

FIRST COLONY

Neighbors



Cover photo by Aimee Pisano
November 2022

The Kubala Family,
Supporting Our Community For More Than A
Quarter Of A Century, One Bite At A Time!



November Calendar of Events

Thur, Nov 3 - Sat, Nov 5

Sugar Plum Market

@Stafford Centre

The Sugar Plum Market is the largest, all volunteer and oh-so festive holiday shopping extravaganza that features more than 100 vendors from across Texas with unique items for everyone on your gift list. Since its inception, the sugar plum market has raised over \$3.7 million benefiting many local Fort Bend county charities. Time: Doors open at 9 am
Cost/Tickets: \$15.00
<https://www.sugarplummarket.com/ticketboxoffice/>

Sat, Nov 5

Sienna Arts Festival

@Sawmill Lake Club at Sienna
Visitors can shop paintings, jewelry, pottery and other work by local artisans during the festival. There will also be a juried art show for adults and an age-bracketed student competition. Wine and food will be available for purchase, and children's activities such as face painting, balloon art, sand art and a bubble zone will add to the fun. Time: 10am - 5pm
Cost: Children - \$5 Adults \$10
<http://www.siennatx.com/art-festival>

Fri, Nov 11

Another Night Out

@ Sugar Land Town Center
Calling all High School Juniors & Seniors! Another Night Out is an awareness event put on by Parks Youth Ranch to teach students about the hardships and struggles of at-risk and homeless youth. Event participants will have an overnight opportunity in the Plaza to experience a small part of what some of their not-so-fortunate homeless peers must endure regularly in order to survive. There are thousands of youth in Texas that do not have a place to call home and ANO will open your eyes to a whole new world. Bring a sleeping bag or blanket to stay warm! *Attendees must register in advance. Time: Fri 6pm & Sat 6am
Cost: Free
<https://www.parkseyouthranch.org/events/ano2022>

Thursday, Nov 17

Jingle Tree Festival Finale

@Houston Museum of Natural Science Sugar Land
It's the most wonderful time of the year, as one of Fort Bend's most beloved events—Jingle Tree, presented by Houston Methodist Sugar Land Hospital—returns to HMNS at Sugar Land. Jingle Tree features a showcase of beautifully decorated trees and décor, up for bid in a week-long, online silent auction from Friday, November 11th - Thursday November 17th. Proceeds support the Museum's daily operations, expand access to underserved communities and support innovative sensory-friendly programming. From the inaugural Tree Lighting, to exclusive limited-capacity VIP Experiences, and culminating in the countdown at the Festive Finale, join us and decorate the holidays with Natural Science! Cost/Tickets: \$50
<https://www.hmns.org/hmns-at-sugar-land/events/jingle-tree/>

Sat, Nov 12

5th Annual Taste of the Caribbean Festival

@Crown Festival Park
Join us for an all day celebration as we celebrate the food, the music, the arts, the entertainment, and the overall culture of the Caribbean. Enjoy the succulent, spicy, and savory flavors of the Caribbean along with LIVE reggae, soca, salsa, reggaeton, and other musical styles of the Caribbean in this one of its kind celebration of Caribbean food, music, and culture! Time: 2pm - 10pm
Cost/Tickets: \$20-\$30
<https://tinyurl.com/4a9uaffr>

Sun, Nov 13

Autism Speaks Houston 8k & 1k Kids Fun Run

@Sugar Land Town Center
Autism Speaks is looking to raise awareness while having a great time in the 2nd Annual Houston 8K & 1K Kid's Fun Run at Sugar Land Town Square. So lace up those running shoes for an event that means so much more than just 4.97 miles. Recruit friends and family for your team and get ready to run, walk or virtual run for a great cause. Time: 6am registration
Cost: \$20 - \$45
<https://tinyurl.com/yn84f36n>

Wed, Nov 16

Infant Sensory Playtime

@Fort Bend County Library - Sugar Land Branch
For parents and caregivers with children 0-12 months. Babies have an opportunity to learn by exploring with their senses. This program is for infants and non-walkers only. Time: 10:30 am
Cost: Free

Sat, Nov 19

The Arc of Fort Bend's 44th Annual Best in the West

@George Ranch Arena
Come out and enjoy a BBQ dinner, "Two-Steppin'" to live music and the biggest auctions in Ft. Bend County! We'll transform the George Ranch Arena into a familiar honky-tonk, where you can meet-up and party with your friends from all over Ft. Bend County! The fun begins when the doors open at 6:00 pm. Time: 6pm
Individual Tickets: \$75.00
<https://tinyurl.com/2p8c3jn2>

Thur, Nov 24

37th Annual Fort Bend Kia Sugar Land Turkey Trot

@ 13895 Southwest Fwy, Sugar Land, TX 77478
Join us for the 37th Fort Bend Kia SUGAR LAND TURKEY TROT, in honor of race director Andy Stewart, who passed away on Nov. 9, 2021. The running community and Andy's family want to continue the tradition of the Thanksgiving Day race as a tribute to all Andy did for the sport of running, especially his support of charities. Time: 7:30 am
Cost: \$15-\$30
<https://sugarlandturkeytrot.com>

Wed, Nov 29

Giving Tuesday

It's a simple idea: whether it's making someone smile, helping a neighbor or stranger out, showing up for an issue or people we care about, or giving some of what we have to those who need our help, every act of generosity counts and everyone has something to give. Consider volunteering or making a donation to one of our local charities: arcoffortbend.org (The ARC of Fort Bend) attackpoverty.org (Attack Poverty) cafb.org (Child Advocates of Fort Bend) fbwc.org (Fort Bend Women's Center)

fortbendfamilypromise.org (Fort Bend Family Promise) fortbendisid.com/foundation (Fort Bend Education Foundation) fortbendseniors.org (Fort Bend Seniors Meals on Wheels) ftbendliteracy.org (The Literacy Council of Fort Bend) hopeforthree.org (Hope For Three) lunchesoflove.net (Lunches of Love) secondmile.org (Second Mile Mission)

Mondays

Playtime in the Plaza with The Jolly Trolley

@Sugar Land Town Square
The tumbling, tossing, trolley is coming to Town Square every Monday! Tots from 18 months to 5 years of age are welcome aboard to enjoy a magical moment of play for up to two hours. Time: 12pm-2pm
Cost: \$15 for 30 minutes, \$20 for 1 hour
<https://www.sugarlandtownsquare.com/events/>

Fridays

Fitness in the Plaza

@Sugar Land Town Plaza
Mommy and Me strength training and conditioning each week, courtesy of Inspired Fitness! Time: 9:30-10:30am | Cost: Free
<https://www.sugarlandtownsquare.com/events/>

Saturdays

Farmers Market at Imperial

@234 Matlage Way, 77478
Shop for fresh fruit and vegetables. Time: 9am-1pm | Cost: Free
fortbendchamber.com/imperial-farmers-market

Sundays

Farmers Market Partners

@ 16403 Lexington Blvd; Mercer Stadium Parking Lot
Support local farmers and producers to provide you with organic produce, baked goods and artisan foods. Time: 10am-2pm | Cost: Free
[FarmersMarketPartners.com https://www.sugarlandtownsquare.com/events/](https://www.sugarlandtownsquare.com/events/)

FIRST COLONY *Neighbors*

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CONTENT SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

Content Due: Edition Date:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| December 25..... | February |
| January 25..... | March |
| February 25..... | April |
| March 25..... | May |
| April 25..... | June |
| May 25..... | July |
| June 25..... | August |
| July 25..... | September |
| August 25..... | October |
| September 25..... | November |
| October 25..... | December |
| November 25..... | January |

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Letter to Residents

It's November and we all know what that means...cooler temperatures, pumpkin spice everything, holiday shopping, family gatherings and lots to do all around Sugar Land.

Start your holiday shopping off with the Nutcracker Market. Read about Amy Labbe, one of the many vendors at the market, in our special interview article.

Continuing with our Nutcracker theme, meet the many Clara's of Ballet Forte's Nutcracker and Clara's Tea in this informative article. My kids and I went for years, and 3 of them are boys. They loved it every year and as adults it is still one of our holiday traditions. Perhaps it can become one of yours.

Are you tired of the same old holiday fare? Take a look at our article on some locally owned and operated Sugar Land eats and try something new.

Even this month's feature family, the Kubala family, are a restaurant family. Read more about them as you get to know your neighbor.

As we approach the holidays and enter into a more giving spirit this time a year we wanted to highlight both Make-A-Wish and Taylor's Gift Foundation. Learn more about both of these great organizations and how you can get involved.

As always, we ask you to please keep us posted on all the good news out there and in your life. To submit a story of your own, or to point us towards a story or family you believe should be featured, please email kburgos@bestversionmedia.com. Can't wait to hear from you!

Happy Thanksgiving to all our First Colony Neighbors!

Karen Burgos

Content Coordinator

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Brent graduated from A&M in 1993. His wife Catherine graduated in 1993. Brent knew he wanted to continue working with Chick-fil-A after graduating from A&M and worked for another Owner/Operator with several restaurants in Tyler for six months before being hired by the Chick-fil-A corporate office to work in an internship in Salt Lake City. After the eight-month training in Salt Lake, Brent continued the program in Downtown Houston at Chick-fil-A in the Park Shops. The area is now called The Highlight at Houston Center, and the Chick-Fil-A is still there! Brent was chosen as an Owner/Operator in October of 1995. This is no small feat. Chick-Fil-A requires candidates to show evidence of personal financial integrity and stewardship, proven business leadership, and entrepreneurial spirit. Brent and his family exhibit these qualities!

Brent relocated to what was at the time a new free-standing restaurant in Sugar Land in December of 1996 and the location at First Colony Mall. If you have been wondering about the new construction on Highway 6 near the Southwest Freeway, Brent solved that mystery for me. After 26 years, Chick-fil-A Sugar Land will relocate across the street on the former Red Lobster restaurant site and, at press time, is scheduled to open as you read this article! The Drive-thru will have three lanes, one of which will be a Mobile

The Kubala Family

Supporting Our Community For More Than A Quarter Of A Century, One Bite At A Time!

By Stacy Bynes
Photos courtesy of Brent Kubala

It isn't a stretch to say that Brent Kubala and his family have served everyone in our neighborhood. Brent, his father, Milton, and his brother Greg have been successful Chick-Fil-A owner/operators for more than a quarter of a century!

Milton is the Owner/Operator of the Missouri City location near Highway 6 and Riverstone Blvd., and Greg is the Owner/Operator of two stores in Houston located at Westheimer near Kirkwood and Memorial Drive near Dairy Ashford. From grabbing a quick bite at the mall to a quick drive-thru lunch or dinner to a playdate with littles to elementary school spirit nights, the Kubala Family has been a part of our lives.

I met Brent for the first time (doing what he always does) as he and his team served a complimentary breakfast at the Fort Bend Education Foundation's golf tournament at the Sweetwater Country Club. Brent is an excellent ambassador for his close-knit and very generous family. He is pretty tall, but what is most noticeable is his huge genuine smile and friendly personality.

Brent and his family have lived in Sweetwater for over six years. Brent grew up in Baytown, Texas. His first job was at Chick-Fil-A in San Jacinto Mall in Baytown! Brent worked at Chick-fil-A in high school and later attended Texas A&M. He continued to work at Chick-Fil-A in College Station during his last two years of college.



Express-only lane. The property, parking lot, drive-thru lanes, and kitchen will be much larger than the existing location, but the dining room will be a bit smaller, and there will not be a Playground at this new location.

Brent and Catherine have lived in Sweetwater for a little over six years. Their daughters, Caroline (17) and Courtney (11), complete their family of Aggie football fans! They love to travel to College Station to catch the games at Kyle Field and reminisce about Brent and Catherine's college years.

The Kubalas are members of Second Baptist Church. Their family traditions include an annual ski trip to Breckenridge, Colorado, for the last 16 years. They travel well together and have visited Hawaii, Grand Cayman, Bahamas, St. Thomas, St. John, and European countries. Brent is an avid outdoor enthusiast and enjoys hunting trips with friends, fishing, exercise, and once again...Aggie football! A fun fact about Brent is that he has served the community as a Reserve Deputy at the Harris County Sheriff's Office and Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office for ten years!



I asked Brent about the Spirit Night fundraisers hosted by his family's restaurants for public and private schools. He smiled as he handed out the complimentary chicken biscuits, hash browns, and orange juice to the tournament players. That's the Kubala family for you, generously feeding our families and supporting our community one bite at a time!

KNOW A NOTABLE NEIGHBOR?

Do you know a neighbor who has a story to share? Nominate your neighbor to be featured in one of our upcoming issues! rgruene@bestversionmedia.com.

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Outlive Yourself

By: Laura Frnka Davis | Photos courtesy of Laura Frnka Davis



I befriended Tara Storch last year. She is an incredible woman who turned an unimaginable tragedy into a mission of hope. Read more as our contributor Laura Frnka Davis shares her family's story of hope and faith. - Stacy Bynes

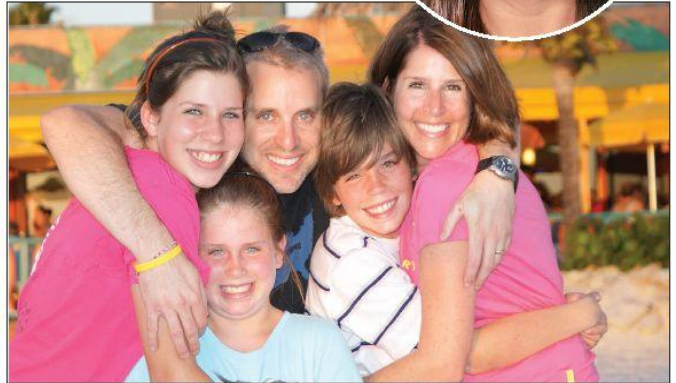
Each year in the middle of November is the National Donor Sabbath, a weekend set aside to educate faith-based communities about the need for organ, eye, and tissue donors.

For one Texas couple, the observance provides another platform and meaningful way to share the story of their daughter, Taylor, who saved and healed the lives of others when she gave the gift of life to others 12 years ago.

It was Spring Break 2010 when Tara and Todd Storch were enjoying a skiing trip to Beaver, Colorado, with their three children. Taylor (13), Ryan (11), and Peyton (9). Their lives changed forever with the last ski run on their first day on the slopes. Although Taylor was an accomplished athlete wearing a helmet, she lost control and hit a tree. The weather prohibited a medevac flight to Denver, so Taylor was flown to Grand Junction, Colorado. Consequently, the family had to make the excruciating two-and-a-half-hour drive to be with Taylor at the hospital.

Thinking back to that day at the hospital, Tara admits to being in shock and recalls the confusion as they spoke with orthopedic surgeons and neurosurgeons. However, a moment Tara remembers clearly is when a nurse walked into Taylor's room and knelt beside her. With compassion, she said that Taylor was a beautiful candidate for organ donation and gently asked if the family would consider it.

"She made the most gentle and loving ask of Taylor and us. There was no pressure," said Tara. And knowing how giving Taylor was in life, the ultimate decision to donate her organs was an easy decision for Storches. They said yes, which sparked life for five individuals waiting on a heart, kidneys, pancreas, liver, and cornea.



After their daughter's death, Tara and Todd founded Taylor's Gift Foundation with the initial goal of encouraging more people to "outlive themselves" by registering as donors. Today, the foundation's focus has grown to serve a different purpose: providing cost-free emotional and grief support for families of organ donors through their Kindred Hearts Program.

"Taylor's Gift Foundation is honored to offer this free support so that no donor family ever grieves alone." Throughout their own grief journey, the Storches have relied heavily on their faith, which is why National Donor Sabbath is so meaningful to them.

"All major religions in the United States support organ, eye, and tissue donation as an unselfish act of love and charity," said Tara. "If you haven't made a decision about if you'd like to be a donor, we encourage you to talk to your faith leader about it to learn more."

This year's National Donor Sabbath is from Friday, November 11, through Sunday, November 13.

For more information about Taylor's Gift Foundation and the Kindred Hearts Program, visit www.taylorsgift.org. To register as a lifesaving donor, visit www.donatelifetexas.org.



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Meet the Claras of BalletForte's The Nutcracker

By Thuy Brown | Photos courtesy of Michael Banigan



The double doors open and a flood of little girls in their sparkly holiday dresses and boys in their plaid button-downs fill the lobby for Clara's Tea, a Nutcracker-themed holiday event like no other. Children's eyes light up the second they catch a glimpse of Clara in her flowing white nightgown. She sits ready to greet her guest from her red velvet throne. Children carry autograph books to collect signatures from Clara, The Sugar Plum Fairy and her friends, while their parents snap holiday-card worthy photos of their little ones among the backdrop of snowy trees and fanciful delights.

Clara's Tea, on Sunday, December 4, 2022 at Safari Texas, will be the official start of The Nutcracker season for BalletForte, Fort Bend county's premier classical ballet company. BalletForte is a nonprofit arts organization whose mission is to increase awareness of the arts and classical ballet through master classes and affordable performances for the local community. Clara's Tea is a fundraiser event, hosted by the BalletForte Guild, an organization of strictly volunteers working to augment the mission and support the dancers of BalletForte.

The star of Clara's Tea is, of course Clara, the heroine of The Nutcracker in a Nutshell performance at Clara's Tea as well as

The Nutcracker full length ballet. Emmalynne Brown (13), Kyra Cadungog (13), Lily Gardenour (15), and Sofia Grovas (14) will each get to play the leading role of Clara this year under the leadership and guidance of Michael Banigan, BalletForte's Artistic Director and founder. Brown said, "when I was six years old, my mom took me to see Clara's Tea. I remember being enchanted by all the dancers and the yummy food and desserts. Now, I can't believe I will be a part of the show!"

In addition to the performance at Clara's Tea, BalletForte hosts Title I schools in Fort Bend ISD, Lamar Consolidated ISD and Stafford Municipal SD for special outreach and service project performances of The Nutcracker at the Stafford Center. The general public will have to wait until opening night on December 9th to experience BalletForte's The Nutcracker. Each of the four girls will have multiple opportunities to dance through The Kingdom of Sweets. Clara's precise pique turns, exacting arabesques and animated theatrics will move audiences of all ages.

"The role of Clara is so special and important to me. I always admired the dancers in this role and hoped to be Clara someday," said Cadungog. "Right now, I'm recovering from an ankle

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Lily Gardenour



Emmalynne Brown



Sofia Grovas

injury. But, I am motivated to work hard and succeed. I am learning the choreography and perfecting my technique." "It is amazing that all of us get a chance to dance the role of Clara," said Gardenour. "We've shared the same dance classes together for the last six years and have become such close friends. Now, we get to share this unforgettable experience together too."

In the past, Banigan has double cast and even triple cast this role, but this is the first time in his 27 year Nutcracker directorial history to cast four Claras. Having multiple dancers learn the same role is crucial in case you need an understudy to go on or need to balance the demands of the performance. This year, four amazing dancers get to share this great achievement. "I

have wanted to play the role of Clara since I was three years old and went to watch BalletForte's production of The Nutcracker," explained Grovas. "When I was six, I got to play an Angel in the same production. Now my dream of being Clara has come true! The best part for me is sharing this role with my best friends. I love them so much and can't wait to make lifelong memories with them this year."

Information and tickets for Clara's Tea on December 4th can be found on <https://balletforte.givesmart.com>. The full-length The Nutcracker ballet at the Stafford Centre runs December 9, 10, and 11th. Visit www.balletforte.org for ticketing information.

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Pleased to meet you: Artful Jewelry Artist Amy Labbe

By: Stacy Bynes | Photos courtesy of Amy Labbe

If you've shopped at the Nutcracker Market even once over the last decade you have likely crossed paths with the fabulous Amy Labbe. Maybe it's her booth teeming with her creative jewelry pieces that may include a cow tag, porcelain figurines, or even a throwback typewriter element. (I have one of those!) Or maybe it's her megawatt smile and her pink hair. (By the way, Amy says pink is her natural color.) Amy is someone you want to get to know! She's in town, and we were excited she made the time to chat with us!

We are so delighted to connect with you! Tell us where you're from, about your family, and how long you've been bringing your fabulous jewelry and more to our area.

We are literally from the middle of nowhere. We live outside of a tiny town, population 200, in Southeast Kansas, close to where I grew up, and returned to raise my three amazing children. I can't even remember how long I have been coming to the Houston Nutcracker Market, 15-20 years? The Houston Rodeo and the Houston Nutcracker are the highlights of our year. Seeing all our customers, who have literally become our friends, is my favorite part of my job! That should tell you something, I only do three retail shows a year, and two are in Houston! We love Houston.

How did you get started? Where do you get your inspiration?

My Mother has always known I was going to be an artist. She has saved crayon drawings from as young as three, of my favorite things to draw at the time: embarrassingly, they are of Queens, smoking cigarettes. Ugh. In grade school while other kids were getting toys, I wanted a subscription to the craft of the month club. My dear grandmother who consistently encouraged me, owned a ceramics business. She wasn't good at detailed painting, so after school, I would go to her house and paint all the eyes, eyelashes, lips, etc. on all her ceramic creations. At ten years old, I turned my parents screened porch into an art show, where I sold my crafts that I am sure were terrible! But to this day, I still remember my very first sale. I thank the Lord to this day Ms. Vera Rudasill, our Avon lady, for purchasing that painted red plaster poured paperweight from my art show. That act of kindness not only gave me the encouragement to set me on my artistic career, but gave me a life long lesson that I still hold dear to my heart. My entire home is decorated with art from artists I have found on my journeys through life. Not only do I want to pass on that encouraging turn point in my life, but my home is a colorful happy place with every inch covered in happy moments and wonderful art.

After graduating from the University of Kansas, there were bills to pay, so I took several jobs, but I was still creating. I started painting on clothing that got the attention of my office colleagues, who began purchasing. My evenings became busy

painting clothing, which began my business. My advice has always been the same to all who ask me: Do what you love, even if it's a side gig, when that side job begins to take over and you can't keep up, it's time..... That is exactly what happened to me. My inspiration comes from everywhere. Never stop learning. I love learning new techniques and any art or craft out there! Everything I learn, culminates into my art, in some form or another. I love it all: sewing, painting, ceramics, macramé, scrapbooking, tie dye, woodworking, silversmithing, stained glass, sculpture, batik, woodburning, beading, embroidery, knitting, paper crafts, etc.

Who is part of your crew, and what does it take to get set up, then packed up?

My studio gang includes lots of family, my 75 year old mother and my 21 year old daughter work with me each and every day. My right hand Kelsey, whom I love like a daughter, has worked with me for over 10 years. I literally have the best crew at home who continues to handle everything for me while I am on the road also. Not only do I love my job, I love my crew!

I have a love/hate relationship with set up and tear down. I LOVE setting up. We have such an elaborate booth set up, it





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takes 4-6 people, Four 10-12 hour days, that is approximately 500 hours of set up. But it's the possibilities I love. We never seem to set up the same way any time. It is taking an empty 300-400sq ft space, and turning it into a magical place for me. More than once, I've been setting up our display, and other vendors have come by and said "we love your booth and your products!" And I say, "Thank you but I haven't put out anything I sell yet! That's just my display." Now for the hate part: tear-down. It always seems to have to be at impossible speeds, we have to be out by a certain times, we have to pack up in 4 hours what took 4 days to create, then try to get it all to fit back onto a trailer, when everyone is exhausted and crabby from working long hours for days without breaks, or getting to sit down, etc. I would rather skip this part altogether and just stay until next year, LOL!

What do you do when you aren't being creative and working?

That's a tough one. Anyone who knows and owns their own business knows it's never a 9-5 job. When I'm at home in the studio, it's more like a 7am- 8pm job, then I take work inside after dinner and work on my couch while binge watching something until bedtime. I've had days before deadlines or shows, where I work till 3am, sleep til 7, and get up and do it again for weeks on end. But, I LOVE MY JOB, and my life. so I never feel like it's "work". It's what I want to do, all the time. I love creating new pieces, coming up with new designs, and that will NEVER get old for me.

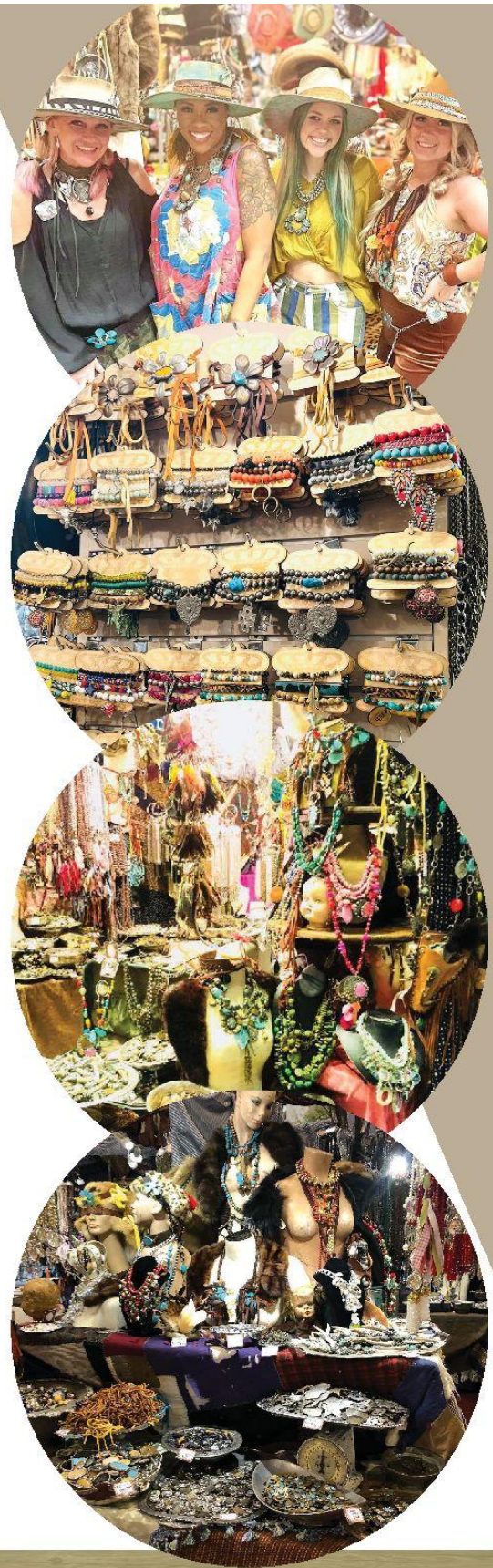
What free time I have, I love to cook, bake, canning my homemade salsas, pizza sauce, apple butter, etc, I love to read mostly dystopian books (Sarah J Maas is one of my favorites), lay in the sun (yes I know it's bad for you but it makes me happy), eating at family owned delicious restaurants and dives, playing with our 2 Frenchies, (Beans and Banx), decorating and spending time with kids and my new Grandbaby!

What are five things you ALWAYS keep in your purse?

Lip balm, hand sanitizer that smells good (can't stand the gross kind that smells like straight tequila), an extra bottle of diet soda (diet dr pepper addict), usually a phone cord that I've forgotten the box to charge with, and a hair clip for the hot flashes!.

Tell us something you want our readers to know!

My cup will always be 1/2 full, never 1/2 empty. Even on bad days, tomorrow is a new and exciting day, and the possibilities are endless. God is Good, and I am very blessed. Please come by Art by Amy at the Houston Nutcracker Market, and the Houston Livestock and Rodeo Show in March to say hello! I would love to meet y'all! xoxo Amy



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Local Places to Go - The Best Thing I Ever Ate

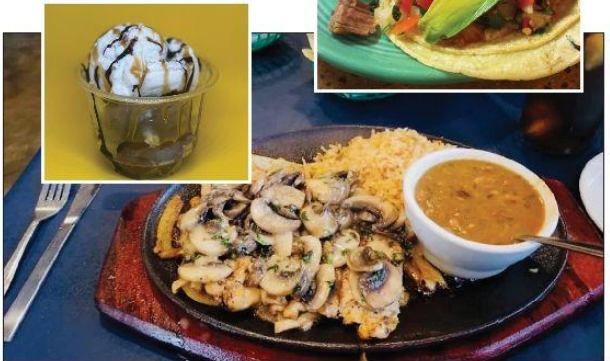
By: Karen Burgos

The grocery store shelves are missing poultry seasoning, sage, and cinnamon? a sure indicator that you probably need a break from cooking, and your taste buds need relief from the holiday fare. There are many legendary as well as new locally owned restaurants in our community; knowing what to order or trying something new can be a challenge. I asked Commonwealth neighbor and owner of Off the Vine Bistro Namita Asthana; longtime restaurateur and owner of La Cocina Mexican Restaurant in Richmond Andres Novoa, and Danita Carey, owner of Carey's Frozen Delights in Missouri City to tell us about the best thing they ever ate from their own restaurants.

Off the Vine Bistro's locally sourced and scratch cooked dishes bring foodies from all over for a unique dining experience with our neighbors and proprietors Namita and Manish Asthana. The entire menu was created by Namita and is as delicious as it is unique. Namita says that the best thing she ever ate from her own kitchen at the restaurant are the bacon wrapped feta-stuffed dates with local honey and garlic. The salty bacon paired with the pungent feta, spicy garlic and sweet dates and honey cover the entire taste palette! They are the perfect intro to a hearty meal. Be sure to ask Namita for a great wine to pair with them!

La Cocina Mexican restaurant is known for its authentic Tex-Mex including hand-made flour tortillas and fabulous margaritas. Of the many fresh and delicious items on the menu of this very popular spot, Andres says the best thing he ever ate from his very own grill are the Street tacos (beef, chicken or pork) and the La Sirena; a grilled chicken breast stuffed with baby shrimp, Monterey Jack and Ranchera sauce topped with sautéed mushrooms, cilantro butter sauce. Both are so popular we bent the rules a bit and were okay with letting him recommend two dishes!

We never know if we will be shivering or swimming on Thanksgiving Day. Either way, a cool and sweet treat after all of the holiday cakes, crumbles, tarts and pies is a welcome palette pleaser! Danita Carey has been serving her frozen delights from her popular food truck for many years and recently opened a store front in Quail Valley so that fans can find her anytime! Danita told us that the best thing she ever ate from the colorful freezer at her store is the oh so rich and creamy Italian Butter Pecan Gelato with caramel topping! (We'll take two!)



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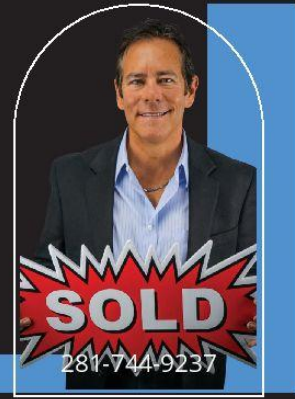
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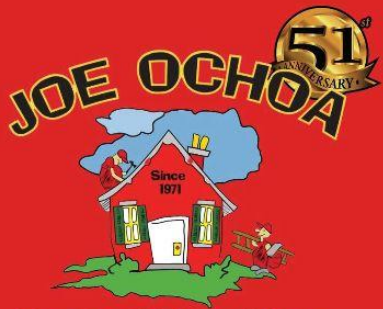
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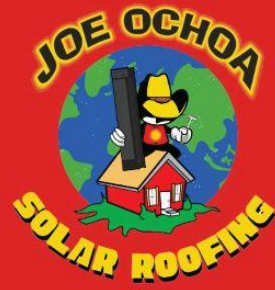
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Make-A-Wish Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana Dedicates New Building to Honor Former CEO, Teresa Andrepont

By: Laura Frnka Davis | Photos courtesy of Laura Frnka Davis



The Make-A-Wish Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana building, located at 12625 Southwest Freeway, now bears a new name.

On Saturday, Sept. 24, current and former Make-A-Wish Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana board members, staff, friends, family, and volunteers gathered to formally dedicate its headquarters to honor the impact and legacy of Teresa "Teri" Andrepont. She served as the nonprofit's CEO from 1991 to 2020.

"Teri's contributions to Make-A-Wish Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana were significant, and it's only fitting we dedicate our building to celebrate all that she did to propel the organization forward during her 29 years as CEO," said Kristin Palmer, chairman of the board for Make-A-Wish Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana. "Throughout her tenure, the organization granted 8,261 wishes, making dreams come true for local children battling critical illnesses and their families."

Throughout the evening, several past and present board members and Make-A-Wish dignitaries shared stories of Teri's dedication to the mission of the organization, including Make-A-Wish co-founder Tommy Austin and Make-A-Wish America CEO Leslie Motter.

For Teri though, the highlight of the event was reconnecting with several "wish alumni"—kids, now adults, whose wishes she had brought to life during her career.

Teri's involvement with Make-A-Wish started as a volunteer in 1991. The organization had such a profound effect on her that she found herself interviewing for and shortly after accepting the position of CEO – only the second CEO in the organization's history.

"My years at Make-A-Wish were some of the most rewarding years of my career. I loved how we could pull together to make any wish – even those that seemed impossible

– happen," said Teri. "The organization does much to enrich the human experience with hope, strength, and joy, and it was an honor and privilege to serve as CEO."

Make-A-Wish Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana is one among 59 chapters throughout the United States and its territories. Since its inception in 1984, the nonprofit has granted nearly 10,000 wishes to local children. The world's leading children's wish-granting organization, Make-A-Wish, has served children in every community in the United States and 50 countries worldwide.

For more information about Make-A-Wish Texas Gulf Coast and Louisiana, visit <https://wish.org/texgulf>.

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