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Editorial Assistant, Beverly Shay

Writers, Randy Bigham . Joe Joseph

Dianne Reaux . Callie Revell . Sydni Thomas

Editors/Proofreaders,

Pat Anthony . Pamela Parisi

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Creative Director, Chris McCalla

Artists, Casey Henson . Martha Macias

Felipe Ruiz . Arlene Honza

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ON THE COVER



The Lohmanns keep pumpkins aglow in Red Oak.

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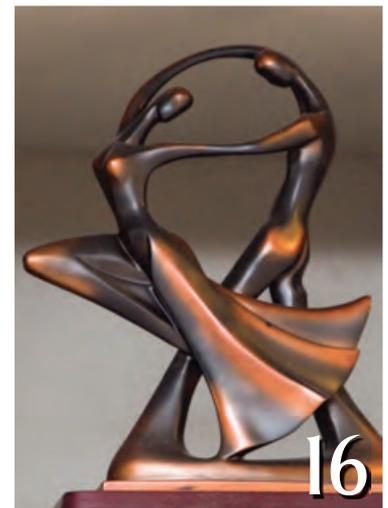
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Editor's Note

A perfect 10 ...

Simple math tells us that October is the 10th month of the year, which I find suiting since it's also the most perfect month, in my book. Autumn's cooler temperatures and the reflecting back on childhood that Halloween brings are just two special things about October.

Of course, Halloween is not as carefree as it once was, but the opportunity for creativity still abounds: from cleverly carved pumpkins to out-of-this-world costumes and decorations beyond the imagination. And any holiday that revolves around candy is always a friend of mine.

Whether October finds you pulling out the stops with fall decor or just indulging in a favorite candy treat from days gone by, may this 10th month be your perfect treat!

Angel

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SPOOK

CENTRAL

— By Randy Bigham



Scary is as scary does for a young couple whose lives revolve around not one but three haunted houses. With assorted tricks, treats and terror-filled encounters, Halloween comes and goes for most people, but for Alex and Jennifer Lohmann the holiday is a year-round fascination. In addition to owning two haunted house attractions and directing public relations for a third, all located on the Red Oak property where they have lived since 2005, Alex and Jennifer have absorbed the work into their daily lives. Many of their friends are also involved in the industry that haunted houses have become, and the pair is well-known in the community of commercial "haunts" that thrive in the Dallas area. "There really is no distinction between our professional and private lives," Jennifer laughed. "Even our vacations are haunt-related. We went to New Orleans once to get away from everything and ended up giving a tour at a haunted house there!"

Alex agreed that, with their 7-year-old son, Ian, he and Jennifer are a Halloween family through and through. "We have all Ian's birthday parties here," he explained. "And when we go on a trip somewhere, we always stop and take pictures at cemeteries or other so-called spooky places, for inspiration."

For Ian, having a trio of haunted houses in his front yard is nothing strange, nor is being picked up from school by his parents in their replica of the hearse from the film *Ghostbusters*. It's a lifestyle Ian was born into, and he thinks it's pretty cool.

Ian's 30-something parents are grown-up kids themselves, with a high-energy, positive attitude that at first seems at odds with scaring the daylights out of children and adults alike. But their upbeat personalities merely underscore their belief in family-friendly fun. "There is very little blood and gore or anything like that in the shows we put on," Jennifer assured. "We want people to have a good time being scared but not grossed out."

Haunted house aficionados from across the state have been enjoying the playful mayhem in Red Oak for nearly 40 years, long before the Lohmanns took on the property that has since become famous for ghosts and the odd goblin. Although the two attractions Alex and Jennifer own have, respectively, entered their 10th and 25th years in operation, it's the third haunted realm they promote, Reindeer Manor, that has drawn trembling, screaming crowds since 1974.

Reindeer Manor is a charitable arm of the Boy Scouts of America Troop 1 in Duncanville and is sponsored by that



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city's Holy Spirit Catholic Church. Proceeds from the attraction benefit the Scouts as well as Venture Crew 3, the Ellis County Sheriff's Explorers Post 106 and the North Ellis County Outreach Center.

"Reindeer Manor is the longest-running, walk-through haunted house in the state, and maybe the world," Alex pointed out. "We get a lot of returning patrons, and aside from the fact that it's an interesting exhibit, the public knows that proceeds go to local charities. So that makes it a popular draw." Alex stressed that support of the attraction through funds raised represents such a broad spectrum that people from almost any walk of life can feel confident their donations are well used. The primary benefactors are Boy Scouts Troop 1 and Holy Spirit Catholic Church, as they have been from the project's inception, but other vital, countywide organizations have been added to the list of charitable recipients over the years.

The Lohmanns are not only happy in their current work but they have their hands full doing it. Along with juggling three exhibitions during the Halloween season, they operate a props supply company geared to the haunted attraction industry. Under the label When Hinges Creak, Jennifer designs everything from decorative doorknobs and latches to locks and light fixtures, while Alex welds the pieces into their repurposed state. The pair keeps equally busy hosting training seminars and workshops geared to the haunts market. Jennifer is also noted for her delicious rum balls, which she hopes to enter into the Taste of Dallas event someday.

"We're really just doing what we have always loved," Jennifer shared. "I was involved in theater in school, and Alex was in a band. I especially loved working

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with makeup, costumes and props, and those are still my main interests here.”

Alex is motivated by the mechanics of showmanship, as well. “I learned to build and weld in school, and with Jen, I build all our sets, structures and fencing. When I was performing with my band, it was the animation, the lights and all the props that I liked as much as the music,” he said. “Now, I get my fill of all the backstage prep, and I prefer it to being onstage.”

“I also like being in the background, not part of the performances,” Jennifer admitted. “To me the fun is in staging the scenes, and making sure everything is in place so that visitors can be wowed.” Her personal favorite among the duties she carries out is applying makeup to the characters who appear in the skits that are produced. Self-taught, Jennifer knows just how to make a skeleton or zombie look his or her Halloween best. “It’s a great creative process, and I love being challenged like that,” she said.

The pair works in tandem with a team that is as wickedly passionate as they are when it comes to putting on a good show. “We have a loyal and dedicated staff that is just like us, in that they love everything about what we do here, which is making scary fun.”

As lovers of scary movies, Jennifer and Alex’s marriage 17 years ago was made in horror heaven, and they consider it a blessing that they’re able to work together, sharing a common passion. “I used to love the old Hammer films,” Alex recalled.

“And I liked watching the old Dracula and Frankenstein movies,” Jennifer added.

Now they live out their spooky childhood dreams on land that’s haunted, or at least rumored to be. Reindeer Manor and the other buildings on the site, including an old barn and the carriage house (where the Lohmanns live) are each reputedly haunted by members of the Sharp family who owned the estate more than 100 years ago. Fatal fires, poisonings and a series of suicides allegedly occurred on the property. While facts are dim, legends endure, and it’s the stories that have been handed down that keep people coming back to scare up a good time at Reindeer Manor ... thanks in no small part to Alex and Jennifer Lohmann. **NOW**

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Downhome Civics 101

— By Dianne Reaux

When Sandy Galletta lived in DeSoto, she was an active member of her community. To say she was burning the candle at both ends was probably an understatement. When she moved to Red Oak, she was determined to scale back her civic responsibilities. But one too many coincidental conversations with acquaintances and well-timed opportunities led Sandy right back into civic involvement.

Sandy's personality is a blend of warmth and enthusiasm. "I'm originally from New Jersey, but I've lived in Texas for the last 25 years. We first lived in Richardson, and then we moved to DeSoto where we lived for 10 years," she said. While living in DeSoto, Sandy was busy making an impact in her community. "The DeSoto Lions Club, the DeSoto Service League, the DeSoto Chamber of Commerce Education Committee — you





name it, I was affiliated with it," she stated. "I've always taken an active role in my community. I volunteered with the DeSoto Outreach Center for about two years, and then I was selected to serve as the director of the program, a position I held for about 10 years."

A series of life changes left Sandy with a desire for a fresh start. She had always valued history, and the opportunity to work in Dallas at The Sixth Floor Museum presented itself. Sandy then decided to move, and in 2000, she relocated to Red Oak. In 2001, she married John, another former New Jersey resident.

When Sandy moved to Red Oak, she was reluctant to take on so many different projects, and she decided to take a different approach. "I told myself I was going to scale way back on my commitments. My plan was to work in Dallas and live in Red Oak, and that was going to be it," she stated. Sandy currently works for the Convention and Visitors Bureau for the city of Dallas. With her strong background in civic involvement, it's easy to see why she was such a good fit for the organization. "Last January, I was hired by the Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau where I provide administrative support to the Senior VP of Diversity and Inclusion and the VP of Strategic Alliances."

For a while, Sandy stuck to her decision to reign in her civic involvement. But then she began to make little

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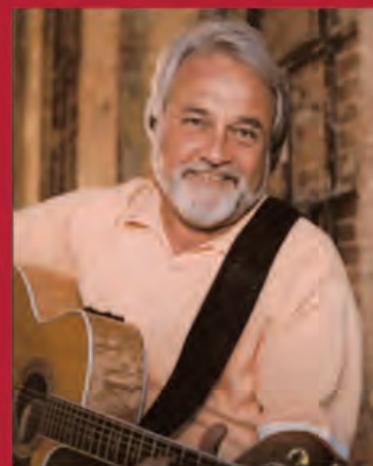


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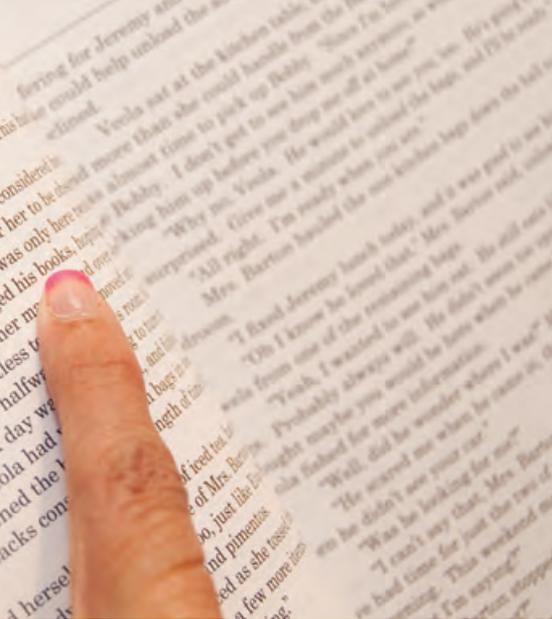
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compromises with herself. Her first two projects didn't end up being full-blown, citywide initiatives. In fact, they were pretty small. "Well," she admitted slyly, "I did end up starting two groups that meet once a month — a couple's Spades group and a Bunco group," which is a game played with dice. And with those relatively small compromises, she continued to stick to her guns, going to work and back home, with the occasional social outings with friends. But a personal internal shift was slowly beginning to take place for Sandy, and all it took to turn the tide was for her to start reading a few good books, a few well-timed conversations and a little nudging from her friends.

"A few years ago, a friend of mine, Tamera Moses, was serving on the Red Oak Library Advisory Board, and she



mentioned they were short a few board members. She knew how engaged I'd been in the DeSoto community, and she commented I should really consider getting involved. This was around the same time that the *Hunger Games* books were really popular. My youngest daughter, Dana, kept insisting that I read the series. I don't read a whole lot, but after reading the *Hunger Games*, I continued to read several other books including, *The Help*, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* and *The Secret Life of Bees*. While I was enjoying my books, another friend, who lives in the Garland area and is part of a book club through her church said, "I can't believe you aren't involved in a book club." But one final conversation Sandy had proved to be an undeniable sign that full-fledged civic involvement was close on the horizon.

"I'd had another conversation with Joyce Grant in which I'd floated the idea of a book club. She served on the Red Oak Library Advisory Board, and she asked me if I would be willing to facilitate the book club, if there was mutual interest from the Red Oak Library," Sandy explained. "I told her I would consider it. She approached the library board. They were receptive, and that's how it all began." So in May 2012, Sandy became a member of the Red Oak Library Advisory Board, and one of the first items on the agenda was the book club.

Sandy approached the assignment the same way she approached all her other endeavors — enthusiastically and diplomatically. She reached out to community members, and the library assisted her efforts by posting the details



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of the book club on its website. The first meeting was held last September, with about 30 participants attending the kickoff event. "As a group, we decided which books were going to be read, and the first book selection was *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer," she said. "To break the ice at the first meeting, and to help the group be more interactive, we started with introductions." To introduce themselves, participants removed the words *loud* and *close* from the title of the book and replaced them with words that described themselves.

With the launch of a successful book club under her belt, Sandy now has a couple of new missions in mind. "I would like to launch a Red Oak Friends of the Library group to serve as an advocate for our library." One of the main missions of the group would be to facilitate more activities between the library and the schools, especially targeting younger children in elementary school. She would also like to see the formation of a historical preservation group that could dedicate itself to researching, writing and preserving the history of Red Oak. "While working at The Sixth Floor Museum, I saw, firsthand, the value of history in photographs, keepsakes and oral histories," she confided. "It's so unfortunate, but once those who remember history firsthand have passed, if they haven't shared their stories and photos, that history may be lost forever."

A community is always strengthened when its citizens band together with common goals that can enhance the quality of life for its members. Sandy serves as an example of the positive change that can result when people invest their time and talents back into the places where they live and play. **NOW**



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Sustainable Raising

— By Sydni Thomas



Appearances are not always as they seem, as is the case with DaRandall and Fransell Riley's Oak Leaf home. From the curb, the Riley abode fits in seamlessly with the other large, brick houses with well-manicured lawns on their quiet street. One step inside, however, and visitors will see that DaRandall and Fransell have turned their house into a hands-on learning center and environmentally conscious home for their two growing boys — Dyson, 6, and Sullivan, 4.

**At Home With DaRandall
and Fransell Riley**





When DaRandall and Fransell built their four bedroom house in 2003, they sacrificed custom interior upgrades to create an energy-efficient and environmentally friendly house. All of the windows are triple-paned with blinds built in between the glass. They installed a geothermal HVAC system to reduce their need for heating and air conditioning. "It was important to us that our home is as energy efficient as possible, and we were willing to sacrifice design upgrades to make that happen," Fransell said. "With our geothermal HVAC system, our house is around 69 degrees — without the heat — on the coldest day of the year. The coils in the ground help regulate the temperature."

Teaching Dyson and Sullivan the importance of leaving the earth a better place did not stop there. The Riley family loves food and makes every effort to eat organic and local foods. To cut down on the cost of groceries, DaRandall and Fransell started a garden. It began small and now produces enough vegetables for the family year-round. They've grown everything from tomatoes and beans to spaghetti squash and zucchini. When they planted their first garden, Fransell used the Internet to learn what she needed to know to have a successful garden. Most of her research led her to gardens in the north, and this inspired her to start her own gardening blog about sustainable living. It follows her family's garden and explains how they've turned gardening into a family event.

Each of the boys has his own gardening responsibilities. This year, Dyson was given his own bed in the

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garden to tend to — the cantaloupe bed. “Each Saturday morning, we wake up and work in the garden as a family,” DaRandall said. “They know when it’s time for the beans to be picked and how to pull weeds in the flower beds. We compost all our leftover food and make rich soil.”

“We wanted our children to know where food comes from,” Fransell said. “So many children don’t know food comes from the ground. We also don’t like being limited to what is in the grocery

store. Most people don’t even know there is such a thing as purple broccoli or tomatoes that aren’t red. We try to grow as many different varieties as possible.”

Bringing their harvest inside and cooking is a family effort. The kitchen island stores most of their produce until it is canned, frozen or cooked. When it is time for a kitchen project, the parents are on one side of the island cooking while the boys stand on the other with a work surface at their level. Most of the meals the family eats are prepared in their

kitchen. They only eat out as a last resort. If they aren’t cooking at the kitchen island, it’s likely they’re at the kitchen table, sharing a meal or working. It is their central gathering place.

“We make our own salsa, barbeque sauce, jelly, relish and canned vegetables,” Fransell said. “It doesn’t feel like we spend a lot of time in the kitchen cooking, because it’s our way of life. Most of the time it’s more convenient to cook at home.”

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format allows for many things to be going on at once. Fransell can be studying at the table, while the boys watch their favorite shows on TV or play in the game room just past the living room. The game room featuring a large super hero mural was once DaRandall's man room, but now his pool table shares the space with all his son's toys and games. Each boy has his own Dallas Cowboys-inspired bedroom, but they enjoy spending their time playing together in the open areas of the home.



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Just off the game room is the media room, where Dyson and Sullivan watch their favorite movie, *Transformers*. Fransell and DaRandall decorated the room with items from their world travels. A treasure returns with them from each trip they take. The travel theme extends from the media room to the study, where a large mural of the world adorns one of the walls. The family plans on marking all the places they have traveled, making a unique geography lesson for the two youngest members. Traveling has been one of the biggest parts of the Rileys' lives since they got married 12 years ago.



They have traveled all over the world to places including: Cozumel, Jamaica, Paris, Hawaii, St. Lucia and Niagara Falls. For their 10th wedding anniversary, DaRandall and Fransell spent two weeks in Italy.

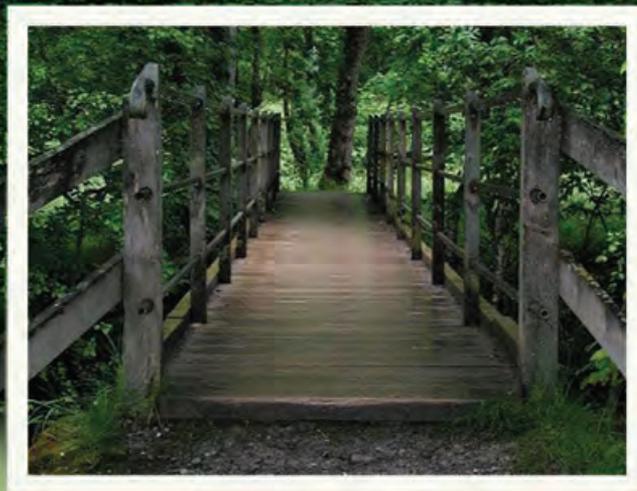
“When we travel, we don’t travel like most people,” DaRandall said. “We submerge ourselves in the culture and learn as much as we can by living like they do — no hotels or resorts. We rent an apartment, buy local foods and walk as much as possible. By the end of the trip, we are so tired that we make sure we have a weekend to recover before we go back to work.”

With two growing boys, even a large house can get cramped from time-to-time. The Rileys spend as much time outside as possible, playing basketball and baseball in the evenings or taking a swim in their pool. Two pet chickens also inhabit the backyard and are the family’s main source of eggs. They run to greet Dyson and Sullivan when they enter the backyard.

“I got the chickens from a co-worker who accidentally ordered too many, and we have been learning about raising them ever since,” Fransell said. “We love being outside as a family and would say that it’s the best thing about our home. We have plenty of room for the chickens, gardening and for playing.”

DaRandall and Fransell took what they learned about food and sustainable living from cultures around the world and created an environment in their home that is fresh and organic. They introduce their sons to new food and cultures every day. “We want our children to know the world is larger than the city, state and country they live in,” Fransell said. “It’s our job to make sure they know where food comes from, and we’re having fun growing it.” **NOW**

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A HAND UP

— By Callie Revell

John Reynolds has lived in Ellis County since 1998 and works as a landscape architect and project manager for the City of Dallas Parks Department. He knows firsthand the importance of caring about how land is used, and is currently serving as the president of the Ellis County chapter of Habitat for Humanity. He first got involved with the

organization after attending a meeting in Midlothian when the chapter was first founded. Since then, he has assisted with construction on three houses. He meets with his fellow board members once a month to discuss how the organization can fill a vital need in Ellis County by providing adequate shelter for families in need.



“Habitat for Humanity provides home ownership opportunities for people who might not have one otherwise by offering them a chance to use their own sweat equity,” board member Josh Davis explained, referencing the policy of Habitat for Humanity International that generally requires homeowners to put in 500 work hours toward building their



home. This encourages homeowners chosen by Habitat for Humanity to receive a house to be involved in every step of their home's construction.

Habitat for Humanity does not necessarily seek to fight homelessness, but rather help those living in unsafe or inadequate housing to build a reliable home. The structure of the program means volunteers do not renovate houses, but build new ones, because a smaller chapter like Ellis County's does not have the resources to do repairs, as well as construction. “It's for people who can't get financing by conventional means,” board member Kay Willingham said. “People think we're giving away the house, but that's not what it is. It's not a giveaway.”

“It's getting a hand up, not a handout,” added board member Teresa McNiel, who emphasized the houses are not free to the new owners. Instead, Habitat for Humanity allows those in need to buy a home, many for the first time.

“They do get a mortgage. It's interest-free and at a rate less than what you would pay for a similarly sized home,” John explained.

“Most people don't know that Habitat for Humanity is their own mortgage company,” Teresa added. “They fund their own houses. The homeowners pay

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Habitat, so the money from the houses we've built is there to build another house. Most of these people have never owned a house before. We're trying to educate them about home ownership."

The goal of Habitat for Humanity is simple: revitalize communities by eliminating substandard housing. "Our goal is to see a family grow and reach the heights they want to in their home," said board member Felecia Warner. "Focusing on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, we're starting off with shelter, a basic need of all human beings. That's why Habitat has grown the way it has since it was founded, because we are supplying that basic need of humans — shelter." However, she added that the houses are modest and described them as "accessible, affordable and appropriate. We're not going to build a house with room for a pool and a pony," Felecia laughed. "We're building in economically disadvantaged areas, and it's revitalizing the neighborhoods."

Throughout the year, the Ellis County chapter of Habitat for Humanity participates in many fundraising events, including the Belk Charity Sale and the annual Lawn & Garden Expo hosted by the Ellis County Master Gardeners. "Getting the word out is really important to us," Felecia said. "We're trying to raise funds for our next family."

The main event they are hosting this fall is the Festival of Trees, a Christmas celebration that will help fund the construction of a new house for a deserving family. "It will be an event the weekend before Thanksgiving this year, and we ask local businesses and individuals to donate decorated



Christmas trees that are then auctioned off to benefit Habitat,” Willingham explained. “We need donors to donate trees. We’ll be looking for sponsors and volunteers to help with the event.”

“We do want the public to come. It’s open to the public,” Teresa said, reiterating that community support is vital to the success of any nonprofit organization. An organization like Habitat for Humanity gives much to the community, and needs support in return.

“I think a lot of people don’t understand what it is,” John said, expressing a desire to increase the visibility of the organization and educating the public about its mission. He remembered a certain project that demonstrated the great things Habitat for Humanity can do for a family. “I worked on the most recent project almost from the start. That particular family was there almost on a daily basis. Part of it was to get their hours, but part of it was also because they took pride in building their own house. Actually building a home and seeing who it’s for is a very rewarding experience.”

“I remember building a home for a handicapped individual, a single mom with two children who unfortunately had become paralyzed,” Felecia said. She mentioned special cases like this one, which required the organization to construct their first handicap-accessible house, help Habitat for Humanity grow to better serve the community.

The Ellis County chapter of Habitat for Humanity meets the last Tuesday of each month at Ferris Heights United Methodist Church at 108 Center Street in Waxahachie. “Our monthly meetings

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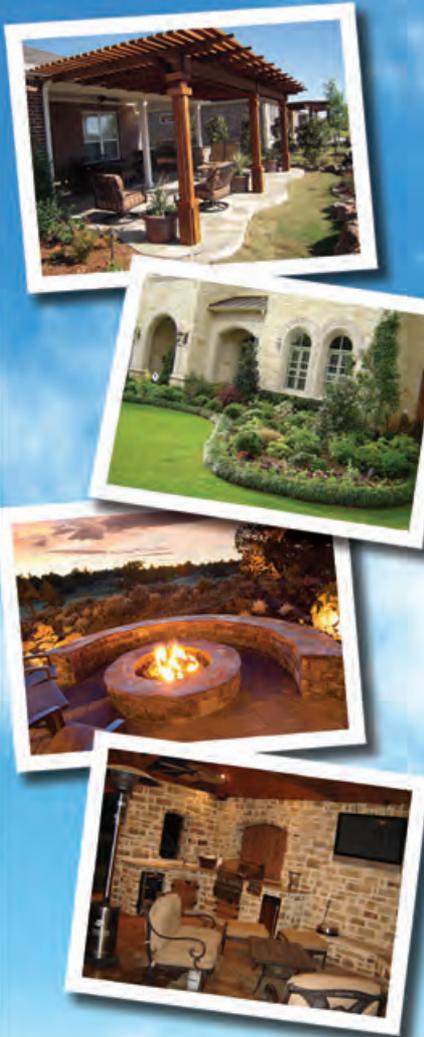
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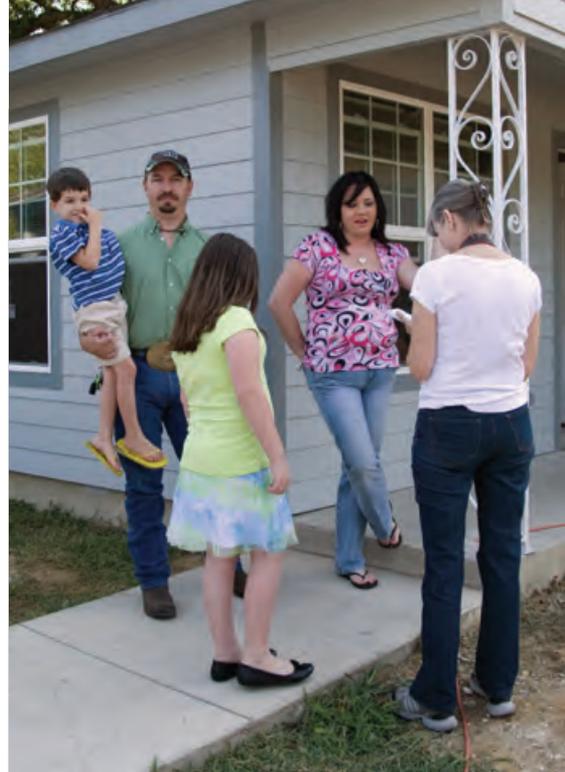
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are open to the public,” Felecia said. “We welcome all visitors to come and bring their ideas, to share what they’d like to see.”

“People can come to the meetings and become board members if they’d like,” Kay added. “We’re always looking for board members.”

“Right now, we’re looking for donations, and fundraising events like the Festival of Trees help build up our bank account to start our next house with plenty of money, so we don’t get to the point where we’re ready to put in cabinets and there isn’t enough money to buy cabinets. Once we start the house, we’ll need volunteers to help us build,” Kay added. Habitat for Humanity is always looking for volunteers to help build houses for families in need. A background in construction is helpful, but not required. They are also looking for a project manager for their upcoming house.

Habitat for Humanity is an organization that will hopefully continue to positively impact lives in Ellis County for years to come. Sometimes, all it takes to give someone in need a hand up is to raise your hand in the air and say, “Yes, I will help.” **NOW**

Editor’s Note: A schedule of fundraising events and building projects can be found at www.elliscountyhfb@gmail.com. You can also contact the local Habitat for Humanity office directly at (972) 937-2797.

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— By Angel Morris

Green Funeral Home is a longtime Ferris tradition, founded in 1882 by the Green family. Currently owned and operated by Lee Longino, the facility is dedicated to preserving funeral customs and traditions that have comforted generations of North Texans.

With a decade of funeral home experience to his credit, Lee learned the Greens wanted to sell their Ferris facility in 1975. One visit with the family and a few short months later, Lee became the new owner of Green Funeral Home on September 15, 1975.

“Green Funeral Home has always ensured that local families have the choices they want at an affordable price. People need the freedom to choose services that help create a meaningful

celebration of the life lived,” Lee said.

Working from the convenient location of the beautifully decorated site, Green Funeral Home staffers are caring and experienced professionals who understand that each family has personal requests and traditions. “Our funeral home’s dedicated staff can play a critical role in planning and carrying out a meaningful funeral or memorial service. Our licensed funeral directors are intimately familiar with the planning process, key decisions a grieving family must make and necessary legal documentation required during this difficult time,” Lee said.

“Our professionals can handle all of the details and help create a unique service that fits your needs and values.”

Green Funeral Home services include everything from a

Business **NOW**

family conference regarding conducting arrangements to consulting with family and clergy throughout the funeral process. Shelter of remains, preparing and filing necessary notices, obtaining necessary authorizations and permits, coordinating with cemetery, crematory or other third parties are also Green Funeral Home services. Plus, viewings/visitations, memorial/graveside services, funeral coaches, burials and extras such as acknowledgment cards, visitors registry, crucifixes, rosary beads and temporary markers can be provided.

“Most of us are not prepared to plan and carry out a funeral ceremony for someone we love. And so much of the information available on this critically important subject fails to focus on what is most important: having a personalized, meaningful funeral that helps families and friends begin the healing process of mourning after the death of someone we love,” Lee said.

The Green Funeral Home staff and its website can provide insights to help families create a funeral experience that both honors the life of your loved one and starts you on the path to healing. “Everything can be done in person, of course, and this is what’s comfortable for a lot of families. But those who are interested may also visit our website to begin an online plan. Individuals can preplan their own services with our Basic Planner, which takes less than five minutes to complete,” Lee noted.

The site also enables individuals or families to make funeral arrangements based on their own preferences and budgets, as options and prices are listed. Online videos can help in the selection of caskets and burial vaults or cremation vs. traditional burials.

“Making the decisions which come at a time of loss is difficult. With our online arrangements, you can take time to select what you most prefer within the amount you want to spend. Or you can simply get an idea of what you want before you visit with our staff in person,” Lee said. “Whatever your preference, Green Funeral Home is dedicated to helping you make meaningful arrangements to best celebrate the life of your loved one.” **NOW**

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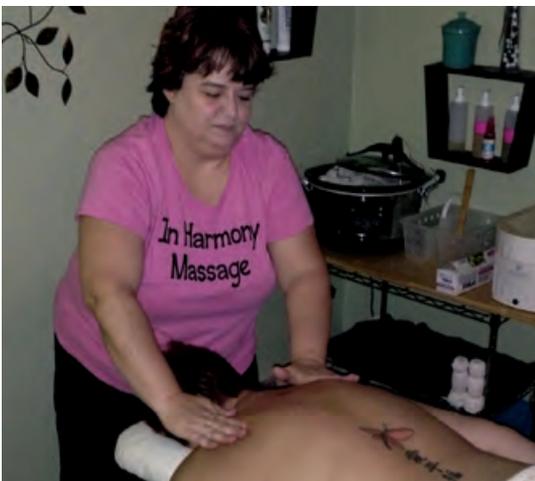
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Planting for Spring

Every October, it seems as if I talk about it being the time to plant. Although it does seem odd, it really is the right time for planting almost everything. I found a sack of bulbs in my carport closet that need to go into the ground, and I am expecting an order of 200 bulbs to arrive any day. They will all need to be planted in order for us to enjoy the blooms in the spring. I have several small trees growing in my beds around the house that I would have dug up and cut out if a friend hadn't asked me for trees. I told her to send her husband over in October, and we would transplant the trees into their front yard. The trees will have a much better chance of surviving than those planted in the late spring or summer.

Planting in the fall gives the plants and trees a chance to develop roots and strength before the cold sets in. Allowing them this extra time to establish themselves also gives them an extra edge when the next summer hits. When planting a new tree, be careful to plant it just above the soil line. (Remember the ground will compact after planting.) Heavy mulch will help protect the roots from the drop in temperature as the winter sets in. This also slows the water evaporation in the root zone as our spring rains warm up the ground.

If you are planting seeds or small starter plants, read the directions on the packet or do a Google search to find planting directions. Watch to avoid planting too deeply. After the seeds come up, plan to water every day for a week to give them a good start. Small plants need about a 1-inch layer of mulch to start, and after they get several new leaves, you can increase the layer of mulch to 2 or 3 inches. Lettuce, radishes, parsley, spinach, English peas, turnips and carrots are all good cool weather crops and do well from seeds. Leeks, onions, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale, chard and collard greens probably will do much better if you start with small plants. They all tolerate the cooler temperatures well and will tolerate a light freeze and continue to grow.

Good luck with your winter plantings. Check with the Ellis County Master Gardeners at (972) 825-5175 for more specifics on fall gardening plants for our area. **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.

Breast cancer

Breast cancer

of malignant cells in the
Every woman is at risk
early detection and medi
ing mammogram.

Be Breast Aware

Besides fall, football and Halloween fun, each year October marks Breast Cancer Awareness month. It's a good time to reflect on the millions of American women who have battled the disease — remembering those who lost their struggle and celebrating those who are now survivors.

One in eight American women will fall victim to breast cancer in her lifetime. However, through advanced detection technology and better treatments, more women than ever before are surviving their fight. The best way to beat breast cancer, though, is to detect it early. For women with no family history or risk factors for the disease, that means:

- **Monthly self-exams starting at age 20:** Check your breasts every month after your menstrual cycle, or on a date you'll remember, such as the first of every month.
- **Clinical breast exam starting at age 20:** Your doctor should examine your breasts every three years up to age 40 and yearly after that, or as recommended based on your risk factors.
- **Annual mammogram starting at age 40:** Often, doctors recommend a baseline mammogram between age 35 and 40 and yearly mammograms starting at age 40, or sooner if your risk is higher due to family history or other factors.

Should a mammogram reveal a suspicious area, a breast ultrasound or breast MRI may be ordered to further evaluate the abnormality. A breast MRI scan can also screen women who are newly diagnosed with cancer and those with a 20- to 25-percent lifetime risk of the disease. If a woman has a suspicious mass,

typically a biopsy — taking a sample from the lump to check for signs of cancer — is recommended.

Risk Reduction

While there is no surefire way to prevent breast cancer, there are ways to manage risk. The most important steps match the healthy living advice everyone has heard many times before:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Exercise
- Don't smoke
- Eat less fat, especially saturated fat
- Eat lean meat

But there are other ways to decrease breast cancer risk that many women may not be aware of, but over which they may be able to exercise a measure of control:

- Have first child before age 30.
- Reduce use of birth control pills.
- Avoid hormone replacement therapy if possible.
- Breastfeed for one-and-a-half to two years.
- Limit alcohol to less than one drink a day.

Women with a strong family history of breast cancer may want to consider genetic testing to see if they have the BRCA 1 and/or BRCA 2 mutation — which indicates a high likelihood of developing breast cancer — as well as other genetic mutations that correlate with a heightened risk of breast cancer. **NOW**

Joe Joseph • Marketing and PR Consultant • Baylor

Throughout October

Pumpkin Patch: Hours vary by day, First United Methodist Church Red Oak, 600 Daubitz Dr. Variety of pumpkin sizes and prices. Call (972) 617-9100 for details.

Reindeer Manor Amusement Park: Hours vary by day, 410 Houston School Rd. Visit reindeermanor.com.

October 4, 5

Homecoming and Founder's Day: Homecoming Game/Alumni Night is Friday, **Oct. 4** at 7:30 p.m. Red Oak High School, 122 S. Hwy. 342. Founder's Day kicks off at 9:00 a.m. Saturday, **Oct. 5** with a parade leaving Goodloe Stadium. Concessions and entertainment until 2:00 p.m. Visit redoakareachamber.com.

October 5

Annual Lord's Day Festival: 9:00 a.m., Ferris Heights United Methodist Church of Waxahachie, 108 Center St. Country store and silent auction open and children's activities begin; 11:00 a.m. lunch; 1:00 p.m. live auction. Call (972) 937-2344.

Pioneer Day: 10:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m., historic downtown Ferris. Free evening

street dance. Contact Kathy Harrison at (972) 544-3696.

October 12

Clean-Up Day: 8:00 a.m.-noon, 301 Locust Dr., Oak Leaf. Visit oakleaftexas.org.

International Moon Observation Night:

7:00 p.m., Cherry Creek Nature Preserve at end of Pecan Creek St. near Old City Park, Red Oak. Free/open to public.

October 19

Discipleship Ministries Community Health Fair: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Red Oak City Park, 101 Live Oak Dr. Register for 2K Breast Cancer Walk at dminc.org. Call (469) 835-0587 for details.

Red Oak Lions Club Clay Shoot: 9:00 a.m., check-in; noon, lunch begins; Ellis County Sportsman's Club, 470 W. Sterret Rd., Waxahachie. Visit redoaklionsclub.com.

Free Self-Defense Class: 9:00 a.m., 301 Locust Dr., Oak Leaf. Class size is limited. Call (972) 617-2660 to reserve your spot.

October 26

Fall Festival: 4:00-8:00 p.m., Old City Park,

101 Live Oak St. Family-friendly event. For more information, visit redoaktx.org.

Fourth Annual Great Pumpkin 5K run/walk: 9:00 a.m., downtown Ferris. Event benefits the Lions Club of Ferris. For more information, visit cityofferris.org.

October 26 — 30

Fall Festival: 3:00-5:00 p.m., Eastridge Baptist Church, 732 E. Ovilla Rd. Revival and 80th anniversary open house and dinner. Call (972) 617-2338.

November 1 — 3

Lord's Acre: Hours vary by day. Visit ovillaumc.org/lord_s_acre for details.

November 9

Jog for Dogs 5K Benefit Run: 8:00 a.m., Midlothian ISD Multi-Purpose County Stadium. Proceeds go toward the cost of Joshua Seller's diabetic alert service dog. Visit www.facebook.com/jogfordogsmidlothiantx for further details.

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

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In the Kitchen With Veronica Whitlock

— *By Angel Morris*

Veronica Whitlock has recipes she considers “sure things,” but she also likes experimenting. “I love to learn about different cultures through ethnic cooking,” she said. Her mother taught her “flavor is everything and not to be afraid to put twists on traditional recipes.”

Being outdoors and traveling are some of Veronica’s hobbies, and she dreams of owning her own holistic spa. “As a licensed esthetician I love to take care of people. Cooking allows me to do that, too,” Veronica noted. “I cook for family and friends and love to entertain.”

As someone who enjoys making desserts, Veronica has a particular recipe on her to-do list. “I can’t wait to make my family some no-bake peanut butter cookies. I tasted some, and they are next on my baking list!” **NOW**

Guacamole Verde Sauce

5 jalapeños
2 avocados
1 Tbsp. chicken bouillon
3/4 cup milk

1. Roast jalapeños on top of stove until soft. After roasting, cut stems off.
2. Blend all ingredients in blender, adding more milk if sauce is too thick.

Baked Egg Casserole

Perfect for spreading on tortillas and topping with Guacamole Verde sauce above.

1 lb. bulk sausage, hickory flavored (or your preference)
Bacon, cooked and crumbled (optional)
1 dozen eggs
12 Tbsp. water
1/3 cup milk
6 oz. cheddar cheese, grated

1. Spray oblong cake pan with cooking spray.
2. Brown sausage in a frying pan. Break sausage into small pieces; drain fat.
3. Spread sausage (and bacon, if used) on bottom of cake pan.
4. Beat eggs in large bowl; add water and milk.
5. Sprinkle cheese over sausage. Add egg mixture.
6. Bake at 350 F for 1/2 hour. Casserole is done when eggs are firmly set.

Tamale Pie

1 lb. ground beef
1 packet taco seasoning
1 can corn
1 small jar salsa
1 1/2 boxes Jiffy cornbread

1. Brown ground beef, drain grease; add taco seasoning.
2. Mix corn and salsa in with meat, then pour meat mixture into oblong cake pan.
3. Mix 1 1/2 boxes of Jiffy cornbread mix.

(One box is too thin; two is too thick). Pour and spread on top of meat.

4. Follow directions on Jiffy box for baking temperature and time.

Bowtie Pasta

2 red bell peppers
1 head broccoli
1 1/2 cans chicken broth
1 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. black pepper
2 pkgs. cream cheese, softened
4 boneless chicken breasts cut into small pieces
1 Tbsp. butter
1 12-oz. box bowtie pasta

1. Cook red peppers and broccoli in chicken broth, adding garlic and pepper to taste. (I always add more than recipe requires.)
2. Cook until vegetables are soft; add cream cheese.
3. Cook chicken in butter, adding a pinch of garlic powder and black pepper. Set aside when done.
4. While everything else is cooking, boil pasta in water to cover. When done, drain off water and add vegetable/cream cheese mixture and chicken. Mix together and cook for about 5 more minutes, until sauce thickens.

Chocolate Heavenly Delight Cake

1 box chocolate cake mix and ingredients required for mix
1 can Eagle Brand sweetened, condensed milk
1 jar caramel (Mrs. Richardson’s is the best but can be hard to find!)
1 tub Cool Whip
2 Heath candy bars, finely broken

1. Bake cake per package instructions. Let cool, and then take a straw and poke holes all over cake.
2. While cake is cooling, heat condensed milk and caramel together, stirring until mixed. Once cooled, spread caramel mixture over cake.
3. Spread entire tub of Cool Whip over cake; top with Heath sprinkles.
4. Keep cake chilled in fridge.

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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