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July 2010

*The Blalack*

## **LEGACY LIVES ON**

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*From Trash to  
Musical Treasure*

*Getting Serious  
About Play*

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## On the Cover

Brian and Caroline Ford are right at home on Marvin Street.

Photo by Shana Woods.

# Editor's Note

*Happy Independence Day!*

So many things in this life are continually changing, but one thing remains the same — our freedom. I extend heartfelt thanks to all those who have given their lives and to all those who are currently serving in the military. If not for their calling to serve, I dare ask, what would life be like in America today?

The Independence Day holiday is so much more than parades, picnics and fireworks after the sun sets. It should also be a time when we stop what we are doing and thank all those who made our freedoms possible. They are our mothers and fathers, our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters and many times our best friends. Without their love of country, we might be hard-pressed to just be able to spend time with family and friends or to freely fly the American flag.

This Fourth of July, I encourage you to take a moment to remember!

Sandra Strong  
WaxahachieNOW Editor



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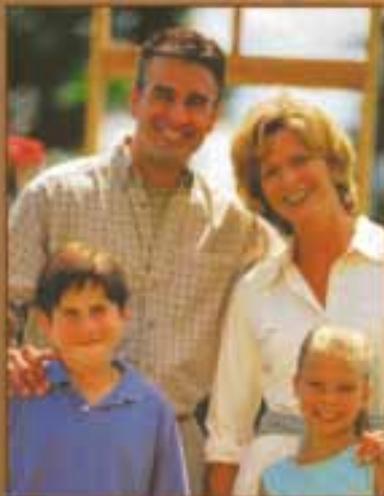
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Beautiful historic home with two master suites and a secondary bedroom. Original hardwood floors and historic brick. Backyard is an oasis featuring grand covered patio, mature pecan trees and lots of shade. Call Chris Oliver at 972-921-6797.



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**“His zeal for life is something I’ll never forget. It’s another thing I’d like to keep alive.”**

# The Blalack Legacy LIVES ON

— By Sandra Strong

*The Fourth of July holiday has always been a special time at the Blalack home. It used to represent a time when the late Ken Blalack would reminisce about the 13 months he spent as a prisoner of war during his tour in Vietnam as a helicopter gunman. “He was the only one from his platoon that lived to celebrate the holiday,” his daughter Emily Blalack said. “He was sent home before his tour of*

*duty was complete because of his POW status.” The Fourth of July Parade would be the start to an all-day party celebrating life, liberty and happiness.*

Now, the Fourth of July holiday is celebrated for all the same reasons aforementioned; but also in loving memory of a faithful husband and father. The legacy he started just three years prior to his death in 2008 is what this story is all about. It is a story about Emily, who wants to remember the things that made her dad happy. Since she is the only child, she is the only one

who can carry on the legacy her father started. “I remember him leaving the house for the parade hours before the rest of the family woke up,” Emily said. “He showed up early so he could give rides to the little kids. His zeal for life is something I’ll never forget. It’s another thing I’d like to keep alive.”

He left home with one of his three tractors — the John Deere Model A Poppin’ Johnny, the Farmall B or the Long tractor. Ken did not leave the house in a car; he used a pickup truck and trailer, and one time he even drove one of the tractors, which had been decorated for the holiday, from home to town because it was too large to fit on the trailer. “He had refurbished all three and he was so very proud of them,” Emily shared. “The annual parade provided an avenue for him to show off what he’d done in the refurbishing process. He just loved decorating them. He took great pride in his work and it showed.” After each parade, Ken would come home and park all three tractors in a line so they could be admired by those who attended the after-the-parade parties.



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Emily remembers the process all too well. "Dad would start getting ready several weeks in advance. He'd go to work, come home and mow," she said, mentioning that his mowing business was a part-time job he thoroughly enjoyed. "Then he'd work late into the night preparing 'his ride' for the parade. One year he even repainted the work tractor [the Long] red, white and blue to give the tractor the overall Fourth of July effect." Ken rode in three consecutive parades, taking first place in the "Other Motorized Vehicle" category all three times. Each of his three tractors earned him a blue ribbon. He would sit tall on his tractor in Hee Haw-like overalls and a patriotic red, white and blue shirt. The Uncle Sam hat stuffed with tissue paper topped off his holiday ensemble. "He loved getting dressed almost as much as he loved preparing the tractor," Emily added.

Since driving a decorated tractor in the local parade was a family affair prior to his passing, Emily thought it best to keep the legacy going. She bought a patriotic shirt at Old Navy, donned a pair of red, white and blue flip-flops and painted her nails red, white and blue for the special occasion. "My dad would probably have frowned on the flip-flops," she added with a laugh.



Entering the parade was the very least Emily could do to keep Ken's memory and spirit alive. "It's a tribute to my dad," she said, with emotion in her voice. "It honors all that the Fourth of July holiday meant to him." Because it meant so much to him, it now means even more to Emily and Ken's wife, Sheila, who has helped Emily in the preparation both years just like she did with Ken.

Emily decided to drive the Long since it was the "tractor she grew up on." "I

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felt like it was the safest and easiest to drive,” she explained. “It was also the one I road on all the time with my dad when I was a little girl. It has a side tool box next to the driver’s seat that I sat on.”

The difference between Emily and her dad is preparation. Emily knew he worked hard on his parade entry, but she never realized just how difficult it was going to be. She did not fully understand what all it would take to get her entry parade-ready. “He always checked the trailer early, whereas I didn’t really take notice of it until the morning of the parade,” she confessed, referring to the 2009 parade. “It had a flat tire. It ended

**Since winning third place honors last year, she is hopeful that the second time will be the charm she is yearning for.**



up being what dad always called ‘a Ken Blalack moment.’” With help from family, the flat tire was changed. “The spare was too large for the trailer, but we made it work all the way to the staging area at College Street Church of Christ,” she said, now able to laugh at the memory. “I prayed all the way. I made it and that’s all that mattered.”

Emily also thought she was mentally prepared for the task at hand that first year. “I thought it took less work. Dad just made it all look so easy,” she said. “And I also didn’t realize all the work my mom put into getting the tractor parade-ready each year.”

Needless to say, Emily cried bittersweet tears throughout the parade. She did not fully understand what was

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going on until she passed the first group of people lining the roadside. “As I passed, the crowd went crazy,” she said. “They screamed, ‘Your dad would be so proud!’” The poster she proudly hung from the back of the tractor was the cause of the heartfelt responses. “It was a large photo of my dad that read, ‘The Blalack Legacy Lives On,’” Emily stated. “There were very few dry eyes in the crowd that day.”



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Once again this year, Emily decided to drive the Long. Since winning third place honors last year, she is hopeful that the second time will be the charm she is yearning for. “I’ll have more balloons and streamers. The decorations will be more elaborate,” she said, disclosing her plan on winning the coveted first-place ribbon in memory of her dad. “I might even wear his Uncle Sam hat!” **NOW**



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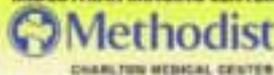
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# Cheerful Harmony

— By Janice C. Johnson



## *At Home With Brian and Caroline Ford*

*Brian and Caroline Ford have carved out a place where old and new work together in cheerful harmony. In 2001, the newlywed couple was living in Dallas where Brian worked in banking and Caroline taught. Caroline had grown up in the East Texas town of Henderson and was enjoying city life in Dallas. But Brian, a Waxabachie native, wanted to return to his hometown. He was delighted, then, to get a phone call advising him of an opening at Citizens National Bank (CNB). "We had only been married for two weeks," he said. "Caroline probably thought it was some sort of plot."*

Brian got the job and the Fords started scouting Waxahachie for a house. Brian said, "I was raised along the Gingerbread Trail, and we liked the older houses — but we needed one that was already fully restored."

"We aren't the handiest people," Caroline agreed. "We wanted a house with all the basics in good shape, so we could just make cosmetic changes."



When some local friends told them that the old Laswell house was on the market, the Fords went to see it. They took one look into the wide hallway and knew they had found the right place. "We had just happened to tell those friends what we were looking for, and they just happened to hear about this home being up for sale," Caroline said. "It's like it was meant to be."

The 1910 home had been in the Laswell family until 1999, and the couple who bought it then had done all the structural and major restoration. The three-bedroom, two-bath home has a den, three of its five original fireplaces and a large living room that had been reclaimed from part of the front porch. A detached garage, added in about 2000, also houses a workshop.

Meanwhile, Caroline had also started working at Citizens National Bank. Even with two full-time careers, she and Brian have found time to make some changes to their home. The last owners restored the house with a Victorian-style interior. Since



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buying it, the Fords have swapped wallpaper for texture and paint and created a timeless, tailored look with a contemporary panache of their own. They painted the centrally located dining room all red. Dark-red accessories and white trim throughout the house tie the other rooms into the whole, while a palette of strong, but compatible colors gives each room its own personality.

Caroline insisted, "I'm not much of a decorator. The bold wall color hides that." For decorating ideas, she keeps a file of photos clipped from magazines. She and Brian brought one such idea to life when they opened up the butler's pantry and turned it into a breakfast nook. A built-in table and benches under a window fill the west end of the narrow room. Two large paintings of old-fashioned bicycles, the work of Caroline's mother, hang on one of its sunny yellow walls, brightening the view from the serving window in the kitchen opposite.



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*Since buying it, the Fords have swapped wallpaper for texture and paint and created a timeless, tailored look with a contemporary panache of their own.*



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While the Fords like modern-day conveniences, they want to keep the century-old home's charm and character. The stove, probably a 1950s model, works so well that they decided to just keep it. They also have some antique furniture, mostly handed down from family members: Duncan Phyfe dining table and chairs and a treadle sewing machine that stands in the wide hallway. Caroline uses accessories to enhance that feeling of going back in time. For

example, the framed handkerchief that hangs in the master bedroom was part of her baptismal outfit. "I wore that same handkerchief under my wedding dress," she said.

Brian and Caroline also travel backward through time to tell the story of how they met and married. They got acquainted and began dating through mutual friends in 1999, when both lived in Dallas. But they had also met briefly at Baylor University, during Caroline's freshman year. Brian went back still further: "Actually, our first encounter was when I was in high school; Henderson and Waxahachie were in the playoffs. I was on the team and played against Caroline's brother. When we started dating, the first

thing Caroline's dad did was get out the tape of that game."

Since then, the couple has grown into a family. Gavin, age 3, has his own football-themed corner room, with windows along two sides. Baby brother Carter's room has a masculine green and dark-brown color scheme. Carter has not yet chosen a career, but Gavin is anxious to follow in his Granddad Lamar Ford's footsteps and become a firefighter. "Now," Brian said, "we're trying to figure out how to fit a



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*Gavin, age 3, has his own football-themed cornerroom, with windows along two sides.*

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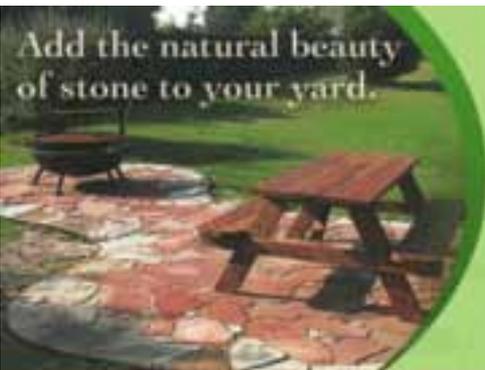
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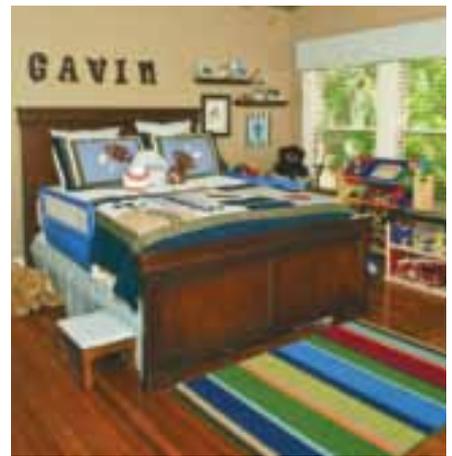
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third bathroom into the house.”

Brian currently manages CNB’s loan department, while Caroline is director of marketing. Caroline said, “We still get along and love each other after six years of working together.”

“Ever since we met in Dallas, we’ve been inseparable,” Brian added.

The couple shares an interest in civic organizations. Both are active in the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce; Brian serves on its executive board. Caroline is in Rotary Club, and they attend First United Methodist Church. But their main focus



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is their family. Brian said that the purpose behind their community involvement is to make Waxahachie a better place for their children. “We waited five years to have kids,” Caroline said, “and now I can’t imagine it any other way.” She has stepped back from some of her outside activities so she can be home with Gavin and Carter.

Brian and Caroline do enjoy some separate pursuits — Caroline, a runner, participated in the 2008 New York Marathon. She and her friends are always training for one race or another. Brian, on the other hand, enjoys hunting. During

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November, he may often be found at his deer lease in West Texas.

The home has seen many changes over its first century. A laundry and mudroom in the back of the house were added onto the original structure some time ago. “The ‘mudroom’ is really kind of a ‘sign room,’” Brian said. He indicated the old bank and Baylor University signs hanging alongside such whimsical slogans as “Hard work never hurt anyone but why take the chance?” But some of the original windows and hardwood floors remain. “Oh, and here’s another original thing,” Caroline said, pointing to two framed landscapes hanging in the living room. “The seller told us that if we bought the house we had to keep these two pictures. They have always hung in the house — ever since 1910, when it was built.” While staying true to its history and tradition, Caroline said that the house is still evolving. “It’s a reflection of us.”

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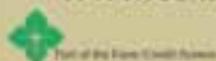
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*Trey Mize, Brooke Rogers and Mindy and Chase Mize pose in period garb during Scarborough Renaissance Festival*



*The Davila family enjoys the day with a picnic at Getzendaner Park.*



*William Larson from Troy, Texas, paints roses during the Ellis County Art Association plein-air event.*



*Alison, Debbie, Piper, Aleta and Lacey are all smiles at the Clinique Makeup Event at Belk.*



*Ginger Brown picks up a movie from RedBox.*

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*Students from Molly McInnis' third grade class "monkey around" during their end-of-the-year class picnic.*



*The Fellowship Class from First Baptist Church enjoy their monthly luncheon at Tuscan Slice.*



*Surprise guest Roger Staubach speaks to a large crowd gathered for the opening of the Ellis County Courts and Administration Building and the City of Waxahachie Parking Garage.*



*Mike Dickey and Kevin McDonnell enjoy the Mid-Way Regional Airport Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-in.*



*Chamber members enjoy a preview of Nunsensations, the Vegas Revue! at a recent Lunch Bunch networking event at the Texas Theater.*



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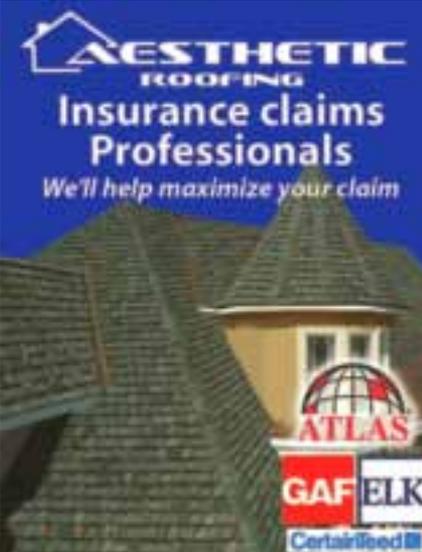
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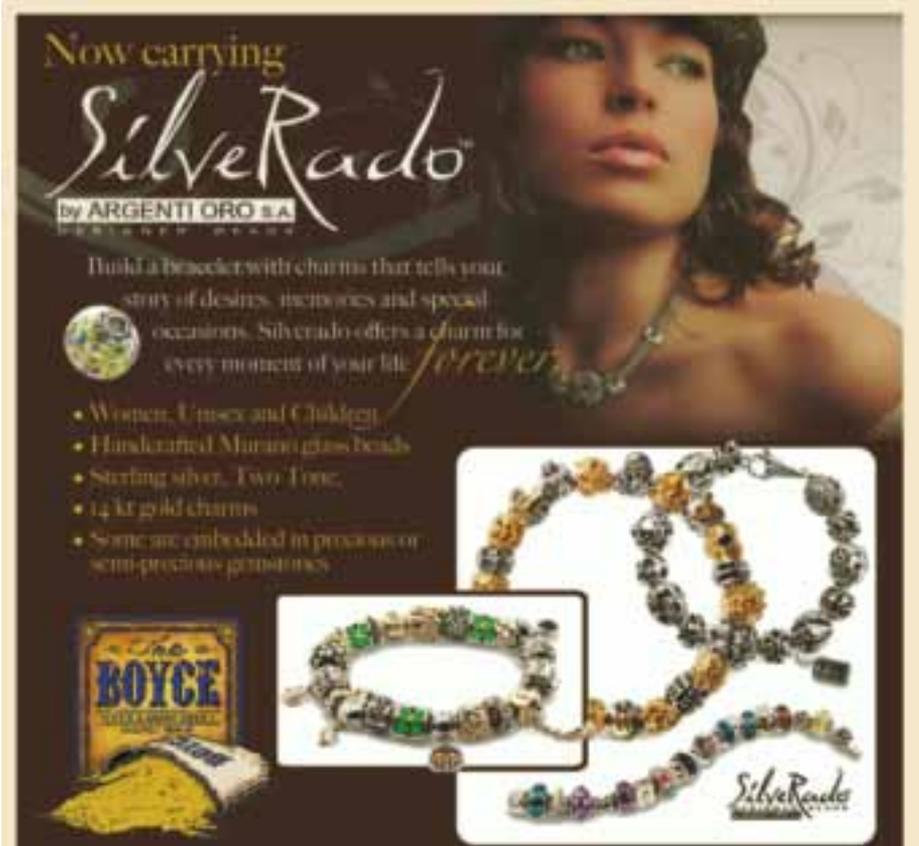
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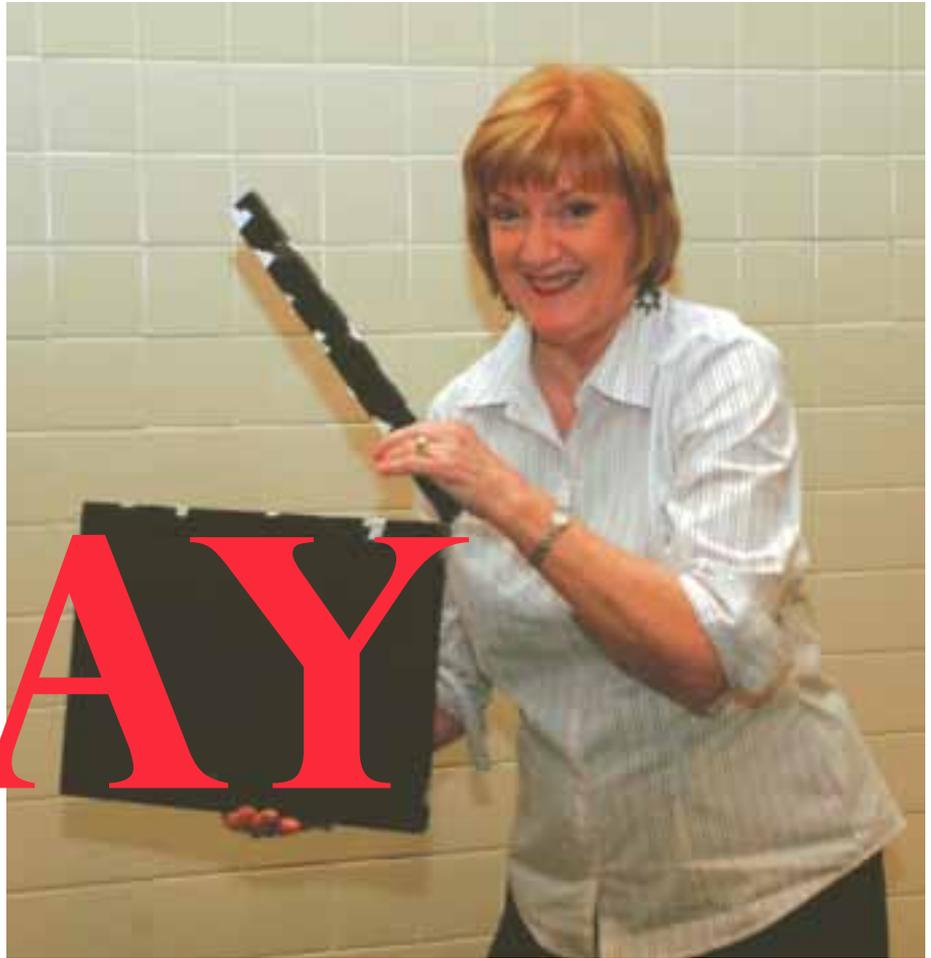


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# GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT

# PLAY

— By Sandra Strong



As an educator and lover of the arts, Gail Harrell quickly realized something was missing when she moved to Waxahachie in 1995. “There was really nothing aside from school and extracurricular athletic activities available to children,” Gail said. “Once the local skating rink was sold and turned into a funeral home, the kids began to notice the lack of things to do, too.”

As Gail took on her current position as the Waxahachie Independent School District (WISD) choral director, an

idea began to form in the back of her mind. “The series of events leading to the formation of ECCT [Ellis County Children’s Theater] began when an Ennis mom called and asked if I’d give her daughter voice lessons,” Gail remembered. “Once the lessons started, I got connected with Tina Autry, the young girl’s aunt, who worked with the Bartlesville, Oklahoma Children’s Theater.”

Andy Reynolds, the WISD drama director, and Gail had been including

children in productions since 2007, and this helped foster the idea to form an actual theater. “We quickly both agreed that a children’s theater would be a wonderful idea for the community,” she stated. Gail looks back with a smile as she fondly remembers the first musical presented that involved “upcoming theater kids” and WHS teachers. “The musical was *Honk*,” she said, “and all the kids were frogs.”

Gail’s new friend, Tina, was interested in the project. All three of them seemed



to want the same thing — a musical theater that would offer the arts to children of all ages. The chain of events took another wonderful twist following an additional phone call from Gail's Ennis voice student. "She told me her Aunt Tina was moving to Waxahachie," Gail said. "Tina and I sat around my kitchen table and brainstormed for hours over the possibilities of forming a musical theater for children." It was during this meeting that ECCT was born. "Tina was able to obtain a copy of the Bartlesville, Oklahoma Children's

**“After a great deal of prayer, sweat, tears and more prayer, sponsors from the community came forward in very big ways.”**

Theater's bylaws, so we'd have a place to start," Gail explained. "Then she went one step further. Tina suggested we invite the nationally renowned Missoula CT to come to Ellis County. This proved to be a monumental first step in spreading the word. You see, the troupe comes to town with only props and all the items necessary to present a musical. They are missing the most important thing — the children — those who become the actors and actresses of the show to be presented. "The community furnishes the kids," Gail added.

To shorten a rather lengthy tale, it cost \$5,000.00 to get the troupe here. After a great deal of prayer, sweat, tears and more prayer, sponsors from the community came forward in very big ways. "CVS Pharmacy called to invite the WHS choir out to sing for them," Gail said. "During this visit, they offered to raise the funds we needed to get the troupe here. It was truly a God thing." Thanks to CVS Pharmacy, Attorneys Wray & Willett, and many, many other

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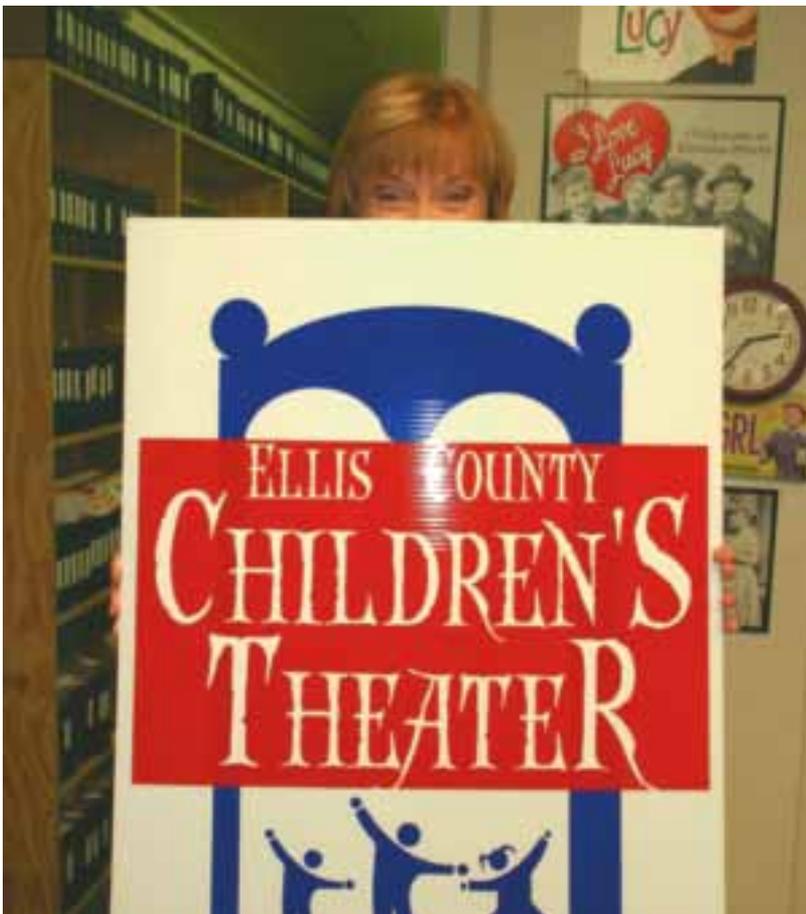
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local organizations, businesses and individuals, the ECCT was able to gain its 501(c) (3) nonprofit status, while also presenting their first musical to the public. "It was bittersweet," Gail said. The musical, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, called for 60 cast members. "We were worried about how many children would show up for the audition," Gail stated. "We opened the doors to well over 100 kids. We had to watch the faces of those who didn't make it. We vowed then and there to never turn a child away again."

Gail's reasoning behind musical theater actually has more to do with building self-value and imagination than it does with the overall musicality. "I know it sounds cliché," she admitted, "but we are re-teaching people how to be imaginative. We are teaching them how to get out of their comfort zone and think outside the box. Music theater is just the vehicle we use to develop talents within each child to help them become stronger individuals. We're creating tomorrow's creative leaders."

ECCT starts with 5-year-old children and offers something for everyone until they graduate from high school. "The goal is to capture kids when they're young," she said, "and take them down the self-esteem path that includes growing their imaginations. Back when I was a child, all it took was a stick and broom to become a queen of the universe!"

Last year, ECCT offered a two-week camp and one musical. Added interest has caused an increase in opportunities this year. They offered a full fall schedule of events, and are now gearing up for the rest of the summer as they prepare for *Boudreaux the Lake Dog*, a musical Gail and her daughter, Robin Benson, wrote in its entirety. Robin will travel from New York to direct this production.

"Surely we do not want to become a society of robotic individuals who are unable to connect and create with one another," Gail said. "Like I always say, it's time to get serious about play. Oh, and by the way, I'll see you on stage." **NOW**

*Editor's Note: For more information on Ellis County Children's Theater, visit [www.ecctheater.org](http://www.ecctheater.org) or call Gail at (972) 923-9744.*

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# just do it!

— By Teresa Maddison

“If you want something, you have to work hard at it,” stated avid soccer player, Juan Anaya, passionately. “I started working at 6 years old to have a little money — to help my parents.” Originally from Mexico City, Juan was one of two boys and three girls. “Soccer started for me when I was 5 years old. No one would or could buy me soccer shoes, so that is why I started working,” Juan explained of his early jump into the working world. “Soccer is big in Mexico; people play in the streets until after dark. There’s not someone to buy you shoes whenever you need them. My



**“He took me aside and told me I could do it; that I just needed to work very hard.”**



first soccer shoes I bought when I was 16 years old and started playing for the big teams,” he said quietly in retrospect. “One of my friends took me to a semi-pro team, and I felt there was no way I could do it; it was very intimidating,” Juan paused and smiled. Then the coach told him something he would carry with him for the rest of his life, “He took me aside and told me I *could* do it; that I just

needed to work very hard. ‘Just do it!’” And he did.

“I played semi-pro for quite a while. When I told my Dad I wanted to move up to pro, he took me to Texas to get a good job and send money back to help out,” Juan stated. “At that point, I made a decision that the mission I was given to help my family was more important than going pro in soccer, so I left my dream

behind. Shortly thereafter, I met my wife and decided to make it work here.”

Juan then explained what he meant by “make it work here.” “I worked two jobs so my wife could go to school and get her degree; that was very important to me.” One might wonder what the most difficult situation was for Juan to overcome. “Learning English,” he answered. “I didn’t get to go to school when I got here, so I was determined to learn it on the job.” He continued in perfectly fluent English, “I just picked it up from everyone around me.”

Juan and his wife, Lucy, have two boys. “I have taught the boys to work hard,” Juan said passionately. “When they were 7, they were taught to get up early for school and make their own



lunch. They do their own laundry. They know how to cook. They clean their own rooms,” Juan stated simply, because, “It’s theirs, not mine.” He is ensuring that, “When they grow up, they will know how to do something.” Juan continued, “When they’re home, they’re not allowed to play their PlayStation®, computer, etc. until homework and chores are completely done.” He tells his boys what was told him all those years ago. “You have to work hard for whatever you want.”

Both boys play select soccer, a skill they came by naturally, it seems. In addition to Juan playing semi-pro, with plans for pro, “My brother plays soccer, too; and my dad used to play pro soccer in the Mexico City 2nd Pro Division.” He said he is hard in the sports, “The boys choose to run to stay in shape, but they don’t run with me because they know I’ll push them harder if I’m running with them.” He smiled, “It’s because I know what they can do.” Juan continued, “I would like to see my kids go to college

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and get the education I did not have.” As hard as he is about the sports, Juan stressed, “Make sure to always focus on school!”

Juan continued to play soccer throughout his years in Texas, as well. “I used to play forward; that is a fast and furious position! But now I play midfield, as it offers a better control of the game.” Though there are leagues for “over 30” players, “I still play with the

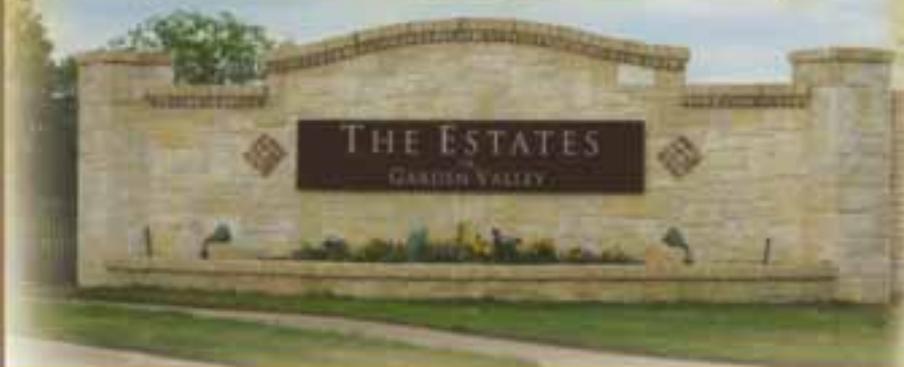


young kids — the 17- to 18-year-olds,” he laughed. “I just play smart; I make them run! I get the ball and then send it to the kids to run it in — that’s how I control the game.

“My wife always asks me when I am going to retire from soccer,” Juan said with a grin. “It’s become a little game we play. Six years ago when she first asked, I said that would be my last year. The next year, I played again.” Lucy would not be averted. “She kept asking. I said I would play until I finished my shoes, then I got new shoes, and work done on both knees.” Juan smiled. “Next year, next year ... it’s just something we say every year now.”

Juan would one day like to retire. “I have been at Applebee’s for 11 years; worked up from cook to kitchen manager. I love my job. I am trying to work to the top for my family,” Juan stated. When asked what he considered most important in a person’s character, Juan shared, “The desire to learn and to always do more than is asked. It’s hard, but it’s best to always give the most that you can. I want to keep moving up; learning everything I can. I just ... *do it!*” **NOW**

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# Doing It Jeanette's Way

*Jeanette's Custom Embroidery strives for excellence because excellence gives God the glory. — By Sandra Strong*

Jeanette Stoffregen, owner of Jeanette's Custom Embroidery, has always looked at her job as a ministry, one that parallels the words found in Colossians 3:17: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." "Our goal," she added, "is to produce professional quality at affordable prices. If something doesn't look right, we discard it and start over. Quality always comes first."

Quality started for Jeanette at a very young age. "I've been interested in sewing my whole life," she said. "I taught myself to sew at the age of 12." As grade school turned to high school, Jeanette had two "fantastic home economics

teachers," Mrs. Middleton and Mrs. Gray, who reinforced the skills she had taught herself. Beginning as a teenager and moving into young adulthood, new bride and mother of three daughters, Jeanette clocked many long hours at her sewing machine creating designs for herself and her children.

Sewing for others started one day on a trip to a local fabric store. "I would purchase material there," Jeanette said, further explaining that the shop's owner asked if she would be interested in sewing samples from patterns for her to display in the shop. "Of course, I said yes. I was told to choose the most expensive fabric, buttons and trim and sew the dress in a size that fit one of my

**From left:**

From left: Angela Pounds, Vicki Thompson, Michelle Glenn and Jeanette Stoffregen; six-head embroidery machine; a small sampling of t-shirts and ball caps.

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girls. The completed dress would hang in the store for 30 days, and then it was given back to me.”

Customers started asking if Jeanette would be interested in sewing for them; anything from new clothing items to alterations. “I started sewing for others about the same time I became a single parent,” she remembered. “I probably did 90 percent of the alterations in town.” So much so, that she was able to turn her love of sewing into a home business, Jeanette’s Alterations, which fortunately supported her family of four.

It was not long before people started asking Jeanette if she could do custom embroidery. “I bought a small home model at the Texas State Fair in 1996,” Jeanette added. Remarrying in 1998, Jeanette and her new husband, Jim, decided that custom embroidery was something they could do together — he would sell the jobs and she would work

**“I started sewing for others about the same time I became a single parent.”**

the jobs. But, they needed a larger, more efficient machine if they were going to be successful in their venture. “We bought our first commercial embroidery machine soon after we married,” Jeanette said. “In 2000, we moved the business into my parents’ old home and bought a six-head embroidery machine.” It was during this move that Jeanette’s Alterations & Embroidery was born.

In 2004, they moved into their new building on FM 66, and in 2009 they changed their name once again to Jeanette’s Custom Embroidery, as alterations were eliminated. Along with General Manager Angela Pounds, Customer Service Representative Vicki Thompson and Machine Operator Michelle Glenn, Jeanette is still finding satisfaction and success in the profession she chose for herself so long ago. “I’ve trained all three of them to do things Jeanette’s way. That may be why they’ve nicknamed me ‘Miss Picky,’” she laughed. “The responsibility of owning my own business is tiring at times, but I love what I do, and I want the girls who work for me to love it, too!” **NOW**

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# From Trash

## to Musical Treasure — By Cari LaCroix

As the music teacher for Northside Elementary School, Chris Burkhalter does everything he can to foster creativity and imagination. “Fine arts are about pleasure and enjoyment; you should enjoy creating art or it’s pointless,” Chris emphasized. The difference with Chris is that he is not only talking about creating the melody or lyrics, he is also talking about creating the instrument itself.

Chris explained that as a child, music was not his favorite class. “In fact, I did not like music in elementary school.” He recalled it as a hands-off environment where students were expected “not to touch anything.” In his class, Chris emphasized, “Pretty much every student in school has gotten to play every instrument in this room.” It is this openness that makes his classroom a favorite among students.

Chris has lived in Waxahachie since he was in eighth grade. He enjoys rearing his young family here in a district he believes in. He started his teaching career in Irving, where he taught high school

English. When an opportunity opened to teach in Waxahachie; he accepted. Chris has been at Northside for almost five years, with his own children attending the campus.

Chris’ main desire is to see his students enjoy music, but he is sensitive to the costs involved in music programs and materials. He likes to find ways to avoid purchasing items, whenever possible. “I almost feel bad to ask for money,” he confessed, “so I try to figure out other ways to do things.” Upon entering Chris’ classroom, the expected piano, xylophones and music stands are all there, but various working musical instruments Chris has created are there as well. These include drums made from fastening drumheads around thick cardboard carpet rolls, a xylophone from PVC pipes and wind chimes made of metal tubing from Lowe’s. The biggest instrument is his “Stomp tribute,” a massive creation constructed from what some may consider trash. It includes a hubcap, satellite dish, pots, an engine

fan, bicycle, fire extinguisher and other items Chris hand-picked from a student’s grandfather’s iron yard.

Students have also contributed to this collection. “Kids bring me different things, and we sit down in class and try to figure out what to make with it,” Chris shared. He keeps a “junk bucket,” which is a plastic tote filled with junk. One of his students’ favorite things to do in class is to sit in groups and try to create instruments together, and then actually perform with their creations. It is typically percussion-based and they learn to create compositions.

Chris feels that music naturally enables kids be creative and think critically. “I think the biggest thing in teaching is not teaching content, but to think,” he stated. He has seen that often musicians are included in the top of graduating classes. Indeed, those who play an instrument are 52 percent more likely to attend college. This inspired Chris, several years ago, to apply for a grant from Little Kids Rock — a program that provides students with free musical instruments and instruction. Out of over 200 applicants, Chris was among the chosen recipients. This earned

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"Music man" Chris has since taught guitar, both in class and after school. He begins each school year by asking students to write a letter stating why they want to be in guitar class and what they want to learn. Chris laughed, "I guess that's the English teacher in me coming out!" He enjoys reading why they want to play. This year, over 120 students signed up to take his after-school guitar class, but only 30 could be chosen for the privilege of taking a guitar home to practice with and being in Tuesday's after-school class.

In addition to guitar, Chris also teaches drums after school on Wednesdays. Toward the end of the school year, he combines drums with guitar and adds electric bass to form a rock band. The students enjoy playing songs such as the Beatle's "Yellow Submarine" and Taylor Swift's "Love Story."

The percussion ensemble meets on Thursday afternoons. They once used an assortment of cardboard boxes to imitate a rainstorm. They are a talented group that earned the honor of being the only elementary school in WISD to be included in the high school's percussion ensemble performances.

During school hours, each grade level also works on various programs, throughout the school year, which increase in difficulty as they age. One of Chris' favorite responsibilities is having the students rehearse these programs that they perform for their families. He enjoys watching them progress and improve with the material they learn. "When it clicks, that's cool!" he said proudly. The fourth- and fifth-graders have instrumental programs, which he uses to further challenge them by letting students "write parts of the program." He is especially proud when they are able to hear what they are doing.

Although Chris can play many instruments, his first were baritone and tuba. He also has taken what he calls a "crash course in guitars!" Obviously willing to go the extra mile, he is a talented individual and teacher who is willing to provide real-world experiences to teach his students a lifetime of music skills and appreciation. **NOW**

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# In The Kitchen With Oma Shaw

— By Faith Browning

Everyone who has been a longtime Waxahachie resident should know about the famous hamburger lady, Oma Shaw. “I started cooking hamburgers on January 19, 1970, in a hole in the wall on College Street. It was a very small place,” she recalled. “After being there 16 months, they tore the building down. I moved over to Water Street and stayed there for 28 years until I retired, but the

restaurant is still going strong.”

Oma was born in Sardis and has lived in and around Waxahachie all her life. The one thing she misses the most from her restaurant is meeting new people and visiting with her long-time customers. “I still do a little cooking,” she laughed, “I even make a hamburger every once in a while.” **NOW**



## YELLOW SQUASH RELISH

**8 cups yellow squash, diced**  
**2/3 cup salt**  
**3 cups sugar**  
**2 cups vinegar**  
**2 tsp. celery seed**  
**2 tsp. mustard**  
**2 cups onions, diced**  
**2 cups bell peppers, diced**  
**1 lg. jar pimentos**

1. Soak squash in 3-quarts cold water and salt for one hour; drain in strainer and set aside.
2. In a large pot, add remaining ingredients and bring to a rolling boil for 5 minutes.
3. Have pint-size jars ready; fill with relish and put lids on tight. Makes 6 to 8 pints.

## PASTA SALAD

**1 box angel hair pasta**  
**4 Tbsp. oil**  
**1 cup onions, chopped**  
**1 cup celery, chopped**  
**1 cup bell pepper, chopped**  
**1 lg. jar pimentos**  
**1 sm. can black olives, chopped**  
**3 tsp. LAWRY'S® Seasoned Salt**  
**2 Tbsp. Accent seasoning**  
**1 cup real mayonnaise**

1. Break the pasta into thirds; cook per directions. Drain and let cool.
2. Add oil to pasta; mix well. Add

remaining ingredients; mix well. Refrigerate for several hours, but this is best if left in refrigerator overnight. It makes a large bowl, so recipe can be halved.

## TORTILLA CHICKEN CASSEROLE

**1 10-oz. can cream of mushroom soup**  
**1 10-oz. can cheddar cheese soup**  
**1 10-oz. can Ro\*Tel® tomatoes**  
**1 whole chicken, cooked, deboned, cubed (4 cups)**  
**1 11.5-oz. pkg. flour tortillas**  
**2 cups cheddar, shredded**

1. In a large bowl, combine soups, tomatoes and chicken.
2. In a greased 9 x 13-inch pan, layer the tortillas and chicken mixture, ending with tortillas. Sprinkle the top with cheese. Bake for 30 minutes at 350 F.

## PECAN CREAM PIE

**2 egg yolks**  
**1 cup sugar**  
**1 cup milk**  
**2 Tbsp. butter**  
**1 cup pecans, chopped**  
**2 tsp. vanilla**  
**2 Tbsp. flour**  
**1 piecrust, cooked**

1. In a saucepan, combine all ingredients, except piecrust. On low heat, bring mixture to a simmer

for 5 minutes.

2. Pour into piecrust and refrigerate until set.

## OATMEAL CAKE

**1 1/4 cups boiling water**  
**1 cup oatmeal**  
**1 stick butter**  
**1 cup sugar**  
**1 cup brown sugar**  
**2 eggs, beaten**  
**1 tsp. baking soda**  
**1 1/4 cups flour**  
**ICING:**  
**1 stick butter**  
**1 sm. can evaporated milk**  
**1/2 cup sugar**  
**1 16-oz. bag coconut**  
**1 tsp. vanilla**  
**1 cup pecans, chopped**

1. Mix oatmeal with the boiling water. Add butter and sugars; mix well. Add eggs, baking soda and flour; mix well.
2. Spray a 9 x 13-inch pan with cooking spray; pour in batter. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes at 350 F. Do not overcook.
3. In a small saucepan, slowly bring butter, evaporated milk and sugar to a boil. Add coconut, vanilla and pecans; mix well.
4. Poke holes in the cake and pour the icing over the cake. Place cake in the oven until the coconut is tan, no longer than 10 minutes.

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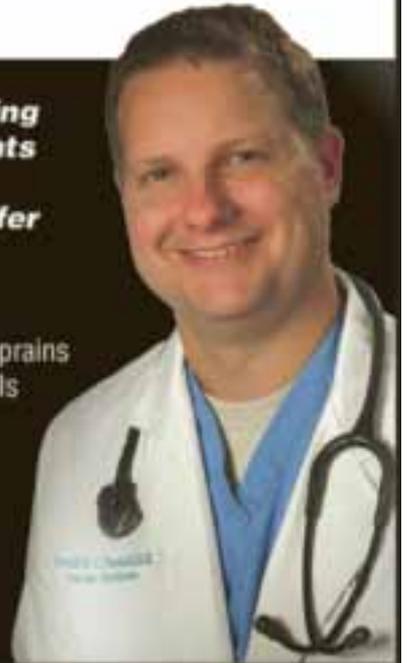


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# Do Not Drink the Water

— By Betty Tryon, R.N.

Those happy days of summer spent splashing in the pool without a care in the world may not be so carefree. The



closing of public pools because of contamination brought Recreational Water Illnesses (RWI) to the forefront. RWIs occur when swallowing or having some contact with water that is contaminated with pathogens (germs). These pathogens may be bacteria such as shigella and E. coli, or parasites such as Cryptosporidium, Giardia or even some viruses. The most frequent symptom is diarrhea along with fever, vomiting and stomach cramps. After exposure to polluted water, skin, eye, ear and respiratory symptoms are all indicative of a possible infection.

One of the most common ways these germs are spread is from humans suffering with diarrhea entering the water. Even barring the occasional “accident,” anyone with recent diarrhea will have enough germs on their bottom to easily contaminate the water supply. To lessen the probability of becoming ill from RWIs, do not swallow the water! Even a small amount can be devastating. Many people think pool water is safe because it has been treated. On the contrary, some of these pathogens can live for several days in chlorinated water. Even with a perfectly maintained pool, it is impossible to prevent all RWIs because you cannot control every circumstance of what gets into the water.

Therefore, if swimming in a public pool, please remember that it is a communal venue. If someone is ill or

careless, you may not know it. It is not always evident when fecal material gets in the water. Water that is treated with chlorine is not a substitution for good personal hygiene. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) recommends showering with soap and water before swimming. Wash your hands after using the bathroom. Please consider others and do not swim if you are ill with diarrhea. Parents of small children need to be especially vigilant and offer frequent potty breaks to avoid accidents in the water. Clean the bottom with soap and water before entering the pool.

Swimming pools are not the only water venues susceptible to this problem. Hot tubs and Jacuzzis are particularly vulnerable to the spread of waterborne diseases because the high temperature of the water causes the chlorine to evaporate more quickly. Lakes, rivers, springs or ponds carry an even higher risk. Any number of pollutants can foul the water such as sewage, animal waste or even a heavy runoff from a recent rain. It may be inconvenient to practice due diligence when the water and good times beckon. However, being careful may not only keep others from becoming ill, it will keep you safer, too. **NOW**

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

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# WHAT IS YOUR OBJECTION TO TERM LIFE INSURANCE?

— By *Adam Rope*

One objection to purchasing term life insurance is just that: when the term is over, the policy is finished. That's it. No more coverage.

Many people I've talked with about term insurance worry they will outlive the policy period and 'waste their money' on something they didn't need. It can be difficult to counter these arguments except by explaining how term insurance can be an affordable way to provide life insurance coverage for a specific time period.

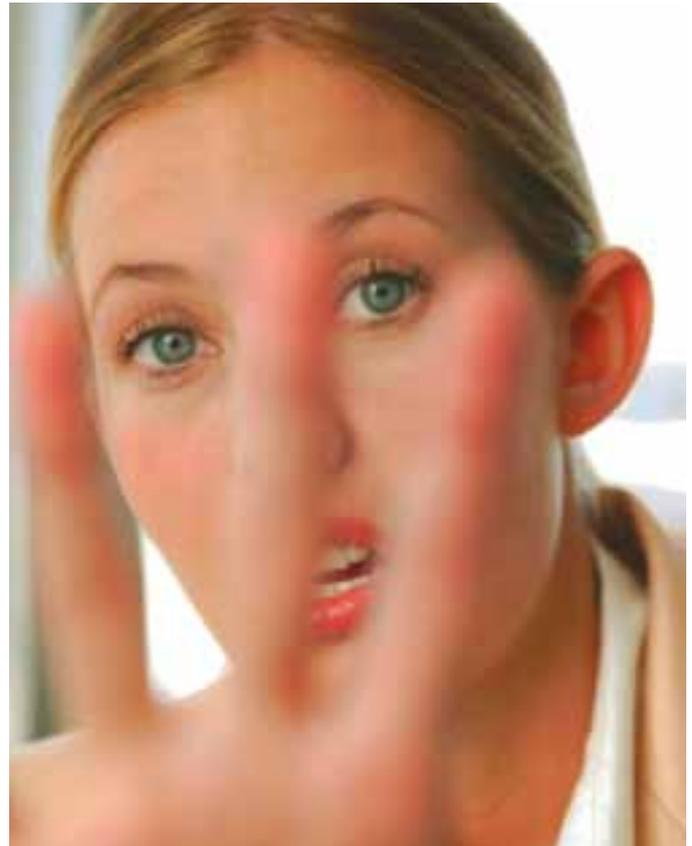
Until now. Insurance companies are offering term policies that actually return the premiums you've paid after the level premium period ends. In other words, if you purchase a 20-year term policy and are still living when the 20-year level premium period ends, the premiums you paid will be returned to you, in many cases free of federal income tax.

Those returned premiums can have a number of uses. If you still need life insurance, you could purchase another policy. You could also use the premiums that are returned to pay down your mortgage or even add to your retirement savings.

Life insurance can provide peace of mind that your loved ones' financial burdens may be eased if you are no longer there. The benefit provided by life insurance can help keep dreams alive.

One objection to buying term life insurance has been addressed by a policy that may return the premiums you paid. Ask an insurance professional about a product that provides needed life insurance coverage but has the potential to return your premiums at the end of the term. **NOW**

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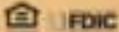
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# July is Crape Myrtle Time

— By Nancy Fenton

Look around at all those gorgeous, blooming trees! If you do not have some crape myrtle trees, try them. There are varieties for every space, taste and color preference. They can run from 2 feet (miniatures) to 20-plus feet (tree size). They are all ultra-hardy and do very nicely on natural rainfall after the first year. The key is to pick your color and know the maximum height you can tolerate in the space you are considering for planting. Do not plant 20-plus foot trees under your power lines!

Texas A&M recommends some good varieties for our mid-Texas areas. Their sizes and names are as follows:

## RED

- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| 2-3 feet     | Pocomoke        |
| 3-6 feet     | Dwarf Low Flame |
| 5-12 feet    | Cheyenne, Tonto |
| 10-20 feet   | Comanche        |
| 20-plus feet | Arapaho         |

## PINK

- |              |                   |
|--------------|-------------------|
| 3-6 feet     | McFadden's Pinkie |
| 5-12 feet    | Caddo             |
| 10-20 feet   | Osage             |
| 20-plus feet | Biloxi            |

## PURPLE

- |              |                       |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| 2-3 feet     | Velma's Royal Delight |
| 3-6 feet     | Dwarf Royalty         |
| 5-12 feet    | Zuni                  |
| 10-20 feet   | Lipan                 |
| 20-plus feet | Muskogee, Wichita     |

## WHITE

- |              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| 5-12 feet    | Acoma          |
| 10-20 feet   | Byer's White   |
| 20-plus feet | Fantasy, Kiowa |

You will notice not all sizes have all colors available. Take your pick of size and color. Buy from a reputable nursery. Ask if they will take it back if it is not the right size and color. Good nurseries will! Plant the tree in the full sun and water thoroughly each week until the days no longer hit 85 degrees or higher. All new plants need special care and crape myrtles are no different. Your investment in thought, time and money will bloom and bloom and bloom! **NOW**

*Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.*



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# Happening **NOW**

## Every Thursday

Celebrate Recovery meeting:  
7:00 p.m., 408 Water Street, Waxahachie.  
The purpose is to help people live free from addiction, compulsive or dysfunctional behavior. Contact Brandon Jones at (214) 949-5725 or [Brandon@thefrontiercommunity.org](mailto:Brandon@thefrontiercommunity.org).

## Every Saturday

After Hours Improv Theater begins at 8:00 p.m. Tickets: adults \$10 plus tax, children 10 and under \$5 plus tax. Call (972) 937-9839 to make reservations or visit [www.AfterHoursImprov.com](http://www.AfterHoursImprov.com) for more detailed information. The theater is located at 100 N. College St., Suite 11, in the Rogers Hotel.

## Third Tuesday

Skyblazers of Waxahachie R/C Club meeting: 7:30 p.m. at the Parks and Recreation Building in downtown Waxahachie.

## Fourth Monday

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting: 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Avenue.

## July 5-17

Ellis County Children's Theater will present the full length original musical production created for children ages 5-14, *Boudreaux, the Lake Dog*, from 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Final production, Saturday, July 17, at 7:00 p.m. Participation fee, \$60, includes ECCT T-shirt. Visit [www.ecctheater.org](http://www.ecctheater.org).

## July 9

After Hours Improv Theater presents Dance Hall Night: 7:30-10:30 p.m., 100 N. College St. All types of dance music will be featured. \$10 cover charge. B.Y.O.B. For more information, call (972) 937-9839 or visit [www.afterhoursimprov.com](http://www.afterhoursimprov.com).

Nicholas P. Sims Library in the Lyceum, Amazing Light Juggling Show with David Slick from 10:00-11:00 a.m. For children ages 4-10.

Summer Moonlight Movies: 9:00-11:00 p.m., downtown Waxahachie on Franklin

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### July 10

ALS Fundraiser at the home of sports newscaster Dale Hansen. For more details or to purchase tickets, contact Delores McKibbin at (972) 351-2849 or visit [www.dallasals.org](http://www.dallasals.org).

Classical guitar concert with Stacy Arnold: 7:00 p.m., St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 624 Ovilla Rd., Waxahachie. Free to the public. [www.stacyarnold.com](http://www.stacyarnold.com).

### July 10-11

Trade Days of Waxahachie, Ellis County Expo Center, 2300 W. U.S. Hwy. 287, Waxahachie. Free parking and admission. Operating hours are Saturday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. and Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. For more information, visit [www.tradedaysofwaxahachie.com](http://www.tradedaysofwaxahachie.com) or call Les Clemons at (972) 617-8156, James Scott at (214) 202-1788 or Jean Davis at (972) 816-3644.

### July 16-17

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County annual quilt show: 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center. This year's theme is "Stitches Around the World." This will be a judged show where more than 100 quilts are expected to be displayed and available for judging. Contact Carol Sawyer at (972) 921-8576.

### July 17

"Walkin' the Line" ... A Tribute to Johnny Cash: 8:00 p.m., Texas Music Theater, 110 W. Main St., Waxahachie. (972) 937-1993.

### July 21

As part of Sims Library's Texas Reading Club, Ronald McDonald will stop by Nicholas P. Sims Library from 10:00-11:00 a.m. He will be joined by his friend Stogie as they present an educational, fun-filled program for children ages 4-10.

### July 30

Summer Moonlight Movies: 9:00-11:00 p.m., downtown Waxahachie on Franklin St. between Jackson and College Streets. Featured movie: *Where the Wild Things Are*.

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