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THE FOUNTAINS OF CONROE

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February

2012

On Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is a special time for telling others how much they mean to you. In keeping with the tradition, we would like to express how much all of our residents mean to us! We hope each one of you has a happy and memorable Valentine's Day!

Groundhog Day

Every year on February 2, we give the groundhog more attention than it gets any other day of the year. Of course, that's because it's Groundhog Day, which is about midway between winter and spring. According to the legend, if the groundhog fails to see his shadow, that means we're in for an early spring. However, if there is a shadow, we've got six more weeks of winter. Punxsutawney Phil, and his predictions are recorded in the Congressional Records of our National Archive. So far, Phil has seen his shadow about 85% of the time.

Happy Presidents' Day!

During February, we honor two of America's best-known and most beloved presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. The President of the United States embodies and reflects our most cherished American ideals of strength, dedication, determination, work-ethic, integrity, liberty and freedom. When we celebrate the leaders of our republic, we celebrate ourselves.

Making Up For Lost Time

Everyone knows that the month of February has only 28 days, right? Well, not in a leap year! Every fourth year an extra day is added to the end of February, creating a special day known as leap day or February 29. This day has been around since the Roman Empire, when astronomers had calculated the time it takes for the Earth to circle the sun. The number they came up with was 365 days, plus about 6 hours. This extra bit of time would add up to approximately 24 hours, or one day, after four years. Problem solved! By adding an extra day at the end of February every fourth year, we make up for lost time, so to speak.

OFFICE STAFF

Paula Watson
Manager

Kim Pherigo
Assistant Manager

Giovanna Gone
Leasing Consultant

Oswaldo Ortiz
Maintenance Supervisor

Michael McCann
Make Ready

Juan Garza
Porter

Yesica Bernardo
Housekeeper

OFFICE HOURS

M - F 9:00 - 6:00

SAT 10:00 - 6:00

SUN 12:00 - 5:00

EMAIL

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February 2012

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 Rent Due	2 Groundhog Day Pest Control	3	4 Rent Late
5	6	7	8	9 Pest Control	10	11
12	13	14	15	16 Pest Control	17	18
19	20 President's Day	21 Valentine's Day	22	23 Pest Control	24	25
26	27	28	29	Thank you for paying on time		

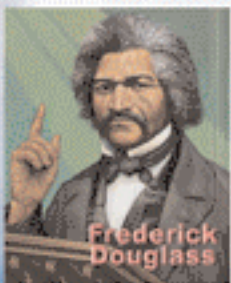
Paving the Way

With our diversification of peoples and cultures, Americans have a wonderful opportunity to enjoy literature written from a variety of perspectives. African-American authors have contributed immeasurably to our literature, and since February is Black History Month, a remembrance of those



who paved the way for today's writers seems most fitting.

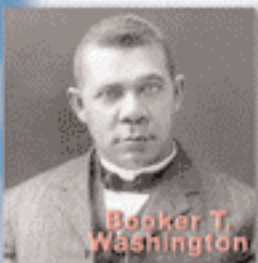
Many of the earliest published black writers were slaves, former slaves and abolitionists. The first to make a name was **Phillis Wheatley**. Her interest in literature led her to write and publish *Poems on Various Subjects* in 1773.



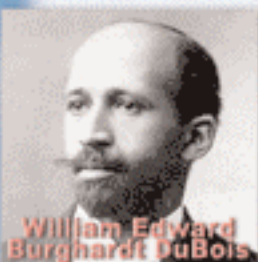
Perhaps the most famous former slave to become a literary giant was **Frederick Douglass**. A great orator and politician as well as writer, Douglass also championed women's rights in the mid 1800's. His autobiographies

detailed his life as a slave.

Booker T. Washington, educator and founder of the Tuskegee Institute, was by the 1890's the most prominent African-American in the country. His autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, published in 1901, followed the American tradition of the self-made man's account of success.



William Edward Burghardt DuBois, was not only a great writer but also an intellectual and one of the founders of the NAACP. While serving as head of the history department at Atlanta University, he wrote articles for several magazines, including *Atlantic Monthly*. His works were collected in *The Souls of Black Folk*, a sociological study of African-Americans. He was a recipient of the World Peace Council Prize in 1952.



Much of the African-American literature we have today springs from the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's and 30's. One of the most important voices

belonged to poet **Langston Hughes**. His verse dealt with the joys, troubles and hopes of African-Americans. Another writer from this time was **Richard**



Wright, whose first novel, *Native Son*, published in 1940, is significant for bringing attention to African-American literature and African-American writers. Women writers from this period include **Zora Neale Hurston** who wrote *Their Eyes Are Watching God* and **Dorothy West** who published *The Living Is Easy*.



The Harlem Renaissance inspired such writers as **Ralph Ellison** whose highly acclaimed 1952 novel, *Invisible Man*, explores the struggle for identity, and **James Baldwin** who published *Go Tell It On The Mountain* a year later. Poets were also inspired by the Renaissance with **Gwendolyn Brooks** receiving the first Pulitzer Prize awarded to an African-American for her collection, *Annie Allen* in 1949.



During the civil rights movement several playwrights emerged who furthered the cause. Most notably, perhaps, was **Lorraine Hansberry** whose play, *A Raisin In The Sun*, was the first by an African-American to be produced on Broadway, and **Amiri Baraka** with his risky off-Broadway plays.



In the 70's and 80's, the legacies begun by Phillis Wheatley and furthered by civil rights writers reached the mainstream. Books by African-American writers routinely topped the best-seller lists. Poet and historian, **Maya Angelou**, published *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* in 1970. The autobiographical story of an African-American girl growing up in the South is read by many school children. Novelist **Toni Morrison** rose to prominence as did successful African-American writers such as **Alice Walker**, **Gayl Jones**, **Jamaica Kincaid** and **John Edgar Wideman**. **Alex Haley** emerged with the novel *Roots*, which was produced as a successful television miniseries.



Today there is a wealth of work by African-American writers in all genres, whether it be serious fiction, light fiction or nonfiction. A trip to the bookstore, library or an online web search will enable one to sample the many great fruits from the American tree of diversity.

Dark Chocolate... Good &... Good For You!

...And just in time for Valentine's Day!

Chocolate has battled a bad reputation with the diet culture for years, one it definitely doesn't deserve. Chocolate, especially in dark varieties, has a number of health benefits that might just make you put down that crunchy cardboard "granola" bar and reach for this ancient sweet treat instead! Thought to originate with the Aztec culture, the cocoa bean was believed to be a gift from paradise—a compliment that man-a-chocoholic might still attest to today. Studies have shown that this delightfully decadent snack has positive effects that extend past the taste buds, making dark chocolate a winner even with doctors.

Chowing down on dark chocolate stimulates endorphin secretion—the happy little chemical clusters that bring a smile to our face and keep us from using our shopping carts as impromptu cattle prods on a crowded day in the grocery store. The effect has been compared to a "runner's high", the feeling of elation some exercisers describe hits them after several miles pass by. Surprisingly, many people opt to sample a chocolate bar over trying on a new pair of running

shoes—who knew?

Stressing over wrinkles? Dark chocolate also contains anti-oxidants, the powerful age-fighting components that have lead doctors and dieticians alike to put their seal of approval on red wine and dub produce like blueberries and pomegranates superfoods. Anti-oxidants can help fight many of the effects of aging, including keeping skin healthy and supporting general brain and organ functions. To stack the deck in your favor, try looking in natural food stores for dark chocolate dipped blueberries or other combinations of chocolate and superfoods—it's like a tasty, tasty time machine for your insides.

No, that triple-mocha-frappe-creamachino-grande that your local coffee chain dishes out in the mornings won't count towards your healthy chocolate intake. It may reduce your wallet by five bucks, but there probably isn't any anti-oxidants lurking under that grande paper sleeve. Powdered chocolates, drink mixes, syrups, milk chocolate and white chocolate—which doesn't actually contain any chocolate, by the way—don't pack the punch that dark chocolate does, no matter how tasty they are. If you'd like some health

benefits with your snacky satisfaction, be sure to only reach for dark varieties of chocolate, 70% or higher in cocoa content. If you do manage to forgo the morning coffee for chocolate without injuring your co-workers, here's some good news—dark chocolate actually contains caffeine too, so a square or two might be just what's needed to banish that 3 o'clock slump.

Though many people don't exactly have to be coaxed to nibble on chocolate, sometimes changing things up a bit can be fun! Try stirring shaved dark chocolate into hot milk for truly decadent hot cocoa, or even adding a little cinnamon to spice things up. Don't be afraid to experiment with adding dark chocolate to your favorite foods and enjoying the results! As the saying goes, man cannot live by bread alone, but bread dipped in chocolate? Now that, he might be willing to try.



Creamiest Chocolate Pudding

A combination of cocoa powder and dark chocolate offers acidity and flowery notes in this wonderfully creamy pudding. The pudding may be stored, tightly covered, in the refrigerator up to five days. For a pretty presentation, dip mint sprigs in water and gently dredge in sugar; let dry on a wire rack.



- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 1/2 cups 1% low-fat milk, slightly warmed
- 1/2 cup evaporated fat-free milk, slightly warmed
- 2 ounces bittersweet chocolate (60 to 70 percent cocoa), finely chopped (about 1/4 cup)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Fresh mint sprigs (optional)

Combine first 4 ingredients in a medium, heavy saucepan; stir with a whisk. Gradually add warmed low-fat and evaporated milk, stirring with a whisk. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly with a whisk. Reduce heat, and simmer 1 minute or until thick. Remove from heat; add chocolate, stirring until melted and mixture is smooth. Stir in vanilla. Pour about 2/3 cup pudding into each of 6 (8-ounce) ramekins; cover surface of each serving with plastic wrap. Chill at least 4 hours. Remove plastic wrap; serve. Garnish with fresh mint sprigs before serving, if desired.

Nutritional Information; Amount per serving, Calories: 194 Calories from fat: 21% Fat: 4.6g

Bathing with Essential Oils & Herbs

Bathing is a calming way to relax in today's fast paced, stressful life. It is a soothing way to start a new day and a blissful send-off to bed. Herbs and essential oils can soothe aching muscles, tense nerves, skin irritations, soften skin and help you gain that peaches and cream complexion.

Set the stage for your bath with a clean fresh bathroom. Keep clean towels, bath gels, herbs, loofah, etc., handy. Choose relaxing music and light aromatic candles around you. All in all make sure that everything you need for your luxury is within arms reach.

Create a bag of your favourite herbs to be used in bathing. Fill a muslin cloth or even an old stocking with your favourite herbs. Dip it in your bath, letting the herbs gently soak in the water. Bath salts, citrus leaves, dried rose petals, or dried lavender flowers, to name a few, will create a lovely herb bag. If you don't have the fondness for creating your own bag of herbs, ready made herb bags are easily purchased.

No more than 5 drops of essential oils should be used in a bath. Dilute with milk or carrier oil. The following are common herbs and essential oils used for their differing properties.

- Black Pepper or Chamomile for relief of aching muscles.
- Clary Sage as a perk-me-up.
- Jasmine when you wish to feel luxurious.
- Rosemary, Calendula and Thyme for oily skin.
- Lavender for dry skin, eczema, sprains, hot flashes, headaches, over work or insomnia.
- Rosemary to get you going in the morning and a quick pick-me-up in the evening. Also good for aches and sore muscles.
- Eucalyptus opens the pores and the vapours from the bath help to clear the breathing passages.
- Apricot and Amber moisturizes and restores softness and suppleness to skin.
- Citrus & Lavender have soothing and therapeutic properties.
- Geranium for very dry or itchy skin, eczema and PMS.
- Ylang Ylang exfoliates and moisturizes the skin.

Make sure that your bath time is a time of solitude. Just let yourself luxuriate in the watery haven. And don't forget to put a "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door.



BrainBusters 1) you just me 2) ____ it 3) RUE

Brain Buster answers: 1) Just between you & me 2) Blanket 3) Are you ready?