

Upper East Side of Texas

county line

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2025

MAGAZINE

CountyLineMagazine.com



HAPPY NEW YEAR! WINNSBORO CENTER FOR THE ARTS

ART EXHIBITION POETIC VISION

Killaby
Shewmaker
Lucas Hardy
Wright
Through Jan. 25



ART EXHIBITION YAKETY YAK

A just animals art
invitational exhibit.

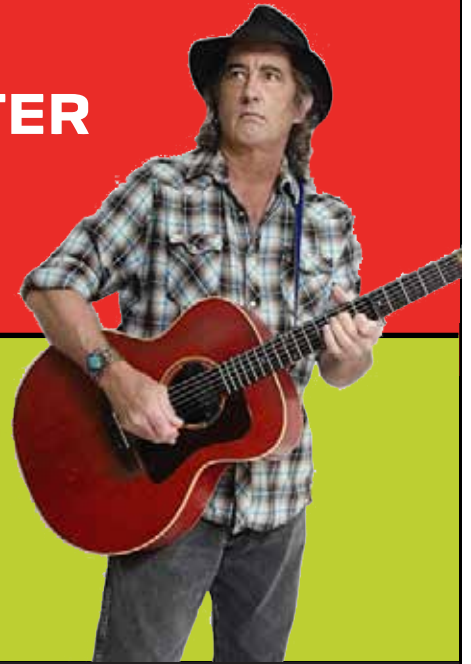
Call for art: Now - Jan. 16
Exhibit Jan. 29 - Mar. 22
Reception Feb. 6, 4-6 p.m.



CONCERT

RADNEY FOSTER

Sunday Matinee
January 26
2:30 p.m.



TWO CONCERTS

JAMES MCMURTRY

Valentine Evening
February 14
7:30 p.m.

Saturday Evening
February 15
7:30 p.m.

CONCERT SUSAN GIBSON

Saturday
March 8
7:30 p.m.



NEW for 2025 THEATER SEASON TICKETS

4 Shows - 1 Discounted Price!
Season tickets available for a limited
time - Jan. 4 - Feb. 15 ONLY!

Glass Menagerie, Romeo And Juliet
Barefoot In The Park
A Christmas Carol

COMMUNITY CHOIR AUDITIONS

January 9 and 14 at 6 p.m.
Visit website for details!

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Come have fun experiencing the arts
through a variety of classes and workshops.
Register online!

OPEN MIC NIGHT

Every second Thursday.

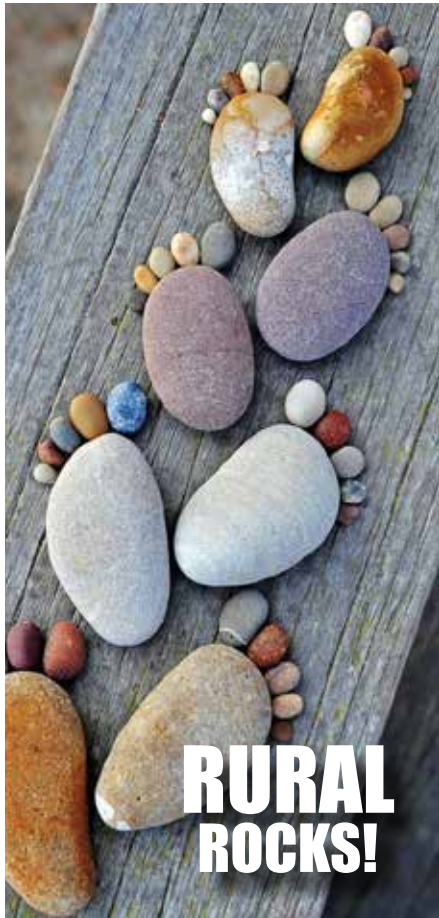
WCA

WINNSBORO
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

WinnsboroCenterForTheArts.com



EMBRACE THE SPIRIT OF CREATIVITY



Discover the Treasures of 211 Gallery

DISPLAY GALLERY. EXHIBITS. CLASSES. ART SHOWS.



211 North Palestine Street, Athens, TX
ArtGallery211.net • (903)292-1746

RODRIGUE
PAINTING FOR MYSELF

ADMISSION FOR RODRIGUE SHOW:
ADULTS - \$5 • CHILDREN - \$3
FAMILIES - \$20 MAX • FREE TO LMFA MEMBERS

AT LMFA - 213 N. FREDONIA • NOW - MAY 2025

GLIMPSES THROUGH
Jessica Sanders

KOMOREBI SCATTERED LIGHT
Paula McDermott

AT LMFA - 215 E. TYLER ST • NOW - FEB. 22, 2025

LMFA LONGVIEW MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
903.753.8103 • LMFA.org



MURALS • SHOPS • MUSEUMS • RESTAURANTS



HISTORIC DOWNTOWN TERRELL
WWW.DISCOVERTERRELL.COM



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

This little patch of earth I dubbed the Upper East Side of Texas is part of me. From as early as I can remember, it was where the “home place” was, a magical land with heartwarming stories that I got to visit from time to time from my Dallas suburb world. Childhood memories with my relatives in East Texas are some of the sweetest I will ever know.

Both my parents' ancestries began in East Texas in the mid 1800s. The stories I heard from my relatives about growing up in East Texas in the 1920s and 30s and beyond were overwhelmingly full of fun. The occasional hardships of picking cotton and working in sugarcane fields were but a backdrop to the life they truly enjoyed with their families and communities. They were very creative with their leisure time, often pranking each other, enjoying music and singing together, playing creative games, and eating delicious pot luck and farm fresh meals and homemade ice cream.

They enjoyed travelers stopping by for food or water, sometimes from very far away. They would listen to the travelers' stories of places and things they'd never seen and delight in knowing about different cultures and things going on outside their area. Travelers were allowed to sleep a night or two in their barn before venturing off down the road.

The families listened intently to radio programs that entertained and informed. They truly embraced the adage to “think globally, act locally,” at least in the sense that most people are interesting and fun to observe, and deserve every human right, while putting their immediate attention on taking care of those in their own community.

Like most rural Texans of that time, they were farmers and ranchers, and no richer or poorer than any others they knew. They knew everyone in their communities and they all looked out for each other and passed no harsh judgments or mean gossip about each other (except for the occasional “busy body” that others avoided).



The towns during the years my parents were growing up in rural East Texas were small, but thriving with cotton gins, syrup mills, lumber yards, schools, and mercantile stores. People of the communities would gather in downtowns on Saturdays to visit and trade products and animals, shop, and get their much beloved mail.

One of my favorite stories from that era comes with a photo I found in a book about the community where my mother grew up. The photo is titled, “Forty Men and Forty Mules.” A neighbor had fallen ill. Forty men showed up with their mules and plowed his fields for him. I was told this was quite common and I felt that energy everywhere I went in East Texas growing up when I visited. People really liked and respected each other, whether they went to different churches, or not at all, or had their own way of doing all kinds of things as long as it didn't hurt anyone. As a rule, people focused on their shared mission for healthy communities and mostly were amused and entertained by their differences, not enraged by them in any way.

This is the East Texas in my heart when I moved here from San Antonio in 1997.

Coming from one of the top tourism towns in the nation to a rural farm in East Texas was a major culture shock for sure. Although I didn't disagree, I soon grew

tired of people saying, “There's nothing to do around here.” I started researching and found that although events were few and far between, there were some things going on that not enough people were hearing about.

So I started *County Line Magazine* to tell people what I was finding. It wasn't much in the early years — a street dance in one town, a pool tournament in another, an art class here and there, and karaoke in a restaurant or two. There were a few festivals and the monthly First Monday Trade Days and as the years went on, more fun and entertainment came to East Texas. It's been a very long time since I heard someone say “there's nothing to do around here.”

With other writers, we also began discovering and telling the stories of the region's history, and interesting people, places, and unique characteristics. I will never forget the first time I enjoyed a Saxon tomato grown in Ben Wheeler after moving there. In my years of city grocery store shopping, I had forgotten how good locally grown food tasted. I love that I get to dine often now on food grown within a few miles of where I live.

For 25 years now, *County Line Magazine* has chronicled the stories that shape the Upper East Side of Texas. I've watched good changes happen all over the region and know many more are coming. I am grateful for the people who help create “thoughtful” improvements — those that bring us fun and meaningful things to do but are careful to guard our need for nature, light traffic and moderate crowds, and friendly neighbors. I am reminded how similar some of my days are now to the heartwarming ones my family told me about so many years ago, filled with community support, farmers' bounty, pot luck gatherings, live music, and creative entertainment.

I am grateful that I was welcomed to my “home place” here in this region, where I found both my roots and wings. I hope all our readers feel that same warm welcome and cherish your time here in the Upper East Side of Texas. — P.A. Geddie

PUBLISHER & MANAGING EDITOR

P.A. Geddie

CONTRIBUTORS

Lisa Tang
 Tom Geddie
 Lisa Hilbers
 Debbie Sandlin
 Ine Burke
 Craig D. Blackmon, FAIA
 Wendy Floyd
 Beverly Burchett
 Alex Marshall
 Pamela Edwards
 Howard Oliphant
 Dave Shultz
 Logan Vaughan
 Jim Willis
 A.L.O. Photography
 Dana Goolsby
 Dare To Aim Photography
 Brandon Adams
 Carrie Bennett
 Lauri Dodd
 Joe Selby
 JD Cole
 Maureen Killaby
 Linda Lucas Hardy
 Terry Crum
 James Surls

ADVERTISING

pa.geddie@countylinemagazine.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Sign Up [HERE](#)

County Line Magazine eEdition is published every other month, six times a year in digital format. Material may not be reproduced without written permission. Opinions expressed in articles or advertising appearing in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher. Mailing address: P.O. Box 705, Winnsboro, Texas, 75494 Phone: (903) 312-9556. E-mail: info@countylinemagazine.com. Website: www.countylinemagazine.com. Advertising space may be purchased by calling (903) 312-9556. We reserve the right to refuse any advertisement we deem incompatible with our mission.



CHECK OUT COUNTY LINE
 DIGITAL PUBLICATIONS

CountyLineMagazine.com

SPECIAL THANKS

County Line Magazine's success over the past 25 years took a village of hundreds of contributors and thousands of readers.

Without our partners, sponsors, and advertisers, we would not have gotten far. We had strong support from the very beginning from business, organization, and city leaders that put their faith in our team to uplift and promote them and the entire Upper East Side of Texas. Some of our most valuable partnerships over the years include city organizations of Greenville, Sulphur Springs, Gun Barrel City, Rockwall, Palestine, Terrell, Longview, Tyler, McKinney, Marshall, Mineola, Henderson, Emory, Winnsboro, Canton, Athens, Corsicana, Edom, Paris, Grand Saline, Jacksonville, Jefferson, Kilgore, Nacogdoches, and Ennis, as well as Wood County EDC.

Significant partnerships with arts and cultural organizations over the years include Mount Vernon Music, Winnsboro Center for the Arts, Tyler Museum of Art, Longview Museum of Fine Arts, Marshall City Hall Performance Center, Marshall Regional Arts Council, Potters Brown, Edom Art Festival, Ben Wheeler Arts & Historic District Foundation, Texas Shakespeare Festival, Belcher Center, Cowan Center, Texarkana Regional Arts & Humanities Council, East Texas Symphony, Heritage Park Museum of East Texas, Tyler Junior College, and Whatley Center for the Performing Arts.

Other notable collaborators include Redlands Hotel, Four Winds Steakhouse, Dairy Palace, Robertson's Hams, Stanley's Famous Pit Barbecue, Queen St. Grille, C. Miller Drilling, Heritage Land Bank, American National Bank, Door Controls USA, Beacon Hill Properties, Burton Star Properties, Blue Moon Gardens, Black Beauty Ranch, Copper Leaf Day Spa, Dragonhead Resort, East Texas Medical Center, East Texas Oil Museum, Mill Creek Dental, Mill Creek Ranch Resort, Old Mill Marketplace, Paul Michael Company, Pegasus Project, The Links at Lands End, United Country Real Estate, Wilhite Landscaping, and Texas State Railroad.

I also want to thank the state departments and tourism organizations that we continue to enjoy working with in

our shared mission to shine a light on all the good things in Texas: Texans for the Arts, Texas Commission on the Arts, Texas Historical Commission, Friends of Caddo Mounds, Inc., Texas Music Office, Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Main Street, Texas Parks & Wildlife, Texas Downtown, Texas Economic Development & Tourism, Travel Texas, and our new friends at The Portal to Texas History.

Much gratitude goes to all the writers and photographers who contributed to *County Line Magazine* in the last 25 years. Readers, please explore the *County Line* archives and take note of those whose work raised the region to a new level, making us proud, and showing the world who we are.

A few who made regular contributions to the content and administration of the magazine are significant in keeping it growing and glowing year after year. I offer my heartfelt appreciation to Lisa Tang, Tom Geddie, Judy Peacock, Kevin White, Elvis Allen, Jackie Stroud, Tracy Torma, Kelsey Cockrum, Alia Pappas, Barry St. Clair, Dean Taylor, Linda Wheeler, Ann Riley, Terry Britt, Theresa Bullard, Lisa Hilbers, Ine Burke, Cindy Roller, Larry Brown, Krista Leard, Steve Freeman, Madison Payne, Patti Ramey Light, Jeremy Light, Edward H. Garcia, Leah Lynch, Pam Boyd Bombyk, Bob Mauldin, Wendy Floyd, Herb Marlow, Dave Shultz, Jim Willis, Carolyn Gibson, Linda Ayers, Lyndsay Caldwell, Lauren Wacaser, Rachel Gross, Jill Couchman, Lori McGraw, Clare McCarthy, Shea Gilchrist, Elaine Rogers, Bill Ramsey, Jan Kaye, Kerian Massey, Stan Johnson, Jette Stephens, Sue Norton, James Iguchi, Tonya Krumvieda, Wendy Matthews, Katie-Rose Watson, and the late and ever-so-talented Jerry Tolbert and Vern Dailey.

Last, but not least, THANK YOU to our readers. Your continuous encouragement and enthusiasm guides our direction. Thank you for all the comments, shares, and unwavering support these past 25 years. Please keep reading, stay in touch, and let us know what's important to you as we continue telling the stories of our region. ♥

VISIT
Gun Barrel City
The Heart of Cedar Creek Lake



Come Play and Stay for a Weekend or a Lifetime!

East Texas Hospitality * Lakeside Living * Fishing * Water Sports
Boating * Birdwatching * Concerts * Festivals * Biking
Parks & Playgrounds * Scenic Walking Trails * Basketball Courts
Picnic Shelters * Disc Golf * Golf Courses



www.GunBarrelCity.gov

Greenville, TX



March 15th

LitCon

Celebrate literature, pop culture, comics, manga, anime and games



April 5-6th

Ink Slinger

Our inaugural Tattoo Expo. See the artists' work or get a tattoo



May 10th

Festival of the Arts

See downtown filled with diverse expressions of the arts



July 4th

Bottle Rocket Bash

Music, food, games and fireworks to commemorate the day!



August 2

Lure & Tackle Show

Collectible lures, tackle and all types of unique fishing gear



Sept 19

Lee Street Jamboree

Live music with a street dance atmosphere

CONTENTS



FEATURES

12

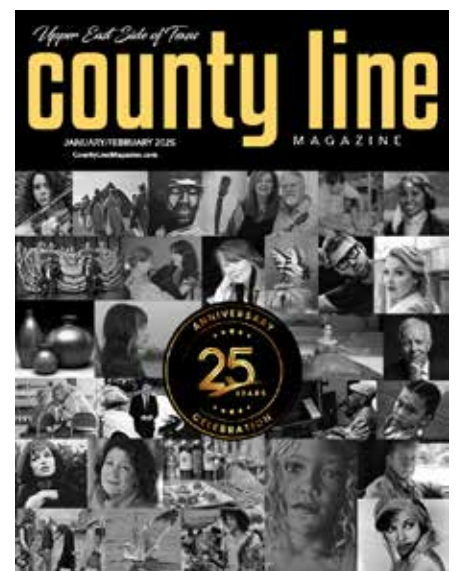
Celebrating
25 Years
in the
Upper East Side
of Texas

54

Communities Make
Small Town Charm
a Priority Amid
Diverse Influences

66

25 Stories
for 25 Years



Find MORE for your enjoyment on CountyLineMagazine.com







Jan 18. Bradd Marquis



Jan 25. Shenandoah



Feb 15. My Funny Valentine



Mar 8. Linda Davis
With Bill Whyte & Lang Scott



Apr 5. Already Gone
The Premier Eagle's Tribute



MEMORIAL CITY HALL PERFORMANCE CENTER
MARSHALL, TEXAS
www.MemorialCityHall.com 903-934-7992

Enjoy Your Stay in Winnsboro CARNEGIE COTTAGE

VACATION RENTAL WALKABLE TO DOWNTOWN SHOPPING, ART CENTER, AND RESTAURANTS



300 E. Carnegie St. • Winnsboro, TX 75494
www.CarnegieCottageTX.com



Come for the hospitality.
Stay for the experience.



visit
McKinney.com

Plan
your
visit.



Scan the QR code to access our Visitors Guide.

A photograph of The Redlands Hotel, a large brick building with many windows and fire escapes. In the foreground, there is a large white dogwood flower. The hotel's name is displayed in a glowing oval above the building.

**THE REDLANDS
HOTEL**

800-550-5445 903-729-2345

www.TheRedlandsHotel.com

A colorful abstract artwork with various patterns and colors, including blue, orange, and green.

**GLIMPING
THROUGH**
Jessica Sanders

A yellow background with purple and white text and a subtle pattern of small white dots.

**KOMOREBI
SCATTERED
LIGHT**
Paula McDermott

AT LMFA - 215 E. TYLER ST
NOW - FEB. 22, 2025

A stylized blue and white dog's face with yellow eyes.

Rodrigue
PAINTING FOR
MYSELF

AT LMFA - 213 N. FREDONIA
NOW - MAY 2025

ADMISSION FOR RODRIGUE SHOW:
ADULTS - \$5 • CHILDREN - \$3 • FAMILIES - \$20 MAX
FREE TO LMFA MEMBERS

LMFA
LONGVIEW MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

**TWO LOCATIONS
NOW OPEN:**
215 E. TYLER ST.
213 N. FREDONIA ST.
DOWNTOWN LONGVIEW

LMFA.org 903.753.8103

Celebrating 25 Years in the Upper East Side of Texas



ARTS LONGVIEW CULTURAL DISTRICT, PHOTO BY A.L.O. PHOTOGRAPHY

By P.A. Geddie

The Upper East Side of Texas has seen many changes in 25 years, particularly in our small towns and cultural districts. While acknowledging the benefits of the amenities enjoyed from nearby larger cities, *County Line Magazine* has focused much of its content on the untold and good stories of the rural, community-based parts of the region. From an increase in fun things to do, including different cultural experiences, live music, entertainment, attractions, and the arts, to better dining, shopping, and lodging choices, the Upper East Side of Texas has clearly evolved into a desirable place for residents and visitors alike to live, work, and play.

HISTORY

There are many famous quotes about the value of knowing the history of a place and its people. Sometimes it brings a sense of pride. Other times, it's an opportunity to learn not to repeat it. Getting to know the foundation is essential in knowing where a society stands now, and where it goes from here.

This land of the Upper East Side of Texas and the humans who inhabit it are part of a rich and complex history. The American Indians had sophisticated villages and elaborate trade networks and social systems here for thousands of years before the Mexicans, Europeans, and Africans arrived.

During conflicts over land, food, slavery, and cultures, the Europeans took control and created the state of Texas. It is their history that is largely shared in public education systems and historical markers throughout the state. Missing are important contributions of women and other cultural representation.

Historians and others are better focused in recent years on sharing the untold stories for a more accurate account of our state's past. It is an important step in the shaping of our society as we move forward, that all people can see themselves in our human history. In partnership with Texas historians since its

continued page 14



CADDO POTTERY, GREGG COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM, LONGVIEW



ARAWAKA-COUSHATTA DANCER, PHOTO BY HECTOR MALDONADO





HERITAGE PARK MUSEUM OF EAST TEXAS, EDGEWOOD, PHOTO BY HOWARD OLIPHANT

25 YEARS *continued from page 12*

beginning, *County Line Magazine* makes a concentrated effort to expand the narratives of the region's history.

Stories of Thomas J. Rusk and other European settlers are easily found in the archives of *County Line* because information about them was so readily available. Some of them, like Rusk, have statues on town squares created to honor them. Some of them have their names on street signs and noted county and city names throughout the region. Appropriately, the state and cities also named many streets, creeks, rivers, towns, and counties after the American Indians who came before. Cherokee County, Kickapoo Creek, Neches River, Waxahachie, Nacogdoches, and Caddo Lake are just a few examples.

The Caddo Indians of Northeast Texas

are credited with the state's name. The word Texas originates first from the Caddo term taysha, which means "friend" or "ally." The Spanish spelled it tejas, and the name lived on to become Texas, the 28th state of the United States of America.

Numerous museums in the region have great collections of Caddo pottery. Caddo Mounds in Alto near Nacogdoches is a sacred site for gatherings and teachings of pottery making and other Caddo traditions.

There are many interesting stories of men who helped form the region, from the early pioneers and cattle ranchers to generations who came later and went on to live out their dreams.

County Line also uncovered many stories of women that are still working their way into the history books. They helped get women the right to vote and had great

success in other lanes. Readers met pioneering women Ima Hogg, Mary Kate Hunter, Mary Louse McKeller, Lallie Brisco Carlisle, Bessie Coleman, Sarah McClendon, Lady Bird Johnson, Hattie Brantley, Lulu Belle Madison White, Anna Pennybacker, Elise Tvede Waerenskjold, Jane Long, Francita Alavez, Mollie Bailey, Karle Wilson Baker, Corinne Griffith, Lillian Richard, and still making history, Opal Lee, to name a few.

Many other men and women helped pave the way for future generations and the many places noted in the regions' history. Readers are encouraged to get to know some of them in the [County Line Magazine archives](#).

• [A Woman's Place](#)

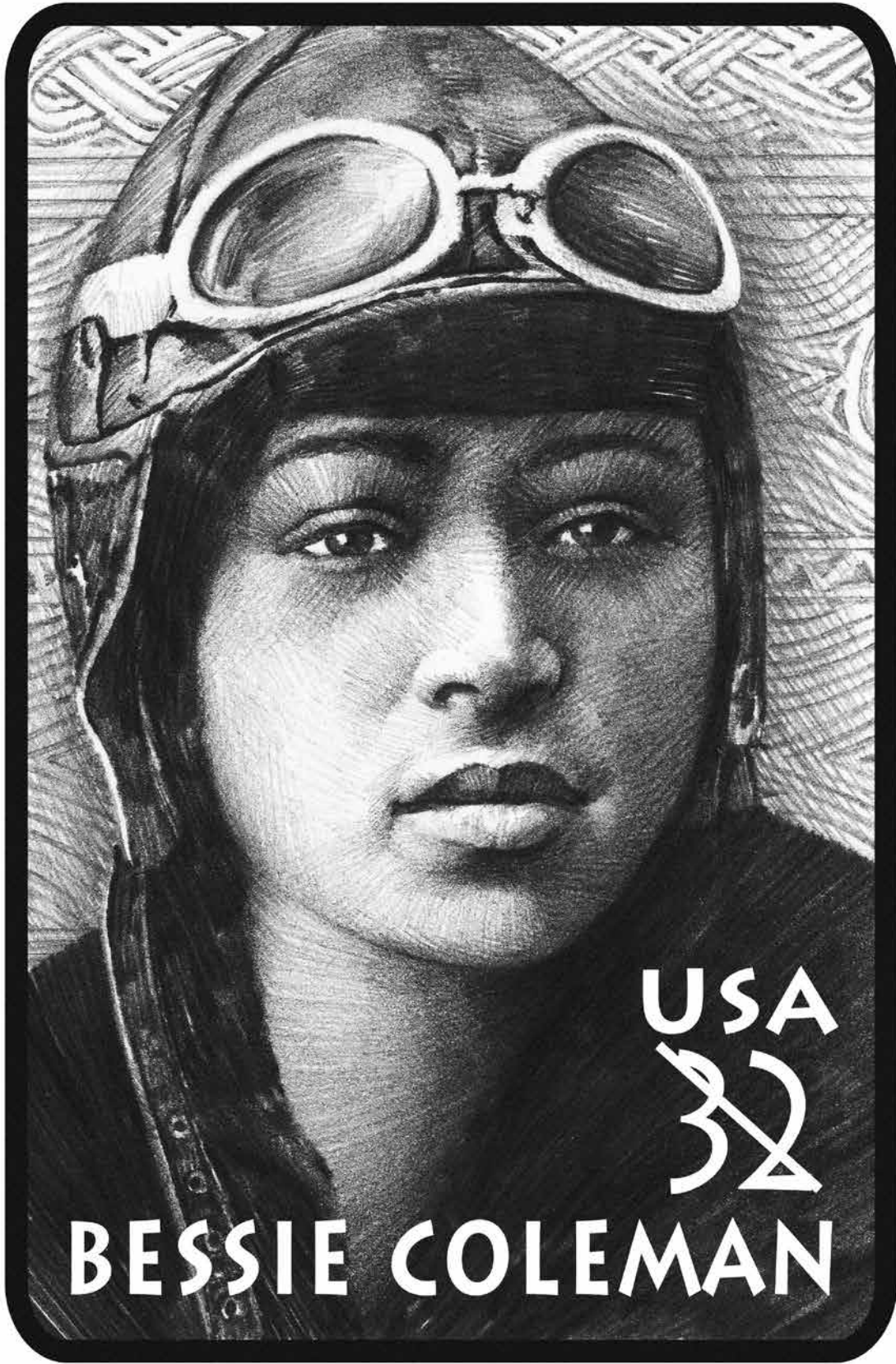
• [History: It's the New Thing](#)

continued page 19

“Old Time Traditions,” Painting by JD Cole



BLACK HERITAGE



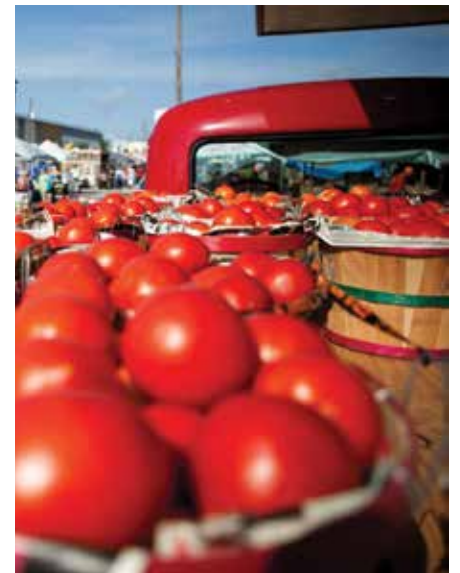
USA

32

BESSIE COLEMAN



FLO STEPHENSON, PLEASANT HILL QUILTERS, PHOTO BY PAMELA EDWARDS





25 YEARS *continued from page 14*

CULTURE

While historians try to catch up on documenting all sides of the state's history, the more inclusive stories are already present throughout the region, passed down through generations and carefully guarded in museums and celebrated in events. Some unique cultures are still intact, while the melding of different backgrounds and experiences of those who came to live in East Texas are present as well and continue to evolve.

There are cultural groups who gather for monthly or annual meet ups more privately than some including Vietnamese, other Asians, those from India, South Africans, Hispanics, and Portuguese to name a few. Other cultures are getting more attention with an increasing number of public celebrations including Cinco de Mayo, Dia De Los Muertos, Oktoberfest, Mardi Gras, Scottish Highlands games, Celtic fairs, St. Patrick's Day,

Juneteenth, Renaissance fairs, Polka and Czech festivals, and American Indian Heritage festivals.

The combining of all the cultures that made their way to the region resulted in many other special events and museum displays. Some include the trade days with the mother of them all, First Monday Trade Days in Canton; heritage events like Henderson Syrup Festival, Iron Horse Festival, and Edgewood Heritage Festival. Others encompass the history of the booming oil days; cowboy and western influences; and old cars, railway memorabilia, and other transportation history, and train excursions that continue today. Most all the towns have Independence Day celebrations and heartwarming holiday parades, tree lightings, and nostalgic traditions.

The wide open skies of the region make it a perfect fit for several hot-air balloon festivals, including the largest sanctioned hot-air balloon race in Texas that takes place in Longview each summer.

Some of the most successful events in the region are well over 60 years old and a good number of festivals continuing today were in their infant stages 25 years ago. But it was just in the last 10 years ago or so when the region started to see a bigger surge of new festivals with staying power like Oktoberfests in McKinney and Kilgore, Fall Feral Hog Festival in Ben Wheeler, Winnsboro Art & Wine Festival, July Fest in Gun Barrel City, Claws for a Cause Crawfish Boil in Sulphur Springs, REEL East Texas Film Festival in Kilgore, and many others.

In 2005, a state initiative program began designating cultural districts in cities across Texas that "harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development and community vitality." Receiving official Cultural District designations in the Upper East Side of Texas so far are Winnsboro, Longview, Texarkana, Sherman, Denison, Dallas, and McKinney.

continued page 23

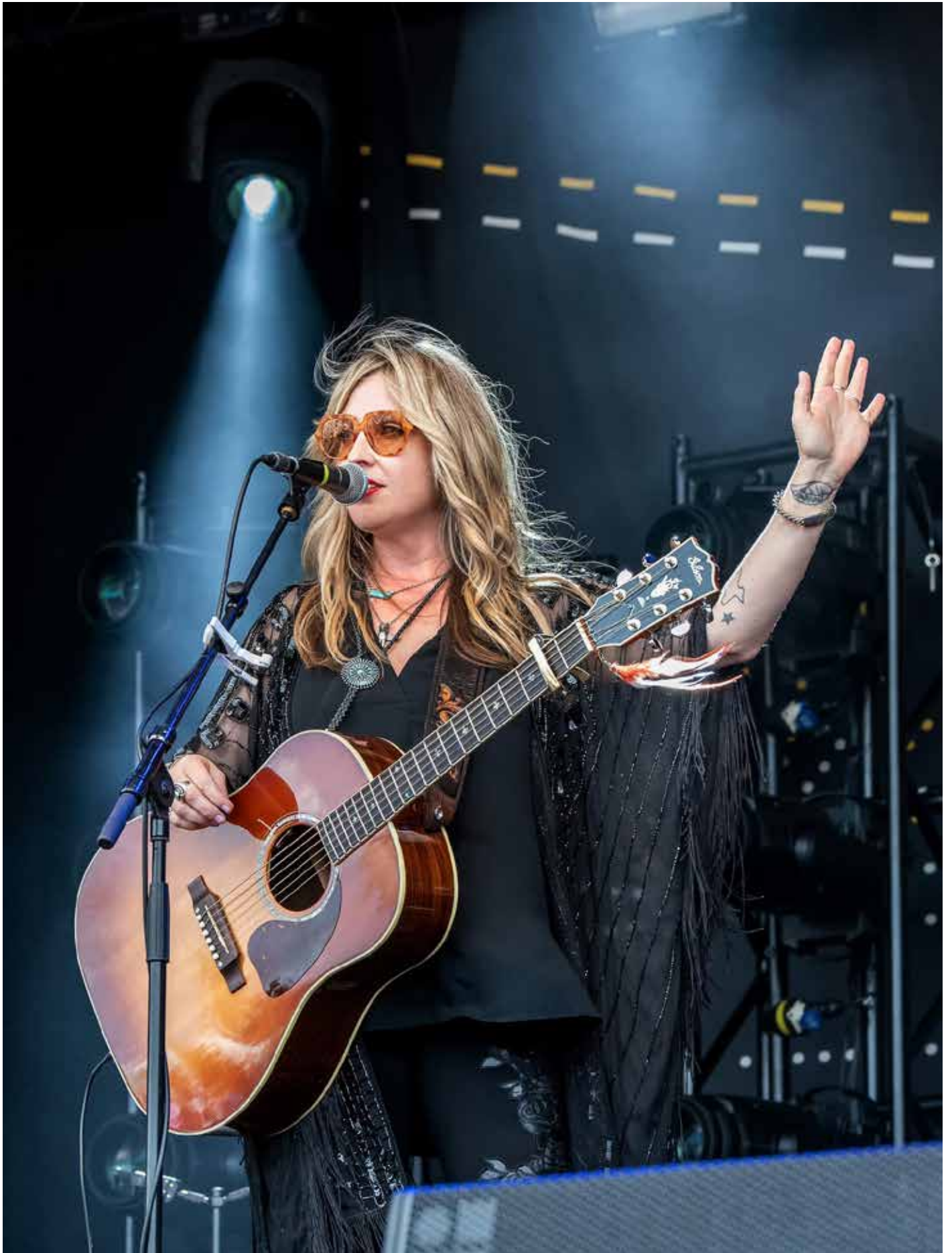
GREAT TEXAS BALLOON RACE, LONGVIEW



HERITAGE SYRUP FESTIVAL, HENDERSON



DOWNTOWN BEN WHEELER. PHOTO BY CRAIG D. BLACKMON, FAIA





25 YEARS *continued from page 19*

MUSIC

The Upper East Side of Texas has tremendous deep roots in music and has given birth to an incredible number of successful musicians to the point it is sometimes asked inquisitively, “What’s in the water there?”

Like cultures and most things, some music genres born or practiced in the region still have very clear lanes, while others are a blend. Most music styles evolved from combinations of sounds including boogie woogie, jazz, blues, ragtime, rock and roll, Celtic ballads, Appalachian folk, cowboy campfire tunes, country, and gospel. Genres and styles continued to evolve, brought by waves of immigration and neighboring traditions from Mexico. Over the last 20 years or so, the term Americana came into mainstream media and in jam sessions across the country as singer-songwriters tired of trying to fit their styles into any one genre.

Leading the way in cultural heritage through music in the Upper East Side of Texas are ragtime composer and pianist Scott Joplin; folk singer Huddle “Lead-belly” Ledbetter; gospel musician Stuart

Hamblen; blues legends Aaron T-Bone Walker, Omar Sharif, Floyd Dixon; followed by pop crooner Johnny Mathis; country stars Ray Price, Tex Ritter, Jim Reeves, Johnny Horton, Johnny Gimble, Lefty Frizzell, Bob Luman, and Al Dexter; and classical music’s Van Cliburn.

Music City Texas Theater opened in 2003 in Linden, hometown of Don Henley.

Marshall, Texas, became officially designated as the Birthplace of Boogie Woogie in 2010.

In more recent years, popular musicians from the region include ZZ Top, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Jimmie Vaughan, Billy Joe Shaver, Michael Martin Murphey, Lee Ann Womack, Linda Davis, Neal McCoy, and newer superstars Miranda Lambert, Kacey Musgraves, Sunny Sweeney, and Chris Tomlin.

Other music-related talent sprang from the Upper East Side of Texas as well with lyricists, composers, and famous venue hosts including Kenneth Threadgill, Will Jennings, Susanna Clark, and Blake Neely.

In the past 25 years, besides some of these incredible musically inclined hu-

mans becoming national and international stars, the region has seen the emersion of hundreds of local talented musicians and singer-songwriters. Previously mostly heard only by other musicians, family and friends in garage and pasture jam sessions, over the years more and more music venues, open mic stages, and restaurants featuring music nights emerged, giving them a place now to showcase their talents for residents and visitors alike.

The growing number of music venues — both small and large enough to seat up to 2,000 people — bring in national talent as well.

Jamborees, fiddle fests, seasonal weekly music series, street jams, concerts, and music festivals are happening now in the region on a regular basis.

One notable venue and organization is Mount Vernon Music, bringing a full schedule each year of concerts of traditional chamber music, jazz, and other styles from their renovated church near downtown Mount Vernon, Texas. Led by talented musicians Mark and Ute Miller, they invite guest artists from around the country to share music by composers

continued page 26



EAST TEXAS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



ADLER & HEARNE, WINNSBORO CENTER FOR THE ARTS





THE BOWERY PLAYERS, WINNSBORO CENTER FOR THE ARTS. PHOTO BY JIM WILLIS

25 YEARS *continued from page 23*

such as Joseph Haydn, Johannes Brahms, Beethoven, Strauss, Mozart, and many more. They also take their performances into the schools and communities, often introducing children and adults alike to live classical music for the first time.

Many Upper East Side of Texas communities are being welcomed into the Music Friendly Texas Certified Community Program that began in 2016 including Nacogdoches, Lufkin, Marshall, Linden, Lindale, Corsicana, Dallas, McKinney, Denison, Rockwall, and Waxahachie. Several others are working through the certification process now including Carthage, Texarkana, Sherman, Crockett, and Kilgore.

STAGE & THEATRE

Community theatre was one of the few performing arts happening in small towns in the region when County Line began 25 years ago. Some communities

already had thriving troupes and numerous shows each year. Others were few and far between, and many rural live theatre fans made their way to the Tyler Civic Theatre for shows or ventured into Dallas.

The Texas Shakespeare Festival in Kilgore was in full swing, having begun in 1986. Still continuing today, each summer the festival presents several weeks of shows featuring theatrical experiences with high-caliber actors, designers, and directors from throughout the nation.

Over the years, some theatrical troupes have disbanded while others have continued and new ones started. On the whole, the increase in theatrical performances — including musicals — in small towns has made it easier for fans to see classic and comedic favorites and more on a regular basis.

The Texas Shakespeare Festival also has a roadshow that travels to communities and schools throughout the region and

the Texas Commission on the Arts has a touring roster of performers with matching funds to help rural communities afford the initiative.

In addition to theatre, many venues in the region upped their entertainment offerings considerably in the past few years including the recently remodeled Municipal City Hall Performance Center in Marshall; the Greenville Municipal Auditorium and Texan Theater in Greenville; Caldwell Auditorium, Liberty Hall, Rogers Palmer Performing Arts Center, and Cowan Center in Tyler; Whatley Center for Performing Arts in Mount Pleasant; Banita Creek Hall and W.M. Turner Auditorium in Nacogdoches; Belcher Center, Theatre Longview, and Maude Cobb Convention Center in Longview; Hopkins County Civic Center in Sulphur Springs, Perot Theater in Texarkana; Winnsboro Center for the Arts; and Henderson County Performing Arts Center.

continued page 29





"All Diamonds," by James Suris



POTTER DOUG BROWN, EDMO, PHOTO BY TOM GEDDIE

25 YEARS *continued from page 26*

VISUAL ARTS

World renowned sculptor and Texas Medal of Arts honoree James Surls told *County Line* a few years ago that growing up among the forests of East Texas near Malakoff was where he learned to spend his time “making things.”

“I didn’t call it art when I was a kid. I just loved to make little carts, wagons, tree houses, and other things. My dad was a builder. My older brother could build things that worked. He could take automobiles and watches apart and put them together and they worked. He built things that had a working reality. The things I built never did, but people always loved what I did, so I gravitated toward art. Over a period of my early 20s, I just kinda became more and more focused and it was apparent that there was a name for what I did, and it was called art. I would say I got into it by osmosis.”

Many artists found inspiration among the natural beauty of the Upper East Side of Texas.

In 2000, there were not that many places showcasing local talented visual artists. Tyler Museum of Art and Longview Museum of Fine Arts would occasionally feature locals, but most of their exhibitions focused on bringing collections from around the world to the region, which was and remains a great resource for art lovers who live in and visit the region.

Some art enthusiasts got their fix in the artists’ community of Edom, established by potter Doug Brown in the 1970s with a small group of artists working in their shops and a very successful annual art festival that brought thousands to the tiny town each year. The festival is still going strong and art shops are still open several days a week.

There were a few groups working to pro-

mote the arts — local and visiting — like Texarkana Regional Arts & Humanities Council and Mineola League of the Arts, but they were few and far between.

Today, there are hundreds of arts-related organizations, museums, galleries, and boutiques that regularly feature local artists in the region. Many artists offer their work in their own online shops. The Texas Commission on the Arts offers initiatives and resources and Texans for the Arts goes to bat for the arts at the legislative level.

Art is incorporated into many of the towns in the way of murals, statues, and street art.

The creative works of visual artists in the Upper East Side of Texas are comparable to any found in galleries across the globe. Find a small sampling in the next few pages — explore the *County Line* archives for much more.

continued page 34



ADMIRING THE ART OF CHERYL HICKS, ATHENS. PHOTO BY TOM GEDDIE

Upper East Side of Texas

MARCH/APRIL 2024

county line

MAGAZINE



TERRY CRUM

*Artist with an eye for women,
nature, and legends*

PARIS, TEXAS
LAUGH OUT LONGVIEW
HEATHER LITTLE
CERAMICS ART SPACE
FEMALE ODD COUPLE
CULTURAL CONNECT

CountyLineMagazine.com



"SHE WAS ONLY 16," BY LINDA LUCAS HARDY



ART BY RANDOLPH MARTIN. PHOTO BY CRAIG D. BLACKMON, FAIA





25 YEARS *continued from page 29*

BOOKS, POETRY, FILM, & OTHER STORYTELLING

County Line Magazine explores the value of books and literacy for children and adults alike. From the early years, book reviewers graced the magazine pages with their recommendations. Readers were made aware of book signings, author lectures, library sales, and literacy in education. Local authors are often highlighted.

The Northeast Texas Writers Organization was founded in 1986 to encourage and support writers on their literary jour-

neys. They have critique groups, writing contests, seminars and regular meetings. www.netwo.org

The East Texas Writers Guild formed in 2004 as a professional organization with a purpose to provide support, education, and opportunities to learn about publishing for East Texas writers of all genres. They offer workshops, meetings, and other resources.

The East Texas Book Fest began in Tyler in 2008. Ben Wheeler Book Fair ran for several years starting in 2011. Winnsboro Festival of Books began in 2020. The W. Walworth Harrison Public Library in

Greenville started Author Fest in 2023 and LitCon in 2024

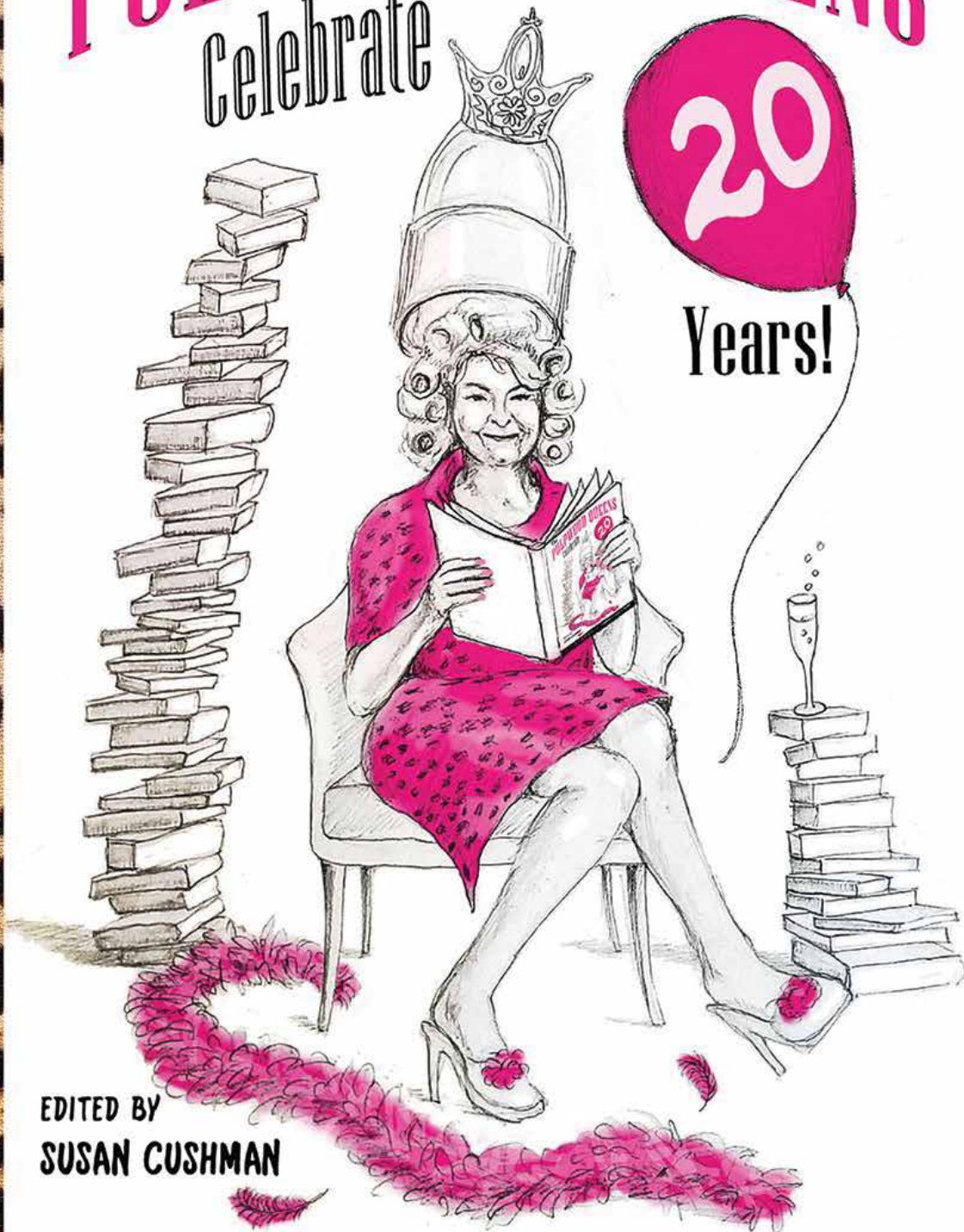
From Barnes & Noble to small bookshops and libraries across the region, the magazine has a long history of supporting other book lovers to make reading and writing a priority.

The Pulpwood Queens Book Club began in a small hair salon in Jefferson owned by Kathy Murphy in 2000. Called Beauty and the Book, she quickly gained national attention as the “hairdresser to the authors.” The salon moved to Hawkins in 2014 with small gatherings of women

continued page 37

The PULPWOOD QUEENS

Celebrate



EDITED BY
SUSAN CUSHMAN

INTRODUCTION BY KATHY L. MURPHY FOREWORD BY ROBERT HICKS

SUGAR ON THE BONES



A HAP AND LEONARD NOVEL

JOE R. LANSDALE

AUTHOR OF *THE DONUT LEGION* AND *MOON LAKE*



25 YEARS *continued from page 34*

donning tiaras and hot pink outfits while they discussed books.

The Pulpwood Queens Book Club grew to more than 550 chapters around the world and was featured on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, ABC's *Good Morning America*, and numerous national newspapers and magazines. Murphy soon began hosting annual Beauty and the Book Girlfriend Weekends with workshops and guest speakers featuring well-known authors. Men who wanted in on the fun were called the Timber Guys and had their own membership chapters. The annual gatherings featured the Big Hair Ball and many other forms of entertainment.

"I never in the world dreamed that I would run the largest 'meeting and discussing' book club in the world," Murphy told County Line writer Alia Pappas in 2014. "How did this happen? Well, we

make reading big time fun. Our motto is, 'where tiaras are mandatory and reading is the rule.' As far as our books, we do take them very seriously. They must be well written, tell a story we have not heard before, and be discussible. We love to help first time, first book authors or those whose body of work has not been discovered in a big way. Our sole mission is to promote our authors, their books, literacy and reading, and for each chapter to take on a literacy mission."

Read more about The Pulpwood Queens in the *County Line* archives and get Murphy's book, *The Pulpwood Queen's Tiaras-Wearing, Book-Sharing Guide to Life* on Amazon. To find out more about the book club, visit www.thepulpwoodqueens.com.

Renowned photographer and author Hank O'Neal released Preserving Lives: An American Family's Scrapbook in 2017 about his parent's lives East Texas.

Joe R. Lansdale's successful books written from his home in Nacogdoches are often East Texas-inspired. Matthew McConaughey includes his time in the region in his book Greenlights, and numerous other authors also highlight their meaningful time in this part of the world.

A *County Line Magazine*-inspired book, Upper East Side of Texas: Small Towns & Cultural Districts, premiered in early 2024 and is available on Amazon and in shops throughout the region.

Colleen Hoover of Saltillo, Texas, near Sulphur Springs, has published 24 books in the last 12 years, some of them in multiple languages for fans all around the world, mostly based in the romance and psychological thriller categories. Seventeen so far made the *New York Times* best sellers list. She's sold well over 20 million copies of her books.

continued page 38



25 YEARS *continued from page 37*

Reflecting on her success, Alexandra Alter of the *New York Times* wrote in 2022, “To say she’s currently the best-selling novelist in the United States, to even compare her to other successful authors who have landed several books on the best seller lists, fails to capture the size and loyalty of her audience.”

In 2024, her book *It Ends With Us* was made into a movie of the same name, and her book *Verity* is being adapted into a movie as well.

One fun author discovery is Ben King Green of Cumby, Texas. He had a sly cowboy sense of humor and with a golden gift of gab told tales of his days with horses and cattle. Despite his need for an audience from time to time, the call for wide open spaces during his earthly trek ran deep, even into his grave.

In his will, the author and horse doctor donated land to the Cumby Cemetery with the stipulation that he have 100 square feet for himself. He is quoted as saying, “I never let myself be crowded

in life, and by God, ain’t nobody gonna close in on me when I’m dead.”

His wishes were honored and his grave stands alone on a grassy knoll with his brand — a G and spurs — engraved in the granite stones standing guard at each corner. He published 11 books between 1967 and 1974. In 1973, he received the Writer’s Award for contributions to Western Literature from the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City. He also received a career award from the Texas Institute of Letters for his unique contribution to Texas literature.

Cowboy culture has long been part of the East Texas scene. Stories were told around campfires on trail rides, books and poems were written, films were made, and special events continue to honor the traditions like the Cowboy Music & Poetry Gathering held annually in Winnsboro.

East Texans, like Audie Murphy, Dan Blocker, and Tex Ritter took their cowboy ways to Hollywood, becoming famous movie and TV stars.

Beyond cowboys and country gentleman, East Texans who took their talents to the big screen in other ways include Jamie Foxx, Sissy Spacek, Margo Martindale, Matthew McConaughey, Sandy Duncan, Doolie Wilson, Tye Sheridan, Forest Whitaker, and Montana Jordan.

Film festivals have developed around the region, including in Nacogdoches, Tyler, Kilgore, and Longview, giving local filmmakers a chance to show off their work.

The Film Friendly Texas program has certified several Northeast Texas communities as good filming locations including Atlanta, Bonham, Carthage, Farmersville, Greenville, Kilgore, Marshall, Mineola, Nacogdoches, Palestine, Pittsburg, Quitman, Tyler, and Winnsboro. See more details including TV and movies filmed in each location on this Texas Film Location page.

Poetry became a regular part of *County Line Magazine* almost from the very beginning. Providing an outlet for children and

continued page 43

“SWEET LIBATIONS,” PAINTING BY JD COLE









TERRELL HERITAGE MUSEUM, CARNEGIE BUILDING



STEAMBOAT HOUSE, PALESTINE

25 YEARS *continued from page 38*

adults in this way brought forth lovely and meaningful words to our readers.

In 2006, the magazine began coordinating an annual poetry contest to give poets young and old a place to voice their thoughts and feelings. From 2015 to 2017, the magazine continued publishing the poems of regional children in a partnership with Region 7 Education Service Center, Young Audiences of Northeast Texas, Rusk County Poetry Society, and Inspiritry entrepreneur Anne McCrady.

The process of working with teachers, judges, and the poets themselves during these years was quite rewarding. Some adult poetry winners became judges in subsequent years. Some of the young poets submitted poems year after year and watching them improve was heartwarming. Hearing their stories through the words of their poems gave readers much insight and inspiration. More than a few of the young poets said the opportunity to take part changed their lives.

ARCHITECTURE

Preserved homes and historic buildings are a big part of the attraction of the Upper East Side of Texas for many. Architecture shapes the environment of each town, reflecting its culture, identity, and history. Some notice the details, others don't, but it's always present and contributing to the experience.

Find numerous stories in the *County Line* archives of building preservation in the past 25 years and beyond. Some of the ones that readily come to mind include the Terrell Historic District, the Art Deco architecture that brought new style to Greenville, the renovated Carnegie Library and more than 1,800 noteworthy sites in Palestine, and old gas stations and other buildings along the historic Bankhead Highway.

More than 50 beautiful homes and other structures created by German immigrant Diedrich Rulfs have stood the test of time for more than 100 years to help define the landscape of Nacogdoches.

The Texas Historical Commission's historic house museums represent Texas' diverse landscape and architectural heritage. Experience how Texans lived over the past 175 years in modest homes, comfortable residences, and opulent estates. This list of available tour locations includes the Starr Family Home in Marshall, Sam Bell Maxey House in Paris, Sam Rayburn House in Bonham, Eisenhower Birthplace Historic Site in Denison, Howard-Dickinson House Museum in Henderson, Goodman-LeGrand House in Tyler, and the stunning Ace of Clubs House in Texarkana.

Not to be missed are the outstanding courthouses in the region, including those in Marshall, Mount Vernon, and the award-winning Romanesque Revival courthouse in Sulphur Springs.

- [Architects and Artists Design Palestine, Texas](#)
- [Jefferson Tours Go Back in Time](#)
- [Mineola Architecture](#)

continued page 44



25 YEARS *continued from page 43*

NATURE & OUTDOOR RECREATION

Surrounding the communities of the Upper East Side of Texas are acres of land as far as the eye can see, naturally landscaped with enormous trees, prairies, wildflowers, and spectacular sunrises and sunsets. Beautiful vineyards, garden centers, resorts, and wildlife attractions dot the countryside. One is never far from a lakeside shore in this part of Texas, which is fed by the flowing waters of hundreds of rivers and creeks.

Back road driving, meandering from one charming main street to the next, is a favorite pastime for visitors and residents alike. It is often stated that the Upper East Side of Texas is one of the prettiest parts of the state with breath-taking scenes.

Numerous events celebrate the nature of the area including the blooming of Mrs. Lee's daffodils, azalea and spring flower trails, wildflower trails, bluebonnet festi-

val, garden galas, stargazing, horse trail rides, Texas rose festival, and annual homages to pesky critters like Marshall's Fire Ant Festival and Ben Wheeler's Feral Hog Festival.

Longview Arboretum, East Texas Arboretum in Athens, Blue Moon Gardens in Edom, Wood County Arboretum & Botanical Gardens in Quitman, the Ruby M. Mize Azalea Garden in Nacogdoches, and the Tyler Rose Garden are must see sites to admire floral beauty in the region.

Texas State Parks in this corner of the state are top notch, offering hiking, biking, boating, and other recreation. Included are Cooper Lake State Park (both South Sulphur Creek and Doctors Creek Units), Lake Tawakoni State Park, Martin Dies, Jr. State Park, Eisenhower State Park, Cedar Hill State Park, Tyler State Park, Caddo Lake State Park, Lake Bob Sandlin State Park, Martin Creek Lake State Park, Atlanta State Park, Bonham State Park, Daingerfield State Park, and Purtil Creek State Park.

A few other noteworthy sites covered by

County Line these past 25 years include Davey Dogwood Park in Palestine. The 254-acre park began having visitors in the early 1940s and improvements over the years make it one of the most visited parks in the region year-round, especially when the dogwoods are in bloom and for those who enjoy the eight miles of unincorporated hiking and biking trails and picnic areas.

Plans to create a 130-mile continuous walking and bike trail across Northeast Texas began several decades ago and in the early 2000s, several counties began getting property and preparing for the Northeast Texas Trail. By 2013, many miles of the trail were usable and today the entire 130 miles is open for recreational trail use. Improvements and maintenance continue, headed by the Northeast Texas Trail Coalition. More than 10,000 members of their Facebook group keep users informed of places to look out for problems and good places to stay overnight. Read one woman's story here from the [County Line archives](#).

continued page 49

BLUE MOON GARDENS, EDOM. PHOTO BY CRAIG D. BLACKMON, FAIA



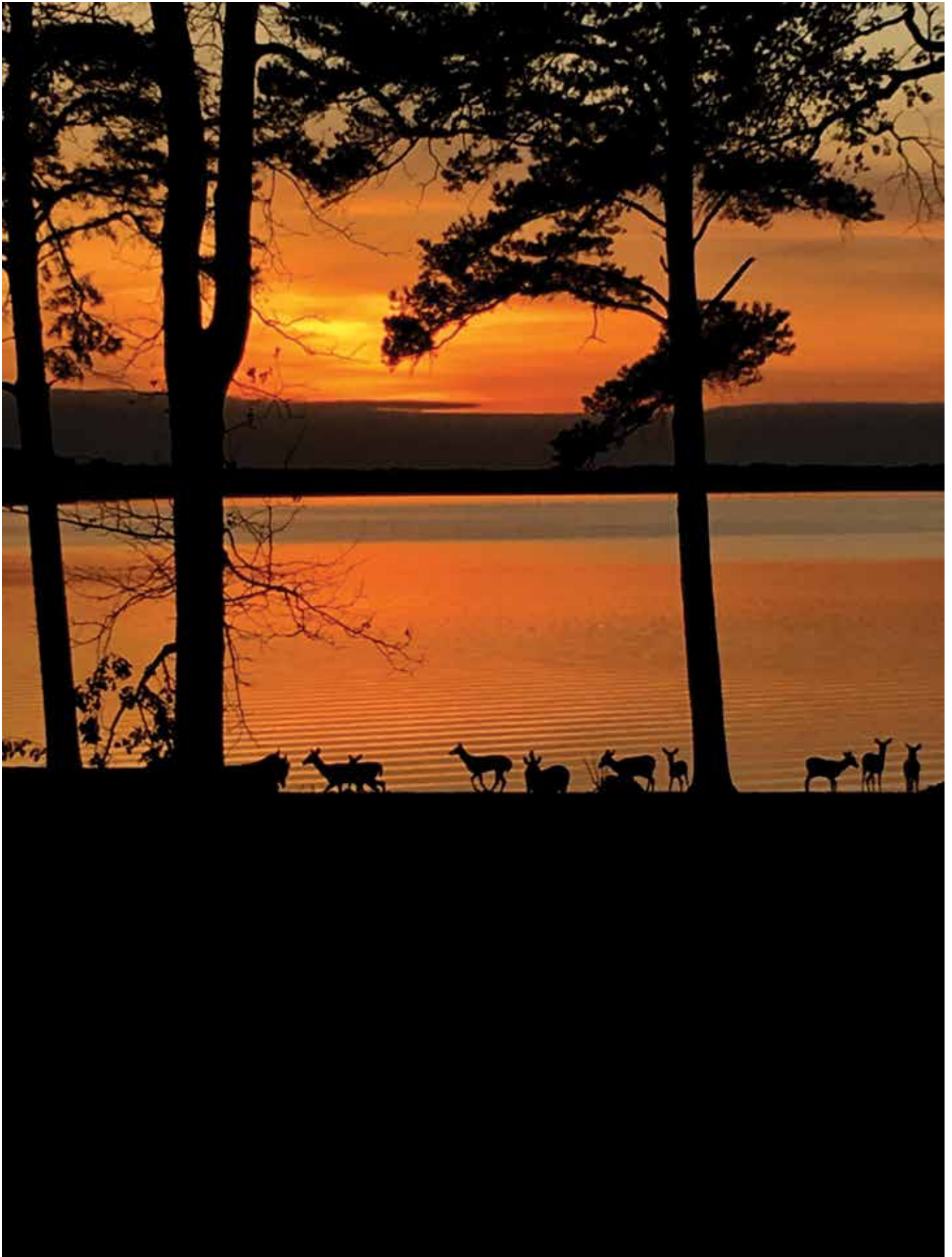




EAGLE OVER LAKE FORK, PHOTO BY LISA HILBERS

RING BILLED GULL ON LAKE FORK. PHOTO BY LISA HILBERS





“SUNSET WITH THE GANG,” LAKE O THE PINES, PHOTO BY DEBBIE SANDLIN



FARMERS MARKETS OFFER FRESH LOCALLY GROWN FOOD

25 YEARS *continued from page 44*

The Mineola Nature Preserve along the Sabine River began being built in stages in 2002 with matching grants from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and others and is maintained by funding from the City of Mineola. The 2,911-acres is home to more than 193 species of birds, numerous wildlife, buffalo, longhorn cattle, and a wetlands environment. Guests enjoy walking, hiking, biking, birding, wildlife viewing, more than 20 miles of equestrian trails, fishing ponds, picnic areas, primitive camping areas, RV connections, two pavilions with restrooms, playground, and educational opportunities.

One of the best views one can get of East Texas is at Love's Lookout near Jacksonville. Visitors go for picnics, to take photographs, and to soak up the scenic surroundings. At an elevation of 720 feet above sea level and rising 240 feet above the surrounding terrain, the vaulted ridge affords a panoramic view of the eastern horizon as far out as 30 miles on a clear day.

When Bessie Heard saw too much concrete being poured around Collin County, she set out to build a place for people to experience and learn about nature. In operation since 1967, the Heard Wildlife Sanctuary and Museum welcomes about 100,000 visitors each year to observe live animals in the natural setting and explore an interactive museum.

Birds, butterflies, wildflowers, sunsets and other nature's beauty in the region are included in many articles in the *County Line* archives.

The Upper East Side of Texas is often called "lake country" because of the many bodies of water enjoyed by residents and visitors from all over the world. Many of the state parks are built around the lakes. Others that are noteworthy include Lake Fork, Caddo Lake, Lake Texoma, Lake Bob Sandlin, Lake Cypress Springs, Cedar Creek Lake, Lake Tawakoni, Lake Palestine, Lake Ray Hubbard, Lake Jacksonville, Lake O' the Pines, and Toledo Bend.

FOOD, DRINKS, AND OTHER AGRICULTURE

In the early 2000s, there were a number of roadside stands in the front yards of farmers, many working on the honor system with a sign to take tomatoes, squash, onions, watermelons, and other produce and leave money in a jar sitting on a table. Actual markets with multiple farmers coming together in downtown squares were few and far between.

There was a time in East Texas when farmers' markets were well attended but that practice began to decline after World War II with the advent of supermarkets and convenience stores and country people leaving to find work in large cities.

Over the last 25 years, the appreciation and implementation of farm to table experiences in the Upper East Side of Texas has grown significantly. People became much more interested in getting

continued page 50



TARA VINEYARD AND WINERY, ATHENS

25 YEARS *continued from page 49*

fresh and organic foods with the realization of the health and economic benefits of consuming locally grown food, not to mention that it tastes better.

Numerous communities hold weekly markets now bringing farmers and artisans together for gatherings featuring seasonal produce as well as baked goods, farm raised eggs and meats, honey, cut flowers, herbs, and handmade crafts. Some provide ambience with live music and other forms of entertainment.

Another big change occurring in the last 25 years is the State of Texas' grape growing initiative that worked out beautifully in the East Texas soil, resulting in numerous enchanting vineyards and wineries offering excellent food and wine experiences.

Several breweries opened up in the last decade as well.

Special events featuring farm to table community dinners — often with a focus on chef prepared multiple-course meals using local ingredients and paired with local wines — take place during the year in the region and the trend is growing.

Besides farmers' markets, other events centered around agriculture of the region include wine swirls and festivals, tractor shows, brew fests, barbecue contests, Dutch oven cook-offs, and festivals celebrating home grown pecan pie, hot links, dairy, salt, tomatoes, blueberries, black-eyed peas, hamburgers, stew, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, hot peppers, jellies, jams, and cane syrup.

Coffee shops also popped up in small

towns and cultural districts of the region in the last couple of decades, to the delight of patrons of all ages.

Many restaurants in the Upper East Side of Texas use local produce in their meals as much as possible. Favorite country cafes are still found in most communities with burgers, chicken-fried steak, and catfish, as well as the ever-popular barbecue joints. In the past few years, professional chefs opened restaurants with gourmet options like fancy tacos, award-winning steaks, seafood, pasta, wood-fired pizza, fine wines, and specialty cocktails. Many of them have menu sections for vegetarians and health-conscious guests.

Keep exploring the region in the pages of *County Line Magazine* and in person for unique experiences in each town and along scenic backroads. ♥



“YOU CAN NEVER GET ENOUGH

BOOKS INTO THE HANDS OF ENOUGH CHILDREN”



Dolly



Inspiring a Love of Reading in the Upper East Side of Texas

BOWIE COUNTY

United Way of Greater Texarkana
Contact: Molly Riley, (903) 794-3105
molly@texarkanaunitedway.org
214 Spruce St, Texarkana, TX 75501

GRAYSON COUNTY

United Way of Grayson County
Contact: Katie Eubank, (903) 893-1920
literacy@unitedwaygrayson.org
PO Box 1112, Sherman, TX 75091

HUNT COUNTY

United Way of Hunt County
Contact: Natalie Pegg, (903) 217-1694
info@unitedwayofhuntcounty.org
PO Box 224, Greenville, TX 75403

DELTA COUNTY

Friends of the Delta County Public Library
Contact: Lisa Carter, (903) 395-4575
deltacountylibrary@gmail.com
300 W Dallas Ave, Cooper, TX 75432

GREGG COUNTY

Greater Longview United Way, Inc.
Contact: Dr. Evan Dolive, (903) 758-0191
edolive@longviewunitedway.org
PO Box 411, Longview, TX 75606

MARION COUNTY

The Rotary Club of Jefferson TX
Contact: Toni Woods, (903) 407-2231
tonilwoods@aol.com
PO Box 5, Jefferson, TX 75657

MARSHALL

Mission Marshall
Contact: Misty Scott, (903) 472-4944
mscott@missionmarshall.org
2109 S. Washington St., Marshall, TX 75670

NAVARRO COUNTY

Westminster Presbyterian Church
Contact: April Grant, (903) 874-3781
imaginationlibraryWPC@gmail.com
312 N 13th St, Corsicana, TX 75110

NEW SUMMERFIELD

New Summerfield Education Foundation
Contact: Peggy Craft, (903) 726-3306
pcraft@newsummerfieldisd.net
PO Box 6, New Summerfield, TX 75780

RED RIVER COUNTY/LAMAR COUNTY

Paris Kiwanis Imagination Library
Contact: Claudia McKinney, (903) 784-6374
cmck126@gmail.com
714 CR 35010, Brookston, TX 75421

RAINS COUNTY

Rains County Public Library
Contact: Wendy Byrd, (903) 473-5096
wendy.byrd@co.rains.tx.us
PO Box 202, Emory, TX 75440

RUSK COUNTY

Little Ones Literacy Program
Contact: Brian Ballard, (903) 521-6435
brian.ballard49@gmail.com
PO Box 1762, Henderson, TX 75653

SULPHUR SPRINGS

Sulphur Springs Independent School District
Contact: Amanda Ridner, (903) 885-4576
aridner@ssisd.net
600 Calvert St, Sulphur Springs, TX 75482

WOOD COUNTY

Pilot Club of Quitman
Contact: Susan Ukleja, (903) 243-9384
quitmanpilot@gmail.com
PO Box 1265, Quitman, TX 75783

Winnsboro Center for the Arts

Contact: Tona Blizzard, (817) 247-0607
dpilwinnsboro@gmail.com
655 CR 4592, Winnsboro, TX 75494

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a book gifting program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth to age five, no matter their family's income. The Imagination Library relies on local partners to secure funds to cover the cost of the books and shipping fees.

www.ImaginationLibrary.com

DONATE

Contact a participating
community to contribute
to this worthy cause.



January & February Events:

Splash & Dash 5k
January 1, 2025

Faire of Champions
Running for five weekends
beginning January 4, 2025

Mardi Gras Parade
February 22, 2025

Texas State Railroad Season
opening in March 2025.

Plan your visit: 800-659-3484
VisitPalestine.com

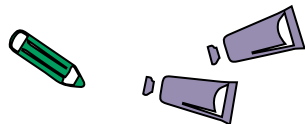


Join us for **Family Day**

every second Saturday

1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
in the TMA Classroom

**Free art activities
& light refreshments**



Tyler Museum of Art
1300 South Mahon Avenue
Tyler, Tx 75701 • 903-595-1001
www.tylermuseum.org

**Casual, Classic Dining
for Lunch or Dinner**
903-723-2404



www.QueenStGrille.com

Communities Make Small Town Charm a Priority Amid Diverse Influences

CASUAL OUTDOOR DINING, ROCKWALL. PHOTO BY LAURI DODD



By P.A. Geddie

The small towns and cultural districts are the superstars of the Upper East Side of Texas, each with its own unique personality. Standing at the center of many of the communities, people get an immediate sense of the beauty that happens when the reverence of the historical past, the welcoming of contemporary culture, and a partnership with nature converge. That good vibration is the underlying current of the entire region.

At the time *County Line Magazine* began 25 years ago, many of the small communities were definitely “sleepy towns” and some were bordering on the title of

“ghost town.” Over the years, through the hard work of many city employees, business leaders, entrepreneurs, and motivated citizens, there are now well over 30 tourism-worthy and local friendly towns in the region.

The state began a few programs that helped small towns think about revitalization possibilities and offered some funding opportunities. The Texas Main Street program is one of them still going strong.

More of the state’s Main Street cities are in Northeast Texas than anywhere else in Texas. Those include Sherman, Denison, Celina, McKinney, Paris, Greenville, Royse City, Rockwall, Mesquite,

Waxahachie, Ennis, Corsicana, Palestine, Nacogdoches, San Augustine, Carthage, Henderson, Kilgore, Longview, Marshall, Tyler, Canton, Grand Saline, Mineola, Winnsboro, Pittsburg, Mount Pleasant, Mount Vernon, Clarksville, Texarkana, and Linden.

“Shop Local” is a term heard often in rural communities to remind people to support local economy. In a time when large companies like Amazon make it easy to shop online and get quick deliveries, in-person shopping requires conscious thinking and boutiques in the region try to make it an experience worthy of tourists and residents alike. Some offer coffee

continued page 56



ATHENS FIDDLE REUNION. PHOTO BY CARRIE BENNETT



HOPE MURAI, GREENVILLE, BY BRANDON ADAMS

COMMUNITY *continued from page 54*

or champagne as shoppers browse gift shops, antique and thrift stores, art galleries, and home decor, cool curiosities, and other specialty locations.

Most of the small town shoppers are looking for an experience that may involve browsing through the shops, taking a break at a bakery, and enjoying a meal at a local restaurant. These activities are often part of the small town destination getaway package that many look for to escape the high traffic and crowded spaces of big towns.

Rural communities rely on tourism to keep the doors open for small shops. Some are doing a better job of that than others. Visitors have the best experience when they call ahead and speak to local travel specialists who can help them create an itinerary based on their interests.

There are many citizens who grew up in the area and stayed in their small communities and “kept the lights on” who are grateful for the changes that brought them more local shopping and dining opportunities. The same amenities like coffee shops and wineries they now enjoy

are also attracting young families, retirees, and others to live and visit the area.

One trend that instigated change in the region is that some people began returning to their hometowns after retiring or to help care for aging parents or to return to a more simple way of life. Many had received higher education by then and gained more “worldly” views and had more expectations for social needs they’d grown used to in urban areas. Add to that the needs of people moving or staying part time in popular lake communities and sought-after wide open country spaces in the area and there’s a good picture of other trends affecting economic development for the region.

In Greenville, Kevin Banks, like many of his peers, left his hometown there for greener pastures after graduating from high school in 1978. But after a successful career with The Walt Disney Company, he moved home to impact the town’s success. As tourism manager and director of the Greenville Municipal Auditorium (GMA) for several years, he made major improvements. The GMA baton was then passed to Micah McBay in 2022 who moved to Greenville with his

wife Heather from Rowlett. They were both born in East Texas (Texarkana and Daingerfield) and wanted to contribute to improving the region through the arts.

“The ability to implement and support the arts here in our community is a key reason we are here,” Micah says. “We both believe the arts are vital to a growing community and will continue to support them in all forms here in Greenville.”

Running the GMA helps ensure the community has a solid centerpiece for entertainment and the arts. In recent years improvements include adding free arts programs to the annual GMA calendar for local school students, starting the Greenville Theatre Works, working with local citizens to launch a community choir and a community band, and supporting local arts programs at the library and here at the GMA.

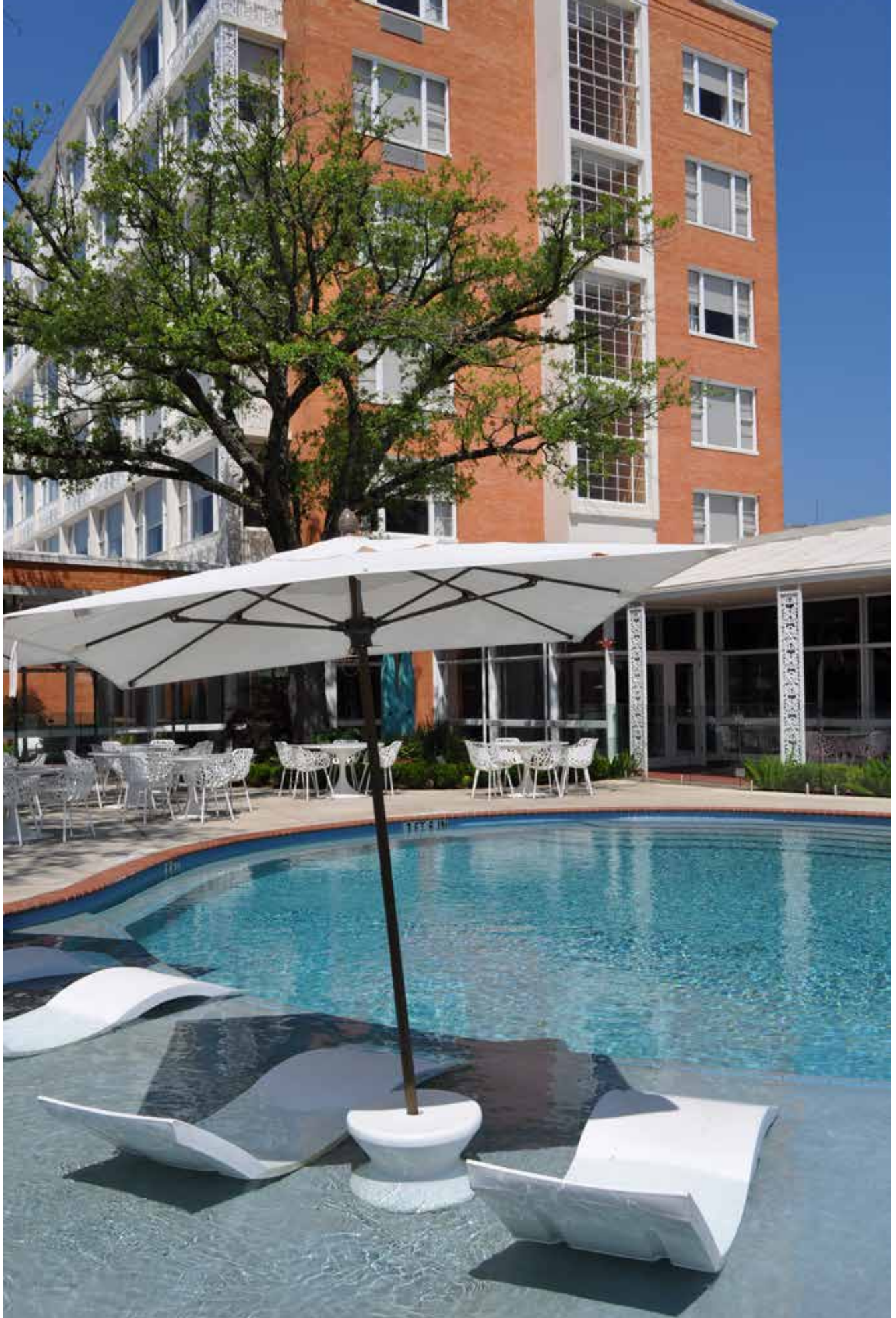
Micah worked with Greenville City Council to coordinate a \$5 million renovation to the GMA that takes place next year and upgrades all of its tech systems.

continued page 59

ACROSS THE STREET DINER, CORSICANA, PHOTO BY DARE TO AIM PHOTOGRAPHY



FREDONIA HOTEL, NAGOGDOCHES, PHOTO BY P.A. GEDDIE





WINSBORO CENTER FOR THE ARTS, PHOTO BY JIM WILLIS

COMMUNITY *continued from page 56*

Heather serves as president of the Creative Arts Community in Greenville, which is the non-profit organization that houses Greenville Theatre Works, Greenville Harmony Chorus, and Greenville Community Band. They are adding a fourth arm to that organization to coordinate piano-related events and concerts at the GMA — including two piano competitions scheduled for 2025 and 2026.

“Lots of good things happening in the arts here,” Micah says. “Over the past [few] years, the GMA continues to grow and provide high quality entertainment to our region. This year alone (2024), over 25,000 people attended events at the GMA including concerts from well-known artists like The Oak Ridge Boys to local dance recitals and community theatre. Investing in the arts is an investment in your community because the arts brings in people to stay in your hotels, shop at your stores, and eat at your restaurants. It’s a worthwhile endeavor to support local arts and to invest in their sustainability.”

Mary White and her team have a simi-

lar focus on creative endeavors in much smaller Winnsboro. Born and raised in Winnsboro, she moved on to have a successful 30-year biomedical career on the East Coast. She is classically trained in piano and also enjoys playing jazz. She moved back home in 2014 and became active in the Winnsboro Center for the Arts (WCA), founded in 2001 to provide more cultural and artistic opportunities and to make them accessible to everyone.

The multi-disciplinary arts center serves communities throughout Northeast Texas through educational programming, cultural experiences, and entertainment. A new 10,000 square foot, two-story arts education building is now under construction next to the existing art center in the Bowery Pedestrian Park in downtown Winnsboro. Following that, is the construction of a new state-of-the-art performance hall.

White says it takes many people with diverse backgrounds to keep the momentum going.

“I grew up in Winnsboro before our society had become so mobile,” she says. “Everyone I knew was born and raised in Texas, and a majority were from around Winnsboro. When a family moved in

from out of state, it was big news. Now, there are people who have moved in from all over the country, if not from around the world.

“Winnsboro is such a special community because people (old-timers and newcomers alike) tend to respect and value its rich history and traditions while embracing its potential for what it can become. That means that people from diverse backgrounds can find common ground to work together for the good of the community. That is so important. We move too fast for some and too slowly for others, but we do work together to address the needs of our changing times.”

Retired Dallas businesswoman Mary Spencer is on the WCA board of directors and supports the town in many other ways. She purchased a second home on nearby Lake Cypress Springs in 2007.

“After retiring, the weekends became weeks, giving me time to discover the wonderful little town of Winnsboro and to observe and be a part of the many changes over the years,” she says. “Shopping and dining out in the various boutiques and restaurants with my new

continued page 61





REDLANDS HOTEL, DOWNTOWN PALESTINE, PHOTO BY DAVE SHULTZ

COMMUNITY *continued from page 59*

friends led me to Winnsboro Center for the Arts, where I met some of the most talented, creative, and fun folks ever. I quickly discovered that WCA provided everything that the cultural arts of Dallas had previously done [for me] and I so enjoyed the wide variety of art classes, the shows, and the music, and theater. WCA is truly a diamond amongst the hay bales of picturesque East Texas.”

Sulphur Springs has completely renovated their downtown area in the past 25 years. Joey Baker, Director of Aviation and Tourism Departments spoke, to *County Line* in 2011 when they were in the early phases of making improvements to the city’s courthouse plaza and their municipal airport that would draw more tourism and other industries to the area.

Their well-planned strategies were very successful as is evident by the constant stream of foot traffic these last few years

as visitors and residents alike enjoy the splash pad, outstanding veterans park, outdoor restaurants, seasonal concerts, boutique shopping, and ongoing activities throughout the year, all with a backdrop of the award-winning Romanesque Revival courthouse. People also enjoy the amusing see-through bathrooms, sometimes driving many miles out of their way for the experience.

Many “movers and shakers” in other communities in the region are making positive change happen. Often one big renovation can lead to the rest of the town working harder to spruce things up.

Such is the case in Palestine after Jean Mollard followed her husband Norman to his hometown in 1976, coming from Houston. With a special interest in historic buildings and restoration versus bulldozing, they purchased what she calls “the most dilapidated and seemingly desperate project in town.”

Today it is the beautiful Redlands Hotel

with overnight suites, a fine dining restaurant, cozy bar, gift shop, conference room, library, and art gallery. Other buildings in Palestine are following suit.

The people who make a community what it is, come from diverse backgrounds, no matter how long they or their ancestors have been there. The value of a place is measured by its history, its present, and future. From the American Indians who first roamed this land of the Upper East Side of Texas, to the influx of immigrants over hundreds of years that continue today, a blending of shared cultures, history, and creative new ideas keeps the people of the region appreciating and preserving its natural beauty and small town vibe.

Get to know the communities in the Upper East Side of Texas in the *County Line* archives and in the book, *Upper East Side of Texas: Small Towns & Cultural Districts* available in shops around the region and on Amazon. ♥



We specialize in creating strategic communication plans that work through a multi-channel approach including eEditions, newsletters, websites, blogs, guides, email, and social sites. Let us help you choose the most cost-effective, results-oriented promotion campaigns for the success of your business.

CALL TODAY. (903) 312-9556. PA.Geddie@COUNTYLINEMAGAZINE.COM



Because Music Belongs To All Of Us



UNEXPECTED TREASURES

Saturday, January 11, 2025 at 7:30 pm, Mount Vernon Music Hall

AND

Sunday, January 12, 2025 at 2:30 pm

Steinway Piano Gallery of Fort Worth

Includes piano quartets by Joaquín Turina and Louise Adolpha Le Beau, Arnold Bax's Quintet for oboe and strings, and "Calvary" by Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson. With pianist Evan Mitchell and oboist Sharon Lacey.

MOUNT VERNON MUSIC

PRESENTS

2024-2025 Season

COMMON PURPOSE



PIANO SUPERLATIVES

Saturday, February 15, 2025, 7:30 pm

Steinway Piano Gallery of Plano

AND

Sunday, February 16, 2025, 2:30 pm, Mount Vernon Music Hall

Saluting Johannes Brahms and Edvard Grieg. With Evan Mitchell, piano. Edward Grieg Piano Concerto, and Johannes Brahms Piano Quintet.

ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Saturday, March 22, 2025, 7:30 pm

St. Mark's Anglican Church, Arlington

AND

Sunday, March 23, 2025, 2:30 pm, Mount Vernon Music Hall

Richard Strauss' creation of Metamorphosen with an arrangement of the beloved Pastoral Symphony by Beethoven's contemporary Michael Gotthard Fischer. Featuring Mark Miller and Andres Bravo, violins; Ute Miller and Matt Sinno, viola; Marie-Thais Oliver and Noemie Golubovic, cello; Jack Unzicker, bass. With MVM Scholarship Award winners.

FAMILY CONCERT

Saturday, April 26, 2025 at 11:00 am, Mount Vernon Music Hall

The Tortoise and the Hare, Camille Saint-Saëns' Carnival of the Animals, and Rumpelstiltskin gets a musical update from Mozart.

With MVM Scholarship Award winners.

FROM SORROW TO JOY: MUSICAL MESSAGES

Saturday, May 24, 2025, 6:30 pm

Daphne Prairie, 4020 FM 1896, Mount Vernon

AND

Sunday, May 25, 2025, 2:30 pm

The Old Frankford Church, 17400 Muirfield Dr., Dallas

Composers include Sally Beamish, Jesse Montgomery, Svante Henryson and more. With MVM Scholarship Award winners.

Events are subject to change. Visit MountVernonMusic.org for latest information about upcoming events, to purchase tickets, become a member, or make a donation.

IN A

WORLD

WHERE YOU CAN

BE ANYTHING

BE

KIND



YOU CAN BE ANYTHING

VIDEO



Imagine the Possibilities

A seven-year-old professor? Veterinarian? Soccer coach? Business professional? Why not? Girls imagine what they may one day become.

Willis Country Cabins

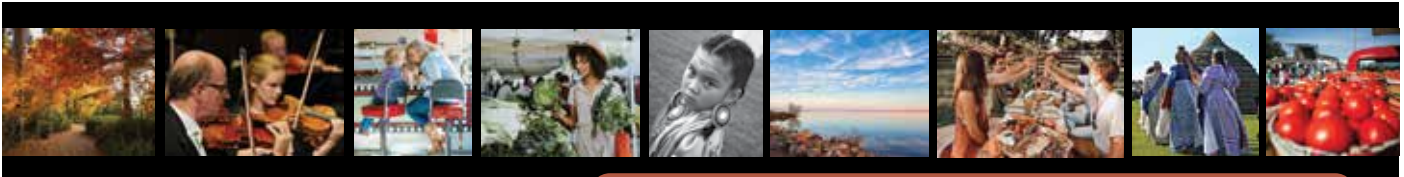
Luxury Resort. Memorable Experience.



Between Lake Fork and Lake Tawakoni in Beautiful East Texas

1553 RS County Road 4310, Point, TX 75472, 903-474-3624
www.WillisCountryCabins.com

BOOK NOW



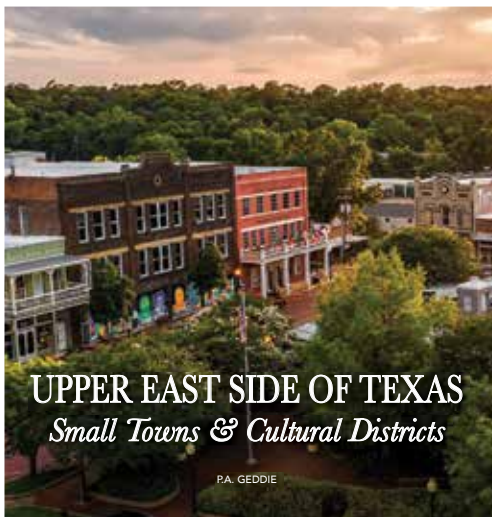
GET THE BOOK!

AVAILABLE ON AMAZON
AND IN VISITOR CENTERS, GIFT SHOPS,
AND BOOKSTORES IN THE REGION



www.SpeckledCrow.com

HARDCOVER & eBook VERSIONS



25 Stories for 25 Years

By P.A. Geddie

1

It's hard to pick just 25 stories to highlight out of close to 10,000 we've published so far. My favorite part of all the articles over 25 years is learning about all the things — the history, the people, the places, the art, music, food, farmers, nature, special events, and so much more. My true favorite is the complete collection. Around every corner is a new treasure chest full of interest.

Nevertheless, here's a selection of 25 stories and collections of topics, that are interesting and meaningful to me. I would love to hear what your favorites are and why. Let me know.

Many of my picks here are about people who got their inspiration in East Texas and followed their dreams to wherever they took them. There's also a trend of appreciating diversity and how sad, sometimes devastatingly so, when we don't live and let live. Others highlight the importance of appreciating the gifts so many people here bring to the table.

Kacey Musgraves: Most Times on the Cover

Kacey Musgraves was only about 12 years old when *County Line* began 25 years ago, but even so, her name was already appearing on the pages. She was performing at local music festivals and even released an album in 2000 with friend Alina Tatum during their time performing together as the Texas Two Bits. It was about that time also when she started taking guitar lessons from local legend John DeFoore, who also encouraged her to start writing songs. She credits her time with him as “one of the most important things that ever happened to me.”

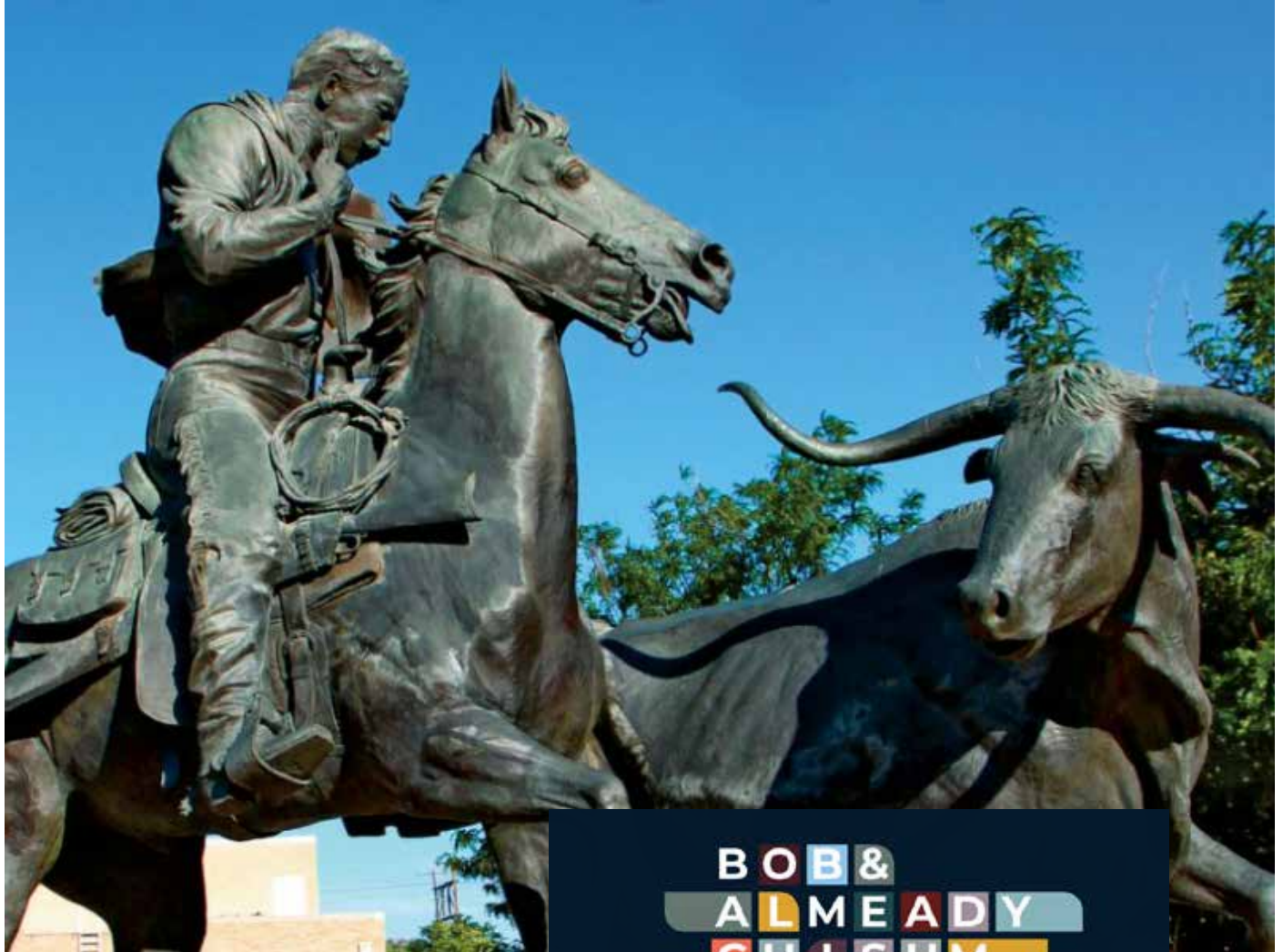
In 2007, she competed on the TV series *Nashville Star*, coming in seventh place. I believe it was that year that I invited her to a small festival in Van not too far from her home and she agreed. She and her band set up on a flatbed trailer and were

ready to go at the advertised time. Unfortunately, the hundreds of people that had shown up for the festival went home before she started — it seems the parade was the only show those folks were interested in that day.

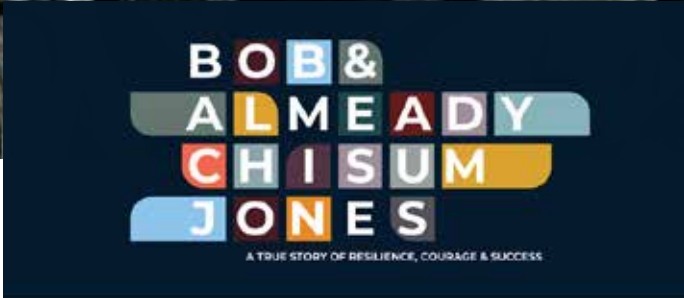
Kacey was not a happy camper looking out at five people sitting in the audience. I told her I would completely understand if she wanted to pack up and leave. But I also encouraged her, since she was already set up, to play a few songs, noting that those five people hearing her might be important in some way. She played a few songs and I never forgot her “show must go on” attitude and have seen it over and over again through her career. *County Line* writers were fans of hers from the start, following her career over the years and did a few interviews before she became universally famous. Read a few in this collection in the *County Line* archives.

- [Musgraves, Country Music Future](#)
- [Musgraves Returns for Hometown Hang](#)





2



The Legacy of Cattle Baron John Chisum and Jensie

This story unfolded layer after layer over a few years and I am still learning more through ancestors. John Chisum grew up in Paris, Texas, and became a famous cattle driver moving longhorns from Texas to New Mexico. During those years, he provided a home in Bonham, Texas, and financial support for his common-law wife, Jensie, a bi-racial former slave, and their two daughters Harriet and Almeady. Because of the pressures of racism of the time, Chisum never publicly recognized his wife and children and they were not mentioned in his obituary.

Chisum was involved with the famous New Mexico Lincoln County War, Billy the Kid, and many other notable people and events. His life is featured in film with John Wayne playing him in *Chisum* in 1970.



When Chisum's granddaughter Eugie Thomas saw the movie that year, she helped author Russ Brown write a book telling her side of the story. Her mother was Almeady, Chisum and Jensie's youngest daughter. Eugie's father, Bob Jones, was a successful rancher for whom Southlake, Texas' largest park, a road, and the city's nature center is named. Their legacy is also very layered.

Interestingly, at some point, John Chisum was memorialized with a bronze star on the sidewalk of the Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District. In October 2023, Bob and Almeady Chisum Jones were also memorialized there, decades later, not far from her father's star.

Read more in this [County Line article](#) and throughout the archives.

The Orchid Lady of the Screen

Corinne Mae Griffith is another multi-layered story that has kept me coming back to see what else I can discover. She was born in Texarkana and became a popular star of the silent movies. When “talkies” started taking over the film industry, it ended her movie career, as she couldn’t sing and didn’t have a voice that matched her moves. Not to be held back, Griffith left her beauty behind and let her brain take over. She became a successful writer and amassed a fortune as an astute business woman, primarily in real estate.

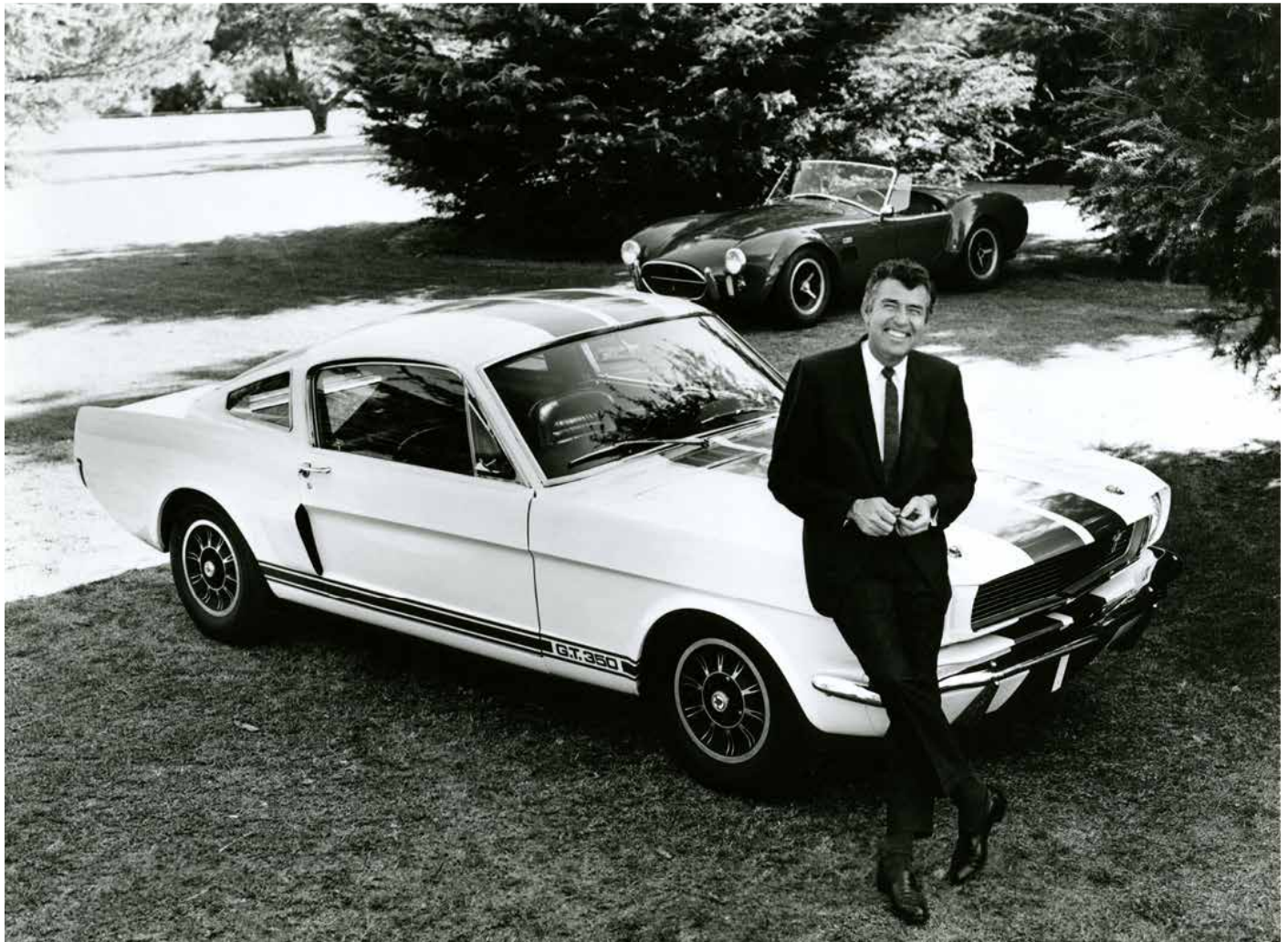
One book, *Papa’s Delicate Condition*, was made into a movie starring Jackie Gleason in 1963. The story centers around the Griffith family in turn-of-the-century small-town Texas, and six-year-old “Corrie” that adores her eccentric, over-the-top father. Not amused by his shenanigans, his wife takes the kids and goes to her father’s house in Texarkana. Papa buys a circus and they all go to Texarkana and win back his family.

One of the strangest things about Griffith in her real life story is a period beginning in 1966 when she claimed she was not Corinne Griffith but the actress’ 20 years younger sister. She claimed Corinne died, and she took her place. This part of her life inspired the Tom Tryon novel *Fedora*, that was later filmed by Billy Wilder and released in 1979, coincidentally, the year of her death. Some of Griffith’s family are buried in Sacred Heart Cemetery in Texarkana, including her grandparents Anthony and Augusta Ghio, who have a great story of their own that takes place in Jefferson and then in Texarkana.

Corinne Griffith made her grand exit July 13, 1979, in Santa Monica, California. One of the richest women in America at the time, she left an estate of \$150 million.

- [Orchid Lady of the Screen](#)
- [Papa’s Delicate Condition](#)





4

The Life and Legacy of Carroll Shelby

Writers LouAnn Campbell and Steve Freeman dove into the life of famous race car driver and classic sports car designer Carroll Shelby's life for the January 2016 *County Line Magazine*. This was my first introduction to the son of a rural Texas mailman born in Leesburg between Winnsboro and Pittsburg in 1923, who went on to high acclaim with the design of the Shelby Cobra sports car and the ever-popular Ford Mustang. I love learning about new people and this guy was quite a character — smart, funny, ambitious, and his generosity is still serving the people of Northeast Texas today through a family foundation and contributions to students at Northeast Texas Community College. Read this [article](#) and search the archives for much more.





5

Tribute to Van Zandt County World War II Veterans

I was just into my second year of publishing *County Line Magazine* when I learned that the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor was approaching on a Saturday, December 7, 2001. Never one to glorify war, I nevertheless have a firm commitment to honor our veterans since getting to know so many of them during my years working at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Dallas. Men and women who are willing to stand steadfast in the ravages of war to protect those at home and a country they love, deserve all the respect we can offer. Many gave their lives. Others survived and came home and never talked about this most important piece of their lives.

A small group of veterans and businesses in Van Zandt County and I formed a committee and pulled off a mighty, meaningful project. First, I committed to a special edition telling as many stories

of World War II veterans in the county as possible.

We could think of no better way to honor the men who served in the armed forces than to get our youth involved and let them hear and tell their stories.

We asked all seven schools in the county to participate and they came through with flying colors. I was so proud of the way the students embraced these heroes and listened to every word. As one student put it, "I've read about it in the history books, but it didn't seem real until I met the men that were there."

It was fulfilling to meet so many of the WWII veterans. Many of them were sometimes embarrassed to tell their stories, as if they were bragging on themselves. Many said this was the first time they had ever talked about their experiences. Most of them were overjoyed at the interest.

I ended up publishing 30 stories in that special edition and numerous more over the years. I also researched WWII and wrote about the many layers of that time. The issue included men from all branches of the service, women in the WAVES

and on the home front, and many others who did their part for victory.

We also collected more than 80 videotaped interviews with the WWII veterans that were given to the Van Zandt County Library of Genealogy and Local History.

Because the project was getting great support from media, businesses, schools, and veterans organizations, and others, somewhere along the way, we decided to have a special USO Show type event on December 7. The horrendous attacks on our country that occurred on September 11 that year gave us pause, but we were well into the planning stages by then and our veterans weren't getting any younger. So we persisted.

A very unexpected 1,100 people attended the event. It featured big band music, slide shows, skits for each branch of the military, the "Andrews Sisters," "Bob Hope," jitterbug dancing, and lots of saluting, and photographs of babies with the World War II heroes. Read a full review of the evening [HERE](#).

Find the collection of stories from the December 2001 *County Line* and the project [HERE](#).

Don Henley Returns to Cass County

I'm not sure how I ended up getting to interview Don Henley of the Eagles for our November 2015 issue but, as a long-time Eagles fan, I was pleased to say the least. I think our mutual friend and Henley's former East Texas bandmate Richard Bowden probably did a little nudging that got Henley's attention and his agent finally took my call and off we went.

It was the perfect time since Henley was releasing a new solo album with a salute to his East Texas roots. *Cass County* came about after several years of his thinking about doing something in-between Eagles touring on his own.

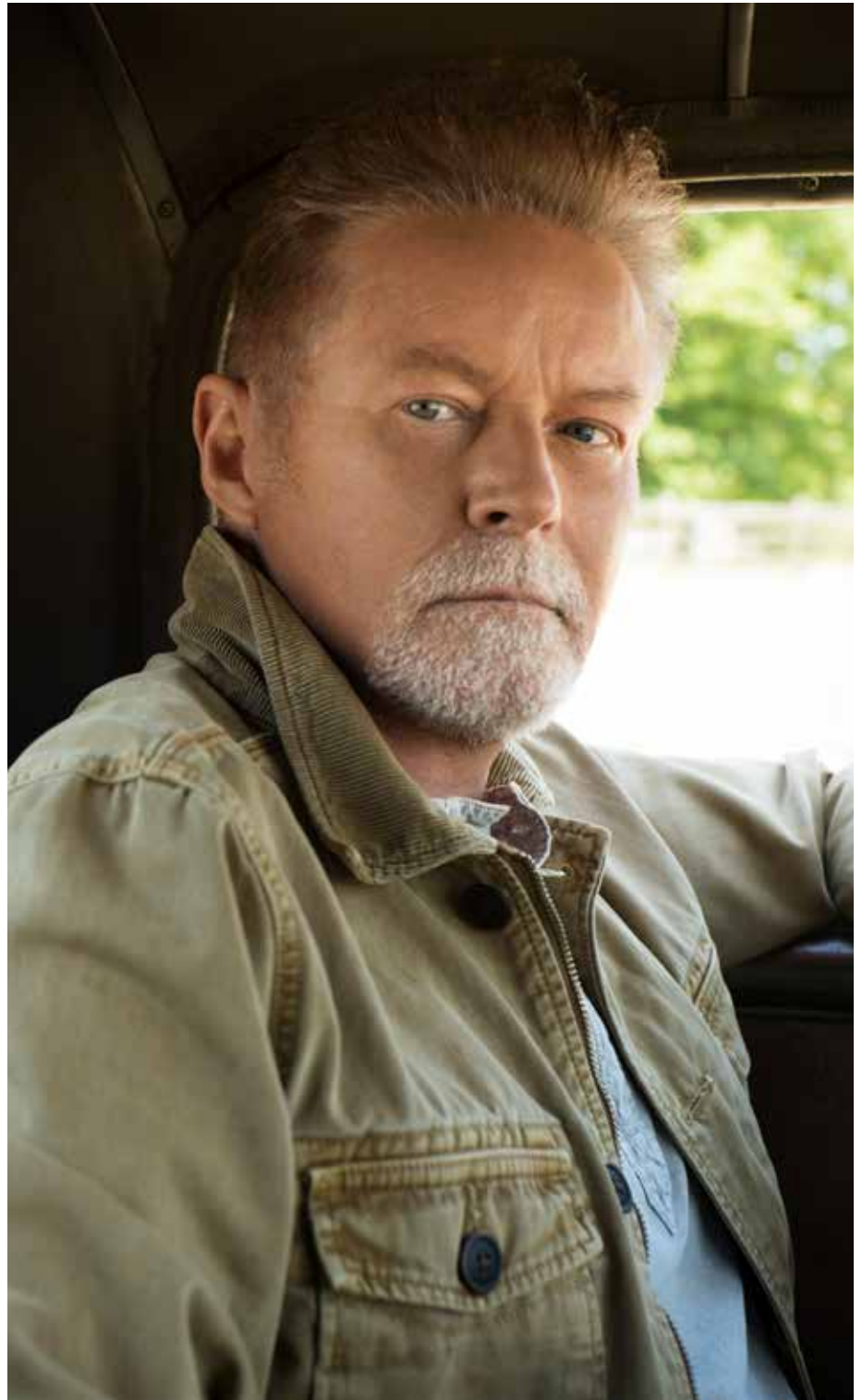
"Several years ago, I began to grow tired of the 'new country' music I was hearing on the radio. To me, it didn't authentically reflect 'the country' or the people who live there. So, I decided to do a country-flavored album of my own — one that reflected the influences of the country music that I heard all through my childhood and my adolescence."

He spent about five years working on it and released it in 2015.

"It's not an exercise in nostalgia; it's an exercise in perspective," he said. "It's good not to forget where we come from and it's healthy to look at the whole picture — the good, the bad, and everything in between. By looking back over my life, through the creation of music, I can see how far I've come and how I got here. I can see pivotal moments in my life and the results of critical decisions that I made in those moments. It helps me to locate myself in the present and it helps me to map out the future."

An impressive list of musical superstars contributing to the album includes Mick Jagger, Merle Haggard, Alison Krauss, Martina McBride, Trisha Yearwood, Dolly Parton, Vince Gill, Lucinda Williams, and fellow East Texans Miranda Lambert and Lee Ann Womack.

The [article](#) covers times from his childhood to the Eagles and other issues important to him. At one point, he shares



some great advice for young people in East Texas about following their dreams.

"Never let the fact that you're from a small town shake your confidence or your belief in yourself," he said. "Kids who grow up and go to school in the bigger cities may have some advantages, but there are many very successful people in America who came from small towns.

Get a good educational foundation first, and then go out and work toward your dreams. Don't be afraid to take a risk now and then as long as it's a calculated risk. There will be failures and setbacks but those are just part of the process. Perseverance and belief in yourself are key. Your small-town values and your work ethic will serve you well. Nothing great is ever achieved without hard work."



7

Cherokee Chief Bowles and the Battle of the Neches

I lived most of my time in the last 25 years next to the Neches River. I hadn't been in the area long before I discovered the historic site of the Battle of the Neches and all the history that comes with it, including the story of Cherokee Chief Duwali Bowles. The first time I visited the site, I got goosebumps.

“Walking through the fields and trees alongside the Neches River in the southeast corner of Van Zandt County you can almost hear the battle cries, the gunshots, the horses' hoofs pounding on the grass and dirt, sloshing through the river, and women and children running for safety that never came. The thought of the blood shed that day, July 16, 1839, is overwhelming. As one said when she visited the area, ‘You can feel the sadness.’”

There's a lot of history between the half Cherokee, half Scottish Duwali Bowles who at 83 years old was representing American Indian tribes in negotiations over land with Texans Sam Houston, Thomas J. Rusk, and others. In the end, the Republic of Texas did not honor the treaty, and war broke out, resulting in the killing of Chief Bowles and many others.

The State of Texas erected a nice marble marker in 1936 to honor Chief Bowles where he died and telling their side of the story. Across the pasture, members of the American Indian Cultural Society — who now owns the grounds — placed their own version of the events of that day on a wooden marker. Every year on the Saturday closest to July 16, a memorial ceremony is held.

A bronze sculpture in Nacogdoches — created by artist Michael Boyett — honors the historic treaty between Texian general Sam Houston and the Cherokee leader Chief Bowles. The treaty, signed

on February 23, 1836, granted the Cherokee the legal right to occupy land in East Texas. It also assured the neutrality of the Cherokee in the unfolding Texas Revolution, which allowed the Texian Army to concentrate its strategy solely on defeating the Mexican Army.

Nacogdoches residents Sam Houston, Adolphus Sterne, and William Goyens, all played crucial roles representing Texas in the negotiations, with Chief Bowles representing the Indian tribes. As noted above, the treaty was not honored.

The statue is at 700 East Main Street in Eugenia Sterne Park, on the south side of Main Street, just east of the square in Nacogdoches.

Read these linked stories and search the *County Line* archives to learn much more.

- [Remembering the Battle of the Neches](#)
- [Ceremony Attracts Descendants](#)

East Texas Helped Will Jennings Make It

I have a passion for movies. Watching them is the most relaxing thing I do for myself and I usually learn a thing or two. It's got to be a good story and just the right music. I determine whether or not I'm going to continue watching a movie by the theme music at the beginning. If it reeks of violence, too much suspense, eerie tones, or "porno groove," I'm out.

Watching the movie *Titanic* in 1997, the song "My Heart Will Go On" sung by Celine Dion carried that story from beginning to end. It hit all the feelings and seeing the lyricist Will Jennings receive an Academy Award, Golden Globe Award, and Grammy Award for the song that year led to my doing some research and finding this amazing writer was born and raised in East Texas.

Then I learned he wrote the lyrics for many other songs that had touched me and the rest of the world deeply, like "Tears in Heaven," which Jennings co-wrote with Eric Clapton after Clapton's four-year-old son's tragic death. Clapton started the song with the first verse but asked Jennings to finish it for him and the two collaborated to get it done.

I was also a big Steve Winwood fan and found that much of the soundtrack of my cruising days in an old blue Camero, including "Higher Love" and "Back in the High Life Again," were written by Will Jennings.

We began noting the accomplishments of Jennings in the *County Line* early on and then in 2013, my brother, Tom Geddie, got to [interview Jennings](#) from his home in California. In this article, he talks about the influences of growing up in East Texas on his songwriting success and his process and much more.

"We lived mainly in the country, near town, and spent a lot of time fishing and hunting," he said. "You don't say it was real beauty when you look back on it, but there was a certain freedom in everything that was going on with that. I appreciate almost everything that goes around, and has some beauty to it.

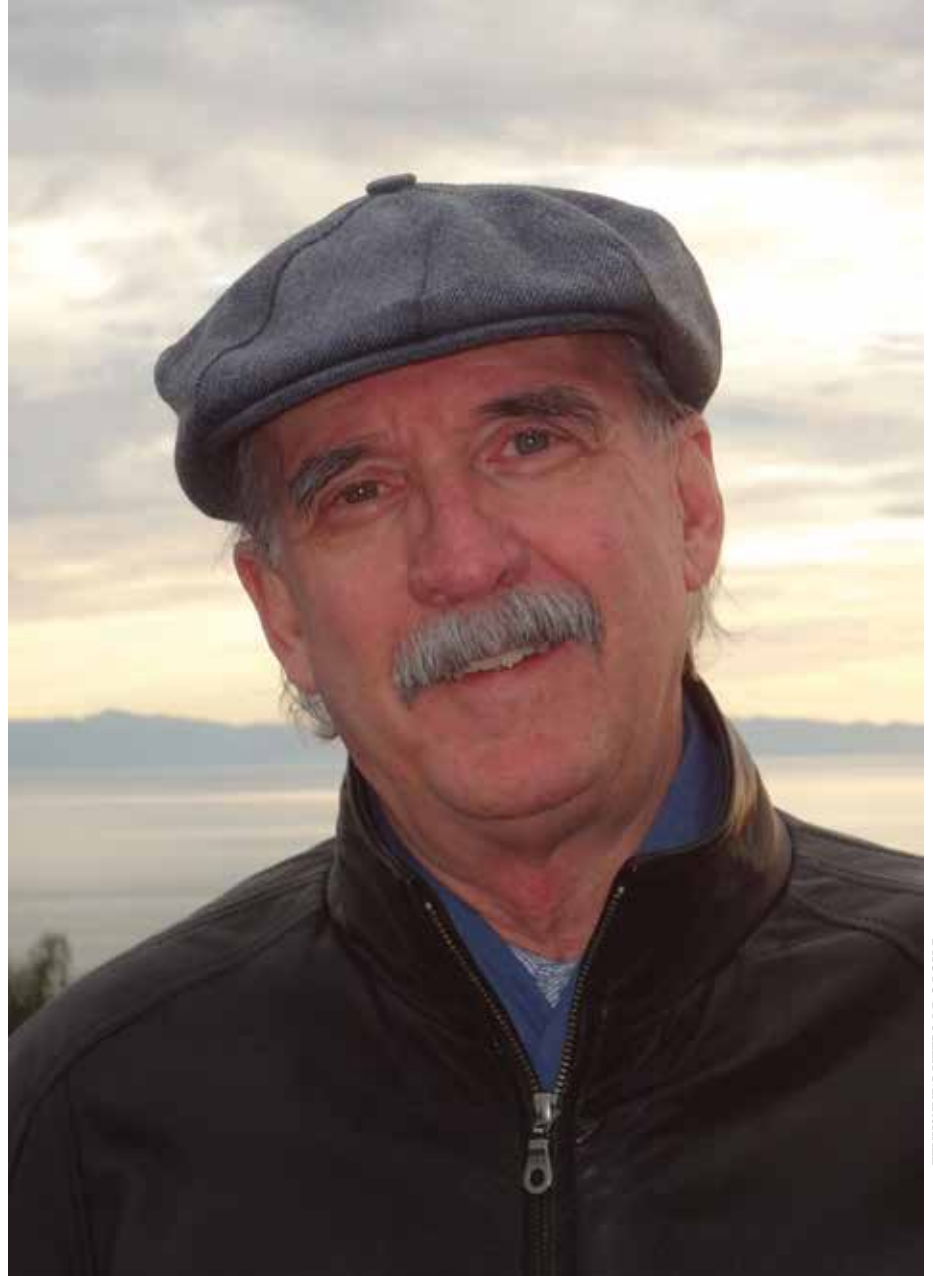


PHOTO BY ALEX MARSHALL

"The first house we lived in, between Tyler and Kilgore, was next to a cotton gin and it was almost like living in the wild," he said. "There's some kind of feeling that goes into you. I suppose that's because you are not dominated by machines, but by what kind of day it's going to be. Is it going to be hot or cold? Are we going to get some birds or not?"

A few years ago I heard Jennings moved back to Tyler near family. An alumni and former teacher at Tyler Junior College (TJC) and then Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, he received a few welcome home events and awards. At the opening of TJC's Rogers Palmer Performing Arts Center in 2021, the center's "Carole and Will Jennings Lobby" was named in their honor. The Carole and Will Jennings Lobby also houses a

rotating exhibit of his memorabilia and awards from his songwriting career, including two Oscars, two Golden Globes, three Grammys, and many others.

Last year *Billboard* announced the closing of a deal where All Clear Music and Fuji Music Group jointly acquired Jennings' extensive catalog. While the terms of the deal were not revealed, *Billboard* said the "catalog carried a valuation in the range of \$60 to \$70 million."

In [May 2024](#), the East Texas Symphony Orchestra and singer-songwriter Rodney Crowell joined forces to pay tribute to him at Rogers Palmer Performing Arts Center at TJC. Jennings was not able to attend but was represented by family.

Will Jennings passed away at 80 on September 6, 2024, in Tyler, Texas.

Taking the High Road with Sully

“Roots and Wings” is an underlying theme with most everything I do. It comes from a quote by Johan Wolfgang von Goethe, “There are only two lasting bequests we can hope to give our children. One of these is roots, the other, wings.”

I’m always looking for inspiration from people who do the right thing, going beyond their comfort levels often to do what it takes to make a difference. I hope our stories inspire children and adults in our region to know that they too have the capacity to make a difference and to follow their dreams.

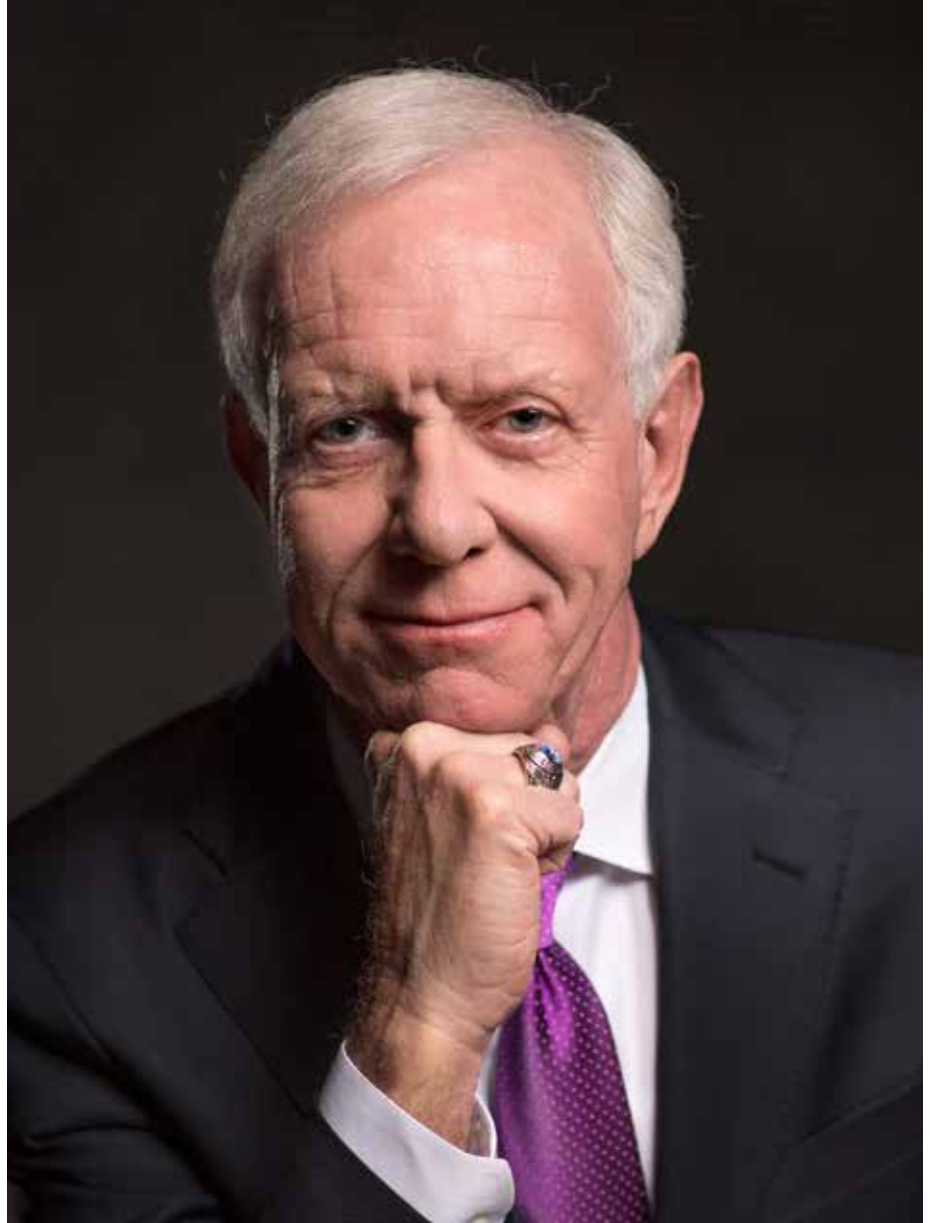
When I interviewed Sully Sullenberger for our January 2021 issue, we were still in the throes of the pandemic that interrupted all our lives. We needed heroes to do their jobs well and do the right things for humankind, not for their own self interests. Heroes who make us laugh when we really need it. Heroes who live exemplary lives and inspire us to do the same.

My visits with Sully certainly inspired me to be better, to move through the good times and bad with confidence and integrity, and to be the hero of my own story.

Most everyone in the world knows about the famous safe landing of a passenger plane, US Airways Flight 1549, on the cold Hudson River in January 2009, commandeered by Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger III. Little did I know until a few years later that his flying and leadership skills began in rural East Texas.

“In many ways, all my mentors, heroes, and loved ones — those who taught me and encouraged me and saw the possibilities in me — were with me in the cockpit of Flight 1549. My entire life led me safely to that river,” he says.

Read the full [article](#) to learn about his upbringing in Grayson County, Texas, and how his love for flying began, about his career, and the movie starring Tom Hanks simply titled *Sully* about the landing. He’s written books on leadership and “what really matters.”



“It’s what we do for each other,” he says. “There are rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It’s not the winner-take-all world that some who are motivated by their self interests believe. There are things we owe to each other. Civilization isn’t possible without it. My ultimate message is we’re all in this together.”

Opal Lee: Grandmother of Juneteenth

Another proud East Texan, is Opal Lee, who got much of her inspiration and determination in her birth town of Marshall, Texas. She became the “Grandmother of Juneteenth” for her work in getting the important historical date

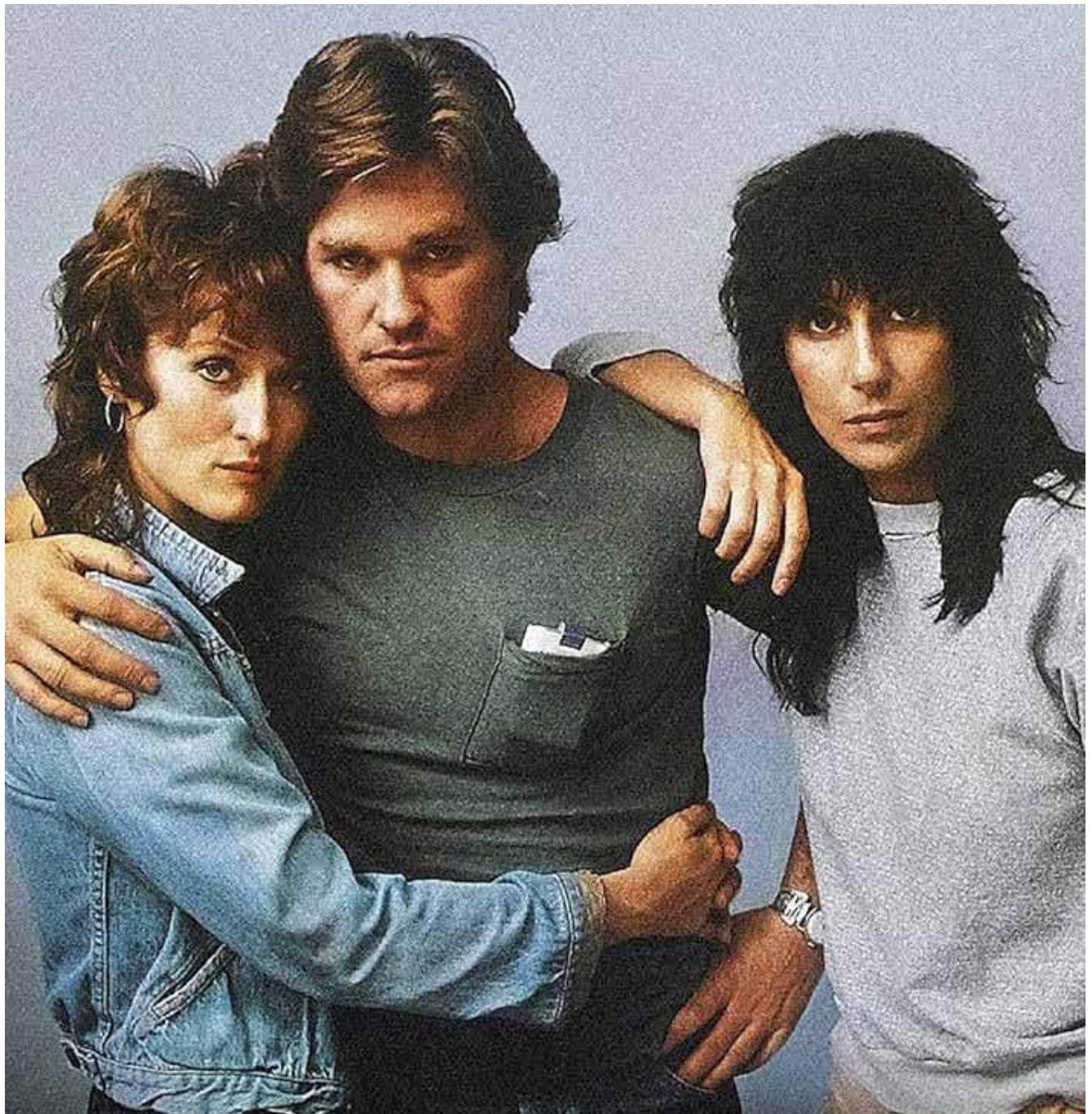
made a federal holiday. And by the way, she did that in her 90s.

Juneteenth, a name used for June 19, 1865, commemorates the day the Texas enslaved people received word that the Emancipation Proclamation had actually freed them two and a half years earlier.

I got to know Opal Lee first when Lisa Tang interviewed her for the May/June 2022 *County Line* and have followed her since. Read details of her crusade, her time in Marshall, including graduating from Wiley College, and other articles in the archives that bring surprising full circle moments.

- [Opal Lee Walks Juneteenth to Victory](#)
- [Ceremony Brings Juneteenth Grandmother Home](#)





MERYL STREEP KURT RUSSELL CHER

SILKWOOD

A MIKE NICHOLS FILM

Remembering Karen Silkwood

Writer Madison Payne told us the story of Longview native Karen Silkwood and interviewed her children for the November 2014 *County Line Magazine*. It was the 40th anniversary of nuclear safety whistleblower Silkwood's suspicious death. She gained national attention after voicing concerns of health and safety issues at the Kerr-McGee nuclear facility in Crescent, Oklahoma. Her life was the subject of a motion picture titled *Silkwood*, released in 1983.

Meryl Streep portrays Silkwood in the movie with a supportive cast that includes Kurt Russell and Cher.

We've stayed in touch with her family and this year did an article update for the 50th anniversary of her death. *Silkwood*, the movie, was only available through DVD until this year when Hulu began streaming it. Several documentary segments came out this year as investigators continue to try to piece together the truth.

Silkwood rests in the Danville Cemetery in Kilgore, with members of both her mother and father's side of the family.

- [Remembering Karen Silkwood. 2014](#)
- [Silkwood: 50 Years Later. 2024](#)



Welcome Home Ceremonies Honor Vietnam Veterans

Besides publisher and editor of *County Line Magazine*, I own a communications company called Geddie Connections. When someone comes to me with a project that interests me, I enjoy helping them making it a success through a variety of communication channels, including the *County Line* and through other media outlets and promotional strategies.

When Mandy Kennedy approached me in 2022 to tell me she and her team were bringing "The Wall That Heals" to Sulphur Springs that November, I was all in.

It's a replica of the monument in Washington DC, built to honor the warriors of the Vietnam War — both those whose names are on the wall who died in service to our country and also to those who survived. Organizers say the wall is a gesture to all Vietnam veterans to let them know that the country cares about them and as a nation, we all continue to heal from the wounds of that horrible war.

I interviewed a few Vietnam veterans and their stories touched me to the core. We cried together and laughed and listened to the songs of the time that were often the only good things that got them through their days. They had never seen the wall, not this traveling one, or the one in DC, so it was a very emotional time for them. Read about this project and their stories in this [County Line article](#).

Spend Healing Time with Ruthie Foster

Singer-songwriter Ruthie Foster has performed in the Upper East Side of Texas more than a few times in the past 25 years. I was fortunate to catch a few shows and would hear little bits of information that led me to believe she had East Texas roots but it wasn't until I interviewed her for our March/April 2023 issue — as she'd just released her album *Healing Time* — that I got the full story. As I write in the article, Foster's energy wraps around audience members like a warm quilt on a cold and rainy day. Her passion for Texas blues and Americana vibe brings a sense of peace to listeners that makes them feel everything's going to be okay.

She's also quite inspiring, bringing Maya Angelou's famous "Phenomenal Woman" poem to life in song that empowers the female species.

Foster was born in Mineola and surrounded by musical talent from the beginning. She moved with her mother to Gause, Texas, and spent much of her childhood in East Texas with her dad and extended family.

Her shows are authentic experiences that she says include her family as it gives her a chance to speak for them.

"I'm giving you a part of my family, a piece of East Texas and next to the Brazos River. There's Big Mama, PawPaw, Aunt Sugarlump, and my mother they called Puddin'. My heritage. I bring everybody with me. I'm a better songwriter, better overall performer, and better person because they are with me on stage."

One of the venues Foster played a few years ago was the Beckham Hotel in Mineola. Her father shared many good aspects of growing up in Mineola, she says, and sometimes quietly speaks about the indignities of the past as well.

Back in his day, the esteemed Beckham Hotel served the railroad industry and other travelers beginning in the 1920s

for several decades. Those of African descent were not allowed in the building, except perhaps as servants.

Decades later, Foster was booked to play there and she asked her father to come with her for a sound check a few hours before the show.

"Walking up the stairs, my dad's walking behind me, and he stops halfway up," Foster says, asking him what's wrong.

"He said, 'I need a minute. As a Black man, I was never allowed to go up these stairs.'"

This struck a chord with her as the reality of racial divide so close washed over her.

"That was the first time hearing my dad talk about it," she says. "Here's my dad telling me about the real history from his eyes of this particular building."

Thankfully, that building received many healing vibes from musicians like Ruthie Foster since those early years when people were mistreated. Read more about her in this [County Line](#) article and in the archives.



RODRIGUE

PAINTING FOR MYSELF

ADMISSION FOR RODRIGUE SHOW:
ADULTS - \$5 • CHILDREN - \$3 • FAMILIES - \$20 MAX
FREE TO LMFA MEMBERS

ON DISPLAY NOW - MAY 2025 AT LMFA - 213 N. FREDONIA

LMFA LONGVIEW MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS
903.753.8103 • LMFA.org







The Art and Influences of Biggers and Criner

In the summer of 2022, *County Line Magazine* was honored to sponsor an exhibition at Tyler Museum of Art titled, *Student/Teacher: Works by Charles Criner & Dr. John Biggers*. I was already familiar with both of their works and remarkable stories and took this time to dig deeper.

Dr. John Thomas Biggers, PhD, established and chaired for 34 years the Department of Art at Texas Southern University in Houston. In 1988, he was recognized as the Texas Artist of the Year. During his teaching years, he garnered a reputation also as a major African-American artist of the Southwest.

From 1950 to 1956 he painted four murals in Texas communities, one of which was a 1954 commission by the Naples school board in Morris County in the Upper East Side of Texas to honor Professor Phineas Y. Gray as he was retiring after 30 years in the district. As Dr. Biggers got to know Professor Gray, he decided to paint a mural related to Gray's Master's thesis on the history of African American education in Morris County schools.

Biggers completed the 22-foot-long by six-foot-tall muslin painting in 1955 titled

“History of Negro Education in Morris County, Texas.”

What happens next to the mural is both sad and a bit of a miracle. The mural hung in the Carver High School library for about 15 years, inspiring countless numbers of young people to embrace heritage and hope. As the district grew and schools integrated and combined with other districts, Pewitt Consolidated Independent School District inherited the building and it became the elementary school. To accommodate younger children, the ceilings were lowered. The mural no longer fit the space and was moved into storage under the band hall. After several moves, it ended up in an audio-visual shed where it stayed for about 20 years.

When former students who had attended the school in the mid 1950s started asking about the mural, a search was done and it was found in the shed in good condition considering the climate. The painting was patched up a bit and reinstalled in the school library.

The mural inspired elementary students there for about 25 years. In that time began to deteriorate.

In 2015, when executives at North Texas Community College (NTCC) in neighboring Titus County found out about the mural, they approached the Pewitt ISD about restoring the work and taking steps

to preserve it. They also asked to move the mural to the college campus where the public could see it. The school district agreed.

Joining NTCC administrators and Pewitt ISD officials in a joint effort for conservation of the mural was the Tyler Museum of Art. The painting's restoration took about one year and costs were paid by a private donor in the amount of \$105,000. Before landing in its present home at NTCC, the mural was taken to Tyler Museum of Art in 2017 for a brief exhibition.

Since then it remains in the climate-controlled room at NTCC built specifically for the mural and is available for public viewing along with other works by Dr. Biggers.

Charles Criner was a student of Biggers at TSU and credits this teacher with helping him find his voice. Born in Athens, Texas, Criner began drawing as a young child and often uses family members or people and places close to him as inspiration. His art reflects activities he experienced growing up, from children playing on abandoned railroad boxcars, to one of his favorite hobbies — fishing. He also shares scenes influenced by his trip to South Africa and his own cultural heritage.

Learn more about these two talented visual storytellers in this [County Line article](#).



Susanna Clark: Artist, Writer, Muse to Texas Songwriters

As a big fan of singer-songwriter Guy Clark, I'd heard him mention his wife Susanna a number of times and her beloved Atlanta, Texas, where she was born and spent her childhood. In the spring of 2021, a film on Guy's life was produced called *Without Getting Killed or Caught*. The documentary is narrated from Susanna's perspective by Academy Award-winner Sissy Spacek, a fellow East Texan who grew up in Quitman, a short distance away as the crow flies from Susanna's hometown of Atlanta.

The title comes from Guy's song "L.A. Freeway" that favors small towns to the false allure of big cities.

*"Pack up all your dishes / Make note of all
good wishes / Adios to all this concrete /
Gonna get me some dirt road back street*

*If I can just get off of this L.A. freeway /
Without getting killed or caught /
I'll be down the road in a cloud of smoke /
To some land I ain't bought /*

*Oh Susanna don't you cry, babe /
Love's a gift that's surely handmade /
We've got something to believe in /
Don't you think it's time we're leavin'."*

Yes, she's that Susanna. Forever immortalized in a classic.

Far from standing in the shadows of Texas' most famous songwriters — including the couple's best friend Townes Van Zandt — Susanna was their muse, their light, the angel of mercy with the golden touch. She also created her own extraordinary work. Her spirit forever flows through timeless art and music she breathed into life in her 73 years on earth.

Susanna passed away in 2012 and part of her ashes were scattered in Atlanta, Texas. Guy passed away in 2016.

I was fortunate to find and interview Susanna's niece Sherri Talley Lemaire, who inherited her aunt's important things. Find out so much more about this special story in this [County Line](#) article.



Hollywood Screenwriter Kris Hunt Embraces Nuanced Texas Characters

What I loved about interviewing Kris Hunt is his commitment to get Hollywood to see the East Texas he grew up in — not one full of “hicks” they like to portray, but the truth that people of this region are nuanced.

“People from our region,” he says, “are just as likely to be worldly, educated, or otherwise well rounded. Some Texans may wear worn-out clothes, have strong country accents, and drive old trucks. But they also may speak four languages, play the piano, and tell you all about fine wines.”

Cowgirl’s Last Ride is his latest screenwriting project still in production. A Hollywood Reporter article dated October 23, 2023, shares the scoop.

“More than 30 years after she made her most famous dash across America in *Thelma & Louise*, two-time Oscar winner Geena Davis has lined up another wild road trip movie with Cowgirl’s Last Ride.

The comedy adventure was originally announced back in 2019, but has now taken shape, with Scoot McNairy (*Argo*, *12 Years a Slave*), Julia Sweeney (*Saturday Night Live*, *Pulp Fiction*) and Jill Scott (*The No. 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency*, *Get On Up*) joining the cast and HanWay Films launching sales at the upcoming American Film Market.

Described as a “comedic odyssey set against the vast landscapes of rural Texas,” the story follows retired Texas cowgirl Fay (Davis), who escapes her Dallas nursing home and journey’s back towards her native East Texas, first in a stolen pickup truck then on a horse, on a ride of rediscovery to reconnect with her former self, all while in hot pursuit by her more conventional — and deeply concerned son Randall (McNairy).

Read more about Kris Hunt from his East Texas to Hollywood days in this [County Line](#) article.







17

Artist Captures Faces of Newgate Homeless

Anup Bhandari of Longview was one of those amazing people who made the world a better place in a big way before his life was cut way too short. We first presented Bhandari in the May 2011 issue of *County Line*, learning about his colorful art that he shared in galleries and shows throughout Northeast Texas.

He was already giving back, donating paintings for good causes for local nonprofits, as well as for the Japanese tsunami victims and Nepali school children. Then, he let us know in 2011 that doing an art project with the homeless was also high on his list of “life’s bright possibilities” he wanted to accomplish.

He took his idea to Newgate Mission, a center that serves needs of the homeless, low-income, and marginalized populations of Longview. He taught art classes there and more and more of those in need started showing up to take them and they created a growing body of artwork he called the Healing Art Project.

By the time I interviewed him and featured him on our March 2019 cover, he was well into the project and had just published a book featuring self portraits by the homeless artists.

Bhandari used his art skills to help homeless people express themselves and to show society that the homeless, though too often unseen, are not invisible.

“They have vision and a voice, and are no less deserving of love and respect,” he told me.

In 2016, Bhandari received an inaugural award, the Anup Bhandari Award for Exceptional Kindness and Dedication to the Newgate Community.

Sadly, Bhandari, passed away at the age of 40, on March 10, 2020, after suffering a cardiac arrest that left him with an anoxic brain injury.

In the foreword of his book, *The Faces of Newgate*, are the words “Unity Starts With You.” They served as the inspiration for a mural created in 2021 to honor Bhandari and his work for the importance of shared humanity.

The Healing Arts Project at Newgate Mission continues today.

- [Artist Captures Faces of Newgate](#)
- [Longview Artist Explores Possibilities](#)

Two Families—One Heart

As half of the duo blacktopGYPSY, I began getting to know singer-songwriter Andie Kay Joyner and her phenomenal fiddle-playing best friend Heather Stallings in 2009, as they started playing at Moore's Store and The Forge in Ben Wheeler. I was living there at the time and my place often served as the "green room" where more than a few memorable parties took place. I quickly became a big fan of their music and even more loved the human beings they are. I was honored to invest in their 2011 album titled *Whirlwind*, and things seemed to be going well for them and their full band touring Texas and surrounding states.

Andie Kay discovered a few years earlier that she had a blood disorder called hemochromatosis. She thought she was following doctor's orders to keep it in check, but in early 2016 she was told she had irreversible heart damage, and later discovered liver damage as well. A heart and liver transplant became her only hope. On Saturday, September 3, her organs started shutting down and her surgeons said she was within hours of death. Sun-

day, September 4, they hooked her up to an Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation (ECMO) machine that took over pumping her blood to give her severely damaged organs a rest and the family held on to hope that a donor would be found in time.

The next day, they were advised a match was found for both organs.

Andie Kay underwent an 18-hour surgery to replace her damaged organs, becoming UT Southwestern's first heart and liver transplant, joining the ranks of only four other Texas medical centers to perform the complicated surgery.

Her body seemed to accept the new organs right away and she began her long road to recovery. She started thinking about her donor "hero" almost immediately.

"Tubes and lines coming out of my body and I'm lying there, curious about who this is inside of me that's keeping me alive," she said.

After a period of time dictated by the Southwest Transplant Alliance, the donor's family and Andie Kaye were notified about each other. She wanted to meet them as soon as possible but let them set the time that was right for them.

Her donor was a young man named Steven Dominy from Kirbyville, Texas, who had a loving family and three children. After many phone conversations with Steven's sister and his oldest daughter, Reagan, an in-person meeting was set up.

I was honored to be among the small group invited to witness this incredible time, with Steven's daughters listening to their dad's heart inside Andie Kay, and the exchange of lots of hugs, flowers, gifts, and thoughtful conversations. Reagan invited Andie Kay to stand in for her father as her escort across the football field on her upcoming high school Senior Night.

There's so very much more to this story. Please read it and remember how important it is to take the time to say "yes" to being an organ donor. Andie Kay is doing well today. She got married and continues to share her beautiful music and enjoy a relationship with her donor hero's family.

- [Two Families, One Heart](#)
- [Keeping the Beat for a Blacktop Gypsy](#)
- [Music is Full Time Job for Blacktop Gypsy](#)



PHOTO BY P.A. GENDRE



PHOTO BY BEVERLY BURCHETT

The Legacy of Tex Ritter

I learned about the singing cowboy Tex Ritter growing up in a household with a country and western musician. My dad played Tex's records and I'm sure we saw a few of his old movies from time to time, although most of his work was done way before I came along.

I think everyone was proud someone from a tiny town in East Texas could make such a big name for himself.

For his contribution to the recording industry, he has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He was inducted into the Western Performers Hall of Fame at the National Cowboy & Western Museum in Oklahoma City in 1980, and received numerous other accolades throughout his life, not to mention has his own museum in Carthage, Texas.

That's a pretty good legacy right there. But Tex and his wife Dorothy Fay had two sons, one of which became a pretty famous actor himself, John Ritter. I enjoyed all of John's silly antics on *Three's Company* and some of his later work. I could sense he was down to earth and could feel his Texas roots.

John was in a sitcom, *8 Simple Rules for Dating My Teenage Daughter*, when he passed away from an aortic aneurysm in 2003, the same thing that killed his father.

Tex and John became the first father and son duo to get stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

John's children are actors and musicians too, continuing the legacy. In an interview with John's daughter Carly, she shared stories with me about her father, siblings, famous grandfather, and the museum that honors him in his Texas hometown. She likes singing some of her grandfather's songs.

Read this article to learn much more about this family that continues to do good work and carry on the family legacy.

• [The Legacy of Tex Ritter](#)



Martindale's Acting Passion Started in Jacksonville

Interviewing the award-winning actress Margo Martindale from Jacksonville, Texas, was so much fun. In my cover story appearing July 2016, I start with, "There's something sweet and saucy and wise all at the same time about Margo Martindale that makes people smile when she enters a room. It's like she knows something amusing others can't quite see just yet and they eagerly wait for her to let it out in her friendly East Texas accent and make the world a better place for a few moments."

The very successful actress talked to me about some of her film roles and about growing up in Jacksonville and the thing that struck me most is how she described her hometown and her neighborhood in Manhattan with very similar feelings.

"Her small town upbringing reminds her a bit of the Upper West Side of Manhattan neighborhood where she's lived now for 30-plus years, she said."

"My block is small town America. It's a real community. We share births and deaths. Very sweet. We sit on the stoop and before you know it, there's a party."

That's what my time with her felt like too — a party, but a small one where everybody cares about and looks out for each other. Made me want to pack my bags and go sit on the stoop with her and get as much of that Margo Martindale vibe as possible.

Read the full interview in this [article](#).



YOU CAN BE ANYTHING



Imagine the Possibilities

A seven-year-old professor? Veterinarian? Soccer coach? Business professional? Why not? Girls imagine what they may one day become.



21

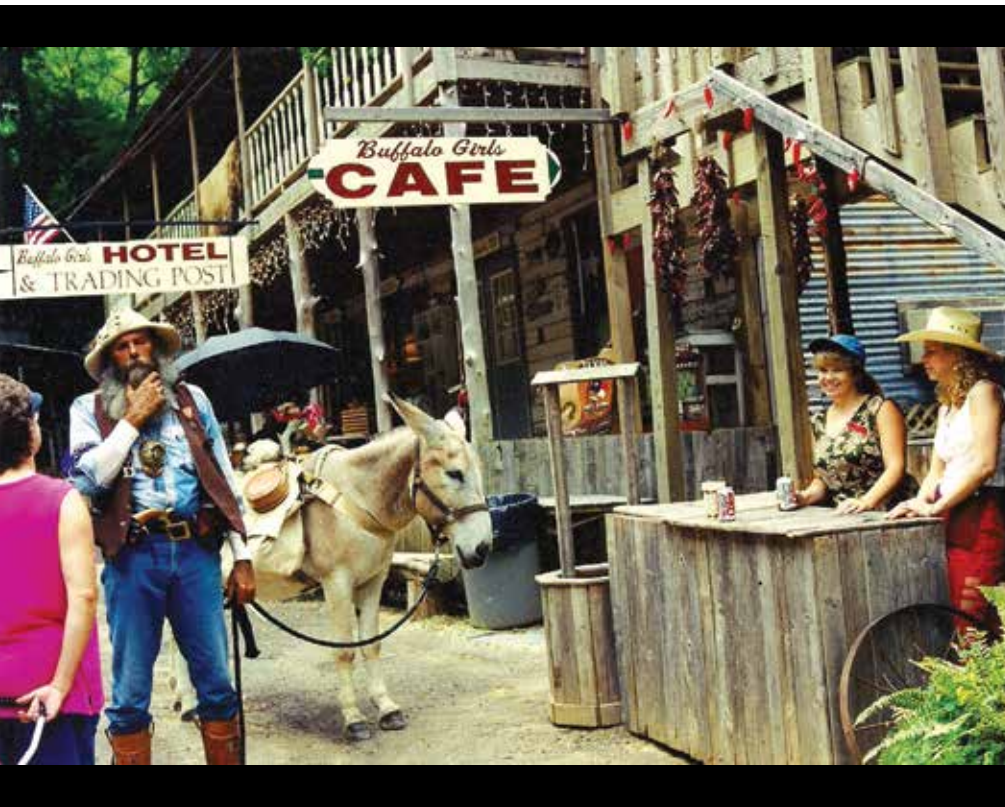
Blake Neely Scores in Hollywood

I interviewed Paris, Texas, born and raised Blake Neely for our March 2015 issue. He learned at an early age that composing music for film was his calling and had good encouragement from teachers and family to follow his dreams. He's racked up a long list of successful credits in film and TV projects including *Everwood*, three *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *King Kong*, and *The Last Samurai*.

Neely has composed the music for more than 40 television series, including *The Mentalist*, *You*, and *The Flight Attendant* (which earned him a 2022 Emmy Award for the theme. See him accepting the award in this [VIDEO](#)). A 2024 project is the TV series *Masters of the Air*, a companion to *Band of Brothers* (2001) and *The Pacific* (2010).

Read more about him in the *County Line* archives.

- [Blake Neely Scores in Hollywood](#)



22

The Legend of Wild Willie

It's a tale of a man that took a hillside at the edge of the "world's largest flea market" in downtown Canton, Texas, and turned it into an 1800s pioneer and western-themed mountain town.

Wild Willie, Calamity Jane, Teton Ken, the Buffalo Girls and many others had a good thing going for a while, entertaining thousands of shoppers each month. Then an avalanche of events took down Wild Willie's Mountain.

Willie began to live beyond his means and quit taking care of vendors. Financial struggles and regrets that he'd let so many people down, ultimately led him to take his own life at the end of 1997 in ultimate Old West fashion — he hung himself.

- [The Legend of Wild Willie](#)

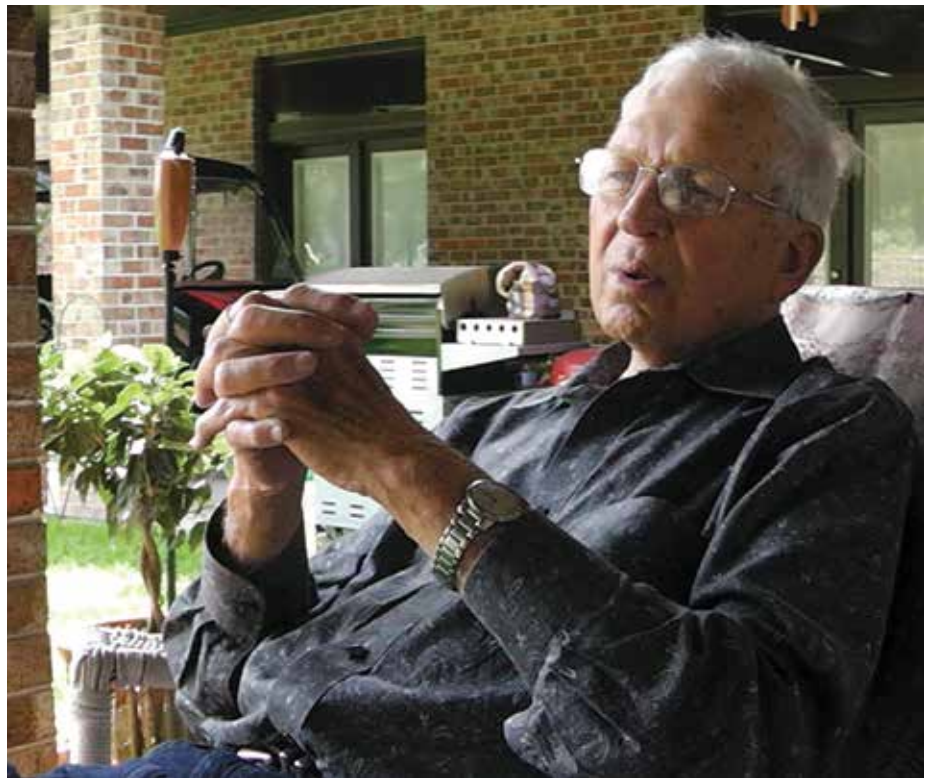
Kyser Capo Strikes a Winning Chord

With a long line of musicians in my family, I decided at age 12 to teach myself how to play the guitar. I still play the same six chords I learned then. Equally limited in my voice range, it was the Kyser capo that changed my world. When I put one of those on the end of my guitar, I could change the pitch and play many songs with those same six finger placements on different frets.

I don't recall exactly when I was introduced to the capo, but by the time I started going to Kerrville Folk Festival around year 2000, I ran into hundreds of guitar players from all over the world using a Kyser capo. There were a few other capo brands, but overwhelmingly, most guitar players were using the Kyser.

Being so popular I assumed they were made in some massive factory somewhere in New York or Boston or maybe Germany for all I knew. Then somewhere along the way I heard they were made in East Texas and the hunt was on!

I found out there is a person named Milton Kyser who invented this popular capo and he did so in Canton, Texas, where they are still being made today.



He was awarded a patent for his Quick-Change® capo in 1978 and converted his garage into a design and production workshop, what he calls his first “factory.”

Milton's health was declining in 2013 when I sat down to interview him along with his grand-niece Meredith Hamlin, who did most of the talking.

He was still coming into his office most

days during that time and very excited about the products he invented and shared more than a few with me.

Milton Kyser passed away January 23, 2014, at the age of 80. The company continues under Meredith's leadership still today in Canton, Texas.

• [Kyser Capo Strikes a Winning Chord](#)



IN TUNE WITH
KYSER
CAPO

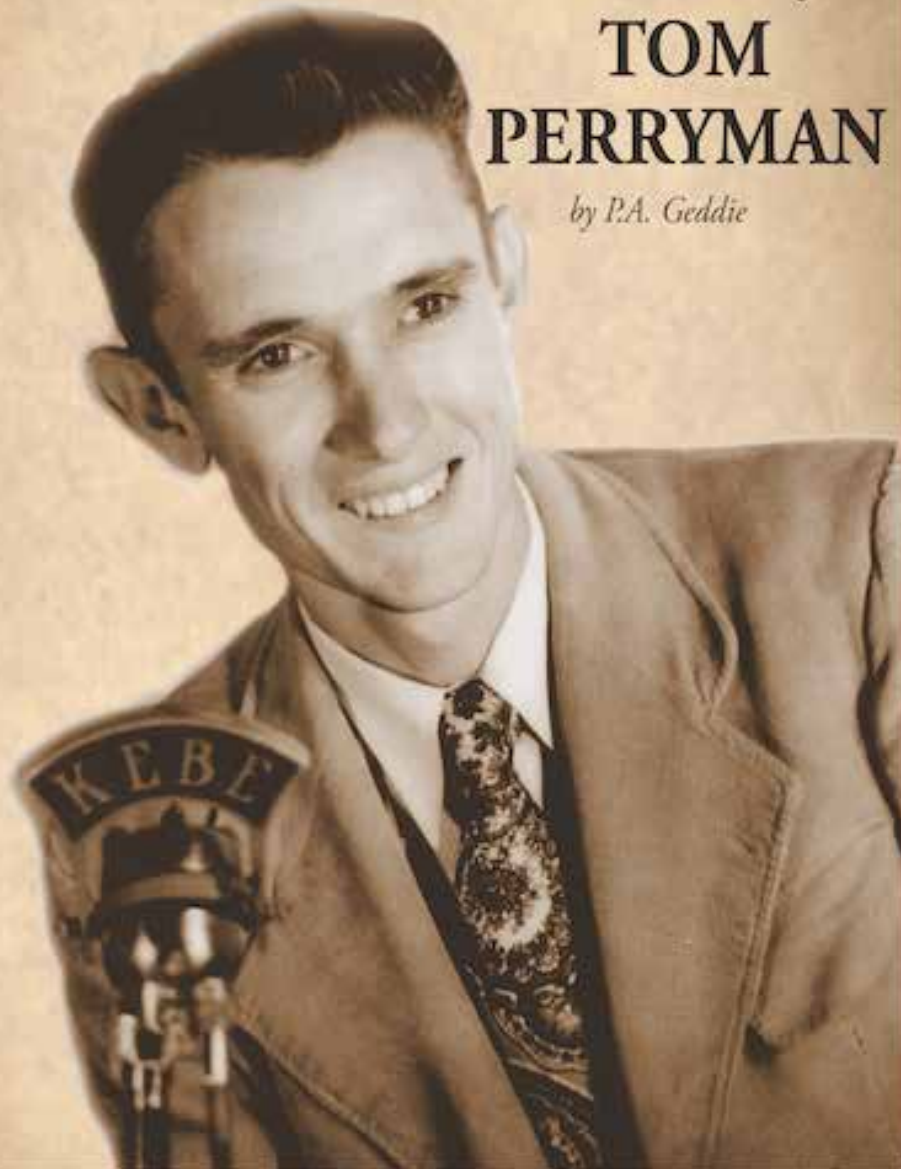
KEEPIN' IT *Country*

60 YEARS

WITH
AWARD-WINNING BROADCASTER AND LEGENDARY DJ

TOM PERRYMAN

by P.A. Geddie



Legendary Broadcaster Tom Perryman

Myself and others have written numerous articles about legendary DJ Tom Perryman in *County Line Magazine* over the last 25 years and I also wrote a book because he's just that interesting and then some.

In the summer of 2001 I was planning a 1940s USO-type show with other local citizens in Canton, Texas, town to take place on December 7 — the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. (See Story #5 above for more on that project). We were working very hard to contact World War II veterans to be our honored guests at this event. I sent out press releases to newspapers, radio and TV stations. Several people told me of a DJ on a Tyler radio station that was heavily promoting our event during his show that ran from nine to 11 a.m. I wasn't listening to radio much during those years because I was tired of hearing the same "cookie-cutter" songs over and over by people I didn't know whose voices all sounded boringly alike to me. But I did want to hear our event being promoted so one morning curiosity got the better of me and I tuned in to KKUS 104.1 The Ranch.

The first thing I heard was a booming country voice saying, "You cain't cuss a cat in here without gettin' hair in yore mouth," followed by several minutes of tales of his life among talents including Jim Reeves, Patsy Cline, Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, and Elvis. As he began to play a Jim Reeves tune that took me back to childhood, I knew I was hooked on this breath of fresh air.

Tom and his wife Billie and I became good friends. Both gone now, but never forgotten. Read much more about them in the *County Line* archives and find the book, *Keepin' It Country: 60 Years With Legendary DJ Tom Perryman* on [Amazon](#).

- [Legendary DJ Tom Perryman Dies](#)
- [Celebrating Milestones](#)
- [Remembering Elvis in East Texas](#)



Matthew McConaughey: A Long Way From Dazed and Confused

Getting the interview with Matthew McConaughey for our January 2014 cover story was a big deal for us. Interviewed by Elizabeth Branca exclusively for *County Line Magazine*, this one is a good lesson in “timing is everything.” His movie *Dallas Buyers Club* had just premiered and our hammering his agent for an interview paid off. It was fun to hear him talk about his strong East Texas connections.

“I haven’t checked in with my people back in East Texas in a while,” McConaughey says, “but who I am today has a lot to do with who I was and growing up there.”

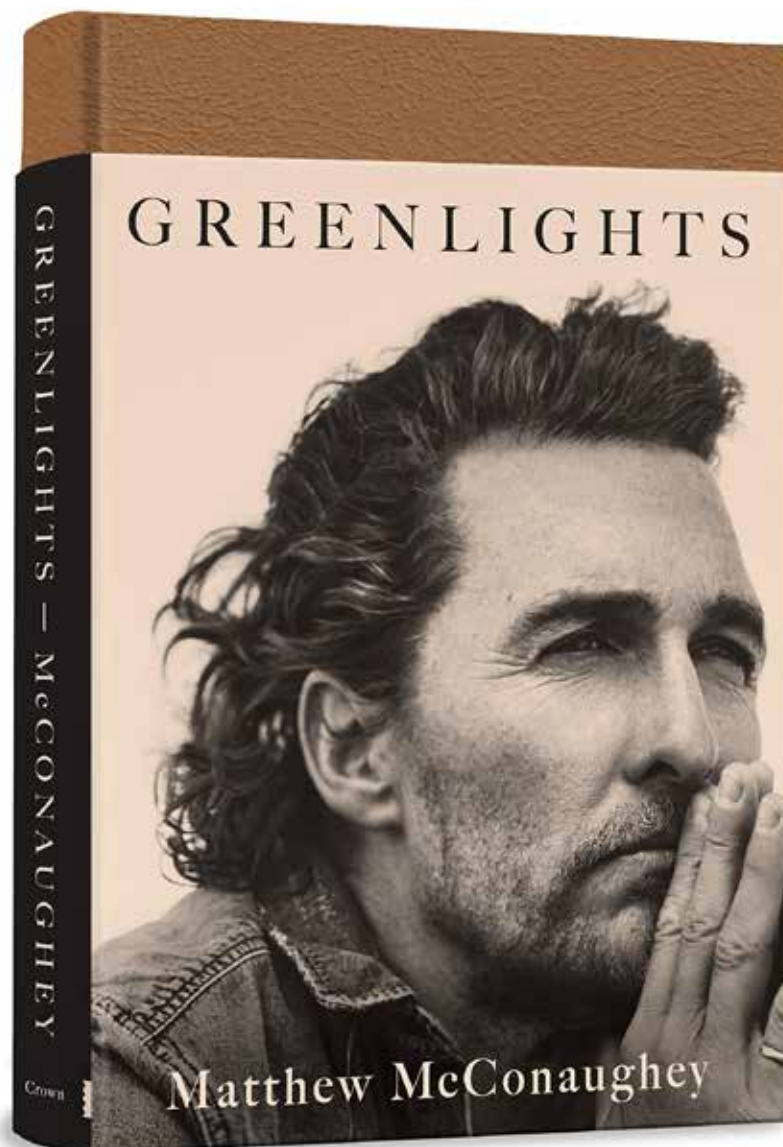
His philosophy on “vital motion” stretches back to his youthful days in the East Texas countryside.

“If the sun’s out, you gotta be outside,” he said, “and if the TV was on, Mom came in and turned it off.”

He remembers her advice, “Don’t watch somebody do it — do it yourself,” and admits that her “can do” spirit helps him with his job as an actor.

Read more about his East Texas influences and career in this article and others including the release of his book *Greenlights* in the *County Line* archives.

- [A Long Way From Dazed and Confused](#)
- [McConaughey Sails Through Greenlights](#)



**FUND ARTS
EDUCATION**

FOUR WINDS STEAKHOUSE, ART & ESPRESSO, MOON PIE MURAL, THEE HUBBELL HOUSE, MOORE'S STORE

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2014

county line

MAGAZINE

*Best
of the
Upper
East Side
of Texas*

SALLY WADE
ROLANDO DIAZ
BILLY HASSELL
KACEY MUSGRAVES
DANNA DICKINSON
PULPWOOD QUEENS
BEYOND THE PALE
LAGO DEL PINO
YAMA YOGA
BEE HEALTHY

COMPLIMENTARY COPY
TO SUBSCRIBE SEE PAGE 39

COUNTYLINEMAGAZINE.COM

MATTHEW
McCONAUGHEY

A LONG WAY FROM DAZED AND CONFUSED

WHY THE ARTS MATTER IN TEXAS



NATIONAL ARTS FACTS

FOR-PROFIT & NON-PROFIT ARTS & CULTURE SECTORS REPRESENT

4.31% Nation's GDP **5.2 M** Jobs

\$1.102 TRILLION Arts & Culture

\$920.5 B Transportation

\$438.2 B Utilities

The national arts and culture sector was a **\$1.102 trillion industry** in 2022 (4.31% of the nation's GDP), representing **5.2 million jobs** (3.28% of nation's workforce), and total compensation of **\$540.9 billion**.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis & National Endowment for the Arts (2024). Data collected for 2022.

TEXAS ARTS FACTS

FOR-PROFIT & NON-PROFIT ARTS & CULTURE SECTORS REPRESENT

2.47% State's GDP **383,066** Jobs

\$59.3 BILLION Arts & Culture

\$93.6 B Transportation

\$41.4 B Utilities

The Texas arts and culture sector was a **\$59.3 billion industry** in 2022 (2.47% of the state's GDP), representing **383,066 jobs** (2.76% of Texas' workforce), and total compensation of **\$30.2 billion**.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis & National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (2024). Data collected for 2022.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NON-PROFIT ARTS & CULTURE INDUSTRY AND AUDIENCES

National

\$151.7 B Economic activity annually

2.6 M Jobs supported by economic activity

In 2022, the impact of this economic activity generated **\$29.1 billion** in total tax revenue to federal, state, and local governments.

88.5% of audiences agreed with the statement "This arts activity/venue is inspiring a sense of pride in this neighborhood or community"

87% of audiences agreed with the statement "My attendance is my way of ensuring that this activity/venue is preserved for future generations"

Source: Americans for the Arts, 2023. Arts & Economic Prosperity 6.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF NON-PROFIT ARTS & CULTURE INDUSTRY AND AUDIENCES

Regional Snapshot: Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA, TX

\$1.5 B Economic activity annually

25,174 Jobs supported by economic activity

In 2022, the impact of this economic activity generated **\$313.5 million** in total tax revenue to federal, state, and local governments.

89.4% of audiences agreed with the statement "This arts activity/venue is inspiring a sense of pride in this neighborhood or community"

87.3% of audiences agreed with the statement "My attendance is my way of ensuring that this activity/venue is preserved for future generations"

Source: Americans for the Arts (2023). Arts & Economic Prosperity 6. 2022 data collected for the Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington MSA, TX.

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Federal Appropriation FY24 **\$207 Million**

Congress allocated **\$207 million** to the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in **FY24**. This amounts to just **62 cents per capita**. Ideally, Congress should index \$1 per capita funding to the NEA.

Source: Americans for the Arts Action Fund, 2024.

PUBLIC FUNDING RECEIVED FOR TEXAS ARTS & CULTURE SECTOR

State Appropriation FY24 **\$14,309,718**

NEA State Grant FY24 **\$1,372,000**

119 NEA Direct Grants FY23 **\$4,443,250**

Source: Texas Commission on the Arts & NEA, 2024

3/6/2024

TEXAS ARTS HIGHLIGHTS

IN THE LONESTAR STATE, THE ARTS UNITE US



The **Texas Touring Arts Program** serves the nation's largest rural population with outstanding Texas-based companies and artists in their own communities.

TEXAS COMMISSION ON THE ARTS

was established by the Texas Legislature in 1965 to advance the state economically and culturally by investing in a creative Texas. By providing resources to enhance economic development, arts education, cultural tourism, and artist sustainability initiatives, the Texas Commission on the Arts supports a diverse and innovative arts community statewide.

Executive Director: Gary Gibbs

Chair: Dale Brock



[Learn more here.](#)

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT

Arts and Culture Texas is a state-wide magazine focused on the contemporary visual and performing arts across Texas.

Texans for the Arts

Texas Cultural Trust

Texas Music Educators Association

Texas Folklife

Texas Association for Symphony Orchestras

Art Spark Texas

Texas Hotel & Lodging Association

Texas Dance Educators Association

Texas Educational Theatre Association

Texas Downtown Association

Texas Association of Museums

Humanities Texas

Theatre Network of Texas

Texas Creative Placemaking Initiative

TEXANS FOR THE ARTS is a highly effective, non-partisan statewide arts advocacy organization whose mission is to secure, protect and grow the public investment in the arts and to advocate for the development and implementation of public policy that supports a strong and vibrant arts and cultural industry.

Executive Director: Ann S. Graham

Chair: Fiona Bond



TEXANS FOR THE ARTS

[Learn more here.](#)

[Join here.](#)

THE ARTS ARE EVERYWHERE

Designated TCA Cultural Districts

Texarkana, Winnsboro, Longview, Denison, Sherman, McKinney, Plano, Garland, Dallas Fair Park, Dallas Deep Ellum, Dallas Arts District

Music Friendly Communities

Corsicana, Denison, Dallas, Lindale, Linden, Lufkin, Nacogdoches, McKinney, Waxahachie, Frisco, Tyler, and Chandler. In process are Carthage, Texarkana, Sherman, Rockwall, Crockett, and Kilgore.

Programs for Rural Communities

Texas has the nation's largest rural population, with more than 3.8 million rural residents. Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) recognizes that arts and cultural activity is thriving all across the state. They also know there are challenges in getting their services to rural communities. TCA has opportunities designed to serve these communities and are interested in ways to better serve rural Texans.

Texas Touring Roster

The Texas Commission on the Arts has accepted and is promoting 139 Texas artists and arts companies for the TCA Texas Touring Roster for 2024-2026. The Texas Touring Roster features some of the state's best artistic talent and is designed to ensure that all Texans may enjoy events and performances by these artists in their local communities. They represent artistic disciplines including music, visual art, dance, theater, storytelling, literary art and folk art.

As of 2/6/2023



JOIN THE ARTS ACTION FUND FOR FREE TODAY!

E-MAIL US: ArtsActionFund@artsusa.org

VISIT US: ArtsActionFund.org

FOLLOW US:



Just play. Have fun. Celebrate!

Downtown Dining District



Sulphur Springs

TEXAS



www.VisitSulphurSpringsTX.org



Discover the Treasures of 211 Gallery

DISPLAY GALLERY. EXHIBITS.
CLASSES. ART SHOWS.



211 North Palestine Street, Athens, TX
ArtGallery211.net • (903)292-1746

LIVE. DREAM. EXPLORE.
Upper East Side of Texas



county line
MAGAZINE

www.countylinemagazine.com
(903) 312-9556

EXPERIENCE FINE DESTINATION DINING



Tuesday & Wednesday DINNER SPECIAL

MIXED GREEN SALAD

Choice of FRESH FISH OF THE DAY,
RIBEYE STEAK, or FILET MIGNON

Served with WHIPPED POTATOES
and GREEN BEANS \$34.00

*Located in a beautiful
lakeside lodge at 21191 FM 47
in Wills Point, one block north
of Interstate 20, Exit 516*

Open Tuesday - Saturday
5 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Available for Special Events

MAKE A RESERVATION
903.873.2225



www.fourwindssteakhouse.com

Family Owned and Operated — Open 24/7
WORLD FAMOUS SINCE 1984



I-20 & Hwy 19 Canton, TX 903-567-6551 DairyPalace.com

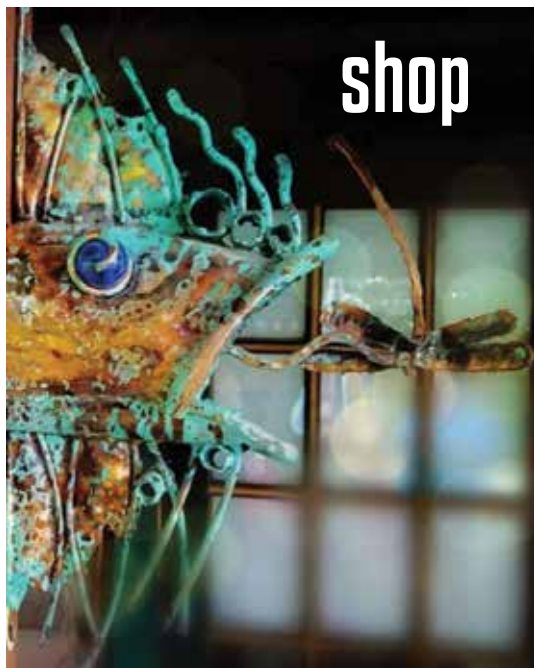


county line MAGAZINE weekly

GOOD NEWS for the Upper East Side of Texas

SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE

to receive good news in your inbox every Sunday morning.



Between County Line eEditions, read more about the people, places, and things that make the Upper East Side of Texas the best place to live, dream, and explore.

Includes events, attractions, articles, food, drinks, arts, culture, lifestyle, entertainment, people profiles, and more.

Go to www.CountyLineMagazine.com and click on SUBSCRIBE to find the WEEKLY or email your address to info@countylinemagazine.com with WEEKLY in the subject line.

For assistance, call (903) 312-9556.