

SMTX LIFE

Sunday, November 7, 2021 | Section B | San Marcos Daily Record

River Realm Readers

San Marcos intuitive community brings spirituality, healing

CELESTE HOLLISTER
FEATURES EDITOR

San Marcos exists at the heart of its sacred springs, a place with a deeply-rooted spiritual connection that dates back for centuries. Within this cherished space thrives the River Realm Readers, a community of intuitive artists and healers dedicated to helping people realign with their higher purpose.

River Realm Readers consists of seven intuitives – Parker Dumas, Jenn Perez, Diedre Rodriguez, Sydney Moon, Pocky Stixx, Wendy S. and Gregor Ælfweald – with backgrounds ranging from tarot and oracle card readers to energy workers, crystal healing, astrology and rune readers. Each

reader comes to their spiritual practice with different gifts, but united with a common purpose: to give guidance and reassurance about one's place in the universe.

Parker Dumas, who runs Twin River Tarot, is a nonbinary empath born and raised in San Marcos who uses his intuitive gifts to provide a diverse, accessible healing space for others.

“Growing up surrounded by the beautiful spirit of the rivers, I have always felt the magic in this community,” Dumas said. Currently an International Studies senior at Texas State, Dumas began intuitively practicing divination around the age of 13, particularly



Parker Dumas holds a tarot card reading with Shae Lewis at Stonebound Treasures. Photo by Celeste Hollister

SEE READERS PAGE 6B

Belvin Street home built by Habitat for Humanity is November Yard of the Month



Front of the Henk home on Belvin Street, with mountain laurels flanking the front porch and blooming gardens. Photo by Sharon Lockett

SHARON LOCKETT
SPRING LAKE GARDEN CLUB

Spring Lake Garden Club's November Yard of the Month features a handsome new home on the west end of Belvin Street, blocks from the more familiar heritage district near downtown. November's winner — the residence of Casidy and Esther Williams Henk — dates from spring 2012, when the Henks received the keys to a house built by volunteers working weekends with the San Marcos chapter of Habitat for Humanity, including Esther and their two children (then ages 12 and 14).

At that time, Casidy was serving with the U.S.

Army in Afghanistan, but returned home for two weeks' leave, during which time he reconnected with his family, landscaped the front yard, laid a paver patio in the back yard and prepared to return to duty. Meanwhile, Esther arranged their move into the new house before Casidy's return and planned an open house after the presentation of homeowner keys. Now with kids out of the nest, Casidy and Esther still enjoy the home that reflects so much of their hard work.

Casidy represents a fourth generation of Hays County settlers, and one notable yard item is an antique tractor purchased by his great-grandfather in

1947 in San Marcos. Like any serious gardener (and descendant of farmers), Casidy first prepared the soil for planting, incorporating pecan mulch and turkey litter in beds near the house to ensure that transplanted Mountain Laurels would thrive. The beds, edged with large rectangular stones, are filled with colorful yellow lantana, blue plumbago, red turk's cap, and the showy white flowers of vinca or petunias. A thick stand of lime green lemongrass contrasts with flower blooms in a bed below the front porch. A second bed under a towering oak near the street holds native

SEE YARD PAGE 6B

These Snapdragons aren't just fantastic, they're Snaptastic

NORMAN
WINTER

HORTICULTURALIST,
AUTHOR, AND
SPEAKER



These new snapdragons aren't just fantastic, they're simply “Snaptastic.” Snaptastic is a relatively new series coming from Syngenta and is considered medium in height, reaching 14 to 16 inches. They fill a void that's been longed for in the market.

Snapdragons are planted in the fall in much of the country, including San Marcos, so as you shop, you'll likely see these riotous colors tempting you. Snaptastic finds itself right in the middle of the Montego series, which is one of the best dwarfs and reaches 8 to 10 inches tall, and the Liberty Classic series, which hits a height of 24 inches.

Each year, I was thrilled to go to the California Pack Trials, as it was called then, to see an acre of snapdragons growing in the field next to the Syngenta Flowers headquarters. It was a sight that would always deliver that Kodak moment. Even then it was apparent that breeding would allow the flowers a full range of heights.

The snapdragon is native to Europe and the Mediterranean and is known



Snaptastic Snapdragons will bring an assortment of sorbet freshness to your fall garden. Photos by Norman Winter

botanically as *Antirrhinum majus*. No matter where you live, and whether you garden in the landscape or in containers, there is a snapdragon season for you. In addition to staggering beauty in a range of colors, you will also find that snapdragons are resistant to roving deer populations.

So as you plant this fall, know that snapdragons are like pansies and prefer a fertile, organic, rich soil in full sun for best bloom production. Incorporate three to four inches of organic matter, tilling to a depth of eight to ten inches, or use a prepared landscape mix like many in the commercial landscape do.

While doing your soil preparation, apply two pounds of a slow-release 12-6-6 or balanced fertilizer per 100 square feet of planting area. There are some great new

fertilizers that also incorporate a fungicide that helps reduce some of the most prevalent diseases.

Set transplants into the garden at the recommended spacing for your variety. For the Snaptastic series, this would be 8 to 12 inches. Apply a good layer of mulch to keep soil temperatures moderate for the long growing season ahead. A little fertilizer every two to three weeks will keep them growing.

Snapdragons are more cold-hardy than many realize. Once established in the landscape and hardened off, they are quite capable of taking subfreezing temperatures. Even if record cold moves in, they can be completely covered with pine straw for a few days with no problem.

Snaptastic is available in five rich colors:

yellow, orange, red, magenta, which looks fit for royalty, and a luscious pink. These are also combined in a showy mix. You'll love Snaptastic as a pansy partner, grown with violas and flowering kale and cabbage. They are most dazzling when planted in mass in front of a backdrop of evergreen shrubs. Don't forget the opportunities to use Snaptastic varieties with spring bulbs.

Snapdragons don't require much care, just a little deadheading of spent blooms, watering during dry spells, water-soluble fertilizer and mulching for winter protection. The incredible display of color is sure to bring you joy and make your neighbors green with envy. For more photos and garden inspiration follow me on Facebook @ NormanWinterTheGardenGuy.



An antique tractor belonged to Casidy Henk's great-grandfather in Hays County and serves as yard art while awaiting restoration.



A planting bed below front porch features bright yellow lantana, blue plumbago, red turk's cap and white flowering vinca surrounding tall lemongrass.



The garden bed under old oak includes part from antique farm machinery among native lantana and colorful fall flowers.



An old hand plow graces Henk garden and echoes family farming heritage. *Photos by Sharon Lockett*

YARD FROM PG. 1B

multicolored lantana along with more white vinca and yellow fall flowers.

Plants are nourished by the soil rather than artificial fertilizer, and Casidy notes that several iron horseshoes and cattle horns are buried in one bed, so both iron and calcium are available to new plantings. The two large oak trees on the property provide just enough mottled shade to temper summer sunshine, and the only pesticide used is Sevin Dust. All planting beds are thoroughly covered with cedar mulch to deter weeds. Casidy moved a clump of irises from beside the house to a sunnier spot near the street where they are thriving and will spread.

Esther added a large pot of ferns in a corner beside the front steps, as well as several containers of arrowroot vine (nephthytis or syngonium) on tall metal shelves on the front porch. The perfect place to relax at the end of a long day, the porch is furnished

with sturdy red lounge chairs under a ceiling fan, which discourages any mosquitoes. Eleanor continues her career (now 19 years) serving at San Marcos' popular Cafe on the Square, and Casidy, now retired from the military, also works in San Marcos. They both enjoy finding antique farm implements for yard art at their home, and Esther promises that once the old tractor is refurbished and "parade ready," they hope to include it in San Marcos outdoor celebrations.

The Henk home was the third of five Habitat for Humanity houses built in this block of Belvin Street between 2010 and 2013, and all were sited to retain the grove of large oaks native to the original property. Built by volunteer labor and the "sweat equity" of owners, all these homes show creative landscaping and front porches ready for relaxation and hospitality.

READERS FROM PG. 1B

"If any of the messages have the slight chance of allowing you to see yourself worthy of grace, mercy and healing, then I believe I've done my job."

— Jenn Perez, *River Realm Readers*

connecting with the practice of tarot, oracle and pendulum readings. "It's been an important part of my life ever since," he said. "Through these, I am able to provide intuitive guidance to the situations you experience along your journey of growth."

Oracle reading is somewhat like tarot, in that both are based on a deck of cards, but oracle tends to be more about self-reflection and allow for a broader range of interpretation. More people are familiar with tarot cards, which feature a more structured deck of major and minor arcana, though many readers use tarot as a starting place for spiritual direction.

"I have recently developed my own tarot spread that allows me to help guide people into past life regressions," Dumas said, "which is a beautiful way for people to connect with their spiritual lives."

Like Dumas, Jenn Perez is a San Marcos-born intuitive who credits local lore, urban legends and encounters with her family as the beginning of her spiritual journey. "It was something that always fascinated me," Perez said. "I did not know much about my indigenous roots, but I'm continuously learning more about them. My mother's family is from Mexico, and my father's family has lineage connected to the Lakota and Apache indigenous tribes."

Perez currently attends Texas State with hopes of someday becoming a pathologist, working specifically within the San Marcos intuitive community as a healer who helps others navigate through grief, guilt, agony and shame by creating

a sacred space in which someone can become vulnerable.

"My gifts enable me to feel the deep-rooted pain that we carry for far too long," Perez said. "I felt the burden, agony, shame, and guilt that has come along with so many experiences I had in my life. Through healing these parts of myself, it has allowed me to see the wounds that people cover up so well."

Within this shared space of vulnerability, Perez is able to channel messages that provide an alternate perspective in a person's journey of healing. "These messages are of healing and pure, unconditional love from Spirit, your ancestors, past lives and guides," Perez said. "My gifts help you find the path towards rediscovering your love for yourself and the love from Spirit."

Dumas added, "There's no strings, no tricks. I can't see the future or read your mind. Everything I feel is based entirely off of the energy you provide. The real magic comes from you – and it's amazing to see what you're capable of. Sometimes it takes a little bit of guidance to get there."

Another member of the River Realm Readers collective is rune reader Gregor Ælfweald. Born in El Paso, but raised in Coopertown, Tenn., Ælfweald grew up in a part of greater Appalachia where 'spiritual gifts' are treated as a given and openly accepted.

"In that context I learned, mostly from my grandparents, about understanding and interpreting signs in nature and communication with the dead and spirits of the land," Ælfweald said. "I didn't understand any of

that as 'mystical' or 'occult'. As far as I knew, divination and spirit communication were just things that people do."

Ælfweald, who received a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Austin Peay State University and a Masters in Philosophy from University of Oklahoma, became interested in studying various mystical systems of Eastern and Western cultures from an early age, and felt particularly drawn to seership, which relates to prophecy and clairvoyance.

"I am familiar with Runes, Ogam, Wildwood Tarot, bones and Seider deeply at an intellectual level," Ælfweald said. "I do believe my raising with an openness to the 'unseen' has helped me be a well-rounded seer who can balance a cognitive understanding of oracular systems with applied wisdom intuition."

Each reader at River Realm came to the collective through connections with local herbalist Fawn Gregg, who is on a mission to provide holistic healing while fostering the growing metaphysical community in San Marcos. She currently has two storefronts: Herbs & Oddities, described as a "Tiny Metaphysical Shop of Wonders," and Stonebound Treasures, a rock and gift shop that hosts monthly divination fairs and maker's markets in support of local artists and intuitives.

"I got into River Realm Readers because I got to know Fawn through going into Herbs & Oddities all of the time," Ælfweald said, "which I quickly came to call 'my happy place.'"

Recently, Herbs & Oddities celebrated its third anniversary, the shop's



The River Realm Readers reading space on 705 W. Hopkins is available for walk-in and by appointment. *Photo by Jason Cook*

growth attesting to the tight-knit community that has sprouted up around it. This is not surprising, given that recent world circumstances have caused many people to question the role of standard religion in regard to their daily life and wellbeing.

According to Dr. Deborah Cornah of the Mental Health Foundation, "In the past decade or so, researchers across a range of disciplines have started to explore and acknowledge the positive contribution spirituality can make to mental health."

These findings dovetail with Ælfweald's philosophy as well. "I believe we are on an upswing of interest and value in the wisdom of 'the beyond,' and the aid that it can give us in our lives," he said.

The readers of River Realm agree that self-exploration is the key to finding true happiness and purpose. "Should you feel drawn to the spiritual community, I highly encourage your interest," Dumas said. "It can be life changing. Sometimes we are unable to understand the messages we are receiving. These spiritual



Gregor Ælfweald is a San Marcos-based rune reader and seer with a Master's degree in Philosophy. *Submitted photo*

spaces are the perfect place for others to tune in and interpret those messages, so you can hear what you need in the way you need to hear it."

Perez concurred, saying, "That connection between you and the Creator has always been present, but sometimes we need a little help remembering it's there. If any of the messages have the slight chance of allowing you to see yourself worthy of grace, mercy and healing, then I believe I've done my job."

River Realm Readers are located at 705 W. Hopkins, from 12 to 6 p.m. daily, and walk-ins are welcome, though booking an appointment is also available at riverrealmreaders.square.site/ or by calling 512-749-1041. Stonebound Treasures also features a reading room, and the maker's markets spotlight various readers as well.

Private, individual readings are also available with Parker Dumas at twinrivertarot.com.