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April 2010

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Midlothian NOW MAGAZINE
The Community Magazine Serving Midlothian and the Surrounding Area

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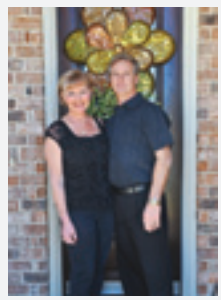

On The Cover

Donna and Chris Matthews are together again since Chris' return from Iraq.

Photo by Shana Woods.

Editor's Note

Hello, Midlothian!

What is your favorite April Fools' joke? I will not go into great detail, but one of mine had something to do with a kindergarten teacher and cookies flying off the ceiling fan during class time. I am sure you get the picture. April is an unusual month. It begins with the tradition of endeavoring to fool anyone sufficiently clueless long enough to make a joke.

This year, the month also celebrates one of the most sacred events in Christianity — the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Easter is a time for newness, beauty and a fresh beginning. Even nature joins in with an explosion of color from awakening wildflowers. April's beauty is fleeting, however, so enjoy it while you can. Whether it is the monkey business of April Fools' Day, or the blessed event that makes Easter so special, April is a month for celebration.

Betty Tryon
MidlothianNOW Editor

Creating a Successful Future MISD

MIDLOTHIAN ISD Teacher JOB FAIR

Friday, April 9, 2010 12:00pm-5:00pm

First Baptist Church of Midlothian
1651 S. Midlothian Pkwy.

All certified teachers, counselors, librarians and other education professionals are invited to attend the event. Read more details online at **www.midlothian-isd.net/hr.**

Kindergarten Roundup

April 19-23, 9am-2pm

All elementary campuses

Any child who will be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2010 is eligible to attend the district's full day kindergarten. Parents/ Guardians need to register their child at his/her attendance zone campus during the week of April 19-23, 2010 from 9:00am to 2:00pm.

KinderCamp

Parents and students are invited to visit their home campus for an informational meeting about MISD's Kindergarten program. Dates and times on MISD website.

Pre-Kindergarten Roundup

Pre-K is also available for children who will be 4 years old on or before September 1, 2010 and have a limited ability to speak and/or comprehend English, are homeless, or whose family income allows the child to qualify for free or reduced lunch. Registration is also scheduled for April 19 - 23 at all MISD elementary schools.

Head Start Roundup

MISD also offers the Head Start program as an option to Pre-K if the child qualifies. Head Start registration is April 19 - 23 only at the LaRue Miller campus. Contact Michelle Lewis at 972-775-4361 for additional information.

On behalf of Longbranch Elementary School, Interim Superintendent Robin Bullock presented a $25,000 check to Christina Wilke, from the American Heart Association.

All eight FCCLA teams advance to state!

The MHS Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) were represented well by 24 MHS members at the Region III FCCLA Leadership Meeting. The chapter brought home four 1st places, two 2nd places, one 3rd place and one 5th place and now has a Region III FCCLA Officer. Last year the FCCLA team was recognized as National Champions.

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THE FLYING NANA

— By Betty Tryon

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Yes! It is Hollie McNeely, "The Flying Nana" as she is affectionately called. On her birthday, Hollie McNeely received a most unusual gift — she flew solo for the first time! At the age of 50, she continues to seek new and daring adventures. "I took lessons for three months and on my birthday in October, I soloed and passed," she said in a matter-of-fact way, as if it is the norm and no big deal for grandmothers to seek their pilot's license.

She explained her experience from 11 years ago, "Flying solo means I am able to be signed off by my instructor to go up in the air by myself. When you do your solo [flight], you do three touch and goes [taking off and landing the plane alone] and after they sign you off, you can fly with restrictions. It is sort of like getting your training license for driving a car. Then you take a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) verbal exam with an examiner who gives you scenarios on all the rules and regulations of flying. The actual flying comes after that. I did this in Sulphur Springs, Texas, and there was a horrible crosswind. I'm thinking, *This is horrible!* But my husband, Dan, said, 'No, this is good. It hides your mistakes,'" she said laughing. "That was the joke of it. I took my exam, did my flying and got my license."

Learning how to fly a plane seemed a natural fit for Hollie. Her dad worked for the airlines and Dan was a pilot having earned his license soon after graduating from high school. From her father's

opportunities to log many hours in the air, to her husband's many hours of flying, Hollie was a frequent guest in the sky. "I was always a passenger. I read or knitted and didn't pay too much attention to what was going on. Dan kept asking me why I didn't get my license, but I always gave him the same answer — not interested. One day I said, 'Okay, I'm ready.' He bought me a Cessna 150 two-seater plane, and I hated it. I just never felt comfortable in it. So, he found me another plane in Oklahoma. It is a Cessna 172 four-seater. It's broader and gives you more of a comfort feel. Flying is like driving in your car," she stated, referring to the cockpit.

"On my first cross-country flight by myself, he followed me, and I didn't know it."

Dan's plane is a Mooney 252 and is a much faster plane than Hollie's Cessna. In an incident reminiscent of a mom hiding in the bushes as she shadows her child's first walk to school alone, Hollie remembers a time when Dan's faster plane became a distinct disadvantage to his purposes. She recalled, "On my first cross-country flight by myself, he followed me, and I didn't know it. I flew from Addison to Tyler. When I radioed the tower to let them know I wanted to land, I heard them radio a message to him to go in first because he was faster. But he said, 'That's alright, let her go in first.' I wanted to do this all by myself," she said sounding slightly disappointed. "He

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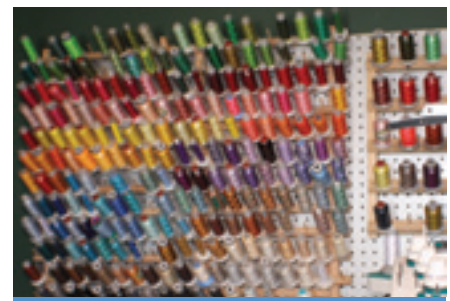
had been following me all this time just to make sure I didn't get into any trouble! Of course, he is not supposed to do that, but that's a good husband for you."

Despite not having piloted a plane until her 50s, Hollie takes it all in stride. Fear is not something she associates with flying. "I've never been put in a position where I have been scared," she said. "There was one time we were up in the air with Dan's friend, who was flying. [He] told Dan to look at what he was going to do. He then banked over and made a steep turn. I thought, *Oh, don't show any fear because they will really feed off of it.* I wasn't afraid, just hesitant because I didn't know what was going on."



"I was always a passenger. I read or knitted and didn't pay too much attention to what was going on."

Safety is paramount whenever you operate a vehicle. It may perhaps be even more so when flying in the air. It is crucial to have a thorough understanding of the plane and how it operates. Hollie's instructor gave her a hard lesson in the value of doing things correctly. She explained, "When I was still learning how to fly, on my dual cross-country, I forgot to set the DG (directional guidance). The DG is what you set for the direction you are going. We took off flying to Tyler, and I am thinking that I know Tyler because I've been there a hundred times. My instructor asked me if I knew where I was. I said, 'Yeah I know where I am.' And that's when I realized that I wasn't on course. He put the hood over me, which means you fly by instruments, and he put me through all these maneuvers. Tyler is probably 30 minutes away, and it turned into a four-hour flight. I had to refuel before I could come home because he had me all over the place. It was the longest day of my life." Hollie now never forgets to set her DG.

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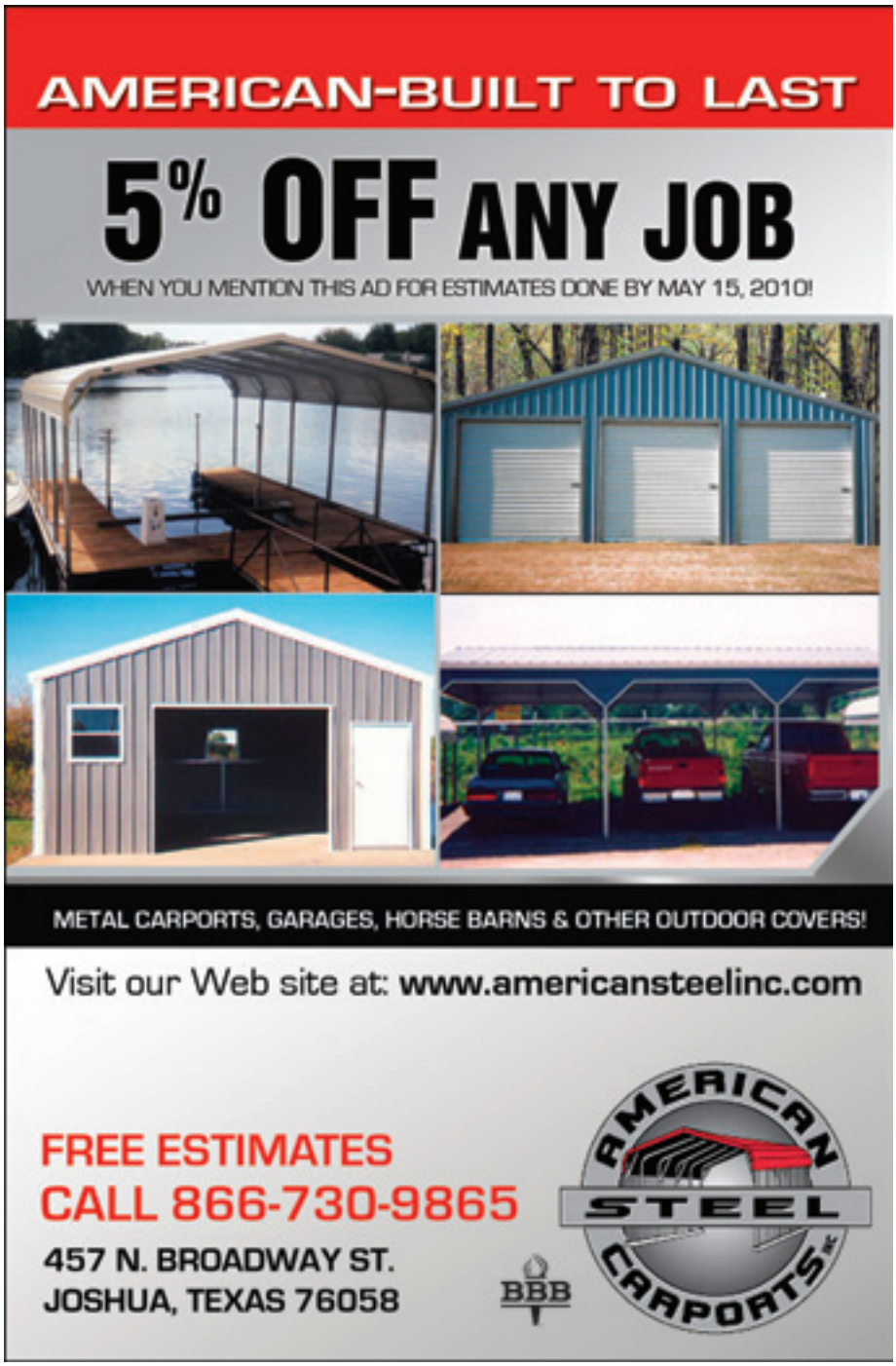

Just as crucial to safety is an awareness of personal limits. Hollie stated, "You don't want to be caught in a condition you don't want to be in. You have to be smart. If it is something you can't handle, you have to turn around and go back and land. Again, you don't want to put yourself at risk. You just hope everybody in the air follows the rules like they are supposed to. On one trip, we were coming home when a hurricane was coming in and we were right on the edge of it. We had the best tailwind we have ever had in our life," she smiled. "We were safe because we followed the rules. You don't get yourself into predicaments, and you need to know your limits. I know I can't fly in strong winds. So, I would never put myself at risk."

"Safety is paramount whenever you operate a vehicle. It may perhaps be even more so when flying in the air. It is crucial to have a thorough understanding of the plane and how it operates."

Flying in the air as a passenger or the pilot holds many fun experiences for Hollie and Dan. She explained, "You meet so many cool people. You get there quicker. You can take off and land whenever you want. You don't have the security issues and have to wait two hours in advance getting scanned. You get to see things you wouldn't if you are on the ground. You really see what God has created. I guess it's just the fun of doing it. It's exciting." NOW

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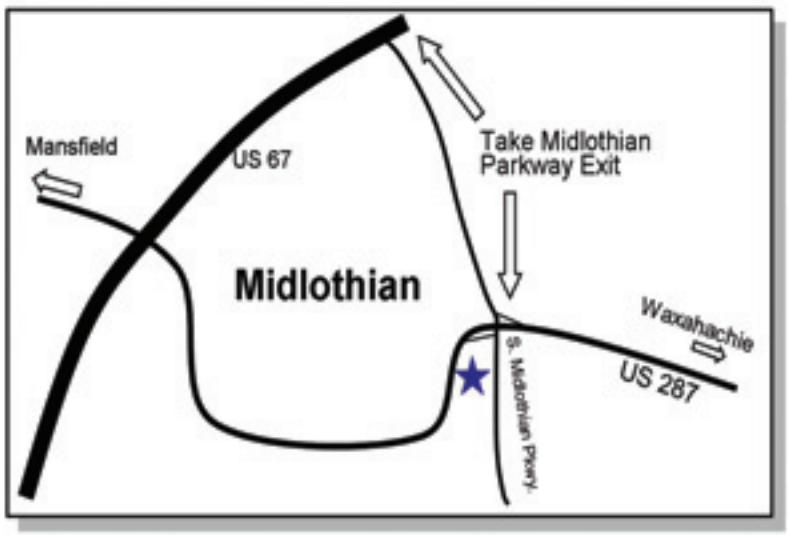

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At Home With

Chris and Donna Matthews

Home at last

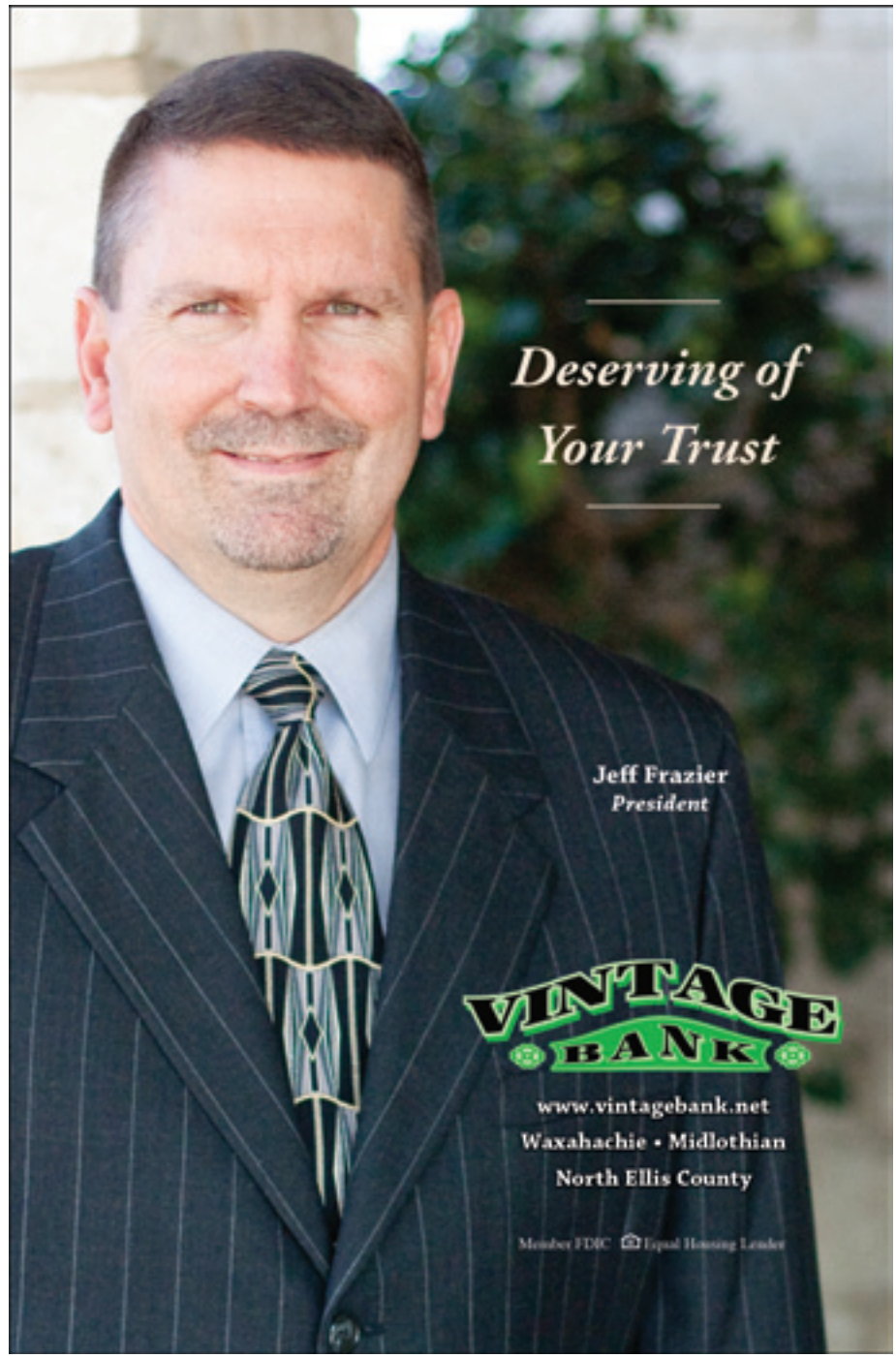
When Chris Matthews first showed his wife, Donna, the five-bedroom home in Midlothian, she had misgivings about its location in the small rural town. Both military veterans, each had experienced plenty of moves. They had lived in Arlington for over 20 years, and Donna was used to the conveniences there. Could a person even buy groceries in Midlothian? How would she find her way through all those winding little back roads? As for the house itself, while it was brand new with upgraded paint and flooring, she was put off by its large, stark, empty spaces. But Chris, a longtime police officer, favored Midlothian because he had friends here. "It's more of a 'cop town,'" he said. "There are a lot of cops who live here." Since his new job as a police trainer would take him overseas part of each year, he liked the idea of having those police friends nearby, some right on their block, to keep an eye on his home. He also loved the house.

— *By Janice C. Johnson*

So, after two hours of walking around the cavernous interior, trying to picture the rooms looking livable, Donna agreed she could probably do it. Shortly after closing, while the house was still empty, Chris left the country for an assignment in

Iraq. Donna learned her way around Midlothian, delighted to find a Walmart in town. The local folks made the transition easier. Everyone she does business with, she said, "from the mail lady to the pool man, are just as friendly as they can be."

Meanwhile, she also rolled up her sleeves and began the project of furnishing and decorating her new home. Donna had learned marksmanship in the Air Force, practiced emergency medicine for years, and now, runs her own business. She was not about to back down from the "do-it-yourself" challenge. Her goal was to soften the interior and make it warm, inviting and homey. The east wall of the two-story den was a start, anchored by a fireplace and hearth and faced with stone



all the way up to the ceiling. Above the polished wood mantel was an impossibly tall mirror extending upward above the second-floor balcony. In the living and dining rooms, full-length windows broke up the wall space; some nice drapes would dress them up nicely. Donna made the drapes herself, hanging them with only the help of a 14-foot ladder.

The master bedroom received luxurious blue-and-gold fabrics on walls and furniture. That left four bedrooms, plus a loft and two bathrooms, upstairs. Donna said that she "put [her] heart into decorating each room," using elegant fabrics, silk plants and lots of pillows. Now her mother, their grown children and their three grandchildren, which includes PawPaw's princess, all have comfortable places to stay when they visit. And they do visit often. "Especially in the summer," Donna said. "The

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backyard has a pool, a patio with the 'man-grill' and refrigerator … all it needs is a waitress!"

Donna's efforts to make the house into a welcoming retreat for Chris are not lost on him. The first time he was home from Iraq, he kept waking up at night and wandering the house. "I can't believe this is my home," he would say.

Chris used his free time in the Middle East to study online. He has earned both a master's and a doctorate in criminal justice. He has also found time to buy gifts for Donna. Cut-glass perfume bottles sparkle on a tray in the master bathroom, and one of the cobalt-blue accents in the kitchen and breakfast area is a tea set from Iraq. Chris has also brought her many animals of carved bone or enameled metal. Donna sets the eye-catching art in unexpected spots, sometimes underneath furniture, to provide interesting accents from any angle in the room. "But I'm running out of places," she admitted.

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Saturday, April 17, 2010
7 a.m. Registration
8 a.m. Race Start
10:30 a.m. Awards Ceremony

Visit www.midlothian-isd.net/mef
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Join the Midlothian ISD Education Foundation for a pasta dinner and student art contest and auction on Friday evening. Then lace up your running shoes for a 5K or 1 mile fun run on Saturday morning.

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Chris and Donna met in the 1980s at Arlington Memorial Hospital's emergency room, where Donna worked. Chris, then a police officer, brought a prisoner in to be treated. Donna fell in love as soon as she saw him … and the couple will celebrate their 20th anniversary this summer. They enjoy antiques, collectibles and each other's company. Their most important interest, though, is keeping their family connected despite being apart so much. Chris's hard work and Donna's determination and hospitality have made that possible. "We have lived in Midlothian now for two-and-a-half years, and I could not be happier," Donna said. "This would not have been possible without the hard work Chris has done overseas. He has made this sacrifice to make our lives and our kids' lives better — to give them things we couldn't have afforded. We have a beautiful home, our children all have successful careers, and our family is all healthy. We, as his family, appreciate him and support his cause 150 percent."

Naturally, Donna misses Chris when he is in the Middle East. Though he is now a civilian, there is still plenty of danger so she also worries about his safety. He has missed Christmases, birthdays and anniversaries, along with

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some of the grandchildren's milestones. Even so, she has found an upside. "Having Chris away has been good for me," she said. "I'm bound and determined to do things myself, and I have learned to do many things."

Chris agrees. Besides her independence and determination, he admires Donna's creativity. "Donna could decorate a cave," he said. That creativity shows up in everything from the wine room that she concocted in an unused corner of a little hallway, to the popcorn cart in the TV loft upstairs.

But what is her single favorite room? "It's the first-floor powder room, of all things," she said. A large framed poster of Audrey Hepburn dominates one wall. Donna fashioned a coordinating retro look with black and gold fixtures and accessories. She made the most of the small space, even fitting in a faux-wood burning stove and a black leather bench without crowding it. Donna looked into the room for a few moments and smiled. "I just love Audrey Hepburn," she said.

Not long ago, Chris remembered Donna's reluctance to buy their current home. He offered to build her dream house for her. "The heck you will," she retorted. "This *is* my dream house!" After two years of putting her heart into her home, the house she wanted to reject has become everything she wanted. And what does Donna like best about her home now? The answer was ironic: "Oh, the size — all the open space!" She thought for a moment. "God has sent us plenty of things in our lives to overcome, but this right now is a good place to be."

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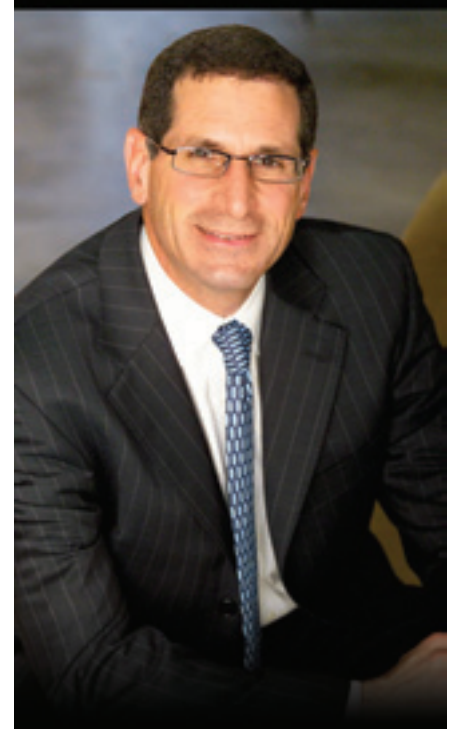

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Austyn Rapp signs with The College of William & Mary. She is on the front row, second from left.

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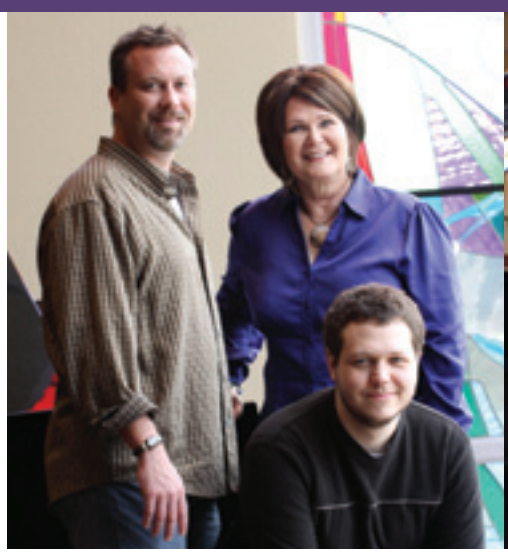
promise for a miracle

— By Betty Tryon



The year of 2005 changed the direction of Donna Smith's life and opened a door of hope for children everywhere. "During the summer of 2005, I was driving a lot back and forth to work in Plano. It seemed as if every time I turned on the radio or TV there was a child who had been harmed. One was locked up in a mobile home, another left to starve to death, someone left in the car or burned. It seemed overpowering because it was everywhere I turned that summer. I wanted to know, 'Lord, what can I do here?'" she prayed. "One of the things I had done for my daughter and my nephew was pray God's words over them even before they were born. As I prayed, I realized I could use the same prayer of protection for other children that I use for my own. I began thinking about that and talking to my sister, Diane Sulak, about it. We started to put things on paper that we thought were important and utilizing Scripture. That was how it all got started."

Four years later, that beginning produced the CD titled *Child of Promise*. Donna's musical experience began in her childhood and, up until the age of 20, she participated in music a great deal. However, after she married and had a child, family life took precedence and sidelined her music temporarily. The CD gave her an opportunity to become involved in music again. As she

and her sister worked on the Scripture verses, Donna wanted to present the words in a manner that would appeal to more people. She explained, "We realized that there were those out there who wouldn't just listen to Scripture on a CD, and maybe there needed to be something more to it. So, we began to add music to it and after two years, we ended up with 13 songs. Those 13 songs, linked together with prayers and Scripture on the CD, is *Child of Promise*." A collaborative effort with musicians and vocalists from First Baptist Church provided the voices and instruments for the CD.

Donna stresses that although she has a background in music, neither she nor her sister are professional musicians. They are both professional educators. Donna's range of 30 years of experience in education covers her time as a teacher, principal, central office administrator to where she now works as a testing coordinator. She said, "As an educator, you get to see a lot of kids who don't always have everything that they need emotionally and you become sensitive to that. You get tired of adults not meeting the needs of helpless children. Some moments you have to step out and say something and try to find a way to help. That is the whole purpose of this."

Step out she did with the CD, hoping to make a difference. Donna wants it to touch the hearts of parents, grandparents, caregivers, teachers or anyone who encounters a child who needs help. She and her sister want

'Before your first breath, I knew you and adored you.'

adults to be sensitive to the needs of children. She exclaimed, "Our target audience is really anyone who needs comfort, peace and unconditional love. The CD is affirming children and who they are. One of the lines in a song is 'Before your first breath, I knew you and adored you.' It's God's blessings, His love. We want people to understand that children are not expendable. They're not

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status symbols. They are God's precious children. We need to recognize that."

The beginning song on the CD, *I'm a Miracle*, sung by Donna's great-niece, 11-year-old Dylan Turner, is a fun and upbeat song that expresses how Donna wants others to see children.

I'm a miracle
Look at me
I'm a miracle
You formed me
Like an open book
You watched me grow
I'm a miracle
Now I know
I'm a miracle
God's miracle of love.

Donna can visualize parents, grandparents and caretakers of children playing the CD at the end of a busy day, lulling them to sleep. The ending song *Evening Prayer* makes a complete and comforting finish. Every song is preceded by Scripture verses. Donna stated, "The Scripture piece is the power piece." Since the release of the CD, she has received much favorable feedback. One mother of four boys said to her, "This CD gets me through the day sometimes." A grandmother purchased one as a gift but enjoyed it so much she kept her copy and purchased another one to give away. Donna said, "We just want to get it in the hands of people that it can help."

Future plans for the CD involve translation and sending it to orphanages overseas because every child is a precious miracle and deserves a safe place in this world. It becomes our responsibility to make sure the children in our care and under our eyes feel that they are truly the wonderful gifts they were meant to be. NOW

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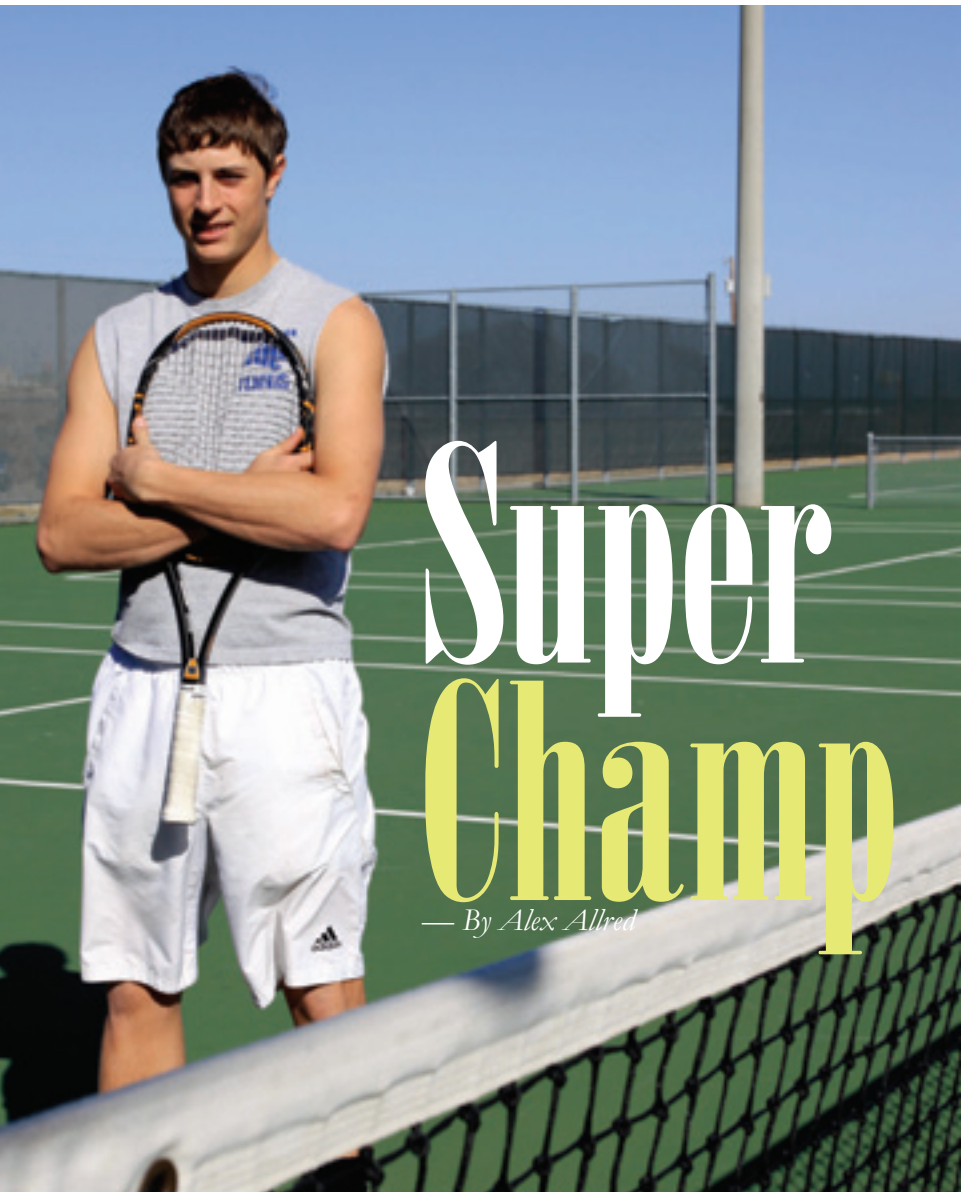

Super Champ

— By Alex Allred

"You have to see plays before they happen."

We all have an idea of what a tennis player looks like. Minus the well-documented tirades of John McEnroe and Serena Williams, the image of a tennis player is one of poise, white shorts and quiet grace. It is for this reason then that so many remark, "You don't look like a tennis player!" upon meeting Tanner Hill.

"I get that a lot," Tanner laughed. In fact, he looks more like a poster boy for the NRA. An avid hunter and fisherman, Tanner drives a pickup truck complete with hunting decals on the back and is more comfortable in heavy work boots and his camouflage ball cap than his dress whites. "And he will never turn down a fishing trip," said his grandmother, Lucia Biasatti.

Since anyone can remember, all Tanner has ever wanted was to be outside. Whether he was camping with the Boy Scouts, fishing or working alongside his father, who owns a feedlot in West Texas, Tanner has thrived outdoors. By the first grade, he was involved in Boy Scouts, baseball and tennis. But with conflicting schedules, Tanner had to make a tough choice. "It got to be too much and I had to pick," he recalled.

To judge this book by his cover, however, most would guess that Tanner chose baseball. A team player and an athlete who is both quick and aggressive, he was a natural for the sport. But even at an early age, Tanner understood that he could and would not want to rely on others for the outcome of a game. He also instinctively knew that he would push himself harder than he should expect of his teammates. Even today, well after the practices are over, Tanner can be found on the courts, perfecting his serve.

"I try to push myself," Tanner said, adding, "I get cranky when I can't play." But there was a time when he drifted away from the sport he loves so much. "You have to put in so much time and the beginning of this [senior] year, I burned out. I wanted to hang out with my friends. I wanted to go hunting, and I really wasn't practicing. But I knew I wanted to play in college."

After a brief break, Midlothian High School got its star player back. A "Super Champ," a distinction within the U.S. Tennis Association's state and national ranking four consecutive years in a row, Tanner was also named "Most Valuable Player" last year and now serves as Team Captain. In truth, Tanner is also an excellent spokesperson for tennis.

When yet another person expresses surprise to learn that Tanner is a tennis player, he smiles. "I can't always be in my shorts," he joked. While he does possess the poise and quiet grace, as well as the shorts, of a tennis player, he also highlights the athletic demands of tennis. Competitive, strong and agile, Tanner also plays the game as a chess match noting, "You have to see plays before they happen."

Beyond the high school schedule, Tanner works with a private coach and travels the circuit playing tournaments around the state. "I keep up with all the tournaments," said Lucia, "and tell him when and where they are. I ask him which ones he wants to play and tell him which ones are points, sanctioned, non-sanctioned." This allows Tanner to stay focused on his academics and practice time on the court.

Lucia takes pride in her role as Tanner's "personal secretary." It was a title she earned while Tanner and his mother, Helena, lived with Lucia in Duncanville before moving to Midlothian his freshman year. "I guess I started doing this when he first started, and it just continued," Lucia said, adding that she was currently working on his tournament schedule through the summer. While Helena was often too nervous to watch Tanner's matches, Lucia is the perfect travel partner for Tanner, sharing his laid-back nature.

"That's one thing about Tanner," Lucia said. "He never worries about what his draw is or what the ranking is of the other player. A lot of these kids will look at the [competitor's] ranking, but Tanner doesn't do that." Rather than focus on those things he cannot control, Tanner is more proactive. He knows how many extra hours he has put in on the court and how to play to his strengths. His teammates see this as well. "A lot of

times, I'll go up to Frank Seale to hit," said junior tennis athlete, Matt Frazer, "and he'll already be up there hitting with a coach or friend or just by himself practicing a serve."

For the team, Tanner serves as a role model. It can be argued that he has been working on this for some time. He is

"He never worries about what his draw is or what the ranking is of the other player."

projected to earn his Eagle by spring and is already laying out plans for his future. He hopes to earn his college degree, potentially agricultural, under an athletic scholarship. While he plays tennis, he also hopes to go through an ROTC program, so that upon graduation he can enter the U.S. Marine Corps as a commissioned officer. Determined to succeed and lead both on and off the court, Tanner Hill looks very much like a tennis player and so much more. NOW

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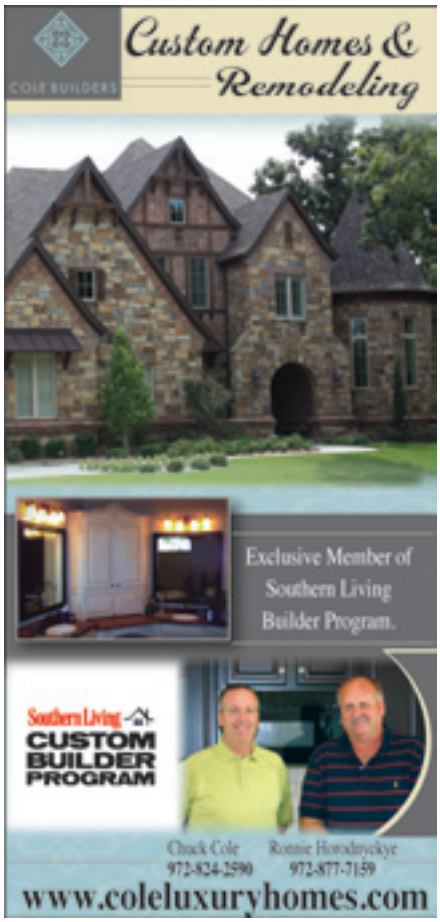
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Loving Strokes

Christina Koehler, owner of Cats & Dogs, takes loving care of your pets.
— By Betty Tryon

Christina Koehler thought she was just giving her sister-in-law a helping hand in her pet grooming business in Cedar Hill. Little did she know that action would plant the seeds of an idea for a shop of her own. "My sister-in-law said she needed help. She would always tell me how good I was at it, but I don't know if it was because she needed the help," Christina said laughing. "She taught me everything she knew, and I thought that there was really a need for this. It's not just the money aspect; these people and their dogs need help. The animals really need to be taken care of just like people do."

Christina opened her first pet grooming business, Cats & Dogs, in Midlothian on North 9th Street. She recently moved to a larger facility, her current location on Main Street. Her plans for the facility are all about making the animals under her care more comfortable. There is a large playroom area for lots of romping about and playing with other dogs. For those who want to take a break from all the fun, the television area with cozy doggie beds is just the thing for relaxing. The cats, of course, are in a separate area. Christina stated, "I have to keep them completely separate from the dogs because the barking drives them nuts!"

At Cats & Dogs, the services of hair cutting, bathing, nail trimming, anal glands expression and teeth brushing are all a part of a day's work. Christina's eye for detail to meet the animals' every

From left:
Melissa and Christina Koehler work together to keep your pets well-manicured.

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need shows how much she cares for them. She stated, "I love dogs. I get a lot of satisfaction in what I do. The dogs and the cats come in here and they are a mess. They have stickers, glue or bubble gum stuck in their hair. The dogs are like toddlers; they get into everything. When they leave, they are all nice and tidy with their skin moisturized. It's like after you go to the beauty shop."

Grooming helps keep animals healthy and looking good. Christina mentioned, "We use medicated oatmeal shampoo for skin irritations. We moisturize and condition also if it helps." Taking your animal to a groomer can sometimes help identify health problems. Christina explained, "Sometimes, their hair is all matted and when we shave it off we see things their owners didn't even know existed. We have found skin irritations

"I love dogs. I get a lot of satisfaction in what I do. The dogs and the cats come in here and they are a mess. They have stickers, glue or bubble gum stuck in their hair."

and tumors. We tell them if they need to go to the vet for a problem. Sometimes they need to go to the dentist because there is so much tartar they need to get it scraped off. In trimming hair on their head, we might find a hematoma in their ear or notice something in their eyes. We find these things because our hands are on every part of the animal." She encourages pet owners to have their pets groomed every six weeks.

In addition to grooming, Cats & Dogs is a boarding facility. To smooth the transition, Christina has the owners bring the animal's own food so their digestive system does not get upset. Cats & Dogs also has a photographer on hand every Saturday for photography of pets and their families. Christina stated, "You can't take your pet into most studios so we like to provide this service."

Cats & Dogs is ready to help keep your pet well-manicured and clean. Give them a call or visit the office on Main Street. NOW

School House Candles

— By Betty Tryon

In Kristi James' CBI (Community Based Instruction) class, a display of candles of different shapes, colors and scents, all made by the students, wait for the next appreciative buyer. All who visit her classroom get something special when they walk in the room — a bouquet of fragrances from scented candles of panther blueberry, applejack and peel, leather and snickerdoodle, to name a few.

The candles play an important role in the students' regular studies in life lessons and job skills. Kristi explained, "CBI allows our students to learn the regular courses — science, English, math and social studies. In addition, we teach life skills — skills they can take and live as independently as possible. These are special needs students. They are called that because they have a special need, such as: blindness, deafness, cystic fibrosis, mental retardation and autism."

Teaching the students' job skills can best be accomplished by allowing them to perform the tasks necessary to complete a specific job. Many of them have jobs outside of school for a few hours during the school day. Kristi stated, "When I teach, I like using all four senses. In special education, we like to be 'hands on.' Our kids work at Midlothian Bible Church, Busy Bs Bakery, Frank Seale Middle School and Manna House. They receive real checks, although it is a token wage. We take them to the bank, and they learn how to endorse the back of the check and then cash it." Going to their jobs outside of the school is something the students enjoy. However, not all of the students have this privilege. With some of them, their special needs make it prohibitive. Wanting the students who cannot leave to have the same experience as their traveling classmates, the solution became the candle-making job at school. "Our ultimate goal is to transition out into the community productive citizens, so we created the candle company. We chose candle making because it has so many steps to it. Every student can be included. We do things in tiny steps. Jobs are given to everyone to do. The kids do everything from cutting the wax, all the way down to decorating them."

Inside the candle-making shop of the classroom, a large slab of wax waits in a box for its day of glory. The students cut sections from it to begin the candle-making process. Kristi likes to incorporate a learning experience with each task. She said, "With the wax, I incorporate science in teaching them how it goes from a solid to a liquid when melted." While the wax is melting, they decide which color and scent to use. After the proper amount of color and fragrance is mixed together, it is poured into the melted wax. This gives the students an opportunity to learn about measuring. Different students place warning labels on the bottom of the jars; others set wicks inside the jars. Another places the wick setter on top of the jars, so the wicks stay straight as the wax cools and sets. A student will then trim the wick. After that, the decorating

begins. Part of the decorating starts with using the die-cut machine, which Kristi affectionately called a teacher's piece of gold. The machine cuts out the schoolhouse icon that is attached to every candle. Kristi added, "Candle making covers math; they learn the exchange of money, social skills, sales promotion, and it connects us with the community. It helps their communication skills. The CBI candle program helps students develop and maintain job skills, so they are prepared for the post-graduation job force."

The School House Candle program has proven to be a great success. According to Kristi, "We sell hundreds of candles a year at a cost of $4.00 to $10.00 a piece. We have teachers who will

In addition, we teach life skills — skills they can take and live as independently as possible.

stop by and say they need a candle for a birthday present, and we will decorate it for a birthday gift. We sell our candles to the administration, and we also have people in the community e-mail me for orders."

Kristi likes to give credit to the Midlothian Education Foundation [MEF] for getting the program up and running. The foundation funds innovative education projects that will benefit students by using private donations. Kristi said, "We wrote a grant and received $2,443.37. Because of that, we can make the candles in the classroom with the full setup." Kristi plans to make a donation back to the foundation to show her and the students' appreciation.

Kristi summarized the goal of the program by saying, "When they graduate, they can immediately go into the workforce as a skilled worker and become tax-paying members of society. Finding suitable jobs for mentally-challenged students can be difficult due to their special needs or their social behavior. A business operated from the CBI classroom would reach these specific students. I always say let's see what they can do with their ability." NOW

In The Kitchen With Jessika Lasater Brantley

— By Faith Browning

Jessika Lasater Brantley is one of few who can say she married her high school sweetheart. She has been married to her husband, Lance, for over 11 years. They have been blessed with five wonderful children, Breka, Gage, Nolan and twins Larkin and Corbin.

She has many fond memories of spending time in the kitchen with her parents. "My dad is the best cook I know, and so was my mom. I was always in the kitchen watching them and that's how I learned to cook," she recalled. "I always enjoyed my parents cooking, so I like doing it for my family, too. I love when I make something and the kids go on and on about how good it is. It makes me laugh." NOW

VELVEETA SPAGHETTI CASSEROLE

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1 green bell pepper, chopped
1 sm. can mushrooms, drained
2-3 cloves garlic, minced
2 Tbsp. butter or olive oil
2 lbs. ground hamburger meat
2 14-oz. cans diced tomatoes (Do not drain.)
1 12-oz. can tomato sauce
1 tsp. Tabasco (or to taste)
16 oz. pkg. spaghetti noodles
1 lb. Velveeta cheese

1. In a large skillet, brown onion, bell pepper, mushrooms and garlic in butter or olive oil. When done, remove from skillet and set aside.
2. In same skillet, brown hamburger meat; drain (if needed).
3. Return meat to skillet and add tomatoes, tomato sauce, Tabasco, onion, bell pepper, mushrooms and garlic. Reduce heat and let simmer for 20-30 minutes.
4. Cook spaghetti according to package directions; drain.
5. Place spaghetti in deep casserole dish or Dutch oven.
6. Slice or cube Velveeta. Stir half of the Velveeta into the spaghetti then pour meat sauce over spaghetti.
7. Top meat sauce with the remaining Velveeta. Cover and bake in oven at 325 F until the mixture is bubbling.

MEXICAN LASAGNA

2 lbs. ground hamburger meat
1 med. onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 14-oz. can enchilada sauce
1 sm. jar mild picante sauce
1 12-oz. can Ro-Tel tomatoes
1 16-oz. can refried beans
1 pkg. taco seasoning
1 Tbsp. cumin
1 Tbsp. chili powder
1 pkg. 10 large flour tortillas
1 pkg. 20 small flour tortillas (You will have leftovers.)
2 cups grated Monterey Jack cheese
2 cups grated mild cheddar cheese

1. In skillet, brown hamburger meat with onion and garlic. Cook until meat is done and the onions are clear.
2. Add enchilada sauce and picante sauce.
3. Put Ro-Tel and refried beans in blender and chop. Add mixture to meat and stir in taco seasoning, cumin and chili powder.
4. Simmer over low heat for 30 minutes, stirring on occasion.
5. Coat bottom of 13 x 9-inch pan with layer of sauce.
6. Cut large tortillas in half. Line pan with tortillas using the flat edges of halved tortillas against the edges of pan and filling in with the small tortillas in the center of pan. Make 2 layers.
7. Spoon on 1/2 of the sauce. Sprinkle on 1/2 of the cheeses. Repeat procedure.
8. Place piece of aluminum foil on top but do not seal it. Bake for 45 minutes at 325 F. Let cool 15 minutes. If desired, sprinkle with shredded lettuce, chopped onion, diced tomatoes, sliced black olives, sour cream and grated cheese.

BEEF QUESADILLA STUFFED JALAPEÑOS

20-25 fresh jalapeño peppers
1 1/2 lbs. hamburger meat
1 pkg. taco seasoning
1 can Ro-Tel tomatoes, drained
1 tsp. chili powder
1/2 tsp. ground cumin
1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 cup sour cream
2 cups shredded Monterey Jack and cheddar cheese blend

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Spray baking sheet with non-stick cooking spray.
2. Cut peppers in half, remove seeds and membranes and set aside.
3. Brown hamburger meat; drain.
4. Return meat to pan and add taco seasoning, Ro-Tel, chili powder, cumin and salt; let cool for 5-10 minutes.
5. In medium bowl, combine meat, sour cream and cheese; mix well.
6. Spoon meat mixture evenly into peppers; place on baking sheet. Bake for 35-45 minutes in oven uncovered. Note: Peppers can be stuffed and refrigerated for up to two days before baking.

CHICKEN WITH DRIED BEEF

1 jar Armour sliced dried beef
1 pkg. chicken breast
Bacon (optional)
2 14-oz. cans cream of mushroom soup
24 oz. milk
Salt and pepper, to taste
4 cups cooked white or brown rice

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Line bottom of 13 x 9-inch pan with dried beef using the whole jar. (It will overlap.)
2. Rinse chicken and trim off all fat. If the breast is large, cut in half.
3. Wrap each breast with a piece of bacon and secure with a toothpick, if bacon is desired.
3. Place chicken in pan on top of dried beef.
4. Pour cream of mushroom soup into a bowl; mix in 1 1/2 cans of milk and stir well (It will still be lumpy.)
5. Pour over chicken; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake in oven for 1 hour covered; then take off foil and bake for an additional 20 minutes. Serve over rice.

CHOCOLATE SHEATH CAKE

2 cups sugar
2 cups flour
1 stick margarine
1/2 cup shortening
4 Tbsp. cocoa
1 cup water
1/2 cup buttermilk
2 eggs, slightly beaten
1 tsp. soda
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. vanilla
***ICING*:**
1 stick margarine
4 Tbsp. cocoa
6 Tbsp. milk
1 box powdered sugar (3 1/2 cups)
1 tsp. vanilla
1 cup pecans, chopped

1. Sift sugar and flour into a bowl.
2. In a saucepan, mix margarine, shortening, cocoa and water. Bring this mixture to a rapid boil; pour over flour and sugar mixture and stir well.
3. Add buttermilk, eggs, soda, cinnamon and vanilla. Mix well; pour into a greased 11x17-inch pan. Bake 20 minutes at 400 F.
4. Start making the icing about five minutes before cake is done. Mix margarine, cocoa and milk.
5. Melt together and bring to a boil, remove from heat and add sugar, vanilla and pecans. Beat well and spread on cake while cake is still hot. Make sure to leave cake in pan to ice and serve.

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Declare Your "Financial Arbor Day"

— By Jaime Holland

The national celebration of Arbor Day happens on the last Friday of April, although some states have designated different dates for their own Arbor Day observances. Over the years, Americans have planted millions of trees on this day, improving the environment, reducing erosion and leaving an invaluable gift to future generations. But the concepts behind Arbor Day can also be transferred to other realms — such as investing. So, this year, why not take steps to establish your own Financial Arbor Day?

Here are some ideas to consider:

• Plant some "seeds."

Even the mightiest trees started out small — and the same is true of the investment portfolios of many successful investors. If you're just beginning to invest, put whatever you can afford, however minimal, into an IRA and a 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan. If you've been investing for a while but still need to move closer toward your goals, you may have to seek out some new fields of opportunity and invest in them.

• Nurture the "roots."

To grow, tree roots need to be fed through water, oxygen and minerals. And once you've planted the seeds of your investments, they need to be nourished, too. So, for example, once you've opened your 401(k), boost your contributions whenever you get a salary increase. Also consider fully funding your IRA until you've reached the annual limits.

• Seek out variety.

If you look around your neighborhood, you will likely find many different types of trees. And that's a good thing, because when Dutch elm disease or some other ailment strikes one type of tree, you and your neighbors still have others that can thrive. And the same principle applies to investing — if an economic downturn or some other event primarily strikes one type of asset, and most of your money is tied up in that asset, you could run into trouble. That's why you need to diversify your investment dollars among stocks, bonds, certificates of deposit (CDs), Treasury bills and other securities. While diversification, by itself, cannot guarantee a profit or protect against a loss, it can help reduce the effects of volatility on your portfolio.

• Be patient.

When you plant a seed, you know it will take many years for your efforts to reach fruition. Over time, your tree will lose some branches and bark, and it will be buffeted by heavy winds, scorching sun and driving rains. However, if it has a strong set of roots, it can survive and grow. You need to show the same patience with your investment portfolio, because it, too, will face a variety of challenges over the years, and at times it may appear beaten down. But if you follow a consistent strategy, supported by a mix of quality investments that reflects your risk tolerance, time horizon and long-term goals, and if you have the patience and discipline to ride out downturns, you can help yourself reach your objectives.

When people use their shovels and hoes on Arbor Day, they create something that will literally last a lifetime. And the same thing can happen when you declare your own Financial Arbor Day — so get out your investment "tools" and get to work. NOW

Jaime Holland is an Edward Jones representative based in Midlothian.

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Addition by Subtraction

— By Brad W. Collins, D.C.

You probably have a junk drawer at home. It holds a mishmash of nuts and bolts, some old keys, a pair of pliers, a night-light bulb and a roll of duct tape. Your body also collects junk. This "junk" comes from the food you eat, the water you drink and the air you breathe. Included are pesticides, heavy metals, chemicals, caffeine, pollution and preservatives.

Simply living also creates wastes. As you read this, your body is making ammonia and carbon dioxide. These and other poisons are created by the workings of each cell. It is the job of your liver, lymphatic system, kidneys, lungs, intestines, blood and skin to filter these toxins from your body. When overloaded, your body becomes inefficient. Like a furnace with a clogged filter, it collects toxins.

Purification is merely the internal cleansing and detoxification of your body. Think of it as a "spring cleaning" for your insides. Making new, healthier choices for yourself are required. You will be discontinuing fast foods, processed convenience foods and sugar-laden snacks, which place unnecessary load on your body. Say goodbye to cheeseburgers, French fries, salt, sugar and dairy products. Say hello to whole, unprocessed, preservative-free foods, lots of pure spring water, tasty shakes and whole food supplements.

Through the process of purification, you will not only learn about your body and its needs, rid yourself of accumulated sludge and energy-zapping wastes, but the average person will lose between eight to 15 pounds in a matter of weeks. Fad diets sell a lot of books, but they ignore the way our bodies actually work. Gaining the weight back (plus a little extra) is all too common. The proper purification program is not a diet; it helps you live a healthier life. Whole food supplements will be used to help your body purify and rebuild itself — naturally! You will also be supporting all your organ systems that play a role in purification.

As the purification/weight-loss process is completed, most patients lose weight, have increased energy, have healthier skin, experience decreased joint stiffness, healthier bowel movements, less bloating and an overall increased well being. It is exciting to see the transformation that takes place by merely removing the excess "junk" from our bodies. We clean our houses; we delete/clean our hard drives on our computers; and we change the oil in our cars, all in an attempt to make them function better and work more efficiently. Why would we not do the same for the one thing we can't replace — our bodies? Removing our toxins can have a profound effect on enhancing our health. Sometimes addition by subtraction is the best answer! NOW

Brad W. Collins, D.C.
Midlothian Chiropractic Clinic

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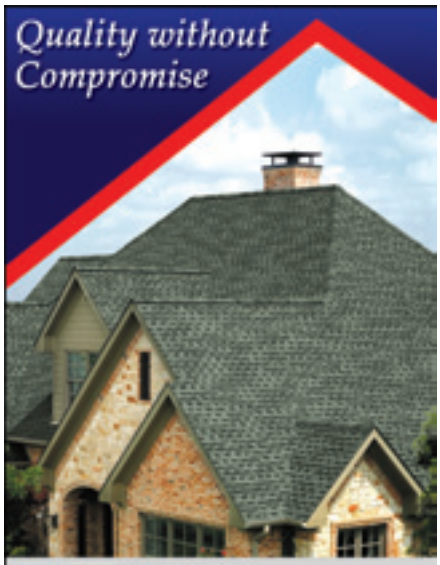

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First and Fourth Monday
School Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

Third Monday
Ellis County Aggie Moms: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin. For more information, contact Cheryl Bell at (972) 723-0341 or rb4cj@sbcglobal.net.

Fourth Monday
Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting: 6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave. Guest Speaker: Fran Snay, "Using Color and Fabric Play."

Every Tuesday
Midlothian Rotary Club meeting: noon, Midlothian Civic Center, 224 South 11th St. Call (972) 775-7118 for information.

GED Class: 6:00 p.m., Meadows Library, located at Midlothian High School.

Second and Fourth Tuesdays
Midlothian City Council meeting: 6:00 p.m., City Hall, 104 West Avenue E.

First Thursday
Midlothian Area Historical Society meeting: 7:00 p.m., Meadows Library, located at Midlothian High School. Contact Kathy Robinson at (972) 723-2755 for more information.

ABWA – Empowering Women Express Network monthly meeting: 6:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Circle. Please RSVP at www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org for more information.

First and Third Thursday
Midlothian Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th Street. For more information, call (972) 775-7118 or to RSVP, call (972) 723-0017 or e-mail julia_mainplace@sbcglobal.net.

April 5-9
Early voting: 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m. The only location to vote early is the Election Office, 106 S. Monroe St., Waxahachie. Run-Off Election Day is Tuesday, April 13.

April 16-17
Midlothian Education Foundation "Love to Eat and Run" Fundraiser and Student Showcase. Join the MEF for their first pasta dinner, student art contest/auction, and 5K fun run on Friday, April 16 and Saturday, April 17. The dinner and student art contest

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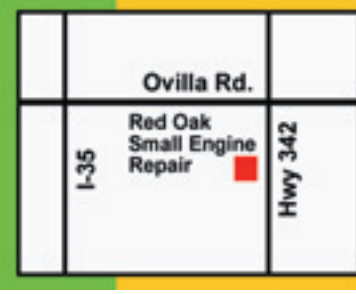

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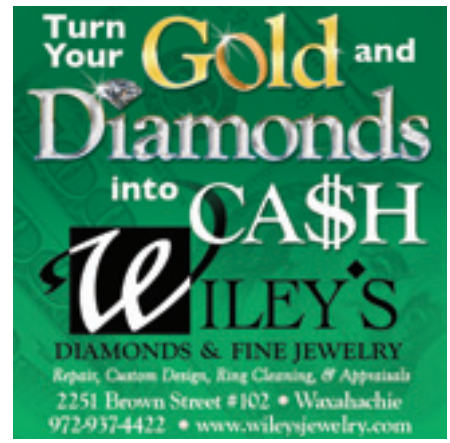

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and auction will be held Friday evening from 6:00-8:00 p.m. in the MHS cafeteria, and the 5K fun run will follow on Saturday morning at 7:00 a.m. at the MHS Parking Lot off Walter Stephenson. Visit www.midlothian-isd.net/mef, call (972) 775-8296, ext. 1281, or e-mail foundation@midlothian-isd.net for more details.

April 21

Aggie Muster at Park Meadows Baptist Church in Waxahachie. Dinner starts at 6:30 p.m. Program starts at 7:00 p.m. Speakers: Rev. and Mrs. Kerlee, parents of Bonfire collapse victim, Tim Kerlee. 2010-2011 scholarship awardees will be recognized. Proceeds benefit Ellis A&M Club scholarship fund. For more information, please go to www.ellisaggies.com.

April 24

Midlothian Chamber's Annual Spring Fling Arts and Crafts Fair: 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Heritage Park, downtown Midlothian. Call (972) 723-8600. or visit www.MidlothianChamber.org for more information.

The 2010 Ellis County Homeschool Expo and Used Curriculum Sale: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Getzendaner Park, Waxahachie. Inexpensive spots are available to promote your group, classes, resource, business, museum, library, nonprofit, or to sell curriculum. Homeschool students are encouraged to have their own free "show-off' table and perform on stage. For more information, please contact webnotions@yahoo.com or call (214) 701-6101. You can follow updates at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/elliscountyexpo.

May 14

Relay for Life at Don Floyd Stadium, starting May 14 at 7:00 p.m. and ending May 15 at 7:00 a.m. Contact Donna at (469) 449-7293 or visit www.relayforlife.org.

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A 30-year former American Airlines employee, Kathleen Macdonald, had been enjoying a leisurely life of retirement until one day when her blood sugar dropped so low she fell to the floor unconscious. At 71, Kathleen Macdonald quickly discovered her low blood sugar levels were the least of her worries.

After being rushed to Methodist Mansfield Medical Center to restore her glucose levels, the attentive staff quickly made an unexpected discovery—Macdonald actually had a heart attack and would need cardiac intervention if she hoped to enjoy the rest of her retirement. "I was in real bad shape," says Macdonald. "But the nurses were absolutely wonderful. Very informative and comforting. I really appreciated it because I was scared."

"The people were just the best. *The very best.* They turned a very frightening experience into a good one."

Thanks to the cardiology program at Methodist Mansfield, a coronary stent was inserted to improve blood flow and help prevent another attack. "The attention I received was way above and beyond my expectation. And the food was excellent. I didn't want to come home," she says with a much-deserved smile. "If you have to go to the hospital, Methodist Mansfield is the place to go. It was like a relaxing vacation for me."

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"I didn't want to come home. I wanted to stay and be pampered and served good meals."

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To learn more about Methodist's heart program, call them at 877-637-4297 or visit **www.methodisthealthsystem.org.**

–Kathleen Macdonald
Arlington resident and coronary stent recipient at Methodist Mansfield Medical Center.

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