

Jobs, real estate & misc.

Classified, 8-9D

The Dallas Morning News

Dallas News.com

BUSINESS INSIGHT Dallasite has \$100M plan to restore historic Galveston hotel to glory days



Gussying up the Galvez

Mark oversees construction and opera-tions for the Galvez Galvez project, while Lorenda supervises interiors — much as they've done with Wyant's three three previous historical building projects in New Orleans. Charleston Charleston, S.C., and Key

West, Fla.



▲ ALVESTON — Mark Wyant wants to give the grande dame of Galveston a little spring to her step.

In May, the 62-year-old owner and CEO of Dallasbased Seawall Hospitality LLC bought the Hotel Galvez & Spa, the matriarch of Galveston's seafront.

He's intent on bringing the 110-year-old property to her original splendor while adding vivacity to her personality.

He's changed the name to Grand Galvez.

Twant to respect its past and ready it for the future, 'Wyant said in an interview at the hotel along Galveston's famed Seawall Boulevard. 'It's gotten into a bit of a rut. I want people to come here for its history and provenance, but enjoy its energy and vibes.' Wyant swife, Lorenda, who is overseeing the hotel's new interior design, puts it his way: 'It's got great bones and so much potential. It just needs a little love.' Wyant paid in excessor \$500 million for the 224-room property, but that s' just half of what he expects the total cost will be. 'By the time I

IDEAS AT WORK



get finished with the redo. I will have

get finished with the redo, I will have spent well over \$100 million, abso-lutely," Wyant said. He purchased the property from heirs of the late George Mitchell, a billionaire shale oil extraction pio-

See COUPLE Page 5D

DENTON COUNTY

Adults with autism have 29 Acres to call 'home'

Nonprofit is designed to provide programs, space for independent living

By MORGAN GONZALES

Jodi Bartek still tears up when she describes her realization 22 years ago that her then 18-month-old son Ryan was showing signs of

"I always get that feeling in the gut with that memory," Bartek said.
"We always thought Ryan would live
with us until we're old and gray."
For Ryan and 31 other adults
with autism or other developmental

disabilities, a nonprofit organiza-tion called 29 Acres is giving them a chance to live independently with as much, or as little, support as needed. Situated in Cross Roads, a small

Situated in Cross Roads, a small town on a major growth corridor in Denton County, 29 Acres consists of eight autism-friendly homes de-signed to create a communal living environment. It's bolstered by ther-apeutic support, partnerships with community organizations, employ-ment resources and recreational ac-tivities.

So named for the acreage the complex is built on, the residential community opened to residents a year ago in the early months of the



Brandon Shoemaker, a resident of 29 Acres, visits with Penny, the community dog, at the Denton County facility designed to offer independent housing for people with autism.

COVID-19 pandemic

acas and chickens that also call The grounds include a pool, hot tub, walking trail and community center, as well as an area for goats, unds include a pool, hot 29 Acres home. Residents and oth-

See 29 ACRES Page 6D

Forgoing vaccines exacting huge cost

f the health risks of COVID-19 aren't enough to drive more people to get vaccinated, what about the cost of eatment — or even health insurance? In June and July, the estimated costs

for treating unvaccinated patients hospi talized for COVID-19 were at least \$2.3

tor treating unvaccinated patients hospi-laized for COVID-B were at least \$2.3 billion, according to a recent report by researchers at the Kaiser Family Founda-tion. In Flexas, the total probably sur-passed \$280 million, although research-ers acknowledge the actual burden was probably higher in the state and country. They estimated that 183,000 prevent-able hospitalizations occurred nation-wide at an average cost of \$20,000 a person. This doesn't include the August surge caused by the delta variant, which has pushed COVID-19 hospitalizations in Texas near the peaks set in January. And it doesn't include the cost of follow-up outpatient care, which can be substantial. The Kaiser report emphasizes the word 'preventable.' Because vaccinations are so effective at reducing hospitaliza-tion and death, the costs are viewed.

are so effective at reducing hospitaliza-tion and death, the costs are viewed differently than a year ago, before we had a clear way to combat the coronavirus. "We really wanted to focus on the avoidable COVID hospitalizations, to illustrate what they would cost taxpayers

See HOSPITAL Page 7D

PERSONAL FINANCE



Higher pay will benefit all of U.S.

A recent population report from the Census Bureau revealed the enormous increase in the elderly population coming our way.

By 2030, immigration is expected to be the biggest source of U.S. population growth, not births.

The old will soon outnumber the

- _ s.se ord will soon outnumber the young. The shift is projected to occur in 2034.
- Today there are 74 million people
 18 years or younger, and 56.1 million who
 are at least 65.
 But not long after 2030, the num-
- bers will reverse so that we have 80.8 million seniors by 2040 but only 77.1
- million seniors by 2040 but only 77.1
 million youngsters.

 By 2060, the number of seniors
 (94.7 million) will exceed the number of youngsters (80.1 million) by a whopping
 14.6 million.
- The very old will grow in number even more rapidly. Today, the number of

See EMPLOYERS Page 7D





Couple pouring money, creativity into Galvez redo

neer, real estate developer and philanthropist who died in

Mitchell, who was born on the island but made his fortune in Houston, bought the hotel out of bankruptcy for \$3 mil-lion in 1993 and spent \$20 million on renovations.

The previous owner, the late Denton Cooley, Houston famed heart surgeon, made a mess of things by doing such things as moving the entrance to the backside and building a pool in the lobby.

"It made everything smell like chlorine or a sweaty gym," Wyant said. "Why anyone would build an indoor swimming pool in Galveston is be-yond me."

Mitchell tore out the aquat-ics and restored the palm tree-

lined grand entrance facing the

"The efforts of George and Cynthia Mitchell essentially saved the property for future generations," Wyant said. "I would not have the opportunity to take the property to the next level had they not saved it from degenerating into something that somebody would want to

Turning over Galveston's iconic hotel to interlopers from Dallas created consternation among the "Islanders," as Gal-vestonians proudly call them-

"The Galvez has always ented the resilience of the island," said Michael Woody chief tourism officer for Galves ton Island. "It was built right after the storm of 1900 and became the marker to the world that we were going to survive the deadliest natural disaster in American history. The Mitchells were seen as its guardians.

But people are beginning to realize that what they thought was original isn't, Woody said.

"Right now, if you walk through the hotel, within a 200-foot stride, you're going to pass through four decades of design," he said. "There's no consistency. Mark is bringing it all back to its grandeur. The island can really benefit from that."

Hue and cry

Local concern was exacer-bated when they learned that Wyant intended to paint the hotel pink.

"They didn't realize that the hotel was originally pink and only painted white in 1981, when it was owned by Cooley and operated as the Galvez Marriott," Wyant said.



knows exactly what shade of pink the hotel was when it opened. Pho-tos from that era are black and white.

Locals went bonkers when the newspaper ran a photo of a hot pink painted as a test along with other shades, Wyant said.
"Everybody thought I was going to paint it like a giant Taco Cabana. That color was never in

Contention.

He knew what he wanted.

Wyant has always admired The
Beverly Hills Hotel in Los Angeles, which is painted a soft, sandy mix of salmon and

He and Lorenda flew to L.A., met with the hotel manager and explained that they wanted to paint the Grand Galvez the same hue. The GM took them down to the basement, gave them a paint can lid and the

paint code.
"While everyone else in
Beverly Hills was shopping,
Lorenda and I were at the Beverly Hills Sherwin-Williams mixing paint. We matched it perfectly. Lorenda even did a couple of touch-ups on their walls to make sure."

It's that kind of attention to detail that's winning Islanders over, Woody said. "It helped



AT A GLANCE

Education: South Garland High chool, 1977; bachelor of b

ness administration, Southern Methodist University, 1981

Personal: Married to Lorenda for 17 years. They have two sons and a daughter, David, Skylar and Sabrina.

Ownership: Mark Wyant Sr.

nded: April 1, 2021

Property: 224-room Grand

Airport restaurant.
That was when I realized that you can achieve anything if

you churned away and worked

hard enough," he said.

Wyant, who earned his
undergraduate degree from
SMU's Cox School of Busines

in 1981, laddered his way up

from giving flying lessons at Addison Airport, flying small freight planes out of Love Field, joining Air Midwest, then

American Eagle, to flying in-

ternational and Hawaiian jumbo jet routes for American Airlines for 22 years. Wyant only kept his 1958

Wyant only kept his 1908 single-propeller Tri-Pacer for about a year, but it held a special place in his heart. Forty years after selling it, Wyant tracked down the origi-

nal owner and bought back the plane. He spent more than \$250,000 restoring it and

lying requirements.
"I won the grand championship at Oshkosh [AirVenture] with it in 2017, which is
like winning the Pebble Beach

of small planes," he said. It's that kind of devotion he

updating it to meet today's

Headquarters: Dallas

SOURCE: Mark Wyant his parents' Mesquite hotel and washing dishes at the Addison

David Mark

Wyant Sr. Title: Owner, CEO, See Hospitality LLC

Age: 62

Seawall Hospitality LLC

A family from Peru relaxes at the Grand Galvez Hotel. The Galvez, which had been a Wyndham property until January, is ent until it's upgraded to Marriott Autograph Collection's high-end standard



A rendering shows what the restored Peacock Alley will look like. The corridor leading from the lobby to the Music Room has been partially closed off for meeting rooms



at the Oshkosh AirVenture in 2017. He owned the plane as a teen, sold it and then bought it back 40 years later.

settle nerves when they painted the north side of the building and saw that it wasn't going to be a Pepto project."

rs won't tackle the front of the hotel until after the

Peacocks and crooks

Mark heads construction and operations, while Lorend supervises interiors — much as they've done with Wyant's three previous historical building projects in New Orleans, Charleston, S.C., and Key West,

"From Day One, we have always loved the same things and see eye-to-eye on a lot," Lorenda said.



But we always end up coming together and creating something pretty magnificent. "I do win from time to time, but then he claims it was his idea."

times seems like forever.

The Wyants want to create better flow, more live entertain-ment areas and restore the hotel's Jazz Age fun and energy.

"There will be hints of Al Capone — a nod to the hotel's laissez-faire attitude toward

illicit gambling that occurred during Prohibition," he said. Sam Masceo ran the island's rackets and casino operations from his seventh-floor, Il-room penthouse at the Galvez. Frank Sinatra and other stars were frequent visitors. "Suffice it to say, Prohibition didn't work," Wyant said.

The couple plans to reincar-nate the hotel's famous Peacock Alley. The long corridor that leads from the lobby to the Music Room has been partially closed off for meeting rooms. Crews discovered original ceiling molding and wall trim behind sheetrock.

"They named it Peacock Alley in the '20s because men would dress in the finest eveningwear and the women would all look like peacocks as they strutted down to the Music Room, which was then called the Venetian Room," Mark said.

Not newcomers

Lorenda, 49, bristles at the notion that she's an outsider. "Everyone talks about 'these

Dallas people. I was born and raised in Houston and lived there my whole life until I married him," she said, nodding to her husband of 17 years. "My family owned a beach house here. My father owned a surf-board shop here when I was a baby. My grandmother owned a souvenir shop. So I have been coming here my entire life."

This is Mark's third hotel along Galveston's famous sea-front strip, having previously owned the Holiday Inn Express and the Holiday Inn Sunspree Resort, now a DoubleTree by

Wyant, who was born and raised in Garland, is a third-generation hotelier — the family's first property was the Holi-day King Motel in Sulphur Springs that was built by Mark's schoolteacher parents and his homebuilder grandfather when

ne was 5.
"After school on Fridays,
we'd get in the car and drive
about an hour, 80 miles straight down I-35," Wyant said, "The 36 rooms rented for \$8, \$9, \$10, so 150 bucks was a big night." Since then, Wyant and his

relatives have owned and oper ated 13 properties, including the Big Town Inn in Mesquite and the Holiday Inn Express in

Jon Contreras has known Wyant since those Big Town Inn days, when Contreras was an 18-year-old night auditor and 14-year-old Mark used to pester him behind the desk.

"After a while we became friends," said Contreras, who now owns a Dallas tax prep-aration company. "We both liked aviation. We didn't have a car, so we'd drive the Big Town Inn shuttle bus and use the airport locator to find all of the little airports that used to dot the countryside around town."

Contreras has always been apressed by his buddy's drive impressed by nis or and dependability.

And happily, Wyant has mellowed with age, Contreras

When they were kids, Con treras said, "whether I wanted to treras said, Whether I wanted to go or not, he'd be banging on my window and charging me up. He's really calmed down a lot. We like to joke that he's the kinder, gentler Mark nowadays.

Oshkosh b'gosh

Wyant learned to fly in a beat-up Piper Tri-Pacer that he bought as a teenager from wages earned as a desk clerk at and historic tax credits. We pretty much bought the build-ing for nothing."

Wyant wanted the entrance

with his mother, Jana. "That was an incredibly good deal,

because it was eligible for al-

most \$9 million in federal, state

to be as close to its original format as possible. He scoured the online archives of the Library of Congress and found photos of the New Orleans ouilding when it opened in

1909. "It was almost like an ar-chaeological dig," Wyant said. "We used those photos as the template to rebuild the whole front of the property." That included replacing the

large canopy that had fallen off the building in 1931, killing three people. Wyant tracked down the

manufacturer of the original tin-pressed ceiling tiles and ordered replacements. Lorenda applied the antique finishing touches to them while standing on scaffolding.

All told. Wyant spent \$28 million on The Saint New Or-leans. He sold it in late March for 840 million.

for 840 million.
"It was a very difficult deci-sion to sell it," he said. "If I didn't have the opportunity to buy the Galvez, there would have been no way that I would have sold it

in the open market."
He's in the process of selling
The Saint boutique in Charles-ton, but he's keeping one in Key

Like mother, like son

The Galvez, which had been a Wyndham property until January, is operating as an independent until Wyant up-grades the hotel to Marriott Autograph Collection's highend standards.

"Heavy-duty reconstruction will begin in September after the summer season," Wyant said, "But we're not going to shut it down. We're going to do

sections at a time."

The hotel is holding its own, with more than 150 weddings on the books for this year. "We're amplifying that by add-ing a small room for selling weddings," Wyant said.

While we were sitting at the coffee bar in the lobby, general manager Darryl Hill, who has worked for Wyant for 10 years, came to tell Wyant that there was water leaking from the roof into the Music Room.

Without asking for details, Wyant dispatched his wingman as the two like to think of their relationship — to take whatever action was necessary

"This isn't a dog-and-pony show for you," Hill said when he returned. "He gives me free rein. He understands operations and lets me do what we

need to do to get the job done."
"There are always surprises with reconstruction," Wyant

He paid \$85,000 to replace five iconic palm trees that didn't come back after February's historic freeze.

His mother, Jana, who has been a partner with Mark on various hotel projects, has made the trip down on Mark's private plane but not in an official

business capacity.
"This is my venture, but she
participates greatly with her
opinions and knowledge. Hey, she's my mom," he said. "My mother has always been ahead of the curve. Dresses that way. Haircut is that way — short and sassy. She's in her 80s and took delivery of a new Ferrari last

His father died in 2000. Jana Wyant said her son makes life very interesting.

"As a business partner, it has been a joy to have a son like Mark," she said. "He always has something going on. Mark says he'll never remember me for baking cookies as I've been his

business partner all his life.
"If anything ever goes side-ways, I'm the first phone call he

Twitter: @CherylHall_DMN

Big Easy for a song

Wyant has always been a cker for history. In 2009, while taking a

morning stroll with Lorenda along Canal Street in New Orleans, they passed a boarded-up, 100-year-old eyesore called The Audubon. Developers had gutted the eight-story building, intending to turn it into a Hil-ton. But they walked on the deal in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

The bank had owned it for two years and was willing to offload it for a song. "We paid \$5.35 million for

the property in the heart of downtown," said Wyant, who did the project in partnership