

west columbia

ROOTS

fall/winter 2023
city magazine

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WHERE HISTORY AND PROGRESS DO A

Texas Two-Step





WEST COLUMBIA

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12/2 ▪ Breakfast and Firetruck Ride with Santa
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12/15 ▪ Varner-Hogg Candlelight Christmas
12/16 ▪ Hometown Market
1/6 ▪ Hometown Market
2/3 ▪ Galentine's Day in WC & Fill the Pantry Retail Event

For more information, see full calendar on page 6

EAT ✻ DRINK ✻ SHOP
TOUR
WEST COLUMBIA, TX











West Columbia is blessed by excellent first responders - The West Columbia Volunteer Fire Department, Central Emergency Services, and the West Columbia Police Department. These departments work hand in hand to make our community a safe and desirable place to live.

In 2010, Wesley Chafin, the son of former Fire Chief Jimmy Chafin, compiled an informative 70th Anniversary Commemorative Book chronicling the history of the department. Following a fire on June 3, 1940, at the Wright Motor Company, the department was born out of necessity. The fire call was answered by Angleton and Bay City fire departments. Grateful for their assistance, Mr. Wright held an appreciation dinner for the firefighters that evening and pledged funds for the first fire engine and pumper. In June of 1940, the City Council appointed WC Autry as the first fire chief. Eighteen members joined soon after. The first firetruck arrived on Sunday, November 10, 1940. During the department's 83 years of service, many wonderful men and women have served. The faces have changed, but their mission has remained the same. The all-volunteer department is funded along with 7 other fire departments through the taxing entity ESD #2. They also receive funds from the voluntary donation option on the City's water bill. That option netted WCVFD $28,101.93 in 2022.

The Central Emergency Medical Services, like the fire department, was created to fulfill a need for emergency services in West Columbia and surrounding area in 1978. On May 4, 2002, the voters of West Columbia voted to form ESD #1, a taxing entity whose sole purpose is to fund this service. Other forms of income are from recipients of the service and/or their insurance, grants, donations and annual fundraisers. CEMS receives a $3 voluntary donation on the City's water bill totaling $35,891.97 in 2022.

The West Columbia Police Department recently announced that it had again been accredited through the Law Enforcement Accreditation program. This process occurs every four years with annual reports due to an independent auditor verifying compliance. The department must prove their compliance with 170 Texas Law Enforcement Best Practices developed by Texas Law Enforcement professionals. When seeking factual crime data for West Columbia, it is important to search only West Columbia rather than by zip code which includes a much broader area. According to City-Data.com, the crime rate for the city in 2020 was 60.4, the lowest of neighboring cities: Sweeny (173); Brazoria (106.2); Angleton (155.8); only Danbury was lower (2.3). In the Livability Score Comparison, West Columbia rated an A+ in the area of crime with our neighbors in Brazoria rating an A- and Sweeny a B. The department is funded solely by taxpayers and grants. In the past 10 years, Chief Paul Odin has brought in approximately $2 million in grants.

It is important that we show our appreciation to these men and women who serve our community.

Sincerely,

Laurie Beal Kincannon

Laurie Kincannon
Mayor, City of West Columbia



Thanks to our community for supporting the $79M bond election last fall. This project will replace 80% of the current Columbia High School instructional facilities.

The new instructional footprint requires some demolition, including D building/competition gym, E building, F building, G building/auxiliary gym, H building including Ag/Dancin' Dolls and the tennis courts.

New facilities will include a library, special education classrooms and facilities, two health science classrooms and a lab, culinary arts classroom plus a kitchen and bistro, floral design classroom and lab, agriculture shop and classroom, dance classroom and studio, six business/computer classrooms and 36 regular classrooms. The project also includes new tennis courts, a competition gym, auxiliary gym, a gym foyer with concessions and public restrooms, locker rooms, a weight room and a training room. The competition gym will have increased seating for 1,200. (The current gym seats 375.) The new gym will have seating on three sides and the home side will have some chair-back seats.

Soon, the gym parking, E building, D building and the competition gym will be demolished to make way for the new gyms and two-story instructional building. The courtyard will remain and is designed to be a campus highlight and an outdoor instructional setting.

The new gyms are set to open in October 2024, and the two-story instructional building in August 2025. After the new instructional building opens, buildings E, F, G and H will be demolished to make way for new parking.

The new design will provide increased campus security, increased student parking and improved traffic flow.

Sincerely,

Steven Galloway

Steven Galloway
Superintendent
Columbia-Brazoria ISD

Chevron-Phillips Chemical
Columbia-Brazoria ISD
Cornerstone Realtors
Discovery Days Learning Center
Medical Leaders & Associates
Oak Financial
Republic BBQ
St. Mary's Episcopal Church
UTMB
Wes Griggs Law Firm
West Columbia Health Clinic
West Columbia Tourism

Nurturing the community also nurtures Sylvia Gibson's soul and is translated into good business. Hard work, long hours and loyal employees who become like family are the hallmark of Sylvia's thriving business. Find out more on page 4.







BUSINESS Insight

FLOWERS BY MARY LEE

Sylvia Gibson's name is synonymous with her shop, Flowers by Mary Lee. She bought the business 45 years ago from Mary Lee Rasco and never changed the name. Sylvia said some customers really want her to change the name and even pay her with checks made out to Sylvia's Flowers. She just laughs and carries on.

The hard-working woman, who friends nicknamed the Energizer Bunny, began her journey with flowers while still in high school. She worked at Sibyl's Flowers & Gifts in Sweeny before going to the University of Houston and earning a bachelor's of science in home economics education.

"Sibyl LeBlanc was a remarkable person," Sylvia said. *"She was beyond her time. She was quite open minded, and she gave me an opportunity doing floral design that I probably wouldn't have gotten anywhere else at the time. She told me 'You're quite talented.' She wanted me to end up with a flower shop. She really did."*

Sylvia graduated with her home economics teaching degree but could only find one summer of work in Lamar ISD. At the time there was little turnover in home economics teaching positions, so Sylvia looked about for other work. That's when she and a friend found Flowers by Mary Lee for sale in West Columbia.

"We started out where Janet's Custom Frame Shop is. That's where Flowers by Mary Lee was when I bought it," she said. She says she bought the store on a whim, but with hard work and long hours, she made it work. About 15 years later, she needed more space and moved to the current location at 301 E. Brazos Ave.

An advocate of education, Sylvia took courses through the Texas State Floral Association and earned her certified florist and advanced master florist designations. In addition, she has served on countless boards and committees,



helping move her community forward, taking care of people.

"I like volunteering and being of service to the community. That's part of it. You have to give back. Our parents gave back. We learned early on to give back," she said. Nurturing the community also nurtures Sylvia's soul and is translated into good business. Neighbors helping neighbors benefits everyone.

Hard work, long hours and loyal employees who become like family are the hallmark of Sylvia's thriving business. Perhaps her most notable achievement is the fall shopping event, Christmas Open House, held on a Sunday each November. Sylvia borrowed the idea from her high school job with Sibyl.

"We always had a fall open house. In deer season, the ladies had somewhere to go," she said. In the beginning, *"it was just my store doing it. We'd invite people on a Sunday afternoon. Then, when we moved into a bigger space, we invited more people to join us. Over the years, it just got bigger."*

Now, more than 20 businesses participate in the Fall Open House offering shopping, dining and historical experiences. This year's event will be on Sunday, Nov. 19.

After more than four decades in business, Sylvia's children are ready for her to retire and spend time with her family, and she's considering it, in the future. For now, she is enjoying her daily work which brings her into contact with friends and neighbors at some of the most important milestones of their lives.

"When I bought this store, it was on a whim, a leap of faith," she said. *"I've had many, many good customers. It's been hard work. I put in lots of long hours, but I love what I do. I love my job."*



Sylvia Gibson and Don Bogy receive the 2022 Chamber Legacy Award from the West Columbia Chamber of Commerce.





For more detailed event info, follow Visit West Columbia TX on Facebook or visit westcolumbiatx.org

OCTOBER

TBA Community-Wide Clean Up - Fall Event from 8am to Noon
10/21 Hometown Market's Fall Festival, 2 – 8pm, 324 E. Brazos
10/23 CHS/WBJH - Fall Choir Concert, 7pm, CHS Auditorium
10/28 Ghosts Along the Brazos, 5 – 9pm, Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site 1702 N. 16th St.
10/28 Project Grad Halloween Carnival, 6 – 10pm, First Capitol Park
10/29 St. John's Masonic Lodge BBQ Chicken Dinner and Raffle Fundraiser, 11am – 1pm, 313 W. Jackson
10/31 Trunk-or-Treat - Walk the Block with First Baptist Church, St. Mary's Episcopal Church and Columbia, Methodist Church, 5 – 7pm

NOVEMBER

11/4 City-Wide Garage Sale - Fall, 8am – 1pm, Call the West Columbia Chamber at 345-3921 for more info.
11/4 Hometown Market/Free Hayrides, 2 – 8pm, 324 E. Brazos
11/4 Moonlight Madness/Shopping Extravaganza, 4 – 9pm, Call West Columbia Chamber at 345-3921 for more info.
11/4 Meet Your Ancestors/Old Columbia Cemetery, 5 – 8pm, S. 16th and E. Jackson St.
11/11 Veterans Day Breakfast at Senior Citizens Center, 7 – 9am, 629 E. Bernard St.
11/11 Veterans Day Program, 5 – 8pm, 219 Veterans Memorial Park Dr.
11/19 33rd Annual Holiday Open House - Downtown Shopping Event, Noon - 5pm
11/25 Small Business Saturday, ALL DAY

DECEMBER

12/2 & 3 **Light Up the First Capitol Festival**
12/2 Breakfast and Firetruck Ride with Santa - Hosted by Pi-Lambda Sorority and WC Fire Dept., 8 – 10:30am, 314 E. Clay
12/2 BBQ Cook-Off/Heritage Hall, Starts at 8am
12/2 Holiday Market/Heritage Hall, 10am – 5pm
12/2 Santa's Workshop/Heritage Hall, 10am – 5pm
12/2 Giving Tree Stroll/Rosenwald School, 10am – 7pm
12/2 Holiday Bistro (Heritage Hall) Lunch provided by the ladies of the Lighthouse Church, 11am – 2pm
12/2 Christmas Performances/Heritage Hall, 1 – 3pm
12/2 Hometown Holiday Market/ Pics with Santa, 2pm – TBA, 324 E. Brazos
12/2 Parade Parties & Eats on the WC Streets, 6pm
12/2 Parade - Downtown, 7pm ***(Route may change due to construction)***
12/2 Christmas Under the Stars at First Baptist Church, 7:30 – 9pm, 226 S. Broad St.
12/2 Live Music at the 1836 Pocket Park with Howlin' Howie, 7:45 – 11pm
12/3 Holiday Bistro/Lunch provided by St. John's Masonic Lodge and Eastern Star, Noon – 2pm
12/3 Holiday Market/Heritage Hall, Noon – 4pm
12/3 Santa's Workshop/Heritage Hall, Noon – 4pm
12/3 Giving Tree Stroll/Rosenwald School, Noon – 4pm
12/3 Columbia Methodist Church Youth Christmas Program, 6pm, 315 S. 16th St.
12/3 Christmas Performance/ Heritage Hall, 1 – 3pm
12/5 Cookies with Santa - Lucy Goose Market, See their FB page for times, 309 S. 17th St.
12/6 Cookies with Santa - Lucy Goose Market, See their FB page for times, 309 S. 17th St.
12/7 WBJH Band Christmas Concert, 6:30 – 8pm, WBJH Gym
12/11 CHS/WBJH Christmas Choir Concert, 7pm, CHS Auditorium
12/12 CHS Band Christmas Concert, 6:30 – 8pm, CHS Auditorium
12/15 Candlelight Christmas, 6 – 9pm, Varner-Hogg Plantation State Historic Site
12/16 Hometown Market, 2 – 8pm, 324 E. Brazos

FEBRUARY JAN.

1/6 Hometown Market, 2 – 8pm, 324 E. Brazos
1/20 Daddy Daughter Dance, 6 – 8pm, Columbia Heritage Hall
2/3 Galentine's Day in WC & Fill the Pantry Retail Event, 10am – 5pm
2/3 Open House Rosenwald School, 10am – 2pm, 247 E. Brazos
2/6 WC Chamber of Commerce Vision 2024 Awards & Networking Breakfast, 8:30 – 10:30am, West Columbia Civic Center
2/10 Trinity Church Choir, 10am, Rosenwald School, 247 E. Brazos
2/11 St. John's Masonic Lodge Super Bowl Fundraiser (BBQ Baked Potatoes), 11am – 1:30pm, 313 W. Jackson
2/13 St. Mary's Episcopal Church Pancake Supper (Free), 5 – 7pm, 201 E. Clay
2/17 Presentation by Dr. Cook, 10am, Rosenwald School, 247 E. Brazos

MARCH

3/2 Spring City-Wide Garage Sale, 8am – 1pm
3/2 Music program with Dr. Scott Rogers, 6pm, Columbia Rosenwald School, For tickets 979-345-6125.
3/8 International Women's Day Open House Exhibit, 10am – 2pm, Columbia Historical Museum, 247 E. Brazos
3/23 Little League Opening Day All Day



LIVE MUSIC • BBQ COOK-OFF • PARADE • SANTA'S WORKSHOP • ENTERTAINMENT • HOLIDAY MARKET

LIGHT UP THE FIRST CAPITOL

WEST COLUMBIA TEXAS

DECEMBER 2ND & 3RD

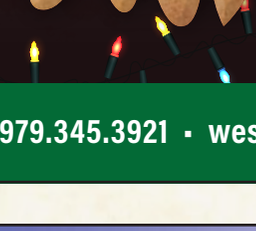
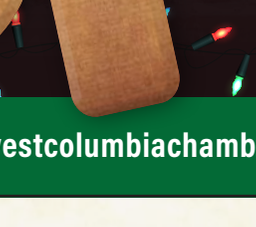
*** FREE ADMISSION***









SATURDAY

ALL DAY - Eat, Drink, Shop & Tour West Columbia
8am - BBQ Cook-Off
8am - 10:30am - Breakfast & Firetruck Ride with Santa - Hosted by Pi-Lambda (WC Fire Dept.)
10am - 5pm - Holiday Market (Heritage Hall)
10am - 5pm - Santa's Workshop (Heritage Hall)
10am - 7pm - Giving Tree Stroll (Rosenwald School)
11am - 2pm - Holiday Bistro (Heritage Hall) Provided by the Ladies of Lighthouse Church
1 - 3pm - Christmas Performances (Heritage Hall)
6pm - Parade Parties & Eats on the WC Streets
7pm - Parade (Downtown) *Route may change due to construction*
7:30 - 9pm - Christmas Under the Stars (First Baptist WC)
7:45 - 11pm - Live Music - Howlin' Howie (Pocket Park)

SUNDAY

Noon - 2pm - Holiday Bistro (Heritage Hall) Provided by St. John's Masonic Lodge/Eastern Star
Noon - 4pm - Holiday Market (Heritage Hall)
Noon - 4pm - Santa's Workshop (Heritage Hall)
Noon - 4pm - Giving Tree Stroll (Rosenwald School)
1 - 3pm - Christmas Performance (Heritage Hall)

For more information, please visit the West Columbia Chamber of Commerce Facebook page or website at www.westcolumbiachamber.com.

Event times and/or locations subject to change.

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YOUR CITY Education

AN INTERVIEW WITH DEBBIE SUTHERLAND, CITY MANAGER

9-1-1 is a number we should all be familiar with but may not know a lot about. Those three numbers can be a lifesaver, but only if emergency responders can find you.

When you call 9-1-1, your address is displayed to a dispatcher who relays the call to the appropriate service like the ambulance, fire department or law enforcement. Emergency response vehicles then drive to your location as soon as possible.

"When minutes count, we have to play detective to try to find an address," said Cathy Greiner, Central EMS chief director. GPS can guide the ambulance to the general area, but not always to the exact address.

Greiner said when an address is not displayed prominently and is not reflective at night, the ambulance spends precious time guessing which house called for help.

"The address may be displayed behind a tree or the numbers have fallen off or faded. Maybe a rose bush has grown up in front of it," she said. *"It really delays our response time."*

The 9-1-1 system has been in place since 1999, and West Columbia is one of 23 Regional Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in a coordinated service of the Houston-Galveston Area Council (HGAC). HGAC provides the 9-1-1 equipment to all the PSAPs, funded from fees on your phone bill. The city provides dispatchers, trained and certified on the equipment. The city secretary coordinates new construction addresses with the county so that these addresses are correctly entered into the 9-1-1 system.

Do your part to keep your family safe by prominently displaying and illuminating your street address. Being able to see the address easily greatly assists emergency service responders, ambulance, fire and law enforcement. Help them help you.



Photo contributed by Kasey Dworaczyk

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GROWTH & Progress

EXCITING THINGS ARE COMING

Rustic Wolf Trading Co.

The former Brazos Avenue Market location, at 333 W. Brazos Ave., is being transformed by Katrina and Joshua Ashburn into the Rustic Wolf Trading Co. The couple moved from Michigan where Joshua was in the Coast Guard. They knew they wanted to settle in a small town where they could know their neighbors and raise their children.

"We had heard great things about West Columbia. We fell in love with the schools, the people and small businesses," she said.

The Ashburns are remodeling the building. The first stage, Junkyard Studio Photography, is currently open by appointment. The second stage of the remodel will feature a retail area to promote local artists and makers, hopefully by the end of 2023.

"Our goal with the Rustic Wolf is to promote handcrafted artisans, because I feel like it's a lost art," she said.

The last phase will create a coffee house and a drive through.



Rustic Wolf Trading Co.

Republic BBQ

Republic BBQ recently opened in the former Smokin' R location at 226 E Brazos Ave. Owners are Tony Shanar and cousin Tim Foteh. The pair invested in West Columbia in 2019 when they purchased Loggins Court Apartments. They dined at Smokin' R and were sad when it closed. Tony and Tim had barbecue restaurant experience, so they decided to bring the building back to life as Republic BBQ.

"The reason we're investing in West Columbia truly is because of its people," Tony said. *"We've always been enamored with West Columbia's small, home town feel. We knew there was a need for it, and we knew the restaurant was going to work because of the support of the community."*

Republic BBQ's first big gig is catering Roughneck Blowout.

"It's going to give us exposure, and that's what we need," Tony said. *"The more we get our name out there the more successful it will be for the city and for us."*

Four more businesses are relocating including:

- Lucy Goose Market purchased a new location at 314 Broad St. and will transfer to that location in January.
- Discovery Days is remodeling the old Watts Grocery, at 520 S. 17th St., and will be expanding the daycare to that building.
- Coburn Chiropractic is moving from Highway 36 to 205 S. 17th St., where Bleu Roots Salon was located.
- West Columbia Health Clinic is moving from 668 W. Brazos Ave., to the old Texas-New Mexico Power building at, 411 W. Brazos Ave., that Sweeny Community Hospital is renovating.



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central-ems.org

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westcolumbiatx.org

Cable/Internet
Sparklight
844.216.9190

Chamber of Commerce/ Visitors Center
LaBonne Casey
979.345.3921
westcolumbiachamber.com

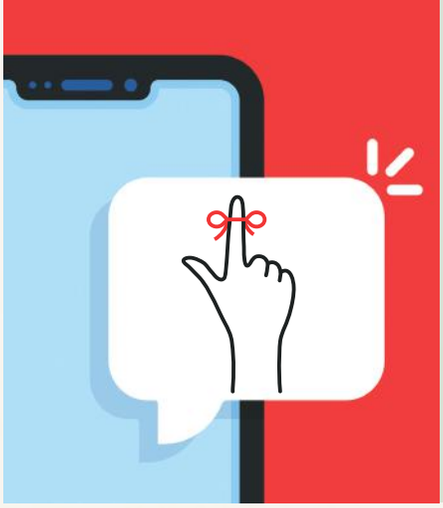
Brazoria County Commissioner Pct. 4
David Linder
979.482.1356

Drainage District #11
John W. Damon
979.864.5401
wbcdd11.org

West Columbia Volunteer Fire Department
Chief Michael Eulenfeld
979.345.3416

Gas Company
CenterPoint Energy
800.752.8036
CenterPointenergy.com

West Columbia Health Clinic
979.345.2525



Notify City Hall with your updated contact information at 979.345.3123 so we can notify you with

CRITICAL COMMUNITY ALERTS

Medical Leaders & Associates
979.345.6522

Justice of the Peace
Sherry Kersh
979.345.2671
brazoria-county.com

Municipal Court
Judge Sherry Kersh
979-345-4832
Westcolumbiatx.org

Library
979.345.3394
bcls.lib.tx.us

Museum
Columbia Historical Museum
979.345.6125
columbiahistoricalmuseum.org

Police Department
Chief/EM Paul Odin
979.345.5121
westcolumbiapolice.org

Post Office
usps.com

Power Companies
powertochoose.org

School District
Columbia-Brazoria ISD
979.345.5147
cbisd.com

Telephone/Internet
Btel
979.798.2121
btel.com

Century Link
800.788.3500

Trash Pick Up
Waste Connections
979.864.4600
wasteconnections.com

Vehicle Registration
Kristin R. Bulanek
979.345.5914
brazoria-county.com

Elected Officials

979.345.3123 • westcolumbiatx.org

Mayor
Laurie Kincannon

Mayor Pro-Tem
Charley Tindol

Council
Robert Thomas - Position 1
Charley Tindol - Position 2
Roy Maynor - Position 3
Rory Burke - Position 4
Lauren Buchanan- Position 5

City Contacts

512 E. Brazos Ave. • West Columbia
979.345.3123 • westcolumbiatx.org

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Kaili Avirett

Economic Dev./Tourism
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CBISD

Columbia-Brazoria Independent School District



We Are CBISD



www.cbisd.com

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