



# DOCK LINE

## MAGAZINE

April 2020

Tomball



### A Different Niche!

*Your home décor store*

From Dream to  
Boutique  
The New Home Décor  
Boutique in Montgomery  
that's Set to Become an  
Instant Local Favorite

See page 8



### Critters in Your Attic or Chimney?

See Page 24

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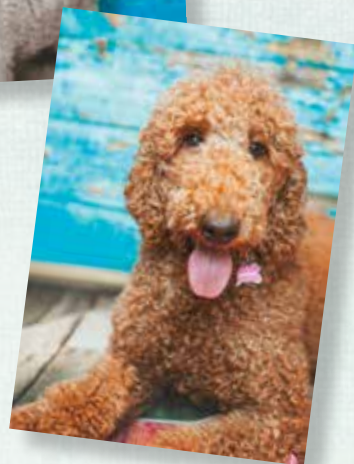
# DOCK LINE

Tomball


## MAGAZINE

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APRIL 2020



Spring has finally sprung once again! Although we have been consumed with experiencing the devastation of the Corona Virus, house isolation and consumed with worry about what the future has to hold for us this year. We would like everyone to remember it's still a great time to live in Texas. Longer days, great weather and blooming flowers mean longer dog walks and two happy doodles. We would just like to say thank you to all the great people who read and follow Dock Line Magazine. We have met so many wonderful people and made some great friends throughout the community. Now that the weather is getting sunny once again, we encourage you to look for the brighter days to come. Remember now more than ever how important it is to shop local and support our great community for we are all in this together. The April edition is filled with some great articles, new businesses and interesting facts to help you explore your community and keep you informed. I hope you enjoy it and Thanks for Reading Dock Line Magazine.

*Bentley & Ellie* 

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#### ON THE COVER



*Faye Milstead of A Different Niche! which opened its doors in March 2020, and is now open Tuesday to Friday from 10:00AM to 6:00PM, Saturdays from 10:00AM to 3:00PM, and is closed on Sundays and Mondays. Come shop and enjoy a glass of wine at the store located at 2114 McCaleb Road, BLDG. A, Ste. 100, Montgomery, TX. You can also give them a call at 936-286-8073 and find them online at [www.adifferentniche.com](http://www.adifferentniche.com).*

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DOCK LINE MAGAZINE - TOMBALL  
is published by:  
Magic Marketing, Inc.  
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Conroe, TX 77301  
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Subscriptions to DOCK LINE MAGAZINE - TOMBALL  
cost \$25.00 per year. To subscribe, mail a check with  
your name  
and address to:  
P.O. Box 174  
Conroe, TX 77301

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### **Tomball High School Booster Club**

#### **Crawfish Boil**

Date: April 4, 2020

Time: 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Where: The Train Depot, Downtown Tomball, 201 S. Elm St., Tomball, TX

Come out and enjoy the Annual Crawfish Boil benefiting THS Athletic Scholarship Fund endowing the Sammy M. Lopez Memorial Scholarship presented by TABC.

### **International Friends of Tomball**

Date: April 4, 2020

Time: 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Where: Tomball Public Library (at Lone Star College Tomball) 1st Floor Meeting Room  
Share Culture - Grow Understanding and Build Community. For more information on this FREE event call Jena at 832-768-0590 or email [Tomballfriends@gmail.com](mailto:Tomballfriends@gmail.com)



**HOMEGROWN • HANDMADE • YEAR ROUND**

### **Farmers Market Tomball**

When: April 4, 11, 18 & 25, 2020 – every Saturday

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Where: Farmers Market Tomball at Main & S. Walnut - in the former TISD parking lot – Downtown Tomball. Tomball Farmers Market is a registered nonprofit and works as a cooperative effort of local families dedicated to providing the highest quality food and handmade products to our community. This market was created by farmers and is operated by farmers. We can only exist and attract more farmers through your continued support. Open rain or shine! For more information email [tomballfarmersmarket@gmail.com](mailto:tomballfarmersmarket@gmail.com)

### **Easter-riffic Festival**

When: April 11, 2020

Time: 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Where: The Train Depot, Downtown Tomball, 201 S. Elm St., Tomball, TX

Admission: FREE

Hop on over to the Tomball Depot for an Easter-riffic Egg Hunt. Age group egg hunts (including adults), games, bounce houses hosted by Tomball United Methodist Church Kids Ministries.

### **2nd Saturday at The Depot**

Date: April 11, 2020

Time: Opens at 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. @

Rainout Location – (Community Center, 221 Market, Tomball, TX)

Where: The Train Depot, Downtown Tomball, 201 S. Elm St., Tomball, TX

Admission: FREE

Please bring your family to enjoy games, music, entertainment & a movie at dark! Contact Rosalie Dillon at 281-610-2595 for more information. ♦

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# Matilda

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**April 18** 2 p.m., 6 p.m. **April 19** 2 p.m., 6 p.m.

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**May 2** 2 p.m., 6 p.m. **May 3** 2 p.m., 6 p.m.

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All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. [www.MTIShows.com](http://www.MTIShows.com)



# A Different Niche! *From Dream to Boutique*

**The New Home Décor Boutique in Montgomery  
that's Set to Become an Instant Local Favorite**

BY: BRIAN SHERMAN



It's amazing how many business success stories can be attributed to a simple pivot. While in the day-to-day life of a business, sometimes it's a side business or hobby that carries the most passion. A Different Niche! is a perfect example of this phenomenon. Ken and Faye Milstead owned and managed Milstead Glass in Magnolia for over 30 years. In 2012, Milstead Glass expanded to include Milstead Home Décor, Faye's passion project. For the last eight years, her home décor boutique has grown in popularity.

When Ken and Faye decided to sell Milstead Glass in 2019, Faye had no intentions of slowing down. Instead, it was time for her dream to take on a life of its own. Her previous 1,500 square foot boutique in Milstead Glass has blossomed into a beautiful, new 4,000 square foot showroom located at 2114 McCaleb Rd. Faye's passion for home décor has continued to intensify and now she has the right location, product lines and time to allow her passion to flourish. The home décor boutique is a reflection of Faye. "I didn't want to retire. That's just not for me. I was ready to start living my dream full-time," she says. Faye admits she loves the experience that she and Ken gained with Milstead Glass, but doesn't miss the business. "I do miss my employees," she exclaims. "My employees and my customers have always been my priority."

When asked why she decided to open her own home décor store, Faye speaks of creating a shopping experience centered around the customer. "A Different Niche! encourages customers to come in, take the time to browse, touch and feel the products. Smell the wonderful candles and lotions in the store. You can purchase almost anything on Amazon from your computer or phone. My plan is to make A Different Niche! a destination for great shopping and in coming months, small events," she explained. "Most of all, it's about shopping locally and supporting your community."

Like many beloved brands, there is an almost serendipitous way this store came to be, including how it got its name. Faye reminisces, "When I

*Continued on page 10 ➞*







first opened, a man walked in and was just looking around. I didn't have a name for the store yet. He looked around and said, 'You know, this is a different niche.' And it just clicked."

Why that name clicked is no secret to Faye. "When you go to the market, you have to select unique products that people like and just don't see anywhere else." Customers aren't looking for something ordinary for their homes. They want something with character - something that looks good, but also tells a story," shared Faye.

Unique is the focus at A Different Niche!. Large furniture stores offer a standard selection of the most common brand items. Faye's approach is to offer products that accentuate people's style and take on a personal meaning to them. Part rustic, part chic, part contemporary - Faye's sense of style comes from years of learning what her customers love most. Her new store continues to offer the brand names her clientele has come to love from her original location, while adding more new product lines to discover. You'll find brands like Tyler Candle Company®, Orleans Home Fragrances®, Noodle & Boo®, Bella Tunno®, Bearington Baby Collection®, Park Hill®, Forty West®, Uttermost®, nora fleming®, among many others. The shop also carries a large selection of Texas-based brands including wines you will love!

Her customers regularly tell her they love the name, the openness of the store, and the selection of merchandise. It's not just another store, after all. A Different Niche! has a welcome atmosphere that invites you to hang out and look around. Walking through the doors is a bit like accepting an invitation to a home décor scavenger hunt. Customers can enjoy a glass of wine from local wineries like Messina Hof®, Bernhardt®, and Los Pines Ranch® and discover new brands around every corner.

If the success of Milstead Glass is any indicator of Faye's new venture, then it's safe to say A Different Niche! will be a resounding success. After all, Faye is bringing the same level of dedication and passion to her new store. As she fondly expresses, "This is why I'm where I am today. It's because of glass." She





attributes her 30+ years of continued success to one factor: "Our main goal has always been customer service. Make them feel like they're appreciated when they walk through the door." Her method speaks to a timeless simplicity that is all but lost in business nowadays: "You stand up!. You greet customers! You smile! You're there for your customers. You take care of them. Customer service is number one. At A Different Niche!, you'll feel more like family than just another shopper," Faye strongly emphasizes.

When asked what advice she would leave with her customers, her wisdom is simple, yet profound. "Be kind. Be honest. Show respect."

It's safe to say that A Different Niche! is set to become a new, local-favorite, destination in Montgomery County. Come check out the boutique and see for yourself.

A Different Niche! opened its doors in March 2020, and is now open Tuesday to Friday from 10:00AM to 6:00PM, Saturdays from 10:00AM to 3:00PM, and is closed on Sundays and Mondays. Come shop and enjoy a glass of wine at the store located at 2114 McCaleb Road, BLDG. A, Ste. 100, Montgomery, TX. You can also give them a call at 936-286-8073 and find them online at [www.adifferentniche.com](http://www.adifferentniche.com). ♦



*Happy Easter*  
from

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nora fleming® · Uttermost®  
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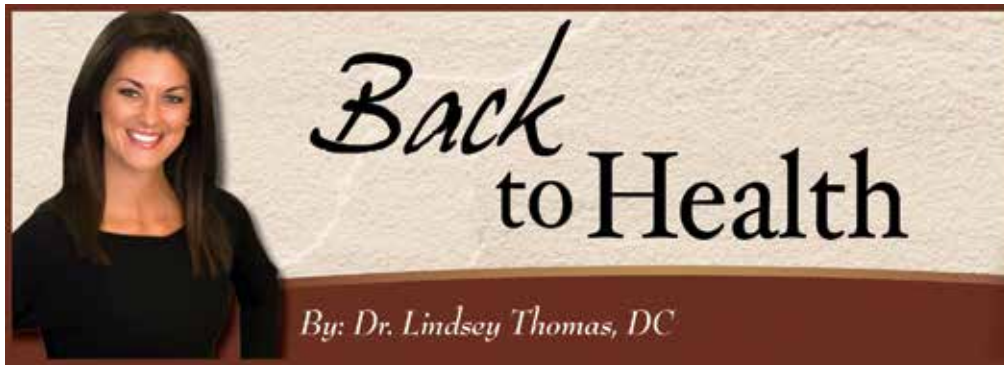
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[www.adifferentniche.com](http://www.adifferentniche.com)

Faye Milstead, Owner, [fm@homedecor2114.com](mailto:fm@homedecor2114.com)





## A Little Bit of Dirt is Healthy

The purpose of the immune system is to allow us to live in harmony with our environment. In fact, most of the trillions of foreign cells present in our body exist peacefully, and in some cases even contribute to our health and well-being. In spite of this, chronic diseases such as allergies, asthma, and eczema, which were much less common several decades ago, have risen exponentially, especially in children,

evidence that certain antibacterial products may be contributing to the alarming problem of bacterial resistance that was initially linked to our improper or over use of antibiotics.

While everyone is busy killing all of those “germs,” they didn’t stop to think about what this would mean for the future generations. Children are now growing up without being exposed to the bacteria, viruses and parasites that have existed throughout the world. In some cases, this can be a good thing. But to children’s immune systems, which are not being exposed to bacteria and viruses like they were in the past, it results in an excessive immune response against routine things, like grass, resulting in allergies and autoimmune diseases.

The immune system has two different components: the cell-mediated immune system and the humoral immune system. The cell-mediated immune system involves white blood

cells and specialized immune cells which basically “eat” antigens, or foreign particles in the body. This helps drive the antigens out of the body causing symptoms such as skin rashes and the discharge of mucous from the throat and lungs. The cell-mediated response is associated with the beneficial acute inflammatory illnesses, and represents the driving out of the infection.

The other aspect is called the humoral immune system. Antibodies, special defense proteins, are produced to recognize and neutralize the antigen. It is a constant humoral response that is associated with chronic allergic-type diseases.

In order to be healthy, one needs to keep a balance between the cell-mediated system and the humoral system, with the cell-mediated system predominating. The cell-mediated response is activated by the natural exposure to bacteria and viruses. Through repeated exposure to infectious organisms, various types of bacteria and spores found in dirt, dust, and animal dander, we develop many immune

response patterns. It is the cell mediated response that protects us from future illness, and develops the type of immune response we commonly associate with life-long immunity. The cell-mediated system suppresses the activity of the humoral system.

If the cell-mediated system is not properly stimulated, it does not fully develop. This can lead to an abnormally high production of humoral system antibodies. A humoral system that is continually running will overdevelop, creating a hypersensitive environment. When infants are exposed to germs early, their immune systems are pushed to go in an “infection-fighting direction.” Without this push, the immune system’s shift to infection fighting is delayed, and it becomes more likely to overreact to allergens; dust, mold, and other environmental factors that most people can tolerate.

Early exposure to allergens and infections also prime our immune systems to resist them later on.

Many studies have provided very fascinating evidence that your body actually benefits from regular exposure to dirt. So when we are exposed to a little bit of bacteria, our immune system does what it’s supposed to: develop a tolerance to it. Here’s what has been found so far:

- Individuals with the highest degree of personal hygiene, those who washed their faces and hands more than five times per day, cleaned before meals, and bathed more than two times each day, were the most likely to develop eczema and wheezing.
- Those who grow up in extremely clean homes are more likely to develop asthma and hay fever than those who grow up on farms or in houses with a little bit of dirt.
- Individuals who are raised with pets, or who have older siblings, are less likely to develop allergies, possibly because they are exposed to more bacteria.

The future of your immune system is in your hands. Make sure you are doing all you can to help build up the resistance it needs! ♦



quadrupling during the last two decades.

Researchers suspect the increase is due to many aspects of modern living including the “hygiene hypothesis,” which blames being raised in increasingly sterile homes.

As society in general becomes more “sterile,” it is causing real problems for your immune system, which is becoming increasingly unable to differentiate between real threats and harmless things like pollen and dust-bunnies.

How many people do you know who carry a bottle of antibacterial hand sanitizer with them wherever they go? Meanwhile, you’re exposed to antibiotics, in your food and by prescription, while most of the food supply is pasteurized or otherwise treated to remove both good and bad bacteria.

Antibacterial products are designed to remove disease causing organisms from external surfaces before they can enter the body. But we’re learning that, in the case of a large group of these products, this is not a healthy approach to keeping disease at bay for a number of reasons. Most important, there’s growing





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# STAGE RIGHT

OF TEXAS

Presents Hilarious Comedy

# M\*A\*S\*H

April 10-26

By: Carolyn Corsano Wong    Photos: Michael Pittman Images



*The cast of M\*A\*S\*H hope you will join them at the 4077th*

STAGE RIGHT of Texas, resident theatre company at the historic Crichton Theatre presents the hilarious comedy *M\*A\*S\*H* April 10-26. The play is adapted by Tim Kelly from the book by Richard Hooker and will be directed by Meredith Ann Gaines. Presentation is made possible by arrangement with Dramatic Publishing.

M\*A\*S\*H stands for Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, and joining it are two unpredictable madcaps, Hawkeye and Duke. They can't be dealt with casually, however, because they are also two of the best chest surgeons in South Korea. They decide to wage a campaign to get a young Korean named Ho Jon to the United States and entered in a good school. Along the way, Hawkeye has



*Frank Burns and the dead cat; how did that get there?*





*General Hammond having a discussion  
with Colonel Blake*

an encounter with a woman psychiatrist who believes he's been trying to lobster-trap mermaids in a rice paddy! There's a jolly visit with the daffy Bonwit sisters, the worst tap-dancing act the U.S.O. ever sent overseas. A sergeant is selling dumb GIs fishing rights in the Bay of Phum. Radar O'Reilly, a soldier with incredible hearing, anticipates things before they happen. The proprietor of a painless dental clinic is cured of dark moods by the recreation of an old monster movie—and a monster! It's all here at the 4077th including a little romance mixed in with dramatic moments and a genuine love of life. Oh, yes—the Korean boy does get his education in the United States. If you loved the book and subsequent TV series, you'll love the play.

Director Meredith Ann Gaines has assembled a wonderful cast and crew to bring this entertaining play to the Crighton stage.

**M\*A\*S\*H Company:**

General Hammond - Todd Brady  
Private Boone - Matthew Wehring  
Lt. Colonel Henry Blake - Steve Murphree  
Captain Bridget McCarthy - Rhea Young  
Lt. Janice Fury - Rachel Sakal  
Sergeant Devine - Shaun Bennett  
Lt. Louise Kimble - Jill Villalobos  
Major Frank Burns - Ed Dolphin  
Father Mulcahy - Frank Purcel  
Captain Walt Waldowski - John Kaiser  
Captain John (Trapper) McIntyre -  
Baron Dan Jackson  
Captain John (Ugly) Black - Daniel Fonville  
Corporal Radar Reilly - Ara Hollyday  
Captain Benjamin (Hawkeye) Pierce -


John Barton  
Captain August (Duke) Forrest -  
John Thompson  
Ho-Jon - Nicholas McKee  
Private Lopez - Sean Sears  
Lt. Nancy Phillips - Tracie deRoulac  
Major Margaret Houlihan - Leona Hoegsberg  
Congresswoman Goldfarb - Jennifer Prior  
Dean Mercy Lodge - Jennifer Prior  
Miss Randazzle - Katie Kowalik  
Mitzi - Monique Lott  
Fritzi - Monaé Lott  
Agnes - Katie Kowalik

Captain Oliver (Spearhucker) Jones -  
Chris Daniel  
Lt. Connie Liebowitz - Rachel Sakal  
Major Ruth Haskell - Donna Warner  
Korean Woman #1 - Donna Warner  
Korean Woman #2 - Angelie Aggarwal  
Director - Meredith Ann Gaines  
Stage Manager - Angelie Aggarwal  
Lighting Designer - Ashley Anthony  
Sound Designer - Travis Gaines  
Set Designer - Meredith Ann Gaines

*Continued on page 16 ➞*

**STAGE RIGHT** Performances at the historic  
Crighton Theatre in Conroe, TX

**M \* A \* S \* H**  
**MOBILE ARMY SURGICAL HOSPITAL**



**Adapted by Tim Kelly**  
**From the book by Richard Hooker**  
Directed by Meredith Ann Gaines

**APRIL 10-26, 2020**

**Fridays & Saturdays 8pm, Sundays 2 pm**  
**Saturday matinee 4/25 at 2 pm**

**Tickets \$17-26 Group discounts available**

**TICKETS: 936-441-SHOW (7469)**

**ONLINE: WWW.STAGE-RIGHT.ORG**



Funded in part by The City of Conroe CVB [visitconroe.com](http://visitconroe.com)

By arrangement with The Dramatic Publishing Company



Scenic Artist - Kara Kowalik  
Costume Designer - Kara Kowalik  
Producers – Steve & Carolyn Wong

### SPOTLIGHT NON-PROFIT

As with every STAGE RIGHT show, a need in the community is highlighted and then a 'spotlight' is thrown on an organization helping with that need. The Spotlight Non-Profit for *M\*A\*S\*H* is the Montgomery County Veterans Memorial Commission. Montgomery County Veterans Memorial Commission is a nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring our heroes, remembering our history, educating the public and bringing awareness to the needs of our veterans in our community, state and country. Stop by their information table during the run of the show and see how you can support the beautiful new Veterans Memorial Park and their efforts to



*Dentist Walt Waldowski undergoing a bit of shock treatment to shake his blues away*



*How about a tug of war to make you forget about the war?*

*M\*A\*S\*H* we hope that you would let us keep any moneys made from prior ticket sales as we have already spent money on advertising, scripts, performance rights, costumes, props, etc. Of course in the event of a cancellation we can apply the cost of your ticket to another show or issue a refund if that is what you prefer, I'm only asking that perhaps you might consider it a donation to help us offset the costs this virus has caused STAGE RIGHT and the Crighton Theatre. We'll get past this as we have weathered many a storm before. Crises like this give me hope because although sometimes we see the absolute worst in some people, the majority just want to help their neighbor and do so with such a giving heart it is sometimes overwhelming. Thank you all for your continued support.

– Carolyn Wong ♦

support area veterans.

Performances of *M\*A\*S\*H* will be April 10-26; Fridays & Saturdays at 8 pm, Sundays at 2 pm and an added Saturday matinee on April 25 at 2 pm. All performances are at the historic Crighton Theatre located at 234 N Main St., in downtown Conroe, Texas. Tickets can be purchased online at [www.stage-right.org](http://www.stage-right.org) or by calling the Crighton box office 936-441-7469.

P.S. – As I write this article here in the middle of March, the theatre is currently shut down due to an order by the county to cancel events over 250 person for 30 days. The 30 days will hopefully be enough to nip this bug in the bud (as Barney Fife would say). If we are required to cancel performances of



*Duke, Hawkeye and Radar with the Bonwit Sisters*





*Major Houlihan having a discussion with the nurses*

## DENTAL IMPLANT RESTORATION

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# Online with Dock Line

## Stuck at Home and Thinking of Starting an Online Business?

### What to Know Before You Start an Internet-Based Business

As the whole world comes to a standstill in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, I predict that we will see an influx of online businesses started in the next few months. People are spending more time at home with time off of work and have been instructed to not leave as much as possible. It's the perfect mix of ingredients for pursuing personal creative expression. The "right time" that most people wait for to follow their passions has fallen in their laps.

So, with this new time on your hands, you can finally start that thing that you've been putting off for years. If you've ever wanted to start your own business, you can do it right now from the comfort of your own home with just a laptop and an internet connection.

Before you dive head first into the world of online business, there are a few things you need to know. Thousands of people venture into the online space every year to start a virtual business, but the sad truth is most of those businesses fail quickly, if they really ever get started at all. You really can succeed online, but you need to take the proper steps to get there. Most of all, you need to understand why most online businesses fail and how you can follow the steps of those who are crushing it.

Let's dive in! Here are the keys to success you must follow before you start your online business.

#### 1. Demand

Do people actually want what you have to offer? Some people jump into starting an online business and may have everything in place



to make it work, but nobody buys. Sadly, this happens quite often. Before you decide to start an online business, you need to first determine if the idea is solid - if you are meeting a real need for someone.

A great resource for testing your business idea before you go all in is Pat Flynn's book, *Will It Fly*. Pat is one of the most successful online entrepreneurs in the world and his book walks you through the necessary steps to make sure your idea will actually be successful. You could also just ask. Put out a poll on your personal social media pages and get some

real feedback. Ask friends and family for honest opinions. Search online to see if there are other businesses already doing it well. Most of all remember, if someone else is already succeeding at your idea, it doesn't mean you shouldn't pursue it. It just means it already works!

#### 2. User Experience

So, you have a solid idea. Now you need to make sure that people can get it easily. This means you need to have a solid platform online. A good online "platform" is centered around a user-friendly website that is attractively de-



signed, easy to navigate and helpful to the visitor. When someone comes to your website to buy your product or service, they need to know what to do and where to go. As simple as this sounds, most business websites don't work well at all. They confuse people with unclear messaging and they are difficult to navigate.

Make your website easy to use, and free of clutter. Don't talk about yourself unless it will directly help the customer. Instead, talk about your customer and how you help them. Give them as few steps as possible to buy your product.

### 3. Consistency

The most successful online businesses provide value consistently, day after day, week after week, and month after month. Most people start an online business with lots of momentum in the beginning, but fizzle out quickly and their website becomes a ghost town. However you decide to provide value, whether it's through blogging, email, video, or social media interaction, you need to create a schedule and stick to it for a while. How long is a while? About 2 years.

### 4. Authenticity

The internet is chock full of personalities, influencers, and experts. Many of them are genuine and their main goal is truly to help others. However, there are far too many people online who put up a front. They show you what they want you to see. They create personas, fabricate an identity of massive success, and smooth talk their way into your wallet. If you are going to

start an online business and start inviting people to get to know you, just be real. Be yourself. Be genuine. As you grow in popularity any false persona you create will become harder and harder to hide behind. Be real from the beginning.

### 5. Generosity

Starting an online business requires a lot of work up front, but if done correctly, it can run on autopilot to a degree. However, instead of letting it run in the background as just a tool to make money, be willing to invest your time into it. What I mean by this is to show up online where your customers are, like your social media pages and on your email list, and be available to them. The best way you can be generous, especially in the beginning, is with your time. Talk to your audience. Show them you care. Give away your advice and knowledge.

One of the best methods for building an audience online is to offer something for free in exchange for someone's information, like an email address. Give away something genuinely valuable and people will listen to you, buy from you, and tell their friends about you.

### 6. Marketing

One of the most common ways online businesses fail is a lack of marketing. Believe it or not, just building a great website and offering your amazing product or service doesn't mean people will actually visit your site or buy your offering. They need to know you exist and that you have something they need to make their lives better. That means you need to show

where they hang out and get their attention... without spamming them. How do you do that? By providing real value. This is why we always recommend a business to have a blog. It's a time-tested method of providing real value to your audience and letting them know you're the expert. The great thing about a blog is that, if written and published correctly, it does a ton of marketing for you with SEO. Search engine optimization helps Google find your content and recommend you to searchers. People searching for what you offer will visit your site if Google recommends you. That's why the best marketing is always through the channel of providing great value to people. You can do the same thing with video on YouTube. YouTube is actually the second largest search engine in the world, behind Google.

Of course, you can also run ads on social media sites or use pay-per-click advertising, but my recommendation is to utilize the organic, value-based methods most often.

Are you thinking of starting an online business? Do you already have an idea, but need to build an online presence around it? Let us know. At Dock Line, we have tons of resources for starting an online business, whether you want to build it all yourself or have a web design agency help you. If you'd like more information or to get access to our "Starting an Online Business" resources, send me an email at [brian@thedockline.com](mailto:brian@thedockline.com). I hope to hear from you soon! ♦

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*Egrets are stone cold killers. Small fish are swallowed quickly and big fish are brought to shore and stabbed to death with sharp beaks. All fish are swallowed head first.*

## The Elegant & Fashionable Great White Egret

From the late 1800's to early 1900's Great White Egrets were so fashionable that they were hunted almost to extinction! Back then women's high fashion used all those long gorgeous white feathers for hats, capes, accessories and other clothing. But conservationists rallied and laws were passed to protect these lovely birds. Now they are common in all wetland habitats including streams, lakes, sea shores, ponds, marshes and even occasionally your roadside ditch! Any wetland area with fish, lizards, insects or frogs is a great place to look for these beauties.

Great White Egrets are hard to miss but easy to misidentify because their cousins, snowy egrets and cattle egrets, also have large populations in the area. Look for the great white's distinctive long black legs, big black claw feet, a yellow-orange beak, and of course all that beautiful white plumage! They stand over 3' tall with a 5-1/2' wingspan. During breeding season they have lime green coloring around their eyes, and spectacular mating plumage cascading down their backs.

These tall birds slowly wade in shallow waters to hunt, patiently waiting for their meals

to swim or hop by. Fish and frogs see the long dark legs as a safe, protected place to swim because the Egret's legs look like reeds and twigs. You can also see the big birds standing on a

*The glorious breeding plumes were once highly sought for women's fashion.*

*Egrets and Great Blue Herons often nest together in rookeries. There is safety in numbers for all their eggs and chicks.*





bulkhead or a shore bank, staring down into the water, watching intently for their next meal. A great white egret will carry a big fish to shore, stab it through repeatedly with its sharp beak, and eat it head first after the wiggling stops. Never forget that these birds are true carnivores.

In April and May you will spot our nesting great whites up creeks, high atop secluded pines away from human activity. They make good-sized stick nests that look as if they would rattle apart during a storm! Not surprisingly, the parents are constantly bringing in twigs, sticks and other nesting material to reinforce their rickety nests. And the egrets are not alone in their chick nurseries. There are often Great Blue Herons nesting alongside in the same rookery! There is safety in numbers for all their eggs and chicks because predators include black vultures, eagles, raccoons and



*Great whites are defined by their long black legs, black claw feet and orange beaks.*



*These nests are near water in tall secluded pine trees. And they need constant repair with additional sticks and twigs.*

snakes. After about 4 weeks of incubating eggs, and 3 more weeks of feeding the hatchlings, the chicks are ready to leave the nest and start out on their own adventures.

Learn more about the incredible nature in your area by joining a local chapter of the



*The elegant and fashionable Great White Egret.*

Texas Master Naturalist organization. To find a chapter close to you, or to read about the state

program, go online to [www.txmn.org](http://www.txmn.org). Volunteer and get involved! ♦



*A black vulture predator sits below the birds' nests, waiting quietly for a clumsy chick to fall, or an easy egg to snatch.*



# MISD Fishing Team A Return to Winning Ways

BY: MARK HOOKER

Finishing Second in Conference for the First Time in the Fishing Team's History last year, did not sit well with many on the Team. From 2014-2018, the MHS Angler's Club had known nothing but First Place in their Conference.

Their First Conference Title coming in the Houston High School Fishing Conference in 2014-15, beating 14 Houston Area High Schools. Then, winning 3 Consecutive Texas High School Bass Association Conference Titles from 2015-2018 was next, capturing these Championships over as

many as 46 Local High Schools. There were also 2 Regional Titles, as well as being crowned the THSBA State Team Champions in 2017 along the way.

Enter the 2018-19 season, which was the catalyst for making the 2019-20 squad hungry to return to Montgomery's familiar spot. Last year's team was the first to be combined, with students from both Montgomery High, as well as Lake Creek High Schools, hence the name change to MISD Fishing Team. The numbers of Team Members had swelled to 94 students,







and anticipation was high to continue the Winning Ways established in the prior years.

However, the newly united Team had an old nemesis in Huffman Hargrave. The Falcons had been nipping at the heels of the MHS Anglers Club's for several years. In the 2018-19 Conference season, Hargrave was finally able to catch Montgomery, earning them the Conference Championship, and putting Montgomery in the unfamiliar spot of 2nd.

The 2018-19 squad responded well to this setback, by outdistancing Hargrave at the Regional Championship that year, and qualifying a record number of teams to the State Championship, in which they placed a very respectable 4th. The 2018-19 Team also had a strong base in which to build upon for the 2019-20 season, with the return of the Teams' Anglers of the Year from last year Dallin Turner & Carson Rennell, plus the addition of some strong Incoming Freshmen in Fallon Clepper & Wyatt Ford.

Speaking of record setting, that is exactly what transpired at Lake Livingston for the MISD Fishing Team. By winning the Lake Livingston Event, there was no doubt that Montgomery was back. The win clinched a 5th Conference Title in 6 years of Competition for Montgomery, more than



any other Team in THSBA History. It was also the way the team responded to the challenge that Lake Livingston can bring, that impressed this writer so much. There were 7 individual Teams from MISD that were in the Top 10 for the tournament. It was an unbelievable display of dominance, on a Lake that had given the teams of prior years' a little trouble. The Tournament Director Ryan Emmert said later that "I don't think that's ever been done before. Having that many Individual Teams from one school or Team, in the Top 10 of any tournament in the THSBA."

Leading the way in this historic win for MISD were Zach & Jake Hird in 3rd, Beau Massey & Wyatt Lanier 4th, Tyler Funderburg & Hayden Bither 5th, Logan Beverung & Jack Shafer 6th, Jack Haag & Conner Callihan 7th, Fallon Clepper & Wyatt Ford 8th, and Taylor Peel & Tanner Poole coming in 9th. To take 7 spots out of 132 total Individual Teams, from 23 Area High Schools, is simply unheard of.

Along these same lines, the MISD Fishing Team also set another precedence; in that the "Squad" had 5 Individual Teams qualify for the coveted Anglers of the Year Tournament. This is a tournament where only the Top 10 Individual Teams from all 9 conferences, will have the opportunity to compete at the end of the season after the State Championship. Those qualifying from MISD were as follows: Fallon Clepper & Wyatt Ford, Taylor Peel & Tanner Poole, Ethan Price & Brendan Oleyar, Carson Rennell & Dallin Turner, plus Clayton Holcomb & Kade Beall.

The MISD Fishing Team has now earned the right to send 26 Individual Teams to the Regional Championship, which will be held at Lake Conroe on April the 11th. The Team invites everyone in the community to come out and support this awesome group of young men and women. They have represented the town of Montgomery, as well as the School District, in a very positive manner. The weigh in will be held at the MISD Stadium, with weigh in activities usually running from 3 to 5 p.m. It will be here that Teams from all over the region will be competing for the right to go to the State Championship, which will be held at Lake Belton on May the 8th-10th. ♦





# Critters in Your Attic or Chimney?

By: Lisa Wolling, Executive Director

At Friends of Texas Wildlife, we often get calls from homeowners who have nuisance wildlife issues. While many of us enjoy coexisting with our furry and feathered friends, we can generally agree that we really don't want to share our houses with them. We would like to offer some simple, humane, and inexpensive ways you can encourage wildlife to move along and that your home is not a good place for them to stay.

If you have animals in an unwanted place (usually an attic, chimney, or under a deck, shed, or trailer), here are some things to remember. Because we live in an area where weather is usually mild, and animals do not hibernate, typically wildlife animals generally only want "in" when they are looking for safe denning places to have their babies. With the spread of suburbia and more clearing of wild areas, there are less natural denning places left for wildlife, so they try to adapt and find the next best thing. The most common animals people have problems with are raccoons, bats, and squirrels (in attics or chimneys) or skunks and opossums (under decks, sheds, or trailers). A little prevention can limit having problems in the first place. Keep tree limbs trimmed away from roofs and eaves so access by wildlife is limited. Make sure your chimneys are capped with screening, which will prevent all wildlife from gaining access (some birds may also try to nest in chimneys). If you feed your pets outdoors, please remember to pick up all food and water bowls before dark; skunks, opossums, and raccoons are all nocturnal and love a free meal when they can get one. Feeding wildlife encourages them to congregate in areas too close to people and domestic pets, and it can also increase the number of animals in a particular area, which can lead to overpopulation and the spread of disease. If you feed birds and squirrels, try to keep the feeders away from housing structures to discourage climbing on your home. Keep your home and outbuildings in good repair, making sure to fix any holes or rotten wood in roofs, eaves, or siding. A small hole can easily be enlarged by animals seeking an entrance point.

Raccoons and squirrels are the most common animals to be a nuisance in chimneys or attics due to their great climbing abilities. The animals typically take up residence in very early spring or early fall, just before they give birth. The reason they select a particular space is because they could gain access and they perceive that particular attic or chimney to be a safe place to keep their babies. It is the mission of the homeowner to convince them otherwise. If it is not possible to leave the animals alone until they naturally vacate in a few weeks, you should make them believe your home is no longer a safe, quiet spot to raise their babies. First you will need to locate where the animal(s) are getting in. Tape some newspaper over the access hole as this will allow you to monitor the animal's coming and going. Here are three effective means to convince unwanted attic or chimney occupants that your home is NOT a safe place for them to den:

**PREDATOR SMELL.** Place a stinky dog blanket (the smellier the better) near or as close to the area of animal activity in your attic or chimney. Brush your dog and place the dog hair around access points (or get some dog hair from a friend or neighbor). Purchase fox or coyote urine at a sporting goods store or online, saturate some tennis balls with it, and toss them around in the attic (for chimneys, you can try some soaked cotton balls. In a pinch ammonia may also work as it mimics a strong urine smell.

**MAKE A LOT OF NOISE.** Periodically, over a 3-day period, go into the attic or near the chimney base and make a lot of noise. Blow whistles, honk air horns, and clang pots and pans. You can also attach a box or cans to a cord, toss it into the attic, and drag it across the rafters. Make the noise during the natural sleep period of the animal (raccoons sleep



*Because of their ability to climb and their tenacity, raccoons are one of the more common animals found in people's attics. They usually have their litters in mid-spring or occasionally early fall. Raccoons generally have two to six kits. Families often stay together through their first winter.*

during the day; squirrels at night). Put a portable radio in the attic or at the base of the chimney and tune it to talk radio. Play it loud during the natural sleep cycle of the animals. The sounds of human voices will reinforce that your home is not a safe place for them to stay.

**LIGHTS.** Keep bright lights on in the attic 24 hours a day for the 3-day period. Flashing strobe lights can also be quite effective. For chimneys you can try a drop light.

All of these methods can be adapted to scare animals out from under decks, sheds, or trailers also. Utilizing all three of these methods usually assure you of a critter-free space in about 3 days. Remember, if a mother animal has already had her babies, she will need a little time to find another denning location and then relocate her babies. Mothers will move their babies (one by one) to a new location. Raccoons or skunks will typically move their babies during the night and squirrels during the day. Also remember that the mother animal almost always has multiple denning spots already scoped out; given the time and opportunity she will move her babies to another location if she senses danger. Opossums, as marsupials, have a "built-in nursery" as baby opossums grow up in their mother's pouch. Once mama opossum leaves, the babies leave with her. Skunks may need a little more time to leave, especially if the babies are not yet old enough to follow their mother. Give the animal ample opportunity to move out. Do not block entrances/exits and make sure to keep your dog(s) inside as much as possible. Keep checking the newspaper you have taped over access holes; once the paper remains undisturbed for several days and you no longer notice noises coming from your attic, chimney, etc., you can safely seal up all access points. Take care to repair all access points. Block entryways with thick boards or wire and trim back tree branches to prevent any further access. This method of removal has been used hundreds of times over the years in



our area and has proven extremely successful. Encouraging wildlife to move out on its own is a win-win situation; mom gets to raise her own babies, you save lots of money since you didn't need to pay anyone to remove the animals, and baby animals were not unnecessarily orphaned. NOTE: This technique does NOT work for mice/ rats or bats. This technique should also not be used for owls or chimney swifts since mother birds cannot move their babies. Many species of bats are protected, so they can only be dealt with after breeding season is over. Typically, a one-way "door" is installed at the access point to the attic or eave; the bats can fly out but not get back in. Almost all songbirds and birds of prey are federally protected, so their active nests, eggs, or young cannot be interfered with. If you notice a bird building a nest in a spot that is a nuisance to you or your home, the nest can be removed ONLY if eggs or young are not yet present.

Many people's first impulse is to set live traps and remove the animals themselves, or to call a pest control company. Trapping is a very ineffective way to deal with wildlife issues. You may be able to trap the mother, but it is almost always impossible to trap the babies, so trapping often leads to needlessly orphaning baby animals. A mother animal, trapped and separated from her babies, often injures herself quite severely while struggling to free herself from the trap (imagine her being trapped and listening to her crying babies nearby). Studies show that trapped wildlife animals transported and released into new areas have extremely low survival rates. Another reason trapping will not solve the problem is because wildlife from the surrounding areas will soon replace any animals removed. Raccoons, skunks, opossums, and squirrels are everywhere in our area; trapping merely creates turnover in the population. We discourage trapping unless an animal is stuck somewhere and does not have the ability to get out.

If you have tried all of the above, or if you have a situation you feel you cannot deal with on your own, please call us at 281-259-0039 so we can refer you to some help. We encourage people to please NOT use regular pest control agencies as many are not licensed or trained to deal with wildlife. Many of these companies euthanize animals they remove, and most are not trained in how to locate babies, thereby often leaving orphaned baby wildlife behind for the homeowner to still deal with. We will be happy to refer you to the appropriate companies who can safely and humanely help you deal with nuisance wildlife and to also assure that no orphaned babies are left behind. Please remember that we need to try to share our space, as best as we can, and to try to coexist with our wild friends. They benefit us by keeping the natural balance in order; remove one species, and you are likely to create unbalance up and down the food chain.

To learn more about what we do and view pictures of many of the animals we as-



*Baby skunks (left) are typically born late spring or early summer. Mother skunks prefer dens such as rotten logs or fallen trees, but in the absence of those they will look for den sites under decks, sheds, or other buildings. Baby squirrels (right) are born early spring or fall. Mother squirrels prefer to nest in trees or tree cavities, but occasionally they will get into house eaves or attics.*

sist, please visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/SavingTexasWildlife](http://www.facebook.com/SavingTexasWildlife). Our educational visitor's center is open the second Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., located at 29816 Dobbin Hufsmith Road, Magnolia, Texas, so the next open house date will be Saturday, April 11. Come on out and visit us, learn a little more about local wildlife, do some fun activities and a craft, and meet some of our non-releasable wildlife educational animals.

We also host birthday parties, camps, and educational presentations. Summer Camp registration will open April 1. For more information about any of these activities, or to register for summer camp, please visit our website or email [ftwl.education@gmail.com](mailto:ftwl.education@gmail.com). There are many other ways you can help support our efforts, too (such as Kroger Community Rewards, Amazon Smile, etc.). Details can be found at [www.ftlw.org](http://www.ftlw.org), and then click on "How to Help". ♦

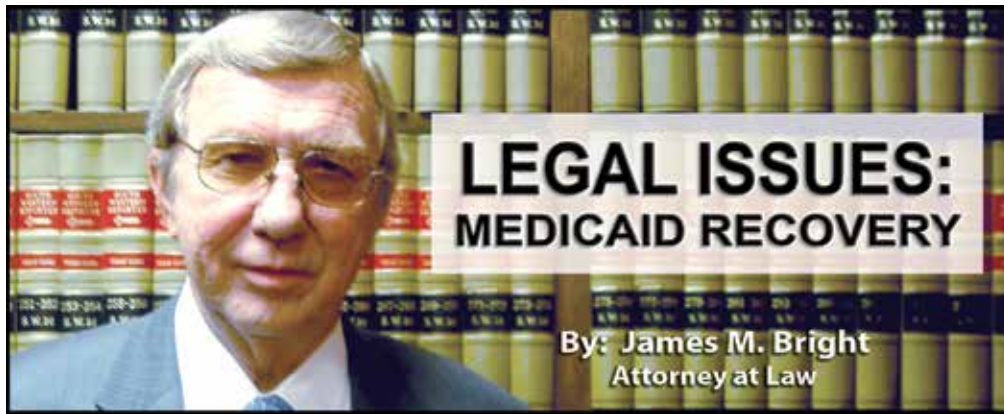


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*The following is provided for informational purposes only and is not, nor should it be construed as legal advice.*

This firm is often faced with questions during probate proceedings regarding how the Medicaid Estate Recovery Program affects the disposition of property belonging to an estate. Although this program affects only a small number of probate clients, it can be troublesome. If benefits have been paid to the decedent, and the probate estate is the owner of the family home and the children have an expectation of inheritance from the sale of the home, there is a great possibility of conflict.

When qualifying for Medicaid, the person applying must show financial necessity for care. When computing this financial need, the State of Texas ignores the value of the homestead property. The assumption is that the Medicaid applicant may return to their home after the need for Medicaid services is no longer required. This is the case, no matter how long the recipient receives services in the nursing home, care facility or by other means.

The Medicaid Estate Recovery Program, normally referred to as "MERP," is a federal program which Texas and all other states are mandated to implement. It is a program for recovery of expenditures made by the State of Texas for long-term care health/nursing home benefits which have previously been paid by the state. The funds so collected will be put back in the system to pay for future Medicaid benefits for other persons seeking long-term care services.

One of the first questions that must be answered before we can determine how MERP affects distribution of probate assets includes:

Was the recipient of Medicaid services 55 years of age or older when the long-term nursing care or other services were performed, or did the recipient apply for long-term care services on or after March 1, 2005?

If the Medicaid recipient applied for services prior to March 1, 2005, and subse-

quently received benefits, they are "grandfathered" into the system, and the estate will never be liable for reimbursement of benefits received.

If, on the other hand, the Medicaid recipient applied for or received services on or after March 1, 2005, his/her estate may be liable for services provided.

Common Medicaid questions that come up when probating a Will include:

**• What is included in an estate that can be reached by MERP?**

The answer to that question will include all real and personal property that is subject to probate. The most effective way of answering this question is to define which assets, if any, do not pass through the probate estate. A non-exclusive list of these assets can be insurance proceeds, retirement accounts, pension plans, deposit accounts that carry a payable on death (POD) designation or right of survivorship plan designation.

**• What are the exceptions, if any, from MERP claims?**

According to Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS), if any of the following conditions exist, the MERP claim will not be filed:

- There is a surviving spouse;
- There is a surviving child or children under 21 years of age;
- There is a surviving child or children of any age who is blind or has a permanent or total disability under Social Security requirements;
- There is an unmarried adult child residing continuously in the Medicaid recipient's homestead for at least one year before the time of the Medicaid recipient's death.

Further, according to published information from DADS, they will only file a claim if it is cost effective.

Claims that have been considered to be not cost effective include those instances wherein:

- The value of the recoverable estate is \$10,000 or less; (*See the above non-exclusive list of assets that have historically been safe*

*from recovery.*)

- The recoverable amount of Medicaid costs is \$3,000 or less; or
- The cost of the sale of the property would be equal to or greater than the value of the property.

**Another common question is how far does the Internal Revenue Service "look back" for transfer of property?**

The period of time for an IRS "look back" is normally sixty (60) months. If the Medicaid recipient's plan is to avoid MERP claim requirements, it should be done well in advance of need.

It is also worthy of note that when the State of Texas holds a lien on real property of a decedent that is responsible for Medicaid debt, it does so only to the extent of the debt. This may result in the State being reimbursed and the heirs still receiving their inheritance. Example: If the Medicaid debt is \$30,000 and the old homestead is worth \$120,000, the State will be reimbursed and the heirs will still inherit \$90,000.00.

The information made available in this article is also available through the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and the Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services. Publications from those offices are directly or indirectly the source of most of the information contained in this article.

As always, if you have questions relating to any area of probate law, you should seek advice from an attorney of your choice that has demonstrated expertise in probate matters.

*James Bright has been admitted to practice before the Federal Courts for the Southern District of Texas and Eastern District of Texas as well as all of the Justice Courts, Probate Courts, County Courts at Law, District Courts, Courts of Appeal and Supreme Court for the State of Texas. He maintains an office in Houston and by appointment another at 208 McCown Street in the heart of historic Montgomery. Contact may be made by telephone (936) 449-4455 or (281) 586-8277. For more information about wills or probate in Texas, please see- [www.houstontx-probate.com](http://www.houstontx-probate.com). ♦*

IF YOU WISH TO SUGGEST A TOPIC FOR THIS COLUMN, SEND TO:

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# Around Town

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## Greater Tomball Chamber Luncheon





***Empowering Business***



## **Greater Tomball Area Chamber of Commerce**

### **Member Benefits Include:**

- Networking & Exposure Identity
- Community Contribution Information

**29201 Quinn Rd., Ste B  
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