

Village News

Views from the Heart of Historic Plano

September • October 2003 Issue

Urban Life—Seeking A Sense of Place

Dee Dee Carpenter wanted to expose her 11-year-old to culture, so she and her daughter Noel moved from Nacogdoches to Eastside Village in Historic Downtown Plano this past spring. "This community offers more culture in a small area than we could find in all of East Texas," said Dee Dee. "We love to eat, love to shop and love the arts—and it's all within walking distance."

The pair frequently plays cards at the Coffee Haus and attends plays at the Plano Repertory Theater as season ticket holders. They enjoy shopping in many of the stores along 15th Street and love to stroll in the park. "We love it here," she said. "Everyone is so friendly. And it's easy to ride DART to Dallas."

Dee Dee and Noel are part of a growing trend of people called "Urban Dwellers." In bygone eras, people lived close to their community centers. With the advent of the automobile, people began settling in outlying suburban areas. To resurrect a sense of connectedness, many are returning to small, tight-knit communities in search of an "authentic sense of place."

Sydney Simone, owner of Spa St. Claire, moved downtown from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to live and work. "I was looking for a community that was intimate, small and basic, after living in Santa Fe," she said. Her luxury day spa is becoming renown as the place to go for spa parties where groups enjoy food, wine, massages, facials, waxes and pedicures.

"Everything is close by—I pop into the Plano Mini-Mart, the Coffee Haus and Into My Garden Tea Room nearly every day, and get



Plano received the CLIDE Leadership Award for redevelopment of the downtown mass transit village. Fernando Costa, Chair of the Center of Development is shown presenting the award to Plano's Mayor Pat Evans.

my hair done regularly at Mane Design." With DART light rail and the new Eastside Village apartments,

Historic Downtown Plano is becoming a unique Urban Center. Frank Turner, City of Plano Executive Director of development said,

"Early in the 1990s, we began to see the importance of the downtown area and the need for expanding housing opportunities. Urban centers such as this thrive on diversity such as mass transportation, cultural and artistic elements, parks and civic centers and convenient shopping—people feel secure walking the street in an enlivened environment."

Even though in its infancy as an urban community, downtown is blossoming with activity, and coupled with its nostalgic historic charm, this area has all the ingredients of what people seek in urban living.

"It's a small community where everybody knows everybody—I feel at peace here."
—Sydney Simone,
Owner,
Spa St. Claire

HAPPENINGS

September/October 2003

September:

- 1-29 **Plano Photography Club Exhibit**
Plano Municipal Center 972-941-5201
- 1-29 **Jenny Chang & Students Exhibit**
Plano Centre 972-941-5201
- 5-27 **"A Breeze from the Gardens of Persia" Exhibit**
ArtCentre of Plano 972-423-7809
- 11-28 **Plano Repertory Theatre "Stage Door"**
Courtyard Theater 972-422-7460
- 13 **Plano Symphony Orchestra**
Eisemann Center
Canadian Brass 972-473-7262
- 16 **Candlelight Music Series**
Courtyard Theater 972-960-7700
- 20 **Home Show and Craft Bazaar**
Chamber of Commerce 972-516-8655
- 21 & 23 **Kalinka Duo "Paganini on Three Strings"**
Courtyard Theater 214-692-5119
- 27 **Mother/Son Dance "A Night at the Races"**
Plano Senior Center 972-941-7250

October:

- 1-5 **Plano Repertory Theatre "Stage Door"**
Courtyard Theater 972-422-7460
- 30-11/23 **Plano Repertory Theatre "Chicago"**
Courtyard Theater 972-422-7460
- 1-17 **CCCCD Spring Creek Photography Scholarship Show**
The Arts Gallery 972-881-5873
- 1-30 **Plano Art Association Exhibit**
Plano Municipal Center 972-941-5201
- 1-30 **"Plano Photography Club" Exhibit**
Plano Centre 972-941-5201
- 18 **Texas Junior Anglers**
Bob Woodruff Park 972-941-7250
- 18 **Home Show and Craft Bazaar**
Chamber of Commerce 972-516-8655
- 20-11/15 **CCCCD Spring Creek Ceramics Invitational Show "Sculptural Syncretism" Exhibit**
The Arts Gallery 972-881-5873
- 25 **Plano Symphony Orchestra "A Romantic Tour de Force"**
Eisemann Center 972-473-7262

HISTORIC VIEWS

When the after school bell rang, Peggy Mitchell grabbed her book satchel and ran to the cloakroom. She hurriedly tied her scarf around her head and pulled on her gloves and coat. Today she was rendering a snow scene on the mirror behind the soda fountain, and wanted to paint before the after-school crowd hit.

Peggy worked as a soda jerk at an uptown drug store. Her boss, James Harrington, asked her to paint a winter scene on the mirror in preparation for the holiday season. Little did she know, Peggy was cultivating a life-long career in art.

At 4 O'Clock, Jerry, Red, Ed and Billy, wearing their maroon letter jackets, sauntered in, followed by a gaggle of high school girls in swinging skirts and saddle shoes. Peggy scooped the ice cream, and since the football players were playing in the big game that night, broke two raw eggs into each of their shakes. The girls slid their knees under a

The High School boys hung out in Uptown Plano after school in the 1940s.



display table and leaned on elbows to peer through the glass. Four tables in the soda fountain were six-inch deep cases that held a perfume line entitled "Evening in Paris." The girls longed for the perfume in the slender, blue-glass bottles.

Later that night, the class of '47 was to play a home game against Royce City. Plano residents would drive, walk or ride horses to Rice Field to watch the Wildcats.

After winning the game, the high school crowd walked back uptown to Vavra Bakery. At midnight, the baker unloaded the ovens. The kids sat on the curb to eat the fresh piping hot donuts.

VILLAGE PEOPLE

Designs for Living

By sheer will and creative energy, some people can transform the world into a place of beauty. Michael Hamilton, floral designer and interior specialist, creates his Utopia by living and working in Historic Downtown Plano. Employed part-time as a buyer and decorator for the Blue Goose, he also works at the Dallas Trade Center twice a week and is a freelance floral designer for celebrated weddings.

Hamilton, the son of a tomato farmer, hails from the oil patch of Luling, Texas. He was raised with four brothers, one sister, and a can-do attitude. After earning a degree in landscape architecture, he escaped the heat by moving indoors as a floral designer in Corpus Christi. In 1989, he moved to Plano to work for Biggerstaff Flowers where he met his mentor, Jim Biggerstaff. "Jim taught me that you have a civic duty to give back to the community where you work and where you live, and I try to give as much of myself as he did," said Hamilton.

Three years ago, he married Debbie, a mural artist, and the couple purchased the Schell House on 16th Street and began renovations. "It is truly home," Hamilton said of the 1930's era home built by A.R. Schell, the mayor of Plano from 1932 to 1948. Debbie and he enjoy cooking, gardening and finger painting with their three-year old granddaughter on the weekends.

"We love it here," said Hamilton. "I grow tired of malls and walls and like an open space where you can meet people—downtown is clean, safe and friendly and is the reason we bought our house here."

The couple often rides the DART light rail to dine at Campisi's on Mockingbird or to visit the West End, where they recently toured the Andy Warhol exhibit.

Michael is gearing up for Christmas, his favorite and busiest season where his creativity is in high demand. He is renowned for lavish garlands and exquisite Christmas trees and for his Department 56 Dickens Village displays. Michael Hamilton truly has the knack for bringing beauty indoors.



Michael Hamilton works at the Blue Goose.

"I love the atmosphere and meeting travelers from different places who come to visit and celebrate."

—Sue Nagy, Into My Garden Tea Room

STREET TALK

Historic Downtown Plano, famous for its one-of-a-kind gift shops, now boasts a new one. **Random Accents** has gizmos and gadgets, lamps, clocks and glassworks, plus fun finds for all ages.

The new **Eastside Village Gallery** on 14th Street displays art from local and national artists. Visit the gallery in September to see the stoneworks by Eliseo.

Peggy Mitchell, owner of **Into My Garden Tea Room**, hired a new chef and opened a second restaurant location downtown in Cobwebs Antique Mall. **The French Hen** offers European cuisine and is opened daily for lunch. The Crepes are a specialty. Save room for dessert!

The Robin's Nest is a new antiques and consignment store on 15th Street. Art deco beds, gate leg tables and hutches are among the items found here. If you have furnishings to buy or sell, this is the place to try.

"We enjoy the sights, the sounds, and the smiling faces which spill over into our neighborhood from the theater and the special events downtown."
- Pam Hatcher, downtown resident

The Reverend Bruce Grentz was named Senior Minister of the **First Christian Church**. The church is currently undergoing a renovation and expansion to include a one-story building linking the church to the old chapel. This new addition will house the Mother's Day Out program.

The Plano Art Committee is soliciting ideas from 200 artists for a public art installation for **Haggard Park** to be installed in the spring. The outdoor art should reflect the history of the park and neighborhood. For information call Sabrina Hamilton at 972-941-5201.

Jorg's Cafe Vienna celebrates Oktoberfest September 24 through October 24. Special foods, music and lots of Gemuetlichkeit—good times—to be had by all!

The Vikings are coming to the **Wooden Spoon** Saturday September 13 to celebrate their 15th year anniversary. Join the festivities for food and fun.

Did You Know?
The InterUrban Railway ran through North Texas from 1908 to 1948. It connected small rural communities to the larger metropolitan areas much like DART does today.

SHOPPING THE VILLAGE



The Blue Goose has scary masks, black bridal veils and other bewitching items for Halloween. Serve candy in giant witches bowls, decorate doorways with light-up ghosts and scare the daylighters out of trick or treaters with spiders and Frankenstein hands.

After a hard day of work, slip into these comfy Chinese silk slippers by CicciasBella. Random Accents sells these and many other personal gift items and accessories for the home.



Feather, Leopard and Zebra print water bottle holders are flying off the shelves at Nikki's. For fun and flair, these fabric wraps dress up most brands of bottled water. Dasani never looked so good!

"Downtown is the safest place to be in Plano. The only thing criminal is how good-looking everybody is."
-Floyd Simmons, Manager, Coffee Haus



Need a quick Shiraz for your dinner party or a beer for your bar-be-que? Look no further than downtown. Plano Mini Mart sells wine, beer and a variety of non-alcoholic beverages.



CITY SCENE

Haggard Park Renovation

Renovations are complete. Clean up will proceed through early September. The park will be available for reservations beginning October 1. Watch for the spring premier during the Blackland Prairie Festival in April.

Pedestrian Friendly Enhancements

The City of Plano is currently reviewing possible pedestrian-friendly enhancements to Avenue K, which may include additional landscaping and crosswalks. Other possibilities are to improve handicap access, add additional seating benches and enhance the street banner program for color and interest. These possibilities are currently unfunded, but will be reviewed by the City Council.

Cox Building Renovation

The City of Plano, Plano Independent School District, and local colleges/universities are beginning plans for renovation and adaptation of the Cox Building on Avenue H. Plans include additional rehearsal space and associated administrative offices, along with space for programs and training for arts educators. The historic aspects of the exterior structure will not be affected in the adaptation.

Traffic Safety Measures Tested on Avenue K

Installation of signs and pedestrian crosswalks have been completed to assist with improving pedestrian safety and slowing down traffic along Avenue K in the downtown area. Beginning September 2, the City of Plano will temporarily close the left lane of southbound Avenue K, next to the Plano Municipal Center, and designate it as temporary on-street parking. Emphasis on speed enforcement will continue in the immediate downtown area. During the 60-day temporary closure, city staff will evaluate the effects of slowing down traffic, and making the temporary measures permanent. Please contact Lloyd Neal, Transportation Engineering Manager, at 972-941-7151 with questions.

"A measure of your success is to live within 10 minutes of your job."
-Michael Hamilton,
Designer, Blue Goose

"Everyone down here is family, like I've known them all my life-no one is fake." -Liz Peitzner,
Owner, Mane Design

"It reminds me of Sesame Street—a small neighborhood where everybody is friendly."
- Shannon Dickson,
Barista, Coffee Haus

"We are suburban pioneers!"
- Tony Holman,
Artist/Owner,
Holman Pottery

VILLAGE NEWS
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The City of Plano provides the Village News to members of our community to keep citizens informed about the activities in the heart of Historic Plano.

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