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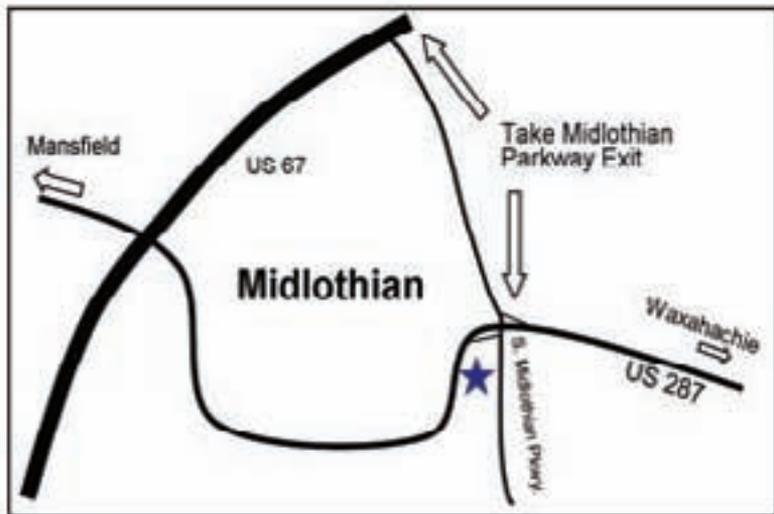




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Editor's Note

Dear Friends,

Novelist Charles Dickens once wrote: "Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some." These are noble thoughts for all of us to contemplate this month. As you gather with your friends and family this Thanksgiving season and remember your blessings, remember to share some of them, too. The little ripples of kindness that you do, can turn into giant waves of goodness for others. The world will never be perfect, but every day we live, we have the opportunity to make it better. The poor will always be among us, but we can give of our bounty to ease some of their burdens. When you give thanks for your blessings, add one more to the list — the ability to share what you have with others. I hope you have a wonderful Thanksgiving.



Betty Tryon
MidlothianNOW Editor

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A Gift for Manna House

— By Betty Tryon



Sometimes good things come in small packages with rosy cheeks, grand ideas and big hearts. Katherine Neal, age 11, looked at the world and decided not to sit on the sideline, as others struggled with the necessities of life, but to do something about it.

Rummaging through her Grandma Lo Lo's (Lois') garage one day, she came across a huge roll of tickets and asked to have them. Permission granted she announced to her mother Rosemarie that she wanted to have a raffle for the people at Manna House. Katherine explained, "I thought Manna House would need help because of all the people that need food, shelter and medicine."

Manna House is a local charity that seeks to meet the needs of struggling families offering food, clothing and, sometimes, financial help. After Katherine got permission from her mom to proceed with the raffle, she went "shopping" in Grandma Lo Lo's garage and found bags of jewelry and other items. "I called it garage shopping

because I gave her things to go in there," Katherine said, explaining she replaced what she took from her grandmother with ceramic objects she painted or coins she had collected.

Katherine also wanted to have an auction for Manna House, so it was back to grandma's for more free shopping. This time she came up with a big-ticket item — a television. Rosemarie stated, "They had a silent auction at her school and she got this concept of *Why can't I do that?* Katherine has an attitude of *I can do that*, then she will actually do it. She is very detail-oriented and always thinking of the next project. She barely finishes one project and she's ready for the next one."

Katherine meticulously planned the auction and raffle herself. She explained, "For the silent auction, I took pictures of the items up for auction and put them on pieces of paper to show people." She sold the tickets for \$1 per ticket or five tickets for \$3. "I sold them at church, school and people in the neighborhood

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— only to people I know — because you're not supposed to talk to strangers.”

Rosemarie said, “Her karate teacher donated a month’s worth of classes that included the uniform. That is a value worth \$125.” Katherine added, “I advertised the auction with signs, mostly at church. I made a big sign that said Silent Auction and Raffle All Funds and Donations go to Manna



“I thought Manna House would need help because of all the people that need food, shelter and medicine.”

House.” Katherine had a table at church with the sign behind her. She waited until some interested person would come by the table and then explained to them what she was doing and why. The items on her table were designated either for auction or for raffle. Katherine made \$350 from the auction and \$250 from the raffle.

When Katherine donated money for the first time, she discovered how important her efforts were for Manna House. She said, “This family couldn’t get the money to buy medicine and

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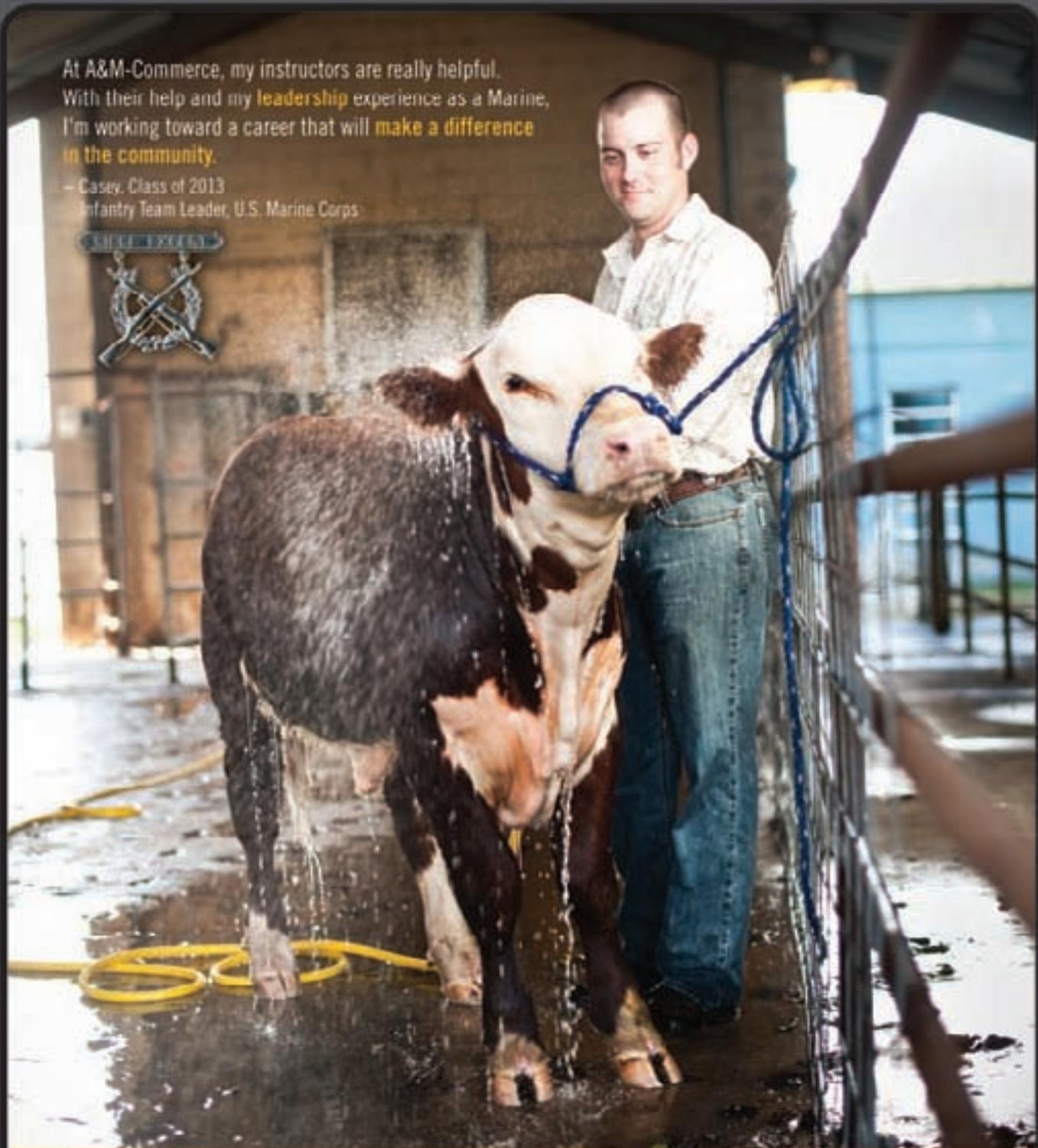
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the money people give can help with prescriptions. That's why I didn't want to donate things, but to give them cash."

Katherine's next moneymaking project for Manna House was to have a carnival in her backyard, with her friend Hannah Pavach helping. In planning the carnival, the Neal's backyard became a hive of activity. Katherine recalled the activities scheduled for the carnival. "Pastor Tom [Tom Curran from Midlothian Bible Church] helped



us with the toys and donated bean bags, milk bottles and duckies. We had a tank filled with water and tiny rubber duckies, with prize numbers on some of them. People were blindfolded before they reached in and got a duck. They could have three ducks for a dollar. We had [a] hula hoop contest to see how long you could go. We sold lunch and dinner. Dad [David] cooked hamburgers and they [mom and dad] bought drinks to sell. We also had a bow and arrow booth. If they hit the bull's eye, then they got a grand prize." Rosemarie had bags of candy for smaller prizes. Manna House joined in on the fundraising by donating a basketful of toiletries for Katherine to sell at 50 cents a piece.

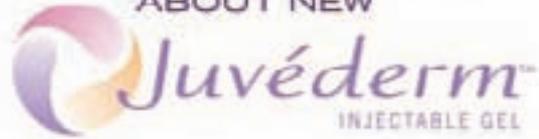
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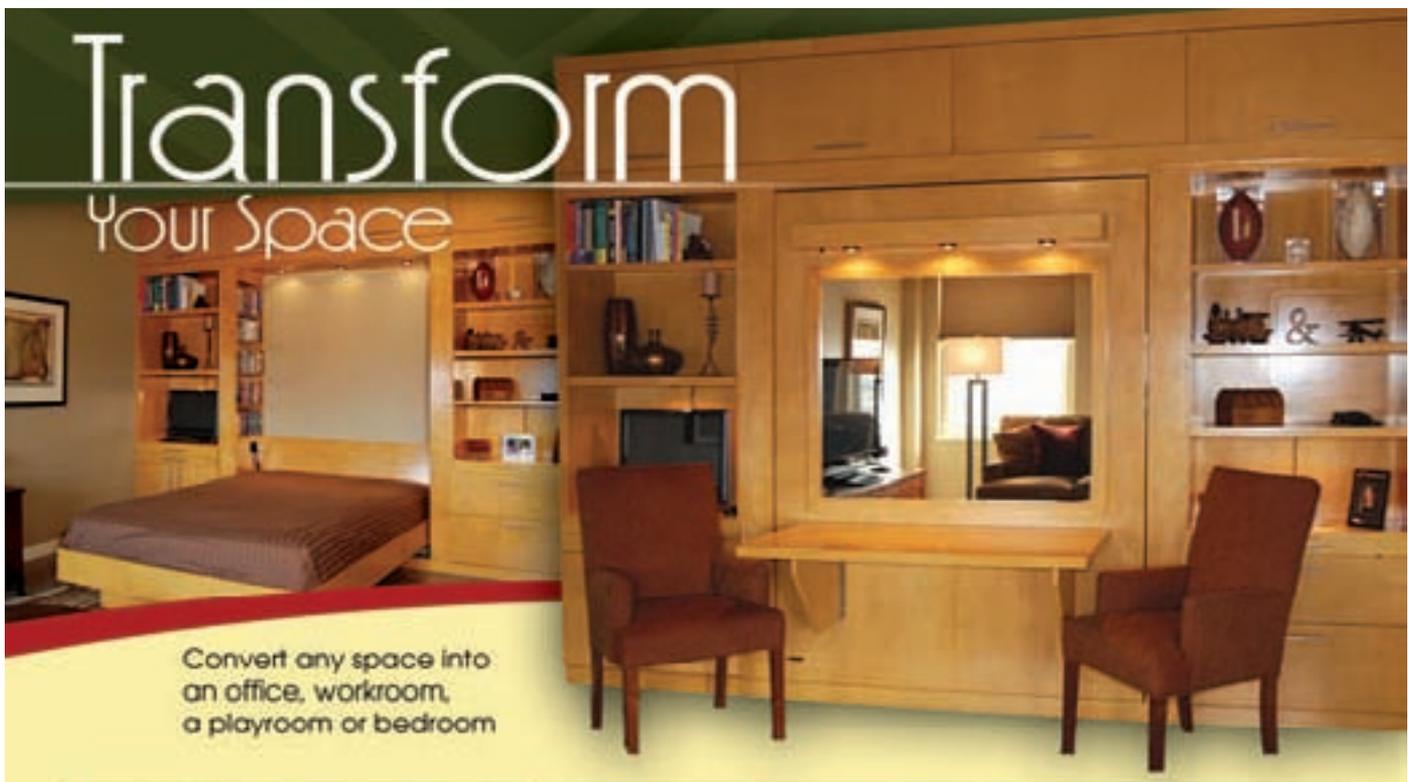
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their own carnival was taking advantage of everything in their backyard. "We have a trampoline in the backyard, and I didn't want kids coming into the backyard for the carnival, jumping on the trampoline and possibly falling off and breaking an arm," Rosemarie said. "So, we placed it upright against the tree and tied it so it wouldn't fall over. It looked so cool that we used it as a backdrop for a baseball throw with the milk bottles. That way, the ball would hit the trampoline and bounce back in the yard and not go in the neighbor's yard."

The most popular and profitable moneymaker was, surprise, surprise — water balloons! Rosemarie remarked, "Those kids went berserk over the water balloons. I had to go buy more balloons and make more water balloons. They sold for a quarter a piece. The kids would run home to get more money to come back for more of them." Katherine chimed in with, "Some people paid \$10 for a whole bucket full."

After two days of fun and hard work, the carnival earned \$137. Hannah and Katherine split the amount, with Hannah's money going to an animal shelter and Katherine's to Manna House. Rosemarie exclaimed, "Do you know how many games the kids had to play for them to earn \$137? That is a lot of dimes and quarters!" As soon as the carnival was over, Katherine was ready for her next project. Her mother suggested the family take a breath between projects, but that did not stop Katherine from mentally planning it. She draws and paints beautiful paintings and will put at least one up for her next silent auction.

Katherine also volunteers at Manna House. "I organize the clothes, help with filing and, sometimes, I dust and clean. I help put the clothes in the back on hangers."

Little Katherine's heart for Manna House is as much a gift as the money she brings. When others remark to her about the wonderful things she is doing to help others, she simply says in a soft voice, "Thank you, I'm trying to help Manna House." **NOW**

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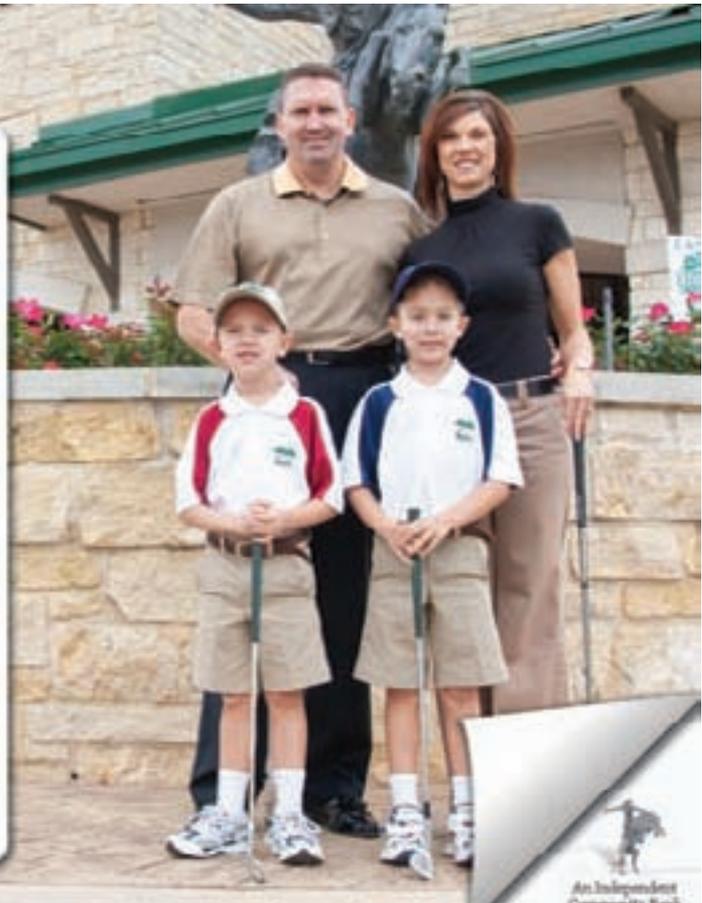


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Keeping It Simple

At Home With Mike and Carrie Houston

— By Sandra Skoda

Mike and Carrie Houston believe in keeping it simple, especially when it comes to their traditional Colonial-style home. After breaking ground in November 2004, it took the couple only four months before their five-bedroom, four-bath, dream home was complete. “We had some really good weather that fall and winter,” Mike said, “and it seems to take a shorter

time to build a new home when you build outside the city limits.”

The couple has only lived in the area since March 2009, but they are finding great satisfaction in relocating from Coppell and making the outskirts of Midlothian home. “We sold our pest control business once our son graduated from high school,” Carrie said. “We wanted to live more in the

country and our family lives here, too.” Living in what they consider the country with the big city conveniently located a few miles down the road is just what the Houstons were looking



for. "We have the best of both worlds," she added with a smile.

When finalizing the decision to move, they had no idea how fast their old home would sell. "Our home in Coppell sold in three short weeks,"



Carrie remembered. "We went from a 4,000-square-foot home to a 700-square-foot duplex. It was crazy." It was also during this same time that Carrie's

mother was making plans to move from Waco. Her home also sold in a very short time span — 10 days to be exact. "She also moved into the duplex with us," Mike said. It proved to be a time of true family togetherness, but at least now Mike and Carrie are able to look back on the whole experience with laughter and some very fond memories.

The plans for the new home were not something Mike and Carrie took lightly. In fact, a great deal of thought and a large amount of time was put into the process before the building



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phase got underway. “Carrie had been working on the plans for two-and-a-half years,” Mike said with pride for his wife in his voice. “The exterior of the plans chosen stayed the same, but she reformatted the plans to make the home exactly what we needed it to be.” The revised plans included relocating several walls and expanding the outdoor porches, the staircase to the second level and the width of the garage, thus making it easier for each of them to get in and out of their respective vehicles when both vehicles are parked side-by-side.

With its rich, Old World European-themed decor, the two-story abode houses a media room, formal living and dining areas and two master bedrooms, one upstairs and one down. The downstairs master bedroom has been transformed into a workout center. A large family room has proven to be the perfect gathering place when Mike and Carrie entertain, as has the backyard pool with hot tub. Carrie laughed as she

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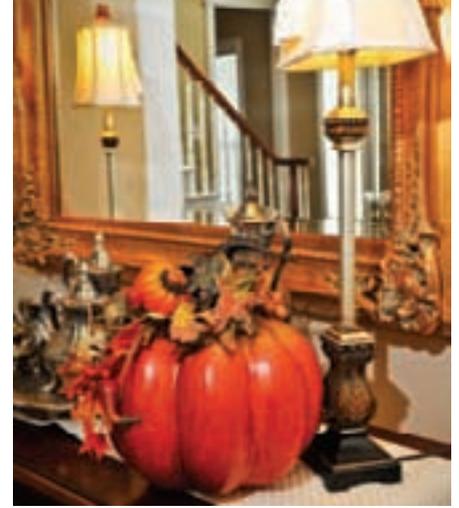
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recalled the conversation she had with Mike about the pool. "He didn't want another pool," she said. "I told him, 'Do you want your teenage daughter laying out at our pool or someone else's pool?' He decided he didn't mind maintaining another pool." Carrie found it quite comical, while Mike found it to be a realistic decision as a father.

The overall design allows family and

friends to enjoy the simple ease of cozy comfort. The color scheme is soothing, as well as inviting. "The home is formal," Carrie admitted, "but it's very comfortable." The Houston home is filled with lots of "bells and whistles." When deciding on finishing features, they included many upgrades including built-ins, kitchen appliances and crown molding. "We went nuts on the crown molding," Mike said. "It's doubled and

tripled, depending on the room." Carrie quickly added, "There are no real curtains in the house. We don't want to cover up the beauty of the crown molding." The home also boasts features that meet the couple's need to conserve for future generations. Radiant barrier decking; cellulose, an insulation product manufactured from recycled paper material; and high-efficiency windows have greatly helped with the utility bills.

Decorations throughout the home include antiques purchased after the two were married mixed with newer,

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more contemporary items that continue to offer the Old World European feeling Carrie loves. The main collection can be found in the kitchen in countless cookbooks and dishes, dishes and more dishes. Dinner parties, centered on the tableware and the meal, are commonplace in the Houston home. Even though Carrie had enlarged the kitchen when revamping the plans, she and Mike soon realized the cabinet space still was not enough. "I'm Martha Stewart made over when it comes to dishes," Carrie joked. "All the kitchen cabinets were full when we moved in. There's no room left for anymore dishes."



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Mike and Carrie met 22 years ago this past August while attending the same church in Waco. After dating six months, they were engaged for one year before tying the knot. They readily admit that they have always lived in nice homes, but once their new home came to fruition, they were able to actively visualize what had only been seen on paper or in Carrie's mind. "Every day during the building process, we were seeing our dreams come true.



There was something new every day!" Carrie said, as Mike smiled in agreement.

The home is personalized for the people who reside within. "Carrie decorated every inch of the home," Mike said. "We wanted people to be comfortable, and we believe they are. It's who we are." Even today, it seems as if their dreams are continuing to come true. Carrie currently homeschools their youngest, Jessica, who is a high school sophomore; and their oldest, Brandon, is learning what it is like to own and maintain his own home, also in Midlothian. "Oh my, we can't forget Coco, the newest addition to the family," Carrie said, as a long-haired Chihuahua wagged its tail, waiting patiently for some attention. **NOW**

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Mrs. Cooper's first-grade classroom enjoyed a visit from Dr. Kennedy, MISD Superintendent, their first mystery reader of the year.



Ms. Tidwell's fourth-grade class explored chemical reactions.



MHS Homecoming Queen Maddie Wigman smiled for the camera.



Jacob and Ryler Gill took a break from playing in a local pumpkin patch to pose for a picture.



Xingyu, a first-grade student at Miller Elementary, shows off her interactive writing and illustration.

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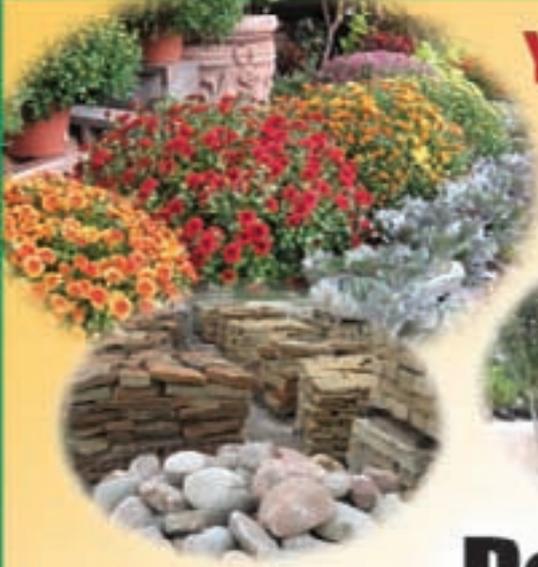
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Join MISD on ... New! Connections E-News E-mail

Midlothian ISD has expanded communications to the community through an online electronic newsletter. The new MISD Connections E-News provides subscribers important district news, weather related closings and delays, as well as late breaking news as needed. In addition, the newsletter contains district announcements and links to calendars, online meal payments, Powerschool, athletic schedules and more. To join, visit www.Midlothian-ISD.net

National Hispanic Recognition Scholar

Rosita Zubieta, a MHS senior, has been selected as a recipient of the 2009-2010 Scholar of the National Hispanic Recognition Program (NHRP) for excellence in academic achievement. She was selected from a pool of over 200,000 students identified as Hispanic/Latino who took the 2008 PSAT. The NHRP distributes names of the honored scholars to four-year post secondary institutions in October for recruitment purposes. This will give Zubieta an opportunity to hear from colleges that are particularly interested in communications with academically outstanding students of Hispanic/Latino heritage. Zubieta's future plans are to attend Harvard University to pursue the study of Business Law. Pictured with Rosita is Midlothian High School counselor, David Moore.



AP Scholars

Midlothian High School is proud to announce that sixteen students have been named as Advanced Placement (AP) Scholars by the College Board for their scores on Advanced Placement exams at the end of AP courses.

Scholars

Scholars have received a four or above on a five-point scale on all tests taken or a 4 on at least eight exams. These students are: Ryne Alber, Brian Bales, Nicole Beck, Rebekka Bellew, Carley Crandall, Leslie Ingersoll, Hannah Merrifield, Katherine Owen, Brittany Stubbs, Michael Yang, Taylor Walling and Jonathan Wang.

Scholars with Honor

Laine Miller has been named a Scholar with Honor. He made a 3.25 on all tests taken or a three or higher on at least four of the exams.

Scholars with Distinction

An AP Scholar with Distinction makes at least a 3.5 on all tests taken or a 3 or higher on five or more exams. These students are: Matthew Detrentas, Michael Hayden and Kacie Rowlette.

Facebook and Twitter

Are you on Facebook or Twitter? MISD would like to encourage parents and community members to join the new Facebook group and/or Twitter network. To join our Facebook Group, search for "Midlothian ISD" and submit a request or you can follow MISD on Twitter! These services provide a regular update about Midlothian ISD, from district and campus news to sports news.



Commended Merit Scholars

Garrett Cornett and Courtney Lish have been named Commended Students in the 2010 National Merit Scholarship Program.

These students are 2 out of 34,000 students nationwide who are being recognized for their exceptional academic promise. They placed among the top five percent of more than 1.5 million students who entered the 2009 competition by taking the 2007 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT).



Businesses can now advertise on the MISD website

Midlothian ISD is offering for-profit businesses to place a business ad on the MISD Web site for a minimal fee. The district Web site offers a valuable way to reach potential customers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Currently, there are approximately 2,600 visitors on the MISD Web site per day including employees, parents and community members.

To place an ad, contact Jana Hathorne, Public Relations Coordinator, (972) 775-8296, ext. 1037, jana_hathorne@midlothian-isd.net.

Note: Web advertising guidelines and agreement forms are in compliance with the MISD School Board Policy GKB.

**MISD WILL BE CLOSED FOR THE THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
NOVEMBER 23-27, 2009 AND CLOSED DECEMBER 21-JANUARY 1, 2010**

A Wonderful Thanksgiving.



District Receives Superior Financial Rating

The Midlothian ISD has received a "Superior Achievement" rating under Texas' Schools FIRST financial accountability rating system for the seventh consecutive year by earning a perfect score by passing all 24 state indicators.

The Superior Achievement rating is the state's highest, demonstrating the quality of the school district's financial management and reporting system.

The Schools FIRST (Financial Accountability Rating System of Texas), was developed by the Texas Education Agency in response to Senate Bill 875 passed in 1999. The primary goal of Schools FIRST is to achieve quality performance in the management of school districts' financial resources, a goal made more significant due to the complexity of the state's school finance system.

The financial rating system assigns one of four ratings to Texas school districts. In addition to the superior rating, a district could be rated as "Above-Standard Achievement," "Standard Achievement" and "Substandard Achievement." Districts with serious data quality issues could receive an additional rating of "Suspended-Data Quality." Districts that perform poorly on the accountability assessment must file corrective action plans with TEA.

Under the system, a district's rating is based upon 24 different indicators based on the district's fund balance, audit, timeliness of reports, delinquent tax collections, administrative costs, PEIMS financial information, debt service expenditures and budget. Midlothian ISD earned a perfect score by passing all 24 indicators.

Auditor's Report = Good Financial Practices

The MISD auditor recently commented that the district's financial statements proved once again to be examples of the exceptional standards and practices of the MISD Business Office. The Audit Report is available on the MISD Finance Web page.



Read It Forward

A Community Reading Event

November 12, 2009, 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Midlothian ISD Multi-Purpose Stadium

Located at the corner of the new Hwy. 287 Bypass and 14th St.

Weather permitting

- Sign up for Meadow's Library Card
- Half-Price Scholastic Book Fair On-site
- Listen to Stories on the Yardline
- Lightening Thief games
- Movie Trailer of *The Lightening Thief* by Rick Riordan
- Performances by the FSMS and WGMS Bands
- Face Painting and Book Walk
- Drop Everything and Read On the Field

****Bring family, books and blankets on the field for one huge group read!!!**

Read It Forward: A Yearlong Initiative sponsored by the MISD Library Services Department.

MISD is on the Grow

There is no secret that Midlothian ISD continues to enroll new students on a weekly basis.

Current Enrollment (Updated weekly on the MISD Web site. Click on About MISD link)

Campus	# of Students
J.A. Vitovsky	566
J.R. Irvin	305
LaRue Miller	608
Longbranch	714
Mt. Peak	570
T.E. Baxter	570
Frank Seale MS	808
Walnut Grove MS	937
High School	2244
Total	7322

Enrollment Projections

Source: Bob Templeton Demographics, 1st Qtr. The bold text are campuses that are projected to reach student enrollment capacity.

• MISD district area is 112 sq. miles, larger than Duncanville (29), DeSoto (22), Cedar Hill (42) combined.

• MISD is larger than Mansfield ISD, which has 94 sq. miles.

• Out of 166 school districts with 5,000+ students, MISD is ranked the 22nd fastest growing district in TX.

Campuses	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
J.R. Irvin Elementary	299	318	342	364	383
J.A. Vitovsky Elementary	573	595	681	813	955*
Longbranch Elementary	719	723	763	900*	826
Mt. Peak Elementary	531	560	579	631	691
T.E. Baxter Elementary	573	590	609	627	644
LaRue Miller Elementary	633	653	691	713	719
Walnut Grove Middle School	944	950	967	1036	1097
Frank Seale Middle School	766	769	794	772	808
Midlothian High School	2242	2314	2353	2427	2483*
TOTAL	7281	7477	7779	8182	8615



Pennies for Panthers

Announcing the first ever Pennies for Panthers Drive! Dig under those sofa cushions and car seats because we need your change! Send your loose change to school with your students to drop in the collection container in their campus's front office. All proceeds will go directly to the Midlothian Education Foundation's

Spring Innovative Teaching Grants, where one of our grants awarded will be the Pennies for Panthers Grant. We will collect change through March 1, 2010. Since 2004, the Midlothian Education Foundation has awarded over \$140,000 in Innovative Teaching Grants to MISD teachers to implement innovative programs in their classrooms. If you have any questions, please contact Kristin Zastoupil, MEF Executive Director, 972-775-8296 x1281 or e-mail foundation@midlothian-isd.net.





“I know I got my talent from God.”

Angela's

Paintbrush

— By Betty Tryon

Students at LaRue Miller Elementary School returned to school this year to discover new walls in their library to capture their interest. Angela Edwards completed these murals right before school resumed for the fall session. She said, “It is a country landscape kind of scene. They wanted me to add some things that LaRue Miller [school is named after her] likes to the paintings. She likes schoolhouses; so on one wall there will be a schoolhouse with a dirt road going up to it. She likes frogs; so on another wall there is a pond with frogs and a boat with a kid in it reading. In the reading section, it is just bluebonnets and oak trees.”

For as far back as Angela can remember she has always liked to draw and color. “Mom wanted me to play the piano and had me in piano classes, but I never liked that,” she recalled. “She noticed that I liked drawing, so she put me in an oil painting class when I was 10 years old for about five or six years. The instructor was a schoolteacher who taught art classes after school. I was in the kid’s class and she noticed I was serious about it. After one lesson, she

said, ‘We need to put you with the ladies.’ So, for the rest of the time, I was with the older ladies.”

Angela’s confidence soared when her grandmother bought her paintings. She recalled, “She framed them beautifully. She was a decorator and had a lot of different artists on her wall. She had an open house for a newspaper and she put my painting on an easel in the front and told everyone I painted it. It boosted my ego.”

Taking art classes at school was the only formal training Angela received. However, such talent does not stay hidden. Others started to recognize and acknowledge her talent by giving her the highest compliment — they wanted her art for themselves. She added, “I always did different projects for others. I had oil paintings from my classes, but I haven’t painted on canvas for years. I went to college and had a friend in drama, and he would always get me to do the backdrop for the school plays. I also painted on furniture, on chairs and trunks.”

Angela remembers when murals became popular in the culture but felt

a little inadequate about doing it. That, however, did not stop her from giving it her best effort. “I’m a believer,” she declared. “I have a lot of faith and I would just say, ‘Lord help me to do this.’ Most people have been real pleased with what I have done. I know I got my talent from God.”

As with most artists, there is always one more thing to add to make their work perfect. “I like detail, but I don’t think I am as detailed as I want to be because there is never enough time. A lot of my stuff looks detailed, but to me it’s not quite where I would like it. On walls, it is kind of a challenge because you might be painting on a textured wall and someone would say, ‘Well, it looks great to me.’ Then I would be like, *Just get it done. You know not [to] be so meticulous on the murals.*”

LaRue Miller Elementary is not the only school to experience Angela’s touch. At J.R. Irving, her western handiwork gallops across the walls of the library. In one scene, a Pony Express rider makes his way carrying not the mail, but books. On another wall, a miner pans for books. The educators in

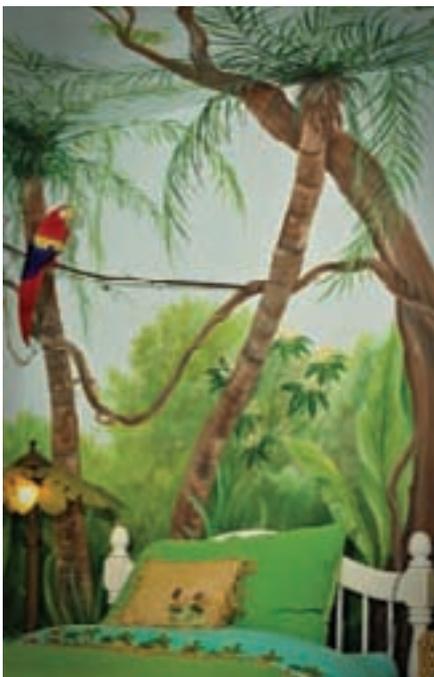
the teacher's lounge get to relax with a Tuscan theme on their wall. Angela also did the teacher's lounge at Mountain Peak.

Even Angela's home does not escape her paintbrush. Entering her daughter's room, one is surrounded by images of the rain forest. The jungle scene contains a leopard, monkey and a waterfall,

“I like detail, but I don't think I am as detailed as I want to be because there is never enough time.”

among other images. Her husband secured a branch to two adjacent walls and perched a parrot on top for a three dimensional look. In the dining room, the double doors grace a beautiful image of adjoining wrought iron gates with a path leading away from the gates. Even blank spaces in the kitchen are not free from Angela's paintbrush. The empty white spaces above the stove and the sink now display still-life fruit paintings.

One of the reasons Angela enjoys



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painting murals is the creative aspect of painting the desires of others. She explained one such project. "It was in a friend's game room. She hung bamboo over her ceiling and I painted the look of straw fringe along the edge. She



wanted the room to look like Hawaii to remind her of her vacation." The walls were painted with rolling, majestic hills covered in lush, deep green known to Hawaiian scenery. "It is always something new and challenging because everyone always wants something different. You may do an ocean scene or sports, like the Yankees, on their wall. It's always a challenge to see if you can do it." **NOW**

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Learning to

Fly

— By Alex
Allred

Austyn Rapp is many things, but the real story behind the Midlothian teenager is not what she can do on the ground but in the air. Austyn can fly. Nationally ranked as the 14th best pole-vaulter in the nation, little holds Austyn back. As the district champion and record holder in pole vaulting for the last three years, her personal best is an astonishing 12 feet 6 inches. Throughout the state of Texas and nationally, Austyn has made a name for herself, as she has participated in the USA Track and Field Junior Olympics and AAU Junior Olympics.

Prior to pole vaulting, Austyn had been in tumbling and cheerleading since the age of 5 and, no surprise, traveled with a competitive cheer team at the ages of 14 and 15 to compete in a “world championship” two years in a row. By

all accounts, she was on her way to becoming a nationally competitive cheerleader. Midlothian, however, was also home to pole-vaulter Nick Frawley. When Austyn was invited to watch Nick practice on an elaborate pole vault run in his own backyard, her world changed.

“I went to that practice and fell in love. I had butterflies in my stomach,” Austyn recalled. She was in the sixth grade and had never seen anything so powerful and exciting. As Nick soared through the air, Austyn knew she wanted to fly, too. A thrill seeker with a competitive nature, she had all the qualifications, as pole vaulting is a sport about power, speed, precision and positively no fear.

In the track world, pole vaulting is an event in which a seasoned athlete uses a

pole to lift him or herself up and over a bar. Dating back as far as the ancient Greeks and Celts, it has been a recognized Olympic sport since 1896. Women, however, did not make their Olympic debut until the 2000 Sydney Games. Until that time, the sport was considered too dangerous and too rigorous for women. Austyn was completely unaware of her

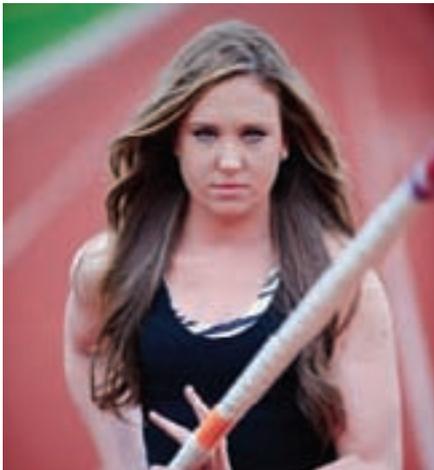
“A thrill seeker with a competitive nature, she had all the qualifications, as pole vaulting is a sport about power, speed, precision and positively no fear.”



pioneering efforts. She only knew she was the only female pole-vaulter for years.

At state and national events, while other pole-vaulters were busily sizing up their competition and trying to rid themselves of growing nerves, Austyn was truly happy to be among “the girls.” In fact, it took Austyn some time to realize that it was she who was considered the competition.

Described as “tenacious,” “ferocious,” “dedicated” and “committed” by her coaches, Austyn has never questioned



the sport that has been relatively lonely and unquestionably dangerous. “I really think the sport chose me,” Austyn said. “I’ve never been scared of hurting myself. I’m only afraid of failing.” As her success rose, so, too, did her expectations. “It’s cliché, I know, but I want to be the best I can be.”

Still in the midst of growing an impressive résumé, pole vaulting is not Austyn’s only activity. She is currently Miss Teen Ellis County and was third runner-up in the 2009 Miss Teen Texas International Pageant, which led to invitations to both the Miss Texas USA and Miss Teen USA to represent Ellis County. She is also the official model for a local photography studio. While cheering on the Midlothian High School’s varsity squad, Austyn was named “Cheerleader of the Year” in 2008-09 and was three-time All-American and

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Austyn served on the student council, National Student Advisory Board and S.T.A.N.D. (Students Taking Action, Not Drugs), all while serving as president of the chess club and, most importantly, she served as spokesperson for the Jump Rope for Heart program with the American Heart Association. "That was very important to me," Austyn said.

Today, as college recruiters come knocking, Austyn's expectations have remained high. "If my grades are good enough," Austyn smiled, "I want to get

**"It's cliché, I know,
but I want to be the
best I can be."**

my degree in dentistry." Specifically, this young woman with a brilliant smile wants to give smiles to those in need through children's orthodontics.

Education is her number one priority, but she is also excited to take her pole vaulting to a higher level — to train with other female athletes and have that camaraderie that she never experienced before. "I want to continue to be a role model, make my parents proud and give back to my community," she said. "My family is everything to me, and I love them more than anything."

As Austyn talks about the highs and lows of sport, her gratitude to a community "that has always been so good to me," and what she calls her continued walk of faith, she is described by those who love her as "grounded." It is an ironic statement about the young woman who loves to fly.

"I heard someone say once that attitude determines altitude," Austyn said. "I loved that! It doesn't just apply to pole vaulting, but to my life, too!" For Austyn, armed with both a great attitude and altitude, she really can fly. **NOW**

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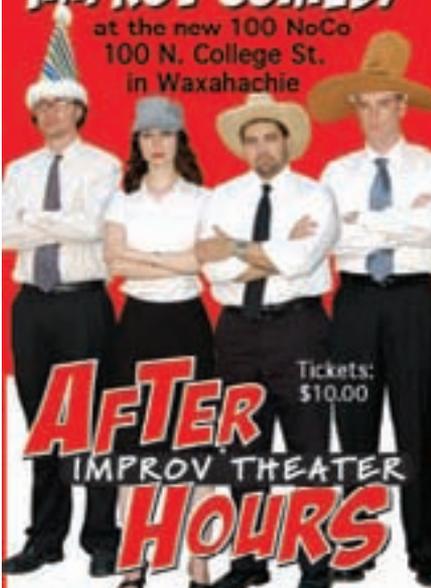
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User Friendly

— By Betty Tryon



In the area of real estate, Manager Ernestine Nickel wants Nickel Property to be the icing on the cake. Its agents not only perform all tasks necessary for the successful completion of any real estate or property management deal, but they do this in a way their clients can appreciate. Ernestine said, “I know a lot of times people are intimidated about real estate because they don’t understand. We want to help them be knowledgeable and learn, so we make it as user-friendly as possible. I want to take the fear out of it.”

When Ernestine’s father-in-law, Pug Nickel, retired, she took over the family business. It was a natural fit for her having worked at Electronic Data Systems (EDS) for five years in its relocation department. She stated, “I got my feet into real estate, and with the background of my father-in-law, it was a natural transition. When Pug started the business, he was doing real estate and property management. When I took over, I took the property management part and worked primarily with investors, helping them buy real estate. I helped them walk into a situation where they were making money and having positive cash flows.”

Ernestine’s degree in finance from the University of North Texas and her knowledge in financial matters gave her customers the extra edge when consulting with her about investing. “Real estate is the most solid investment out there,”



she said. “The stock market can go down and your shares can be worth zero, but real estate will never be worth zero. You may be getting less rent, but you still have a tangible asset. That’s huge.”

Nickel Property is a full-service real estate company. Ernestine stated, “Basically, the person comes to me and says, ‘I want to get into investing [in] some rental properties.’ We help them find the property. We actually keep the tenant in it, keep it leased and keep the money coming in for them for that property. We want owners to just go to the mailbox and get their check. We use our knowledge and experience to help their bottom line. We are your buffer,” Ernestine explained. “When

the tenants have a problem, they call us. We take care of everything. If there is an insurance claim, we handle that. We do everything that you would do if you were handling the property yourself.”

Nickel Property not only has a large property management division but it also does home sales. Its agents can help you select a builder. According to Earnestine, “We want to be that hometown Realtor, that place where people drop by and feel comfortable. We want to be that person they can go to and get information. Customer service makes us unique. We really do care about our clients getting what they want.”

“We want owners to just go to the mailbox and get their check.”

There are four real estate agents who do sales and leasing. Ernestine remarked, “We are members of all of the state and national Realtor organizations as well as national property management groups. We keep abreast of all the laws, keep our education current and make sure we are complying with everything that is out there. We keep our owners current also.”

Earnestine considered the possibility of a home not selling and precipitating a crisis for the client. “If they can’t sell and need to get out of that house, we’ll lease it for them. We will get them a new tenant, and once the lease is signed, the seller gives the lease to lender and they can get a new loan. It makes us unique because not all of the real estate companies do property management.”

As past president of the Dallas chapter of the National Association of Residential Property Managers, Ernestine is uniquely qualified. You can contact her at (972) 296-9291. Visit their Web site at www.nickelproperty.com. **NOW**

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Aliens & Cartoons

— By Betty Tryon

“Something was odd that morning; it was something that made the air heavy and cold. Was it the stench of the old socks in the corner? Was it the sleep in your head? No ... but something was different that morning, something that no one could foresee, no one except Kevin Trace.” So begins the winning short essay in the annual Walnut Grove Middle School Library Writers’ Club Winter Holiday and New Year Writing Contest written by 14-year-old Daniel Cole.

Daniel titled his essay “The Alien and the Boy.” He explained, “It’s about an alien crash landing in a backyard and the boy finding it. The boy and the alien then become friends, but he has to keep the alien a secret because if people found out, they would probably take him away. Then his mom finds out.” At this point, Daniel shows his comedic touch in his story with the words: “There is always that one moment, when you get in serious trouble, where everything slows down to where you can feel your heart pump. During that moment, all you can think about is how much trouble you’re going to be in. Well, this was one of those moments.” Many people have been in this spot before and would no doubt be able to relate to that feeling!

Writing for Daniel comes easy. He stated, “Once the idea comes to me, I figure out what would be best to go with it or what will work story-telling wise. I think, *Is this a good idea for a story or something to keep in your imagination?* If I think it is a good story, I’ll visualize the story in my head, how it will play out, and then I write it down.”

No one in Daniel’s household was surprised that he won the contest that included participants from both Walnut Grove and Frank Seale middle schools. His mother, Nanette Wofford, stated, “When he started learning how to write, he wrote all the time. He always had these creative pictures with his stories. I knew he would win when I read the story.” According to Daniel, “I love to write. I started writing in the first grade. I like creating stuff and letting other people see it.”



All of that practice with writing led to his win last school year. He recalled the day it happened. “I was in the middle of science class dissecting a frog and the librarian came in and said, ‘I need to talk to you.’ I thought, Oh thank goodness, because I really didn’t want to be in there [science class]. We went to the library, and when they told me I won, I was like *Whoa!*” Daniel was very impressed with his prizes — a picture with the mayor and a \$50 gift certificate to Barnes and Noble. Another bonus from winning the contest is the prospect of a novel from his story. An agent considering having him expand his story into a children’s book has contacted the family.

Another aspect to Daniel’s writing is his drawings. He wants to become an animator for cartoon television shows. “I really love drawing characters and thinking up stories for

them. My favorite hobby is drawing. I would like to own an animation studio, write stories and design characters for them.” Daniel is currently working on episode two of the adventures of his animated characters, Hammey and Vlosey. Daniel created them in the first grade and now has a following for their adventures in the Hammey Club. He posted his first animation video of the characters on YouTube. He admitted rather sheepishly, “My running animations are, in fact, kinda embarrassing. It is about what you could expect from a 14-year-old with a Windows Movie Maker and Paint.” However, embarrassing or not, Daniel dares to experiment with different venues as an outlet for his creative writing.

Daniel mentioned the importance of his English classes and found them helpful because “even if you are a really great writer, you still need to know things like climax and foreshadowing. In order to have a great story, you need to have a beginning, middle and ending. There always has to be a climax point to a good story and having some sort of problem. I didn’t learn that until I was in the sixth or seventh grade. I was doing beginning, middle and ending but didn’t know about other details like foreshadowing and, obviously, my grammar was horrible,” he stated with a grin.

In encouraging other youth to experience the joy of writing, Daniel had this advice, “If you think you have a great idea, try visualizing it like a movie in your head. Then think of how it will play out. Just keep at it. Keep on writing rough drafts. It will probably take quite a few tries to get exactly what you want. As long as you don’t give up, you will definitely get a good story down.”

Daniel’s future is full of exciting possibilities and just think — it all began with a love for writing. **NOW**

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Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning

IN THE KITCHEN WITH BRYAN AND KIM TRIPLETT

When it comes to cooking, Bryan and Kim Triplett love to team up. Since their marriage in 1988, they inspired one another to explore the realm of cooking. “We love watching cooking shows and enjoy trying new things,” Kim said. “We get most of our recipes from the cooking shows and others are just trial and error on Bryan’s part. He is great with making something out of nothing.”

Bryan and Kim especially enjoy spending time with their three children: Justin, Ryan and Shelby. They take pleasure in boating, playing and watching soccer and cooking out. “We love getting the family together for cookouts,” Kim said. “We enjoy grilling the best, but we also enjoy making casseroles. Steaks are probably our most favorite, but we have to mix it up a little!” **NOW**

BROCCOLI AND CAULIFLOWER SALAD

- 1 head fresh broccoli crowns
- 1 head fresh cauliflower
- 1 tomato
- 1 bunch green onions
- 1 cup ranch dressing
- 1/2 tsp. celery seed
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. season salt

1. Chop broccoli, cauliflower crowns and tomato into small, bite-sized pieces and place in bowl.
2. Slice green onions into the bowl. Add dressing, celery seed, pepper and season salt; mix.
3. Add more dressing and salt to taste.
4. Chill in refrigerator 1 hour.

MACARONI SALAD

- 1 lb. macaroni noodles
- 1 jar diced pimentos
- 1 1/2 cups mayonnaise
- 1 bag cheese crumbles
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1/2 tsp. celery seed
- 1 tsp. season salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1/4 cup real bacon bits

1. Boil macaroni noodles, as directed; drain the noodles.
2. Place noodles in a bowl; chill in refrigerator for a few hours. (This is the key for great Macaroni Salad).
3. Drain the jar of pimentos; add to noodles along with the remaining ingredients.
4. Mix well and add additional seasoning to taste.

BROCCOLI AND RICE CASSEROLE

- 3 bags boil-in-bag rice
- 1 bag frozen broccoli florets
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 large jar Cheez Whiz

- 3 cans cream of mushroom soup
- 1 small can of mushrooms, drained (optional)
- 1 large block cheddar cheese, grated

1. Boil the rice, per instructions; drain.
 2. Steam broccoli where it is still firm.
 3. Sauté onions.
 4. Heat Cheez Whiz in microwave on low setting, until soft.
 5. Combine all ingredients, except the cheddar cheese, and mix well.
 6. Put into casserole dish and top with the grated cheddar cheese.
 7. Cook in oven at 350 F uncovered for approximately 45 minutes.
- Yields approximately 15 servings.*

ZUCCHINI AND SQUASH

- 1 large or 2 small squash, sliced
- 1 large or 2 small zucchini, sliced
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1 pkg. Splenda or 1 Tbsp. sugar

1. Sauté squash, zucchini and onions in butter, until soft; season to taste.
2. Add Splenda or sugar. It takes away any bitterness and adds a splash of sweetness.

GOURMET BURGERS – FAMILY FAVORITE

- 2 1/2 lbs. ground meat (not lean)
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 cups cheese crumbles
- 1 cup real bacon bits
- 1 pkg. Lipton Onion Soup

1. Combine all ingredients and make patties.
2. Put in freezer for about 1/2 hour before cooking.
3. Cook on grill to drain extra fat. Top with your

favorite condiments. *Yummy!* The key is to not use lean meat, as they will be dry.
Yields 9 patties.

KEY LIME PIE

CRUST:

- 2 cups graham cracker crumbs
- 1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup butter, melted

PIE FILLING:

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 12-oz. can sweetened, condensed milk
- 3/4 cup key lime juice
- 1 Tbsp. key lime zest (little shavings of the outer peel of the lime)
- 1 pint half-and-half
- fresh lime slices for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
 2. In a medium bowl, combine cracker crumbs and brown sugar.
 3. Stir in melted butter. Press the mixture firmly into bottom and the sides of a 10-inch pan.
 4. Bake for 8 minutes and let the crust cool completely before spreading the pie filling over it.
 5. In large bowl, beat cream until slightly thickened with an electric mixer on medium speed.
 6. Gradually add the sugar, beating until soft peaks form.
 7. Add condensed milk and beat until stiff peaks form.
 8. Beat in lime juice, lime zest and half-and-half.
 9. Once the mixture has reached the desired flavor and consistency, gently spread the pie filling over the cooled crust.
 10. Cover and freeze for 4-6 hours until firm.
 11. Cut into wedges and garnish with fresh lime slices, serve cold.
- Yields 10-12 servings.*

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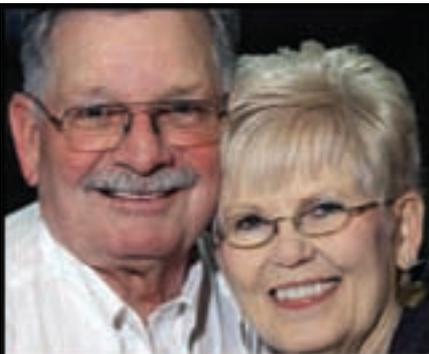


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15-year vs. 30-year Mortgage

— By TJ Henley

It is often said that one of the greatest sources of wealth is our homes. Now more than ever, when we purchase something we want to save the most money and receive the greatest value for our dollar. As a home owner, whether your goal is to pay off your home or only live in the home a few years, a 15-year mortgage is a great option to consider.

No one really knows why 30 years was the standard created for the length of a mortgage. One idea is that when mortgage financing began, the average person would marry in their 20s and

purchase their first home when they were in their 30s. So, assuming they stayed in that home for 30 years, they would have it paid off in time to retire. We do know that it is a great money maker for the bank lending you money. No matter the reason, the 30-year mortgage is not necessarily the best financing option for owning a home.

When comparing the difference between a 15-year mortgage and a 30-year mortgage, the one detractor to the 15-year mortgage is the higher payment. A wise piece of advice is to always know what payment fits into your budget. This allows you to actually expand your options to all available products that work within your budget and could prevent you from making a costly financial mistake.

Versus a 30-year mortgage, a 15-year mortgage builds equity much faster and typically has a lower interest rate. Here

is an example of the benefits of a 15-year mortgage vs. a 30-year mortgage in just five years.

Term	Loan Amt.	Principal & Interest Pmt.	Interest Rate	% of equity in the home after 5 years
30 yrs	\$150,000	\$851.68	5.5%	7.5%
15 yrs	\$150,000	\$1,186.19	5.0%	25.4%
15 yrs	\$110,000	\$869.87	5.0%	25.4%

** Non-APR calculation, not intended as a quote for interest rates.*

Wow! Twenty-five percent equity in five years vs. seven percent, incredible. Our assumption was the value of the home did not appreciate or depreciate during the five years. If you ended up selling this home, after five years, the 15-year option would allow you to pay a six percent realtor commission, and still have 19 percent in cash to you, the 30-year option only would leave you one percent after a six percent realtor commission.

One last comparison. So how much would you pay in principal and interest

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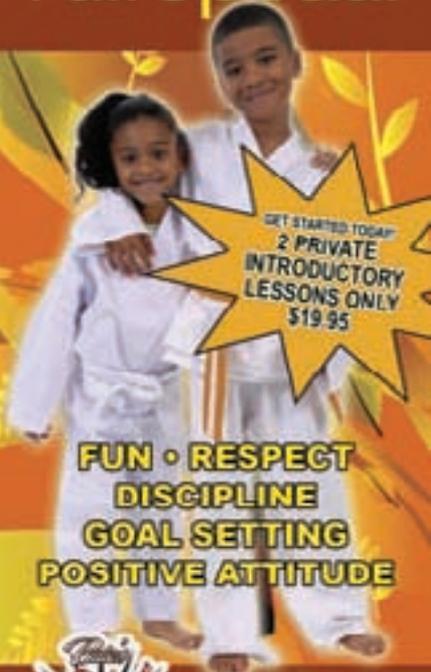
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That \$93,094 is extra bank profit for lending you the same money. Or another way to look at it is the person who selected the 15-year mortgage put an extra \$93,094 into their own bank account.

So the benefits can definitely out way costs when it comes to a 15-year mortgage. To know for sure if this is the right mortgage product for you, work with a mortgage professional that offers you options and clearly explains the benefits of each option. **NOW**

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Hope for a Better Future

— By Betty Tryon, R.N.

Ronald Reagan, 40th president of the United States, Charlton Heston, movie star, and Norman Rockwell, artist, are just a few of the famous people who have had Alzheimer's disease. They put a face on a devastating illness. Facing the possibility of losing a little bit of oneself every day is a dismal prospect. The fear is real, and the disease is irreversible. Is there any hope?

Alzheimer's disease (AD) holds the dubious distinction of being the most common cause of dementia. We still do not know what causes this disease, but evidence points to brain damage occurring over a long period of time before any sign of forgetfulness becomes worrisome. How much forgetfulness is enough to warrant further examination? Obviously, if you are very concerned about this, a trip to your physician may allay your fears.

We all have those minor "senior moments" of forgetfulness. However, if memory challenges disrupt your daily routine in some manner, that may be cause for concern. Being unable to balance the checkbook when you have done it previously with little effort may be worrisome. An inability to follow a plan or understand a favorite recipe is another sign. Confusion is very typical with AD, such as not being able to travel to a known place or to find your way home. Anyone can forget about those very important dates, but we have the ability to

recall them later. A warning sign in AD is when important dates or even their purpose can no longer be remembered. Needing to retrieve the instructions to reset the clocks or other electronics is common. Not remembering how to brush your teeth or dress yourself needs evaluation. Those with AD may find it difficult to express themselves using the correct words or to understand others.

Although there is no cure yet, early detection is still useful and important. Early diagnosis allows one to be an active participant in planning for future care. It permits you to have a say in legal matters regarding your estate while you can still do so. Becoming involved in support groups will help to enhance the quality of your life. Your family can benefit from these services also.

Yes, there is always hope, and it may be in early diagnosis. Research continues to advance in this area and early treatment may become crucial. Early detection can give you an opportunity to receive treatment or participate in clinical trials that can slow down the progression of the disease. Knowing what is ahead may give you a better future. **NOW**

This article is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult with your physician for questions regarding this topic.

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November 2009

Community Calendar

First and Fourth Monday

School Board meeting: 6:30 p.m.

Third Monday

Ellis County Aggie Moms: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie First United Methodist Church, 505 1/2 Marvin. For more information, contact Cheryl Bell at (972) 723-0341 or rb4cj@sbcglobal.net.

Every Tuesday

Midlothian Rotary Club meeting: noon, Midlothian Civic Center, 224 South 11th St. (972) 775-7118.

GED class: 6:00 p.m., Midlothian High School Meadows Library.

Second and Fourth Tuesdays

Midlothian City Council meeting: 8:00 p.m., City Hall, 104 1/2 Ave. E.

First Thursday

Midlothian Area Historical Society meeting: 7:00 p.m., Midlothian High School Meadows Library. Contact Kathy Robinson at (972) 723-2755 for more information.

ABWA Empowering Women Express Network monthly meeting: 6:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Circle. www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org.

First and Third Thursday

Midlothian Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., Midlothian

Civic Center, 224 S. 11th St. (972) 775-7118.

November 3

WRC Pregnancy Center of Ellis County Roundup 2009 benefit dinner: 6:30 p.m., Creekside Church on Highway 287. Guest speaker: Jody Dean, North Texas Journalist and KLUV Morning Show host. Free tickets; reservations required. For more information, call (972) 938-7900 or (972) 878-0784.

November 4

Navarro College SBDC's How to Start a Small Business free workshop: 10:00 a.m.-noon, Citizen's National Bank Community room, 310 N. 9th St. Pre-registration required; seating limited. To register, call (972) 937-6425 or e-mail sbdc@navarroccollege.edu.

November 7

Ellis County Veterans Appreciation Ceremony: 10:00 a.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Lane, Waxahachie. Join other local residents to collectively participate in a moving tribute honoring veterans past and present from our Ellis County communities. If you have any questions, please contact: David Hudgins (972) 937-1200 or Perry Giles (972) 937-6171.

November 9

2nd Annual ABWA's Marketplace Midlothian: 6:30 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Circle. Display fee: \$25. For more information, e-mail abwainfo@gmail.com.

November 10

Navarro College SBDC's Writing a Winning Business Plan workshop: 10:00 a.m.-noon, Citizen's National Bank Community Room, 310 N. 9th St. Cost: \$20. To register, call (972) 937-6425 or e-mail sbdc@navarroccollege.edu.

November 14

Lions Club Fall Pancake Breakfast: 7:00-11:00 a.m., Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th St. Advance tickets: \$2. Tickets sold at the door: \$3. For more information, e-mail midlothianlions@gmail.com.

November 18

Ellis County Christian Women's Connection monthly luncheon: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 1/2 Hwy. 287, Waxahachie. Cost: \$13. Nursery vouchers available. Reservations preferred; walk-ins welcome. Contact Kay at (972) 937-2807 or windchime423@yahoo.com or Mary at (972) 937-9984 no later than Friday, November 13.

November 23-27

WISD closed for Thanksgiving holiday.

November 26

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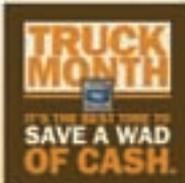
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