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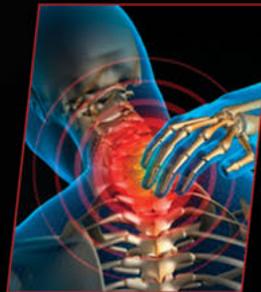
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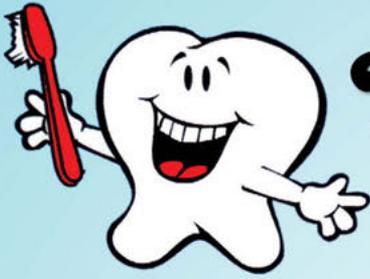


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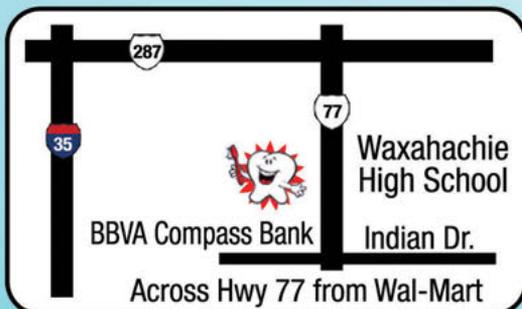
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ON THE COVER

Ricky Robinson takes his job as dad seriously.

Photo by
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EDITOR'S NOTE



Sandra

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The coo is music to my ears!

Each morning as I sit down to do my daily devotion, I look forward to counting the doves outside my dining room window. Just the other day, I counted a total of 17. Someone, I'm not sure exactly who, told me that doves only mate once in their lifetime. So, as I look at the 17 doves pecking the ground for the birdseed I leave, I wonder which one is traveling alone. It's during these times I wish I could talk to the birds — instead of the cat lady, I'd be the neighborhood bird lady.

I know you've heard the stories of John Solomon Rarey, the horse whisperer. You've probably seen the documentaries on Cesar Millan, the man who's made it his mission to whisper to the dogs. As I daydream, I see myself as the dove whisperer. As the doves coo, I coo back in a conversation that only the birds and a bird lover can understand and appreciate. The coos are relaxing, and they bring a smile to my face. Yes, I wouldn't mind being referred to as the dove whisperer, not one little bit.

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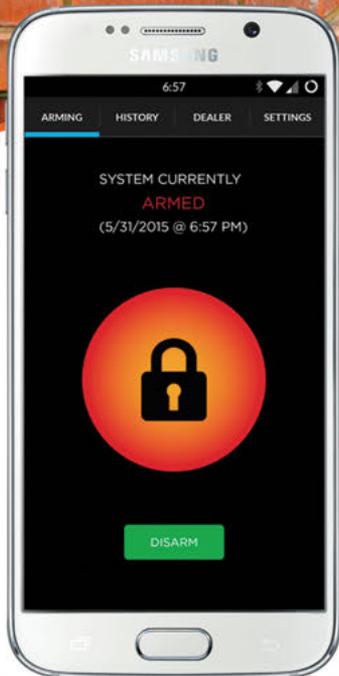
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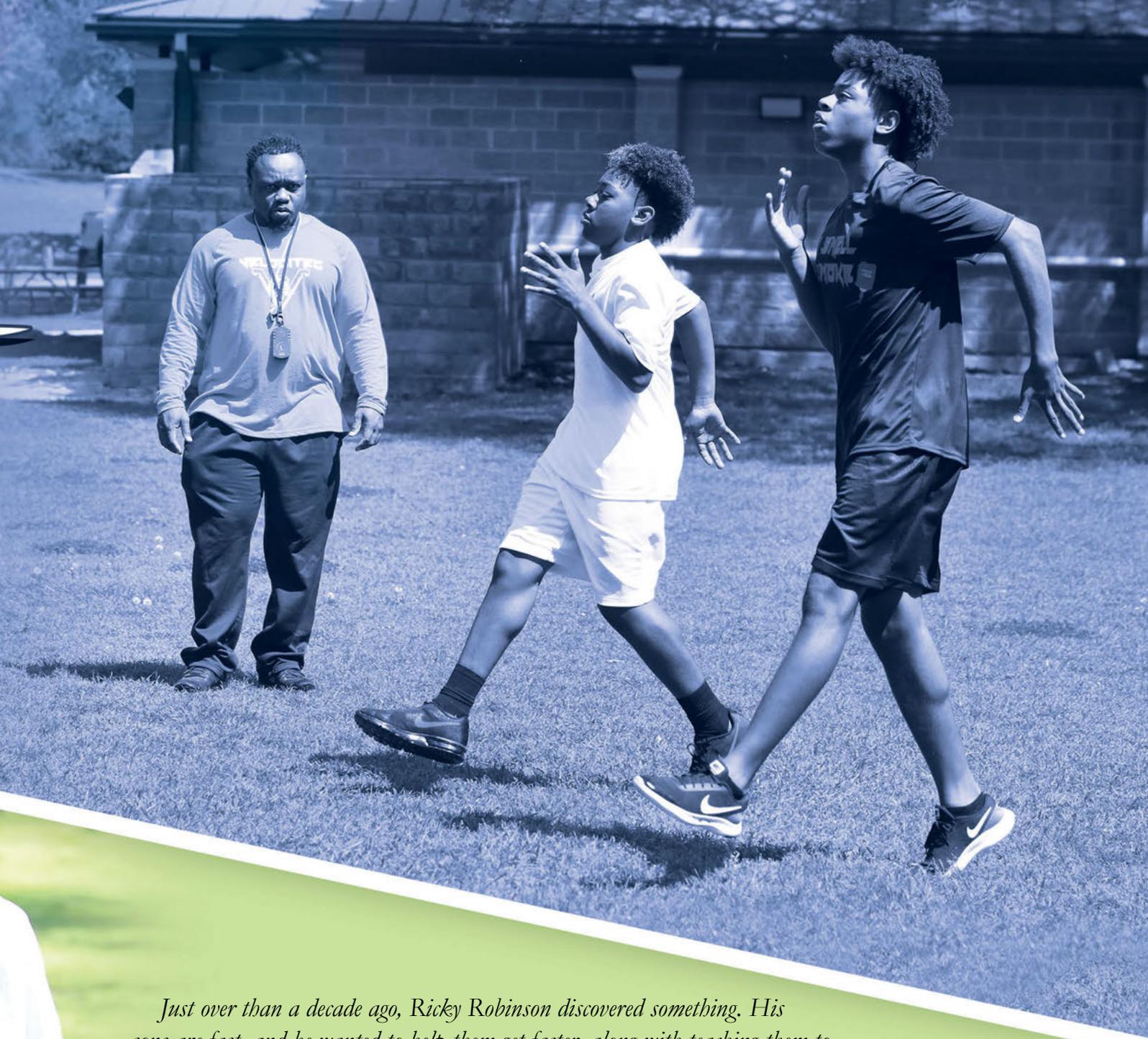


FAMILY

First

— By Rick Mauch





Just over than a decade ago, Ricky Robinson discovered something. His sons are fast, and he wanted to help them get faster, along with teaching them to navigate through life. “We were at football practice, and Jaelyn wanted ice cream. I said wait, we’re at practice now. We’ll get some later,” Ricky recalled. “Next thing, we looked up and he was running across the field after the ice cream truck. I don’t know what he thought he was going to do if he caught it, but I knew right then he was ready for track.”

Shortly after that day he began working with Jaelyn, then 3 years old, and 1-year-old Tamodrick in their backyard. That was in 2007, and they’re still going strong with Jaelyn, now in the ninth grade, and Tamodrick, in the seventh. “I got advice from some elite trainers and applied it to them,” Ricky said. “Over time, it’s paid off really well, and I’ve learned a lot, also.”

The boys run for Mercury Elite Track Club of DeSoto. They’ve made several trips to compete in the Amateur Athletic Union Junior Olympics and posted top-10 finishes in their age groups. This summer, both will compete in the Boys 13-14 division. “I started out teaching them how to run correctly,” Ricky said. “Going from cone to cone, working into speed training. I knew they had it in them. I also wanted Jaelyn to be ready for football when he played his first year. He was only 4, and he was one of the fastest on the team.”

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Like their dad, both sons are sprinters, along with playing running back and defensive back in football, and Jaelyn has played some linebacker. Tamodrick loves track but prefers football, while Jaelyn said he can't choose between the two. "I like both the same. I couldn't choose if I had to," Jaelyn said.

"Mine's football," Tamodrick said. "I like being aggressive and physical. I love tackling."

Ricky was a multisport athlete himself. He was a running back on the 1992 Waxahachie state champion football team, though he regrets not finishing the season. He also ran track, competing in high school and the Texas Amateur Athletic Federation. "I learned a hard lesson, and I'm passing that on to my sons," he said. "I turned away from my dream, but I can help my sons and others see their dreams come true."

And he's doing exactly that. Along with working with Jaelyn and Tamodrick, Ricky started Smoke City Training Club, named after Jaelyn, whose nickname is "Smokey." He helps local youths who might not otherwise have the opportunity for training. "Some people don't have the resources, but they still need help,"

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Ricky said. "And it's a blessing for me to help people."

Ricky comes from an athletic family. Also, his wife, Tamara Robinson, was a cheerleader and ran some track at Waxahachie High School. She will often help with the training of their boys, like timing and preparing for meets. But she admits the greatest thing that comes from it all is the family time together. "Time is precious. Family is precious, especially these days," she said.

"I love my family. Family means so much to me," Ricky said. "I have good kids, and I love spending time with them. Even when I'm at work, I'm thinking about them. And sports strengthen our bond, but we also talk about so much that often doesn't have anything to do with sports."

The boys understand the significance of this quality time, as well. They know it's more than training. "We're not always going to be kids. We want to enjoy this," Tamodrick said.

Jaelyn added, "I enjoy getting closer to my family and learning about their background."

"Growing up I didn't have my dad around a lot, and I especially needed him in junior high," Ricky



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said. "In my adult years, my dad and I have been closer than ever, and he's close with my boys, but I know what it's like to grow up without a father. I don't want my kids to ever experience that."

Jaelyn and Tamodrick are close. Ricky is proud of that, having lost his own brother, three years younger, last year. "As I got older, I realized how much my brother looked up to me, and I can never get any of that time back," Ricky said, a tear forming. "My kids motivate each other, and I'm glad they are close. I teach them to enjoy their youth and each other, every second, as much as they can."

The boys said they appreciate this life lesson and many others from their dad. They know what they are learning now will serve them throughout their adult years, as well. "The people you hang around can affect you, and you can affect them," Jaelyn said.

"Appreciate your true friends," Tamodrick added. "You can't trust everyone, so work hard in life and



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be thankful for those who are your friends.”

As for each other, they have the usual competitive, but friendly, sibling rivalry. They are also each other’s biggest supporter and cheerleader. “When he’s running, I’m right there cheering him on,” Tamodrick said.

To which, Jaelyn added, “Sometimes, we’ll compare times and do things to help each other out.”

Although they have plenty of time to ponder their future, Jaelyn wants to run track in college. He’s interested in Baylor, TCU and, perhaps, Oregon. Tamodrick wants to play football in college, and he’s considering Baylor, TCU and Alabama.

But wherever they go, Ricky and Tamara are taking pride in doing all they can to prepare them for life. But then, they plan on the lessons continuing no matter how old their sons get. “I wake up every day and try to be the best father I can be, and Tamara is the best mom she can be,” Ricky said. “That’s what parents should do.” **NOW**

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— By Virginia Riddle

Traveling to state and national parks to hike and camp, boating and water skiing, running marathons and triathlons, being involved parents in school sports and activities — this is what Derek and LeAnn Jones enjoy doing in their spare time. “Our home is our base camp for everything,” LeAnn remarked. “We love to travel and explore new places, but we also love it when we’re home, sitting outside relaxing or playing basketball. We can’t believe we’re lucky enough to live here, travel and share activities as a family.”

Derek agreed, “We have over an acre with lots of backyard. It’s a very peaceful, quiet space.” However, there will be an exception to the quiet next month. Enjoying fireworks on the Fourth of July has become a tradition for this family and their friends.

Palmer High School is another base camp for this family. LeAnn serves as the counselor, Derek is an English teacher and the couple’s two children, Daniel (17) and Emma (15), are students. Both Daniel and Emma attend college classes through Navarro College and have set amazingly perfect attendance records at Palmer ISD. Both have been members of the high school band. Daniel, a senior in the top 10 percent of his class, plays trumpet and runs cross-country, and Emma, a sophomore, plays percussion. She also is on the volleyball, tennis and basketball teams and has run track. Daniel has earned UIL recognition in journalism. He hopes to attend Texas A&M University after graduation, majoring in business with an emphasis in





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computer systems. Emma, at least for now, is setting her sights on attending her parents' undergraduate alma mater, the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor, leading to a career in pediatric nursing.

Derek returned to the classroom, after having served as the assistant principal, so he could devote time to earning his doctorate through Texas A&M University-Commerce. His experience as an adjunct instructor at Navarro College has been an inspiration to eventually teach full time at the college level.

Serving their communities is important to this family. "We're



always involved in service projects," Derek said. The kids are members of Interact Club, volunteer at ECSPCA functions and participate in Relay for Life. LeAnn, Daniel and Emma

have earned awards in their age groups at Ennis' PolkaFest Run, but Derek has earned the coveted Iron Man designation and is a member of the Waxahachie Running Club. The family attends First Baptist Church Waxahachie.

A Houston native, Derek met LeAnn while both were students at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. He was a junior, and she was a freshman. LeAnn is a native of Hobbs, New Mexico, but her family moved to the Dallas area, where she



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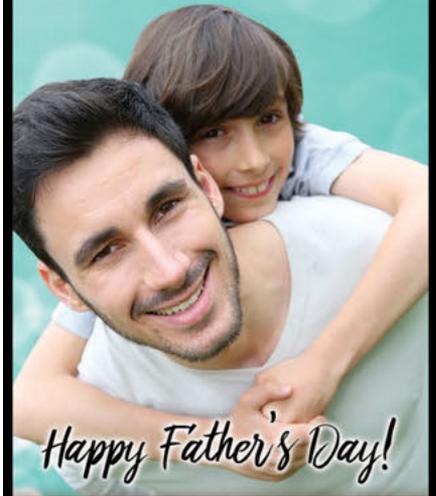
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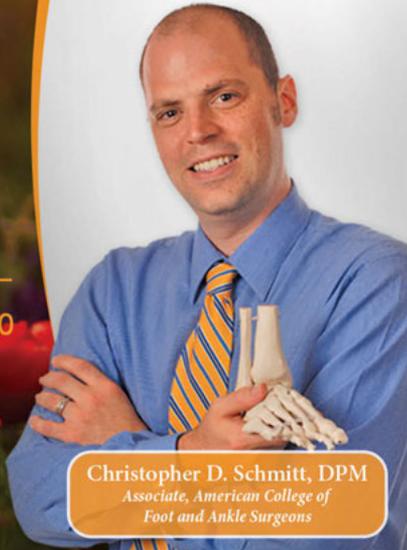
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graduated from Rockwall ISD. “We were just friends for four years, but my mom had told me I was going to marry Derek,” LeAnn recalled. Mom was right. The couple have been married for 19 years this month, and they have extended family members located close by from Seguin to Dallas.

Furthering their education was a goal set and achieved by both parents. Derek earned his master’s degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and LeAnn stayed at Mary Hardin-Baylor to complete her master’s. She has continued her studies at The University of Texas at Arlington and through Southwestern Assemblies of God University.

Built in the 1980s, the family’s home was very dated when they purchased it. They’ve updated cosmetically and converted the formal dining room into an office and the enclosed patio into an exercise room. “It’s our own personal gym.” LeAnn explained.

The office space gives Derek a place to work and study. In addition to his teaching duties and studies, he uses his undergraduate degree in English when writing as a freelancer for NOW Magazines. A fold-out couch allows the office to serve as a guest bedroom when needed.

With a realization that a home and yard are works-in-progress and their priorities have been set elsewhere, Derek explained, “We’ve not yet done as much as we would like to do.”

“Luckily, I don’t like a bunch of clutter,” LeAnn added. “Derek and I are kind of simple when it comes to decorating our home.”

Mia, the family’s 9-year-old Yorkie, greets visitors with enthusiastic barks. She was named for Mia Hamm, the American soccer player, a player that Derek, also a soccer player, admires. Mia’s favorite place in the house is the kitchen, since that’s where her treat, Pop-Tarts, are kept. The eat-in

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kitchen table was where Derek dined when growing up. Corner windows over the sink provide two street views. A handy bathroom near a side door provides the couple a place to clean up after trail runs.



The master bedroom is decorated in restful silver and grays in sharp contrast to Emma's color preferences for her bedroom. Turquoise and pink explode from her bedspread and pillows. A hat rack collection of favored sports — tennis, basketball, cross-country and track — hangs on one wall. Memorabilia from her visit to Comic Con's FAN EXPO Dallas decorate another wall. Her face brightens at the memories made.

A boat from Derek's childhood has a place of honor in Daniel's water-themed bedroom, which is decorated in the blues and purples of his wakeboard hanging above the bed. Both Daniel and Emma proudly display their school letter jackets in their bedrooms.

The kids' hall bath displays a sign, saying *Shine*. Decorated in teal, blue and lime green, the bathroom serves as wake-up central each morning. "I wanted to do something cheery to get them up and going," LeAnn explained.

But when the day is over, it's the living room and/or the patio gathering places to which this busy family retreats. "We love just sitting out on the patio and relaxing," Derek said. Just like any other base camp, home is a retreat in which the day's joys, trials and accomplishments can be shared. **NOW**



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A Calling

— By Joy Horn

Elizabeth Power believes her calling was written in the cards. “I always knew I wanted to be a dance teacher,” she said. She was a Cherokee Charmer on the drill team during her time in high school, and this experience helped to shape her dreams for the future. When she graduated from Waxahachie High School in 2012, she decided to pursue her calling.

Kilgore College, home of “the world’s best-known collegiate drill team,” was her initial destination on her journey to becoming a teacher. Elizabeth felt this school was the right fit for her because of her love for dance. “I thought this would be a great place for me to drill team network,” she explained.

While at Kilgore, Elizabeth unexpectedly found a

second passion. She discovered she loved math, inspired by her trigonometry professor. “He was the first teacher who taught in a way that made math applicable and worthwhile!” she exclaimed. “I felt like I actually understood the purpose of math for the first time.” Her teacher not only delivered material in a way that made sense, he was also encouraging, patient and helpful. Because of this experience, Elizabeth decided she wanted to be a math teacher.

Eventually, Elizabeth received her bachelor’s degree in math with a minor in education from Texas Woman’s University and then decided to come back to her roots. Now, she is a geometry teacher at WHS. “I like being back where I graduated,” she said. “It’s cool to walk back through the hallways where I was a student as a teacher. Sometimes, it is a little nostalgic during football season or when Charmers have a spring season.” She also enjoys teaching alongside some of her former teachers, seeing each other in a new light. “They view me as an adult because now we are colleagues.”

Elizabeth's first year as a teacher was smooth, with few bumps along the way. The first year is often notorious for being difficult, mentally and physically, as long hours and learning your own style of teaching can be draining, but Elizabeth feels like hers was a success. "I came in mentally prepared for long nights and tears. I had heard multiple horror stories in college, so I knew things would be challenging," she reflected.

Her favorite thing about teaching geometry this year was seeing students getting interested in math.

Fortunately, Elizabeth only had a handful of hard days. She credited her success as a first-year teacher to her math team who supported her 100 percent along the way. "They know what it's like to be a first-year teacher," she said. Her team members often came in to check on her. "I could ask them for anything, and they were willing to help without judgement. Sometimes, they even made copies for me."

Elizabeth also serves as the Howard Junior High Chey-Annes drill team director. She enjoys working with the girls. "We just recently finished contest season. The girls learned a lot. They blew me away with how willing they were to learn. They wanted to learn, and it was evident every single day," she said. "That is all I could ask from them."

Her favorite thing about teaching geometry this year was seeing students getting interested in math. "Some students don't like math," she expressed. "I get that, but when these students see how math can apply to real life, it makes everything worth it." **NOW**

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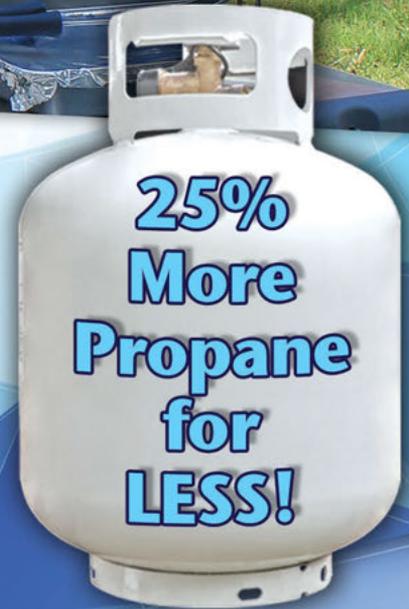
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REEL THEM

— By Derek Jones

Gary Don Jost is loving life after retirement. His days are now filled with scouting the best fishing holes in the area and reeling in the largest fish. “For years, I worked and had little time for fishing,” he said. “For this past year in retirement, I have been free to pursue my love of fishing, and it has been great!” Recently, he has been fishing for trout in the pond at the Waxahachie Sports Complex, searching for new fishing holes in Lake Waxahachie and fishing with his brother, Darell, at the lake by his house.

For Gary Don, fishing is not a solitary activity. His most consistent partner is his 5-year-old German Shepherd, Anja. “She goes with me everywhere,” Gary Don related. “However, she *really* loves to go fishing.” He takes Anja on every trip, and she even rides along in his small boat. “The very first time she went with me and saw me reel in a fish, she was so excited,” Gary Don recalled. “Now, she just sits there on the boat and watches my every cast to see what I may reel in.” Anja is Gary Don’s faithful companion, and he can never imagine a time when she will not be at his side watching him fish.

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The pair love sharing the experience with his family. Over the last few years, it has brought him and his sons closer together. “Your kids grow up and leave home as a natural part of life,” Gary Don reflected. “But, fishing has brought us together again in these later years.” Gary Don has two sons, Don and Greg, who have joined him on his recent trips. “My son, Greg, even bought some fishing kayaks for us to take out on



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the lake,” he stated. “I even bought all my grandkids rods this Christmas.” Recently, he has also been fishing for bass with Darell at a lake outside Bluff Dale. Gary Don shared, “It truly has become a family activity.”



One of Gary Don's favorite spots to pursue his favorite pastime is the pond at the Waxahachie Sports Complex, which is stocked with trout. "Oh, I have a secret to catching trout that a woman shared with me years ago," he said. Like any good fisherman, Gary Don is willing to share his secret with others. "Kernels of corn are key," he shared. "Throw a few handfuls of corn out into the water, and then put a few kernels on your hook." He has filled buckets with fish using this method. He smiled as he shared his last little nugget. "If you really want to drive the trout wild, just also add a little garlic to the hook."

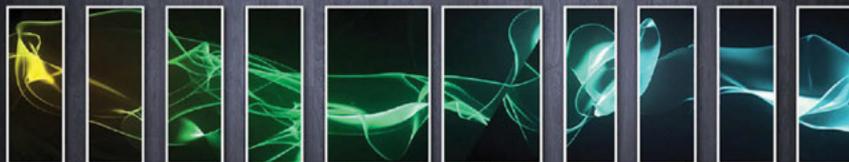
He has also been spending more time on Lake Waxahachie. "I have never spent much time on the lake until recently, but since retirement, I have been busy exploring it, looking for some good fishing spots."

Fish stories are always a part of any good fisherman's repartee. Many fishermen have hooked themselves rather than the fish at least once, and Gary Don is no different. He recounted, "This one night, I was fishing on the lake with a topwater jitterbug, when the largest fish I think I ever snagged struck the line. This fish jumped out of the water, and the lure came loose from his mouth." Gary Don mimicked his struggle with the massive fish as he continued. "With all the tension on the line, the lure flew into my face, and the hooks

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dug into my forehead, right between the eyes." He pointed to where the lure struck him. "We could not pull the hooks out because the barbs were too deep, so my buddies had to cut the hook and push it through. I was OK, but I didn't get the fish, because it doesn't count unless you land him on the dock." Gary Don cannot help but lament the one that got away.

One thing which has always drawn Gary Don to his sport of choice is the simplicity of it. "I just have a small two-person boat with a trolling motor on it, but it is all I need for me and Anja to get out on the lake," he shared.

Many times, Gary Don just fishes from the shore of a small pond. "You don't need a bunch of fancy equipment to just go out and enjoy the day and appreciate spending time with those you love."

Gary Don has worked hard all his life, and now, in retirement, he has time to focus on the things he really loves. Fishing is obviously one of those things, but he made it clear the most important thing is the people he comes into contact with through the sport. "It doesn't matter if I catch anything or not, as long as I can share the experience with others." He laughed and quickly followed up, "But, it is always better when you are catching fish." **NOW**

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2. BRING ENOUGH SUPPLIES FOR TRIPS

Going on a trip? Be sure to pack enough toothbrushes, toothpaste and floss for the whole family. Keep them in an easily accessible place so everyone can brush and floss every day.

3. BRING AN EMERGENCY DENTAL KIT

In case of an emergency, bring these supplies to keep on hand: gauze, a small container with a lid, pain reliever and a handkerchief. It's also a good idea to include your dentist's emergency contact info.

4. TEACH YOUR CHILD WATER SAFETY

Summer is a great time for swimming, but the pool could be hazardous and result in oral injuries. Teach your child the importance of water/pool safety: no running on slippery surface or diving into shallow water.

5. EAT HEALTHY AND DRINK PLENTY OF WATER

Eating fruits and veggies and drinking water can help your child's overall oral health. Avoid too much sugar.

6. PRACTICE ROUTINE ORAL CARE

Help teach your kids not to slack off on their dental care during summer break. Daily oral care is the best way to keep your child's teeth healthy.



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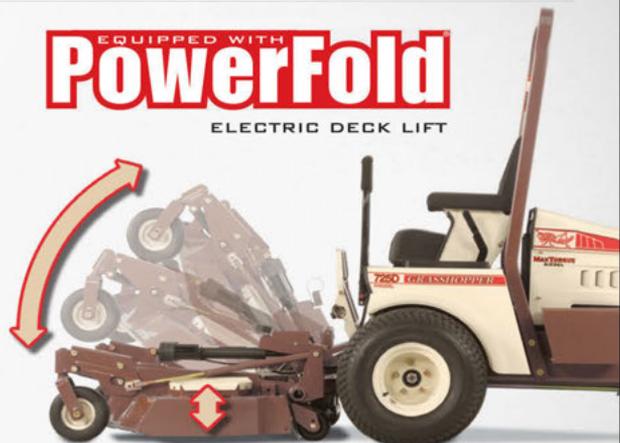
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CookingNOW In the Kitchen With JENNIFER FOREHAND

— By Lindsay L. Allen

Growing up in California with access to fresh, healthy foods and seafood and a Nana from Scotland who had her own delicious recipes, Jennifer Forehand had a reason to be excited about cooking at a young age. “My mom was also a great cook. She would always come up with something new and fun, but healthy, for us to eat,” she recalled.

While she has only been in Texas for two years, Jennifer is anxious to learn as much as she can about Southern cooking, and as a mother of five, she has a great panel of “judges” to help her taste test her cooking. If cooking for a large family isn’t enough, Jennifer works at an assisted living facility and oversees the food preparations for the residents. **NOW**

Ranch Cornflake Chicken

- 3/4 cup cornflakes, crushed**
- 1 pkt. Hidden Valley Ranch Dressing mix**
- 3/8 tsp. salt**
- 3/8 tsp. pepper**
- 1/4 tsp. paprika**
- 6-8 chicken breasts**
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise**

- 1.** Mix cornflake crumbs with the ranch packet, salt, pepper and paprika.
- 2.** Roll the chicken in mayonnaise, then in the cornflake mixture.
- 3.** Lay the chicken in a single layer on a sheet pan or baking dish.
- 4.** Bake at 350 F for 25 to 30 minutes. Cook to an internal temperature of 165 F.

Garlic Parmesan Chicken With Fettuccini

- 6-8 chicken breasts**
- 1 bottle H-E-B Flyin’ Saucy, Parmesan Garlic Mild Wing Sauce**
- 1 pkg. Roseli Garden Vegetable fettuccini**
- 3 Tbsp. butter**
- 1 pkg. fresh sliced mushrooms**

- 1.** Layer chicken breast in a baking dish.
- 2.** Pour Parmesan garlic sauce over the chicken; bake at 350 F for 25-35 minutes.
- 3.** Cook pasta according to package directions.
- 4.** Heat up a small frying pan; add butter. Add thinly sliced mushrooms; sauté until they are golden brown.

- 5.** When chicken is done, place it on the fettuccini noodles; pour sautéed mushrooms on top of the chicken.

Southern Cabbage Soup

- 2 cups chicken broth**
- 1 pkg. ham, cut up**
- 1 head cabbage**
- 1/2 cup yellow onion, thinly sliced**
- 1/2 cup shredded carrots**
- 1 tsp. salt**
- 1 tsp. sugar**
- 1 tsp. pepper (optional)**

- 1.** Bring broth to a boil. Add the ham to the broth; mix.
- 2.** Cut up cabbage into small pieces; add to the broth.
- 3.** Add the onions to the mix, followed by the carrots.
- 4.** Mix in salt, sugar and pepper, if desired; boil for 30-40 minutes.

Candy Apple Salad

- 6-8 Red Delicious or Granny Smith apples**
- 1 small bag Snickers, regular**
- 1 small bag Peanut Butter Snickers**
- 1/2 cup pecans**

1 tub Cool Whip
1 bottle caramel sauce

1. Chop the apples and Snickers into bite-size pieces.
2. In a mixing bowl, add the apples, Snickers, pecans and Cool Whip. Mix together well, until covered in whip topping.
3. Refrigerate for an hour. Serve when ready; drizzle with caramel topping.

Susan's Surprise Oatmeal Cookies

1 cup margarine
1 cup sugar
1 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup peanut butter
2 eggs, beaten
1 tsp. vanilla
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
1 1/2 cups flour
3 cups oats
Option 1: 1 bag HERSHEY'S Almond Kisses, chopped
Option 2: 2 cups white chocolate chips with 8 oz. raisins and 1 cup of nuts, chopped

1. Cream the margarine; add the sugars and peanut butter gradually. Mix well.
2. Add beaten eggs and vanilla; stir in sifted baking soda, salt and flour. Add the oats.
3. Add either the HERSHEY'S Kisses or the white chocolate chips, raisins and nuts.
4. Bake at 350 F for 12-15 minutes.

Strawberry Jam Smoothie

1 cup apple juice
1/2 cup frozen strawberries
1 frozen banana
1 scoop frozen yogurt
1 tsp. honey

1. Add all ingredients to a blender; blend until smooth.

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Orthodontics

— By Virginia Riddle

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Dr. Laura Morgan and her experienced staff are Ellis County residents’ “Smile Specialists.” Serving children and adults, ages 7 to 70, Dr. Morgan said, “It’s most important to us that we know our patients’ needs and communicate effectively as to what we can do for them to get the best results.”

That communication begins with the new patient complimentary exam, which includes X-rays, photos and digital models. For patient convenience, same-day treatment



is available with treatment options of traditional braces, clear braces and Invisalign.

Morgan Orthodontics also provides complimentary insurance benefits checks at the initial exam. Most dental plans are accepted with options of interest-free payment plans and care credit. “We want payment to be manageable,” Dr. Morgan explained.

The staff at Morgan Orthodontics includes orthodontists Dr. Laura Morgan and Dr. Becky Trieu, three front desk personnel willing to help with any needs, five certified chairside orthodontic assistants to comfortably help at each appointment, a new patient coordinator to answer all patient questions and a marketing director. “We’ve built a staff whose goal is to provide excellent customer satisfaction. Our team is fantastic! We treat patients the way we would like ourselves or our loved ones to be treated,” Dr. Morgan said.

“I’ve been in private practice in Waxahachie since 1998,” she added. “I started with my first patient while working in a

rented office on Water Street. In 2010, construction on our current location was completed, and we moved into our permanent home.”

While developing individual treatment plans for each patient can be challenging, Dr. Morgan finds joy in getting to know her patients and their families well over the course of treatment. “We develop great relationships with those who join our ‘Go MO’ orthodontic family,” she said.

The Go MO branding is evident in community volunteerism. “We donate to The Salvation Army’s Angel Tree; Ellis County Habitat for Humanity’s Festival of Trees; local school clubs and sports organizations; and truly enjoyed partnering this year with Kids Against Hunger, sponsored by First United Methodist Church,” Dr. Morgan said. Memberships include the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce and sustainer of Waxahachie Junior Service League. Morgan Orthodontics was recognized as a Partner in Education by Waxahachie ISD and has been named the newspaper’s Dentist of the Year.

Dr. Morgan grew up in Lubbock. She graduated from West Texas State University (now West Texas A&M University), where she played basketball and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in biology. Valedictorian of her dental school class at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, Dr. Morgan furthered her studies earning orthodontic certification at the Medical College of Virginia. She met her husband of 20 years, Mark, while in dental school. The couple are parents of three teenagers. “We’re just a little busy these days,” Dr. Morgan quipped. “We support our kids in their activities, and I enjoy working out and scrapbooking.”

Embarrassed by her teeth as a child, Dr. Morgan wore braces during her youth and, again, for orthognathic surgery as an adult. “That experience helped give me my smile, so I trained to do that for others,” she explained, “because everyone deserves a confident smile.” **NOW**

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TravelNOW

Cultural Attraction

— By Andrea Panozzo

For a slice of Americana, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, beckons Texans with family fun, outdoor adventure, live music, shopping, museums and history. Enriched culture, ever-growing culinary and brewery scenes, beautiful art and a variety of sports entertainment are all within visitors' reach. Driving northeast from Fort Worth will take almost 16 hours and about \$150 in fuel. Or, the Eastern Iowa Airport is 9 miles from Cedar Rapids, where cultural immersion is easy, thanks to a community proud of its heritage.

For many years, Czech was commonly spoken in Cedar Rapids, and today, more people of Czech ancestry live in Cedar Rapids than in any other city in the world, except for the Czech capital of Prague. It is a proud aspect of Cedar Rapids culture, and the history is expressed through extraordinary

exhibitions and experiences at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library.

The museum isn't the only representation of the Czech culture. Czech Village/New Bohemia Main Street District was voted Best Cultural Attraction by the *Corridor Business Journal* in 2017 and was a 2016 Great American Main Street Award semi-finalist. It is home not only to incredible artists and world-class museums, but also some of the best dining, shopping and entertainment in the area.

One fantastic shopping area in the district is NewBo City Market, a year-round indoor farmers market. Visitors can taste local cuisine and brews and support local artistry, all while experiencing a unique and fun atmosphere.

One of Cedar Rapids' most famous local artists, Grant

Wood, got his start here. Cedar Rapids Museum of Art holds the largest collection of his works. The classic art piece, *American Gothic*, was painted in his studio home in 1930. His studio is located near downtown Cedar Rapids and is available to visitors on weekends from April through December.

Another historic landmark is the Brucemore Estate, former home to several history makers who played a large role in Cedar Rapids' factory industries, including Quaker Oats. The estate was donated to the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1981, and today 43,000 people are drawn to the site every year. Brucemore Estate hosts signature events for the public, like the poolside Tahitian Party, Balloon Glow in the summer, Bruceorchestra in the fall and A Modern Salon in the winter. The house and incredible gardens are open for tours throughout the year.

Hundreds of other parks allow for escape into nature. Indian Creek Nature Center's grounds and trails are explorable at no charge. Families can hike scenic trails, see a concert in the amphitheater, participate in a yoga class or let their children play in the outdoor classroom.

Throughout spring and summer, visitors can join residents cheering on their Cedar Rapids Kernels baseball team, the Minor League affiliate of the Minnesota Twins, playing at the single A level. Fans get to experience firsthand future MLB talent, as top prospects from all over the world play for and against the Kernels. There are also hockey, indoor football and soccer teams competing in the winter.

At the end of full days, calm and cozy lodgings abound. People who need the comfort of a hotel will find every national chain has a key just for them. And those towing an RV will rest securely at campsites nestled close to the Cedar River. **NOW**

For more information or to plan a trip to Cedar Rapids, visit gocedarrapids.com.

Photos by Liz Zabel, GO Cedar Rapids.

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RV There Yet?

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

You may be thinking about getting a new ride before your family heads on its ultimate adventure. Whether you just need a vehicle to get to your destination, or you are thinking of having the RV experience this year, here are some tips to keep in mind before you head to the dealership.

The Best Type for You

- *Compact vs. Roomy* — If you are just looking at getting a simple sedan, the main decision is two-door or four-door. If you have kids, a compact car with limited legroom in the back may not be the best choice. But, if you just need something to get to work and back, a compact car is often cheaper and offers better fuel efficiency.

- *Minivan vs. SUV* — If you have a big family or tend

to drive a lot of people around town, you probably need something that seats seven or eight people. While minivans are sometimes thought of as uncool, their sliding doors and lower access make them more convenient than bulkier sports-utility vehicles. If you need the space but not necessarily the seating, an SUV or even a pickup truck may be the ideal choice for you.

If the Car is More Than a Car

While alternative accommodation options like Airbnb have given travelers more choices than ever, many people still love the freedom of having a vehicle that doubles as lodging. If you are looking for the perfect RV, here are the questions you should ask:

- *Pull vs. Drive* — While there are many specific choices, the first decision to make is whether you want something

that attaches to a vehicle, or if you want to buy a larger unit that is a vehicle in and of itself. Motor homes vary in size, but they are self-contained houses that sleep any number of people, while fifth wheels and bumper pulls attach to trucks, and even small cars, in some cases, and tend to be less expensive on average.

• *Fifth Wheel vs. Bumper Tow* — Fifth wheel RVs are a specific type of trailer that use a sophisticated system to hitch to the entire bed of a pickup truck. Because of their attachment method, they tend to be bigger than other towable RVs. But there are varied sizes available for those who want to tow from a bumper hitch. Some of the smallest pop-up campers can actually trail a sedan, though most RVs will still require a decent-sized truck for the towing power they afford.

• *A vs. B vs. C* — If you decide to go the route of a true motor home, there are three classes, A, B and C. Type A is the largest and, understandably, the most expensive, but it offers more sleeping accommodations. Type B is essentially a larger version of a minivan, with sleeping enough for a small family. Type C is smaller than type A but, typically, offers sleeping space over the driver's area, similar to the way type B does.

While there are no special license requirements for operating an RV, you will want to practice driving such a large vehicle before heading out on the open road for the first time. If you opted against a motor home, be sure you have all the necessary hitches, light hookups and the registration needed to tow from your vehicle. This summer could be the perfect time to take your family on the road trip of a lifetime, so be prepared and get the perfect vehicle to meet your family's needs. **NOW**



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Did You Know ...

Texas Wildflowers Are Always Blooming?

— By Derek Jones

Driving through Texas in spring, it is not uncommon to find vehicles parked along the roadside and families taking pictures among the waving seas of bluebonnets and Indian paintbrushes. Snapping photos among the wildflowers, particularly bluebonnets, is a favorite Texas tradition.

The city of Ennis, south of Dallas, was designated as the home of the Official Texas Bluebonnet Trail in 1997. The trail itself is a mapped series of country roads, which takes the driver through 40 miles of fields covered



in bluebonnets. Whether viewing bluebonnets along the official trail, or just traveling between cities and towns, there is no shortage of opportunities to view these amazing wildflowers during springtime. As the bluebonnets emerge from their winter slumber, families will once again flock to these roadside destinations in hopes of the perfect spring photo.

The bluebonnet has been the official state flower of Texas ever since it was adopted by the state legislature in 1901. It was not until the creation of the Texas Highway Department in 1917, now known as Texas Department of Transportation, that there was a systematic program to ensure the sustainability of bluebonnets and other Texas wildflowers near roadways. According to TxDOT, part of the conservation program involves prohibiting mowing alongside the highways until wildflower season is over.

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TxDOT has expanded its wildflower program even further, now buying and sowing 30,000 pounds of wildflower seed each year. Thanks to these initiatives, Texas wildflower enthusiasts will be able to enjoy the spring bluebonnets and wildflowers alongside the highways for generations to come.

TxDOT has been instrumental in preserving Texas wildflowers, but perhaps no other name is as synonymous with wildflowers as that of former First Lady of the United States, Lady Bird Johnson. As First Lady, she was able to apply her passion for beautifying the nation's highways and cities and political influence to help pass the Highway Beautification Act in 1965. Because of her influence and involvement, the bill is informally referred to as, "Lady Bird's Bill." Thankfully, she had the foresight to know making the nation a place of beauty also makes it a better place to live.

Part of making the nation a place of beauty requires focusing on native wildflowers and creating environments in which they can flourish. After her term as First Lady ended, Mrs. Johnson returned to Texas. Living in Austin, she partnered with actress Helen Hayes in 1982

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to create the National Wildflower Research Center. Later, in 1997, the center was renamed The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Through the efforts of the research center, native plants and flowers of Texas are being restored in areas where they had been wiped out due to development. Today, The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center stands as a legacy to a woman who devoted her life to adding a bit of color and beauty to the Texas landscape.

Although Texas may be famous for its fields of bluebonnets and Indian paintbrushes, the state is also home to many other unique wildflowers. For example, another



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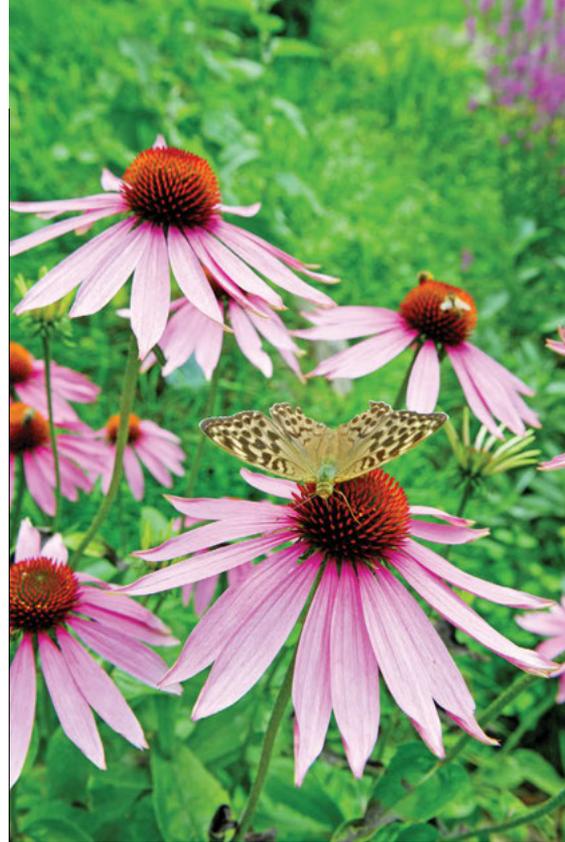
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favorite is the sunflower. The contrast of the bright yellow against a clear, blue Texas sky creates a breathtaking image and, like the bluebonnets, is worthy of family photographs. As with bluebonnets, these Texas favorites reach their peak in the spring before the heat from the harsh Texas sun withers them. Whether a favorite color is blue, red, yellow or a combination of these, the wildflowers of Texas do not disappoint.

For Texans who truly love wildflowers and have a discerning eye, spring is not the only time worthy of viewing. During any season or month, there are a variety of wildflowers blooming and flourishing. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center website is a valuable tool for finding information about these lesser known wildflowers. For example, the website lists 20 wildflowers growing during the freezing temperatures of January and 24 examples growing during the heat of July.

The extremes of Texas weather only serve to create great diversity among the wildflowers. Institutions such as The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the Dallas



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Arboretum and Botanical Garden and Fort Worth Botanic Garden offer exceptional spots for year-round viewing of wildflowers and plants found in Texas and serve as hubs for information about native plant life.

The extremes of weather contribute to the wide range of wildflowers in Texas, as does the state's landscape. Woodlands, prairies, coastal regions and desert can all be found in this great state, and each region serves as a perfect environment for acclimated wildflowers. For example, The Lady Bird Wildflower Center has a state-by-state listing of wildflowers. Most of them are listed within a single state. Texas, however, is listed by six distinct geographic divisions. The environment of the region determines which wildflowers grow. From lush environments to harsh landscapes, Texas wildflowers demonstrate their ability to thrive and adapt.

Wildflowers are a true Texas treasure. The variety found in the Lone Star State will satisfy even the most die-hard enthusiast. **NOW**

Editor's Note: For more information, visit www.txdot.gov and www.wildflower.org.

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Zoomed In: Ashton Guevara

By Sandra Strong

Ashton Guevara is very much a people person. As an employee at Roland's Nursery, he takes great pride in helping customers find just what they're looking for. "I like the atmosphere here," he said, referring to Roland's. "I love getting my hands dirty. I wouldn't trade my job here for anything."

Saying Ashton is busy would be a gross understatement. He was born and raised in Red Oak, graduating from Red Oak High School. He works full time at Roland's, he's a member of the band, Limerick, and he's a student at The University of Texas at Arlington where he's majoring in liberal arts and communication. "I enjoy people," he admitted. "Everyone has a different perspective, and that's what makes everyone I meet unique."



Perot Family Game Night is a big success at Pettigrew Academy.



Jennifer and Mikell Flachman of Maypearl are all smiles and feeling relaxed after spending time with Teresa Morrow and Dr. Bethany Barnes at Body in Balance.



Everyone is a winner at the first ECCHO Kids Baking Championship where children from Ellis County put their baking skills to the test in a friendly competition.



Waxahachie Nissan celebrates the opening of its new facility with a ribbon cutting by both the Waxahachie and Midlothian Chambers of Commerces.



Longtime friends Kristin Bato, Gregory, Priscilla and Evalynne Lee and Jonathan Alvarado enjoy a beautiful day at Scarborough Renaissance Festival in their steampunk costumes.



Tina Boblman sets up shop during the weekend opener of the Farmers Market to plein air paint.



Santana, Karla and Marcos Marroquin offer fresh greens, carrots and homemade beeswax at the Farmers Market.



Lorelei Shipko looks for evidence at an event she attended with her dad.

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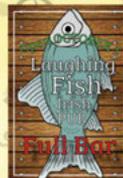
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Calendar

June:

1

Gingerbread Golf Classic: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club. Call (972) 937-2390 for more details.

2

Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-in: 8:00-11:00 a.m., Mid-Way Regional Airport. The event includes classic airplanes and fighters, helicopter rides, CAF vintage airplane rides, fly-overs, Midlothian Classic Wheels, Gold Wing Road Riders, live music, children's activities and more. Breakfast tickets are \$6 for adults and children 8 and above. Children under 8 are \$3. Parking is free. For more information, call (972) 923-0080 or visit www.mid-wayregional.com.



Waxahachie Symphony Association presents Music Under the Oaks: 7:00 p.m., on the lawn at Sims Library. Free family POPS concert. Lawn chairs, blankets and picnics are encouraged.

O'Reilly TOPMA Outlaw Pro Mod Series: Texas Motorplex. For more information, visit www.texasmotorplex.com.

2, 3

Gingerbread Trail Historic Home Tour: sponsored by the Ellis County Museum. For more information, call (972) 937-0681.

4 — 8

Twilight Cub Scout Camp: 6:00-9:00 p.m., Ellis County Expo Center. \$79 for early signup, \$89 for late signup. For more information, contact Neil Sims at (817) 271-2054.



6, 20

Survivor Trail, Surviving Cancer Together: 6:30-8:00 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County. There are new topics presented at each of the meetings. Call (972) 935-9801 for topic titles, more information and directions to the church.

8

Ultimate Street Car: Texas Motorplex. For more information, visit www.texasmotorplex.com.

9

BOGO 2nd Saturday: participating downtown merchants.

Book Signing for *Operation Caregivers/ Life with Dementia* by Alex Allred: 10:00 a.m., Isle of Watercrest Memory Care and Assisted Living. A representative from the Alzheimer's Organization will be on hand to answer questions.

Junk in the Trunk: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., downtown Waxahachie.

Manufacturer Series: Texas Motorplex. For more information, visit www.texasmotorplex.com.

9, 23

In the Music Room Studio & Listening Room Radio Show Tapings: 7:00 p.m., **June 9**, Leo Hull & The Texas Blues Machine; **June 23**, Heather Little & Meredith Crawford, 3103 Sanger Creek Way. For more information or to make reservations, call (972) 938-9990 or email rsvp@inthemusicroom.com.

12

Ellis Co. Opioid & Heroin Town Hall: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. Brunch provided. Limited seating. Must register to attend. Free registration from 8:30-9:00 a.m. For more information, call Drug Prevention Resources – IMPACT Communities at (972) 937-1531.

14

2nd Thursday Ladies Night Out: 5:00-8:00 p.m., downtown Waxahachie with participating merchants.



16

Waxahachie Craft Beer Festival: 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., downtown Waxahachie. For more information, visit www.downtownwaxahachie.com.

Annual Juneteenth Celebration hosted by Waxahachie Branch NAACP 6240: 11:00 a.m., Lee Penn Park. There will be food, fun and fellowship. Everyone is invited to the free event.

22 — 24

Lonestar Summer Shootout: Texas Motorplex. For more information, visit www.texasmotorplex.com.

23

Waxahachie Cow Creek Country Classic Bike Ride: sponsored by the Waxahachie Rotary Club. For more details, visit www.cowcreekcountryclassic.org.



30

Waxahachie Gun & Knife Show: Waxahachie Civic Center.

July:

1

Waxahachie Gun & Knife Show: Waxahachie Civic Center.

3, 4

Crape Myrtle Festival & Parade: **July 3**, concert and fireworks, Waxahachie Sports Complex; **July 4**, parade, downtown. For more details, visit www.waxahachiecvb.com.

Ongoing:

Third Mondays

Ellis County Veterans Networking Group: 6:00 p.m., Ryan's Buffet,

Waxahachie. Come join the group for dinner and listen to what the guest speaker for the evening has to share. For more information, call Mike Lamb at (214) 763-0378 or visit vetsnetgrp@att.net.

Fourth Mondays

Texas Master Naturalists Indian Trails Chapter: 6:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie. The program begins at 7:00 p.m. For more information about the group, visit www.txmn.org/indiantrail.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to sandra.strong@nowmagazines.com.

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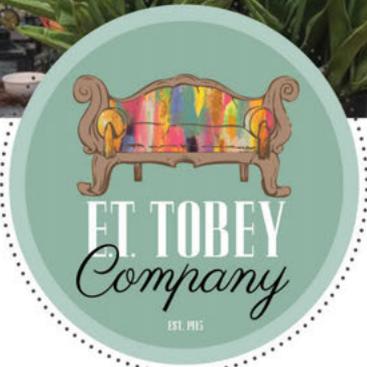
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Some simple foot care tips include:

- Wear thick, absorbent socks (acrylic instead of cotton).
- Dry feet thoroughly after bathing, making sure to dry between toes. Use powder before putting on shoes.

- Nails should be cut regularly, straight across the toe.
- Bunions, hammertoes or any other serious foot problems should be evaluated by a foot and ankle surgeon.

The right shoe is also important for healthy walking. The ideal walking shoe should be stable from side to side and well-cushioned, and it should enable you to walk smoothly. Many running shoes will fit the bill. There are also shoes made especially for walking. Walking shoes tend to be slightly less cushioned, yet not as bulky, and lighter than running shoes. Whether a walking or running shoe, the shoes need to feel stable and comfortable.

Warming up exercises to help alleviate any muscle stiffness or pulled muscles are also advised before walking. Loosening up the heel cords (Achilles and calf) and thigh muscles before a walk is especially effective. If you're not accustomed to long walks, start slowly and rest if your feet start hurting. And above all, have fun. **NOW**

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