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On The Cover



John Keane volunteers to improve the quality of life for those around him.

Photo by Natalie Busch.

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charity: water

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Editor's Note

Calling all Red Oakians ...

And those of you from Glenn Heights, Oak Leaf and Ovilla, too! It's a new year, and we're ready to showcase the best of each of these cities. From athletes and artists to cooks and educators, we want to share your stories in 2012.

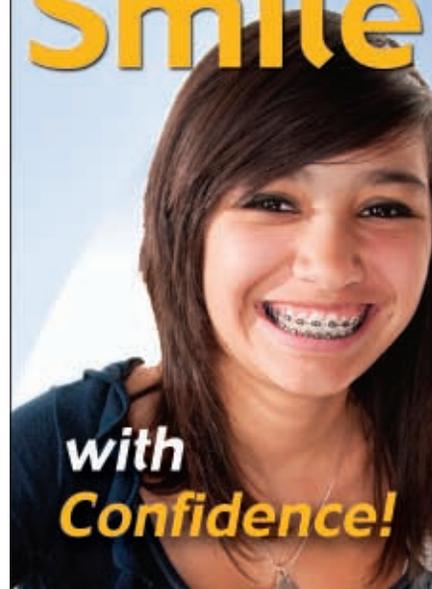
Do you have an interesting friend or neighbor with a hidden talent or inspirational tale? Or perhaps you have a history that would enlighten or entertain our readers. Is your home the one where all the local teens want to be, the favorite spot for friends and family or just a haven you have created for yourself? Any and all of these are exactly what we're looking for at *Red OakNOW*. Contact me at the e-mail address below, and together we'll share a year's worth of features worth reading. Let us tell *your* story!



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“I don’t really like attention,” John Keane said, smiling but a bit uncomfortable. “I prefer to be behind the scenes.” Being a teacher, husband and father to four outgoing children, and grandfather to four, his quest for relative anonymity has been successful. Now, however, being on the board of the Ellis County Habitat for Humanity, John is speaking on behalf of the charity and people who are both helpers and those being helped.

John is a special education teacher for Red Oak Intermediate School, a profession he stumbled into and has grown to love. After deciding to put his landscaping business on hold for a profession that would allow him more time with his kids, he was acting as a long-term substitute for a kindergarten class in Dallas. He began to wonder why two of his students kept leaving to go to a class called Resource. One day he visited Resource, and what he saw made him sure of what he wanted to do. “There was a group of kids who could use my help,” he said. During John’s third year of teaching in

ing HAND

“I just really want to be involved in any way that can improve the quality of life for people, especially my family and my community.”

— By *Cindy Malone*

Dallas, he was Lida Hooe Elementary’s Teacher of the Year.

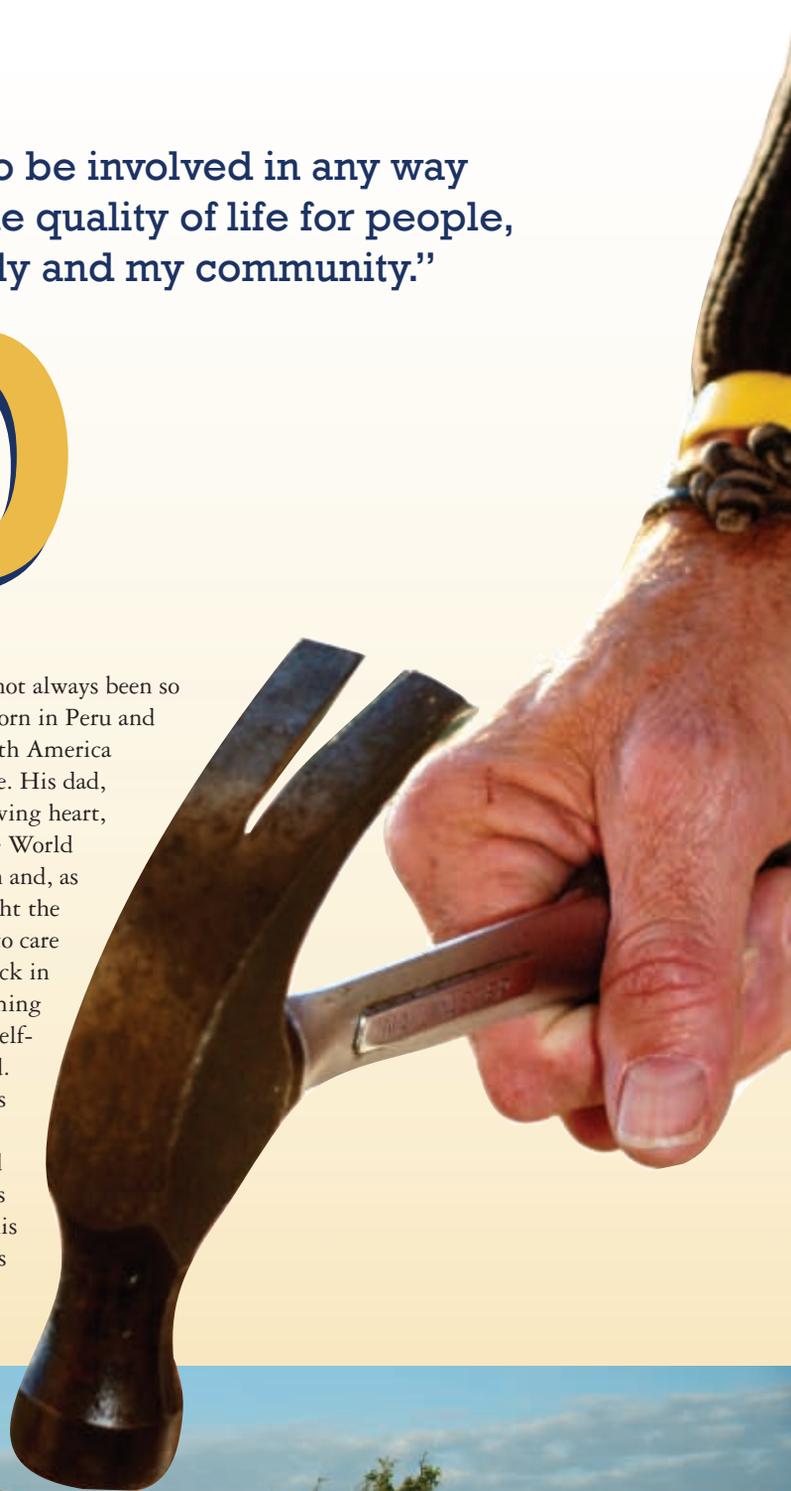
He decided to teach in Red Oak several years ago to be closer to his teenage children and share their schedules. At Red Oak Intermediate School, he is the faculty co-sponsor for Rachel’s Challenge, a group of children who believe in the power of being kind to one another and using random acts of kindness to support and take care of their classmates and those around them. The name comes from an organization started on behalf of Rachel Scott, a victim in the 1999 Columbine High School shooting. John’s group has performed acts like sending materials to soldiers, which often included fun things for the soldiers to give children in the war-torn countries where they serve.

Although John has been teaching in Red Oak and living in Pecan Hill

for 15 years, he has not always been so stationary. He was born in Peru and traveled all over South America during his young life. His dad, also a man with a giving heart, was a member of the World Health Organization and, as a veterinarian, “taught the disadvantaged how to care for and breed livestock in hopes of them becoming healthier and more self-sufficient,” John said.

From there, John’s family retired to Michigan, so his dad could be closer to his parents. Thanks to his father, leading comes naturally to John.

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John joined the Pecan Hill City Council, where he served as mayor for a short time. "I just really want to be involved in any way that can improve the quality of life for people, especially my family and my community," John explained.

When John's children began to need him at home more, he gave up his post in small town politics, but once they grew up and left for college, he needed something to fill his time. He began participating in Relay for Life, raising money for cancer research. It was there he met the woman who would introduce him to his next major volunteer opportunity.

"I was at a Relay for Life event, when my wife struck up a conversation with a woman who worked with Habitat for



Humanity," John recalled. "And my wife, knowing I was interested in the organization, volunteered us to show up and work at the next meeting." John laughed as he remembered showing up and being thanked for "volunteering" for the board of directors. "I looked at my wife and she just kind of smiled. She is sneaky like that."

But John really didn't mind. He has enjoyed his time serving on the board. Within a few months of joining, they finished a house and began the process of looking for their next lot of land and home recipient.

"Getting one of the [Habitat] homes is not easy. The application process is very hard, and then once a family has been approved, they must put in hundreds of hours in sweat equity," John pointed out. The family receiving the home must work hard building, fundraising and doing clerical work, or whatever is needed, to help pay for their home. Even after



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moving in, the home isn't free. Habitat homeowners usually have a less expensive mortgage, and they do pay taxes, but they don't pay interest on the mortgage.

John is quick to give credit to the massive number of people whose time and effort go into a house. "The construction teacher from Waxahachie High School helps with some prefab work and brings it to the home site," John said. "Even some of the students help build and plan." There are people who raise funds all year long, people who drop off nails and other supplies at the home site and people who cook and bring food to those who are working.

The group recently finished its latest house. "The family of six who is getting this house has been working extra hard and have been through a lot of hardships, even while we were working on their house," John said. "The husband had lost his job but recently found another. He is working extremely hard and is super appreciative of all the help." John is confident they will make this house into an excellent home for their family.

There are several ways people can give to Habitat for Humanity. Right now, John is working on a campaign whereby anyone can "sponsor a square foot." Basically, for \$70, a person, family or group can sponsor one square-foot of a home being built. But that isn't the only way to give. "We always need construction material. If we can't use it, we can sell it and buy what we do need. We take everything," John admitted. "You can also go online and buy Habitat for Humanity T-shirts and other merchandise."

John's sense of volunteerism and giving may have been inherited from his father, but he is quick to acknowledge that a person doesn't need a history or an outside motivator to become a giver. "Why not?" he asked. "Why not give to those in need? Who could possibly be hurt by doing something good?"

John is quick to point out that he is not only talking about giving money. "If you are climbing up, if you are doing well and succeeding, look behind you. There is someone trying to climb up behind you that could use a hand to help pull them up. Why not be that hand?" **NOW**



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Half a World Away

— By Janice C. Johnson

Engineers have a reputation for depending on formulas and logic but sometimes forgetting about matters of the heart. That stereotype, however, does not apply to Savannah Almond, an engineering student at Waxahachie's Global High School. Once she became aware that many villages in Third World countries lack clean water, she chose to use her problem-solving skills to turn compassion into action.

The long process began more than a year ago, when Savannah watched a documentary film on the food industry. The film called her attention to the food shortage and lack of clean water in many areas of the world. Her curiosity was sparked, and she started researching these needs, particularly in Africa, on the Internet. As she read about the seemingly insurmountable challenges there, she told herself, *I bet I could do something to fix this.*

At that point, the object of Savannah's investigation shifted from the problem to the people who are working toward solutions. As she gathered facts, she became interested in an organization called Charity: Water and learned that she could sponsor a water well for a village for just \$5,000.

"I chose this organization partly because of their focus in Africa," Savannah said. "The cost per village is low because all the funds go directly to the project." The charity saves expenses by involving the villagers. "They teach the locals, who help build the well," she added.

Thanks to that training, the villagers are able to maintain their

new water supply for themselves. Not only that, they can then go and teach other villages to construct water wells. Savannah is excited about how that will multiply the impact of her donation.

Another thing that attracted Savannah to this agency was that she will receive a photograph and the GPS coordinates of the village where the well she sponsored will be dug. "I don't get to choose the village. The charity does that based on where the needs are at the time [of the donation], but I'll get to follow its progress," she explained.

Since safe water and sanitation play such a huge role in a community's

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economy and health, Savannah chose a charity that will make efficient use of its resources to meet that need. But \$5,000 is still a great deal of money for a high school sophomore to raise.

Naturally, Savannah has thought of that and has no intention of jumping in either unprepared or alone. She has formed a plan to involve both her school and the greater community. Her first step was to talk with an acquaintance who is a member of the Lions Club. This friend arranged for her to speak at a club meeting to try to recruit its support for her project.

When Savannah spoke, she was well-prepared and not too nervous about addressing the group. "I'm not shy, and I'd had plenty of practice at school with presentations for engineering classes. I got comfortable with it," she said.

Savannah's message must have come across clearly, because the Lions Club has

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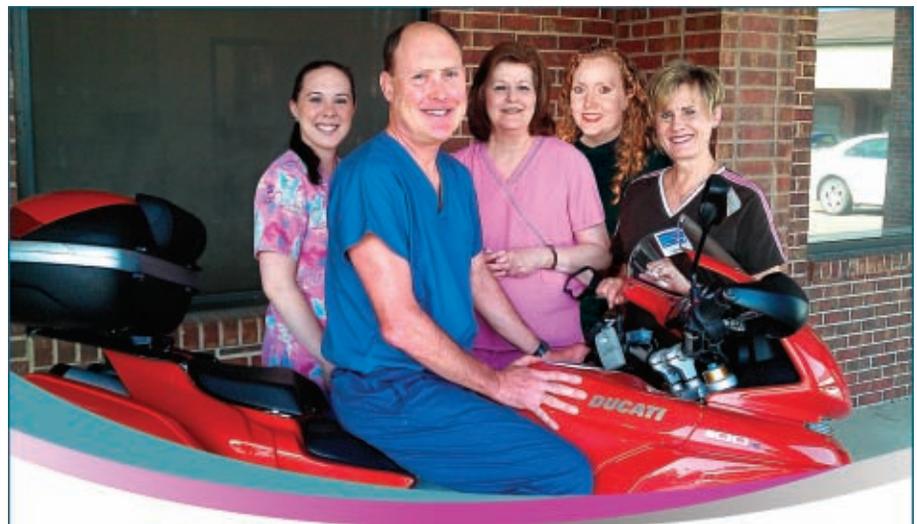
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offered its meeting facility for Savannah's first event. "I want to start with a big dinner," she said. "I had to be careful when to schedule the dinner, because once I kick off the project, I only have a three-month window to raise the funds." She hopes the dinner, set for Saturday, March 3, will generate both immediate donations and momentum for the project.

Savannah also has a series of other fundraising ideas planned after the dinner. Part of her strategy is to involve her classmates, so she met with her principal to request his permission. He has approved of the charity and given her the go-ahead for some one-day and ongoing fun events at school.

Clean, safe water is so readily available in our cities that it is easy to take it for granted. Many Americans find it difficult to grasp the importance of even a simple hand-dug well to a tribal area. At first, Savannah found some of her friends less than enthusiastic about the water project. "I'd tell them I wanted to sponsor a well in Africa, and they'd say, 'Why do you want to do that?'" But once she explained to them the need and Charity: Water's approach, they became inspired and have offered their full support. She has also formed a symbiotic relationship with Interact, the service club at her school. Savannah gains a steady supply of volunteers, and they, in turn, get credit for community-service hours.

Even with support, a few glitches and setbacks are bound to occur, such as having to change the original scheduled date for the kickoff dinner. Savannah takes these in stride. For one thing, the schedule conflict gives her more time to plan the fundraising campaign before the three-month deadline clock begins ticking.

Savannah's concern for suffering people is nothing new. "She's always been like this — drawn to people she can help," her mother, Katie, said.

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“She has such a heart for service. Our goal in raising her was to not mess her up too badly.” Her generosity may be a by-product of thankfulness. Even as a preschooler, Savannah expressed appreciation for the routine little services that every mom performs. “You could have knocked me over with a feather when she — a 3-year-old — thanked me for making her bed,” Katie smiled. She added that a previous youth pastor at First Methodist of Red Oak also noted Savannah’s big heart and can picture her in some sort of ministry in the future.

As Savannah put it, “I’ve always wanted to do something to make a difference. I felt a calling.” She recalled one particular turning point: a 30-Hour Famine conference she attended as an eighth-grader. There they learned about hunger firsthand. “It gave me just a smidgen of a connection with another child in the world,” she explained.

In one sense, this project is only the latest activity to which Savannah is



devoting her characteristic enthusiasm. She serves on Global High School’s Prom Committee and is active in the Ballroom Dance Club. And thanks to the school’s focused curriculum and her focused energy, she will graduate high school with enough college credit for an associate degree.

However, the water well project will not be just a one-time donation, but a long-term commitment. Simply monitoring the village’s progress online does not sound like enough follow-up for Savannah. “Someday, after college, I hope to visit there,” she said. In her concern for others, Savannah will go to great lengths to help, even if it’s halfway around the world. **NOW**

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We Do Our

— By *Angel Morris*

Terry and Ranna Perdue have put a special touch on every square inch of their Red Oak home. From floor to ceiling, the house speaks to Ranna's flair for interior design and Terry's construction expertise. "We've had our hands on just about everything in this house. When we first saw it, it had good bones. We just gave it life," Ranna said.

AT HOME WITH Terry and Ranna Perdue



Indeed they did. Terry moved to Red Oak from Granbury in 1995 to work for his brother. Ranna joined him in 2002, and the couple found their current home in 2003. "We visited the neighborhood, and this was the only house on the street. We loved the size of the lots," Terry explained. The couple made a bid on the spec home and closed the deal in less than a month. "We expected it to take more time. It happened very quickly, actually."

Today, the neighborhood is full of homes and is a short bus ride to local schools. It was the perfect setting for a stay-at-home mom with a home-based business, who can walk 7-year-old Colton to the bus stop just a few houses down.

Ranna's interior design business, True

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Image Interiors, was born from her love of making an ordinary house a home. “Being an interior designer, my home is kind of the guinea pig and always a work in progress. I have more ideas than I do spaces. So, sometimes, I feel that my home gets a little busy,” Ranna said.

This means creative and personal touches to each room, starting with the foyer where an arched entryway draws the eye to a sky-like, pale blue ceiling. A side table filled with seasonal decor grounds the entryway in whimsy, and



Ranna’s grandfather’s chair hints at the vintage to come.

“We love the rotunda as you walk through the entry. It was one of the reasons we bought the house,” Ranna recalled. From here, guests enter the Perdue’s eclectically decorated home. “I call it Country Chic. I love old vintage things mixed with a more modern style.”

To one side of the entry is Ranna’s office, with a large turquoise blue work table in its center, colorful custom artwork created by herself and Colton

and all the baubles she needs to bring a room to life. It also houses the requisite computer and the far less common squirrel cage. “We have two flying squirrels. They sleep all day and play all night,” Ranna explained, with the family cat typically perched atop the cage anticipating playtime with the squirrels.

The animals add to the playfulness of Ranna’s work room, and a lighthearted sense of style continues throughout the home. “We love the open layout of our kitchen, dining and living area,” Ranna

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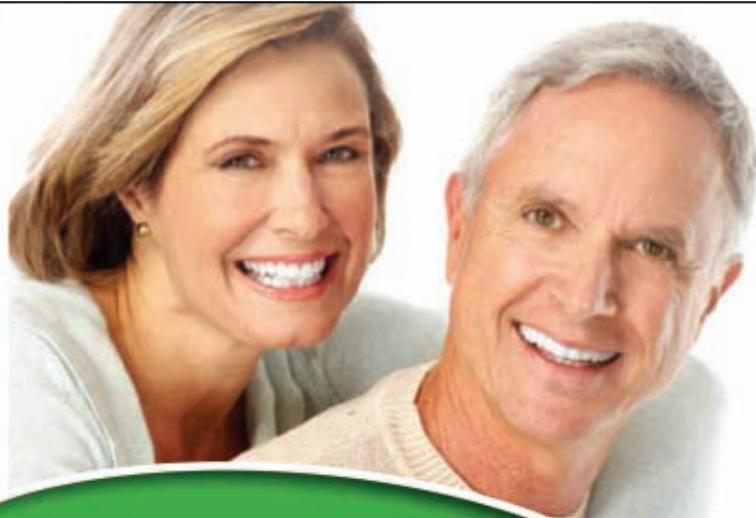
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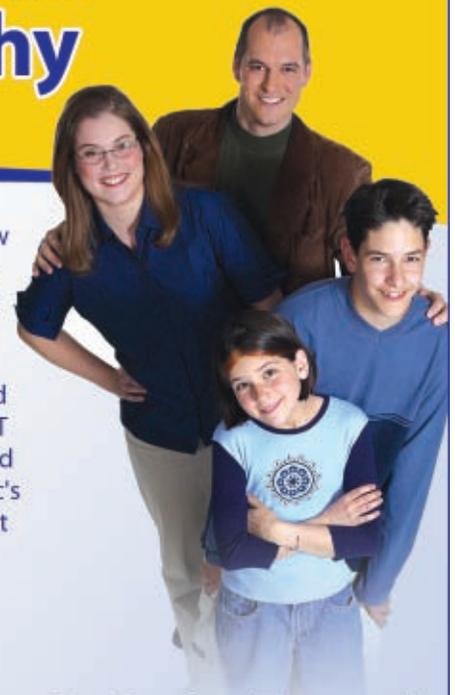
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January means the beginning of a new year and sometimes new deductibles for folks with medical insurance. Start the new year off with new healthy habits. January 11th is "Cigarettes Are Hazardous To Your Health Day." Did you know, by law, nine warnings **MUST** appear on cigarette advertisements and packaging? The FDA invited the public's input on images that will possibly start to appear on packs of cigarettes.



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said. "We love to entertain and have the family over for football games, so this works perfect for us."

Entertaining most often includes grown children, Andrew and Megan, and their significant others, who can relax in the family-friendly living area featuring an ombre-painted wall fading from light to charcoal gray in color. A chocolate brown leather sofa winds around the room, facing the fireplace and flat-screen TV.

Ranna changes out the mantel decor with the seasons, while the antler art is a mainstay in the room. "The painted antlers are from an elk Ranna's dad killed, and the other antlers she and I made from cardboard and painted," Terry said.

Also in the living room is a wall of family photos, and the latest furniture addition. "We just acquired an antique upright piano that is dated back to around 1905. It needs tuning, but it plays," Ranna said.

The backdrop to the living room is the kitchen, with black cabinets, camel-colored walls and red accents. A metal-finish, hammered backsplash gives the area pizzazz, while pendant lights installed by Terry brighten the dining bar. The dining room houses a 5-foot-square piece of custom cardboard art created by the couple, and an enormous light fixture over the table is a design warehouse find.

Off the open living space is Ranna and Terry's master bath and bedroom with a king-sized bed in a frame built for a castle. King and Queen pillows solidify this is where the Perdues reign. "Our bed was the first piece of furniture we purchased as a couple. It is relaxing and pleasant with a touch of whimsy," Ranna said. "White bedding is my favorite. I love the crisp, cleanness of it."

Wine racks were creatively repurposed as bedside tables, and the couple shares an oversized chest of drawers that is taller than Ranna. "I'm 5 foot 3 inches, and it's bigger than me!" she said. Two walk-in closets give them their own

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space, as well. One of the couple's two antique sewing machines is housed in the bedroom, as is a cross collection and Ranna's grandmother's hand mirror. An antique vanity is on its way.

While the master bedroom is decorated royalty-size, Colton's corner of the house is suitable for a prince. His bathroom is nautical, his bedroom John Deere and his playroom is all things LEGO.

"We just call it the LEGO room. That's all there is to it," Terry said. The spare-bedroom-turned "LEGO Land" has plastic stackable bricks depicting an airport, Coast Guard-protected ocean, two working trains and an entire ground city. Its current scene shows Colton's imagination at work, with a LEGO police chase in progress.

"Colton is absolutely obsessed with LEGOs. We built and painted platforms for him to have the full city," Ranna said. "And he has about this much in LEGOs at my mom's house, too."

But Colton is not the only one who likes to play. The Perdues' backyard is where their two playful pups reside, and where grown-ups enjoy a sitting area, custom penny-topped bar, hot tub and flat screen TV. "My husband can build anything. He should have never let me know how good he is," Ranna said. "He made many of the furniture pieces in the home, added all the cedar accents to the front [of the house] and built the patio, hot tub surround and bar in the back."

Self-employed owner of Perdue Enterprises, Terry is a licensed HVAC contractor. He also enjoys golf and woodworking, while Ranna enjoys graphic design, sewing and volunteering with her son's school and Dwell with Dignity, a nonprofit group of designers and interior decorators. Ultimately, however, their favorite pastime is making their house a home.

"Whenever Ranna says, 'I have an idea,' I know I'm in for a new home project," Terry said, but it's clear he enjoys them as much as his wife.

"We really love working on projects together. Our dream jobs would be to make a living designing and building for others," Ranna said. In the meantime, designing and building for one another will do. "That's the best part of our house — that we did it all ourselves. We are a great team!" **NOW**

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Ebony and Shane Myers and the staff at Red Oak Driving School help steer their students toward success.

IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Red Oak Driving School puts students safely on the road to success.

— *By Angel Morris*

Decades ago, Drivers Education was a class taught in high school for teens anticipating their first car and driver's license. Times have since changed, and drivers education is primarily taught at privately owned schools today. New state laws have made it more challenging to receive one's license, and young adults, aged 15-24, are required to take some type of drivers education course.

Young entrepreneurs Shane and Ebony Myers provide this education through Red Oak Driving School. "Our goal for Red Oak Driving School is to become a staple in Red Oak and surrounding communities. When we originally thought about opening a driving school, we knew that we wanted to be different than any others that we had seen before; so with that, we wanted to create an experience that all of our students would never forget," Shane explained.

The Myerses chose their location because it is close to Red Oak High School, making it convenient for students to attend drivers education after they get out of school. Also, it is centrally located between

Waxahachie, DeSoto, Glenn Heights, Ovilla, Lancaster and Ferris.

Driving instructors Randy Broyles, Charles Charley and Walter Mitchell round out the Red Oak Driving School team. With their help, Shane and Ebony provide Teen Drivers Education, Adult Drivers Education and Defensive Driving. "We are not just a cookie-cutter driving school. We have a lot of flexibility that we can provide when working with our customers. We love the fact that we are able to run specials almost every month of the year, and so do our customers!" Ebony said. "With the economy being down, what better way to let our customers know that we understand by offering a discount to the course? We offer payment plans, and we have flexible drive times to help accommodate all of our students."

The Myerses said Red Oak Driving School is not only their dream business; it is an outlet for their desire to help youth. "When walking into our facility, one will see large framed posters of inspirational sayings: words like perseverance, growth, greatness, determination.

Those words are there for a reason. We want all of the students to know what they are, and that is great,” Eboney said.

Having faced personal struggles of her own, Eboney stressed a desire to reach out to youth in bad living conditions. “I have been in that low self-esteem place questioning my ability and much more. I’ve been there in that place where there was no one to encourage me but me,” she recalled. “So, that is why I encourage the students when I see them. You never know what the kiddos are going through, but when they come in that door, we make the atmosphere special just for them. I have and will continue to council and up lift them and let them know to walk in their greatness, no matter what life may look like.”

This personal concern for students inspires the Myerses’ simple motto: Do things the right way and help others along the way. “We enjoy making someone smile and giving encouraging words to our students,” Eboney said. “Kids have this unbelievable energy that is infectious! We love to see them excited about a new chapter in their lives. We love to build confidence in those students who are not so sure about what they are in for. We love the fact that we know that we make a difference in their lives.”

Red Oak Driving School, which opened in June 2010, is a member of the Red Oak Chamber of Commerce and a supporter of several organizations at Red Oak High School. “We received an outpouring of love and support from the Red Oak community the day that we opened our doors. We are very thankful for our customers, our students and, of course, the Red Oak community,” Shane said.

Shane and Eboney met in high school in Garland, Texas, and have been married for almost 10 years. They have two daughters, Madison and Jordan. They appreciate the environment Red Oak offers. “Red Oak has a very family-oriented feel that we love. Even though Red Oak is growing very fast, it still has a small town feel to it,” Shane said.

The Myerses and the Red Oak Driving School team look forward to growing with the city. “God has blessed us by guiding us to the city of Red Oak,” Eboney said. “We love our students, and we are still so thankful to our customers for supporting us!” **NOW**

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Armando Rodriguez decorates the Whataburger tree at Red Oak Education Foundation's Festival of Trees event in December.



Collecting toys for those in need, these officers from Red Oak and Ferris team up with North Ellis County Outreach.



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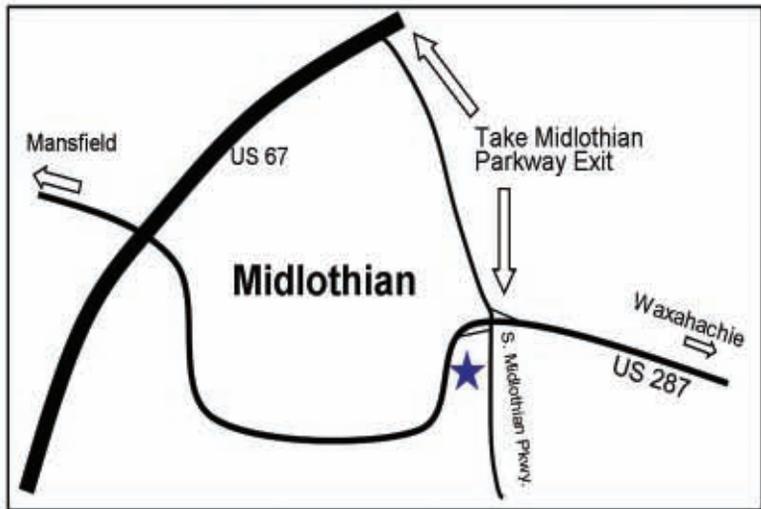
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Sundays are busier than ever. If your kids play sports, Sunday mornings are often filled with games & travel. So we're starting something designed to help you coach your family spiritually after the game is done!

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What Basic Information Do I Need to Know About Life Insurance?

— By *Celeste Fonseca*

Life insurance helps provide peace of mind that your family is financially protected when you are no longer around. However, buying life insurance can seem like a daunting task because of the variety of products that are available; plus, it is hard to approach the idea that you should plan for a time when you're not around. However, life insurance is a critical component to financial well-being, so it is a discussion you should not postpone. To help you get started, you should consider two common questions: "How much life insurance do I need?" and "What type of insurance should I buy?" The answers to these questions will arm you with the basics to begin your assessment of life insurance options.

How much life insurance do you need?

A general rule of thumb is that your life insurance should be at least five to seven times your annual salary. However, the amount you need can vary because it is dependant on so many factors, including income, expenses, assets and liabilities. You need to think about your current situation and how that situation may change in the future. Your insurance agent or financial professional will likely have a worksheet to help you calculate your needs.

What are the different types?

There are many kinds of life insurance, but they generally fall into two categories: term life insurance and permanent life insurance.

Term life insurance is in some respects similar to renting a home. When you rent a home, you get to take full advantage of the entire property immediately and for as long as you continue paying rent. As soon as your lease expires, you must renegotiate your lease or move out. Even if you rented the house for 30 years, you have no "equity" or value that belongs to you.

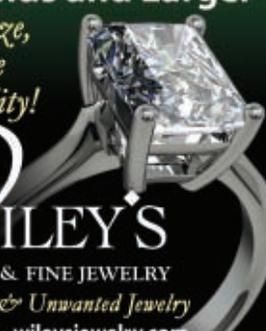
This concept could be applied when thinking of term life insurance. You establish a term, or amount of time you'd like life insurance protection for, and you will pay the premiums for this certain period of protection. At the end of the term, you can request to renew at a new rate, discontinue protection or apply for a new policy.

Permanent life insurance is in some respects similar to owning a home. It provides insurance throughout your life. Because it is designed to last a lifetime, permanent life insurance accumulates cash value — like the equity in your home — and is priced for you to maintain over a long period of time. If you make regular premium payments and avoid loans, withdrawals or surrenders, the full-face amount will be paid.

So, which one is better? Just like buying or renting a home, neither option is always right or always wrong. Rather, the type of policy that's right for you depends on your specific situation. A financial professional can help you make the decision that may be appropriate for you. **NOW**

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Love Gala ticket sales: Save the date for the **February 11** Love Gala benefiting CASA of Ellis County, a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of abused and neglected children. The event is from 6:00-10:00 p.m. at the Waxahachie Civic Center, 1950 N. Interstate 35. Tickets are \$50 per person and can be purchased online at www.casaofelliscounty.org. For more information, call (972) 937-1455 or e-mail rlrawls@sbcglobal.net.

Community of Neighbors Festival registration: Glenn Heights is accepting volunteers and participants for the city's annual family festival. The event is from

10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. **March 24** and includes local entertainment, artists, games, health screenings, business vendors and more. Visit www.glennheights.com/Family_Festival.cfm for participation information and applications.

January 3 and 16

Red Oak ISD classes resume **January 3**. Schools close **January 16** in observance of Martin Luther King Day.

January 8, 12, 15

New Year, New You Sessions: **January 8 and 15**, 4:00-5:30 p.m.; **January 12**, 6:00-6:30 p.m., Dynamic Yoga and Fitness Studio, 558 Bluebird Lane. Free community sessions addressing weight-loss, nutrition and fitness goals, as well as overcoming fatigue, pain and depression. An hour of free yoga follows each event for those interested. RSVP online at 90daystofeelingfit.com.

January 12

Red Oak Citizens Police Academy Class No. 4: Application deadline 5 p.m. The 12-week program starts **February 9** and will be held from 6-9 p.m. every Thursday. The weekly course is an opportunity for citizens to get a

working knowledge of the Red Oak Police Department, offering classroom and hands-on instruction taught by several ROPD officers. Contact Officer Nathan Bickerstaff at (469) 218-7710 or nbickerstaff@redoaktx.org.

January 14

Ellis County SPCA Volunteer Training: Noon-1:00 p.m., 2570 FM 878, Waxahachie. This meeting is for new volunteers with the ECSPCA or current volunteers who would like to be more involved with the organization. E-mail coordinator@elliscountyspca.org for details.

Thursdays

Open mike night at Lighthouse Coffee Bar, 1404 N. 9th Street, Midlothian. Sign up: 6:30 p.m. Start time: 7:00 p.m. Anyone can come and play as long as it is family-friendly.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to angel.morris@nowmagazines.com

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In The Kitchen With Susan Simmons

— *By Angel Morris*

Longtime restaurateur, Susan Simmons, has cooked since childhood, enjoying making meals from scratch. “I take traditional recipes and tweak them to make them my own. Also, I insist on quality ingredients and shy away from shortcuts, because they never seem to taste as good.”

Susan grew up sharing Sunday dinners with some 20 extended family members in Ellis County. “My grandmother loved cooking for everybody. Maybe I take after her,” Susan said.

Watching others taste her cooking inspires Susan. “I think it’s the addiction to such a creative outlet and also the opportunity to witness people eagerly enjoying what you have worked so hard to make,” Susan said. “My daughter has always said, ‘Mom, you love to feed everybody!’ including whatever animals we have at the time. I think she’s right!” **NOW**

Amazing Chocolate Cake

Cake:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup HERSHEY’S Cocoa
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup boiling water

Frosting:

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
- 2/3 cup HERSHEY’S Cocoa
- 3 cups powdered sugar
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

1. Make cake by heating oven to 350 F Grease

- and flour two 9-inch round baking pans.
- 2. Stir together sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder, baking soda and salt in large bowl.
- 3. Add eggs, milk, oil and vanilla; beat in mixer on medium speed for 2 minutes. Stir in boiling water (batter will be thin). Pour batter into prepared pans.
- 4. Bake 30 to 35 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes; remove from pans to wire racks. Cool completely before frosting.
- 5. Make frosting by melting butter and stirring in cocoa.
- 6. Alternately add powdered sugar and milk, beating to spreading consistency.
- 7. Add small amount additional milk, if needed. Stir in vanilla. Makes about 2 cups.

Chicken Tortilla Soup

- 1 whole chicken (fryer)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 8 cloves fresh garlic, finely chopped

- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 5 corn tortillas, cut in half-inch slices
- 2 large tomatoes, chopped
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- Avocado

1. Place chicken in large pot and cover with water 2 inches above chicken.
2. Cover and bring to rolling boil.
3. Turn down heat and simmer for 2 hours.
4. Turn off heat and strain chicken from broth.
5. On medium-high heat, sauté onion, garlic and bell pepper until onions are translucent and slightly brown.
6. Add 8 cups broth. Add a little water if you don’t have enough broth.
7. Add tortilla slices and tomatoes and simmer for 15 minutes.
8. Pull meat from chicken and add to soup.
9. Add cilantro and cook 5 minutes more. Serve with fresh avocado slices, if preferred.

Favorite Lemon Bars

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour (divided use)
- 2 cups white sugar (divided use)
- 4 eggs
- 3/4 cup fresh lemon juice (usually 3 lemons)

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. In medium bowl, blend together softened butter, 2 cups flour and 1/2 cup sugar. Press into bottom of ungreased 9 x 13-inch pan.
3. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, or until firm and golden.
4. In another bowl, whisk together remaining 1 1/2 cups sugar and 1/4 cup flour.
5. Whisk in eggs and lemon juice. Pour over baked crust.
6. Bake an additional 20 minutes.

Broiled Salmon

- 1 salmon filet
- Fresh lemon juice
- Real butter, melted
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste

1. Turn on broiler in oven. Generously squeeze fresh lemon juice over salmon (skin side down).
2. Generously brush salmon with melted real butter.
3. Salt and pepper salmon.
4. Place on middle oven rack under broiler. It takes 10-15 minutes to cook a 1-inch thick salmon filet. Do not overcook.

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