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M A G A Z I N E

November 2007

**Making-up  
Disaster**

**Kindness  
Rests in  
Her Heart**

**Farming  
a New  
Life**

**Official  
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**Rob and  
Lori Ellis**

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# Midlothian NOW

## Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

It is time to count our blessings and be thankful. I am grateful for the freedom to worship my Savior as I choose. I am thankful for my husband, my children and all the joys and struggles that come with a family. I am thankful my mom still lives and for our love for each other. I am thankful for little things, like a good book or a rip roarin' western. I cherish pleasant memories, like standing in my grandma's kitchen, smelling her biscuits warm from the oven and peering through the backdoor screen at my grandfather as he rode his tractor in the fields.



Caring for members of that era is something the individual in our main feature, Vicki Massey, does everyday. She works tirelessly to feed the hungry seniors in our community. Read the story of her work in this issue. To donate to this worthy cause, contact her at (972) 723-6177.

I hope you enjoy this Thanksgiving as you gather together and give thanks to God for all His blessings.

Betty Tryon  
Midlothian Editor

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— By Betty Tryon

*Vicki Massey and her team of volunteers are dedicated to ensuring that none of the senior citizens of our community go hungry.*

It is 5 a.m. and Vicki Massey is up and running. She and six other people must reach the North Texas Food Bank before 6 o'clock, or risk being late in getting food to the hungry elderly in Midlothian. "We have to have enough time to load the trucks and trailers, get back to Midlothian, unload the supplies and have everything ready for the food bank to open at 1 o'clock," she explained. "We distribute about 20,000 pounds of food every week on Thursday and Friday." The whole process sounds so organized and smooth, but getting to that point was anything but. Vicki had to wrestle with problems of acquiring the food, finding a place to distribute it and dealing with the occasional naysayer along the way.

"I love being around older people," she said. "I used to visit two elderly

ladies in the city and saw empty cat food cans in their trash, but I knew they didn't have a cat. I asked them about it and they told me they could not afford to buy food. Cat food tuna was then 17 cents and regular tuna was 68 cents. They could not afford the 51 cents difference.

"I started taking them roast, potatoes and carrots. After awhile, I thought, they must be getting pretty tired of that. About that same time, a friend of mine was manager of a 7-Eleven store; she said they would throw away sandwiches that didn't sell at the end of the day. I was able to get the sandwiches and started taking them to the ladies. Sometimes, there were so many left over that I was able to help other seniors as well."

"I always took care to transport the

food carefully. During this time, the Southland Corporation, which owns 7-Eleven was sued because someone got a bad sandwich, and my friend could no longer donate to us. I took it all the way up the ladder to the president of Southland, and he told me to go to the North Texas Food Bank to pick up there." That was the beginning of her relationship with the food bank.

"I started attending the Senior Citizen Program in 1990; we met at the high school. I met some of the seniors who didn't have enough to eat, and I would take baggies of food to them. We started giving food away to those who needed it. There were about 35 in the program then. I have had widows say this was the first time they had food in their pantry since their husband died."

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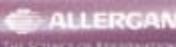
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“Once, while at the high school, we accidentally spilled some grease on the sidewalk. We scrubbed with soap and water until it was as clean as we could get it. All that day, 80- and 90-year-olds had walked through that same area; however, a lady said she slipped and fell, and then tried to sue us. In Texas, the Good Samaritan Act says if you are



*Above: Vicki Massey is a Good Samaritan to many senior citizens.  
 Below: Margaret McClendon volunteers her time at the food pantry.*



giving away food, you can't be sued, so nothing came of it. However, we were asked not to bring food up there anymore. We had to find another place.”

Vicki likes to say that for 11 years she was a street person. “Every Thursday we were in a different place to pass out food.” Smiling, she said, “I would rather operate on the principle of asking forgiveness than permission, so we set up at the Fina station and were given permission to use the paved area in back. We were outside there in all kinds of weather. The seniors would have to stand in the cold, rain and the

heat. One night at a Lions Club meeting, Randy Hampton offered us the use of the funeral home on Thursday mornings. We were there for four years until someone got angry and reported us. The USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) told us we had to find a place with a pantry.”

Meeting resistance again, Vicki was, nonetheless, undaunted. The seniors were still hungry and needed help, and she was determined not to let them down. Help came in the person of J.D.

**“We’ll take any kind of donation; we’ll take it because someone needs it. It’s a God thing. I have nothing to do with it. It is strictly the Lord who takes care of His seniors.”**

Kennedy, superintendent of Midlothian Independent School District. He allowed her to move into the Laura Jenkins School. At that time, there were over 150 seniors in her program. Vicki said, “Finally, we had a permanent place. The school has been so wonderful to us. They have bent over backwards. When we moved into the building, I never asked anyone to volunteer. When we opened, all these people came out to help us unload, stock and clean. They were mostly senior citizens.”

“The North Texas Food Bank comes out twice a year to inspect. I make sure all recall items are off the floor. All refrigerators and freezers have thermometers. Food is properly stored and insect control is okay. Allied Waste has been just wonderful to help with the trash.”

Vicki has been receiving donations, but more funds are needed. She will have a fundraiser this month, a Gospel Jubilee, to raise money for Thanksgiving meals.

Vicki thinks her love of the elderly stems from her childhood. “My grandparents adopted me, and I called them Mother and Daddy. Daddy died when I was 12 years of age, so my mother had to raise me alone. I never really thought of her as



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being old, but we used to visit all of her friends and pay respect to them. I enjoyed those visits.”

She went to Mary Hardin-Baylor and UT in Austin with the goal of becoming an attorney. “I met Percy Foreman, one of the great criminal defense lawyers in Texas. I went up to him and said, ‘I’ll buy you a cherry



*Sard McClendon helps carry a new shipment of food into the pantry.*

phosphate if you come talk to me.’ He did. We met four more times. Some of the advice he gave me on being an attorney was to take all the acting, speech and diction classes I could.”

Well, Vicki never became an attorney. She fell in love with Hershel Massey; they had one daughter and now have four grandsons. The law profession’s loss has been our community’s gain. Caring for the seniors is a mission with Vicki. She remarked, “We will never see another generation like this one. They have been through so much. These people deserve whatever we can do for them. They have paid their dues and adapted to more changes. We’ll take any kind of donation; we’ll take it because someone needs it. It’s a God thing. I have nothing to do with it. It is strictly the Lord who takes care of His seniors.”

God has blessed Vicki with a special gift. Kindness rests in her heart, and senior citizens in the Midlothian area have found a friend in her. **NOW**

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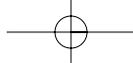
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# Beginning With the Letter M

By Sandra McIntosh

Rob and Lori Ellis, along with their two daughters Marisa and Mariah, came to Midlothian by way of Oklahoma just over a year ago. The family's four dogs — Mia, Mele, Mr. M and Maui — did not want to be left behind, so of course, they too came along for the journey.

A new move for any young family means new adventures and the Ellis family is no exception. A job offer was extended to Rob that he just could not pass up. "I was the sales manager at McClain's RV store while we were in Oklahoma," Rob said. "The owners wanted to close the Alvarado location and build something larger." After the promotion to general manager of the new Fort Worth store was offered and accepted, Rob came to Texas, taking up residence in a fifth-wheel RV. During the week, it proved plenty roomy for him, but when the family came to visit it quickly became cramped, as well as a bit overcrowded.

The couple had every intention of finding some land and building their dream home, but first they had to decide where would be the best place to rear their two girls. "We knew we didn't want to raise them in the city," Rob explained. "So naturally, we

started looking outside the metroplex." Schools were the deciding factor for

Lori. "I had heard and read so many good things about Midlothian," Lori said, adding that Midlothian started with the letter m.

"If you haven't already noticed, the girls' names and the dogs' names all

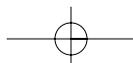
begin with the letter m. We put a lot of thought into naming our kids and

our pets, so finding just the right place to live was important. It just seemed appropriate to relocate to a town that also started with the letter m." Lori also added with a laugh

that Midlothian was in Ellis County and their last name is Ellis.



## At Home With Rob and Lori Ellis





Once the town was decided upon, it was not long before the construction of the couple's two-story, five-bedroom, three-and-one-half-bath Legendary



home got underway in the Brandi Ridge addition, just a few miles from FM 66 and only minutes from Rob's job in downtown Fort Worth. "We were

the first ones to buy a lot on this street," Rob said, "and our home was the second one to be completed." Looking around the neighborhood now, one would be amazed at the enormous growth seen in the past 12 months. "There are houses everywhere you look now," Lori added.

When the Ellis family moved into their new home on the evening of



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August 25, 2006, all the walls were a stark white, "coconut" to be exact. It was not long before Lori realized they needed to incorporate color into their lives. "Getting in contact with Kim Roberds of Wallpaper, Paint & Design 'by Kim' was the best thing," Lori said, referring to the interior specialist, who

gave their home the Old World European style it boasts of today. "I had taken pictures of colors I liked and Kim was able to match them perfectly." From the green in the home office to the gold and deep shades of khaki found throughout the first level of the home, it is easy to see that Kim

completed her job to perfection. The finished style is not only steeped in rich, warm hues, but it also includes metal abstract art and grapevines, greenery and Italian wine bottles that take their rightful places on the cornice space above the kitchen cabinets. Bricks peaking through the

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honey-glazed wall treatment with white trim give visitors the feeling they have entered a romantic villa in Italy. "I finally got my bricks," Lori said, explaining the accents are paper, which is textured to look and feel like real bricks. "I absolutely love my kitchen." A wall decal with the appearance of a stucco window ledge has also been strategically placed well above the pantry door. It is eye-catching and has proven to be the topic of many kitchen conversations.



In most circles where young children are allowed to do the voting, Rob and Lori would be considered the "coolest" parents

on the block because of the way they actively involved their daughters in the decorating process. "The girls picked out the paint colors for each of their rooms, as well as the tile we used in their separate bathrooms. We're all about the kids," Lori said. "It was important for them to have a part in the process. It allowed them ownership in their new home." Rob and Lori also noted that the girls buried pennies in the cement on the front porch for good luck.

Mariah's room has four walls, each of a different color. There is brown, pink, lime green and her favorite color,

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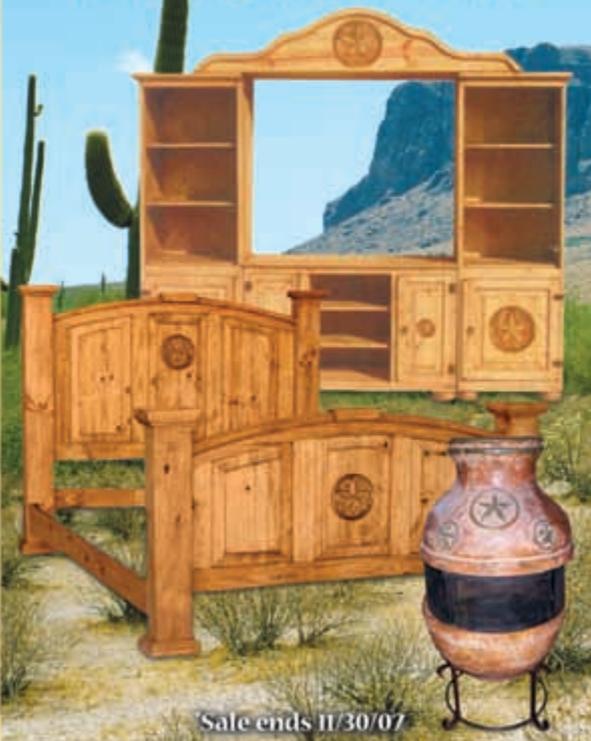
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purple. Polka dots in all the same colors complete the room. Marisa's room is just as bright and colorful. She also chose four key colors — purple, red and two distinctly different shades of pink. The accent wall is a combination of all four colors in vertical stripes. Her accent motifs are lips in all shapes, sizes and matching colors. Both rooms have their fair share of baby pageant trophies, as well as medals and ribbons from the years both girls spent in gymnastics. Since relocating, the girls no longer take part in a gymnastics program. Nowadays, they can be found dividing their free time after school between soccer, volleyball and basketball.

**“We’re happy here.”**



When Rob and Lori said it was all about the children, they really were not kidding. The second floor is home not only to the girls’ bedrooms, but also to an oversized playroom and home theater, where imaginations run rampant. “Both girls have their very own personalized director chair,” Rob said. “They put on original plays for the adult guests of the house. It’s been great for birthday parties and family gatherings.”

The holidays are quickly approaching. It will soon be time for Lori to box up the fall pumpkins and unpack her large collection of Christmas decor. In fact, she is looking forward to it for one reason in particular. “My mom was an art teacher who loved creating ceramics. My favorite piece she crafted is a Nativity Scene dating back to 1964,” Lori said.

“It holds very special meaning because she made it for my dad. The intricate detailing on the kings’ robes in 24-carat gold paint is really my dad’s initials.” It means the world to Lori and she derives great pleasure in sharing it with others.

Moving to Midlothian is everything the Ellis family expected it to be and so much more. “We’re happy here,” Rob and Lori agreed, almost simultaneously. “We plan to live here forever!” **NOW**



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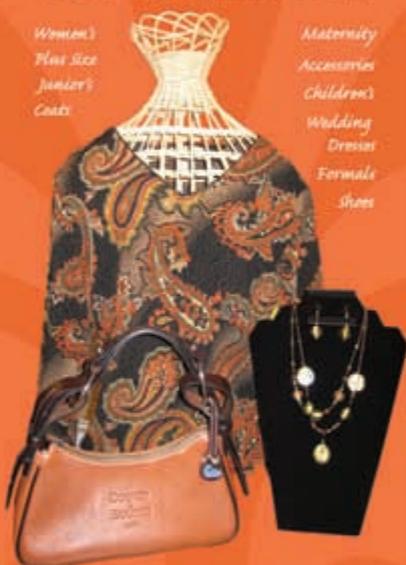
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# Making-up Disaster

— By Betty Tryon

The photograph of the beautiful young woman is riveting. However, her beauty is not what captures your attention. The deep burns that cover her face make you gasp in horror. Copious amounts of blood cover the area like a gory shroud on the seemingly lifeless woman. While observing the photo, Christie Lee cheerily chirps, "That's my friend!" If you are thinking, "What's wrong with this picture?" — you are not alone. Her friend is OK. Makeup is responsible for the gruesome picture! Christie is a makeup artist and well on her way to perfecting her craft.

As a 2006 Midlothian graduate, she has gained in just one year, experience most veterans of her profession would envy. It all started when she was 13 years of age. Sherry Wiedmann, Christie's mom, laughingly said, "She became interested in makeup when she started wearing it!"

Christie stated, "I have always been interested in color. I was always doing my friends makeup and hair. Every week we were at CVS buying a box of hair color. I would change my color every week. Since I was doing my friends' makeup and hair, one of them offered to pay me for it. That was when I realized I could make a living at it."



Sherry said, "Christie expressed an interest in doing this in her sophomore year in high school. There was a traveling makeup school in Dallas called Last Look Academy she attended. I wanted her to experience it, to see if that is what she really wanted to do." Christie, of course, loved it and went on to Cosmetology School in Waxahachie while still in high school. She added, "After high school graduation, I went to Make-up Designory School in New York. I had four weeks of makeup classes and six weeks of character or special effect classes. I learned how to recreate burns, cuts, baldheads and gunshot wounds. Our homework assignment was to study pictures of real wounds and re-create them."

Christie's work requires a high degree of artistry and creativity. She said, "I like to paint, but I don't draw that well." She manages with aids, such as prosthetics for nose growths, cuts and face pieces. "The prosthetics gives it a three-dimensional look," she explained. "I also use a product called 3 Degrees. It is a silicone

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product. Once I open it, I only have three to five minutes to carve it into whatever I want.”

Christie is currently employed by MAC Cosmetics (Makeup, Artist, Cosmetics), where she gets to indulge her passion every day. “I do makeup all day long. People come in who are going out and want to look their best.



Brides come in for makeup for their weddings. I had a lady come in who was going to her 25th high school reunion, and she wanted to look good. She was so excited with the way she looked. It was pretty cool. I enjoy doing this, because I get instant gratification from changing someone’s hair color and applying their makeup. Thirty minutes later, you can completely change someone’s mood and appearance.”

Although Christie enjoys her job, her future lies in television and films. She has already been the makeup artist for a movie. “My uncle owns Renavatio Production Company, and he hired me to do all the makeup for his movie called *Drug Wars*. It is a docudrama — a documentary with re-enactments. We were on location on the border in Mexico, and it was very intense and scary,” she remarked somberly. “The people my uncle is letting everyone know about are not nice people. I was afraid because the Americans who live near the border don’t cross, because so

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many don't come back. Many get kidnapped." Because the nature of the film dealt with the seedy, violent world of drugs, Christie had to use all her skills in a variety of situations to re-create horrific conditions.

"I would use a photo from the news and make the actors up to look exactly like the tortured ones in the picture. It



was mostly burns, cuts, bruises, gunshot wounds, covering up tattoos and re-creating tattoos. At first, the pictures were disturbing, but I got used to it because I had a job to do. It was a tiring, demanding job because I had to be available at all times for touch-ups and when someone changed their mind about a scene."



Not all of her assignments were as dark. She recently undertook a project of doing the makeup for a music video for the band, Every Time I Die. It is a spoof on the movie *Teen Wolf*, which will be shown on MTV2. "We had to do a lot of work with hair."

Christie also did the makeup for the model on the brochure for next year's Miss Spokesmodel International. "That was fun. I really enjoy my job because I get to travel, which is something I like to do. I work hard and play hard!" Christie lives an incredibly focused and self-motivated life. Watch for her in the movie credits as she pursues her career! **ARTS NOW**



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# OFFICIAL Good Sport



— By Alex Allred

Here is the job description: You may be forced to run anywhere from four to 10 miles a day, the pay is low and you must endure extreme heat, cold and rain. You will be yelled at, chastised and repeatedly questioned. You will rarely be thanked, and often you will be overlooked despite your good intentions and hard work. You are a weekend warrior. You are a youth league soccer referee.

Despite these warnings, Andrew Payne signed on and remains one of the most recognized and popular referees in Midlothian. “It’s really not difficult,” Andrew said of officiating. “There are only 17 rules in the game of soccer and one of them deals with the size of the ball.” Of course, this is the same man who has run up and down the lines of the soccer fields in Midlothian for almost a decade, dedicating entire weekends to the sport while joking about possible heat stroke.

Andrew is different than most referees in that he came to the sport not as an athlete, but as a coach. Most referees are athletes who move into officiating, but Andrew knew little of the game until his son, Geoff, wanted to play. “I didn’t understand it,” he said, “but I liked kicking the ball around.”



# Sports NOW

He began asking questions, trying to learn the rules of the game and how to better help his budding new soccer star. When his youngest child, Anna, wanted to play soccer, Andrew volunteered to coach, but it quickly became clear the soccer association did not have enough



Andrew Payne and two other soccer referees meet before a game.

qualified referees. It was then Andrew became an outspoken advocate for referee clinics and certification courses. Rather than stand around complaining about the need for referees, Andrew took on the role as head ref. In fact, the position of Chief of Referees was specifically created for him with the

**“When you have a good 90-minute match with breakaways and aggressive players, a ref can run up to four or five miles per game.”**



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Midlothian Soccer Association (MSA).

While he is reluctant to talk about the role he's played in its success, he has become the face of the MSA for many soccer families. Few people, however, know the man behind the bright yellow uniform. Fewer still realize during their "less than stellar moments," they are yelling at a minister.

**"A good day is when he watches teammates pass the ball back and forth. It is a sure sign of success in life and on the field."**

Indeed, the man in yellow is a man of God. He is also a man of many talents. A self-described "computer geek," Andrew works for a human resources consulting firm in Dallas, but also serves as a professor at Dallas Baptist University (DBU), with a doctorate in New Testament. Before he began teaching at DBU, Andrew served on staff in Midlothian as a minister. Today, when not teaching or officiating games, he volunteers with local churches, leads a Bible study and, working around a busy soccer schedule and the curriculum of 70 college students, spends time with his family. He is busy, to say the least.

"I have discovered people will do what is most important to them," Andrew said, noting that he is no longer the runner he used to be. "When you have a good 90-minute match with breakaways and aggressive players, a ref can run up to four or five miles per game," he explained. "I just can't do them [games] back-to-back

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## Sports NOW

anymore." Instead, Andrew has been known to mentor younger referees between his own games.

As invested as a parent feels in watching his or her child play the game, or as impassioned as a coach may feel, Andrew will not give up the integrity of the sport for lack of solid officiating. He has too much respect for the athletes, the coaches and the sport itself. Although his own children are grown and no longer play, he is still out on the soccer fields.

In fact, it is not uncommon to hear him talking to the young athletes after a good play, encouraging them. "When the goalie gets just the fingertips on the ball, but it's enough to push the ball out, I'll tell 'em what a good play that was," he added. "I talk to the players all day." For him, a good day is when he watches teammates pass the ball back and forth. It is a sure sign of success in life and on the field.

He treats the games and his athletes just as seriously as he does his college classes. He once called a sports radio show to ask, "How is it we have the best referees move up, but keep the most inexperienced or less skilled officials at the lower levels?" As cliché as it is, his mission really is about the children.

He is outspoken, passionate and, by his own admission, impatient. He is of the mind that if he can make time for children, so can other parents. Together, he and his wife, Cindy, who serves as an educator at J.A. Vitovsky, have dedicated their lives to helping and inspiring children. "In no way am I saying I'm already there; I know I've got a long way to go," Andrew said, "but I would hope it can be said that I was always willing to give."

In recent years, Andrew has played in a number of adult leagues. His strength is not passing the ball while playing. His strength is found in passing on his experience to others with a desire to find success as a referee. **NOW**

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# Why Sweat It?

— By Betty Tryon

Why suffer in the hot sun for that healthy glow when 4 Ever Tan offers a spa-ahh experience! From the pleasant, clean scent that meets you at the door and the smiling staff, to the complimentary bottled water, Danielle Erbert has created a welcoming atmosphere to achieve the perfect tan.

One staff member acknowledges that she enjoys working there because she likes talking to people and getting to know the customers. Danielle said, “Our staff is friendly and knowledgeable. I really emphasize cleanliness. I go on the principle that you can never be too clean. My girls [staff] are always to be up and doing something: cleaning the floors, the chairs and the door handles. Anything the customer will touch is a priority. Towels, beds and goggles are sanitized after each use or even a suspected use.”

Danielle wants her customers to have the best experience possible in her tanning salon. “I want to offer relaxation and a unique tanning experience with

excellent service,” she said. “The staff is trained in customer service and eager to talk to you about all your questions, such as discussing your skin type, how long to stay under the lights, the proper use of the bed and the use of lotion.”

4 Ever Tan offers several different types of lotions, which contain bronzers and accelerators to help hydrate and tan the skin. The bronzers are used to give the skin more color — for that deeper tan glow. Danielle explained the benefits further, “If the customer has indoor tanning lotion on, it speeds up the tanning process. It takes only 45 seconds to start the tanning. Without the lotion, it takes anywhere from three to five minutes to begin the process. That

means you’ve just wasted the first few minutes of your tanning session. My staff matches you up to the best lotion for you and teaches you how to apply it.”

They offer three different levels of tanning beds. The differences between the three depend on amenities, amount of wattage and length of time while tanning. All of the beds have facial lamps and give a surround tan.

Excellence 800 has the shortest amount

of tanning time — 12 minutes. Danielle remarked, “Its bed is more contoured to eliminate white spots. It has neck and shoulder lamps. It also has an a.c. unit and is our highest power bed. You get more tan in less time.”



# Business NOW



“The next is the Advantage 400. It is ventilation-controlled and also helps with pressure points. It takes 15 minutes to tan. The Ambition 250 takes the longest to tan at 20 minutes.”

They also have a Mystic Tan booth. It is UV-free tanning and requires two minutes. A fine mist is applied using MagneTan technology. It uses the body’s own magnetic properties to attract the micro-particles of the tanning mist.

4 Ever Tan is more than a tanning salon. It offers an aqua massage bed and an infrared sauna. “The advantages of the aqua massage bed helps to loosen muscles, lessen tension and you can remain clothed. The massage bed can be used as many times a day as you want,” Danielle explained.

An infrared sauna, which is a dry sauna, can burn many calories in a 30 minute session. They offer a two-seater; the benefits include relaxation, detoxification, pain relief and also claims to reduce cellulite and acne with continued use over a consistent amount of time.

A visit to 4 Ever Tan can leave you looking healthy and feeling relaxed. So, what are you waiting for? They are located at 910 E. Main, Suite 600 in Midlothian. You can reach them at (972) 775-4448 for more information. **NOW**

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## Education **NOW**

# Farming a New Life

— By Betty Tryon

From the high Andes Mountains in South America to Midlothian, Texas, alpacas are thriving! Nancy Ricketts remembered a vacation in 1996 when they went to a wool show in Colorado: “There were live alpacas on display and I said to my husband, Terry, “This is what I want to do when we retire.”

Nancy initially thought she would not be able to pursue her dream of being an alpaca farmer in Texas because of the heat. “After we retired, we were planning on moving to Colorado to start our farm,” she said. “Then one day when we were traveling to visit a sick relative near Austin, I was looking out the window and saw alpacas!”

So began the journey. She explained, “Once I saw that it was possible to raise alpacas in Texas, we started our research. Terry, my husband, is the computer expert, so he did research. We went to seminars, visited about 15 farms and read books.”

That was three years ago, and the Ricketts now own eight alpacas with two pregnant females. Alpacas are part of the camel family and are hypoallergenic. Nancy commented that, “People who are allergic to wool can wear it [alpaca]. It is expensive because it is exotic. Alpacas are no longer considered exotic animals in Texas, because now there are so many of them.”



Nancy takes exception to the TV ads which give the impression that alpacas are cuddly animals. She remarked, “Alpacas are aloof. They are not pets, but are domestic livestock. They are wonderful animals that meet people on their own terms. They can live for 20 years. The females are pregnant for one year, and they wean their babies after six months.”

The Ricketts have been on the farm for two-and-a-half

years. Before they could place any animals on the land, a lot of work had to be done. Nancy said, “We put up carports and fencing. I have a whole new appreciation for the skills a farmer needs to have. I have had to learn how to give shots, and there is constant problem solving for whatever may go wrong. You have to be physician, nurse and a mechanic.”

An important part of caring for the alpacas is keeping them cool in the Texas summer heat. “The alpacas need a shady area, which we have. I have to go out and hose them down on their neck, bellies and legs to cool them down.”

## Education **NOW**

There are fans in the shelters, and I put ice in their water. They can die in Texas heat," Nancy informed.

There was one task that Nancy was not interested in learning — shearing. "We raise our animals for their fiber. So, when it's time to shear the alpacas, we have someone else do it. It is this fellow from Australia who travels all



**“Then one day when we were traveling to visit a sick relative near Austin, I was looking out the window and saw alpacas!”**

over the United States to meet fellow alpaca owners at an agreed location. We met at the Copper Hill Ranch in Covington, Texas. He can shear an adult animal in two-and-a-half minutes.”

Having the alpacas presented a great opportunity for the Ricketts to educate others about not only the animals, but about farm life. Nancy said, “We have had many students come to visit the farm and see the animals. I enjoy teaching them about barns, pastures and caring for the livestock. We have had Mission Midlothian children come to visit, international students, and a flock of children who come with parents and grandparents. Many of them have no idea of what farm life is about. I like teaching them about it and showing them real life experiences. Now when they read about it in books, they will

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## Education **NOW**

have pictures in their head to go along with the words.”

Nancy also spends a great deal of time educating others about raising alpacas. “We answer questions from people interested in becoming alpaca farmers and helping them make informed decisions. We also participate



in Alpaca Day where our farm is open to the public to visit and learn about the animals.”

Educating others is natural to Nancy because in the years leading up to becoming a farmer, she was a teacher. She started her career as a Peace Corps volunteer teaching English as a second language to school children in the Philippines. When she returned to America, she taught for several years until she married and became a stay-at-home mom. Returning to the educational system, Nancy earned her master's in special education from San Jose State University and taught for 18 years in a local school. When she and Terry signed on with Wycliffe Bible Translators, Nancy became a career counselor for the organization while Terry put his computer skills to use.

She has now embarked on a whole new journey. “Farming is a whole lot of work and a little bit of sitting and admiring. With babies that need to be fed, it gives me a reason to get up in the morning. Being an alpaca and angora farmer was the furthest thing from my mind whenever I thought about what I would do at retirement, but I love it.” **NOW**

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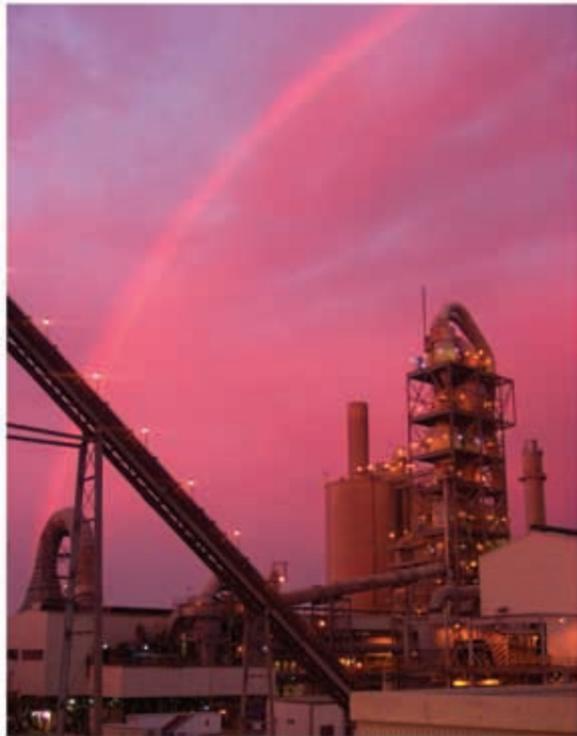




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# Around Town **NOW**



Ribbon cuttings were held recently, at left from top to bottom: New Image Studio, Ellis Hill Realtors, Main Street Games and HILCO Electric Cooperative, Inc. A groundbreaking, top right, was held at Ken Pritchett Properties' Walnut Grove Retail Center. JV cheerleader Lauren Tryon, center middle, visited with Macie Turner before the homecoming game. Just a sample of the many scarecrows displayed, middle right, during the Scarecrow Festival. Mountain Peak first-graders from Mrs. King's class, bottom right, enjoyed a morning of reading, writing and football.

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# Around Town **NOW**



Fourth-graders from T.E. Baxter, top left, recently learned about the states of matter when they changed liquid to a solid by making ice cream. One of many floats, top right, at the recent Homecoming Day Parade. T.E. Baxter students, bottom left, studied the scientific process by building boxes to protect eggs that they dropped from various heights. The Chamber held several ribbon cuttings recently: Pecan Trails Golf Course, middle center; Cross Martial Arts, middle right; A One of a Kind Pony Party, bottom center; and Kim Triplett of Keller Williams, bottom right.





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## Look Who's Cooking

— By Melinda Hines

### IN THE KITCHEN WITH KRISTEN SWANSON

**K**risten's first attempt at cooking at the tender age of 7 resulted in salty scrambled eggs. "Unfortunately, I thought tsp. meant Tbsp. and they were a little salty," Kristen said. Kristen enjoys cooking simple, basic meals and comfort food. "I work full time and my kids are very active, so when I get home, I need to be able to make dinner quickly. I love to cook for my husband and four children," she said. "When I find something everyone likes, which is next to impossible, I usually keep it on our regular menu."

Kristen actually feels that her husband Zane is the chef in their family. "He is constantly making up recipes that we all end up enjoying over and over," Kristen said. **NOW**

#### TACO SALAD

- 1 lb. ground beef (browned, drained and seasoned with 1/2 packet of taco seasoning)
- 1 head lettuce (washed and shredded)
- 2 large tomatoes, washed and diced
- 1 8-oz. package shredded, mild cheddar cheese
- 1 8-oz. bag Nacho Cheese Doritos, crushed
- Thousand Island Dressing, to taste

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Add Thousand Island Dressing to taste and serve immediately. Serves 6 - 8

#### SHEPHERD'S PIE

- 1 lb. ground beef, browned and drained
- 2 14.75-oz. cans creamed corn
- 4 large potatoes, boiled to make mashed potatoes
- 3/4 cup milk
- 4 Tbsp. butter
- salt and pepper to taste

Layer browned ground beef in bottom of 9 x 12-inch casserole dish. Cover with both cans of creamed corn. In separate bowl, cream together potatoes, milk, butter and salt and pepper. Spoon on top of corn, and spread evenly.

Bake for 15 minutes at 350 F or until potatoes are browned. Let stand 5 minutes and serve. Serves 6 - 8.

#### BLUEBERRY CREAM CHEESE STUFFED FRENCH TOAST

- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 can blueberry pie filling
- 1 loaf unsliced French bread
- 6 eggs, beaten

Beat cream cheese and blueberry pie filling together in a bowl. Set aside. Cut bread into 1-inch slices. Cut each individual slice almost all the way

# Who's Cooking **NOW**

through, making sure not to cut all the way (to hold in filling). Fill each slice with cream cheese mixture. Coat both sides of filled bread with egg mixture and cook on 425 F griddle until browned. Top with your favorite syrup or remaining pie filling and enjoy.

## FRUIT PIZZA

- 1 16-oz. pkg. Pillsbury Sugar Cookie Dough (or you can make homemade sugar cookie dough)
- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 8-oz. container Cool Whip
- 6 cups of cut up fresh fruit of your choice (I use grapes, strawberries, bananas, and mandarin oranges) coated in lemon juice to prevent browning
- blueberry syrup to taste

Spread cookie dough on 9 x 12-inch cookie sheet. Poke holes in dough with fork. Bake at temperature on package for about 10 minutes, or until browned. Cool well. Blend together cream cheese and Cool Whip until smooth. Spread over baked cookie dough. Top with cut up fruit. Drizzle with blueberry syrup and enjoy.

## CORN CHOWDER

- 5 - 6 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 small sweet onion, diced and sautéed in bacon grease (drain)
- 3 medium potatoes, chopped
- 2 14.75-oz. cans of creamed corn
- 1 tsp. butter
- dash thyme
- dash basil
- 1 cup hot milk
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 1/2 cup chopped carrots
- salt and pepper to taste

Put all ingredients into crock pot on low and cook until potatoes are done (about 6 hours on low). Serve with salad and corn bread.

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## Finance NOW

# Saving for College

— By Tim Tobey

I am talking with more families about planning for the future. While families almost always want to talk about retirement, their most immediate concern is saving for their children's college education. This is wise. College education will, in most cases, be a family's second largest expense after home ownership, so it deserves careful planning. Rising college costs make saving even more important.

According to The College Board, *Trends in College Pricing 2006*, tuition and fees for a public college or university average \$5,836 per year, over six percent higher than in the 2005 report. For private colleges and universities, the average tuition and fees have also increased nearly six percent to over \$22,000. That is just tuition, not room and board, books and supplies, and other expenses.

If those numbers do not make you want to start putting money aside, I do not know what will. The good news is that with sound planning and a long-term outlook you have the potential, over the course of 10 - 15 years, to build up a nice college nest egg. The government even has ways to help you reach that goal.

In 1997, Congress gave middle-income parents a new college-planning tool with the Education IRA, now called the Coverdell Education Savings Account (ESA). Contributions to an ESA are limited to \$2,000 per year. Parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles can all contribute until the child reaches 18 years of age, as long as the total yearly contribution for the child does not exceed \$2,000.

529 Plans are another tool available to set aside money for education. Since 529 Plans are regulated by the states, each state determines the contribution limit. However, 529 Plans allow you to contribute much more than allowed by an ESA. This gives families a greater opportunity to better meet their education savings needs.

While contributions to these accounts are not tax deductible, earnings

accumulate tax deferred. Even better, when you draw the money out to start paying for qualified education expenses, those distributions are tax free.<sup>1</sup> You would be surprised how a program like that can help. If you have an 8-year-old child — and thus have 10 years to save for college — an investment of \$100 per month at an 8 percent annual rate of return would create a nest egg of \$18,295 when the child turns 18. These figures are based on the value of the investment with an 8 percent fixed rate of return and do not represent any particular investment. While such rates of return may not be representative of investments currently or historically available, this hypothetical situation is added for illustrative purposes only and reinforces that starting early can be significant.

That is good for any investor to know, especially if you want to invest in mutual funds, which contain a certain element of risk. Disciplined investors know that while the stock and bond markets do fluctuate, over time they have historically produced a greater rate of return than other types of investments that carry lower risk.

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# Finance NOW

college takes preparation, some guidance and, in many cases, sacrifice. Americans have traditionally been more than willing to make that sacrifice to secure a better future for their children. By setting up a plan with earning potential, we can help our children fulfill their learning potential. There is no assurance that any investment will achieve its investment objectives. Past performance is not indicative of future performance. Investment return and principal value will fluctuate and the investment, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than its original cost. **XXXX**

Note:

1. If the money is used for purposes other than education, earnings are taxed as ordinary income and may be subject to an additional 10 percent tax penalty. Funds must be withdrawn within 30 days of the beneficiary's 30th birthday. At that time, earnings are taxed as ordinary income and may be subject to an additional 10 percent tax penalty.

*Tim Tobey is a State Farm Insurance agent based in Midlothian.*

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## Surviving Diabetes Requires More Than Just Managing Blood Sugar

For the nearly 20 million Americans living with Type 2 diabetes, monitoring their blood sugar levels is a critical and daily task. While keeping blood sugar numbers in check is essential for managing the disease, paying attention to cholesterol and blood pressure levels is just as important.

According to the American Diabetes Association (ADA), about 73,000 diabetics die each year from diabetes-related complications. Topping the list of complications is cardiovascular disease. In fact, the ADA estimates that two out of three diabetics will eventually die from heart disease or stroke. While cardiovascular disease is a serious and common complication of diabetes, only 18 percent of diabetics are aware of this, according to a survey done by the ADA.

So what is the link between cardiovascular disease and diabetes? Jeffrey Astbury, M.D., internal medicine physician on the medical staff at Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie said that over time, high blood glucose levels can lead to increased fatty deposits on blood vessel walls, affecting blood flow and increasing the risk of clogging and atherosclerosis (hardening of the blood vessels) ultimately increasing the risk for a heart attack.

“While high blood sugar is indeed dangerous and can cause other complications such as damage to the eyes, kidneys and nerves — unchecked cholesterol and blood pressure levels are even more so,” Dr. Astbury said. “Even if a diabetic is meticulous about controlling their blood sugar, they are still at risk for heart disease.”

Dr. Astbury said to help prevent heart disease, diabetics should work with their physician to determine the best treatment plan. He recommended the following guidelines:

- Maintain normal blood glucose levels. “Blood glucose levels vary depending on the time of day, what and how much you have eaten, as well as if you have exercised or not, but a ‘normal’ blood glucose level is in the low to mid 100s.”
- Keep blood pressure under 130/80, using medication if necessary. “High blood pressure puts diabetics at risk for heart attack, stroke, eye problems and kidney disease. Have your blood pressure checked regularly if you are a diabetic. It can usually be controlled with medication and lifestyle changes.”
- Keep cholesterol levels under control, using medication if necessary. “There is no

way to tell if your cholesterol levels are high without a blood test. It is recommended that diabetics keep their LDL (bad) cholesterol levels below 100 mg/dl, their HDL (good) levels above 40 mg/dl and their triglyceride levels below 150 mg/dl.”

- Maintain a healthy weight. “In most cases, weight loss can lessen the symptoms of Type 2 diabetes and in some cases keep it under control without the use of medication.”

- Exercise regularly. “Regular exercise is crucial for Type 2 diabetics and it is never too late to start. Exercise can lower your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol levels and actually increase your energy level.”

- Maintain a heart-healthy diet that is low in fat and salt. “Try to avoid food that is high in fat as this can increase your cholesterol levels and anything high in sodium can increase your blood pressure. Try to eat a balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and choose lean meats and low-fat dairy. Most importantly, Type 2 diabetics should avoid sugar.”

The most common signs of a heart attack include:

- chest pain or discomfort
- Pain or discomfort in your arms, back, jaw, neck or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating or light-headedness



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# Health NOW

- Indigestion or nausea
- Fatigue

"If you experience any of these symptoms, take them seriously and call 9-1-1 right a way," Dr. Astbury said. He added that Type 2 diabetes is manageable, especially if it is detected in the early stages before any significant damage has been done. "Common symptoms of Type 2 diabetes include frequent thirst and urination, weakness and fatigue, blurred vision and tingling or loss of feeling in the hands or feet to name a few. If you suspect you may have Type 2 diabetes, talk to your physician about taking a blood glucose test." **NOW**

*\* Physicians are members of the medical staff at one of Baylor Health Care System's subsidiary, community or affiliated medical centers and are neither employees nor agents of those medical centers, Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie or Baylor Health Care System.*

## Audiological Services of Ellis County The Hearing Center

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### NEW THERAPY FOR SWALLOWING DISORDERS NOW OFFERED AT Renfro Healthcare Center

Renfro Healthcare Center in Waxahachie has introduced an innovative new treatment for patients who suffer from dysphagia, a painful and often debilitating swallowing disorder.

Known as VitalStim® Therapy, the treatment uses non-invasive electrical stimulation to help re-educate the throat muscles needed for swallowing. Cleared for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, VitalStim® Therapy is applied externally and delivers small electrical currents to the neck to stimulate inactive or atrophied swallowing muscles. With repeated therapy, throat muscles are retrained until the patient reaches an optimum level of swallow function.

"VitalStim Therapy is truly a breakthrough in treating dysphagia", said Sara L. Brinnas, MS, CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist at Renfro Healthcare Center. "Since introducing VitalStim at Renfro, we have seen some exceptional outcomes that probably would not have been possible with traditional approaches to therapy. Patients have shown dramatic improvements in their ability to swallow and have returned to more normal diets - and a better quality of life - much sooner than we've seen in the past. Even patients on feeding tubes have responded well to the therapy".



**"VitalStim  
Worked  
For Me!"**

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Admissions Director  
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## Renfro Healthcare Center

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## Great Outdoors **NOW**

# Time to Plan Ahead

— By Nancy Fenton

November is here, and we can look forward to some cooler weather for a while. It is time to look at the yard and make some decisions as to what we want it to look like next year. Have you split up those perennials yet? Have you planted those spring blooming bulbs? There is still time to get to it. I like the ones that naturalize, like the narcissi, crocuses and jonquils. I have just enlisted my grandsons' help to put in another 300 bulbs in our natural area across the creek. The boys are a lot closer to the ground than I am!

It is too late to trim back those shrubs and trees, but not too late to

plant new ones. Try some that might be new ones to you, like the possum hall holly or vitex which will survive our hot and dry summers.

The *Farmers' Almanac* is predicting another hot, dry summer for northern Texas. With our changing climate at the poles, it could happen. Bed preparation with shale and compost, plus the selection of plants that can tolerate the heat, will help your landscape maintain the look you want. The trees that shade us absorb 2,250,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per tree each year and produce oxygen for us. Think about planting a tree for every member of your family. Just remember to plant it high, mulch it heavily and give it a weekly watering even through the winter.

Christmas is coming, and if you are already thinking about your gardener friends, order magazines like *Birds and Bloom* ([birdsandblooms.com](http://birdsandblooms.com)) or *Texas*

*Gardener* ([texasgardener.com](http://texasgardener.com)). It takes six weeks or longer for the magazines to get it together, so you need to start working on it this month if you plan on giving them as Christmas presents.

It is also the time to take a look at your tools to see if any of them need repair, replacement or general cleanup. As the shorter days approach, a brief swipe with sandpaper and a little oil will make those tools shine and last for another season! The mower can stand a cleanup, blade sharpening and oil and air filter change before it turns cold. Let's pass up the frustration of a mower that does not want to start next spring by spending a little time with it this month!

Have a great Thanksgiving, and plan ahead for a glorious spring! **NOW**

*Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener in Ellis County.*

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# November 2007

## Community Calendar

**First and Third Tuesdays**

Training Academy for Dental Assistants holds free informational sessions at 5:30 p.m. Call (972) 842-2999.

**First and Third Thursdays**

Midlothian Lions Club meeting, 7 p.m. at Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th Street. Call (972) 775-7118.

"Leads to Success" Leads Group meets at 8 a.m. at 2nd @ Main Place.

**Second and Fourth Mondays**

Texas Ladies Networking meets from 11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Ryan's in Waxahachie. Call (214) 587-1221.

**Second and Fourth Tuesdays**

Toastmasters meets at 6:30 p.m. inside Baylorworx, 507 N. Hwy. 77 in Waxahachie.

Midlothian City Council meeting, 6 p.m. at City Hall.

**Every Tuesday**

Midlothian Rotary Club meeting, noon at Midlothian Civic Center, 224 South 11th Street. Call (972) 775-7118 for information.

**November 3**

The National Team, Celebrate Moms One Day Women's Conference, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at Ferris Avenue Baptist Church, Waxahachie. Visit Celebratemoms.org or call Melissa Howell at (866) 324-2893, ext. 4414 for information.

John Mahailov and Daryl May on stage at 7:30 p.m. at Deb & Jerry's Restuarant.

Longbranch Community Baptist Church orientation for Upward Basketball and Cheerleading, 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., at the church. For information, call (972) 723-6442.

**November 6**

Free financial seminar "Freedom Debt" by Sue Falter with Primerica, 7 p.m. at the Midlothian Health Center.

**November 9**

WGMS annual Veteran's Day Celebration, 10:30 a.m. at Walnut Grove Middle School. All armed forces veterans are encouraged to attend. Lunch will be provided for veterans and their spouses after the event. Contact Walnut Grove Middle School, (972) 775-5355, if you plan to attend.

**November 10**

Dallas Zoo Nature Exchange program, 9 a.m. - noon at Pettigrew Academy, 806 East Marvin, Waxahachie. Call (972) 923-1633 for more information or to exhibit.

Corby Lacroix and the House Ranch Band on stage at 7:30 p.m. at Deb & Jerry's Restuarant.

Pancake Breakfast hosted by the Lions Club from 7 - 11 a.m. Call (972) 775-7118 for information.

**November 11**

Santa will make another special appearance at Madearis Studio at 1000 East Main Street #301. Call (972) 775-8489 for information.

**November 13**

"Look Good Feel Better Program," sponsored by the American Cancer Society, 6:30 - 7:45 p.m. at the Midlothian Wellness Center, (Methodist Imaging Center), 2210 Bryan Place, Midlothian. Free admission. Program for women undergoing cancer treatments. A licensed cosmetologist provides a free workshop on makeup application and skin care. A complimentary makeup kit is provided to each participant. Contact Vicki Hallum at (972) 775-7410 for information.

**November 14**

Chamber Luncheon, 11:30 a.m. at the Midlothian Conference Center.

**November 15**

Ribbon Cutting for Approved Home Health Care, 11:30 a.m. at 200 Silken Crossing, Ste. 202.

**November 17**

19th Annual Midlothian Band Booster Christmas Craft Fair, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. at Midlothian High School. Contact Melanie Miller at (972) 723-0971 for information.

Santa will make another special appearance at Madearis Studio at 1000 East Main Street #301. Call (972) 775-8489 for information.

**November 26**

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting, 7 p.m. at St. Paul Episcopal Church, Hwy. 287 at Ovilla Road, Waxahachie. Visit CQGuild.org for information.

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