

HCV

HILL COUNTRY VISITOR MAGAZINE



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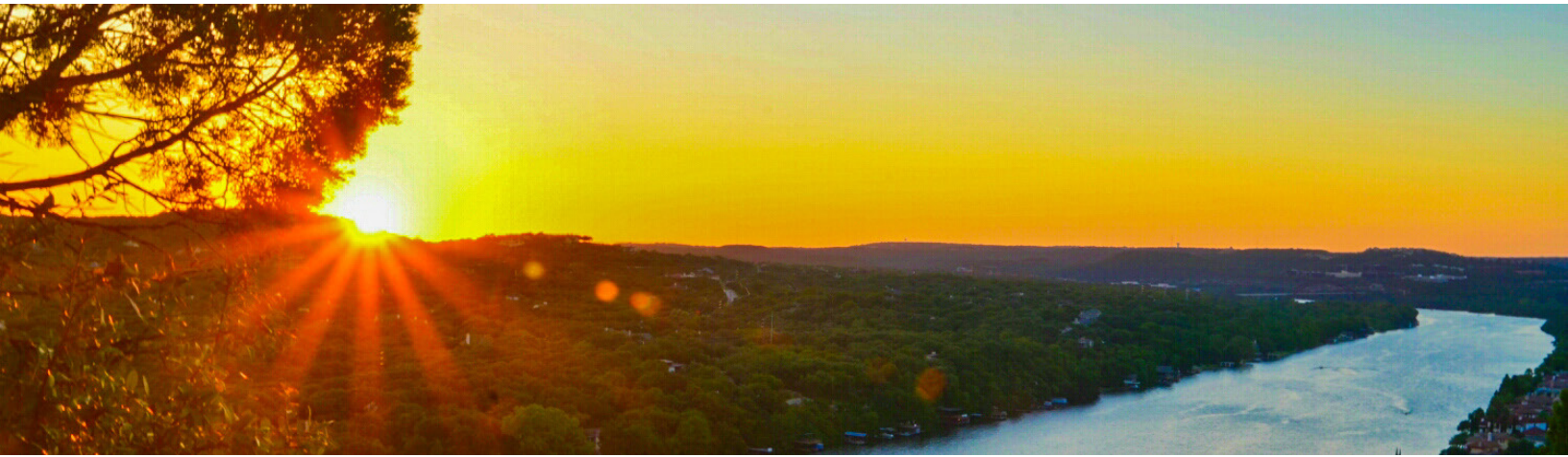


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A Farewell With Gratitude



What can I say there comes a time when every chapter reaches its natural close, and for me, that moment has arrived. It is with a full heart and deep appreciation that I share the news that I am passing the Hill Country Visitor Magazine on to my son, Matthew Willis.

Many of you already know Matthew well. Truth be told, he has been the quiet force behind the magazine for quite some time. The advanced technology we use, the systems that keep us connected to thousands of subscribers by email and thousands more by SMS Matthew built it, refined it, or found it. His vision and innovation have helped make the Hill Country Visitor Magazine a trusted, recognizable brand throughout the Texas Hill Country.

Because of his dedication, creativity, and commitment to excellence, I can say with complete confidence that the magazine and all our valued advertisers are in exceptional hands moving forward.

As for me, I'm shifting my focus to the Shop Local First Loyalty Card Program, continuing my passion for supporting and uplifting small businesses across our region. It's work that inspires me, and I look forward to pouring my energy into helping our local entrepreneurs thrive.

It has truly been a pleasure serving our customers, partners, and the many wonderful people I've met along the way. Whether you were a longtime supporter or someone I met only once, each connection has meant something to me.

Thank you for the trust, the conversations, the collaborations, and the community we've built together.

God bless the Texas Hill Country.

Marvin Willis

Founder, Hill Country Visitor Magazine

Looking Ahead

I want to begin by saying thank you—to my father, to our advertisers, and to every reader who has trusted this magazine over the years. Hill Country Visitor has always been about people, place, and connection, and that foundation is not changing. My role moving forward is to honor what has been built while continuing to strengthen how we serve our community through thoughtful content, reliable partnerships, and steady growth. I am grateful for the opportunity to carry this work forward and excited for what lies ahead, always with the same heart for the Texas Hill Country.

- Matthew Lee Willis

Feeling The Pinch

by Marvin Willis

Across the Texas Hill Country, small business owners are feeling the pinch. Online shopping has changed the way people buy everything—from socks to sofas—and a whole lot of money is quietly slipping away from Main Street and into the pockets of giant corporations far from home.

And here's the truth: most small businesses simply can't jump into the online world. The tech costs are high, shipping is a headache, and trust is a big deal. Many business owners just don't feel comfortable running their sales through the internet.

Meanwhile, it's incredibly easy for shoppers to tap a button and have something show up at their door. Sometimes we don't even remember ordering it. (If you've ever opened a package and said, "Who ordered this?"—surprise, it was you.) But every time that happens, our local shops lose out. And when they struggle, we all feel it—empty storefronts, fewer jobs, less tax revenue, and a community that starts to lose its spark.

The good news? We can turn this around.

That's where the Shop Local First Loyalty Card comes in—a simple, powerful way to keep our dollars local, support our neighbors, and make shopping fun again.

Why Shop Local First Matters

Shop Local First isn't just a catchy phrase—it's a community strategy. It's about keeping our towns strong, our businesses open, and our local economy thriving. And the Loyalty Card gives shoppers a real reason to choose local first: savings, rewards, and a stronger community.

Top Reasons to Support Shop Local First



- Keeps money circulating right here at home -
- Protects local jobs and helps create new ones -
- Builds real relationships—something online stores can't do -
- Helps fight inflation with Loyalty Card savings -
- Gets people off the couch and back into town -
- Preserves the unique character of each Hill Country community -
- Supports family-owned shops, dreamers, and entrepreneurs -
- Makes our towns more resilient and less dependent on big corporations -
- Encourages accountability and better customer service -
- Unites the whole community around a shared mission -

A Loyalty Card That Works for Everyone
The Shop Local First Loyalty Card makes supporting local businesses easy—and rewarding. Shoppers save money. Businesses get more customers. The community grows stronger. It's a win-win-win.

Always a Successful Start

Shop Local First proudly donates Loyalty Cards to all our First Responders and essential workers:

Hospital staff, medical professionals, police officers, sheriff deputies, DPS officers, firefighters, Schreiner University, and all our ISDs including Kerrville, Ingram, Fredericksburg, Bandera, and Boerne—plus all our city workers.

They serve us every day. This is one small way we serve them back.

And Here's Something Special

If you're a charity or nonprofit, Shop Local First will donate Loyalty Cards for you to sell — and you keep 100% of the proceeds.

It's one of the easiest fundraisers you'll ever run, and every card sold helps your mission and strengthens our local economy. That's community teamwork at its best.

2026: A Year of Growth—or a Year of Closures

Small businesses are at a turning point. Rising costs and shrinking margins mean

many are facing tough choices. The future of our Main Streets depends on us—our habits, our priorities, and our willingness to support the businesses that support our communities.

How to Join Shop Local First For Businesses:

Become a Shop Local First partner and start welcoming Loyalty Card shoppers. You'll gain visibility, community support, and a spot in a growing regional network dedicated to local success.

Call 830-377-9838 between 9 AM and 5 PM.

For Shoppers:

Grab your Shop Local First Loyalty Card and start saving every time you choose local. Your everyday purchases become a direct investment in your community's future.

For Charities & Nonprofits:

Request donated Loyalty Cards, sell them as a fundraiser, and keep 100% of the revenue. It's simple, effective, and community-powered.

2026 can be the year our small businesses thrive—or the year too many close their doors. The choice is ours. Shop Local First, support your neighbors, and help keep the Hill Country strong.

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Instant Gratification Advertising...Why

What It Is

You can see it happening in real time! A simple, incentive-driven system that turns customers into brand amplifiers via QR-driven sharing and prize entries.

Key Benefits

- **Boost Social Reach:** More shares/comments trigger platform algorithms to show your content to new audiences.
- **Capture Leads:** Collect names, emails, and phones for follow-up campaigns.
- **Cost-Effective Growth:** Leverage existing customers' networks instead of heavy ad spend.



Scan & Enter

Customer scans a branded QR code (placed in-store, on packaging, receipts, etc.) and enters minimal info to join a prize draw.

Share & Amplify

After entry, they click prominent buttons to share your page/post on social platforms (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, messaging). Pre-filled text makes sharing one tap.

Engage & Follow-Up

Their shares/comments boost your algorithmic reach. Automated emails thank them, announce winners, and invite further engagement (follow pages, redeem offers).

Why It Works

- Immediate Impact
- Network Effect
- Build Contact List
- Flexible Incentives
- Fast Deployment
- WE HANDLE EVERYTHING

Next Steps

Brief Discovery: Quick call to choose prizes, QR placements, and goals.

Setup & Test: We build the form, sharing page, and feedback elements; you review.

Launch & Monitor: Deploy QR codes; track scans, shares, and leads daily/weekly.

Optimize & Scale: Refine messaging or incentives; plan next campaign wave.



Advertise With Us

A new year always brings fresh attention. New plans. New visitors. New energy moving through the Texas Hill Country.

From January through March, our region fills with winter travelers, weekend explorers, and locals ready to try something new. It is a season when people are paying attention. That is why this issue of Hill Country Visitor Magazine matters.

Our publication is designed to meet readers where they already are. Inside the interactive digital magazine, your business is not competing for space. It is being discovered. Readers click, explore, and spend time learning about the places that make this region special. Your story lives alongside the Hill Country itself, not buried in noise.

What makes this different is what happens beyond the magazine.

Every advertiser is amplified across a wide network of trusted Texas Hill Country Facebook communities. These are established, local spaces where people share events, recommendations, and plans. From one town to the next, your business shows up consistently, creating

familiarity and recognition without you lifting a finger. We handle the distribution so you can stay focused on running your business.

For new advertisers, this season is a smart place to begin.

Visibility works best when it feels natural. When readers see your name in a polished publication and again in places they already trust, confidence builds. Conversations start. And your brand becomes part of the Hill Country rhythm.

If you are ready to introduce your business to a wider Hill Country audience this winter, we would love to welcome you into this issue.

Interested in being part of the next issue of Hill Country Visitor Magazine?

Reach out directly to

Matthew Lee Willis at 830-377-1987

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Amos Barton - Relentless Advocate for Justice In The Texas Hill Country



In the heart of Kerrville, Texas, where limestone buildings meet the rolling hills of the Guadalupe River Valley, one name has become synonymous with fierce advocacy, unwavering compassion, and transformative legal victories: Amos Barton. Founder of Barton Law Firm, Barton has built more than a practice, he's built a reputation as a protector of the vulnerable and a strategist for justice.

Amos Barton's journey into law wasn't born from ambition alone it was forged in the fires of empathy and a deep understanding of trauma. His firm, located at 301 Junction Highway in Kerrville, is more than a legal office; it's a sanctuary for those navigating the aftermath of life-altering events. Barton's approach is holistic, blending legal precision with emotional intelligence.

"When the unthinkable happens, you

need compassionate legal support backed by experience,” reads the firm’s homepage. This ethos is reflected in every case Barton takes on, whether it’s a complex personal injury suit or a high-stakes jury trial.

Barton Law Firm’s track record is staggering:

- \$16 million recovery for a sexual assault survivor
- 80 consecutive life sentences for a convicted child molester
- \$7.2 million settlement for a victim of negligent shooting

These aren’t just numbers, they’re lives changed, futures restored, and justice served. Barton’s courtroom victories have made headlines, but it’s his behind-the-scenes dedication that clients remember most.

One testimonial reads: “From start to finish, they provided me top-notch legal assistance.” Another client shared, “We have felt a tremendous relief that there is now closure with a positive outcome.”

What sets Amos Barton apart isn’t just his legal acumen, it’s his ability to navigate the emotional terrain of trauma. Traditional legal processes can often re-traumatize survivors. Barton’s firm actively works to counter that, offering a client-centered approach that prioritizes healing as much as verdicts.

His team’s expertise spans personal injury, strategic consulting, and tailored advisory services. Whether guiding a business through legal complexities or representing a family in crisis, Barton brings clarity, confidence, and care.

While Barton’s roots are firmly planted in

Kerrville, his influence stretches far beyond the Hill Country. The firm’s consulting arm offers strategic guidance to businesses and organizations across Texas. From medical professionals to entrepreneurs, Barton’s insights help clients navigate risk, compliance, and growth.

Barton’s work is especially vital in cases involving sexual assault, child abuse, and violent crime. These are areas where victims often feel silenced or overwhelmed by the legal system. Barton steps in not just as a lawyer, but as a fierce advocate.

“Your healing matters as much as your verdict,” a mantra that guides every interaction.

Beyond the courtroom, Barton is deeply embedded in the Kerrville community. His firm sponsors local events, supports nonprofits, and offers pro bono services when needed. He’s not just building a business, he’s building trust.

That trust is reflected in the firm’s 24/7 availability, multilingual support, and transparent communication. Barton Law Firm isn’t just accessible, it’s accountable.

Amos Barton is more than a lawyer, he’s a lifeline. In a world where justice can feel elusive, Barton brings it home. His blend of legal excellence, emotional intelligence, and community commitment makes him one of the most compelling figures in Texas law today.

Whether you’re a survivor seeking justice, a business navigating legal terrain, or a neighbor in need, **Amos Barton stands ready.**

Hill Country Events



Howdy, y'all! The Hill Country is stirring awake after winter's cool hush with a rich calendar of festivals, outdoor adventures, markets, and community gatherings that showcase our rugged landscape, local makers, and spirited towns. From Wild West rendezvous to farmers markets and seasonal climbs, this quarter invites you to get out under big skies, discover hidden trails, meet local storytellers, and savor the simple joys that make this place unforgettable. Here's your roundup of can't-miss events across the region for early 2026.

Kerrville Renaissance Festival

Dates: January 17 – February 1, 2026

Location: Kerr County Youth Event Center, Kerrville, TX

Step back into medieval times with this beloved Hill Country gathering. Enjoy costumed performances, artisan crafts, music, jousting demonstrations, and family-friendly enter-

tainment spread over three weekends of lively revelry. With period food and spirited atmosphere under Hill Country skies, this festival blends history with local hospitality.

[<GO>](#)

Heart of the Hills Farmers Market

Dates: Weekly Saturdays January 3 – March 28, 2026

Location: Downtown Kerrville, TX

This long-running farmers market fills downtown Kerrville with fresh local produce, hand-made goods, baked treats, and live Hill Country music. It's a perfect way to kickstart your weekend, meet growers and makers, and enjoy the community pulse. Seasonal blooms and artisans make each visit feel like a celebration of place.

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Inks Ranch Climbing & Camping Weekends

Dates: January 30–February 1, February 27–March 1, March 27–29, 2026

Location: Inks Ranch, near Llano, TX

For adventurous souls, this rare chance to access a private Hill Country ranch offers primitive camping and granite climbing akin to nearby Enchanted Rock. Limited tickets require reservations and gear prep, but the payoff is pure outdoor immersion and quiet nights under starlit hilltop horizons.

[<GO>](#)

Johnson City Rodeo & Roundup Events

Dates: Various weekends in January–March 2026

Location: Johnson City, TX

Johnson City's winter rodeo events bring authentic Western culture to life with barrel racing, bull riding, roping contests, and family-friendly shows. Whether you're a seasoned rodeo fan or a curious traveler, these gatherings offer a taste of Texas heritage and community spirit in a small-town setting.

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Fredericksburg Winter Lone Star Market

Dates: February 14–15, 2026 (example weekend market)

Location: Fredericksburg, TX

Celebrate midwinter with a vibrant market featuring local artisans, live entertainment, food trucks, and handcrafted wares. This seasonal market reflects the Hill Country's blend of German heritage and creative local culture, making it perfect for browsing and discovering unique gifts or local artwork.

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Boerne Market Days (Spring Kickoff)

Dates: March 21–22, 2026

Location: Boerne, TX

As spring edges closer, Boerne's historic downtown square comes alive with craftsmen, local food vendors, and musicians. Market Days mix traditional Hill Country charm with fresh seasonal energy

— a favorite with locals and visitors alike who enjoy strolling plazas and discovering regional makers.

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Wimberley Bluebonnet & Wildflower Weekend

Dates: March 28–29, 2026

Location: Wimberley, TX

Spring's signature arrival is marked with wildflower celebrations across Wimberley. Take scenic drives, enjoy pop-up art and music in the square, and gather for picnics among fields of bluebonnets and Indian paintbrushes — a vibrant, free-spirited way to welcome warmer days.

[<GO>](#)

Blanco Market Days – Spring Edition

Dates: March 20, 2026

Location: Historic Blanco Courthouse Square, Blanco, TX

A Hill Country classic returns with artisans, local food, folk music, and small-town conviviality. Wander booths shaded by oaks, chat with makers, and enjoy live tunes — all in the heart of Blanco's historic square, where community and craft are part of every handshake.

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As winter softens and spring edges into view, these early-year gatherings show how the Hill Country shakes off the cool, bringing people together with music, markets, outdoor adventure, and time-honored community traditions. Whether you're tasting a local's favorite biscuit at a farmers market, cheering at a rodeo, or chasing bluebonnets down a backroad, this season's events are stitched together by the warm welcome and rich heritage that define this landscape. Visit these corners of the region and you'll quickly see why every trail, festival, and friendly tin mug feels like part of our shared story.

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When Camels Walked the Hill Country

Written By Publisher



lot of doubt.

The soldiers at Camp Verde didn't know what to make of them. The camels spit, smelled terrible, and had a habit of scaring the horses half to death. But there was no denying their strength. They could carry over 600 pounds and go days without water. On long hauls, they outperformed traditional pack animals.

Still, the men didn't warm up to them. Camels are stubborn and proud, and not easily trained. It's hard to bond with something that stares at you like it's judging your life choices.

Then the Civil War hit. Confederate forces took over Camp Verde, and after the war, the Camel Corps lost its funding. Some camels were auctioned off, others escaped. For years afterward, folks claimed to see wild camels wandering the Texas hills. One was even spotted near Alpine as late as 1902.

Today, Camp Verde is a peaceful place with a charming general store and a bronze camel out front. It's a quiet reminder that this part of Texas has always been open to bold ideas, even if they come with humps.

Because here in the Hill Country, the truth is often just as strange and wonderful as the legends.

Before cars kicked up dust on Highway 173 and Hill Country ranchers ran cattle through these limestone hills, the U.S. Army tried something different. In 1856, just outside Kerrville, Camp Verde became home to one of the strangest military experiments in American history: the U.S. Camel Corps.

The idea came from Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, who believed camels might handle the heat, drought, and rocky terrain of the Southwest better than horses or mules. Congress approved the plan, and soon 34 camels were shipped from the Middle East to Texas.

They arrived with fanfare, and a whole



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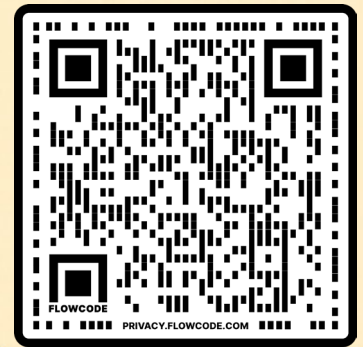
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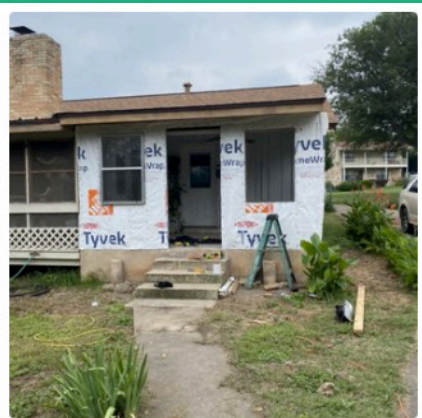
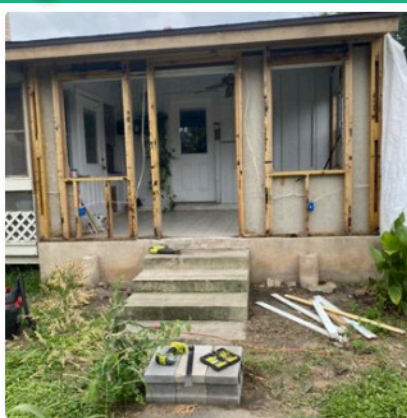
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Texas Mountain Laurel and the Gift of Patience

by Matthew Willis

Late winter in the Hill Country can feel like a holding pattern. The garden looks still. The soil is cool. The instinct is to do something. But some plants teach best when they ask us to wait, and Texas mountain laurel is one of them.

Mountain laurel is not a fast reward plant. It is slow to establish, slow to grow, and slow to forgive impatience. But once settled, it becomes one of the most reliable evergreen anchors in a Hill Country landscape. Its glossy leaves hold structure through drought and heat, and in late winter or early spring it offers clusters of purple flowers scented unmistakably like grape soda. When it blooms, you know exactly where you are. This plant belongs here. Native to rocky limestone slopes and dry creek edges, mountain laurel is built for thin soils and long dry spells. It does not want rich compost or constant watering.

What it wants is drainage, sun, and time. If you give it those three things, it will quietly do the rest.

Planting is best done from late fall through early spring while the soil is cool. Choose a spot with full sun to light shade and excellent drainage. If water lingers after rain, keep looking. Mountain laurel resents being planted too deep. Set the root ball so the crown sits slightly above grade. This plant evolved in lean ground and performs best when allowed to adapt.

Water deeply at planting to settle the soil, then back off. During the first year, water every ten to fourteen days if rainfall is lacking. After establishment, many mountain laurels need little supplemental water at all. Overwatering is a common cause of decline. If leaves yellow or drop in warm weather, it is often a sign of excess moisture rather than drought. Mulch lightly, no more than two

inches, keeping it pulled back from the trunk. Gravel mulch works well in limestone landscapes and helps reflect heat without trapping moisture. Organic mulch is fine too, as long as air can move freely around the base.

One of the quiet benefits of mountain laurel is its timing. When much of the garden is still waking up, its blooms provide early nectar for pollinators that are already on the move. Native bees visit first, followed by butterflies as temperatures warm. It is not a loud plant in the ecosystem, but it shows up when needed.

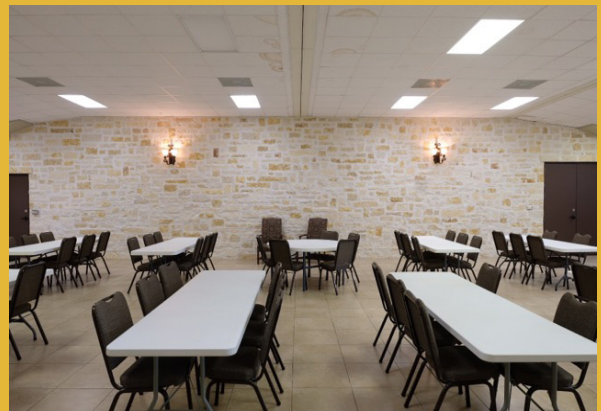
Cutting later removes next year's buds. Again, patience matters.

There is a lesson here that extends beyond one shrub. In a region prone to extremes, plants that endure are often the ones that ask the least. They do not rush. They do not demand constant inputs. They establish deep roots and wait for the right moment to respond. Mountain laurel reminds us that a good garden is not built by speed. It is built by observation, restraint, and trust in slow processes. As winter gives way to spring, watch for those purple clusters tucked among evergreen leaves. They are proof that even in a quiet season, the garden is still working. When you plant with patience, the land returns the favor.

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Tuskegee: When the Record Itself Became the Scandal

by Matthew Willis



Lean in.

Every so often, history hands us a story so well documented that disbelief is not an option. No whistleblower needed. No hidden files smuggled out at midnight. The paper trail is open, stamped, archived, and

signed. Tonight's entry is not about secrets uncovered. It is about a program that operated in plain sight for decades, quietly trusting that most people would never look too closely.

A Study Launched in Plain Sight

In 1932, the U.S. Public Health Service began a medical study in Macon County, Alabama, working with the Tuskegee Institute and local health officials [1]. The stated goal was to observe the natural course of untreated syphilis in Black men. Six hundred participants were enrolled. Roughly 399 had syphilis. The rest served as a control group [2].

The men were told they were being treated

for “bad blood,” a catch-all phrase used locally for various illnesses. They were offered meals, transportation, and burial insurance. They were not told the true purpose of the study, nor that treatment would be withheld [3].

From the beginning, the study relied on deception rather than consent.

When a Cure Existed and Was Denied

By the mid-1940s, penicillin had become the accepted and effective treatment for syphilis across the United States [4]. At that point, the ethical path was clear. Treatment should have been offered. The study should have ended. Instead, it continued.

Participants were actively prevented from receiving penicillin. Local physicians were instructed not to treat them. Even draft boards were contacted to ensure the men would not receive therapy through military service [5]. These decisions were made internally and maintained through routine administrative channels, not hidden actions taken by rogue individuals [6]. The suffering was not accidental. It was required for the study to proceed.

Consent That Was Never Given

The men never gave informed consent. They were not told they had syphilis. They were not told effective treatment existed. They were not told they were part of an experiment [7].

Medical procedures such as spinal taps were described as “special free treatment,” even though they were performed to collect data, not to help the patient [8]. Wives were exposed. Children were born with congenital syphilis. These outcomes were documented and included in the study's findings [9].

The harm extended beyond the original participants and into their families.



Forty Years of Institutional Routine

The Tuskegee Study ran from 1932 until 1972 [10]. It continued through multiple presidential administrations, wars, and major social change. During that time, results from the study were published in respected medical journals and discussed at professional conferences [11].

This was not a forgotten project buried in a filing cabinet. It became institutional routine. The study did not end because the system corrected itself. It ended because the public learned it was happening.

Exposure, Settlement, and Apology

In 1972, the Associated Press reported on the study after a Public Health Service employee disclosed its existence [12]. Public reaction was swift. The study was terminated within months.

A class-action lawsuit followed. In 1974, the federal government settled, providing financial compensation and lifetime medical benefits to survivors and eligible family members [13].

In 1997, President Bill Clinton formally apologized on behalf of the United States, acknowledging that the study was “morally wrong” and violated basic principles of human dignity [14].

Why This Still Matters

Tuskegee is often framed as a historical anomaly. It was not.

The study directly led to modern informed consent standards and the creation of institutional review boards governing human research [15]. It also contributed to lasting mistrust of medical institutions, particularly within Black communities, a reality documented by federal health agencies and researchers [16].

Trust, once broken at an institutional level, does not repair itself quickly.

Not a Theory. The Record.

There is no dispute about whether the Tuskegee Syphilis Study occurred. It is documented through government reports, congressional hearings, court records, medical journals, and official apologies.

No speculation is required. The record is sufficient.

The most unsettling detail is not that the abuse happened, but that it was sustained, funded, and normalized for forty years under the banner of public health.

Next Steps

Read the documents. Trace the timelines. Pay attention to how long it took for the system to stop itself. Curiosity does not demand fear, only attention.

Next time, we will move from human experimentation to a very different kind of facility, one built openly in Alaska, where questions arise not from secrecy, but from capability.

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<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3694209/physics>, and a facility in Alaska that exists, operates openly, and inspires very different kinds of questions.

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Hill Country Visitor Magazine Is Growing and So Is Your Opportunity

by Publisher



The Hill Country isn't just a place. From the winding rivers to the town squares, from back-porch concerts to bustling farmers markets, our region is bursting with beauty, culture, and small business spirit.

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The Wait That Matters

by Matthew Willis

Out in the Hill Country woods, silence has a way of talking back to you. It settles in and forces you to slow down, whether you want to or not. That morning, I felt prepared. I had my spot picked, my rifle steady, and my plan clear. All that was left was for the woods to cooperate.

Then a doe stepped out.

She was close. Close enough that impatience started doing math in my head. Meat is meat. A freezer needs filling. A man's duty is to provide, and opportunities do not always linger. I felt the pull to take what was being offered and be done with it.

But I paused.

I lowered the rifle just enough and said a quiet prayer. Nothing polished. Just a moment of surrender. Then I waited.

Waiting in the woods is different than waiting anywhere else. There is no clock to blame, no noise to distract you. Just your own thoughts, exposed. Mine were restless. I could feel how badly I wanted control, how easily patience slips when provision feels urgent.

Minutes passed. Time stretched the way it only does when you stop forcing it.

Then the brush moved again. A buck stepped out, calm and deliberate, antlers catching the

light just enough to make the lesson clear. He moved like he had all the time in the world. I waited until the moment was right, then took the shot clean and true.

As I worked afterward, the weight of it settled in. This was not just about hunting. It was about restraint. About trusting that waiting does not mean wasting time. It means honoring the process.

Providing for your family is a responsibility, but so is patience. We live in a world that rewards speed and grabbing what comes first. The Hill Country teaches something quieter. Seeds take time. Rain cannot be rushed. And some things only come when you prove you can wait without forcing the outcome.

That morning reminded me that impatience often disguises itself as practicality. Patience, on the other hand, requires trust.

I walked out of the woods grateful, not just for what I carried, but for what I was reminded of. Waiting is not weakness. It is obedience lived out slowly, one decision at a time.

Sometimes the most important thing a man brings home is not the harvest itself, but the wisdom learned while standing still.



New Restaurants Worth Visiting

by Editor

**Roxie's Southern Comfort**

Buda, TX — Opening: Mid-January 2026

Chef and barbecue legend Scott Roberts (of Salt Lick BBQ fame) is bringing a heartfelt slice of Texas hospitality to Buda's Mill & Grain Co. community with Roxie's Southern Comfort. Named in tribute to his grandmother Roxanna, the menu leans into classic Southern dishes — think crispy fried chicken, chicken-fried steak, creamy mashed potatoes, honey-topped rolls, and other comforting favorites. Roberts' reputation for bold yet balanced flavors elevates familiar dishes without losing their roots, blending rustic charm with thoughtful technique. With historic mill vibes and recipes built on family tradition, Roxie's promises to be a warm gathering spot for friends and diners craving truly soulful cooking. [CHECK IT OUT](#)

Carmella's Pizza Parlor

Boerne, TX — Opening: January 2026

From the team behind beloved 28 Songs Brewhouse + Kitchen comes Carmella's Pizza Parlor, a vintage-style pizzeria slated for Boerne's burgeoning dining scene. Inspired by owner Don Kretz's Sicilian heritage and crafted with old-world techniques, Carmella's will serve crisp thin-crust pizzas alongside Detroit-style deep-dish pies, handmade meatballs, pastas, salads, and gelato. With red-and-white checkered accents and a nod to classic Italian-American neighborhood eateries, the space aims to be lively and family-friendly perfect for date nights, group dinners, or pizza lovers seeking scratch-made perfection in Keto Country. Chef Zachary Disch, formerly of Z's Pizza, joins the project, bringing local credibility and craft expertise. [CHECK IT OUT](#)

UBP Burgers

New Braunfels, TX — Opening: Mid-January 2026

A Hill Country road-food favorite is moving from parking lot to storefront. UBP Burgers, the cult-loved New Braunfels food truck known for its signature donut-shaped burger (juicy center meets caramelized outer ring), is opening a brick-and-mortar. Burgers remain the star, but expect a full comfort-food lineup including crispy chicken sandwiches, loaded fries, and shakes to match. For years, fans have chased the truck for its perfectly balanced beef, thoughtful toppings, and unapologetic devotion to meat quality. The transition to a permanent space signals not just growth but community demand and it gives locals a reliable place to grab premium burgers without the food-truck chase. [CHECK IT OUT](#)

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Jan Through March In The Hill Country

by Matthew Willis

January in the Hill Country has a way of fooling us. One week brings hard frost and quiet beds, the next offers a stretch of blue skies and soft afternoons that feel like spring knocking early. This quarter is about paying attention. The garden is not asleep. It is resting, gathering strength, and waiting for small signals that tell it when to move. For the gardener, these months are less about rushing and more about setting the tone for the year ahead. What you do now shapes everything that follows.

The first task of the season is care, not planting. Winter weather compacts soil, especially after holiday foot traffic and heavy rains. Before seeds ever touch the ground, loosen beds gently and top them with compost. This feeds

soil life that never truly stops working, even in cold weather. A thin layer of mulch helps regulate temperature swings and protects roots from sudden freezes. Resist the urge to overwork the soil. Early winter preparation is about readiness, not disruption.

February brings momentum. Cool season vegetables planted earlier often pick up speed now. Lettuce, spinach, kale, and arugula respond to lengthening days with fresh growth. These greens thrive in the steady rhythm of cool nights and mild afternoons. Thin seedlings so they have room to breathe, and harvest lightly to encourage regrowth. This is the reward season for patience. While summer crops still feel far away, these quiet harvests remind you the garden is already providing.

Pruning takes center stage this time of year. Roses benefit from a thoughtful winter cut before new growth begins. Remove dead wood, open the center, and shape for airflow. Fruit trees and berry shrubs should be pruned while still dormant, focusing on structure rather than size. Clean tools between plants and take your time. Good pruning now prevents disease and sets the framework for strong spring growth.

By late February and early March, planting begins again, carefully and deliberately. Potatoes can go in the ground once the soil is workable. Onion sets and transplants find their place in prepared beds. Peas climb trellises with enthusiasm, and carrots and beets appreciate the cool soil. This is also the moment to start warm season seeds indoors. To-

atoes, peppers, and herbs like basil need a head start to be ready when the danger of frost finally passes.

The Hill Country is famous for its wildflowers, and this quarter is when the promise is most visible. Bluebonnet rosettes hug the ground, soaking up sunlight. Indian paintbrush and coreopsis show early signs of life. Leave these areas undisturbed. What looks messy now becomes a landscape worth waiting for. Pollinators notice too. Native bees begin emerging on warm days, searching for early blooms. Even a small patch of flowering plants can make a difference at this point in the season.

Watering habits shift during these months. Winter rains often do the work for you, but dry spells still happen. Check soil moisture before watering. Overwatering during cool weather invites disease and weak roots. The goal is consistency, not saturation. Containers dry out faster than in ground beds, especially on sunny days, so keep an eye on them.

March feels like a turning point. The garden stretches, growth quickens, and plans become visible. Weeds

wake up too, and early attention saves effort later. A quick pull while soil is moist keeps them manageable. Add compost where beds look tired. Repair trellises and edging before plants fill in. These small jobs keep the garden functional as activity increases.

This quarter is also for observation. Notice where frost lingers longest and where warmth arrives first. Watch how water moves across your property after rain. These patterns guide smarter planting and placement as spring unfolds. Gardening in the Hill Country rewards those who watch closely.

By the end of March, the garden feels alive again. Greens fill the kitchen, seed trays crowd sunny windows, and the soil smells rich and active. The rush of spring is coming, but these months remind us that good gardens are built quietly. January through March is not about waiting for the season to start. It is the season beginning, one careful step at a time.

YOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Prepare soil early with compost and light mulch to protect against winter swings.

Harvest and maintain cool season greens like lettuce, spinach, kale, and arugula.

Prune roses, fruit trees, and shrubs while plants are still dormant.

Plant potatoes, onions, peas, carrots, and beets as soil becomes workable.

Start tomatoes, peppers, and herbs indoors for a strong spring transition.

Monitor moisture carefully and avoid overwatering during cool weather.

Observe frost patterns, drainage, and early pollinator activity as spring approaches.

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The streets of Ingram sparkled with holiday cheer this past Saturday as the town gathered for its beloved annual Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting Ceremony. With crisp skies and perfect weather, families lined the expanded parade route, eager to celebrate the season in true community spirit.

A Parade of Wonder

This year's parade was nothing short of spectacular, featuring 27 dazzling floats that glowed with creativity and festive flair. The enlarged route carried the procession through Ingram to Riverside Drive at Citywest, where the grand finale awaited.

Floats came not only from local businesses and organizations but also from neighboring communities—including Comfort and the Hunt Fire Department—adding to the sense of unity and celebration.

Children squealed with delight as Santa and Mrs. Claus made their much-anticipated arrival from the North Pole, waving and wishing everyone a merry Christmas.

Music, Magic, and the Tree Lighting

As the floats gathered at Citywest, the evening crescendoed with the Symphony filling the air with timeless Christmas melodies. Anticipation built as the crowd joined in a countdown from five... and with a burst of light, Ingram's Christmas tree illuminated the night sky.

Gasps, cheers, and applause echoed as the tree became a radiant beacon of holiday joy—its glow reflecting the warmth of community togetherness.

And of course, no celebration would be complete without hot chocolate and cookies, generously provided alongside the tree lighting by Shop Local First, whose sponsorship made the evening even sweeter. Served more than 250 spectators.



Parade Winners

The parade competition crowned its champions with well-deserved recognition:

- 1st Place: Lowe's Home Improvement
- 2nd Place: 2JC Construction
- 3rd Place: Kountry Kurl Salon
- Honorable Mention: TJ Moore Lumber

Bill, General Manager at Lowe's, captured the spirit of the evening perfectly:

"It was the best parade ever—because of the Symphony music, the tree lighting ceremony, and best of all, hot chocolate and cookies."

Gratitude and Community Spirit

Events like these shine brightest thanks to dedicated hands and generous hearts.

Special appreciation goes to:

- Joe Ochoa, for delivering the Christmas tree and helping assemble it
- Twanda Brown, always ready to lend a hand helped line out all our floats.
- Marcus Willis from Sysco Foods, and his

family for serving the hot chocolate and cookies

- Evelyn Miller, who helped secure the parade judges and location
- Judges: Tricia and Mike Hanley, Joan and Mike Fischer, Diana Johns
- Citywest Event Center, for their generosity in hosting the gathering on their property
- Shop Local First, proud sponsor of the advertising and coordination of the event
- Symphony of the Hills, for filling the evening with Christmas music

And of course, heartfelt thanks to all participants, volunteers, and attendees who made this year's celebration unforgettable.

As the lights twinkled and music lingered in the air, Ingram once again proved that when a community comes together, magic happens. The Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting Ceremony wasn't just an event—it was a memory etched into the heart of the town.

Thank you to everyone who played a part in making this the best parade yet.



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The Butter Board that Stole the Table

by Matthew Willis

I'll admit it. The first time I saw butter spread across a board like it was the main event, I laughed a little. Butter has always been something you pass, not something you present. It lives quietly beside the bread, doing its job without fanfare. Turning it into the centerpiece felt a little dramatic. Then I tried it. And just like that, I understood why people keep talking about butter boards.

At its heart, a butter board is exactly what it sounds like. Soft butter, spread thick and generous across a wooden board, then finished with whatever flavors suit the moment. Flaky salt, cracked pepper, fresh herbs, honey, roasted garlic, citrus zest. It is simple, but it feels indulgent. The kind of indulgence that makes people slow down, tear off another piece of bread, and linger a little longer around the table.

What makes the butter board work is not novelty alone. It is the familiarity. Butter is comforting. It reminds people of warm rolls, Sunday dinners, and hands reaching across the table. By laying it out in the open, you invite people to gather instead of rush. Around here in the Hill Country, that matters. Meals are rarely just about eating. They are about visiting, catching up, and staying put until the sun dips low.

A butter board fits right in with that rhythm. Set it out while the grill warms up or as guests wander in the door. It does not ask for much attention, but it rewards curiosity. Someone will ask what is on it.

Someone else will suggest another topping. Before you know it, the board is half gone and everyone has an opinion about their favorite bite.

The beauty of it is how adaptable it can be. Keep it sweet with honey and cinnamon for brunch. Go savory with herbs and roasted garlic for dinner. Add a little heat with chili flakes if you want to wake people up. There is no wrong direction, only what sounds good that day.

If you are hosting and want something easy that still feels special, this is it. No cooking. No last-minute stress. Just good butter, good bread, and good company. Sometimes that is all a table really needs.





Ingredients

1 to 2 sticks good-quality butter, softened
Flaky sea salt
Freshly cracked black pepper
Fresh herbs like thyme, rosemary, or parsley
Optional toppings: honey, roasted garlic, lemon zest, chili flakes
Sliced bread, rolls, or crackers for serving

The Steps

Let the butter sit at room temperature until soft and spreadable. You want it smooth, not melting.

Using a spoon or butter knife, spread the butter evenly across a wooden board or serving platter. Thick is better than thin here.

Sprinkle flaky salt and black pepper over the butter. Add herbs and any optional toppings you like, spacing them out so every scoop gets something interesting.

Serve immediately with bread or crackers. Encourage people to dig in and make it their own.

That is it. Simple, bold, and surprisingly memorable.

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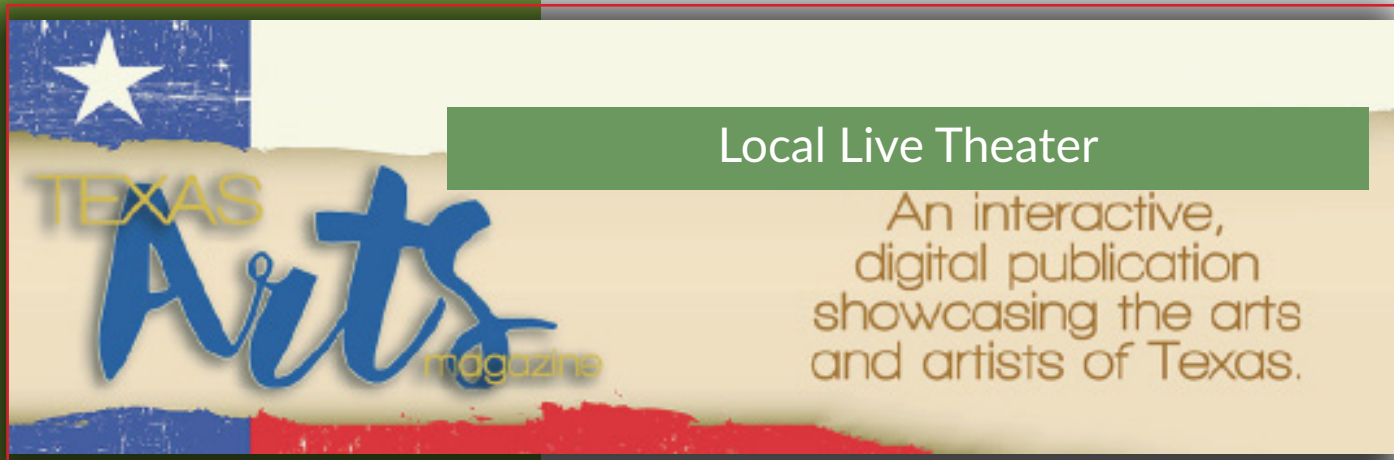
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The DMA's winter season balances immersive contemporary work with global material traditions. January through March is an ideal time to linger in galleries that favor repetition, detail, and close looking, paired with a steady rhythm of public access programs.



Return to Infinity: Yayoi Kusama

A mesmerizing plunge into Kusama's polka-dotted universe, where repetition becomes both meditation and excess. The installation invites viewers to lose their sense of scale and self. On view through January 18, 2026.

Constellations: Contemporary Jewelry

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Not Visible to the Naked Eye: Inside a Senufo Helmet Mask

Ivory carvings and ceremonial symbolism reveal layers of spiritual and artistic meaning within Senufo traditions. The presentation is quiet, reverent, and deeply focused. On view through February 1, 2026.

Creatures and Captives: Painted Textiles of the Ancient Andes

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On view through February 26, 2026.

Please note that exhibition dates are subject to change. For the most current information, visit the Dallas Museum of Art's official website.

<https://www.dma.org/>

Kimbell Art Museum

3333 Camp Bowie Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76107-2792
Main: 817-332-8451

<https://kimbellart.org>

The Kimbell's winter offerings emphasize permanence and proportion. Classical forms and carefully curated selections make this season especially suited to reflective viewing and architectural calm.

Myth and Marble: Ancient Roman Sculpture from the Torlonia Collection

Fifty-eight monumental marble sculptures, many never before seen in the U.S., present Roman ideals of power, beauty, and legacy with striking immediacy. On view through January 25, 2026.



Kimbell Permanent Collection Highlights

European masterworks, ancient Mediterranean objects, and Asian art anchor the museum's year-round identity. Winter light enhances the galleries' restraint and clarity. Ongoing.

Members' Exhibition Tours

Docent-led explorations offer deeper context into both special and permanent collections. Select dates January–March.

Asian Art Installations

Focused presentations of sculpture and scroll painting highlight material sensitivity and spiritual depth. Ongoing.

Please note that exhibition dates and details are subject to change. It's advisable to check the museum's official website for the most current information before planning your visit.

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

3200 Darnell Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76107
1.866.824.5566

<https://www.themodern.org>

Winter at the Modern favors emotional intensity and material experimentation. The season's exhibitions engage the human body, transformation, and contemporary anxieties through scale and surface.

Jenny Saville: The Anatomy of Painting

Saville's emotionally charged canvases confront flesh, vulnerability, and identity with unflinching honesty and painterly force. On view through January 18, 2026.



David-Jeremiah: The Fire This Time

An immersive installation of polychrome wood forms envelops viewers in themes of renewal and reckoning. On view through November 2, 2025.

Modern Collection: Postwar Abstraction

Selections from the museum's core holdings explore gesture, color, and form in postwar art. Ongoing.

Photography and New Media Installations

Rotating works examine perception and time through lens-based practices. Ongoing.



Museum of Fine Arts Houston

1001 Bissonnet
Houston, Texas 77005M
713.639.7300

<https://www.mfah.org>

MFAH's winter programming leans expansive, offering cross-disciplinary exhibitions that span sculpture, design, and contemporary practice within a global framework.

BLOCK 10: Celebrating a Decade of the BLOCK Program

A retrospective of advanced studio artists from the Glassell School, highlighting experimentation across media. On view through December 2025.

Highlights from the Permanent Collection

Modern and contemporary masterworks anchor the museum's winter season with depth and breadth. Ongoing.

Decorative Arts and Design Installations

Focused galleries examine craft traditions and modern design dialogues. Ongoing.

Modern Sculpture Galleries

Large-scale works emphasize material presence and spatial relationships. Ongoing.

San Antonio Museum of Art

200 West Jones Avenue
San Antonio, TX 78215
210.978.8100

<https://www.samuseum.org>

Set along the river, SAMA's winter exhibitions highlight cross-cultural conversations and material traditions that bridge painting, pottery, and history.

Canvas to Clay: Georgia O'Keeffe & Maria Martinez to Mata Ortiz & Tonalá

Paintings and pottery enter dialogue across regions and generations, revealing shared visual languages.

On view through October 4, 2026.

Art and Life in Imperial Rome: Trajan and His Times

Artifacts, sculpture, and daily objects reconstruct Rome at its imperial height. On view through January 25, 2026.



Ancient Mediterranean Collection

Sculpture and vessels anchor the museum's classical holdings. Ongoing.

Asian Art Galleries

Focused installations highlight spiritual and aesthetic traditions.

For the most current information on these exhibitions and related events, please visit the San Antonio Museum of Art's official website.

McNay Art Museum

6000 N New Braunfels Ave,
San Antonio, TX 78209
(210) 824-5368

<https://www.mcnayart.org>

The McNay's winter season pairs modernist foundations with regional voices, offering exhibitions that feel both grounded and exploratory.



O' Powa O' Meng: The Art and Legacy of Jody Folwell

A vibrant survey celebrating Folwell's influence on contemporary ceramic art. On view through January 4, 2026.

Gyula Kosice: Intergalactic

Neon-lit kinetic sculptures imagine utopian futures shaped by water, light, and air. On view through early 2026.

Modernist Painting Galleries

Selections from the McNay's core holdings emphasize color, form, and experimentation. Ongoing.

Sculpture Court Installations

Rotating works activate the museum's outdoor spaces. Ongoing.

The Point Theater

120 Point Theatre Road, Ingram, Texas 78025

The Hill Country Arts Foundation (HCAF)/Point Theatre is located on the banks of the Guadalupe River off State Highway 39 in Ingram, Texas. HCAF provides a cultural atmosphere, including art classes and theatre for professionals and amateurs, plus special children's programs.

[See the 2026-theatre-season here](#)

Playhouse 2000

The Kathleen C. Cailloux City Center for the Performing Arts in beautiful downtown Kerrville, TX includes the 800 seat Cailloux Theater, the intimate VK Garage Theater black box, and the Kit Werlein Annex support facility. All facilities and programming are managed by Playhouse 2000, a production and community theater performance company with over 20 years history bringing great entertainment to the Hill Country. Playhouse 2000 is also proud to offer their own productions at the Cailloux City Center. We hope to see you soon!

[See the Playhouse 2000 season here](#)

SYMPHONY OF THE HILLS

The Hills Are Alive With Music



A SEASON OF INSPIRATION: 2025–2026

Join us for a spectacular new season of live symphonic music at Kerrville's beautiful Cailloux Theater. From classical masterworks to jazz-infused pops, Symphony of the Hill brings world-class performances to the heart of the Hill Country.

Upcoming Concert Highlights

A Time to Dance – All That Jazz

Saturday, January 3, 2026 – 7 PM

Celebrate jazz as a uniquely American art form with rhythm, swing, and soul.

Tatiana Dorokhova in Concert

Thursday, February 26, 2025 – 7 PM

Featuring acclaimed soloist Tatiana Dorokhova and a full orchestra of professional musicians and advanced students.



*Reserve in the Next
Generation.*

Five-Concert Season • Professional Orchestra • Local Impact

Symphony of the Hills presents a five-concert season each year, performed by a 75-member professional orchestra. Concerts are held at the Cailloux Theater, with pre-concert receptions begin a c.

BE PART OF THE MUSIC. BE PART OF 2026 Season

Visit SymphonyoftheHills.org for tickets, donations, and season d etails.

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