

A PUBLICATION OF VISIT THE WOODLANDS

#SoWOODLANDS

THIS IS THE LIFE



SPRING 2023
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VISIT
THE WOODLANDS
 TEXAS



Neighbors and Friends...

Each spring, visitors from across the nation come to experience world-class art at The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival and to watch athletes run along The Waterway during the Memorial Hermann IRONMAN Texas (the 2023 IRONMAN Americas Championship). This year, the first LPGA Chevron Championship will also be held in The Woodlands, and a week later, the legends of golf will be here with the Insuperity Invitational. Group business in The Woodlands is also flourishing, with events like the Lunar Planetary Science Conference happening this March.

Less than 20 years ago, community groups and organizations were brainstorming how to attract visitors to The Woodlands Waterway, which founder George P. Mitchell and his design team had just begun to develop. The Woodlands has come a long way in a short amount of time, and we couldn't have done it without the restaurants, shops, events, attractions, and (most importantly) the people that make this area so special. Thank you for making this a great place to live, and a great place to visit. Thank you for making this #SoWoodlands.



Nick Wolda
 President of Visit The Woodlands

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This is The Life

I'm in awe of where we live. I work in Houston, but when I come home and cross over the flyover on Woodlands Parkway, it's like an "aha" moment. The billboards, power lines, and neon signs fall away, and nature takes their place. The amount of detail, from public art to the brown stoplights that fade into the environment – this is what sets The Woodlands apart. All of the details that were thought about in the '70s, we're benefiting from today. Our natural setting is one of the things that makes The Woodlands so unique.

The painstaking detail that was taken in saving the trees amazes me, and it also amazes me how our community continues to preserve this beautiful forest. I went to Arbor Day several weeks ago, an event where The Woodlands Township gives away seedlings to residents. This is one of the longest-standing traditions in The Woodlands. We all realize that we need to preserve what has been left to our care: a livable forest, and the country's original live, work, play model.



Brad Bailey
 Chairman of Visit the Woodlands



SCAN HERE TO CONTINUE READING.

This letter and other content in this issue has been condensed. Find the full articles online at visitthewoodlands.com/sowoodlands

The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival

A Springtime Tradition in The Woodlands

When artists and art enthusiasts first gathered in Town Green Park for The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival, The Woodlands Waterway was only a few years old. The area was still being built – there was no Waterway Square, only a handful of businesses, and swan boats were still a dream of the future.

“The thought was to activate The Waterway with a big, signature event,” said Nick Wolda, Co-Founder of The Woodlands Arts Council and President of Visit The Woodlands. “I was part of the Town Center Improvement District at that time, and it was our job to bring people to The Woodlands for shopping, dining, hospitality and entertainment.”

It was 2005, and The Woodlands had just turned 31. Known as a great place to live, it wasn’t necessarily seen as a must-visit destination. What better way to draw in travelers from around Texas than an arts festival along the new waterway?

Fast forward 18 years, and The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival has become one of the top-ranked arts festivals in the nation. It’s grown from an initial 5,000 attendees in 2006 to an impressive 23,000 in 2022. Locals and visitors both regard it as a long-standing springtime tradition, and time and time again, the community has voted it the best event in The Woodlands.



This year at the festival, you’ll enjoy...

- Books on the Green
- Local food, beer, and wine
- Children’s art activities
- World-class artists
- Live music

“ Festivals like this are tradition building for the community. This festival gives everyone the opportunity to experience life differently in The Woodlands. ”

Best of all, many of the volunteers who brought the event to life in 2006 are the same ones who spend time and effort transforming The Woodlands Waterway into a beautiful waterfront art gallery during the festival today. Jenny Carattini-Wright, now Executive Director of The Woodlands Arts Council, first began working with The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival as a volunteer.

“I came into (The Woodlands Waterway Arts Festival) because I really wanted to participate, share my love of art and culture, and see what we could do to make it grow,” Carattini-Wright said. “It was definitely a small, hometown effort – just as it still is today. The whole community came together to make it happen.”

According to Carattini-Wright, between 500 to 1,000 artists apply to be part of the arts festival every year. A jury of professionals reviews the applications using a scoring system, and the 200 artists with the highest scores are invited to come showcase their work at the festival. Clay, ceramics, painting, photography, sculpture, jewelry, fiber – the best of the best, all right here in The Woodlands.

Once all of the artists are selected, partnerships are developed, performers are booked, and every aspect of the festival is planned out, The Woodlands Arts Council makes the weekend one to remember with the help of 400 to 600 volunteers.

Local families return to see art along The Waterway every spring, and Carattini-Wright says guests often drive in from Austin, Dallas, San Antonio, and beyond. The vision that inspired the festival – to establish a signature event that celebrates art in The Woodlands, attracting artists and art enthusiasts from across the nation to the iconic Woodlands Waterway- has become reality. And with the help of the community, it has thrived.



APRIL 14-16, 2023
TOWN GREEN PARK
Scan to learn more and purchase tickets.

Sit and Stay a While

The Woodlands has one of the largest collections of public art in Texas, and some of most unique - and practical pieces - are the art benches. If you've walked along The Woodlands Waterway or the shore of Lake Woodlands at Hughes Landing, you've probably seen a few. Last year, six new art benches were added to the collection, bringing the total number of art benches in The Woodlands to 30.

These benches were created by local, national, and international artists with different styles and techniques. Each bench was underwritten by a local business or individual who filled out a questionnaire about their personal feelings toward the location of their bench. Artists then used this questionnaire to develop designs for the bench, and the underwriter chose which design resonated with them the most.

The art benches are a project of The Woodlands Arts Council, a non-profit organization with the mission to promote public art and the creative economy. Read the backstory behind the new six art benches, then take a stroll and experience their beauty firsthand.



Pictured clockwise from top left.



SCAN HERE FOR
ART BENCHES LOCATIONS

1 Seated with Santiago

Artist: Michael O'Brien

The looming waves on the back of this bench are a reminder of the impact that we can all have if we push forward through our hardships, continue to swim, and rise above the water.

2 Sound of Healing

Artists: Michelle Old, Kevin Giuseppetti, Stacy Moore, and Derek Giuseppetti

This bench symbolizes the journey to healing that patients experience at Memorial Hermann The Woodlands. The windchimes ring out as wind blows underneath the bench, reminiscent of the tradition of ringing the bell at the end of cancer treatments.

3 State of Texas

Artist: Carolina Gonzales

The art bench brings together classic western design with a Texas-shaped metal piece that's painted like a turquoise gem, and the live edge cedar bench seat.

4 Discovery Art Bench

Artists: Michelle Old, Kevin Giuseppetti, Stacy Moore, and Derek Giuseppetti

This art bench is meant to express that there are always wonders to explore and the three sets of blocks speak to the three different cognitive skills: recognize, see, and feel.

5 Angel Wings

Artist: Jim Weitzel

Further north along The Waterway, A beautiful bench that's as eye-catching as it is touching. Look on the back of this bench for a heartfelt poem, written by underwriter Maria Holmes.

6 Free Spirit

Artist: Paul Reimer

Feathers symbolize different things in a variety of cultures. A reminder that no matter your age or culture, you can experience lightness and freedom.

Why The Woodlands?



Photos Courtesy
Visit the Woodlands

The Woodlands has been a stellar host since the event was launched in 2011 with IRONMAN Texas scoring highest in overall satisfaction, finish line, post-race experience, and finisher medal among all North America events.

Simply put, The Woodlands offers all the amenities an athlete could need along with an epic course, and we could not be prouder to host some of the best athletes from around the globe in this beautiful destination.

Greg Pennington
Memorial Hermann
IRONMAN Texas Race Director

There's something truly magical about this community and their support. It's incredible to be involved in this community and to grow a business with them.

Chef Austin Simmons
Chef of TRIS and The Kitchen



Photo Courtesy
TRIS

Scan to learn more about tourism's economic impact in The Woodlands.



THE IMPACT: 2 MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS COMING TO THE WOODLANDS THIS SPRING!

IRONMAN AMERICAS CHAMPIONSHIP



\$28 MILLION TOTAL
COMBINED ECONOMIC IMPACT

LPGA CHEVRON CHAMPIONSHIP



Source: World Triathlon Corporation and IMG Golf Events

Q&A



When you bring your conference or group event to your hometown, you get to show off the community that you care about, love, and believe in.

Josie Lewis

Director of Sales, Visit The Woodlands

There are a lot of decisions involved in planning a conference, meeting, or group event. Choosing the right meeting space, team building activities, food, and ultimately, the right destination can be incredibly overwhelming! Fortunately, Visit The Woodlands' Sales Team is here to help take the pressure off of meeting planners. We talked to Josie Lewis, Director of Sales, to learn more about how she and her team help meeting planners develop successful events and generate a large economic impact for The Woodlands.

Q: Why are meetings vital to The Woodlands?

A: It supports our local businesses and brings in a significant amount of sales tax and hotel occupancy tax dollars, which gives more opportunity for The Woodlands to develop. The more people we have coming in and spending money at our local businesses and attractions, the more we are able to attract new business and create a better quality of life for our residents.

Q: What is Global Meetings Industry Day, and why is it important?

A: GMID is an international day of advocacy highlighting the impact meetings and events bring to a destination. This year it falls on March 30, and our team is using this opportunity to push the critical message that Meetings Matter. In 2021, over 1,200 professional meetings and events took place in The Woodlands, which brought in \$14.2 million in total room revenue.

Q: What are the benefits of working with a CVB?

A: Visit the Woodlands becomes an extension of the meeting planning team from the very beginning of the planning process all the way through the day of the event. We help with RFP distribution, site tours, finding the right vendors, resolving problems, and servicing the event with everything from welcome bags to welcome booths, depending on group size.



THEN
CIRCA 1990s

The Woodlands Waterway began as a small drainage system, but that didn't stop George Mitchell and Robert Heineman from envisioning what it could become. In the initial sketch of The Woodlands, Heineman drew a transit corridor through Town Center, and 27 years later, construction began on the iconic Woodlands Waterway. This vision for the future has become one of the most cherished parts of The Woodlands, for residents and visitors.



&NOW
CIRCA 2023

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Where in The Woodlands?

Do you know the location
of this mosaic installation?

Submit your answer online for a chance
to win a #SoWoodlands gift bag.

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