

A PUBLICATION OF VISIT THE WOODLANDS

#SoWOODLANDS

THIS IS THE LIFE

*Our first
issue!*



FALL 2022
VOL. 1, ISSUE 1

Neighbors and Friends...

As Chairman, I have felt for some time that Visit The Woodlands needed to do more to highlight businesses and their owners who have chosen to set up shop in our community. So today it is my pleasure to introduce #SoWoodlands, a new publication that publicizes and promotes our local businesses and their individual stories.

From restaurants to candy shops, bookstores to clothing retailers, The Woodlands Township is home to a multitude of extraordinary businesses. To all of you: Thank you for choosing to bring your business to The Woodlands Township. We wouldn't be the same without you.



Bruce Rieser

Bruce Rieser
 Chairman of Visit The Woodlands

Many things make The Woodlands an ideal destination for business and leisure travel: The natural beauty, first-class hotels, luxury shopping, and most of all, top-notch retail and hospitality businesses. With #SoWoodlands, we want to highlight these businesses, owners and staff who provide unique visitor experiences and make The Woodlands Township an amazing place to visit and do business.

I hope that you enjoy the first issue of #SoWoodlands. We're happy you're here.



Nick Wolda

Nick Wolda
 President of Visit The Woodlands



Content in this issue has been condensed.
 Find the full articles online at visitthewoodlands.com/sowoodlands
 Cover Photo by Amber George

This is The Life

The Woodlands is a place designed for great experiences - from beautiful nature to top-tier amenities, globally-ranked venues to hidden gems, our purpose at Visit The Woodlands is ensuring the visitor experience is seamless. And by supporting and investing in local hospitality businesses, providing complimentary services to partners, engaging potential visitors across digital and social channels, and so much more, we help visitors effortlessly enjoy everything that makes our destination distinctive.

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Find more at visitthewoodlands.com

Discover partnership opportunities, upcoming events, and more #SoWoodlands stories.

The Candy House

From one generation, to the next.

Kristen Watson and Courtney Moore's love for The Candy House began long before they became co-owners of the little shop tucked behind trees on Glen Loch Drive. Watson once drove from Houston to The Woodlands on her lunch break for The Candy House's delicious cheddar cheese popcorn. Her sister, Moore, spent her high school and college days working at the store's Conroe location, which she fondly remembers as one of her favorite jobs.

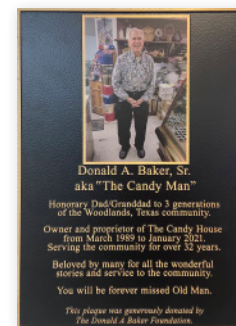
Now, the two are working with their husbands and their mother to carry on the sweet legacy of The Candy Shop's former beloved owner, Don Baker. Baker ran The Candy House with care for over 30 years, doling out taffy, popcorn, fudge and a variety of other sweets.

"I think it says something about the whole community," said Moore, co-owner of The Candy House, "that they were so willing to support a small business, they became like family to Mr. Baker."

Yes, customers returned to satisfy their sweet tooth – but they really came back to see Mr. Baker, the friendly man who always had time to talk and remembered everyone who came into his store. The community's love for The Candy House and Mr. Baker became unmistakably clear in 2020, when The Woodlands rallied to support his business during difficult times.



Pictured left to right: Danny Moore, Courtney Moore, Reed Watson, Wanda Graham, Kristen Watson.



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People flocked to The Candy House, forming lines down the block, to show their support and kindness to a man who had done the same for them as kids. The community's support continued even after Baker passed away in January 2021.

After Mr. Baker passed away, Watson and Moore (along with their husbands, Reed Watson and Danny Moore, and their mother, Wanda Graham) wanted The Candy House to continue making an impact on the community. They didn't want their beloved mom-and-pop candy shop to close. So, when they heard that the Baker's were contemplating selling their business, they had several family discussions that led to one answer: Let's buy it.

On September 1, 2021, The Candy House opened with new ownership. Baker's daughters showed Watson and Moore how to make fudge and flavored popcorn (both done in-house), and the two sisters suddenly found themselves spending Friday nights eating pizza at The Candy House with their families, making fudge and popcorn while brainstorming business ideas. They didn't change the recipes; they didn't change how the store looked – they carried the torch to continue what Don Baker had begun years before.

"Even though we're not Mr. Baker – we're never going to fill those shoes – everybody has been so welcoming," said Watson. "We're having a lot of fun."



FIRST TIME TO THE CANDY HOUSE? TRY THESE...

- Homemade Fudge
- Popcorn - Cheddar Cheese, Caramel, or Cinnamon Toast Crunch
- Taffy - There's a full wall of flavors!

Porta’Vino

A New Place to Wine & Dine

In April 2021, Greg Brenneman and Bill Floyd sat down for dinner at Floyd’s new restaurant. They were longtime friends who had worked together on an innovative “Continental Congress of Chefs” program several years before, when Brenneman was helping spearhead a legendary company turnaround as President and COO of Continental Airlines. As they grew in their careers – Floyd moving on to open over 30 Houston restaurants, and Brenneman serving as CEO of Burger King and CCMP Capital – they remained close friends.

While enjoying wine and Italian food, Floyd shared details about his new restaurant concept: Porta’Vino (Italian for “Bring Wine”). Despite hurdles caused by the pandemic, the restaurant’s first year had been a huge success. Floyd was thinking about expanding, but he needed a partner who knew how to scale a business.

“I told him, ‘Bill, you don’t know if you can do more of these, unless you do a second one,’” Brenneman explained. “I offered to open a second one in The Woodlands, and we put together a partnership.” Nearly a year later, the second Porta’Vino opened in the East Shore neighborhood in The Woodlands on March 1, 2022.

Pictured left to right: Greg Brenneman, Ronda Brenneman, Charlene Floyd, Bill Floyd.



Photos Courtesy Porta’Vino

Porta’Vino is part restaurant, part wine store, featuring amazing deals on bottles of wine and delicious Italian dishes. Floyd worked with renowned Houston chef Danny Trace to develop a casual Italian menu including salads, pizzas, pastas and more – all under \$30.

Bottles of wine are also sold at prices incredibly competitive with discount wine retailers, and a majority of the wines on their menu fall within the \$40 to \$60 price range. Customers have the option to enjoy a bottle of wine with dinner, buy a bottle or case to take home, or bring a bottle of their own for a small corkage fee.

“ I have been all over the U.S. and the world. The Woodlands is the best place to build a business...”

There’s a reason why they opened the second Porta’Vino in The Woodlands: it’s been home to Brenneman since 1994. He was close friends with George Mitchell and watched the area develop. Even after moving away to serve as the CEO of Burger King, Brenneman moved back because he and his family loved living in The Woodlands. Plus, he says, it’s a phenomenal place to run a business.

“The Woodlands is a fantastic place to operate. I have been all over the U.S. and the world. The Woodlands is the best place to build a business... and that’s not an exaggeration. We love being part of and serving the community in The Woodlands!”

Must-Try Items

FOOD

- Calabrese Shrimp Salad
- Balloon Bread
- Porta’Vino Salad
- Wild Boar Bolognese
- Lasagna
- Double-Cut Smoked Pork Chop
- Coconut Cream Pie
- Milkshake No Minors (Ice Cream, Kahlua, and Brandy)

WINE

- Darioush – \$59
Vioigner, Napa
- Merry Edwards – \$44
Sauvignon Blanc, California
- Belle Glos “Clark & Telephone” – \$43
Pinot Noir, California
- Barnett Spring Mountain – \$64
Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa
- Caymus – 1 LITER \$85
Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa



Why The Woodlands?



Photos Courtesy Kirby Ice House



We saw a great opportunity to bring our neighborhood bar concept to the wonderful people of The Woodlands, and felt that our casual concept of indoor and outdoor fun would be the perfect fit for the area.

Danny Evans & Russ Morgan
Kirby Ice House

It took a long time to figure out where we wanted to be in Texas. After spending quite a bit of time here, it's a great community.

Jason Wishengrad
The Stand



Photo Courtesy The Stand



Photo Courtesy Village Books

I chose to open Village Books last year, because I wanted to give back to the community I love.

Teresa Kenney
Village Books

Like The Woodlands, the luxury brand Robert Graham brings unexpected fun and uniqueness.

Lorelei Pons & Tristan Jones
Robert Graham



Photos Courtesy Visit The Woodlands

THE IMPACT: *A Few Facts About Tourism in The Woodlands*



14
HOTELS
WITH MORE THAN
2,220
ROOMS

\$9
MILLION
HOTEL REVENUE
COLLECTED IN
2021

\$50,000,000

MORE THAN \$50 MILLION IN SALES TAX COLLECTED IN 2021



HOTEL AND SALES
TAXES
MAKE UP MORE THAN
50%
OF THE WOODLANDS
TOWNSHIP
BUDGET

THERE ARE MORE THAN
4,100
RETAIL AND
HOSPITALITY
EMPLOYEES

Source: The Woodlands Township and Dean Runyan Associates.

Q&A



You'll find me in the lobby, greeting customers, helping the bell stand, pointing people in the right direction, and answering questions.



Fred Domenick, III

General Manager, The Woodlands Waterway Marriott

When Fred Domenick joined The Woodlands Waterway Marriott team 16 years ago, The Waterway was in its beginning stages. Domenick has watched the area grow into a must-visit destination, and he continues to elevate visitors' experiences daily with top-notch customer service and quality at The Woodlands Waterway Marriott Hotel and Convention Center.

Q: What's your average day like?

A: It's never the same. Most of my days, I walk the entire property when I arrive. I'll check in with every department and say hello to every employee. We have a standup meeting at 9 a.m. where we talk to the entire team about what's going on in the hotel that day.

Around lunchtime, I'm typically on the floor in catering or the outlets, making sure things are going smoothly during food service. In the afternoon, you'll find me in the lobby, greeting customers, helping the bell stand, pointing people in the right direction, and answering questions. [The Marriott's] senior leaders cover the lobby from 3-6 p.m. daily.

Q: We heard you're renovating the rooms?

A: We've completely renovated all 345 guest rooms. The big work was the tub-to-shower conversions in the bathrooms – we literally gutted the bathrooms down to the studs and redid them completely. Everything is brand new, including the walk-in shower. We also took the opportunity to change out the televisions in the rooms to 55-inch televisions, and to convert all our double-double rooms to king-queen rooms. Every room has a king bed in it now. The convention center was completely renovated in 2019, so it's like we have a brand-new hotel.



THEN
CIRCA 2000

The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion

Opened in 1990, The Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion is owned and operated by The Center for Performing Arts at The Woodlands, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to make the arts accessible to everyone. Profits from the venue are used to fund free Performing Arts shows, arts education programs, and more.



&NOW
CIRCA 2022

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