

Getting to Know Your Local Business Owner

In their own words



Dale Johnson & Colby Weems

Dale and Colby are the owners of Eclectic Home and their newest addition CODA, both located in the 300 block of W. 19th Street. Both are native Texans and Heights residents for nearly 20 years.

Dale grew up with a family business, Johnson's Hardware, in Santa Fe, Texas. "I guess owning a business and helping people is just in my blood", says Dale. "My family opened the store when I was in first grade and I worked there until I graduated from college". He is a CPA and has worked in public accounting and in financial reporting for an offshore drilling rig company. During that time he met Colby.

Colby came to Houston with his family at an early age from west Texas. His true love for design started early, building with Lego's, drawing house plans and foam board scale models. After drafting for an oil and gas equipment supplier and then switching to computer training, support and software maintenance he finally decided to fulfill the "design desire". Colby Weems Designs finally came to fruition in 1999.

Merging Dale's business background and Colby's love of design, they decided to join forces and open a home furnishings and accessories store in 2001, named Eclectic Home. Colby and Dale both love the "eclectic" mix of styles.

Eclectic Home 345 W. 19th St.
713.869.1414 eclectichome.ws

eclectic
HOME

Our second in an ongoing effort to introduce the business people that make up our community.

See the website, Spring 2011 for the first of this series.



Laura & Dennis Virgadamo

Married 32 years - by Laura

We have three grown children, John (10th Mountain Division, U.S. Army, married to Amy, expecting first child in July, and then 10 days later he ships out to Afghanistan for the third tour of duty there. Anthony lives in New Orleans and Autumn who lives in San Francisco.

We moved to the Heights to be closer to our business but also because I was registrar of the Heights Museum and love the history and historical architecture.

We live at 124 W. 17th St., the home of Edmond and Maude Whitty, both Shakespearean actors, built in 1907. It is rumored that Edmond's father, Patrick was friends with Clark Gable. Patrick Whitty was one of the first engineers with the City of Houston and our home is a City of Houston Landmark Home, and has been on two Christmas Home tours.

Dennis is Community Gardener of the 17th Street Community Garden, Yale at 17th St. It as started in June of 2004, an Urban Harvest Garden and inspired by one of our trips to Italy where Dennis has relatives. The garden won a "Community Improvement" award in 2004.

I have worked extensively with many organizations serving on boards including Opera in the Heights, past President of the Houston Heights Woman's Club, Houston Heights Association, and Rotary Club of Houston Heights.

Dennis is a Master Electrician and has been in the electrical trade for 49 years. We live in a "green" house and enjoy finding ways to merge the historic structure with energy saving ideas.

Interests include Miniature Schnauzer Rescue of Houston. We have two Schnauzers, Diva (white) and Kelly (black, whom we fostered and adopted. Other interests include gardening, opera



Phyllis A. Oeser, Attorney at Law

Phyllis A. Oeser, Attorney at Law in the Garden Oaks area, became a Texas transplant as soon as she became an adult and has loved living in the Houston area ever since. Phyllis is very active and enjoys reading, bicycling, and photography. Digital cameras have made photography her favorite hobby. She can take hundreds of pictures without incurring the cost of developing them. This has helped her develop a keen eye for the right shot and allowed her to embrace the artistic side of photography.

Phyllis is very people-oriented and enjoys interaction especially on a one to one basis. This has helped her in practice. She is a down-home girl from Arkansas and is especially good at putting her clients at ease. She does not allow them to be intimidated by her or the legal process and speaks to them in terms they will understand.

She also has a strong sense of family and is very close to her own family and friends communicating with them daily. This caring and joyful spirit is apparent to anyone she meets. She loves life and is living it to its fullest.

Phyllis A. Oeser
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and Texas history. We now are having the time of our life raising our two Grandchildren, Jim 6 and Anthony 2.

Dennis and Laura received the "Marcella Perry" award from the Houston Heights Association in 1999.

We're looking forward to the next 20 years in the Heights!

Harmony Electric 811 Yale St.
713.863.8428
harmonyelectric.com



Mark Woodroof and Marilyn Eiland, Owners of Prudential Gary Greene, Realtors

Mark Woodroof and Marilyn Eiland have been the owners of Prudential Gary Greene, Realtors since its inception in February 2000 but they were both in residential real estate long before that. Mark was with a national real estate brand and worked on acquisitions and mergers before getting into the operational side of the brokerage business. He has always had an appreciation, although vicariously, of the Realtor's day to day ups and downs because his wife of 33 years has long been a top producer. Mark's involvement in the industry has taken him to CEO of the Houston Association of Realtors and he is currently a Director with the National Association of Realtors.

Marilyn can't claim a spouse in the business; her husband is retired from IBM, but says her love of real estate began as a child. Her father was a broker in Louisiana and she can recall many a Sunday getting home from church and hurrying through lunch so her Dad could get to an open house. She began her career as an agent but soon found her love for training and coaching both agents and managers. That is still her love.

The partners other passion has been The Sunshine Kids, a foundation dedicated to bring smiles to the faces of children with cancer. Prudential Gary Greene, Realtors has raised over \$3,000,000.00 for the kids since 2000.

Mark and Marilyn have always enjoyed coming to the area for dining, music, shopping, and meeting friends so it was natural to want to join the Heights/ Inner Loop community in a business relationship. By giving their new office at 1939 West Gray a complete make over and placing strong leadership at the helm, they have shown their commitment to the this market. According to the partners, "With offices throughout the Houston metroplex, we have had a chance to watch the evolution of Houston and we know that the Heights and Inner Loop market is the place to be. There is an energy and strong sense of community that we are delighted to be a part of."

Prudential Gary Greene 1939 West Gray 713.961.1722
garygreene.com



Master Barbara Dickens, White Horse Martial Arts

I was born in Arkansas and raised in Mississippi. Got Cosmetology license in 1961... worked for 10 years as a hairdresser. Living in Singapore in the early 70's began my martial arts career. Moved to Houston in 1975.

Got a Real Estate License in the early 80's and sold real estate until 1988.

I always wanted to do martial arts, but back then "ladies" were not supposed to do martial arts, so when moving to Singapore there was no one there to tell me I shouldn't do it, so I began my martial arts career! I never intended to be a school owner. I began "helping a

friend" with a few months of classes while he vacationed in Hawaii. He never returned and I ended up a school owner! My school was born Nov. 1, 1992. I taught in Katy for 6 years then moved to my Heights location Jan 1999. Being diagnosed with breast cancer in 1988 was the changing point in my life. Up until then I thought I had my "act together" but little did I know at that diagnose that cancer really put my "act together". I no longer took routines for granted. Being a normally optimistic person I was completely devastated. I went through all the stages from hating God to "I'm going to die". Thankfully that was short-lived. I began the battle of beating it. My family was always there, supporting and loving... even taking care of me when the going got really tough. I began seeing what I had all along. I had God. I had my family. I had martial arts. Those are 3 very powerful fighters, so I joined them and began "practicing what I preach".

My family was always there whether to love, carry me, or wipe away the tears. God carried me as the "Footprints" poem says. My students loved me and gave me strength and energy. I had surgery 5 times that first year, got a clean bill of health and thought it was over and I could get back to my life. Well, cancer has a mind of its own... and even though the 5 yr. time was up (the one where if it's going to come back it does)... I was diagnosed again in 1994. (Same breast... also something that rarely happens... lucky me!) That year was worse than the first. I did 6 rounds of chemo and 6 weeks of radiation. Between being very tired all the time, horrible mouth sores, and the biggest PAIN of all... losing my hair, I had a tough year. Throughout both my bouts with cancer I never missed a class at the schools where I was teaching in the after school program every day and the classes I taught at my school every night. So what does it all mean? It means I am now a far better person. It means I want to spend my life educating people about cancer and what we can do to prevent cancer. I want to fundraise for research. I want to be there for that person that just heard the words, "You have cancer". My hope is that NO ONE should ever hear those words again. And I am doing all I can to make that happen!



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Whama.com