

A PUBLICATION OF VISIT THE WOODLANDS

PATHWAYS

NEW IN TOWN

Charm Thai Kitchen & Bar

HOW IT BEGAN

The Republic Grille

Q&A

With Constance McDerby





Visit The Woodlands Board of Directors and Officers (from left to right): President Nick Wolda, Cameron Klepac, Jennifer Gohagan, Vice Chairman Linda Nelson, Chairman Brad Bailey, Secretary/Treasurer Richard Franks, Kim Lowe, Jenny Taylor, Monique Sharp

Welcome to Pathways

Visit The Woodlands is excited to introduce *Pathways* to *The Woodlands Community Magazine*. In this quarterly publication, we'll highlight various business owners and community members who make The Woodlands a great place to live and visit. We'll also share snapshots of how The Woodlands has grown—and how tourism works behind the scenes to boost our economy.

As the official destination marketing organization, Visit The Woodlands is responsible for marketing our community as a premier destination for business and leisure travel. One of the primary ways we do this is

by shining a spotlight on the shops, restaurants, and attractions that make The Woodlands so unique. Although we often frequent our local businesses as residents of The Woodlands, we don't always know the stories behind them—the “pathways” that led them here, if you will. These stories create the fabric of our community. We hope that in sharing them with you, you'll feel more connected to this great place we call home—and encourage others to come experience the beauty of The Woodlands.

Learn more about Visit The Woodlands at: visitthewoodlands.com/about.

VISIT THE WOODLANDS STAFF MEMBERS

Nick Wolda, President
Elizabeth Eddins, Executive Director
Ashley White, Director of Marketing
Josie Lewis, Director of Sales
Ashley Fenner, Senior Sales Specialist

Ryan Greenwood, Senior Sales Specialist
Amber George, Social Media Coordinator
Mary Murphy, Public Relations Coordinator
Julie Quinn, Servicing Specialist
Carla Montelongo, Administrative Analyst

Why The Woodlands

Sixty Vines

“We were drawn to Market Street due to its premier location and knew it would be the perfect spot for Sixty Vines. The support has been incredible, and we've appreciated the opportunity to share our commitment to sustainability and passion for exceptional wines with this community.”

Jeff Carcara
CEO of Sixty Vines



The Woodlands Team | Located in Market Street



Rick and Lisa De Armas | Located in Alden Bridge Village Center

Pure Green

“Pure Green was born out of our love for healthy living and our desire to create a space where our community in The Woodlands could access nutritious options in a welcoming environment. As residents ourselves, my husband, Rick, and I have always cherished the vibrant shopping and dining scene, the natural beauty.”

Lisa De Armas
Pure Green Owner

How it Began

The Republic Grille

📍 4775 W Panther Creek, Ste 490
The Woodlands, TX 77381

In the late 90s, Terry McBurney relocated his family from Houston to The Woodlands—back when Woodlands Parkway stopped at Kuykendahl and a wooden sign from the 70s still greeted commuters.

As The Woodlands Mall and Market Street grew into the scene, he watched regional and national restaurant chains move in. “But there was a void of locally owned restaurants,” said Terry. “I envisioned a concept that could preserve the roots of The Woodlands.” When a commercial space in Panther Creek Village Center hit the market in 2014, he saw his opportunity.

Though he had no restaurateur experience, he was a self-made entrepreneur with a plan centered on his desire for a “modern-day Cheers,” highlighting The Woodlands history through positive culture built on accountability and professionalism.

MUST-TRY ITEMS

Chicken Fried Steak

Chicken Marsala

Cobbler, “Off the Wall Good”
— Terry

Tres Leches

The Republic Burger

📍 30340 FM 2978, Ste 800
Magnolia, TX 77354

Working with photographer Ted Washington to obtain historic photos of the community’s founder, Mr. George Mitchell, and gathering old newspaper articles for display, he adorned the walls with the historic beginnings of The Woodlands. From a bio outlining Mr. Mitchell’s education at Texas A&M to Frank Sinatra performing one of the first concerts at The Pavilion, The Republic Grille patrons can step back in time to the first days of The Woodlands.



*“You must stay the course
and always seek to improve.
This really is a community,
and it’s all about giving back.”*

— Terry McBurney

The Republic Grille quickly became the local lunch and dinner hotspot. Terry filled his menu with Southern, Texas-centric dishes, inspired by his grandmothers and his upbringing in Augusta, Georgia. Outside of supply chain issues, Terry says he’s never removed anything from the menu—just added a few new customer favorites.

“In the beginning, I can’t say everything we did was spot-on. We just had this desire to offer dishes we loved. This is what we like, so we’re putting it on the menu,” Terry laughed. “Apparently, everyone else liked it, too.”



Blackberry Cobbler (The Republic Grille)

**RANKED
TOP 10**

Best of the Best
Everyday Eats
in the U.S.

by TripAdvisor
(2022, 2023)

“We actually exceeded our original sales goals in the first year,” Terry said. “I couldn’t believe it. Afterward, it became very clear that we had something special.” Although multiple restaurants weren’t

part of the initial plan, after two successful years at Panther Creek, Terry opened a second location off FM 2978—this time highlighting the local story and history of Montgomery County. Terry expanded again in 2020, opening a Spring location on Grand Parkway 99. Now, he’s developing a Conroe location.

The Republic Grille continues to prioritize community, giving back to local schools, veterans, police officers, and first responders.



*“We’re continually building
on the solid foundation we
developed when we first
opened The Republic Grille.
That’s our mainstay.”*

— Terry McBurney



The Republic Grille owner, Terry McBurney

Photos courtesy of The Republic Grille and Visit The Woodlands



New in Town

Charm Thai Kitchen & Bar

4223 Research Forest, Ste 100
The Woodlands, TX 77381

Wanalee and Adam Gorelick are elevating authentic Thai food in The Woodlands with their friend and business partner, Ann Middleton. Charm Thai Kitchen & Bar, which officially opened in May, is quickly becoming a must-visit for local foodies.

“We’ve had a really great welcome,” said Wanalee. “Sometimes people feel like The Woodlands is a bubble and don’t want to leave just for food, so we brought the best Thai experiences home.”

Prior to opening Charm Thai Kitchen & Bar, Wanalee and Adam saw success with Charm Thai Bistro in Spring. Charm Thai Bistro was their third endeavor, featuring authentic

dishes and notable hospitality that led to a dedicated following and the opportunity to expand.

They set their sights on The Woodlands and planned with Ann to raise the bar through specialized decor, a unique bar program, and clever menu items.

At the corner of Research Forest Drive and Technology Forest Boulevard, Charm Thai Kitchen & Bar has established itself as the place for date nights, business lunches, and celebrations. Guests can enjoy the spacious dining area and a private dining room that seats 24. Additionally, Adam’s bar program offers fresh-squeezed juices, in-house infusions, and a large selection of whiskeys.

Of course, the Thai dishes are the main attraction. Wanalee and Ann, both from Thailand, emphasize authenticity and freshness. The new location in The Woodlands is also home to Chefs Opa and Oudy, who have 30+ years of experience creating and curating Thai dishes.

“Adam, our chefs, and I collaborate on the menu,” said Wanalee. “Each week, we get together to summarize what we learned from our customers and make updates based on suggestions.”

Much of the original menu came from Charm Thai Bistro in Spring, but there are a handful of items exclusive to The Woodlands—like the pad thai sauce and khao soi. These recipes are passed down from Chef Opa’s grandmother, who once owned a restaurant in North Thailand.

While Chefs Opa and Oudy have elevated the authentic Thai cuisine, Ann has ensured that the hospitality at Charm Thai Kitchen & Bar is unmatched. Wanalee and Adam have poured their all into it, selling their previous businesses—Noe’s Crepes, Coffee & Tea in The Woodlands and Thai Kitchen in Sugar Land—and using proceeds to renovate their new space. Wanalee and Adam are no strangers to business risks. They both left medical school to pursue their



Chor-Muang

restaurant passions, starting with Noe’s Crepes, Coffee & Tea. With Ann by their side, the team is excited to bring a new local spot to The Woodlands—where all three live and where Adam grew up.

“We don’t cut corners,” said Wanalee. “We all want to bring high quality and freshness to The Woodlands.”

“

“We brought the best Thai experiences home.”

— Wanalee Gorelick

Red Curry | Phuket Old Fashioned | Thai BBQ Ribs with Fried Rice

MUST-TRY DISHES

The Woodlands Sample

Spring rolls, seed rolls, dumplings, crab wontons

Shrimp Cake

Thai BBQ Ribs with Fried Rice

Made from Adam’s in-house smoked brisket and ribs

Handmade Flower Dumplings



Charm Thai Kitchen & Bar owners Adam Gorelick, Ann Middleton, and Wanalee Gorelick

Photos courtesy of Charm Thai Kitchen & Bar



with Constance McDerby

Founder of Wine & Food Week

The start of summer in The Woodlands is always sweeter with Wine & Food Week's renowned events during the first week of June. Constance McDerby, CEO of Food & Vine Time Productions and Founder of Wine & Food Week, continues to elevate the experience and find new ways to give back to the community. This year marks 20 years of Wine & Food Week in The Woodlands, and the bar—or more aptly, glass—is raised higher each year.



Q. What's the story behind Wine & Food Week?

A. When I moved from New Orleans to Houston in 2000, it blew my mind that there was no multi-day, multi-faceted wine and culinary event in our area. I launched a Galveston Food and Vine Time Event in 2002, and after two successful years, I approached HEB to see if they'd be interested in sponsoring. They didn't have stores in Galveston and weren't planning to for years, but they told me they'd be

open to sponsoring if I did something similar in The Woodlands, where they were building their new signature style store (now at Market Street).

Seven months later, we launched our very first Wine & Food Week in The Woodlands. We sold out 22 of our 24 events, and the rest is history. We still have those initial partnerships in place, and Wine & Food Week is now the largest culinary event in the region, from New Orleans to Aspen.

Q. What's your favorite thing about Wine & Food Week each year?

A. It's the people. The people behind the scenes blow me away. The relationships that the volunteers have created with each other and what they're willing to do in support of the community and support of the overall mission are incredible.

Q. How do you give back to local charities?

A. As a company, we've created a platform of raising two million over our 20 years for deserving nonprofits in Montgomery County. We gift them with wine and experiences that they can raffle off, and the donations go directly to them. It gives them a platform and a space unencumbered where they're able to meet patrons in the area and open up conversations for future appointments, future direct donations, and future volunteer days.

Q. What can people expect at the events?

A. An unforgettable experience. We fly chefs in from across the country and around the world—Italy, France, Portugal. We had a whole culinary team from Peru come one year, and in the past, we've brought in the Chef to the Royal Family, the Chef to the White House, and the first 3-star Michelin chef from England.



Our commitment is to raise a glass, share a laugh, meet a new friend, and take it all in. That's how we build this community.

Q. Do you have any other culinary events throughout the year?

A. Yes, we have the Platinum Wine Vault Ultra Collectors Tasting in September for the dedicated wine collectors, and the HEB Wine Walk in October, where guests can enjoy wine tasting and light bites from local restaurants.

Come join us! Let us celebrate you and your wine and culinary journey.

Our commitment is to raise a glass, share a laugh, meet a new friend, and take it all in. That's how we build this community.



Storytellers & Matchmakers

How Meetings Work in The Woodlands

Showcasing The Woodlands as a Premier Meetings Destination

Meetings in The Woodlands play a key role in the economic vitality of the community.

As the official Destination Marketing and Management Organization of The Woodlands Township, The Woodlands Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) is a 501(c)(6) organization led by a volunteer board of directors, with a staff that works diligently for those valuable tourism and convention/meeting dollars.

“Storytellers and Matchmakers” is a common phrase in the CVB office. While our marketing team tells the story of The Woodlands as a business and leisure destination, our sales and tourism team matches



meeting planners and event organizers with the right people and places of The Woodlands.

Residents and businesses, we’d love you to be a part of our efforts positioning The Woodlands as a meetings destination.

Why is this important?

The Woodlands has 14 hotels with 2,254 total rooms available each night. Sales, hotel, and mixed-use beverage tax makes up between 55% and 60% of the overall Township budget—which helps keep the Township tax rate low. The State of Texas shows travel and

tourism employs more than 4,000 people, pumping a total of \$439M of direct travel spending into The Woodlands. (Source: Travel Texas Research)

Meetings and conventions in The Woodlands

Visit The Woodlands recently hosted an event called “Connect Texas,” an annual conference that brings together more than 50 meeting planners for networking and education.

“It’s really important for [The Woodlands] to gain exposure, because a lot of people are still learning what The Woodlands has to offer,” said Josie Lewis, Director of Sales, Visit The Woodlands. “When they’re in town and see what The Woodlands has, the likelihood of them booking a meeting here goes up exponentially.”

The Visit The Woodlands marketing team helped bring the event to life with the “9 Wanders of The Woodlands,” highlighting reasons why The Woodlands is such a great meetings destination.



“When they’re in town and see what The Woodlands has, the likelihood of them booking a meeting here goes up exponentially.”

— Josie Lewis
(Director of Sales)

Ms. Lewis worked with Ashley White, Director of Marketing for Visit The Woodlands, to develop the concept. What began as the “7 Wonders” evolved into the “9 Wanders,” a nod to our nine distinct areas—the eight



villages plus Town Center—and how the forested area invites meeting planners and attendees to wander and explore.

“The flipbook became a great sales tool that attendees could use after they left Connect Texas,” Mrs. White said. “They walked away with a physical piece they could use to say, ‘Here are all the reasons that we should host a meeting in The Woodlands.’”

Outside of this group, in 2023 Visit The Woodlands was actively working with 184 different leads representing 86,605 hotel rooms and an economic impact of \$28.5M.

If you have ideas about meetings and groups to bring to The Woodlands, Visit The Woodlands is here to help. Please reach out to Ms. Lewis via email: josie.lewis@visitthewoodlands.com

Scan this code
to watch the
video recap



VISIT The Woodlands

The Woodlands Convention and Visitors Bureau
2801 Technology Forest Blvd.
The Woodlands, TX 77381

PRESORT STD
US POSTAGE

PAID

PERMIT NO.
542

THEN
1993

Photo courtesy of Howard Hughes

NOW
2024

Photo courtesy of Visit The Woodlands

The Woodlands Mall has always been an iconic landmark in The Woodlands. It opened with a grand celebration just a few days before The Woodlands' 20th anniversary on October 5, 1994. Since then, it has become well-known as the place to go for get-togethers and shopping sprees, featuring more than 160 stores, a dynamic food court, and fun for kids at the Carousel and Courtyard.



DON'T MISS

Movies on the Lawn (Now – August 1)
Tax-Free Weekend (August 9 – 11)



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Pathways is a publication of The Woodlands Convention and Visitors Bureau (dba: Visit The Woodlands), the official destination management organization responsible for promoting The Woodlands to drive demand for both hotel and retail tax collections. Visit The Woodlands is a 501(c)(6) organization that serves as a reliable and credible source for The Woodlands tourism industry. Its mission is to establish The Woodlands, Texas, as a beautiful, lively, and welcoming destination recognized regionally, nationally, and internationally for first-class business, convention, and leisure travel.