world, cracking codes, discovering clues and solving puzzles with up to seven of your friends, family members and/or coworkers to “escape” the locked room. My curiosity piqued, my husband, son and I decided to come out from behind our screens at home and embark on a fun-filled, real-life adventure.

Even though I consider myself an impatient, light-weight at using brain power for puzzle-solving, I felt secure knowing my software engineer husband and online gaming creator/ enthusiast son would come through for me. Besides, as a writer, I was the designated observer in the group. When we arrived, we were greeted by co-owners, Eric Wertz and Ryan Toth. They directed us to watch a video segment that explained the rules of the game.



Brainstorming with a few friends produced some solid ideas for the room's themes and stories. A vote determined which two were going to make the cut. Sal's Chop Shop started as a poke at Eric who, a year earlier, had a motorcycle stolen from his house.

Next, a door was opened and we were ushered into a dark, cozy, burgundy-colored room with all the delightful elements of a 1920's speakeasy, complete with a bar, a corner booth and - of course - lots of liquor "moonshine" bottles. The overall scenario was that we were served a tainted whiskey that knocks us out cold. The bartender, too tired to move us, left us passed out in a booth, but left a trail of clues leading to his secret, high profile exit. By following the clues, we would be able to escape without alerting the police.

Because the room was watched via surveillance camera, Eric explained that we could sing a song or tell a joke if we got stuck and a verbal clue would be given. Well, that may be sooner rather than later, I thought. Then Eric gave us our first clue, he left and the timer over the door started counting down from 60 minutes.

I looked around. The room was expertly designed with professional, realistic props...not at all like a cheesy, haunted

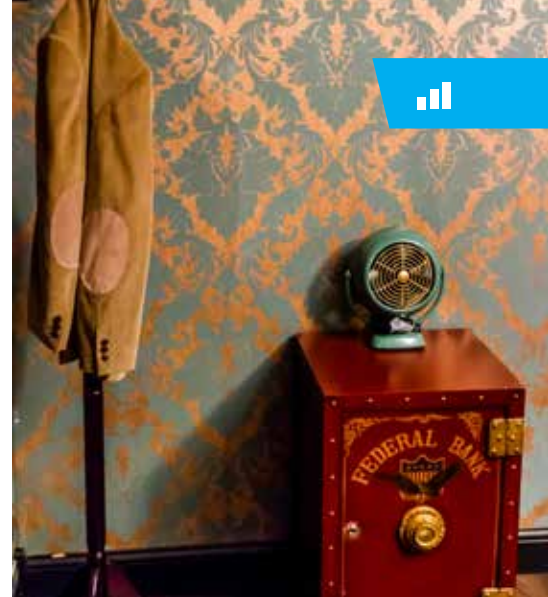
house experience, I surmised. We moved uncertainly, but with heightened curiosity, clumsily rifling through everything we could see on different surfaces. I was a little nervous, but not knowing what to expect was part of the fun and added to the suspense. After wandering around for a while with no luck, Eric gave us a hint. Sure enough, we hit the jackpot—our first clue solved. Cool!

Without giving away any spoilers, clues can take the form of math problems, numbers, riddles, mysterious symbols, word play, or sound or video recordings. Some cool technology used can be black lights, lasers, magnetic and electric currents, or even Morse code.

With growing confidence after solving the first clue, we continued. Me, the lazy problem-solver, would pipe up periodically and say, "Let's ask for help," to which my keen, sleuth partners would both say in unison, "No, not yet." Finally, at one point they acquiesced and we sang out loudly for a clue, "My country tis of



Co-owners,  
Eric Wertz and  
Ryan Toth



thee, sweet land of liberty...”

Prior to Narrow Escape’s grand opening in January 2017, co-owner Eric Wertz had enjoyed a few escape room experiences so much he invited his long-time friends, Sarah Harvey Toth and her husband, Ryan Toth, to “escape” as well. Ryan poo-pooed the idea, thinking it would be lame—“some dinner theater madness that we’d all regret.” Reluctantly, he acquiesced and after that one momentous, immersive adventure, they eagerly batted about the idea of opening one themselves. A month later they signed a lease. With the help of many family members and friends, and “cashing in every favor ever owed to us,” they finished in six months, only hiring out for the few elements where a professional was needed.

“With the exception of one prop in our building, they were all built on site. If it’s electronic, Ryan probably designed and built it. If it’s mechanical, then Eric (a former diesel mechanic) was the brains behind it. Any of the paper props and puzzles were made by me,” Sarah shared. “We worked day and night to create something we are all extremely proud of.”

Especially noteworthy, considering the quality and ingenuity that make up each escape room, is the

fact that the owners bypassed going the franchise route. “We wanted to create something of our own from scratch. The idea of buying a franchise to bring to a small town just didn’t make sense to us,” Sarah explained. “Plus, we’re all too hard-headed to let someone else tell us how to do our jobs!”

Brainstorming with a few friends produced some solid ideas for the room’s themes and stories. A vote determined which two were going to make the cut. Sal’s Chop Shop started as a poke at Eric who, a year earlier, had a motorcycle stolen from his house. “Ryan proposed we make the players find the stolen motorcycle at a chop shop to win the game as a joke. It evolved into what it is now...your friend who steals cars, gets locked up and needs a favor from you,” Sarah explained.

The Speakeasy was actually written by one of Sarah’s co-workers at the time. “We fell in love with the story and promised to give her credit if we used it. So, Sally Stanfield, if you’re reading this, “Thank you!” Sarah chuckled. “Not much was changed from her original story either; we adapted it a bit to fit the end of our game.”

As for ideas on the props and mechanical elements for the room, there was a lot of long nights re-



#### DID YOU KNOW?

With the exception of one prop in our building, they were all built on site.

A photograph of a speakeasy-themed room. The wall is made of red brick. On the left, there is a dark wooden bar cabinet with a mirror above it. In the center, there are two vertical copper pipes with a valve and a knob. In the foreground, there is a large wooden barrel with a lantern on top. The lantern has a glass chimney and a metal top. The floor is dark wood.

The Speakeasy room is dark, cozy, burgundy-colored room with all the delightful elements of a 1920's speakeasy, complete with a bar, a corner booth.

The grand opening  
in January 2017



searching, looking at available products, brainstorming on what was or wasn't possible, and plenty of discussion over whether the props fit the theme or time period involved. The two rooms are still occasionally tweaked by adding more puzzles and other brain twisters. "We are constantly trying to adjust and make improvements to make the game play as exciting as possible," said Eric.

The beginning of 2018, the friends will unveil some totally new themed escape rooms to replace the old. They opened a mobile room to the public last summer, but it was destroyed in a storm on July 4th weekend. Keep an eye out next year for its return. "Ryan has been working on a mystery game that involves a missing private detective that we are all pretty excited about," Sarah said." He mentioned

creating it for two to four players which would be perfect for date nights."

Roughly 40% of groups make it out of a room before the 60 minutes is up. If time allows, they like to let the groups finish out the game even if the timer has expired. The record so far for solving an escape room puzzle and escaping the room goes to a group of middle school teachers; they managed to get through The Speakeasy in a short 43 minutes.

As for our Speakeasy escape, we did ask for a few hints along the way, which Eric happily provided. We made our surprising escape—and even eluded the police! Although, it was five minutes after the timer went off—sigh—we still had a blast. We can't wait to try Sal's Chop Shop and hope to include our two other sons as well! ■LGL

Visit [www.narrowescaperooms.com](http://www.narrowescaperooms.com) for more details.





1



2



3

## Winter Bundles of Joy

Photography provided by Misti White Photography

- 1. **Audrey June McGavock** | Parents: Brad & Melissa McGavock
- 2. **Camdyn Accaputo** | Parents: Adam & Casey Accaputo
- 3. **Wyatt Trainor** | Parents: Bill & Mary Trainor
- 4. **Micah Epps** | Parents: Bobby & Jill Epps
- 5. **Knox Mitchell** | Parents: Austin & Molly Mitchell
- 6. **Samantha Phillips** | Parents: Brad Phillips & Kristin Herrmann
- 7. **Everleigh Stinson** | Parents: Justin & Amber Stinson
- 8. **Rhett Biser** | Parents: Aaron & Danielle Biser
- 9. **Aubree Phillips** | Parents: Jeremy & Kristan Phillips
- 10. **Hollis Toler** | Parents: Wade & Lauren Toler
- 11. **Nathan Roth** | Parents: Matt & Jessica Roth
- 12. **Kambrynn Cannon** | Parents: Tyler & Amanda Cannon
- 13. **Lola Sherrill** | Parents: Vance & Karissa Sherrill
- 14. **Ryland Deimling** | Parents: Adam & Rachel Deimling



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



The Berry Family  
(left to right):  
Lawson, Seaton,  
Jason, Elizabeth,  
Karolina, Josefina



Words by **Peggy Purser Freeman** | Photography by **Layth Taylor**

# Adoption – A Unique and Blessed Bond

*The labor pains of adoption last longer than natural birth, but the rewards are just as wonderful.*

**F**or a family with two children, the adoption of an infant became a slim possibility for Doctors Jason and Elizabeth Berry. Yet, Elizabeth longed for another child—a girl. Doctor Elizabeth will tell you that adoption embraces all the joys of childbirth and the pain. Even though the labor pains of adoption last longer than a natural birth, the rewards are just as wonderful.

"When our youngest son was about five years old, Jason and I considered adoption," Elizabeth explained. "I was ready to have more children and I really wanted a girl. However, Jason didn't want to

go through the infant phase. We started researching, looking into adoption and decided to look at fostering as a way to adopt within Hood County. However, as time passed, we hadn't finished the Foster to Adopt classes or the endless paperwork.

It started with a simple post—a picture of twin girls. A friend from church had adopted a child from Ukraine and while visiting there, she came to love many of the children. My friend pleaded for someone to adopt the twins. When I saw their picture, I fell in love at first glance. I picked up Lawson and Seaton from school and asked them what they thought. By





The Berry family enjoys quality and fun together in their Granbury backyard.

the time dad made it to dinner, we had already taken a family vote to adopt the twin girls. Dad agreed.”

Jason and Elizabeth received information from New Horizons for Children. The Christian organization arranged for the orphan children to visit during holidays so that host families could show love to them and encourage adoption. When you see children in extreme need, heading toward danger, everything else seems small and irrelevant.

“Having girls in the house is a huge blessing for me. It’s just amazing how God fashioned girls and boys so differently. I pride myself on being the sporty-boys’ mom. The mom who is always up for anything, but I can’t tell you the joy of being doted on by my girls. They love me like girls love. They hug a ton and laugh more. They paint so many pictures that say, ‘I love you.’ God is so good!

The integration of new family members can be very difficult, and especially so when your siblings

are older and there’s a language barrier. At twelve and fifteen when we started the process, both boys seemed eager to have sisters and spent about eleven weeks with the girls during their host visits to the U.S. Two years later the children love each other. And yes, there are normal fights and fusses.”

Of course life changed for the twins and the Berry boys, however, it changed for Jason and Elizabeth too. As a founder of the dental clinic at Ruth’s Place and president of its board, Doctor Elizabeth quickly had to pass the responsibilities on to someone else. She flew to Ukraine three times within four months. The cost of adoption is high and the difficult process is a full-time job. If you know the Berrys, you know their love for others and caring support is a driving force in our community.

“With four children, I no longer made it to every event. I work constantly to help the girls settle into a new family, language, church, and school. The most



difficult part for our girls has been American food and language. Even though the girls are fluent in Ukrainian, Russian, and now English, at age eight, they basically received a first grade Ukrainian education with the ability to read at a low level in Russian and Ukrainian. Their math level tested around second grade. Once they arrived in the U.S., we were busy learning English, which meant quickly forgetting Ukrainian and Russian. Research shows it takes about a year to lose your native language, and so we worked to keep all the languages. They're smart and learning quickly. A great Christian school helps."

When the Berrys adopted their girls, they didn't live with their biological parents. Both parents were gone before the twins could remember. However, the girls had lived with their brother and maternal grandmother. Unfortunately, the family seemed ridden with alcohol addiction and the twins suffered neglect. A plea to the courts from their brother re-



The first picture Elizabeth saw of the twin girls (Josefina, Karolina)

*Elizabeth and Jason Berry offer these suggestions about adoption.*

- Pray!
- Not everyone is meant to adopt.
- There are so many other ways to support adoption.
- Know for sure that you are set up emotionally, financially, and the family stays balanced while bringing more children into your home.
- We specifically adopted girls.
- We specifically adopted children younger than our biological children.
- Be smart about adoption.
- We have seen so many failed adoptions which are truly such a sad event.
- Read materials, watch videos, talk with other moms who have adopted.
- Use self-control to handle difficult situations in the best way possible.





Arriving home on April 7, 2016.

moved them from the home and they were placed in the orphanage.

“We had the pleasure of meeting their grandmother and brother during the adoption process, and continue to stay in contact with the brother,” Dr. Elizabeth said. “The brother’s so thankful that the twins are well cared for and loved. He knew he couldn’t do it. In his own words, he said, ‘I will have my own family and I want the twins to have their own family, too.’” He now has his own family. “When I reflect on adopting children from a foreign country I have mixed emotions. I know my girls are better off. They will have all the comforts of America. They will be educated. They will be independent. They will be self-supporting and have families of their own who love the Lord and make a difference right here in the U.S. My hope is that they will also be able to visit Ukraine and make a difference there as well.”

Elizabeth reflects on how people living in a country like the United States often view adoption, “We tend to look at it as if we’re saving these children—saving them from abusive parents, addicted parents, terrible living conditions, little food, no education,



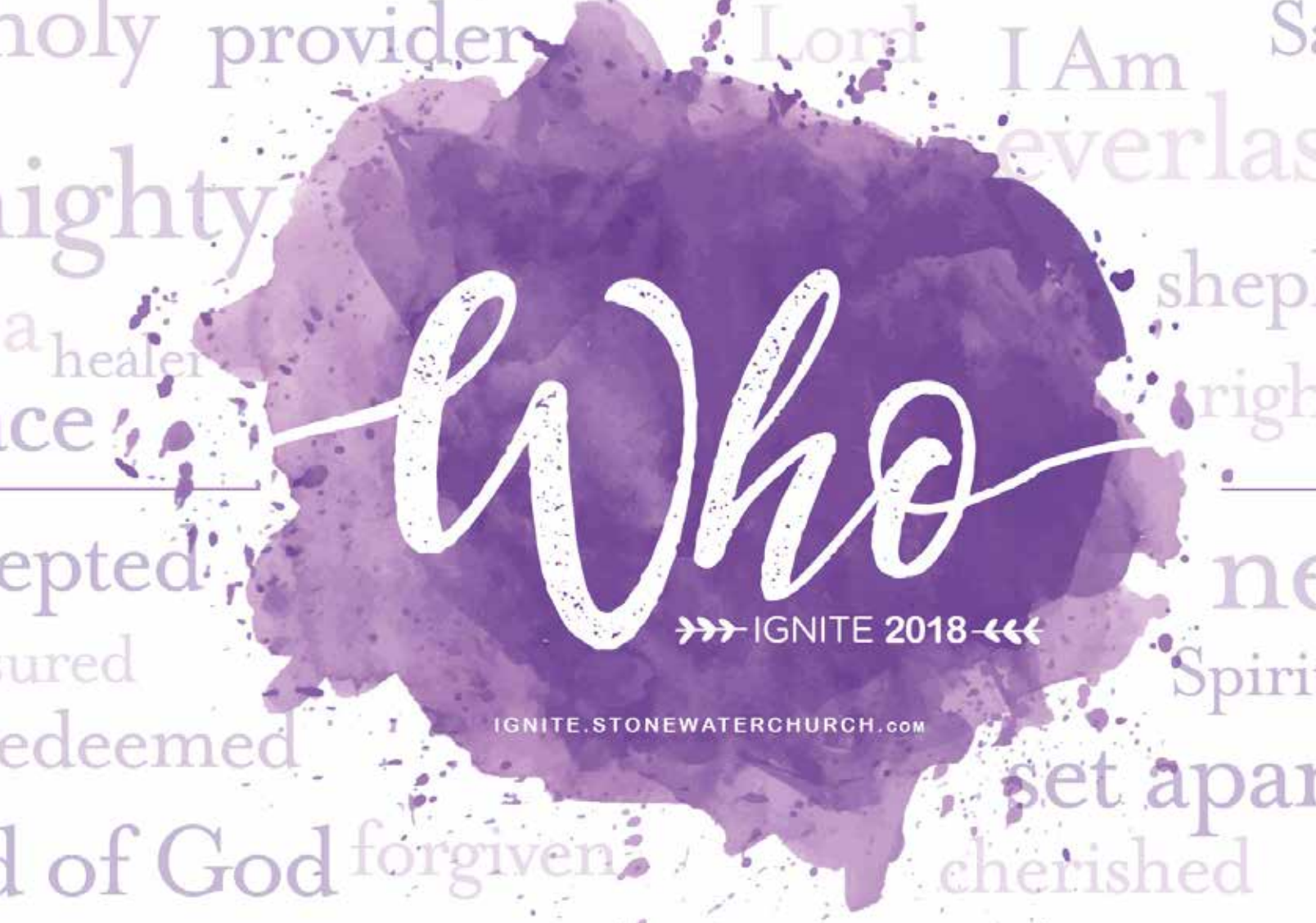
*Our girls are happy and greatly loved by our extended family. Our boys have adjusted to girls in the house. It's been an awesome learning experience.*

dangerous drugs, and child trafficking. But we don't realize this is a family that they love—even through the terrible circumstances. Adoption is an amazing thing. It frees many biological parents from the responsibility they don't want and never did want. It takes the guilt away from them knowing their children will have a better life. But they suffer to watch their families fall apart. I believe in the restoration of the family if possible. I believe in providing the best resources to make that happen. I believe God calls us to step in and take children into our own families or support others who do. .”

The Berry's have been blessed with a smooth adoption and healthy children. Although they've needed very little support, there's a plethora of

resources available for adoptive parents. Help overflows in every direction from books, videos, friends, the web, support groups, and churches.

“Our girls are happy and greatly loved by our extended family. Our boys have adjusted to girls in the house. It's been an awesome learning experience. We made this decision as a family and that God wants us to help widows and orphans. I try to remember they're teenage boys with two little sisters. What teenage boy enjoys their little sisters on a daily basis? I enjoy a special bond with our girls. They make me tea when my head hurts, and they're always on my side, 'the girls' side.' The balance in our house is just the best—three to three. I love it so much and I'm so thankful for it!” ■LGL



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# How to Get Involved

Words by **Lindsey Haase** Photography by **The Seventh Lens**

## FEATURE EVENT:

### *Granbury Quilters Guild 2017 Quilt Show*

October 20, 2017 | Historic First Presbyterian Church | 303 W Bridge St



#### OUR VISION

The Quilters Guild's mission is to share the art of quilting with the community and along the way help the different charities.

#### Some of the charities and causes that the Granbury Quilters Guild has helped include:

- Ada Carey Shelter
- Nursing homes
- Habitat for Humanity
- Casa Quilts, Mission in Guatemala
- Tornado victims
- Fire victims
- Katrina victims
- Riley Stephen Memorial Fund
- Quilts of Valor for veterans
- Premie quilts for Harris hospital
- Death of loved ones
- Hospital cheer quilts
- Prayer blankets
- Raffle quilts to raise money for church camp
- Brazos Pregnancy Center.





## INSPIRATION FOR THE QUILTERS GUILD 2017 QUILT SHOW

The Granbury quilters had an idea when the group visited the quilt show in Plantersville at St. Mary's historic church. They asked themselves - Couldn't we do the same thing in Granbury?

The Historic First Presbyterian Church will serve as the perfect place for the show during the weekend of the Harvest Moon Festival. Quilters Guild members' quilts will be draped over the pews of the church. The groups will also be selling quilted items at the Historic Langdon Concert Hall. Special thanks to First Presbyterian Church for donating the use their facility and space.

The part is the show is free , but donations will gladly be accepted to help with the Quilters Guild charity projects.

Lucy Esposito | (817) 296-8186





# LOOKING FORWARD:

*Philanthropic Happenings this Winter*

## December 7, 2017

### Danny Wright at Granbury Live

**Forward Training Center**

**New Granbury Live**

**6 PM Dinner, 7:30 PM Concert**

Raffle, Christmas Music, Plated Dinner

Proceeds from this event will benefit Forward Training Center, a Christ-centered organization made up of mentors and educators that are replacing despair and hopelessness to self-sufficiency for women and men they serve by breaking the cycle of generational poverty and abuse in Hood County.

Danny Wright, concert pianist will be accompanied by Ashely Blaine on vocals, both joined by members of the FW Symphony Orchestra. A beautiful plated dinner will be catered by Christina's. VIP ticket holders will have a chance to win their very own Danny Wright composed song, valued at \$3,500. Graduates of Forward Training Center will be in attendance.

[www.forwardtrainingcenter.org](http://www.forwardtrainingcenter.org)  
[www.thenewgranburylive.com](http://www.thenewgranburylive.com)

## November 27 - December 13, 2017

### Hood County Christmas For Children Volunteer Days and Distribution Day

**Hood County Reunion Grounds**

Christmas for Children became a 501C3 organization in 1994 when leaders of the community realized the need. Currently the organization has a 15 person board of directors, none of whom are compensated for the time they volunteer. Hood County Christmas for Children provide for 2800 - 3200 local children each year.

The organization takes applications through the school system and at

Mission Granbury, Ruth's Place and through their website. Each child is allowed to choose three items that they would like for Christmas. Families are able to request family items, like a gaming system, a TV or computer. For the past five years, Hood County Christmas for Children has provided beds and bedding to families in need, as well as blankets for every child. Thanks to the help of generous donors, volunteers and the community, children in Hood County wake up Christmas morning feeling loved, and hopefully warm.

**To volunteer or find out more:**  
[www.christmasforchildren.org](http://www.christmasforchildren.org)

## Jan 25, 2018

### Volunteer Appreciation Event

**Hood County Courthouse**

**7 PM**

Forward Training Center's second annual volunteer appreciation event will take place at the very top of Hood County - the Hood County County Courthouse. The public is welcome to attend this appreciation event. State Representative Mike Lang will be the guest speaker. Forward Training Center's mission is to educate, support, and inspire life changing growth in men and women.

[www.forwardtrainingcenter.org](http://www.forwardtrainingcenter.org)

## March 1 - 3, 2018

### Texas Heroes Foundation Student History Fair

**Acton Baptist Church, Acton Cemetery**

The Texas Heroes Foundation invites you to "Stroll Through Texas History" on March 1st - 2nd, 2018 at the Acton Baptist church from 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM. Saturday, March 3rd the public is also

invited to celebrate with us from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the Acton Cemetery. Meet Texas Heroes, portrayed by the THF Team, partake in Elizabeth Crockett Memorial Ceremony, make period crafts, see black powder demonstrations, enjoy period music & performing art winners, view the Student History Fair, vote on People's Choice Award and more. Take your family to the flag display around the Hood County courthouse and near the Elizabeth Crockett Memorial in Acton. Each flag is labeled with the name of a hero who fought at the Alamo for Texas Independence.

2018 Texas Heroes Foundation Student History Fair Theme: "Conflict and Compromise in Texas History" Awards - \$200 best of show. Each category each level: \$100 first, \$50 second & \$25 third and Group Award \$100 to be shared. We encourage choirs and other groups to participate in group categories. Senior Scholarship presented by the Texas Heroes Foundation.

**For more information visit [www.TexasHeroesFoundation.org](http://www.TexasHeroesFoundation.org)**

**Don't see your upcoming event listed?**

Email us at [info@greenfoxmarketing.net](mailto:info@greenfoxmarketing.net)  
We'd be glad to add your event to our website and Facebook page.

LAKE  
**GRANBURY**  
*Living*

# Christmastime in Granbury

*Festive Happenings this Winter*

## **The New Granbury Live - Christmas Shows**

During the month of December, the Historic Granbury Square turns into a magical playground of holiday shopping, festive spirit and merriment. The New Granbury Live is no exception. Catch any of these Christmas shows to get in the spirit:

**The Michael Hix Christmas Party - DEC 1 - 3**

**A Cowboy Christmas - Dave Alexander and the Young guns - DEC 8**

**Andy Meadows and his big Band Christmas Show - DEC 9**

**Penny Gilley and Doug Allen Nash Country Christmas - DEC 15**

**The Granbury Live Follies Christmas Show - DEC 16 & 23**

[thenewgranburylive.com](http://thenewgranburylive.com)

## **November 24, 2017**

### **Parade of Lights**

**Historic Granbury Square  
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

A must-see holiday tradition, the Annual Night of Lights Christmas parade marks the official arrival of Christmas with a colorful line-up of beautifully decorated parade entries winding their way through Granbury's historic district. Be sure to arrive early to get a front row seat at this popular tradition.  
[granburysquare.com](http://granburysquare.com)

## **December 1 & 2, 2017**

### **34th Annual Granbury - A Candlelight Tour**

**Historic Granbury Square  
Friday 5 PM - 9 PM  
Saturday 12 PM - 9 PM  
Tickets \$25 per person**

The 34th Annual Candlelight Tour will showcase Granbury's architecture, history and culture. The tour provides attendees with a rare opportunity for guests to go inside the private homes of some of Texas' most beautiful and historic residences.  
[www.granburyacandlelighttour.com](http://www.granburyacandlelighttour.com)

## **December 1 - 10, 2017**

### **Nativity Display - Away in a Manger**

**Concert Hall, Langdon Center  
300 E. Bridge Street,  
Granbury TX**

This gift to the community includes a display of over 1,000 Nativity sets from 87 countries showing "The Birth of Christ through the eyes of the World" beautifully displayed for the public. Included in the display is a children's play area, music boxes and vintage sets.  
[granburysquare.com](http://granburysquare.com)

## **November 25 - December 21, 2017**

### **Santa's House**

**Granbury Square Gazebo**  
Santa will be arriving after the Granbury Parade on Granbury Square November 24th, 2017 and go straight into his house. From November 25th through

December 23rd the hours are:  
Fridays - 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM  
Saturdays - 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM, 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM  
Sundays - 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM  
[granburysquare.com](http://granburysquare.com)

## **December 11, 2017**

### **Brazos Chamber Orchestra Christmas Concert 2017**

**First United Methodist Church in Granbury  
7:30 - 9:00 PM**

The Brazos Chamber Orchestra, composed of musicians from the DFW Metroplex, is a nonprofit organization, founded in the fall of 1998, currently in its 19th year of free concerts. The group plays an eclectic blend of orchestral music, including Classical, Big Band, Movie Tunes, Americana and Pop..  
[www.brazoschamberorchestra.org](http://www.brazoschamberorchestra.org)

## **Granbury Theatre Company at the Granbury Opera House**

The Granbury Theatre Company is proud to present Disney's Beauty and the Beast - The Broadway Musical from November 17 - December 23, 2017. After Christmas is over, Theatre patrons can enjoy Frank and Liza - A New Year's Special Event on December 30th and 31st.  
[granburytheatrecompany.org](http://granburytheatrecompany.org)



## Harvest Moon Festival of the Arts

Granbury Square

October 21 - 22, 2017

*Photography by The Seventh Lens*

This festival of the arts, supported by the Granbury Arts Alliance and Historic Granbury Merchants Association, has been a staple event on the Granbury Square for 39 years. The fun-filled weekend included the work of over 80 artists. The wide array of artists displayed contemporary works, fine art, sculpture, hand crafted jewelry, and others. Hands-on project booths for kids were another big hit of the weekend.



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Center of Balance

# Mindful Hoarding and the Power of No

Words by [Tui Snider](#) | Photography by [Righteous Photography](#)

*Local artist, Elise Techentine's recipe for living a creative life, and the surprising things she learned from a year of saying, 'no.'*

**W**hile browsing along Granbury's town square, shopkeepers asked what brought me to town. "I'm here to interview Elise Techentine," I told them.

"Oh, the artist gal!" one exclaimed. "You're going to love her."

"She keeps the arts scene fresh and friendly," said another. "Not snooty, like some places." And so it went. Everyone on the square seemed to know Elise Techentine and feel grateful for her presence in the local arts community.

I first met this creative dynamo last summer when I spent a couple weeks in Granbury as Writer-in-Residence for Tarleton State University's Langdon Review. Even then, her reputation preceded her. "Have you met Elise?" people kept asking. "You need to meet Elise!"

So just who is Elise Techentine and how has she kept Granbury's arts scene "fresh and friendly"? We recently met at Paradise Bistro for a lively conversation about her art and life.



"As a mom, wife, art advocate, and someone who sees potential in the community, I said 'yes' to everything for a very long time. I felt like this was my year to say 'no' to everything - so I did."

- Elise Techentine

While not a native Texas, Elise Techentine's Granbury roots stretch back to 1991 when she moved here with her husband, George, and their two young children. Despite having a nursing degree, once in Granbury she never sought a career in that field. Her husband's job at Comanche Peak Nuclear Power Plant allowed her to pursue creative endeavors while being a full-time mom. According to Techentine, "I often say that George is the best artist patron ever."

Even so, Techentine never set out to "become an artist." She didn't need to. Creativity is integral to her being; it just bubbles up naturally. Nor is her creative spirit limited to her art work. For Techentine, every aspect of life is better when imbued with creativity, from dressing, to cooking, to raising kids, to life in general. "To me, there's no 'being an artist.' It's just living a creative life," she explained. "It's what I do."

Case in point: when I complimented her beautiful shirt, Elise quickly related

how she used rust to create the batik-like print, before adding sparkly antique buttons, and topping it off with a hand-stitched trim. "This shirt is going to change over time," she continued, "just like a person. I love that. Rust is a living thing."

Techentine credits her parents for her hands-on approach to life and art. Her appreciation for antiques comes from her father, while her mother's practicality taught her how to put those items to use. "Dad likes the history of an old thing. He's always bringing them home. Mom knows how to make old things useful, so between the two of them, I learned."

Techentine grew up steeped in history, and feels a deep connection to the legacy of places and objects. "I'm the only one in my family living west of the Mississippi," she says. "The rest are in South Carolina. Our family there goes back 400 years."

In contrast to her tactile approach to life, Elise's husband, an engineer, is quite



“Sometimes, I use whatever I have lying around to weigh down the metal pieces so they make better contact with the fabric. Sometimes they pick up rust prints too, which gives me more ideas!”

methodical. “If you ask us to do the same thing, George can spend 10 hours planning, and then get it right the first time. I spend those exact same 10 hours doing it wrong 100 times,” she said with a laugh, “but I have fun and learn new things along the way.”

Although she started off making pottery, Elise Techentine is best-known for her assemblage, sculptures created by combining, and in many cases altering, various found items. “Assemblage is like collage, but using objects instead of paper,” she explained. “I didn’t even know what it was when I started,” she added with a laugh. “It was just the best way to tell my stories, visually.”

Each one of these assemblage pieces has a story behind it, a theme from her own life. While she doesn’t make the details of these stories public, Elise often shares them with her little sister during video phone calls. Because her work is her autobiography, Elise is meticulous about having her pieces professionally photographed. “There’s a story behind each one,” she says. “They’re all me.”

Elise completes roughly one piece per month, and as the work progresses, she often feels a creative high, especially towards the end. “I can get





obsessed,” she explains. “Even if I want to go home and have dinner, sometimes the piece just has to get done, so I stay late at my studio.”

While Techentine’s pieces are highly personal, she doesn’t expect viewers to respond or connect to them in a specific way. “It’s sometimes hard for people to see what I do as art,” she said. “But I do hope it makes people see ordinary objects differently.”

Techentine enjoys being a “fly on the wall” at gallery openings, so she rarely wears a nametag. “If they know I’m the artist, it often stifles viewers,” she said. “Honest feelings are better than polite remarks.” She wants people to feel comfortable enough to say what they really think and feel. “Even if it’s simply, ‘That’s weird!’ or ‘That’s creepy!’ at least it’s an honest reaction.”

In 1997, Elise rented an old building in Granbury to showcase her assemblage. It was an impulsive move but, “It was time to get out there,” Techentine explained. “I believe it’s not really art until people see it.”

It didn’t take long for Techentine’s following to grow, and in ’99 or 2000 (she’s not sure which) she got a fateful phone call from fellow artist, Carol McKay, who said, “I hear you do assemblage.”



Around and Around



This was news to Techentine. “Carol is the one who let me know my stuff has an actual name,” she said with a laugh. Even better, McKay invited Elise to take part in a group show at Gallery 206. Things took off from there.

After closing her store in 2002, Elise participated in Texas Antiques Week in Round Top/Warrenton, Texas. Under the pseudonym “purplegoat,” Techentine gained a loyal following at that twice yearly mega flea market.

In 2014, Elise curated a pop-up gallery space for the Granbury Theatre Company and the City of Granbury. There, she used her “mindful hoarding” expertise to create a thriving space for both established and emerging regional artists. Plus, proceeds from the art sales generated much-needed revenue for the local theater group.

From 2014 through 2016, Techentine served as director for Granbury’s Harvest Moon Festival of the Arts. When Elise took the helm, this annual event

had strayed from its original intent of showcasing handmade items and regional art. Techentine’s invitation came with a directive to steer the event back to its roots. Now in its 39th year, the Harvest Moon Festival is thriving once again as a juried arts event featuring fine art and contemporary craft.

From 2014 through 2015, Techentine served as art coordinator for another popular annual celebration, the Granbury Wine Walk. In 2015, she was the featured artist in Coleman, Texas at an event where she gave a talk and, in true Techentine-style, led a hands-on workshop.

Along the way, Techentine earned numerous accolades and awards, including the Spirit of Texas Brownwood Sculpture award in both 2015 and 2017. In 2016, she earned two Best of Show awards, one at Brownwood’s Spirit of Texas show, and another at Rio Brazos in Granbury.

Recently, however, Techentine felt a creative shift. Just as in 1997, when she

Elise checks the metal pieces she placed a few days earlier are leaving the marks she is hoping for. “I almost never toss anything! These metal curly q’s are the cut out pieces from a plasma cutting project a few years ago.





*“What it represents to me, those teapots: is a pouring out and a receiving. I think I’m ready for that. I think I’m ready for a cup of tea.”*

felt compelled to open a store, in 2017 Techtentine’s creative spirit urged her to scale back. “As a mom, wife, art advocate, and someone who sees potential in the community, I said ‘yes’ to everything for a very long time,” she said. “I felt like this was my year to say ‘no’ to everything - so I did.”

While Techtentine found it liberating to say ‘no,’ she was surprised when the art world responded by saying ‘no’ right back. After a steady rhythm of participating in 8 to 10 juried shows each year, “This year, I had six show rejections in a row,” Techtentine said. As any artist knows, rejection comes with the territory. “I’m OK with rejections,” she added. “But six in a row? It made me question myself.”

The experience caused Techtentine to take a hard look at each piece she submitted, after which she concluded that she would not have done anything differently. So while this string of rejections wasn’t exactly fun, the experience helped reaffirm her artistic integrity.

All this free time led to a joyous summer for Techtentine. “Each day felt just like when the kids

were little and out of school.” Participating in fewer gallery shows means she can hop down creative rabbit trails without worrying about deadlines. Her creativity is thriving as she explores new methods and techniques without the pressure of strict timelines.

While she isn’t sure exactly where it will take her, Techtentine is feeling another creative shift. Her most recent pieces explore balance, with the stories behind them related to her many roles in life, especially as wife, mother, and art advocate. This September, for instance, she has a solo exhibit at Raw 1899 in San Angelo called “Finding Balance in the Unknown.”

So what’s next for Elise Techtentine? Will 2018 be another year of saying ‘no’?

Techtentine’s not sure but she did reveal that, “The other night, I had crazy dreams about teapots.” When I asked how those teapots would translate into her art, she replied, “What it represents to me, those teapots: is a pouring out and a receiving. I think I’m ready for that. I think I’m ready for a cup of tea.” ■LGL



## Rubbish Revival Girls Night Out

Rubbish Revival | 309 Western Hills Trail, Granbury, TX 76048  
September 16, 2017

*Photography provided by Misty Marsh*

The popular antique, refinished furniture and home decor store stayed open late for fellowship, cheesecakes and wine during the Girl's Night Out event. An India Hicks Ambassador joined the group to show the latest collections. Guests enjoyed wine, provided by Poppin' Bottles Granbury and cheesecake parfaits were provided by Cheesecake Nation Granbury. @RubbishRevivalTx on Facebook



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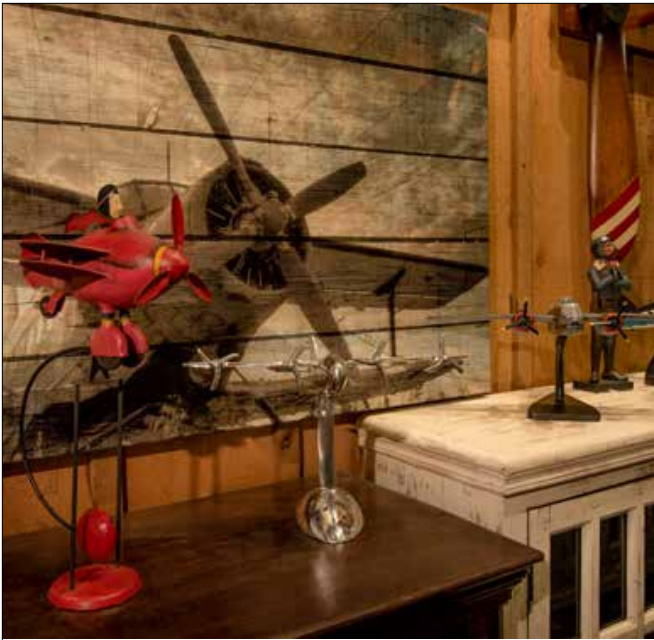
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# Honest Answers to a Facebook Questionnaire

Words by **Dena Dyer**

It was close to Mother's Day, and I mindlessly cruised through my Facebook feed, chuckling at silly dog memes and cringing at a friend's post-surgery pic (don't you love the "hide" and "unfollow" functions?). With a feeling of dread, I realized I'd been tagged in a questionnaire ("All About Your Firstborn"). Sigh.

Y'all, Facebook used to be fun. It was a diversion from work, not another place to juggle responsibilities and expectations. And who started the questionnaire trend? Am I the only person

who doesn't want to participate? I think not.

So I almost scrolled on by, but then I stopped. What would happen, I wondered, if I were ruthlessly honest in my replies? After all, I'm a mother of two teenage sons, so I have the luxuries of time, perspective, and experience when I look back on their newborn and toddler years. And while I miss the chubby feet I used to nibble on during bath time, I do not, in any realm of the imagination, miss the utter exhaustion I felt so often when the boys were small. Nor do I

miss the post-partum depression I suffered during my first crack at parenting.

I wish someone had warned me of the down side of being a mom, although I probably wouldn't have listened. I wanted to wear the "mother" hat so badly that I set myself up for a big fall. I had way-too-high expectations of both myself and my infant, and I paid the price.

And while I didn't answer my friend's queries honestly on Facebook, I decided to do the next best thing...and submit a facsimile to my editor.

# ALL ABOUT YOUR FIRSTBORN

## 1. WERE YOU MARRIED?

Yes—but we still had no business being parents. Why was there hundreds of hours of instruction required to get your license, while there was no mandatory parenting classes in order to take our son home from the hospital? What kind of upside-down world do we live in?!

## 2. DID YOU HAVE AN EPIDURAL?

Let me put it this way...if I could have had the epidural in the car on the way to the emergency room, I would have.

## 3. WERE YOU INDUCED?

None of your business, as are most of these questions.

## 4. HOW OLD WERE YOU?

Too old to care whether I had a “natural” birth or not. To me, a natural birth is one in which you’re oblivious to pain and can leisurely watch television in a quiet room until it’s time to push.

## 5. HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?

I couldn’t stop peeing every two minutes.

## 6. DID YOU WANT TO FIND OUT THE GENDER?

Yes. I have about as much patience as Kanye does during award shows.

## 7. DID YOU HAVE MORNING SICKNESS?

Listen...I want to find the people who decided to coin the term and strangle them. Because I had all-day sickness. For NINE MONTHS. Can you tell I’m not a woman who enjoyed every minute of her pregnancy? It was worth it, because a son is a blessing... but hello! All-day sickness, you are not a pregnant woman’s friend.

## 8. WHAT DID YOU CRAVE?

Anything and everything. Thus, the answer to #9.

## 9. HOW MANY POUNDS DID YOU GAIN?

The only people who know this number are the tight-lipped Ob/Gyn nurse and me. Suffice it to say, I will only give up this answer a) on my deathbed, or b) never.

## 10. WHAT WAS THE SEX OF THE BABY?

Male, God love him. And my house has been smelly ever since!

## 11. WHERE DID YOU GIVE BIRTH?

Who cares? My pregnancy and labor were over. I could have given birth in an alley and it would have been fine with me, as long as the epidural-giver guy was there, too.

## 12. HOW MANY HOURS WERE YOU IN LABOR?

Too many.

## 13. HOW MUCH DID YOUR BABY WEIGH?

6lb 13oz. And then it took two years to lose the extra pounds I'd put on, but I digress.

## 14. WHAT DID YOU NAME THE BABY?

His name is Jordan, but since we'd never had a baby and we joyfully "parented" a dog for several years, we have accidentally called Jordan by the dog's name more times than I care to admit.

## 15. HOW OLD IS YOUR BABY TODAY?

Nineteen. He's in college now, and I'm tearing up as I type this, just like I did throughout my pregnancy. The only good things about these months after the semi-empty nest: no weight gain, no all-day sickness, and no sleeplessness at the end of it all. At least I'm hoping that's the case.



## About Dena

Dena Dyer is a professional writer and speaker, as well as the author of eight books and hundreds of articles. Her most recent book, written with her husband Carey, is *Love at First Fight: 52 Story-Based Meditations for Married Couples*. In her day job, Dena is the Director of Education for Brazos Pregnancy Center. She and Carey have been married nineteen wonderful years, and a couple more they don't talk about. They live in Granbury with their two sons (Jordan and Jackson) and a spoiled dog, Princess. Dena loves coffee with hazelnut creamer, traveling, reading, shopping at thrift stores, and watching British television.

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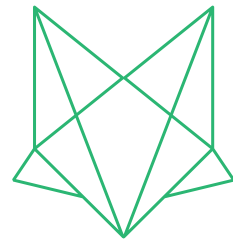
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# MEET ERIC WILKINS



## MY EARLY LIFE TAUGHT ME A GREAT DEAL ABOUT HUMILITY AND GRATITUDE.

I had every reason not to succeed. Due to the ramification of my parents divorce, I grew up in a one bedroom apartment in a low income part of Dallas. In school my grades weren't great. In fact, my favorite class was lunch, which is probably why I weighed well over 300 pounds during my teenage years.

A turning point in my life was when I began playing Rugby during my junior year of high school. I was quickly appointed as team captain and learned what being a leader felt like for the first time in my life. Our team went on to win state, the western championship, and place third in the nation. Those successes earned me an invite to try out for the Under 19 USA National Team. I qualified for the developmental squad, then went on to compete at the Mall in Washington, DC.

I felt encouraged to seek more opportunities to lead and a calling to Granbury led me to be a part of starting StoneWater Church. I quickly realized, equipped with God's grace, I could accomplish anything I put my mind to.

To start, I was the first person in my family to attend and graduate from a university. While attending

Tarleton State University, I met my wife, Ashley. We have three handsome and energetic boys all under the age of six.

Our lives together evolved, and the need to provide for my family grew. God showed me that the next step in my life would be to open a local marketing company, enter GreenFox. Inspired in part by a rapidly growing church family and congregation over the last 12 years, I rose to the challenge. Our very first client was sportsman Barry Stokes, featured in this issue of Lake Granbury Living.

My wife grew up at a Stephenville pace, while I was used to the hustle of Dallas. We love the medium paced lifestyle of Granbury. It is a good middle ground for my family and me. Together with my church family and GreenFox, this publication gives another great avenue to be a part of this incredible place.

Just how people think of Nashville as the music city, I want people to think of Granbury as something special too, and I aim to have GreenFox and Lake Granbury Living contribute to that effort. I look forward to uncovering the abundant stories and raw talent here, as well as upholding the great history of our community.

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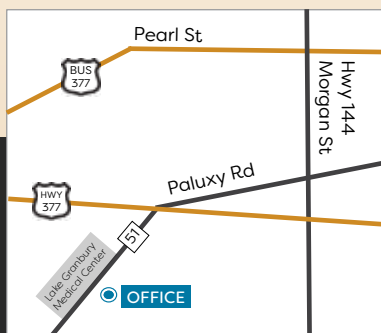
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