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SEPTEMBER 2018

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#### ON THE COVER

*Ken Fleming hosts an annual Celtic music retreat at a local campground.*

**Photo by**  
Hannah Chartrand.

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# Be Ready To



## National Voter Registration Day Tuesday, September 25, 2018

Ellis County Volunteer Deputy Registrars will be at each location to register any voter in Ellis County. Either a new application, change of address, change of name... they will be ready for you!

7:00 am - 8:00 pm - Ellis County Elections Office, 204 E Jefferson St., Waxahachie, 75165  
8:00 am - 8:00 pm - A.H. Meadows Library, 922 S 9th St., Midlothian, TX 76065  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm - Boze Community Center, 161 W Main St., Italy, TX 76651  
9:00 am - 6:00 pm - Ferris Public Library, 301 E 10th St., Ferris, TX 75125  
10:00 am - 6:00 pm - Ennis Public Library, 501 W Ennis Ave., Ennis, TX 75119  
11:00 am - 7:00 pm - Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Dr., Red Oak, TX 75154

Check your voting status by calling the Elections Office.

**October 9th is the deadline** to register to vote in order to be eligible to vote in November.  
Get a voter registration application at a local City Hall, Tax Office, Election Office or Election Website.

## General and Special Elections Tuesday, November 6, 2018

Early Voting begins October 22nd - November 2nd  
Election Day polls will be open from 7:00 am - 7:00 pm

Visit the website for a complete listing of polling locations, sample ballots and more.

Elections Office: 204 E. Jefferson Street, Waxahachie, TX 75165.

Phone: 972.825.5195 • Email: [Elections@co.ellis.tx.us](mailto:Elections@co.ellis.tx.us)

Website: [www.co.ellis.tx.us/elections](http://www.co.ellis.tx.us/elections)

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# EDITOR'S NOTE



Angel

Angel Morris  
MidlothianNOW Editor  
angel.morris@nowmagazines.com  
(972) 533-7216

*Hello, Midlothian!*

What do you appreciate most about September? The changing leaves and potential for cooler weather? Labor Day, when we officially get to relax from work, or Patriot Day, when we take time to remember the fallen heroes of 9/11? For me, September is about settling in for a new season. The routine of school has begun, opening day is only weeks away for the annual State Fair of Texas, and fall decor makes a gradual return to porches in preparation for end-of-year holidays.

Known best for his nature writings, in his poem "September," poet Archibald Lampman described how this month eases us from summer to fall: "Thus without grief the golden days go by/So soft we scarcely notice how they wend/And like a smile half happy, or a sigh/The summer passes to her quiet end."

Lampman was from Canada, however, where summer may have gone more quietly into the night than the 100-degree weeks we Texans endure, sometimes even in September. Nonetheless, "Lone Star Staters" appreciate the relief this month eventually brings, as summer comes to pass and the calendar officially welcomes a new season.

I'll most enjoy my back patio this month, spending evenings on the porch swing at a time of year when life seems simpler, if only for a while. I hope you, too, settle well into September.

Happy fall, y'all!

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“We came up with the idea to have a retreat where people could come together, learn from great teachers and spend a long weekend playing Irish music.”

*Certain musical notes and melodies are instantly recognizable. Whether it is the beginning riff of a rock 'n' roll classic or the first measure of a piece from one of history's great composers, music can bring its listener to a different time and place. Ken Fleming has spent decades showing people that power in traditional Irish music. By organizing several Irish festivals and gatherings, he has had a hand in helping the area grow a thriving traditional Irish music scene.*

Ken did not move to Texas until he was a young adult, after an early life spent moving around every few years. “I was a military brat, so I kind of lived everywhere,” he detailed. “Colorado was my first home as an adult, but I used to visit my aunt and uncle’s ranch

Photo by Hannah Chartrand.





# Pluck *of the* Irish

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

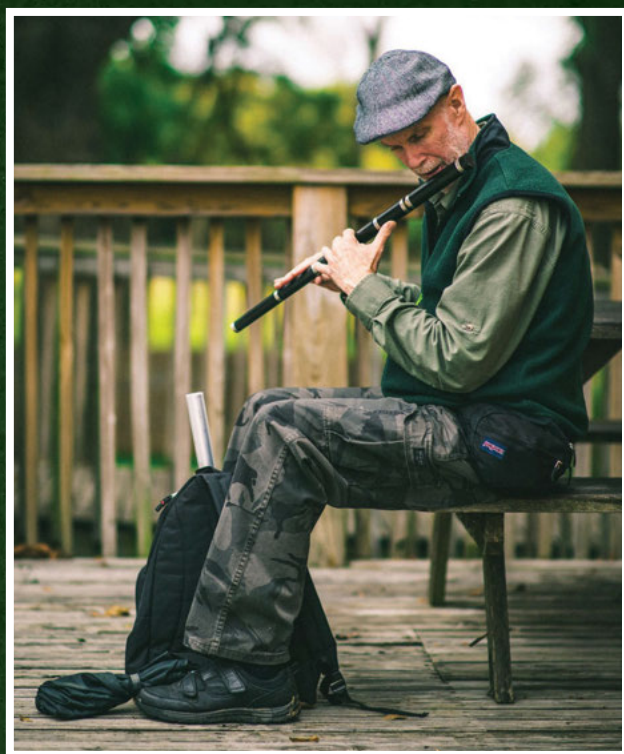


in Seagoville. I decided to move to Texas in 1980, and I've been here ever since."

Ken met his wife, Peggy, a few years later, and they have two children, Kevin and Katie. Ken worked for a public relations firm for a while, after which he started a number of gymnastics gyms in Dallas, Addison and Frisco. But for the last two decades, he has owned Group Dynamix, a team-building events center in Carrollton.

Ken has also put his entrepreneurial spirit to use in another way — helping to start several musical organizations and events in the Metroplex. "I got my first guitar when I was about 6," he recalled. "I've been playing music pretty much all my life."

As a teenager living in Germany, Ken was in a rock band that played in military officer's clubs and won a "battle of the bands" of Europe. When he came back to the states, he







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started branching out from rock 'n' roll. "I kind of went back further and further, from rock to blues to folk to bluegrass to old-timey," he listed. "I was at the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas, in 1981, and I heard De Dannan, one of the premiere Irish bands of the time. I loved the playing of Charlie Piggott on tenor banjo, so when I got home, I went out and bought one and have played Irish music on it ever since."



Ken traded his rock band for an Irish group, Tinker's Dam. "We would play in the area, and even traveled to festivals like the Milwaukee Irish Fest," he recounted. "But we were never trying to make a living out of it or anything like that. We just loved playing the music together."



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In addition to playing Irish music, Ken desired to see the music grow in popularity. Ken; his wife, Peggy; and two friends — Peggy Turner and Jim Brunke — founded the North Texas Irish Music Festival in 1983, and Ken and Peggy have played at the festival every year since. He also helped found the Southwest Celtic Music Association in 1984, and in 2004, founded the Traditional Irish Music Education Society (TIMES), which organizes events to help youth and adults learn Irish music that is centuries old.

In the midst of his early efforts, Ken connected with Jim O'Flaherty, an airline pilot who had immigrated to America. "Jim was from Ireland, but had made a family in Corinth," Ken said. "He had 10 kids, and the whole family played. Jim loved taking people under his wing to teach them the music from his homeland."

Jim passed away in 2001, and Ken knew he needed to do something to honor the man who encouraged so many players new to Irish music. "We came up with the idea to have a retreat where people could come together, learn from great teachers and spend a long weekend playing

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Irish music,” Ken explained. “When we were thinking about places, Midlothian’s Hoblitzelle Camp came to mind. I’d had some dealings with them through my ropes course work over the years, and I’d been there for some Boy Scout campouts where we stayed at the fort. It was a perfect place.”



Every October for the last 15 years, Ken and a large group of dedicated volunteers have held the three-day weekend retreat. “We actually outgrew the camp for a short time, but then they built a new conference center, and we were happy to be able to come back,” he remarked. “The point was never to get *too* big. We just like getting together to keep the love for the music going. This year, we expect about 350 people between campers, volunteers and our instructors, all of whom are highly respected musicians from Ireland and the U.S.” Ken gives the credit for the camp’s growing success to his “awesome team,” which shares his passion for the music and for creating opportunities for people to learn to play traditional Irish music, many for the first time.

The retreat starts with a Thursday céilí, something that can most closely be compared to the Irish version of a square dance. For the next three days, everyone eats together at the camp and spends their hours honing their craft on more than a dozen instruments. “Everyone who comes has at least some musical background. The only beginner instruments for



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the weekend are the tin whistle and the bodhran,” Ken explained.

The retreat has a nightly instructor concert that family, friends and people from town can enjoy. “We don’t get many students actually from Midlothian, but each night we welcome anyone to come and enjoy the music.”

Though the average person may not be able to name a given Irish melody, there is a sound that is distinct and recognizable any time the fiddles, banjos and other stringed instruments are played. Ken loves playing, listening to and sharing traditional music with anyone who is so inclined. And as the organizer of one of the top-rated musical gatherings of its kind, Ken and his crew are helping bring that unmistakable sound straight to DFW’s Southern Star. **NOW**

*Editor’s note: Learn more at [www.oflabilityretreat.org](http://www.oflabilityretreat.org). Photos by Andrew Simmons, unless otherwise stated.*





## Welcome to the Team, Amanda Warren!

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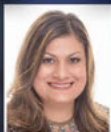
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*People find their homes in many ways. Some live in the town where they were born and raised. Others find a job that moves them to a new state. Sometimes, though, a more unique story leads a family home. For Rashaan and Raquel Fitch, chance brought them to a new house that would become their castle.*

Rashaan came from a military family, so he grew up all over the place. “I was in Panama as long as anywhere else, but when they were getting ready to take Noriega, they got all the families out,” he recounted. “We lived in San Antonio for a while but were in Fort Worth by the time I was in high school.”

Rashaan played basketball at McMurry University, then baseball at Southwestern Adventist University in Keene. “After school, I signed a record deal as a rapper. Then I transitioned from rap to playing in a metal band,” he detailed.

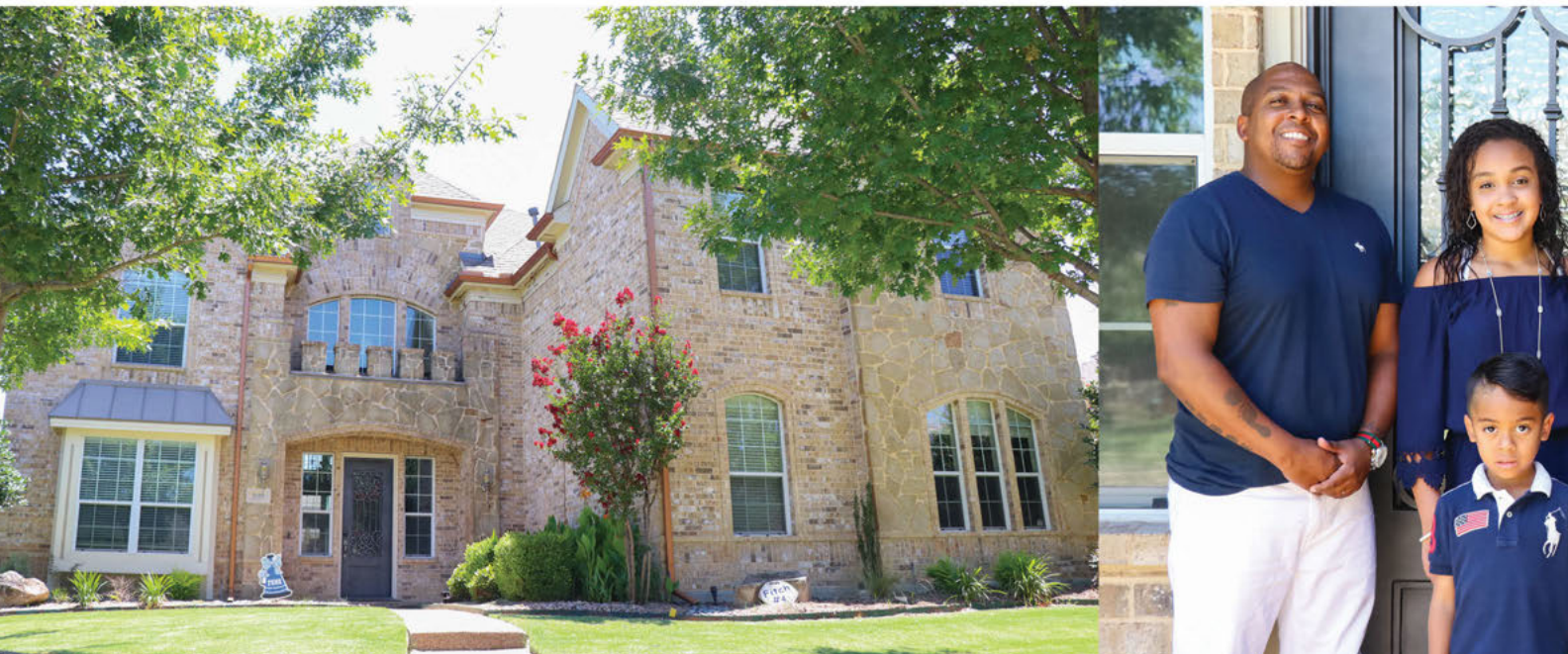
Raquel is from North Richland Hills, and after high school, she went to college for a while before going to work. “I didn’t have all of the travels and things he did, but once we met, we started our own adventure,” she remarked.

Rashaan and Raquel met while working for the same technology company, and after some time, they began dating. Now, almost two decades later, they have made a life complete with four children. Peyton is 16 and plays basketball. Alexis is a 14-year-old cheerleader. Preslie is 8 and one of the top gymnasts in the state, and Gavin is 6 and has recently started playing soccer.



AT HOME WITH RASHAAN AND RA

# THEIR HOUSE THEIR CASTLE







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# SE, TLE

— By Zachary R. Urquhart



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After spending several years in music, Rashaan knew it was time for a change when they were starting their family. "I was kind of the responsible one in the band, so it was taking a lot of my time," he said. "When we were pregnant with Peyton, I knew I needed to be done with music, so I could be the best dad and husband possible."

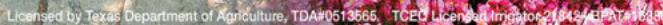
Over the last 20 years, Rashaan and Raquel have worked a litany of jobs, and it was one of those jobs that brought them to Midlothian. "We had a repo recovery service, and I was looking for a vehicle in Plum Creek one day," Rashaan explained. "I called Raquel and told her we had to move here."

Though it helped them find their new home, Rashaan and Raquel moved on from the recovery service. Raquel went back to school and has been working as a dental hygienist. Rashaan recently started a career in real estate, allowing the family to be even more connected to the community. "Even before our house was built here, we would come to be part of the town," Raquel added.

Construction was complete in October 2007, and they moved into a home that is part ranch house, part medieval castle. The medieval portion is visible even from the outside, where columns give the center of the home's facade a castle-like appearance. That theme continues inside.

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“One of the biggest mirrors you have ever seen gives the dining room the medieval feel,” Rashaan said.

The space also houses a full suit of armor, a conversation piece that is especially great certain times of the year. “We love decorating him for Halloween,” Rashaan laughed. “And from the front door, people can see him, so every kid sees our dressed-up knight.”

While building, Rashaan and Raquel considered permanent decorative touches. “I think our favorite part of the house is the stonework around the staircase,” Raquel said, noting it was one of many structural decisions they made.

“I worked with an interior designer for a while, so I just studied what she would do,” Rashaan described. “That’s where I came up with the idea for the fake exposed stone upstairs and on the underside of the archways.”

Throughout the house are numerous personal touches, from a gymnastics bar that stays in the formal sitting area to mementos they have in some of the kids’ rooms. “Peyton has my Michigan basketball shorts signed by three of the Fab Five,” Rashaan noted.

The playroom has a drum set, and their game room doubles as his music room — reminders of the early part of his life. “We know there will be noise, and that’s OK. I don’t push the kids into music, but it’s always there



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when they want to play," he said.

The bedrooms have simple decor, with color choices and minimal accent pieces giving each one its style, with one notable exception. "We love the beach," Raquel remarked. "The kids really wanted to have a beach room, so we made the little ones' bedroom with that in mind."

With blue and white stripes and anchors for decor, one bedroom has a clear theme that ties in with the numerous family photos from their various beach trips throughout the year.

With an open design, the home's expansive windows offer views of the backyard from almost anywhere upstairs or down. "We love grilling and having people over, and I'm a grass guy, so we'll paint the yard for whatever team is in season," Rashaan detailed.

Rashaan and Raquel are happy that an unexpected turn led them to their current location. As Rashaan put it, "We've loved the idea of making our home our castle in Midlothian, because castles last for generations." **NOW**

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# Call to Action

— By Alexandra Allred

Michael and Melissa Boler are throwing a party with WFAA's Dale Hansen acting as the master of ceremonies. There will be a professional judge provided by the International Barbeque Cookers Association for the barbecue, celebrity chef and former Food Network star Michele Ragussis judging the ever-popular Cupcake War, as well as a few other surprise guests. That's right! This year's party on September 29 marks the 3rd Annual Bridges' Bands and BBQ Bash to raise funds for its nonprofit organization and to spotlight the underserved community of young adults with intellectual learning disabilities or special needs. But how they got to this point, and the love and commitment they have given back to this community is truly a story worth telling.

As impressive as this year's event appears to be, it all began very humbly. Melissa, the founder and CEO of Bridges Training Foundation, had no visions of high-profile parties or

extravagant affairs. "I just want people to see how capable my guys [clients] are," Melissa said.

When Melissa saw how negatively the special needs population is impacted following graduation, she had to wonder, *What are their choices? What are their options?* "Graduation for everyone else is the beginning of their life," she said. "For the special needs students, however, it was the end of daily routines and friendships. I knew I needed to start a nonprofit, but it had to be different from the other programs."

After extensive research, the Bolers drew a line between *want* and *need*. What did her former students *need* to continue to grow? The answer was easy — opportunities. But it was only half the battle. "Educating our society and local community's awareness are equally as important," Melissa said.

"Our guys don't have a problem with their disability, but most everyone else does," Michael added.

For the last five years, Melissa's foundation has helped to teach life skills and offer job coaching to her clients, while networking in the community. Bridges actively works to get their clients out in the public to be seen and appreciated. So much so, in fact, that Melissa has fielded phone calls from



around the country from families asking what their options are for a loved one. "We want to be a resource for everyone. The need is so diverse that we must have diverse solutions."

When the Ellis County Women in Business learned about the Bridges BBQ Bash, they were all in. Created to empower, mentor and provide scholarships to young women in Ellis County, ECWB sought a way to partner with Bridges. "We knew we wanted to be a part of this," said Dionne Zschiesche, vice president of mentoring. ECWB partnered with Melissa to run a goat yoga event with all proceeds going to the Bridges Training Foundation.

"Hey," Michael laughed, "this is Texas. We have a long, proud history of producing some of the best barbecue in the country. People are really passionate about barbecue. It's become synonymous with a get-together."

Add cupcakes, cars, live music, silent auctions, bounce houses, a professional cornhole competition and more and, "It's a party all day long," Michael said. "We're celebrating differences. We're celebrating inclusion!"

"This is our call to action. We want everyone to know who we are and what we're about," Melissa said.

No matter how the day goes, Melissa's wish is as simple as the day she first opened her doors to the special needs population. "I would really hope at some point people could walk through our doors and see how amazing our individuals are instead of focusing on what they can't do. We [Bridges Training Foundation] are one of the best kept secrets in Ellis County. We want people to know that we're here and ready to help — that there are solutions." Just maybe, over that bridge, there are options and choices that every graduate deserves. **NOW**

*Editor's Note: For more information about Bridges Training Foundation, visit [www.bridgestf.org](http://www.bridgestf.org).*

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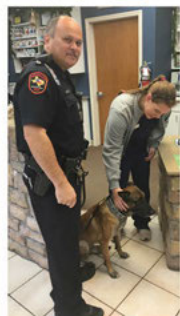
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# A GIFT FOR GRANDKIDS

— By Derek Jones



*Childhood is a time of awe and wonder, made even more special when shared with a grandparent. No one knows this more than George Allen. George loved capturing his grandchildren's imagination by telling them magical stories when they were little.*

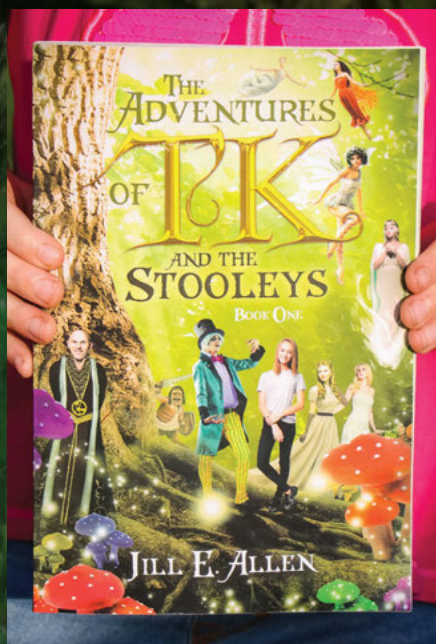
One day, his granddaughters, Taryn and Kelby, asked him to write his stories down. Not one to deny his granddaughters a request, George began writing. "Taryn and Kelby asked me to write a story for them, and that is when I had the idea to include all my grandchildren as characters. I actually began writing the book six years ago, but just recently decided to have it published," he said.

*The Adventures of TK and the Stooleys: Book One*, is a story about a group of magical individuals who team up to use their gifts to protect a world known as Stooleyland from



an enemy who is threatening their world. What makes this book special is that George based each of the characters on the unique personalities of his nine grandchildren. "Keep in mind that I based these characters on my grandchildren as they were six years ago," George said. "Kids change as they grow up, but I think the character traits are still fairly accurate."

George explained how each character parallels one of his grandchildren. "They make up the seven Protectors of Stooleyland," George explained. "My grandson, George, is Mushy. He is the leader because he is smart and easy to trust. Tyler is Ottie and is a warrior for peace, but he is also able to handle conflict. Cloud Dancer represents my granddaughter, Samantha. She has the ability to fly, among other powers, but she must keep her strength in check.



Kelby is the Dreamcatcher. Her abilities are to interpret dreams and separate them from reality so that Stooleylanders do not lose sight of truth. "She keeps dreams in check," George explained.

Taryn is known as Camelon, a shapeshifter. She can disguise herself easily, but her character is easy to underestimate. Meagan is represented by Mythos. She has the ability to

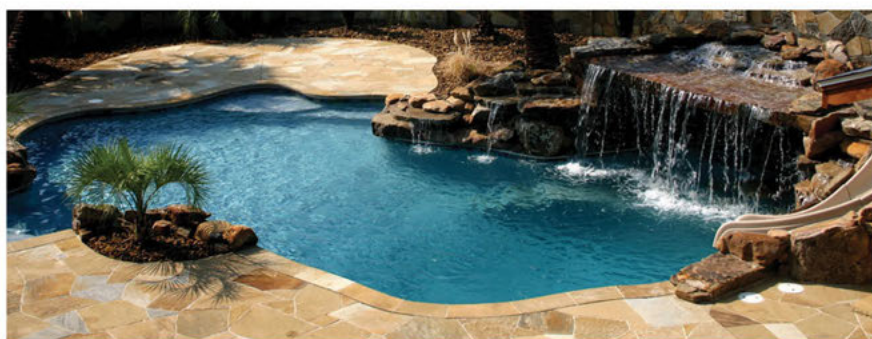


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conjure up necessary chants. “This one was easy, since Meagan was a cheerleader in high school,” George shared. “My granddaughter, Korie, is the character Fashionista, and her job is to design all the clothes the Protectors need for every situation. This one was also easy because Korie was always very fashionable.”

Not wanting to leave anyone out, George found a way to work in his youngest grandchildren, including one



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who had not yet been born. These two are not Protectors like the other seven but are part of a group called the Supremes, with their own powers and gifts. Kenley and Kembry are the daughters of Pame (whose name George created by combining his grandchildren's monikers for him and his wife, Papa and Meme). "Kenley is known as the Mender — the healer and the second in charge in watching over their universe. Since Kembry was not actually born yet when I wrote the story, she is not yet born in the book either," George noted. "Kembry's known as Shawoman, and her future abilities are to fix broken spirits and be the voice of those who seek to be free."

George looked for other ways to incorporate his grandchildren into the story, as well. "Each birthstone is the source of that character's power," he explained. There are also pictures in the book illustrating each character.

With the completion of the book, George felt satisfied all his grandchildren were represented. "The message I hope readers walk away with from reading this book is things are not always perfect, but through common sense, love, forgiveness and other positive character traits, you can overcome. Success is important, but it is usually accompanied by difficulties."

Although George is the author,

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he employed his wife's name, Jill E. Allen, as a pseudonym. "I used her name as the author to honor her for putting up with me for the last 45 years," George admitted.

The book has only been in print for a few months and is doing well, but George's satisfaction was in gifting the book. "This past Christmas my wife and I gave each of the grandkids a prerelease print copy of the book with a special message written in each one. They each said it was the most special out of all their Christmas gifts, and that made all the effort of writing the book worth it."

Currently, George has no plans for a sequel. "I had fun writing the story and having it published, but for now, let's just see how successful this one is," he said. "I used two fingers to type this whole thing, so it really was a labor of love."

Perhaps one day George will find inspiration for book two, but, ultimately, he is content just to continue finding creative ways to engage with his grandkids. Jill encourages his special bond with them. "He is so creative and is always making up stories and songs," she said.

Ultimately, George just wanted his grandchildren to walk away with life lessons from his work. "I incorporated everyday situations — like teamwork and individuality, bullying and recognizing love — into the book, which is actually written as one long poem," George explained. "It was really just about providing some good commonsense knowledge for young people to take with them." **NOW**



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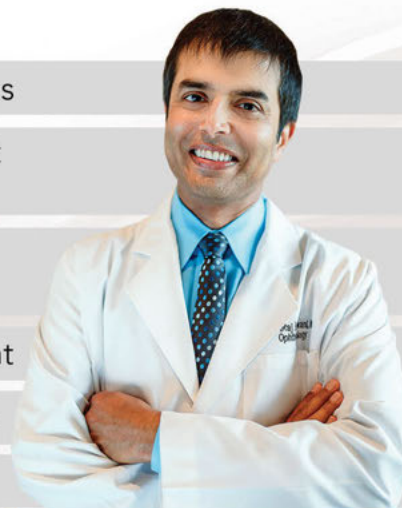
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CookingNOW

## In the Kitchen With HEATHER ADAMSON

— By Angel Morris



Heather Adamson's favorite thing about cooking is that her son, Bennett, has inherited her enthusiasm and shares it with little sister, Harper. While her initial kitchen efforts were cooking on a college budget, today the focus is advance preparation. "My husband and I both work outside the home. I need meals I can prepare on Sunday that last several days or can be tweaked to create different dishes all week," Heather noted. "Mostly, I want to cook things that expand my skills and introduce the family to new things."

Heather gets recipes from her sister, who also inspired Bennett's interest in baking when he was only 2. "She's amazing at creating recipes and is teaching Bennett to be just as adventurous as she is in the kitchen." **NOW**

small saucepan over very low heat, stirring frequently. Remove from heat; immediately add sugar. Stir until well combined. Allow to stand about 3 minutes to cool slightly.

**3.** Place eggs in a mixing bowl; beat lightly with fork or whisk. Add chocolate mixture and whisk until well combined.

**4.** Pour mixture into piecrust; bake at 350 F on the bottom rack for 30 minutes. Move to top oven rack; bake for an additional 10 minutes. Cool to room temperature.

**5.** Serve with whipped cream, if desired.

### Harper's Favorite Pasta

- 1** 12-oz. box your favorite pasta (Do not precook.)
- 1** 24-oz. jar pasta sauce (I like to use one that I can sneak veggies into.)
- 1-2** pasta sauce jars water (just to cover the pasta)
- 1** 24-oz. bag frozen turkey meatballs (I use Cooked Perfect brand from Kroger.)

- 1.** Place all ingredients into an Instant Pot; high-pressure cook for 8-10 minutes.
- 2.** Use the quick-release valve to immediately release the pressure, ensuring your pasta will not overcook.
- 3.** Serve with a salad and fresh fruit.

### Bennett's Chocolate Crack Pie

Originally from [www.thekitchenismyplayground.com](http://www.thekitchenismyplayground.com).

- 1** piecrust for bottom-crust only (If using a store-bought frozen crust that comes in a foil pan, use "regular" not "deep dish.")
- 1/2** cup butter
- 1** 4-oz. bar semi-sweet baking chocolate
- 1** cup granulated sugar
- 2** large eggs
- Whipped cream (optional)**

- 1.** Lightly spray an 8-inch pie plate with nonstick cooking spray. Fit piecrust into the bottom and up sides of pie plate; set aside.
- 2.** Melt butter and chocolate together in a

### Pollo or Carne Asada (Heather's version)

- 3-4** boneless, skinless chicken breasts (Flank steak can be subbed for chicken.)
- 2** large lemons, juiced
- 2** large limes, juiced
- 2-3** Anaheim or Hatch chilies, sliced and seeded (can use jalapeños for spicier chicken)
- 1** medium onion, chopped
- Salt, to taste**
- Pepper, to taste**
- 1** tsp. cumin
- 1** tsp. paprika
- 1** tsp. fresh garlic
- Water or chicken stock, to cover ingredients**



1. Place all ingredients into an Instant Pot; cook on high pressure for 15-18 minutes (or 20-28 minutes if using flank steak). Let steam release slowly. (You can also use a Crock-Pot, and cook 6-8 hours on low or 4-6 hours on high.)
2. Shred chicken once cooled; save all liquid.
3. Serve in tortillas, over salad or rice, or serve with tortilla chips and cheese for nachos.

## Heather's Hamburgers

- 3 lbs. ground beef**  
**1-2 cups shredded cheese**  
**1/2 to 1 2.5-oz. pkg. real crumbled bacon bits (H-E-B brand)**  
**1/4 cup A1 Steak Sauce**  
**Salt, to taste**  
**Pepper, to taste**

1. Mix all ingredients. Form into patties and grill.
2. Serve on warm hamburger buns.

## Buttermilk Pancakes

*These freeze and reheat well in the microwave or the toaster for an easy breakfast.*

- 2 cups all-purpose flour**  
**1/4 cup sugar**  
**2 1/4 tsp. baking powder**  
**1/2 tsp. baking soda**  
**1/2 tsp. salt**  
**2 eggs**  
**2 cups buttermilk**  
**1/4 cup unsalted butter, melted**  
**1 cup blueberries, fresh or frozen**  
**1 cup mini chocolate chips**

1. In a large bowl, sift together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt.
2. Beat eggs with buttermilk and melted butter. Combine dry and wet ingredients into a lumpy batter, being careful not to overmix.
3. Heat butter/nonstick spray in a skillet or griddle. Spoon 1/3 cup batter into the skillet/griddle; sprinkle the top with blueberries or chocolate chips.
4. Cook for 2-3 minutes on each side.

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## BusinessNOW

# McKeever Real Estate

— By Angel Morris

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Who better to help sell your home, find your dream home or build you a new one than a family of Realtors and builders who grew up in Midlothian? Julie and Allan McKeever opened McKeever Real Estate in 2016, after working in the interior design business, selling homes for brokers and building homes in Midlothian for about 35 years. “We leased space where a hair salon had closed, gutted it down to empty floors, and Julie started designing, while I began building walls and painting,” Allan recalled.

High school sweethearts who raised their sons in Midlothian, the couple felt drawn to the heart of the city for their offices. “Living in Midlothian offered great schools, sports programs that our boys enjoyed and a variety of churches and worship areas for our family,” Julie noted. “Today, we feel blessed by the consistent business we’ve received from having our offices downtown.”

The McKeever family work together using their different skill sets to complement one another. “Julie negotiates contracts and prepares listing presentations — and new homes are her specialty,” Allan said.

“Allan does existing home sales and new home building, along with running the property management side of the business,” Julie added.

Allan handles technical questions about inspections and building costs that may arise during the inspection phase of a contract. He holds a Graduate Builder designation from the



National Association of Builders, while Julie received her Broker's License in 2015. "On a typical day, I prepare listing presentations and provide home staging and prep work getting clients' homes ready to sell quickly, while Allan installs the signs, lockboxes and helps me with photos," Julie explained.

The McKeevers walk clients through the entire real estate process, making friendships along the way. They are active in community events such as the art festival, wine walks and trick-or-treat night, along with serving as primary sponsor for the annual family street dance. "We take every opportunity to give back to the community we grew up in by participating in charitable donations, including Manna House needs, and assisting those in need of housing or employment," Allan said.

The couple hosts a home group to meet and invest in the lives of fellow Stonegate churchgoers. They put family first, with their daughter-in-law serving as their office receptionist and their sons assisting with advertising efforts as needed. "We love to set our own hours and take one day off a week to spend with our grandkids to build those lasting bonds," Julie added.

With their mantra of being "the Ellis County experts," the McKeevers know all the subdivisions, costs of each area and upcoming market listings through attending planning and zoning meetings. Not only can they assist buyers and sellers, but they offer new builds and offer property management for rentals, including duplex and commercial spaces. "Our monthly fees are typically lower than most franchise companies, and property owners can get inspections and repairs processed quickly as we use our employees for faster, more cost-effective solutions," Allan admitted.

Julie continued, "We love it when our clients say, 'We did not know you could do that,' and we say, 'Sure, we'd be glad to!' Helping families get into a home and making that transaction as smooth as possible is a joy for us to be part of." **NOW**

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# A New Way to Landscape

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

*Landscaping can be one of the most time-consuming tasks for homeowners. Pulling weeds and trimming bushes are jobs that are seemingly never really finished. Instead of planting flowers, consider adding hardscapes, decorative structures or materials that add a different kind of beauty to your yard.*

## Patios and Walkways

- *Create a Walkway.* One of the simplest ways to enhance part of your property is with a patio or walkway. The most permanent route is to pour concrete, possibly even covering your new space with an awning or gazebo. For a simpler DIY project, you can lay stones to make your new walkway or patio.

- *Do It Yourself the Right Way.* If you decide to lay your own stone, there are some important choices to make.

You can buy square or rectangle stones and lay them end to end, leaving no space between. Or, you might want a more irregular stone, which necessitates putting a material like pebbles or crushed granite in the gaps. Whatever your finished product is, your first step should be laying down weed blocker. And the key to a solid, level walking surface is getting a good foundation of sand before you put your stones down.

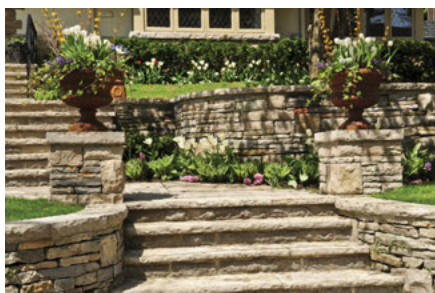




## Build What You Need

### • *Add Form to Function.*

Sometimes, hardscapes can be as much about necessity as beauty. If you need to build a retaining wall, you will want to carefully plan your project. Including pipe for drainage is essential, as is tamping down the soil while you backfill to cut down on the land's settling making your wall uneven. And to improve the aesthetic value, spread out any stones that are slightly discolored to give the wall a more artistic look.



• *Check for Codes and Cables.* If you decided to build stairs, retaining walls over a few feet or are pouring a new driveway, do not start the work on a whim. For some larger projects, city codes may dictate size restrictions and what materials you can use. For projects that require significant digging or trenching, you should always call 8-1-1 first, so you can ensure there are no pipes or cables underneath your project area.

## Accent Pieces

• *Create Some Counterspace.* If you admire your friend's outdoor kitchen, but building something that large is not an option, consider building an outdoor island. Find a space, get your measurements and use simple right angles to design a counter for food prep. Large hardware stores and lumber suppliers will generally make cuts for you, so you will only have to put the wood together yourself. And if you want to add a small refrigerator underneath, it is easy enough to install an exterior outlet by tapping into an existing outlet inside.

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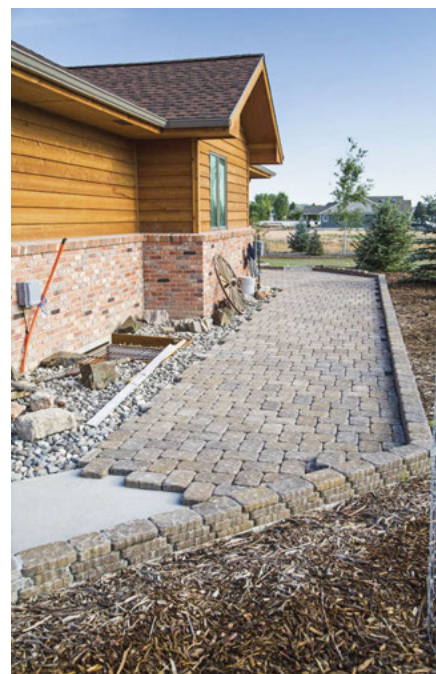
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• *Create a Buzz With a Blaze.* If you want to add something fun that can be a conversation piece, fire pits are a great and relatively simple project idea. Unless your pit is going on top of existing hardscape, you should dig about a foot into the ground, then add sand as a foundation for the stones. Be sure your stones are at least 12 inches above ground level to ensure a safe barrier between your fire and your yard.



If you need design help for whatever hardscape ideas you have, sites like Pinterest are flush with pictures and plans perfect for builders of all levels. With all the options available, hardscaping your lawn is a great way to put your personality into your property. **NOW**



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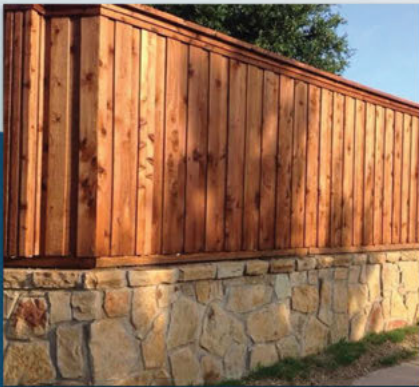
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## Zoomed In: Ella Curry

By Angel Morris

Ella Curry was honored by family and friends for her 100th birthday this year at Midlothian Senior Center. She graduated from high school in Howard, Texas, in 1936. She moved to Midlothian in 1950, when her first son was 6 years old, so he could start school here. "It was just a little town, and the schools were little. I knew all the teachers and the people, and I loved that," Ella recalled.

Now a resident at Midtowne Assisted Living and Memory Care, Ella still loves the city. "I wouldn't want to live anywhere else," she said. As for reaching the century mark, Ella said the best thing is, "Just being happy, healthy and having a wonderful family backing me."



WGMS and FSMS dance teams work hard at dance camp in preparation for the school year.



Michelle Subia shows off dress-up clothes in Sweet Belle's Boutique Princess Party Room.



First Methodist members volunteer at the church rummage sale.



These members of MISD Class of 1983 started school together and recently celebrated their 35th reunion.



Brandi Robbins enjoys a snow cone at Momma's Icebox with her mom, Rose.





*Second-grader Addison Coffman scales the rock climbing wall at the Mayor's Back to School Bash.*



*The ladies of Gemini Moon host their fifth anniversary celebration.*



*Garrick Hutchins of All Things Elegant Entertainment shares music at a Midlothian event.*

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# Calendar September 2018

September:

1

Fall Festival and 5K Registration: Vendor/food booth and 5K registration continues at [www.midlothianchamber.com](http://www.midlothianchamber.com). The events themselves are **October 20**.



6

Women, Worship and the Word: 7:00-8:00 p.m., FBC Midlothian, 1651 S. Midlothian Pkwy. Learn more at [fbcmidlo.com](http://fbcmidlo.com).

11

Paws for Fun Afterschool Program Kickoff: 6:00-7:00 p.m., 5431 Montgomery Rd. Learn more at [pawsforreflectionranch.org](http://pawsforreflectionranch.org).

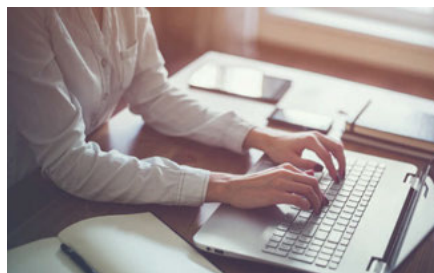


15

Pet Adoptions: 9:00-11:00 a.m., Tractor Supply, 890 N. Hwy. 67. Adoptable pets from the Midlothian Animal Shelter.

17

The Writers' Circle: 6:00 p.m., A.H. Meadows Public Library, 923 S. 9th St. Open to the public. For more information, contact [writerscirclemidlo@gmail.com](mailto:writerscirclemidlo@gmail.com).



18

Breakfast with the Blue: 8:00-9:30 a.m., Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Dr. Register at [www.midlothianchamber.org](http://www.midlothianchamber.org).

22

Ellis County Emergency Preparedness Fair: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., MISD Multi-purpose Stadium, 1800 S. 14th St. Learn more at [www.co.ellis.tx.us](http://www.co.ellis.tx.us).

29

EMS Roaddocs Family Event: 2:00-4:00 p.m., Walmart, 400 N. Hwy. 67. Car and motorcycle show, food, vendors, more. Learn more at [www.emsroaddocsntx.org](http://www.emsroaddocsntx.org).

Chamber Fundraiser Auction: 6:00-10:00 p.m., Blaine Stone Lodge, 5331 Weatherford Rd. Fun and fundraising at the Chamber's annual auction. Learn more at [www.midlothianchamber.org](http://www.midlothianchamber.org).

Ongoing:

Mondays

Celebrate Recovery meeting: 7:00-9:00 p.m., The Lighthouse Church, 1400 N. 9th St. A Christ-centered recovery program designed to help

those struggling with hurts, habits and hang-ups. For more details, email [jason@dfwighthouse.org](mailto:jason@dfwighthouse.org).

Second and Fourth Mondays

Rag-Tag Readers Book Club: 10:00 a.m., A.H. Meadows Public Library, 923 S. 9th St. For more information, call Sandy at (972) 775-3417.



Wednesdays

Movies at the Meadows Library: 1:00 p.m., A.H. Meadows Public Library, 923 S. 9th St. Bring a blanket. Children 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult.

Thursdays

Midway Composite Squadron of Civil Air Patrol/US Air Force auxiliary: 6:45-9:00 p.m., Mid-Way Regional Airport, 131 Airport Dr. Cadets ages 12-18 and Senior Members 18 plus. Visit [www.gocivilairpatrol.com](http://www.gocivilairpatrol.com).



Fridays

Preschool Storytime: 11:00 a.m., A.H. Meadows Public Library, 923 S. 9th St. Story, craft and snack provided. For more information, call (972) 775-3417.

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



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## Toes on the Move

Crossover toe is a common foot problem that can inhibit physical activity for older Americans, but there are conservative options, such as splints, that can help. Ultimately outpatient surgery might be needed to address the deformity and keep senior citizens active and on their feet.

Individuals with hammertoes, bunions or a second toe that extends beyond the big toe are most susceptible to developing crossover toe as they age. It's a common problem among older people in which the second toe gradually moves across the big toe. It can be painful and, therefore, difficult to walk comfortably or pursue an active lifestyle.

The first symptom of crossover toe is pain in the ball of the foot. A tear in the joint makes the second toe unstable. It falls out of alignment and eventually drifts over toward the first toe and can even overlap the first toe.

Doctors normally check the ball of the foot for a possible plantar-plate tear when an older patient complains of pain in the area. Pre-existing forefoot problems combined with normal wear and tear or possible trauma




can cause the plate to tear over time. If the pain persists and the toe starts to drift, it is time to find a foot doctor.

Surgery to correct crossover toe is an outpatient procedure performed with local anesthesia. Patients with bunions or hammertoes are advised to have those deformities corrected during the surgery. Recovery time is about six weeks.

If you're an older adult with persistent pain in the ball of your foot, it's in your best interest to see a doctor, because if your foot hurts, you aren't exercising, and your cardiovascular health can take a nosedive. **NOW**

*Christopher Schmitt, DPM*  
Associate of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons  
Southern Star Foot & Ankle



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