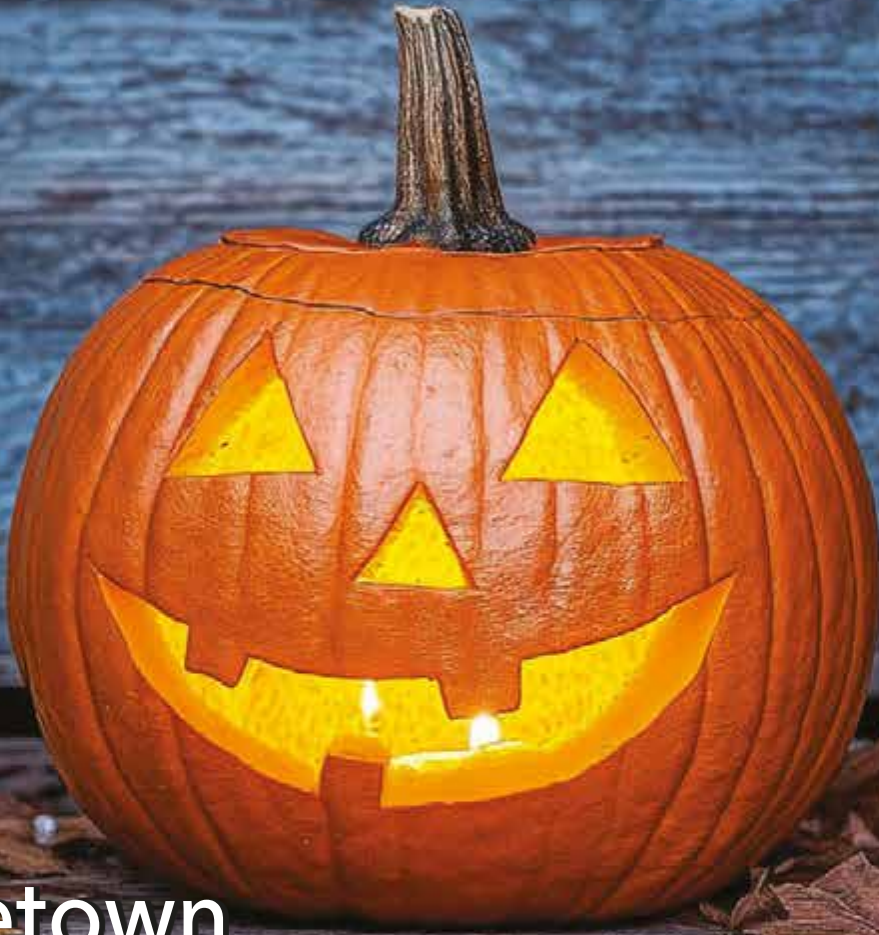


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OCTOBER 2024



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**Sat, October 26 7am-7pm**  
**Sun, October 27 1pm-7pm**  
**Mon, October 28 --- Fri. Nov. 1st 7am-7pm**

### **Locations:**

- Ellis Co. Woman's Building (Davis Hall)  
**\*\*Main Early Voting Site\*\***  
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- Ellis County Sub Courthouse (Conf. Rm)  
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- Midlothian Conference Center (Ballrooms)  
 1 Community Circle Drive, Midlothian
- Palmer ISD Annex Bldg (Portable Bldg)  
 303 Bulldog Way, Palmer
- Red Oak Municipal Center (Ballrooms)  
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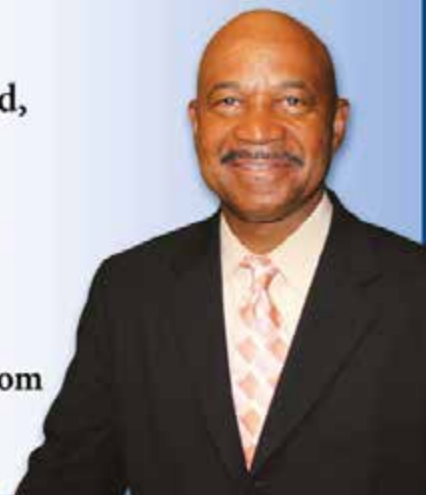
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- October – Principal Appreciation Month**
- Oct. 10 – Parent/Teacher Conferences (4-8pm)
  - Oct. 11 – Parent/Teacher Conferences (8am-12pm)  
(No School)
  - Oct. 14 – District Holiday (No School)
  - Oct. 21 – School Board Meeting
  - Oct. 28 - Nov. 1 – Red Ribbon Week
  - Oct. 27 – Staff Development (No School)
  - Nov. 3 – Daylight Savings Ends
  - Nov. 8 – Early Release
  - Nov. 14 – Senior Citizen Luncheon
  - Nov. 15 – Staff Development (No School)
  - Nov. 18 – School Board Meeting
  - Nov. 25-29 – Thanksgiving Break



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ON THE COVER



The Parker family takes its love of Halloween to the next level at Pecan Tree Manor.

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# EDITOR'S NOTE



*Angel*

Angel Morris  
North Ellis Co. NOW Editor  
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*Life is tricky ...*

One of my all-time favorite Halloweens, my young son had a horrific case of allergies and was absolutely too sick to go trick-or-treating. I realize my favoring this particular time makes me sound heartless, but it's not because I didn't want to take him out for candy that I would then have to sort through with a fine-toothed comb looking for evidence of tampering before he could enjoy it. I would happily do such tedious examination — or make a surreptitious exchange of the candy in his big plastic pumpkin for treats I'd purchased myself in advance — if it meant my little guy was happy.

Besides being a fan of dressing up in costume, my son most enjoyed lining up each piece of candy received, end to end, to see how far it extended across the living room floor. I have photos of him stretched along candy trails that were much longer than him — apparently the measurement of a successful All Hallow's Eve outing.

But the year it looked like the holiday would be cancelled thanks to an angry case of sinusitis, I did what any neurotic mom would do ... I began texting neighbors, nearby friends and family explaining the situation. So, while we did not do Halloween on October 31 that year, as soon as my son was healthy again, he put on his Harry Potter costume, and we traveled to the homes of folks who made him feel like he hadn't missed a thing. His plastic pumpkin was filled, his candy trail extended beyond his own height, and all was right with my trick-or-treater's world. May your Halloween memories be just as sweet ... however, or whenever, you choose to celebrate.

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# HOMETOWN HALLOWEEN

— By Angel Morris

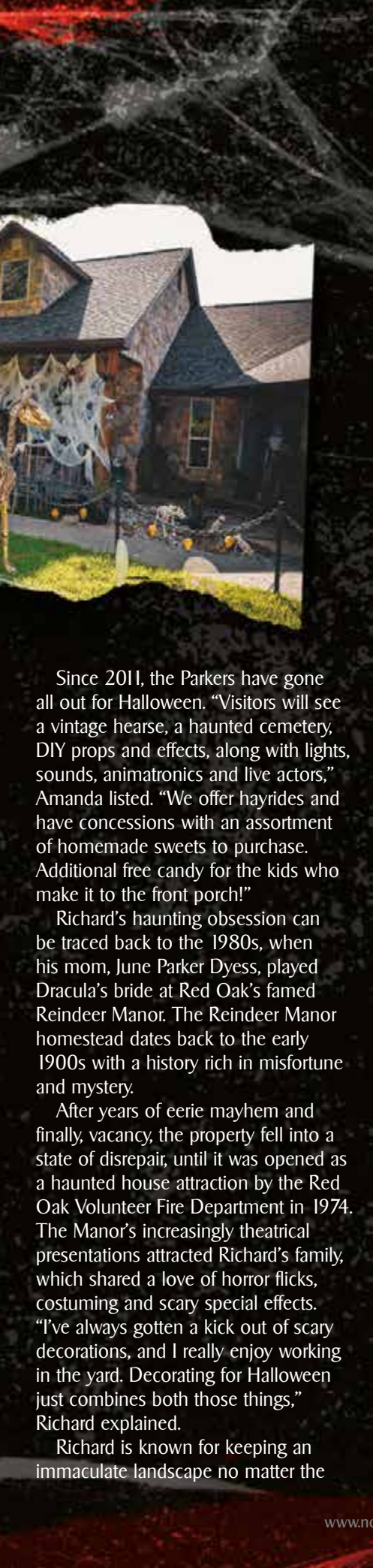
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Raising their two sons in the town they themselves grew up in underscores the importance of tradition for Richard and Amanda Parker. The Red Oak graduates built their home in 2004 on family land and, through the years, it has become a popular autumnal landmark, known as Pecan Tree Manor. “We started offering free tours so families could enjoy a night out during the month of October. We always decorated big for Halloween, but we wanted it to be more than just one night of trick or treating,” Richard noted.





Since 2011, the Parkers have gone all out for Halloween. "Visitors will see a vintage hearse, a haunted cemetery, DIY props and effects, along with lights, sounds, animatronics and live actors," Amanda listed. "We offer hayrides and have concessions with an assortment of homemade sweets to purchase. Additional free candy for the kids who make it to the front porch!"

Richard's haunting obsession can be traced back to the 1980s, when his mom, June Parker Dyess, played Dracula's bride at Red Oak's famed Reindeer Manor. The Reindeer Manor homestead dates back to the early 1900s with a history rich in misfortune and mystery.

After years of eerie mayhem and finally, vacancy, the property fell into a state of disrepair, until it was opened as a haunted house attraction by the Red Oak Volunteer Fire Department in 1974. The Manor's increasingly theatrical presentations attracted Richard's family, which shared a love of horror flicks, costuming and scary special effects. "I've always gotten a kick out of scary decorations, and I really enjoy working in the yard. Decorating for Halloween just combines both those things," Richard explained.

Richard is known for keeping an immaculate landscape no matter the

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season, and now for his increasingly enthusiastic Halloween displays. While tours scaled back during COVID and last year due to heat, the Parkers are excited to bring full tours back this fall.

Hours of operation depend on the weather, but gates are typically open from 7:30-11:00 p.m., Friday-Saturday, Oct. 18-19 and 25-26, plus Thursday, Oct. 31. "This activity is appropriate for whomever dares to enter the gates — it is scary, but we do have a safe zone!" Amanda noted. "But Richard's costumes have gotten scarier each year. Sometimes, he even makes the grown-ups run away!"

The thrill of the fright is just one reason the Parkers decided to bring back the tours. "Having people thank us for providing a place to bring their family without spending a lot of money means a lot," Amanda admitted. "We have had several tell us they could not afford going to a haunted house. This brings us joy because we love seeing adults and kids having such a good time."

Building on that generosity, the Parkers decided to accept donations for the tours if guests are so inclined.



"We started taking donations when we felt like we could help a particular local family with medical needs. Since then, we have donated to families for groceries, bills, restaurant meals or even just movie tickets," Richard listed. "It's been a small way to give some cash to folks to spend on something they need or that will make them happy."

"I have always enjoyed Halloween and seeing people have a good time," he continued. "When we started

taking donations, we knew we could use it toward a good cause and help when needed."

So, whether you can donate or not, the Parkers invite folks to come as they are (or in their favorite costume — scary or not) for a Halloween season tour. "It's a great night with family and friends, and a way to help some people in need if you choose," Amanda underscored. "It's a tradition with our family and friends, too, and we enjoy scaring all who come."

On land that has been in the family since the 1960s, the Parkers look forward to seeing new faces as well as those who have made it an annual event. "My grandfather was in World War II, and it is because of him and my grandmother that we have a place to host this special event each year," Richard credited. "That our home was built on family land and had enough room for our boys to grow up with plenty of room to play outside were key factors in our decision to stay in Red Oak. And we're just thrilled to add to other families' traditions with Pecan Tree Manor tours." **NOW**

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# UNITED EFFORTS

— By Angel Morris

*Just as its name implies, Unite Ellis is an organization bringing together multiple groups to help locals in need. Through collaborative efforts, leaders in business, church, education, government and other nonprofits partner to uplift the community. At Unite's helm is Anna Hammonds. "We have amazing people doing amazing things in this county. Unite's mission is to ensure we're all working together to best utilize resources," Anna explained.*



When someone can't be helped by an individual organization, Unite puts its network in motion. "With my co-champion, Chris Aguilar, we utilize about 150 people across the county to help with housing and homelessness, domestic violence, poverty and other issues," Anna shared.

In this way, Unite is about more permanent solutions. "If we work together, we're not only more effective, but we limit duplication of services and can move toward longer-term change — helping people thrive and flourish rather than just moving them on until they need help again," Anna underscored.

Working in the nonprofit/social services sector since 2005, Anna was drawn to Unite as a means to help the community in which she lived. She and her husband, Danny, and their four children, have lived in Midlothian since 2013, where Anna has served on the City Council, the MISD Education Foundation Board, within her church and as a business owner. "Those areas parallel the entities partnered within Unite," Anna noted. "The root of what we do as a family is our love for Jesus and wanting to make an impact in a direct way in the world, which means rolling your sleeves up and jumping in.

"In that same sense, Unite is about addressing all areas of human flourishing, including mental and physical health, vocational health, relational health, financial health and spiritual health," Anna continued.

Some of Anna's favorite success stories include Unite partners helping a single mom of two children move from a hotel to a rent house, with all appliances and furniture donated; purchasing a new trailer for a couple who lost theirs to a fire; providing things like backpacks, take-home meals, all-sizes of underwear, hygiene products and sensory rooms for schools; and directing pregnant teens to resources for when babies arrive. "There was a mom who was about to receive citations for not keeping up with her lawn. Our network not only mowed for her but bought a lawnmower and taught her sons how to use it," Anna recalled. "Teach a man to fish!"

Under the umbrella of Unite Greater Dallas — which serves seven counties — Unite Ellis utilizes CarePortal, a software project to connect families in crisis to a network of organizations that can meet their basic needs. "Schools, case workers, crisis centers and others can enter needs and surrounding churches and individuals answer the call," Anna explained. "CarePortal is one of our biggest tools and getting more people and more schools online is awesome!"

Unite also conducts Cost of Poverty Experience (COPE) simulations, giving participants a glimpse into the lives of low-income individuals and families — a look at the obstacles and decisions that impact them every day while living in poverty.



**"SCHOOLS, CASE WORKERS, CRISIS CENTERS AND OTHERS CAN ENTER NEEDS AND SURROUNDING CHURCHES AND INDIVIDUALS ANSWER THE CALL."**

"Certainly there are times when people think others are just taking advantage of the system, and sometimes that is true, but it is rare," Anna shared. "There are so many obstacles to overcoming the cycle of poverty, COPE is truly an eye-opener toward understanding how infuriating it can be for the person really trying to better their life."

COPE is one of the most-requested tools of Unite Greater Dallas and has been facilitated 120 times for 100 groups of people with more than 8,000 participants over seven years. "What address does a homeless person list on job applications? Where do they clean up for interviews? How does an undocumented family living in a car learn how to do things the right way? How does a victim of violence get away?" Anna questioned. "COPE addresses these and so many more eye-opening issues."

Unite is keenly aware that poverty is about more than finances. "When people don't have relationships in their life, a basic support system for needs or advice, everything else can begin to collapse. Pepper in mental health or addiction issues, and the struggle is that much worse," Anna reminded.

Unite networks meet all across the county on a consistent basis by geography, service line and sector. "Our hope is that you will be inspired to become a part of someone else's success story," Anna shared. "Communities flourish when we unite." **NOW**

Editor's Note: Learn more at [www.unitecellis.org](http://www.unitecellis.org)



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Zoomed In:  
Olivia Trevino

By Angel Morris

Red Oak’s Olivia Trevino recently played in The United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) All American Games for girls fast-pitch softball in Viera, Florida. While tryouts were last spring, she did not receive word of her selection until this summer. The wait, however, was worth it. “I was chosen to represent the South region, which included five states: Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arkansas and Louisiana!” Olivia explained. “My teammates were from different states in the U.S., such as New Jersey, Tennessee and Michigan to name a few.”

Currently a third baseman and pitcher for a 12U select team in Palmer, Olivia has participated in softball since she was 8 years old. Olivia loves competing in the sport, “because of the teamwork involved and all of the excitement that comes with playing in games!”



Summerwood Estates, presented by Century Communities, is welcomed to the area with a Red Oak Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting.



Mallorie Moorman shows off a favorite brand at Driven Youth’s cereal night on Wednesdays at Vertical Church.



Gravy and More restaurant donates more than 1,000 snack bags plus gift certificates to encourage the Red Oak High School varsity football team.



The city of Glenn Heights receives \$510,000 from Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett’s office for the city’s new Emergency Warning System.





Brian Holly and his grandson, Jackson Holley, volunteer for cleanup along Cockrell Hill Road in Ovilla.



Army Staff Sergeant Corinthian Howard, Staff Sergeant Angel Pena, Staff Sergeant Jonathan Morjon and Captain Dwain He'bert meet potential recruits at a Glenn Heights community event.



Tammy Wilson with TW Pies prepares for the ROHS Special Needs Market taking place November 9.

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A woman with dark hair, wearing a vibrant yellow and pink patterned blouse, stands in a kitchen. She is holding a wooden plate with several chocolate chip cookies. The kitchen has wooden cabinets and a stainless steel sink is visible in the foreground.

CookingNOW

## *In the Kitchen With* MARGIE CABALLERO

— By Angel Morris

After losing her vision, Margie Caballero began selling desserts to pay for treatment. “I started with banana pudding, then added flavors like strawberry, honey bun, chocolate, Oreo and even sugar-free versions of banana pudding,” she listed. “Then I added cakes and cookies. It’s a challenge because my eyesight is still poor, but banana pudding is my secret recipe!”

A volunteer for the Senior Citizen Center of Red Oak and member of Believing Restoration is Attainable widow support group, Margie shares her faith through baking. “I’ve experienced tragic circumstances, but with God, my eyesight is getting better. I share my testimony so that maybe somebody will use my recipes and be encouraged not to give up,” she shared. “The most important thing I do is pray over every dessert I make for others.” **NOW**

### Island Cookies

**1 2/3 cups all-purpose flour**  
**3/4 Tbsp. baking powder**  
**1/2 tsp. baking soda**  
**1/2 tsp. salt**  
**1 1/2 sticks butter, room temperature**  
**3/4 cup brown sugar, packed**  
**1/3 cup granulated sugar**  
**1 tsp. vanilla extract**  
**1 large egg, room temperature**  
**1 3/4 cups chocolate chips**  
**1 cup toasted coconut flakes**  
**1 cup toasted walnuts, chopped**

**1.** Preheat the oven to 375 F. In a small bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt.  
**2.** In a large mixing bowl, beat the butter until creamy. Add in the brown sugar, granulated sugar and vanilla extract, mixing until it is nice and creamy, scraping down the sides of the bowl as you go.  
**3.** Beat in the egg; slowly add in the flour mixture, combining together until it is mixed well. Make sure to scrape down the sides of the bowl while mixing. Stir in the chocolate chips, coconut flakes and walnuts.  
**4.** Form the dough into round balls; drop

onto a cookie sheet, adding 3 walnuts on top of each cookie ball, pressing down in the center for presentation. Bake for 10 minutes; enjoy while still warm or cooled!

### Glazed Banana Nut Bread

*Bread:*

**2 1/3 cups all-purpose flour**  
**3 tsp. baking powder**  
**1/2 tsp. baking soda**  
**1/2 tsp. salt**  
**1 stick butter, room temperature**  
**1 cup granulated sugar**  
**3 eggs, room temperature**  
**3 large ripe bananas**  
**1/2 cup nuts of your choice (optional)**  
**1/2 cup raisins (optional)**  
**1/2 cup toasted coconut (optional)**  
**Semi-sweet chocolate chips, to taste (optional)**

*Glaze:*

**1 cup powdered sugar**  
**1-2 Tbsp. milk**

**1.** *For bread:* Preheat the oven to 350 F. Coat a 9x5-inch pan with nonstick cooking spray. Mix together the flour, baking powder,



- baking soda and salt.
2. In a separate bowl, beat together the butter and sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy; add the eggs, one at a time, until well combined. Make sure to scrape down the sides of the bowl as you go.
  3. Beat in the bananas; slowly add in the flour mixture until well combined. Add any optional ingredients you are using; bake for 55 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the middle of the cake comes out clean to ensure it is fully cooked.
  4. Place on a wire rack; let it cool for 15 minutes.
  5. For glaze: While the bread is cooling, combine the powdered sugar and milk until smooth. Once the bread is cooled, pour the glaze on top and serve.

### Chunky Chocolate Chip Peanut Butter Cookies

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour, sifted out  
 1/2 tsp. baking soda  
 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon  
 1/2 tsp. salt  
 1 1/2 sticks butter, room temperature  
 1/2 cup granulated sugar  
 1/2 cup brown sugar, packed  
 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter  
 1 large egg, room temperature  
 1 tsp. vanilla extract  
 2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips  
 1/2 cup peanuts, chopped

1. In a small bowl, stir together the flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt.
2. In a large bowl, beat the butter until it is creamy; add the granulated sugar, brown sugar and peanut butter. Beat until creamy. Make sure that you scrape down the sides of the bowl. Once it is well combined, add the egg and vanilla extract; mix until thoroughly incorporated.
3. Slowly add in the flour mixture, making sure to scrape down the sides of the bowl as you go. Add in the chocolate chips and peanuts.
4. Heat the oven to 375 F. Form the dough into round balls; drop onto a cookie sheet, adding 3 chocolate chips on top of each cookie ball, pressing them down in the center for presentation.
5. Bake for 10 minutes. Allow to cool before serving.

To search for more great recipes from any of the 9 NOW Magazines publications, visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).



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# Hello, Fall

## OCTOBER

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.

### 10/4-10/5

#### **The Play That Goes Wrong:**

Dinner theater. Appropriate for ages over 8 years. Includes dinner and dessert. Doors open and dinner service begins: 6:15 p.m. Show starts: 7:00 p.m., Park Meadows Church, 3350 N. Hwy. 77, Waxahachie. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Visit [www.parkmeadows.org/tickets](http://www.parkmeadows.org/tickets).

### 10/5

#### **Fall for Fishing:**

Anglers under age 16 invited to participate; must be accompanied by an adult. Fishing poles and bait provided while supplies last. 8:00-10:00 a.m. Pearson Park pond, 200 Lakeview Pkwy.

### 10/12

#### **Trash Bash:**

Community cleanup. Disposal of bulk trash, brush, tires, automotive batteries, e-waste and paper shredding services. Must show proof of Red Oak residency. 7:30-10:30 a.m., Oaks Church, 777 S. I-35 E.

### 10/19

#### **City of Red Oak Fall Festival:**

Artisan vendors, live entertainment, crafts, petting zoo, pony rides and more fall fun. 3:00-6:00 p.m., Pearson Park and Red Oak Municipal Center, 200 Lakeview Pkwy.

### 10/20

#### **Fall Festival:**

Horse riding, games, prizes and candy. Free. 1:30-

4:30 p.m., Wagon Wheel Cowboy Church, 328 Hoyt Rd., Waxahachie. [www.wagonwheelcowboychurch.org](http://www.wagonwheelcowboychurch.org).

### 10/26

#### **Crossroads of Texas Country Festival:**

This new and improved arts and music festival includes 10-time Grammy Award winner Asleep at the Wheel, 200-plus artists/craftspeople, music on 10-plus stages, food and more. Free admission. 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Downtown Waxahachie. [www.texascountryfestival.com](http://www.texascountryfestival.com).

#### **Fall Festival:**

Food, drinks, hayride, maze,

crafts and carnival games.

2:00-5:00 p.m.,

Eastridge Baptist Church,

732 E. Ovilla Rd.,

Red Oak.

### 10/27

#### **Candy Bash:**

Free family event with candy for the kids, plus a petting zoo, hayrides, mini train rides, games, inflatables, food truck and more. 4:00-6:00 p.m.,

First Red Oak,

320 E. Ovilla Rd.,

Red Oak.

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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