

# AN OBLE AFFAIR

## Women's City Club to host 'The Royal Chef' for charity Starlight Tea

By KIRSTEN CROW  
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In a landscape smattered with Starbucks drive-thrus, and in a culture where sweetened ice tea is a staple at every down South barbecue, the British-born afternoon tea is a foreign custom to Americans.

But for anyone who has ever craved the very refined experience of taking an afternoon tea in pure across-the-pond fashion, the opportunity is just around the corner.

The Women's City Club will host a Starlight Tea from 3 to 5 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 27, at the Laredo Country Club, and feature Darren McGrady, a chef who long served royalty at Buckingham Palace and who is now known under a trademarked name of "The Royal Chef."

Themed as "Butterflies, Bunnies and Bluebonnets," it will include a traditional tea, along with scones, sandwiches and pastries made from the recipes used in Buckingham Palace while McGrady served Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Diana for 15 years. McGrady will also provide a demonstration of his expert baking skills, and sign copies of his cookbook, "Eating Royally: Recipes and Remembrances from a Palace Kitchen."

Proceeds will benefit the Starlight's Great Escapes program, which supports seriously ill children and their families in Laredo.

Nancy de Anda, an honorary board member of Women's City Club, said the tea should be a one-of-a-kind event for attendants.

"It should be just a wonderful afternoon," she said. "It's not something we normally do in Laredo — sit around and have high tea."

### The Royal Chef

McGrady, who is now based in Dallas where he works as a personal chef, author and public speaker, has hosted the teas before as fundraisers — the latest one being a benefit for



Courtesy photo

Darren McGrady, known as "The Royal Chef," is pictured with his book featuring the royal recipes of Buckingham Palace.

cystic fibrosis. The event was such a hit, Starlight asked if he would be interested in repeating it, this time in Laredo.

"It was amazing, the fascination with the British and their afternoon tea," McGrady said. "People asked me all the time the difference between high tea, afternoon tea and cream tea."

Afternoon tea, McGrady explained, can either be a very private or a very large affair.

Sometimes he served afternoon tea to the queen alone — in which case she would crumble up her scones and feed them to her 12 Corgers, he added, because she did not care for them — or to a crowd of 6,000 guests on the Buckingham Palace lawn.

See TEA | PAGE 5C



## We should all express our patriotism proudly

The 113th Washington's Birthday Celebration is coming to a close today after a month full of festive events, all commemorating the birth of the first President of the United States.

It's also a time when we reflect on our country's history, and the trials and struggles for which so many have sacrificed and continue to sacrifice so that we can enjoy the freedoms we enjoy.

A friend of mine who recently became a United States citizen confided she did not know the words to the "Star-Spangled Banner."

She asked if I could find the lyrics for her, because she wanted to learn the



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words to our anthem. It seems she was a little embarrassed she could not sing along at the opening ceremonies during a recent WBCA event.

I mentioned she should not worry, because a lot of people don't sing along, confessing that I don't always do so.

In a very serious tone, she asked me, "Aren't you proud to be an American?"

Caught a little off-guard, I told her I was very proud to be an American.

Her question, though, made a lot of sense, especially when she added she was also very proud. My friend shared that the long, frustrating process leading to her new citizenship was not easy. Plagued by many obstacles, she fought relentlessly. Giving up was not an option for her.

Her story made me realize that we often take for granted our inalienable rights as U.S. citizens. We forget to vote, we draw party lines between one other and yes, we forget to sing our national anthem.

As Americans, whether we are native or naturalized, we should express our patriotism proudly at every opportunity.

### Preserving History

No one knows the importance of preserving our heritage better than the Webb County Heritage Foundation, and we should all support their efforts to keep Laredo's history alive for future generations for another 30 years.

In that vein, the organization will host a membership and anniversary gathering on Monday, Feb. 22, at 6 p.m. at the Villa Antigua Border Heritage Museum, 810 Zaragoza Street.

The reception will also serve to unveil "A History of Fort McIntosh" exhibit.

By becoming a member, you can also provide some much-needed support to the

organization's projects and growth.

### Art with friends

Native Laredoan Marilu Flores Gruben recently returned to Laredo with a growing passion to pursue her art.

She was joined by fellow artists and close college friends Mary Elizabeth Schleier, Sally Shiels Schupp and Laurie Hickman Cox for an exhibit of their recent works at Texas A&M International University's Center for Fine and Performing Arts.

The show will remain on display through the month of February.

### Two steppin' for kids

There is nothing more important than ensuring a safe and happy life for our children — and Voz de Niños does just that every day while they provide a safe haven for children involved in domestic violence.

The group recently hosted a festive dance at Hal's Landing, thanks to the generosity of Tom and Mary Ann Lamont.

The group was able to raise some much-needed funds with the support of many who attended.

### A taste of the '70s

See CASTILLO | PAGE 5C