The Community Magazine Serving Red Oak and the Surrounding Area

Red Oak NOW MAGAZINE

Ovilla • Glenn Heights • Oak Leaf

April 2009

Love the Court

Miss G's Charm

The Ultimate Showman

Remembering Yesteryear

At Home With Bob and Pat Mahlstedt

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ROISD Education Foundation

Going Buggy – Wooden Elementary - $3,622.01

Cathy Schultz
Shirley Jones
Ailsha Devlin
Ann May
Theresa Gossett
Janet Thweatt

This is an innovative, multi-faceted program integrating science with language arts through guest speakers, live insect habitats, books and DVDs for the library, life cycle insect models, and learning centers to stimulate curiosity, observation, and respect for the importance of insects and spiders in our environment.

Leap into Learning – Eastridge Elementary - $4,962.30

Sally McCabe
Jeanne Powers
Hollie Kruse
Loretta Godwin

This program will be used as a hands-on, auditory, visual, and kinesthetic approach to learning. Leap into Learning will help address the strengths and weaknesses of all Kindergarten children. This will be used to enhance letters and sound, math, science, and social studies and concepts and skills.

Get on the Ball While Having a Ball – Red Oak Elementary - $2,501.63

Richard Roth

This grant is to purchase stability balls that will help to play an integral role in the program by improving the students' overall fitness levels and to promote health awareness. The balls will be used in the physical education classes as well as in the classrooms as a trial run to see how productive they are to enhancing learning.

H.E.A.R.T.S. – Eastridge Elementary - $5,000.00

Tracy Pitts
Suzy Keane
Kim Pevehouse
Kim Rogers
Angela Fitzgerald

This is a method of teaching and learning that integrates practical life experiences, services to the community, and academics for students at the elementary level. This community service opportunity will not only reinforce classroom academics, it also provides opportunities for character building and personal growth.

We Both Read – Wooden Elementary - $805.42

Ailsha Devlin
Lainie Jackson
Katie Pate

These special books offer interesting information which allows a struggling reader to be engaged and assisted by a fluent reader who may be a parent, tutor, or an advanced reader. The advanced reader is asked to read the information on the left side of the page and then the struggling reader is asked to continue the storyline on the right side of the page. It helps to promote parental involvement and support.

Why Try - Why Not? – Red Oak Intermediate - $836.00

Dawn Woodyatt
Jeanye Mercer
Nathan Brown
Billy Oakley

This is a strength based approach to helping youth overcome their challenges and improve outcomes in the area of truancy, behavior, and academics. It is based on sound, empirical principles, including solution Focused Brief Therapy, Social and Emotional Intelligence and multi-sensory learning.

Check Mate – Wooden, Shields, Eastridge and Red Oak Elementary - $4,812.85

Melissa Hancock
Paula Barnes
Suzy Keane
Cindy Prcin
Shondra Jones

This grant will enable a chess club to be started and maintained at all four of our elementary campuses, including a kick-off party, t-shirts, chess sets, incentives, prizes and tournament supplies.

The mission of the Foundation is to provide ROISD students with exceptional programs that will enhance the quality of education and present them with opportunities they may not otherwise experience.

For more information on the Education Foundation visit www.redoakisdfoundation.org or call 972/617-4320

The Prize Parade awards $39,023.25 to ROISD!

Rachel's Challenge - Creating a Chain Reaction of Kindness
Red Oak Intermediate
$3,500.00
Jeanye Mercer

This is a school assembly and training program that was created following the Columbine High School Tragedy in 1999. This challenge transforms a school through inspiring full school assembly, followed by an informative training session for staff and students representing a cross section of the school that enables them to practically follow through with the challenges presented. The core group then takes the challenge school-wide.

Dynamic Drummers – Shields Elementary - $2,600.00

Diane Magier
Shirley Veltman

This grant will allow students to be mentally active as they move and play patterns with drumsticks on drumming tables to high intensity music. Dynamic Drummers puts music and physical education together in a fun, creative and energetic way.

I is for iPod® – Shields Elementary - $1,844.75

LaShera McElhany

The purpose of this project is to use the I-Pod, along with I-Tunes software, as powerful tools for teaching and enhancing early literacy skills. They are portable, easy to use and they deliver audio as well as text, images and video. This will allow reading, writing, and phonemic awareness skills to be presented in a fun and motivating manner.

ROJH Math Goes Interactive – Red Oak Junior High - $2,400.00

Joshua Crouch
Penny Fowler
Robyn Randall
Gerald Spriggs
Brandi Pitts
Jaimie Dulworth

Through the use of Interwrite Pads and the software that comes with them, teachers and students alike will be able to teach, learn, respond, and interact innovatively. The Pads will use the current computer and projection systems already in place in the classrooms to create a truly interactive and engaging classroom that the students will love to be a part of.

Functionally Speaking – Shields Elementary - $1,138.29

Deborah Tigert
Barbara Crismon
Kathy Spurgin
Julia Backus
Shondra Jones

Wristspeaks are wristbands with words/pictures on a card inserted into a clear plastic sleeve that allows students the freedom to communicate and use their arms to play, explore, eat, etc … This will bring language to non-verbal language in a non-traditional yet very functional way.

Virtual Carnegie Hall in Red Oak – Red Oak High School - $5,000.00

Richard Thomas
Phillip Cadenhead
Anthony Smith

With the touch of a button, technology takes over and makes it sound like the student is on a recital hall stage… or in a cathedral … or in a major concert hall. With the acoustics just right and the stage in place, makes practicing for a performance much more fun and realistic.

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Photo by Natalie Busch.

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Subscriptions are available at the rate of $35 per year or $3.50 per issue. Subscriptions should be sent to: NOW Magazines, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates or editorial correspondence, call (972) 937-8447 or visit www.nowmagazines.com.

Editor's Note

Hello, Neighbors!

This issue is just blooming with ways to welcome spring. Learn about our city's history while preserving our communities for future generations. One great way to ensure our town's future would be to honor Arbor Day on April 24. What better way to preserve our communities than by planting a tree with your family or volunteering to help maintain a local park. Either way, we all win!

Last month, we inadvertently ran the wrong photograph in the cooking section. So, this month, we are re-running those recipes, this time with a picture of the *real* Barbara King! Thanks to Barbara King and Becky Packer for being such great sports! We apologize for the inconvenience!

Diana Merrill Claussen
Red OakNOW Editor

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For the second year in a row, Methodist Charlton Medical Center has been ranked among the leading hospitals in the country, and the only hospital in the Dallas area*, to receive the prestigious "5-Star Rating and Maternity Care Excellence Award™" from HealthGrades®. It's recognition that our mommies and babies can expect better outcomes and fewer complications during childbirth. Two more reasons to choose Methodist Charlton first for your baby's birthday.

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Remembering Yesteryear

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

If you traveled down a dusty road in Ellis County 60 years ago, the most notable construction you might have seen would have been various barns and cotton gins. If you took a turn down Main Street in Red Oak, you would have seen many of the popular "catalog homes" which were ordered from the pages of a Sears or Montgomery Wards catalog.

Take a drive throughout our area today, and you will still see a few remnants of yesteryear, or just sit and talk to long-time resident Von Stanford. He will help answer any questions you may have of our city's heritage and lore.

"My dad was born here in 1912 and lived in Red Oak all of his life," Von said. "Ellis County has been the only place I have ever lived, too. I was born in a house on Main Street here in Red Oak in 1937." Von and his three sisters grew up during the time when farmers raised cotton and grain and there were many cotton gins in the area, most of which have now been torn down.

During his early years in Red Oak, seeing a horse and buggy being used as transportation or to move cargo was a pretty usual occurrence. "People would come to town on horse and buggies and, sometimes, I would sit in a mule-drawn wagon and collect corn," he reminisced. Most of the roads were either dirt or gravel.

"We grew up in an era when the town had an electric trolley," Von said. "A lot of people rode the Interurban trolley to travel. Not many people got off the trolleys here besides the post [postal service]," he remembered. "Then, when I was 10, we would ride the Interurban to Waxahachie and see a movie." During that time, young Von's allowance was $.75 a week, and he could buy a ticket to the movies for $.09. "Sometimes, they would even show on the streets of Red Oak. The city would hang a large screen on the side of a building so we could watch it," he recalled.

As far back as Von can remember, his family owned a grocery business. "Our stores were named Stanford Food Stores," he said. "We had the stores in three different locations during different times here. We were in the grocery business for about 50 years." During that time, "there was also a central telephone office here run by the Owens family. Back then we had the hand crank phones." Von still remembers his home phone number and the number for their store. "Our home phone

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number was 45 and the store was 46," he added.

Von laughed when he recalled a story about the telephone operators always snooping in the business of the local children. One evening, young Von dialed the operator to get connected to a number. Instead of receiving the number from the operator, Ms. Owens, he got a stern talking to instead, because children were not allowed to use the phone unsupervised. "Ms. Owens, the operator, would ask me, 'Does your momma know you're using the phone?'" he laughed. "As kids, we would also play in the streets at night and would play tag. We didn't have any police officers here then." Von grew up to become one of the first volunteer firemen.

Back then, whenever the town needed something done, the residents would volunteer to do the job. "The

Von Stafford and Robert Goodloe as children.

local people here built our first fire truck and our streets eventually got paved because the townspeople got together and did it," Von said. "I can drive down the streets today and still tell you who lived in every house. Hardly any of the houses here today [still] house the original owners."

However, our area is still home to many original founding families. "The Goodloes, Pratts, Hazards, Browns and Oldhams still live here," Von informed. He shared some history regarding a few of our area's more famous families and individuals. One such story is of a girl named Bonnie Parker. "Bonnie's family used to work in the cotton fields here,"

Von shared, adding that Bonnie and her friend, Clyde Barrow, "robbed a bank in Lancaster with the Floyd Boys." Later, the duo was gunned down in Louisiana, and it is said Bonnie was laid to rest at a cemetery on Webb Chapel Road.

Von can name many local residents of talent, such as a famous engineer named Stanley Bruce Cavatt, who in his younger days would make homemade fireworks and put on fireworks shows in town, and Pat Choate, a local boy who later ran as Ross Perot's running mate. The famous Louise Ritter won a gold medal at the 1988 Olympics, and our city has also been called home by a certain gent named Lecil Martin, also known as the notorious entertainer "Boxcar Willie," for whom our beloved overpass on Ovilla Road is named.

Von knew the Martin family very well. "Lecil was raised on the outskirts of Red Oak," Von recalled. "His dad was Birdie Martin and there were five kids in the family." When Birdie went to work for the railroad, the family "moved in right behind my house in Red Oak," Von said. In the evenings, Mr. Martin would play a tin guitar while he and Lecil would sing together. "I would squat by my fence and would hear them sing," Von remembered. Lecil became a disc jockey and went by the name of Marty Martin. He later created his alter ego, Boxcar Willie. "He would travel all over the world and perform," Von said. "Boxcar was a big time entertainer."

Von believes the city has changed in many ways since his childhood days, but some things remain the same. "Well, they tore down all of the cotton gins, and we are not very antiquated because there are no more brick buildings anymore," Von reflected. Every so often, he and his wife, Ann, like to take drives around the town just to reminisce. During his lifetime, Von has seen much change and is thankful his hometown is still here. Thinking aloud, he mused, "If they only saw today how we did things back then. …" NOW

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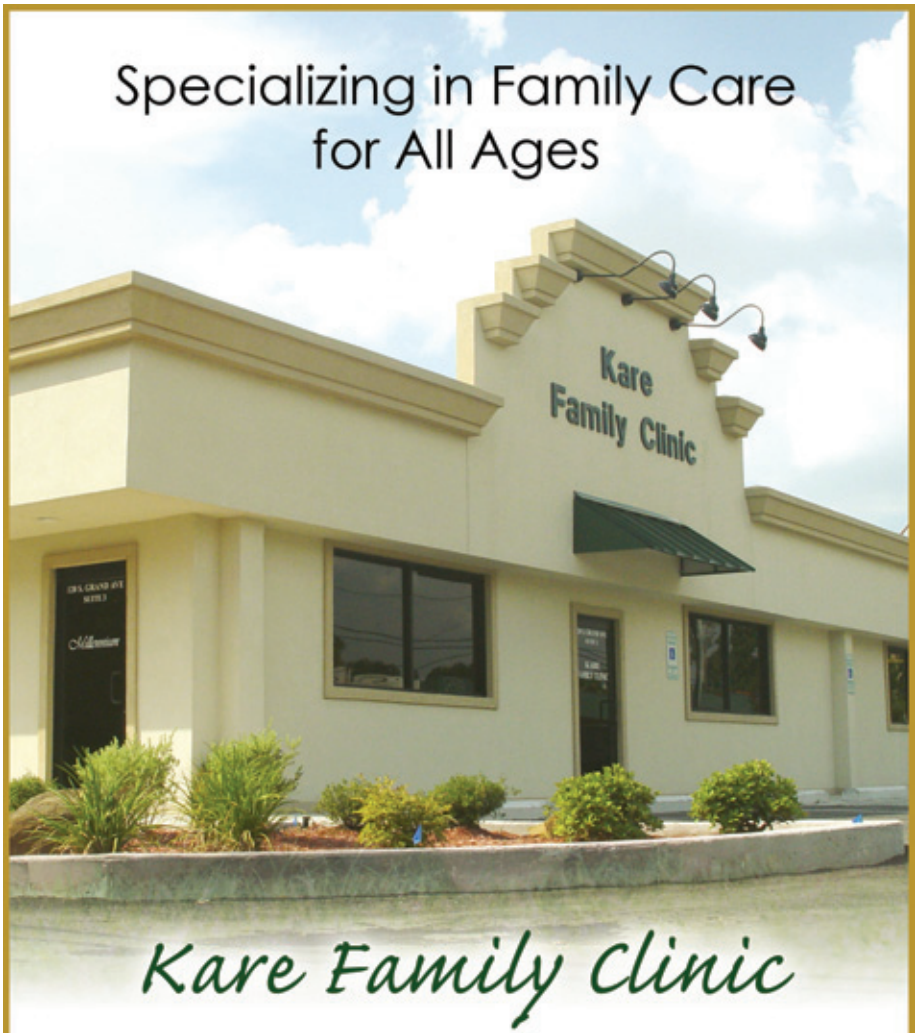

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Anything but Dull

— By Amanda Madden Pitt

At Home With Bob and Pat Mahlstedt

Beyond Red Oak and Glenn Heights, the quaint, little town of Oak Leaf springs out of nowhere. Bob and Pat Mahlstedts' home is enchantingly tucked away down a long driveway, across a small bridge with a moat below, in a forest of large trees. The sprawling ranch style home is nestled in age-old woods that have fairy tale charm. "These are native Texas trees; some are over 100 years old," Bob said. "It is very private out here, and that's what we love about it," Pat noted, as a contented expression stretched across her face.

Bob and Pat's lives together began on a blind date in New York, but they are true Texans now, and have been for over four decades. Their three-plus-acre Texas homestead is a haven for Pat, Oak Leaf's mayor pro tem and city councilmember and her husband, Bob, who runs a business called Affordable Restorations where he restores family heirlooms, paintings and collections in addition to doing commissioned work. Bob is also the vice president of the Ellis County SPCA.

The couple's house was built in 1978, designed by Pat herself with the idea of entertaining and rearing a family in mind. The Mahlstedts' four sons, three daughters-in-law and eight grandchildren enjoy coming for a visit just as much as the couple's friends like the parties they host.

It is not uncommon for the New York natives to transform their ceramic Italian tile entryway into a dance floor, surrounded by collectibles from every country imaginable, for an evening full of festivities — one that takes the visitor to far off places with colors and decor full of motion and life. "It would be so much easier to tell you where we haven't been," Pat said, "because [we have been] everywhere but Antarctica, and we're not going there. It's too cold."

It does not take long to realize that the Mahlstedts have a passion for travel. Just a few of the places they have visited include: Ireland, Portugal, Hungary, Italy (three times), Thailand, the Caribbean Islands, the Dutch Antilles, Panama, Spain, China and the list goes on. Their home truly does have an international flair. They are surrounded by china from Germany, tea sets from Turkey, tiny crystal coffee cups from Russia and a rug from Morocco. One timeless piece of art, which the couple went to great pains to get home from Israel, is a sculpture of Jesus carrying the cross, carved from the wood of an olive tree. It exhibits detailed

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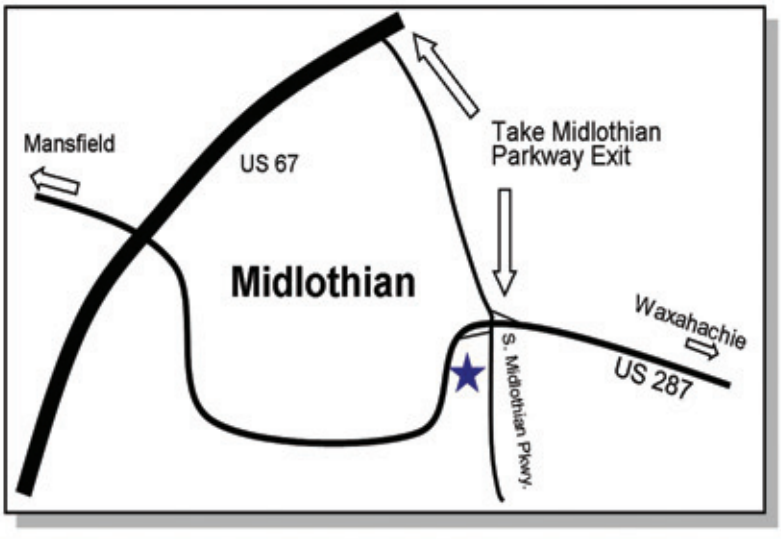

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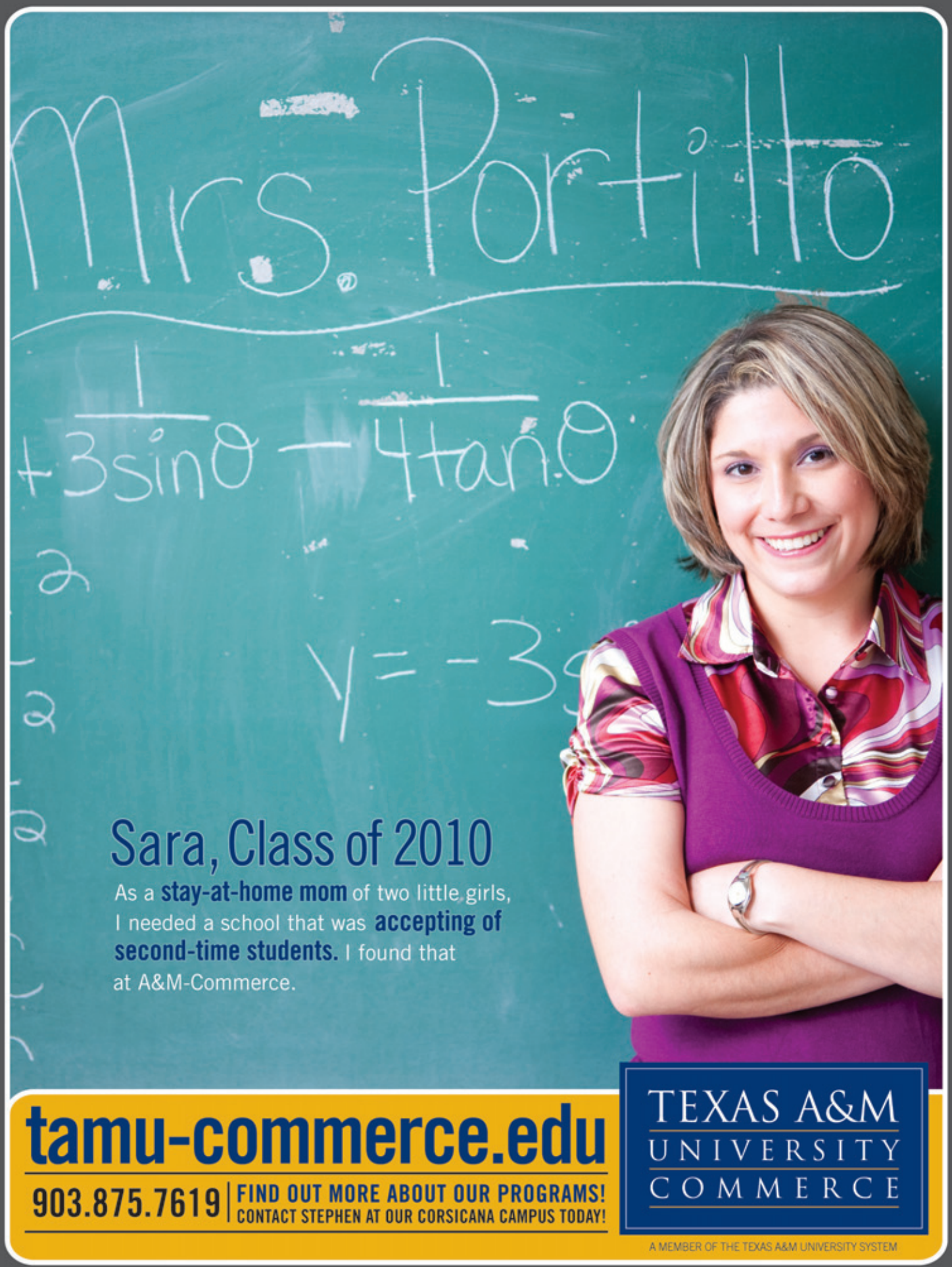
craftsmanship in an expression of compassion and pain etched across the Savior's face.

They have gathered collectibles from around the world and each piece has its own story. Just coming over to their place makes you feel like you have been immersed in a melting pot of cultures. Visitors feel it is not so much that the Mahlstedts have traveled, but more that they have lived. The secret of living life to the fullest comes by embracing the differences for this couple.

However, none of these items are as special as the pieces of art created by the Mahlstedts' eldest son, Bob Junior. "I don't believe in just one of anything, because the world is a very large place," Pat said, and of course, she has more than one of her son's original pieces of art. Bob Junior's work features breathtaking landscapes with beautifully soft mixes of color that capture mood-setting scenes from any photograph provided.

Before retirement, Bob worked for MetLife for 44 years and Pat worked in the executive offices of General Electric in both New York and Dallas. The closest semblance of subway life in the metroplex is DART, but Pat says there is nothing like commuting to work every day via New York's real subway. "People are so packed in there you can't even move," she recalled. She even had to take a hat pin on the train to ward off uninvited strangers who got too close.

Another interesting cultural detail about their New York roots lies in the fact that Bob's dad was a New York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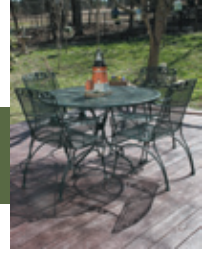

City fireman. His helmet and picture in full gear are proudly displayed on the couple's game room wall.

Bob and Pat have a big heart for animals and his work with the Ellis County SPCA is one way Bob helps give back to the community. The shelter has recently been taking in some 200 animals each month — a much faster rate than adoptions. However, this past holiday season, Bob helped implement a new strategy. Some people may be able to care for the daily needs of an animal, but cannot afford the adoption fee. The new program allowed someone else to pay the adoption fee for such potential pet owners. "This event was very successful, with 58 adoptions," Bob explained. "Spreading the knowledge about spaying and neutering pets and educating the community on basic pet obedience goes a long way to preserve and protect the animal population," he added.

Many cats and dogs have found a home with the Mahlstedts over the past 31 years. Currently, Bob and Pat have six furry friends: Guy, Gus, Pedro, Sweetie, Dolly and Brutus. Among the many pets they have owned over the years, Star stands out. No longer with them, Star was the daughter of the famous Border Collie from the movie *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*. She was a very smart dog with a sweet personality. One pet they currently own is an orange cat named Pedro who actually says "out" when he wants to go outside. "I didn't tell people about Pedro talking, because I was afraid they would call me crazy, but one day when my bridge group was over here, he said it," Pat recalled, remembering the friend who almost jumped out of her seat when the cat began to talk. "When he's really getting impatient, it becomes a two syllable out, like 'ow-out,'" Pat shared. Among other amazing pets the family has owned are a parakeet that slept with a dog and a cat that nursed on their German Shepherd Schatzie.

For the couple, preserving our cities is as simple as preserving our native plants, neighborhood creatures, families and the stories that surround us. "I never judge a person," Pat said, "but we {Bob and I} are really very dull people." Talking cat, famous dog, talented children and all, this couple is anything but dull. In fact, they are a bright spot right in the middle of the quaint, little town of Oak Leaf.

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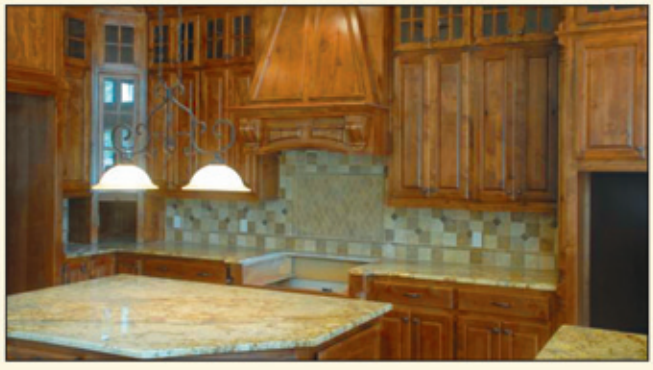

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April 10 Play Day 7:00PM
April 11 Heavenly Hogs Ride- All Church & Community Motorcycle Riding Club
April 18 Trail Ride- All Church & Community Trail Riding, see web site
April 18 Team Roping Event at the Church
April 25 Lil Wranglers Day-Bring your kids and let them learn about horses and ride in the Arena(see web site)
Every Thursday 7:00pm there is team roping practice in the Arena
Every Sunday 3:00pm there is Team Roping Practice in the Arena

NA meetings Every Monday & Friday 8:00 pm
AA Meeting every Tuesday (women only) and Saturday 8:00 pm

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The Ultimate Showman

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Local fine arts leader, Jeff Todd's, idea of performing encompasses a variety of talents. Jeff's job at Ovilla Road Baptist Church covers a broad spectrum of artistry, from singing and piano to photography and drama. This longtime resident is well known as the "ultimate performer."

"I have been playing the piano since the third grade," Jeff said. "Piano and drama have always been a part of my life." Jeff plays several instruments including the saxophone and the flute, and offers lessons in music and voice. He and his wife, Angie, direct many artistic performances, both onstage and at home. "We have five children from the ages of 8 to 18," Jeff said, explaining that he takes on the role of production manager to help his children or other actors on stage. His family is involved in many aspects of the arts and encourages him in his artistic abilities, supporting him every Sunday morning while he is performing, teaching, leading and inspiring others. "It's important for me to pass the arts along to my own children," he asserted.

Jeff is a talented teacher who believes in the importance of helping his students succeed. To prepare his students for competitions, he has been known to teach them to sing in other languages such as Italian and German. Jeff's goal, however, is not to boast of his occupation or talents; he cares little for being the center of attention. "My goal is more than just music and singing. My hopes are for everyone to share and show the talents they have been gifted with," he said. "As you get older, you realize it's more about helping others find and grow in their own talents," he added. "There is more joy in helping artists achieve their potential."

Jeff has found contentment in community arts. "I believe that the arts allow people to use their talents to show how God has made them who they are, and it is a positive form for people to express themselves," he said. "When we do a production [at the church], there is a sense of unity. Although we may all be different, the arts bring us all together." Jeff encourages community development and involvement in the arts. "I always invite the community to participate in our performances, such as our Christmas program. Plus, most of our performances are free," he pointed out. Art within the community is good for bridging the gaps within society.

"Having a high quality of fine arts is also important to me," Jeff continued, adding that he would like our area to have, "a group such as the Dallas Children's Choir here within our community. We, [society] are definitely losing the art form of choir," he expressed, acknowledging that choral groups are not as popular as they once were. "I have always loved all music, from vocal to contemporary to even older hymns." Regardless of the musical style, helping others with their talents while striving for excellence and having fun is what Jeff finds fulfilling.

This month, Jeff will be coordinating an upcoming performance that will be sure to touch the hearts of those

within the community. "From April 8 to April 12, we will be presenting *The Hiding Place*, which was a major box office movie in the 1970s," Jeff said. *The Hiding Place* is based on a true story of a Dutch Christian family who helped to hide their Jewish countrymen during WWII. "We chose this

"I believe that the arts allow people to use their talents to show how God has made them who they are, and it is a positive form for people to express themselves."

production because it is such a story of forgiveness and love," he stated. "It is a story which we hope will help people to make their lives better. One of the most important things to me is when the audience walks away with joy, wondering how they can make their lives better."

Whether at a performance, fine arts practice or at home, Jeff's life is filled with artistic expression. He also enjoys the art of nature. "At home, I am big into gardening and have every type of Texas perennial known [to man]," he beamed. He not only enjoys preserving our community and the arts, but encouraging others to do the same. Like a springtime bud, "Sometimes you have to be able to allow people [to grow in their journey]," Jeff said. NOW

Love the Court

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

This is the second year Red Oak has offered tennis as an athletics class and the first year the students will be able to use the courts at Red Oak High School for team practices. For a few months now, the high school students have been enjoying their courts at the new campus. "Our new tennis courts are phenomenal and it's a great thing for the players to be playing on better courts," Tennis Coach Dana Calhoun exclaimed. Dana refers to her students as her "kids" because she mentors them as if they are her own. She endeavors to instill the values of hard work and perseverance to her charges, both male and female.

Besides teaching tennis class and coaching the coed teams, Dana also teaches a high school credited health class to junior high students. "The coed teams are a very interesting mix," Dana smiled. "I am glad to see as many boys [on the team] as we have. I just teach tennis, so it doesn't matter if they are boys or girls. My whole focus is to get them to work on the mechanics of it, mainly practicing on their forehand, backhand and serving."

There are sometimes differences in her students' athletic styles. "Boys tend to hit the ball harder so I try to teach them to use more control, keeping the ball in the court," Dana said. She encourages the girls to "hit the ball with a little more force." Gender differences aside, tennis is a sport anyone can learn. "I try to encourage everyone to play it because it is a sport that can keep you healthy all of your life," Dana shared.

Besides teaching and mentoring students, establishing community tennis is something very dear to Dana's heart. "Red Oak needs a tennis association and so does Waxahachie," she expressed. Although the community courts at the high school are rarely used, Dana still believes there is a need to establish an association. With 87 students currently enrolled in her junior high and high school tennis classes, Dana feels there is a growing interest in the sport. According to Dana, many players whom she coaches are ranked highly on their teams, and/or in their divisions. She participates in adult tennis tournaments herself, and recognizes the value of community sports associations through her work with the Dallas Tennis Association. "DTA is a great organization that promotes both junior and adult tennis," she said. "I not only think we can get some similar programs here, I believe our city is ready to kick tennis up a notch throughout junior high and high school athletics. I would also like to see more of our players compete in USTA [United States Tennis Association] tournaments."

The students could not be learning this sport from anyone more dedicated than Dana. "I am a certified tennis pro through the Professional Tennis Registry," Dana said. Being an active member of PTR, involved in the sport since childhood, and playing tennis with her husband and three children, helps her be the best coach she can be. "Growing up, I was always involved in athletics and my goal was to be a tennis or physical education instructor," she recalled. "I initially started playing

tennis in the ninth grade and then went on to play in high school." Dana's skills on and off the court landed her a tennis and academic scholarship. "I went to Lincoln University and became their number two ranked player at the university level in Jefferson City, Missouri," she added.

The Calhoun family loves spending time outdoors together. On the weekends, they can usually be found on the courts. "We are an athletic family. We make it a family tradition to play tennis and will usually play each other in doubles matches," she said. Dana has even coached her own children in the sport. "My 14-year-old daughter is ranked as the number one varsity player in Waxahachie, and she is also ranked in the top 100 for the USTA's Texas Section, Super Championship division."

It is very easy to observe Dana's dedication and her high commitment to helping her students and the sport achieve success within the community. Dana is known for helping her students when she is off of the clock, conducting voluntary tennis practices on Saturdays for her students. "Sometimes, I will go over to the courts and play a few matches with the kids," she said. Some have even won a few matches when playing against their dedicated coach. "I have a dream job," Dana said. "I can't believe I actually get paid to have my dream job." NOW

Down Home Doctor

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

When local resident Michael Parker was 5 years old, he already knew what he wanted to be when he grew up. "I told my dad that I wanted to be a doctor," he said. When he later graduated medical school at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) in Galveston, he not only achieved his dream, but has helped others to achieve theirs as well. Since 1982, Dr. Parker has been saving lives at medical and emergency facilities here in Texas.

Dr. Parker has resided in our area since 1992. Realizing the need for an urgent care practice here in Red Oak, he decided he wanted to provide this type of service to the residents of Dallas and Ellis counties. In August 2008, Dr. Parker and his business partner, Mikel Chamblee, opened the first urgent care practice in our area. "Being familiar with our towns, I realized there was a need for a facility like ours," Dr. Parker said.

When he and Mikel opened the clinic, they put much thought into the specialized type of care and customer service they wanted to provide for all of their clients. The two began to build the goals of their clinic while centering it on their mission to provide the best service possible to the patients. "There is no appointment necessary," Dr. Parker said. "Patients can usually walk in and be seen within a few minutes."

"When we designed this clinic, our goal was and is to never have someone wait anymore than 30 minutes," Mikel added.

From the waiting room to the exam room, patients will receive expedient care and a compassionate and personalized experience. Dr. Parker is known for giving more than just a medical diagnosis; he allows his patients to give their input regarding their treatment options.

Personalized treatment is a priority at Red Oak Urgent Care, as is establishing a caring rapport with their patients. When a patient is at the practice, they can count on the doctor and staff to listen and be concerned. Dr. Parker truly enjoys getting to know his patients. "Having personal contact and communication with my patients is important," he said. This personalized care is all part of the "down home" feel the doctor and staff strive to accomplish when interacting with their patients and helping them feel more comfortable.

Red Oak Urgent Care is geared toward those experiencing colds, infections, sprains, strains and lacerations, but can also accommodate those with urgent medical needs. "We see anybody with an episodic or urgent medical condition. We

can do basically anything except treat big things like strokes or heart conditions. We can also do a few quick in-house tests such as flu, strep, mono, UA and glucose tests," Dr. Parker said, explaining that his facility has accounts with reference labs.

"We also have the ability to handle laboratory needs through one of our contracted labs," Mikel added. This is good for all of Dr. Parker's clients, some as young as 6 months. The age of patients is not limited, however. The clinic sees patients up to any age.

Red Oak Urgent Care will see any patient with or without insurance, but their main mission is to help the uninsured. "We do not take insurance because most of our patients are uninsured," Mikel said. "Since our visits are $85 dollars, our goal is to help people that can't afford to go elsewhere," he added. When a patient does have insurance, they see Dr. Parker because according to Mikel, they "would rather get reimbursed later with their insurance instead of waiting in an emergency room."

Dr. Parker is known for giving more than just a medical diagnosis; he allows his patients to give their input regarding their treatment options.

Red Oak Urgent Care is located at 119 S. Highway 342 and may be contacted at (972) 617-7100 or www.redoakurgentcare.com. Their hours are Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. NOW

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Miss G's Charm

— By Angel Jenkins Morris

Being "one of them" works in Jessica Guerrero's favor. The freshman biology instructor is a Red Oak ISD graduate with at least one character trait to which teenagers relate — sarcasm. "Although I have a strong sarcastic personality, my students know that I truly care about them," Jessica explained. "I believe I provide a solid understanding of science along with application to real-life experiences in class."

Part of that real-world training is through dual-credit anatomy, physiology and dual-credit biology courses taught by Jessica. Dual-credit course work lets students earn high school and college credit at the same time, giving them a leg up on a college degree when they graduate.

When Jessica graduated in 2000, she went on to the University of Texas at Arlington, but not to study teaching. "I didn't go to school to become an instructor," she remembered. "I was substitute teaching while I was working on my bachelor's degree at UTA. The teacher I was substituting for didn't come back, so the summer after I covered her class the principal [where I was teaching] offered me a full-time position, but only if I'd get a teaching certificate."

As a beginning teacher at age 21, Jessica quickly learned she had to take control of the classroom. "There was such a small difference in age between myself and the students. They really ran over me," she confessed. Her solution? Brutal honesty. "On the first day of school I told the students, 'I don't like you.' And I told them they didn't have to like me," she said.

Some students said it was the one thing they remember about the first day of school. As the year progressed, students began to learn that attitude is part of "Miss G's" charm. In reality, Jessica said she enjoys teaching so much because of the students themselves. "Helping them grow, learn and become leaders," she said, "that matters to me." Five years in, Jessica said she loves working in the district where she was educated. "Red Oak is my home. I now work with a lot of the teachers who instructed me," she laughed.

In 2007, after earning her master's degree, Jessica began adjunct teaching at Navarro College in Waxahachie and Midlothian and said she would consider transitioning to a career in college education. "I would contemplate teaching full time at the college if a position became available. However, I love teaching at the high school and don't want to think about not seeing my students every day," she said. "I would like to teach at the college and at Red Oak. I would also love to have a leadership course taught here at the high school. I'm working on this for the future."

Another of Jessica's projects is Renaissance, an educational enrichment program designed to "re-energize the educational atmosphere" and help students "seize new opportunities for success." The program provides a number of tangible rewards — from food coupons to local eateries and athletic event admissions to free homework passes — for students' and teachers' efforts toward activities promoting school pride and benefiting the community.

According to Jessica, schools country-wide cite higher GPAs, increased attendance and greater graduation rates after implementing Renaissance. The program rewards good grades and behavior while instilling community awareness in its participants, who meet with Chamber of Commerce members and coordinate food drives, toy collections and recycling programs with the city.

Most importantly, however, might be Jessica's approach to making Renaissance a hit. "I lead by example," she stated. "I don't ask the students to do anything that I, myself, have not carried out on my own." While she has hit her stride, she said the job is not without challenges. "The first year of teaching is always difficult, but ultimately, the true challenge is that no two students are the same," she said. "During my conference periods, if I'm not with a parent, there are always students in my class helping with projects or needing someone to talk to."

Finding ways to meet students' varied needs is something every good educator strives to do and the key, according to Jessica, is "planning, planning, planning." "I work late into the nights setting up lessons and lectures. I talk to my students and find out what is working and what is not," she said. "Sometimes I tweak my assignments, and with others, a complete overhaul is necessary."

Jessica has done this while furthering her own education and teaching college and high school concurrently, not to mention rearing a family.

Married to a fellow ROHS graduate, Jessica and her husband have three daughters and the family is involved in softball, ice skating, hockey and more. "My oldest daughter has dance class, and besides that we ride horses, take walks, spend time with grandparents and extended family," she said. "We also go to church at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Waxahachie." As if there is room for more, Jessica said there is one other thing she really enjoys — "I love to work out!"

Reflecting upon her career, Jessica summed up her teaching philosophy by saying, "I honestly feel that the 'secret to teaching' is forming an appropriate relationship with your students; letting them know that you care," she said, "but that you also have high expectations for each of them and their future." NOW

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Shane Upchurch, top left, assisted with the Ellis County ASPCA pet adoption trailer. Girl Scout Service Unit 215 from Ferris and Red Oak, top center, spent a day at a Bronze Award workshop. Wayne Kimbro, top right, watched his granddaughter, Emma. Girl Scout Troop 1938, second row left, sold cookies at Pennies from Heaven. Faith took her dog, Chibby, second row center, for an afternoon walk. Children from The Oaks Fellowship, bottom, had fun performing.

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Local cowboys, top left, gathered at the Lonestar Church arena. Superintendent Scott Niven, top right, started the grand opening ceremony for the new athletic facility by thanking the community for their support. The Red Oak Color Guard, bottom left, performed at the North Texas Color Guard Association Preview Competition in Keller, Texas. Red Oak Library employees and board members, second row right, volunteered at the Taste of Red Oak event. ROISD held a grand opening ceremony for the new athletic facility where the ROHS Choir, bottom right, sang the school fight song.

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Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning

In the Kitchen with Barbara King

Even through Barbara King and her husband, Karl, have downsized their household to two, Barbara still loves to take the time to cook a good meal. "When I was younger, I loved to bake and decorate cakes and try new recipes," she explained. "Now I cook a lot of casseroles or just bake chicken with some vegetable sides."

Barbara enjoys car-touring to points of interest in Texas in one of their old cars, a '55 Crown Victoria, and spending time with her (seven wonderful) grandchildren. She believes grandchildren are an incredible spice of life. "My grandchildren are my biggest fans. They really spoil me with affection," she said. "I can tell my family likes my cooking; they always clean their plates!" NOW

To view more of your neighbors' recipes, visit our archives at www.nowmagazines.com.

COUNTRY CHICKEN CASSEROLE

FILLING:
1 small onion, chopped
2 cups cooked chicken, chopped
10-oz. pkg. frozen peas and carrots, thawed
2 10 3/4-oz. cans condensed cream of chicken soup
1/4 tsp. ground black pepper
BISCUIT TOPPING:
1 recipe of Bisquick biscuit dough
Preheat oven to 400 F. Prepare filling by combining onion, chicken, peas and carrots, soup and pepper; mix well. Pour into greased 9-inch square baking dish. Bake 10 - 15 minutes or until bubbling around edges. Meanwhile, prepare topping. In medium bowl, mix Bisquick biscuit dough. Remove filling from oven; place on wire rack. Drop tablespoons of topping evenly over chicken mixture. Bake 20 minutes or until topping is golden brown.

BAR-B-Q BURGER MIX

1 lb. ground beef
1/2 cup onion, chopped
1/4 cup green pepper, chopped
1/4 cup celery, chopped
1 8-oz. can tomato sauce
1/4 cup catsup
1 Tbsp. vinegar
1 Tbsp. sugar
1 tsp. salt
1 1/2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1/8 tsp. pepper
Brown meat and vegetables; cook until vegetables are tender. Add remaining ingredients; mix well. Cover and simmer 20 minutes. Spoon onto hamburger buns.

TUNA NOODLE BAKE

1 12-oz.can cream of vegetable soup
1/2 cup milk
1 10-oz. can tuna, drained and flaked
2 cups noodles, cooked
1 Tbsp. parsley, chopped
2 slices tomato, cut in half
Empty soup into bowl; gradually blend in milk. Mix in tuna, noodles and parsley. Spoon into 10 x 6 x 2-inch shallow baking dish; top with tomato slices. Bake at 350 F for 20 minutes. Serves 4.

STUFFED BELL PEPPERS

4 bell peppers
1 lb. ground beef
1/2 cup rice, uncooked (may also use bread crumbs)
1/4 cup onion, diced
1 small can tomato sauce
1 12-oz. can tomato soup
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
1 Tbsp. brown sugar
Preheat oven to 350 F. Cut tops off bell peppers, remove seeds and wash out inside. Put peppers in boiling water just until tender. Mix raw meat, rice, onion and tomato sauce together. Fill peppers with mixture; place in covered casserole. Bake 45 minutes. Meanwhile, mix together tomato soup, lemon juice and brown sugar. After 45 minutes, remove casserole cover from peppers; cover peppers with soup mixture. Place peppers back in oven for 15 minutes.

CAKE MIX COOKIES

1 pkg. cake mix of your choice
2 eggs
1/2 cup Crisco
Combine ingredients; mix well. Drop by teaspoon on greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 F for 10 minutes. VARIATIONS: Use yellow cake mix and add 1/2 cup peanut butter, or use cake mix of your choice and add nuts or chocolate, peanut butter or butterscotch chips.

TACO DIP

1 16-oz. can refried beans
1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
1 1.25-oz. pkg. taco seasoning mix
2 garlic cloves, pressed
1 small tomato, chopped
1/4 cup onion, chopped
1/4 cup pitted ripe olives, chopped
2 Tbsp. fresh cilantro, minced
1/2 cup (2 oz.) cheese, shredded
sour cream (optional)
tortilla chips
Preheat oven to 375 F. Spread beans onto bottom of 9-inch pie plate. In medium bowl, combine cream cheese, seasoning mix and garlic; spread over beans. Top with tomato, onion, olives and cilantro; sprinkle with cheddar cheese. Bake 25 minutes or until heated through. Garnish with sour cream. Serve with warm chips. VARIATION: Add seasoned ground beef.

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Irritable Bowel Syndrome

— By Betty Tryon, R.N.

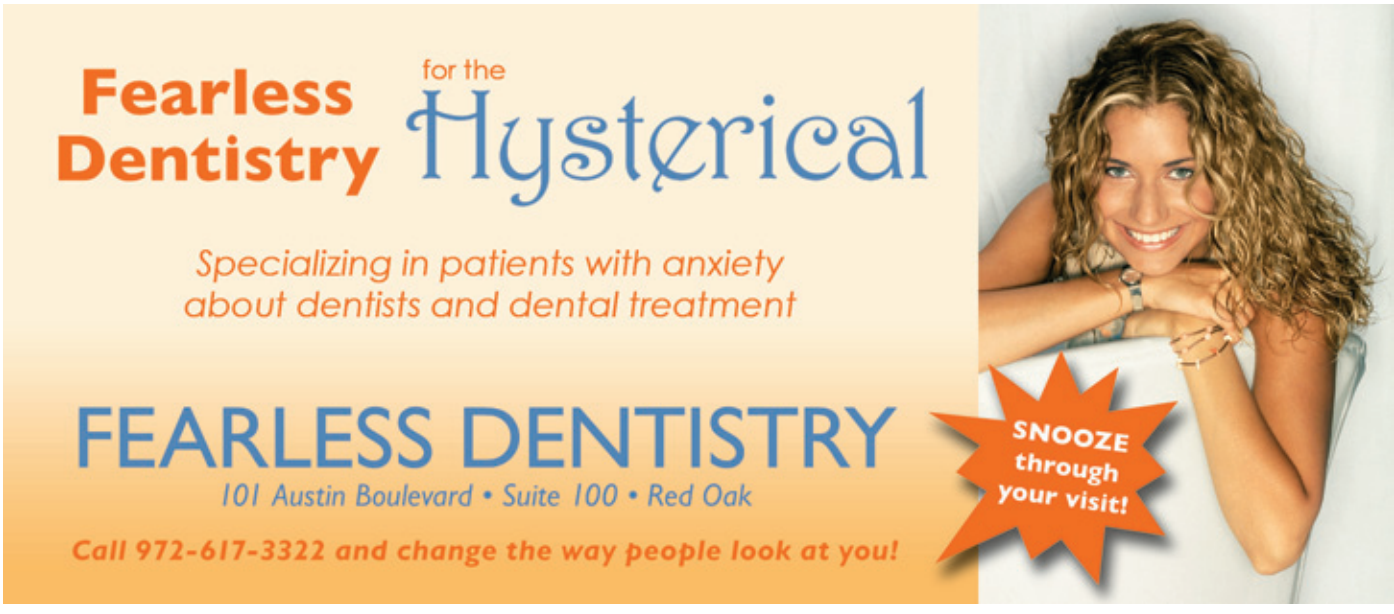
Oh no, it is starting up again, you think despairingly as you clutch your abdomen and bend over in agony. If you are a sufferer of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), you know the drill. You are in for a lot of pain, diarrhea and that weak, wasted feeling when it is all over. The only thing that makes this bearable is knowing it will not last long.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome, for all of its distressing symptoms, is one of the more common gastrointestinal disorders. Some of the different names assigned to IBS are spastic colitis, spastic colon and irritable colon. While not a disease, it is a functional disorder with a collection of symptoms consistent to this condition. IBS is not a progressive disorder, does not cause cancer, inflammation or abnormal changes within the bowel tissue. No one knows what causes IBS. Since it is a functional disorder, portions of the intestines function improperly. Some physicians think this is because of faulty signals between the brain and the intestines. Because of the malfunction or miscommunication, the contractions in the intestines may speed up and trigger diarrhea or they may slow down causing constipation. Another cause of IBS could be hypersensitivity in the bowels of people prone to this syndrome.

The more prevalent symptoms are abdominal cramping, bloating, gas, diarrhea and/or constipation. There can be mucus in the stool. The severity of the symptoms may differ on a daily basis. Diagnosis can be made from the troublesome symptoms and findings through a physical examination. The physician may run tests to rule out other problems. Since the cause is unknown, alleviating the distress from IBS remains the best treatment. Some relief can come from avoiding situations, which trigger this condition, such as managing your stress level, eliminating foods in your diet that may provoke symptoms, such as dairy products, caffeinated drinks and fatty foods. Being aware of how some medications affect you may also prove helpful. There is some evidence women with IBS will experience an attack due to hormonal changes. Medication can be prescribed for the abdominal discomforts of constipation, diarrhea and pain.

If you experience any of these symptoms, it is important to visit your physician. There are many health problems which can occur with problematic intestinal symptoms. Presently, there is no cure for IBS, but if you take care of yourself and follow your doctor's guidelines, you can minimize the symptoms. NOW

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



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Enjoy One-year Holiday From Required Minimum Distributions

— By Renee Chase

Although it sounds strange, you may encounter situations in which you have to accept money even if you'd rather not. Such is the case with required minimum distributions (RMDs) from your traditional IRA, 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan. But thanks to recent legislation, you can ignore the "required" part of RMDs — at least for a year.

Specifically, lawmakers recently placed a one-year moratorium on taking (RMDs) for 2009. If you're not familiar with the rules governing RMDs, here's a little background: Generally, the IRS requires you to begin taking RMDs in the year in which you turn 70 1/2, or no later than April 1 of the following year. For example, if you turn 70 1/2 in 2009, you would normally be required to take your first RMD by April 1, 2010. You must also think about RMDs if you are a beneficiary of someone else's IRA, 401(k) or other retirement account, because when the account owner dies, regardless of age, you must generally begin taking RMDs. And this is also true if you are the beneficiary of a Roth IRA, even though Roth IRA owners are never required to take RMDs.

But thanks to the new legislation, you can skip the required 2009 distribution if you reach 70 1/2 in 2009 or if you're a beneficiary currently required to take RMDs. You also have until Dec. 31, 2010, to accept the 2010 RMD, which will be based on your retirement account balance at the end of 2009.

Why did Congress decide to provide this RMD "holiday" for 2009? For the answer, you need look no farther than your IRA or 401(k) account balance. As you are well aware, 2008 was not a stellar year for the stock market. Consequently, as 2008 draws to a close, the market value of your IRA or 401(k) is probably considerably lower than it was in earlier years. This could have been a problem for you if you had to start taking RMDs in 2009, because these distributions are based, in part, on your account balance at the close of the previous year — which means you may well have had to sell some stocks or other investments in your retirement plan when their price was down. To help people avoid having to "sell low," Congress acted.

Ultimately, you will have to end up taking distributions again. But before that happens, take some time to decide how large a distribution you should accept each year. If you need the money, you might have to take out more than the RMD. But if you can get by on just the minimum distribution, you may want to do so, thereby keeping as much of your retirement account as possible in a tax-deferred account. But for now, if you have any questions about taking RMDs in 2009, contact your financial and tax advisors. NOW

Renee Chase is an Edward Jones representative based in Red Oak.

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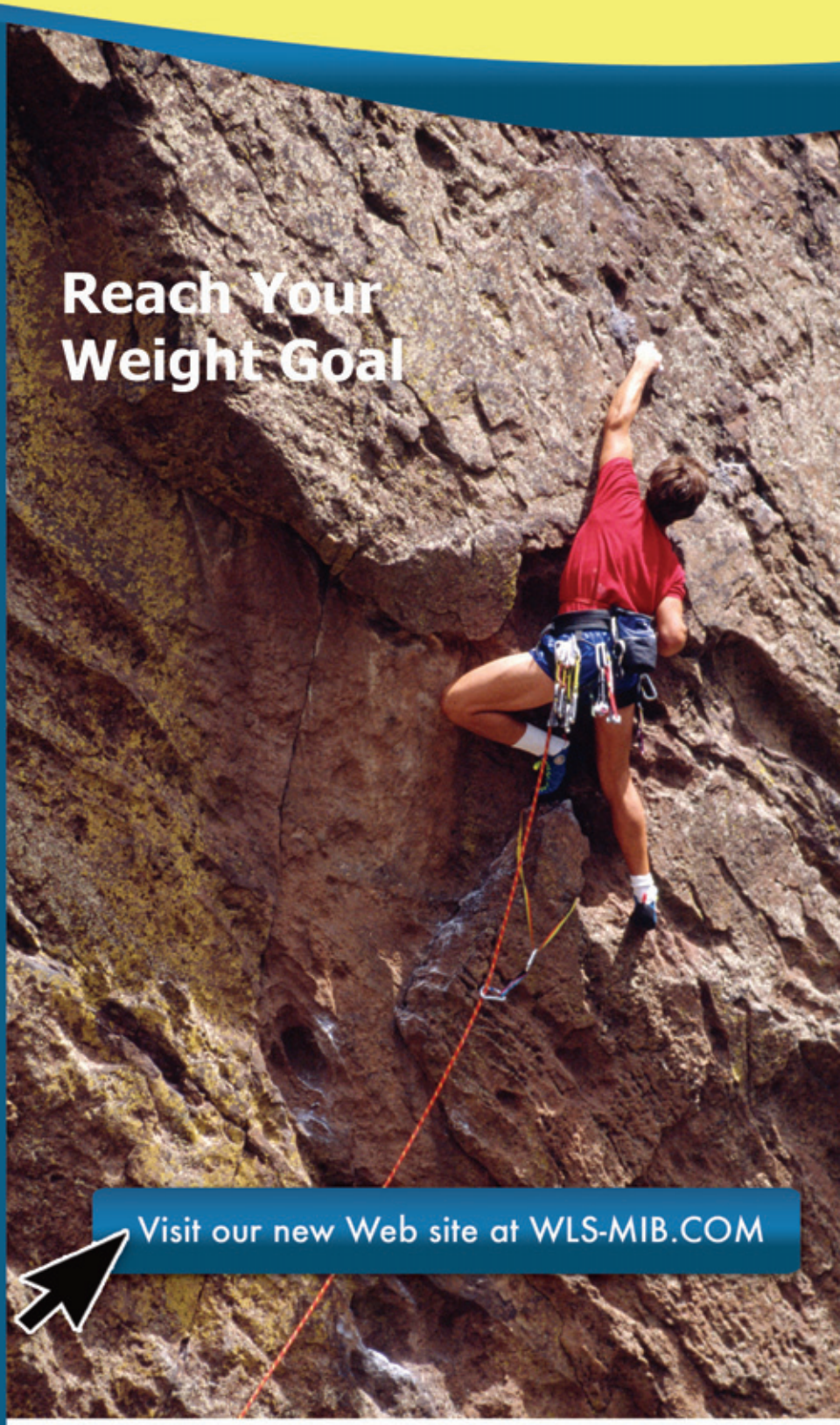

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Call for appointment **972-230-2517**

Arlington Office
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Weep, Creep and Leap!

— By Nancy Fenton

Are you planting yet? Flowers, shrubs and trees are only going to be as beautiful as the care given to them merits. This includes planting! The old wives' tale about perennials, shrubs and trees "weeping, creeping and leaping" makes sense if you watch your plants and think about it.

All plants need to be planted in our clay at ground level or a bit higher, so they do not start out with soggy feet. The roots need to be loosened from that tight ball they get in while in those little pots. I have even taken a knife or spading fork to them if they are in a giant ball! You can see why they might "weep." Just the shock of planting can set some back for quite a while. New plants need a good cover of mulch (three-four inches) to protect them from heat and drought. If your plant is very small, just take the mulch up to within two inches of the plant until it grows a bit, then move it on in closer. Trees need to have the mulch pulled back from the trunk at least two-three inches to lessen the possibility of fungus or disease.

I am watching a certain tree right now. It did not do much last year or the year before, but I hope it will have established itself and be ready to "leap" up and grow like mad this year. If it does not, I may have to do some digging and check out roots. If they did not get unwound, they will still be growing round and round. That tree will not be very stable (watch out for high winds) plus it will exhaust all the food and water in that confined area. Not a good situation for the tree!

If you are planting annuals, be sure and loosen up the roots as you put them in the ground. Those tight little squares do not do much for water and food acquisition. Our plants really are pretty resistant and can take a bit of handling if given a good soaking.

Farmers' Market begins in May, so I may see you there!

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.

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972-617-2338.

April 2009 Community Calendar

All Month
Mother's Day flower sale for the North Ellis County Outreach. 20 flower pots per flat. Call NECO to pre-order. (972) 617-7261.

Every Monday
Celebrate Recovery meeting: First Baptist Church, 103 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-3591. www.redoakcelebraterecovery.com.

Second and Fourth Mondays
Texas Ladies Networking meeting: 11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Ryan's Grill, Waxahachie. (214) 587-1221.

First Tuesday
PrimeTimers Senior group meeting: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., The Oaks Fellowship, 777 S. I-35 East. Fun, food and fellowship. (214) 376-8208.

Tuesdays and Thursdays
Alcoholics Anonymous meeting: 7:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 Red Oak Rd. Non-smoking. (972) 617-9100.

First and Third Tuesdays
Red Oak Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., 207 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-3577.

Every Wednesday
Family Story Time: 10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. (469) 218-1230. www.redoakpubliclibrary.org.

Wednesdays and Thursdays
Senior Citizens Club meeting: 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 207 West Red Oak Rd. Games, exercise and activities. (972) 576-2777.

Every Thursday
Ladies Prayer meeting: Education Building Room E105, The Oaks Fellowship Church. (214) 376-8208.

First and Third Thursday
Senior Citizens' Lunch. $5 for non-resident seniors. Call early to register. (972) 576-3414.

Third Thursday
American Business Women's Association meeting. www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org.

Last Thursday
DeSoto Art League meeting. www.desotoartleague.com.

First Friday
Worship Jam: 6:30 p.m., Bubba Que BBQ's front porch.

Second Friday
Equestrian Play Day: 7:00 p.m., Lonestar Cowboy Church arena, 1011 E. Ovilla Rd. (972) 576-0900.

First Saturday
Red Oak Fire Rescue CPR classes: 9:00 a.m. Call early to register. (469) 218-7713. www.redoaktx.org.

Second Saturday
Lonestar Cowboy Church motorcycle group ride. 1011 E. Ovilla Rd. (972) 576-0900.

April 15-20
"Cost of Freedom" American Veterans Traveling Tribute: Grimes Park, 500 E. Centre Park Blvd., DeSoto. (972) 224-3565. info@desotochamber.org.

April 18
5th Annual Walk For A Cure Car and Bike Show: 4:00-8:00 p.m., Uptown Village, Cedar Hill. Proceeds benefit Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. www.midlothianclassicwheels.com.

April 25
Car show: 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Vandergriff Honda Dealership, I-20 service road between 157 and Matlock, Arlington. www.midlothianclassicwheels.com.

April 27
Red Oak Area Chamber of Commerce 20th Annual Golf Tournament: 11:00 a.m., Lancaster Country View golf course. Contact Shelley Oglesby at (972) 617-0906 or admin@redoakareachamber.org.

May 2
Downtown Waxahachie Cinco de Mayo Fiesta: 11:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m. at Singleton Plaza. Food, vendors and music featuring Baraja De Oro, The Tequila Boyz and more. Kids corner with bounce houses, face painting and fun. Free admission. For vendor information, contact Andrew Sanchez at (214) 336-5314 or visit www.waxahachie5de5.com.

June 19-21
DFW Summer Balloon Classic: Mid-Way Regional Airport, Midlothian/Waxahachie. Free admission. $10 parking. www.summerballoonclassic.com.

For more community events, visit our online calendar at www.nowmagazines.com.

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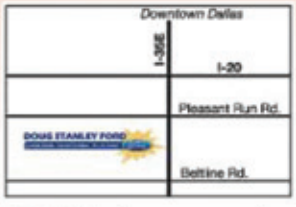

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