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FEATURES

October

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Medina River
Natural Area

October



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ON THE COVER

Photographer Josh Huskin recruited his wife, Steph, daughter, Finley, and sister-in-law, Diane, for this shoot at Blanco State Park. Hitch the Photo Trailer loaned their trailer to help illustrate the surge in RV and trailer use as locals look to head outdoors while maintaining social distance.



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 TRRAINTOPIA



For the past four summers, my husband, Andrew, and I have escaped the Texas heat to a family cabin in Colorado for one week in August. The cabin is set in a valley in the Rocky Mountains, there's no cell service and no Wi-Fi—and it's heaven. We spend the week hiking, playing with our dog along a river bank, sometimes fishing, reading and just soaking in the fresh air and time away from screens. I always leave feeling peaceful and revived, and this year felt especially relaxing.

We could all use some more calm these days, which is why we devoted our cover feature to the outdoors, focusing on some off-the-beaten-path places to enjoy a breath of fresh air without having to worry *too much* about crowds of other people. We also touch on the mental health benefits of time spent outside and the RVing trend. Find inspiration for a fall adventure on page 26.

Also, in this issue, *San Antonio Magazine* photo assistant Brenda Piña turned her camera on a handful of local activists, creating portraits of people passionate about helping others (page 36). Executive editor Kathleen Petty then interviewed them to learn more about the various causes for which they spend time advocating.

Piña says she considers herself an activist, too. A Native American and Mexican American women, Piña says there are so many causes she feels drawn to support, including Native American rights and immigration rights, but women's rights especially are important to her. "I was raised by a single mom (my dad died when I was young), and I was always surrounded by strong women," she says. "And I'm a single mom myself to an amazing 9-year-old daughter." Piña says she talks with her daughter about what's going on in the world and emphasizes to her, "There's always something good that comes out of the bad." This feature, she says, spotlights that good.

Piña didn't have to look far to identify activists. Each of the people photographed she already knew, having met them over the years through various events, mutual friends and her work as a photographer. In recent months, she says she saw so many posts on social media from her friends about their activism, and an idea of her own was sparked. "Not everyone knows who's behind the projects and the protests," she says. "I wanted to show their faces along with what they do in San Antonio."

Rebecca

Rebecca Fontenot Cord
Publisher & Editor in Chief

BEHIND THE ISSUE

TRAILER MADE

Not every RV or travel trailer is the most aesthetically pleasing, but Hitch the Photo Trailer that Josh Huskin photographed for the cover is one good looking mobile base. Courtney Slade, owner of Hitch, which sets up as a pop-up photo booth at events, says she worked with a custom trailer builder in Oregon to design it. "Inspired by a vintage VW camper, Hitch combines the nostalgia of the past with the most modern and efficient technology of today," she says. The interior of Hitch is designed to accommodate photo booth guests, but it's not hard to imagine it as a place to sleep on the road, with its custom flooring, herringbone-patterned countertops, mini retro fridge and safari window. Slade says its iconic original VW turquoise green paint color often elicits waves on the road from drivers who recognize it.



INSPIRATIONAL FOLLOW

For about 15 years, Brenda Piña (photographer of "Activists at Work," page 36) has been spreading joy by leaving Post-its with inspirational quotes in public places. She does it regularly throughout San Antonio and says she's also extended the practice around the U.S. during her travels. She recently started an Instagram account to document the project and further the impact. "With everything that has been going on, we need some good and that's why I leave them in different places," Piña says. Follow along at @positivepost_its.

Want to see your photo published in *San Antonio Magazine*? Tag us in your best shots on Instagram. We'll print our favorites in some issues throughout the year.
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COMING UP NEXT MONTH

A spotlight on the world of visual arts

San Antonio

OCTOBER 2020 / VOLUME 16 / ISSUE 1

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Rebecca Fontenot Cord

PUBLISHER & EDITOR IN CHIEF

EDITORIAL

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Kathleen Petty

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

JoMando Cruz, Emily Guajardo,

Katherine Stinson, Edmund

Tijerina, Chris Warren

FACT CHECKER

Katherine Stinson

COPY EDITOR

Patsy Pelton

EDITORIAL INTERN

Alex Fulton

ART & PRODUCTION

ART DIRECTOR

David G. Loyola

**GRAPHIC DESIGNER &
PRODUCTION MANAGER**

David Hassmann

PHOTO ASSISTANT

Brenda Piña

CONTRIBUTING ILLUSTRATORS

Mary Haasdyk, Vicente Martí

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Aiessa Ammeter, JoMando Cruz,

Vincent Gonzalez, Josh Huskin, Brenda Piña

ADVERTISING

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

Julie A. Kunkle

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR

Christina Olivarez

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

Dana Horner, Mike McKee,

Tina Mullins, Misty Pennock,

Maxine Pittman, Stephanie Schillaci

AD SALES & SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR

Jillian Clifton

EVENTS

EVENTS DIRECTOR

Macaulay Hammond

OPEN SKY MEDIA

CEO

Todd P. Paul

PRESIDENT

Stewart Ramser

VP OF SALES

Julie A. Kunkle

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Rebecca Fontenot Cord

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

Hollis Boice

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Kerri Nolan

ACCOUNTING

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

Sabina Jukovic

DIGITAL

DIGITAL MANAGER

Abigail Stewart

DIGITAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

Rosie Ninesling

CONTACT US

210-268-1100

sanantoniomag.com

ADVERTISING INQUIRIES

advertising@sanantoniomag.com

JOB & INTERNSHIP INQUIRIES

jobs@sanantoniomag.com

STORY IDEAS, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@sanantoniomag.com

BULK ORDERS

info@sanantoniomag.com

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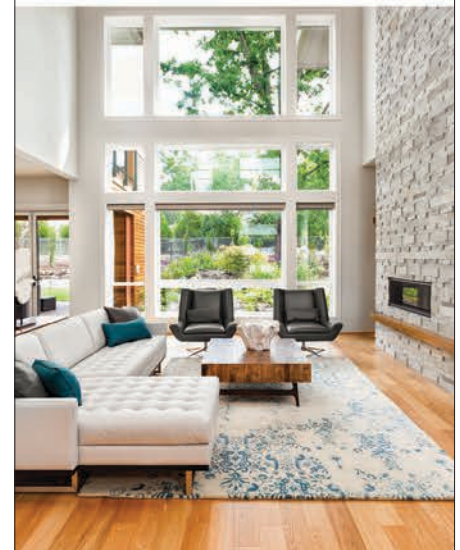
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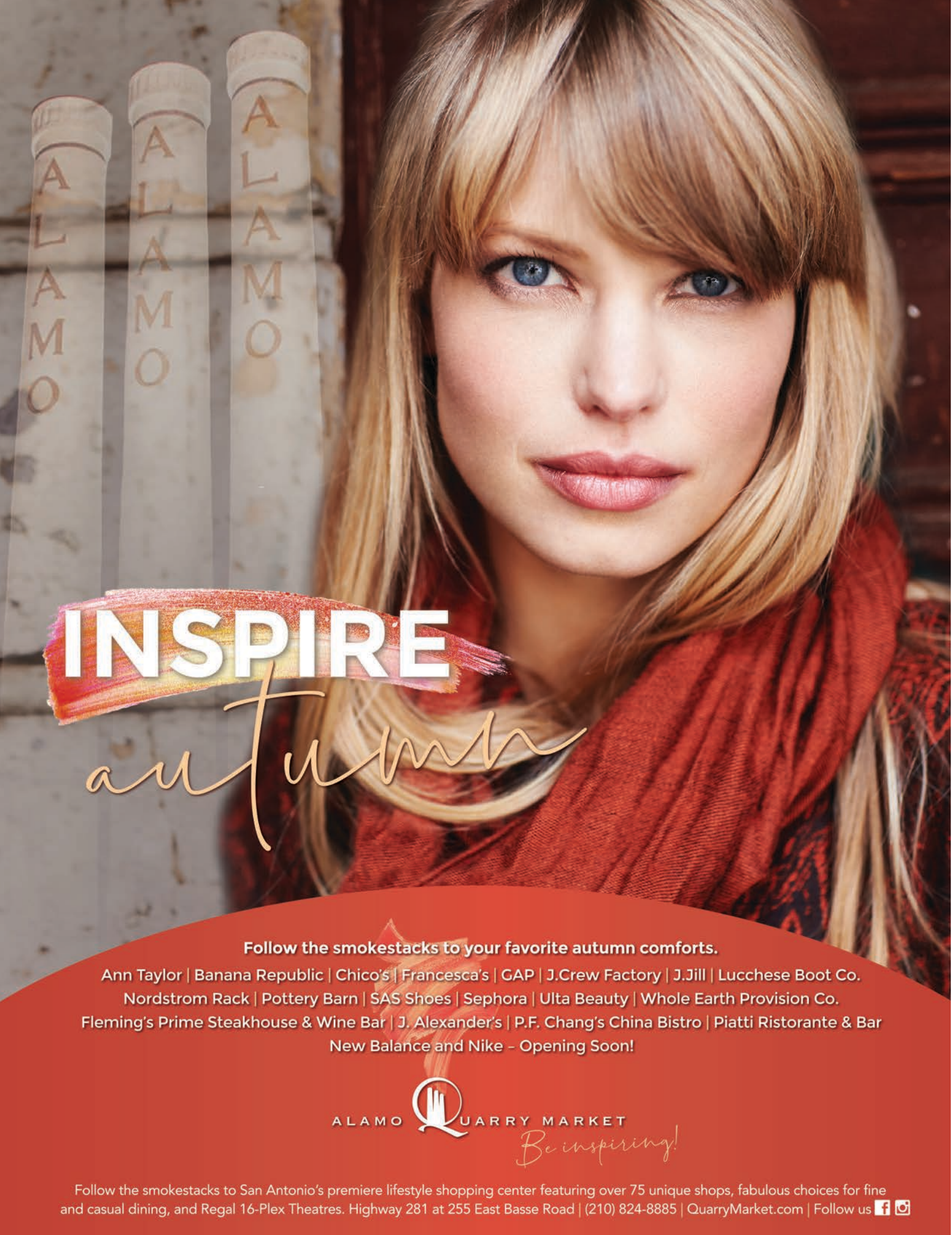
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**Submissions
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In the Loop

INSIDE / CATALOGING HISTORY p.10 / BLACK FRI

FACTORY p.12 / ART OUTDOORS p.20

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Antique Stitching

Bronte Treat remembers her grandmother setting her down as a child and trying to pass on the craft of sewing. “I always thought it was really boring,” Treat admits. “I just didn’t have the patience and it definitely takes a lot of time and patience.” Still, the San Antonio native had an appreciation for her grandmother’s skill and for the fabric pieces in her own house that had been passed down through generations. She studied art growing up—including from Cruz Ortiz when he taught at then-Lee High School—and enrolled at St. Edwards University with a focus of rhetoric and writing. While in college, Treat says she found she finally had the patience to turn her love of art toward a thread and needle. She began collecting vintage Levis and embellishing them with stitched patches. When

she graduated and returned to San Antonio, the idea of a technical writing desk job was less than appealing so she launched her own business, Lunchroom Anxiety, selling her patches, accessories and custom pieces, including shirts produced in partnership with Richter Goods. Pre-pandemic, she operated out of the Broadway News lot but now sews at home. “The best thing that I learned in school is that creativity is a muscle,” she says. “I have to be vigilant and to show up every day and create in some capacity.” Treat now crafts everything on a 1927 chain-stitch embroidery machine that she spent 12 months lovingly restoring, reading old manuals and sourcing replacement parts online. “This was the original machine that was created for embellishments so being able to learn from that particular model has been really interesting,” she says. —KP

Record Keepers

Museums and historians work to create an archive to help future generations learn about 2020

BY KATHLEEN PETTY



CLOTH FACE MASKS SEWN BY A NEIGHBOR, personal journals detailing the symptoms of a battle with COVID-19, recipes from a loaf of bread baked with a pandemic sourdough starter—these could all be fixtures in a museum exhibit in the decades to come.

“Right now we’re probably tired of hearing about this stuff, but you save it now so that later there can be study around this time in our history,” says Amy Rushing, assistant dean for special collections at the University of Texas at San Antonio and a certified archivist. “There are diaries from the 1918 pandemic and it’s just important to hear what folks were experiencing and feeling. It’s a firsthand account, which from a historical and sociological account is interesting.”

UTSA, the Witte Museum, the McNay Art Museum and others are all working to catalog pieces of 2020 with the goal of helping future generations better understand what it was like to live through a pandemic, Black Lives Matter protests and a presidential election in one year.

“The Witte has 320,000 artifacts that tell the history of Texas from millions of years ago to now,” says Michelle Everidge, Ph.D., chief of strategic initiatives at the Witte Museum. “We realized as we were living in the last several months that this was a historic time and now is the time to start actively collecting so we have that record in the future.”

Over the summer, the Witte launched a Rapid Response Team to collect physical items, digital files, protest signs, audio journals and more. Some items are obvious—toilet paper

to document the great toilet paper run of early pandemic days, cloth face masks and N95 masks from health care workers. Others, like photos people took as they recovered from COVID-19, symptom journals or items from frontline workers may be less common.

Stephanie Prichard, registrar for the Witte, says they’re also interested in digital archives, such as footage of Zoom weddings or videos from drive-by birthday parades. Everidge adds that they’ve received worksheets kids used when distance learning at home and that they’d also love audio journals or even meaningful Facebook posts or poignant memes.

“We’re interested in telling the full Texas story. We’re open and ready to listen,” Everidge says. “If we don’t shape what museums hold during the historical moments that we’re in, we may end up telling a partial story. If we can be intentional about it, then we can tell more of those stories.”

Digital archives are the focus for UTSA, where Rushing says they’re cataloging the impact of the pandemic on the university and then turning their focus to the local culinary industry’s response to COVID-19. Rushing says it’s a fit with the vast culinary archives the university already holds. “There’s so much happening that we can’t document everything,” she says. “We were looking for where there might be gaps.”

For local restaurants, that means they’ve been archiving Instagram and Facebook posts about specialty meal and cocktail kits, curbside offerings, reopening procedures and other COVID-19-era adjustments. ★

FILLING THE GAP

SA PRIDE CENTER EYES EXPANSION

On a pre-pandemic Tuesday evening, it wasn’t unusual for the facilitators and board members at Fiesta Youth to welcome teens and their parents from Seguin, Corpus Christi, McAllen and Brownsville to their weekly meetings for LGBTQ youth.

Some families would come for special events—like the Fiesta Youth prom—while others were regular participants, driving up after school for the weeknight meeting, staying in a hotel after it had finished and then getting up early the next day to drive home. “We literally are a South Texas LGBTQ organization,” says David Laidacker-Luna, president of Fiesta Youth.

As they continued to see more youth from outside of San Antonio, Laidacker-Luna says the

10-person volunteer board agreed this year that it was time to grow. They secured a space and hired a second part-time youth facilitator to lead an office in Corpus Christi—then COVID-19 hit. “We haven’t been able to meet yet, but we’re really excited for the expansion,” he says.

Laidacker-Luna says there are LGBTQ organizations in other parts of South Texas but not one where youth can connect with other kids who are going through the same experiences of exploring their identity and coming out to family and friends. “They know they’re not alone and that they’re not the only ones out there,” he says.

At Fiesta Youth meetings, teens and youth as young as 12 have the chance to connect and talk with one another and with adults like facilitator Gideon Del Rio, who identifies as transmasculine, non-binary leaning. The nonprofit also brings in adults who speak to youth about everything from

how to stay safe as an LGBTQ person to what it looks like to build a successful career. Del Rio says they want youth to know that while they may be part of a minority group, they can still pursue and accomplish anything.

Laidacker-Luna adds that there is also a biweekly caregiver and parent support group that helps adults learn about how to communicate with and support their children.

Meetings for the remainder of the year will continue virtually, but Laidacker-Luna says even that type of connection is helpful. Eventually, Fiesta Youth hopes to open a standalone San Antonio drop-in facility where youth could stop by daily to use a computer or just meet together in a space they know is safe and welcoming. “I know if I would have had something like this, I think it would have been a much different story,” says Laidacker-Luna, who didn’t come out until adulthood. —KP

SMALL TALK

FIVE THINGS TO CHAT ABOUT AS YOU FINALIZE PLANS FOR YOUR AT-HOME HALLOWEEN

Draft Hopes / The San Antonio Spurs missed the playoffs for the first time in more than 20 years, which also means they were part of the NBA Draft Lottery for the first time in decades. The Spurs secured the No. 11 pick—the highest selection the team has had since 1997 when it drafted Tim Duncan at No. 1. The draft is scheduled for Oct. 16.

Military Support / USAA announced it will donate \$30 million to groups supporting veterans, military personnel and their families struggling due to COVID-19. The gift is the largest one-time donation the company has made in its history and will go toward two dozen nonprofits and organizations, including places like the American Red Cross Service to the Armed Forces and the Air Force Aid Society.

In Sickness and in Health / San Antonians Carlos and Grace Muniz were married in the Intensive Care Unit at Methodist Hospital after Carlos was hospitalized with COVID-19 a week before their July wedding. By the second week of August, Carlos had tested negative for coronavirus but was still recovering from the impacts of the virus at the hospital. A nurse who'd heard about their canceled wedding planned the event and Carlos' father performed the ceremony on the hospital floor where Carlos was being treated. The bride wore a mask along with her wedding dress while the groom sported a tuxedo T-shirt and black mask from his hospital bed.

More Beef / A Texas Court of Appeals in August rejected a "save Chick-fil-A" lawsuit that a group of advocates had brought against the City of San Antonio after its new food vendor contract for San Antonio International Airport excluded Chick-fil-A. The court said the group didn't have the grounds to sue and require the city to reopen its contract bidding process. The group said it would appeal to the Texas Supreme Court.

Pop to Brooklyn? / Rumors began circulating in mid-August that the Brooklyn Nets hoped to fill their head coach vacancy with Gregg Popovich, who's been the Spurs' head coach nearly 25 years. Brooklyn's GM won two championships with the Spurs under Pop so the idea wasn't completely far-fetched, but the Nets announced at the start of September that they'd hired Steve Nash.

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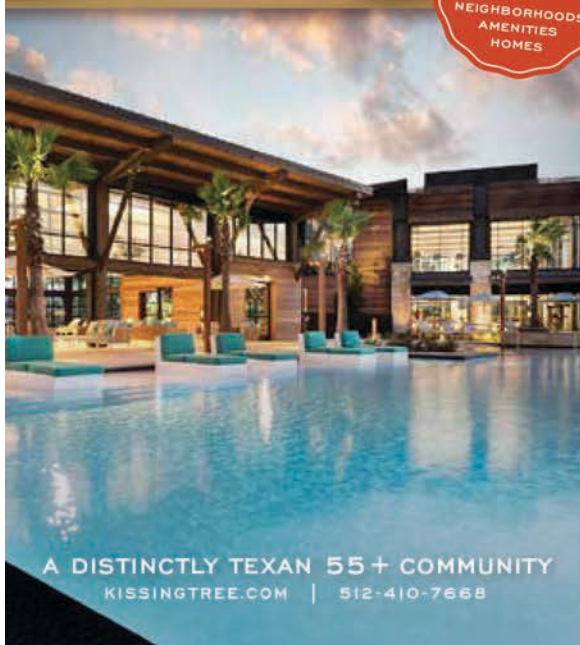
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Finding Her Voice

Black Freedom Factory President Kimiya Factory finds place as a leader for racial justice

INTERVIEW BY KATHLEEN PETTY

Kimiya Factory learned at a young age the importance of finding your voice. Growing up in Austin as the daughter of a single mother, Factory says she was taught that her values mattered above all else and that they should carry over into every facet of her life. With that in mind, she enrolled at the University of Texas at San Antonio to study political science with a minor in legal studies, hoping to find a path where she could influence policy and law in the years to come. At UTSA, she became involved with the debate team, allowing her to travel and compete while learning about policy and how to make structural changes. The 20-something put those ideals to work while still in school, helping to lead the #changerapeculture movement at UTSA and meeting other community members in the process who would eventually empower her to become a leader in the current movement for equality and racial justice. Alongside public relations pro and activist Christian Reed-Ogba, Factory launched

FACT FILE

Hometown:
Austin

Roadrunner:
Factory moved to San Antonio to attend UTSA and graduated in 2019

Get involved:
blackfreedomfactory.org

Black Freedom Factory this summer with the goal of helping corporations and organizations in San Antonio create environments that are safe and welcoming for Black people and people of color. "Finding your voice is really the most important thing," she says. "What has kept me going is just the spark of change that I've already seen."

What led you to get involved with Black Lives Matter protests this year?

As a Black woman, I mourned the death of George Floyd, but then at some point I got mad and decided we needed to be active.

San Antonio is a predominately Hispanic community so conversations around race in that sector and around immigration are prevalent, but this was the first time since I moved here for college that I've seen Black Lives Matter activism and seen that people believe Black lives matter in San Antonio. There has been some activism before, but this is the first time Black organizers have really called the city to action and have kept in contact with council members and the city manager to push for change.

For a while, Black organizers in San Antonio didn't necessarily have strong coalitions, but that has changed. Along with Black Lives Matter, there is the Black People's Collective, Defund SAPD, Black Freedom Factory, Radical Registrars, which have registered around 700 people to vote, and others. We've just seen a plethora of activists.

What is Black Freedom Factory?

Essentially, Black Freedom Factory is data-driven activism. It's not just that, though, it's making sure grassroots organizations are connected to businesses and corporations and systems that want to have honest conversations about equality. The death of George Floyd brought much of the world to a consensus that we need to have honest conversations about race and biases—not just hourlong mandatory diversity trainings. We need to challenge ourselves as business owners and corporate citizens to have the hard conversations and make ourselves better.

If a business wants to take those steps, how does Black Freedom Factory get involved?

Essentially, we offer programs, initiatives and consulting. So, we could come in and conduct surveys or polls of staff to really get a good feel for how minorities and POCs feel within the company. From there, we would present feedback to the company based on the data. We want to be able to hand them a report card so they can analyze their progress moving forward. That's the culture that Black Freedom Factory hopes to create—one of transparency and humility. It's for diversity by diversity.

That's just one facet. We also have other

programs. Along with data, we have a commitment to major community issues—sustainability, gentrification, health and safety, education. We're looking at those as pillars of influence and something we're going to hold close and work with other organizations to talk to the City Council and work for change on.

When it comes to workplaces, what types of things do you hear from people?

The average middle-class American works from 9 to 5 and those interactions are important and often include microaggressions or those cultural innuendos and conversations that make Black people and POCs uncomfortable. If an employee feels like they have to endure a racial or uncomfortable conversation, they're not going to perform their best. And that's something Black Freedom Factory wants to address. We really want to let other professionals know they're not alone and that this is something we've collectively endured and there's no reason not to be vocal about it. It can even be things like microaggressions about our hair or instances where our knowledge or expertise are questioned in a way that someone else's would not be. Those kinds of undertones are common and very consistent.

How would you describe San Antonio when it comes to racial justice and equity?

I think we have a ways to go. The city of Austin just reallocated funding from its police department. Now, do I think the conversation is active here? Absolutely, I do think that. But in the world of change and social justice, we can always do better even when progress is made.

Historically, the city of San Antonio is very segregated socioeconomically and that's something Black Freedom Factory recognizes. So, housing, gentrification, education, sustainability—those pillars we're paying attention to—those all play into that and the long-term access to resources. Data can also be used to point to that and to show how people have been impacted by gentrification and to help create resources for them as a result of what has happened.

Was there something different about the George Floyd incident? Or what do you think has made the protests this time result in more prolonged activism locally?

I don't necessarily feel like George Floyd was different. I feel like it was a boiling point. Brutality against Black bodies was something Black folk have always dealt with. The difference is now you can record that, and it can go viral in a second. Black people being forced to see the violence being done through videos on social media makes it impossible to turn away from. It's sickening.

What sort of change would you hope to see in a year or two? Do you ever worry about there being fatigue among activists?

We hope to create a more equitable and diverse and transparent culture within workplaces. We also really just want to make sure that police violence and all these issues that haven't consistently been at the table remain there. We hope to serve as a conduit for structural change.

We're in for the long haul. Our people are dying so that alone is enough incentive. The best Civil Rights figures in history didn't succeed right away. I couldn't have marched this summer without the people who marched before me. And we've been supported by other organizations throughout San Antonio, which has been amazing—places like the Esperanza Center for Peace and Justice, Southwest Workers Union and others. ★

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

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The Brain at Work

The DoSeum's latest artist-in-residence uses data, sculpture and light to examine dyslexia

BY KATHLEEN PETTY

S

arah Sudhoff's *The Reading Brain* exhibition was crafted with all visitors to The DoSeum in mind, but it's her 8-year-old son's reaction that she wants to see first.

"I want him to walk in and say, 'Oh my goodness, look at all of these colors,'" says the mom of two. "It is based on data from a dyslexic brain, and I want him to see that it's exciting and beautiful and it's still firing, it's still lighting up, it's still processing and working."

On display Oct. 10-Jan. 3 as part of The DoSeum's Artist-in-Residence program, Sudhoff's piece will run in conjunction with the visiting *Beautiful Minds: Dyslexia and the Creative Advantage* exhibition. In her art, Sudhoff uses sculpture and MRI data to show visitors how the different regions of a child's brain with dyslexia react when presented with tasks like reading or processing letters.

Now based in Houston, Sudhoff began her career as a photojournalist, working for publications like *Time* magazine, and says when she earned a master's in fine art photography, she worked to integrate her journalism training into her art, relying on facts, data and research to drive her projects. "I still really love photojournalism, but then I wanted to expand my artistic practice," says Sudhoff, a former instructor at Trinity University, Art Institute of San Antonio and UTSA and a past Artpace San Antonio resident artist.

With a son who lives with dyslexia, Sudhoff has some familiarity with the learning disability so she was immediately intrigued when she saw a call for applications from The DoSeum for an interactive art exhibit that would address the learning disability.

As she began her application, she dug into more research about dyslexia, eventually stumbling upon an article that mentioned Dr. Guinevere Eden, a professor in pediatrics at Georgetown who has

been honored for her research in the changes the brain can undergo following intervention for dyslexia. As part of Eden's research, she conducts MRIs on children while they're completing reading simulations and records data that shows which part of the brain is activated by the activities.

Intrigued, Sudhoff sent Eden an email, never expecting a reply. Eden called the next week and after hearing Sudhoff's reasoning for the data request, said she was in.

"I told her, 'I want to celebrate dyslexia and I want to celebrate that my son thinks and reads differently, but he can still accomplish his goals,'" Sudhoff says.

Sudhoff got to work over the summer, working with orb sculptures that represent a map of the brain. The orbs



MAKE YOUR OWN SLIMY SLIME

The DoSeum's education team offers an at-home Halloween craft for kids ages 5 to 11 that doubles as a chemistry lesson

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Mixing bowl
Wooden stick or spoon
Measuring cups and spoons
Reusable bag
½ cup white glue
Slime activator (2 tsp Borax powder dissolved in 2 cups warm water)
5 or more drops of food coloring

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Pour glue into bowl and add food coloring of choice (if you prefer brighter slime, add a few more drops). Measure out, dissolve and add the slime activator. Put the kids in charge of measuring everything and talk with them during this step about what the ingredients are normally used for and how they could change when combined.

2. Use the spoon to stir all of the ingredients together, mixing until there is no white glue visible. Knead and pull apart the slime with your hands to mix it together even more and talk about how it feels to touch. Ask children how the slime is different than the ingredients were individually.

3. Before you store your slime in that reusable bag, take some time to observe it. Did you notice, when the activator was added that the viscosity (ability to flow) changed and the liquid became thicker? Slime is known as a non-Newtonian fluid because it's not quite liquid but also not quite solid—rather like toothpaste.

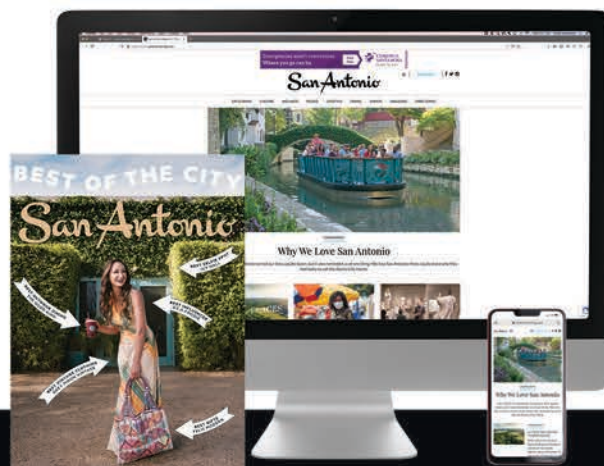
Visit sanantoniomag.com/make-your-own-slime for a video demonstration from The Doseum.



will hang from the museum's ceiling and different regions of the neural network will light up to show real-time data mapping of a brain with dyslexia. When a child stands underneath one of the orbs, a robotic camera overhead will activate and speed up the orbs in that particular region. Data is being translated into the piece with the help of a computer programmer.

"Eden's research shows that very intense reading interventions show very apparent growth in the brain," Sudhoff says. "I wanted to show that but make it playful and interactive and something that required some decoding because dyslexia is about decoding." ★

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Merging with the Outdoors

San Antonio homebuilder and interior designer team up to make indoor and outdoor living spaces flow in this North Central home

BY KATHLEEN PETTY

B

ringing the outdoors in through architecture and interior design has become a common refrain in recent years, and for one local homebuilder achieving that goal included much more than simply adding walls of windows.

At John and Jana Palosi's home in the North Central Inverness neighborhood, John incorporated moss, bold green colors, natural stone and, with the help of JMS Architects' Joseph M. Smith, created a U-shaped design that allows for nearly every room in the home to open into a private outdoor courtyard.

Interior designer Lori Caldwell, of Lori Caldwell Designs, says while many clients opt simply for floor-to-ceiling glass doors or windows to achieve a feeling of being outside while relaxing in the living room, Palosi, president of Omni Custom Homes, was more progressive in his choices. Caldwell worked with the Palosis to incorporate striking patterns, colors and creative light fixtures, in addition to some timeless hues and fixtures. "He stepped out of the box, which a lot of people won't do," she says.

Situated on a cul-de-sac, the 4,000-square-foot one-story home features natural stone blocks, stucco and steel panels on the exterior plus natural stone and



The home is situated on a cul-de-sac in the Inverness neighborhood.

(From top) A moss wall truly brings the outdoors in; the kitchen flows into the living room and features a green, multicolored backsplash that also is used above the bar; the dining room opens into a courtyard featuring a pool and wooden deck.

natural-colored travertine tile throughout the interior of the home.

Inside, the open kitchen flows right into the main living space and features a pantry that's tucked out of view. A wine bar is situated on a side wall where the kitchen meets the living area and showcases the same multicolored tile backsplash that covers the back wall of the kitchen.

In the kitchen, the striking tile wall is accented with floating wood shelves on either side of the oven, a large window sits over the sink and an island with natural, gray-colored Delta Granite provides a workspace plus places for the family to sit.

The master bedroom is on one side of the house and includes access to the main courtyard plus a more private garden area. Children's bedrooms are on the other side and also open into the courtyard.

And while quick access to the outdoors is part of what allows the two environments to easily merge, colors and materials inside also are important. Bold green and forest green moss covers a wall between the entryway and the living room while the half-bathroom is covered in green wallpaper with modern yellow and dark green accents.

In the dining room, wood paneling that complements the wooden deck around the outdoor pool covers a slanted ceiling and is accented with a light fixture that is anything but typical. "It's very organic," Caldwell says, describing the wooden fixture that became a centerpiece for the whole room after an electrician pieced it together stick by stick. Plush green chairs surround a modern wooden table.

Outside, the Palosis wanted to be able to entertain as easily as they do indoors so an outdoor kitchen, TV and seating area was tucked at the front of the courtyard and is protected by an extension of the home's roof. A rectangular pool is the centerpiece and a small game room to the side welcomes guests through sliding doors.

Caldwell says often homeowners don't think about the inside of their home when designing a pool and deck like the Palosis did—a mistake typically only realized after a resident looks out onto the pool from their chairs inside and sees how much the colors or materials clash. "You want to take the time to make them coordinate," she says. "A lot of people really want their indoors and outdoors to feel cohesive." ★

3 Home Design Tips from Caldwell

1. Get interior designers involved early on

Whether you're building, redesigning or adding on, the best way to stick to a budget is to have a designer helping to select materials, fixtures and furnishings before the work begins.

2. Take it in phases

Caldwell says many homeowners want to refresh their home but get stuck when faced with the dozens of decisions they'll have to make to change everything. Instead, start with a kitchen or bedroom and take it slowly, selecting colors and materials you love.

3. Be flexible

With new builds or major remodels, Caldwell always tells homeowners to leave spaces for TVs, electronics and other technology flexible. If you build an ornate stone nook for the TV you own now, it may not be the right size in five years when you replace your television with the latest technology.

Plant Lovers Unite

Follow these plant pop-ups and influencers for inspiration, events and tips for cultivating that green thumb

@CRAZY.PLANT.LOVEE

When Ashleigh Thompson found life as a mom of two rarely left enough time for her creative outlet of painting, she turned her attention toward succulents and house plants, upcycling items from thrift and antique stores into unique planters. After her family's windowsill became too full to handle another plant, Thompson earned her nursery license and launched her business and Instagram account in May 2019. Now available at the Hand-made on Main co-op in Boerne, her pre-potted plants come in everything from refurbished antique toys and watering cans to beer cans and Mason jars. "They're all unique," she says. She also creates DIY fairy garden kits. Follow Thompson for inspiration for your own planters, behind-the-scenes looks at her plant care routines and updates on pop-ups where you can find her plants. Plus, her pre-potted plants come with a replacement guarantee because she knows as well as any plant mom that sometimes life happens.

@PLANTPARENTHOODSA

At his first pop-up sale in late 2019, Mike Capo quickly realized one thing: San Antonians love plants. Interest in the plants that he sells through pop-ups, curbside pickup or delivery from Instagram has only grown during COVID-19 as people have looked to add something new to their home and routine. "All of our stuff is locally propagated or cut," says Capo, who grew up with a mom and grandmother who were avid plant people. After his day job with T-Mobile, Capo spends evenings focused on plant care and propagation, plus answering DMs from customers and fans who need help keeping their own plants alive. "Water lightly when dry to the touch and start with medium to indirect light," he says. "Those are good general rules." At 30, Capo is among the youngest members of the SA Men's Gardening Club and

4 HOUSE PLANTS TO TRY IF YOU'RE A NEW PLANT PARENT

Aloe Vera

Jade Plant

Snake Plant

Vicks Plant



Bonsai Society, but he doesn't mind. For him, the fun of growing and learning about plants comes from the community of it. Find his pop-ups on Tuesdays at The Growler Exchange and at Witte Museum events, like Cocktails & Culture.

@PLANT_SHOPPE

Specializing in rare plants not readily available at area nurseries, Sonam Aditya's Plant Shoppe pops up regularly at Shotgun House Roasters, PhiloCoffee and Bakery Lorraine (head to sanantoniomag.com for this month's schedule) as well as offering local delivery. A tech industry professional, Aditya says plants bring her joy and she wants to share that with others. Along with gorgeous photos of the plants she has available, her feed offers regular tips on plant care. Chief among them: Don't overwater. Aside from that, she says to get to know your plant. Some need bright light while others thrive without much light. "Most plants are like cats," she says. "They are self-sufficient and can thrive with very little care." ★



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En Plein Air

Four places to engage with culture in the outdoors

BY KATHLEEN PETTY

McNay Art Museum

The museum completed the first phase of its Landscape Master Plan in September. As the McNay continues its work by adding the Mays Family Park at Austin Highway and N. New Braunfels Ave., it also recently debuted three new sculptures on its outdoor grounds, which are free to visit. Look for "The Sole Sitter," by Willie Cole, the first Black artist to be featured in the McNay's outdoor sculpture collection; "Standing Tulip," a 13-foot aluminum sculpture by pop artist Tom Wesselmann that greets guests at the main entrance; and "Hashtag Orange," a bright metal sculpture by Alejandro Martin, an emerging artist who is based in Mexico City. The Blackburn Patio with its coy pond and sculptures also welcomes museum guests. 6000 N. New Braunfels Ave., mcnayart.org

Briscoe Western Art Museum

Tucked just behind a low stone wall on Market Street sits the Briscoe Western Art Museum's McNutt Sculpture Garden, a quiet oasis on the River Walk that features more than 20 works of premier Western art. With a focus on bronzes, the collection includes "Golden Wings," by Gerald Balciar, "Thank You Lord," by Harold Holden, "Dance of the Eagle" by Allan Houser and many others. Don't stop exploring in the garden, though. "Checkmate" greets visitors outside the museum at Market and Presa streets while the 3-ton "Camino de Galvez," by T.D. Kelsey sits along the River Walk. New this year is "Great Blue Heron Pair," a sculpture by Walter Matia that welcomes guests at the museum's River Walk staircase. 210 W. Market St., briscoemuseum.org



"Standing Tulip" by Tom Wesselmann is one of three new sculptures at McNay Art Museum; The visiting exhibition *Origami in the Garden*² features multiple metal origami structures by Jennifer and Kevin Box; "Great Blue Heron Pair," by Walter Matia, was recently added to the outdoor collection at the Briscoe Western Art Museum.

San Antonio Botanical Garden

The 32 acres at the San Antonio Botanical Garden has been a favorite COVID-19 escape for locals for months, but there's a new reason to visit this fall with the September opening of *Origami in the Garden*², a sculpture exhibition by Santa Fe artists Jennifer and Kevin Box. The metal sculptures are largescale depictions of the airplanes, floating boats, butterflies and more that can be crafted from a single sheet of paper through the Japanese art of origami. The couple first debuted the works—which include some of their original forms plus art made in collaboration with renowned origami artists—at the botanical garden in their hometown. San Antonio is the first Texas city to host them. The works are on display until May 9, 2021. 555 Funston Place, sabot.org

Texas Treasures Fine Art Gallery

If you've ever driven down Main Street in Boerne you've likely seen the "Nautilus" kinetic wind sculpture by Jim Lapaso that sits at the edge of the sculpture garden outside of Texas Treasures Fine Art Gallery and Frame Shop. Opened nearly 10 years ago by Johnny Rosa, who previously ran a gallery in Santa Fe, the outdoor garden features a walking path and multiple sculptures, including the life-size "Watching Over Texas" by Ed Hayes, a bronze allegorical sculpture by world-renowned artist James N. Muir, works by Marianne Caroselli, Juan Dell Wade and others as well as a sculpture by local artist Erik Christianson, who has work at several area churches and is known for his "Bonfire Memorial" at Texas A&M University. 605 S. Main St., Boerne, texastreasuresfineart.com ★

+1 ARTISTIC EVENT

CHALK IT UP, OCT. 10

Artpace San Antonio staff knew they couldn't bring hundreds of San Antonians together downtown for the nonprofit's annual Chalk It Up public art festival, but they didn't want to cancel the event entirely.

Instead, they've decentralized the event so that San Antonians can view chalk art pieces on Oct. 10 at San Antonio Public Library locations in each of the 10 City Council districts. Twenty featured artists will create chalk murals based on the theme of community and the works will be available for viewing at

the libraries by car or from nearby sidewalks.

School and community teams will have the chance to work on murals in the month leading up to the festival and to submit photos and statements about their murals to Artpace. Those works can be viewed online. artpace.org/chalk-it-up

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Pandemic Love Connection

How one local venue is helping singles mingle from a distance

BY KATHLEEN PETTY

U

nder normal circumstances, Shannyn Allan would never have considered speed dating.

"It always gave me the heebie-jeebies because it just seemed so cheesy," says the 34-year-old San Antonio transplant.

But after a few months of talking with potential dates on apps like Bumble and Tinder—where she says COVID-19 has only made ghosting a more frequent occurrence—and with bars still closed and restaurants restricted in seating, Allan decided she might as well give it a try and registered for Physically Distant Speed Dating at The Good Kind.

If nothing came of it, she thought, at least she'd have a reason to get dressed up and get out of the house without the hassle of being the one to figure out all of the details. "Planning a date right now is a drag," she says. "There aren't that many safe places to meet. With this, the socially distant aspect is baked right in, so you don't have to worry."

At the events, participants are broken into groups by gender and age (21 to 40 or 40-plus) and then provided seven minutes to chat with each person before moving on to the next potential match. (Organizers are planning to add LGBTQ nights in the future.)

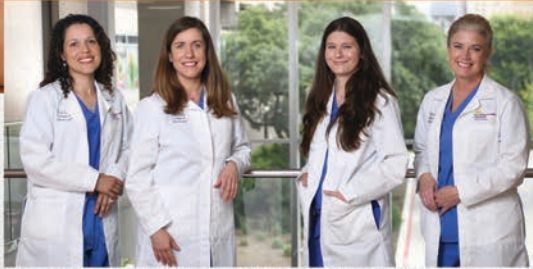
Tim McDiarmid, chef and owner of The Good Kind, says they've been working to create events since the pandemic began that allow

people from throughout the community to enjoy their outdoor space in Southtown and came up with speed dating after talking about how those who are working from home and living without family have been largely isolated. "Some people won't come to a movie night alone, but they might come to something like this with parameters," she says.

Upon arrival, guests share details on how they'd like to be contacted if a match is made. McDiarmid provides a one-page list with conversation starters—What's one place you want to visit before you die? Are you a cat person or a dog person?—and then they're off, chatting from an appropriate distance with a new person every seven minutes. At the end, they can let staff know if there's someone they'd like to talk with further and if that person also selected them, their contact information is shared. A DJ also stays for a few hours after the event so guests can continue to mingle if they wish. McDiarmid says they've had at least a few matches during each event.

Allan wasn't among them, but says she did meet some other women who have become friends. And while she didn't find love, Allan says she enjoyed the short conversations with everyone she met. "COVID is a total lover killer," Allan says. Plus, she adds, finding new friends during a pandemic was a bonus. ★

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Judges



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Quibi's *Murder House Flip*



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Exteriors

- Deck/Patio/Porch/Outdoor Kitchen
- Exterior Use of Color (Paint, Doors, Shutters, Etc.)
- Residential Landscape Design | Less Than One Acre
- Residential Landscape Design | More Than One Acre
- Residential Landscape Water Feature
- Residential Swimming Pool/Spa

Interiors

- Children's Room/Play Space
- Closet
- Conservatory/Screen Room/Sunroom
- Dining Room | Modern
- Dining Room | Traditional
- Full Bath
- Guest Suite
- Kitchen
- Laundry Room/Mud Room
- Library/Study/Home Office
- Living Room/ Great Room | Modern
- Living Room/Great Room | Traditional
- Powder Room Bath
- Primary Suite | Modern
- Primary Suite | Traditional
- Specialty Room (Gym, Music, Billiards, Crafts, Etc.)
- Wine Room/Bar
- Use of Color
- Use of a Collection, Antiques, or Art

Details

- Custom Cabinetry
- Custom or Repurposed Furniture
- Fireplace
- Flooring
- Lighting
- Millwork
- Stone/Tile

Home

- ADU (Casita/Garage Apartment)
- Architecture | Modern | Up to 3,500 Square Feet
- Architecture | Modern | More than 3,500 Square Feet
- Apartment/Loft/Condo
- Historic Renovation (50 Years and Older)
- Home in the Hill Country
- Interior Design | Modern
- Interior Design | Traditional
- New Model Home (Architecture)
- Remodel | Up to 1,000 Square Feet
- Remodel | More than 1,000 Square Feet
- Architecture | Traditional | Up to 3,500 Square Feet
- Architecture | Traditional | More than 3,500 Square Feet

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OFF-THE-BEATEN-PATH PLACES TO EXPLORE

BY

JOMANDO CRUZ
KATHLEEN PETTY AND
CHRIS WARREN

PHOTOS BY

JOMANDO CRUZ



MCKINNEY ROUGHS NATURE PARK



Part of the Lower Colorado River Authority network, this 1,140-acre park east of Austin offers horseback riding, zip lining, hiking and plenty of places to relax and take in the scene. The park has access to more than a dozen trails, including the 1.6-mile Riverside Trail, plus the option to rent a hostel or dorm. 1884 Hwy. 71, Cedar Creek, lcra.org/parks



GUADALUPE RIVER STATE PARK



A go-to for many locals each summer, this state park in Spring Branch provides just as much respite in other seasons thanks to views of the Guadalupe River, massive bald cypress trees on the water's edge, 13 miles of trails and plenty of areas for secluded camping or picnicking. Hike or bike to see the park's two limestone bluffs and watch for gray fox, white-tailed deer and even bobcats or coyotes in the distance. On Saturdays and select Sundays, join a guided 2.5-hour tour of nearby Honey Creek State Natural Area. 3350 Park Road 31, Spring Branch, tpwd.texas.gov

PALMETTO STATE PARK



Step into an oasis of dwarf palmettos, mesquite trees and ephemeral swampland just an hour away thanks to this 270-acre space in Gonzales County. Palmetto offers nearly 5 miles of flat trails for hiking and biking. Take a leisurely pace and watch for the myriad wildlife that hide between the foliage and water, including armadillos, raccoons, turtles, lizards and dozens of birds. Fall isn't the ideal time for dipping into the San Marcos River or Oxbow Lake, but you can spend time on the water fishing, canoeing or kayaking. Also look for the functioning water tower and mud-boil recreation built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. 78 Park Road 11 S., Gonzales, tpwd.texas.gov

CIBOLO CREEK PRIMITIVE TRAIL



Park at Universal City Park or Veterans Park and take the 3.4-mile round trip trek along a lesser-traversed public path Northeast of San Antonio. Offshoots from the trail take hikers toward Cibolo Creek and, at some spots, to cave access points. There's also an 18-hole disc golf course near the trail. 737 E. Aviation Blvd. or 305 North Blvd., Universal City, universalcitytexas.com

HAMILTON GREENBELT + KRAUSE SPRINGS



A donation from Jack and Myrtle Hamilton 30 years ago allowed for the purchase of 80-plus acres between Austin and Spicewood that now host this all-level trail that's more than worth the drive. Just over 5 miles out and back, the greenway features a mix of crushed gravel, dirt and primitive trails along Hurst Creek plus views of waterfalls, pathways to Lake Travis and plenty of shade for those warmer fall days. Looking to make a weekend trip of it? Drive farther west into Spicewood for camping (and more hiking) at the privately owned Krause Springs. Known first for its swimming hole, the 115-acre oasis features 32 springs and a butterfly garden perfect for relaxing in cooler months. 1250 Lohmans Crossing Road, Lakeway, lakeway-tx.gov; 424 County Road 404, Spicewood, krausesprings.net

MEDINA RIVER GREENWAY



Local greenways have consistently proven reliable places to actually maintain social distance while running, walking or hiking, according to city staff. Two new sections were recently added to this greenway in South San Antonio meaning locals can now trek up to 17 miles with views of the Medina River and natural brush (plus flowers in the spring). Several trailheads provide access and camping and picnicking is available at Medina River Natural Area. *15890 Hwy. 16, San Antonio, sanantonio.gov*



San Antonio's Parks & Recreation staff say these trails are ideal for those looking to avoid a crowd

Elmendorf Lake Park

Crownridge Canyon Natural Area

Gold Canyon Park

Tom Slick Park

HILL COUNTRY STATE NATURAL AREA



With over 5,000 acres and 40 miles of trails, it's easy to find solitude here. Mountain bike, hike or horseback ride through rocky canyons, grasslands and oak mottes near Bandera. Vista Ridge, Hermits and Madrone trails connect to provide a more than 6-mile trip and campsites are available so you can stay and explore further. *10600 Bandera Creek Road, Bandera, tpwd.texas.gov*

BUESCHER STATE PARK



Drive past the well-known Bastrop State Park for a getaway at its less well-known sibling. A full 100 miles from the pines of East Texas, this park gives Central and South Texans the chance to hike through the woods thanks to its Pine Gulch Trail featuring towering loblolly pines—part of what's known as the state's Lost Pines ecosystem. On the Winding Woodland Trail, find more familiar oak and cedar trees or hop on a bike and take the 12-mile trek to Bastrop State Park. Rainbow trout live in the park's 30-acre lake during the winter, and catfish, bass and crappie can be caught at other times of the year. *100 Park Road 1E, Smithville, tpwd.texas.gov*

CHALK BLUFF RIVER RESORT & PARK



Make reservations for a campsite or cabin at this family-owned park just outside of Uvalde. Hike, bike or fish along the Nueces River, let the kids interact with animals in a petting zone and sit around a campfire before heading to your sleeping bag. *1108 Chalk Bluff Road, Uvalde, chalkbluffriverresort.com*

LIFE ON THE ROAD

**RV SALES AND RENTALS HAVE
SKYROCKETED AS STIR-CRAZY PEOPLE
SEEK OUT SAFER WAYS TO TRAVEL**

ANGELA AND BERNARD JOLIVETTE HAVE PLENTY of reasons to travel. With a son and daughter in Dallas, Angela's mother and sister living in California and Bernard's family in Louisiana, the couple knows that maintaining cherished family bonds requires a certain amount of wanderlust.

But when COVID-19 hit, any thought of travel more or less evaporated. "My husband and I are high-risk because we are over 62 and we were worried about hotels and planes," Angela says. "I just realized that is something I didn't want to engage in."

But when the Jolivettes really thought about it, they realized that doing all they could to avoid infection didn't necessarily mean they couldn't see friends and family. Friends from church were already enthusiastic RVers, so the couple decided to follow their lead. They visited Crestview RV and drove away with a 28-and-a-half-foot BTouring Cruiser RV. "We love camping and fishing, and I was a Girl Scout and he is retired military," Angela says. "We basically felt we would use it during COVID but would have it for life."

The desire to maintain some level of normalcy—which for many of us includes travel and time outdoors—while avoiding the inherent risk of exposure that comes from venturing away from home has spurred tremendous interest in RVs, both from renters and new owners. Indeed, according to a recent survey by RVshare, an RV rental marketplace, Labor Day bookings were up 50 percent compared

to last year and rentals are expected to continue rising through autumn, which is unusual. "RV travel is a seasonal business and as we look toward the fall months, we usually see reservations drop off," says RVshare CEO Jon Gray.

Purchases are also up, with the RV Industry Association reporting that shipments of RVs from manufacturers to dealers were up 11 percent this past June compared to the same month in 2019 and up 45 percent between May and June of this year. "Younger, first-time buyers are turning to RVs in droves," says Monika Geraci, a spokesperson for the RV Industry Association, noting that there was also a 40 percent increase this year of smaller and towable RV purchases.

This is not at all what Steve Spearing expected when COVID-19 hit. Spearing is managing partner for Crestview RV, and his initial instinct at the onset of the pandemic was to expect the worst. "We thought the economics at the time of the outbreak would curb business and we all braved for the downturn," says Spearing, which, for Crestview RV, meant laying off extra workers and cutting back on inventory. Initially, Spearing anticipated a fall in sales of between 30 and 50 percent.

But then folks like the Jolivettes started showing up and Spearing's big challenge—one that has been shared by RV dealers around the country—has become a shortage of inventory and employees. For a time, the chasm between supply and demand was so large that lots were largely empty. Though conditions have normalized somewhat, sales have remained brisk. And with so much ongoing uncertainty around COVID-19, it seems unlikely that masses of travelers will go back to their pre-pandemic routines. "With no one wanting to fly, stay in hotels, travel on cruises or travel abroad, we found ourselves with the perfect social distancing alternative," says Spearing.

For the Jolivettes, the RV has allowed them to visit their kids in Dallas and also venture to campsites in Louisiana, all while doing it in style. "It's like a hotel room on wheels," says Angela, who can recount in detail the many upscale features of her RV, including a stainless steel refrigerator, microwave, gas stove, two TVs, a queen sized bed and shower. There has been a learning curve to RV ownership. Though Bernard is licensed to drive 18-wheelers, he still appreciated the three-hour tutorial provided by Crestview and watched more than his fair share of YouTube videos to prep himself for getting behind the wheel.

Any little hiccups haven't dented their enthusiasm, though, and the Jolivettes are hoping to make a trip west to California to see Angela's mother and sister sometime soon. "We have had a wonderful time with our RV and feel safe and stay at places where we have our own pavilion and own area that is secluded from other folks," Angela says. "It's wonderful and peaceful."





WHETHER BY RV, STATION WAGON OR CAR, THESE TEXAS DRIVES ARE ALL ABOUT THE JOURNEY

The allure of hitting the road to do some exploring is greater than ever. "For folks who want to travel, the road trip is going to be the primary mode of transport," says Joshua Zuber, a senior public affairs specialist at AAA Texas/New Mexico. Whether that means a day trip in your family car or a big adventure in a new RV is obviously a personal decision. But AAA has mapped out a range of road trips around South Texas that can help cure you of your quarantine funk. Visit sanantoniomag.com/roadtrips2020 for full itineraries.

Texas Hill Country Trail

Take a 63-mile jaunt along Hwy. 281 past ranches and through the rolling terrain of the Hill Country. A stop in Marble Falls for a bite to eat or to gaze at the Colorado River is a welcome diversion.

South Texas Wander

At nearly 700 miles, a trip from San Antonio to Corpus Christi, Brownsville, Laredo and back home is chock full of variety—from pleasant ocean breezes to wide open spaces to the many staycation attractions right here in San Antonio.

Texas Mountain Trail

It takes some driving to reach Fort Davis (over 300 miles, in fact) but once there, enjoy the 73-mile Fort Davis Loop trip through the unique mix of grasslands, mountains, and shady pines, oak and juniper trees.



TINA BEECHAM, FOUNDER OF PEDAL SATX AND CO-LEADER OF THE BLACK GIRLS DO BIKE SAN ANTONIO CHAPTER, AIMS FOR 1,000 MILES A MONTH

REGARDLESS OF THE STATE OF THE pandemic, Tina Beecham knows her bike will be waiting for her. "I go out my front door and boom I can feel happy and healthy," says Beecham, who retired in Cibolo with her husband following his military career.

Her love of the outdoors started when she was growing up in Washington, D.C., spending time in parks and walking near monuments. With their three kids grown, she and her husband have dedicated their newfound free time to cycling.

In a recent month, Beecham hit the road or trail all but a few days,

averaging 30 to 40 miles a day and rotating between more leisurely rides downtown and longer treks through Cibolo, Schertz, Universal City and Converse. She also continues to lead small groups of women on area greenway trails as part of Black Girls Do Bike, which nationally was named the 2020 Bike Club of the Year by the League of American Bicyclists. "I just try to encourage ladies to get out there, whether they can do 10, 20 or 30 miles. It's a joy to see people grow," she says. "There might be a pandemic, but we can still get out there and stay active."



3
Places
Beecham
Recommends
Riding

1. Start on a greenway:
New cyclists can try the Salado Creek Greenway starting at McAllister Park or the Leon Creek Greenway starting at The Rim Trailhead and continuing as far south as the Military Drive Trailhead.

2. Head Downtown:
Park near Brackenridge Park off Broadway and ride downtown and back. Plan a stop at Mila Coffee or Art of Donut along your route.

3. Trek from Schertz to New Braunfels:
Park at Blue Bonnet Palace in Selma and take FM 482 to Landa Park.

FOR *The* BIRDS



AT MITCHELL LAKE AUDUBON CENTER AND GOVERNMENT CANYON STATE NATURAL AREA OR SIMPLY IN YOUR BACKYARD, SLOW DOWN AND SEEK OUT FEATHERED FRIENDS

WITH SO MANY OF OUR REGULAR ROUTINES AT LEAST PARTIALLY UPENDED by COVID-19, there is a certain solace in knowing that nature continues to follow its age-old rhythms. At Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, autumn means the arrival of ducks that spend their winters in San Antonio's warmth. From duck species like northern shovelers, ruddy ducks and northern pintails to the white-crowned sparrows that favor the gardens and bird bath near the visitor center, Mitchell Lake is an ideal spot for viewing some of the area's most unique winged residents (at press time, the center was set to open Sept. 11).

According to Angel Poe, the education specialist at Mitchell Lake, the tremendous diversity of the 1,200-acre natural area is what makes it such a mecca for seasonal and permanent avian inhabitants. "Mitchell Lake Audubon Center is an incredible place for birding because there are a diversity of habitats on-site," Poe says. "From the ponds and wetlands to grasslands, scrubland, and woodlands."

To take full advantage of such diversity, Poe suggests visiting either early to mid-morning or late afternoon, when the birds are actively searching for food (though ducks are often busy and visible all day long). "To see a variety of birds, I'd recommend spending a few minutes by the feeders at the visitor's center and then walking the trail of our native plant gardens," she says. "You'll often find interesting small birds in the trees and shrubs there."

Viewing ducks requires a walk or drive to the center's basins and ponds—though Poe suggests not remaining exclusively focused on the water. "Don't forget to look and listen for songbirds in the surrounding vegetation," she says. If you have time, Poe also says a walk along the road beside the aptly named Bird Pond is worthwhile, especially in the morning because the trees provide such good cover for birds.

While it should come as no surprise that the Audubon Center is a great place to see birds, Poe says the San Antonio area as a whole is a hot spot for bird activity. "Several eco-regions come together in Bexar County, so we have a great diversity of birds and birding locations," she says.

4 Places to Birdwatch

Brackenridge Park Despite its urban location, Brackenridge Park is home to a uniquely abundant collection of birds, everything from red-shouldered hawks and white-winged doves to green herons and ladder-backed woodpeckers. Areas along the river have particularly plentiful populations of birds.

Crescent Bend Nature Park The short trip is worthwhile not only for the possibility of seeing barred owls and spotted sandpipers but also because the Schertz park is particularly welcoming to birdwatchers: two dedicated bird blinds let visitors settle in for a long stretch of birding.

Government Canyon State Natural Area "When I really want to get away without driving too far, I love bird watching at Government Canyon," Poe says. "You can find many species right by the visitor's center or be more adventurous by taking one of the hiking trails." In autumn, it's common to see birds like the greater roadrunner, yellow-billed cuckoo, and black and turkey vultures.

Your own backyard You don't have to travel far to enjoy birding. Just be observant as you stroll through your neighborhood, visit a local park or lounge in your backyard. "Getting to know the birds in your own neighborhood is such a reward, and it can be a thrill to find an unusual bird right in your own backyard," Poe says.

FINDING FREEDOM *in* NATURE

CAMP FOUNDER GIRLS IS SHOWING WHAT RESEARCHERS ALREADY KNOW: BEING OUTSIDE IS GOOD FOR THE MIND, BODY AND SOUL

ANGELICA HOLMES DOESN'T HAVE TO think hard to conjure up memories of the first time she attended summer camp. She was a pre-teen growing up in Arkansas, and support from an anonymous donor at her church allowed her to spend a week at the Jan-Kay Ranch near the Arkansas-Texas border.

For a young Black girl who hadn't spent much time in nature, the visits to camp were transformative. It was at camp that she rode a horse for the first time and gloried in splashing around the pool and competing in relays.

"I remember coming back from camp with an extreme level of confidence and joy," recalls, Holmes, who is executive director of Black Outside and camp director for Camp Founder Girls, two organizations that provide opportunities for young Black children to spend time outdoors. "I never had a lot of outdoor exposure as a kid besides riding my bike around the neighborhood, so camp felt monumental to me. Through the activities, competitions, and also the free play, I was able to explore a different side of myself and my interests, and camp is really where I practiced exerting myself as a leader."

Given her own overwhelmingly positive experiences at camp, it's no surprise that Holmes is so dedicated to recreating the same opportunity for young girls in San Antonio. Last year she was able to resurrect Camp Founder Girls, which in 1924 became the first summer camp for Black girls in the entire country. Though COVID-19 forced a shift to day camp this summer, last year's five-night camp for 30 girls was held in Kerrville, making it the first



Camp Founder Girls experience since the 1960s. "After learning that only 4 percent of summer campers are Black, I realized the need," she says.

Holmes' belief that time spent immersed in nature is good for the mind, body and soul is not mere nostalgia. Indeed, the benefits of time spent outdoors are both expansive and well documented. A comprehensive review of research into the mental health impacts of nature-based activities published in the *Journal of Leisure Research* revealed a wide range of benefits. For example, among the most common salutary effects of time spent outdoors are significant reductions in stress and anxiety and an improved overall mood. Besides an increased sense of well-being, various research studies have also connected nature-based recreation with improved cognition and resilience.

Mary McNaughton-Cassill, a psychology professor at University of Texas at San Antonio, says the sense of well-being so many of us feel when surrounded by trees, rocks and water are part of our natural makeup. "We evolved in natural environments. Many of our circadian rhythms are linked to light-dark cycles, and we seem to respond better to natural light than we do to artificial sources," she says.

For that reason, the treatment for seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is more natural light or exposure to a light box that replicates natural light. McNaughton-Cassill also points out that research shows how humans are conditioned to regard plants as crucial to our survival—which helps explain why time spent outdoors can be so calming to our overactive minds and why gardening is such a go-to activity. "Nurturing plants and growing food is also intrinsically satisfying, which may be why so many people are taking up gardening to cope with the pandemic," she says.

It's also important to remember that time spent in nature typically replaces time indoors staring at screens. Simply removing ourselves from the continuous stimulation of smart phones provides a much-needed respite for the brain, especially when it is substituted with time outdoors. "Taking a break from electronic input gives us time to reflect, daydream and unwind," McNaughton-Cassill says.

In fact, when McNaughton-Cassill surveys her UTSA students, most report spending less than one hour of their waking hours by themselves with no electronic stimulation. "Compare that to most of the rest of human history when we spent most of our time in physical activity, could

only interact with the people who lived near us, and were not inundated with constant lights and sounds," she says. "Some researchers even link the information flow to the development of attention problems and ADHD (attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder)."

For her part, Angelica Holmes has seen for herself the many mental benefits of immersion in nature. Last year's five-night Camp Founder Girls camp modeled all of its activities around four pillars: strong, brave, creative and confident. "The girls go day and night hiking, swimming, participate in ropes courses, and sometimes just explore during their free time," she says. "We try to give them the opportunity to pursue what feels good to them and get out of camp what they need."

Holmes says many of the girls begin camp leery and fearful of the outdoors, the result of not having any experience in nature. That initial skepticism always falls away. "No matter what they try, whether it's a hike to an unknown destination, swimming in a lake with mysterious creepy crawlies, or wandering through unfamiliar woods, they always come out bright-eyed and excited," she says. "Their guards come down, they push themselves at their own pace, and they always seem more free to me."

GO WEST

While the rural nature of West Texas has for decades charmed many a settler and traveler, these days it can also seem like the latest fashionable escape for the weekend bohemian. The highly Instagrammable “Target” and “Prada Marfa” art installations, for example, arguably risk losing at least a tiny piece of their artistic integrity with every token roadside photo that’s hashtagged. But this is not to say that they aren’t worth visiting or that West Texas is overrated in any way. On the contrary, West Texas is indeed magical, especially if your trip’s focus is on soaking in the outdoors. If you’re on a westward excursion, add these six activities to your itinerary.

VISIT TERLINGUA GHOST TOWN

These days, Terlingua is mostly a tourist destination for visitors of Big Bend National Park and Big Bend Ranch State Park, given its neighborly proximity to both parks. And while hiking and camping is the large attraction that deep in the Big Bend region, this former mining town deserves a look. The ghost town—the abandoned houses and buildings the miners left behind around the World War II era—and the town cemetery tells (or hides) many stories. Stop at The Starlight Theater for a drink to cap off the excursion. ghosttowntexas.com

STARGAZE AROUND BIG BEND

Whether you’re camping at Big Bend National Park, Big Bend Ranch State Park, or even sleeping indoors, there is one thing you must do at night: look up. The line “the stars at night are big and bright, deep in the heart of Texas” is absolutely true—if the heart of Texas is its Big Bend region. Big Bend National Park is home to some of the darkest skies in the country and has the least amount of light pollution of any national park in the lower 48 states. It’s also one of only 13 parks in the world to have received gold-tier certification from the International Dark Sky Association. Whereas in a typical city or town, a few hundred stars might be visible on a clear night, Big Bend’s skies yield an average of more than 2,000 visible stars. visitbigbend.com

HIKE GUADALUPE MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

West Texas is not just comprised of the Big Bend region. The Guadalupe Mountains are north of Big Bend, along the New Mexico border, and it is there that you can climb the highest peak in Texas at over 8,700 feet of elevation. You can also visit Texas’ own El Capitan mountain. If you have an extra day, make the short drive over the border to Carlsbad Caverns National Park. Reaching the highest point in Texas is reason enough to make the multihour excursion out west, so visiting two national parks in one trip is an added bonus. nps.gov/gumo, nps.gov/cave

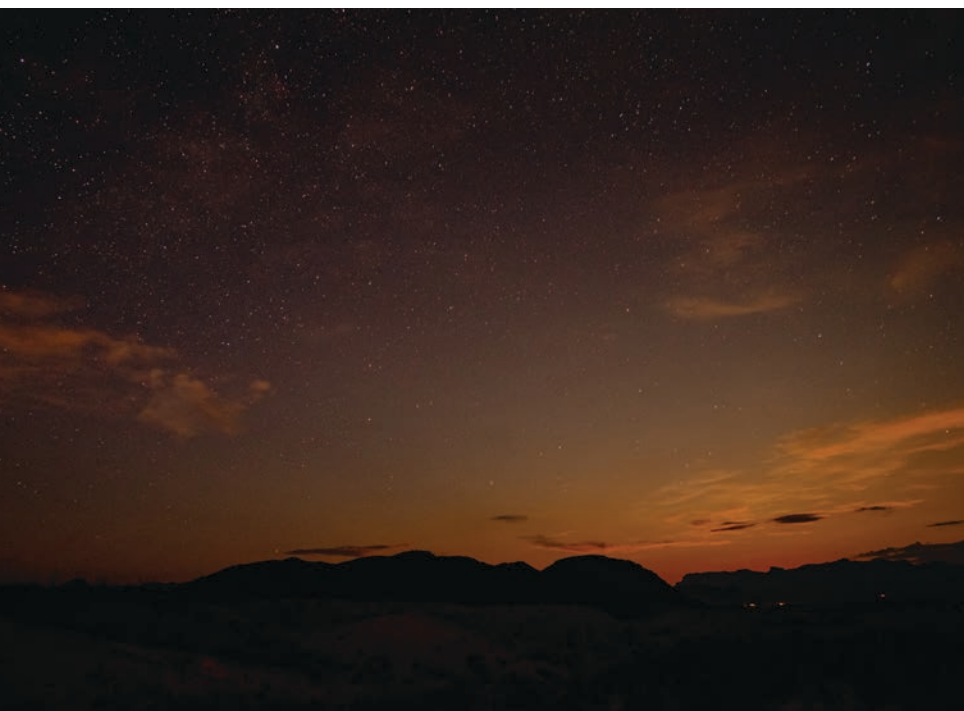


SLEEP IN A BUBBLE AT BASECAMP TERLINGUA

When it comes to glamping (that is, glamorous camping), few experiences beat a night in a bubble at Basecamp Terlingua. Situated off the road leading to Terlingua Ghost Town, these large inflatable structures allow guests the experience of sleeping in the desert under an extravagantly starlit sky without sacrificing creature comforts. The well-appointed room places your bed directly under a clear dome, offering an unbeatable panorama of the night sky. While this visual is stunning year-round, take note that the summer is an especially hot time and while the bubbles are air-conditioned, there is no escaping the sun’s rays. The bubbles do have a tarp for coverage, but then, what’s the point? Book early. Reservations already are full through April 2021. basecampsterlingua.com

LOOK FOR THE MARFA LIGHTS

The unexplainable phenomenon that is the so-called Marfa Lights is just that—a mystery. But countless individuals (including researchers and scientists) have confirmed seeing them over the years, so their existence isn’t questioned, only what exactly is creating them. Catch them most nights from the same general vantage point on U.S. Route 90 between Alpine and Marfa at the appropriately named Marfa Lights Viewing Area. While this structure is usually empty during the day, crowds of onlookers descend upon the lot once the sun drops for a glimpse at these strange lights. visitmarfa.com/marfa-lights





EXAMINE FOSSILS AT BIG BEND NATIONAL PARK

The Fossil Discovery Exhibit is one of the newest additions to Big Bend National Park, having opened in early 2017. This exhibit is an open-air, multiroom shelter that highlights 130 million years of geologic time at the park. The self-guided exhibit features four ancient ecosystems from the park's paleontological history, including custom murals and museum-quality fossil replicas depicting Big Bend's fossil record. Particularly interesting is Big Bend's most famous fossil, the giant pterosaur, *Quetzalcoatlus*—the largest known flying creature of all time. nps.gov/bibe



TERLINGUA: COURTESY MACAULAY HAMMOND



HIS OWN PIECE of PARADISE

WEST TEXAS HAS LONG BEEN A FAVORITE ESCAPE FOR SAM EVENTS DIRECTOR Macaulay Hammond, but it wasn't until he was browsing through the Realtor.com app while bored one quarantined day this spring that he entertained the idea of owning land there.

"I randomly searched Terlingua because that's one of our favorite places to go and get away," he says.

He stumbled across a listing for 5 acres on Terlingua Ranch and contacted a friend who, along with her husband, had recently accompanied him and his partner there and asked if she'd be interested in going in on the property together. The real estate agent told them the listing was rare and would likely go quickly, so the two—who share a birthday in early May—decided to "treat themselves" and placed an offer. They signed closing documents in a San Antonio driveway soon after and took ownership of the land, sight unseen.

They were finally able to visit nearly two months later and returned again in September to consider plans to build an adobe structure they could stay in and share with others through Airbnb.

"It is exactly what we thought. You're standing in the middle of the desert with mountains all around," Hammond says. "It's kind of unreal to think you've got this place in paradise."

A Virginia native who moved to San Antonio in 2015, Hammond says he is drawn to West Texas because of its remote setting and dark night sky. "It's got this magnetism about it—you either like it or you hate it," he says. "I love how quiet and far away it is from everything."

Going for the first time? If renting a cabin, campsite or Airbnb at Terlingua Ranch, Hammond says to make time for dinner at Bad Rabbit Café and for relaxing in the pool at the base of the Christmas Mountains Range. In town, visit Terlingua Ghost Town. ★

ACTIVISTS AT WORK

INTERVIEWS BY
KATHLEEN PETTY

PHOTOS BY
BRENDA PIÑA

MEET 9 SAN ANTONIANS WHO HAVE BECOME CATALYSTS
FOR CHANGE, WORKING THROUGH ART, NONPROFIT
EVENTS, PROTESTS AND SMALL BUSINESSES
TO INFLUENCE AND EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY
ON EVERYTHING FROM RACIAL JUSTICE AND
LGBTQ RIGHTS TO AUTISM AWARENESS AND
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Denise M. Hernández

A cultural awakening turned this fifth-generation San Antonian into a Chicano rights advocate

"I left San Antonio for an extended period for the first time when I attended Baylor University, and it was jarring. It was the first time I experienced overt racism and the first time I understood myself racially and ethnically and culturally," says Hernández, who in 2015 founded Maestranza, an organization that puts together education materials and speaker series on Chicano history, implicit bias training and perspective sharing. She also works full-time for Councilman Roberto Treviño's office. "When I came home, I thought, 'Why didn't I learn anything about my people or my city or where I came from?' I started doing my own research and watched a documentary about Dr. Hector Perez Garcia. He founded the American GI Forum so Mexican American veterans of World War II would have access to veterans' services and mobilized Latinos to vote. I thought, 'Why haven't I learned about these people and what else don't I know?' The floodgates opened from there. When you know the truth, there's nothing that can sway you—I know who I am and what my history is. I feel like a lot of what this country has done to oppress marginalized folks has been to keep them ignorant. Now, we have the opportunity to learn for ourselves and to make sure our voices are included in the conversation."



"When you know the truth, there's nothing that can sway you—I know who I am and what my history is."

Cecilia Lopez

Domestic violence survivor fights against human trafficking

"I'm a domestic violence survivor and I know what it feels like to not have a voice," says Lopez, who in 2015 helped launch San Antonio's first A21 Freedom Chasers walk to raise awareness of and fight against human trafficking. "I know what it's like to have no one listen to me or to notice the signs. This is about being able to stand for those who are voiceless. I wanted to step in the gap and say that there is more we can do."

Since becoming involved with A21, Lopez says she's seen awareness of human trafficking grow and even legislation change in Texas. Still, the issue is one that is growing during COVID-19. "Everyone is on their computers and that's one of the biggest ways traffickers lure victims—through chat sessions, social media, pornography. Those between 9 and 16 are most at risk in San Antonio, but everyone is at risk. It's driven us and other organizations even more online. If traffickers are going to be online, we're going to be online. We just have to be more innovative and more creative."

"I know what it feels like to not have a voice"

"This is about being able to stand for those who are voiceless."

Irma Canfield

A son's diagnosis with Down syndrome and autism led one mom to a life of activism

"Back in 1988, they didn't do tests (during pregnancy) like they do now so when Steven was born with Trisomy 21/Down syndrome, we had a lot of learning to do and we went through a grieving phase... When he started school, I went to ARD meetings (Admission, Review and Dismissal meetings that determine a student's eligibility for special education services), but I was still learning and his teachers would get burnt out with his behavior and not know how to handle him. He was a runner. He wasn't officially diagnosed with autism until the end of middle school. At that time, they were prescribing meds, which made him drowsy. That's when I decided I needed to get more involved," says Canfield, who is vice chair of the Planning Network Advisory Committee with Alamo Area Council on Governments and has been recognized as a community champion by the state Senate. "I started attending conferences and trainings and when Steven was an adult helped start the Texas Adults With Autism and Intellectual Developmental Disabilities support group with friends. We started going to the Capitol to advocate. I've tried to make sure that families don't see their children fall through the cracks like mine did. There's always hope. Never give up. You just have to learn about the system and the resources that are out there."

"I've tried to make sure that families don't see their children fall through the cracks like mine did."

"There's always hope. Never give up."



"When these girls do find their passion or learn about careers they could have, they light up."

Lea Rosenauer



President and CEO of Girls Inc. of San Antonio wants all young women to feel empowered

"Providing access and opportunities to girls who don't have the opportunity to see a world bigger than their backyard has always been a passion of mine. Personally, I was very lucky. I still have two parents in my life and they always told me I could be whatever I wanted. We went to museums and took road trips, so I saw a bigger world and I had adults in my life who said, 'Try it. You can do it.' So many girls in our community don't have that," says Rosenauer, who has led Girls Inc. of San Antonio since 2014. "Girls Inc. works primarily with girls in the most under resourced areas. They may never have heard that they can be successful. We focus on teaching them to be strong, smart and bold. Women are nearly 40 percent more likely to live in poverty than men. If we want to break that cycle, we have to start early by exposing girls to careers that earn a living wage and helping girls to find their passion and to be prepared to succeed academically ... When these girls do find their passion or learn about careers they could have, they light up. It's amazing to watch. It's awe inspiring."

Juan Mancias

Tribal chairman for the Esto'kgna (known as the Carrizo/ Comecrudo) Tribe of Texas works to preserve his ancestors' history

"We are one of the original tribes of Texas, prior to any Europeans or colonization. One of the things we're trying to do is preserve our sacred sites because that's part of our identity," says Mancias, who took over as tribal chairman after his grandfather died in 1981. "My role has been to try and preserve our cultural lifeways and to promote decolonization of historical misinformation in Texas toward the tribe. There's this vacuum in Texas history where history before Europeans arrived is not shared. We were here and had learned to live with the land and the resources we had. We're just asking to change the narrative and quit romanticizing the native presence in Texas because a Native American cleansing or erasure is part of Texas' history."

"There's this vacuum in Texas history where history before Europeans arrived is not shared."

"One of the things we're trying to do is preserve our sacred sites because that's part of our identity."



Rebel Mariposa

Co-owner of La Botanica works to promote LGBTQ rights, equality and veganism

"My mother is an artist and I grew up in community spaces in San Antonio—Blue Star when it was Jump Start Theater, Esperanza Center—where folks could be themselves, so I've always known how important it is to create your own community and family," Mariposa says. "I never dreamed of opening a vegan restaurant, but I love curating spaces and events so when I was asked, I said, 'yes' because I saw that it could be a great community space. I knew it had to be bigger than some business. It had to be this evolving, beautiful, messy space that was for the community and by the community. It's our individual and collective responsibility to get rid of homophobia/transphobia and internalized and systemic racism. It can be fun—through concerts or art or events—but there are also times where we have to have tough conversations and do the work... It's like a garden. You can throw some wildflower seeds and some may grow but if you want to grow food you can eat, you have to put the work in to cultivate it."

"It's our individual and collective responsibility to get rid of homophobia/transphobia and internalized and systemic racism."

"I've always known how important it is to create your own community and family"

Christian Reed-Ogba and Uchennaya "Uche" Ogba

How small business owners became "accidental activists"

"This was something we kind of walked into. I definitely thought about being an active citizen and staying involved in the community through boards and things. But after watching the George Floyd murder, it kind of just sparked something. Our office is located between the Alamo and Travis Park, which has always been a charged zone. Being there as Black business owners after watching a Black man get murdered, it was necessary to make a statement outside of social media and outside of the office and get involved in the protests. And it's developed from there—that's what made it an accident," says Reed-Ogba, who has since co-founded Black Freedom Factory with Kimiya Factory, a young woman Reed-Ogba has mentored (read more about Factory on page 12). Ogba, meanwhile, is a board member at the Alamo City Black Chamber of Commerce and is working with a group of minority men to launch a digital men's mental health summit this fall. Together, the couple runs EHCÜ Public Relations.

"We love San Antonio. I love that it's created such an inclusive environment for the Black Lives Matter movement. We're creating educated protesters, we have people going to City Council meetings because it can't just be the protests. There has to be follow up."

"We love San Antonio. I love that it's created such an inclusive environment for the Black Lives Matter movement."



Marisela Barrera

"I want to create sustainable practices so that artists can stay in San Antonio and thrive and make a life here."



Rio Grande Valley native uses the arts to advocate for immigration and social equity

"A year ago, I spent a week in my home in the Valley with a theater company interviewing people on all sides of the immigration issue, from refugees to a DA and federal judges and detained youth. I wrote about it for a publication in New York City and then morphed that into a performance and also a podcast. The stories take on different forms so that hopefully they can reach different audiences. I use my material to advocate for immigration rights and I support Black Lives Matter here in San Antonio because I feel that we need to have dialogue, as a community and within our families," says Barrera, who moved to San Antonio in 2002 to work at the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center and now teaches English at Northwest Vista College along with writing, performing and hosting podcasts. "I've also been involved locally with advocating for artists and cultural preservation. There is a lack of funding for individual artists here as compared with Texas' other major cities. I want to create sustainable practices so that artists can stay in San Antonio and thrive and make a life here."

Matthew Skinner and Miguel Martinez

Brothers' quirky Beard vs. Beans challenge turns into major fundraiser and campaign for the Alzheimer's Association

"My brother hates beans—pinto beans, lima beans, green beans—so I said, 'If I raise more money than you, you have to eat beans,'" says Skinner (pictured on the left). "At the time, I had a massive beard I hadn't shaved for five or six years so he said, 'If I raise more than you, you'll have to shave your beard.' I lost. But in the process, we created an event that raises money for the Alzheimer's Association and lets people know about the disease. In the Hispanic community, people have always been kind of hush-hush about the impacts of Alzheimer's on their grandparents or aunts or uncles. We've lived around it and seen it. It hurts. So, we had to talk about it and raise awareness. We've had grandparents impacted by the disease and our neighbor, who was like a grandfather to us and all of the neighborhood kids, Mr. Leonard. My dad ended up taking care of him until his last day in 2008. It was tough, and my dad 100 percent taught us how to have a heart and have a heart for raising awareness."

Adds Martinez, "From there our work just kind of grew. The idea of the (Alzheimer's Association's) Longest Day Campaign is to recognize caregivers and the fact that every day is long. The day is about telling them to go out and do something they love, which for me was always running, so I started a 5K/10K run and we also now organize the Run to Remember, which is a Fiesta event but will take place in November this year. We've seen what Alzheimer's did to our family and we want to help find a cure and resources for other families." ★



"In the Hispanic community, people have always been kind of hush-hush about the impacts of Alzheimer's on their grandparents or aunts or uncles."



F L O A T I N G

T H R O U G H A N E W

R E A L I T Y



FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES,
COVID-19 LED TO A MAJOR DISRUPTION IN
THE DAILY SCHEDULES THEY RELY ON TO
THRIVE AND NOW, 30 YEARS AFTER THE PAS-
SAGE OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES
ACT, SOME ARE FEELING LEFT BEHIND



BY KATHLEEN PETTY
ILLUSTRATION BY MARY HAASDYK

BEFORE COVID - 19 , MORGAN GUYNES KEPT A FULL CALENDAR .

THE 2017 BRANDEIS HIGH GRAD WHO LIVES WITH A DEVELOPMENTAL disability volunteered at Stinson Middle School on Mondays and Wednesdays, at Steubing Elementary School (where her mom teaches) on Fridays, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays, she rode VIAtrans to Methodist Children's Hospital where she volunteered carrying paperwork and assisting with check-in. Her evenings also had plenty of regular activities like Young Life Capernaum meetings.

In March, that all came to a halt with the spread of COVID-19 in San Antonio. Since Guynes has a compromised immune system and asthma, mom Jackie Schafer knew her daughter needed to take quarantine seriously. Since then, Guynes' dad and sister have come over for socially distant driveway visits and she and Schafer have gone for drives, but otherwise Guynes has been working to fill her calendar from home. "She hasn't been able to be out at all since mid-March," Schafer says.

It's estimated that one in seven San Antonians live with some type of disability and many, like Guynes, have experienced a whole new level of isolation during the pandemic, both to protect their own health and because many of the programs they participated in have paused or moved online. Others in the community have missed out on therapies and seen their progress slide while still others have struggled to obtain basic things, like groceries. It's the opposite of

the progress that disABILITYsa executive director Melanie Cawthon says she was hoping to see for the community when 2020 began.

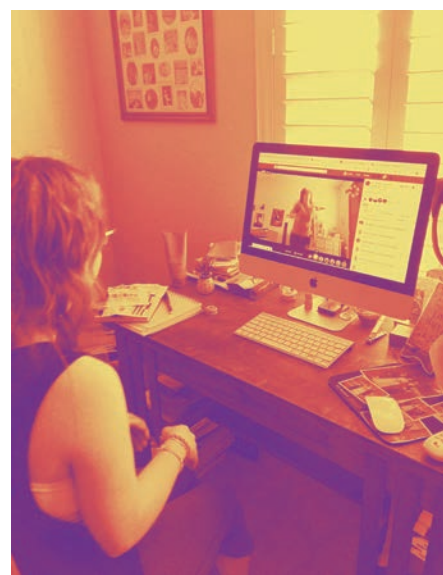
"This year was supposed to be a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) and this is how far we've come and this is how much farther we need to go," says Cawthon, whose nonprofit works to strengthen services for those with disabilities while also connecting them to the community. "Instead, we're seeing a regression in the rights that people have already struggled to get. We're going backward in a year when we should be spring boarding forward."

When companies began cutting hours, laying off employees and furloughing people in the spring, Cawthon says those with disabilities were often the first to go, in large part, because they usually work part-time.

Since then, many who had been working, attending school or taking part in adult day programs have been largely at home.

Most of the families and caregivers they hear from are taking it in stride, says Mike Bennett, president and CEO at The Arc of San Antonio, which in March had to close its day program that typically serves around 200 adults daily. But, he says, it has been a balancing act for parents and caregivers who have either had to make other arrangements for care or learn to balance working at home while also supervising their loved one. "It's had an impact on families," he says. (The Arc reopened at 25 percent capacity as this issue was going to press in early September).

Even for those adults living with disabilities





who can go out, says Emma Faye Rudkin, founder of Aid the Silent, challenges exist. Rudkin, who lives with profound hearing loss, says when masks became mandatory, those who are deaf or hard of hearing lost their ability to read lips, which for her meant she was no longer able to navigate doctor appointments or even the grocery store without someone by her side. “Before this, I was very confident in navigating my life on my own and that’s all been taken and I bet a lot of people feel that way,” says Rudkin, who launched a campaign to increase the use of clear masks so lip reading is still possible.

In group homes or supported living environments, Cawthon says, the level of isolation was even more pronounced as family members were not permitted to visit. “The people you know and trust and the people who are there to advocate for you and to observe and watch what’s going on aren’t allowed access anymore,” says Cawthon, adding that such advocacy is particularly important for those who experience challenges communicating.

In-person therapy also was mostly not being offered through the spring and early summer and while virtual therapy is available in some cases, it’s not always covered by insurance. Additionally, Cawthon says, many children rely on public schools to receive their therapy meaning they were without those services for as long as schools remained closed. “We’ve seen a significant amount of regression not only cognitively but physically because of the lack of consistent care,” Cawthon says.

The Arc is among those that has offered activities virtually, like online art club. Other nonprofits provided tele-speech, occupational and ABA (applied behavior analysis) therapy, and some, like the Autism Treatment Center, resumed COVID-compliant in-person therapy over the summer.

Natalie Olivo-Spencer’s son Christopher, 30, who lives with autism had been attending The Arc’s day program three days a week. “He loves it there,” she says. Olivo-Spencer says her son thrives on routine, so she’s worked to create that at home during COVID-19, empowering him to make his own lunches and adding to his usual chore list around the house. He’s also been lucky to continue ABA therapy during socially distant sessions at home, Olivo-Spencer says, and staff from The Arc even came by for a front yard visit over the summer.

Like everyone else, though, Olivo-Spencer says he can’t wait to

get back to some kind of “normal.” “He’s really looking forward to going back,” she says. “We’ve sat down and watched the news together. He knows that he’ll have to wear his mask and we practice that.”

While also having to adjust to a new routine, Guynes says she’s found new ways to stay busy, too. Thanks to the nonprofit Inclusion is Sweet, she attended a virtual summer camp and has participated in “lunch bunch” video chats with friends as well as virtual dance and music classes. Her Young Life group also has moved online, and she’s been playing Zoom bingo with a group at University United Methodist.

“I can’t give enough praise to these people who have reached out to the special need community. It’s just been a huge blessing in our lives,” says Schafer, who returned to the classroom in the fall while Guynes continued to stay home. “I don’t know what I would have done without all of those things.”

Natalia Jasso, founder of Inclusion is Sweet, which typically focuses on job training for the special needs community, says they ramped up their online offerings after their weeklong virtual camp in July because they heard from so many parents that their children and adult children needed opportunities for things to do at home other than watching TV or completing chores. “A lot of our parents told us that their kids were experiencing regression and are not as open to socialization as they were before because they’re not getting those experiences,” she says.

To get a fuller picture of what those with disabilities and special needs are experiencing, DisabilitySA partnered with the city and the San Antonio Area Foundation in August to conduct a survey so it can have data to better understand what’s occurring and how to address those issues when making COVID-19 resiliency and recovery plans, Cawthon says.

Cawthon says she knows finding normalcy when San Antonio moves out of the pandemic at some point will be a learning process for everyone, but she emphasizes that it will be especially challenging for many in the disabled community because they’ve been left behind for much of 2020.

Bennett says their biggest plea is simply for people to think about those living with disabilities—and about the programs and nonprofits that require support to continue offering services to them. “Our population many times doesn’t receive the visibility of other folks,” he says. “Individuals with disabilities—everybody has a right to try to live the life that is satisfying to them.” ★

The best OB/GYNs, plus doctors in
eight other practice areas specific to
the treatment of women

SAN ANTONIO'S TOP DOCTORS FOR WOMEN



How the List is Made Using an online survey, *San Antonio Magazine* solicited peer nominations from physicians in Bexar and surrounding counties, asking them to nominate up to three doctors per practice area who they would trust with the medical care of themselves or their family. To ensure the nomination process is peer-based, contact information was requested. Doctors were asked to limit their nominations to physicians whose work they've personally witnessed. *San Antonio Magazine* then tallied the results, selecting the top 10 to 15 percent of vote recipients in each practice area before submitting the final list to our fact-checking process, which includes a review of good standing among medical boards.

GYNECOLOGIC ONCOLOGY

Joseph de la Garza, MD

Texas Oncology
5206 Research Drive
San Antonio, TX 78240
210-595-5300

Kevin Hall, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Edward Kost, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Georgia McCann, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Antonio Santillan-Gomez, MD

Texas Oncology
5206 Research Drive
San Antonio, TX 78240
210-595-5300

J. Brian Szender, MD

START Center for Cancer Care
502 Madison Oak, Ste. 210
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-593-2536

James L. Wilder, MD

South Texas Gynecologic Oncology
540 Madison Oak Drive, Ste. 570
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-402-3700

MATERNAL AND FETAL MEDICINE

Michael Berkus, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Angela Boyd, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Deborah Conway, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Kayla Ireland, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Patrick Ramsey, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Emma Rodriguez, MD

The Children's Hospital of
San Antonio
315 N. San Saba
San Antonio, TX 78207
210-704-3200

Elly Xenakis, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

MEDICAL ONCOLOGY

Amanda D. Bucheit, MD

START Center for Cancer Care
155 E. Sonterra Blvd., Ste. 200
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-593-5700

Virginia Kaklamani, MD

UT Health San Antonio
7979 Wurzbach Road
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-1724

Kate Lathrop, MD

UT Health San Antonio
7979 Wurzbach Road
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-1724

OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY

Bruce D. Akright, MD

Northeast OB/GYN Associates
250 E. Basse Road, Ste. 205
San Antonio, TX 78209
210-653-5501

Alexandriah Alas, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Yadira Anca, MD

CommuniCare Health Centers
10002 Westover Bluff
San Antonio, TX 78251
210-521-9500

Anna Beceiro, MD

Lone Star OB/GYN
7950 Floyd Curl Drive, Ste. 300
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-615-0337

Patricia K. Brougher, MD

Bluebonnet OB/GYN
4499 Medical Drive, Ste. 140
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-698-0742

Elisa F. Carroll, MD

Women's Health Texas
222 W. Cypress St.
San Antonio, TX 78212
210-226-9705

Katherine Cornforth, MD

Women's Health Texas
7940 Floyd Curl Drive, Ste. 301
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-615-8585

Susan A. Crockett, MD

Virtuosa GYN
12602 Toepperwein Road, Ste. 208
San Antonio, TX 78233
210-878-0090

Rochelle David, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Chris Franka, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Shannon Gallagher, MD

Seven Oaks Women's Center
7711 Louis Pasteur Drive, Ste. 200
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-692-9500

David E. Garza, MD

525 Oak Centre Drive, Ste. 270
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-616-0792

Jessica D. Guerrero, MD

Women's Health Texas
540 Oak Centre Drive, Ste. 301
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-615-8585

Michelle Harden, MD

Stone Oak Womens Center
540 Oak Centre Drive, Ste. 280
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-614-2229

Jennifer Knudtson, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Ilanna Loeffel, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

James Lovell, MD

4499 Medical Drive, Ste. 150
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-614-8181

Erin Mankus, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Georgia McCann, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Gabriel Medrano Valle, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Maria Molina Boero, MD

CentroMed Walzem Clinic
5542 Walzem Road
San Antonio, TX 78218
210-922-7000

Amanda Murray

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Erin Nelson, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Luke Newton, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Jamie Lyn Nolan, DO

Women's Health Texas
7940 Floyd Curl Drive, Ste. 301
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-615-8585

Susan P. Novak, MD

Women Partners in OB/GYN
502 Madison Oak Drive, Ste. 440
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-946-1300

Sarah Page-Ramsey, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Steven G. Pilkington, MD

Dignity Women's Center
4499 Medical Drive, Ste. 151
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-593-4392

Kristen Plastino, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Patrick Ramsey, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Marcy Rosen, MD

Northeast OB/GYN Associates
250 E. Basse Road, Ste. 205
San Antonio, TX 78209
210-653-5501

Jose M. Ruiz III, MD

Women's Health Texas
4458 Medical Center Drive, Ste. 705
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-614-1000

Tiffany Satterfield, DO

Seven Oaks Women's Center
7711 Louis Pasteur Drive, Ste. 200
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-692-9500

Ora Schwope, MD

Lone Star OB/GYN
7950 Floyd Curl Drive, Ste. 300
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-615-6505

Kristin Brozena Shah, MD

Women Partners in OB/GYN
502 Madison Oak Drive, Ste. 440
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-946-1300

Debra J. Williams, MD

Women Partners in OB/GYN
502 Madison Oak Drive, Ste. 440
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-946-1300

Elly Xenakis, MD

UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

PLASTIC SURGERY

Rodney Chan, MD

STARS Plastic Surgery
8042 Wurzbach Road, Ste. 130
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-201-2806

Woodward L. Coleman, MD

Woodward Coleman, MD
8715 Village Drive, Ste. 504
San Antonio, TX 78217
210-251-4362

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UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 4
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210-450-9220

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Alon Aesthetics

11503 N.W. Military Hwy., Ste. 114
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Earl E. Ferguson III, MD
Dermatology Associates of
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15900 La Cantera Pkwy., Ste. 20270
San Antonio, TX 78256
210-877-5005

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Advanced Concepts in
Plastic Surgery, PA
423 Treeline Park, Ste. 300
San Antonio, TX 78209
210-499-5900

Markian Kunasz, MD
STARS Plastic Surgery
8042 Wurzbach Road, Ste. 130
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-201-2806

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PRMA Plastic Surgery
9635 Huebner Road
San Antonio, TX 78240
210-692-1181

Richard A. Levine, MD, DDS
Levine Plastic Surgery
4499 Medical Drive, Ste. 316
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-614-2747

Amita Shah, MD
UT Health San Antonio
7979 Wurzbach Road, Floor 6
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9220

Howard Wang, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 4
San Antonio, TX 78229

210-450-9220

RADIATION ONCOLOGY

Timothy Wagner, MD
UT Health San Antonio
7979 Wurzbach Road
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-1000

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Susan Hudson, MD
Texas Fertility Center
705 Generations Drive, Ste. 102
New Braunfels, TX 78130
830-608-8004

Jennifer Knudtson, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Erika Munch, MD
Texas Fertility Center
18707 Hardy Oak Blvd., Ste. 505
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-370-3800

Gregory S. Neal, MD
Fertility Center of San Antonio
4499 Medical Drive, Ste. 200
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-692-0577

Randal Robinson, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Robert Schenken, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5

San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

UROGYNECOLOGY/FEMALE PELVIC MEDICINE AND RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY

Alexandria Alas, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Sylvia Botros-Brey, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 4
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9600

Ash Dabbous, MD
Stone Oak Womens Center OBGYN
335 E. Sonterra Blvd., Ste. 170
San Antonio, TX 78258
210-614-7744

Elizabeth Evans, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 5
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9500

Stephen Kraus, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 4
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9600

UROLOGY

Sylvia Botros-Brey, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 4
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9600

Christopher Cantrill, MD
Urology San Antonio
7909 Fredericksburg Road, Ste. 120
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-614-4544

Dharam Kaushik, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 4
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9600

Stephen Kraus, MD
UT Health San Antonio
8300 Floyd Curl Drive, Floor 4
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-450-9600

Kurt G. Meissner, MD
Urology San Antonio
7909 Fredericksburg Road, Ste. 135
San Antonio, TX 78229
210-614-4544

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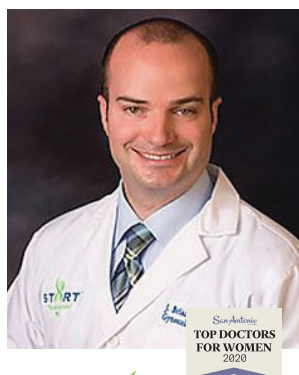
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J. Brian Szender, MD

Dr. J. Brian Szender is a gynecologic oncologist in practice with the START Center, treating women with cancer of the reproductive system. His practice encompasses the full spectrum of gynecologic cancer care, including minimally invasive and robotic surgery, upper abdominal surgery, prescription of chemotherapy, targeted therapy, hormonal therapy, and immunotherapy, as well as participation in clinical trials.



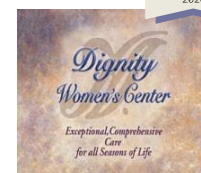
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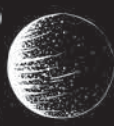
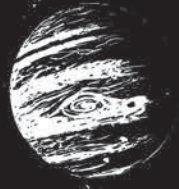
DIGNITY WOMEN'S CENTER

Steven G. Pilkington, MD, FACOG

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Market Talk: What's Happening on the Local Real Estate Scene



Home Is Where the Heart Is and the Office, School, Gym, Etc.!

According to Lisa Grove, Realtor with Phyllis Browning Co., currently the local market is thriving. "Interest rates are at a historic low: 2.25 percent for a conventional loan," she says. "It's a great time to buy."

Grove says one of the most interesting side effects of the pandemic is how Americans see themselves living in a particular home. "Homeowners are making creative lifestyle adjustments, investing in upgrades that meet new needs. Maybe they're adding on because their college-age kids have come back or maybe they're putting in a pool because they're paying HOA fees for a community pool they can't access or maybe their garage becomes their office or gym," she explains. "Ultimately, this also increases their home's value."

Thankfully, open houses are again a possibility. Grove says she makes the experience safe for both the seller and prospective buyers by providing gloves, masks and wipes. Other safety measures include opening all the doors in the home so no one needs to touch the handles during a tour.

Important tips from Lisa Grove for the home seller: Make repairs you've been putting off; paint rooms, if necessary; reduce clutter as much as possible. And, she definitely agrees with JCS Staging & Design that clean, white towels in a bathroom make a huge difference. Check out Lisa's social media: Instagram [@realestatebylisad.grove](#); Facebook [@realestatebylisad.grove](#); Twitter [@lisadgrove84](#).

A realtor can help navigate these fast paced, changing times.



All the World's a Stage—Even the Home You're Selling!

For Jan Garza, Carissa O'Connor, and Sarah Forney, their home staging business—JCS Staging and Design—grew organically from years of friendship and shared natural talents. Now the trio delights in professionally staging San Antonio homes for sale. Staging a home most often involves strategically placing furniture and accessories in a home to emphasize the property's strengths and minimize any weak areas. "It's an important part of selling a home because it helps the prospective buyers see the home's potential," says Garza who has 15 years' experience in the industry.

"In fact," says O'Connor, "research shows that a properly staged home is on the market for one-third to one-half as long as an empty house." When the sellers still occupy the home, it might be more difficult for buyers to envision themselves living there. However, Forney says their expertise can help in these situations, too. "We walk through and make recommendations—like collections, for example—that should be removed. You don't want buyers caught up in the current owners' possessions rather than the actual home."

Some important tips from JCS Staging and Design for the home seller: Less is always more; put away collections and personal items like photographs; keep decor minimal, clean and neat. Don't forget the bathroom! Clean fluffy towels add spa appeal.

Selling a home can be emotional. Hiring a staging company can relieve the stress and help sellers get the highest return on their investment. For more information or to check out the work of JCS Staging and Design, visit their Instagram [@jcsstaginganddesign](#).

Eat + Drink

INSIDE / CULINARY WONDERS

/ VEGAN TREATS p.60



MI ROTI

312 Pearl Pkwy., Bldg. 6
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Lunch and dinner Tues-Sun.

Deliciously Fresh

W

hile Mi Roti works to present a holistic approach to Caribbean food, chef Nicola Blaque says the concept began by looking at what hadn't yet been offered in the Bottling Dept. at Pearl.

"When I was thinking about Mi Roti and what it would be like, I wanted to keep it simple," says Blaque, who also owns The Jerk Shack. "I said, 'Let me infuse fresh flavors, but stay simple' and I was able to achieve that."

Along with presenting a new take on the food of her heritage, Blaque wanted to appeal to vegetarians and those interested in eating a well-balanced diet when Mi Roti opened in the former home of Maybelle's Donuts. However, offering healthy food didn't mean that Blaque's famous jerk chicken was off the table—or that everything couldn't still be delicious.

Mi Roti is based on a build-your-own concept that can be applied to a roti flatbread wrap or a bowl so there are plenty of options other than jerk chicken, too. Diners begin by selecting a protein (or two) from the variety of options—jerk chicken, grilled chicken,

butter chicken and stew chicken or non-meat proteins such as spicy creamy coconut spinach and curry chickpeas with potatoes—and that's just the start. From there, get to topping. With three options of rice, 12 choices of vegetables and five different sauces, food enthusiasts can create over 33,000 different combinations of roti bowls and wraps. The roti tradition is inspired by street food cuisine from the West Indies.

Although Blaque is praised for her visionary outlook on Caribbean fusion cuisine, she also recognizes that her background and standing as one of few Black female chefs/restaurant owners in San Antonio share an equal part in every concept she creates. Above all, she hopes her deep passion for honest, good food is apparent to every patron. At Mi Roti, chef Lionel "Butch" Blache, who joined The Jerk Shack from Max's Wine Dive, serves as executive chef.

Since its opening, which was delayed from March to July due to the pandemic, Mi Roti has been buzzing. Blaque hopes to continue to present new savory protein options, including a saucy, pineapple glazed pork belly. —EMILY GUJARDO



Culinary Kids

For these young entrepreneurs, youth is no obstacle to building a business

BY EDMUND TIJERINA

For many young people, selling Girl Scout cookies, setting up lemonade stands or baking Rice Krispies Treats for a bake sale is a rite of passage that provides all kinds of stories and important lessons for later in life. But some local kids are going beyond the bake sale. Here, meet three young people who have launched their own food businesses and balance the responsibilities of entrepreneurship with their schoolwork.

Cake Boss in Training

For her 15th birthday over the summer, Reese Saliceti didn't have a traditional quinceañera. Instead, she designed, baked and decorated her own cupcakes and cake, a stunning multi-tiered white fondant creation topped with buttercream flowers.

Then she got to work fulfilling orders from customers.

Reese began learning about baking a few years ago when her grandmother was taking a baking class. Reese learned about creating flowers out of frosting and she immediately fell in love with the art of sugar. From there, it was a quick step to making cakes for family celebrations.

"People who were at those birthdays or baby showers said, 'Oh, I want that cake.' I started just charging for materials," she says. "Now, I'm pretty experienced and I have had a lot of practice. Once I started my Instagram page in March (@dulcecustomcakes), I started to get a ton of orders."

Her mom, Erica, is drawing upon a college accounting class and helping her daughter understand inventory and cashflow. Erica also drives her daughter to purchase ingredients and

equipment, and she's helping her learn how to manage her time so she can balance the burgeoning business with her homeschool studies.

As her business grows, Reese hopes she can build it to the point where it can help her pay her way through college. She's created everything from custom Fortnite cakes to UT Health graduation cakes and wedding-themed cake pops.

"Every client and every cake is a challenge. It's fun to push yourself to do something you haven't done before," Reese says. "Just seeing how people can get so excited about something so small and the joy is just priceless."

Booming with Barbacoa

Officially, Sarah Hernandez is CEO of Sarah's Barbacoa, a family-run Mexican spot in a strip mall off De Zavala Road on the Northwest Side. She's also the restaurant's namesake, along with her maternal grandmother.

On a day-to-day basis, 17-year-old Sarah runs the cash register and makes sure things are ready for customers. Her dad, Mike, makes barbacoa and carnitas. Her mom, Irma, cooks the rest of the menu, using recipes she learned from a grandmother from the northern Mexican state of Coahuila. Sarah's sister, Rebecca, runs the restaurant's social media when she's not working on her studies at UTSA, where she's majoring in public health with a minor in business administration.

Cooking for large family gatherings gave the members of the Hernandez family plenty of practice in preparing large quantities, so they were ready to scale up for the demands of a restaurant.

They opened their own place last March, and Sarah was able to balance going to school online with working at the restaurant. Now that the business has scaled back to weekends only because of the coronavirus, juggling work and school is more manageable.

With an energetic personality that radiates happiness, Sarah is a natural at customer service. So, it's no wonder her favorite part of the restaurant is "seeing all the customers with all their smiles on their faces."

And the least favorite? "Waking up early—at 4 in the morning!"

Baking Star

When Madeline "Madi" Zuniga was very young, she never asked to watch cartoons.

"She just watched cooking shows," recalls her mom, Tami.

Those shows inspired her to learn more about baking, developing her skills and ultimately launching her own business, MadiBakes—impressive, considering she's still only 10.

"My parents really inspired me to do a business," she says. "They showed me that I could do something and enjoy what I'm doing."

She and her parents discussed the idea of her selling some baked goodies early this year but decided to wait until spring break to launch. Then the pandemic hit, and her first week brought orders for 35 dozen cupcakes, explains her father, Ernie, a news anchor on KABB, who says he mentioned the venture briefly on TV but mostly got the word out via Facebook.


"She really runs the ship," Tami says. "We are her assistants."

Her parents make sure that she invests some of her earnings back into the business, puts another third into savings and then they let her keep some for herself. She's a fifth grader at Bob Beard Elementary in Helotes and bakes in her free time, but she always finishes up for the night so she can get to sleep at a responsible bedtime.


By the time she completes high school, Madi hopes to grow the business to the point where she can get her own building and perhaps go to culinary school. ★

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Probiotic Happy Hour

Madge's Food brings a dose of gut health to your favorite bloody mary or michelada

If you're going to drink during brunch—or dinner or happy hour—why not do as little damage to your body as possible?

That was the thinking behind Madge's Food's now-popular Fermented Bloody Mix when owners Mike and Jody Miller first introduced it in 2017. A finalist in the most recent H-E-B Quest for Texas Best contest, the mix is now available at over 130 stores statewide and, along with the company's kraut and kimchi, has been in high demand since the COVID-19 pandemic began as people look to add immune-supporting foods to their routine.

"We're trying to not only give you something to enjoy, but also something that builds your gut and your immune system," Mike Miller says.

Still, he adds, getting the mix into stores during COVID-19 was a challenge. The day the bloody mary mix was set to debut at H-E-B was also the day in

2 Ways to Mix It

MAKE A MICHELADA: Mix 4 ounces of Madge's Fermented Bloody Mix with your favorite 12-ounce light beer. Miller suggests going local with Islla St. Brewing's Chola Blonde. Garnish with salt and veggies or a lime. Want an extra kick? Add an ounce of tequila on top.

GO BLOODY: Mix 4 ounces of bloody mary mix with 2 ounces of your favorite vodka (you can't go wrong with Texas-made Tito's Handmade Vodka), tequila or mescal. Mix and pour over ice. Garnish to your heart's desire—Miller recently created a Gulf seafood version that included snapper, baby octopus, raw oyster and Old Bay Seasoning on a lemon grass skewer.

March that Texas began shutting down due to the coronavirus. In response, H-E-B halted all non-essential food shipments, canceling a truckload of Madge's product as it was arriving in the parking lot. "It was definitely crazy," Miller says, adding that they were able to reship with the help of H-E-B.

They rerouted the hundreds of gallons of mix and in April were finally able to start distributing to several stores. Without the ability to do in-store tastings as is usual for new products, Miller says they've relied on social media and grassroots campaigns to build their fan base and drive buyers to the store. "It's been old-fashioned grit," he says, adding that they ship nationwide and that they're also working to distribute in California, where they relocated from.

While Miller says he's not a big drinker himself, he began tinkering with a bloody mary mix because he knew there had to be a way other than kombucha to drink fermented vegetables. "It was about trying to push the boundaries of fermented foods and beverages," Miller says.

What they found soon after introducing it at Pearl Farmers Market was that it's a great entry point for customers who might never have considered fermented, probiotic-containing "health foods" before, but were willing to try it as part of a favorite cocktail.

Along with the original version, which is made with fresh tomatoes and celery using lacto-fermentation and wild cultures, they also sell a spicy version that includes jalapeño, habanero and serrano peppers. A third version also is in the works. In addition to veggies, each mix contains fresh lime juice and sea salt (never any Worcestershire sauce, since they're committed to keeping it plant based). madesfood.com—KP



A HEALTHIER BRUNCH

How an unexplained illness led to San Antonio's Pure Heart Pancake & Waffle Mix

AT 31, PRISCILLA GOMEZ HAD NEVER BEEN truly sick.

About four years ago, though, the San Antonio native says her immune system began to crash. She experienced joint pain, extreme fatigue and inflammation. "I'd always had amazing, impeccable health and had played sports and worked out all of the time," Gomez says. "Then I had to move back in with my parents because there were days I couldn't take my kid to school. I was so scared."

Following dozens of doctor appointments, Gomez was eventually diagnosed with Lyme disease after being tested for a host of issues, from multiple sclerosis to Hashimoto's disease. In an effort to find healing, she also embarked on a healthy eating journey, cutting out sugar and grains, which can lead to inflammation.

The longer she stuck to her clean diet, the better she felt. But Gomez says she also wanted to keep things as normal for her then

8-year-old son as she could—which meant keeping up their tradition of Saturday morning pancakes. She tried every grain-free mix available but struggled to find one without any added sugar. So, she decided to create her own.

Her kitchen experimenting began in 2017 and last April she launched her own pancake and waffle mix brand called Pure Heart. Made without grains, preservatives, sweeteners, corn or artificial additives, the mix is Paleo-friendly, gluten free and can be made with an egg-substitute to be vegan. "As a mom myself, I don't have time to make (pancakes) from scratch every weekend, so this makes it easier," she says.

Gomez says she's used the pandemic as an opportunity to fine tune her brand by redesigning her logo to target the health and fitness crowd, transitioning to a shared commercial kitchen space and adding a muffin mix.

A former Rackspace employee, Gomez now works in the legal department at another tech company by day and spends time on weekends and evenings dedicated to helping people eat healthier for at least one meal of the day. "Everybody wants to eat healthier, but they don't want to eat cardboard-tasting food," she says. pureheartpancakes.com—KP



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—Theresa, living with Alzheimer's



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A (VEGAN) CINNAMON ROLL SO GOOD IT COUNTS AS DESSERT

Cinnaholic SA has something
for everyone

BY KATHERINE STINSON

SAN ANTONIANS FORMED A LONG LINE DOWN South Alamo Street when the 100 percent vegan Cinnaholic San Antonio opened on Valentine's Day earlier this year.

Just one month later, they were forced to shut their doors, along with other restaurants, due to the pandemic. Yet, the husband-and-wife-team who own the shop, Nicki and Ben Reedy, say the business has continued to grow thanks to curbside pickup, deliveries and customized cinnamon roll boxes for every holiday. Customers can also now dine-in or enjoy their orders at a small table outside.

"It has definitely been a growing process, navigating a new store in the midst of a pandemic," Nicki says. "It's been encouraging hearing feedback from customers saying that they're thankful that they could come enjoy a treat during such a difficult time."

Cinnamon rolls are plant-based, which means they're dairy- and egg-free. Each roll is baked and then served within minutes of coming out of the oven, Ben says, so that it's always fresh. Once baked, patrons can customize their vegan treat

with a variety of frosting flavors, including classic vanilla, peanut butter, cake batter, marshmallow, and caramel. After that, the rolls can be decked out with more than 20 toppings—everything from almonds or housemade pie crumble to vegan 'Oreo' cookies, strawberries, homemade cookie dough, graham cookies, peanut butter cups and more. For those not sure where to start, they also have variety packs and plenty of suggestions for cinnamon roll combos. The cookie dough cheesecake roll, for example, comes piled with cheesecake frosting, cookie dough, graham cookies and chocolate drizzle.

Nicki says the cookie dough they make in the shop is a favorite, especially among expectant moms who can eat it raw since it doesn't contain eggs. Their pie crumbles—something vegans often can't eat—are also popular. "It's tough to choose a favorite because they're all so good!" she says.

The couple says they opened the shop, which is their own location of a California-based concept, because of their love of food and its ability to bring people together. However, seeing the joy vegan treats bring to people who normally wouldn't be able to enjoy such things is the most satisfying thing about the business.

"We absolutely love seeing faces light up when someone realizes they can eat anything we serve. Some parents come to order their child their first cinnamon roll ever," Nicky says. "It feels so rewarding to hear people comment about how delicious everything smells when they walk in, or that they're so thankful they can enjoy anything from the menu. It definitely makes us smile." ★

10 Spots To Get Your Vegan Fix

BLISSFUL BURGERS (South East) Cheeseburgers, patty melts, cheesy fries and more. Blissful Burgers is a haven for classic all-American favorites—without any of the typical meat and cheese. 3959 S. Zarzamora St., 210-239-5830, blissfulburgers.net

CAKE THIEVES BAKERY & EATERY (Downtown) Vegan donuts put this bakery on the map but it now offers everything from chopped BBQ sandwiches and baked mac and cheese to chicken and waffles, toaster pastries and cinnamon rolls. Their downtown shop opens soon, but they're already taking orders via Instagram @cakethievesbakery. 514 El Paso St., cake-thieves.square.site

GREEN VEGETARIAN CUISINE (Pearl, Alon) Green serves a plethora of vegan lunch and dinner options, but their vegan brunch is a highlight. Order large vegan pancake stacks, sweet griddle sandwiches with vegan eggs, vegan migas, breakfast tacos and more. Vegan cupcakes and cakes also are available for order. 200 E. Grayson St., Ste. 120, 210-320-5865; 10003 N.W. Military Hwy., Ste. 2115, 210-233-1249, eatatgreen.com

GO VEGAN SA (UTSA) This vegan food truck located at The Block SA offers comfort food favorites, like their best-selling BBQ Burger Mac, patty melt or their boneless Seitan wings available in buffalo, BBQ or crispy. 14530 Roadrunner Way, 210-729-5400, govegansa.com



MISS CHICKPEAS BAKESHOP (North Central) Cupcakes, cookies, toaster pastries, gansitos, croissants, muffins and more. Tatiana Martinez studied at Le Cordon Bleu in Austin with hopes of becoming a cake decorator but learned the art of vegan baking when her family sought to make changes to their diet and has since become a go-to for sweet treats made without eggs, butter or milk. Order ahead on the Toast Take Out app to get points toward future visits. 8065 Callaghan Road, 210-993-0748, misschickpeas.com

SOUTHERN ROOTS VEGAN BAKERY (Online)

Co-owner and San Antonio native Cara Pitts says her favorite treat is Mary Lee's Lemon Cake, named after her grandmother. This family-run business also offers fresh cinnamon rolls, sugar cookies, brownies, donuts and more. Everything is vegan and nut-free and because the Black-owned bakery is online, orders can be shipped locally and nationwide. southernrootsvegan.com

THE STUDY SPACE SA (UTSA) Though not a dedicated vegan café, this family-owned coffee shop has plenty of vegan options for those looking for a meatless bite to eat with their latte. Try cauliflower wings, vegan meatloaf, grilled "cheese" and even a tofu club sandwich. All vegan offerings are made separately from their non-vegan options to avoid cross-contamination. 7280 UTSA Blvd., 210-437-3206, thestudyspacesa.com

URBAN SOUL SCRATCH KITCHEN (Downtown)

Plant-based and always made from scratch, Urban Soul offers a variety of hearty vegan options, from Chkn 'N Waffles to their classic soul food sampler and family meals that can be ordered to go and enjoyed at home on those nights when there's no time to cook. 1615 S. Laredo St., 972-503-9925, urbansoulmarket.com

VEGAN AVENUE (Monte Vista) Griselda Munoz

opened this vegan and gluten-free restaurant in the former home of Periphery on Main. The chef behind the now-shuttered Marla Restaurant presents dishes made from fresh ingredients, including classic brunch items like avocado toast, Mexican hash and breakfast tacos plus comfort food lunch and dinner entrees like mac and cheese, chick'n strips, enchiladas verdes and flautas. 2512 N. Main Ave., 210-332-9284, eatveganavenue.com

VIVA VEGERIA (Lonestar) San Antonio's first 100

percent vegan and gluten-free Tex-Mex restaurant is the place to go for those craving authentic dishes like fried avocado tacos, enchilada plates, pastor tacos and more. 1422 Nogalitos St., 210-465-9233, myvegeria.com

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AUTISM SPEAKS



6 SA Coffee Roasters

Bring a taste of local home with these San Antonio-roasted beans

BY ALEX FULTON

Coffeccionado

This local roastery is led by women who also seek to empower other women through partnerships with businesses and coffee farmers. Many of their beans are sourced from Colombia, including the Zuca blend which is 100 percent Colombian. 502 W. Mitchell St., coffeccionado.coffee

Medina River Coffee

Single-origin coffees from Honduras, Ethiopia and elsewhere are roasted in-house as well as a signature Medina River blend and other medium/dark coffee blends. Beans can be purchased in the veteran-owned shop or ordered online for free delivery within San Antonio. 11825 West Ave., Ste. 101, medinarivercoffee.com

Merit Coffee Co.

The company that started as Local Coffee sends staff to various regions to sample beans and negotiate fair prices for farmers before selecting coffee to have shipped back to San Antonio where it's roasted in a Southtown warehouse. Baristas at each location can provide advice on which blend to try depending on your taste and drink preference. Multiple locations, meritcoffee.com

Mildfire Coffee Roasters

The couple behind this North Central café believe "fresh is best" so they roast beans from around the world each week and pull them from the shelf after 10 days. Each region delivers a different flavor profile so ask for help if you're not sure where to start. For a rich and smoky flavor, try the 1836 Texas Blend. 15502 Huebner Road, Ste. 101, mildfirecoffeeroasters.com

Shotgun House Roasters

Eddie Laughlin roasts beans from Brazil, Colombia and elsewhere on a San Franciscan SF-6 in his West Side Warehouse 5 location. Subscribe to the Shotgun House Coffee Club for discounts on regular bean deliveries. 1010 S. Flores St., Ste. 116; 1333 Buena Vista St., shotgunhouserasters.com

What's Brewing?

For over 40 years this family-run business has been freshly roasting and carefully curating green coffee beans to ensure its highest standards are met. Blends, including the Pearl Market Blend, can be purchased in the roastery/café or ordered online. In non-COVID times, samples are available to help find your perfect match. 138 W. Rhapsody Drive, sacoffeeeroasters.com

OFF MENU

News from the restaurant scene

Chilaquil will move from its food truck at Broadway News into the Bottling Dept. at Pearl this month. / **New Braunfels Smokehouse** closed in early August after 68 years in business. Its owners left a sign on the door attributing it to the pandemic. / **Agave Azul** opened in the former Saigon Express in Tobin Hill. / **Birria Barrio** food truck debuted a brick-and-mortar location on South Presa Street. / The couple behind The Cookhouse launched **Golden Wat Noodle House**, a Cambodian eatery that for now will offer to-go options from The Cookhouse with plans to expand to its own location in the future. / Silo Restaurants opened **Fairmont Rooftop Oyster Bar** at the downtown Fairmont Hotel. / Jeret Pena, of The Brooklynite and Still Golden, launched **Brazed Bourbon & Beer**, a whiskey and beer bar inside of a secondary space within Augie's Alamo City BBQ Steakhouse just north of downtown. / **Volare Pizza** on Broadway closed in August after more than 30 years. Its Olmos Park location remains. / **Southerleigh Haute South** at The Rim is scheduled to open by the end of summer. / Weathered Souls Brewing Co.'s **Marcus Baskerville** and William Chris Vineyards' **Chris Brundrett** were named to *Wine Enthusiast's* 40 under 40 Tastemakers of 2020 list. / Sichuan-style noodle house **Shifu Noodle** opened on the Southeast Side in August. / Jennifer Dobbins and Quealy Watson, of Tenko Ramen, are opening **Best Quality Daughter** in the former Granary at Pearl in November.



There likely won't be any in-person Oktoberfests this year. While you're celebrating at home, which local beers do you like to enjoy?

Two breweries come to mind to celebrate Oktoberfest in San Antonio. First is Künstler Brewing to celebrate the German roots of brewer Vera Deckard, and her beers are just terrific. I'm also partial to Alamo Beer, because they usually throw a great weekend Oktoberfest party. For specific beers, I'm a big fan of the always-changing Darwinian IPA at Southerleigh and the Betty from HighWheel Beerworks at Dorcol Distilling & Brewing Company. And sometimes I'll just order a flight of whatever looks interesting from Islla St. Brewing or Back Unturned Brewing.

Do you have a question for our resident foodie? Email asked@sanantoniomag.com.



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Haunted Past

A former hospital built next to the Alamo, the Emily Morgan Hotel is one of several downtown buildings rumored to house ghosts

BY KATHLEEN PETTY

The terra cotta gargoyles lining the exterior of the Emily Morgan Hotel are one of the few remaining traits that hint at the 1924 building's origins, when it opened as the city's Medical Arts Building. Designed by Ralph Cameron, each gargoyle crawling on the downtown hotel's façade is fashioned to depict a medical ailment, including many that may have been treated inside the facility from the 1920s all the way up until 1976 when the building transitioned into an office space before becoming a hotel in 1984. Inside, though, some guests and local ghost tour guides say there are other traces of the hotel's hospital past. On the 12th and 14th floors, which were hospital and surgery floors decades ago, guests have reported seeing hospital patients in the hallway when they open their room door—only to look back moments later and see nothing, according to Ghost City Tours. Others have returned to their room to find a bathtub mysteriously filled with water, had lights come on late at night when no one is near the switch and reported phones ringing with no call on the line. The seventh floor and basement, which is not open to guests and once acted as a morgue, are also reported to have paranormal activity, according to Ghost City Tours. Located across from Alamo Plaza, the gothic revival-style hotel was once named the third most haunted hotel in the world by *USA Today*. It's one of a handful of hotels that are rumored to be haunted downtown, including the nearby Menger Hotel. ★

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