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M A G A Z I N E

OCTOBER 2022

Belonging Through Books

Jonathan Johnson writes
to encourage children

The Shoe

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jockey reading and
feeling his mount

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Scavenger Hunt

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Dr. Maryam Raza

Dr. Raza is a Board Certified Physician in Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine practicing in the Dallas area since 2006. She completed her residency at Columbia University New York and has been medical director of the wound care program at Methodist Hospital Dallas since 2010. She is an ardent supporter of the concept of limb salvage and has developed a comprehensive program for healing diabetic foot wounds in a timely fashion. She is a member of Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society.

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- Oct. 14 – Early Release
- ROHS Homecoming Parade
- Oct. 17 – Board Meeting
- Oct. 18 – Senior Citizens Luncheon
- Oct. 20 – Early Release
- Oct. 21 – Parent Teacher Conferences
- Oct. 24-28 – Red Ribbon Week
- Nov. 8 – Election Day
- Nov. 14 – School Board Meeting
- Nov. 21-25 – Thanksgiving Break

ON THE COVER



A Red Oak author turns life's challenges into inspirational books.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Angel

Angel Morris
North Ellis Co. NOW Editor
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From its roots ...

I'm convinced the tree in my front yard is one of the most glorious in existence, and it's quite possibly my favorite thing about where I live. While I love to tool around other neighborhoods and dream of newer houses than mine, seeing our tree when I turn on the road back home reminds me why I may never move. It's hard to find new developments with trees like this.

Sure, sure, trees grow over time. But this tree was mighty when we moved in, and it will likely be mighty when we no longer exist. This tree shades our entire yard and a good portion of our neighbors' yard. This tree provided the acorns from which more than one nearby tree has come into existence.

This tree is where we took our son's photo among its branches marking his growth, and the tree under which he and I had picnics. This tree is where we rested on blankets to read books and looked up through its maze of branches at the sky ... always a reminder of how vast and beautiful simple nature can be.

We've collected leaves for autumnal decoration from this tree. And we used this tree as a gauge of seasons ... the tiny lime buds that seem to spring up overnight signaling winter's end and the arrival of spring; the massive canopy of rich green that cools us in summer; the vibrant blanket of red, yellow and orange that covers our yard ushering in the fall.

Like Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, our oak expects little in return ... a bit of water and some pruning now and then. What a small price to pay for having a fortune in one's own front yard.

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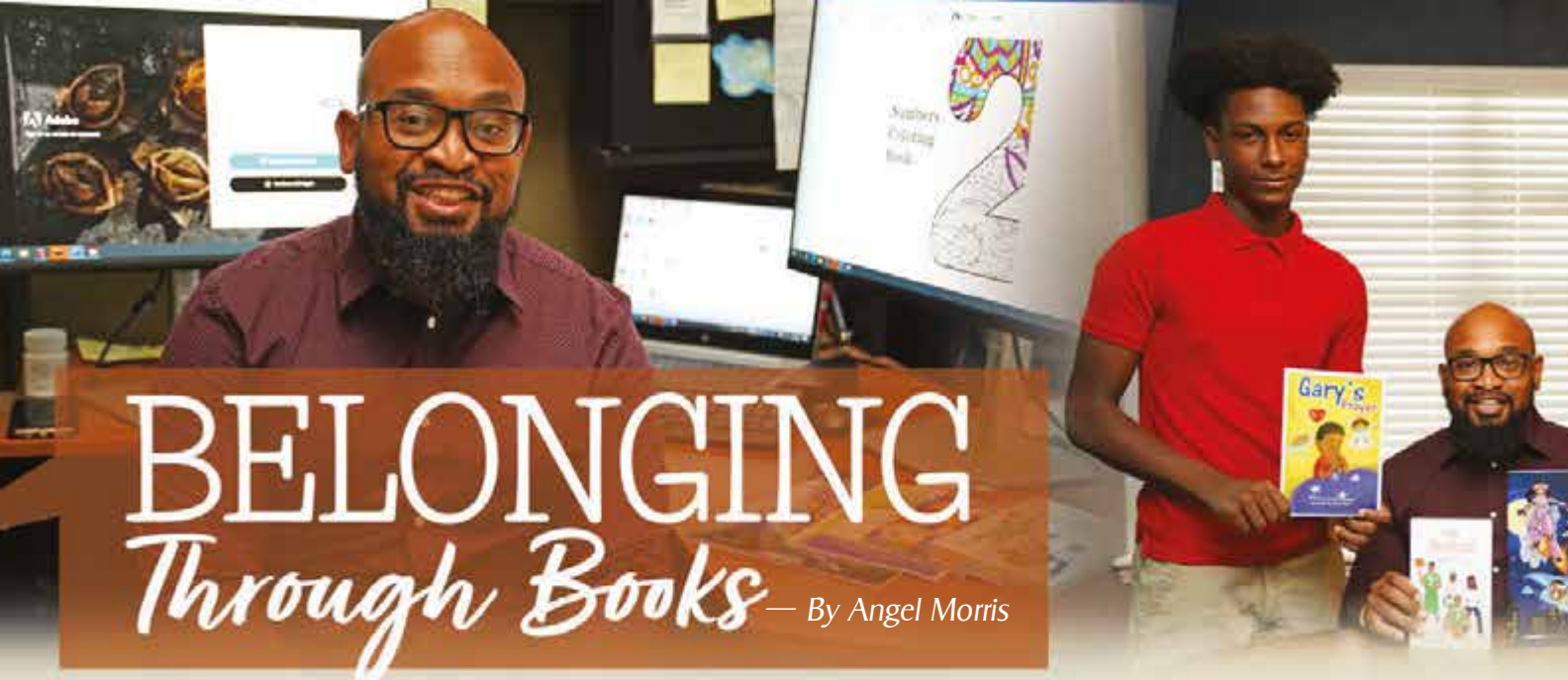
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BELONGING

Through Books — By Angel Morris

What started as a way to clear his mind and soothe his soul has turned into a career for Red Oak's Jonathan Johnson, who hopes his struggles can help others — particularly children. Adopted at age 2 and raised by loving parents, Jonathan now advocates adoption and shares other meaningful lessons as a children's book author. "I learned about my adoption around the age of 11. Honestly, when I found out, the news didn't faze me," he recalled.

Partnering that news with a health scare, however, led to much introspection on Jonathan's part. "My first bout with kidney disease is when me being adopted really came into play," he recalled. "I was diagnosed with kidney failure at 15. Due to my health, high school was a bit different for me. I was forced to grow up fast as I had to learn about different kidney medications, stay on top of my schoolwork, deal with being on dialysis and even a failed kidney transplant attempt."

Around that same time, Jonathan met his biological mother and siblings. To help him deal with everything he was facing at the time, his adoptive mom suggested he begin keeping a journal. "Between school, dialysis and doing my best to embrace my biological mother, it was a lot for me to handle. My mother sat me down and gave me a journal that I still have now. She advised me to write whatever it was that I was feeling."

At 17, Jonathan received his first kidney transplant. After high school graduation, he went on to earn a bachelor's degree in political science from University of North Texas, then a master's degree from the University of Phoenix. During graduate school, he worked for the Dallas County District Attorney's Office. "By that time, I was 24. By 25, I had published my first book," Jonathan recalled.

The first, and subsequent five books, were all products of those journals he kept as a teen. "My first book, *A Fighting Chance*, is my autobiography. My remaining books are geared toward children," Jonathan explained.

In *When God Blessed Us With You*, Jonathan's characters explain the beauty of adoption to their son. *The Yearbook* shares the challenge young people can have in admitting their feelings for others. *Stars of the Bible* tells the story of Joseph in a way to which children can relate, while *Gary's Prayer* explains how children can gain confidence through prayer. *The Super Twins* is a comic strip coloring book coming soon.

"Through my books children learn they have a voice — be it about adoption, prayer or even life in junior high school. They also see that reading can be fun," Jonathan noted.

Jonathan believes his books make a positive impact on families. "Parents have expressed to me that my adoption book made it easier for them to tell their children that they are adopted," he continued. "I've also had several parents send videos of their children reciting some of the prayers that are in my books."

Jonathan's goal is to help children ask questions of their parents and for parents to elaborate with the information their child needs to know. A quiz section at the back of some of his books helps facilitate such conversations.

Jonathan also hopes his books provide something that has been lacking in the industry. "After I married and had kids, I realized it was hard to find characters that looked like my children and many others. As I decided to further pursue writing, I wanted to show children who look like me that they can do or be anything they want."

A person who encouraged Jonathan in a similar way was his Godmother, Mae Brown, who reminded him every time he left her house, "I love you and it didn't start today." Jonathan recalled, "She had the biggest heart, warmest smile and the best hugs."

Wife, Brittane, and sons, Landon and Gary, (not to mention the family dog, Bella) are Jonathan's biggest inspirations, motivating him even when he went through a second battle with dialysis in 2016 and a second transplant



in 2018. "My advice is to surround yourself with people who love and care for you because then you can't afford to quit. You have people counting on you to win," Jonathan advised.

Along the way, he found a silver lining in his previous health trials, using his recovery time to write. "In every struggle there's strength. In every trial there's opportunity," he acknowledged. "I turned those obstacles into work that others now enjoy.

"During those difficult times, I learned how to lean on others for help when I need it. Everybody needs a team, you can't do it alone," Jonathan continued. "And I realized, as long as you have breath in your body, God is not done with you yet, and there is indeed a brighter day ahead."

For would-be writers struggling to find their own motivation, Jonathan suggested making the dream about others. "Write about what you are passionate about. Write about what puts a smile on your face. Keep in mind there is someone out there who's been waiting for you to write your particular story," he said.

"I've learned along the way if you have a dream or goal, go ahead and do it. Time does not wait. And last, I've learned to enjoy the process and the journey," Jonathan admitted. "With any goal, there are early mornings and late nights. But the relationships you build along the way make those worth it. For me, there is nothing like seeing the excitement on a reader's face brought to them by my books." **NOW**

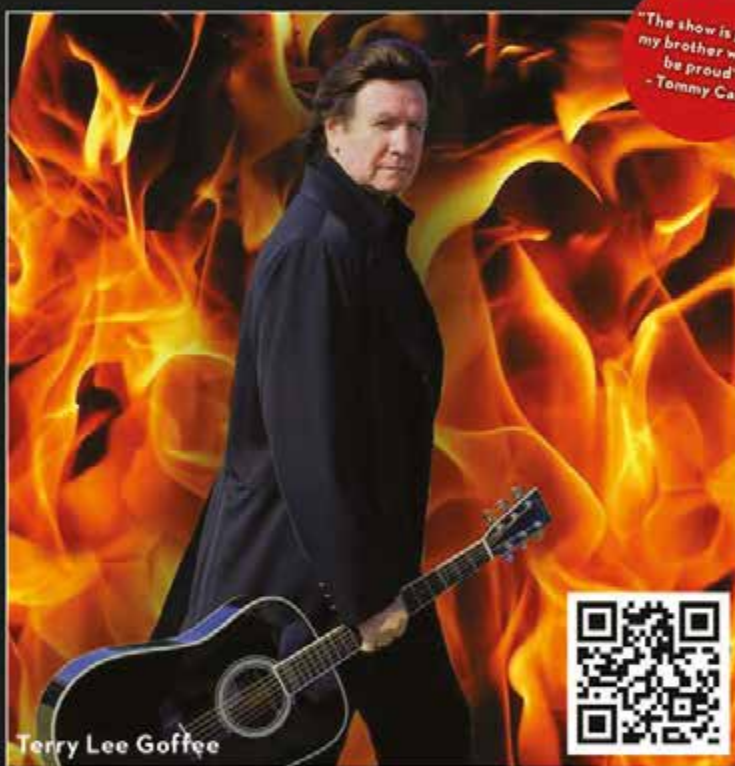
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THE SHOE

— By Virginia Riddle

Pounding hooves, fast horses and a break in the crowd as horses and riders came into the final stretch — that was Willie Shoemaker's world for most of his life. Also known as William Lee Shoemaker, Bill Shoemaker and "The Shoe," Willie knew how to get the best out of his thoroughbred mounts throughout his 40-plus years "in the irons" as one of the most winning jockeys and trainers in the world. He rode 8,833 winning horses, setting a world record that held until 1999. He won the Breeders' Cup Classic and 11 races in the Triple Crown series, though the Triple Crown itself eluded him. He won each of the three races in the Triple Crown multiple times — two Preakness Stakes, five Belmont Stakes and four Kentucky Derbies — but he never won all three in the same season. However, his beginnings were humble. Born in 1931 in an adobe shack on his grandfather's ranch near Fabens, Texas, Willie's seemingly effortless riding style began to be honed while riding across the ranch's El Paso/Rio Grande area landscape.

The doctor who delivered Willie didn't think the 1 pound, 13-ounce tiny infant would survive, but Willie's grandmother created an incubator by wrapping him in a warmed blanket and placing him on a pillow near a warm oven. Life was hard for Willie's family during those Depression Era days, so he lived with several relatives as they came and went at the ranch. Willie's job, by age 6, was to ride a horse to pick up the mail. At age 10, he and his family, like so many other families of that time, moved to California looking for work, and he discovered horse racing.

By age 14, a school classmate had suggested that the diminutive Willie might be just the right size to become a jockey. He was strong and was known for not losing matches on his school's wrestling and boxing teams. So, he secured a job at the Suzy Q Ranch and quit school, earning \$75 a month. By age 16, he had become an exercise rider at the Bay Meadows track in San Mateo, California, learning from trainer Hurst Philpot and jockey, Johnny Adams, a future Hall of Famer. Willie's first race as a jockey was in 1949 at Golden Gate Fields. He won the race, which netted him \$120, the first dollars leading to a lifetime earnings of more than \$123 million. He led in the amount of dollars in purses earned in a single year 10 times.

Size wise, Willie at full height/weight was only 4 feet 11 inches tall and 98 pounds. Other assets were his even temper,

calm disposition and his remarkable understanding of horses. Horse breeder Rex Ellsworth was quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* as saying, "When a horse was doing his best, Shoe left him alone. When a horse loafed, Shoe would get after him. I never worried when Shoe rode one of my horses, because I knew he'd do a perfect job." In 1959, Willie was inducted into the National Racing Museum and Hall of Fame.

His riding career was, as is usually the case with jockeys, riddled with small injuries, but in 1968, Willie broke his thigh when the horse he was riding fell on him. The doctor used a child-sized metal pin to repair the damage. After physical therapy for 13 months, he returned to winning races. In 1969, he was thrown and survived a broken pelvis, ruptured bladder and temporary paralysis of his left leg, only to return to racing and winning for the next 20 years. In 1981, Willie rode John Henry, and together, horse and rider won the Arlington Million, the first million-dollar stake thoroughbred race.

At age 54, in 1986, Willie rode a long shot horse, Ferdinand, in the Kentucky Derby. Ferdinand won, and Willie became the oldest jockey to win the Derby after having been one of the youngest years before to win that famed race. In 1990, Willie made a farewell tour of U.S. racetracks. He retired from riding to become a trainer, even after he became a wheelchair bound quadriplegic following an automobile accident in 1991. Willie retired as a trainer in 1997 after he faced the reality that he couldn't totally know the horses anymore without riding them, and the physical demands were becoming too much for him. He passed away in 2003, survived by a daughter from his third marriage. NOW

Sources:

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Zoomed In: Ayden Chambers

By Angel Morris

Ayden Chambers recently celebrated his 17th birthday by serving others at Snow King, the shaved ice shop located at Hwy. 342 and Ovilla Road. "The owners made a special of the day just for my birthday, and the customers were super nice — one even tipped me \$15!" Ayden said.

A Red Oak High School senior, Ayden attends Oaks Church, enjoys gaming and appreciates having early release from school so he has time to work and save money. After graduation next spring, he hopes to attend The University of Texas at Austin to major in astronomy. "I've been interested in astronomy forever," Ayden admitted, "and after watching the movie, *Interstellar*, I realized that's what I wanted to study."



Student volunteers participate in the First United Methodist Church Red Oak YOUTH Mission Trip to Beaumont, Texas.



Twin siblings, Ian and Lia McChesney, with mom, Amy, settle into fourth grade and teaching pre-Kindergarten at Wooden Elementary.



Members represent the Red Oak Firefighters Association at Founder's Day.



Owners and employees celebrate the ribbon cutting of HOTWORX, the virtually instructed fitness facility in Red Oak.



Eighth-grader Samantha Lord qualifies for the Amateur Athletic Union Junior Olympics in both shot put and discus.



Jaxon Smith and mom, Tracy Smith, attend the ROMS 101 event for eighth-graders.



Red Oak Music students rehearse The Beatles' "Twist and Shout" with Mrs. Regina at summer rock band camp.

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SCAVENGER HUNT WINNER!



Darrin and James Klice won this month's Scavenger Hunt's \$50 prize! "We love Red Oak!! Support local businesses."



When the 2020 pandemic kept Peggy Powell from returning to California from vacation, she and her husband made their stay in Red Oak permanent. “God took a hard situation and turned it into good. A good home, good neighbors, good church and good times with family and friends,” she reflected.

Peggy’s favorite learning-to-cook stories are from early marriage. “Because I’d watched my grandma and mom in the kitchen, I eventually turned my terrible dishes into delicious meals,” Peggy admitted. “My 92-year-old mom, Gwen Ryan, and I still bake banana bread together, and she shares it with her retirement center.”

Peggy enjoys traveling, gardening, painting, time at the lake and cooking with her daughters and grandkids. “My grandkids have been cooking with me since they were big enough to sit on the counter. I can honestly say each of them have surpassed me in the art of creating delicious dishes.” **NOW**

Pumpkin Delight

1 28-oz. can pumpkin
1 cup brown sugar
2 1/2 tsp. cinnamon, or more to taste
1 tsp. ginger

1/2 tsp. cloves
1 tsp. pumpkin pie spice
1 tsp. salt
1 14-oz. can evaporated milk
1 14-oz. can Eagle Brand Milk
4 large eggs

1 yellow cake mix
2 cups walnuts or pecans
1 cup melted butter
Whipped topping, to taste

1. Preheat the oven to 425 F Mix the first 10 ingredients thoroughly; pour the mixture into a 10x14-inch casserole dish.
2. Sprinkle the yellow cake mix evenly atop the pumpkin mixture. Do not blend it in. Sprinkle the nuts on top of the cake mix; drizzle with the melted butter.
3. Bake about 40-50 minutes or until knife comes out clean. Top with whipped topping.

Pecan Muffins

1/2 cup flour
1 cup pecans, chopped
1/4 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. salt
1 cup brown sugar
2 eggs, beaten

2/3 cup butter, melted
1 tsp. vanilla

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease muffin tins or use cupcake cups. (I spray both with cooking spray because these are sticky, and doing so will prevent sticking to the pan).
2. Mix the flour, pecans, baking powder and salt in a large bowl; mix completely, making sure the pecans are covered with the dry ingredients.
3. In a separate bowl, mix the brown sugar and eggs until combined well. Stir in the melted butter and vanilla. Add to the flour mixture; mix together.
4. Fill the muffin tins about halfway full; bake for 11-13 minutes. Allow the pan to cool for several minutes; run a knife around the edges to remove carefully.

Mom's Banana Nut Bread

1 1/2 cups sugar
1 1/2 cups butter
4 eggs
2 cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup buttermilk
2 tsp. vanilla
3 medium bananas, mashed
1 cup pecans or walnuts, chopped (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Prepare 2 loaf pans with butter, flour and parchment paper.
2. Blend the sugar and butter until fluffy. After blended well, beat in the eggs, one at a time, until all are mixed in well; set aside.
3. In a dry bowl, mix the flour, baking soda and salt. Add small amounts of the dry ingredients to the sugar and eggs mixture, alternating with the buttermilk and vanilla. Blend in the mashed bananas and nuts, if using.
4. Divide the batter between the 2 loaf pans; cook for 25-30 minutes. Check with a knife or toothpick inserted in center to test for doneness.

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Hello, Fall

OCTOBER

Due to COVID-19, some events may have been cancelled or rescheduled while we were at press. Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

10/1-10/31

Pumpkin Patch:

Purchases benefit First United Methodist Church Red Oak children's ministries, or just take a picture with the kids. **Mondays-Saturdays:** 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.; **Sundays:** noon-7:00 p.m., FUMC, 600 Daubitz Dr.

10/4

Red Oak Night Out Against Crime: View emergency vehicles, enjoy refreshments, giveaways and prizes. Free. 6:00-8:30 p.m., Red Oak Police Station, 547 Methodist St.

10/20

Bunco Fundraiser:

Bunco, prizes, raffles and snacks. Benefits the Red Oak Public Library. Purchase tickets during regular library hours. \$20. Doors open: 6:00 p.m.; activities begin: 6:30 p.m., Red Oak Municipal Center, 200 Lakeview Pkwy.

10/22

Red Oak Fall Festival:

Games, rides, inflatables, petting zoo, face painting, airbrush tattooing, seasonal crafts and lots of candy from vendor booths. 3:00-6:00 p.m., Pearson Park and Red Oak Municipal Center, 200 Lakeview Pkwy.

10/29

26th Annual Texas Country Reporter Festival:

Hosted by Bob and Kelli Phillips. 300-plus craft booths, food courts and Diamond Rio concert. Admission: Free. 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Downtown Waxahachie.

10/30

Trunk or Treat:

A safe trick-or-treating alternative. 2:00-4:00 p.m., FUMC Red Oak parking lot, 600 Daubitz Dr.

11/5

ROHS Annual Special

Needs Christmas Market:

Includes auction benefiting the VIP prom for special needs, self-contained students at the high school. 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., ROHS Cafeteria, 220 TX-342. katherine.mccoy@redoakisd.org.

11/12

Ellis County Veterans

Celebration Ceremony:

Classic Swing Band: 9:30 a.m.; ceremony with a memorial service and military-style flyover begins: 10:00 a.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 200 Civic Center Dr., Waxahachie, TX 75165.

Ellis County Veteran's

Benefit Concert:

Johnny Cash Experience. 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., Waxahachie Fine Arts Center, 1000 N. Hwy. 77, Waxahachie. Tickets: bestcashconcert.com or (888) 937-6258.

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2022 General Election



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Early Voting: Monday, October 24, 2022 through Friday, November 4, 2022

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Election Day: Tuesday, November 8, 2022 (Vote at any Vote Center Location in Ellis)

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