

The 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award Honoree, pg. 2



Bosque County Seat

Est. 1854

Meridian Chamber of Commerce

Spring, 2014

News

2014 Chamber Board Officers:

President: Miriam Wallace,
Wallace Sight & Sound

Vice President: Jason Hurley,
Mustang Dental

Treasurer: Sharla Rowland,
First Community Bank

Secretary: Juanita Miller,
Miller Septic & Port-a-Pots

Directors:

Linda Calhoun,
Main Street Antiques

Stefanie Cobb,
Cobb Ranch Properties

Jim Cole,
Associate Member

Past President: Madelyn Rieke,
RARE Motorsports

Kris Toman,
Center Pointe Barber Shop

Kay Duke – Ex-Officio,
Meridian Chamber of Commerce

CHAMBER on the MOVE:

NEW MEMBERS: 15

RENEWED MEMBERS: 89

MEMBERSHIP TOTAL: 104

CHAMBER INQUIRIES:

OFFICE VISITORS: 84

MEMBER REFERRALS: 28

RELOCATION PACKET: 1

TOURISM PACKET: 1

Two Barbecue Cookoffs & Summer Fun for the Kids Saturday, June 14 at Bosque Bottoms

The wonderful aroma of smoking brisket, chicken and ribs will again drift through Meridian when the two annual summer barbecue cookoffs kick off on Friday, June 13 at Bosque Bottoms. The ChiggerFest Barbecue Cook-off, sponsored by the Meridian Chamber of Commerce, is open to cooking teams residing in Bosque county as well as the surrounding counties. The Bosque County Go Texan Cookoff is open to residents of Bosque County only. 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners of each category of brisket, chicken and ribs of the HOT Cookoff will receive prize money. 1st and 2nd place in the Bosque County Go Texan (brisket) cookoff will receive trophies.

The top winner of both contests will have their entry fee of \$200 paid in the National Championship Barbecue Cookoff which will be held on October 24–25, 2014. The top winner of the Bosque County Go Texan Cookoff will also have



Photo by David Duke

their entry paid to the 2014 Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo. Bosque County residents can enter one or both contest.

Hot dogs, sausage on a stick, cookies, chips and drinks are just some of the food and refreshments that will be on hand so bring the kids out for lunch or just a snack.

There will be a pie and cake contest and a dog show along with music. RV hook-ups are available for camping overnight or lease a spot to pitch a tent. Vendor booth space or a camping space can be reserved by contacting the Meridian Chamber of Commerce at 435-2966.

Bring the kids out to have some fun in the bounce house and cool off with a snow cone. For more details, an entry form to any of the contests or to be a sponsor of one of the activities, call the Meridian Chamber at (254)435-2966 or e-mail us at meridian-chamber@sbcglobal.net. You can pick up any of the entry forms at the Chamber office located at 107 N. Erath, Meridian.

Our Mission Statement

The mission of the Meridian Chamber of Commerce is to promote expansion and growth of our businesses through commerce and tourism and to partner with other local organizations to promote civic programs designed to increase civic pride in our community to make Meridian a great place to live, work and play.



The 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award Honoree

The 2014 Lifetime Achievement Award honoree was Dennis Clark owner of Meridian Ace Hardware. Dennis grew up in Arlington, Texas; after HS graduation he served in the National Guard, and then graduated from the University Texas at Arlington with a degree in Business Management.

Dennis is someone who truly loves the community of Meridian and the beauty of Bosque County. At 32 he knew he wanted to be here. He bought acreage and built a weekend home that would someday be his family's permanent residence. By age 44, with one son off at college, an opportunity too good to pass up knocked at his door and the family moved from Arlington to Bosque County.

Enrolling the 2

younger sons in Meridian Elementary and sending his wife, Mary Lou, to work for the school district, Dennis embarked on a venture that proved to be challenging and satisfying at the same time. Heart and soul were poured into the 4,000 square foot retail space to provide the community with access to as many necessary and desirable items as possible.

Even while working 60-70 hours a week, time was set aside for coaching baseball, being a member of the Lion's Club, helping the Chamber of Commerce, and serving on the Meridian Hospital Board. He served on the board of the National Championship Barbe-

cue Cookoff for 16 years. Amazed by the number of volunteers working together to put on the cook-off, Dennis saw the return of their efforts in the donations made to Meridian's service organizations and in the honor and widespread recognition Meridian gains by hosting a national event.

Some would use the word workaholic to describe a person as busy as this, but it is not a fitting term for Dennis because it implies a compulsion to work at the ex-

pense of other pursuits. Dennis is a loving father and husband; he balances time with family with time at work and a strong desire to support and grow our community. Dennis has always contributed to groups and organizations seeking donations for

their events whether they are from Meridian or other towns in Bosque County. He truly appreciates the fine work done by our Volunteer Fire Dept., our Police Dept., the Sheriff's office and the EMS first responders. He knows the value added to our community by all the Meridian Youth Support Groups and finds it hard to say no to Girl Scout cookies!

He takes pride in his employees efforts to provide good customer service. His energy and motivation to grow his business are invested in guiding his employees to know how to assist customers with finding what they need and helping them to solve any problems with a project

they are trying to complete. Dedication to customer service paved the way for an expansion in 2004, doubling the size of the store. In hopes of providing better service to the community, another 3,200 square feet is currently being added to the store, allowing for the addition of lumber, new building materials, a new line of paint and more sporting goods.

The Meridian Chamber of Commerce was thrilled to award this year's Lifetime Achievement Award to an honest, hard-working retailer who loves his community and seeks ways to help it grow. Be sure to join us in congratulating Dennis Clark. Meridian and Bosque County are fortunate to have Dennis and Meridian Ace Hardware.

New Chamber Website

Another great benefit of your chamber membership!

Meridian, Texas
Top of the Hill Country.

The Chamber office and board wants you to get the most out of your Chamber of Commerce membership. If you are a business member, church or non-profit organization we invite you to visit the new chamber website at www.meridian-chamber.com, look at your membership listing and let us know what you would like to add. Email us any logo's or pictures you want added as well as a bio or useful information. What would you like new residents or visitors to see when they pull up your listing? Let us know and we'll get it done.



New Business Ribbon Cuttings

American Inn & RV Park

A new business Ribbon Cutting was held for American Inn & RV Park on April 3rd. New owner Harry Patel also has a hotel in Buda, Texas. We are glad he chose Meridian; the renovations have been enormous.

They have replaced beds, furniture, entry and bath flooring. Added new AC units, plumbing, water heaters, toilets, electronic door locks, security camera system, Wi-Fi system and are doing interior and exterior painting.

Other improvements are still in progress, such as flat screen tvs, repaving the parking lot, landscaping, a new sign and ice and vending machines. Give them a call at (254)435-2851 or visit the website www.americaninnmeridiantx.com



Photo by Kimberly Smith

Brookshire Brother's

A new business Ribbon Cutting and festive grand opening was held at the new Brookshire Brother's grocery store, on March 26th. The high school band was there to play throughout the morning and finished with the Star Spangled Banner. Refreshments were served and gift bags handed out. A \$100

gift card was given to the 100th shopper each day through that week in celebration of Meridian being their 100th store. The excitement for the bright, roomy and well stocked store was very high.

Founded in 1921, Brookshire Brothers is 100% employee-owned. Its assets include 148 retail outlets including grocery stores, convenience stores, free standing pharmacy, tobacco and petro locations with two more stores planned for 2014. Its market stretches east of Lake Charles, Louisiana, west to Canyon Lake, Texas, north to Whitesboro, Texas and south to Ganado, Texas. For more information about Brookshire Brother's and its family of brands go to www.brookshirebrothers.com

They are famous for the fried chicken so if you haven't checked out the new store and deli...what are you waiting for?



Divine Assistance Living Services

A new business Ribbon Cutting was held for Divine Assistance Living Services in Whitney on Thursday, April 10th with owner, Jennifer Kidd, and her daughter.

Divine Living Assistance Services is an independently owned and locally operated company that provides home care services for elderly and disabled individuals. They offer short-term and live-in aides to assist residential clients in their daily activities, such as hygiene assistance and meal preparation. Some of their other services include ambulation assistance, medication reminders and transfers.

Their caring, devoted staff is available for one-hour visits or 24-hour care. "We are proud to provide personal, respite, and home care to our valued clients. As a licensed, bonded, and insured company, we ensure that you and your loved one will receive professional care with a personal touch," says Kidd.

If you are in Whitney, Texas stop in and see them at 1220 N. Brazos, Suite 1. They serve Hill County, Bosque County, Johnson County, Falls County and McLennan County areas. To receive home health care services from an experienced and dedicated care provider contact them at (254)694-8614 or email divinelivingassistance@gmail.com. You can also apply online or get more information on their website at www.divinelivingassistance.com.

*Thank You to these Members for their Special Investment
in the future success of the Meridian Chamber of Commerce:*

2014 Platinum Member:



Gold Members:



Business Partner Members:

City of Meridian

First Security State Bank

First National Bank

Texas-New Mexico Power

United Cooperative Services

Bronze Associate Members:

Rick & Jan Goon

Don & Mary Beth McMahon

Chamber Member

Spotlight

**Spotlight your business
by sponsoring one of
the 2014 Membership
meetings.**

\$50 includes:

- Advertising in the next newsletter
- Lunch for 2
- A five minute commercial
- Promotional materials placed on each table

Call or email to reserve a month... 7 meetings are still available.

(254) 435-2966
meridian-chamber@
sbcglobal.net

2014 Scheduled Events:

1st Thursday, Friday, & Saturday: Sales @ area Merchants

2nd Thursday: Membership Meeting & Luncheon;
12p-1p Meridian Civic Center

Last Friday of the month: Cork & Fork, 7p-10p
@ Red Caboose Winery, Meridian

Every Saturday: Market on the Square 9a-2p,
Bosque County Courthouse (weather permitting)

June 14: ChiggerFest/Bosque Go Texan BBQ Cookoff,
10a-3p @ Bosque Bottoms

June 28: Bosque County Old Settlers' Reunion,
11a-2p @ Meridian Civic Center

September 27: Pasture Golf

October 11: Lords Harvest @ First United Methodist Church

October 24-25: National Championship Barbecue Cookoff @
Bosque Bottoms

December 6: Christmas on the Bosque, Parade & Market

Please mark your calendars & plan to attend these events.

For more information call the Chamber office at

254-435-2966

**Mark your
calendars!**

The Meridian Chamber Newsletter design and layout courtesy of
Kimberley Smith of *Bosque Living Magazine*, (254) 675-4222.

2014 Meridian Chamber of Commerce Members

(* indicates new member)

5 - Five
A Plus Loans
Abuelita's Mexican Restaurant
American Inn*
Assurance Title Services*
ATMOS Energy
Avirett Agency
BCP Real Estate
Best Western - Velkommen
Bi-County Electric & Air*
Bosque Cen-Tex Title
Bosque County Cowboy Church
Bosque County Vet Clinic
Bosque Insurance
Bosque Living Magazine
Bosque Pest & Termite
Bosque Resort Restaurant & Bar
Briggs Freeman Sotheby's Int'l
Briley Auto Supply
Brookshire Brother's*
Cactus Grill
CASA-Cross Timbers Area*
Carlisle Real Estate
Carter BloodCare
Cedar Country Antiques & More
Center Pointe Barber Shop*
China House
Citizens State Bank
City of Meridian
Cobb Properties
Cooler Center
Crossroads Bar & Grill*
Cut-N-Up
Divine Living Assistance Services*
Double B Foods
DW Blues Band*
Edward Jones
Edwin S. Nichols Exploration
El Jardin*
Faith Lutheran Church
First Baptist Church
First Community Bank
First National Bank of Bosque County
First Security State Bank

First United Methodist Church
First United Pentecostal Church
Goodall Witcher Healthcare
Hill Top on Main, The
H & R Block
Hyde Farms
Integrity Plumbing
Jackie's Antiques
Koehler Law Firm
Lake Whitney Chamber of Commerce
Lawson Funeral Home
LKCM Radio Group / KOME
Lutheran Sunset Ministries
Main Street Antiques & Interiors
Meridian Ace Hardware
Meridian Car Wash
Meridian EDC *
Meridian ISD
Meridian Lion's Club
Meridian Public Library
Michael Group Real Estate, The
Miller Septic & Port-a-Pots
Morgan Street Burgers
Mr. Ed's Country Feed Store
Murphrey, Jane S. PC
Mustang Dental Care
Myers Cedar Yard
National Championship Barbecue Cookoff
Patton Land Company
Radde Ranch & Christmas Tree Farm
RARE Motorsports

Rivers Bend Doggie Drop Inn, The
Rountree Appliance
Rowland Realty
Rusty Armadillo RV Park
Screen Door Inn
Smith & Bratcher, P.C.
Skeeter Creek Gun Repair*
Texas-New Mexico Power
Triple J Ranch*
Trophy Inflatable Bounce House Rentals*
United Cooperative Services
Wallace Sight & Sound, Inc.
Webb-Hardin Estate Warehouse
Yellow Book USA
Your Community Phone Book

Associate Members

Peggy Brantley
Bob & Paula Boykin*
Jim & Patricia Cole
Kenn & Karen Cornett
Richard & Jane Creech
David & Kay Duke
Rick & Jan Goon
Gene & Aline Harville
Mary Jones
Sue B. Kerley
Don & Mary Beth McMahon
Mark & Teresa McMahon
Ray & Ernestene Miller
Pat Perry

Great Ways to Get Involved...

Monthly Chamber Membership Meeting:

Second Thursday of each month:

Informative Speakers, Good Community Fellowship, Great Meal.

Call 435-2966 for reservations

Committees:

Join One of Our Committees in 2014 & Help Make a Difference
By becoming active and involved, you help determine the direction the Chamber takes on issues that are important to the businesses and the community.



Why Should You Support the Chamber of Commerce?

Every profession and every citizen has the same stake in their city as does the retail merchant. When retail business is good, people pay their bills more promptly. Patients and clients, and the businessman's customers and employees, are the same people.

Businesses support the Chamber of Commerce because its functions are not only to bring more people and new money into the community, but to maintain and increase the earning power of those who are here. Increased population and a more prosperous community enables businesses to thrive. Throughout the U.S., many accountants, lawyers, and dentists are Chamber of Commerce leaders. It is not public spirit alone that prompts their interest. They know the value of the organization to any citizen...and they have no time for a dead town.

The professional, like the rest of the citizens, is certainly interested in a progressive, active community. The Chamber of Commerce makes every effort to keep the city progressing in every way. The professional can help by contributing to the main organization that is engaged in civic progress. They help the community by giving financial aid to make it a better community in every respect. The citizens can help by donating a little time to serve on a committee. The Chamber of Commerce is asserting sound leadership in the city. Give it your support, your voice, your influence.

A prosperous community for all is the goal—that's what you'll help maintain. Remember—membership in the Chamber of Commerce is the least expensive and most productive item in a budget. It does pay dividends!

Membership: Civic-minded men and women from businesses, professions, churches, etc. who share a common interest -- the betterment of the City. They put the UNITY in commUNITY!

Board of Directors: Elected from the membership by their fellow members; it is here that policies and programs are formulated and courses of action determined in accordance with the community's needs and priorities.

Staff: A staff of trained, experi-

enced professionals working with the members to accomplish the objectives and goals of the organization.

Committees: Active members, working together, studying problems, seeking solutions and exploring new ideas -- busy men and women giving of their time, talents and energies to help the City realize its potential.

Chamber of Commerce...Doing things most people feel just happen! Written by Gordon Dill, ceo@chamber101.com

Texas Tourism FAQ's

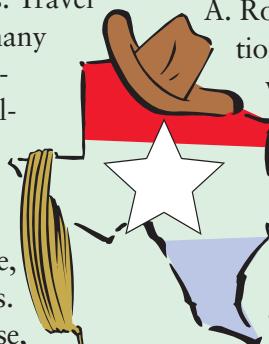
Q. What is the economic impact of tourism in Texas?

A. Preliminary estimates show that direct travel spending in Texas totaled more than \$67 billion in 2013, an increase of 3% over 2012. This directly supported 599,000 jobs and generated \$4.7 billion in state and local taxes. Travel supports jobs across many industry sectors including leisure and hospitality, transportation, retail trade, services, finance, real estate, construction, insurance, government and others. With numbers like these, travel matters to everyone who calls Texas home.

Q. How did the Texas hotel industry perform in 2013?

A. Texas hotels collected an estimated \$8.8 billion in revenues in 2013, an increase of 9% over the previous year. More than 93 million roomnights were sold across the state, with occupancy increasing 1.1 percentage points to 63.6%.

Q. How many domestic visitors travel to Texas destinations?



A. Domestic visitation to Texas destinations increased 6% over 2012 with an estimated 233.5 million domestic travelers in 2013. Roughly 70% were traveling for leisure versus 30% for business.

Q. How many international visitors travel to Texas?

A. Roughly 8.2 million international travelers visited Texas with direct travel spending of \$5.3 billion in 2012. Top origin markets include Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Brazil, Australia, Japan and China.

Q. How do these estimates compare to the previous year?

A. 2013 was a strong year for tourism in Texas with all indicators showing positive growth in visitation, economic impact and hotel performance. Final estimates for 2013 travel will be available in the summer.

Source: Travel Research Reports at www.travel.state.tx.us/TravelResearch.aspx; Office of the Governor, Economic Development & Tourism; 2013 estimates are preliminary and subject to revision, last updated: April 2014 needed money into the community rather than cannibalize the existing businesses of your neighbors.

Common Summer Travel Scams & Tricks

BBB warns of common scams and tricks to watch out for during summer vacation.

As families, students and friends gear up for their summer travel plans, BBB warns of the following scams and travel headaches that could potentially plague consumers this summer:

1. Fraudsters hacking internet connections in hotels. The FBI recently issued a warning to consumers about scam artists using internet connections in hotels to gain access to consumer's personal information using pop-up windows that appear as 'software updates.'

Tip: Avoid clicking on pop-up windows and suspicious advertisements. Perform software updates on laptops immediately before traveling, and download any computer updates directly from the software vendor's website.

2. Scam artists posing as a distressed family member or friend. Fraudsters pose as vacationing friends or family members asking for money to be wired to help them get out of a messy situation. This scam can come as an email or as a phone call.

Tip: Avoid wiring money. Attempt to first contact the said friend or family member directly. If needed, call other family members or friends to verify the story.

3. High-pressured travel club and sales pitches. Complaints to BBB show that many travel clubs promise huge discounts on hotels, airfare and cruises but fail to fully deliver despite the high cost of joining. In addition, complaints allege consumers felt misled and pressured into making an on-the-

spot decision.

Tip: Before signing up with a travel club, vacationers should do their research and check the company's BBB Business Review at www.bbb.org.

4. Sneaky cell phone data charges. When traveling abroad, some consumers do not realize their cell phone data plan doesn't cover the area they're traveling in. Even though those travelers may not be using their phone, roaming charges may still apply. Some complaints to BBB allege consumers were unaware that their cell data service was still operating while they traveled outside of their coverage area.

Tip: Before traveling abroad or out of your coverage area, contact your service provider for specific details regarding your individual

data and roaming plan and make appropriate changes prior to your departure.

5. The dark side of social media updates. One of the biggest mistakes travelers can make is to alert the world to the fact they are not in town by updating or posting on social media sites. Updates and tagged posts on sites like Facebook and Four Square can alert criminals to your exact location, leaving your home and personal belongings vulnerable.

Tip: It's best to keep your travel plans offline until you return from your vacation. If you must update, review your privacy settings before you leave. Change settings so that posts don't identify where you are. And don't be too specific with your updates.

We're Growing by Leaps & Bounds!

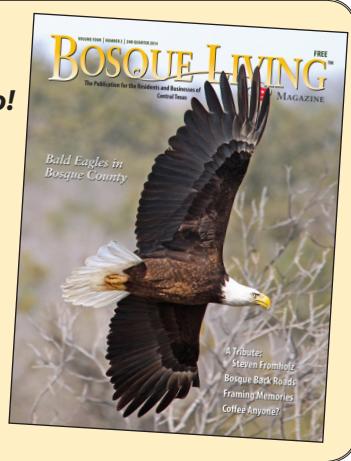
Distribution is in Bosque County and the surrounding five-county area including Waco!

BOSQUE LIVING MAGAZINE

- A premier Central Texas publication
- Frequency discounts available
- Free online exposure for advertisers

(254) 675-4222

BosqueLivingMagazine.com



Market on the Square – Bosque County Courthouse Square

Anyone with arts & craft items or homemade goodies is welcome to set up at the Courthouse Square on any Saturday that another event is not scheduled. Most Saturday's



you can find vendors with wonderful home cooked, home canned and homemade items selling their items on the square between 9a and 2p, weather permitting.

Tips to Protect You from Becoming a Victim of Identity Theft

- Don't carry your Social Security card or any documents that include your Social Security number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).
- Don't give a business your SSN or ITIN just because they ask. Give it only when required.
- Protect your financial information.
- Check your credit report every 12 months.
- Secure personal information in your home.
- Protect your personal computers by using firewalls and anti-spam/virus software, updating security patches and changing passwords



- for Internet accounts.
- Don't give personal information over the phone, through the mail or on the Internet unless you have initiated the contact or you are sure you know who you are dealing with.

If your tax records are not currently affected by identity theft, but you believe you may be at risk due to a lost or stolen purse or wallet, questionable credit card activity or credit report, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490, extension 245 (Monday–Friday, 7am–7pm local time;

Alaska and Hawaii follow Pacific time).

If you receive a notice from the IRS and you suspect your identity has been used fraudulently, respond immediately by calling the number on the notice.

If you did not receive an IRS notice but believe you've been the victim of identity theft, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 800-908-4490, extension 245 right away so they can take steps to secure your tax account and match your SSN or ITIN.

For more information, see the special identity theft section on IRS.gov and IRS Fact Sheet 2014-1, IRS Combats Identity Theft and Refund Fraud on Many Fronts.

Tips for Hiring the Right Lawn Care Company

For those that lack a green thumb, hiring a lawn care service or landscaper can ease the burden of beautifying your own yard. But, consumers should get clear, written expectations for what services the company will provide, and agree on a fee before work starts. Otherwise, dreams of a green wonderland could quickly turn into a brown wasteland.

In the past 12 months, your local BBB received over 150 complaints against landscaping and lawn maintenance contractors. Many of the complaints allege dissatisfaction with the services provided and companies not performing the agreed upon duties. Other complaints allege problems with billing.

BBB offers the following advice to help consumers find a lawn care company they can trust:

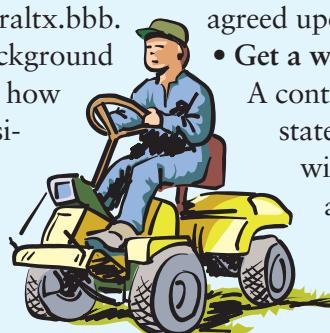
- **Know what you want from a lawn service.** Lawn care companies provide many services, so it is important to decide what services and products are appropriate for your needs and budget.
- **Find a trustworthy company.** Check out any company's BBB Business Review at centraltx.bbb.org to see important background on the business, such as how long they've been in business, ownership information and how they resolve complaints. For an online directory of Accredited Businesses visit checkbbb.org.

- **Check references.** Ask the company for references and photos of previously completed projects. Call all references and ask what their experience was working with the company and if they were satisfied

with the services provided.

- **Ask for a lawn inspection and free estimate.** Lawn care companies that quote a price without seeing your lawn may not give you an accurate estimate. A company should be willing to visit your home to provide you with an agreed upon fee.

- **Get a written agreement.** A contract should clearly state the services you will receive, guarantees and refund policies, as well as how and when payment will be handled. If you



are using a recurring service, the contract should also include how often the company will come out to work on your lawn, how to cancel the service and a schedule for when payments are due.