



THE AUSTIN
CHRONICLE

BEST OF
AUSTIN
2025

THE BEST * THE BEST * THE BEST * THE BEST

* Keep Austin Groovy *

WINNERS REVEALED * WINNERS REVEALED

WINNERS REVEALED * WINNERS REVEALED

* Keep Austin Groovy *

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THE
AUSTIN
CHRONICLE
...

Best
OF
Austin



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2025

THE AUSTIN
CHRONICLE



THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE

KEEP AUSTIN GROOVY

★ Love Y'all ★

25



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ART BY
ZEKE BARBARO

Welcome to The Austin Chronicle's 35th Annual Best of Austin Awards

A big high-five, a citywide group hug: Our annual Best of Austin issue is all about cheering on the home team.

Our readers did most of the work, choosing 175 winners across eight categories in our annual Readers Poll. (By the way – pause for airhorn – 33,055 voters cast 423,142 votes in the last round of voting. Way to show up, y'all!) The Chronicle's Editorial staff and a handful of our contributors then doled out an additional 71 Critics Picks.

Together, these awards provide a unique snapshot of Austin in 2025, celebrating new hot spots, tried-and-true favorites, trusted professionals, and so many other incredible people putting in the work to make Austin so special.

Thanks to everybody for being our partners in this ongoing project.

— Editor-in-Chief Kimberley Jones

Got Feedback? WE PLAN ON REFRESHING THE READERS POLL BALLOT IN 2026.
GOT SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW CATEGORIES WE SHOULD INTRODUCE? LET US KNOW!



**FRESH CLIPS AND SIPS
SINCE 2006**

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**BIRDS
BARBERSHOP**



PHOTO BY ERICA NIX

Stand-Up Comic

Roxy Castillo

FINALISTS: DYLAN CARLINO, DESTINY LALANE, AVERY MOORE, ARIELLE ISAAC NORMAN

"Roxy is a hilarious ray of sunshine in the comedy world!" – *Gina DeBonis*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/ROXYCASTILLOCOMEDY

Museum

Blanton Museum of Art

FINALISTS: BULLOCK TEXAS STATE HISTORY MUSEUM, THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN - JONES CENTER, HARRY RANSOM CENTER, MEXIC-ARTE MUSEUM

"The Blanton is such a beautiful place and the updated grounds are incredible. We are lucky to have a world-class museum in Austin." – *Virginia Rotherflue*

200 E. MLK, WWW.BLANTONMUSEUM.ORG

Art Gallery

Women & Their Work

FINALISTS: ARTUS CO, THE CATHEDRAL, RICHESART GALLERY, WEST CHELSEA CONTEMPORARY

"They are small but mighty, and in the current political climate with so many cuts to cultural programs, their support of and focus on women's work is more needed than ever." – *Kiki Browning*

1311 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.WOMENANDTHEIRWORK.ORG



PHOTO BY LAUREN JOHNSON

Performance Space / Theatre

Paramount Theatre

FINALISTS: GROUND FLOOR THEATRE, HYDE PARK THEATRE, THE VORTEX, ZACH THEATRE

"An amazing and beautiful historic venue offering movies, music, comedy, and more. Plus it's the best popcorn in town!" – *Megan Pilewski*

713 CONGRESS, WWW.AUSTINTHEATRE.ORG



PHOTO BY BRIAN FITZSIMMONS

Artist

Victoria (@onlinebedroom)

FINALISTS: CURTIS RAMSTEDT, JEREMY THE ARTIST, WILEY ROSS

"Vic is a great artist and a great person. Their solo exhibition, 'Forget-me-not,' was one of my top exhibitions I've seen this year." — *Alexis Hunter*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/ONLINEBEDROOM

Stage Director

Lisa Scheps

FINALISTS: LACEY CANNON GONZALES AND CARL GONZALES, DAVE STEAKLEY, TRACE TURNER, KEN WEBSTER

"Lisa is adored and respected in the Austin performing arts community for the phenomenal work she does to uplift and amplify marginalized voices." — *Elián Sweeten-López*

979 SPRINGDALE #122, WWW.GROUNDFLOORTHEATRE.ORG

Actor

Amber Quick

FINALISTS: KATHLEEN FLETCHER, MICHAEL GALVAN, TONIE KNIGHT, RYAN EVERETT WOOD

"Absolutely phenomenal star. An incredible actor and gracious and kind to boot!"

— *Madeleine Cleveland*

Classical Musician

Graham Reynolds

FINALISTS: LUIS EDUARDO BELLORÍN, CHRISTABEL LIN, WILL TAYLOR, JORDAN WALSH

"Dedicated to creating masterful music across multiple media and genres. We are so lucky he stays in Austin to create his magic." — *Juliet Blake*

WWW.GRAHAMREYNOLDS.COM

Dancer/Choreographer

Stephen Mills

FINALISTS: ANDREA ARIEL, TONI BRAVO, STEPHANIE PATRICK, VERTARIAS

"Creates works of exceptional quality."

— *Kelly Saenz*

501 W. THIRD, WWW.BALLETAUSTIN.ORG

AUSTIN FILM SOCIETY'S
ART HOUSE THEATER

SEE WHAT'S PLAYING
AUSTINFILM.ORG

LOCAL
MUSICIANS
DESERVE
ACCESS
TO CARE.

VOTE HAAM FOR BEST NONPROFIT IN AUSTIN!

20 HAAM
ANNIVERSARY
MYHAAM.ORG

Terrapin
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TECL #37755

**Terrapin Empower:
Power with a Purpose**

Terrapinelectric.com
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At Terrapin Electric, we believe in giving back to our Austin community. Through our Terrapin Empower initiative, we provide free electrical services—including materials, permits, and installation—to deserving neighbors in need, such as elderly residents, veterans, and single parents.

Think someone in Austin deserves a helping hand?

Submit your nomination via our online form—just include the name and contact details of a deserving neighbor—and we'll follow up directly.

Let's light the way together!

Drag Showcase

Big Tits Bigger Dreams

FINALISTS: BOYZ OF AUSTIN, COCO CXNTS, DRAG ME TO THE TAVERN, VIXENS OF VOLSTEAD

"So amazing to have a space where amateur or upcoming artists can feel safe and have a space to express themselves." – *Josue Estrada*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/BIGTITSBIGGERDREAMS

Burlesque Performer

Ginger Snaps

FINALISTS: BLAISE RICIN, FIG, MANDY MEZCAL, ZENYTH GALE

"Ginger Snaps is an absolutely mesmerizing powerhouse. I can't take my eyes off of her when she performs." – *Gabriela Reyes*

WWW.GINGERSNAPSBURLESQUE.COM



PHOTO BY SCAM LIKELY

Drag Performer

Brigitte Bandit

FINALISTS: BOBBY PUDRIDO, EILEEN DOVER, GOTHES JASMINE, LOUISIANNA PURCHASE

"Such a sweet person in and out of drag." – *Tams Johnson*

WWW.BRIGITTEBANDIT.COM



COURTESY OF THIRTEENTH FLOOR ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

Arts & Entertainment Wild Card

House of Torment (haunted house)

FINALISTS: PANORAMIC VOICES (COMMUNITY CHOIR), PUNCHLINE AT THE POLE (COMEDY + POLE DANCING SHOWCASE)

"They have the best props and scare actors I have ever seen in my life!!!" – *Micah Hunter*

2632 RIDGEPOINT DR., WWW.HOUSEOFTORMENT.COM



Comedy Troupe

Esther's Follies

FINALISTS: COME @ ME, GARAGE, JANE AUSTIN IMPROV, MASTER PANCAKE

"Love the mix of old Austin vibes with current events and musical comedy. Classic but refreshing." – *Ash Hall*

525 E. SIXTH, WWW.ESTHERSFOLLIES.COM

Comedy / Storytelling Showcase

Hyde Park Storytelling

FINALISTS: MORTIFIED, POWERPINTS, TEXASS, WORD PERV

"Unique premise and a backyard vibe." – *Nicholas Carroll*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/HYDEPARKSTORYTELLING

Comedy Club/Venue

Cap City Comedy Club

FINALISTS: COLDTOWNE THEATER, THE CREEK AND THE CAVE, COMEDY MOTHERSHIP, FALLOUT THEATER

"Fair ticket prices, delicious burgers and brownies, and unobtrusive but friendly staff. Can't wait for my next show at Cap City!" – *Julie Meach*

11506 CENTURY OAKS STE. B-100, WWW.CAPCITYCOMEDY.COM

Fiction Writer

Ali Hazelwood

FINALISTS: CHRISTINA BERRY, CALLIE COLLINS, FERNANDO A. FLORES, JAMES WADE

"Her wit and charming characters!"

— Nicole Curry Johnston

WWW.ALIHAZELWOOD.COM

Nonfiction Writer

Lawrence Wright

FINALISTS: KB BROOKINS, MICHAEL HALL, MEGAN KIMBLE, ALICIA ROTH WEIGEL

"Fantastic storyteller of true, often Texan, tales."

— Marcel Spivey

WWW.LAWRENCEWRIGHT.COM

Cartoonist / Comic Creator

Rory Blank

FINALISTS: DREW EDWARDS, JON FORTENBURY, SAM HURT, NICK STOUT

"No one is more obliquely existential, unabashedly weird, and deeply funny as Rory."

— Duncan Holmstrom

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/RORYBLANK

Movie Theatre

Alamo Drafthouse South Lamar

FINALISTS: AFS CINEMA, GALAXY HIGHLAND, HYPERREAL FILM CLUB, VIOLET CROWN CINEMA

"Excellent Kubrick theme, redesigned with very comfortable seating and ATMOS sound system."

— Steven Gonzales

1120 S. LAMAR, WWW.DRAFTHOUSE.COM

Filmmaker

Lisa Belcher

FINALISTS: KIRTANA BANSKOTA, DAVID HARTSTEIN AND SAM WAINWRIGHT DOUGLAS, CHINWE OKORIE, PJ RAVAL

"She's a killer filmmaker, making waves for feature films MADE in Austin." — Janelle Austin

WWW.JUMPROCKPICTURES.WEEBLY.COM

Film Festival

Austin Film Festival

FINALISTS: AGLIFF, FANTASTIC FEST, INDIE MEME, SXSW FILM & TV FESTIVAL

"Excellent panels and networking events.

Chill atmosphere. High film IQ." — David Fabelo

WWW.AUSTINFILMFESTIVAL.COM

New Book by an Austin Writer

Women and Children First by Alina Grabowski

FINALISTS: PRETTY: A MEMOIR BY KB BROOKINS; A NATURAL HISTORY OF EMPTY LOTS: FIELD NOTES FROM URBAN EDGELANDS, BACK ALLEYS, AND OTHER WILD PLACES BY CHRISTOPHER BROWN; AFTER IMAGE BY JAIME DEBLANC; BROTHER BRONTË BY FERNANDO A. FLORES

"Read it in our book club!" — Joni Greeson

WWW.ALINAGRABOWSKI.COM



Family-owned retro diner serving scratch-made modern comfort food with a touch of Texas smoke.



three Austin locations

THE
AUSTIN
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...

Best
OF
Austin

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

★ Critics Picks ★

25



PHOTO BY JINNI J.

Most Outside the Mainstream Gay Mamas Gallery

MASS Gallery

When a gallery says they center LGBTQIA artists, that can often mean that every so often they run a gay artist's work – usually during June. Not so for the volunteer-run democratic collective that is MASS Gallery. MASS exhibits LGBTQIA creators' work year-round that explores everything from religious trauma through a church basement re-creation to a show featuring erotic photographer David Hurles' rough trade snapshots not seen since 2010. In addition to a pretty gay-ass leadership team – hello, Beth Schindler, of the Lesbian Wedding Schindlers – the gallery's continuing commitment to platforming queer art allows a greater gay cultural consciousness to materialize. There's a lotta ways to be gay, and a lotta ways to make gay art: MASS attempts to show them all.

705 GUNTER, WWW.MASSGALLERY.ORG

Most Marvelous Microcinema

Hyperreal Film Club

About the size of a video rental shop but featuring a far bigger screen than any Blockbuster ever did, Hyperreal Film Club stepped up their cinematic bona fides last September with a brick-and-mortar on Third and Chicon. Their sharp kino curation extends from multi-night series like this February's incisive Black in America series, Elaine MAY featuring three of her best features, and newer selects like Freaks Only on first Mondays and the sapphic Carabiner Club, to hosting their own short film festival as well as single-day screenings of obscurer picks like *Da Hip Hop Witch*. Monday through Friday, you'll always find cinephile friends and family in this empire of light.

301 CHICON, WWW.HYPERREALFILM.CLUB

Best New Home for the Arts

Baker Center

The old Baker School has been one of Hyde Park's true architectural gems since it was built in 1911, but for the longest time no one really knew what to do with it. When Austin ISD sold it in 2018 to Alamo Drafthouse founders Tim and Karrie League, they finally gave it the purpose it deserved, and got it onto the National Register of Historic Places in the process. The former campus and teacher training facility now hosts arts groups, nonprofits, and businesses that would otherwise struggle to find a home for reasonable rent, building a community in the process.

3908 AVENUE B

Best DIY Merch Designer

Elianna Panakis

Though Instagram-scrolling Austin scenesters have likely seen much of her work on their feeds throughout the years – she's made flyers to promote many a local vendor market, and even Soccer Mommy's most recent show at Radio/East – @eliannasart is everywhere. The artist, born Elianna Panakis, makes cute 'n' quirky merch for local DIY devotees – from stellar Hyde Park Hotties and Keep Abortion Safe tees to a slew of tiny tanks, G-strings, and baby tees for acts like Farmer's Wife, Die Spitz, and Mr. Kat. Panakis' own doodled characters – long-limbed dancers, creatures sipping martinis, and other oddballs – epitomize Austin culture.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/ELIANNASART

RAMEN TAISU-YA



AUSTIN CHRONICLE BEST OF RAMEN

SINCE 2012

SO GOOD YOU'LL CRY NOODLES!



6 LOCATIONS AROUND AUSTIN

LAKELINE | EAST 6TH | SOUTH CONGRESS
SOUTH LAMAR | ROUND ROCK | RESEARCH BLVD



PHOTO BY TONY MORENO

Most Community-Empowering Murals

The Mosaic Workshop's Legends Project

This public art initiative by the Mosaic Workshop gives Austin artists the opportunity to honor cultural leaders of Central Texas through mosaic portraiture, with more than 45 icons like Flaco Jiménez, Jackie Venson, and Alice Ming Fei Yi now immortalized around town. Workshop co-founders J Muzacz and Carmen Rangel bring their mission of empowerment through creativity to every piece of their multifaceted workroom, from an open studio stocked with sustainably sourced materials to site-specific murals celebrating community identity. The individual artworks alone are impressive, but – as with the namesake mosaic – it's when you take in the scope of the whole project that the impact is most profound.

729 AIRPORT BLVD., WWW.THEMOSAICWORKSHOP.ORG

Most for the Girls Theatre

Broad Theatre

Austin is rife with theatre companies, but Molly Fonseca and Anikka Lekven's nonprofit is of a rare breed founded specifically to tell stories for and by people with marginalized genders. Starting with Fonseca's 2019 one-woman show *MS*, about an aspiring actor's diagnosis with the autoimmune condition, and through recent highlights *Hungry Teenage Track Stars* and *Unbury Your Gays*, Broad productions are always bold, brave, and tender, depicting experiences that so many of us relate to, but don't often see take center stage.

WWW.BROADTHEATRE.ORG

Best New Soundtracks to Old Movies

Silents Synced

Silent movies were never silent. From cinema's earliest days, they'd be accompanied by music – sometimes live scores, sometimes records timed to the action. Nowadays, those period scores often sound old-timey, but Blue Starlite Mini Urban Drive-in supremo Josh Frank has collaborated with bands like R.E.M. and Radiohead to make classics like *Sherlock Jr.* and *Nosferatu* box-office hits at arthouses and drive-ins around the nation. The silver screen never rocked so hard.

WWW.SILENTSYNCED.COM

Best Booster of Our Creative Future

Future Front Texas

Ten years on from their first Best of Austin win, the formerly titled Boss Babes ATX has only increased their supportive spirit as a 501(c)(3) arts & culture nonprofit. Future Front Texas' programs are all about giving women, queer, and BIPOC creatives platforms to boost their work, whether that's bi-season shopping experience the Front Market, the multimedia Front Festival, or their 2023-opened brick-and-mortar the Front House, which offers a space for community organizing, creative workshops, and art exhibitions. As national arts funding fizzles under fickle dictators, FFTX remains a beacon for a brighter cultural future.

1900 E. 12TH, WWW.FUTUREFRONTTEXAS.ORG

Most Theatrical Farm-to-Table Tour

Fables From the Farm

Back at Boggy Creek Farm for a second year this spring, Jade Fusco's immersive ode to regenerative agriculture continued to delight all five senses. Actors and audience alike wander through one of Austin's oldest continuously operative urban farms, tasting food and drink made from its produce as performers weave a tale celebrating the bounties of the natural world and refuting the forces that threaten it. The experience combines the reverence for sustainable production methods typically associated with farm-to-table tours with the imagination of Fusco's theatrical creation. The verdict? A harmonious bite of art and advocacy.

WWW.FARMTOTABLETHEATER.COM

Best Purveyors of Poetic Justice

Host Publications

Though launched in 1988 by the late Joe W. Bratcher as a works-in-translation press, current Host editors Annar Veröld and Claire Bowman now focus on publishing poetry by marginalized voices. The through line? "Sharing literature that otherwise would not ever be found," Veröld told the *Chronicle* in 2024. In curating their written roster and their I Scream Social reading series, the publishers prioritize women, nonbinary, and BIPOC writers. "We know our power is limited," Bowman said last year. "But we also know that even just something as simple as a chapbook can literally change someone's life."

3408 WEST AVE., WWW.HOSTPUBLICATIONS.COM



PHOTO BY @REILLYSBADPHOTOS

Best Bibliophile Emo Bookers

Tiny Sounds Collective

Bookstores are wonderful spaces for quiet contemplation, but local booking collective Tiny Sounds proves their headbanging potential. The show organizers curate at several venues across town, but their emo/punk programming at West Campus staple Alienated Majesty strikes a cathartic chord. Often connecting local talent with touring bands – a recent bill paired Phoenix's Troubled Minds with Texas thrashers Sulk II – the group's DIY bent and zine publishing aligns beautifully with the bookstore's radical ethos. If you've ever dreamed of moshing next to a shelf of literary criticism, check out the Tiny Sounds calendar.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/TINYOUNDS.CLTV

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for your support
all these years!**



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Sharks, LBJ and Conservation

Dive into our new exhibit at the LBJ Library

OPEN DAILY | 9 AM - 5 PM

LBJ PRESIDENTIAL
LIBRARY





PHOTO BY JOHN ANDERSON

Bartender

Tatiana Amelia Pennino (Cheer Up Charlies & Outer Heaven)

FINALISTS: BLAKE BROWN (TRONA), ARIEL DE LEON (SWAN DIVE), TYLER RODRIGUEZ (CHEER UP CHARLIES), KELLIE ROSE (EGO'S)

"Super great personality." – *Melissa Consolo*

Dance Club

Outer Heaven Disco Club

FINALISTS: BARBARELLA, CHEER UP CHARLIES, COCONUT CLUB, ELYSIUM

"Truly unique place that attracted beautiful people. I will forever miss the community that was created here."

– *Kole Nelson*

1808 E. 12TH, WWW.OUTERHEAVENDISCOCLUBATX.COM

Cheap Date

Sagebrush

FINALISTS: BUSTY'S, CAROUSEL LOUNGE, FALLOUT THEATER, TWEEDY'S

"Good beerz, good burgz, good tunes... perfect makeout scene." – *Sam P.*

5500 S. CONGRESS, WWW.SAGEBRUSHTEXAS.COM

Dive Bar

Deep Eddy Cabaret

FINALISTS: BACK LOT, BARFLY'S, SILVER MEDAL, WORKHORSE

"The low ceiling and lights make this place instantly welcoming to anybody who walks in, and when the pool table is just 50 cents a game, how can you not stay?" – *Luis Joy*

2315 LAKE AUSTIN BLVD., WWW.DEEPEDDYCABARET.COM

Happy Hour

Bufalina

FINALISTS: BURNET GO-TO, HOLIDAY, HONEY MOON SPIRIT LOUNGE, UNCLE NICKY'S

"Pizza and natty wine is a match made in Austin heaven."

– *Theodore Sopher*

2215 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, 6555 BURNET RD., WWW.BUFALINAPIZZA.COM

Place for Sober Socializing

Cosmic

FINALISTS: CENTRAL LIBRARY, DEAR DRY DRINKERY, SANS BAR, TINY MINOTAUR TAVERN

"I never tire of that strong coffee surrounded by tasty food trucks." – *Mona Sarkiss*

121 PICKLE #111, WWW.COSMICHOSPITALITYGROUP.COM



PHOTO BY JANA BIRCHUM

Sports Bar

1972 Pub

FINALISTS: BLACK SHEEP LODGE, CHALMERS, HAYMAKER, PLUCKERS WING BAR

"Finally, a bar supporting female sports teams!" – *Kay Marley-Dilworth*

2530 GUADALUPE ST., WWW.1972PUB.COM

Queer Party

TuezGayz at Barbarella

FINALISTS: AUSTIN KINK WEEKEND, LESBIAN WEDDING, NEON RAINBOWS, QUEEREST SPRING BREAK

"...and in the beginning, there was TuezGayz."

– *Matthew Joyner*

611 RED RIVER, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/BARBARELLA_ATX

Karaoke

Ego's

FINALISTS: CANARY ROOST, COMMON INTEREST, RUCKUS KARAOKE, SHOWPONY LOUNGE & KARAOKE

"It's perfectly divey. You aren't a true Austinite until you've sung at Ego's."

– *Robbi Constantine*

510 S. CONGRESS, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/EGOSBARATX



ATX TEQUILA BLANCO

Tequila Cristalina de Auténtica Excelencia

This authentic, crystalline tequila reveals a harmonious mix of herbal and fruity flavors. To guarantee maximum quality and purity, we slow-cook the blue agave to reveal its unique sweetness.

Aroma:
Our tequila carries delicate notes of vanilla, oak, and citrus, distinguished with a soft aniseingency.

Taste:
On the palate, this 100% blue agave tequila exhibits the perfect combination of sweet and smooth, with hints of citrus and a delicate oaky flavor.

Color:
Our crystal-clear liquor is a product of its careful maturation and robust structure—a tequila in its truest form.

The blue agave is ground in a four-step process, using water from a deep well that is purified through reverse osmosis to distill our very own ATX Tequila.

750 ML | 100% Agave | 40% Alc. by Vol.



100% BLUE AGAVE
atxtequila.net

R.I.P. OLD AUSTIN

From Liberty Lunch to Raul's, Dobie Theatre to Armadillo World Headquarters, Sound Exchange to Shady Grove ... Austinites can't help but miss the places that kept us weird.



We want everyone to carry a piece of "Old Austin" with them, so we created this shirt in memory of iconic local restaurants, bars, clubs, and businesses past.

Whether you're a long-time Austinite looking for a trip down memory lane or a newcomer eager to embrace the city's past, don't miss your chance to wear a piece of Austin history.

THE AUSTIN
CHRONICLE

Order yours
today!

AUSTINCHRONICLE.COM/STORE

Lots of color
options!

Trivia Night

Queer Trivia with Aira Juliet and Little Gay Shop

FINALISTS: GEEKS WHO DRINK AT THE HIGHBALL, GEEKS WHO DRINK AT THE IRON BEAR, PLUCKERS WING BAR, TRIVIA 512 AT RADIO

"Super inclusive space that makes anyone who joins family!!! Super unique trivia questions and it's never ever a dull night with Aira 🍷"

— Stefany Ortiz

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/CANTBREATHEWITHNOAIRA

Cocktail Bar

Whisler's

FINALISTS: DRINK.WELL, MIDNIGHT COWBOY, ROOSEVELT ROOM, TIGRESS

"Have never been let down by a cocktail and the prices don't make me wanna cry." — Gabe Ciccione

1816 E. SIXTH, WWW.WHISLERSATX.COM



PHOTO BY JOHN ANDERSON



COURTESY OF QUEER TO TELL

Bar for Singles

Cheer Up Charlies

FINALISTS: THE CAVALIER, HOTEL VEGAS, LATCHKEY, WHITE HORSE

"Cheer Up Charlies is the kind of place where you go out for one drink and end up in three conversations, two dance circles, and maybe one queer situationship. If you're single, flirty, or just vibing, this is where the universe sends you." — Sarah Pendley

LGBTQIA Club

Cheer Up Charlies

FINALISTS: COCONUT CLUB, OILCAN HARRY'S, RAIN ON 4TH, TINY MINOTAUR TAVERN

"Cheer Up Charlies is more than a bar. It's an entire cultural moment!"

— Celesta Montoya

900 RED RIVER, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/CHEERUPCHARLIES

Pool Hall

The Grand

FINALISTS: FAST EDDIE'S, SLICK WILLIE'S, STARDUST CLUB, WAREHOUSE

"Forever the Grand, the Grand Forever." — Joe Erwin

4631 AIRPORT #121, WWW.THEGRANDATX.COM

Adult Club

Yellow Rose

FINALISTS: PALAZIO, PERFECT 10, RED ROSE, XTC

"Classic club in Austin." — Justin Wilson

6528 N. LAMAR, WWW.YELLOWROSE.COM

Nightlife Wild Card

Austin Swing Syndicate

(swing dancing)

FINALISTS: HAIR METAL HEATHENS (80S HARD ROCK & METAL TRIBUTE AT THE 13TH FLOOR), MIGHT BE MAGIC (DANCE PARTIES)

"One heck of a good ol' time. Be prepared to dance till the cows come home!" — Karlene Grinberg

WWW.AUSTINSWINGSYNDICATE.ORG

THE RED ROSE

ADULT NIGHTCLUB

AUSTIN'S PREMIER GENTLEMAN'S CLUB



Nightly Complimentary Limo Service After
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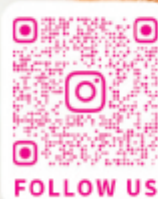
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PHOTO BY RUSK PHOTOGRAPHY

Best Full-Fleshed Erotic Variety Show

Boner Bizarre

What do horror movies, nudity, and sociopolitical commentary all have in common? A lot, actually, but Boner Bizarre synthesizes it all into one deliciously perverse variety show full of fake blood and macabre comedy. Coming up on their 10th anniversary, the skin-baring spectacle has tributes to horror royalty like David Cronenberg and Dario Argento under its latex belt. With a stacked lineup of hand-picked dancers, drag performers, aerialists, and artists, this tour de force commands your attention. Stop by and see for yourself that there's no better place to let your freak flag soar than Boner Bizarre's exotic extravaganzas.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/BONERBIZARRE



PHOTO BY CATHERINE DAVIS

Best Not-a-Strip-Club

Busty's Bar & Jukebox

The first time you invite friends to Busty's, you might be met with raised eyebrows. Busty's is not a strip club. It's no off-brand Hooters either. Busty's is "always on the way home," the kind of bar that's just as likely to be packed any day of the week. The neighborhood-dive-meets-Seventies-blockbuster has panache for all with cherry-red booths, tastefully framed *Playboy* prints, and a classic convertible suspended from the ceiling. Within their wood-paneled walls, exceptional table service, Fifties-inspired snacks, and classic drink offerings collide like a tattooed waitress in go-go boots and a feather boa – that is, with surprisingly cohesive flair.

6214 CAMERON RD., WWW.BUSTYSBARANDJUKEBOX.COM

Best Sinatra-oke

Ken Kruse

On a Wednesday nights, it's packed tighter than a tray of cannoli at Reale's Italian Cafe – "Your Home Away From Rome" – as Ken "Ol' Green Eyes" Kruse croons Sinatra tunes from a karaoke stage in the dining area. Though his Reale residency is his longest-running – 25 years and counting! – Austin's ace Sinatra stylist gets around, belting out Frank's swinging numbers at weddings, anniversaries, and birthday parties. We even heard he's been making surprise appearances at the Home Slice on North Loop. Fly me to the moon ...

WWW.FRANKLYSINGING.US

Best New "Old School" Bar

The Golden Horn

Austin barhoppers love a classic dive with strong drinks, neon signs, and zero pretense. But for a brand-new bar to tap into those retro vibes while still feeling authentic can be a tough endeavor. Luckily, the Golden Horn – which moved into the old Burger Tex space on Airport Boulevard in spring of last year – succeeds on all fronts. That's thanks to the roomy tavern space with serious 1970s-Midwest energy, their well-curated draft list and playful frozen cocktails, and Yellow Ranger, their excellent food counter serving modern twists on Chinese-takeout staples. This is a spot where we feel instantly at home.

5420 AIRPORT BLVD., WWW.THEGOLDENHORNATX.COM

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COME BY THIS WEEK FOR THESE GREAT SHOWS:

Thursday, June 19: Hayden Butler, Armadillo Road

Friday, June 20: All Hat No Cadillac

Saturday, June 21: Guitar Grady, Gaiteros All Stars, **SUPERFONICOS**, Nether Hour

Sunday, June 22: James Steinle & Co., Matt Tedder

Wednesday, June 25: Theo Lawrence

Thursday, June 26: Western Express

Friday, June 27: Jonathan Terrel

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sagebrushtexas.com

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Thanks for Voting for Us!



COURTESY OF LOBOS HOSPITALITY

Best Anti-Social Media Cocktail Bar

Powder Room

We've all been to a dimly lit cocktail bar in Austin only to find the vibes quickly interrupted by a bright ring light and a content creator trying to get the perfect angle of their espresso martini for TikTok. But at Powder Room, a sexy "speakeasy" tucked behind Manny's Sandwich Shop on West Fifth Street, the hosts kindly and politely ask you to check your phones at the door. No social media browsing, no work emails, no group texts – finally, a real chance to connect with your drinking companion and enjoy seasonal cocktails like the strawberry-and-bourbon Just Over My Head and the mezcal-and-mango The Dogs of War, all without digital distractions.

301 W. FIFTH, WWW.LOBOSHOSPITALITY.COM/VENUES/POWDERROOMATX

Best Curator of Queer Cowpoke Vibes

DJ Boi Orbison/Ed West

Mr. Edward Weston, aka DJ Boi Orbison, throws the hoppin'-est hoedowns around town, from the transformative T-time of ATX Trans Pride to nostalgia-bait bop Middle School Dance Party, collabo two-step lesson Bronco with Country Fried Dance to queer country music & drag mega-mix Neon Rainbows – plus a million more in between. More than just the guy slinging vinyl in a ten-gallon, Ed West utilizes the power of a party to bring queer Texans together as well as benefit local nonprofits like Kind Clinic, Out Youth, and Equality Texas. There's more than just boot-scootin' at a Boi Orbison event: There's true-blue cowpoke solidarity.

WWW.ED-WEST.COM

Best Bar Big Screen

Cabana Club

It's not totally clear what vibe Cabana Club is going for. The spacious East Seventh bar doubles as a coffee shop, and encourages patrons to use it as a co-working space when it opens bright and early at 7am every day. Yet it also attracts bougie millennials with its craft cocktail menu and outdoor pool, and everyman sports fans with its huge patio TV screen. In any case, the drinks slap, the bartenders are friendly, and that patio projector does, in fact, make for a great UT football viewing experience. The bar's been known to offer free hot dogs on occasion as well. A lot going on, but it's all good.

5012 E. SEVENTH, WWW.CABANA CLUBAUSTIN.COM

Most Stellar New Hang

Stargazer

This sprawling Springdale Station coffee & cocktails spot, situated in the old Eastciders Collaboratory space, is a real day-to-night place. While we love a latte & kolache morning, or the very chill afternoon vibe for studying or off-leash kid time in the spacious yard, it's after 8pm, when Stargazer turns 21 and up, that the mood turns from desert stylish to downright sexy. The menu spans cocktails, mocktails, rotating drafts, wine offerings, and a host of canned THC bevs. Need to soak up the booze? Carb deliciously at nearby Bambino and Handsome Dan's.

979 SPRINGDALE #130, WWW.STARGAZER.COM



PHOTO BY JOHN ANDERSON

Best Seafaring Speakeasy

Leonard's Welcome Aboard

Gangway, gang, and drop anchor at this hidden Cherrywood speakeasy, whose maritime theme takes you deep into the hull of the Captain's mind, as he offers cocktails, beer, and a buffet of karaoke from his exquisitely crafted Golden Chorale YouTube channel. If you want to impress your Tennille with a uniquely Austin experience, this is your port of call. Just DM the Captain through his Instagram to find the coordinates and take the ride, but know this – when you have to go, it's time to go: No bathrooms.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/LEONARDSWELCOMEABOARD

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SAT. 9.27

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UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA
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SUN. 9.28

PAVEMENT
BUILT TO SPILL • THE BLACK ANGELS
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UPCHUCK • DILES QUE NO ME MATEN • POPULATION II



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FOOD & DRINK

★ Readers Poll ★

25



PHOTO BY LIKENESS STUDIO

New Restaurant

Loudmouth

FINALISTS: THE GREEK BAR, MARIMBAS GUATEMALAN BAKERY & RESTAURANT, OKO, TANCHI SUSHI + SAKE

"yo, GRILLED CORN ARANCINI, yo." – *John Gross*

1209 ROSEWOOD AVE., WWW.LOUDMOUTH.PIZZA

Chef

Bryce Gilmore

(Barley Swine, Odd Duck)

FINALISTS: JOSH CARBAJAL (BILL'S OYSTER), ALI CLEM (LA BARBECUE), CAMDEN STUERZENBERGER (PHOEBE'S DINER), AMANDA TURNER (OLAMIAE)

"He honors our local farmers and ranchers and is a steady pillar of the Austin restaurant industry." – *Nicole Toner*

Service

Este

FINALISTS: ABA, JUNIPER, ODD DUCK, PHOEBE'S DINER

"They just have so much spirited fun there." – *Diane Brewer*

2113 MANOR RD, WWW.ESTEATX.COM

Fine Dining

Uchi

FINALISTS: BARLEY SWINE, FABRIK, HESTIA, JEFFREY'S

"Anyone that's been doing it this well, for this long, without a hiccup, has got to be rewarded." – *Jess Loera*

801 S. LAMAR, WWW.UCHIAUSTIN.COM



COURTESY OF UPPER CRUST

Bakery

Upper Crust Bakery

FINALISTS: COMADRE PANADERIA, QUACK'S, ROCKMAN BAKERY, SOUR DUCK MARKET

"I live for the peanut butter cookies."

– *Teghan Hah*

4508 BURNET RD., WWW.THEUPPERCRUSTBAKERY.COM



PHOTO BY RICHARD CASTEEL

Established Restaurant

Odd Duck

FINALISTS: CHEZ ZEE, CUBA512, ELDORADO CAFE, UCHIKO

"This will be my last meal in Austin if I ever must leave." – *Theodore Sopher*

1201 S. LAMAR, WWW.ODDDUCKAUSTIN.COM



Coffee Shop

Radio

FINALISTS: EPOCH, FLORA COFFEE & CULTURE, TEXAS COFFEE TRADERS, TURNSTILE

"Old-school vibe, great live music, and good coffee too." – *Bill Smotrilla*

4204 MENCHACA RD., WWW.RADIOCOFFEEANDBEER.COM

Late-Night Dining

Kerbey Lane Cafe

FINALISTS: 24 DINER, JUSTINE'S, MAGNOLIA CAFE, TYSON'S TACOS

"Pancakes. Because pancakes." – *Cathy Thomas*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.KERBEYLANECAFE.COM

Sandwich

ThunderCloud Subs

FINALISTS: FOODHEADS, HOME SLICE, LITTLE DELI, LOCAL FOODS

"OG Austin environment, cool employees, and great food." – *Gisele Brazlett*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.THUNDERCLOUD.COM

Pizza

Home Slice Pizza

FINALISTS: BUFALINA, EAST SIDE PIES, PINTHOUSE PIZZA, VIA 313

"Have you had that tomato pie??" – *Joe Erwin*

1415 S. CONGRESS, 1421 S. CONGRESS, 501 E. 53RD, WWW.HOMESLICE.COM



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JewBoy Burgers

FINALISTS: CASINO EL CAMINO, HOPDODDY BURGER BAR, P. TERRY'S BURGER STAND, TURNSTILE

"The A\$\$hole from El Paso is the best thing I've ever put in my mouth. So spicy, but it hurts so good." – *Ashley Crooks*

5111 AIRPORT, WWW.JEWBOYBURGERS.COM

Veggie Burger

P. Terry's Burger Stand

FINALISTS: ARLO'S, BILLY'S ON BURNET, BOULDIN CREEK CAFE, MISSION BURGER CO.

"Delicious customizable veggie burgers that are not an afterthought on the menu." – *Lakshmi Bollini*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.PTERRYS.COM



PHOTO BY JANA BIRCHUM

Food Truck

Veracruz All Natural

FINALISTS: CUANTOS TACOS, FERAL PIZZA, KG BBQ, SPICY BOYS

"They made Austin a food truck destination!" – *Megan Hall*

Taco

Veracruz All Natural

FINALISTS: NIXTA, TACODELI, TACO FLATS, TORCHY'S TACOS

"Fresh tortillas! Big fan of the fish tacos." – *Elaine Candelas*

Breakfast Taco

Veracruz All Natural

FINALISTS: JUAN IN A MILLION, PUEBLO VIEJO, TACODELI, TACO JOINT

"Have you had the migas??"

Chef's kiss." – *Jessica Grimm*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.VERACRUZALLNATURAL.COM



COURTESY OF TORCHY'S TACOS

Queso

Torchy's Tacos

FINALISTS: ELDORADO CAFE, DE NADA CANTINA, KERBEY LANE CAFE, MATT'S EL RANCHO

"Theirs is the only queso that I would want as a meal alone." – *Nathan Rock*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.TORCHYSTACOS.COM

Steak

Bartlett's

FINALISTS: ALC STEAKS, DEAN'S ITALIAN STEAKHOUSE, J. CARVER'S OYSTER BAR & CHOP HOUSE, JEFFREY'S

"Classic and not pretentious." – *Dori Moreno Korn*

2408 W. ANDERSON, WWW.BARTLETTSAUSTIN.COM

Barbecue

Terry Black's BBQ

FINALISTS: FRANKLIN BARBECUE, LA BARBECUE, LEROY & LEWIS, STILES SWITCH

"Flavors that never stop and meat that just melts in your mouth." – *Shannon Jordan*

1003 BARTON SPRINGS RD., WWW.TERRYBLACKSBQB.COM

Sushi

Komé

FINALISTS: NEIGHBORHOOD SUSHI, NORI, UCHI, UCHIKO

"Komé feels like home (if home was Japan and filled with delicious sushi and staff that recognize me and say hello)." – *Ashley Essary*

5301 AIRPORT BLVD., WWW.KOME-AUSTIN.COM

Noodles / Ramen

Ramen Tatsu-ya

FINALISTS: MARUFUKU, MICHU RAMEN, RAMEN DEL BARRIO, SAZAN RAMEN

"Consistently fantastic ramen and sides. Like Austin, the employees are just this side of weird too. In a good way." – *Patrick Longo*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.RAMEN-TATSUYA.COM

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Margarita

De Nada Cantina

FINALISTS: CURRA'S, EL ALMA, MATT'S EL RANCHO

"Absolute lightning in a pink plastic cup." – *Seamus Carey*

4715 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.DENADACANTINA.COM

Brewery

Meanwhile Brewing

FINALISTS: AUSTIN BEERWORKS, LAZARUS BREWING CO., PINTHOUSE, ZILKER BREWING CO.

"Every single beer on their tap is clever. Balanced, tasty, smart, fun brews." – *Kate Meehan*

3901 PROMONTORY POINT, WWW.MEANWHILEBEER.COM

Winery

Wanderlust Wine Co.

FINALISTS: THE AUSTIN WINERY, DUCHMAN FAMILY WINERY, WILLIAM CHRIS VINEYARDS, WINE FOR THE PEOPLE

"Self-serve wine taps are cool!" – *Megan Matisi*

702 SHADY, 610 N. I-35, 1601 BARTON SPRINGS RD, WWW.WANDERLUSTWINE.COM

Distillery

Still Austin

FINALISTS: DESERT DOOR, FIERCE WHISKERS, TREATY OAK

"Superb craftsmanship." – *Bobby DeLaGarza*

440 E. ST. ELMO, WWW.STILLAUSTIN.COM



PHOTO BY JANA BIRCHUM

Vegetarian

Bouldin Creek Cafe

FINALISTS: CASA DE LUZ, FABRIK, NORI, VEGAN NOM

"Chose my apartment based on its proximity to Bouldin Creek Cafe." – *Analina Tunnell*

Brunch

Bouldin Creek Cafe

FINALISTS: CHEZ ZEE, KERBEY LANE CAFE, PAPERBOY, PHOEBE'S DINER

"I would vote for Bouldin in literally any category."

– *Seth Whaland*

1900 S. FIRST, WWW.BOULDINCREEKCAFE.COM



PHOTO BY ERIC MEDSKER

Mocktail

Roosevelt Room

FINALISTS: HOLIDAY, NORI, UPTOWN SPORTS CLUB, SANS BAR

"They actually put a lot of time and effort into formulating their mocktails! A lot of places don't do that."

– *Heather Bugni*

307-B W. FIFTH, WWW.THEROOSEVELTROOMATX.COM

Dessert

Amy's Ice Creams

FINALISTS: CHEZ ZEE, LAUNDERETTE, OMG SQUEE, UCHIKO

"Can't beat a Mexican vanilla and Oreo milkshake." – *Nick Lacerenza*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.AMYSICECREAMS.COM

Food & Drink Wild Card

ATX Supper Club (dining experience)

FINALISTS: ANTS BEER CAVE (BOTTLESHOP + PICKLEBALL + FOOD TRUCKS), TIAN TIAN GOLDEN PALACE (DIM SUM)

"This is one of the best experiences I have had. Beautiful people, amazing food, and great atmosphere!" – *Anna Campbell*

WWW.ATXSUPPERCLUB.COM


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COURTESY OF ROLLIN' SMOKE BBQ

Best Game-Day Snacks

Rollin Smoke BBQ & Discada at Chalmers

Austin offers no shortage of places to settle in, grab a drink, and watch the game. Bars, breweries, and pubs all like to market themselves as prime sports hangouts, and while a big screen and a good selection of cold beverages do most of the work, a really memorable destination requires quality snacks. It's hard to think of better game-day bites than those offered at Chalmers, the huge indoor-outdoor sports bar on East Cesar Chavez. Chalmers counts both Rollin Smoke – a highly acclaimed barbecue spot beloved for its pork belly burnt ends – and Discada – a taco purveyor focusing on “cowboy wok” cooking that results in their famous beef, pork, and pepper taquitos – as their on-site food vendors. It's a real win.

CHALMERS, 1700 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, CHALMERSAUSTIN.COM; DISCADA, 1700 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.DISCADATX.COM; ROLLIN SMOKE BBQ, 1700 E. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/ROLLINSMOKEATXBBQ

Best Stuck the Change-of-Ownership Landing

DittyDog

When DittyDog's JonJon and Julie announced in December they were leaving their beloved Seventh Street food truck behind, Downtown bar- and concertgoers braced for impact. What would happen to our prime post-show eatery? Thankfully, the owners' reassurance that they found suitable stewards to take over was true. These dogs – famously fully loaded with cream cheese, honey mayo, chipotle mustard, sriracha, Asian ketchup, crunchy mix, and caramelized onions – continue to hit the spot, and the team serving them continues to be kind and quick.

519 E. SEVENTH, WWW.DITTYDOG.COM

Best Off-the-Beaten-Path Specialty Lattes

Cenizo

It's no surprise that Downtown Austin and East Austin are fully loaded with coffee shops ready and willing to make fancy lattes with well-sourced ingredients, but it's been a real pleasure to see more artisanal java locales opening in farther-flung Austin neighborhoods. One prime example is Cenizo, a duo of coffee trucks located in far Southeast Austin and Del Valle that use locally roasted beans to make playful and seasonally appropriate drinks like the honey lavender latte, the cafe de olla latte (spiced with cinnamon and piloncillo), and their already-famous iced horchata latte.

7701 COLTON-BLUFF SPRINGS RD.,
15701 PEARCE LN., DEL VALLE,
WWW.CENIZOATX.COM



PHOTO BY JANE YUN

Best Brunch at a Bar

Mother's Ruin

A newish East Austin arrival by way of NYC, Mother's Ruin leans hard on the neighborhood-bar vibes; it opens early, closes late, and serves food all day long. A bar where one can grab both a cold beer and a hearty plate of food at noon on a Tuesday is appealing enough, but Mother's Ruin ups the ante by offering a full-fledged brunch menu every day from 11am-4pm. French toast, breakfast burritos, chilaquiles with tri-tip, a McMuffin-ish sandwich – all available, all flavorful, all satisfying, and all hangover-vanquishing.

1401 E. 6TH, BUILDING A, SUITE 204, MOTHERSRUINAUSTIN.COM

Best Place to Send Serious East Coast Pizza Snobs

Small's Pizza

If you've ever heard an East Coast expat grumble about the sorry state of Austin pizza, then this counter-service spot should silence those complaints. Pizzaiolo Kelsey Small comes to Austin via New Haven, Connecticut, and his mastery of New Haven's famous pizza style (thin crust, coal oven) is on full display here. Small lets classic toppings like sausage & peppers, "house cheese," and anchovies shine, but those in search of quirkier options will love the spicy vodka pie and rotating seasonal specials. Finicky Northeasterners and native Austinites alike will leave Small's Pizza fully satisfied.

1023 SPRINGDALE RD., WWW.SMALLS.PIZZA

Best Gluten-Free Treats for That Special Occasion

Sweet Charli Girl

If you have a gluten allergy, it's getting easy to find locally made treats, including the delicious delights crafted in the kitchen of Sweet Charli Girl founder Rachel Metts Salim. But finding a celiac-friendly celebratory cake is much more of a challenge – or, at least, it used to be. Whether it's a birthday or a wedding, Sweet Charli Girl makes your special day feel truly special with made-to-order wonders, and all without a speck of gluten to wreck your day.

WWW.SWEETCHARLIGIRL.COM

FASHION & SIMPLICITY

Call for research participants

Stories are being collected about individuals who use their spiritual or religious experiences to simplify their clothing consumption habits.

If you use spiritual or religious ideas to guide your clothing habits and attitudes about your appearance, scan the QR code or visit this link to learn more: <https://tinyurl.com/37fvxcka>.



How to? Zoom interview or essay submission

Incentive? Choose a gift from a selection of books or mindful art kits

This project has been reviewed and given "exempt" status by the Texas State University Institutional Review Board on July 10, 2024 [project #9648]. Data will be collected from 2025-2026.



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SMOOTHER,
MORE
SUSTAINABLE
COUSIN

DRINK
DIFFERENT



COME VISIT US IN DRIFTWOOD,
JUST OUTSIDE AUSTIN



PHOTO BY JOHN ANDERSON

Best Asian-Cajun Fusion Paradise

Ocean Blue Oyster Bar

Formerly the Laotian-owned Deckhand Oyster Bar & Seafood, Ocean Blue is now run by “five Vietnamese dudes” who changed the name, but kept it the same. It’s a wondrous, thunderous mix of Thai restaurant, sports bar, and Long John Silver’s – and the menu goes long and hard, with everything from po’boys to Swamp Curry. The superstar of the menu remains the Salt & Pepper Special: your choice of protein (chicken wings, frog legs, shrimp, calamari, or – the only real choice – soft-shell crab) tempura battered, and served with onion, garlic, cilantro, and jalapeño over cabbage. Coupled with their nam jim and a cold beer, it’s pure bliss.

4211 S. LAMAR BLVD., WWW.OCEANBLUEATX.COM

Most Nourishing Philosophy

Korea House’s Free Community Meal Program

This family-run North Austin staple has long been known for its sizzling bulgogi and bubbling hot pots, but since 2023, it’s also been serving up something even more nourishing: dignity. On the first Wednesday of each month, Korea House opens its doors for a pay-what-you-can community lunch, no questions asked. It’s a quiet, consistent act of mutual care, a restaurant feeding not just hunger, but humanity. Amid skyrocketing food insecurity, this initiative turns hospitality into solidarity, one hot meal at a time.

2700 W. ANDERSON #501, WWW.KOREAHOUSEAUSTIN.COM

Best Tortu-concha

Mi Tradición

Among the dozens of self-serve pan dulce racks at this well-loved panadería is a creation that’ll encourage your inner child to play with their food: the tortu-concha. A Mexican sweet bread staple, conchas – which translates to “shells” in Spanish – are traditionally round and found in a handful of colors, but social media has inspired folks to get creative with their conchas. While Mi Tradición has only recently begun to churn these puppies – er, we mean *turtles* – out routinely in rainbow, brown, and green, there’s no telling what other colors they have in store for the future. We’re *shell-a* excited to see what they come up with next.

8716 RESEARCH #290, 801 E. WILLIAM CANNON #125, WWW.FB.COM/MITRADICIONATX



COURTESY OF CÀPHÊ.IN COFFEE

Best Reason to Line Up for Your Caffeine Fix

CàPhê.in Coffee

If you’ve driven down Guadalupe recently, there’s a chance you’ve seen a line of thirsty students waiting outside CàPhê.in. Given its walkable distance to UT and variety of coffee and tea selections, it’s no surprise that the shop has quickly become a hit with the campus crowd. They specialize in Vietnamese phin-dripped coffee, made with savory Robusta beans that will ensure you’re caffeinated for the day. But if you’re looking for something a bit lighter, they sell matcha and fresh fruit tea perfect for kicking off summer.

3016 GUADALUPE ST. #175, WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/CAPHE.INAUSTIN





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PHOTO BY GABRIEL C. PÉREZ / KUT NEWS

News Reporter

Audrey McGlinchy (KUT News)

FINALISTS: JOSH HINKLE (KXAN), TONY PLOHETSKI (AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN/KVUE), NABIL REMADNA (KXAN), AVERY TRAVIS (KXAN)

"Audrey's *Growth Machine* podcast and her housing reporting make wonky policy accessible and engaging."

— *Lucy Begg*

WWW.KUT.ORG/PEOPLE/AUDREY-MCGLINCHY

Podcast

The Night Owl

FINALISTS: THE DISCONNECT, FUR REAL, GALS & GOBLINS, QUEERTOWNE

"The *Night Owl*'s commitment to storytelling puts most other paranormal shows to shame. Spooky tales with a local twist!" — *Evan Stern*

WWW.THENIGHTOWLPODCAST.COM

TV News

KXAN

FINALISTS: CBS AUSTIN, FOX 7, KVUE

"The go-to place for breaking news." — *Sandra White*

908 W. MLK, WWW.KXAN.COM

Sportscaster

Roger Wallace (KXAN)

FINALISTS: BOB BALLOU (CBS AUSTIN), DENNIS DE LA PEÑA (FOX 7), JEFF JONES (KVUE), CORY MOSE (KVUE)

"A longtime favorite." — *Gail Tighe*

WWW.KXAN.COM/AUTHOR/ROGER-WALLACE

TV Anchor / Reporter

Quita Culpepper (KVUE)

FINALISTS: JOHN-CARLOS ESTRADA (CBS AUSTIN), ASHLEY GOUDEAU (KVUE), JENNIFER SANDERS (KXAN), TREVOR SCOTT (CBS AUSTIN)

"She continues to be the best — charming, intelligent, caring, and funny." — *Kipa Smith*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/QCULPEPPERKVUE

Weatherperson

James Greenhaw (Pflugerville Weatherguy)

FINALISTS: NICK BANNIN (KXAN), KRISTEN CURRIE (KXAN), AVERY TOMASCO (CBS AUSTIN), CHIKAGE WINDLER (CBS AUSTIN)

"Are you even kidding me?? He is faster and more accurate than any local weather people and is also a sweetheart. Thank you to James for helping me feel safe with my fear of tornadoes! <3" — *Jennifer Bruce*

WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/TEXASWILDWEIRDWEATHER

Columnist

Michael Barnes (Austin American-Statesman)

FINALISTS: KEVIN CURTIN (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE), BRIDGET GRUMET (AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN), JAMES SCOTT (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE), ERIC WEBB (TURNING OUT SUBSTACK)

"Makes you want to take those Texas day and weekend trips!" — *Erik Holt*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/OUTANDABOUTATX

Food Writer

Amanda Wong (Austin Food Adventures)

FINALISTS: ADDIE BROYLES (THE INVISIBLE THREAD), NICOLAI MCCRARY (THE INFATUATION AUSTIN), MATTHEW ODAM (AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN), TAYLOR TOBIN (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE)

"She doesn't just eat — she elevates. Her recs are legit, her captions are gold, and she captures Austin's food scene with the perfect mix of taste, wit, and realness." — *Brandi Guerrero*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/AUSTINFOODADVENTURES

Film Critic

Richard Whittaker (The Austin Chronicle)

FINALISTS: ZIAH GRACE (HYPERREAL FILM JOURNAL), KIMBERLEY JONES (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE), ALIX MAMMINA (HYPERREAL FILM JOURNAL), ALEJANDRA MARTINEZ (THE AUSTIN CHRONICLE/AWARDSWATCH)

"There is no Austin film scene without Richard's great work. He makes sure local projects get highlighted, digs deep on the issues (usually the only one doing the good work), and knows what matters and where to shine a light." — *Brian Gannon*

WWW.ROTTENTOMATOES.COM/
CRITICS/RICHARD-WHITTAKER

Social Media Personality

Evil MoPac

FINALISTS: CLARISSA CARDENAS / CONCERT QUEEN, SPILL THE ATX, A TASTE OF KOKO, YIMBYLAND

"Makes MoPac life bearable." — *Kirsten Bradbury*

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City Official

Mayor Kirk Watson

FINALISTS: MAYOR PRO TEM VANESSA FUENTES, COUNCIL MEMBER MIKE SIEGEL, COUNCIL MEMBER ZO QADRI, COUNCIL MEMBER CHITO VELA

"Mayor Watson knows our city, its history, culture, and legacy. He works to keep it a city that works for everyone." — *Gayle Reaume*

WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/MAYOR-KIRK-WATSON

State / Federal Official

U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett

FINALISTS: U.S. REP. GREG CASAR, STATE SEN. SARAH ECKHARDT, STATE REP. GINA HINOJOSA, STATE REP. JAMES TALARICO

"A lifetime of service to Austin." — *Rick Fine*

DOGGETT.HOUSE.GOV

Nonprofit

Austin Pets Alive!

FINALISTS: HAAM (HEALTH ALLIANCE FOR AUSTIN MUSICIANS), MUSICIAN TREATMENT FOUNDATION, POWER FOR PARKINSON'S, THE OTHER ONES FOUNDATION

"Innovative, and of course lifesaving. The models they use to help animals have been modeled in different states, jurisdictions." — *Amy Smith*

1156 W. CESAR CHAVEZ, WWW.AUSTINPETSALIVE.ORG

Grassroots / Political Org

Equality Texas

FINALISTS: AUSTIN DSA (DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS OF AMERICA), AUSTIN JUSTICE COALITION, CLEAR THE AIR ATX, TEXAS HARM REDUCTION ALLIANCE

"The largest LGBTQIA+ org fighting in Texas!! Doing good and necessary work for communities across our state." — *Mariam Laeky*

EQUALITY TEXAS, WWW.EQUALITYTEXAS.ORG



Politics & Media Wild Card

Take a Moment (KUT daily meditations segment)

FINALISTS: LOCKET MAGAZINE (INDEPENDENT MUSIC ZINE), MEDIA FOR TEXAS (FILM INCENTIVES ADVOCACY GROUP)

"Marnie is the greatest and this segment is so unusual and powerful and it's really kind of bonkers that it's even possible. The idea of thousands of people all around the city and beyond just chilling for a second all together breaks my brain in the best way." — *Kirk Smith*

WWW.KUTKUTX.STUDIO/CATEGORY/TAKE-A-MOMENT



PHOTO BY ISMAEL QUINTANILLA III

Photographer

Ismael Quintanilla III

FINALISTS: SANDY CARSON, JAY JANNER, PATRICIA LIM, TODD V. WOLFSON

"The absolute dedication to honoring Austin is seen in all his work!" —

Gabriella Torres

WWW.IQ3PHOTO.COM

Volunteer Experience

Central Texas Food Bank

FINALISTS: AUSTIN ALLIES, CENTRAL TEXAS PIG RESCUE, FESTIVAL BEACH FOOD FOREST, TEXAS HARM REDUCTION ALLIANCE

"My boys and I love to volunteer here. They really make a difference in people's daily lives." — *Cynthia Schwartz*

6500 METROPOLIS DR., WWW.CENTRALTEXASFOODBANK.ORG

Local Controversy

School vouchers battle

FINALISTS: ADAM REPOSA DRUG RAID, ELON MUSK BEING AFFILIATED WITH AUSTIN, PROJECT CONNECT SETBACKS, REPUBLICAN-BACKED "DISTRICT OF AUSTIN" BILL

"PUBLIC funds should not be used to aid parents who CHOOSE PRIVATE education for their children."

— *Karen Laine*



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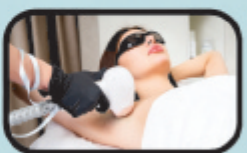
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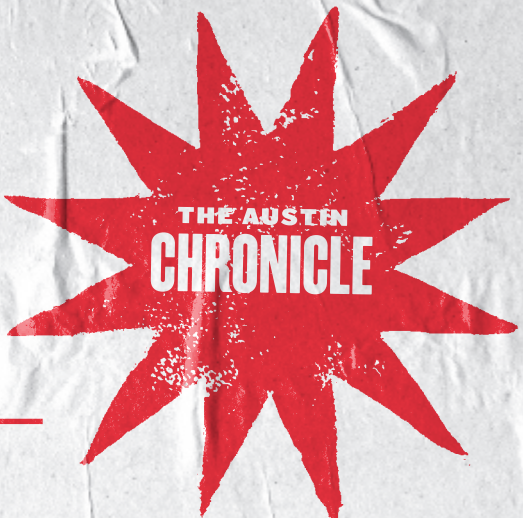
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AUSTINCHRONICLE.COM/SUPPORT

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COURTESY OF VOCAL-TX

Best Up-and-Coming Advocates for Austin's Unhoused

VOCAL-TX

We've been impressed with the urgency and moral clarity VOCAL-TX – a community organizing project spun out of the Texas Harm Reduction Alliance – has brought to a range of city issues, specifically their advocacy for better supports for the unhoused. Especially admirable is how they organize with people with lived experience in the policy areas they advocate in – like the unhoused when pushing for more housing and better shelter. As Austin undertakes an ambitious homelessness response plan, those voices will be more vital than ever.

WWW.VOCAL-TX.ORG

Best Champion for Austin's Public Defenders

Adeola Ogunkeyede

Travis County's Public Defender's Office is still young, and Chief Public Defender Adeola Ogunkeyede has been shaping it since its 2020 inception. She demands just treatment of defendants, but she also advocates for her own staff. They do the crucial job of keeping poor Austinites out of jail, but they struggle with their own student loans while prosecutors and private defense attorneys make much more money. This year, Ogunkeyede went to bat for them, testifying before county commissioners. The starting salary is now \$85,500. Our attorney sources behind the scenes shower their leader with praise for her efforts.

WWW.TRAVISCOUNTYTX.GOV/PUBLIC-DEFENDER

Most Tireless Education Warrior

Allen Weeks

We couldn't ask for a more committed champion for public education. Allen Weeks went to work for our local schools almost two decades ago, successfully advocating to save Webb Middle School from closure. Now, he's in the middle of the same struggle, as Austin ISD considers closing Dobie Middle School and other campuses. He fought heroically through the latest grueling legislative session against Gov. Greg Abbott's voucher scheme, bringing thousands to the Save Texas Schools rallies at the Capitol. He put in a valiant effort trying to convince lawmakers to abolish the STAAR test and to provide more funding for schools across the state. The session brought wins (more funding) and losses (STAAR stuck and vouchers plowed ahead), but it's good to know folks like Weeks are committed to the fight, win or lose.

WWW.AUSTINVOICES.ORG



PHOTO BY RENEE DOMINGUEZ / KUT NEWS

Best Ken Paxton Watchdog

Lauren McGaughy

Lauren McGaughy led the field with her top-notch coverage of our cruel and vindictive attorney general's impeachment trial in 2023, and she's still on the case. From the criminal, civil, and political court battles Ken Paxton has faced over the past five years, she has been there to pursue them all with dogged determination. Now, as Paxton shifts into full-on political mode to campaign against Sen. John Cornyn, we're eager to see the Texas Newsroom reporter's work continue.

WWW.KUT.ORG/PEOPLE/LAUREN-MCGAUGHY

Best Locally Launched Meme Page

@wormtriiip

Talk about a curator of all trades. When Cristina Mauri, aka Moonbby, isn't booking alt rock and hyperpop-focused shows at venues throughout Austin, she's helping post memes to @wormtriiip, an IG account with over 40,000 followers. George Santos' face combined with late rapper XXXTentacion's. A photo of JD Vance accusing him of killing the pope. A gothified image of Mark Zuckerberg in black eyeliner and a collar. Gen Z continues to make political statements the only way they know how: through incredibly referential, ironic internet posts that confound older generations. @wormtriiip does it best.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/WORMTRIIIP

Best Nitty-Gritty Amender on Council

Ryan Alter

Before Ryan Alter was elected to City Council, he was a staffer in the Texas Legislature – and it shows. Through his two years in office, he has proven time and time again to be a studied and prepared policymaker. He is unafraid of the nitty-gritty as he consistently buries himself and his staff in the weeds of policy, where they repeatedly emerge with valuable amendments – like on Austin Energy's resource generation plan, a budget that helped fund mental health crisis response, and a resolution that strengthened civilian police oversight.

WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/ABOUT-COUNCIL-MEMBER-RYAN-ALTER

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PHOTO BY JANA BIRCHUM

Most Indefatigable Federal Judge in Austin

Robert Pitman

Robert Pitman has been holding it down as Austin's only U.S. district judge for two years now, though major cities smaller than ours usually have at least four. For that alone, we must thank him. But we also appreciate his constitutional and compassionate care for the oppressed. At a time when the nation's court system is serving as the last line of defense against a Trump administration seemingly determined to undermine the rule of law, Pitman's thoughtful approach to the law is vital.

WWW.TXWD.USCOURTS.GOV/TEAM/ROBERT-PITMAN

Best Underground ATX Music Blog

Austin Town Hall

Say your friends are annoyed by you tirelessly labeling your music taste as "underground," or maybe you're always interrupting the conversation with niche Old Austin punk references. If this sounds like you, it's probably time you start reading Austin Town Hall and see what's really lying beneath Austin's mainstream venue and record-label roads. While not being overly pretentious, ATH's blog and accompanying DIY record label offer everything from weekly concert previews to in-depth artist interviews – housing all of Austin's best and most overlooked talent on just one site.

WWW.AUSTINTOWNHALL.COM

Best Recent College Grad Watchdogging Texas Colleges

Lily Kepner

If you want to keep up with the disastrous goings-on in higher education – and, honestly, you probably don't – we recommend following Kepner's work at the *Statesman*. Having only recently graduated from college herself, Kepner became Austin's most authoritative source for higher-ed news after moving to town in the fall of 2023. It was a good time to get here, because the shit is going down: In her first couple of years on the job, Kepner's beat has her reporting on the clampdown on free speech, the death of DEI, and ruinous cuts to research funding.

WWW.STATESMAN.COM/STAFF/71516731007/LILY-KEPNER

Friendliest Local News Dispatches

City Cast Austin

Need to know whether you can pick bluebonnets legally in Texas? (You can't.) How to run safely when it's 105 degrees outside? (Not possible.) Which restaurant patios have the least flies? (Is that even quantifiable?) Check out *City Cast Austin's* podcasts and daily "Hey Austin" newsletter. The four local content creators of this national network demonstrate true knowledge of our hometown, diving deep into complex issues like the city's budget woes and the cap-and-stitch debate while also delivering groovy best-of lists and explainers in an easily digestible, conversational style.

WWW.AUSTIN.CITYCAST.FM



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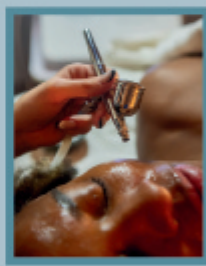

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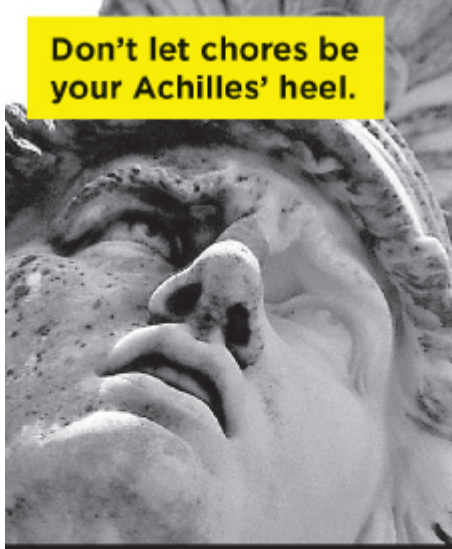

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PHOTO BY CHRIS MONTES

Tattoo

No Good Tattoo

FINALISTS: KATTITUDE TATTOO, LOST EDGE TATTOO STUDIO, SOUTHSIDE TATTOO, STUDIO INK

"No Good is actually very very good." – *Jeremy Nguyen*

1023 SPRINGDALE RD. BLDG. 1, STE. E, WWW.NOGOODTATTOO.COM

Barbershop

Birds Barbershop

FINALISTS: FINLEY'S BARBERSHOP, MONARCH BARBERSHOP, OLDE SOUL BARBERSHOP, THE SHOP ATX

"Always a vibe." – *Brian Lopez*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.BIRDSBARBERSHOP.COM

Salon

Urban Betty

FINALISTS: 29ELEVEN THE SALON, APOTHECA SALON & BARBERSHOP, LOVE + ROOTS, SWAMP MERMAID BEAUTY PROJECT

"Welcoming and vibrant. Has a lot of character and charm."

– *Heather Brunfield*

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Spa

Milk + Honey

FINALISTS: DIVINE LUXURY, MEDICA AESTHETICS, SPA SWAY, VIVA DAY SPA + MED SPA

"The environment and expert providers" – *Ally Jacobs*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.MILKANDHONEYSPA.COM

Massage

Viva Day Spa + Med Spa

FINALISTS: ACE OF CUPS MASSAGE & WELLNESS, CEREMONY SPA, MANTRA WELLNESS, SOL SOLACE STUDIO

"I'm obsessed with the Magic Mint Scalp Massage add on!"

– *Lauren Kamp*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.VIVADAYSPA.COM

Acupuncture

South Austin Community Acupuncture

FINALISTS: CEREMONY SPA, NEIGHBORHOOD ACUPUNCTURE PROJECT, ROSEDALE ACUPUNCTURE & WELLNESS, SAGE ACUPUNCTURE

"Caring, kind, and knowledgeable practitioners.

Great holistic environment." – *Keat Tan*

5700 MENCHACA RD. #300, WWW.ACUPUNCTUREWORLDHEADQUARTERS.COM



PHOTO BY JANA BIRCHUM

Mani/Pedi

Cute Nail Studio

FINALISTS: CURE STUDIOS, NAIL ART HOUSE, VIVA DAY SPA + MED SPA

"Back in the right hands! Pun intended!" – *David Salazar*

1211 E. SEVENTH, 3801 S. CONGRESS #104, WWW.CUTENAILSTUDIO.COM

Skin Care

Viva Day Spa + Med Spa

FINALISTS: HAYLEYANN BEAUTY, LOVE + ROOTS, MANTRA WELLNESS, RXCH + GLO STUDIO

"Amazing estheticians, great vibes and glowing skin every time." – *Jenni Svedlund*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.VIVADAYSPA.COM

Lashes

The Lash Lounge

FINALISTS: AUSTIN CITY LASHES, LUNA LASH, RXCH + GLO STUDIO

"The Lash Lounge is my go-to for last-minute lash magic. I'm a chronic late booker, but somehow they always find a spot for me and save me from looking half-asleep in public." – *Sarah Pendley*

1911 ALDRICH #140, 3300 BEE CAVES RD. #630, 1335 E. WHITESTONE BLVD. STE. H-400, CEDAR PARK, WWW.THELASHLOUNGE.COM

Wax

Sassy Miss Waxy

FINALISTS: BLUSH WAXING AND SKINCARE, CLEAN SLATE WAXING LOUNGE, REWAXATION, YOURS TRULY WAXING LOUNGE

"Get your bush whacked in an art house? I think yes!" – *Elle Camino*

5509 NORTHDAL DR., WWW.SASSYMISSWAXY.COM

Psychic/Tarot

Sister Temperance Tarot

FINALISTS: AUSTIN TAROT THERAPY, HEART SEED HEALING, MAK JAGGER TAROT, SNOWY RODEO TAROT

"Mystic Wisdom flows through her channel."

– *Sasha Illig*

WWW.SISTERTEMPERANCE.COM

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2025

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Auto Repair / Service

TIE: Juke Auto / Rising Sun Japanese Auto Service

FINALISTS: FLAMINGO AUTOMOTIVE, LUCAS TIRE & AUTO SERVICE, YOST AUTOMOTIVE

Juke Auto: "Fair prices, friendly workers." – *Nichole Galvan*
JUKE AUTO, 924 SHADY, WWW.JUKEAUTO.COM

Rising Sun: "Trustworthy, good people skills as well as car skills. Keeping my 2003 Acura happy." – *Kate Cronkite*
RISING SUN JAPANESE AUTO SERVICE, 2714 FOSTER LANE,
WWW.RISINGSUNJAPANESE.COM

Home Maintenance / Services

ABC Home & Commercial Services

FINALISTS: A TEAM HOME SERVICES, THE FOUNDATION GURU, THE HANDYBAND COLLECTIVE, KANGAROO

"Recently had some raccoons take shelter in our attic. ABC came by and safely got them out with ease." – *Cal Little*
VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.ABCHOMEANDCOMMERCIAL.COM



COURTESY OF RADIANT PLUMBING & AIR-CONDITIONING

A/C Repair / Installation

Radiant Plumbing & Air-Conditioning

FINALISTS: THE CHILL BROTHERS, KOALA COOLING & PLUMBING, SALT SERVICE CO., STAN'S

"They send a technician at midnight to fix your AC on the hottest day of the year and yuk it up with you about the state and fate of electronics while making sure your damn house cools down."

– *Lisa Jones*

Plumber

Radiant Plumbing & Air-Conditioning

FINALISTS: KOALA COOLING & PLUMBING, PLUMBING OUTFITTERS, RELIANT PLUMBING, SALT SERVICE CO.

"Great plumbers! Explain everything in detail. Reliable and fast." – *Sofia Baptista*

901 REINLI, WWW.RADIANTPLUMBING.COM



PHOTO BY DEBORAH BARAK

Bike Shop / Repair

Yellow Bike Project

FINALISTS: BIKE FARM, CLOWN DOG BIKES, EASTSIDE PEDAL PUSHERS, THE PEDDLER

"Affordable and a community steward for public transportation!" – *Camila Restrepo*

1216 WEBBERVILLE RD., AUSTINYELLOWBIKE.ORG



Electrician

SALT Service Co.

FINALISTS: A TEAM HOME SERVICES, MAGNIFY ELECTRIC, TERRAPIN ELECTRIC, VOLTHOUSE ELECTRIC

"Knowledgeable and polite contractors who care about their work." – *John Garza*

901 S. MOPAC, BLDG. 1 #300, WWW.CALLSALT.COM

Cleaning Services

MoreHands Maid Service

FINALISTS: AUSTIN'S MAID SERVICE, THE PURPLE FIG, SWANKY HOME PROS

"Consistency, communication." – *Erik Holt*

8000 ANDERSON SQUARE #107, 1208-W N. I-35, ROUND ROCK,
WWW.MOREHANDS.COM

Tailor / Alterations

Ace Custom Tailors

FINALISTS: ALTERATIONS TAILORED BY LIDIA, GASSANE TAILORS, JAM DESIGNS ALTERATIONS

"Speed and quality." – *Valeri Reeder*

724-A N. LAMAR, 11909 DOMAIN DR. #154,
2707 WALSH TARTLTON, WWW.ACETAILORS.COM

Laundromat

SpinZone Laundry

FINALISTS: EZ COIN LAUNDRY, LAUNDROLAB, WASH DAY

"The best. Helpful employees, clean store, great location." – *Monica Yela*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.SPINZONELAUNDRY.COM



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PHOTO BY JANA BIRCHUM

Services Wild Card

That's Sew Austin (co-sewing studio)

FINALISTS: AUSTIN SALT ROOM (SALT THERAPY), WILLINGLEE (GIFT BOXES)

"I freaking LOVE this place!!!!!! I wanted to pick up sewing and had no earthly idea what I was doing and the team there was so incredible, helpful, and POSITIVE."

— *Madeline Coffman*

1601 E. CESAR CHAVEZ #102, WWW.THATS-SEW.COM

Dry Cleaner

Rick's Cleaners

FINALISTS: ECOCLEAN, JACK BROWN CLEANERS, REID'S CLEANERS, ZIPS CLEANERS

"They removed a 2-year-old stain off my son's suit! And didn't overcharge for that." — *Claudia Hisky*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.RICKSCLEANERS.COM

Hotel

Driskill Hotel

FINALISTS: HOTEL VIATA, THE OTIS HOTEL, SOUTH CONGRESS HOTEL

"Do the others have ghosts? No? Why is this a contest?" — *Kevin Cochran*

604 BRAZOS, WWW.DRISKILLHOTEL.COM

Lawyer

Cofer & Connelly

FINALISTS: THE CARLSON LAW FIRM, THE LAW OFFICE OF JASON WRIGHT, SANCHEZ LAW, WYNNE & WYNNE

"They worked miracles and settled my case. I was 100% satisfied." — *Rick Neely*

602 W. 11TH, WWW.COFERCONNELLY.COM

Movers

Einstein Moving Company

FINALISTS: FIREFIGHTING'S FINEST MOVING & STORAGE, MASH MOVERS, MOUNTAIN MOVERS, MUSCLEMAN ELITE MOVING & STORAGE

"Prompt, polite, and professional movers. Easy to work with. Easy to like." — *Melanie Ross*

9200-A BROWN LN., 109 INDUSTRIAL BLVD., WWW.EINSTEINMOVING.COM

Veterinarian

Emancipet

FINALISTS: AUSTIN VET HOSPITAL, BLUEBONNET ANIMAL HOSPITAL, PAZ VETERINARY

"I rescue, rehab, and TNR cats. If it wasn't for Emancipet's low-cost services, there is no way I could afford to keep doing it. Emancipet deserves to be recognized for everything they do to help make a difference in the lives of animals and the people who love them." — *Leo Wolf*

1030 NORWOOD PARK, SUITE 316, 15803 WINDERMERE DR. #420, PFLUGERVILLE, 7201 LEVANDER LOOP, WWW.EMANCIPET.ORG

Doggie Day Care

Taurus Academy

FINALISTS: AUSTIN DOGTOWN, BHV AUSTIN, DIRTY DOG, WORK & WOOF

"My dog runs in there and doesn't look back. He loves it that much." — *Karen Sanchez*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.TAURUSACADEMY.COM

Pet Grooming

Barkin' Creek

FINALISTS: AUSTIN DOGTOWN, FLUFF 'N' BUFF, DIRTY DOG, TAURUS ACADEMY

"My pooch always looks handsome, and they are truly the sweetest!" — *Celeste Moore*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.BARKINCREEK.COM

Wedding Venue

The Contemporary Austin – Laguna Gloria

FINALISTS: BARR MANSION, HOTEL VIATA, SOUTH CONGRESS HOTEL, SPRINGDALE STATION

"An Austin classic! The grounds are incredible, the peacocks are timeless, and the cafe does amazing catering."

— *Poeta Asher*

3809 W. 35TH, WWW.THECONTEMPORARYAUSTIN.ORG

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-Jody Rivera | Owner

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25



PHOTO BY @BRITTANYNOFOMO

Most Floats Our Boat

Cowboy Pools

Founded in the early days of the pandemic by couple Aaron Weiss and Amanda Shafte, Cowboy Pools are now so ubiquitous in the ATX we kinda can't believe we haven't already given them a Best of Austin award. For regular folks who never imagined a home pool could be within their budget, Cowboy's sit-and-soak stock tanks are a dream come true. These galvanized steel wonders come in a range of sizes, from a petite 6 feet all the way up to a backyard-BBQ-party-ready 10 feet, and can be shipped nationwide. But the real boon for locals is that, lucky us, Cowboy offers full installation and other pool services to Austin clients.

WWW.COWBOYPOLS.COM

Kindest Clinic for the Queer and Trans Texan

Kind Clinic

Most known for their stellar work getting Austin sexually healthy – shout-out to everyone waiting outside at 9am for STI testing after a one-night stand – Kind Clinic's more than just a place for PrEP. Even as Texas roils in conservative hot water, cutting funding for anything resembling health care, Kind has continued to provide low-to-no-cost gender-affirming care alongside their sexual health services. Few clinics offer as smooth an experience for trans folks looking to further their medical transition, with doctors and nurses on staff knowledgeable enough not to ask what a "dead name" is. With last year's introduction of pretty affordable aesthetic treatments via Glossy by Kind Clinic, the path to making your body a more welcoming home's become a little easier with KC.

101 W. KOENIG LN. #100, WWW.KINDCLINIC.ORG



PHOTO BY SARAH KJ PHOTOGRAPHY

Most Magical Matrimonial Sanctuary

Brodie Homestead

Sure, there are plenty of rustic-chic event venues around town, but none that rival this one's proximity to Central Austin. It's so cozily tucked away, you won't believe there's a strip mall mere feet away. You also won't believe it used to be a barn – the gorgeous space was built in 1949 by John and Charlotte Weaver and housed cattle, horses, and donkeys for decades. Allan House owners Vicki and Daniel Ross transformed it into an event venue in 2011, with repurposed wood and stunning chandeliers that create an environment so enchanting, they'll have to say "I do."

5211 BRODIE, WWW.BRODIEHOMESTEAD.COM



PHOTO BY CHAD WADSWORTH

Best First Stop for Out-of-Towners

Austin Visitor Center

Whether you're in from out of town or a local looking to experience the ATX with fresh eyes, the Austin Visitor Center is a terrific resource. Newly installed this spring in the historic Phillips Building on Fifth Street, the bright and airy space is multipurpose: You can grab maps, ask staff for sightseeing recs, sip a coffee from the on-site cafe, book a walking tour, purchase an Austin-made keepsake, and even stash your luggage for \$8 a day so you can go tourist your little heart out unencumbered.

103 E. FIFTH, WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.ORG/VISITORS/CENTER

Best Stitch in Time

Chau's Alterations

Considering what made-to-measure should mean, getting an alteration can be so impersonal. Not when it's Mrs. Chau fixing the seemingly unfixable. It's not just the quality of her work, that she's the kind of old-school seamstress that other professionals recommend. It's not just that she can work miracles on materials so fragile and unusual that half the supposed tailors in this city couldn't tell them from rayon. It's the maternal greeting you get, the feeling of family, the stories and warmth that only can come from Mrs. Chau.

1929 PAYTON GIN RD. STE. 1929-D, 512/454-6344

Most Social Bathhouse

Ceremony Spa

Say the word "spa" and your voice has probably dropped to a whisper. But Ceremony, the super-colorful South Austin spa, is more approachable, and nowhere is that more apparent than in their expanded, communal bathhouse. Make new friends as you bounce between the two cedar saunas and cold plunges, make it a private party by renting the whole space out with your besties, or drop in for a regular Third Thursday happy hour and soak up the good vibes.

1706 S. LAMAR, WWW.CEREMONYSIPA.COM

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COURTESY OF DAUGHTERS

Women's Clothing

Daughters

FINALISTS: BLOODY ROSE BOUTIQUE, DYLAN WYLDE, ESTILO, JULIAN GOLD

"They're doing something no one else is in women's fashion. I love getting gifts for all my girly friends here!" – *Colton Dearing*

1210 S. CONGRESS AVE., WWW.SHOPDAUGHTERS.COM

Men's Clothing

STAG Provisions for Men

FINALISTS: BROTHER FRIEND, HOWLER BROS, KENNIMER, NO-COMPLY SKATESHOP

"It's my go-to for my husband. It's the place for the chic casual (or cocktail casual) Austin man style." – *Robbi Constantine*

1423 S. CONGRESS, WWW.STAGPROVISIONS.COM

Vintage / Consignment Clothing

Uptown Cheapskate

FINALISTS: AMERICAN DRIFTER, PAVEMENT, POTLUCK VINTAGE, TOP DRAWER THRIFT

"Best prices, products, atmosphere, and workers! I have to stop by every time I pass it." – *Julie Rogers*

3005 S. LAMAR STE. 110-A, 7501 BURNET RD., 1504 AQUARENA SPRINGS DR. #101, SAN MARCOS, WWW.UPTOWNCHEAPSKATEAUSTIN.COM

Furniture / Home Goods

Room Service Vintage

FINALISTS: ACQUIRED TASTE, FOUR HANDS, JOINT DETAIL, WORLD INTERIORS

"Always treasures to be found in this Aladdin's Cave." – *RL McGruder*

117 E. NORTH LOOP, WWW.ROOMSERVICEVINTAGE.COM

Garden Store/Nursery

The Natural Gardener

FINALISTS: EDEN HOUSE BOTANICALS, THE GREAT OUTDOORS, SHOAL CREEK NURSERY, TILLERY STREET PLANT COMPANY

"Great selection of native plants, loads of knowledgeable staff, beautiful demonstration gardens to browse, and goats!" – *Michelle Michel*

8648 OLD BEE CAVES RD., WWW.TNGAUSTIN.COM

Florist

Freytag's Florist

FINALISTS: AUSTIN FLOWER CO., BEN WHITE FLORIST, GYPSY FLORAL, KING FLORIST

"Been using them since the early Sixties. Always fresh and always delivered in time." – *Thomas Williams*

2211 W. ANDERSON, WWW.FREYTAGSFORLIST.COM



COURTESY OF DESIRED OBJECTS

Jewelry

Desired Objects

FINALISTS: COSMIC CHAOS JEWELRY, COURTNEY MARIE JEWELRY, ELIZA PAGE, SISU STUDIO

"Handmade chainmail is soooooo hard to make and takes a lot of time and patience. They make the most gorgeous pieces!"

– *Kennedy Quintanilla*

WWW.DESIREDOBJECTS.COM



COURTESY OF TEXAS FARMERS' MARKET

Farmers' Market/Farmstand

Texas Farmers' Market at Mueller

FINALISTS: BARTON CREEK FARMERS MARKET, BOGGY CREEK FARM, SFC FARMERS' MARKET AT SUNSET VALLEY, TEXAS FARMERS' MARKET AT BELL

"Go for the fresh produce and artisan goods, stay for the delicious food vendors and dog watching."

— *Blaine Babyak*

2006 PHILOMENA, WWW.TEXASFARMERSMARKET.ORG/MUELLER

Neighborhood Grocery

Wheatsville Food Co-op

FINALISTS: FRESH PLUS, LOCAL PASTURES, RADIUS BUTCHER & GROCERY, TINY GROCER

"I joined the co-op last year and wish I had done so much sooner. Wonderful company, great products, lovely clerks." — *Melanie Alberts*

3101 GUADALUPE, 4001 S. LAMAR,
WWW.WHEATSVILLE.COOP

Local Food Brand

Yellowbird

FINALISTS: DIABLO HUMA BBQ SAUCE, PICKLE ENVY, SIETE FAMILY FOODS, WHITE MOUNTAIN BULGARIAN YOGURT

"I love this stuff. On everything. I bring this as a gift when I travel." — *Cait Taylor*

WWW.YELLOWBIRDFOODS.COM

Local Nonalcoholic Beverage Brand

Waterloo Sparkling Water

FINALISTS: RAMBLER SPARKLING WATER, RESTART RITA, SOCO GINGER BEER, TEJAS TONIC

"If it was possible to be addicted to water — it would be Waterloo!" — *Claudia Cowperthwaite*

WWW.DRINKWATERLOO.COM

Local Alcoholic Beverage Brand

Tito's Handmade Vodka

FINALISTS: AUSTIN BEERWORKS, DEEP EDDY VODKA, STILL AUSTIN, ZILKER BREWING CO.

"Tito's is just in a category of its own. It is its own quality, country, and community values."

— *Stacey Abel*

WWW.TITOSVODKA.COM

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Bookstore

BookPeople

FINALISTS: BIRDHOUSE BOOKS AND GIFTS, BLACK PEARL BOOKS, BOOKWOMAN, FIRST LIGHT

"Forever and ever amen." – *Shannon Stewart*

603 N. LAMAR, WWW.BOOKPEOPLE.COM

Pet Store

Tomlinson's

FINALISTS: GALLERY OF PETS, HEALTHY PET, PAWS ON CHICON, ZOOKEEPER EXOTICS

"They have an incredible staff. I love the rustic, grounded feel of the store. And they have the food, the toys, and the treats that my dog loves. This is where we take our boy for special holidays!" – *Angela Ai*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.TOMLINSONS.COM

Liquor Store

Twin Liquors

FINALISTS: THE AUSTIN SHAKER, OLD SCHOOL LIQUOR AND MARKET, SPEC'S, TRAVIS HEIGHTS WINE & SPIRITS

"Great service, great selection, and unparalleled support of local nonprofits." – *Kerry Edwards*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.TWINLIQUORS.COM

Cannabusiness

Happy Clouds Smoke Shop

FINALISTS: COZY CANNABIS, DRIP-N-RIP VAPES, MARYJAE, RESTART

"These guys are the vibe every time. I love coming to this cannabusiness." – *Logan Marciel*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.HAPPYCLOUDSMOKESHOP.COM



PHOTO BY JANA BIRCHUM

Adult Store

Forbidden Fruit

FINALISTS: DREAMERS, PACKAGE AUSTIN, SIR RAT LEATHER AND GEAR, XXXCITE

"They have been supporting sex positivity in our community for generations." – *Kirsten Bradbury*

108 E. NORTH LOOP, WWW.FORBIDDENFRUIT.COM



PHOTO BY KENNADY BASEDKIS-MORIN

Pop-Up Market

Little Gay Shop Markets

FINALISTS: EASTSIDE POP UP, FRONT MARKET, NORTH LOOP POP UP MARKET, VIBE CITY MARKETS

"Always Little Gay Shop. Activists first who view building and uplifting community as true activism. I love them so much!" – *Abby Strite*

1902 E. 12TH, WWW.THELITTLEGAYSHOP.COM

Electronics/Computer Store

Discount Electronics

FINALISTS: AUSTIN MACWORKS, BOND'S, FRANKENSTEIN COMPUTERS, SPACE BABY AUDIO, THAT BYTES!

"I've gotten several used laptops there. Price, service, and knowledgeable staff." – *Gareth Pollard*

4005 W. PARMER, W1001 S. I-35, ROUND ROCK, WWW.DISCOUNTELECTRONICS.COM

Sporting Goods

Whole Earth Provisions

FINALISTS: ANOTHER ROUND DISC GOLF, MEDUSA SKATES, NO-COMPLY SKATESHOP, THE PEDDLER

"I have never gone wrong with a Whole Earth purchase. They consistently stock 'good' gear, which means reliable, comfortable, practical, long-lasting, and sometimes stylish."

– *John McKiernan-González*

4477 S. LAMAR, 1014 N. LAMAR, WWW.WHOLEEARTHPROVISION.COM

Comics/Fandom Store

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy

FINALISTS: AUSTIN BOOKS & COMICS, BAT CITY GAMES & COMICS, JUNIOR'S COMICS AND CARDS, TRIBE COMICS AND GAMES

"Rare finds and nice employees." — *Mona Sarkiss*

2438 W. ANDERSON STE. B-1, WWW.DLAIR.NET

Game Store

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy

FINALISTS: EMERALD TAVERN, GAME KASTLE, TANUKI GAMES, TRIBE COMICS AND GAMES

"Dragon's Lair is simply a foundation of the tcg/boardgame community. They've been around for ever. They do their best to support every category of tabletop enjoyer and time proves that."

— *Joshua Montgomery*

2438 W. ANDERSON STE. B-1, WWW.DLAIR.NET

Austin Gifts/Souvenirs

Atown

FINALISTS: AUSTIN GIFT COMPANY, BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART MUSEUM STORE, CLOVER + MAVEN, HAND MADE AT NUTTY BROWN

"Atown is one of the most fun OG Austin places to shop for local and quirky gifts." — *Kirtie Dahya*

5502 BURNET RD., WWW.KEEPTOWNWEIRD.COM

Shopping Wild Card

I Slay

(plus-size community clothing swap)

FINALISTS: COLLECTED BY BLACKBIRDS (VINTAGE APPAREL & HOME GOODS), GOLDEN MEAN (GIFT SHOP/ART GALLERY/VINTAGE HOME GOODS)

"This is such a wholesome and beautiful organization. When I walked into their swap, I felt so at home, comfortable, and uplifted!"

— *Cecilia Rodriguez*

WWW.ISLAYLIFE.ORG



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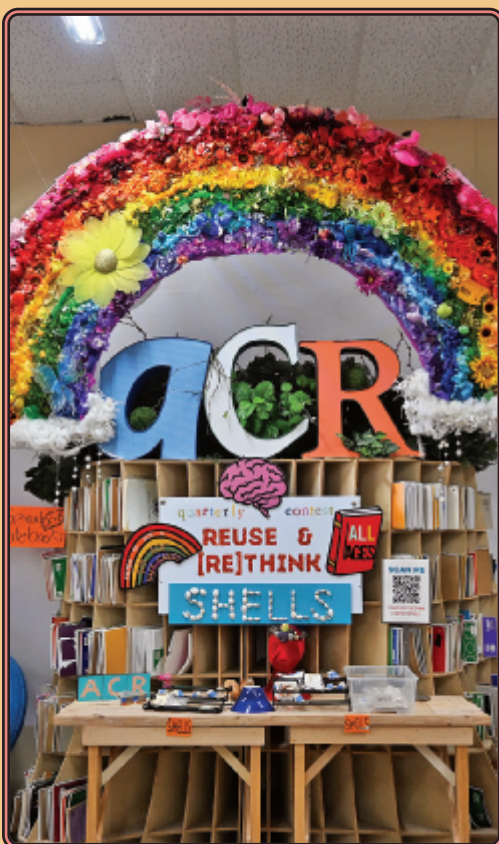


PHOTO BY ZEKE BARBARO

Arts & Crafts Store

Austin Creative Reuse

FINALISTS: BEEHIVE CRAFT STUDIO, JERRY'S ARTARAMA, THE PAPER + CRAFT PANTRY, SEA OF BEADS

"Austin Creative Reuse isn't just about what you find at the center — it's about the really cool people you meet there and the inspiration you get around every corner."

— *Sharon Yarbrough*

2005 WHEELS, WWW.AUSTINCREATIVEREUSE.ORG

ENDING THE WAR ON DRUGS THROUGH HARM REDUCTION

Save the Date for Overdose Awareness Day
August 31st



Join us to honor lives lost and advocate for change at
Come and Take it - 2015 E Riverside Dr
Sunday, August 31st 6PM
Learn more: texasharmreduction.org



PHOTO BY JANA BIRCHUM

Most Joyful Homegrown Seed Shop

Joy Max Jardín

Jennymarie Jemison isn't just selling seeds – she's growing a joyful, radically welcoming gardening movement. Joy Max Jardin makes gardening in Austin approachable, productive, and full of pollinators, from tea gardens to cut flowers and backyard butterfly hostels. Her seed collections are designed for maximum output with minimal input (that's efficiency, friends). Follow along for compost-the-patriarchy vibes, timely monthly planting tips, and her weekly Instagram inspo via "Sunday Nature Church." Bonus points for being a proud participant in World Naked Gardening Day. Hat optional. Enthusiasm required.

WWW.JOYMAXJARDIN.COM



PHOTO BY MATT PANERA

Best Midcentury Modern Record Equipment and Furniture

Living in Stereo

Living in Stereo understands what it means to have a fulfilling music listening experience. The South Austin store feels like a 1960s time capsule with their notable collection of rock, country, and jazz records from the era, and they have a vast array of analog stereo equipment to get the most out of those rich sounds. They also have midcentury modern chairs and couches for your listening comfort – and an in-store coffee shop is currently under construction to maximize the experience.

4825 WEIDEMAR LN. #600, LIVINGINSTEROATX.COM

Best Way to Display Your Inner Darkness

Pallbearer Press

Is your wardrobe too bright and cheery? Why don't you take things down a notch with some Pallbearer Press shirts or shorts depicting skeletons bearing the sickle of death, the rotting flesh of zombies, murderous alien beings, or everyone's fave lycanthrope, the Wolfman. They've got decor covered too: *Frankenhooker* figures, *Casket Kids*, *Evil Dead* blankets, *Return of the Living Dead* tapestries, and the like will surely deaden up your living space. Fans of the macabre must make this the first shopping stop on their list.

6513 CIRCLE S. RD., PALLBEARERPRESS.COM

Best Ethical Shopping Spree

Slow Fashion Festival

Slow Fashion Festival stitches together brands, makers, organizers, and thinkers answering the call to change our high-consumption mindset towards clothes. Since their founding in 2022, the biannual Slow Fashion Fest has become a hub for conscientious shoppers across Austin. From panels to runway shows, the festival showcases sustainable solutions to keep clothes in your closet and find ethically produced, often locally made, items to become your new favorites. Their market space features transparent brands dedicated to fairness, creativity, and responsibility.

WWW.SLOWFASHIONFESTIVAL.COM

Birdhouse Books and Gifts



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COURTESY OF HOWDY'S

Best Neverending Vintage

Howdy's Western Market

Howdy's markets, held on the fourth Sunday of every month, feel like an exceptionally curated yard sale. From the front stoop of their East Austin storefront, the market appears to be the size of a yard sale, too. But peek through the front-yard booths of sturdy jackets and silky slips, peruse shelves of Western-inspired accoutrements inside, and then – surprise surprise – beyond the back door lies a delightful open-air maze of vintage clothing and jewelry, records and furniture, trinkets, art, and plants. Accompanied by fittingly eclectic country-tinged tunes, you can soothe your weary shopper's soul and sidestep through booths of cowboy treasures. Worry about finding your way out later.

2804 MANOR RD., WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/SHOPHOWDYS

Best Southside Secondhand Shopping Stockpile

USE2 Neighborhood Reuse Center

Nestled between various artists' studios within Thornton Road Business Park is a secondhand stockpile of, well, almost everything. USE2's reuse repository hosts craft supplies, computer parts, baby and toddler toys, books for all ages, forgotten Happy Meal treats still wrapped in plastic, jigsaw puzzles, and, goodness gracious, *so many board games*. Though this nonprofit shop's focus is on providing for families, teachers, and schools, all are welcome to wander their stacks. There you might just find your next pre-loved and reasonably priced treasure.

2311 THORNTON RD., UNIT O,
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/USE2AUSTIN

Best Spot to Shop and Nosh in the 512

812 Outdoor Market

Juicy barbacoa tacos packed with lime, cilantro, and white onion. Heaping cups of elote en vaso slathered in creamy mayo and dusted with chili powder. Fresh-cut summer fruit sprinkled with Tajin and drizzled with chamoy. At 812 Outdoor Market, vendors dish out bold Mexican flavors alongside an eclectic mix of goods. Shoppers can browse Harley-Davidson T-shirts, children's toys, unsheathed machetes, and even live chickens and parakeets. The sprawling open-air market is the perfect place to spend an afternoon, browsing stalls with intricate handmade woodworks and hopping between food trucks. Whether you're hunting for the perfect snack or a surprising treasure, 812 offers a little bit of everything.

8714 FM 812, WWW.812MARKET.COM

Best Paperback Pop-Up

Austin Used Book Collective

Fight e-book supremacy! Buy used paperbacks! In this fight, Austin Used Book Collective's got you covered. This group of indie booksellers – Rand Renfrow, Idle Hands Books, Josiah Simon, Sleeper Books, and Time Being Books – share a love for reading, collecting, and the feeling of a paperback heavy in thine hand. Their frequent pop-up book markets offer not only their own unique cultivations – rare German tomes, coffee-table art catalogs, sumptuous sketched horror schlock – but also guest vendors who've included, to date, vintage comic collectors, other used-book brass, and even Austin-based bookmakers. Try and take these paperbacks, Bezos!

WWW.AUSTINUSEDBOOKCOLLECTIVE.COM

Best Tiny Shop to Soak Up Centuries-Old Books

Livra Books

This used bookstore, which opened in Hyde Park last September, welcomes customers even before they walk inside with small carts of assorted books sitting outside. When you enter the homey interior, it becomes clear that Livra's collection is thoughtful and eclectic. Books of all kinds are found on the shelves, from new releases to first-edition rarities from the 19th century, with subjects ranging from architecture to film to the natural sciences. In addition, the store has an extensive collection of Spanish novels, many of which owner Moctezuma Seth Gonzalez acquired on his travels in Latin America.

4101 GUADALUPE #200, WWW.LIVRABOOKS.COM



COURTESY OF PRISM PARADE

Best Shimmer for Eighties Babies

Prism Parade

Nail polish purveyor Prism Parade – a side project of Austin artisan Jill Patton of Luna Tigre Candles – has released seven sparkle-tastic collections since its launch last fall, but it's the most recent drop, Meet Me at the Mall, that will most thrill children of the Eighties. Bearing throwback names like Made U a Mixtape and 2 Straws 1 Julius and going hard on eye-bleeding neons with blacklight-reactive shimmers, these vegan, cruelty-free colors promise glimmer with a professional finish. Fun and function? Nailed it.

WWW.PRISMPARADE.COM

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2309 THORNTON RD., WWW.BANDAIDSCHOOLOFMUSIC.COM

1400 W. ANDERSON, WWW.GIRLSTART.ORG



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WWW.SOCCERSHOTS.ORG/AUSTIN**



PHOTO BY JANA BIRCHUM

Family Festival

ABC Kite Fest

FINALISTS: EYORE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY, EXCUSED ABSENCE COMEDY FESTIVAL, HONK!TX, KUTX ROCK THE PARK

"Classic Austin." – *Renee Maverick*

ZILKER PARK, 2100 BARTON SPRINGS RD., WWW.ABCKITEFEST.ORG



Birthday Cakes

Amy's Ice Creams

FINALISTS: MANDOLA'S ITALIAN KITCHEN, MERINGUE ME, QUACK'S, UPPER CRUST BAKERY

"Love Amy's Ice Creams, and love that they love Austin and give back to the community." – *Alli Phillips*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, AMYSICECREAMS.COM

Playground

Pease Park

FINALISTS: ALLIANCE CHILDREN'S GARDEN, MEANWHILE BREWING, PLAY FOR ALL ABILITIES PARK, WATERLOO ICE HOUSE SOUTHPARK MEADOWS

"Can you name a single other park that (1) hosts Eeyore's Birthday Party and (2) has a resident troll? Not to mention the improved play area, the landscaping, and the overall vibe." – *Chris Humphrey*

1100 KINGSBURY, WWW.PEASEPARK.ORG



Kids & Family Wild Card

Austin Steam Train Association

(kid-friendly train rides)

FINALISTS: THE WEE GALLERY (KID-RUN GALLERY IN BOULDIN CREEK), WINDSOR HOUSE NANNIES (NANNY PLACEMENT AND SITTING SERVICES)

"My littles love the North Pole Flyer every Christmas!" – *Lupita Gray*

401 E. WHITESTONE BLVD., STE. C-100, CEDAR PARK, WWW.AUSTINSTEAMTRAIN.ORG



BEEHIVE CRAFT STUDIO

we are so grateful to be part of Austin's creative community!

thank you for voting in the Chronicle's reader poll ♥

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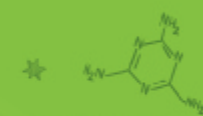
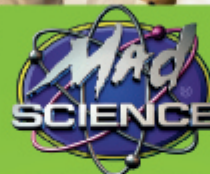
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THE
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KIDS & FAMILY

★ Critics Picks ★

25

Best Use of the Internet to Preserve Wildlife

Alveus Sanctuary

It's common knowledge that cute animals (and all animals are cute, in our opinion) are a surefire way to viewership online. That often amounts to a grainy camera put in an enclosure and little else. Alveus' mixture of livestreams, video shorts, and social media savvy, spearheaded by sanctuary founder Maya Higa, is a great way for kids to zoom in on wild-life (or for adults to just enjoy the slow TV Zen of a sleeping fox or a tortoise munching on greens). Add in a few visits from internet celebrities like HasanAbi or Pokimane for lighthearted content and you have a recipe for clicks *and* education.

WWW.ALVEUSSANCTUARY.ORG

Best Prehistoric Party

Dino Days

Way way back, in the tail-end of the Mesozoic Era, a stray *Ornithomimus* gads about in prehistoric Texas. In 1992, Dr. Mike Duffin discovers the theropod's tracks in Zilker Park, where a limestone quarry had been cleared for a future butterfly garden. Were this a movie, here's where time skips again, to the 21st century, and we see kids, parents, and paleontologists populating the Hartman Prehistoric Garden at Zilker Botanical Garden to celebrate this dino-tastic legacy. In what has now become a spring tradition, families can enjoy not just hands-on crafting but exploration of the garden's more than 100 Cretaceous cycads, conifers, and other period-accurate plants. Now there's family fun 66 million years in the making.

WWW.ZILKERGARDEN.ORG/DINO-DAYS-2



COURTESY OF THE TEXAS SCIENCE & NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Best New Dino Dig

Discovery Center at Texas Science & Natural History Museum

Most kids can't keep their hands to themselves, and at the Discovery Center, they don't have to. This ground-floor exhibit offers kids and families a unique chance for hands-on dinosaur exploration, bones and all. New this May, the center introduces young learners to the science of paleontology using interactive stations and engaging exhibits. The center comes after a major revamp in 2022 when extensive renovations and a name change refreshed the formerly Texas Memorial Museum. As this new addition puts a spotlight back on Austin's only natural science and history museum, it's the perfect excuse to take the family, let the kids pick up a femur or two, and feel for yourselves why we chose the Discovery Center as our pick for the best new dino dig in town.

2400 TRINITY, WWW.SCIENCEMUSEUM.UTEXAS.EDU



COURTESY OF BUDDY BEAR

Best PJ's for Pint-Sized Austinites

Buddy Bear

All parents know that the most rewarding part of having kids is the promise of dressing them in cute cowboy-themed onesies. Thankfully, Mueller's newest children's clothing store, Buddy Bear, understands this universally known fact, as its walls are prepped with various tiny fabrics adorned with Austin's most iconic logograms. Whether you choose jammies sporting bats, the Pennybacker Bridge, and Tex-Mex tacos, or ones with guitar picks declaring your kiddo's live-music-capital bona fides, new parents can't go wrong at this adorable emporium servicing all their baby and big kid needs.

1905 ALDRICH ST. #140, WWW.SHOPBUDDYBEAR.COM

Tartiest Lesson in Empathy

Mistaco! A Tale of Tragedy y Tortillas

"Eat your feelings" gets a positive spin in this delightful picture book from award-winning Austin illustrator and debut author Eliza Kinkz. After a day of debacles, young Izzy vents – and boy oh boy do we find her flair for drama relatable – then learns a valuable lesson about owning and getting over feelings of shame. The whole family gets in on the exercise of turning mistakes into "mistacos" for a universally applicable lesson in self-acceptance and empathy. A Spanish-language edition is expected in August.

WWW.ELIZAKINKZ.COM

Best Rec Center for Everyone

Lorraine "Grandma" Camacho Activity Center

A standout of Austin's Parks & Rec Department, there's no better place get your kid involved than Camacho. Leaning hard into the laid-back sensibility that gave East Austin its reputation while also adeptly utilizing the natural wonders of Lady Bird Lake, they offer affordable summer camps, film camps, and afterschool programs focused on mountain biking, kayaking, rock climbing, hiking, fishing, and archery, as their incredibly kind and attentive staff raise the bar for what you can reasonably expect from city government. They also offer adaptive recreation for adults of all abilities. Go check it out!

34 ROBERT T. MARTINEZ JR., WWW.AUSTINTXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/LORRAINE-GRANDMA-CAMACHO-ACTIVITY-CENTER

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PHOTO BY RALPH ARVESEN / COURTESY OF TXRD

Alternative / Amateur Sports

Texas Roller Derby

FINALISTS: ARENA WEAPON ARTS, AUSTIN COMMUNITY SOCCER ASSOCIATION, AUSTIN WOMEN'S BOXING CLUB COMPETITION TEAM, SKY CANDY

"The best art/cruelty ratio." – *Steven Harding*

WWW.TXRD.COM



Golf Course

Butler Pitch & Putt

FINALISTS: BARTON CREEK COUNTRY CLUB, HANCOCK GOLF COURSE, HARVEY PENICK GOLF CAMPUS, LIONS MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSE

"The staff are so kind and helpful. It's a fun outing for any kind of golfer and easy to play a round and have a beer." – *Ann Francesse*

201 LEE BARTON, WWW.BUTLERPITCHANDPUTT.COM

Bowling Alley

Highland Lanes

FINALISTS: BULL & BOWL, PINSTACK, TEXAS UNION UNDERGROUND, WESTGATE LANES

"Old-school, great enchiladas, love the location."

– *Mary Anne Gunn*

8909 BURNET RD., WWW.HIGHLANDLANES.COM

Yoga

Black Swan Yoga

FINALISTS: FLOW YOGA, MY VINYASA PRACTICE, THE RETREAT, WILD HEART YOGA

"How can you beat donation-based yoga? And every instructor has so much creativity with their class." – *Alex Earle*

VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WWW.BLACKSWANYOGA.COM

Personal Trainer

María Rodríguez

FINALISTS: SAGE BROUSSARD, BRIANA ELLSWORTH, MICHAEL JAY PALSER, MARLOW MCSHAN

"NO ONE DOES IT LIKE MARÍA! Someone so strong and so motivating and so kind!"

– *Isaiah João*

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/MARIACRISTALDEEASTLOS

THANK Y'ALL

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austinwomensboxingclub.com

Bike Trail/Track

Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake

FINALISTS: 9TH STREET BMX, BRUSHY CREEK REGIONAL TRAIL, SOUTHERN WALNUT CREEK TRAIL, VELOWAY

"I moved last year so I could live two blocks from that trail. So, yeah, I'm biased." — *Richard Knopf*

WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/ANN-AND-ROY-BUTLER-HIKE-AND-BIKE-TRAIL-AND-BOARDWALK-LADY-BIRD-LAKE

Place to Walk

Ann and Roy Butler Hike-and-Bike Trail at Lady Bird Lake

FINALISTS: BRUSHY CREEK REGIONAL TRAIL, MUELLER LAKE PARK, SHOAL CREEK TRAIL, SOUTHERN WALNUT CREEK TRAIL

"I'll never get tired of seeing the bats fly along the Austin skyline during a summer sunset." — *Jordan Johnson*

WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/DEPARTMENT/ANN-AND-ROY-BUTLER-HIKE-AND-BIKE-TRAIL-AND-BOARDWALK-LADY-BIRD-LAKE

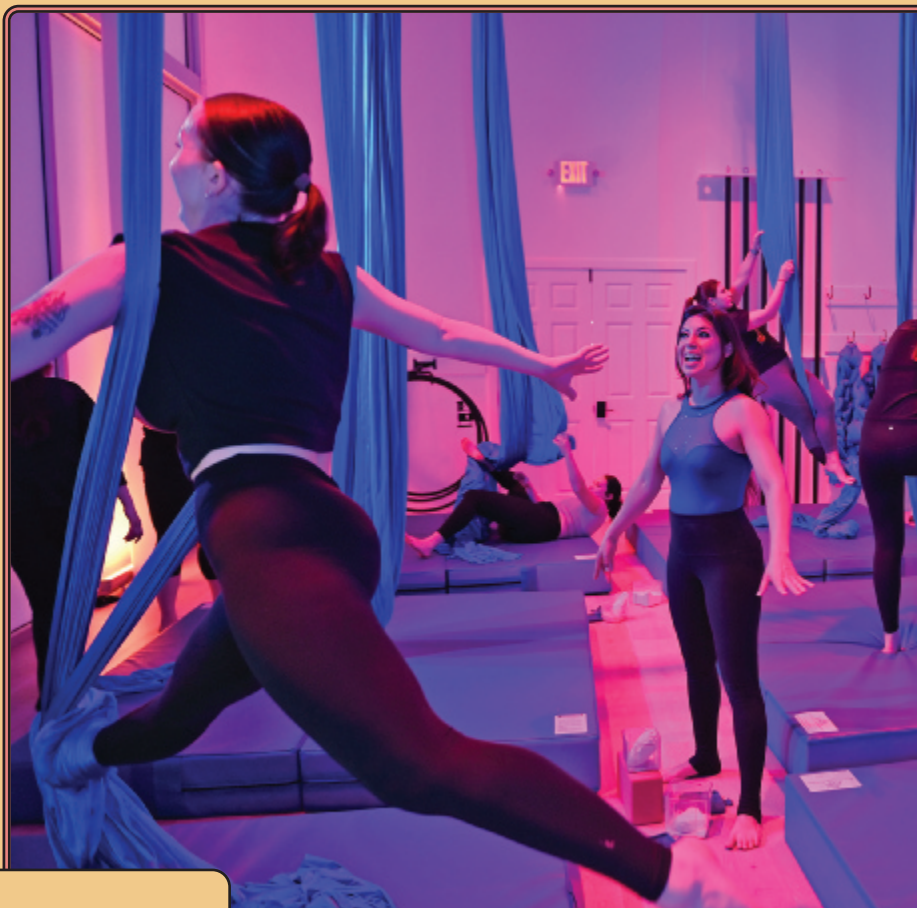


PHOTO BY @GEORGESPICTURES

Sports & Recreation Wild Card

soFly Social

(pole dance & aerial arts studio)

FINALISTS: FITCIDENCE (BEAT-BASED FITNESS STUDIO), SWIFT FIT EVENTS (CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY FITNESS EVENTS)

"I had such a great experience and can't wait to continue my classes!!" — *Jacky Aragon*

979 SPRINGDALE #112, WWW.SOFLY.SOCIAL



PHOTO BY @DANNY.MCFLY

Gym

East Austin JiuJitsu Parlor

FINALISTS: AUSTIN WOMEN'S BOXING CLUB, THE MAT MARTIAL ARTS & FITNESS, ONNIT GYM, OUTWELLNESS

"Dedication, hard work, and inclusiveness! Good people that deserve recognition!"

— *Bob Trevino*

979 SPRINGDALE RD. SUITE #111, WWW.EASTAUSTINJIUJITSU.COM

Dog-Friendly Space

Yard Bar

FINALISTS: MEANWHILE BREWING CO., MUTTS CANINE CANTINA AUSTIN, NEIGHBORS DOG PARK, THE WATERING BOWL

"Best, friendliest, most capable staff. My dog is obsessed." — *Emma Jane Hopper*

6700 BURNET RD., WWW.YARDBAR.COM

Outdoor Race

ThunderCloud Subs Turkey Trot

FINALISTS: ASCENSION SETON AUSTIN MARATHON, ASCENSION SETON CAPTEX TRI, RUN FOR THE WATER, STATESMAN CAP 10K

"Yearly tradition! It helps because I'm going to be eating plenty of calories later that day." — *Afshan Miri*

WWW.THUNDERCLOUD.COM/TURKEYTROT

Place to Camp

Enchanted Rock

FINALISTS: INKS LAKE STATE PARK, KRAUSE SPRINGS, MCKINNEY FALLS STATE PARK, RIVER FOREST HAVEN

"A spiritual haven in the Hill Country." — *Tex Obie*

16710 RR 965, FREDERICKSBURG, WWW.TPWD.STATE.TX.US/STATE-PARKS/ENCHANTED-ROCK

Out-of-Town Hike

Enchanted Rock

FINALISTS: BASTROP STATE PARK, PEDERNALES FALLS STATE PARK, PURGATORY CREEK NATURAL AREA, SAN GABRIEL RIVER TRAIL

"Amazing view from the top. Walk up the rock or be more adventurous going up Turkey Peak." — *Katrina Farthing*

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PHOTO BY DARRELL ORIBELLO, JR.

Best Inclusive Safe Space for Muay Thai Training

The Old Guard Thai Boxing Club

Ever wished you knew how to properly throw an elbow? Whether beginner, hobbyist, or competition-bound, every athlete has a space at Old Guard. Muay Thai trainees build confidence, skills, and stamina in a warehouse-turned-gym in East Austin, down the street from Buddy's Burgers. This boxing club offers impressively versatile "Art of Eight Limbs" martial art training plus a strict commitment to upholding "Muay Ying" values, a movement advocating for gender equality, inclusivity, and safety in combat sports. Try a class, work up a sweat, reward yourself with some seasoned fries and a milkshake. Everyone needs some self-defense, community, and improved mental health these days.

1702 ALDRIDGE DR. #A1, WWW.THEOGTHAIBOXINGCLUB.COM

Best Championship-Winning Upset

LOVB Austin

Despite a talented roster primarily composed of UT Volleyball alumni and international veterans, LOVB Austin surprisingly finished the inaugural LOVB Pro regular season with a 5-11 record. Seeded fifth for the league's six-team postseason, LOVB Austin showcased resilience to capture the first-ever League One Volleyball Championship. LOVB Austin overcame 2-set deficits in each of their first two playoff matches – which included an upset of top-seeded LOVB Atlanta in the semi-finals – before sweeping fellow underdogs LOVB Omaha in the championship game. Former Longhorn standout Madisen Skinner earned LOVB Finals MVP after notching 73 points during the team's blistering, title-winning run.

WWW.LOV.B.COM/TEAMS/LOVB-AUSTIN-VOLLEYBALL

Best Long Game

Austin Outlaws

Austin Outlaws, one of the longest-running full-contact women's football teams in the United States, have embodied the famous phrase "for the love of the game." Remarkably, president/coach Lily Messina has been with the 501(c)(3) nonprofit since its first season. The semi-pro squad celebrated their 25th anniversary this year, with City Council Member José Velásquez proclaiming May 31, 2025, as "Austin Outlaw Day." Though this past season didn't go as hoped on the gridiron, the Outlaws won the inaugural Independent Women's Football League championship in 2001. The team currently competes in the Women's Football Alliance.

WWW.AUSTINOUTLAWS.COM

Best Reminder to Stop and Enjoy the View

Benches Along the Southern Walnut Creek Trail

Those who bike, walk, or run the stretch of the Southern Walnut Creek Trail north of Loyola Lane know the exhausting incline that levels off with some panoramic views of Downtown Austin. However, those views are easily missed from all the huffing and puffing. Thankfully the community-oriented arts crew at Something Cool Studios had the bright idea to put out a call for artists to paint a few benches and install them along the trail to remind your sweaty ass to plant it for a few and take in the sights. Maybe just wipe it down when you get up.

WWW.SOMETHINGCOOLSTUDIOS.COM



JANA BIRCHUM

Best Game Changer in Public Play

4ATX Foundation Mini-Pitches

In a city where green space isn't always evenly distributed, Austin FC's nonprofit arm is leveling the playing field – literally. Since 2023, the 4ATX Foundation and its community partners have been transforming empty lots and overlooked corners into bright, durable mini soccer pitches, free and open to the public. These pint-sized fields in places like Dove Springs and Taylor offer more than a space to kick around a ball: They're safe zones for youth, hubs for neighbors, and proof that grassroots goals can change a community. It's the beautiful game, made beautifully accessible.

WWW.AUSTINFC.COM/4ATX-FOUNDATION

Best Spiller of Blood

Dimitri Alexandrov

In the world of professional wrestling, those brave and unhinged souls who risk their flesh and bones in weapon-wielding death matches are a rare and dangerous breed. Few fighters are mentioned with more terrified reverence than that of the bloody, bloody bear fighter. Just don't let it slip that this globe-trotting, title-draped, and blood-dripping maniac known as Death Match Jesus is also the kind heart and soul of Austin's grappling scene.

WWW.INSTAGRAM.COM/DIMITRI_ALEXANDROV



COURTESY OF JAPAN-AMERICA SOCIETY OF GREATER AUSTIN

Best Pup "Parādo"

Shiba ATX Pawrade

Shiba Inu. You've seen them rise to fame as the "doge" meme and become the face of a cryptocurrency, but in case you were wondering, yes, they are an actual breed. In fact, there are lots of them here in Austin! Every year, the Japan-America Society of Greater Austin hosts a day of fun in serene Pease Park to honor our adorable, very fluffy, foxlike friends with events like origami crafting, a dog talent show, lessons on how to speak Japanese to your dog, and, of course, the Shiba Inu parade walk. We give the Shiba Inu "Komyuniti" Spirit Award to JASGA for their dedication to celebrating Japanese culture, community spirit, and the beloved Shiba Inu. As the meme goes: WOW! Much fun. Such honor.

WWW.JASGA.AUSTIN.ORG

Best Football x Football Double

Vandegrift High School

"The double" is a term used in association football (soccer) when a club wins its country's top-tier division and primary domestic cup competition in the same season. Leander ISD's Vandegrift High School accomplished a different type of football double during the 2024-25 academic year as its football and boys' soccer team each won the UIL 6A Division II state championship for the first time in school history. Quarterback Miles Teodecki threw two touchdowns in Vandegrift's 24-17 championship game victory over Southlake Carroll. Meanwhile, the boys' soccer team defeated Mesquite High School 3-1 in the 6A Division II state finals. All in all, a great year for the Vandegrift Vipers.

WWW.VHS.LEANDERISD.ORG

Best Proof L's Can Become W's

UT Women's Softball

This year's Texas Longhorns softball team turned heartbreak into motivation en route to the program's first national championship. The sixth-seeded Longhorns avenged last year's finals loss to bitter rivals Oklahoma by defeating the Sooners for the first time in the Women's College World Series. From there, a semifinals victory against the other UT, the Tennessee Volunteers, set up an exciting championship matchup against Texas Tech and their million-dollar ace, NiJaree Canady. Texas ran out to an early five-run lead against the Red Raiders in their winner-take-all Game 3 – televised to an average audience of 2.4 million viewers according to ESPN – and never looked back.

WWW.TEXASLONGHORNS.COM/SPORTS/SOFTBALL

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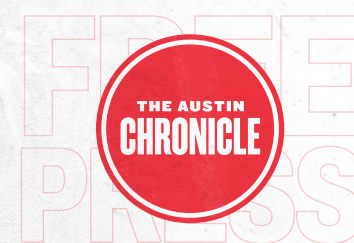
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2025
MLS
ALL-STAR WEEK



ALL-STAR
Skills Challenge

JULY 22ND AT 8PM



MLS ALL STARS
Versus
LIGA MX ALL STARS

JULY 23RD AT 8PM

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!