

10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

# Southwest NOW!

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MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2016

## Powerful Music

For the Duncanville High Marching Band, championships are a familiar tune

## A Caregiver's Journey

At Home With  
Veronica Shanklin

10

## 2016 Holiday Shopping Guide

All About Intention

Fostering New Beginnings

Moving Ahead of the Curve

Dining Deals

In the Kitchen With  
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### DeSoto ISD Magnet Showcase

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### Family Academy & Magnet Showcase – Dual Event!

DeSoto ISD is combining two great events for families this year! The Family Academy and Magnet Showcase will be held in a combined event on Saturday, November 12 from 8 a.m. to noon at DeSoto High School, 600 Eagle Drive. The dual event includes free breakfast and student performances, followed by two sessions to educate and inform parents and students about a variety of topics. In addition, the Magnet Showcase will be in full swing showing off the programs available from elementary through high school. The event will conclude with a motivational keynote speaker and drawings - including a \$1,000 scholarship!

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- Northside Business and Law (Gr. 3-5)
- Ruby Young Medical & Environmental Sciences (Gr. 3-5)
- Woodridge Fine Arts (Gr. K-5)
- Cockrell Hill Linguistics (Gr. K-5)
- The Meadows STEAM (Gr. 1-5)
- Frank D. Moates Blended Learning (Gr. 2-5)

### Calendar

November - Parent Involvement Month

Tues., Nov. 1 - Super Tuesday, Parents Are Tutors 2,  
@ West MS, 6-7:30 p.m.

Th., Nov. 3 - Football @ S. Grand Prairie, 7:30 p.m.

Sat., Nov. 12 - Family Academy & Magnet Showcase,  
8 a.m. to noon @ DeSoto High School

Mon., Nov. 14 - Board Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Nov. 21-25 - Thanksgiving Break; return Mon., Nov. 28  
Th., Dec. 1 - Chamber State of the District, 11:30 a.m.

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#### ON THE COVER



The DHS band director, David Brandon, encourages his students to reach for the stars at the state competition.

Photo by Shane Kirkpatrick.

# CONTENTS

November 2016 • Volume 10, Issue 11



## 8 Powerful Music

The DHS band is seeking to continue the tradition of competing for the state title.

18

## 18 All About Intention

Carma Morgan encourages a strong sense of community with her Lake Ridge neighbors.

18

## 30 A Caregiver's Journey

At Home With Veronica Shanklin.



30

## 36 Fostering New Beginnings

Kentria Arkansas knows a sense of belonging makes a world of difference.

42 BusinessNOW

44 Around TownNOW

52 CookingNOW

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## Editor's Note

*SouthwestNOW Turns 10!*

This month, *SouthwestNOW Magazine* is celebrating its 10-year anniversary. That's 10 years of telling stories about great people doing good things in the community. What started in 2006 as *Cedar Hill NOW* has grown to include DeSoto and Duncanville. As our communities thrive with new businesses popping up and new neighbors moving into our ever-growing cities, what won't change are the great people, stories and legacies that will continue to be passed down. So keep the stories coming, and I'll keep sharing them.

November is also time for Thanksgiving and reflecting on what we're thankful for. This year, I'm thankful for self-awareness and inward reflection. It's difficult to step back and look at one's self, being aware of our shortcomings and the impact we have on others. However, it's very easy to focus on what everyone else is doing and how they could be doing things differently. So, I will continue to work on myself and realize that I'm a work in progress and will not reach perfection until that great day.

Here's to self-awareness and being thankful!

*Abby*

Abby Rich

*SouthwestNOW* Editor

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— By Rick Mauch

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*The Duncanville High School Marching band understands all too well the expectations facing them. They are reminded daily as they make the trek to the band hall. They see the accolades that have been earned by previous band members who have led past all-state bands to victory, and realize they have a reputation to uphold.*

John Cruz, senior saxophone player and drum major, was an all-state selection, individually, last year, which was an off year for state marching competition. He's one of four senior drum majors this year vying to lead Duncanville back to the University Interscholastic League state competition on November 8 and 9 in San Antonio's Alamodome, an event in which the Panther Marching Band is quite accustomed to being involved.

Duncanville won a Class 5A state championship in 1986 and has advanced to state in the biennial competition ever since, believed



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to be the only 5A team (now Class 6A) in Texas to accomplish that feat. They also won titles in 1990 and 2002. Once at state, they consistently make the finals. In fact, qualifying for the final round of competition has become as consistent as August and triple-digit temperatures. "A few years ago, one of our bands didn't make finals at state, and everybody got alarmed. They just couldn't believe it," said Corinne Daniels, the only second-year drum major this season. "We know it's not going to be handed to us, but everyone expects Duncanville to be in the finals. The band and girls basketball have the most success on campus. People really respect us everywhere."

The Pantherettes, like the Panther Marching Band, are renowned. Their championship history includes nine state titles and 14 state finals appearances since 1976. Add in several state championships in a variety of other events and you get the nickname "City of Champions."

David Brandon, 51, is in his second full year as the Duncanville band director. He has been in the school district's band system since 1996, first at Byrd Middle School and then for nearly eight years as the high school assistant and director of the marching band, before taking over the complete program. He also directs the wind ensemble, which is part of the school's honor band.

The Duncanville High School band program became a perennial power under 30 years of leadership by Tom Shine, starting in 1980. Jeff King then upheld the tradition for five years, before leaving to become the Irving ISD fine arts



director. Now, David is in the role that Tom made legendary, and he welcomes the challenge. "That's quite a legacy to live up to, but if you believe in the kids and give them the opportunity to do great, they will," David said. "Ultimately, the success does come down to the kids."

"Tom got the most out of kids through encouragement. If you watched rehearsals, it was fire and brimstone, but then you'd hear him talk individually and with encouraging words — it was really something special. I was fortunate enough to work under that for 14 years."

David was no stranger to powerhouse programs when he came to Duncanville from Spring ISD, where he was an assistant middle school director. His program fed Westfield High School, another perennial state contender.

Then, he recalled his own days at Nacogdoches High School playing a French horn, when he learned what a difference the right director can make to a band student. David said in his sophomore year a new director turned the program around. "He put standards on us and made us feel we were the very best. We went from third division to first division," David said. "We've had the standard here in Duncanville for 40 years."

And students understand and respect that standard. Though the decades-long tradition of success has its intimidations, drum major and flute player Citlalli Rodriguez said, "That is also part of what drives the participants. It's an awesome tradition, a little scary, sure, but we are motivated to keep the tradition going. No one wants to be in the band that ended the streak."



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Drum major and clarinet player Blake Washington said she remembers being a freshman entering the high school band. It was then she said she realized the full impact of the history, and now she understands her connected responsibility. "I take great pride in being a senior leader," she said. "It matters a lot to me. I remember looking up to my senior leaders when I was a freshman, and now I know they are looking up to me."

Not only is the Duncanville Marching Band one of the most successful to be found, it is also one of the largest. In fact, they are believed to have had the largest marching band to ever win a state championship (the 1986 squad, with 350), and the program auditioned about 425 hopefuls at the end of the last school year, the most ever. "If you add in the High Hats (the dance team), that's around another 60," David said. "Their choreography drives the whole story we're trying to tell." The competitive show will feature about 275 students. That's not counting numerous others helping out behind the scenes.

The theme of this year's performance is "Postcards from Paris." It features five different segments describing places in



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Duncanville Band Director David Brandon is proud of the DHS band program's legacy.

Paris, with music from French composers. "From a park to Moulin Rouge (famous French night club), we include a lot," David said. "It's basically a Broadway show we're doing, and it's beautiful."

Though they haven't won state since 2002, the Panther Marching Band has come close. They brought home bronze medals in 2006 and 2010. In 2008, they were sixth, and in 2014, they were seventh.

"As Duncanville continues to set the bar for marching band success, other bands around the state are continually pushing the program," David said. Quite simply, to remain the best, they must constantly find ways to keep getting better. "Texas is the state for band. It's known nationwide. Bands have gotten extremely good. There are 15 or 20 schools that could easily be in the top five every year and another 25 who could be in the finals every year. It makes it tougher for us, but that's good," he added.

As for the future, David is transitioning the marching band leadership to George Townsend, who has been with the district's band program for 15 years. David is confident the success at Duncanville will continue for years to come. "If you're doing the right thing and the system is healthy, it's only going to get better," he said. "We just try to do something a little better each year." **NOW**

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# ALL ABOUT INTENT

*"I want to offer a legacy and promote the message of empowerment through family and community."*

*Carma Morgan is going on her seventh year living in the Lake Ridge community of Cedar Hill. Originally from Lawton, Oklahoma, she served our country in the Air Force for four years, and then returned to her hometown to attend college, where she completed a whopping 24 hours in one semester. The high achiever had to get special permission from the dean to do so, and she's been setting the bar just as high since then.*



— By Abby Rich

# TION

She later moved to the DFW area to work in the financial aid department at The University of Texas at Arlington. Now, with a master's degree in education and leadership, she is assistant principal of a Dallas ISD middle school. Like mother like daughters, four of her high-achieving girls are in the collegiate

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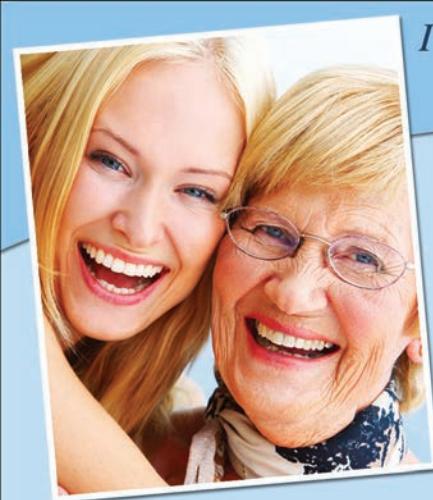
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pipeline programs within Cedar Hill ISD.

"I had five daughters in the span of 10 years, so our house is never boring," Carma confessed. Her mother, Lola, lives with her family, too, which makes her husband, Corey, the only male in the house. The Morgans have the cute tradition of alliteration, all spelling their names with the letter C to include Carma and Corey, plus daughters Courtney, Chloe, Cassie, Charidee and Carrington.

For Carma, life is all about leaving a legacy. She's realized that the life she lives now should be intentional in order to lead her children by example. "I'm a people person and believe in living life intentionally, and that includes finding ways to be healthier like working out and creating a balance of mind, body and spirit," Carma explained.

In the spring of 2015, Carma was on one of her walks through Lake Ridge as she passed neighbor Tiffany Wingo, who was also preparing to walk. Collectively, Carma and Tiffany brainstormed about gathering all the women who attended a recent neighborhood housewarming party to form a walking club, and from there the idea was thrust into action. The first five ladies to commit to walking didn't know each other well, but they quickly

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formed a bond and decided on the name, The Real Ladies of Lake Ridge.

From there, they added more to their number each time they walked through the community. Not long after, one of the ladies, Lovelea Lynch, created a GroupMe text messaging option to coordinate dates and times with everyone who wanted to join in on the friendship and exercise. She encourages everyone who walks to post to GroupMe afterward to offer accountability and a way to track their goals, as well as post pictures. "No matter what, someone walks almost every day of the week, rain or shine," Carma said. They have a total of about 14 regulars, but they always welcome guests to join them when they can.

"The fellowship and camaraderie has been such a blessing," Tiffany said. "We all contribute to the group in our own way, and Carma is a visionary — we lovingly call her the 'glue' of the group. What started out as just a way to walk and get exercise has turned into true friendships that will last a lifetime."

"It's always been my desire to live in a community where I can interact with my neighbors and form relationships with them," fellow Lake Ridge walker Roshonda Lewis said. "I love these ladies

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and truly believe they push me to live a better life," she concluded.

The walking circle around Lake Ridge is approximately 4.2 miles. But, that doesn't stop the ladies from continuing farther to sometimes log a 5.4-mile walk. When asked how beginners handle the lengthy workout, Carma explained that the pain is there in the beginning, but the commitment is always greater than the pain. "It's easier to stick with it when you have a group versus walking on your own," Carma stated. Encouragement and motivation is always waiting in the wings from fellow walkers when excuses come up as to why they "can't" walk. Now with The Real Ladies of Lake Ridge Facebook page, she challenges the women to lengthen their walks and post their distances and times.





When it's winter or raining outside, Carma maintains her pledge to fitness. In order to be an example to her daughters and the ladies, she hits the local gym and encourages them to do so as well. This major commitment has recently helped Carma to lose about 35 pounds.

The power of 'yes' is amazing, according to fellow lady of Lake Ridge Vickie Daniel. "I'm so glad I said, 'Yes,' when Carma knocked on my door," Vickie exclaimed. "What makes this group of women amazing is that we continue with it, even if some of us drop in and out of walking during different times throughout the year. And we always have encouraging smiles to greet us upon our return. The ladies of Lake Ridge have given me endless support, prayers, humor and wisdom, and I thank them for being *real!*"

Last year, at Christmastime, the women and their spouses had a progressive dinner party at six of their homes to create an eight-course meal. Each neighbor participated by cooking and serving up a delicious dish. They carpooled to one another's houses for each course and ended the evening with Christmas carols and an ornament exchange.

Other activities they share in as a group are meet-and-greets for Lake Ridge newcomers and support for the Incarnation House. Last fall, they walked and ran in the *Say Boo to Breast Cancer* 5K and trudged the route in the rain. The ladies also have a once-a-month girls' night out to foster even more fellowship.

Being more than just a positive voice to her daughters, as well as The Real Ladies of Lake Ridge, Carma is a true example that you can do anything you set your mind to, which is why she does it all in the first place. According to Carma, when she passes away — a long time from now — she wants to literally be empty from giving it all in this life. "I want to offer a legacy," she happily declared, "and promote the message of empowerment through family and community." **NOW**



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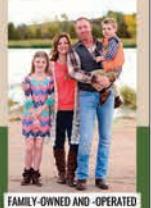
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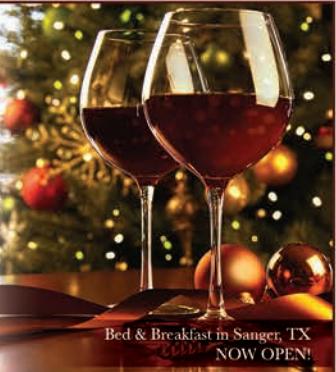
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— By Debbie Durling



## At Home With Veronica Shanklin

*Manicured and lush is the landscape of a corner lot situated in the Hidden Canyon area of DeSoto. Beautiful crepe myrtles, perfectly rounded shrubs and a slightly curved walk leading to the front door give an aura of a well-cared-for home and family. The architecture of the house, bricked in shades of brown, is timeless. Two gables face the front lawn. A chimney, well placed to the side, gives warmth to the structure, while a unique arched, picture window is located to the right of the arched entry. The windows surrounding the front door were ahead of their time when the home was built in the '80s, and they still look modern today.*

Ron and Linda Shanklin bought this home in 1997, after spending the early part of their marriage raising their family in the Oak Cliff area. With both of their daughters off to college and out of the house, Ron, a retired professional football player and UNT football coach, and Linda, who worked in the insurance industry, found DeSoto to be the perfect area for transitioning into their new life as empty nesters.

Even though Ron has passed, the den of this 3,500-square-foot home echoes memories of his life and legacy with the Pittsburgh Steelers. Drawings given to him by fans, trophies, memorabilia and a unique handmade bar he adored are the decor



of this comfortable living space. Parquet wood flooring stretches out beneath the recliners and sofas that give comfort while the family rests and relaxes.

In 2013, Vernell Shorter, Linda's mother, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Soon thereafter, she moved in with Linda to ensure her safety and care. Linda's daughter, Veronica Shanklin, was living in Chicago, Illinois, at the time. She had completed her master's degree at Columbia College and was working as an account executive at a national advertising agency. From there, she moved on to serve as the director of marketing at a community college. When she got the news about her grandmother and saw the challenges her mother was facing with Vernell's care, she decided to leave her life and career in Chicago and move home to help her mom. One year later, her mom was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, too.



Veronica felt blessed to be able to pick up and move back home. The amazing attention to detail and upkeep of the home only reflects the sweet care the family gives to each other. Three bedrooms, two living areas, two dining areas and a large kitchen give ample space for medical needs and the ability for each of the three women to have a space of their own. Pink is the signature color of the carpets and furniture. A brick fireplace adorns the formal living room. The kitchen has raised panel cabinets surrounding a matching island. The sink is in the corner with two windows overlooking the backyard. The cabinets end in a bar that separates the actual kitchen area from the breakfast room.

A tile that has the pattern of parquet wood is found throughout the hard

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surface areas of the home. Vaulted ceilings create a large, spacious feel in each of the living areas. "Three baths make the home very practical for three adults living together," Veronica said. The attention to detail makes this house an elegant showplace with a wet bar in the formal living room, wainscoting in the

formal dining room, a plant shelf under the windows over the kitchen sink and a second fireplace in the master bedroom.

Lighting is elegant throughout the home. The entry houses a staircase to the second floor, and over it hangs a beautiful, teardrop-

shaped, crystal chandelier. To the left in the formal dining room, another crystal chandelier defines the room as a place for elegant dining with family and friends. Unique lamps accent each room. Some are crystal with gold metal, others are silver and look like stacked little balls, and all have uniquely shaped shades.

After returning to DeSoto, Veronica started her own business, Ron25 Creative. She does freelance marketing and event planning to make a living while she cares for her mom and grandmother. "I knew God had a plan for my life when I left



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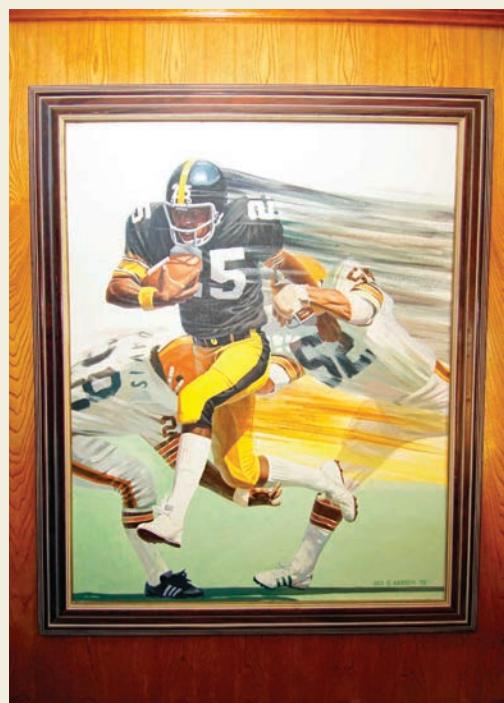
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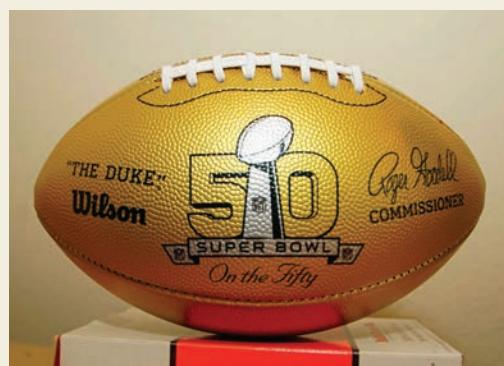
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Chicago. I knew if I took a leap of faith and took care of my family, God would take care of me," she said with a smile.

She also became very intent on finding out all she could about the disease that is trying to claim her loved ones. "I researched the Alzheimer's Association. I started volunteering there and helping out with events and administrative work," she said. One event she has been heavily involved with is the "Walk to End Alzheimer's." The Dallas walk effort is ranked in the top five in the country for fundraising for the association.

She is passionate about the topic and considers her involvement a "win-win." As she helps the association, she gets help for her mother and grandmother by becoming more knowledgeable about the resources available to those suffering with the disease. For instance, she learned about Senior Source, a local agency that provides respite care to caregivers, free of charge.

She is now on the board of directors for Greater Dallas Alzheimer's Association. She wants to dedicate her life to being an advocate for caregivers and those suffering from the disease. A blanket is placed on the couch in the living room that was given to her by a close friend who appreciates the work she does. It reads, "#endalz, #advocate, #caregiver, #friend ... that's you, Veronica." Behind the kitchen, Veronica has remodeled a small room to use as an office for her work and advocacy. Coming home gave her new goals, a new mission and a purpose for her life. She has a blog that provides tools and resources for caregivers and keeps a record of her caregiving journey — [veemyselfandi.com](http://veemyselfandi.com). Veronica has also been interviewed on television and radio as an advocate for Alzheimer's. Her research is branching out to music and memory, as she seeks ways to help her family members keep their present cognition and precious memories alive.



The back door of the house leads to a well-manicured backyard with a patio and grill for entertaining. Veronica often invites friends and family over for fellowship and fun. For this family, their beautiful house is also a refuge where comfort and care are offered to one another in a difficult time. It is not a time of despair but one in which they celebrate and try to hold on to memories of a beautiful life, while finding ways to help others. **NOW**

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# Fostering New Beginnings

— By Debbie Durling



Kentria Arkansas with her five adopted sons, Tristian, Prince Andrew, Robert, Sir Marcus and Josiah.

# Incentives for KIDS

Kentria Arkansas has provided foster care to 52 boys over a 10-year period of time. Having been abandoned by both parents and left for her grandmother to raise, Kentria has a special place in her heart for children who are living without the love and care of their parents. "My grandmother struggled. I wasn't her responsibility, but she took care of me," she said.

She remembers having a lot of anger in her youth, as she would look around at other kids and see their two-parent families. She wanted that kind of life for herself, but it was not to be. After her mom went to serve in the military, her mom's boyfriend stayed around and helped Kentria's grandmother with the finances of raising a child. He was a great example of being responsible. "Even though he's not my biological father, he is still in my life today, and he helps me with my kids. His name is Clark Kent, really. He is my Superman," Kentria said with certainty.

Following in the footsteps of the heroes in her life, Kentria has become a hero to kids who have either been abandoned or have been taken out of abusive situations. A graduate of Texas Southern University in Houston, she has tried several careers. She went to a fire academy, barber school, worked at the post office, worked in group homes dealing with foster kids and completed a business degree. Nothing has fulfilled her like spending time with children who

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need a home. Loving and providing for kids has become her career.

Through the foster care system, five young men have crossed Kentria's path with whom she found a special connection. Adopting them has made all the difference in their lives. She stresses that all kids want to be wanted. "Yes, they have their problems from being abandoned or abused, but once they feel a sense of 'belonging,' they begin to change," she shared.

Her first adoption was Robert. He went into the foster care system at only 3 years of age. Taken from a family involved with drugs and abuse, he had major anger issues. While he was still a foster child, she was getting calls from the school daily concerning his behavior and attitude. Just the act of adoption turned him around. She was no longer getting calls from the school. He began paying attention in class, making straight A's and is in the Male Leadership Academy. People who have recently met him describe him as mild-mannered and shy. He now belongs and is wanted, and it has made all the difference.

Next, Josiah came along. He didn't understand why he was taken away from



his parents. Abandonment and neglect are part of his story. Because he wasn't regularly taken to school, he was behind. After his adoption was official, he began to catch up in school and is now on level in eighth grade.

When kids go through the adoption process, they are allowed to change their first names as well as take on the last name of the new family. This signifies a new beginning. Sometimes unconventional names are chosen, but that is OK, because the choice of name is totally up to the child. The next two children Kentria adopted — Prince Andrew and Sir Marcus — did just that. Adopted at the same time, they chose names that reflected the royal feeling of now being safe and belonging to a good family.

Prince Andrew was just a toddler when he entered the foster system. He would get really upset and self-inflict harm.





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Kentria and her associates, Kerrington and Faith, dream of producing a reality program about fostering kids.

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Though he still struggles at times, after being adopted, his grades came up, and he began to come home with positive reports from school. Sir Marcus was 8 years old when he became a permanent part of this beautiful family. Kentria saw something in him that made her feel he would turn around and fit well into the family.

This past summer, she adopted one more. His name is Tristian. He came out of a drug situation at 11 years old. He was adopted in another state with his sisters, but the adoption failed. A CPS worker contacted Kentria, and she accepted him, first as a foster child. He had a history of fighting and stealing food. He was dismissed from the football team in the past school year because of his behavior. After she decided to adopt him, she could see a change, a sense of calm, that same sense of belonging that had changed the other kids. Kentria is looking forward to seeing how his behavior at school is affected this year by this new life-changing event.

"I have tried many careers, but these kids helped ground me," Kentria shared. "I was born to be a mom, and I love being a mom to these boys." She has found four basic secrets to reaching these kids —

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keeping them active, sticking to a schedule, providing structure and loving discipline. Even though she has five boys, her home is tidy, clean and neat. They are assigned chores, which also creates a sense of belonging. She regularly attends Friendship West Baptist Church, where the boys get to be part of an even greater family and enjoy character-building activities.

She is putting foster care aside for a while, as she attempts to build stability into these five young lives. But, foster care is still close to her heart. "Fostering kids has a bad stereotype. A lot of people are afraid to foster kids, and even more are afraid of adopting them. I want to open my home and show people what it is really like — the difficulties and the rewards," Kentria shared, looking ahead to her dreams. Recently, she has been working on the idea of a reality show called, *From Foster to Family*. She has done pitches to the Oprah Network and others. She wants to create



a positive "vibe" toward adopting these kids and getting them out of the system and into loving homes. She is also in the process of buying a ranch in the Ellis County area where she can provide care for more boys who so desperately need a safe, loving place to belong.

She has also created an organization called Incentives for Kids, which works in partnership with the Dallas and DeSoto school districts as a mentoring program. This organization provides summer camps, college tours and other developmental activities to support foster kids. Kentria could have had a very different story. It is because of two responsible adults who cared and unselfishly gave a quality life to her that she now has a passion to rescue today's kids and set them on a path to wholeness and healing. **NOW**

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Mathnasium of Cedar Hill provides fun and interesting ways for kids to learn through logic and games, creating an exciting learning environment.

# Moving Ahead of the Curve

*Mathnasium is boosting kids' confidence and producing a lifelong love for math.*

— By Abby Rich

The calls from parents to Mathnasium of Cedar Hill owner, Tenequa Gabriel, start increasing as soon as the first report cards of the semester go out in mid-October. Luckily, Mathnasium staff is here to help kids whether they're struggling or looking to get ahead of the curve.

The starting point is assessing students to see where they stand. Many of the students coming into the program are falling behind in math, and after assessing their skills, Tenequa observes that they didn't have a solid foundation of math to begin with. Whereas, schools don't have the extra time to help students go back and master the basics, Mathnasium steps in to fix the

problems at the foundation, and help them develop number sense. And with math techniques ever-changing in schools, not all parents know or understand the new concepts, but instructors help it make sense to the kids.

Tenequa graduated from Texas A&M University with a degree in management information systems. She then spent 10 years in information technology as a computer programmer/analyst for a large engineering company. While the technical field was great experience, she felt the pull to be in a more people-oriented career. So, she got her MBA in human resources and, subsequently, moved into a variety of human resources roles,

## Business NOW

including recruiting engineers. There she saw the need for candidates with strong math and science skills in the workplace and had a vision of how she could help to impact it. After learning about Mathnasium and the need of students in her own community, she came to own the Mathnasium franchise in Cedar Hill, which has validated her urge to help kids while utilizing her math expertise.

"The first noticeable change in kids who come to Mathnasium is the boost in their math confidence," Tenequa explained. "At first, they come in frustrated, but then they learn to like math."

"My daughter's confidence has increased," parent Lavonda Marsh said. "She is no longer apprehensive when math time approaches. She loves the staff at Mathnasium, and her grades have improved. My husband and I appreciate the wonderful job they have done."

Some students seek the program for enrichment in their current studies in order to move ahead of the curve, and Mathnasium does not constrain students to stay at a certain grade level. Some kids test well at their level and end up advancing.

Instructors provide fun and interesting ways for kids to learn through logic and math games, making it an exciting learning environment. In fact, it's such a fun environment that the feedback from parents is kids continue to ask to attend sessions at Mathnasium. All instructors have the skills to help kids from second through 12th grade, and are proficient in all math concepts in between.

Mathnasium's curriculum is designed to teach math in a way that makes sense to kids. Mathnasium partners with the National PTA's STEM program, or science, technology, engineering and math education and family engagement initiative, to support the development and deployment of resources, activities and events that engage students and families in STEM/math experiences. They even offer STAAR preparation for students wishing to get help before the testing takes place.

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## Around Town NOW



Northside Elementary students listen to DeSoto police and fire departments to learn how to safely walk to and from school during the Walk This Way event.



Sara Henson and daughter, Madison, are all smiles since moving back to the city of Cedar Hill.



Obelia McCoy and Charlie Lewis savor some samples at the 15th Annual Taste of Cedar Hill.



It's a beautiful day for a ribbon cutting at Menchie's, and it wouldn't be complete without a taste of their delicious yogurt.



Officer Roland Rodriguez receives his School Resources Officer of the Week gift from Assistant Superintendent Levatta Levels.



Successful DeSoto High graduates Courtney Bennett and Julian Escamilla speak to current students during the collegiate panel of the school's inaugural College Boot Camp.



Duncanville Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting at Thibodeaux's Cajun Cookin' restaurant, which serves up some serious Southern food.



The cast and crew of The Premature Corpse get ready to "break a leg" before their performance at the Duncanville Community Theatre.



First Methodist School of Duncanville students listen to the story of Johnny Appleseed by storyteller and Cedar Hill resident Bea Clack.



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## Tummy Ache or Big Problem

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Inflammation is the bane and the beginning of so many disorders and illnesses in the body. Gastritis — inflammation in the stomach — could be inconsequential or, perhaps, a condition of something more serious. We all have that occasional upset stomach from eating too much, eating the wrong food or even going too long without eating anything. Your stomach can become swollen and irritated from too much of the wrong type of bacteria or even from some medications. These upsets tend to be self-limiting and easily remedied.

There are lifestyle changes one can make to avoid getting gastritis once you recognize that certain actions or behaviors can aggravate the situation. If anti-inflammatory drugs, such as aspirin, Advil or Aleve cause discomfort, another medication may have to be substituted. Avoid spicy foods, acidic foods and alcohol. Try to eat smaller meals more frequently and work on reducing stress.

Depending upon the degree of gastritis, symptoms experienced may be abdominal pain, which can be felt as burning, gnawing or cramping; bloating or a feeling of fullness; belching; nausea; and/or vomiting and diarrhea. In treating these symptoms, many times over-the-counter antacid medications, such as Maalox or Tums, are all that is necessary to neutralize stomach acid. Drugs that reduce the production of stomach acid like Zantac and Tagamet or medications like Prilosec and Nexium, which function by blocking the action in the stomach cells that produce acid, can be helpful.

However, there can be episodes of gastritis that can be serious enough to warrant medical attention. Some such episodes include: peptic ulcers, bleeding within the stomach that causes anemia and, rarely, cancer or serious bowel problems. The most common causes of gastritis are from the Helicobacter pylori bacteria, known as H. pylori, and from anti-inflammatory drugs. Both of these agents can create strong inflammatory actions and set up the stomach for a chronic problem. In addition to bacteria and drugs, some of the conditions that can cause gastritis are alcohol, viruses, stress, fungal infections and bile redux.

Antibiotics prescribed in combination medication therapy are common to eliminate the bacteria. If taking anti-inflammatory drugs is creating a problem but the medication is essential, a balance of medications that either block or reduce acid production to be given with the anti-inflammatory drugs is needed. If possible, another alternative for pain management, other than anti-inflammatory medication, may need to be found.

For the most part, gastritis may just be an annoyance. But, should it become a chronic condition, it may be time to call in the professionals for help. **NOW**

*This article is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult with your physician if you have questions regarding this topic.*

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# Calendar

## NOVEMBER 2016

### November 4

Mobile mammography: 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m., 200 E. Belt Line Rd., DeSoto. DeSoto ISD will partner with Methodist Health Systems to provide mobile mammography for employees and the community.

### November 5

“This is Me” Journaling and Book Writing Program and Workshop for Teen Girls: 10:00 a.m.-noon, DeSoto Public Library. The program will help teens to express creative ideas into positive information through journaling, and then having the opportunity to turn that information into a book. To register, call (972) 230-9661 or email charlettechallengerg@gmail.com.

### November 7

CardioShack Open: check-in at noon, awards at 9:00 p.m., Thorntree Country Club, 825 W. Wintergreen Rd., DeSoto. The CardioShack Open will benefit both the Cedar Hill Chamber’s program of work and the Heart & Vascular Institute at Methodist Charlton Medical Center. Join us for a great day and night of golf and help support the causes. Sponsor, donate, volunteer, play. For more information, email amanda@cedarhillchamber.org.

A Night at the Oscars: 7:00-11:00 p.m., Alan E. Sims Cedar Hill Recreation Center, 310 Parkerville Rd., Cedar Hill. Cedar Hill Action Team presents their concert and fundraiser celebrating their community leaders. The event benefitting CHISD will feature dinner, live music, dancing and auction. Sponsorship opportunities and tickets, \$50 per person, are available for purchase online at [www.cedarhillactionteam.org](http://www.cedarhillactionteam.org).

### November 11

Veteran’s Day Bash: 3:00-10:00 p.m., The Oasis at Joe Pool Lake, 5700 Lake Ridge Pkwy., Grand Prairie. Enjoy free food and live music by David Whiteman Band while investing in raffle tickets to benefit veterans and first responders. For more information, visit [www.AmericaHelpingVeterans.org](http://www.AmericaHelpingVeterans.org).

### November 11 — 14

The Compassion Experience: **Friday** and **Saturday**, 11:00 a.m.-6:40 p.m.; **Sunday** and **Monday**, 10:40 a.m.-5:40 p.m., Church on the Hill, 1375 New Clark Rd., Cedar Hill. This event is an interactive journey through the true stories of children living in developing countries. In over 2,000 square feet of interactive exhibit space, visitors will step inside homes, markets and schools. Each child’s story starts in poverty, but ends in hope.

### November 12

Go Fish! Learn to fish event: 9:00 a.m.-noon, Cedar Hill State Park. Families can learn the basics of fishing through fun, hands-on activities. Take away a fishing fun pack and enter the drawing for door prizes. Equipment and bait provided or bring your own. No fishing license necessary. Adults must accompany children. Bring sun protection and water. For more information, call (972) 900-1296.

### November 15

The CareVan Immunization Clinic: 5:00-7:00 p.m., Trinity United Methodist Church, 1302 S. Clark Rd., Duncanville. Clinic will provide free vaccines for children with immunization records.

### November 15, 22, 29, December 6

Teen Entrepreneur Workshop: 5:30-6:30 p.m., DeSoto Public Library. This four-week training course is designed to educate and encourage teens to pursue entrepreneurship. To register, call (972) 230-9661.

### November 19

Free Public Seminar – Planning for Career Success: 10:30-11:30 a.m., International Museum of Cultures, 411 Hwy. 67, Duncanville. For more information, visit [www.AAUW-swdc.org](http://www.AAUW-swdc.org).

Lantern Fest: gates open at noon, lantern release before sundown, Texas Motorplex, Ennis. Family and friends can enjoy food, live music, a stage show, familiar princesses, faces painters, s’mores, balloon artists and more. When the time is right, the sky will be lit with lanterns released into the night sky. For more information, visit [www.texasmotorplex.com](http://www.texasmotorplex.com).

### Ongoing:

### Third Mondays

DeSoto Public Library Book Club: DeSoto Town Center Complex, 211 E. Pleasant Run Rd. For more information, call (972) 230-9661.

### Fourth Mondays

Living with Diabetes: 6:00 p.m., Zula B. Wylie Public Library, Cedar Hill. Learn life skills suggested in living with diabetes.

### Tuesdays

DeSoto Senior Center Golden Voices Choir: 9:00 a.m., Senior Citizen Center, 204 Lion St., DeSoto. For more information, call (972) 230-5825.

Baby Storytime: 10:30 a.m., DeSoto Public Library. For newborns to 2-year-old children.

### Second and Fourth Tuesdays

Cedar Hill Lions Club meeting: noon, Good Shepherd Church, 915 Straus Rd.

Caregiver Support Group: 2:00-3:30 p.m., Friends Place Adult Day Services, 1232 W. Belt Line Rd., DeSoto. For more information, call (972) 274-2484.

### Wednesdays

Pre-school Storytime: 10:30 a.m., DeSoto Public Library.

### First Wednesdays

The Duncanville Women’s Club: 11:00 a.m., Hilton Garden Inn, Duncanville. Members include women from Duncanville, Cedar Hill, Grand Prairie, Mansfield, Arlington, Desoto, Lancaster, Red Oak and Dallas. The Club also has activity groups for club members and supports various community projects throughout the Southwest Dallas County area. For more information, call (972) 296-3115.

### Thursdays

The Quilters: 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., DeSoto Public Library. New quilters are welcome. If you or someone you know has a quilt top they would like hand quilted, call (972) 230-9661.

Tiempo de Historias en Espanol: 5:30 p.m., Duncanville Public Library, 201 James Collins Blvd. For more information, call (972) 780-5050.

### Second Thursdays

Business on the Hill: 7:30 a.m., Texas Trust Credit Union, 109 W. FM 1382, Cedar Hill. Networking and meeting new neighbors.

### Third Thursdays

Zula B. Wylie Library Friends meeting: 7:00 p.m., 225 Cedar Street, Cedar Hill.

### Third Fridays

Senior Dances: 7:00-9:30 p.m., Hopkins Senior Center, 206 James Collins, Duncanville. Cost \$5. For more information, call (972) 298-0667.

### Third Saturdays

duncanSWITCH Saturday Street Market: 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Main and Center streets, Duncanville. The event will include vendors, food and fun.

Southwest Dallas County Democrats: 10:00 a.m., Southwest Center Mall’s Community Room, Cedar Hill.

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to abby.rich@nowmagazines.com.*

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## In the Kitchen With LaCracha Holley

— By Rachel Smith

For as long as she can remember, LaCracha Holley has been popping delightful foods into the oven. With hobbies like sewing, singing on the worship team at church and traveling with her husband, this empty nester also loves to create delicious, ornately decorated cakes. Originally, her parents and grandmothers helped her establish skills in the kitchen. “My mother’s mother, Big Momma, made the best pastries. I finally mastered the pie dough to be as flaky as hers,” she said.

LaCracha didn’t think she would enjoy teaching others to bake when beginning her cake business, LaCracha’s Creations, after culinary school. “When I taught a summer class one time, it was more fun than I expected,” she admitted. “Homemade baked goods taste much better, and the ingredients can be modified for your health needs. It’s great!” **NOW**

### Peach Cobbler

**1/2 cup unsalted butter**  
**1 cup all-purpose flour**  
**1 3/4 cups sugar (divided use)**  
**3 tsp. baking powder**  
**1-2 tsp. cinnamon, or to taste (divided use)**  
**2 pinches salt (divided use)**  
**1 cup milk**  
**4 cups sliced peaches (fresh or frozen)**  
**1/4 cup lemon juice**  
**1 tsp. orange zest**  
**1/2 tsp. nutmeg**  
**Whipped cream, to taste (optional)**

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. Place butter in a 13x9-inch baking dish; put in oven until melted. Set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, combine flour, 1 cup

sugar, baking powder, 1 tsp. cinnamon and a pinch of salt; mix well. Stir in milk until combined; pour batter evenly into baking dish.

3. In a small saucepan, combine peaches, lemon juice, orange zest, remaining sugar, remaining salt, remaining cinnamon and nutmeg. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly until sugar dissolves. Pour peach mixture evenly over batter. (Don’t stir together.)
4. Bake in oven for 40-45 minutes, or until golden brown. Serve warm or cold. Top with whipped cream, if desired.

### Easy Banana Split Pie

**1-oz. pkg. spreadable Philadelphia Cream Cheese, Strawberry flavored (or plain, if preferred)**  
**1/2 to 3/4 cup powdered sugar, or to taste**

**1 8-oz. container Cool Whip, thawed (divided use)**  
**1 graham cracker crust (Keebler 9-inch ready-made)**  
**2-3 bananas (depending on size), sliced**  
**1 pint fresh strawberries, rinsed**  
**1 8-oz. can Dole crushed pineapple, drained**  
**Your choice chopped nuts (optional)**

1. In a medium bowl, mix cream cheese, powdered sugar and half of the Cool Whip until combined.
2. Spread mixture in the bottom of the pie crust. Slice bananas; place a layer on top of mixture. Hull and slice strawberries; place a layer on top of banana layer. Layer pineapples on top of strawberries. (Note: You can switch the strawberry and pineapple layers, if desired.) Top pie with remaining Cool Whip and nuts, if desired.
3. Seal with lid from crust package, and using the foil lip on pan. Place in freezer 1-2 hours, and then move to the refrigerator.

### Sugar Cookies

**2 3/4 cups all-purpose flour**  
**1 tsp. baking soda**  
**1/2 tsp. baking powder**  
**1/2 tsp. salt**  
**1 cup softened butter**  
**1 1/2 cups sugar**  
**1 egg**  
**1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract**  
**2-3 Tbsp. buttermilk (divided use)**  
**Sprinkles or decorating sugar for topping (optional)**

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. In a bowl, stir flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt; set aside.
2. In a large bowl, cream together butter and sugar until smooth. Beat in egg and vanilla; gradually blend in dry mixture. Add 2 Tbsp. buttermilk to moisten and soften dough.
3. Use medium cookie scoop and place dough on ungreased cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Using fingers, moisten top of each cookie with remaining buttermilk and slightly flatten top of each cookie. Sprinkle with decorating sugar or sprinkles, if desired.
4. Bake 9-10 minutes or until slightly golden; let stand 5 minutes before removing; let cool on rack.

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).



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