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YOUR EVENT SOURCE

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Welcome to Denton Live, the entertainment guide to what’s going on for the next six months in Denton. With the arrival of the A-train, our own commuter rail connects Denton with the DFW Metroplex through DART via two Denton stations. The beautiful Downtown Denton Transit Station is the end of the line and welcomes riders to experience the best of Denton by bus, bike, or simply strolling our wide sidewalks to a hip arts and entertainment scene that includes world-renowned live music and theater, galleries, shows and festivals all year long.

Summer winding down is the sign of a new season of happenings cranking up in Denton. One of the “hottest” Denton events for the past 83 years is the North Texas State Fair and Rodeo in August. Come out and be treated to a little piece of our Western heritage in the heart of Horse Country as we all shine up our cowboy boots and head to the fairgrounds for nine days of bull-riding, boot-scootin’, PRCA Rodeo, great food and a giant midway.

Then as fall sets in, we party at the Arts, Antiques & Autos Extravaganza, the Wild Beast Feast and Blues Fest, all culminating with a postcard-perfect kickoff to the holiday season. You can also be one of the first visitors to the new $80 million UNT Mean Green Football stadium. The same architects and construction company that built the Cowboys Stadium in Arlington are seeking to make UNT’s a Platinum LEED-certified stadium.

As an award-winning Main Street city, we love inviting visitors into our community’s living room: our historic Downtown Denton Square. The beautiful Courthouse-on-the-Square, one of the most photographed courthouses in Texas, is not only the heart of downtown but also of the entire community. The area around the Square perhaps best represents the unique spirit that sets 150-year-old Denton apart. When you visit, you’ll see for yourself that this is no sleepy little town, but a city with its own distinct personality. Denton is vibrantly alive as befits the 13th fastest-growing city in the U.S. over the last decade! Thanks to its eclectic music scene, singers and songwriters find inspiration amidst artisans of every genre here, and the resulting spirit is a tangible, creative energy. More than 100 artists and bands are performing and recording out of Denton right now! And venues throughout the city offer seven-day-a-week opportunities to encounter the scene first hand. More than 25 live music venues are within walking distance of the Square.

Enjoy this issue of Denton Live ... then come on out and enjoy the fun!

Mayor Mark Burroughs

Mark Burroughs
Mayor of Denton

Photo by Samantha Guzman
A “TRAIN” story

Across the United States, cities are looking inward, revitalizing historic downtowns. Denton is lucky: Lively music venues, restaurants, coffeehouses, art galleries and boutique shops already surround the Courthouse-on-the-Square downtown along with everyday barbers, banks and bookstores. And as of the summer of 2011, the A-train will make its way into Denton from the Dallas suburbs, opening up a creative corridor along Hickory Street. It will connect historic Denton to a new zone for eating, playing and living.

Denton attracts thousands of tourists each year for events such as the Denton Arts & Jazz Festival in the summer, the Arts Antiques & Autos Extravaganza in the fall, and now the 35 Conferette, an offshoot of Austin's South by Southwest. Even with so much to offer, Denton lacked an official entertainment district — until now. Historic downtown Denton, meet the new Hickory Street, the Arts Corridor.

One blueprint for Denton’s new zone is taking shape, appropriately enough, in the immaculately preserved Mercantile Building downtown — one of the city’s great old structures. Brandon Martino, a young professional with a baby face and a passion for development, met Lee Ramsey, the man with the plan, five years ago. Inside the homey offices of The Martino Group and Ramsey’s company, Links Construction, Hickory Street is changing with the help of VERUS Realty. The Square, with its courthouse from 1896, is where people want to congregate, says Lee and their Hickory Street Project is aimed at “increasing the value of what we have.” The three companies believe the A-train, a regional line built by the Denton County Transportation Authority (DCTA), will prove a catalyst for growth downtown — without destroying the old. The 21-mile rail line, which parallels I-35, hooks up with Dallas’ regional rail in Carrollton for commuters going back and forth into Dallas — or Dallas residents eager to sample downtown Denton’s music and arts scene. “We’re passionate about downtown, and it’s fun work for us because you get to feel like you’re helping to create something,” says the CEO of VERUS, Greg Johnson.

Once in Denton, rail riders will cross the A-train tracks at the new Downtown Denton Transit Center and walk west toward downtown, past the Center for Visual Arts and the Firefighters’ Museum. “Cities everywhere are trying to build their own downtown. They build these downtowns and try and make them look old, but we’ve got ours,” says Kim Phillips, vice president of the Denton Convention and Visitors Bureau. “It’s probably one of the most exciting up-and-coming projects in Denton right now.”

The 5-foot-something marketer is crazy about Denton. If Denton had a color, she’d bleed it. “The culture, the entertainment, who we are as a community — our heartbeat is already strong. What the Arts Corridor is going to do is enhance the image,” she says. Last year, the Denton Community Theatre moved its rehearsals, theater school and alternative shows into the Black Box Performing Arts Center on East Hickory.

Along Hickory, new restaurants have popped up in redeveloped buildings: Andaman Thai Restaurant, Ramen Republic, Chef Tim Love’s Love Shack and Cellar 22 Wine & Cigar Bar. Nearby, the Martino and Links family designed the Hickory Street Lofts for what they call the “eat, play, live” aspect of downtown, adding Weinberger’s Deli Restaurant beneath the development. “What we want to have is the right mix of residential and retail. The 311 Lofts are a great example of intelligent urbanism,” says Greg. Another North Texas favorite, Mellow Mushroom, is opening on Hickory, too.

Up Hickory Street around the Square, meanwhile, old Denton is doing just fine. People are wandering in and out of Beth Marie’s Old Fashioned Ice Cream & Soda Fountain, The Abbey Inn, Bumble Beads and Mad World Records. Bob Moses, co-owner of Beth Marie’s, has been a business owner on the Square for more than 12 years. As part of the Downtown Task Force, he embraces the change. Space around the Square is already at a premium; downtown needs to expand. “Quite a bit of effort is being put into play to try and keep the personality of Denton the way that it is,” says Bob.

At the Convention and Visitor Bureau, Kim’s fast talk is a sign of her excitement about the arrival of the A-train and the development of the Hickory Street Arts Corridor. She describes it as a “good paradigm change” for the city. “It’s a catalyst for discovering — and rediscovering — Denton.”

Catch it: For the A-train’s complete schedule, check out dcta.net.

Tickets: Downtown Denton Transit Center, Lewisville City Hall, Highland Village City Hall, TWU Commuter Services (Student Union, 2nd floor), DCTA Operations.

Five stations: Downtown Denton Transit Center, located on Hickory between Bell and Railroad avenues, as well as Medpark in south Denton; Highland Village, north Lewisville; Old Town, downtown Lewisville, and Hebron Parkway, south Lewisville.

Hours: 5:30 a.m.–8 p.m. Monday–Thursday; 5:30 a.m.–11 p.m. Friday; 11 a.m.–11 p.m. Saturday.
Eddie Schoenthal knows how to cook, y'all. A Bar-B-Q master extraordinaire, Eddie has participated in every North Texas State Fair and Rodeo cook-off since they first began around 1977. Succulent brisket and chicken, ribs coated in butter and brown sugar, killer jackpot pinto beans – name it and he can make it, putting a personal twist on good ol' southern comfort food. “Once you get your system down it’s not bad,” says Eddie in his Texas drawl. “But it takes years and years of screwing stuff up to figure out what works.”

While Eddie is the master of all things on the grill, his wife Susan, a sunny schoolteacher turned librarian, volunteers to help organize the annual North Texas State Fair and Rodeo Parade, a come-one-come-all procession of vintage cars and tractors, kids on bikes and rodeo pageant royalty in convertibles, all circling the historic downtown Denton Square. A Denton native, Susan has witnessed the evolution of the fair from a small-town shindig in her mom’s day to today’s extravaganza with professional rodeo riders, top country music acts and a Texas-sized midway. “They didn’t have music,” says Susan, smiling at the memory of the fair in simpler times. “I remember they had a giveaway thing that they raffled off … a TV or something, but, it was not at all anything like it is today.” Now there are cash prizes and custom saddles and Spurs to reward the competing cooks and cowboys, quilters and rodeo queens, even parade entries.

Take a pinch of good times, a dash of Western heritage, throw in some great food and music, and you have the North Texas State Fair and Rodeo. A Denton native, Susan has witnessed the evolution of the fair from a small-town shindig in her mom’s day to today’s extravaganza with professional rodeo riders, top country music acts and a Texas-sized midway. “They didn’t have music,” says Susan, smiling at the memory of the fair in simpler times. “I remember they had a giveaway thing that they raffled off … a TV or something, but, it was not at all anything like it is today.” Now there are cash prizes and custom saddles and Spurs to reward the competing cooks and cowboys, quilters and rodeo queens, even parade entries.

Take a pinch of good times, a dash of Western heritage, throw in some great food and music, and you have the North Texas State Fair and Rodeo experience. Established in 1928, the Denton fair captured last year’s Best Overall award for fairs its size in Texas, beating out bigger competitors for the third year running. Performing at this year’s fair August 19-27 are The Randy Rogers Band, Tracy Lawrence, Josh Abbott and former World Champion bullrider Justin McBride, just to name a few.

The rodeo draws big-name cowboys from across the nation, all hoping to lasso a title from the Professional Rodeo and Cowboys Association. With events ranging from solo rides on top of thrashing bulls and bucking broncos, to team events such as calf roping and team branding, the rodeo is what sets Denton apart from The State Fair of Texas down in Dallas. The Mutton Bustin’ event offers little tykes a taste of the rodeo life, while the 21 & Under Rodeo, Invitational Ranch Rodeo and the popular Bull Blowout pull in both local and visiting riders.

Scores of families with deep roots in Denton invest their time and love year after year into nurturing the fair, which attracts more than 135,000 visitors every summer. The volunteers, ranging in number from 300 to 400, perform like a “well-oiled machine,” says Eddie. Months before the fair even opens its gates, farmers, ranchers and construction crews from the area turn up to hand-paint booths, maintain the grounds and touch up the facilities – all without getting paid. During the fair, volunteers help with tickets sales, photography, parking, selling beverages and assisting in livestock shows. “It’s everybody just working together to get everything done. Nobody is afraid to get their hands dirty,” he says.

The Schoenthals first volunteered to help at the fair more than 20 years ago. Eddie, who started out handling the beer and ice, now helps maintain the fairgrounds with his two sons Josh and Ben, who’ve been volunteering three to four months before August to make sure everything is in top shape. Susan lends a hand in the office, rounding up sponsors and participants for the parade. Her mom used to volunteer at the fair so handing down the tradition to a new generation seemed natural. “Josh was probably 2 months old when he had his first barbecue there,” says Eddie.

Volunteers run all 26 committees, carefully monitoring everything from the beer and beverages to commercial exhibits and entertainment as well as the livestock shows, rodeo, pageant and parade. Without volunteers, the fair would not open its doors, says Nanci Kimmey, executive assistant to the fair’s executive director Glenn Carlton. Many families are on their second, third or fourth generation of volunteers. Kids who showed their animals for 4-H projects now bring their kids and grandkids. “We have a giant volunteer family that is extremely dedicated and they just keep coming back,” says Nanci.

Obviously, with a mom working down at the fair, Nanci’s daughter, Ryan Purcell, has been volunteering for as far back as she can remember. Ryan competed in the fair’s pageants as a young girl, dressing as a rodeo queen and participating in the Bar-B-Q cook-offs with their dad since they were kids. His sons take their vacations during the fair so they won’t miss a minute. “It’s been a part of our lives as long as they can remember,” says Eddie, who’s as apt at construction as barbecue. Eddie starts his fair “to-do” list as much as a personal twist on good ol’ southern comfort food. “Once you get your system down it’s not bad,” says Eddie in his Texas drawl. “But it takes years and years of screwing stuff up to figure out what works.”

Most people from around the Denton area have grown up at the North Texas fair. “We call it the fair family. ... It’s just in our blood.”

Ryan Purcell
clown for one contest. Now she serves as co-chairperson of the pageant committee, helping to arrange the show and ordering prizes for the participants. Volunteering, says Nanci, “is a tradition of Western heritage” along with hard work – both values to be handed down to a new generation. “That is a real important aspect to this fair,” she says.

Young girls and boys, aged 3 to 11, compete for the title of Little Miss or Little Mister North Texas State Fair on the first Sunday, Monday and Tuesday of the fair. It’s a good way for girls and boys to try out pageantry and see if they like it, says Ryan. She and Natalie Smith, her volunteer co-chair, try to make sure that every contestant gets something. “Lately we’ve been [giving] little crown necklaces or crown bracelets. Just so that everyone gets something. We want it to be fun for everyone.” For girls 12 to 14, there is the Miss Teen North Texas State Fair competition and for teens 15 to 18, the Miss North Texas State Fair and Rodeo crown (which includes a scholarship).

This year, Justin McBride, a fifth generation cowboy and former two-time bull-riding World Champion, will show his country music side, crooning songs to State Fair crowds after the dust settles in the rodeo arena. McBride, a cowboy legend, managed to wow the Grand Ole Opry crowd within a year of focusing on music and has played to 46,000 fans at the Cowboys Stadium.

The Randy Rogers Band, darlings of the Texas Red Dirt circuit, will be returning to the fair, hoping to break yet another attendance record. Best known for their hit singles “Kiss me in the Dark” (2006), “Too Late for Goodbye” and “Steal You Away” (both in 2010), the boys keep climbing the Texas Music Chart. Josh Abbott, the lead singer, songwriter and founder of the Josh Abbott Band, heads to the fair after touring with Pat Green, who’s played the Denton fair in the past. Josh says he founded his band after seeing The Randy Rogers Band play to a packed house in Lubbock. Though relatively unknown,
Josh is familiar to the local music crowd: He recorded his album “She’s Like Texas” here. Josh’s songwriting connects with audiences because he writes about relationships and small-town concerns. Country music artist Tracy Lawrence rounds out the music lineup. Tracy, who’s had 30 singles on the Billboard country music charts, is best known for his No. 1 singles “Find Out Who Your Friends Are” and “Up to Him.”

Talley Amusements, the Fort Worth-based traveling carnival, is again showcasing its head-spinning, gravity-defying rides on the Midway: adrenaline-rushing rides such as the Mega Drop, the classic 60-foot Ferris Wheel, bumper cars and the History of Horror haunted dark ride among others. “They’re one of the best carnivals in the southern United States,” says Nanci. “They travel from California to here in August. We’re very excited about having Talley. ... They’ve just got great rides.”

New to the Kid Zone is the Live Shark Encounter, the only traveling shark show in the United States. Featuring a 7,000-gallon water tank teaming with different species of sharks, trainer Philip Peters educates the audience about sharks, aiming to steer the audience away from the pre-conceived notion of sharks as “bloody” predators. As a “hands-on exhibit,” the audience is encouraged to come and examine the sharks up close. Philip swims with the sharks during his show. “We have actually been trying to bring that exhibit to Denton for about three years,” Nanci says. “We’re very excited and I think the kids are just going to love it!” Robert Liner’s Spirit of the Horse, also in the Kid Zone, has been offering training demonstrations since 1998 at the Denton fair. Robert, who performs more than 90 demonstrations a year, works to help train riders and their horses to work as a unit. “He has such a great time when he is here, and the public looks forward to his return year after year,” Nanci says. With summer comes a new flurry of activity by the volunteers to get the fairgrounds ready for August. Bobby Jones, wife Judy and daughter Jacee will corral affairs in the Livestock Department while their grandkids show animals at the fair. Glenn Carlton, who served as rodeo chairman for 20 years and now runs the show, roped in his son Chance and daughter-in-law Courtney as volunteers. The Stratton brothers will be everywhere doing 80 percent of everything, says Eddie, who will be there with Susan and their boys. (“The Schoenthals are the fair!” says Nanci.) And Eddie will try once again to win the brisket competition.

While Nanci Kimmey’s daughter talks about the volunteers, grandson Ty Purcell, an adorable ball of energy at age 3, is chattering away in the background. He’s been thinking about entering the Mutton Bustin’ event this year. “I don’t know if he’s just talking a big game, or if he’s actually going to go through with it. But, we’ll see,” says his mom Ryan. “Most people from around the Denton area have grown up here [at the fair]. We call it the fair family. We’ve got second-generation, third-generation kids that are going out there now. It’s just one of those things. It’s just in our blood.”

What: North Texas State Fair and Rodeo
Get ready for fun: August 19-27, 2011
Hours: Check ntfair.com for updated schedules on rodeo and music acts
Midway: Talley Amusements brings on their adrenaline-rushing Mega Drop and a classic Ferris Wheel. The Kid Zone features acts such as the Live Shark Encounter and Robert Liner’s Spirit of the Horse.
Music acts on the Budweiser and Bud Light Stages: The Randy Rogers Band is back, along with Tracy Lawrence, Josh Abbott and former bull rider Justin McBride. Artists play after the dust settles in the rodeo arena. *Note: Music acts are subject to change.
Miller Lite Rodeo Arena: Events include little tyke Mutton Bustin’, calf roping, team branding, bull riding, bronco riding and barrel racing. The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association will host bareback riding, steer wrestling and bull riding competitions.
Find us: North Texas State Fairgrounds. From I-35, take University Drive, Ext. #469. Go east 2 miles to Carroll Boulevard, turn north (left) to 2217 N. Carroll Blvd.
Pony up: $15 for adults, $5 for ages 7-12, free for age 6 and younger
Parking: $5 a car. See parking attendants at the fairgrounds for directions.
For more info or to volunteer: Call (940) 387-2632 or visit ntfair.com.

Photos by Carl Oberman
Bill Ledbetter and his red 1966 Chevy Chevelle are not used to losing auto competitions. He and wife Pam figure they have won at least 10 contests in the past year – their first to compete. On more than one occasion, they’ve been told the Chevelle, an original, is as close to perfection as one can get. That’s not surprising, considering they pay attention to the tiniest detail, even taking disposable cleaning wipes to competitions so they can gussy up the pedals right before judging. Bill’s had so much work done on the car since 2007 – sandblasting it, reconfiguring it, fixing the body, painting it – he can’t bear to drive it at all. In the succinct words of his wife, “He made it too pretty to drive.”

This year, Bill and Pam along with scores of other auto enthusiasts will register their pristine classics for competition in the Denton Arts, Antiques & Autos Extravaganza, hoping to win the coveted “Best of Show” award. Bill won in 2010, and is looking to take home the prize again this year. More than 200 participants are expected to pull into Denton’s historic downtown Square in September with their vintage autos and classic motorcycles – a competition inspired by The History Channel’s “Great Race” show. Denton served as a 15 minute pit-stop for the race in 1999, and thousands of people showed up for those few fleeting moments just to witness the spectacle of almost 100 street-legal vintage automobiles vibrating the streets of downtown Denton.

Since the 2000 startup of the Arts, Antiques & Autos event, the automobile competition has arguably become the biggest draw for the crowd of 6,000. It’s not all about the cars, however. Christine Gossett of the Denton Main Street Association, which sponsors the AAA event, says there has always been a fall festival tradition in Denton on the second Saturday in September. “We had several antique stores and art galleries around downtown and the idea of coupling the antique and classic cars with fine arts vendors and antique appraisers was a way to draw in more people and highlight downtown’s core attractions,” she says. The event also features more than a dozen craft and jewelry artists, as well as antique venues where lovers of all things retro can get an item
“As we expand the event, arts and crafts should be the natural area where we see interest and growth,” says association president Larry Parker. “Having local artists enhances the event and hopefully causes more of Denton’s talent to come be a part of it.” (This year the extravaganza ends early so football fans can hit the new UNT stadium opening.)

John Bennett, a professional antique appraiser and estate sale coordinator, has been appraising antiques for crowds at the Arts, Antiques & Autos show for eight years. He loves surprising people who have no idea what their item is worth. “Maybe the most interesting thing I’ve come across was much more valuable than the people had any clue about – a group of Spanish Civil War posters from both the nationalist and the republican sides,” he says. “The family had gotten them from a relative who was in Spain at the time of the Spanish Civil War in the ’30s and had brought home quite a number of them.” Each was worth several thousand dollars.

This year, John will give a lecture on appraisals and estate sales, part of new all-day workshops in the Courthouse-on-the-Square. “Every year we add something and we grow,” says Christine. “This year we added the workshops.” Georgia Caraway, executive director of Denton County Museums, will give two workshops: “Vintage Purses” and “Tips, Tools & Techniques: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Caring for Antiques, Collectibles and Other Treasures.” Georgia has thousands of tips about antique collecting. She is encouraging anyone with antique purses to bring theirs along to her workshop, which will focus on her own collection of purses from the mid-1800s to 1970s. “I have given these talks over the last 15 years to hundreds of people and they remain popular,” she says.

The extravaganza features dozens of fine arts and craftsmen, booths and activities for children as well as vendors serving up fair-style food, ranging from corn dogs to funnel cakes and live music. “Typically we try to have local bands that play rock, blues and country, with some cover songs and some originals, which appeal to a wide audience,” Christine says. The arts vendors are vetted to make sure they offer unique jewelry and artwork.

One major reason the event has grown successfully is the work and dedication of the volunteers from the Denton Main Street Association. Larry Parker believes in the positivity that comes from preserving the essence of a vital, charming city like Denton. “Our historic downtown is truly a jewel and we must do all we can to keep Denton vibrant and growing,” he says. “We want to create reasons for all ages, families and groups to visit downtown.”

Year in and year out, the festival brings in different interests for different groups – not just locals but for those who travel from out-of-state for the antiques, art or cars. This year’s car and motorcycle competition features approximately 17 car classes and six motorcycle classes, as well as eight specialty trophies. “Best of Show” winners are named in both the car competition and the motorcycle class, which is growing each year. Trophies are typically given...
for first place, second place and participant’s choice. This is the second year that the show will feature professional judges, a facet of the show that Bill Ledbetter certainly appreciates. “They know more about the cars than you do,” he notes.

Bill bought his first 1966 Chevelle for $3,000 with GI Bill money he earned from military service. Unfortunately, he had to sell it in 1973 for $400, and he has regretted it ever since. For the past three-and-a-half decades, he’s been thinking about getting that car back. Finally, in 2007, he bought a Chevelle, began restoring it with help from garage owner Ray Wall in Gainesville, Texas, and entered his baby in shows last season. When asked about his wins, he modestly responds that he hasn’t counted. “You don’t? We always win!” says Pam. He matter-of-factly rounds out the number at “about a dozen.” He won both first place in his class and “Best of Show” car at last year’s show. Denton’s wooden trophy – with a gold car on top – is “by far the nicest” he’s ever won, he says. This year, Christine says, they are working with a local artist to create custom trophies in recognition of Denton’s artistic community.

For Bill, who is chairman of the board of North Central Texas College, the Denton show is all about vindication for the fixes he made to his car based on the advice of judges and fellow participants. He says the small details win. “There can’t be a crack in the straight lines of the car; doors must close perfectly. Nothing comes out perfect at first, but if you keep working on it, it only gets better,” he says. A former teacher, he likes the analogy of school: “You’re in school and you just started writing papers. You have someone helping you edit and improve your writing. It just makes sense that a judge would tell you how to improve your car.”

Die-hard classic car and motorcycle fans can still vote on their favorites: On the Friday night prior to the show, some of the owners park their cars and motorcycles on Industrial Street for a pre-show reveal.

“The allure of the Arts, Antiques & Autos event varies from person to person. If you ask Christine, she pauses to consider how much is packed into six hours. “We have people come to see the bands; we have people come because their friends are showing a car or motorcycle and they love anything on wheels; we have people coming to see an artist in the show; we have people who come with their items for appraisal,” says Christine. The live music, the rumble of antique cars and the aroma of “fried-something” add to the festival atmosphere. “By afternoon, the warm sun just intensifies these scents and the chrome reflects the sun so there are lots of shiny things around you, from art to bumpers and hubcaps.”
It's a scene played out repeatedly last year at the University of North Texas: High school football recruits file onto a bus for a tour of their prospective college campus. Stepping aboard after the players, a bright-eyed tour guide with a Mean Green T-shirt clears her throat. "Welcome to the University of North Texas," she exclaims as the bus steers into the heart of the tree-lined campus, driving past a dorm hall and new recreation facility. As the bus throttles across I-35, the players' excitement is visible: They stretch to look at the vision taking shape out the window – the new stadium of the Mean Green, with seating on one end rising into two Eagle tail-like points, a homage to the school's mascot. "Here is our new stadium!" the guide announces. "The place where y'all will get to play next year.

The new 114-foot-tall structure, which makes its debut in September for the UNT vs. University of Houston game, symbolizes a new era for the Mean Green football program. The $80 million stadium, with seating for 30,000, is hoping to become the first new college football facility in the United States (if not the world) with an eco-friendly "platinum" LEED certification. Besides the gleaming new stadium, the program also boasts a new head coach, Dan McCarney, the former Iowa State head coach who earned the Big 12 Conference Coach of the Year and helped lead the University of Florida Gators to a national championship. The aim of all this change? Creating a top-tier football program to usher in Mean Green success on the recycled rubber turf of their futuristic new football field. Deputy Athletic Director Hank Dickenson calls it a major tool in recruiting players. "Parents and kids want to see a commitment to athletics," he says. "A state-of-the-art $80 million football stadium, designed and built by the same people that built the Cowboys Stadium in Arlington, shows a big commitment."

The architects, Dallas-based HKS, Inc., designed the stadium to take the place of Fouts Field, which hosted games for nearly 60 years. Sergio Chavez, one of the HKS architects, kept students and alumni supporters in mind while designing every aspect of the new stadium. He says every fan – from the stands to the suite levels – will watch the game without obstructions. "People can stand and you can still see over somebody standing," he says, waving his hand toward the eagle's emerald-green, tail-shaped "Mean Green fan zone" at the north end of the field. To help with visibility – a major complaint at Fouts Field – a beaming 49-foot-by-25-foot digital video display board at the south end of the field will project play-by-play scenes.

Standing beneath the tail-shaped fan zone, Sergio – joined by Cassandra Nash, senior project architect for UNT's facilities planning.
BY HALEY SHAPLEY

and construction – shifts the tour’s attention to the open U-shaped stadium seating. Beyond the first-tier of bleachers, seating in the club and VIP levels shoots skyward. The club level will seat more than 500 at a buffet dining area, a bar and two covered patio areas. Floor-to-ceiling windows promise a spectacular view of the action.

The 20 VIP suites at the top each seat 12 fans and drip with amenities, including granite countertops, custom wood cabinetry and air conditioning. One additional suite, built to accommodate 24 fans, will most likely become the president’s suite, says Cassandra. The suite design allows fans to step outside onto a balcony seating area, but those seated inside won’t lose the immediacy of the game. Small windows near the ceiling open so everyone can hear the cheering from the field. “You can get that ambient noise that you lose when you have them all shut,” says Sergio.

Cassandra and Sergio peer out onto the field from the final level of the stadium, a 14,000-square-foot press box. Reporters will view the field from window seats and two patio areas offering an open-air vantage point – a bonus that the university is hoping will lure more press coverage. TV accessibility will be much easier than at Fouts Field, where broadcasters had to literally bring their own wire. “On the south end, we have a little loft for the communications truck,” says Cassandra. “All that backbone is already built into the structure so they can plug their trucks in and they are ready to broadcast.”

As the tour wanders back out of the stadium, the group walks into the concourse area located on the outer ring of the U-shaped bowl. Fouts had eight concession stands and no team stores. The new stadium will have 16 permanent concession stands, 98 concession points of sale and two team stores. Like Fouts, of course, the food will be the usual: hot dogs, nachos and funnel cakes.

While it might not be so obvious to fans, the new stadium is at the forefront of design nationally. It’s not just the easy navigation, roomy seating and top-of-the-line luxury offered to box seat fans. The UNT stadium stands as one of the nation’s only football arenas seeking a platinum Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, certification. While many stadiums boast LEED-certified designs, UNT’s facility aims to be the first completely new stadium with the top platinum certification. The certification requires use of recycled concrete, wood and other reusable materials. Features such as wind turbines and solar panels on the east side of the structure will help power the stadium; a pond will catch runoff rainwater to be used for watering.

Jon Bryan, a Manhattan Construction team member who worked closely on the stadium design, directs visitors’ attention to the native Texas grasses and sustainable landscaping (requiring little watering) in a grove area visible to fans in the nearby tailgating area. “There’s just so much green space around this facility,” says John. “I don’t think you’ll find that anywhere else in the nation.”

The alumni and the football hopefuls who come for tours often stop as they leave for one last look at the sapphire-green Fan Zone jutting into the cloudless Texas sky. Hank Dickenson believes the impact of the new stadium goes beyond its architecture. “A very skilled football staff, combined with the major upgrade in overall facilities for football, will allow for greater success in recruiting,” he says. “The amenities associated with this stadium will allow for increased attendance, a more passionate following and a dramatically improved game-day experience for our players and fans alike.” And that’s just what the university wants: to entice generations new and old to visit the stadium and cheer on the Mean Green.

[ just the facts ]

What: The UNT Eagles face off against the University of Houston Cougars on Sept. 10, 2011, for the season opener of the new UNT football stadium. Kickoff time to be announced.

Tickets: UNT students are free. General admission tickets range from $15-20 a game and reserved seats $25-35. Family fun packs (four tickets, pizza and drinks) start at $75 for Sun Belt Conference games.

Rendering courtesy of HKS Design Inc.
A wild-eyed steer darts out of the chute. Two cowboys on horseback kick up red dirt, gaining on him. Will Travis whirls a lasso, hooks the animal’s horns and turns him while the other cowboy lassos the back feet. As the steer staggers, the panting horses face each other and back up, stretching the steer’s hind legs. When the clock stops, the ropes go slack and the steer escapes. Will, looking satisfied with his performance in the team-roping competition, sits a little bit taller in the saddle and slowly gallops off.

Sitting in the arena watching are Bill and Dolores Burch, who traveled from their home in Newark, Texas, to see their two 20-year-old grandsons roping in this event. All around them are the sounds of competition: metal gates clanging as livestock move in and out of holding pens, a PA system announcing competitors’ names, horses snorting, cattle bellowing and timers buzzing. Space heaters keep the spectators warm inside. “I started roping in 1982,” he says, looking at Dolores to confirm the year. Nearly 30 years of roping and at 79, the silver-haired grandfather is still at it. “Yeah, I’ve been roping all morning and I’m going to be roping in a minute,” he says, not looking exhausted at all.

While he talks, two younger women behind Dolores watch the action, waiting for their men to rope. A toddler plays in a portable crib next to one of the women. Nearby, boys toss a football while the Dal-Worth Appaloosa Horse Club sets up for its year-end banquet, in a meeting room decorated “cowboy chic” with rustic wood and rusty corrugated walls.

The place? Not the stockyards in Fort Worth, but Denton. This is what Will Travis imagined when he opened his arena in Horse Country, northeast of downtown Denton: a premiere equine facility with broad appeal – a place for cowboys to compete and locals to hang out. Twelve years ago he’d never been on a horse, let alone roped cattle. But on a $100 bet made with a family member, he took a dare and roped in a small-town rodeo a year later. He got so addicted that the 48-year-old venture capitalist with graying temples bought the Diamond T Ranch & Arena in 2009. “We’re sitting here on a mecca that’s not even been tapped into,” says Will, a former Dallas police officer and DEA agent. “I love to team rope, but I also wanted to take [the arena] to another level and really bring something to Denton that’s never been brought here before.”

The arena is just one stop on the North Texas Horse Country Tours. The bus tours, organized four times a year by the Denton Convention & Visitor Bureau, are a revelation for out-of-towners who don’t realize Denton County has one of the largest concentrations of horses in Texas as well as the nation – easily rivaling Kentucky. Where Kentucky breeds and trains thoroughbreds for racing, North Texas puts its money into breeding and trains horses for roping, barrel racing and other competitive rodeo events. Will, with only a tad of Texas exaggeration, says the 60 miles around Denton hold “the largest concentration of equestrian facilities in the world. Not the U.S., but the world.”

Located along a stretch of FM 428 lined with a white rail fence, the 100-acre ranch and arena hosts everything from competition-level team roping to corporate parties and competitive dog trials. Today, Diamond T arena is hosting team roping, Will’s favorite. Trucks and horse trailers park in the grassy lot out front near the arena’s logo: a giant T in the shape of a Texas longhorn – a symbol of Will’s own Texas heritage. He’s worked at making the facility safe for the cowboys and spectators as well as the bulls and steers. After buying the arena, he made improvements such as re-welding all the joints on the arena’s fence, and adding Texas-made Priefert bull chutes. (Will points out their trademark gliter.) For the bull-riding side of the business, this is a must since a bull weighs between 1,800 to 2,200 pounds. “They’ll bang against [the fence] as hard as they can just to make a point that they’re badder than you,” Will chuckles, his blue eyes crinkling at the corners. “And they win.”

It’s a place for dreams, too. Just ask Halie Rhodes, a 17-year-old Aubrey High School junior, who always wanted to manage competitive barrel races. In the summer of 2010, Halie rode and trained horses for professional barrel racer Kendra Dickson’s

setting for the 2011 Roy Cooper World Championship Junior Calf Roping competition. The Original Team Roping Association also schedules competitions at the Diamond T throughout the year. The 110,000-square-foot facility is not limited to team roping, however: It holds bull-riding events as well as English dressage competitions that train horses in obedience and precision movements. Often all it takes is a $100 prize posted on Facebook for local riders to show up to rope in mini rodeos during corporate parties. Celebrities stop by, too: last winter country singer Jack Ingram and Sugarland’s Jennifer Nettles did a meet-and-greet at the ranch. “We’ve kind of branched out into some other things other than just equestrian,” Will says. Locals book the arena’s meeting room for Super Bowl parties, corporate events and even bridal showers.

The Diamond T is not just for partying, however. It’s a working cowboy facility. Will, not one for sitting in a plush office chair, can be found on Mondays, in a jogging suit and sneakers, cleaning the arena. The ranch grows its own hay and pumps its own groundwater. The only thing they buy is feed for the animals. Will’s worked at making the arena safe for the cowboys and spectators as well as the bulls and steers. After buying the arena, he made improvements such as re-welding all the joints on the arena’s fence, and adding Texas-made Priefert bull chutes. (Will points out their trademark gliter.) For the bull-riding side of the business, this is a must since a bull weighs between 1,800 to 2,200 pounds. “They’ll bang against [the fence] as hard as they can just to make a point that they’re badder than you,” Will chuckles, his blue eyes crinkling at the corners. “And they win.”

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company, Gold Buckle Barrel Horses. Last December she raised $4,000 in sponsorships for a charity event hosted by Gold Buckle at the Diamond T, which donated the arena for free. Since then, she’s been encouraged to start her own barrel racing events. While Diamond T has helped her, she says, “I’m helping them [produce income] by getting people out to see the arena.” Three of her events are on the Diamond T schedule for 2011.

Kendra, one of the top 20 money earners in 2010 on the Texas barrel-racing circuit for the Women’s Professional Rodeo Association, was one of the first people to stop by when Will opened the arena. Living nearby, she saw the facility sitting empty and likes the changes taking place. A lifelong barrel racer, she says it’s a challenge for any horse enthusiast to find a place to ride and train that has public access. Though the mother of one has her own covered outdoor arena, she also rides at the Diamond T, especially during cold weather. “When they opened their doors it was a godsend,” she says. “[It] has the potential to not be just a diamond in Texas, but to attract attention nationally.”

Foreign visitors get an eyeful when they roll in with the North Texas Horse Country Tours. Often, they don’t understand the horse and rodeo mentality, but quickly come to love it, says Will. Dirk Webb, the Diamond T’s ranch manager, recalls the time a group from the Orient toured during a calf-roping event. “They were all cheering for the calves,” the 37-year-old says, laughing. “They were cheering for the calves that they wouldn’t get caught.”

With a capacity to hold 1,200 visitors, the arena hosts events that rotate 3,000 to 4,000 people in and out throughout a day. Often, however, it’s just the cowboys out practicing what they love. While a John Deere tractor pulls a huge rake through the arena dirt for the next round of competition, Bill, the 79-year-old roper, leans on the fence and shares his thoughts. He says the steers will be faster and the competition tougher against the higher-scoring ropers from the previous round. He ambles with a friend toward his palomino in the holding area to get ready for his next competition. As for Will, the investment-guru-turned-roper, he won that day. He’s won his bet many times over and Diamond T is the proof.

### Just the facts

**What:** Diamond T Ranch & Arena

**Ride ‘em cowboys:** For 2011 events, including the Texas Stampede Team Roping Classic Series (Aug. 20), the Friesian Keuring (Sept. 23) and more, visit dentonlive.com.

**Where:** 6900 E. Sherman Drive

**More info:** (940) 484-6101 or diamondtranchandarena.com

**North Texas Country Tours:** Six times a year. For reservations, contact the Denton Convention and Visitors Bureau at (940) 382-7895 or email communications@discoverdenton.com.
**SPORTS**

July 2: Prestonwood Polo Patriot Cup

5-28 & Aug. 1-18: Game On Sports Performance Camp

6-9: Kids’ Polo Camp & Spring Finale at Prestonwood Polo

7-9: Roy Cooper World Championship Jr. Calf Roping at Diamond T Arena

16-17: United States Calf Ropers Association at Diamond T

23: Diamond T Roping Fiesta

31: TWU Pioneer Power Sprint Triathlon

August 12 & Sept. 10: Hot Links Open, Robson Ranch Golf Course

20 & Sept. 24: 2011 Texas Stampede Team Roping Classic at Diamond T

September 2-3: UNT Volleyball North Texas Invitational

9: TWU Volleyball vs. Angelo State

22: UNT Football vs. ULM

November 5: TWU Volleyball vs. Texas A&M

6: NASCAR AAA Texas 500 at Texas Motor Speedway

Nov. 10-12: Lone Star Conference Tournament (soccer), TWU

19: UNT Football vs. Western Kentucky

December 2: Reindeer Romp 5K

3: UNT Football vs. Middle Tennessee

3: North Texas Horse Country Tours. Call Denton CVB for info.

**ARTS**

**Greater Denton Arts Council**

**June 28-Aug. 26:** GDAC Permanent Collection, Meadows Gallery

**Nov. 21-Jan 15:** Robert Sabuda at Meadows Gallery

**OXIDE Gallery**

Gallery night every Tuesday (except in August)

**Center for the Visual Arts**

**Nov. 12:** TAG Auction

**UNT Art Gallery**


Oct. 11-Oct. 29: 2011 Annual Faculty and Staff Exhibition

Nov. 15-Dec. 17: Untold: new juried art exhibition

**TWU**

Dec. 1-7: Winter Wonderland Craft Fair, TWU Student Union

**MARKETS & OTHER EVENTS**

First Fridays of the month:

First Friday Denton, Courthouse-on-the Square

**Every Saturday:** Acoustic Lawn Jam on the Square downtown

**May-December:** Community Market, every Saturday, Carroll Blvd. & Mulberry St.

**June-Sept.:** Farmers’ Market, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, Carroll Blvd. & W. Sycamore

July 18-22 & 25-29: Teen Fashion Design Camp, TWU

Aug. 12-13: UNT commencement ceremonies at UNT Coliseum

**Sept. 9-11:** Western Heritage Trade Show & Auction, 5800 N. I-35

**Sept. 17:** North Texas Renewable Energy Expo, North Texas Fairgrounds

**Oct. 20:** Planner Zone & Vendor Showcase, UNT Gateway Center

**Oct. 22:** 13th Annual Community Tree Giveaway, Denton Municipal Landfill

**Oct. 27:** Boo at the U Fall Festival, TWU Student Union

**Dec. 14:** 10th Annual Sing-A-Long on the Square
ON STAGE

The Campus Theatre
July, every Tuesday: Play Readers of Denton meeting
Aug. 5-21: Bye-Bye Birdie
Dec. 9-11, 16-18: Christmas at The Campus

UNT Winspear Performance Hall
Sept. 22 & Oct. 27: Dennis Fisher & Symphonic Band
Sept. 27: Choralfest! Varied Choral Ensembles
Sept. 29 & Nov. 3: Eugene Migliaro & Wind Symphony
Sept. 30 & Nov. 9: David Itkin & the Symphony Orchestra
Oct. 5 & Nov. 10: Concert Band with Nicholas Williams
Oct. 7 & Dec. 2: Baroque Orchestra and Collegium Singers
Oct. 12 & Nov. 30: Concert Orchestra: Clay Couturiaux
Oct. 15: Opera Gala
Nov. 14: Brass Band with Brian Bowman
Nov. 15: A Cappella Choir
Nov. 16: Men's and Women's Chorus
Nov. 17 & Nov. 29: Chamber Choir
Nov. 22: One O'Clock Lab Band with Steve Wiest
Oct. 1: Wind Symphony and Symphonic Band: Eugene Corperon and Dennis Fisher
Dec. 2: Jazz Singers: Rodney Booth
UNT Voertman Hall
Oct. 24: Night of Percussion with Mark Ford
Oct. 29: Vocal music of Joelle Wallach
UNT Voertman Hall
Nov. 1: Global Rhythms: Mixed Percussion Ensembles
Nov. 16-17: African, Afro-Cuban, Brazilian and Latin Jazz Ensembles
Nov. 21: Baroque Chamber Concert: Paul Leenhouts

Other Venues
Nov. 11-13: UNT Chamber Orchestra at Lyric Theater, Murchison Center
Nov. 14: Nova Ensemble by Elizabeth Mc Nutt at UNT Recital Hall
Nov. 18-20: UNT Opera/Chamber Orchestra at Lyric Theater, Murchison
Dec. 2: Chamber Choirs at UNT Music Commons

Clubs
July 3: David Bazan at Dan’s Silver Leaf
July 7: Sarah Jaffe at Dan’s Silver Leaf

Lectures
Bayless-Selby House Museum
July 14: Victorians and “The Home Plot”
July 23: Victorian Etiquette
Aug. 11: Victorianism in the Modern Era
Aug. 13: Victorian Pastimes: Music in the Home
Aug. 27: Victorian Wallpapers
Sept. 24: Masters in the Garden
Oct. 1: Victorian House Museum
Oct. 20: Victorian Decor
Nov. 5: Victorian Celebrations
Nov. 19: Victorian Culture: Quilling
Nov. 30: Victorian Culture: Asparagus & Oysters
Dec. 2: Merry, Merry from Mulberry Musicales
Dec. 3 & 8: Victorian Culture: Marketing Christmas
Dec. 10: Victorian Christmas
Courthouse-on-the-Square Museum
July 18: Images of America: Pilot Point
Aug. 19: Images: Southlake
Aug. 18: Images: Roanoke
African American Museum
Aug. 20: Quakertown History
Oct. 22: Football: Denton Stars
Dec. 2: Holiday Ensembles

For other music venues
dentonlive.com
mydentonmusic.com
dentonrockcity.com
dentonlivemusic.com
ntxshowlist.com
As Wendy Broyles frantically rummages through a box of beads in her shop on the Square, only three things are racing through her mind—Holiday Lighting, Holiday Lighting, Holiday Lighting. The annual festival, one of Denton’s largest, brings an endless crowd through her small jewel-filled shop, and this year will be no different. Shoppers bundled up against the cold will be on the prowl for a taste of her cinnamon-spiced Wassail—and hopefully, a sparkly necklace or two.

Just outside of Wendy’s store, Bumble Beads, stands the “Charlie Brown” tree where Santa waits every year to hear Christmas requests from scores of local kids. All around the historic Courthouse-on-the-Square, Denton families will stroll beneath the twinkling white lights, stopping to listen to carolers. “I always tell newcomers, ‘If there’s one thing you should do this year, you’ve got to go to the Holiday Lighting Festival because it’s unbelievable,’” says Wendy. “It looks like a movie stage, truly a Norman Rockwell setting. The lights are on, the Square is closed down to the traffic, there are carolers out and everybody’s in a good mood. It’s just surreal. It really evokes the spirit of Christmas.”

One of Denton’s most beloved traditions, the Holiday Lighting Festival, now in its 23rd year, is moving to Friday, Dec. 2. Denton’s mayor and one lucky child will flip the switch to turn on the lights.
The Holiday Lighting Festival started in 1988 in Denton, but harks back to a 100-year-old tradition of adorning courthouses with wreaths and ribbons around the holiday. Micah Pazourek, who lives in nearby Little Elm, has been a part of the Denton Holiday Lighting Festival Association for almost four years now and has seen the festival grow into one of the city’s biggest events. This year, the festival organizers moved the event from a Thursday night to the first Friday in December so out-of-towners can participate in the kickoff of the holiday season. “I think people look forward to it,” says Micah. She brings her neighbors from Little Elm and their children. “We do it because it’s fun. It gets us into the Christmas spirit and it’s a good memory for the kids.”

Parents see the festival as a way to share the joy of their own Christmases with a new generation. Every year, Caroline Lara brings her son Andrew, now 3, to the Square for the holiday lighting. “The setting is beautiful, with the courthouse and all the trees on the lawn,” she says. “My favorite part is really just going out there and seeing how many of my friends and neighbors and people that I know from the community are also there.” Her son creates his own recycled ornament in the arts and crafts tent and loves to listen to the artists playing guitars, harmonicas and banjos around the Square. “His favorite thing – from the time he was a baby – is the music,” says Caroline. “We couldn’t walk by one of those bands … without him wanting to stay there and listen to them.”

Adults get into the holiday spirit, too. Joey Hawkins owns Jupiter House, the coffee shop a few steps away from Wendy’s Bumble Beads. Last year, he emceed the festival – except you might not have recognized him in his Old Man Winter costume complete with mask and some white facial hair. This year, he’s thinking of dressing as the Grinch. He says the festival reminds locals of the shops on the Square and drives more business to downtown than just about any other event Denton has to offer. He triples his staff for the day. “There’s just a good buzz,” he says. “If you’ve ever seen the movie ‘Groundhog Day,’ you know, with Bill Murray? It feels kind of like that. It’s a real courthouse, the tree lighting, the music, and it’s just one of the neatest events in Denton.”

And who can forget Mr. Claus himself? There’s no question that Denton’s own Santa Claus is real: He’s got everything from the snow-white beard to a giant belly full of cookies. (A former candy salesman in New Jersey, he’s lived here in Denton for 30 years!) Not only does he look like Santa Claus, but he’s also perfected the “ho ho ho” chuckle down to a T. A line of children wraps around the Courthouse-on-the-Square just to catch a few moments atop his lap, hoping they’ve made Kris Kringle’s “nice” list this year and will wake up to an Xbox or a pony.

Wendy can’t forget the first time she happened to stumble upon the Holiday Lighting Festival. “I was going to a Chamber [of Commerce] mixer and … I didn’t realize the lighting festival was going on, and as I was walking up on Hickory, I turned the corner and I saw...
people with baby strollers and the carolers and the surrealness of it,” she says. Denton’s not a small town, she says, but the festival makes it feel like one.

Around the corner from Wendy’s shop, temporary stands with food ranging from sausage on a stick to homemade tamales offer up treats for those looking to satisfy their munchies. Some hop on horse-drawn carriages as they lumber around the Square, while others linger for the live entertainment. (A few streets away, the Bayless-Selby House Museum offers “Merry, Merry from Mulberry” holiday musicales.) Arts and crafts booths lure the children to the Square, while adults drop into the small shops for some early Christmas buys—or a quick sip of the hot mulled cider known as Wassail.

Wassail Fest, organized by the non-profit Denton Main Street Association, is an annual competition among the shopkeepers on the Square. Everyone votes on a favorite, crowning a winner each year. Wendy won the Wassail Fest in 2010 and is hoping to do it again this year with a special recipe her mother created from scratch. Wendy says she made, if memory serves her right, 21 gallons of her liquid “apple pie” and served more than 1,200 cups to thirsty tasters. The recipe is a carefully guarded secret, as the shopkeepers who sign up for the tasting are “really competitive,” says Wendy. The winner gets bragging rights for a year and a shiny crown.

When the festival finally dims its lights around 10 p.m., the holiday revelers head home or to bars such as The Loophole and Hooligans for some after-flow refreshment. Wendy says she and her family and employees will celebrate another successful year as part of a unique Denton tradition. If you look for her, she’ll be the one wearing the shiny crown of the “Wassail Queen.” They don’t announce the winner until the morning after. She plans to hang onto it as long as possible.

“IT’s just surreal. It really evokes the spirit of Christmas.”

Wendy Broyles
**ACCOMMODATIONS**

- **AMERICAN BEST VALUE INN & SUITES**
  - 601 S. I-35E
  - (940) 387-0591
  - dentontx.gov

- **BEST WESTERN INN & SUITES**
  - 2930 W. University Drive
  - (940) 591-7726
  - bestwestern.com/denton

- **BEST WESTERN PREMIER**
  - 2450 Brinker Road
  - (940) 387-1030
  - bestwestern.com/denton

- **BUFFALO VALLEY EVENT CENTER AND HOTEL**
  - 2946 Ganzer Road W.
  - (940) 482-3409
  - buffalovalleyeventcenter.com

- **COMFORT SUITES**
  - 4050 Mesa Drive
  - (940) 320-5150
  - comfortsuites.com

- **COMFORT INN**
  - 4271 N. I-35
  - (940) 566-4798
  - comfortinn.com

- **DESERT SANDS MOTOR INN**
  - 611 N. I-35E
  - (940) 380-8888
  - daysinn.com

- **DAYS INN**
  - 4271 N. I-35
  - (940) 566-4798
  - daysinn.com

- **FAIRFIELD INN & SUITES**
  - 611 N. I-35E
  - (940) 808-0444
  - super8.com

- **HILTON GARDEN INN**
  - 1513 Centre Place Drive
  - (940) 387-5840
  - hgi.com

- **HOMEWOOD SUITES BY HILTON**
  - 2907 Shoreline Drive
  - (940) 382-0420
  - home2suites.com

- **HOWARD JOHNSON EXPRESS INN**
  - 3116 Banderas St.
  - (940) 383-1681
  - hjc.com

- **Knights Inn**
  - 601 N. I-35E
  - (940) 566-1990
  - daysinn.com

- **La Quinta Inn**
  - 1210 N. I-35
  - (940) 383-2007
  - laquintainn.com

- **Motel 6**
  - 4125 N. I-35E
  - (940) 383-1356
  - motel6.com

- **QUALITY INN AND SUITES**
  - 1500 Dallas Drive
  - (940) 387-5311
  - qualityhotels.com

- **Royal Inn & Suites**
  - 1210 N. I-35
  - (940) 383-2007
  - royalinsuitsedenton.com

- **Super 8 Motel**
  - 620 S. I-35E
  - (940) 387-3400
  - super8.com

- **THE WILDWOOD INN**
  - 2602 Lillian Miller Parkway
  - (940) 243-4919
  - thewildwoodinn.com

**IMPORTANT CONTACTS**

- **DENTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND DENTON CONVENTION & VISITOR BUREAU**
  - 501 W. Hickory St.
  - (940) 349-8752
  - dentontx.gov

- **DENTON FIREFIGHTERS MUSEUM**
  - 3225 S. I-35E
  - (940) 349-9840
  - dentontx.gov

- **GREENBELT TRAIL**
  - Located off US 380 and FM 428
  - (940) 349-8472

- **HANGAR 10 FLYING MUSEUM**
  - Denton Airport
  - (940) 565-1945

- **HISTORICAL PARK OF DENTON COUNTY**
  - 317 W. Mulberry St.
  - (940) 349-2865
  - dentontx.gov

- **OXIDE GALLERY**
  - 501 W. Hickory St.
  - (940) 483-8900
  - axidegallery.com

- **SKATE WORKS PARK**
  - 2400 Long Road
  - (940) 349-8523
  - cityofdenton.com/skate-works

- **TEXAS FIRST LADIES HISTORIC COSTUME COLLECTION**
  - Texas Woman’s University
  - (940) 898-3644
  - twu.edu/gown-collection

- **UNT ON THE SQUARE**
  - 1209 N. Elm St.
  - (940) 369-8257
  - untontuesquare.unt.edu

- **UNT SKY THEATER PLANETARIUM**
  - UNT Campus, EESAT Building
  - (940) 349-8810
  - skytheater.unt.edu

- **WATER WORKS PARK**
  - Loop 288 at Sherman Drive
  - (940) 349-8810
  - cityofdenton.com/aquatic-parks

**PERFORMING ARTS**

- **THE CAMPUS THEATRE**
  - 214 E. Hickory St.
  - (940) 382-1915
  - campustheatre.com

- **DENTON BLACK BOX THEATRE**
  - 318 E. Hickory St.
  - (940) 383-1356
  - dentontheatre.com

- **MARGO JONES PERFORMANCE HALL**
  - Texas Woman’s University
  - (940) 369-8213
  - twu.edu/music/margo-jones-hall.asp

- **MURCHISON PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**
  - University of North Texas
  - (940) 369-7802
  - mpa.unt.edu

- **REDBUD THEATER**
  - Texas Woman’s University
  - (940) 369-8213
  - twu.edu/dance-theatre

- **UNIT DEPARTMENT OF DANCE & THEATRE**
  - (940) 369-7802
  - twu.edu/dance-theatre
In 2002, Jordan Malone was lying in a Switzerland hospital with 16 screws and four titanium plates holding his face together. Inline speed skaters are used to injuries, but this injury felt different. Earlier in the year, while competing, he had slipped and twisted his leg, keeping him off skates for four months. He had been eager to get back on skates, or to be honest, even to walk again. It was the longest Jordan had ever been off skates since age 5 when he was still on “quads” – skates with two wheels in the front and two in the back.

Now at 18 years old, he was in yet another hospital bed, far from home. During a race in Zurich, he had tripped over a cord and smashed his face into an unpadded timing box. “If you can imagine the skull, to take the jaw off the skull, and you know the upper part of the jaw right underneath the nose and it’s kind of protruding, right? Imagine that whole piece coming off,” Jordan says. “After I broke my face, I lost four teeth, I broke my upper and lower jaw. I can move my face with my jaw. I’m like, This is messed up, I’m done. This is stupid. I don’t know why I’m doing this to myself.”

He was thinking, he says, of quitting – quitting the one thing that had gotten his asthma under control, that had helped him deal with his dyslexia and attention deficit disorder. That self-doubt lasted … well … here’s how he puts it: “I’m in a hospital all by myself in a foreign country and then five minutes later, I’m like, No, no way. This isn’t gonna keep me from skating. Even when the worst reared its ugly head, I never had any doubts that I was a speed skater.”

His mother, Peggy Aitken, was in Denton when she got the call that Jordan was in intensive care 5,000 miles away. “I had to get on the next flight to Switzerland, but I was fortunate enough to have been able to talk to him before I left, so I knew that he was conscious,” she says. “I still didn’t know the extent of his injury. The plane ride was pretty scary.”

Now 27 years old, Jordan Malone has endured more injuries than most can comprehend in his 21 years of skating. He’s torn a ligament in his knee, broken an ankle, and, of course, there’s that broken face of his. As a kid, he started skating at a local roller rink. By the time he turned 20, he was about as accomplished as an inline speed skater could be. Then in 2004 – just two years after his disastrous Swiss accident – he switched to ice. With typical determination, he managed to become Olympic material within six years, winning a bronze medal in the 5,000-meter speed skating relay in the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada. All this from a kid in Denton, Texas – not exactly world headquarters for skating on ice.

Jordan now spends his days as a mostly...
His mom’s challenge was to keep up with a kid who was always on the go. In elementary school, Jordan skated to class every morning with his mom following in her car. He’d start at their house, get off the skates and into her car around busy I-35, then he would hop back out to skate the last mile to McNair Elementary School. The same routine would go on the next day, the next day and the next. He skated in empty parking lots (and once got chased by cops because of it). Pretty soon, it became apparent to the 40-something Peggy that she needed a way to keep up with her always-on-the-go son. “I honestly don’t think he could have accomplished what he has had we had the traditional family,” says Peggy, who worked full time selling accounting software.

At first, when Jordan was 11 or 12, Peggy says she tried to keep up on skates. (“Of course, I blew her away on the skates,” Jordan says.) She then moved onto a bike, which she thought was going to be fast enough to stay with her pre-teen. (“And then in a few weeks, I was blowing her away on the bike.”) Finally, Peggy found the solution in the form of a battered 1970s turquoise moped. “When he needed more speed work, I would go as fast as I could [on the moped], then he would skate behind me,” Peggy says. “But that didn’t last for very long because he outskated the moped.”

Eventually, Jordan needed more help – professional help – not easy to find in Denton. His first coach, Charlie Lucas, taught Jordan until he was 10 but then moved to Waco to set up a skating empire there. “Everybody at first thought, Oh man, who’s this little kid? He’s not going to do anything. But Chris sort of gave me what I needed to do; just enough so that, you know, he could figure out that I was a character and … I had what it took.” Then Chris left Denton for Waco, too.

After Jordan’s coaches left, Jordan decided he didn’t want to skate with DFW Speed Club, his local inline team, so Chris started making training programs for Jordan. For 10 years, Jordan and his mom would drive down to Waco every weekend and those were all hours where we just talked and talked and talked,” she says. To get the training he needed, Jordan ended up spending summers in Waco, too, staying with speed skater Chip Filler, who remembers watching Jordan. “He was real, real little, much smaller than everyone he was skating against and he was real fast,” Chip says. “I remember thinking there was nothing that he wasn’t going to do to get to the top.”

That determination was there from the beginning. At age 10, Jordan was already entering international skating competitions. He won his first international inline skating competition in France – the Trois Pistes (French for three tracks) – and kept on winning. He made his first World Team for inline skating in 2000 and turned pro in 2001. “I had a really injury-plagued year in 2002, so I’m like, Oh man, I should move over, you know, I should go to ice. But, I wasn’t done. I had to finish everything I wanted to do. Luckily I was able to really put the hammer down and I won world championships in 2003 and that’s kind of the ceiling for every other sport that doesn’t have an Olympics. So, I did all I could do in inline sports and then I moved on.”

When he won the Senior World Championships, he was the fastest man in the inline world. When he left inline speed skating, he had amassed a total of eight Junior and six Senior World Championship titles. Ironically, it was during his injury downtime that Jordan went to see Apolo Anton Ohno, the eight-time Olympic medalist speed skater, in the 2002 Winter Olympics. “I was just like, Man, this dude is just doing it up, you know, this is great. There’s something so fantastic about Olympic glory and it’s contagious.”

Within two years of becoming an ice speed skater, Malone was competing to be a teammate of Ohno’s for the 2006 Winter Olympics. Then, disaster struck again. Jordan broke his ankle a few weeks before the trials. He skated, but did not qualify. “Having that taste in your mouth and having it ripped away, it’s pretty hurtful,” Jordan says of his failed bid for the 2006 Turin Games. “But, I’m not the first one to sit back and go, Oh, poor me, you know. I sit back and go, It won’t happen again.”

Jordan has never been able to put into words why the Opening Ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympics were so special for him. After everything he had been through, the 5-foot-6, 140-pound dynamo was in relay with Ohno, Simon Cho, Travis Jayner and J.R. Celski. The United States was in fourth place for most of the race, but a late push past the Chinese team put the team on the podium. “That’s the icing on top of my resume. It’s the thing that will follow me around forever,” Jordan says. “You know, I’m here at the Olympic Training Center and everybody goes, That’s the Olympic medalist. So, yeah, that precedes my name. It’s not Jordan Malone, the Olympic medalist. It’s The Olympic medalist Jordan Malone.”

After he won his medal, Jordan did the same thing he’s done after every important race he’s competed in since he made his first World team: He found his mother and hugged her. “He ran all the way across the rink, he scaled the wall, then he came up to give me a hug,” Peggy says. “I was way up at the top and everybody yelled, so I ran down the stairs and he gave me a great, big old hug and put his medal around my neck.”

As a freshman, he touts a 4.0 GPA in electrical engineering, but he’s not sure when he’ll graduate because of the six to 10 hours he needs to train each day for the 2014 Winter Olympics. “We don’t have any time for anything else. You know, after you’re done training, you’re dead. You’re just wanting to get food and rest. Nobody wants to do school or anything like that.”

He’s developed a wisdom about life – and competing – because of his accidents. “You have to have the ability to change what you can accept what you can’t. I really live my life by that. Do your best and then you let fate take the rest, you know? I try to stay extremely positive. We choose to be happy or we choose to be unhappy. Simple as that.”
hen Paul Slavens talks about the Denton music scene, people listen. He arrived here in 1984, determined to get a master’s in music theory at the University of North Texas. Funk ruled the clubs in those days, not that Paul had much time for clubbing. Two years later, however, sans degree, he helped form Ten Hands, which won a reputation for its technically proficient blend of progressive, jazz and funk styles. Paul played the Denton clubs, recorded studio albums and booked shows with the New Bohemians and lead singer Edie Brickell. By the time Ten Hands broke up in 1995, Paul was a local legend and Denton was getting a name for its unique music and a certain type of attitude. You might call it a blend of daring and talent congealing into a strange but charming musical buffet.

Take Paul Slaven’s legendary Monday night gigs at Dan’s Silver Leaf. You could write a request for a song topic (usually on a bar napkin), put some money on top of his keyboard, and he and his band would craft a song just for you. (Yes, that was Jeff Barnes from Grammy-winning Brave Combo playing with him.) At these shows, the object for the audience was to come up with the funniest, or most bizarre song titles: “Secret Socks Only Love Their Owners” and “Baby, You Be the Big Spoon Tonight.” Whether Paul was surgical and timely with his wit, or he couldn’t stop laughing long enough to make it through a full song, the shows were an audience favorite in Denton. Nowadays he hosts a two-hour music variety show on Sunday nights, playing everything from Captain Beefheart to Fleet Foxes for radio audiences (on Dallas-based KXT 91.7). Every once in a while, he conjures up Denton’s music over the past three decades, offering astute observations on what makes the scene so enduring.

Catch Paul in an expansive mood at home, sitting in his instrument-filled office/studio with posters of past shows adorning the walls, and he will tell you why papers from New York to London are slathering over Denton’s alternative music scene. (“Indeed, music seems to be ingrained in Denton’s roots,” Lionel Beehner gushed in a 2008 piece for The New...
“There’s always been a kind of undercurrent of the old, hippie, freaky vibe in Denton.”

Paul Slavens

\[just the facts\]

For music venues and showtimes go to:

dentonlive.com
mydentonmusic.com
dentonrockcity.com
dentonlivemusic.com
ntxshowlist.com

York Times.) Certainly a lot of great performers came out of Denton: Pat Boone, Roy Orbison, Sly Stone, Don Henley and Norah Jones, to name a handful. But as impressive as this list is, it’s not the active ingredient in the Denton music scene. Paul’s recipe for the success of the Denton music scene starts with an essential ingredient: more than a dozen music clubs all within walking distance of each other downtown. “Because of that, and because UNT is always providing us with new, young, excited, bad-ass musicians, we just have more going on here,” he says. “Because you gotta cook it in a pot, you know? You can’t have it spread out.”

Denton, he says, is in a “nice golden period” for those wanting to sample the city’s musical mainstays. He quickly ticks off the favorites: Just off the downtown Square at Rubber Gloves Rehearsal Studios (a former cement factory), live music lovers can get their fill of the best local and national indie, punk, hip-hop and metal bands. One block south of the Square, Hailey’s also hosts an eclectic smattering of live acts. As the crow flies, Dan’s Silver Leaf is almost directly in the middle of the two. Dan’s caters to Americana bands, though it hosts other artists, such as Sean Lennon, J & J’s Pizza on the Square has a basement where bands usually play for free, and the beer is priced to move. Another staple of the live music scene adjacent to UNT is Cool Beans Bar & Grill, which isn’t exclusively a blues bar, but is well known for being a favorite stop of Denton blues legend “Pops” Carter. In addition to the live venues, Paul mentions the influence of the Denton Arts & Jazz Festival, a three-day event in April that attracts more than 2,000 bands and roughly 200,000 people, as well as the long-gone Fry Street Fair.

“I came down for the scene,” Paul confesses. A native of Sioux City, Iowa, he visited Denton while in high school for a trombone convention – and didn’t want to leave after he saw the musical mix on Fry Street. Being close to Dallas and Fort Worth didn’t hurt, but being a smaller city meant there was more opportunity, especially because of UNT’s famed music and jazz program. “This is the meat of the thing,” says Paul, warming up to the subject. “What the jazz department and the music department at UNT guarantee for Denton is that every year, there is going to be a fresh crop of incredible young musicians from around the world coming to Denton.” But talent alone doesn’t define the scene. “There’s also the seemingly inherent need to be different.” “There’s always been a kind of undercurrent of that old, hippie, freaky vibe in Denton,” says Paul. He points to Brave Combo, arguably the most famous band to ever come out of Denton, as well as expats from the Denton scene living in LA, Seattle and New York. “They’re all kind of weird, you know. They all have kind of that Denton spirit to ‘em,” he says, that combo of talent – and daring.

Brave Combo, for those unfamiliar with the band, mixes punk with polka with jazz with, well, anything really. They have won two Grammys, done the soundtrack for several films, even served as the wedding band for David Byrne, front man of Talking Heads. Matt Groening, a huge fan, animated them for The Simpsons. They close out the Denton Arts & Jazz Festival every year and often play the Denton Holiday Lighting Festival, with everyone (including the mayor) doing the chicken dance to their song. “Having Brave Combo in this town has set the vibe for me the whole time that I’ve been here,” says Paul. “First band I saw, Brave Combo, blew my mind. And now, you’ve got 20 years of great musicians roaming around here.”

Brave Combo got its start in 1979 – the same year as the Fry Street Fair, which began as a backyard party of sorts by the Delta Lodge, a new-disbanded social fraternity. By the time the fair gasped its last song in 2002, it was drawing more than 20,000 people to see local bands such as Flickerstick and Bowling for Soup as well as bigger names, including banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck. “I first came to Denton in April of 1998, and my first impression of Denton was the Fry Street Fair, and having been a musician, it was really attractive to me to see the culture at that time,” says Batey Ray, front man of Swedish Teens and bartender at Rubber Gloves.

Denton has embraced its share of genres. Funk dominated the ’80s with bands such as Ten Hands and Brave Combo. The ’90s had more of a spacey, hard rock flavor with Caulk, Brutal Juice and Baboon. The ’00s hosted a more eclectic blend, harder to lock in by genre, but probably best defined by Centro-matic, Record Hop, The Baptist Generals, Midlake and Riverboat Gamblers. Punk keeps popping up: The Grown-Ups, E-class, Bowling for Soup and The Marked Men.

Today, the scene is thriving with Midlake and Sarah Jaffe, two of Denton’s softer, more melodic acts drawing national attention. But there’s also a thriving underground market. Since mid-2010, hundreds have been turning out for shows on random weekends at The Barn on an abandoned lot on Parkway. (Brave Combo and Record Hop sometimes play.) The Denton scene is best described as a clan or family. Just about everyone knows each other, and it doesn’t make a difference for the crowds if a musician draws large on the national scale, or plays exclusively in town. Rock star mentalities are not welcome. “Bands here can relax and just be themselves,” says Batey Ray, who came from Boston. “When [people] ask me about Denton, what’s it like, I just say, ‘If you like live music, you can go out every single night and see a good live band.’ That’s pretty crazy.” Cheap, too, he adds with a chuckle.

At Dan’s earlier this year, Boxcar Bandits, a local bluegrass band (pictured at left), was recording live one night while Chris Flemmons, creator of the 35 Conférette music confab (formerly NX35), stood on the patio talking on the phone. In a few weeks, he would be hosting a weekend of live music (225 performers) in Denton as a prelude to Austin’s South by Southwest. Paul Slavens sauntered in not long afterwards. Looking stylish in a fedora and blazer, he headed for the bar where Isaac Hoskins of The Heelers, a talented blues/country/rock band, poured him a drink. A short time later, Jeffrey Barnes of Brave Combo entered in his signature regalia (think of Santa Claus as a hippie in the off-season) and launched into a round of how-the-heck-have-you-been chitchat with the crowd.

Asked to sum up the Denton scene, Jeff mentioned Paul Slavens as one of his local favorites, then paused for a moment and surveyed the music fans congregating on the patio of Dan’s. No long-winded analysis. He kept his answer simple: “I would have to say,” he said and paused, “… Look out.”
Denton Municipal Airport stops at nothing to deliver jet engine roars and spits out heat hot enough to melt asphalt, but it’s not the runway that the engine is trying to melt. It’s the snow on the runway.

It’s Super Bowl XLV weekend and the biggest winter storm in 15 years has touched down in north Texas at the most inopportune moment, with fans arriving from Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Thick ice and snow cover the runway at Denton Municipal Airport, the weather’s been hovering well below freezing for a week now and something’s got to give. The fans in the yellow will stop at nothing to see the Steelers and the Packers play. Their team made it and so will they.

So what’s a humble municipal airport hoping to make a name for itself do? Pull out the lawnmowers and the tractors, turn on the jet engines and ice scrapers and clear the runway. The fans will make it to the game. Waiting for the sun to come out is not an option, with 25 planes scheduled to land despite the bad weather. “We needed to get the runway back in business,” says Quentin Hix, general manager of the Denton Municipal Airport (DMA).

With a jet engine rigged on a truck, they blasted the runway, slowly chipping away at the ice and snow. To their dismay, however, the next day only brought more snow so a supervisor mowed 6 inches of the fluffy white stuff off the runway, using a 90-horsepower tractor with bat-winged mowers. It was, says Quentin with a laugh, “one of the oddest, most unique” things he’s seen.

Denton’s airport is not as well known as Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport or Dallas Love Field, but it has a following among private pilots and international businessmen – everyone from Governor Rick Perry and actor John Travolta to Peterbilt Motors of Denton and the Italian jet manufacturer Piaggio Aero. Its runways are busy with students – some from as far away as China – practicing takeoffs and landings at one the nation’s busiest flight schools. Need heavy maintenance on a jet, or a custom interior? Middle Eastern clients send their planes to Denton for refitting. With no commercial passenger flights coming in, Quentin says the airspace is “easy to navigate, to arrive and depart” – a selling point in a time of air traffic congestion.

It’s a humble airport, consisting of a small main building, a tower and dozens of large hangars sprinkled throughout the vicinity. In the immediate future, however, Denton airport is set to undergo major changes, with the existing runway expanding to a full 7,000 by 150 feet, a new runway planned, longer hours for air traffic controllers and increased security, including new perimeter fencing. The improvements should qualify the airport to handle more jet and charter services for nearby University of North Texas and Texas Woman’s University. It’s already an economic engine
for Denton, says Quentin, with businesses generating 400 jobs and $250 million worth of goods and services annually.

Every day students from the flights schools, US Aviation Group and All American Helicopters, buzz in and out of the airfield. US Aviation helped make Denton the busiest general aviation airport in Texas in terms of operations. The school attracts privileged foreign students as well as local gals breaking barriers such as Laura Rusnk, a vibrant 22-year-old graduate from UNT. She is the first person to earn an aviation logistics degree from a public Texas university. Laura, who first took flight at age 14, says the business side of the degree intrigued her. “I love the atmosphere of the Denton airport,” she says while checking in at the airport one day. “It’s perfect for what I need. It’s not too crowded, but it’s not too dead.”

Since UNT launched its aviation logistics program in 2009, the Mean Green Flight team has made its home at Denton airport. The academy, which changed ownership in 2006, is among the top 5 percent of U.S. flight schools in flight operations. With a staff of 125 people, the annual payroll is projected to hit $3 million in 2011. Since 2002, they have graduated more than 2,700 pilots, including 184 pilots for the growing Chinese airline business.

Walking around the flight academy is like being at a United Nations for pilots, with students from all over the world, the vast majority from China, India and Saudi Arabia. Four students walk to lunch, conversing in their native language, while another strolls to a King Air with his instructor for a flight to Oklahoma. “I truly admire these students for coming over here,” says Laura. “They not only have the huge obstacle of learning English but they also have to learn the very technical language of aviation.”

The flight school has logged more than 32,000 flight hours and currently has 65 aircraft under wing – more than 10 times the amount in 2006. “Our focus is on professional pilot training so we stay very organized to get our students through the entire program. Our slogan is ‘On Time, On Budget,’” says entrepreneur Mike Sykes, CEO of US Aviation. “For most of the guys that are looking for a career in aviation, their two biggest things are how long it will take and what it will cost. We have a program laid out. We are going to keep them on schedule and push them through the program.”

Why Denton? “Look around,” says Mark Taylor, executive VP of the school. “All you see is open space. You don’t see any lakes or mountains out here. If one of these students needs to land, they land. We always tell them don’t worry about the planes – we have insurance – get yourself out of the air first.” Mark says he shakily completed 22 hours of flight training and now sticks to groundwork. He reluctantly threw in the towel after his flight instructor told him he was “not meant to be in the air” and his wife refused to fly with him because of his wild driving. This morning’s tour in the golf cart is no different, with Mark jumping curbs, flying around corners and zipping around the airport. (He was recently told not to drive his golf cart around the aircraft for fear he might crash into one.)

Although small, the local airport is considered to be the “North Texas Airport of Choice,” beating out its larger competitors, Dallas Love Field and DFW Airport along with the smaller airports such as Meacham and Addison. The airport, home to 300 aircraft from a chic Diamond 20 to the large executive King Air, receives enough transient traffic to qualify as a full-service airport for general aviation pilots but there’s enough airspace to make it easy to navigate. “Location. Location. Location,” says Quentin Hix. “We have full access to both Dallas and Fort Worth … and yet airspace is not crowded.” They recently teamed up with Exxon Mobil to become a fixed base operator (FBO), allowing Denton to provide fuel to incoming aircraft – a key in attracting charter business. One tenant, Nebrig and Associates, brokers general aviation aircraft worldwide.

Occasionally locals will see a jumbo jet lumbering into the airport. “We have a lot of individual pilots and smaller aircraft, but at the same time we have companies that need heavy maintenance on jet aircraft,” says Quentin. Behind his desk, through the glass, employees of Jet Works Air Center are at work retrofitting and repairing planes ranging from corporate jets to Boeing workhorses. The company is currently home to a 747 jumbo scheduled for a yearlong, $13 million renovation job, including rewiring and repairs as well as a new custom interior.

Quentin says there are big plans for the future, with 250 acres of land available for an expansion, but the low-key atmosphere is one key to Denton airport’s success. It’s not uncommon for a pilot based out of a neighboring airport, such as Meacham or Addison, to fly in for the flight school’s weekly events. A restaurant is next. “When you land your plane you’re on foot and you’re hungry,” says biology professor Don Smith, an avid flyer with 52 years worth of flight stories. He chairs the annual Denton Airshow, which attracts 10,000 people to view aerobatic teams and vintage aircraft. Luckily that’s in the summer, when they don’t need to bring out the snow-blowing jet engines. –

[just the facts]

Where: Denton Municipal Airport, 5000 Airport Road

Who you might see: International students (see Chinese pilots at left), NASCAR fans, CEOs and maybe even a celeb or two.

What you definitely might see: The big King Air, the plane of an Arabic sheik or the Denton Air Fair held annually in June.

How it started: First started as a training ground for gliders during World War II, but became a civil airport after the war.

Book it! Rentals, hangars, aeronautical maintenance and more at (940) 349-7736 or cityofdenton.com.
The best way to experience a city is through its food. To make the experience authentic, go where the locals go. While these restaurants may lack white tablecloths and fine china, they make up for it with history and charm and good eats. We went looking for the hidden Triple Ds of Denton—the diners, drive-ins and dives that locals love. (Thank you for the idea, Guy Fieri!) From a Greek restaurant owner who racks up airline miles to shop for ingredients, to the guys who created a burger so hot that a release form is required to eat it, to the pizza place using family recipes 70 years old. Each restaurant is different, but they have one thing in common: They all serve up a side order of Denton culture with their food.

**J & J’s Pizza on the Square**
118 Oak St. (940) 382-7769

A row of dining chairs and benches—none of them matching—lines the walls. The exposed wooden beams do nothing to muffle the sound of footsteps and voices coming from above. In the corner stands a small, wood-paneled bar lit only by the Schlitz Beer light fixture dangling above it. If it sounds like an old, dirty basement, it is. But it’s not just any old, dirty basement. It’s *the* Old Dirty Basement at J & J’s Pizza on the Square.

For the past 14 years, J & J’s has been providing dinner and a show with award-winning pizza upstairs and live music down below. Even though owner Joe Vulpitta has been cooking in restaurants for most of his 70-plus years, it took more than a little nudging from his business partner Jaime Ham—a guy half his age—to convince him that starting a pizza place was the right move 15 years ago. “I just kept telling him I was too old for it. Then one day, I said ‘Let’s give it a shot,’” Joe says. They have been serving up Joe’s family recipes ever since.

Joe’s parents were born in southern Italy (near Mount Vesuvius) and brought their culinary traditions with them when they migrated to the United States. As one of nine children, Joe remembers growing up with food fights in the kitchen of their Chicago home. “There were a lot of arguments about who was the best cook,” he recalls with a laugh.

J & J’s moved to downtown Denton’s Square in 2002 and gained a loyal following—on one reason. Almost everything on the menu, from the lasagna to the fresh meatballs and the pizza dough, is made on site. Joe still uses his mom and dad’s recipes. J & J’s is also notorious for what some consider the ultimate pizza sin. They serve both deep-dish Chicago and thin-crust New York style pies in the same place. Naturally, *The Rolling Stone College Guide* gave them the nod in 2005.

Joe and Jaime are also committed to keeping the culture of Denton alive. To give back to the town they feel has given them so much, they hire local college students and book local bands. Joe points out an elderly couple who come in, even in bad weather, to get her cold chicken sub and his hot meatball sub. “I love Denton,” says Joe. “The people are great. They’re the best people around.”

-Desiree Cousineau

**Ruby’s Diner**
111 N. Elm St. (940) 387-7706

Robin Wilson leaves his house around 5:45 in the morning, arrives at Ruby’s Diner, pulls out a table, four patio chairs and the sidewalk sign. He then picks a spot inside and orders his breakfast. Robin’s not the owner of Ruby’s, but every morning, he starts his routine the same way, helping to open the restaurant he loves.

Ken Willis, the owner of Ruby’s, grew up in the business. He started at age 5, working the cash register at his dad’s place, The Charcoal

-Desiree Cousineau
Photo by Megan Radke

Rooster's Roadhouse
113 Industrial St. (940) 382-4227

Framed and displayed for all to see is the one item that best sums up the attitude of Rooster's Roadhouse: a customer complaint letter. The letter, which documents a customer's dissatisfaction at never knowing his waitress' name or receiving a drink refill, may not seem like the typical restaurant wall décor. But owners Johnny Law, Alan Pierce and Morgan Hill keep it as a reminder that you can't please everyone, but you should never stop trying.

The three friends go way back. Johnny and Morgan, high school classmates, have been cooking together in restaurants since the 1980s. In 2008, they found a location on Industrial Avenue that seemed just quirky enough to work. The kitchen produces the standard fare but with a Rooster's "twist" on it. Sure, they have burgers, but they top them with a fried egg and truffle mayonnaise. Nachos come smothered in pulled pork fresh from the onsite smoker. As for the BLT, it's got double the bacon and mayonnaise.

Rooster's challenges are famous. There's the Texas Slider challenge (18 burger sliders plus an order of cheese fries to be finished in under 30 minutes) and coming soon, a Hell Burger Challenge (eating as many of their hell burger sliders as possible in 30 minutes). The challenge will be named for the winner. For most, the Hell Burger itself is enough of a challenge: a burger topped with a sauce that includes scarily hot Ghost chilies. While stuffing yourself silly or setting your mouth on fire may not sound fun to some, Johnny guarantees it is. "Even though tears are running down their face, they're still smiling," says Johnny.

Sweetwater Grill & Tavern
115 S. Elm St. (940) 484-2888

Fresh snow falls, adding layers to the blanket of white already covering the ground. The Square is still. The only sign of life is two people dutifully shoveling snow at the corner of Elm and Mulberry. To get Texans out in the snow is no small feat, but there they are, digging away so regulars won't miss their daily dose of Sweetwater Grill & Tavern. Inside, owner Jimmy Meredith and wife Karen are dishing out bowl after bowl of steaming hot, homemade soup, the perfect cure for cabin fever.

It's this commitment to good food and the community that has made Sweetwater a draw for locals since opening in 1996. The building just off Denton's downtown Square was once a car dealership and junk shop, but now the wall of windows and patio lure customers downtown for a menu that boasts ceviché as well as a fried bologna sandwich. At Sweetwater, plumbers and lawyers sit at the same bar – a testament to the power of good food. Jimmy makes as many of the dishes as possible from scratch, whether it's hand stuffing the jalapenos for the fried jalapenos or home frying the potato chips. "There are no microwaves," says Karen. In addition to the regular menu, which is heavily influenced by Jimmy's Louisiana roots, there are daily specials and a different burger special every day.

Jimmy and Karen want Sweetwater to continue to evolve, adding music to the mix. The music started as a way for music professors and directors from the University of North Texas to continue playing after retirement, but now Sweetwater's small music stage is booked up to four months in advance. It has even turned into a way for UNT music professors to introduce their students to playing in the real world. "We're really interested in supporting the arts," says Karen. Luckily, she means the culinary arts as well as the performing ones.

Denton County Independent
Hamburger
113 W. Hickory St. (940) 383-1022

Around town, they call him the "Hamburger Man." Each day at 5 in the morning, Kim Kitchens starts his day by putting the beans on. Next, he slices the potatoes – hundreds of pounds of potatoes – for the day's French fries. Then he forms the burger patties, no seasoning, all beef. Each patty is formed by his hand into a ball, then smashed into a patty to be placed on a charcoal grill over a live flame.

Kim purchased Denton County Independent Hamburger Company on the Square 32 years ago. Back in the '70s, the Courthouse-on-the-Square was more than just a tourist attraction; it was a working courthouse. From
the beginning, he had a line of customers out the door. “If someone told me that 32 years later I would still be making hamburgers every day, I would have laughed about it,” says Kim. On the walls hang pictures of celebrities such as Phyllis George, the 1971 Miss America, who is from Denton, and Stone Cold Steve Austin, who played football for the University of North Texas. Old Coca-Cola signs that customers have given Kim war for space with vintage beer signs, cigarette advertisements, license plates, antlers, beer bottles and the restaurant’s “Best of Denton” awards. He’s proud that the food is still handmade, with burgers and fries and salads and tea all made fresh each day. “I had a guy come in here that had not been in here in 20 years, this week. He said ‘You know what, this is exactly the same way it was 20 years ago,’” says Kim. The cheeseburger is the favorite and Kim says they go through a monstrous amount of cheese to make them – probably 400 to 500 pounds of cheese alone a week. Which pales by comparison with the potatoes. “Literally 2,000 pounds of spuds a week,” he says.

A native of Tyler, Texas, Kim says he tried a restaurant in his hometown, too, but closed it in favor of Denton, where he has two locations. After the many years of standing at a grill, Kim still enjoys his job. “It’s a family sort of deal. We have had weddings at Denton County Hamburger, and we have had babies almost born at Denton County Hamburger, and we have kids at Denton County Hamburger,” he says. “It’s interesting that you got the kids [coming in], and all of a sudden, you’ve got their kids. Now you have grandkids, you know. It just keeps going.”

Oldwest Café
1020 Dallas Dr. (940) 382-8220
You might have a hard time finding a place to hang your saddle at Oldwest Café these days. Empty parking spots fill up fast with locals looking for the Cowboy or the Train Robber. That’s Carolyn Rollin’s idea of a breakfast food. She was a corporate maven, dreaming of more time with her family in 1997 when her husband arrived home with a present – a set of keys to a restaurant. She opened her first restaurant, Oldwest Café, in Sanger, Texas. Today she owns four – in Denton, Grapevine, Bedford and Sanger. Carolyn and son Bill run the Denton restaurant, cooking up dishes and ideas. “How can we have a French toast cinnamon roll?” Carolyn asked her son one day. Together, they came up with this “sinfully delicious” result called the Cheyenne: Instead of pouring syrup on French toast, they sprinkle it with powder sugar and drizzle icing over the top. The Cowboy, on the other hand, is a pretty straightforward breakfast: two eggs cooked to order, two pieces of bacon, sausage or ham, a choice of two sides. The Train Robber is a large flour tortilla stuffed with three scrambled eggs, sausage, bacon, ham and hash browns, all covered with queso and a side of sour cream, jalapenos and salsa. (A pause of respect here for those who attempt this.)

Bill comes up with the names on Google. “I Google outlaws and Western names until I find something that will fit just right,” he says. The Alamo is Oldwest Café’s original chicken-fried chicken covered with homemade queso, diced tomatoes, red onions and a scoop of sour cream. Sawdust Charlie is a club sandwich layered with ham, turkey, bacon and American cheese. For those trying to be healthy (or the illusion of it), Some Beach Salad comes with crispy or grilled chicken on lettuce, sweet-baked pecans, dried cranberries, fresh strawberries, mandarin oranges, crumbled blue cheese and a citrus-mango vinaigrette.

The menu is not the only thing that carries the Oldwest Café motif. The building has wood panels inside and out. Metal signs, horseshoes and other Western items decorate the inside. Waitresses wear blue jeans and a black Oldwest T-shirt. At breakfast, there’s almost always a line. Customers are always waiting for a place to hang their modern-day saddles. -S.B.
A trio of 20-somethings takes the stage and exchanges high fives. In the dim light, a man carefully wraps white tape on each finger. Austin Chappell is the percussionist for Ashley Gatta’s band, Ashley Gatta and the Free People. As his hands slap against the taut plywood of his cajón, the murmurs of the audience die down. The melody gains momentum, with the rhythmic thumps from Austin’s box-shaped percussion instrument creating a ripple effect in the audience. Heads bob. Tunes from an accordion and a guitar mingle and rise in a crescendo to the top of the tin-covered roof at Banter. It is midnight at the coffeehouse, but the crowd shows no signs of abating.

“The culture of Denton is reflected in the coffee shops,” Ashley, the lead singer of the band, says during a break. “I think you can see the differences, even within coffee shops, each one has its own flavor.” Banter is diverse, featuring music and open mic nights with its brews. Art Six Coffee House has an artsy vibe with cult movie festivals and bold art while Café Du Luxe is upscale with an extensive wine menu. Zera Coffee Company provides a homey atmosphere, making it a great family place, while Jupiter House on the Square is a great spot for locals and tourists. For casual hanging out, students go to Jupiter House and Big Mike’s Coffee.

Banter’s egg yellow brick wall is decorated with paintings and photographs done by students and artists. The café’s open mic nights feature political satire and comedy acts as well as fiction readings and poetry nights for heartbroken lovers. Crowds have been coming for almost three decades for Friday night events. “We’d been coming here for years and loved the music and food,” says new owner Ellen Ryffle, who plans to keep it just the way it has been for so many years.

In a cluster of coffeehouses around the Square, Jupiter House (see picture above) “has a way of fusing Denton ‘oldheads’ with Generation X college kids,” says a reviewer on Yelp. Brick walls showcase a constantly changing display of local art work, lending this coffee joint its hippie vibe. Another reviewer says Jupiter House is the “best place to go if you’re looking for a nice first date, a place to hit the books and get hyped up on caffeine, or just a local hang out.”

A few blocks away, Freddie Schulze is playing in Art Six – all the way from Budapest via Skype. “So here is the thing, it’s 4 o’clock in the morning in Budapest and I live in a very, very quiet apartment,” he hushes into his webcam. The crowd at Art Six lets out a short laugh as they watch. The YouTube video of this event is what Art Six is all about – answering the “what ifs” of life. “It was a ‘wouldn’t it be cool if’ moment when we decided to Skype with Freddie for the live music,” says co-owner Tommy Rose. Art Six, located in a clapboard house near the University of North Texas, is known for its eccentric visual art (elephant heads atop nude women) and the quirky entertainment brought in by the owners – fire spinners, belly dancers, string quartets and cult movies.

Café Du Luxe, south near the city’s hospital zone, is new, with clean contemporary furniture. The taste of owner David Carles is reflected in the attention to detail – from the design to music choice. The studio recording sound system lends an ethereal quality to the ambience, which includes a wall reserved for local artists and a monthly “meet the artist” display. The clever combination of coffee, wine, art and music is unique to this café.

From Jupiter House with its hippie influence to Zera Coffee Company, where you’ll find furniture straight out of a home and decor magazine, the Denton coffee scene has something for everyone. Ashley calls Denton “a diamond in the rough” and its coffeehouses reflect that. Like Denton, they are mixture of old and new, showcasing the city’s raw talent as well as good coffee.
Step into the barber chair! Wayne Johnson’s got a story for ya

A man with weathered features stares out the window, watching people pass by the sign with the familiar striped barber pole. Wayne Johnson, seated behind a chipped black desk, waves toward the window to Bob, Harry, Jim and the others walking past on Elm Street. This desk has been here from the beginning of his shop, he says, pieces of Denton’s history. Wayne leans back and smiles. “Do you want to hear a story?” he asks. “I’ll tell you a story.”

Customers wait along a wall of the shop: a line of Wranglers and boots, starched white shirts and brown slacks, plaid button-ups and jeans. Everyone has a first name here in Wayne’s shop. Each conversation is a continuation of the one from their last visit: new job openings, teacher cuts, UNT football, money. Everyone has a story to tell, Wayne says. “It’s why I love what I do. Meeting people, talking to people.”

While Wayne talks, his customer John waits his weekly turn in the barber’s chair. John makes conversation with the man beside him, the two of them laughing and remembering a previous visit when they made a football bet. John helped Wayne move his shop from Fort Worth to Denton’s Downtown Square – and didn’t get paid a penny, says Wayne, chuckling under his breath. “But I got a free haircut out of it, didn’t I?” John says, standing up to take a seat in a black-and-silver barber chair.

Stepping through the dusty tan-brick façade of Unique Barber Stylists is like stepping into Denton’s past, complete with a cast of local characters. Their barbershop is the fourth oldest business on the Square. Across the street is the Courthouse-on-the-Square built in 1896. As original members of the Denton Main Street Association, Terissa and Wayne Johnson have seen Denton grow and thrive over the past four decades. But their 36-year-old shop isn’t just a business. It’s family. “Some people walk through the door and give you a hug. Some get out of their chair and give you a hug as they’re leaving. You don’t see that anymore,” Terissa says wistfully.

“Our little barbershop is kind of well known all over the state,” Wayne adds proudly. Terissa, a feisty woman with soft features, sits up in her chair as she talks about being appointed by Governor Rick Perry to serve on the State Board of Barber Examiners. During her four-year tenure, she helped craft exams for barber schools across Texas. She throws back her head and laughs. “I don’t know if every barber knew us, but every barber school did.”

Wayne grew up knowing he wanted to be successful like the barber in his hometown of Throckmorton. When he and his wife moved to Denton in 1967, there was just Ethan Allen, McBride’s pawnshop and McNeill’s Appliance, but they made a bet on the future. “We love downtown. Downtown is the place to be right now. We think we helped start that,” says Wayne.

The place is decorated in UNT spirit: football posters, mugs and flags. Giant posters of Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley line the back wall where the customers wait their turn. Shelves are piled to the ceiling with shaving mugs and shaving tonic bottles. “We wanted to keep the shop ’50s and ’60s themes,” Terissa says. Hanging on the wall, just a few inches above her head, is “Boulevard of Broken Dreams,” a watercolor accompanied by a collection of other hand-me-downs and gifts from customers throughout the shop.

In the middle of a long line of chairs, where customers wait to get a haircut, stands a “weight and fate” scale. The scale was originally in Schroeder’s Pharmacy for 53 years until it closed. “John Schroeder gave me that scale and he wanted it to remain on the Square and we’re going to keep it that way, even after we’re gone,” says Wayne. He remembers as a boy, the excitement of getting on his barber’s scale. Kids today love it just as much, he says.

The kids who come into the barbershop today are descendents of an older generation that grew up with the Johnsons. Wayne’s been cutting Dr. Timothy McGuire’s hair since he was 12 years old. “He went away to medical school, but when he came back to Denton, he still kept coming back,” says Wayne. A sly smile stretches across his face. “Do you wanna hear another story?” he asks. Terissa has heard this before and leans back in her chair, ready for another tale.

In photo above: Caden Calvert, age 4, is a fourth-generation customer at Unique Barber Stylists. Photo by Desiree Cousineau