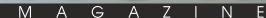
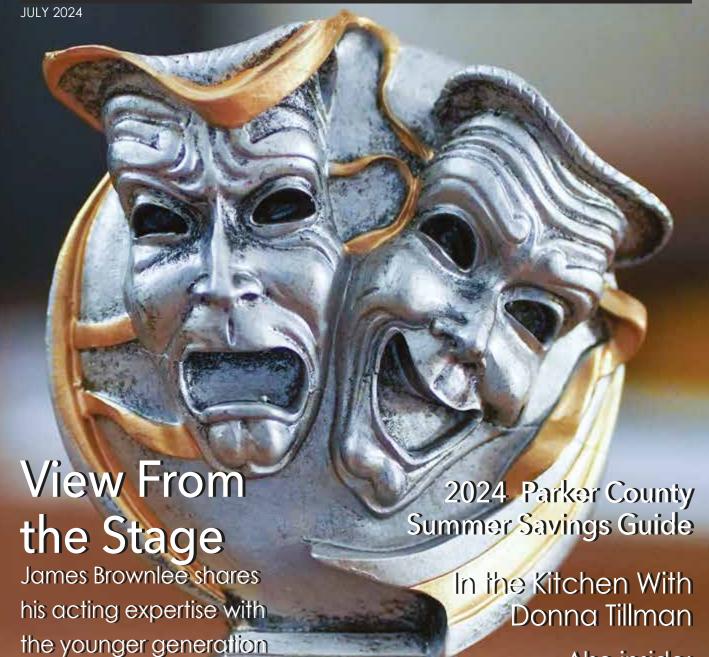
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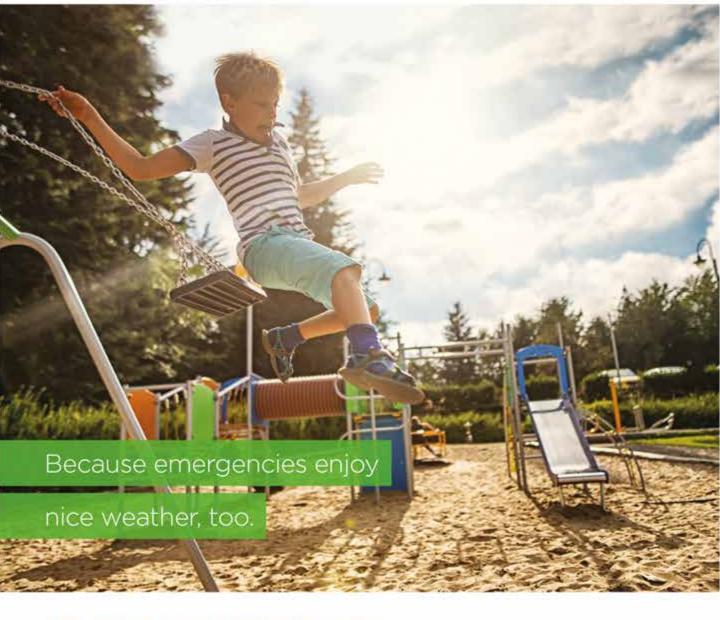
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ON THE COVER



Lessons from a local educator capture the essence and emotion of the theater.

Photo by Sarah Brown.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

July is a time for fun in the sun!

As we are smack dab in the middle of summer, I cannot help but think about all the fun memories we have shared with family and friends during Julys of the past. From soaking up the sun on the white sand beaches of Destin, Florida, to annual Independence Day parties that doubled as a family friend's birthday, July is a time of celebration and reflection on the past, the present and what the future may hold.

On July 4, 1776, our nation declared its independence from Great Britain with the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. While many will don colors of red, white and blue in celebration this July 4, it is peach that will soon be engulfing the local community. The Parker County Peach Festival will be held on Saturday, July 13. Historic Downtown Weatherford will be bustling with thousands of locals and visitors as they shop vendors, taste all things peach, enjoy entertainment on two stages and play games with the littles in the Children's Area.

A great feat is planned for this summer's Parker County Peach Festival. With the help of several local businesses, nonprofits, city leaders and students, the Weatherford Chamber of Commerce plans to create the World's Largest Peach Cobbler! The cobbler, which the Chamber expects to weigh in at more than 5,000 pounds, will be unveiled at the Peach Festival. What will they do with all that cobbler? Locals can buy a taste, and proceeds will benefit local nonprofits.

This is one reason I love this country of ours so much. When people work together toward a common goal, anything is possible.

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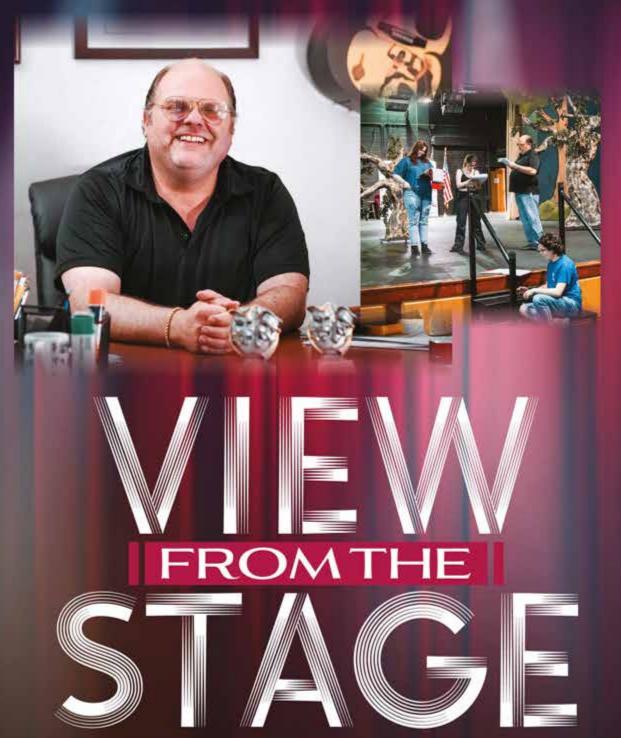
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On Staff



— By Amber D. Browne

Most people may never experience the spotlight of the theater as an onstage performer, the center of the audience's attention. For many, the theater is experienced from afar as performers bring beloved characters to life. James Brownlee knows all too well the view from the spotlight. As a professional actor, he now shares his expertise with the younger generation as director of dramatic studies at Weatherford College.

As a student at Weatherford College in the late 1990s, James appeared in the inaugural production, *Into the Woods*, at the new Marjorie Black Alkek Fine Arts Center. Following his time as a theater student at the college, James transferred to Tarlton State University, where he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts and, later, a graduate degree from Texas State University in San Marcos.

James returned to his roots at Weatherford College to teach theater and speech classes in 2015. Two years later, when

his former theater teacher, mentor and longtime Weatherford College faculty member Nancy McVean retired, James took over her position with the school. In 2018, James invited alumni from the original *Into the Woods* cast for a repeat performance to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the theater.

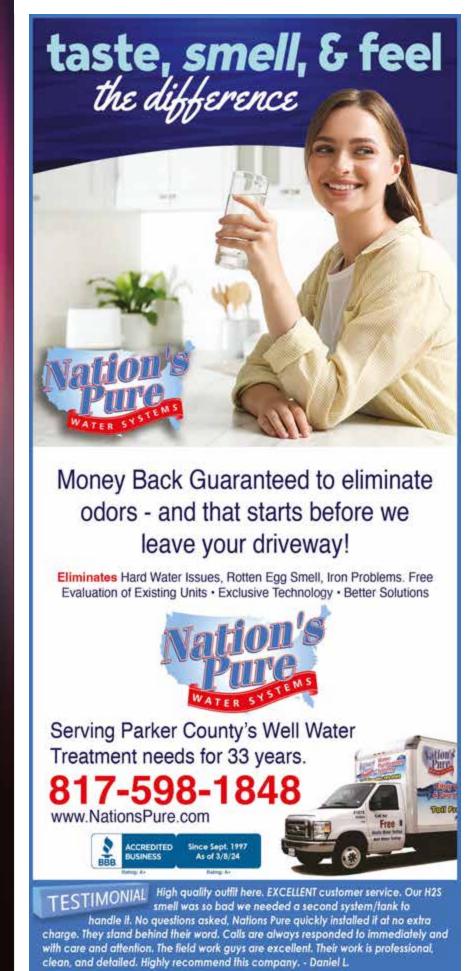
His love of theater began while in high school. He performed in Shakespeare in the Park during the summers, and since then, his acting career has been steady with appearances in dozens of independent films, the previous ownership of a theater company in Austin and voiceover work in anime and video games. A well-known part for James was his performance as a henchman in *Machete*. "I got shot by Cheech Marin," James laughed.

Although he has had steady acting work, James' first love is education.
That love of education stems from his passion for performance art and from those who mentored him throughout his educational and professional careers. "I reasoned if I wanted to do this someday, if I wanted to be where I am right now, it would probably behoove me to spend some time in the field."

He uses that acting experience to teach others about the industry. "As a theater professor, ideally, you don't just teach people how to perform, you also teach them how to actually go be an actor and get jobs." James continues to take acting gigs, but most of his time is spent at Weatherford College. "It's incredibly rewarding. I consider this to be living the dream. I love my students. I love spending time with them. I love learning from them," he shared. "I learn as much from them as they do from me."

The theater department at Weatherford College stays busy with six to seven productions each year, all of which are free admission — except for the summer musical. "We are a small department, but not small-time," James said. "I'm a madman. I don't go home in the summer. I stay here, and I work." James' wife, Erin Brownlee, is an English professor at Weatherford College and has a strong theater background. "She is my partner in crime during the summer. We co-direct things, and we produce the shows," James said.

"Just like any great acting dynasty,





we drag our kids up here, so they kind of grow up in that environment." The Brownlees have three children: the eldest. Mickey, who chooses not to perform, but rather uses her artistic talents as a sketch artist; Maisie, who attends the Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts; and the youngest, Fionn, whom James said is "more of a math and letters guy."

During the summer, three productions are hosted at the Alkek Fine Arts Center. "That's because I just love what I do. but also for the sake of exposure." Community members are invited to audition for the summer performances, which typically involve larger casts. During the school year, the acting and tech roles belong to the students, and productions fall into the educational theater category with an occasional performance from ancient Greece. "In the short time that they're here, I feel like it's my obligation to expose them to as much as possible."

James collaborates with his students. "These kids are all quite brilliant, and they have a million different ideas." He encourages them to trust their intuition when practicing for a performance, and if one idea does not work for the play, he will guide them in a different direction. "My focus is on these wonderful young people and just allowing them to have an outlet to shine." Although some costumes and props are preordered or borrowed from other local theater companies, most costumes, props, sets and lighting are designed by the students with James' guidance. "If they're creating the things that they use in the show, then they truly have ownership in that show."

James encourages his students to follow their passion and pursue an acting career, but if professional acting or technical theater is not the direction they want to take, they learn skills that will

serve them in other careers. "Theater is thinking on your feet. It's problem solving. It's being comfortable around people. It's being comfortable in front of an audience. The skills that you learn in theater can really transfer to any kind of career, especially a career where you have to collaborate and work with other people. The possibilities are endless."

For James, the future holds a space at Weatherford College. "This is very much my dream job. I want to build this department up until this is a glorious hub of culture and art. That's why I do plays year-round."

James and his students, along with community members during the summer performances, provide audiences with productions they might not see elsewhere and with crowdpleasing musicals. James urges the local community to spend an evening in the audience. "It was very important to me when I started that we get people in here and get people knowing about this place," he said. "Theater has the potential to change people's lives. Not just the people performing it, but the people who are witnessing it." NOW











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Home Clean Heroes of West Fort Worth

- By Amber D. Browne

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The benefits of a clean home are numerous and range from better physical health due to fewer germs to less stress living in an organized environment. However, this chore is often done inefficiently, as busy schedules get in the way of cleaning time. For locals with calendars full of extracurricular, school and work-related activities. Home Clean Heroes of

West Fort Worth might just be the cleaning service they are looking for to get their residence into tip-top shape.

"We actually start at the ceiling, left to right, top to bottom," explained Shawn Smith, co-owner of the Home Clean Heroes franchise location in Aledo. She provides in-home estimates for residents, so they know exactly what to expect, and the cleaning crew is aware of specific, personalized instructions. "I love doing the estimate because I like putting that personal touch on it and building relationships," she shared. "We're going to be an extension of your family."

Home cleans include dusting, cleaning the ceiling fans, vents, baseboards, floors, bathrooms and more. "We touch every surface, every time we go in." The price depends on the square footage of the home, but no contracts are involved. "We want them to stay with us because they're happy with the service." They offer the Hero Guarantee, so if the cleaning crew misses something, the homeowner can advise Home Clean Heroes of West Fort Worth within 24 hours, and they will come back to fix it for free.

Homeowners can choose a recurring clean once a week, bi-weekly, monthly or quarterly. Other options are one-time cleans and deep cleans for new construction, move-ins and move-outs. Before the cleaning crew arrives, homeowners are required to pick up clutter, so Home Clean Heroes can focus on cleaning the space. "I tell people, don't clean before we come because that's what you're paying us to do," Shawn explained. "We're here to help you have less stress in your life, not more."

"I LOVE DOING THE ESTIMATE BECAUSE I LIKE PUTTING THAT PERSONAL TOUCH ON IT AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS."

Shawn opened Home Clean Heroes of West Fort Worth with her husband, Anthony Smith, in August of 2023. They discovered Home Clean Heroes after a lengthy search for a business of their own that began prior to COVID-19. Their territory covers an area north to Saginaw, east to Interstate-35 West, south near Granbury and west to Brock. "We're fully insured. We're bonded, so people feel more confident in that," Shawn stated. Each crew member is background checked, has a clean driving record and arrives at the home in a vehicle wrapped with the Home Clean Heroes logo. "I'm not going to put somebody in your home that I wouldn't have in my own home."

The staff must undergo training specific to Home Clean Heroes. "We have a very methodical process that helps them get in and out of the home very quickly. People want their whole house cleaned, but they don't want you under their feet all day long, or they want you gone by the time they get home from work."

Home Clean Heroes donates a portion of every cleaning fee to local first responders through a partnership with First Responders Children's Foundation. Donations go toward several FRCF programs, including financial assistance, college scholarships and mental health programs or assistance. "If we were going to open a business, we wanted to do something to give back because we've lived here forever," she said. "That's what drew us to this brand." NOW





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Around Town



Parker County Sheriff's Posse Frontier Days PRCA Rodeo Parade participants put on a show for attendees.

Zoomed In:

By Amber D. Browne

Tammy Gazzola and Zack Smith

A guest to create the World's Largest Peach Cobbler will culminate at the Parker County Peach Festival. Zack Smith, Weatherford City Council member and Buffalo Equipment Rental President, and Weatherford Chamber President Tammy Gazzola got to work on this extraordinary feat in 2023. "We're not building the world's largest cobbler. We're building a stronger community," Zack said.

Zack spearheaded the logistics, which include building a pit at Peacock's Feed & Supply. A pan, built by Weatherford ISD CTE students, will be heated by burners powered by Texas Butane. Two brand-new concrete mixers will combine ingredients from Fire Oak Grill's recipe.

The cooked cobbler will be weighed at Dillard Feed & Seed and transported to the festival to serve 18,000 people. Estimated to weigh over 5,600 pounds, it should beat Louisiana's 2,251-pound record.



Taylor Decker stands ready to provide tanning advice at CoCo Beach Tan in Hudson Oaks.



Locals entertain in Weatherford College's Summer Stage teen production of Shrek The Musical JR. at the Alkek Fine Arts Center.



Noe Riskas homeschools her daughters, Roxanne and Scarlett, at the East Parker County Library.



TexasBank donates \$25.000 to the Weatherford College Foundation for student scholarships.



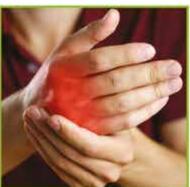
Pitcher Cam Harris celebrates Brock Varsity Baseball's win over lacksboro sending them to state in Round Rock.



The Weatherford Art Association announces the winners of Artist of the Month for June - Amy Smith in first, Cher Crosby in second and Debra Strandberg in third place.

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Over the years, lifelong Parker County resident Donna Tillman has won or placed in a variety of cooking competitions and cook-offs. Although she no longer competes in the Parker County Peach Festival Food Competition, she volunteers to help others receive recognition for their peach-related creations.

Donna grew up in a family of cooks and loves to try new recipes and incorporate others passed down from generations. She often shares her dishes in other food competitions, during holidays and at family events.

Baking and grilling are her go-to cooking methods. "Our family owns more barbecue pits and grills than I can count." One of her favorite spices is chili powder. "I have several different varieties that I use when making chili, beans and even tacos. It's fun to shop at spice shops!" Now

Chili

2 lbs. ground beef
Salt, to taste
Pepper, to taste
1 tsp. dried minced garlic
1/4 cup dried minced onion
1 heaping Tbsp. Pendery's Chile
Pepper-Fire and Smoke

- 3 Tbsp. Pendery's Chile Blend-New Mexico Light
- 3 Tbsp. Pendery's Chile Blend-Original
- 1/4 cup dark chili powder
- I heaping Tbsp. flour
- 1 10-oz. can Ro-Tel tomatoes
- 1 4-oz. can diced green chilies
- 1 15-oz. can tomato sauce
- 1 6-oz. can tomato paste

I cup ketchup I cup water Jalapeños, sliced, to taste (optional) Red pepper flakes, to taste (optional) Beans, to taste (optional)

- **1.** Brown the ground beef; drain the grease. Add the salt, pepper and the next 7 ingredients. Combine well.
- **2.** Add the Ro-Tel tomatoes and the next 5 ingredients; stir to combine. Add the jalapeños, red pepper flakes and beans, if desired. Simmer on low for 1-2 hours. Add water, ketchup or tomato sauce as needed for consistency and taste.

Crock-Pot Roast and Veggies

1 3-4 lb. roast Salt, to taste Pepper, to taste

- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 3-4 large potatoes, peeled and quartered
- I 1-lb. bag carrots, peeled and cut into thirds
- 2-3 onions, peeled and cut into thirds

1 2-oz. pkg. dry onion soup mix 1 10.5-oz. can cream of mushroom soup Water

- 1. Season both sides of the roast with salt and pepper. In a skillet on medium heat, add the olive oil. Brown both sides of the roast.
- 2. Add the prepared potatoes, carrots and onions to the bottom of a Crock-Pot. Add the browned roast on top of the vegetables.
- 3. In a small bowl, mix together the soup mix and cream of mushroom soup. Add half a can of water to the mixture. Combine well; pour over the roast. Secure the lid; cook on low heat for 7-8 hours.

Old-Fashioned Ice Cream

4 cups peaches, peeled and puréed 2 cups peaches, peeled and chopped 1 14-oz. can condensed milk 1/2 to 1 cup sugar Dash of vanilla 1 pt. heavy cream Half-and-half, to taste Ice, according to machine requirements Rock salt, according to machine requirements

- 1. In a crank or electric ice cream maker, add the puréed and chopped peaches. Add the condensed milk, 1/2 cup sugar and vanilla; stir to combine. Depending on the sweetness of the peaches, add more sugar, to taste.
- 2. Add the heavy cream and enough half-and-half to fill the container to the suggested level. Add ice and rock salt to the machine according to ice cream maker requirements; churn for about 30 minutes, or according to directions. Freeze to harden the ice cream or eat as soft serve.

Phyllo Pear Tart

Crust:

- 7 sheets phyllo dough, thawed
- 3 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted (divided use)
- 2-3 Tbsp. sugar (divided use)

- 6-8 fall pears, peeled and thinly sliced
- 3 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted (divided use)
- 3 Tbsp. sugar (divided use)

Glaze:

- 2-3 Tbsp. pear or apple preserves, melted
- 1. For crust: Preheat the oven to 400 F. Place 2 sheets of phyllo dough in a 9-inch tart pan. Brush with melted butter; sprinkle with 1 tsp. of sugar.
- 2. Repeat step 1 for each of the remaining





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5 sheets of phyllo dough, rotating the placement of each phyllo sheet, leaving excess dough draped over the pan sides.

- **3.** For filling: Overlap sliced pears in a circle on top of the phyllo dough. Continue until the pan is filled, placing extras in the center of the tart until dough is covered. Brush the tops of pears with half the melted butter; sprinkle with half the sugar.
- **4.** Fold the excess phyllo dough over the top of the pears and brush with the remaining butter; sprinkle with the remaining sugar. Bake at 400 F for 45-50 minutes, or until golden brown and the tops of the pears brown slightly. Turn the tart

every 15 minutes to evenly bake. Remove from oven; let sit 5-10 minutes. If the tart pan has a removeable bottom, release the side of the tart pan and place on a decorative plate.

5. For glaze: Add water to the melted preserves to thin, if necessary. Brush the baked tart with the melted preserves and serve.

Bacon-Wrapped Appetizers on the Grill

Jalapeños, to taste Cream cheese, to taste Pineapple spears, to taste Peach slices, to taste Dates, to taste Asparagus spears, to taste Corn on the cob, to taste Shrimp, peeled, to taste Lobster tails, to taste I 16-oz. pkg. bacon Butter, to taste Honey, to taste

- **1.** Heat a grill to 350 F. Slice the jalapeños lengthwise; deseed. Add the cream cheese to the jalapeños.
- **2.** Wrap each jalapeño, fruit piece, vegetable piece and seafood piece with bacon. Secure the bacon with a toothpick, if necessary. Add to the grill and baste with butter and honey or with your favorite sauce. Grill until the bacon is cooked to your liking.

To search for more great recipes from any of the 9 NOW Magazines publications, visit www.nowmagazines.com.



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7/4

Boomin' 4th:

Celebrate America's freedom with a fireworks show, music, food and more. Free to attend. 5:00-10:00 p.m., Gene L. Voyles Park, 210 Hudson Oaks Dr., Hudson Oaks. hudsonoaks.com.

Spark in the Park:

Texas Clearwater Revival will open for Eli Young Band at this free event with fireworks starting at sundown. Bring cash for food and beverages. 6:00-10:00 p.m., Heritage Park, 317 Santa Fe Dr. experienceweatherford.com.

7/6-7/7 and 7/13-7/14

Robin Hood:

Presented by the Weatherford College Summer Stage Children's Series. Free. Saturdays: 11:00 a.m.; Sundays: 2:00 p.m., Alkek Fine Arts Theatre, 225 College Park Dr. wc.edu/calendar/ calendar.php.

7/10

Peaches in the Warehouse:

Sample peach-themed bites to benefit those in need. Cost:

\$30 for 1; \$50 for 2. 5:30-7:00 p.m., Tarrant Area Food Bank West, 112 Winners Circle. tafb.org.

7/13

Peach Pedal Bike Ride:

Cyclists will compete in this local fundraiser. 7:30 a.m., Weatherford High School, 2121 Bethel Rd. peachpedal.com.

Parker County Peach Festival:

Arts, crafts, food and entertainment. Adults: \$10; kids 5-12: \$5. 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Downtown Weatherford. Tickets at peachfestivaltx.com.

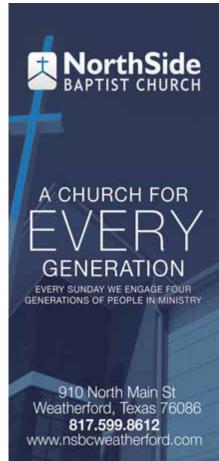
7/19-7/21 and 7/26-7/28

The Wizard of Oz:

Presented by Weatherford College Summer Stage. Cost: \$10. Friday and Saturday: 7:00-9:00 p.m.; Sunday: 2:00-4:00 p.m., Alkek Fine Arts Theatre, 225 College Park Dr. wc.edu/calendar/calendar.php.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to amber@nowmagazines.com.











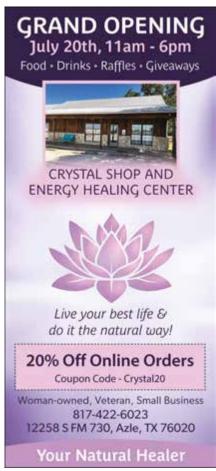
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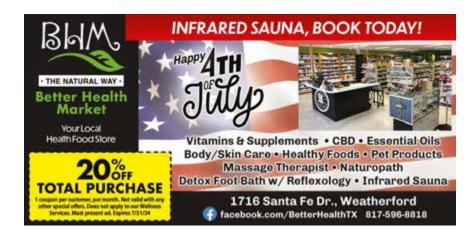


















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