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“Heaven on Earth is a
choice you
must make, not a place
you must find.”

WAYNE W. DYER

Letter from the Editor

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME you took ten uninterrupted minutes and listened to a symphony—truly listened—from beginning to end?

If I had to guess, probably never. Or at least, not recently.

So I’d like to invite you into a small exercise. It may feel a bit outside your comfort zone, but that’s often where the most meaningful things begin.

When you find a moment—no rush—queue up the playlist included in this issue of the Citizen. Pull up a chair near a window. Pour a cup of coffee. And press play on the first track, Adagietto No. 5 by Gustav Mahler.

As the music unfolds, let it create space. Space to reflect on the year that was 2025. Space to imagine what might quietly emerge in 2026.

There was a season a few years ago when I began each morning with this piece of music. Somewhere along the way—amid deadlines, doing, producing—I forgot the particular posture this music gave me. A stance of listening. Of widening. Of becoming present. And while creating this winter issue, it returned to me.

I wondered: *What if we offered the reader a small practice?* Not an answer. Not a resolution. Just an invitation—to pause, to remember, and to look forward with gentle eyes for just a moment.

Because how we live our moments is how we live our days.

And how we live our days is how we live our years.

G.K. Chesterton once wrote, “The object of a new year is not that we should have a new year, but rather that we should have a new soul.”

So here’s to something new.

Something fresh.

Something human.

Something quietly interesting.

Welcome to the Winter 2026 issue of The Citizen.

Warmly,

Ashton Gustafson
Editor, The Citizen



ROLLING INTO WACO

**PROUD MARY BOUTIQUE
BRINGS A NEW VIBE
TO BOSQUE BLVD**

3635 Bosque Blvd, Suite 2, Waco, Texas 76710
@proudmaryboutique

THERE'S A WHITE BUILDING on the corner of 37th and Bosque—bright, modern, and humming with a kind of soft electricity. Next to For Keeps Coffee Shop, Proud Mary Boutique doesn't just feel like a new addition to the neighborhood; it feels like a statement. A shift. A ripple. The kind of shop you step into and instantly sense that something both tender and bold is happening.

Its owner, Sara Garza, didn't set out expecting to run a boutique in Waco. But as the lyrics of the song Proud Mary say, she "left a good job in the city, workin' for the man every night and day," and even though she never imagined entrepreneurship as the exit route, the song's prophecy eventually found her.



A Move Prompted by Faith—and a Lyric That Wouldn't Let Go

The Garza family arrived in Waco on Memorial Day weekend of 2021 after nearly a decade of running a nonprofit ministry in Dallas. When her husband Zach sensed it was time to hand off what he had built, a call came with an opportunity in Waco. A new role. A new chapter. A new city.

They prayed. They made lists. Every box checked itself.

"Five months later, we were here," Sara says. "Fast, but that's kind of how we roll."

What she didn't know then was that a lyric spoken over her and Zach three years prior would become the foundation of her next calling. Someone had prayed the opening lines of Proud Mary over them, without context or explanation. It felt curious at the time. A sweet oddity.

But three years later, they truly had left a good job in the city, releasing comfort and predictability to follow something deeper. That lyric had become a map.

Discovering a Need—and a Calling

When the family settled in Waco, Sara—mom, creative, longtime retail professional—quickly felt at home. What she didn't find, however, was a place to shop that reflected the aesthetic she loved: something cosmopolitan, a little edgy, a little less overtly feminine and more creatively refined.

"Dallas has boutiques everywhere," she says, "but here I kept thinking—where's the store that looks like this?"

The idea surfaced... then intimidated. She had a toddler. She had stepped away from retail before. She wasn't sure she ever wanted to return.

But retail kept finding her. First at Fabled, where she learned the buying process. Then, at Ramble and Co., she learned from a successful founder. And finally, in the fall of 2024, during a season of deep discernment, she felt a clear sense: start the store.

It was not the answer she expected. She and her husband had been considering foster care. Entrepreneurship felt vulnerable—exposed even. But the clarity persisted.

From Idea to Storefront—Faster Than Expected

Sara assumed such a calling would take years to unfold. Instead, it took months.

Working next door at For Keeps one day, she noticed renovations happening in the neighboring suite. When she texted the owner, he responded: "Retail space. Available in

September.” Too soon, she thought. Too fast.

But doors continued opening, and she and Zach spent the summer dreaming, road-tripping, creating. By fall 2025, Proud Mary Boutique wasn’t just a possibility—it was real.

A space. A vision. A community forming around it.

The Proud Mary Experience

Inside Proud Mary, you’ll find clothing that feels like an invitation: sophisticated but wearable, modern with a hint of edge, curated with intention. Yes, there are statement pieces—retro knits, leopard pants, silhouettes that whisper “try me.” But there are also grounded essentials, the kind that help women rediscover confidence with gentle steps.

Sara’s target customer is no mystery: she’s the millennial woman—often a mom—emerging from the fog of early motherhood and reacquainting herself with her own style, identity, and creativity.

“So many women look outward to figure out who they should be,” she says. “But I want them to look inward. To see the gold inside them. To rediscover themselves.”

She offers styling that feels personal, relationship-driven, and rooted in genuine encouragement. Her sister’s handmade jewelry adds an additional touch of uniqueness.

A Name That Means Surrender—and Strength

The store is named Proud Mary not because it’s catchy, but because it’s true.

For Sara, the lyric symbolizes surrender. Obedience. Letting go of the life she thought she should build in order to embrace the one God was forming instead.

“For the women who come here,” she says, “I want them to feel the same—seen, accepted, encouraged right where they are.”

Rollin’, rollin’, rollin’ on into who they were made to be.





Winter Playlist

01	<i>Symphiny No. 5, IV. Adiagetto</i> Gustav Mahler	11	<i>Utah By Tomorrow</i> Andy Squyres
02	<i>Standing Outside a Borken Phone Booth with Money in My Hand</i> Primitive Radio Gods	12	<i>My One And Only Love</i> John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman
03	<i>Don't Come Around Here No More</i> Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers	13	<i>End of the World</i> Miley Cyrus
04	<i>A Couple Minutes</i> Olivia Dean	14	<i>Great Indoors</i> John Mayer
05	<i>Love Is All I Am</i> Dawes	15	<i>everything i wanted</i> Billie Eilish
06	<i>A Kiss To Build A Dream On</i> Louis Armstrong	16	<i>Grow as We Go</i> Ben Platt
07	<i>I Would Die 4 U</i> Prince	17	<i>Wish You Were Here</i> Pink Floyd
08	<i>Across The Universe</i> Rufus Weinwright	18	<i>8(circle)</i> Bon Iver
09	<i>Don't Look Back In Anger</i> Oasis	19	<i>Saturday Night</i> Knowsum
10	<i>White Ferrari</i> Frank Ocean	20	<i>HIGHER!</i> Dijon



ANY HOME

TheWacoHomeFinder.com

ANY TIME

Atlas Chiropractic

BRINGING HOPE, HEALING, AND ALIGNMENT
TO CENTRAL TEXAS

WHEN DR. CHRISTY FLICK FOUNDED ATLAS CHIROPRACTIC IN 2024, she brought with her not only nearly two decades of specialized chiropractic experience, but also a deeply personal understanding of how life-changing proper spinal alignment can be. Located in the beautiful Bader Ranch community at 16401 Badger Ranch Blvd., Suite B, Atlas Chiropractic is quickly becoming a trusted resource for neighbors seeking real solutions to chronic health concerns.



Dr. Flick's journey into chiropractic care began long before she earned her Doctorate of Chiropractic from Parker University in 2005. It started at home, as a mother searching for answers. Her oldest son, Taylor, suffered from persistent ear infections that required round after round of antibiotics. Traditional treatments offered temporary relief at best—until one day an Upper Cervical Chiropractic adjustment changed everything.

A gentle correction of Taylor's Atlas vertebra brought an end to the infections entirely. After months of frustration and worry, the Flick family experienced what Dr. Flick still describes as "a small health miracle." That moment ignited her calling to help others reclaim their health, hope, and quality of life through chiropractic care.

For more than 18 years, Dr. Flick practiced in the Dallas area, helping thousands of patients through Orthospinology Upper Cervical Chiropractic, a highly specialized and precise method that focuses on the alignment of the vertebrae closest to the brainstem. After more than a decade of experience with the technique, she earned her official Certification in Orthospinology in 2020.

But in 2023, another calling began to rise—this time, pulling her



closer to family. Dr. Flick relocated to the Waco area, and with that move came the birth of Atlas Chiropractic, a practice rooted in compassion, accuracy, and the belief that many long-standing health issues can be resolved when the body is allowed to function as it was designed.

"At its core, Atlas Chiropractic exists for one purpose: to help people," Dr. Flick explains. "We are simply the people who help."

That mission is carried out through the clinic's signature Blueprint Spinal Analysis, a detailed process that identifies the true root cause of a patient's symptoms. From there, Dr. Flick creates customized, goal-oriented

care plans designed not just to relieve discomfort, but to restore long-term health and vitality. Many patients arrive after years of searching—sometimes without hope—for answers to migraines, vertigo, balance issues, neck pain, nerve problems, and other conditions linked to upper cervical misalignment.

What they often find is not only relief, but a renewed sense of possibility.

As Atlas Chiropractic continues to grow in Central Texas, Dr. Flick remains committed to the calling that began with her son's healing: providing precise, compassionate care that transforms lives.

**TO LEARN MORE OR SCHEDULE
A CONSULTATION,**

visit Atlas Chiropractic in
Woodway and discover
how proper alignment may
open the door to better
health in the new year.

ATLASCHIROPRACTICWACO.COM



THE **ST**EEED LANGUAGE

INSIDE THE COLOR, CHAOS, AND QUIET
CONVICTION OF DALLAS ARTIST KYLE STEED

By Ashton Gustafson

THERE ARE ARTISTS



WHOSE WORK YOU ADMIRE, and then there are artists whose work you recognize. Before you even register scale or subject, some internal string gets plucked—oh yeah, that’s a Steed. The linework, the looseness, the riot of color contained by restraint just thin enough to feel human. His hand, unmistakably his hand.

For Kyle Andrew Steed, the Dallas-based, self-taught artist who has spent the last decade building one of the most distinct visual vocabularies in modern Texas, that signature wasn’t branded overnight. It began quietly—pen to paper, late nights, early mornings, in the margins of journals that have, for nearly twenty-five years, served as both mirror and compass.

But every mythic origin story has its hinge moment. For Steed, that year was 2012.

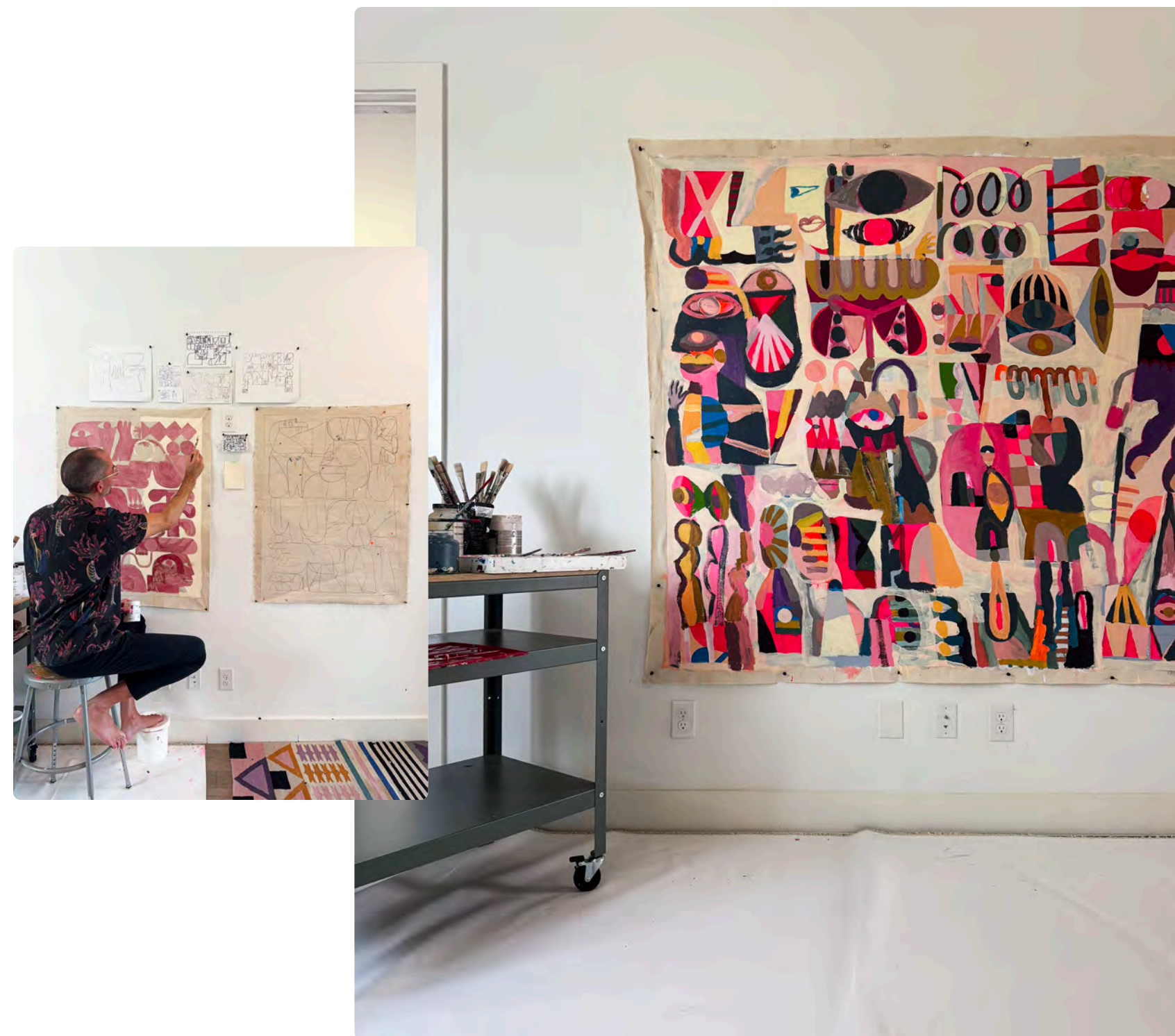
“I had been deep in the UX/UI world—web design, front-end coding,” he says, remembering the fluores-

cent-lit days. “I dove in pretty hard... and then I started wanting to get out as quick as I could.” He laughs—a warm, reflective sound. “I needed to feel something again. The simplicity of tools that have been around for hundreds, thousands of years.”

So he walked. Out of the job, out of the corporate scaffolding, into fatherhood, into uncertainty, into a calling he couldn’t quite name yet. Artist? Painter? Maker? “I don’t know that I would’ve used the word ‘artist,’” he says. “Not then.” But the work was already tugging at him like an interior thread.

By 2014, murals became the doorway. Color-drenched, large-scale, deeply physical works that woke something in him. “It wasn’t that it got easy,” he says. “It’s that it was satisfying multiple things at once. Very design-driven. Very free. Very alive.”

If you’ve walked through Bishop Arts, lingered



over a latte at Oak Cliff Coffee, shopped the racks at Lululemon in NorthPark, or tried on frames at Warby Parker on Knox—chances are you’ve met the Steed sensibility in person. That clean, confident hand. The playful tension between symmetry and asymmetry. The sense of precision that somehow refuses to behave like precision.

But for Steed, mural success didn’t signal arrival. It signaled something more dangerous: the desire to go inward. “Around 2016 I wanted to create a studio practice,” he says. “To find my own voice. Ask: if I’m going to make work, what does that look like? What do I want to say?”

It’s important to understand this about Kyle Steed: the man is as process-oriented as he is spiritually curious. His work isn’t “abstract”—in fact, the word fails spectacularly. His paintings are layered invitations—a

dialogue between the human being and the not-of-this-world. His hand is steady, but the experience is elastic. Patterns don’t lead to conclusions; they lead to beginnings. No canvas is a period. They are all ellipses.

“Color used to scare me,” Steed admits. “I feared pairing things ‘wrong.’ Total overthinking. Too much control.” Then came the letting go. Then came the risk. Then—inevitably—came the language.

What emerged over the years is a body of work that oscillates between chaos and calm, rawness and refinement, vulnerability and swagger. “I kind of like to let things be ugly and raw,” he says. “If I can’t mess it up, then it becomes too precious.” He pauses. “Art is the last thing that needs to be precious.”

The sentiment is profoundly Steed: honest, anti-pretense, reverent without being precious. His canvases—layered, reworked, sanded down, built back



up—embody it. “Anything can be made over. Anything can be recreated. There’s no mistake in art.”

But risk carries another cost: vulnerability. “My work is saying things I may not fully understand,” he confesses. Viewers often describe a sense of peace when standing before a Steed. Others feel a calibrated, intentional chaos—a portrait of life itself. Both are true.

And then, of course, there is the ascent. The invitations. The rooms he once never imagined entering.

A decade after those early Dallas co-working shows—“Instagram had just started; it was such a fun season”—Steed found himself debuting new works in Marfa, inside a restored chapel glowing with West Texas light. “A perfect union,” he says. “A blank space and all these colors on the wall.” The show came together in a month. No plan. Just yes. Then the details arrived, one by one, like a gift.

This is the rhythm of his career: a quiet belief in the calling, decades of invisible discipline, and then—almost

miraculously—doors opening wider than logic would suggest.

Today, collectors call him from Chicago to say his painting “ties the room together,” turning an ordinary evening of vinyl and whiskey into something contemplative. Lululemon calls for murals. Galleries in Lockhart champion his work. And his Instagram—equal parts sketchbook, diary, and dispatch—serves as the front porch of his creative world.

At 43, Steed still feels like a beginner. Maybe that’s the secret. “Beginner’s mind,” he says. “So important.” He still journals. Still draws. Still chases the unknown. Still listens for the work whispering to him from somewhere beyond form and color. “This is my life’s work,” he says simply. “And I still feel like I’m at the beginning.”

The Steed language continues—expansive, evolving, unmistakably his own.

KYLESTEED.COM | @KYLESTEED

**WE LOVE THIS CITY.
WE LOVE THE FRIENDLY PEOPLE.
WE LOVE THE LOCAL VIBE.
WE LOVE THE LOCAL ECONOMY.**



**WE LOVE WHERE WE LIVE,
AND SO SHOULD YOU.**



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Remembering Who You Truly Are with Dr. Rick “The Story Healer” Diamond

Hosted by Ashton Gustafson, Good, True, & Beautiful is an ongoing conversation with thought leaders and visionaries from across the world.



Scan the QR code to listen to the full podcast

THERE ARE INTERVIEWS that simply pass the time—and then there are conversations that quietly recalibrate you. This episode of Good / True / & Beautiful is firmly the latter. When Ashton Gustafson sits down with Dr. Rick Diamond—known to many as “Rick the Story Healer”—what unfolds feels less like a podcast recording and more like a long, unhurried exchange between two people circling the same truth from different directions.

Rick introduces himself without flourish or performance. “I’m here to help people remember who they truly are,” he says. It’s the kind of sentence that lands with weight precisely because it isn’t trying to impress. You can feel that it’s been lived into. The clarity didn’t arrive overnight; it came through a life shaped by chaos, adaptation, and the quiet decision many of us make early on—to become “good,” agreeable, and capable in order to survive. For a long time, that strategy works. Until one day it doesn’t. And when it stops working, something else begins.

What this conversation returns to again and again is the tension between the life we’re told we should live and the one that keeps asking to be lived from the inside out. Rick calls it the difference between the “should story” and the “heart story.” The former promises certainty, approval, and safety if we follow the script. The latter offers no such guarantees—only resonance, truth, and a deeper sense of aliveness. The shift between the two is subtle but seismic, less a dramatic conversion and more a slow recognition that what you’ve been searching for has never been outside of you.

Ashton and Rick explore what happens when spirituality stops being something external—something to locate, obey, or earn—and becomes something intimate and interior. A presence already humming beneath the noise. A wisdom woven through the body, the seasons, the earth itself. Drawing from several wisdom traditions, they circle the same idea from different angles: the Divine is not distant or withheld. It is already here, already within, already participating in your becoming.

The conversation is especially tender around the early moments of awakening, when something begins to loosen or warm from the inside. Rick speaks with compassion about fear—not as a warning sign, but as

a companion. Fear shows up when the old story starts to lose its authority, when the familiar structures no longer hold. It whispers about risk and consequence, about relationships and roles and identity. But rather than seeing fear as something to silence, Rick invites listeners to get curious about it. To ask whose voice it really is, and whether that voice still deserves to run the show.

Midway through the episode, the language shifts from striving to surrender. Ashton names the difference between “making it happen” and “making it welcome,” offering an image of laying down armor and cultivating a garden instead. Rick builds on the idea, suggest-

ing that the great relief of this path is realizing you were never meant to carry everything alone. Life begins to feel less like a project to manage and more like a collaboration—something you participate in rather than control. Meaning emerges not from force, but from attention.

As the conversation deepens, it grows quieter. They talk about moments of unexpected clarity — the way you suddenly feel part of something vast and benevolent. Rick recalls experiences of seeing strangers and recognizing them instantly as kin, not through logic but through presence. It’s the kind of awareness mystics and poets have been trying to describe for centuries: the sense that everything is connected, and that you belong to it.

By the time the episode closes, there’s no call to action, no list of steps to follow. Instead, Rick offers a benediction that feels both disarmingly simple and quietly profound: It matters that you’re here. In a world obsessed with becoming, achieving, and proving, the reminder lands like an exhale.

This episode of Good / True / & Beautiful isn’t about becoming someone new. It’s about remembering who you already are. About trusting that the thing you’ve been searching for—meaning, peace, belonging—has been with you all along, waiting patiently for you to notice. When you listen, don’t rush it. Pour a cup of coffee. Sit somewhere with light. Let the conversation unfold at its own pace. Some truths don’t announce themselves. They reveal themselves slowly, from the inside out.

“I’m here to help people remember who they truly are,”

Rolodex of Local Businesses

Mortgage

Chris Allman
Fairway Mortgage
chris.allman@fairwaymc.com

John Snider
SWBC Mortgage
JSnider@swbc.com

Title

First Title
ftcwaco.com

Home Abstract
homeabstract.com

Inspection

Trent Harris
h4propertyinspections.com

Jeremy Heffner
heffnerhomeinspections.com

Banking

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American Bank
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Lawn and Landscape

Field Creek Land Management
fieldcreekland.com

Phoenix Landscape
phoenixlandscapeswaco.com

Pool Installation and Service

Premier Pools and Spas
premierpoolsandspas.com

Remodel and Renovation

KC Construction
kcconstructionwaco.com

Whyte Oak Homes
whyteoakhomes.com

Furniture

Lu and Home
luandhome.com

Auto

Christian Brothers Automotive
cbac.com/woodway

Restaurants

Opal's
opalsoysters.com

Di Campli's
dicamplis.com



MIXOLOGY



Ingredients

1.75 oz vodka
0.75 oz coffee liqueur
1 oz hot espresso
0.5 oz simple syrup
0.25 oz crème de cacao
Small pinch of sea salt
Ice
Optional: cocoa-salt rim, espresso beans

Step-by-Step

1. Chill the Glass

Place a martini or coupe glass in the freezer.

Optional: Rim half the glass with cocoa powder + a pinch of salt.

2. Pull Espresso

Make 1 oz of hot espresso (or strong hot coffee).

3. Build in Shaker

Add vodka, coffee liqueur, espresso, simple syrup, crème de cacao, and a small pinch of sea salt.

4. Add Ice

Fill shaker ¾ full with ice.

5. Shake Hard

Shake vigorously for 15–20 seconds until frosty.

6. Strain

Double strain into the chilled glass for a silky, crema-topped finish.

7. Garnish

Add three espresso beans or leave clean and elegant.

MIDNIGHT MOCHA ESPRESSO MARTINI

A rich, velvety twist on the classic.

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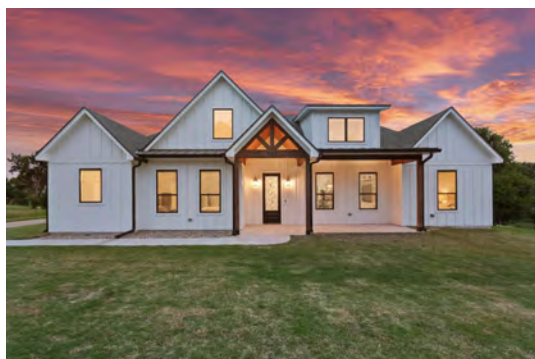
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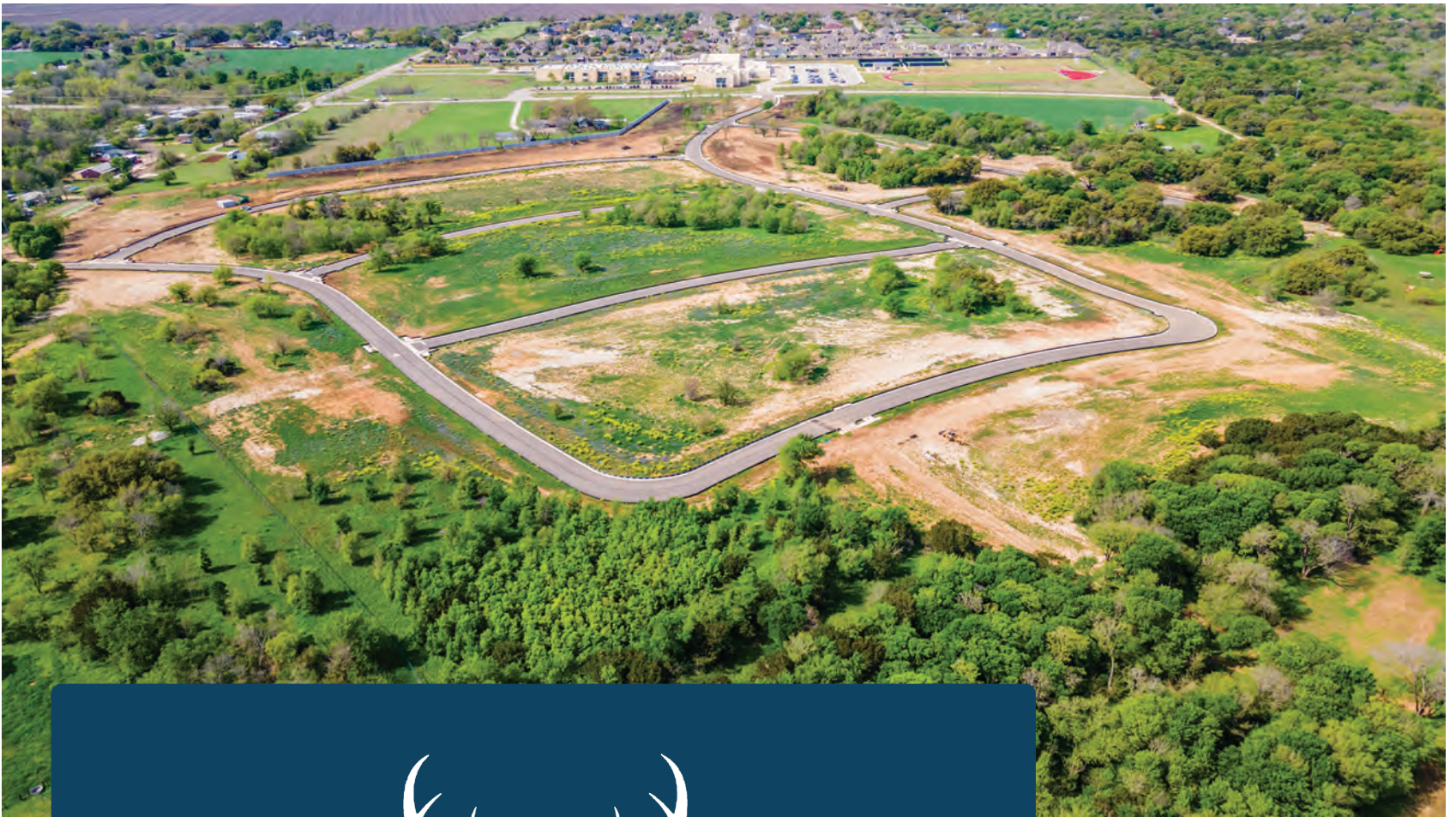
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Discover The Serenity Of Deer Valley Estates!

Situated along the scenic Bosque River, this premier housing development in Central Texas is the perfect location for your next new home! With many spacious lots in a picturesque setting, residents can savor the seclusion of large, tree-lined properties perfect for designing bespoke homes that merge contemporary living with the allure of a Texas Hill Country feel.

With direct access to the river through land reserved by the Homeowners Association (HOA), residents can indulge in activities like hiking trails and picnics

by the river, all within their community. The HOA is set to introduce amenities such as pickleball courts, a basketball court, and a communal pavilion soon.

Additionally, Deer Valley boasts a prime location near Midway ISD schools and various retail establishments. It is also just a short drive from the junction of Speegleville Road and Hwy 84, ensuring easy access throughout the Greater Waco area.

AVAILABLE NOW!

Lots Starting at \$159,900



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4.8 Miles
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MIDWAY HIGH SCHOOL

7.2 Miles
14 Minute Drive



HEB

5.2 Miles
8 Minute Drive



RICHLAND MALL

7.7 Miles
11 Minute Drive



RIVER VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL

0.1 Mile
Walking Distance



BAYLOR UNIVERSITY

14.1 Miles
18 Minute Drive



WALMART

5.8 Miles
10 Minute Drive



BAYLOR, SCOTT, & WHITE HOSPITAL

10.3 Miles
15 Minute Drive

Interested? Contact Ashton Gustafson at 940.224.0881 or email ashton@agwaco.com