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PROFILES P72

# WACO

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**CELEBRATING  
30 YEARS  
OF CAMERON  
PARK ZOO**

BY SUSAN BEAN AYCOCK

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**54 REASONS  
TO LOVE WACO**



Vol 33 |

— In No Particular Order —

# 54 Reasons to Love Waco

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*Introduction by Emily Ober*

## WHEN COMING UP WITH OUR REASONS TO LOVE WACO THIS YEAR,

to say that it was difficult is an understatement. We got so many amazing submissions from our staff and contributors, and narrowing it down was quite the task. There were clear standouts as we got multiple submissions for places like Cameron Park Zoo, Fabled Bookshop & Cafe, Be Kind Coffee and others, but we also had new gems that we discovered in compiling our list. Somehow, we narrowed down our 140 submissions, though if we had our way, we would include them all. There are many reasons to love Waco and we love sharing them with readers every year as Waco grows and new businesses take root and new voices give insight as to why they love Waco.

From new outdoors spaces to take the family this summer to international dishes from across the globe to the people that make this big city feel like a small town, we are excited to present the 54 reasons to love Waco. May this list inspire you to explore Waco and discover what makes this city such a special place not only to us but to all who have made Waco their home. To view lists from previous years, visit [lovewaco.com](http://lovewaco.com).



By Avery Ballmann, Elizabeth Barnhill, Susan Bean Aycock, Lonnie Bradley, Polly Brown, Gretchen Eichenberg, Tori Hager, Leandra Humphreys, Lisa Jaska, Breanne Johnson, Michelle Johnson, Mallory McKeever, Anna Mitchael, Skylla Mumana, Emily Ober, Brittany Ross, Morgan Strehlow and Kevin Tankersley; Photos by Breanne Johnson and provided by Baylor Athletics, Baylor University, Cameron Park Zoo & Waco Symphony Orchestra

**1 ■ Bella Richards, manager at Baskin Robbins:**

They say ice cream makes everything better. But at Waco's Baskin Robbins, it's ice cream served by manager Bella Richards that makes the difference. She's the woman behind the cheerful smile that has been greeting customers for the past nine years and she said the best part about her job is the wonderful people she meets who come back time after time. But Richards is more than a manager, she's a mentor to many young people who get hired for their first job, some who do not have a lot of support at home. "I try to encourage them and give them good advice," Richards said. She said some employees have called her their "second mom" and that makes the hard work worthwhile. Former employees often stop in to say hello and Richards said she loves getting the scoop on where life takes them after BR. — *Gretchen Eichenberg*

**2 ■ Blue Corn Pancakes at**

**Milo All Day:** Milo's is so easy to love, and their blue corn pancakes are my favorite example of putting a fun twist on a brunch staple. Not only are they delicious but the vibrant color is totally on par with the fun and quaint style of this beloved Waco brunch spot. — *Mallory McKeever*

**3 ■ Waco Suspension Bridge:** Being a Wacoan, taking photos in front of the Waco Suspension Bridge is, well, just Waco. Alongside the ALICO building, it's our landmark, here way before the Silos were even built. So for me seeing the bridge make its remodeled debut with a full-fledged cattle drive reminiscent of the Chisholm Trail was a beautiful moment. Even more impressive that day was the slew of families, individuals and businesses that were there. Kids pointing, cameras flashing and families strolling. A perfect day in Waco, and yes, of course I got my picture! — *Michelle Johnson*





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**32 ■ Paletas at Helados La Azteca:** This place reminds me of the paletas (ice cream or fruit ice pops) that I used to get from a pushcart vendor when I lived in Mexico for a decade — only La Azteca has a lot more flavors. I'm partial to mango and coconut, but right now I have a freezer stockpile that includes banana, strawberry, Thai tea, horchata and cookies & cream. When warm weather hits, I take my insulated cooler and buy a dozen at a time to keep my frozen fixes on hand. They also have aguas frescas (fresh fruit waters), Bluebell ice cream and the kind of bulk candy you put in piñatas. The Colcord location at 15th Street is the one I go to; look for the huge mural of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo across from World Cup Café. There's also a location on Franklin Avenue — *Susan Bean Aycock*



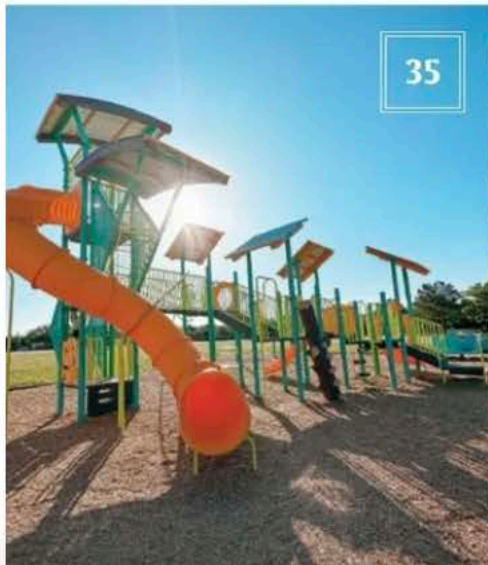
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**33 ■ Christian Fellowship at St. Alban's Episcopal Church:** Here, everyone feels welcome. I love the fellowship that the church provides through the exceptional music from the choir and organ, the vibrant Sunday School and Bible studies, the women and men's socials, the children and young adult programs and for the multiple events it hosts for the Waco community. We learn from each other through participating in the programs and grow as a congregation. There are multiple Sunday services to suit your schedule and the clergy delivers thought-provoking and clear messages through their sermons. At St. Alban's Episcopal Church, it's about more than the Sunday morning service, it's about the Christian fellowship. — *Polly Brown*



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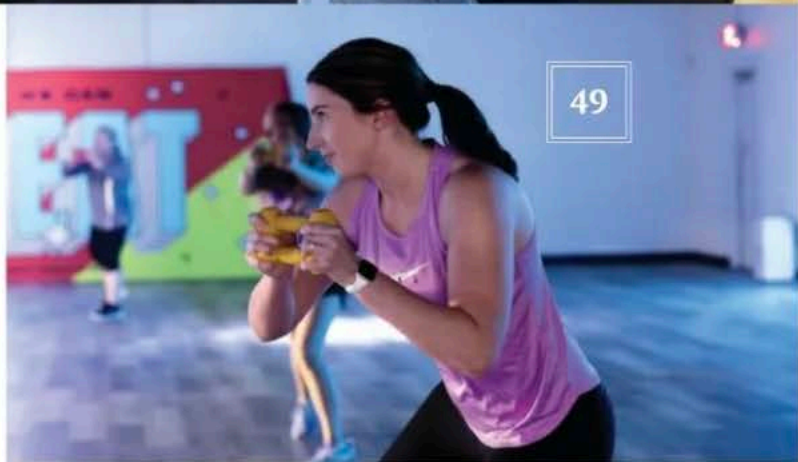
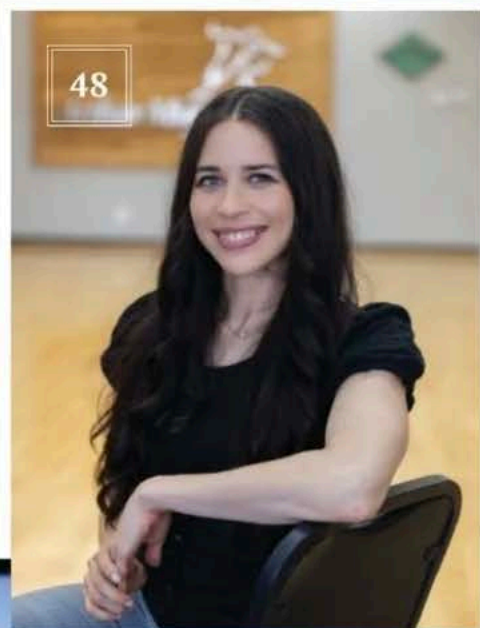
**34 ■ Snickerdoodles from Mo's Cookies:** The ultimate cinnamon-sugary cookie with a thick, cake-like texture awaits you at Mo's Cookies. Whether you stop by for just one to feed a craving or a dozen to take as a gift, Mo's Cookies never disappoints. But they are only open three days a week — Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 11 a.m.–6 p.m. — so plan ahead. — *Gretchen Eichenberg*



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**35 ■ White Hall Park:** Having young kids, we are always looking for new outdoor places to spend time so we decided to try out White Hall Park after hearing of the new playground that had been put in. This playground is absolutely where it's at! From a mommy and me swing to a full blown merry go round to a small play area for little kids all the way up to a three level rope climbing course for the big kids, this place has it all. My daughter has asked every day to go back. Vibrant colors, slides galore, fun for all, it's sure to tire out your kiddos! I know we will be spending a lot of time here this summer. — *Brittany Ross*



**47 ■ Meat Loaf Plate at Jess Soul Food:** I can hardly get past the lunch plate with meat loaf, mac 'n cheese and turnip greens with cabbage to try anything else, though sometimes I do mashed potatoes and gravy instead of mac. The portions are so big, there are always leftovers for a whole 'nother meal. Mom Jessica (the café's namesake) is the cook in the kitchen; daughter Brittany takes orders and runs the register, and they always want to know how you liked your meal. I'd go across town to eat there anyway, but it's a bonus that my son David works down the street and it's a convenient place to meet and has become our go-to place for a weekday lunch. Oh, and the cornbread is to die for. — *Susan Bean Aycock*

**48 ■ Lunchtime Workouts at REFIT Studio:** Lunchtime workouts at the REFIT Studio in downtown Waco have been the most fun way to prioritize movement and exercise in the midst of being a working mom. I used to avoid group fitness classes because I tend to compare myself to others and will become distracted by my own self-consciousness. I don't find that to be a problem when I walk into a REFIT class, though. The words displayed on the outside of the studio, Everybody Belongs, is more than just a mantra. Belonging and inclusivity is embodied by each instructor and studio member. It can be hard to make time for myself and my body in the thick of these early motherhood years, but REFIT classes make it a little easier to. I am finally starting to feel like myself again! — *Morgan Strehlow*

**49 ■ Caryn at the Arthur Murray Dance Studio:** I don't think my husband and I could have gone wrong with any of the teachers at Arthur Murray, but having Caryn as our first instructor was a gift. We showed up for country dance lessons, but thanks to Caryn's encouragement, now have learned everything from ballroom to salsa and even some tango. I'm not sure where one goes to tango in Waco, but if a spot ever opens up, we're ready. — *Anna Mitchael*

**50 ■ Pizza, Beer & Board Games at Southern Roots Brewing Company:** Tucked away on 8th Street downtown, Southern Roots is a chill place to hang out with friends or family on weekends. With their selection of flagship craft brews — H.O.T. Blonde, West of Czech Pilsner, Gunfighter IPA, Surfside Wheat Ale and ALICO American Lager — there's a local for every taste. Signature pizzas — including the Six Shooter (for cheese lovers), the Southern Belle (for a hint of sweetness) and El Diablo (for obvious reasons) — are handmade and hit the spot. There are lots of large tables that are perfect for one of the array of board games available at the place. Southern Roots also has Trivia Night every Tuesday. — *Gretchen Eichenberg*



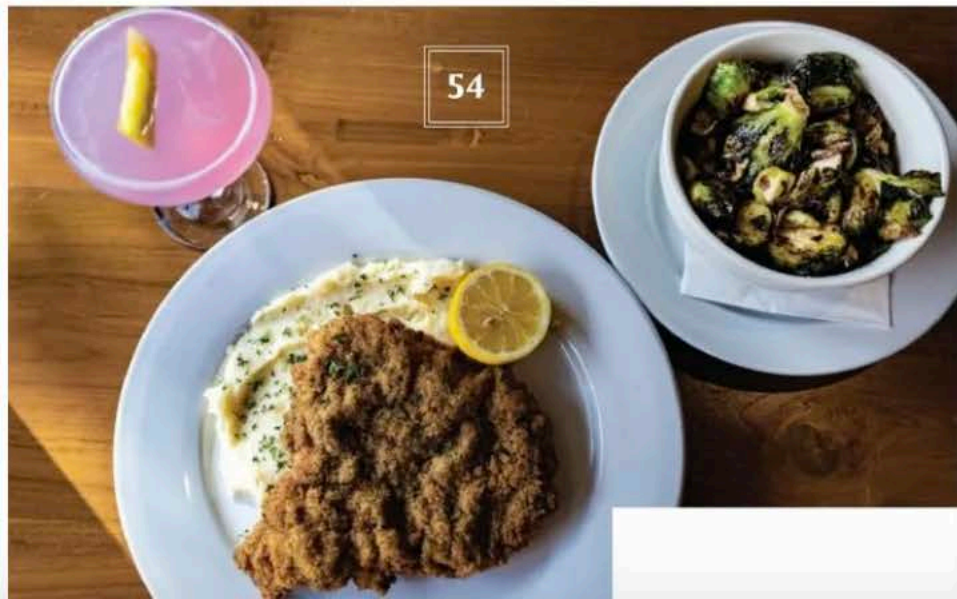
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### 51 ■ The Waco Symphony Orchestra:

I am very proud to support the Waco Symphony Orchestra, which just celebrated its 60th anniversary. Several times a year, the symphony hosts world renowned conductors, musicians and actors to perform alongside Waco's talented musicians. Many members of our symphony have been a part of the organization for decades. "The Nutcracker" at Christmas has become a beloved tradition among parents and grandparents and their children. Waco Symphony also partners with the Baylor symphony to host fourth- and fifth-graders from the greater Waco area to enjoy a day at the symphony. This might be the only time these children are exposed to music of this caliber. Getting to dress up, eat an early dinner with friends and listen to beautiful music every other month is one of my favorite parts of Waco. — *Elizabeth Barnhill*

### 52 ■ Faerie Fire Cocktail from One Day Bar:

For a refreshing after-work experience, enjoy a Faerie Fire cocktail on the covered patio at One Day, surrounded by the sights and sounds of downtown Waco. This effervescent drink is made with strawberry infused rum, house made lemon grapefruit basil syrup, ginger beer and a smidge of salt. It's a beautiful rosy color and always served in a vintage glass of some sort. — *Gretchen Eichenberg*

### 53 ■ Atmosphere, pour steady coffee and cinnamon roll from For Keeps Coffee:

For Keeps Coffee is new to the coffee scene but already making a huge impact being the only local coffee shop serving North and West Waco neighborhoods. I love how close it is to home which mean visits happen almost daily while I edit photos. Cameron and Danielle Philgreen have put so much thought and intention to create a curated space that inspires community and creativity. My go to is an iced latte and one of the freshly baked cinnamon rolls made in house. — *Breanne Johnson*

### 54 ■ Schnitzel, Brussels sprouts and French 75 from Pivovar:

Pivovar has become a new favorite spot for a night out. Offering traditional Czech dishes, it's hard to pick just one. For a perfect dinner, the roasted Brussels sprouts made in their secret sauce are a great starter. For the entrée, the Czechan schnitzel is my go-to. The thin pork is breaded and fried and served over mashed potatoes. Pivovar makes a perfect schnitzel that is as close to the schnitzel I've had in Germany that you will find here in Waco. To pair with your meal, the French 75 is a light cocktail made of gin and sparkling wine that balances the rich dinner. — *Emily Ober*