

FREE

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TEXOMA FARM & HOME

YOUR GATEWAY TO THE HEARTBEAT OF COUNTRY LIFE
IN NORTH TEXAS AND SOUTHERN OKLAHOMA

**A Rare
*Breed*** page 27

**SPRING
IN BLOOM**

page 4

TEXOMA FARM & HOME

Country Life in North Texas &
Southern Oklahoma

STAFF & CONTRIBUTORS

PUBLISHERS

Austin & Jennifer Lewter
alewter@ntin.net

EDITOR

Jessica Edwards
editor@ntin.net

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Sherrie Nelson
sales@texomafarmandhome.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS & PHOTOGRAPHERS

Alexa Guadian
Hector Espino
Sheridan Mears
Mary Jane Farmer
Jolee Skinner
Kiley Morgan
Omar Paluxy/Paluxy Studios
Kristen Schurr

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Texoma Farm & Home
PO Box 68 - 130 East Main St.
Whitesboro, Texas 76273
903.564.3565
texomafarmandhome.com



From the Publishers...

Welcome to the first issue of Texoma Farm & Home! We are eager to share diverse and enriching content with readers who share a passion for country life in North Texas and Southern Oklahoma.

At Lewter Publishing, we believe in the power of knowledge and the impact it can have on individuals and industries. With this philosophy in mind, we have curated Texoma Farm & Home to be a premier source of enriching lifestyles content relevant to our part of Texoma and beyond.

Allow us to introduce ourselves. We are Austin and Jennifer Lewter. We launched Lewter Publishing in June 2023 when we purchased the Whitesboro News-Record.

Austin is a veteran journalist and publisher. We are native North Texans and enjoy raising our four children in the country.

The Lewter family settled at Gordonville, Texas shortly after the Civil War where they farmed. Our lineage in Texoma rural living runs deep. It is with all this in mind that Texoma Farm & Home seemed like a natural step and a wonderful addition to our publishing family.

We are passionate about the people who call Texoma home and we are dedicated to telling their stories and providing content to enrich readers' lives.

This first issue sets the stage for our vision. You will find equine news, DIY advice, entertainment recommendations and much more.

We appreciate your interest in Texoma Farm & Home. Thank you for picking it up and please let us know your story ideas and interests. You can reach us at alewter@ntin.net.

Keep in touch,

Austin & Jennifer Lewter
Publishers- Texoma Farm & Home

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...



Texoma Farm & Home is a high quality bi-monthly magazine dedicated to country life in North Texas and Southern Oklahoma. We strive to give our readers and advertisers the best possible service. Our rate card is applied equally to all. This magazine reserves the right to reject any advertisement at the discretion of the publisher. The advertiser shall defend and indemnify and hold harmless Texoma Farm & Home against any claim of liability or loss asserted or established against it by reason. The company's liability for major errors lessening the value of an advertisement shall be limited to any advertisement or any part thereof submitted by or published at discretion of the advertiser. The company's liability for major errors lessening the value of an advertisement shall be limited to the advertisement as it shall elect.

Oklahoma Wine Trails open for business

Oklahoma Agritourism has launched the Oklahoma Wine Trails passport program. The program will include nine regional wine trails with collectable stamps and prizes.

“Our new passport program is the perfect ‘bite-sized’ adventure to get folks out to our vineyards and wineries,” ODAFF Viticulture and Enology Coordinator Madi Franklin said. “We hope by breaking up our 43 producers into regional trails, exploring our wine regions will be more approachable and easier to complete.”

The passports are only available at the vineyard and winery locations.

With nine trails scattered around the state, the passports offer the opportunity to try local Oklahoma wine, meet passionate producers, see some incredible landscapes, and collect fun prizes. The Oklahoma Wine Trails passport program is your guide to a fun filled day or weekend trip in Oklahoma.

“By having nine different passports with only three to six stops each, the opportunity to win fun prizes is very doable,” said Franklin. “Plus, you’ll have more time to spend tasting a wide variety of wines and chatting with our wonderful producers.”

Each wine trail boasts its own clever name, trail logo and



color scheme making each one a unique adventure and experience. The wine trail brochures with information about all 43 stops are available upon request from travelok.com or at a variety of tourist stops.

Download the free app or visit the Agritourism website to see the nine trails and stops:

App Website: <https://explorer.oklahomawinetrails.com/>

Agritourism Website: <https://www.oklahomaagritourism.com/trails/wine-trails/>

Oklahoma Agritourism is a marketing program within the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. Visit oklahomaagritourism.com to plan your next adventure.



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Spring will soon be in full bloom

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North Texans may still be feeling winter's chill but for the Pilot Point family who owns Texas-Tulips, beautiful spring flowers are just a few weeks away.

The farm features at least 95 varieties of tulips, all of which are long-lasting and gorgeous.

Owners Pieter and Petra Koeman said visitors come to the farm to purchase flowers, to stage fabulous photo ops and to enjoy the beautiful view of the tulip farm.

Pieter is a skilled farmer with more than 40 years experience in Holland, the Netherlands. He knows his business.

He said he was long fascinated with Texas, his perception of the Lone Star state flavored by American television shows including the decadent 1980s series "Dallas" about a millionaire Texas oilman.

"I thought, 'Oh wow, when the time is right, I gotta move to this area,'" Koeman said.

When he and his family decided to make the move nine years ago, Koeman said he didn't know anyone but was determined to find an appropriate place for his home and business.

"I called a real estate agent I found online," he said.

The arrangement worked out well and the family (which also includes the couple's children, Pieter Jr. and Hillary; Pieter's mother, Afra; and the family's cats, Hailey and Coco), set about building a thriving business.

Koeman said he buys his tulip bulbs from the best growers in the Netherlands.

"It's so important that I have top quality," he said. "The tulip is not a (native) Texas flower."

The growing season for Texas-Tulips is relatively brief — just about a month.

Still, there are many things to be considered.

The most important aspect of growing tulips is drainage, Koeman said.

"You cannot change the soil," he said. "The most important thing is the drainage."

Before purchasing the property in Pilot Point, Koeman tested the sandy loam soil with a shovel to see how well water drained.

"The water was pretty much gone in one day," he said.

The tulip picking season begins in late February and lasts until late March.

The Koemans took a chance and have fashioned a nice life in Texas. They clearly enjoy their work, their family life and Texas culture.

The field is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. until 8 p.m. and is at 10656 FM 2931 in Pilot Point.

For more information, entrance fees and ways to pick your own tulips call (940) 290-4075 or visit www.texas-tulips.com.





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As of 2023, there are 28,849 thrift store businesses in the United States, a 3.5% increase from 2022.

(Courtesy Photo)

The cultural revival of the thrift

by Alexa Guadian

For decades, thrifting has allowed people to build their dream wardrobes and home for dirt cheap prices. Chain thrift stores such as Goodwill and The Salvation Army and small “mom and pop” shops have become so popularized that a new thrifting culture has emerged surrounding them.

Thrifting throughout the years

The concept of using secondhand clothing began in the early 20th century during the Industrial Revolution when the Salvation Army accepted used goods from immigrants in return for food and shelter. Soon after, the thrift store was born.

In her article, “Not Charity, but a Chance,” Jennifer LeZotte said people stereotyped shopping secondhand as a sign of poverty and uncleanness. Thrift stores challenged this stigma by creating

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a similar shopping experience to those of department stores.

From then on out, people saw thrifting as a way to get rid of outgrown or pre-loved fashion sustainably in hopes that someone in need would give their items a new life.

The thrill of the hunt

Contrary to shopping catalogues and retail stores, the selection of pieces at a consignment store is dependent on the community. The curiosity of what’s going to be on the racks during each visit is the allure that keeps people coming back every week.

Kaley Leatherwood, a college student and avid thrifter, loves that she can create statement outfits for a fraction of the price.

“I fall in love with every piece I buy. I recently bought these jeans from Good-

will that are a perfect fit! They were a mens pair of Levi’s that are the prettiest shade of blue and will go with a lot of outfits,” she said.

The thrill doesn’t end at checkout anymore. Thrifters are now heading to the internet to share hauls of their finds. Whether the haul is shared through a video or picture, people are creating online communities to show you don’t need to spend a fortune to have good style.

Sustainable style

Thrifting has become a way to express individuality in a sustainable fashion. As fashion trends are constantly coming and going, people are turning to repurposing out of season, secondhand times to fit the style of today.

As someone who’s always looking

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to create the next best fashion piece for her look book, Marlen Rivera considers do-it-yourself projects her best resource.

“I have a pair of jeans that no longer fit me, so I added lace to flare them out and took them on my trip to Europe. I’m incredibly proud of the up-cycle as it let me keep my jeans,” Rivera said.

Rivera has a deep passion for fashion. She appreciates how thrifting encourages saving and maintaining the quality of previously worn clothing.

Budget-friendly living

Because most items sold at a consignment store are from previous fashion cycles or

vintage home décor, prices are dramatically lower than the original retail. This has given low-income families, college students and frugal shoppers alike a place to purchase quality items without sacrificing money needed for necessities.

After a recent visit to her local Goodwill, Leatherwood said, “I found three pairs of jeans, three sweaters and jackets and three books for a grand total of \$50. Those items, minus the books, would typically be at least \$50 each.”

Bringing the thrift online

As younger generations are beginning to experience the financial impact of inflation, thrifting has become a popularized niche online. The digi-

tal era has made shopping secondhand more accessible and inclusive through the creation of online thrifting platforms such as Poshmark, Depop and Facebook Marketplace.

However, with these platforms arise a new recent issue in the thrifting community: resellers. Resellers are known for taking advantage of discounted name-brand inventory and reselling those items for a higher price online. The demand has caused prices to rise, sometimes near the original retail.

This is looked down upon in the community because it leaves less opportunity for shoppers to find that lucky, designer piece they will truly enjoy.

Since the dawn of second-hand shopping in the 19th



century, the concept of giving back to the community through sharing items to be appreciated once more by people in need still stands today. Thrift culture stands the test of time by bringing old pieces back to life and making them an appreciated part of today’s fashion.

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'Pond Boss' to be Inducted into Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame

for Texoma Farm & Home

The Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame committee announced this month that, "Pond Boss" Bob Lusk of Granbury, Texas will be inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2024.

Lusk helped build the private fisheries industry in Texas and throughout the United States and is widely considered the top pond management expert in the country, generously sharing knowledge and advice through the Pond Boss website, magazine, Facebook page and online forum.

"Bob is a great credit to the state of Texas and has contributed immensely to the world of freshwater fishing and fisheries management," Kelly Jordon, Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame selection committee chairman said. "Bob is a pioneer in the industry and has given selflessly of his time and expertise. His enthusiasm for being a good steward of the resource, whether it's private or public is very impressive. Bob was resoundingly selected to be the 2024 inductee and the Hall of Fame is proud to have him as an inductee."

Lusk was born in Fort Worth and at the age of 14, his family acquired land on the Brazos River between Granbury and Glen Rose. He found his passion for water and the aquatic species that lived there on this property and from then on Lusk knew he wanted to make a living working with fish. Lusk graduated from Texas A&M University in 1979 with a degree in aquaculture and fisheries management. Shortly after graduation, he leased a fish farm in Wichita Falls and started his business.

Fisheries knowledge, strategies and protocols were not where they are today when Lusk launched his venture. He confronted the challenges head on, accepted the risks and blazed a path forward. In 1981, Lusk began supplying fish to pri-



Texas fisheries expert and Pond Boss Bob Lusk is set to be inducted into the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Hall of Fame. *(Courtesy Photo)*

vate pond owners through the Soil Conservation Service Districts, led by SCS (now NRCS) State biologist Gary Valentine. The program and business growth enabled Lusk and several others to increase fish availability statewide. It also allowed Lusk to develop true management strategies that pond owners could use to maximize the potential of their fisheries.

Lusk fine-tuned pond stocking and management over the next decade through trial and error and collaboration. Lusk helped launch Pond Boss Magazine with founding editor Mark McDonald in 1992, a publication that today has more than 3,500 subscribers in 42 states and six countries.

Lusk proceeded to transform numerous water bodies from livestock ponds to trophy fisheries. His innovations led to the development of fish foods with Purina Mills, giving pond owners options to feed multiple sizes of fish and species beyond channel catfish. The new feeding trends created a fish feeding industry.

He became the editor of Pond Boss magazine in 2004 and, under his guidance, the publication expanded beyond print into an online forum. Lusk facilitates conferences nationwide and hosts a weekly Q&A livestream on the Pond Boss Facebook page. The Pond Boss community is comprised of tens of thousands of pond owners nationwide, sharing knowledge and experience that improve all aspects of private waters.

Lusk's Texas-based business conducts consulting projects for private fisheries owners from New York to California. He employed dozens of biologists, with some going on to establish their own lake management ventures.

On top of being the nation's leading private fisheries biologist and consultant, Lusk is an award-winning writer, author and photographer. He served as president of the Texas Outdoor Writers Association (TOWA) and received the organization's L.A. Wilke award, the most prestigious award given by TOWA.

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Lusk freely gives of his time and knowledge through multiple platforms, including the free discussion forum, where users from around the world ask questions and discuss pond-management topics. He also hosts a free live podcast on the Pond Boss Facebook page and viewers have access to a wealth of knowledge through videos on the Pond Boss YouTube channel.

Lusk actively gives back through the Bass Brigade Youth Leadership Camp each summer. He provides a copy of Pond Boss magazine to each student who attends, inspiring the next generation of fisheries biologists.

Lusk has garnered numerous honors and has multiple publications throughout his career:

- 2020 American Fisheries Society (AFS) Award for Excellence in Public Outreach
- 2020 AFS Fisheries Management

Section Hall of Excellence (First Ever Private Pond Manager to be Inducted)

- 2014 Best Outdoor Magazine less than 25,000 Circulation from Texas Outdoor Writers Association
- Pond Boss Magazine (More than 3,500 subscribers)
- Pond Boss Online Forum (More than 16,500 registered users)
- Pond Boss Resource Guide
- Books: Basic Pond Management; Raising Trophy Bass; Perfect Pond... Want One?; Beyond the Basics: Fundamentals of Pond Management
- Texas Outdoor Writers Association L.A. Wilke Award

“When I started in the private fisheries management business 45 years ago this tremendous honor never crossed my mind,” Lusk said. “In fact, I’m still absorbing and soaking it in. It’s humbling to know, especially in a career like this, that others recognize the work enough to make the nomination and then to be voted in. It’s an awesome and humbling experi-



Lusk showing off a catch on a Texas Pond. *(Courtesy Photo)*

ence to be honored in the Hall of Fame.” The Texas Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame is housed at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center in Athens. Its mission is to “recognize and honor those who have made a lasting contribution to freshwater fishing in Texas, and to foster a sense of appreciation, awareness and participation in the sport of fishing.”



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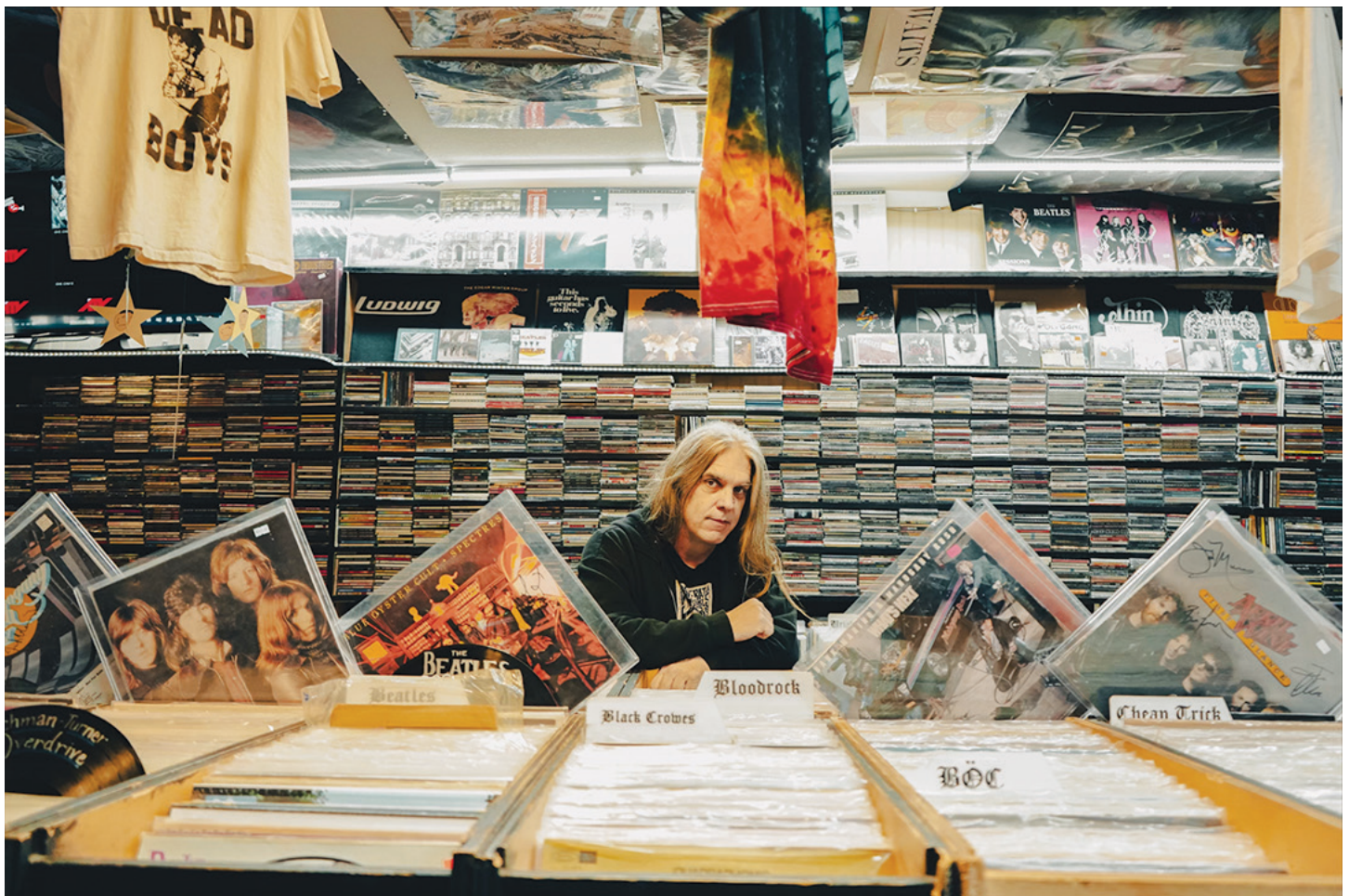
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John Perez, owner of Born Late Records in Fort Worth, curates a shopping experience that harkens back to the day of cheap concert tickets and vinyl record collections.

(Photo by Omar Paluxy/Paluxy Studios)

Fort Worth record shop serves as time capsule to a bygone era of rock n' roll

by Hector Espino

Born Late Records in Fort Worth, Texas is a time machine back to the 1980's from its vintage décor to its staff. Everything from vinyl records to vintage T-shirts, posters from their original release date and so much more. The perfect place to find that hidden gem collectors search high and low for.

The friendly “come on in” you hear as you open the door is John Perez. Current Born Late Records employee is founder and guitarist to the recognized doom metal band Solitude Aeternus. John is a humble man so it takes a few visits and conversations to get that information out of him.

I had the opportunity to speak with John about his career as a “rock star” and was lucky to hear about his career and

life.

He began with his inspiration to pick up an instrument and funny enough, the tough rock n' roller began with piano lessons. “I was taking piano lessons for about two years, I got bored with playing classical stuff. I was a young kid, I had lots of energy, I wanted to rock out like AC/DC.”

Like any other guy with the rock n' roll bug, John wanted the excitement of the heavy melodies. Inspired by the likings of Judas Priest, Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin, “the heavier the band, the better,” was for him as he grew into his musical shell.

When asked about what sorts of goals he wanted to ac-

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complish as he embarked on this journey, he said, “My main goal was to create high quality metal that would stand the test of time.” Along with that, he wanted to tour Europe and the United States, record one studio album and be recognized in the books of rock n’ roll.

John accomplished all of these and more, and was ok with being “a little footnote” in the history books, though that wasn’t necessarily the case. Solitude Aeternus is recognized as one of the more respected doom metal bands, along the lines of bands like Candlemass.

With all of the ups he has seen in his career you would

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Born Late Records is located at 2920 Race St. in Fort Worth.

(Photo by Omar Paluxy/Paluxy Studios)

An advertisement for Enderby Gas, Inc. The top half shows a well-lit outdoor patio with a brick fireplace, a dining table, and a hot tub. The bottom half shows a woman camping with a propane tank. The company logo is prominently displayed in the center.

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PROFILE

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think being dropped from Road Runner records would be a downside, however that is not the case. I asked John about having any regrets in his career and he had none.

“I don’t like to look at the what ifs, I believe everything happens for a reason,” he said

Well, that stood true as being dropped from Road Runner records sent Solitude into overdrive and really kicked off their careers. Prior to them being dropped they had a record deal with the infamous Road Runner records who funded artists like Merciful Fate, Down and King Diamond.

Road Runner records and John had some creative control issues that he was looking to get out of. It just so happened they beat him to the punch.

Solitude went on to release new music that led to his Europe and United States tour that he’d been chasing, proving his beliefs of “everything happens for a reason.”

John had much to say when answering these questions and you could really feel the passion behind every word.

John sees music as a way of healing and a way to bring everyone together. He was inspirational being one of “five kids from Texas who were here to kick ass” and he did just that.

John even left me with goosebumps when asked about what he thought looking back on his career and how he felt about it.



The country music section at Born Late Records. (Photo by Omar Paluxy/Paluxy Studios)

“Well, I’m not done yet, I can tell you that,” he said.

Though Solitude Aeternus is no more, John continues to create and spread his love of music to the next generation. He is currently working on a form of “psychedelic rock and roll” as it has been something he has wanted to create.

If you’re ever in the north Fort Worth area and are in the mood for a hidden gem. Stop by Born Late Records, the building with the big Van Halen logo painted on the side, located on the corner of Race and North Retta Street.

You’ll hear a “What’s up man! Come on in!” from the guy behind the counter.

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How to create an outdoor living retreat

Texoma Farm & Home

Al fresco entertaining has taken off in recent years. It's much more common today to find homeowners who want to extend living spaces to the outdoors in meaningful ways that go beyond a few lawn chairs and a stand-alone grill. Dream backyard living rooms mirror similar spaces indoors and contain features like cozy corners, lush furniture and televisions or movie projectors. Plus, they often abut additional outdoor luxuries like fully functional kitchens.

Homeowners have various options when designing outdoor living spaces. Above all else, spaces should be created with the goal of encouraging people to get together. Here are some ideas.

Poolside retreat

Homeowners with pools and other water features likely want this area to be the star of the entertaining space. Furniture will be more of the lounging variety, with comfortable chaises and spots to catch the sun. If a swim-up bar isn't possible, a rolling bar cart can be stocked with essentials for cocktails or mocktails for the kids. Furniture near the pool will be exposed to a lot of sun, so look for durable, sun-resistant fabrics.

Fireside nook

Gathering around an outdoor fireplace or fire pit is a



It's much more common today to find homeowners who want to extend living spaces to the outdoors in meaningful ways. *(Courtesy Photo)*

treat when the weather cools down. Mirror the look of the same setup indoors by arranging outdoor sofas so they flank the fireplace. Add some ottomans or side tables for stowing mulled cider or hot chocolate. A mantel above the fireplace can hold pots of greenery or candles that add to the ambiance.

Consider a custom banquette

Unused corners on a patio or rooftop retreat can utilize a custom-made banquette that provides the functionality

of a sofa sectional outdoors. Have a contractor design it to the exact specifications of the area, and add a rug to ground the space.

Vary the flooring

Depending on the entertaining space, a balance of soft grass, pavers or other hardscape will be necessary. Certain areas will need to be hard enough for chairs and other furniture, particularly for those who are including an outdoor dining table in the design.

Create some privacy

Some homeowners are lucky enough to have natural barriers that offer privacy in their entertaining spaces. When there isn't enough, tall shrubs, inexpensive bamboo fencing or trellis can provide a blind that makes an outdoor living area more cozy and private. Consider placing tall, potted plants on rolling casters to improve privacy as the need arises.

Outdoor living spaces are all the rage, and they can add value and functionality to most any home.

Low-cost ways to revamp living areas

Texoma Farm & Home

Home improvement projects require substantial financial investment. But just because a homeowner wants to bring a fresh look indoors doesn't mean he or she has to break the bank along the way.

Living rooms are some of the most frequently used spaces in a home, and they can use an update from time to time to stay on trend or to make the area more functional for a changing family dynamic. Here are some budget-friendly ideas for breathing new life into living room designs.

- **Establish the budget.** Homeowners should figure out how many dollars they can designate to a living room makeover before purchasing supplies or hiring out the work. Figure out the scope of the remodel, visit stores or suppliers to price out materials, get estimates from contractors, and then plan for some unforeseen circumstances along the way to determine if this type of renovation is affordable. If not, scale things back until the project more closely aligns with your budget.

- **Change the paint color.** Lighter and brighter colors are on trend. A can or two of paint can do wonders for updating a space without a large financial commitment. Pair that new paint color with new window coverings and complementary throw pillows to pull the theme together with minimal expense.

- **Update the flooring.** Tired, outdated carpeting or other flooring can use an overhaul. While solid hardwood flooring may be preferable, there are many types of laminate flooring that mimic the looks of popular wood colors and styles for a fraction of the cost. Plus, many are sold at home improvement retailers and even at warehouse clubs or online for reasonable prices. Laminate flooring also may be a potential DIY job for a skilled homeowner, saving even more money.

- **Introduce a fireplace.** Fireplaces were once hot commodities, but that popularity waned in the 1970s and 1980s. Homeowners with chimneys may discover a fireplace was boarded over and the bare bones still exist that can be renovated to bring back character. There also are ventless freestanding units that are quite affordable that can mimic the look of a built-in fireplace.

- **Reupholster instead of replace furniture.** There's no need to throw away quality furniture if the fabric is the only thing impeding design. New upholstery or even a slipcover can update designs.

- **Conquer clutter.** Rather than adding something to the living room, remove clutter to give the room a more airy feel. This can instantly change the look of the room. Use cord covers to tame plugs for electronics and remove unnecessary furniture from the room.

- **Improve lighting.** Another easy and often inexpensive fix



Living room spaces in need of an update often can benefit from improvements that go easy on the wallet.

(Courtesy Photo)

is to change lighting fixtures, including using brighter, more energy efficient LED bulbs, and to assess lighting needs to eliminate dark corners of rooms that can make the space seem drab.

Oklahoma songwriter strikes a distinct chord

by Sheridan Mears

Joe McClour was born in a small town in Oklahoma. Just like any other small country town, he was raised with good old fashion values.

As time went on, he grew to love things of the new age. McClour explored all types of genres in the music industry, but then found where he belongs. The Americana style is where he feels home.

He describes his 2022 album “Show up and Love Me” as “country, not western. It’s down home, not yee-haw.” McClour said “I just hope something you hear on this album connects with you.”

I enjoy Texas country and Americana music, so when there is new music hitting the scene, I am the first to check it out.

“Shut Up and Love Me” is an 11 track Americana album. Starting with “Bloodline,” it set the tone of how the artist described the album as “down home.”

Track two “Just Getting Started” feels like an anthem to his career starting to rise. The upbeat tune gives it that upbringing feel.

Then I hear tracks that are slower and more heartfelt. Songs such as “When Will I Learn” and “Walls” take you down a different path.

Slow songs give artists a chance to showcase their feelings and emotions in a way that becomes therapeutic to listeners.

I enjoyed these tracks. As I was listening, I was able to understand the story and meaning behind the lyrics.

One tune that stuck out to me was the track entitled “Blessed are the Peacemakers.” The song is used as a message to today’s society.

In a world that is full of hate and so much tension, we should appreciate the good people that are still in this world. “Blessed are the peacemakers... keeping their eyes on heaven...” McClour sings the message.

Songs such as “Springsteen Serenade,” the seventh track on the album, I really appreciate for the story telling. McClour did a great job using words to give scenarios and visuals that put you in the place and scene that the song is describing.

When it comes to tunes like “Forgive Me” and “Train Wreck,” they are like the perfect combination of love struck and a train wreck- literally.

“Forgive Me” is about how forgetful he is of the woman’s name but has eyes for her.

That theme gives the same feelings towards “Train Wreck” where he is telling a woman he is a bad guy, all over the place, but he wants her no matter what. Despite his reckless behavior,



he will not play games with her heart.

One of my personal favorites on the album is a song entitled “Dead Flowers.” The tune is very upbeat and gives me vibes similar to the style of the band the Turnpike Troubadours. This is a song I could jam and sing to in my car.

However, this is a Rolling Stones original that McClour covered in his own style. It was sung in a style that could help me get over someone, really get the emotions flowing, but all in good terms.

Next up, are tracks three and five, entitled “When Will I Learn” and “Younger Days.” These have themes that go hand in hand.

I know my elder family members enjoy tunes that sound like an old country song, and that is what these two tracks sound like. They also contribute to that by the old-time feel of the lyrics.

Storytelling of way back when is always a good theme to go for when you want to reach listeners who enjoy that old time feeling.

Lastly, the title track “Show Up and Love Me” is like a call to action love song. It is bittersweet but a yearning for the love and touch of his significant other.

The song takes you through a story of a man who is asking his lover to be present and love him unconditionally. No matter the troubles or hardships, he is asking her to be there and continue to stick with him through it all.

I love this track especially for that message.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed diving into this album. Country and down home is exactly the feel this album gives.

We need more singers in the country scene who continue to bring that energy. Country fans old and young demand that.



Van Alstyne, Texas native Austin Michael is making his way as a working songwriter and musician in Nashville.

(Courtesy Photo)

North Texas native is making his way in Nashville

by Mary Jane Farmer

It can take a long time to be an overnight success. Musician Austin Michael, at age 21, is in his eighth year, and says, “This is not a marathon, this is a sprint.”

The Van Alstyne native is now living and working in Nashville, with some of its most successful professionals in his corner.

His childhood dreams had always been along the rodeo line. He received a guitar before he was a teenager and taught himself to play. But music, for him, was still just a diversion, a way to unwind at the end of his busy days.

That is, until a family friend sent a cell-phone video of him singing “Fly Away” to the TV competition series,

“American Idol.” He didn’t even know about that, until he got word that he’d been accepted.

Of it, Michael said, “I enjoyed it. I didn’t walk into it with the same mind set as others did. I thought through it all that I was very blessed to be here. Not... ‘this is my future...’ But when I got back home and it aired, I realized from the many calls and messages that it had touched people. It kinda made me go, ‘Well, if they believe in me, and if they want me to do it, well I can.’”

After his stint with American Idol, Austin Michael’s Van Alstyne family home burned down. The family moved to Westminster and lived with his grandparents for a while. Then, they found land that could accommo-

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ENTERTAINMENT

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date the livestock the family maintains that was in Pottsboro.

“We had a ranch with 50 acres and horses and cows and a few ponds. It was a good four years, but there were issues that went with the good fortune – plumbing, electric.” Again, back to the grandparents’ house in Westminster, where the family still resides.

Nashville had to fit into the picture. His first trip out there happened after he got a text from his dad’s friend, golf pro John Daly. “Listen here, where are you? You need to get to Nashville yesterday.” Austin Michael said he packed up and headed out. There, he slept in his car outside motels and used their bathrooms to clean up. Through Daly’s understandable influences, Austin Michael received the chance for one co-writing session, and that then turned into three sessions or “writes” as he said they are called. After the third one, he was invited to stay one more day. He said he spent the rest of that

day wandering the streets, trying to figure it all out.

“I didn’t understand the industry. I thought it was like it used to be,” he said. “I decided I wouldn’t be going back here.”

But, Michael, being the Christian that he is, gave credit “100% to God for every step along the way. No question in my mind, I believe everything happens for a reason.”

He said he texted Daly again, asking, “Is there anybody you want me to meet while I’m here? He (Daly) had three others and I met with all of them.” One was nice enough to let Austin Michael crash on his couch. His roommate, who worked with L3 Management, stayed there, too. He walked in.

“Who are you? I asked.

“I live here,” the roommate answered.

“Oh, nice to meet you,” I said.

“Why are you here?” he asked.

“I’m another country artist trying to make it,” I replied.

“Well, if you want to be serious, come with me tomorrow,” he suggested.

Michael did, and it went uphill from there.

Before he’d left Nashville on that trip, Michael had an offer from a management company, a publishing company and a label opportunity.

Austin Michael was set to go back to Nashville, and this time, management told him, “You aren’t sleeping in your car.” “They had me set up. And from then on I was booked solid.”

After that, Michael would travel to Nashville about every other month or so until it seemed more sensible to make a geographical move. First, he moved to an Alabama town, staying with a buddy of his there. It was a two-hour drive to Nashville, and he made that two-way trek every day. And then it happened — Austin Michael moved to Nashville in August of last year.

“It simplified and it complicated my

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ENTERTAINMENT

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life,” he said. “I am so family-oriented, it’s hard to be away from family. But, it has allowed me to be more accessible. I play a lot of writers’ rounds and meet people. I’m always writing and always recording and always meeting people.”

“One thing is for certain,” he said. “I have done a lot of growing up here, but not going to let the town change me. It’s a slippery slope and I know I have to adapt to my surroundings.

“I still wear my cowboy hat, it keeps the hair out of my face while working. And, in this concrete jungle, it seems genuine knowing it’s about where I came from.”

When he answered the inevitable question all musicians get — Who is your idol? — it was a simple answer for Michael. “Cody Johnson has always been my idol. I love his authenticity, respect, attitude, his moral compass. It all comes across in very obvious ways.”

Nowadays, Austin is releasing singles about every 4-6 weeks, moved it up to three releases in January. It’s not genuine choreographed videos he and his team are producing, they call it ‘visualizers.’

“Most people don’t understand, a video costs about \$50 grand to produce. My management team has one guy who is pretty good with a camera. We just finished a recording and a visualizer for ‘Whiskey In The Dirt.’”

That and other visualizers, along with the first video made those many years ago, “Country Cred,” are available on YouTube.



Eight years ago, a much younger Austin Michael performing in Sherman, Texas.

(Photo by Mary Janne Farmer/Scene in Town)

And another question songwriters get — “Where do you get your ideas for new songs?” Austin Michael said it can come from recurring issues, conversations. “There’s really no way to go about it. Sometimes during relaxing times, maybe wake up in the middle of the night, or somebody sparks an idea, and some kind of emotions hit me.”

So, where is it all going for this young talented man?

“I could go either way. I could sit back and complain as to why I’m not a superstar. But, I am a firm believer that God opens doors... Give us a few years. We’ll have a number one.”



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Not so sweet like ‘Candy’

by Jolee Skinner

Hulu mini-series retells an incident that shocked North Texas 40 years ago

True crime stories are one of the most popular categories in shows, movies and podcasts in the nation. Shows like “The Staircase” or “American Crime Story” people cannot get enough of. The public loves a good crime story because it’s fascinating. It’s often looked at like museums in terms of the shock factor.

“How can people commit horrifying crimes?” one might wonder. This question, the horrifying shock factor and fascination captures the essence of Hulu’s mini-series “Candy.”

“Candy,” directed by Michael Uppendahl, tells the story of a real murder committed by Candy Montgomery that shocked the small town of Wylie, Texas 40 years ago.

The story starts with episode one where we meet the main characters. Candy Montgomery is a typical housewife who seemed to have it all. Perfect marriage, perfect kids, perfect life and supportive community.

She’s a stay-at-home mom who does it all and is always there for you. She leads Bible study about being a “good little tree” and how if we are good people we will see God. Candy then leaves to stop by a friend’s house.

Christina Gore is best friends with Candy’s daughter Becky. They were having fun spending time together, so Candy allowed Christina to stay with her daughter a second day. Candy then goes to the Gores’ house to pick up a swimsuit for Christina and then is greeted by Christina’s mom Betty. In the next scene, we see

Candy run through Betty’s house with wet hair, missing glasses and bleeding. In that moment, the audience knows what just took place. Candy moves fast trying to cover her tracks and already makes up a story to tell her husband.

Allen Gore, Betty’s husband, is away on a work trip and tries to reach Betty with no avail. He then asks some neighbors to go check on her and what they find horrifies them.

Episode one establishes the dichotomy between Betty and Candy. Candy is bright, outgoing and very friendly. Betty, on the other hand, is an introvert and is struggling with postpartum.

“Candy” explores the theme of “the perfect housewife.” A role that Betty and Candy are trying to fill but doesn’t ultimately exist.

“Candy” is also a series that pays a lot of attention to detail, from the setting, the colors, the sound and tone during a scene. For example, we see the garage of the Gores’ house plenty of times in the months leading up to the murder. We often get shots of Allen’s tool setup in the garage. We see his hammer and other tools such as the infamous axe. A detail that makes the viewers have an unsettling feeling as we know what that axe is going to be used for later.

The series also explores the idea of feminine rage. A rage that women have but are supposed to not show. Betty is an anxious, meek, little woman. But later in the series she snaps at her husband and is struggling with her emotions. There is clearly something more bothering her.



The rage builds over time for Candy. It starts when Candy is having an affair with Betty’s husband and then dissolves. Betty knows something happened with Candy and her husband which leads to her confronting Candy.

In the final episode, we see Candy go to trial for the murder of Betty Gore. Candy’s version of things is not quite like the Gores’ version as we see while she is testifying. We see flashbacks on Candy’s story and all the inconsistencies.

Then we see it. The murder and all 41 blows Candy delivers to Betty. And then she drives home and picks up her kids, like nothing ever happened.

In conclusion, the series ends in a way the viewer may not expect. The ending of the series doesn’t have a resolution. Candy ultimately gets away with Betty’s murder, is found not guilty after confessing and walks away free. But as she is walking to her car, Candy is reminded of the cost of her actions by realizing life will never be the same. “Candy” is a great watch for those wanting to see a “truth is stranger than fiction” story. This series delivers that and more.

TRY A NEW MEAT AND POTATOES DISH THIS ST. PATRICK'S DAY

Texoma Farm & Home

St. Patrick's Day presents the perfect opportunity to try authentic Irish cuisine as well as foods and beverages that have become associated strictly with the holiday (like green beer). It's likely someone you know will be cooking corned beef and cabbage this St. Patrick's Day. But what if you're among those who just doesn't fancy the salted and pickled flavoring of this familiar favorite?

"Zesty Braised Beef with New Potatoes" isn't exactly corned beef, but it can be a worthy alternative. It's warm, filling and flavorful, and can be just the thing to eat on a chilly March day. What's more, this rich beef can pair well with a dark stout like Guinness. Enjoy this recipe, courtesy of "The Healthy Slow Cooker" (Robert Rose) by Judith Finlayson.



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RECIPES

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Zesty Braised Beef with New Potatoes

Serves 8

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 ounces chunk pancetta, (preferably hot) diced
- 2 pounds trimmed stewing beef, cut into 1-inch cubes and patted dry
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon cracked black peppercorns
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 2 pounds small new potatoes, scrubbed and thinly sliced (about 30 tiny ones)
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, dissolved in 1 tablespoon

- freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/4 cup finely chopped parsley leaves.

Instructions

1. In a skillet, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium-high heat. Add pancetta and cook, stirring, until nicely browned, about 3 minutes. Transfer to slow cooker stoneware (3 1/2 to 5 quart).
2. Add beef to skillet, in batches, and cook, stirring until browned, about 4 minutes per batch. Transfer to stoneware as completed.
3. Reduce heat to medium. Add remaining tablespoon of oil to pan. Add onions and cook, stirring, until softened, about 3 minutes. Add garlic, thyme, salt and peppercorns and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add wine, bring to a boil and boil, stirring and scraping up brown bits from bottom of pan for 2 minutes. Add stock and potatoes and bring to a boil. Simmer for 2 minutes.
4. Transfer to stoneware. Cover and cook on low for 8 hours or on high for 4 hours, until potatoes are tender. Stir in cayenne solution. Cover and cook on high for 10 minutes. Transfer to a server dish and garnish with parsley. Serve with a big platter of roasted carrots.



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Our brains were designed to hear. So much so that when our hearing deteriorates, our brains can go into overdrive, striving to “fill in the gaps” and help us fully engage. It leaves those with hearing loss scrambling to stay connected.

Hearing problems are more common than you may think, with an estimated 48 million Americans experiencing some level of hearing loss. It can happen gradually or more suddenly, and may be caused by factors such as aging, genetics, or exposure to loud noises. Hearing problems may also be associated with other significant health issues, which makes it especially important for you to have any changes in your hearing checked.

Perhaps one of the most troubling potential connections is that of hearing loss and dementia or cognitive decline, which may be associated with changes in brain structure, reduced brain volume or shared brain pathways. Even in situations where there are no direct links to physical disease, people who can't hear well may become depressed due to feeling isolated or frustrated with their inability to understand conversation.

If hearing problems are ignored or untreated, they can get worse. That's why treating hearing loss is so important to maintaining overall good health.

“The first step is having your hearing assessed to determine the cause of your difficulty,” said Jill Sheppard, B.S., SLP/Audiology, Licensed Fitter and Dispenser of Hearing Instruments (LFDHI), and co-owner of HearCare & Associates in Sherman and Gainesville. “It's an easy process that's painless, non-threatening and, according to some of our patients, even fun! You'll want to know the root cause of your hearing difficulty and treat it in a way that meets your preferences, budget and lifestyle.”

A hearing evaluation begins with



a conversation between you and your hearing professional. Your ears will be checked for wax or other problems. Then you'll have your hearing tested. You'll sit in a soundproof booth (with glass windows so you can see out!) and, while wearing earphones, you'll raise your hand when you hear a sound. It's quick and painless. Your results are immediately available. You'll receive important information about any issues and be fully informed about options available to you.

“Nothing sounds as good as what God gave you,” said Kenneth Sheppard, Jr., smiling. Kenneth, also a Licensed Fitter and Dispenser of Hearing Instruments, is co-owner of HearCare & Associates. “You want to work with a professional who will assess the ability you have to hear natural sounds and then leverage that with the finest technology available and the earnest desire to help you hear well again.”

Your hearing health depends on you

being an educated consumer. How you get your information, what you choose, and who you buy from can have enormous implications for how satisfied you are with your new hearing aids (and the price you paid for them).

“We understand that you want the best from your investment in hearing well,” said Jill. “You deserve personalized attention and a hearing aid customized to your needs. We sometimes get walk-in patients who complain that they purchased online and don't even know how to put the hearing device in their ears! You want to ensure that your hearing aids are tailor-made to your specific hearing loss and that you have the information and the skill to wear them with confidence and ease.”

Questions? The HearCare team provides knowledge, compassion and over 40 years of experience. They invite you to call 903-868-2650 for more information.

The Cowgirl who wears many hats

by Kiley Morgan

Kinlie Brennisse is what some would call an all-around cowgirl. She is a student rodeo athlete at Tarleton State University in Stephenville, breakaway roper in the PRCA (Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association) and small business owner.

Brennisse is originally from Craig, Colorado, but found her love for Texas roughly four years ago.

She moved to Weatherford, Texas where she attended cosmetology school at Weatherford College for two years. After graduating cosmetology school, Brennisse went on to Tarleton where she will graduate this spring with a bachelor's in business.

Since moving to Stephenville, Brennisse has competed on the Tarleton Rodeo team for three years and opened her own business, Luxury Aesthetics.

"It's kind of a funny story. I never pictured myself owning my own business. I went to cosmetology school basically just to have a job while I went to college," Brennisse said.

While in cosmetology school, Brennisse met her best friend, Grace Seargeant. At the time, Seargeant was cutting hair at a local salon in Stephenville, where Brennisse would soon open her own lash bed.

"I was interested in permanent makeup, so I got Grace to go with me to do a class on permanent makeup," Brennisse said. "After we got certified, we learned that since permanent makeup was a tattooing service, we could not do it in the same room as any other cosmetology service."

After hitting this bump in the road, Brennisse went on a search for a small building to open her own salon with Seargeant. After searching, Brennisse finally found a building where they could offer lash extensions, permanent makeup and spray tan services.

Brennisse eventually moved the business to its current location at 2301 North-



Kinlie Brennisse is a student, entrepreneur and all-around cowgirl.

(Photo Courtesy of Tarleton Rodeo)

west Loop, Unit 103 in Stephenville. A year ago, Brennisse and Seargeant became co-owners of Luxury Aesthetics.

"We basically do everything but hair and nails here. We do permanent makeup, facials, lashes, face waxing, teeth whitening, an injector who does botox and lip injections, spray tans and makeup services for events and such," Brennisse said.

Juggling school, rodeo and a business is challenging for Brennisse.

"I don't always do the best job at juggling it all," she said. "I actually really like Tarleton's program because I have been able to be online my entire school career here, so then it's just my fault when I don't balance everything and get

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EQUINE

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my work done.”

Having school online, and owning her own business makes it easier for Brennisse to be able to rodeo at both the collegiate and professional level.

“I started my college career team roping, goat tying, breakaway roping and running barrels,” she said. “This is the first year that I have only entered the breakaway.”

Not only is Brennisse about to start her spring semester of college rodeos, but she is also about to compete in one of the biggest professional rodeos, the Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo (FWSSR).

“I am really, really excited to compete at FWSSR,” Brennisse said. “Last year was the first year I stepped out of my comfort zone and went rodeoing... I went for a few solid months on the road. I actually qualified for Fort Worth through the WPRA Finals (Women’s Professional Rodeo Association). It is definitely cooler to make it to Fort Worth while you are in school because then they are like ‘Oh, Tarleton State.’”



Kinlie Brennisse in a rodeo last summer.
(Photo Courtesy of Kristen Schurr photography)



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Oklahoma ranch delivers a rare breed

by Jessica Edwards

Just past the Red River in Cartwright, Oklahoma, tucked back behind a labyrinth of winding country roads and beautiful scenery lies an unassuming ranch that produces some of the rarest and highest-quality registered grullo quarter horses in the country.

Corbett Creek Ranch (CCR) is home to 18 broodmares and two studs, all of whom are registered with the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) and can be registered with ABRA (American Buckskin Registry Association) and IBHA (International Buckskin Registry Association.)

Less than 1% of registered American Quarter Horses are grullo. Grullo (or grulla) quarter horses are known for their distinguishing color pattern and dun markings. These markings include a lighter body with a dark main, tail, legs and face; a dark dorsal stripe down the center of their back; and possible striping across the shoulders or on the back of the forelegs. These markings are a result of genetic makeup which, at Corbett Creek Ranch, is highly controlled.

“Our horses are hand-selected,” owner Vickie Corbett said. “We want horses with a great mind -- that’s a top priority – and conformation (shape or structure), pedigree and color.”

Both of CCR’s studs are double homozygous dun, meaning their foals are more likely to carry dominant traits, like black legs and dun factor. As a result, Corbett Creek Ranch foals typically sell for anywhere from \$7,500 to \$8,500.

“We sell our foals to people from all over the world,” Corbett said. “We have one in Hungary, some in Canada and Mexico. Our ultimate goal is to get several into Europe. These foals are so sought-after, they’re sometimes sold in utero before they’re even born.”

Vickie and her husband Brent fell in love with horses as kids. Once they were



A mother and yearling graze at Corbett Creek Ranch in Cartwright, Oklahoma.

(Photo by Jessica Edwards)

married, they knew they wanted to start a breeding program that not only produced horses with great color, but also had the ability to be the best all-around horses. Over the past 30 years, they have built a ranch that breeds and produces grullo quarter horses that can do anything from barrel racing and ranch riding to cutting and showing.

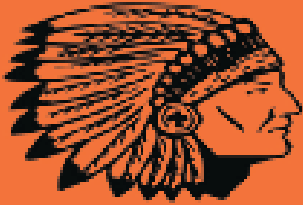
This year the ranch is expecting 14 babies (seven have been delivered so far). The broodmares are on a rotation, and the breeding process begins Feb. 1. The studs are pulled from the pastures at the end of May or beginning of June. With an 11-month gestation period, foals begin arriving in January.

At CCR, babies are handled from birth

and provided with the best care and nutrition. They are free-choice creep fed around one month old so they can come and go as they please. This provides supplemental nutrients to nursing foals, usually through grain or protein supplements. They also enjoy Bermuda grass and a supplement of Alfalfa. At four months old, they’re weaned and prepared for their new homes.

To see an example of the high-quality animals that come from Corbett Creek Ranch, stop by their booth at the upcoming ABRA world show in Tulsa this July. See these beautiful animals on their Facebook page and learn more about Corbett Creek Ranch by calling Vickie at 580-775-5989 or visiting www.CorbettCreek.com.

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Texoma Farm & Home

Buddy the African Sulcata Tortoise



This month's TF&H feature pet is Buddy the African Sulcata tortoise.

Buddy is nine years old and lives with his human family in Collinsville, Texas.

African Sulcata tortoises, also known as African spurred tortoises, are popular reptile pets due to their docile nature and relatively low maintenance requirements compared to some other pets. Here's some information about them:

Size

Sulcata tortoises are one of the largest species of tortoise, reaching lengths of up to 30 inches (about 76 cm) and weights of over 100 pounds (about 45 kg). They can live for several decades, with some individuals reaching over 100 years old.

Habitat

In the wild, Sulcata tortoises inhabit semi-arid grasslands and savannas in Africa. As pets, they require large enclosures with plenty of space to roam and explore. They also need a warm and dry environment, so a heated enclosure or outdoor space with access to sunlight is essential.

Diet

Sulcata tortoises are primarily herbivores, feeding on a diet of grasses, hay, leafy greens, and vegetables. It's crucial to provide a varied diet rich in fiber and calcium to ensure their health and prevent issues like metabolic bone disease.

Behavior

These tortoises are generally calm and gentle, but they can become stressed if handled too frequently or roughly. They are solitary animals and should be housed alone unless breeding. They enjoy digging and burrowing, so providing substrate like sand or soil in their enclosure is beneficial.

Care

Proper care for Sulcata tortoises includes providing a suitable habitat with the right temperature and humidity levels, a balanced diet, regular access to clean water for drinking and soaking, and veterinary care as needed. Regular monitoring of their health and behavior is essential for early detection of any issues.

Legal Considerations

Before acquiring a Sulcata tortoise as a pet, it's important to research local laws and regulations regarding their ownership. In some areas, they may be considered invasive species, and ownership could be restricted.

Long-Term Commitment

Sulcata tortoises are a long-term commitment, as they can live for several decades. Prospective owners should be prepared for the responsibility of caring for them for the duration of their lives.

Overall, African Sulcata tortoises, like Buddy, can make rewarding pets for reptile enthusiasts who are willing to provide the necessary care and attention they require.

Buddy enjoys a large backyard with plenty of dandelions to snack on.

If you would like to feature your pet in Texoma Farm & Home, please email alewter@ntin.net.

SHELTON VETERINARY HOSPITAL

GUNTER
903.433.2284

SVH

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903.429.2284

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