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4TH
OF
July

Local Life

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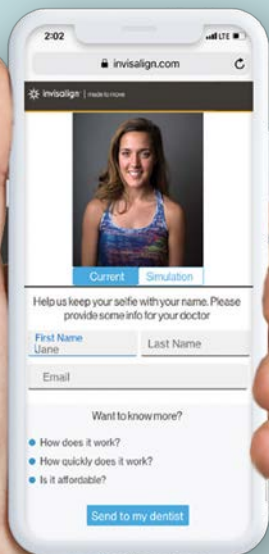
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4th of July

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Purchase today as tickets will go up on the day of the event.

Parking lot opens at 4 • Band starts at 7

Local Life

MORE THAN JUST A MAGAZINE!



RAISE YOUR HAND if you are ready for Covid to be over and behind us. Just when I think things are getting back to normal the rug is ripped out from underneath me. I catch myself being annoyed and I really try and talk myself out of it. I am sure there are many of you like me. I just remind myself to be kind and try to smile and maybe you can be the reason someone else smiles. I know I need someone to do that for me in this messy time

of life! If you look at the cover you will see the background picture is red, white and blue messy paint. I choose that on purpose because life can be pretty messy for lots of people right now. This too shall pass and life will go on.

The 4th of July is my favorite holiday. I have fond memories as a kid of being in the parade and enjoying the fireworks. I have always been amazed by fireworks. I don't know if it is just the awe of the sparkly lights or the big booms. I think I just have such great memories of hanging out with my mom, looking at the stars and waiting on them to start. I guess it was always a good reminder of how blessed I feel to live in the USA. I still believe that now even with everything going on around us. Luckily, we still have a few opportunities see the fireworks this year including right here in our own backyard. Be sure and check our Facebook page and website to see the different options. Hopefully I will see you at the ones here in Burleson. I am helping put on the party at the Standard at Chisenhall. It is going to be a fun one with one of my favorite local bands...The Dolan Band.

Hang in there friends. We WILL get through all this together!

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Alex Phillips, far right

Alex Philips

SOME PEOPLE REFER TO HIM AS MR. BURLESON, and they'd be right. Alex Philips would probably say it differently though. Whenever you talk to him about his role with the City of Burleson, he is clear that he is one part of an amazing team. It is this relationship driven mentality that has made Alex one of Burleson's greatest advocates.

Alex Philips is a hometown boy to Burleson, which is reflected in his love for the city. His family moved to Burleson when he was six years old and he made the choice to never leave. He is a graduate of Burleson High School and he and his wife raise their daughter in the town he grew up in. The same reasons he had for staying are what motivates him to keep Burleson going in its positive direction. He wants his daughter to be proud to raise her family in this community and be prepared with tools, resources and relationships, just as he was.

Alex holds the title of Economic Development Manager for the City of Burleson. He has worked with the city for thirteen years. He first started in the water/wastewater department as an inventory clerk. He moved over to City Hall and later joined the Economic Development team in 2015. Experience in various aspects of the innerworkings of the city gives him a unique perspective of the larger team effort it takes for any business to be successful in Burleson. While he gets to be in the forefront, Alex is quick to point out that there are workers in numerous departments that all have a key role in bringing and keeping businesses in Burleson. He credits relationships as being the most important part of his job. Between the city council, the business community, city departments and his team, Alex recognizes he is one part of a large team.

Alex describes his role as Economic Development Manager as his dream job. He genuinely loves going into work each day. His motivation is to make Burleson better than he found it. He is constantly brainstorming, evaluating and coming up with new ideas. He is a regular in the local businesses, checking on them and building connections with the owners and employees. Alex has an amazing team within Economic Development with Drew Pennywell and Joni Van Noy. Their desire is to be servants to the businesses and community members of Burleson. They have daily meetings so they can collaborate and brainstorm as a team. Whether it is recruiting new companies to make Burleson their home or making sure a thirty-year-old business has what they need, Alex works to make sure the Economic Development team has a collaborative working relationship with the Burleson business community.

This was never more apparent than when Burleson, as with the rest of the United States, faced the challenges



brought on by Covid-19. As social distancing and stay at home orders threatened businesses and the economic stability of our community, Alex and his team went into action. Immediately the city began buying daily lunches for city employees at local restaurants, putting \$80,000 back into the restaurants. The Economic Development team was a part of a small business task force whose first project was BTX Gift Cards. Through this program, local businesses could sign up to be a part of a one stop website where anyone could purchase gift cards to Burleson businesses. They partnered with essential businesses to promote the gift card purchases and by doing so, raised thousands for local charities. The program raised over \$35,000 for the local businesses by June. Then the city offered a program that has widely been praised for keeping some businesses afloat. Operation Together gave nonessential Burleson businesses the opportunity to apply to be a part of a promotional partnership with the City of Burleson's Economic Development Corporation. This partnership gave one hundred businesses \$5,000 each if they met criteria. This partnership extended the economic benefit to additional local businesses, thanks to that criteria. The city introduced Buy BTX as businesses started to open. This program allowed residents to turn in receipts for money spent at any Burleson business in exchange for an entry in a weekly drawing for gift cards to area businesses. Because of the work done by Alex, the Economic Development Team and the City of Burleson, area businesses are coming out of the time of social distancing stronger than ever. Alex credits the people of Burleson for their strong support of the business community, by saying "Through all of this, our team wants to thank the community as a whole for continuing to support the small businesses."

When asked what he would say to prospective businesses, Alex answered: "We know a lot of other communities would want you. If you're looking to be in a place where you'll be supported by a loyal customer base, you will not find an authenticity in any community like you will find here." Alex Philips, leads the community in that loyalty and Burleson is a better place because he is here.



Ihechiluru Ekeke and his wife, Ogechi

Ihechiluru Ekeke

“WHO WOULDN’T WANT TO BE AN AMERICAN?”

Ihechiluru Ekeke posed this question when he spoke of the opportunity he was given to move to the United States from his home country of Nigeria. Ekeke has realized the dreams that living in the United States affords and returns the blessings to his community through his business, Mr. Handyman of Burleson, Midlothian, and East Cleburne.

Ekeke moved to New York in 1995 when he was twenty-five years old on an Immigrant Visa after being selected in the visa lottery program. Two years later he enlisted in the United States Army, thinking he might serve for a few years then get out. He fell in love with the US military though and decided to make a career out of it. He went to Officer Candidate School and was commissioned as a Field Artillery Officer. He retired as a captain after serving for twenty years. During his time of service, he had several overseas tours including time in Iraq, Kuwait, and Korea. He taught Military Science to ROTC students as well, which is what brought him to Texas. He taught at the University of Texas at Arlington and he and his family decided to make North Texas their home.

Ekeke retired from the military in 2017 to focus his time on his family. He first met his wife, Ogechi, in

Nigeria and after he got his start in the United States, he returned to marry her, and she moved to join him in the US in 2002. Together they have four children: one daughter and three sons. His wife is a Nurse Practitioner in the area. After retiring from the military Ekeke went through the Executive MBA program at TCU, graduating in the spring of 2019. By August of 2019 he began the process of starting a business and by February of 2020 he had purchased and opened a franchise of Mr. Handyman. He spent a great deal of time researching several other companies, but it was the core values of Mr. Handyman that caught his attention. He wanted to be a part of a business that allowed him to give back to other people.

Ekeke is not a handyman by trade, he is a soldier



Ihechiluru Ekeke in his office



turned businessman. Rather, he hires employees that are skilled technicians in various forms of home repair. The business model of Mr. Handyman allows for work to be fully insured and guaranteed for a year. He hires all his technicians as full employees who are insured, bonded and have minimum of 10 years of experience. They specialize in the home repair services.

Mr. Handyman has a company-wide Day of Service where the franchise owners donate material and their staff's time to benefit someone in the community. Because of his military experience, Ekeke knows the challenges often faced within the veteran community and has decided to use the Day of Service to help out other veterans. He is working with local organizations to identify fellow veterans who would benefit from the services of Mr. Handyman. He has already identified the benefactor of the first Day of Service that will happen in the summer of 2020. Not only will he have his employees helping this veteran but Ekeke plans to have his family also working alongside him to benefit this veteran.

He inspires others to join alongside him in the work to benefit veterans. Another Mr. Handyman owner in a different part of North Texas has already committed to join Ekeke in his service work and Ekeke only sees the opportunity for growth. He welcomes the opportunity to partner with other Burleson businesses and community members to serve the veteran community.

Ekeke is a man of faith with a deeply rooted belief in God and recognition that God directs everything he does. That faith has given him confidence to start a new

life in a new country as a young man, faithfully serve the United States in the military, and start a new adventure as a businessman.

Tim Davis

WHAT BETTER PLACE TO WORK, shop, play, raise your family, go to church, go out to eat and enjoy a hometown done right, than Burleson Texas? Tim Davis shared this thought about the place he has called home for almost thirty years. He loves this community, where small locally owned businesses mix with larger corporations to make a great town. He describes the city as a place that has held on to its small-town feel while being forward-thinking and keeping up with the growing needs of a community. Tim particularly loves that this city reflects Texas. To listen to Tim talk about it, you almost immediately start to love it too. He describes Burleson as a country area surrounded by cities that is holding on to that rural feel for as long as it can. The farming and ranching community has been an anchor of this town and people have held on to these roots and are still embracing this great heritage. You do not have to look hard to see someone in boots and a cowboy hat going through Old Town, driving an old pickup truck through town full of hay or feed, or a tractor going down main street. That someone could easily be Tim, who is a self-described country boy, that loves the country feel



Tim and Belisa Davis


that Burleson still has to offer!

The city has Tim's wife Belisa to thank for him being in Burleson. Tim grew up in Saginaw, Texas but was drawn to Burleson by his beautiful bride of twenty-nine years. They built their first house in 1994 and made their home in Burleson where they raised their two girls. Tim proudly says his greatest accomplishments are his two daughters and he speaks with nothing but fondness and love for his family. He and Belisa own a small ranch where they raise black angus cattle, hay and love spending most of their time. The country/rural atmosphere was what drew him to Burleson (besides Belisa, of course!) and Tim plans on keeping his roots right here. He wanted to be in a place where he could own his own land, raise a family, have a business and plant his roots. It was a girl who brought him to Burleson and now he couldn't imagine living anywhere else.

In 1998, Tim opened his business here in Burleson, Alpha and Omega Pest Control. As a natural problem solver, he has found satisfaction in helping people take care of what was bugging them for over twenty years. Any customer of Alpha and Omega can attest to the excellent service Tim and his team provides. Tim takes great pride in his business and loves working with his team of employees and leads with a positive attitude. His motto is QUEST! Quality Uncompromised Every Single Time and feels like if a job is worth doing right it is worth doing right the first time!

Over the years, Tim's friendliness, servant attitude, and huge heart have made him a leader in the Burleson business community. He is one of the city's biggest advocates and has actively worked to make it a great place to live and do business. He loves to support the local businesses, enjoys all the great friendships

that he has around town and the team like feeling that exists between business owners. He has served the community in various capacities including the Burleson Rotary Club, the Burleson Area Chamber of Commerce, and chaired the Old Town Design Standards committee. Most recently, Tim was honored to be a part of the local small business task force created in response to the changes brought on by Covid-19. This task force created BTX Gift Cards, a program spearheaded by City of Burleson council members, economic development team, and business leaders. This program immediately put dollars back into businesses' accounts as they faced closures or changes due to social distancing requirements. Tim spurred other people to support this program and matched funds raised in gift card sales to be donated to a local charity. He led the support of the area businesses by example by actively patronizing local restaurants and used social media to encourage others to do the same. Tim described his motivation by simply saying "we weren't going to let anyone fail without a fight." The City of Burleson adopted the hashtag #BurlesonStrong through the time of social distancing. Tim shares how accurately that description fits the response of fellow business owners and the support that our awesome community gave to so many during the height of the recent mess we have all been through. He says Burleson set the bar high for how a community should respond during tough times, and it is because of the hard work and dedication of so many "we are Burleson Strong!" It is because of people like Tim and so many others that displayed great strength, and leadership that Burleson was able to stay uplifted and positive through the toughest of times.

Tim compliments Burleson, by saying it exemplifies its slogan "small town done right." He is the embodiment of what it means to embrace that attitude. Everything he appreciates about the city, he works to make sure others can enjoy it, too. Thank you, Belisa, for bringing Tim to Burleson and raising your family here. The community is better because of our great citizens and we are so blessed that the Davis family calls Burleson its hometown! 

Problem Solved

To-Do List

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- Repair kitchen drywall
- Fix cabinet hinge
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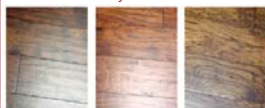
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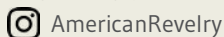
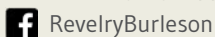


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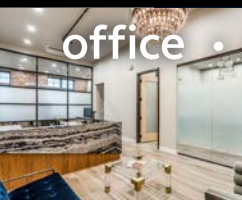
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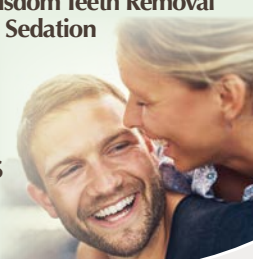
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TRAVEL

with First Travel

by JORDAN DEWALD

Lila Glazener opened First Travel of Burleson in October of 1989. She has seen the travel agency through over three decades of changes, starting during a time where computers were not even a part of the process in travel planning. She has spent the decades building relationships with her clients, adapting to the changes in technology and economics, and grown her business through it. One thing that has remained a constant is the service she and her team can offer. Lila has a dedicated team: Amanda Weir and Sherry Cotton in the office, Judy Smyth in outside sales, and Dixie Broady who helps with the popular bus trips.

The travel industry has never faced a more difficult time than the spring and summer of 2020. The spread of Covid-19 brought on mandated closures, closed borders, a halt to leisure travel, and uncertainty for the

traveler. Lila said she has never seen a time like this in her thirty years in the industry. It was not predicted and even something travel insurance did not know to account for. The team at First Travel of Burleson has been busy throughout the entire time, helping their clients recover and reschedule the investments made for travel plans. They have spent up to six hours on the phone with vendors and airlines on behalf of their clients. This is a unique service that only comes when a traveler has used a travel agent. Countless people who booked their airline tickets, trips, and hotel rooms ended up out of money and frustrated by the lack of response they got from the vendors they booked with. They have had to face the challenge on their own. The staff at First Travel has fought for their clients, proving how valuable their services are.



Many of First Travel's clients are return customers or from word of mouth referrals. Clients continue to find benefit in the services offered and the money they save. A customer of First Travel does not pay a fee when they book a trip so an additional cost is not incurred. Instead, the client receives the benefit of First Travel's experience and connections.

When asked what they would advise regarding travel during this time, their experience comes in handy once again. They stay in the know so they are aware of what changes are made and are up to date on what safety precautions and changes the different airlines, resorts, and other vendors have made. They have direct contact with representatives in the industry so they get a straight answer about what the current status is in the travel industry. The team also understands that it is a personal decision for each person and family regarding what they are comfortable with in regard to travel

right now. They can offer personalized plans for people ready to travel now and can help others plan their travel for 2021.

Many families have decided to stay stateside in their travels, looking for locations with outside activities and house or condo rental. First Travel can help people book condos and places to stay in popular locations such as Orange Beach and Gulf Shores, AL, the Smokey Mountains, Colorado, and New Mexico. Those are easily driveable from North Texas and provide activities where people can remain socially distant.

Whether they are helping individuals, families, city officials, the local school district, or groups the team at First Travel makes each client's travel experience a priority. It is why they have been in business for over thirty years through all of the changes and are continuing to serve their clients despite any challenges. ●



STAYCATIONS *and* SAFECATIONS

Kids have been out of school since March. Families have been home together for weeks. Adults have faced a variety of stressors. If there was ever a time that people were needing a summer vacation, it is now! Unfortunately, the threat of Covid-19 is still present leaving people wondering if they'll be able to do any traveling over the next few months. The good news is if a person is comfortable with traveling most stateside attractions and locations are opening up and ready for visitors.

HOW WILL YOU GET THERE?

Consider whether or not you want to drive or if you are comfortable with flying. Many people still have concerns about airline travel. Most airlines are taking significant precautions though, making them a safe option. A travel agency would be able to help you research

what airline you would feel most comfortable with, find a low rate and help you in case the need for a cancellation arises.

Road trips are a popular option right now, as gas prices are significantly lower than typical summers. When taking the family

STAYCATIONS *and* SAFECATIONS

car, travelers control with whom they share a closed space and can get to several locations with ease. A rental or purchase of a Recreational Vehicle is another option, allowing for even greater social distancing from other travelers at hotels or rest stops.

WHERE WILL YOU GO?

Many travelers are choosing to stay stateside, according to the staff at First Travel of Burleson. Every state in the United States is open for visitors and a good portion of the country is easily driveable from North Texas. Be sure to check the most up to date restrictions and allowances each location has. Make sure you are aware of what phase of reopening the state is in because that could limit your activities. Different counties and cities within a state may be allowed to make their own regulations so pay attention at each stop you make.

Places with outdoor activities are safe options that can allow for social distancing. Beaches, national parks, rivers, or the mountains are great spots for a vacation and are all easily driveable from North Texas. An outdoor activity allows someone to stay further away from people and reports show that the disease is spread less easily outside rather than in a confined space. Plus, being outside is great for mental clarity and physical activity which is needed after a stressful spring.

WHERE WILL YOU STAY?

Once you have chosen a location, the next step is to find a place to stay. Consider what you will use the lodging for. Are you planning to only sleep there or will you spend most of your time at that spot? For people looking to take extra precautions when they travel, a good option is to rent a house or condo. There the group can cook their own meals, avoid lobbies and elevators, and have a place to spend time when other activities are limited.

WHAT SHOULD YOU PACK?

Traveling during Covid-19 will mean you need to pack some extra items. Keep your own stock of hand sanitizer, paper towels, and disinfecting wipes. You do not want to be without those items if your destination does not provide them. You will also need to pack a mask, as many places are recommending them if not requiring them. It will also make other fellow travelers feel more at ease and reduces the chance you could unknowingly infect someone else. Pack as many items from home as you can to reduce the amount of shopping you have to do. Double-check your toiletries, medications, and what items you'll need at the destination. Remember some items are being restocked at a slower rate. You do not want to have to go hunting for items when you're on vacation.

Whether you choose to make this summer's vacation a "staycation" or a "safecation," following the recommended guidelines by the CDC can make your trip a fun experience with great memories even in the midst of an outbreak.

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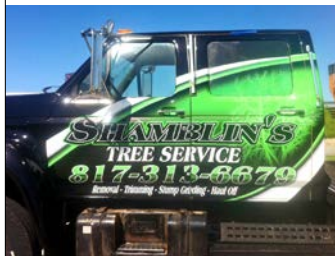
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