

A PUBLICATION OF VISIT THE WOODLANDS

#SoWOODLANDS

THIS IS THE LIFE



SPRING 2024
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Neighbors and Friends...

The Woodlands has a strong sense of community that you can't find anywhere else. I believe that this is because everyone here truly loves The Woodlands. We love living here, owning businesses here, raising families, establishing careers, and making memories here. This deep love lends itself to a collaborative community – one that works together to lift each other up and collectively strengthen the place we're so proud to call home. With this mindset, we support local entrepreneurs, give back to those in need, welcome new neighbors, and actively take part in making our community a better place day by day.

This issue of #SoWoodlands features stories from people and businesses who love The Woodlands, a snapshot of the ways we give back, and a "Then/Now" that shows how we continue to innovate and grow. As Chairman of Visit The Woodlands, I would be remiss not to mention that last year was our strongest year yet as a tourism destination, bringing \$9.6 million in hotel tax revenue into our community. We couldn't do this without everyone working together to make The Woodlands a special place to live – and a fantastic place to visit.



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Chairman of Visit The Woodlands

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Comments? Story ideas?

Send to editor Mary Murphy at mary.murphy@visitthewoodlands.com

Why The Woodlands?



"Rhone's retail expansion was a big company priority in 2023. The Woodlands offered a welcoming community that afforded Rhone the opportunity to connect and engage with current Rhone customers and new shoppers alike. Since opening Rhone's store in the The Woodlands we have felt at home."

Nate Checketts
CEO & Co-Founder, Rhone



Photo Courtesy
Rhone



Photo Courtesy
Bosscat Kitchen & Libations

"Having traveled to The Woodlands for a variety of events, we knew The Woodlands was the prime community for Bosscat Kitchen to expand into. Once we were contacted by Market Street for such a prime location, the move itself seemed serendipitous. From day one we have been welcomed with open arms and treated like locals that have been woven into the community for years."

John Reed & Leslie Nguyen
Founders, Bosscat Kitchen & Libations

"In addition to the stellar reputation that The Woodlands has for its community, lifestyle and preservation, we felt that with patio dining being such a signature component of a true Parisian dining experience and our concept, that there wasn't a better space to offer our guests than the natural beauty and serenity of the The Woodlands. Specifically, our Creekside Park West location lends itself to an enclosed patio dining experience that will leave the guest feeling like they took a brief culinary trip outside of Texas!"

Chris Florczak
CEO, Rise Soufflé



Pictured from left to right:
Chef, Cameron Achee
General Manager, Jack Geigerich
Rise Soufflé

The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion

A Timeless Icon in The Woodlands

By Annierose Donnelly

A concert at The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion is always an unforgettable experience. The Pavilion holds up to 16,000 fans, yet somehow, the show’s atmosphere feels like a cozy gathering of like-minded friends. You can enjoy performances from chart-topping superstars inside the tent or outside on lawn chairs under the night sky.

The Pavilion was the lifelong dream of Cynthia Woods Mitchell, The Woodlands’ founder George Mitchell’s wife. Cynthia had a great passion for the arts, and she dreamed of a world-class performing arts facility in The Woodlands. In April 1990, The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion opened its doors for a star-studded weekend with Frank Sinatra opening the show.

Jeff Young has been there since the beginning. Mr. Young, the recently appointed President and Chief Executive Officer, has a long history with The Pavilion and remembers the venue’s first moments.

“I started working at The Pavilion in 1990 and my first job was Operations Assistant. I did all sorts of odd jobs, from pressure washing to painting and picking up trash. I also worked with the backstage security, so I got to meet the bands and artists that came to the venue. The highlight for me was getting to know the Mitchell family and seeing their vision come to fruition,” said Young.



Pictured from left to right: Jack Johnson, Jerry MacDonald (Former CEO), George Mitchell, Jeff Young, Jim Tobin (Former Tour Manager for Jack Johnson). Photo Courtesy The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion



“There’s no better place to be than sitting under the stars and listening to a world-class performance from the Houston Symphony, Dave Matthews Band, Imagine Dragons, or Kenny Chesney.”



Pictured from left to right: Cynthia Woods and George Mitchell



 The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion
2005 Lake Robbins Dr.

Young was hired full-time in 1994 and he worked his way up to Chief Operating Officer. From March 1, he will become the new President and CEO of the venue, following Jerry MacDonald’s 20 year tenure. “There’s no better place to be than sitting under the stars and listening to a world-class performance from the Houston Symphony, Dave Matthews Band, Imagine Dragons, or Kenny Chesney,” said Young.

The Pavilion is a non-profit organization with a mission to make The Arts accessible to everyone. The venue offers free seating on the mezzanine and the lawn for Performing Arts events. There are free performances from the Houston Symphony and the Houston Ballet to attend throughout the year, too.

Over the years, The Pavilion has grown to become one of the world’s greatest outdoor music amphitheaters, welcoming artists from every musical genre. “It’s hard to pick one, but my top concerts of all time are Chris Stapleton, Radiohead, and Bruce Springsteen,” said Young.

This year, the line-up is bigger than ever, with more dates still to be announced. The calendar for this season includes Noah Kahan, Dave Matthews Band, Kenny Chesney, and Alanis Morissette.

“I’m most looking forward to working with our gifted team at the venue,” said Young. “The future is very bright.”

Dessert Gallery Bakery & Cafe

From Houston to The Woodlands

By Annierose Donnelly

In 1995, Sara Brook opened the first Dessert Gallery Bakery & Cafe in downtown Houston. A go-to spot for any sweet treat imaginable, the bakery has brought joy to Houstonians for many years, and now it's expanding to bring joy to The Woodlands. This unique, woman-owned business opened its second location in the heart of The Woodlands on Waterway Avenue in February.

“We are so excited to officially open The Woodlands location of Dessert Gallery,” said Brook. “We have been creating sweet memories with the Houston community for nearly 30 years, and expanding into The Woodlands was the natural next step.”

The Woodlands will feature the same menu as the Houston location, with 40 - 50 offerings, including signature sweets like the Tres Leches (the top choice of former Houston Astros star Carlos Correa) and the original Chocolate-Dipped Chocolate Chunk Cookies made with three kinds of chocolate.

‘Brookies’ are Sara’s personal recommendation, a scrumptious combination of dark chocolate cookies with chocolate brownie chunks. Another menu highlight is Jennifer’s Birthday Cake, with fudgy, dark chocolate layers, filled with dark chocolate fudge, iced with chocolate buttercream frosting and topped with sprinkles.

Pictured: Sara Brook



The new location also will feature new items introduced at the end of 2023. Order the Billionaire Brownies, fudge brownies with toasted pecans and chocolate glaze splashed with gold, or try a slice of decadent Marble Cake, with a unique pudding-like chocolate buttercream frosting.

“We are so excited to officially open The Woodlands location of Dessert Gallery. We have been creating sweet memories with the Houston community for nearly 30 years, and expanding into The Woodlands was the natural next step.”

Sara is excited to experience all that The Woodlands has to offer. “We are so lucky to have found a great location that’s close to staples like The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel & Convention Center, The Westin at The Woodlands, and The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion, and we look forward to being part of The Woodlands community,” she shared.

A self-professed lover of desserts, Sara is a fifth generation Houstonian. After four decades in the bakery business, Sara still loves coming up with new recipes and ideas, including vegan, sugar-free and gluten-free desserts. When she’s not baking, she spends time working with local charities.

There is never a quiet moment at Dessert Gallery as the business delivers locally and around the nation. The menu at Dessert Gallery is a testament to Sara’s creativity in the kitchen. From personalized birthday cupcakes to indulgent festive treats and freshly baked pastries, her innovations are nothing short of sweet perfection.

Must-Try Menu Items

DESSERTS

- Tres Leches
- Marble Cake
- Dessert Slabs
- French Silk Pie with Oreo Crust



SWEET TREATS

- Carrot Cake
- Billionaire Brownies
- Fruity Pebbles Cookies
- Strawberry Dream Cake
- Jennifer’s Birthday Cake
- Old Fashioned Diner Cake
- Chocolate Dipped Chocolate Chip Cookies

Q&A



We deeply appreciate the sense of community and support that surrounds us.

It's incredibly fulfilling to be able to contribute to the beauty of our town.



Photos Courtesy Piney Rose Floral
Pictured from Left to Right: Taylor and Cullen Handfelt



Piney Rose Floral
2417 Research Forest Dr, Unit B

Taylor & Cullen Handfelt

Owners, Piney Rose Floral

By Mary Murphy

Daily deliveries, flower subscriptions, and curated arrangements for every occasion. What more could you ask for from a full-service floral design studio? Local husband and wife duo, Taylor and Cullen, and their team at Piney Rose Floral go above and beyond in providing beautiful flowers and outstanding customer service for The Woodlands community.

Q: What's the story behind Piney Rose?

A: Taylor started Piney Rose creating beautiful arrangements for weddings and events. She was working out of our house and the dining room was filled with shelves of vases and buckets of flowers. As our business grew, Cullen eventually quit his job to work full time at Piney Rose. We started offering arrangements for everyday occasions, like birthdays, anniversaries, funerals etc. We quickly outgrew the dining room and launched our brick and mortar location in December 2019.

Q: What do you enjoy most about being a small business owner in The Woodlands?

A: As a small business owner in The Woodlands, we deeply appreciate the sense of community and support that surrounds us. It's incredibly fulfilling to be able to contribute to the beauty of our town. We love The Woodlands, its where we live and raise our kids, so giving back to it is important to us. We love that so many of our customers are community minded and shop with us knowing we give so much back.

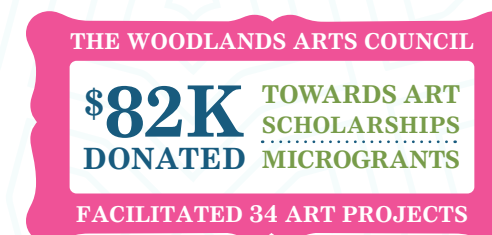
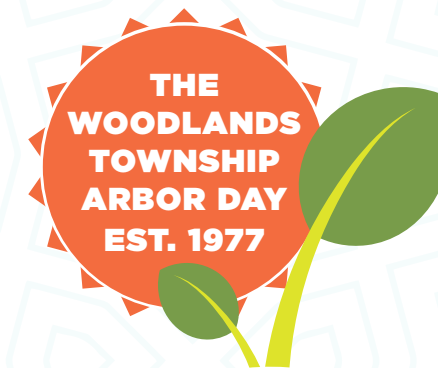
Q: How do you feel when you look back on your business journey?

A: Reflecting on our journey as a florist in The Woodlands, we feel a deep sense of pride in our growth and the relationships we've built within the community. We are grateful to have served The Woodlands from our retail store for over 4 years now. From humble beginnings to now offering not only beautiful floral arrangements but also a diverse range of gifts, it's been an enriching experience.

THE IMPACT: *Philanthropy in The Woodlands*



INTERFAITH
OF THE WOODLANDS
ASSISTED MORE THAN
214,000
INDIVIDUALS IN 2023



THE CYNTHIA WOODS MITCHELL
PAVILION
MORE THAN **20K** KIDS
ATTEND ARTS EDUCATION
EVENTS EACH YEAR
MORE THAN **TEN** FREE
PERFORMING ARTS
CONCERTS EACH YEAR



\$1.4 MILLION
RAISED FOR
THE ARTS
BY THE WOODLANDS WATERWAY
ART FESTIVAL SINCE 2006

Source: Visit The Woodlands, Interfaith the Woodlands, Market Street, The Woodlands Art Council, and Leadership Montgomery County



This is The Life

Out of all the places I've lived – Washington D.C., New York, London – The Woodlands is my favorite place to call home. There's something special about living here, in this little enclave of beauty. It has everything I need: live music, a vibrant arts scene, a close-knit community, an excellent school district, and of course, abundant nature and wildlife.

I'd always wanted to live somewhere surrounded by natural beauty but assumed I'd have to wait until retirement. I didn't think there was a place where I could have easy access to nature, continue my career, and still enjoy the things I loved about living in a big city: art, shopping, live music, delicious food. Then, I found The Woodlands.

Before we moved here, my son and I would visit my parents and sisters in The Woodlands. In 2021, we decided to join them and “temporarily” stay in my parents' casita to be closer to family. During our stay, I called an old friend and couldn't stop talking about how amazing it was to live in this beautiful place. He asked me, “Kelly, if you're enjoying it that much out there, why haven't you thought about making it permanent?”

It was a good question. We'd always loved visiting, and my son had even asked me about moving here while we were in D.C. So, I looked to see if I could make it permanent. Turns out, The Woodlands Hotels had just posted a position for three joint marketing positions. I applied just to see what might happen...and within an hour, I got a call from the Senior VP asking to schedule an interview.

Now, almost three years later, I start my day running under the trees in my neighborhood before going in to work as Director of Marketing for The Woodlands Hotels. The nature I see from my office inspires me as I manage various aspects that touch the guest experience at The Embassy Suites, The Woodlands Resort, The Westin at The Woodlands and their respective dining outlets. My son and I get to see deer almost every day, and we watch birds migrate through the greenbelt behind our house.

Also, we get to enjoy a vibrant community filled with art, shopping, dining, and music. I love having a world-class music venue so close to us. We can leave the house, park, and be in our seats at The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion in under 20 minutes. It's incredible!

To top it all off, The Woodlands has an incredible community. Living here feels like stepping back to that idyllic hometown that you wish you could find, where everyone knows each other and supports each other. We're all proud to work here and live here, and we collaborate and work together because we love The Woodlands. It's home.



Kelly McCourt
Director of Marketing
The Woodlands Hotels

Photo Courtesy Texas TreeVentures



THEN
CIRCA 2006

What was once a clearing in the George Mitchell Nature Preserve has become a tried-and-true favorite for aerial adventures. Since opening in April 2019, **Texas TreeVentures** has welcomed over 50,000 people seeking new heights. The three-story aerial ropes course is a “choose your own adventure” with nearly 100 unique climbing elements, from rope walls to suspended wooden bridges.



&NOW
CIRCA 2023

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The Woodlands, TX 77381

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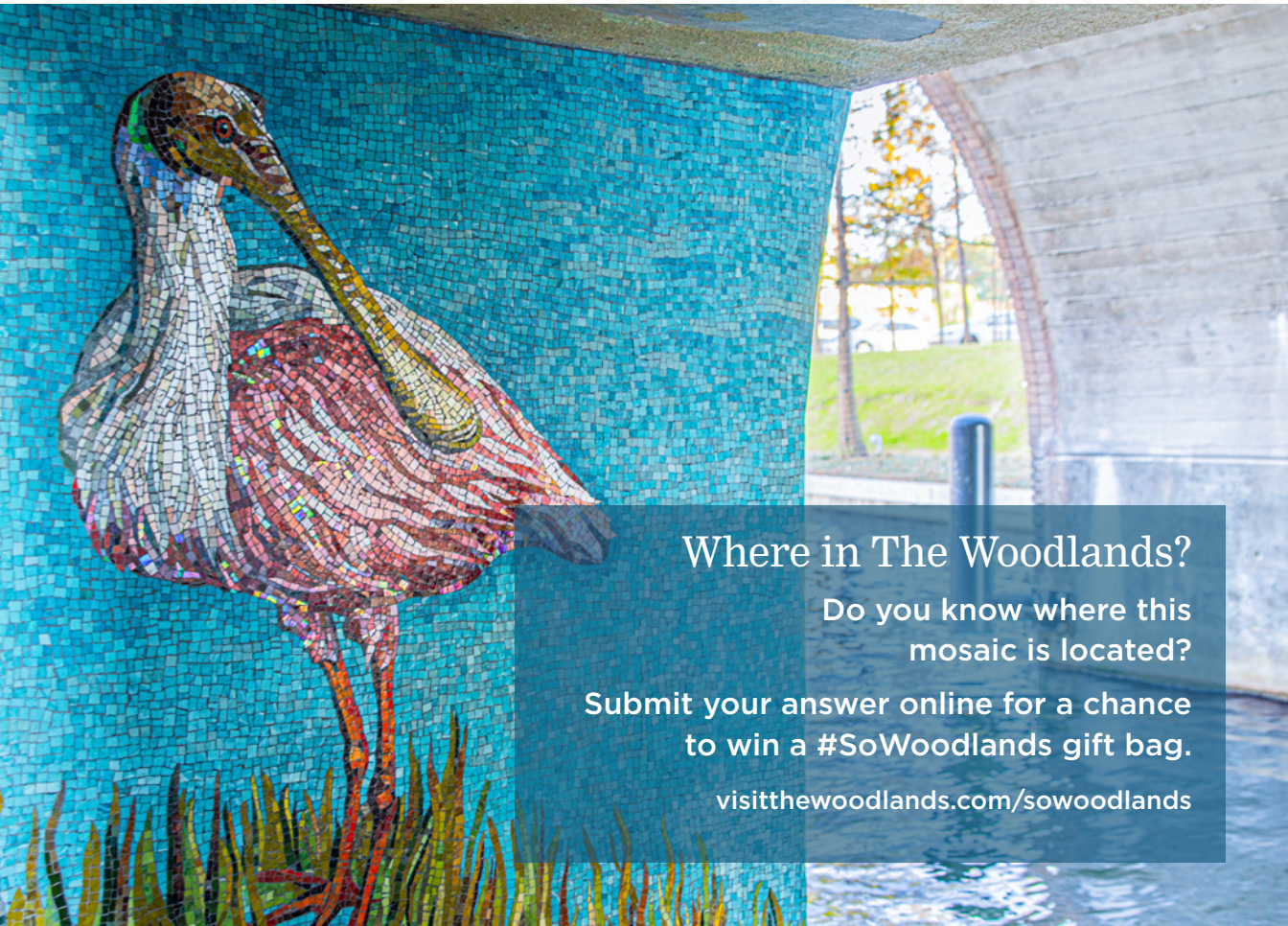


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Do you know where this
mosaic is located?

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