

## The Lodge: Facilities, services to fit any budget

Written by By FAITH HUFFMAN, News-Telegram News Editor, faith@ssecho.com  
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Chad Young and Rhonda Adair bought the property known then as Echo Lodge 10 years ago with the intent of expanding Young's rental business into what has become a full-service facility.

The Lodge has continued to grow, along with the property and services offered, into a booming business sought out not only for its location, but the full array of services offered.

"Chad's been in the rental business for years. He's the one you call to rent tables and chairs. One day, he came home and said he'd bought the lodge," Adair recalled.

Purchasing Echo Lodge, which was a 16-acre property with a building rented periodically to that point for events, seemed like a good fit. Young had been to the property several times to deliver and retrieve items rented from him. He could expand to offer services along with the building and equipment rental — things like catering, decorations and conference supplies which customers previously had to take care of themselves.

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“It’s a fun deal. I get to meet a lot of people and be part of some of their happiest occasions. It’s humbling for us to be involved in once-in-a-lifetime events,” Young said.

“Who wouldn’t want to be part of planning a wedding or special occasion?” Adair said. “I try to help as much as I can. ... It’s a lot of work, but fun. I do my thing, what I like to do — be creative, make things pretty. Chad likes talking to people. He’s never met a stranger. We complement each other, have different areas we take care of.”

Young does most of the planning and communications. Adair and staff do the behind-the-scenes work putting together those choices just right.

The business partners purchased additional land so that The Lodge now encompasses 43 acres. Young and Adair are constantly developing the property and offerings to better fit all manner of customer needs. They’ve added a waterfall, upgraded inside, expanded the patio and develop settings even further out onto the property to offer various backdrops for weddings and special occasions.



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“We are constantly updating. We are constantly checking for new trends, getting new linens, the latest decorations, recipes, fun things to do,” Adair noted.

Future plans include expanding the kitchen and covering the patio so they don't have to keep erecting and tending a canopy.

“We hope to expand the kitchen this year. We have lot of good ideas in the works if we can get them all done,” said Young. “A tent is up over the patio, but plans are in the works to cover the patio so it is partially enclosed. It takes a lot of labor to cover it.”

Potential customers have only to contact The Lodge and pick a package. They pick the venue, decorations, menus, the works — The Lodge staff does all of the work, including set up and cleanup — for one agreed upon price.

“We are one stop, no surprises. We've been told so many times by clients, they are so glad they can just show up and not have to do anything,” said Young. “We provide all the staff and clean up. We have a full staff, different people that help, eight to 10 staff for sizable events including cooks, dishwashers and waiters. We do it with fine china and glassware; no paper and plastic here. We have 400 place settings.”

The Lodge can host anywhere from an intimate gathering of 20 to a wedding reception for 400, if the couple chooses an indoor/outdoor wedding. For smaller events, they will close the dining room and utilize the smaller front area. While weddings and receptions are their mainstays, the partners say The Lodge also handles conferences, anniversaries, retirement parties, family reunions, work parties, luncheons, proms for smaller county schools and large scale social events. Pharmaceutical companies and local doctors are also among their clients.

They have two new flatscreen TVs, equipment for slideshows and in-house karaoke. They'll even help contract with area entertainers and act as DJs if needed.

“We're not about being in tight control, but about being responsible. We could contract with an outside DJ, but we'd have to worry about them showing up and having the right equipment,

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being on time — those things reflect on us even though they're an outside service. So, we employ all our DJs to make for more piece of mind," Young explained.

They have an extensive menu from which people can pick, from steaks, sliced tenderloin and smoked salmon to carving and pasta stations, and a variety of other options in between.

Young and Adair also "work with all local hotels" to help their customers with lodging needs; arrange city tours; and transportation with every event whether it be limos, carriage rentals or regular vehicles to and from events or golf carts to get from the parking area to the site for the event.

"From small country weddings to large black tie affairs and in between, we do it all," said Young. "Our goal is to continue to fit the needs of our customer base in exploring options on expanding our venues. This is full service in that we do the decorating, catering, we've even hired sitters."

The one thing they don't offer is photography, but they have added a photo booth — those fun little booths people get in and take four quick candid shots.

The main concern, the partners said, is meeting the needs and desires of their clients within their budget.

"If they have a small budget and a certain number of guests, we work within that budget. With so many different choices, we can meet their needs. It's all inclusive in the approach we go with — the food and everything we choose is cost effective. Our staff is already there," said Young, adding, "It's so close to town, you have the feel of being in town, but it's still peaceful out here in the country. We still have high speed Internet, projector and screen — presentation supplies for conferences."

Thanks to the Internet and today's communications operations, planning is no problem. For instance, The Lodge recently put on a 60th wedding anniversary for a couple, hosted by a daughter who lives in Manhattan. All planning was handled via email and over the phone so the daughter never even had to set foot in Texas to coordinate the event.

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“The Internet has made it so much easier to plan full events. For example, in the case of an out-of-state bride, away at school. We’ve done those several times. I can’t tell you how many events we’ve held, and not a person was from Sulphur Springs. For example, part of the family is in Gilmer and the other part in Garland. This is about half way between,” Young said.

And business is booming, with dates filling up fast, especially at this time of year. While most request the facilities on weekends, The Lodge also will hold events during the week too.

“Our dates book up fast, sometimes four months or greater in advance. We work mostly weekends, but during the holidays, especially Christmas, things are busier with events during the week too. After all, there are only three Saturdays in December and lots of events,” Young said.

Anyone interested in booking The Lodge for an event can call 903-439-3030 during regular business hours to schedule an appointment to look at the premises and pick a package.

The Lodge is located at 1026 Interstate 30 east in Sulphur Springs, just don’t expect it to show up on any GPS system. It didn’t have a designated physical address until after Young and Adair purchased it 10 years ago — no one had ever gotten mail there before. There was no need as no one had lived in the lodge and no business had operated strictly out of the property.