

EDITOR'S
NOTE



Writer George Getschow (far right) and his family visit Lipscomb in the Panhandle.

The Simple Life

In the hinterland of the Texas Panhandle, the tiny town of Lipscomb has managed to hold on to a way of life that has largely disappeared across the country. Contributing writer George Getschow, who visited four times over the last year to capture life in Lipscomb—population 44—for our annual Small Towns Issue, says he felt like he was on the wild frontier of Texas. “The people who live there have learned to endure,” the Dallas-based writer says. “They get along with each other because they have to—they’re survivalists. But they also go out of their way to make sure everyone’s OK. They define what it means to be a good neighbor.”

When someone heads out to buy groceries, Getschow relates, they buy for three or four weeks and often plan the trip with their neighbors. With no ATM or grocery store—the nearest Walmart is 75 miles away—they barter among themselves for needed items. During the pandemic, one resident walked through the town in the mornings, knocking on doors to check on her neighbors.

In a town of so few, each person is vital, and everyone has a role to play. But it’s not merely about surviving. Town

poet laureate Pam Haines writes poems for her fellow residents when they are going through hard times and when there’s something to celebrate. She also turned an abandoned room in the former schoolhouse into a public library, where anyone can check out books on the honor system. Since everyone knows and looks out for each other, kids often roam free and spend their days fishing at a nearby creek, building rafts, and generally enjoying the sort of liberty that eludes many of us in our overcommitted and overscheduled lives.

“The hallmark of my trips there was seeing the freedom of how they live,” Getschow says. “Kids are allowed to be kids; adults are allowed to be quirky and weird. Nobody says, ‘You can’t paint your house pink.’ People just accept one another, and that’s an act of freedom.”

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