



# The Beacon

News For The Residents at Lakes of Fairhaven

[www.lakesoffairhavenHOA.org](http://www.lakesoffairhavenHOA.org)

## LIFE IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT

*shared by Sarphonn Paul, transcribed by Jackie Devine*



My first childhood memories are of my sister and me running through the rice paddies of Cambodia as my mother worked in the fields.

We lived in a small remote village. Looking back, I can still see her bare-foot and wrapped in a sarong moving in unison with other women as they were forced into

slave labor tending the rice fields to offset the shortages of manpower, draft animals, and farm implements.

It was the 1970's, the Lon Nol government had been abolished. The new regime was executing hundreds of thousands and others dying of disease and starvation were being evacuated to brutal labor camps. Buddhist monks and educated citizens—teachers, doctors, musicians, artists and intellectuals—were being interrogated, tortured and killed.

My father, a teacher, fled during that time. He later sent for us. There was no time to grab even the barest essentials or say goodbye to loved ones. Unprepared for the journey and with no guarantees for our safety we escaped to the Thai border. We slept during the day. At night, we walked and crawled through the underbrush of the jungle, laced with landmines, staying hidden and out of sight. In the distance we could hear gunshots and people crying and screaming.

Even as children we knew there were people out in the darkness that we couldn't see being hurt.

We arrived at the refugee camp in May 1981, where we found Dad and my maternal family members who I had never met. As bad as the camp might seem by today's standards, it was much better than the life we left back in the village. It felt like paradise.

In August 1981 we learned we had been chosen to migrate to the US. We were assigned to Houston, Texas. I remember seeing the great big plane on the tarmac and thought I was going to heaven.

Flying into Houston created another mind shift. Seeing the buildings, cars, and people speaking languages I didn't understand was mind boggling. We were housed with other refugee families on Caroline Street in Houston. Curtains, giving us privacy, separated our living quarters.

Within a few days, we were sent to live in Conroe where my dad found a job as a custodian for Conroe school district. Four to six weeks later, Mom also got a job. At first, he walked. Then, he bicycled to work. Rain or shine. Proudly, he would boast later, "I never missed a day of work."

Mom and Dad always put education first. They told us, "We can't give you much, but we can make sure that you get a good education."

Growing up, we were expected to help them when they picked up extra jobs. There was very little free time. Weekends, holidays, evenings, they would clean offices, churches and residential homes.

My sister and I were sheltered. There was no dating, school parties, or sleepovers.

As I contemplated college, my only options were Sam Houston or the University of Houston. Either one I would have to commute. I chose Sam Houston. This is where I met my husband. He was Hindu; I was Buddhist. Because both families believed in arranged

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(Continued from Cover)

marriages, we broke all the traditional rules.

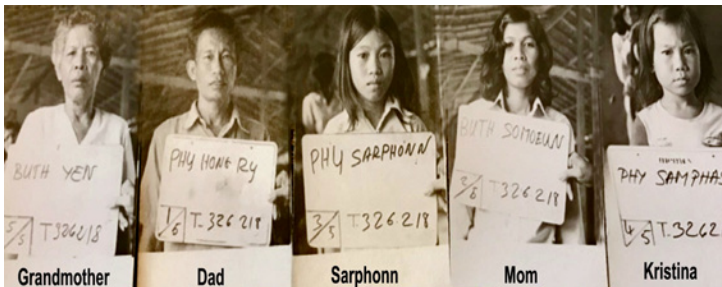
After graduation, I held several corporate positions. One day out of the blue, my husband came home and told me he had bought me a liquor store. I'd no idea he had planned to make such a substantial investment, nor why he chose a liquor store.

I guess it was because of my parents. After they retired, they cashed in their entire retirement and bought a liquor store in Jefferson, Texas. Frankly, it's incredible that they made it. They knew absolutely nothing about selling liquor. But, they survived and have been very successful.

It has been a real journey, I traded a life of stability with recurring paychecks to that of the entrepreneurial path—with no guarantees: a life of competition, employee relations and razor-thin profit margins. However, it has changed my life, in a good way. Now I own two locations, my original shop at 290 and West 34th Street, and Civic Liquor & Wine here in Fairfield. I enjoy the challenge.

In closing I asked Sarphonn after all is said and done, what had she learned from life. Her answer, "Opportunity is out there. Hard work will take you places. Look at my parents starting with \$50. Look how far we have come. Hard work and dedication will take you anywhere you want to go!"

*Sarphonn and her husband have two boys. Shawn just turned 20 and is a student at A&M, and Andy is a junior in high school. Although they are American through and through, Sarphonn insists that she is trying to instill in her children the love of education and the importance of the strong work ethic that her parents passed along to her and her sister.*



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## A TEEN THAT MAKES EVERY MINUTE COUNT

by Jackie Devine



The call came in on October 12, Andrew Nichols left a message telling me that Bradley Hooten told him to reach out to me about helping him promote his upcoming Eagle Scout toy drive in the Gazette. Bradley was the Leukemia/Lymphoma Society (LLS) Student of the Year for 2018 that we featured in January. In just 6 weeks, Bradley's Team Triumph raised a grand total of \$65,757!

Just pondering the possibility of covering another LLS Student candidate who was also an Eagle Scout put me in high gear. Catching up with Andrew was easy; syncing our calendars was

not. It turned out that the Bridgeland High School sophomore is deeply

enconced in school activities, scouts, and runs two very successful companies—Andrew's Artisan Cakes and Andrew's Artisan Pens.

Three weeks out, the day finally arrived. Susan (Andrew's mother), Andrew, and their two beautifully groomed poodles, Autumn and Winter, met me at the door. Stepping across the threshold and into their warm, inviting home, I knew at once I was going to enjoy the interview. Little did I suspect, I would be gifted two stories, each worth investing time and the necessary resources to produce major award-winning IMAX quality documentaries.

Jumping right in, I asked Andrew why he was chosen to become an LLS Student of the Year nominee.

"As a matter of fact," he said, as if it was commonplace for a 16-year-old to get high-end coverage from one of Houston's leading media outlets, "Channel 13 ran a story on Andrew's Artisan Cakes, and part of my interview was focused on Cakes for Cancer. It seems someone working at LLS picked up on my interest in creating cakes for cancer patients and nominated me as a contender."

In September, he received an e-mail from LLS saying that he had been

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*(Continued from Page 4)*

nominated and wanted to know if he was interested in participating.

"After they contacted me, I had a lot to consider before accepting the offer. Not only was I concerned about my school activities and running my businesses, but I also wanted to become an Eagle Scout by May. All I had left to do was my project and one merit badge. I wanted to make sure I had the time to dedicate to my Eagle Scout project.

"So, the first thing we did was ask for a meeting to find out whether it was even a possibility. We met at Starbucks and talked about the Eagle Scouts and bounced around a few ideas. Then, I spoke to my Boy Scout Leader. We discussed running a toy drive for my Eagle Scout project for kids with Leukemia or cancer.

"After researching the idea, we found that teens were the most forgotten age along with personal experiences and activities. They needed books, movies, and games for their age. It seems they get a lot of donations for younger kids age four through 12, but the older ones seem to fall between the cracks.

"It only took us a short while to come up with a plan. After we called a family caucus and agreed on the plan, we expanded that to friends and potential multi-generational team members. In the end, we decided that we could mobilize a team to help me with my Eagle Scout merit badge project, Toys for Teens Fighting Cancer Toy Drive and on the heels of that, launch the 7-week LLS campaign to raise money and awareness to fight blood cancers."

Next came the approval process. Andrew's idea had to be sanctioned at the troop level, committee level, and Sam Houston Council. The Andrew Nichols Eagle Scout Project (Troop 533) was approved in October.

Susan explained, "On August 20, 2014, I was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. Thanks to God and my support team, I am now in remission.

"When this came along our family's first thought was, we already had the platform and an extensive support system to hopefully do some real good with this campaign. Although Andrew is the highlight and the student, we can't neglect the fact that everybody he has on his team is not just people he knows but people who have cared for us. For example, I had groups of people who had to come around the clock to

give me drugs that would take two and three hours to administer. They had to get trained and would come three times a day for 3-hour stints to administer medication. Those are the type of people that are on the team.

"So, together we made the decision to be part of an initiative that can potentially find a cure and contribute to creating a world without blood cancer--and we threw our hat in the ring."

November 11th and 12th posters and collection boxes were delivered. The collection began November 26th and will run through December 21st.

You can help Andrew in his Eagle Scout Project benefiting Teen cancer patients at Texas Children's Hospital by dropping off your new and unwrapped toys to a designated location:

From the Vine Ministries

HSE Medical and Associates

Jersey Mike's (Fairfield location)

Texas Children's Urgent Care (Fairfield)

Steeplechase Pediatrics (North Cypress location)

Steeplechase Pediatrics (Skinner location)

For an updated list of drop off locations please visit Team Nichols Facebook page @TeamNicholsLLS

Items Needed for Teen Cancer Patients include:

Gift Cards (Hulu, Netflix, iTunes, etc.), Board Games (teen level), Xbox 360 Game Cartridges, DVD Movies (rated PG-13), Small Handheld Electronic Games, Lotions, Nail Polish, Beauty Items, Puzzles, Activities (Art Pads, Colored Pens/Pencils, Adult Type Coloring Books), Teen Books/Comics

Drop Off Sit Locations

- Cy-Ranch Senior Women
- Cy-Ranch FFA
- From the Vine Ministries
- HSE Medical
- Jersey Mikes (Fairfield)

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# CYPRESS CHRISTIAN SCHOOL



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(Continued from Page 6)

- Texas Children's Urgent Care (Fairfield)
- Walgreens (Fairfield)
- Strong Vision Center (Fairfield)
- Strong Vision Center (Skinner and Spring Cypress)
- Steeplechase Pediatric (North Cypress)
- Steeplechase Pediatric (Skinner and Spring Cypress)
- ReMax (Fairfield)
- Texas Children's Pediatric Center (Townlake)
- Good Shephard UMC Youth Office
- Gullick orthodontics
- Texas Children's Pediatrics (Fry Road)
- Texas Children's Pediatrics (Fallbrook Crossing)
- Texas Children's Pediatrics (Lakewood)

Contact: Andrew Nichols (713) 321-0170  
Andrew.nichols@andrewsartiscakes.com  
Facebook: @TeamNicholsLLS

Susan Nichols, Andrew's mother, is the reason Andrew is eager to join the campaign. He says LLS does more to advance science and support patients than any other cancer organization. The fact that she is a participant in one of their research efforts is the reason she is in remission today. You will learn more about Susan and her journey to recovery in the Gazette's January issue.

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## GROWING STRONG THROUGH ADVERSITY

*Submitted by Logan's Mom, Donna Stallone*



As a sophomore and honor roll student at Bridgeland High School, Logan found his passion for making pens in Mr. Josh Simmons' tech class in 2017. He continued honing his skills and began making specialty pens in the summer of 2018 as a small hobby that has grown into an exciting business. His work has been featured on Facebook, trade shows, gift markets, and the VFW. He will also exhibit at The Farmers Market at Bridgeland on December 17th.

Logan's attention to detail produces some of the most beautiful and unique pens made of exotic woods and acrylics. They are all hand

turned on a lathe with no two pens looking alike. The possibilities range from ballpoint, roller ball, fountain pens, and mechanical pencils. They feature all branches of military service. Plus, there are pens for businessman, first responders, college and sports fans, fisherman, hunters, bikers, Mardi Gras revelers, and cancer survivors.

While engraving is available on all pens, his service pens have gained popularity across the nation because he has partnered with a veteran-owned business licensed to engrave military logos. Logan's strength behind his work ethic, interest in building a business, and managing finances at his age are impressive. But, I'm convinced, they come from a place of appreciation and gratitude produced by life's hardships at an early age with his father's longtime battle with head and neck cancer.

Pen making has given Logan and his father a much-needed outlet and a great way to spend quality time together pursuing something they both genuinely love.

While cancer cannot destroy hope, it undoubtedly challenges those touched by it in unimaginable ways. It forces us to seize the moment

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and do more with less. L.E.S. Enterprises was formed using Logan's initials. Some may call that coincidence or intelligent design, others would argue that coincidence is when God remains anonymous.

Logan has devised a way to use his creativity, talent and business skill to honor his father's battle with cancer, grandfather's military career, and the tragic loss of a beloved aunt to suicide. He will be donating pens to three non-profits: (1) The Recon Sniper SARC Veteran Pig Hunt organization which supports Marine Corps veterans in troubling times especially those with PTSD (2) B.I.G. Love who help children in their cancer journey, and (3) P.E.P People Empowering People to unify and rally together through hard times for which Logan's father was an honoree in 2017.

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