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ON THE COVER



*Ed and Nancy Etchieson  
celebrate Christmas  
in every room.*

*Photo by Amy Ramirez.*

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## Editor's Note

*Merry Christmas, Midlothian!*

Once upon a time, a long time ago, a baby was born with some pretty hefty titles to his name, such as: Prince of Peace, Bright and Morning Star, Comforter. The story may read like a fairy tale to some, but for me, it is at the core of my life.

Christmas is a time to celebrate with millions of people all over the earth. The world revels in this holiday that certainly would not exist without the birth of Jesus

Christ. Sparkling lights, spell-binding concerts and sharing of gifts are all a part of the festivities.

Whatever Christmas means to you, it is universally recognized as a time to share and rejoice. May your Christmas be filled with the love of family and all the wonderment of the season!

### Betty

Betty Tryon  
MidlothianNOW Editor  
betty.tryon@nowmagazines.com

P.S. The publisher and staff at NOW Magazines wish you and your family a very merry Christmas and a happy holiday season.



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# Inspired by MUSIC

— By Betty Tryon



*Some people singing at Carnegie Hall may find themselves nervous and trembling at the enormity of it all. But for one little girl, she saw her future. “I remember standing on the stage at Carnegie Hall,” remembered Nyadia Thorpe, teacher and choir coach at Frank Seale Middle School. “Watching the women conducting, I thought, That’s what I want to do.”*

Even before that memorable moment, Nyadia had herself all figured out. “I’m an artist, and I knew that early on,” she reflected. “I’ve always been fascinated with architecture, math and science, but I *loved* music. Some kids did sports. I did music. It was always piano and voice and church choir for me.”

Nyadia grew up in a family steeped in musical tradition. Her mother performed in a traveling gospel choir, and her sister studied music and dance in college. Her grandmother was a minister of music. When Nyadia was about 6 years old, she and her siblings began taking private piano lessons with the

encouragement of her grandmother. “It was wonderful,” she enthused. “It helped give me some foundation when I started singing and to take music more seriously.”

It was in middle school that Nyadia really became inspired by music. Not only was she active in all the choirs in church, with her mother’s assistance she was accepted into W.E. Greiner Exploratory Arts Academy in Dallas. “I had to decide whether to focus on piano or voice, but I love using my voice,” she recounted. “I just love singing.” It was also in middle school that Nyadia was able to experience Carnegie Hall. “My choir teacher was Ruth Melnor, and she was wonderful,” Nyadia explained. “She took us everywhere and gave me the opportunity to sing solos. She inspired me, and that experience in middle school helped shaped how I see musical education today.”

Nyadia graduated from The University of Texas at Arlington with her bachelor’s degree in music education, having focused her studies on conducting. In 2012, she earned her master’s degree in the same field. Afterwards, she continued her music ministry at church and has taught for seven years at schools in the Dallas and Duncanville ISDs. This is Nyadia’s eighth year of teaching, but her first year to teach in Midlothian ISD at Frank Seale Middle



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School. Supporting her in this move is her husband, Jeff, and their 2-year-old son, Caden. Their nuclear family has grown to five with the addition of Brian, a relative who lives with them, and another relative, Vincent, who stays with them every other weekend.

Nyadia was excited to come to Midlothian and join the choir program, the reputation of which she knew well. "I've been in music education for a while and we all went to the same contests and competitions," she said. "When I

*"Just as someone once inspired me, if I can inspire someone else, that would be so wonderful."*

heard those Midlothian choirs I thought, *Wow, they sound good!* I knew they had a wonderful legacy behind them. We are going to continue this excellence, go even higher, set new goals and make new traditions."

Like any good teacher, Nyadia intends to pull the best out of each student in her classes. "For many teachers, modeling is the No. 1 thing," she stated. "You have to come in enthusiastic about what you have to share with them. That draws



them in, and they get excited about it and want to try it. Students will rise to the occasion, and as a teacher, you realize they have what it takes to do some really great things.”

At Frank Seale, Nyadia is responsible for The Men’s Chorus (The King’s Cubs), Varsity Women (Lady Cubs), Junior Varsity Women’s Choir (The Pretty Paws) and the Sixth grade Boys’ and Girls’ Choir (Starter Cubs). There is a semester long introduction to music called the MusiCubs. The special teams include Pop and Chamber Singers. Pop is a show



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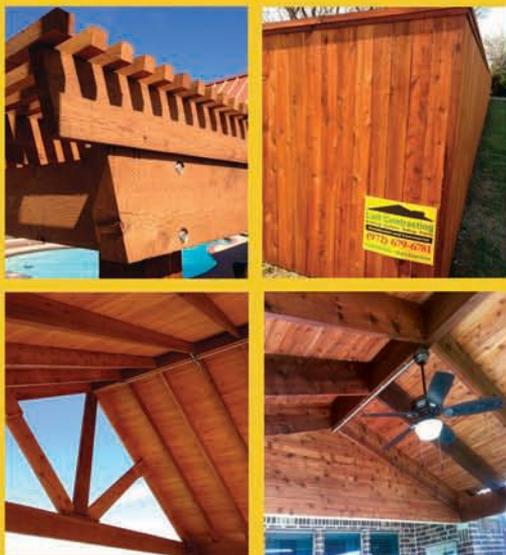
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choir with singing and dancing, Chamber Singers is a select ensemble of about 20 students.

“The Chamber Singers have harmonies that are a little more challenging,” Nyadia elaborated. “This is our go-to group of kids who might go caroling. They don’t dance but may do other theatrical things. It’s all about the voice.” During the school year, students explore different experiences and participate in competitions. “Hopefully, by the time the kids leave my program they will feel as if they have had good opportunities,” she added.

On December 9 at Midlothian High School, the community will get the chance to hear the choirs in the annual Christmas concert. Nyadia likes to plan her concerts so they aren’t just an affair featuring song after song. “When people come to hear the kids sing, I don’t want them to expect just another concert,” she shared. “We want to entertain the audience. We will have a production type of performance with our special

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groups Pop and Chamber Singers.” Many times she uses screens and projections of images to go along with the students’ voices to make the presentation more interesting. “I also want the concert to be multifaceted but not too long. There will be some traditional songs and some with jazzy and pop style arrangements. I love teaching languages, so expect some songs using different dictions.”

Wanting to do more in her life to help others beyond the classroom and church, Nyadia has launched a new project. “Some people make New Year’s resolutions, but one year I thought, *Lord what do You want me to do for my kids and my community?* And the word *inspire* sat on my heart, and I ran with it. So I was able to take my music ministry outside of church and focus my free time on community music.”

She founded a children’s chorus and arts organization called Inspire Dallas Chorus and Arts. Among other ideas, Nyadia plans a summer camp for kids to come together to sing. During the four-day program students perform in two concerts. “We have various ways of learning and memorizing during the camp,” she said. “It’s amazing how much the kids can learn when they focus, focus, focus on the task at hand. It’s a wonderful challenge.”

On the wall in her classroom, Nyadia has the word *Inspire* displayed prominently. “Just as someone once inspired me, if I can inspire someone else, that would be so wonderful.” **NOW**



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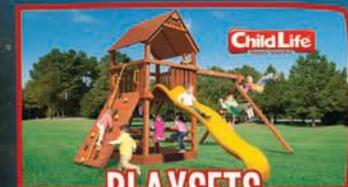
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# GAME ON

— By Betty Tryon



*Early in the morning they come. One by one, then in twos and later in groups, the students traipse into a futuristic classroom seeking an unconventional school experience. Welcome to the exciting world of gaming in high school, the supervised domain of Sam Wrinkle, an educator in technology applications. The class could either be considered ahead of its time or long past due. Regardless, Sam is working to make gaming and gaming competition as commonplace and desired in high school as football.*

Sam's ultimate goal is to give students interested in gaming and computer technology a valued place in society. "I want to create a culture where it's OK to be a computer nerd," he said. His experience in educating kids began long before he became a teacher.



"I want to create a culture where it's OK to be a COMPUTER NERD."

He went to Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, and majored in Christian ministries with an emphasis in youth ministry. Working in youth groups and being involved in their lives gave him the foundation for what he is doing today. "It's the exact same thing," he confirmed, "which is dealing with kids where they are, and trying to create an environment they feel safe in. When you are building up trust with students, and you can meet them where they are, that is when you can start to help them."

Growing up in a small town in Kansas, Sam realized his independent streak early on. Instead of following his dad in football, Sam realized he enjoyed the



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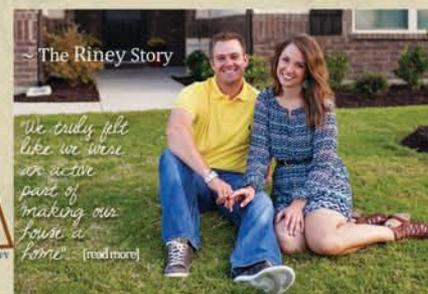
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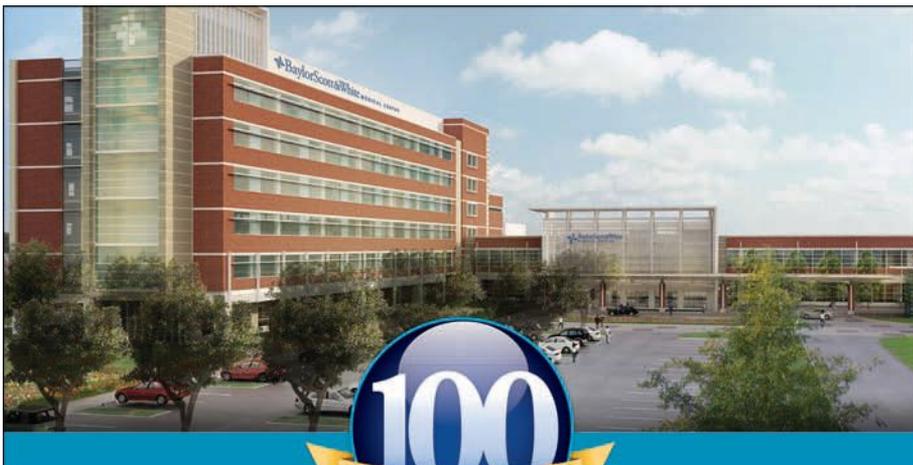
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more independent sport of tennis. “I went to Malaysia for a year and played tennis with the Malaysian Davis Cup Team for a while,” he recalled. “Davis Cup is the international team format you compete in for tennis. I would hit 200 serves a day for six years. There is something about the repetition of it that I love.”

When he came back to the states, Sam worked at Walnut Ridge Baptist Church in Mansfield. But when one of the pastors moved to Midlothian to start Stonegate Church, he invited Sam to come help with the church plant. With his move to Midlothian, Sam started teaching tennis in the community. Soon he heard the school district was looking for new and innovative courses to teach and also needed another tennis coach. So, he applied, and last year he was hired to teach video game design. “I’m artistic, but I’m not good at drawing or painting,” Sam pointed out. “I’m more



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of a visual person. I have a good eye for things. So, I got my certification in technology applications.”

Sam spent many hours of preparation for the class by performing the same tasks the students are required to do. He estimates that keeps him ahead of approximately 85 percent of the kids in



the classes. “There are kids in class who are going to be more computer savvy than I am, and I don’t hide that from them,” he admitted. “Being a coach, you learn you can still motivate people to do things that otherwise they would not do.”

An early tennis coach was Sam’s inspiration, and he patterned some of his teaching methods after him, too. “He was an awesome facilitator,” Sam remembered. “I’ve taken that approach with this class. I might not know everything, but I can make sure I have everything my kids need to be motivated and inspired. If they want to be good at graphic design or 3-D animation rendering, I try to give them the freedom

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to do that.” His main goal is to help students find value in the subjects that interest them. “If you are at home in your basement playing video games, there’s not any value in that,” he stated. “You can be rated top 100 in the world on Xbox Live, but no one at school knows it. It’s important for these kids find value in stuff like this.”

The class model or tool for video game development is called Unity. It is an open source format. “On your Windows computer someone has written code for your interface for you to interact with your computer,” Sam explained. “The game engine is the same way, except you can change things about the manner in which you interact with the computer’s open source. You can change the code. You can change the things that the computer program is doing.”

At the beginning of the year, each student designs his or her own level for their game creating the terrain and characters. Toward the end of the school year, the students work together to structure the game. With Sam’s supervision as producer and the students as art director and programmer, the responsibilities are divided throughout the whole class, according to each person’s strengths.

In the gaming room, the students play on Xbox and Xbox One, two-projection screens and six 60-inch flat screen TVs. There are Xboxes with every screen. Another piece of equipment that will be used in the game

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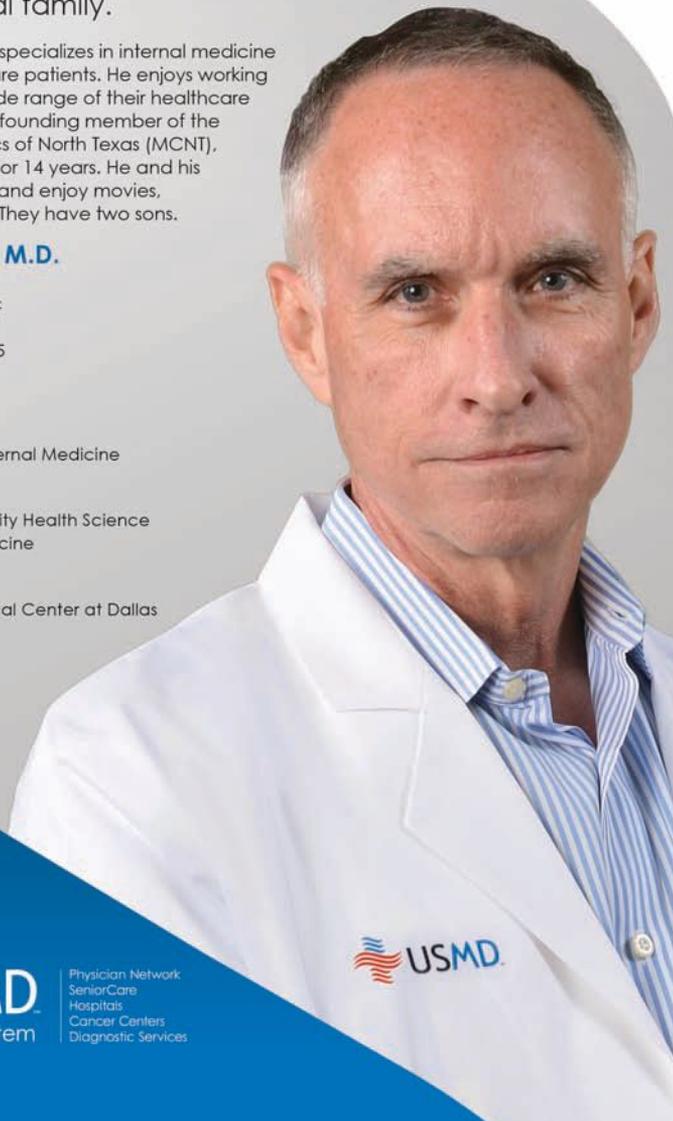
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room at the beginning of 2015 is a state-of-the-art headset system called Oculus Rift, which wraps around the head and is sensitive to movement. Students can even play a panoramic 3-D game inside the headset. Sam makes a bold prediction that in about five years there will be more Oculus Rifts in average homes than TVs. "It's going to be huge," he commented. "Kids won't play video games on TVs anymore," Sam predicted, indicating that Midlothian High School is on the cutting edge of Texas schools working with this technology.



There are many different opinions about the rise in technology in society. However, because of its dominance, educators have to prepare kids for the future now. "No one is doing anything with competitive console gaming," Sam said. "It's not taught in high school or college, yet this is perfect for high school." Sam is hoping to start a district competition. He has a few schools interested — mostly private schools. There are many grants in education for technology, so funding would likely not be a problem. Most of the equipment in the gaming room was in fact purchased with a grant for educational technology.

"At the end of the day, we need people in the community to get on board with gaming competition," Sam stressed. "The main goal for this gaming room is to be able to run tournaments. I want to give the money generated back to kids in the form of scholarships for computer programming and computer science." As Midlothian High School is the first to host competitive gaming, and one of the first to offer game programming and design for technology, the school is headed in the right direction. **NOW**



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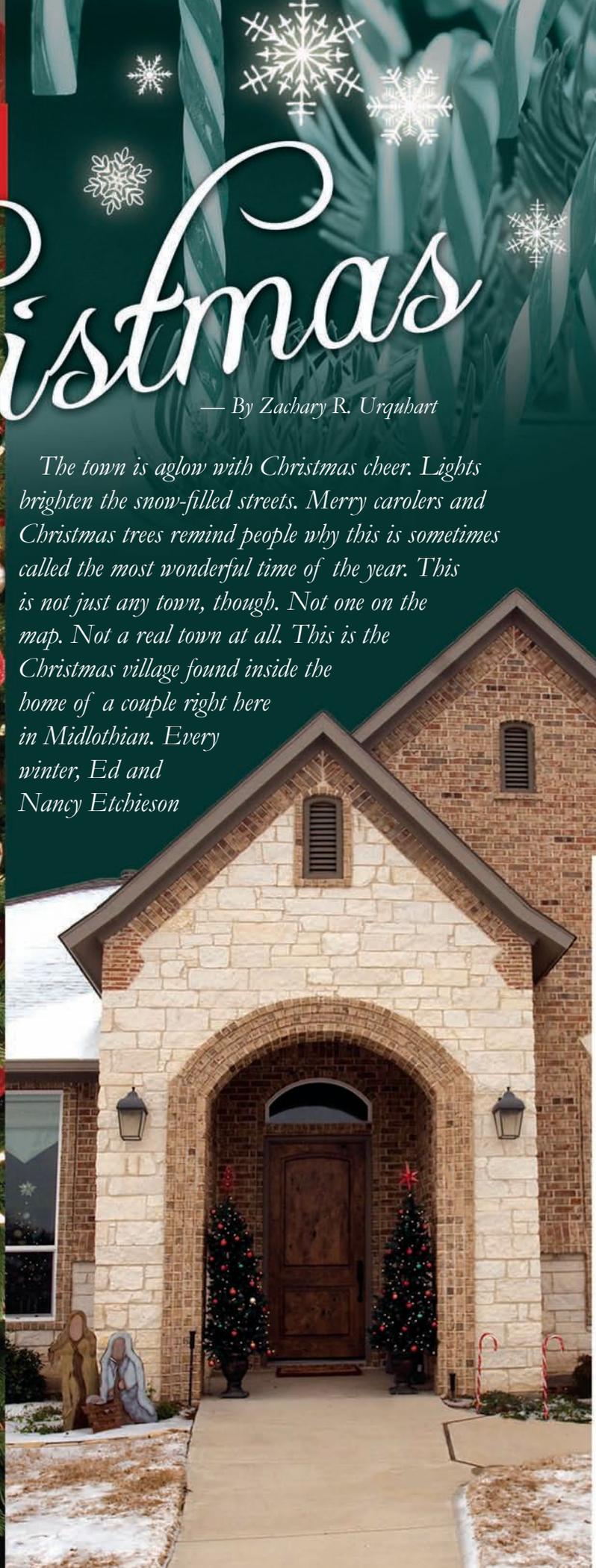
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# A Lot Like Christmas

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

*The town is aglow with Christmas cheer. Lights brighten the snow-filled streets. Merry carolers and Christmas trees remind people why this is sometimes called the most wonderful time of the year. This is not just any town, though. Not one on the map. Not a real town at all. This is the Christmas village found inside the home of a couple right here in Midlothian. Every winter, Ed and Nancy Etchieson*



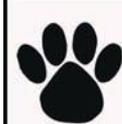
set up dozens of nativities and trees, and a whole city's worth of Department 56 houses to make their own house look a lot like Christmas.

Ed and Nancy are both from the small town of Roff, Oklahoma. "We grew up together," Nancy recalled. "He went to college, then to work, then into the service, then came back to finish school. I was a sophomore when he started again at East Central State." Married 52 years ago, they have lived a long, happy life together, complete with two sons. Stacey and Suzanne live in Fairview with their four children, while Todd and Amber live in Portland, Oregon, with their daughter.

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left Oklahoma behind. “We loaded everything we owned in a Ford Fairlane and headed to Dallas,” Ed laughed. “I hoped I could get a job there.” After a few years and several different jobs (including a short stint farming in southwest Texas), Ed settled in at Olmsted-Kirk Paper Company. There he presided as chief financial officer for 35 years before retiring over a decade ago.

Nancy worked when they were first married, but quit after they had Stacey, only to go back into the workforce. “When Todd was 11 and Stacey 14,” she said, “I started a bookkeeping service for small companies, and retired after about 18 years.” While settling into their careers, Ed and Nancy were also figuring out where they would call home. “We moved around several times in the first



few years before moving to Cedar Hill,” Nancy remembered. “We lived there 38 years, and the boys graduated from there before going on to graduate from Texas A&M University.”

After living in Cedar Hill for the majority of their married life, Ed and Nancy decided to move once more. “We love Hillcrest, our church, and so many of our friends are here that we wanted to stay in the area,” Ed related. “We like Midlothian, and were told about Twin Creeks by friends living there. Ours was one of the last few houses built in the addition.” In 2010, Ed and Nancy moved into the neighborhood, and they have loved it.

The open foyer offers access to a study and a formal dining room. The office is Ed’s favorite place to complete his

morning Bible studies, read the morning paper and check the stock market. “We never had a formal dining area before, but we really love finally having one for family get-togethers,” Nancy remarked. The dining room leads into the spacious kitchen, which has storage space from nook to cranny. The kitchen is also home to one of the many specially decorated trees that Ed and Nancy place each winter. “The trees go with the rooms,” Nancy explained. “This one has kitchen



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decorations. The sewing room tree has sewing decorations and the bedroom tree matches the color scheme of the room.”

While many people decorate anywhere from after Thanksgiving to just before Christmas, Ed and Nancy start much earlier. “We start in early November, because it takes a while to get everything where it goes,” Ed said. The living room features trees, angels and nativities, as well as a large stocking collection. “Our sons, their wives, and the grandkids all have a stocking, as do Nancy and I,” Ed pointed out. “I built a special rack to fit over the fireplace mantel, and we hang the stockings on that. They fit, but just barely.”

Along with their stockings, each grandchild enjoys a special ornament collection. “Eventually, they will have their own special set of ornaments,” Nancy shared. Having several Christmas



collections herself, it comes as no surprise that Nancy wants her grandkids to have something special as they grow up. “We used to travel, and we would buy nativities wherever we went,” she recounted. “We have them from all over the country, Mexico, and several countries around Europe.” In addition to the Christmas trees and nativities, Nancy has acquired an assortment of Department 56 Charles Dickens houses. “I started collecting them over 30 years ago, and I just kept getting more,” she recalled. “I don’t get new ones anymore, because I finally ran out of room for them.”

The guest hallway is filled with books. “We both love to read,” Nancy commented. “When we were building, we tried to add enough shelves for all of our books, but we still can barely fit them all.” Two guest areas are attached via a Jack and Jill bathroom, but one of the rooms is primarily used for Nancy’s sewing and embroidery equipment. “Ed built these sewing shelves for me specifically to fit this room,” she noted.

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“He does woodworking, and is really good.” The knotty alder shelves match the wood throughout the house. In the back of the house there is a den where they watch TV, and the bank of windows is perfect for three more small trees every Christmas season.

Across the house, the master bedroom is decorated in blue hues, and a seating area is Nancy’s favorite spot. “Ed loves the study, but my favorite place to read is right here in the bedroom,” she admitted. “I can open the drapes and read all day while enjoying the backyard views.” The master bathroom features functional design points as well, including a giant step-free shower. The couple also built a large laundry room that has a door straight into their bedroom closet. “I can just wheel our clothes hamper right in. It’s great,” she said.

The large windows in the bedroom are a few of the 15 large windows that line the back visage of the house, offering splendid views from anywhere inside.



Outside, Ed and Nancy have several seating areas, both covered and not, and a beautifully landscaped walkway leading to Ed’s shop. “I tinker there,” he joked, “but, I have made several things in the house.” The workshop is sectioned to also house lawn equipment, which Ed uses to maintain a handsome lawn. From his mowing and building a special stocking shelf, to her setting out dozens of trees, nativities, angels and even creating a whole village, Ed and Nancy make sure Christmas comes early to this happy home. **NOW**



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# 2014 Holiday Shopping Guide

A quick look at the gift items and discounts available locally.



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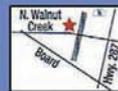
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# IMPRESSIONS OF THE

# Heart

— By Sara Edgell



*Through the years, Joanna Tharp has always enjoyed doing things for others. As a hairdresser for 15 years, she spent countless hours trimming, setting and styling hair for the elderly. The gratitude and appreciation from her clients made Joanna feel contented, knowing she was doing something unique and significant for someone else.*

Over the course of their 23-year marriage, Joanna and her husband, Brandon, have welcomed three daughters into the world. Jordan, age 20, is away at college, while Katie, 15, and Macy, 12, are at home keeping the couple plenty busy with their various school and extracurricular activities. After the birth of Katie, who happens to have Down syndrome, the family made the decision that Joanna would stay at home to rear the girls. She quit her job and began a new adventure. While gratitude and appreciation from her family was plentiful, she held within her the desire to do a little more.

It was during these years that Joanna discovered her crafty, artsy side. She toyed around with a slew of projects before settling on both photography and making hand-stamped jewelry. Joanna began her hobby in the summer of 2012



“It gives me something to do, and it’s rewarding to be able to hand craft something for someone else.”

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after purchasing a necklace online. She bought a stainless steel circle pendant with her daughters' names stamped on it, adorned with their birthstones as charms. It was simple, yet made an eloquent statement, which was perfect. "I'm not a big jewelry person, so I want each piece to be special, meaningful and lasting," she proclaimed. "It makes me feel good to know I have made something like that for someone else. It gives me something to do, and it's rewarding to be able to hand craft something for someone else. Actually, it's a lot like styling hair, because I'm doing something special for them."

Eventually, her inspiration to try her hand at art grew. She recognized a need to have Katie's name on some wearable item for safety reasons, and it needed to be easy to manage. As a young child, Katie liked to hide and was really good at it. Although hide-and-seek is a wonderful game to play, Katie unfortunately chose to play it at less-than-ideal times and

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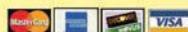


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locations. Just in case, Joanna wanted Katie to always wear some form of identification with contact information on it. The perfect solution was a hand-stamped bracelet. So Joanna took to the Internet, watching instructional videos online and purchasing supplies to get started creating her own designs. At first, she made pieces for her girls, family and friends. The popularity of her work soon spread, and she eventually founded a Facebook business, Bling and Bling Photography.

When Joanna and her family moved to Midlothian from Mansfield, relocating from a significantly larger area to a smaller town had its perks, but it also took some getting used to. "It's kind of neat that everyone knows everyone," she confessed. "The small-town atmosphere is very welcoming and comfortable. I like that."

Currently, Joanna's jewelry-making hobby is housed in the family's home office. Her husband's desk is on one side of the room and her workspace is on the other side. A typical day in her makeshift studio involves a cedar work post and a variety of instruments. These include: snippers, a brass hammer, files and polishers, a metal hole-puncher and many other handheld tools. She also uses an array of metals, including stainless steel, copper and aluminum. "The stainless steel is very hard and sometimes difficult to work with, so I recently began experimenting with other materials,"



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she explained. "I've been told that I go through \$29 brass hammers way faster than I should." In fact, she needs to replace one about every three or four months. Clearly, she packs a mighty punch.

Despite her powerful hammering, Joanna presses each letter of each name, word or phrase with a delicate and careful hand. With deliberate grace, she makes sure every piece is perfectly unique. To further customize each piece, she adds a mixture of handmade and purchased charms to add that extra personal touch. To add birthstones, she uses colored beads and Swarovski crystals with wrapped wire. Over the years, she has perfected her technique through trial and error. When she finds something that works, she sticks with it. She also uses a wide selection of themed charms ranging from colored ribbons for social awareness causes to hobby- and sports-related items. The possibilities are endless.

While she still makes custom pieces for individuals and as gifts, she also donates many pieces to local charities, cancer walk fundraisers and foundation auctions. Since she began hand-stamping metal jewelry, she has donated other pieces imprinted with various Bible verses and inspirational thoughts. Designs with words like hope, faith, believe and amazing grace have been given to Rhett's Roadies, a nonprofit organization founded in honor of a little boy with Down syndrome — a cause extremely close to her heart.

One of the biggest driving forces in Joanna's life is being an advocate for her daughter, Katie, making sure she has every opportunity available to her



that any other child would have. Aside from snapping photos and hammering metal, Joanna spends time with her family, specifically her girls, taking them to school, cheerleading and all the other events that come along with having teenage daughters.

Joanna's most popular piece of jewelry is a circle cutout with a heart hanging in the center. It symbolizes the concept of "always in my heart." "I've done a lot of these for girls who have lost their dads," she shared, "and mothers who have lost a child, but this particular design really has many meanings. It just depends on the person." And that's where Joanna finds the real joy in what she does — making something personal and expressive for people, especially people she knows.

When it comes to putting her heart into her work, Joanna is a pro. Whether it's being there for her kids and husband, or crafting an original creation for a friend at her workstation, she uses a gentle, nurturing hand to firmly impress on the formidable material long-lasting prints of love. **NOW**

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Let the  
**FUN**  
**BEGIN**

— By Sandra Strong

*Are you finding it difficult to get in the holiday spirit? Fret no more. Getting in the spirit will be much easier as you work on crafts that will brighten your home with seasonal merriment, as well as bring smiles to the faces of family and friends, young and old alike.*

### **Milk Jug Snowmen**

Mark the beginning of the holiday season by creating a night light that decorates a room with visual warmth while helping children learn basic shapes.

#### **Difficulty Level: Easy**

- 1 gallon jug
- 1 1/2-gallon jug
- Scissors
- 2 sheets black foam, felt or construction paper (your choice)
- 1 sheet orange foam, felt or construction paper (your choice)
- 5 sheets tissue paper (divided use)
- 2 strands 20-count indoor/outdoor white lights with white cording

- Cool melt hot glue
- 3 black pipe cleaners (or color of your choice)
- 2 large black pompoms (or color of your choice)
- 1 medium-size Santa hat (design and color of your choice)

- ① Rinse jugs out thoroughly. Set aside, allowing them to dry completely inside and out.
- ② Cut 4 ovals from black material to serve as eyes. Cut 5 circles from black material to serve as the mouth for the gallon snowman. Cut five small squares from black material to serve as the mouth for the half-gallon snowman.
- ③ Cut 2 skinny triangles from orange material to serve as the noses for both snowmen.
- ④ Cut 3 small slits in each jug under the handle toward the bottom of the jug to



Step 4

create a hinged opening large enough to insert the tissue paper and lights. Carefully stuff the tissue paper (3 sheets for gallon and 2 sheets for half-gallon) and lights through these holes, making sure to mingle the lights with the tissue paper. Push the opening closed. Be sure the cord portion of the lights remains outside the jug openings.

- ⑤ Glue eyes, mouths and noses on jugs. Bend noses accordion-style to give them a 3-D effect. Braid and bend pipe cleaners in an arc. Glue to the sides of the half-gallon jug. Glue pompoms over the ends of the pipe cleaners to complete the ear muffs. Pull Santa hat over the top of the gallon jug. Dot with glue to hold the hat in place. (You can also use a cap your child has outgrown.)
- ⑥ Plug in and enjoy what you and your little ones have created.

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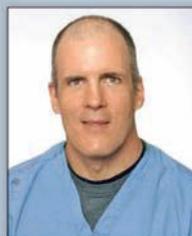


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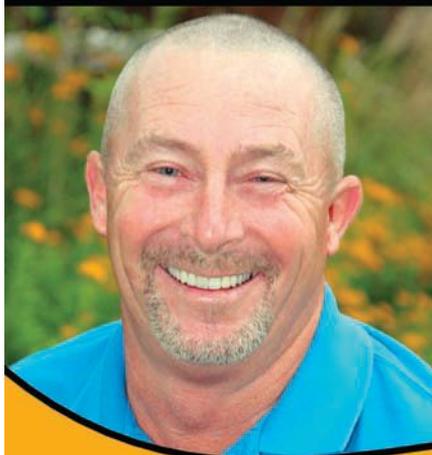
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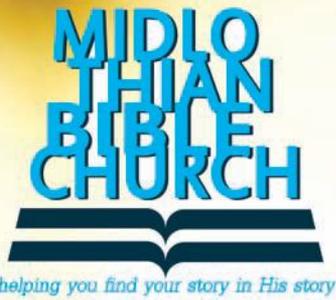
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## Frosty the Snow Pot

Create a Frosty that doesn't melt as he warms your home and the hearts of all those who visit during the holiday season.

**Difficulty Level: Easy to Medium**

*Three variations pictured.*

- 1 large clay pot
- 1 medium clay pot
- Small paintbrush
- White acrylic paint
- Black acrylic paint
- Scissors
- 1 piece orange felt
- Needle
- Orange embroidery floss
- 1 cotton ball
- Cheek color (rouge)
- Kleenex
- Cool melt hot glue
- 2 large black buttons
- 7 small black buttons
- Holiday ribbon
- 1 sprig from holly berry artificial flower pick

- 1 Paint large pot white. Paint small pot black. Allow to dry completely.
- 2 Cut two carrot shapes from orange felt. Hand-stitch the two pieces together to make nose. Stuff nose with cotton ball to give the carrot a 3-D appearance.
- 3 For rosy cheeks, smudge cheek color on the cheek areas using a Kleenex or your index finger.
- 4 Glue large buttons in place for eyes. Glue small buttons in place for smile. Glue nose in place, allowing it to stick out.
- 5 Tie holiday ribbon around the base of



the small pot. Glue holly berry sprig to the ribbon to complete Frosty's holiday top hat.

6 Glue around the inside edge of the small pot. Stack the smaller pot on top of the larger pot. Allow glue to dry completely before moving.

7 You can also "top Frosty off" with ear muffs made from pompoms and pipe cleaners or a stocking cap of your choice. Eyes and mouths can be painted on or cut from black foam. Let your imagination be your guide.

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Difficulty Level: Medium to Hard

- 4 Santa hats
- Needle
- White embroidery floss
- 1/2 yd. white felt
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- 10 green sequins
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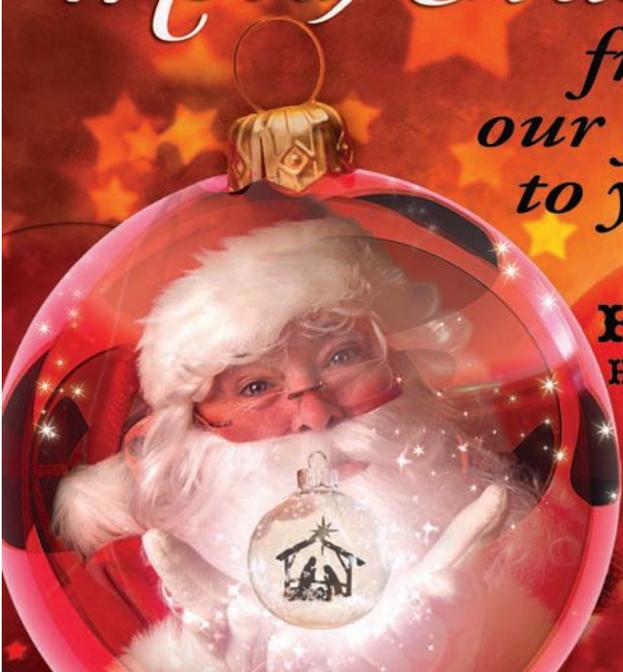
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- 3 Cut green felt in the shape of holly leaves, cutting 10 to duplicate the example shown.



- 4 Attach each leaf by sewing one green sequin and one bead to the swag. Sew in place red sequins and remaining beads in clumps of 3 to represent holly berries.
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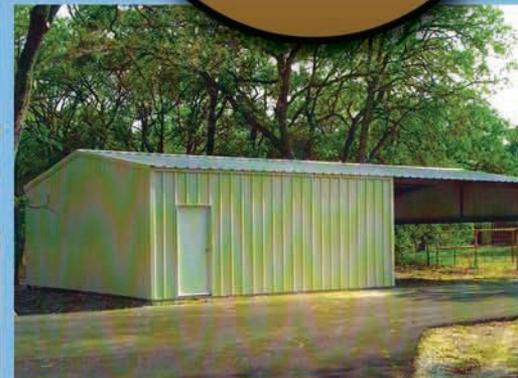
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# Modern Pioneers OF BRECKENRIDGE, COLORADO

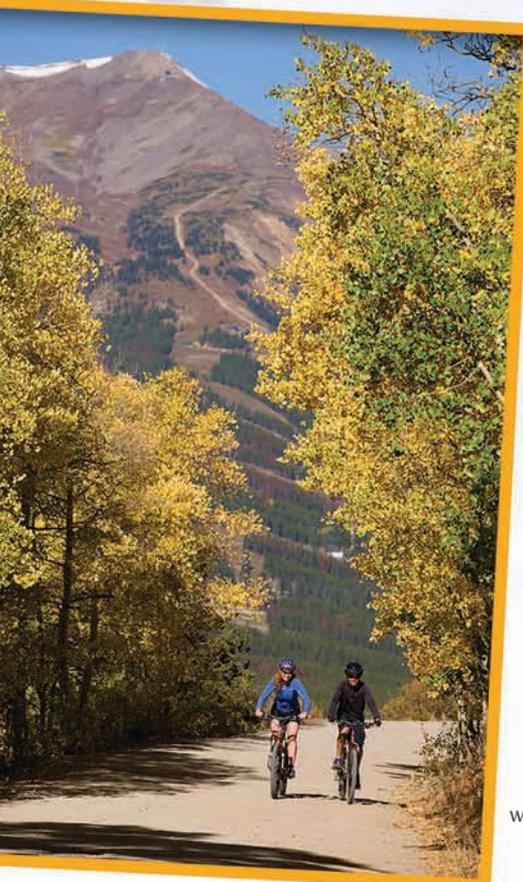


*Breckenridge is a warm and friendly place, whether you are sitting in a bar, lunching in a coffee shop, riding the chairlifts or checking out the town — total strangers make friends it seems they've known for years. With gold at stake, the early residents and visitors of Breckenridge likely weren't quite that open. After all, this historic town was founded by a small group of gold-seekers, each in search of their own big strike.*





The pioneers of the '60s came in the form of skiers with deep Norwegian roots. In 1961 Trygve Berge and Sigurd Rockne founded what is now Breckenridge Ski Resort. As in the days of Berge and Rockne, the outdoors beckons many who arrive in Breckenridge today. The town sits between the Continental Divide and the peaks of



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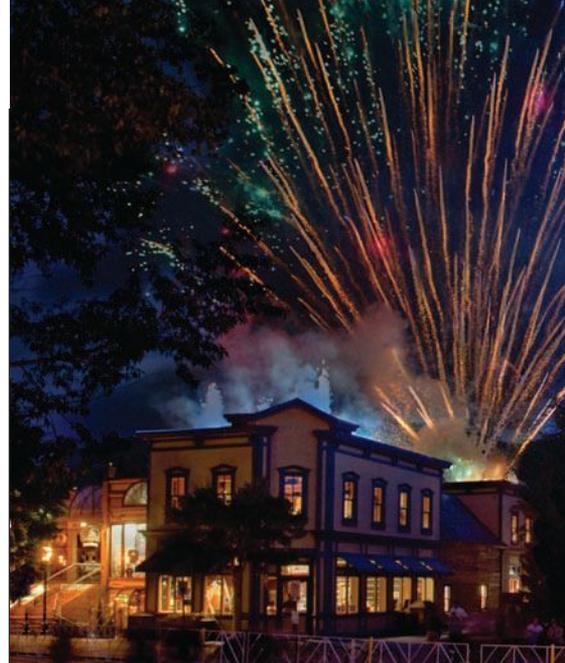
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by beginners and those who seek out the most advanced terrain. Breckenridge's 300 annual inches of snow also hit the backcountry. While there's no preferred method of travel, there's also no shortage of options.

At Good Times Adventures, snowmobile guides walk guests through all the key parts of the machine before taking off through the Swan River backcountry to reach the Continental Divide. Over at the kennel, teams of huskies wait their turn to pull, and anxious guests wait their turn to mush.

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Dogsledding is a popular activity, especially here, where everyone (who chooses) takes turns at the helm.

For those who prefer activities under their own power, Breckenridge's two Nordic Centers offer snowshoe, plus groomed trails for classic and skate-style Nordic skiing. Those with the proper equipment (and a sense of adventure) head to Breckenridge's trail network

for afternoon outings, overnight hut trips and everything in between.

When the snow gives way to dry, 70-degree summer temperatures, wildflowers bloom. Purple lupine, wild roses, bluebells and a variety of Rocky Mountain wildflowers dot the mountainsides. Rivers and streams rush with cold, clear water that invites boating. Kayaks, whitewater rafts and fishing rigs top trailers and cars throughout town.



Jackson Streit, owner of Mountain Angler, explained that Breckenridge is central to some of the Centennial State's best fishing. Several rivers — each with sections of Gold Medal Waters — flow within an easy drive from downtown, and high alpine lakes sit nestled among surrounding peaks. Afternoons bring beginner anglers practicing casts in the Blue River. Cyclists speed by on the paved path that parallels the river and links Breckenridge with surrounding towns.

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cycling network, Scott Reid explained the town's hiking and biking trails: "It's similar to a bicycle wheel, with the hub as downtown and miles of trails, the spokes, extending into the backcountry. Downtown access points lead to town, county and Forest Service trails. There's no need for a car."

Many of these popular hiking and biking routes were once used by miners in search of gold. Flumes have been converted into flowing singletrack (narrow biking trails), and along it are glimpses of the town's gold-seeking beginnings. Pioneer cabins can be seen on trails — Tom's Baby, Minnie Mine — whose names have roots in the characters of the past. Several restored dredge boats, remnants of a mining method uncommon in the Rocky Mountains, stand abandoned in the backcountry.

The Breckenridge Heritage Alliance, a nonprofit committed to protecting, sharing, and celebrating the unique stories of Breckenridge, has placed interpretive signage both at backcountry sites, such as the dredges and throughout town. Historic walking tours cover the highlights, and museums give an in-depth look at the gold seekers who established the town and created a community with pioneering spirit.

Around Main Street, visitors will meet Breckenridge's modern pioneers: bourbon distillers creating world-renowned craft spirits, a passionate community building an award-winning arts district, and retailers serving up a shopping experience that includes both local and global merchandise. More than 70 independently-owned restaurants and bars serve up all manner of cuisine, not to mention nightlife that consistently ranks highly in top ski and snowboard guides.

The storefronts, once housing mostly gear shops and burger stops, now boast a diverse lineup of funky boutiques and modern menus, all served up in the Victorian spaces that line the downtown streets. The diversity adds up to plenty of options in town, plus a backyard that brings adventurers out to play. Wondering where to head next? Just ask the locals in the coffee shop. **NOW**

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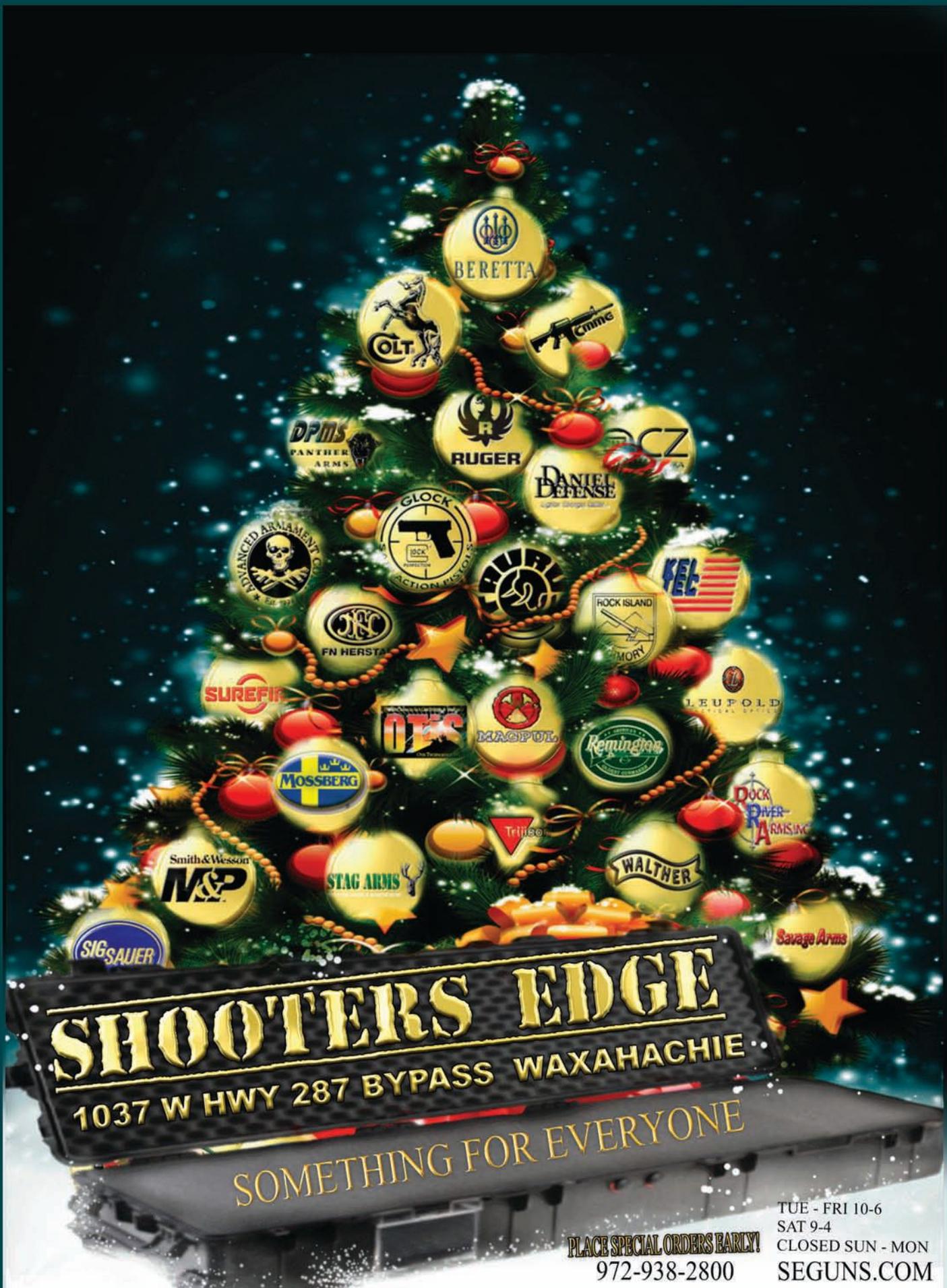
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Mary Laymance, Judy McGraw (owner) and Natalie Wood believe paying attention to details is an essential part of customer service.

# Part and Parcel

*Midlothian's UPS Store fulfills needs from postage stamps to book bindings.*

— By Betty Tryon

Many in Midlothian realize The UPS (United Parcel Service) Store is here when they must ship an important package, and are happy they don't have to travel to another city to complete that chore. But owner Judy McGraw wants to inform the public of the many other services the business provides. "We have been in Midlothian for seven years," she smiled, "but a lot of people still think we just ship packages."

Although The UPS Store is a large corporation located in many cities in the DFW Metroplex, the Midlothian franchise faces the competition by concentrating on a specialty. "We are in a small town," Judy expressed, "but we rank No. 3 in printing out of all Dallas/Ft. Worth stores."

Judy's 24 years in retail gives her the experience to handle such hefty numbers. "We have two monstrous copy machines here,"

she pointed out. "Anything to do with printing, we can do it. We do black and white printing as well as digital color. One of our biggest customers is the small business owner, who doesn't have an office and doesn't have a big staff. We can take care of all of their printing needs." The UPS Store prints business cards, brochures, banners and large posters. The business operates an online print site with templates for people to use for invitations and other documents. "You can go online to make an invitation, send it to us in an email and pick the order up in the store or have it shipped to your home," Judy explained.

Judy believes what sets her business apart from big printers is the attention to detail she insists on. "I have told my guys that if we catch anything that is close to not being right, to give the customer a call," she stated. "Taking care of customers is

really important to me.” A big part of successful customer relations involves hiring the right personnel. Judy counts herself fortunate to have Mary Laymance as her lead associate and some very responsible high school kids to help with the workload.

**òWeare in a small town, but we rank No. 3 in printing out of all Dallas/Ft. Worth stores.ó**

For all the expert printing the staff undertakes, The UPS Store is known for its quality shipping services. The business will ship next day or by regular service and to anywhere both nationally and internationally. The store offers all postal features from selling stamps to laminating and book binding. “I do a lot of laminating for teachers and offer a discount to all educators,” Judy said. “My daughter is a teacher, so teachers are near to my heart.” Even though teachers can do a certain amount of printing at their schools, the printers at UPS are always available and affordable.

The UPS Store also offers a notary service. “We have people we see almost every day for our notary service, because they are in a business where contracts have to be signed before they send them out,” she explained.

As busy as Judy is, she still has time for a career as a real estate agent for Century 21 Judge Fite. “I’m one of the top producers, and for the last four years I received the quality service pinnacle,” she enthused. “That means a lot to me, because I like getting to know my clients, and they are the ones who vote.” Both jobs for Judy involve providing optimal service, which she offers with high-spirited dedication. **NOW**

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 www.midlothiancenter.com  
 972-723-7919



Sharli Stephen with her handmade gifts at Midlothian's Fall Festival.



Mt. Peak Elementary participates in a campus wide field trip at the Lakeview Camp in Waxahachie.



Chelsi Frazier, Randy Denton and Gage Roland celebrate Randy's years of service at the MEF Golf Tournament.



Melode Seremet with Paws for Reflection Ranch shares her animals with festival visitors.



The LaRue Miller Elementary 2014-2015 Yearbook Staff pose for a picture.



School Board president Todd Hemphill accepts three donations from Peggy Campos, MISD Band Booster president.



First grade students at J.R. Irvin Elementary have fun practicing math.



First Methodist School students learn about fire safety and enjoy a visit from the fire truck.



Regalia Mansfield joins the Midlothian Chamber of Commerce.



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# Year-end Charitable Giving

As the holiday season approaches, with the end of one year and the start of another, we pause to give thanks for our blessings and the people in our lives. It is also a time when charitable giving often comes to mind. Charitable giving can be enhanced using income tax deductions, and so it can be much more effective when it is included as part of year-end tax planning.

**Example(s):** Assume you are considering making a charitable gift equal to the sum of \$1,000 plus the income taxes you save with the charitable deduction. With a 28-percent tax rate, you might be able to give \$1,389 to charity ( $\$1,389 \times 28\% = \$389$  taxes saved). On the other hand, with a 35-percent tax rate, you might be able to give \$1,538 to charity ( $\$1,538 \times 35\% = \$538$  taxes saved).

• **A word of caution**

Be sure to deal with recognized charities, and be wary of charities with similar sounding names. It is common for scam artists to impersonate charities using bogus websites, and through contact involving emails, telephone, social media and in-person solicitations. Check out the charity on the IRS website, [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), using the Exempt Organizations Select Check search tool. And don't give or send cash. Contribute by check or credit card.

• **Tax deduction for charitable gifts**

If you itemize deductions on your income tax return, you can generally deduct your gifts to qualified charities. However, the amount of your deduction may be limited to certain percentages of your adjusted gross income (AGI). For example, your deduction for gifts of cash to public charities is generally limited to 50 percent of your AGI for the year, and other gifts to charity may be limited to 30 percent or 20 percent of your AGI. Disallowed charitable deductions may generally be carried over and deducted over the next five years, subject to the income percentage limits in those years. And be sure to retain proper substantiation of your deduction for a charitable contribution.

• **Year-end tax planning**

When considering making charitable gifts at the end of a year, it is generally useful to include them as part of your year-end tax planning. In general, taxpayers have a certain amount of control over the timing of income and expenses. You generally want to time your recognition of income so that it will be taxed at a lower rate, and time your deductible expenses so they can be claimed in years when you are in a higher tax bracket. For example, if you expect that you will be in a higher tax bracket next year, it may make sense to wait and make the charitable contribution in January, so you can take the deduction in the next year when the deduction produces a greater tax benefit. Or you might push the charitable contribution, along with other deductions, into a year when your itemized deductions would be greater than the standard deduction. And, if the income percentage limits above are a concern in one year, you might move income into that year or move deductions out of that year, so that a larger charitable deduction is available for that year. A financial or tax professional can help you evaluate how to make charitable gifts in a way that is beneficial to you. **NOW**

*This information was developed by Broadridge, an independent third party. It is general in nature, is not a complete statement of all information necessary for making an investment decision, and is not a recommendation or solicitation to buy or sell any security. Investments and strategies mentioned may not be suitable for all investors. Past performance may not be indicative of future results. Raymond James & Associates, Inc. member New York Stock Exchange/SIPC does not provide advice on tax, legal or mortgage issues. These matters should be discussed with an appropriate professional. Prepared by Broadridge Investor Communication Solutions, Inc. Copyright 2014.*

*Donald Pope is a Raymond James Financial Advisor in Duncannonville.*

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# Your Guide to Artificial Sweeteners

With all of the artificial sweeteners on the market today, folks are confused! And with good reason. Every few years the medical field recommends something different. Here's a run down of the most common ones, and how you should make the best decision for your health.

**Chemically-derived:**

**"The Pink Stuff"/Sweet'N Low/Saccharin**

Sweet'N Low was truly an innovation, and promised better health to all of those who wanted to cut back on sugar. It came under fire in the 1970s when a study suggested it caused cancer in lab rats, but that research has since been refuted.

**"The Blue Stuff"/NutraSweet/Aspartame**

This hit the market in 1981, giving people an alternative to saccharin and its still questionable safety. It contains phenylalanine, which can be very damaging for those with a condition called PKU, or phenylketonuria.

**SLENDA/Sucralose**

The manufacturer chemically alters sugar by adding three chlorine atoms. This not only intensifies the sweetness, but also chemically changes it so that it has no calories.

**Plant-derived:**

**Stevia Extract**

The extract of Stevia rebaudiana leaves, this plant-based sweetener has been used for centuries in South America. It has no calories, no carbs and no known side effects to this date.

**Sorbitol and Mannitol**

The -ol at the end tells us it's a sugar alcohol. These are very common in gums and toothpastes. They are typically plant-based derivatives of sugar, and as such have a fraction of the calories of sugar.

A frequent side effect is bloating and diarrhea.

**Xylitol**

Also a sugar alcohol, xylitol is getting the dental community excited. This sweetener can change the amount and type of bacteria in your mouth, making it effective at reducing cavities. In large amounts, it can have the same unfortunate side effect as other sugar alcohols. If diarrhea occurs, it typically lasts no more than two weeks. Xylitol is much more expensive to extract from plants than the other sugar alcohols, so it is less common in mainstream grocery items than in health food stores.

Out of all these options, the least favorable are the chemically derived sweeteners. They trigger an insulin response, and because your body is not getting the satisfaction of actual sugar, you will crave more food. People who drink diet sodas containing these sweeteners will actually gain weight over time, rather than lose it. If you must have sweetened tea or coffee, it is far better to choose pure stevia extract and save regular sugar-sweetened soda for an occasional rare treat. Because it is so beneficial for your mouth, you should absolutely look for gums, mints and dental products that contain xylitol.

The best option is to gradually wean yourself off of the need for all things sweet. This is the only way to guarantee you won't have any undesirable side effects or medical problems. And as you eliminate sweetened food from your diet, you will be able to appreciate the flavor of your foods and drinks so much more! Foods that are naturally sweet, like fruits and vegetables, will eventually be enough to satisfy you. What a huge investment in your health! **NOW**

*Toni Ingram, DDS  
Owner/Dentist  
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## December 1

Townhall Rezoning meeting: 6:30 p.m., Midlothian Heritage High School Cafetorium, Call (972) 775-8296 for more information.

## December 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Community Prayer meeting: 7:00-8:00 a.m., Midlothian Conference Center.

## December 4

WGMS Christmas Concert: 6:30 p.m., Midlothian High School Auditorium.

## December 5

All City Choir: 5:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., MHS Auditorium.

## December 5, 6

Mansfield Women's Club Festival of Trees. For information on time, date, etc. go to [www.mansfieldwomensclub.com](http://www.mansfieldwomensclub.com). Proceeds will benefit local charities.

## December 6

Southern Star Christmas Celebration, All Aboard the Polar Express: 1:00-7:00 p.m., Heritage Park, 234 N. 8th St. The Southern

Star Christmas Celebration is a fun-filled weekend of activities in historic downtown Midlothian. Activities include a vendor fair, musical entertainment, pictures with Santa, Christmas tree lighting, multi-denominational worship service and the always entertaining lighted Christmas parade. Visit [SouthernStarChristmas.org](http://SouthernStarChristmas.org) for more information on when each event is scheduled to begin.

## December 7

Mansfield Women's Club Holiday Home Tour: 1:00-6:00 p.m. For ticket price, locations, restrictions, etc. go to [mansfieldwomensclub.com](http://mansfieldwomensclub.com). This is their annual fundraiser. All proceeds will benefit local charities.

## December 9

FSMS Christmas Concert: 7:00 p.m., MHS Auditorium.

## December 11

MHS Christmas Band Concert: 6:30 p.m., MHHS, Heritage High School.

MHS Choir Christmas Concert: 7:00 p.m., MHS Auditorium.

## December 14

Christmas for Cowboys: 8:30-11:00 a.m., Lone Star Cowboy Church of Ellis County, 1011 E. Ovilla Rd., Red Oak. The church band and children's ministries will perform the program in memory of former church band member, the late Steve Weisberg. For more information, call (214) 334-8963 or (972) 576-0900.

## December 18

Jingle Mingle: 4:00-6:00 p.m.; Civic Center, 224 S. 11th St. Call (972) 723-8600 or email [info@midlothianchamber.org](mailto:info@midlothianchamber.org) for more information.

## December 20

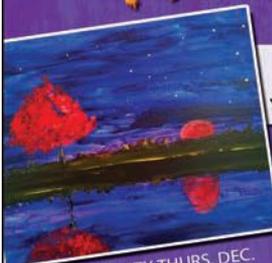
Pet Adoption Event: 9:00-11:00 a.m., Wal-Mart Garden Center entrance.

## December 22 — January 2

MISD winter break, no classes.

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [betty.tryon@nowmagazines.com](mailto:betty.tryon@nowmagazines.com).*

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## DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY 101



Sat. Dec. 20th from 9:30-12:30

\$40 You will need any digital camera that should have the ability to change the shutter and aperture settings. This class will help you understand the basic camera operation and the importance of light.

## ENCAUSTICS WORKSHOP

AGES 11 AND UP

### Wax Painting

SAT. DEC. 20TH FROM 1:30-4:30

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In this workshop, 2 works of art will be created. Artist will leave with the ability to fuse, create texture & use transfers with encaustic medium.



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## In the Kitchen With Whitney Urquhart

— By Betty Tryon

Like many busy young mothers, Whitney Urquhart combines cooking with spending time with her kids. “I like to cook with my daughter, Pearson, who is 6,” she said, “and with my son, Green, who is 3, when his attention span lasts!”

In the beginning, cooking was not her favorite thing, but she wisely noted that since her family has to eat, she should have fun preparing meals. Whitney doesn’t consider herself a great cook but results are always very good. Her recipe preferences are those “that, if you don’t follow directions just right, you don’t ruin the meal!” **NOW**

### Zucchini Lasagna

- 4 zucchini, sliced into long, thin strips**
- 1 lb. ground beef**
- 1 16-oz. chub breakfast sausage**
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped**
- 1 24-oz. jar of your favorite spaghetti sauce**
- 1 Tbsp. Italian seasoning**
- 8 oz. small curd cottage cheese**
- 8 oz. sour cream**
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese**
- 16 oz. mozzarella cheese, shredded**

- 1.** Cook zucchini either in oven or on grill. Blot extra moisture; set aside.
- 2.** Cook beef and sausage with garlic; drain grease.
- 3.** Add spaghetti sauce to meat mixture and season with Italian seasoning to taste.
- 4.** In a bowl, mix cottage cheese with a large scoop of sour cream and Parmesan.
- 5.** Spoon small layer of sauce on bottom so lasagna doesn’t stick. Add one layer each of zucchini, cottage cheese mixture, meat and mozzarella.
- 6.** Repeat layers until all ingredients are used, making sure to end with a mozzarella layer

- 7.** Bake at 350 F until bubbly and cheese is browning. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

### Italian Beef Sandwiches

- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- 1-2 cups flour**
- 1 2-lb. rump roast, big enough to fill Crock-Pot**
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil**
- 2 packets Italian dressing dry seasoning**
- 2 14.5-oz. cans beef broth**
- 6 Kaiser buns, fresh from deli**
- 12 pack sliced Provolone cheese**
- Horseradish mayonnaise (optional)**

- 1.** Salt, pepper and flour roast and brown in oil in a skillet.
- 2.** Add roast to Crock-Pot. Shake Italian seasoning over entire roast and cover with two cans of beef broth, adding water as needed to submerge roast.
- 3.** Cook 6 hours on high or until roast is cooked through. While still in Crock-Pot, shred meat with two forks.
- 4.** Toast bread with cheese. Serve meat on buns with horseradish mayonnaise, if desired.

### Bow Tie Chicken Pasta

- 16 oz. bow tie pasta**
- 1 pint heavy whipping cream**
- 3 cooked chicken breasts, chopped**
- 1 lb. bacon, cooked and crumbled**
- 5 stalks green onion, chopped**
- Garlic, basil, pepper, to taste**
- 2 6-oz. bags Parmesan cheese, shredded**
- Tomatoes, chopped (optional)**

- 1.** Boil pasta to al dente; drain.
- 2.** Slowly stir in cream. Add chicken, bacon, green onion, garlic, basil and pepper.
- 3.** Heat, stirring continuously until heated through. Add cheese and stir until melted. Add chopped tomatoes, if desired.

### Mexican Street Tacos

#### Marinade:

- 4 cloves garlic, chopped**
- 1/2 bunch fresh cilantro**
- Juice of 2 limes**
- 1 cup water**
- 3 cups soy sauce**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil**

#### Tacos:

- 1 3-lb. skirt steak, cut into three large sections**
- 1 medium onion, chopped**
- 20 corn tortillas**
- 1/2 bunch fresh cilantro**
- 2 avocados, sliced (optional)**
- 3 limes, cut in wedges**

- 1.** For marinade: Combine garlic, cilantro, lime juice, water, soy sauce, salt, pepper and vegetable oil.
- 2.** For tacos: Add steak and marinade to a gallon Ziploc bag. Marinate at least 3 hours.
- 3.** Heat a large griddle to 350 F. Sear steaks for about 5 minutes on each side; keep leftover marinade.
- 4.** Remove from heat. Chop steaks into bite-sized pieces; set aside.
- 5.** Use rest of marinade to cook onions on griddle until tender. Return steaks to griddle and cook with onions until done.
- 6.** Serve in warm corn tortillas with fresh cilantro, sliced avocado, if desired, and lime wedges

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

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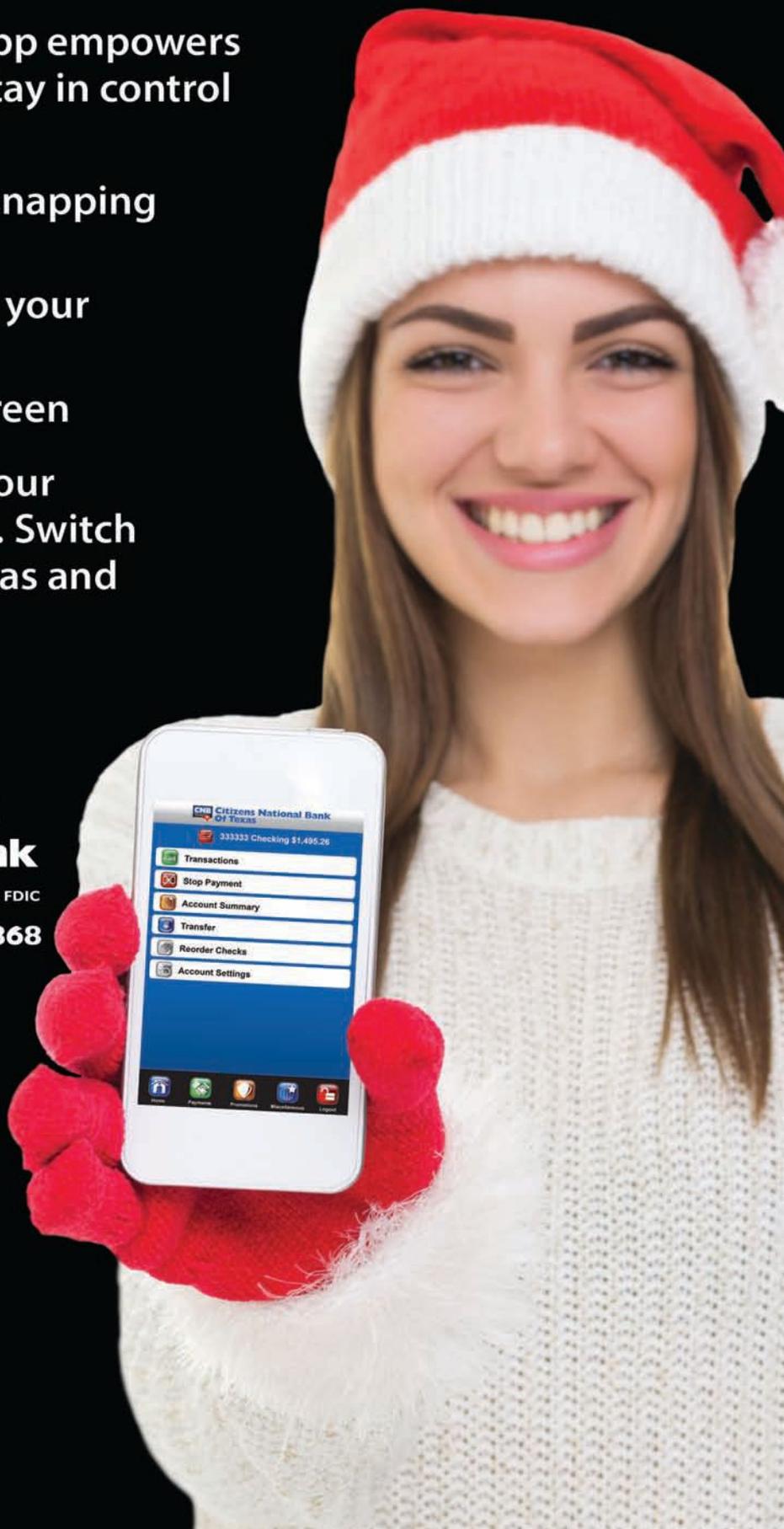


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