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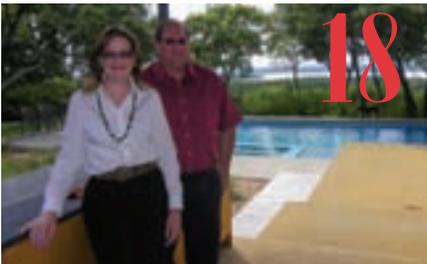


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Surrounding Area

Editor's Note

Greetings, Southwest Friends,

The Thanksgiving holiday prompts me to review all the blessings for which I am thankful: my faithful God; my expanding, precious family; health; friends; freedom to live and worship in a land of plenty. My list could go on and on. As I write, my family is gathering to share in and celebrate my youngest son's wedding in a few days ... a good "excuse" to gather and enjoy the richness of each other. I am so blessed!



As always, our magazine is filled with a unique variety of people contributing to our communities: an irreplaceable volunteer, an inventor/artist, a wild life developer/protector, volunteers and seniors who know how to party, a jeweler, another great cook and many ads offering the fine products and services of those who add their own portion of "riches" to our lives.

Take a moment to chronicle your own list of blessings while preparing a Thanksgiving feast for your families and loved ones.

Beverly Shay
SouthwestNOW Editor

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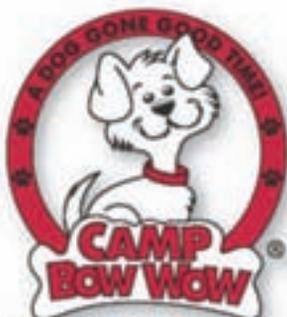
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Audubon ATTRACTION

— By L.B. Lyon

Imagine being on an afternoon walk and resting under the shade of a flowering Dogwood tree while listening to the song of the federally endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler. Farther along on your trek, you come across the uncommon saprophytic orchids and large strands of trout lilies. Imagine this being only a few minutes from your home in Cedar Hill. This is not a dream; it is reality. This is Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center at Cedar Hill, and it should be open to the public next summer.

Chris Culak, the director of the center, explained it has been in the formulation stage for the past five or six years as a partnership between the National Audubon Society, Audubon Dallas, Dallas County and the city of Cedar Hill. “It sits right on FM 1382 between Northwood University and Cedar Hill State Park,” Chris said. The center building will be named the C.E. Doolin Education and Visitors Center. Chris stated, “The Audubon center at Dogwood Canyon will be within a 50-minute drive of four million people.” The expectation is that at least 40,000 people will visit the center each year. “One little-known fact is that Cedar Hill State Park is the busiest state park in the entire state of Texas,” he added. “We hope to be able to attract those visitors to the Audubon Center.”

Most of the work done on this project so far has been in the form of fundraising for the land and for the building of the center. The \$7.4 million project will feature a 6,000-square-foot education center and visitor’s center. “We’re



“The Audubon center at Dogwood Canyon will be within a 50-minute drive of four million people.”

actually building a trail right now,” he said. “There’s a trail behind the center that will be an ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act] trail. It’ll be about a mile long trail. We hope to have it completed by mid-November. Eventually, we’ll have about six miles of trails rolling through the canyon. But we feel it is important to have the first trail open to all people including those with disabilities.”

Dogwood Canyon sustains the Metroplex’s greatest variety of rare and endangered species. Here is found the last known nesting habitat in Dallas County for two endangered songbirds: the Golden-cheeked Warbler and the Black-capped Vireo. Species from East, West and Central Texas converge here, making the canyon the only place in North Texas where one can find the dogwood of East Texas. “This is where the Hill Country ends in a sense,” Chris explained. “A lot of the topography, a lot of the plant life, a lot of the birds that dwell in the canyon are sort of more native to what you might see in Austin’s Hill Country, but yet the Hill Country sticks its neck all the way up into this part of North Texas. As a result, you are going to see certain types of species of birds that are native to Austin and you won’t see them anywhere else in North Texas except for here in Dogwood Canyon.”

The name, Dogwood Canyon, comes from the number of dogwood trees in the center of the canyon. The flowering dogwood is common to the piney woods and post oak belts



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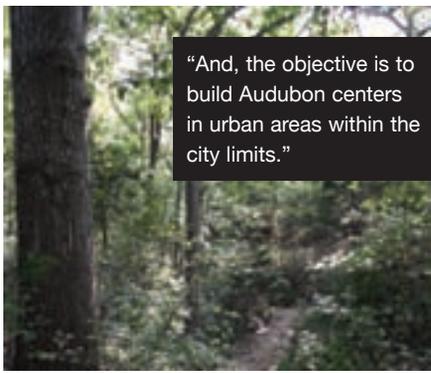
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of Texas, but is generally absent from shallow, clay soils of the limestone regions. Plants and animals from East, West and Central Texas converge here at the outer limits of their ranges, making Dogwood Canyon home to a unique combination of flora and fauna.

Most importantly, the canyon supports mature Ashe juniper trees, the primary nesting habitat needed for the Golden-cheeked Warbler. The mature Ashe juniper has a loose peeling bark, which



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the Golden-cheeked Warbler prefers for its nests. The Warbler also finds its favorite food there: soft-bodied caterpillars. These caterpillars are found here in the Spanish oak, shin oak and Texas ash.

Chris likes to tell people that they do not need to travel a great distance to see some of these plants and bird varieties. "Audubon's objective is to allow people to see something they may not have [had] access to before. And, the objective is to build Audubon centers in urban areas within the city limits." This connects urban dwellers with nature.

The center, simply referred to as Dogwood Canyon, hopes to connect with the area schools for field trips and educational programs. "The schools will not have far to drive when they come to Dogwood Canyon, and they will find plenty of material to supplement their science classes," he stated. They also want to help educate other people on the fun of hiking and identifying certain plants and animals. Classes will

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be held on a variety of environmental and conservation efforts. The National Audubon Society has 45 of these centers throughout the country. The center in Cedar Hill will be the 46th. With it being in an urban setting, they hope to draw people to learn more about conservation of the great gifts of nature available in this area.

Another rare plant in the canyon is the white trout-lily, also called the white dog-tooth violet. A rare plant for this area, the showy spring-blooming forest wildflower ranges from South Dakota, Ontario and New York south to Georgia and Texas. The population of the white trout-lily at Dogwood Canyon may be among the largest in this southwestern limit of its range. Dogwood Canyon also provides the right habitat to support three species of Hexalectris orchids, which are native to the escarpment habitat. The rare orchids bloom during the summer and are among only a few hundred in the country.

Chris sees Dogwood Canyon as an important attraction and a component of ongoing growth, as well as an economic boost to the city of Cedar Hill. "If we can draw 40,000 people a year to this area to visit the center," he said, "there's a good chance those people will also visit businesses in Cedar Hill while they are here."

Chris admitted, "It is incredible for us to work in a partnership with Cedar Hill to conserve 270 acres of important wildlife in a major metropolitan area." Chris currently spends time directing the Trinity River Audubon Center, as well as the new Dogwood Canyon Center. When the center gets closer to opening, he will hire a manager and perhaps a couple of other workers, and then rely on volunteers to help with the daily operation of the center. If you are already planning ahead for local trips and keeping your travels close to home, make sure Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center is on your list. **NOW**

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Going Out on a Limb

— By L.B. Lyon

“I’m not interested in being out in front, but would rather drive others to help others.”

Attend any major functions in the city of DeSoto and you will undoubtedly run into Patricia Coleman. If you have ever had the opportunity to meet and talk with Patricia, you know she is a woman who seems to be everywhere and involved in everything, making you wonder, “When does she rest?”

Patricia, always overflowing with energy, can sometimes be found sitting at the desk right inside the door of Bank of DeSoto, an establishment for which she has worked 16 years. Bank CEO Pierce Monkres recalls how she came to the bank more than 16 years ago seeking a job as a new accounts clerk. Today, she is vice president and director of marketing. “She would work hard inside the bank, but soon started getting out attending the Chamber of Commerce and other functions. Now she spends about half of her time attending other events in DeSoto,” Pierce said. “Everybody likes her and everybody knows who she is. She is our outside representative and she’s very good at it. She’s important to us.”

Patricia said her passion is helping others. Her personal motto is “Go out on the limb, that’s where the fruit is.” She always finds herself out on the end of the limb picking the

best fruit. “I’m a servant,” she said. “I feel I was put on this earth to serve others. I’m not interested in being out in front, but would rather drive others to help others.”

Patricia does not merely attend functions in DeSoto; she gets involved. She is a board director of the DeSoto Senior Center, where she is also on the activity board. Her involvement includes organizing field trips and other activities for the seniors. “We try to make the center conducive to everyone who walks through the doors,” she added. “When I go there, I feel I’m among friends.

“I work a lot with the city of DeSoto and Carolyn Campbell, who is an awesome, good sister and friend in Christ of mine. Carolyn is probably as busy as I am. We do Viva DeSoto and other things with the city,” Patricia said.

Patricia also works with the Chamber of Commerce in DeSoto. “This year I’m really excited about my work with the Chamber,” she said. “I chaired the Head-turning Hats event October 24. It was a fashion show on the originality and creativity of the hats worn by the women who attended.”

There is more to Patricia’s calendar than her work with the bank, the senior center and the Chamber. She is also the CEO of Girlfriends Ministries International. Patricia started Girlfriends Ministries in 2000. “It was created through my

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daughter,” Patricia said. “She wanted to do a lot of things, and a lot of things she wanted to do I didn’t agree with.” So Patricia dealt with it by starting a ministry for girls. “It started with praise dancing. We’d meet every Saturday and talk about praise dancing, but also about boys, girls, abstaining from sex, parents, relationships and a variety of other things; always about how to be a good Christian person. I believe God is first in everything I do.”

Patricia and her husband, Oswald M. Coleman Sr., moved to DeSoto 21 years ago. They have been married for 26 years and have one daughter who



graduated from DeSoto High School and the University of North Texas. She admits that she misses her family that lives in St. Louis, but would not give up the work she does here or the people she meets for anything. Oswald is a videographer with ESPN and ABC, which has allowed Patricia to expand her contacts to sports celebrities. “He’s directly involved with the NFL and the NBA, and he’s done this for 34 years,” Patricia said, noting she could talk about her husband all day.

People often ask her what she talks to sports stars about; she responds that they are just ordinary people. “I try to tell people that if you allow God to be first in your life, He will take you to places you thought you’d never go.”

Patricia loves what she does so much; she said she often has to pinch herself to make sure it is not just a dream. “I sometimes can’t believe that I actually

get paid to do what I do. I love what I do," she shared.

Does she ever relax? "Yes," she laughed. "I go shopping. I have to be out and about with people and I love



Patricia Coleman and Nathan Busby, Director of the DeSoto Senior Center share a desire to enrich the lives of DeSoto's Senior Citizens.

to shop. I may spend hours shopping and never really buy anything, but I get to meet and talk to people."

She does not brag about what her accomplishments have been, but the short list of honors includes: 2006 DeSoto Chamber Ambassador of the Year; 2006 New Pilgrim Rest "Award of Recognition"; award recipient of "Mentoring the Seed"; and 2008 DeSoto Chamber Volunteer of the Year.

The list does not end there. Patricia is also involved in the DeSoto Independent School District as foundation president and a New Vision mentor. She believes it is important to support the school district and the young people of today who will be the business and political leaders of the future. "It's fun to see the kids who came in with their parents who did banking, now opening their own accounts," she said. "I love sitting by the front door of the bank and seeing all the people come in. I know so many of them. I'll keep doing what I do until I retire, and the 'r-word' is something that is not even in my vocabulary at this time." **NOW**

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Putting Their Worries Aside

— By Amanda Madden Pitt

The D.L. Hopkins Jr. Senior Center's mission is to provide opportunities for older adults to continue being active, vital participants in their community. "A lot of people think we're a nursing home, but we're not," said Elaine Ham, supervisor at the senior center. An events calendar, which reads more like a cruise ship agenda, offers a wide variety of entertainment.

"I have daughters who come and say they can't wait to come back, because we have so much fun." The lively and active center is made possible by a team of caring individuals from a variety of professional backgrounds, who give of their time to help make the group a success. "We couldn't run this place without volunteers. Each year we honor them. We send out about 125 invitations to the event," Elaine commented. "We even have a Web master," she added.

The ambiance of the well-kept center offers both charm and an energetic atmosphere. All along the center's hallways, visitors are compelled to check out the amenities as each room resonates with the sounds of people having a good time. One area houses a library, and another hosts ceramic and craft classes, but the busiest place is one Elaine calls "the inner sanctum." It is full of men and women playing dominos and cards. In this room the mood is jovially serious as the sights and sounds of dice mingle with friendly competition filling the air. In a mirrored studio, a dance troop, which Elaine founded her second year working at the center, meets frequently to practice. They are called The Plungerettes. Choreographed by their fearless leader of 10 years, the team has traveled across the United States performing at nursing homes and



for charity events. "You want to be around your peers, and you want to have something outside of your family," Elaine said. "These are my ladies. Once a Plungerette, always a Plungerette."

Hanging as a tribute to one of the center's newest endeavors are three framed photographs. Two of them are pictures of the 2008 and 2009 Ms. Classic Duncanville contestants. The third frame hangs empty encouraging the next contestant to try out for 2010 candidacy. The pageant is only two years old and has already gained statewide recognition. Each year the winner represents their city at Ms. Texas Senior America. "We stress that this is not just a beauty pageant. It is a competition that celebrates the beauty of the spirit of women," Elaine said. Exciting news came this year in May when Ms. Classic Duncanville 2009 placed first runner up at Ms. Texas Senior America.

Weekly events include massage therapy, fitness classes, square and line dancing, women's drill team, choir, band, guitar class, murder mystery dinner theatre and a variety of other activities, but none of these top the festivities during the holidays. One such upcoming celebration will happen the week before Thanksgiving. At that time, theatrics will meet Turkey Day when 150 people will gather for a catered

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lunch, which will include turkey, dressing, cranberry sauce and all of the trimmings. “Another thing that is different about that day is how we decorate. That’s the day that everyone wants to come,” Elaine said. The tables will be clad with Thanksgiving decor and centerpieces to enhance the holiday spirit. The entertainment will be just as unforgettable. “Judy Knight is the Lucille Ball of the senior center,” Elaine laughed. “For the Thanksgiving Day lunch last year, she dressed up as a turkey and sang a song. ‘Hang down your head, Tom Turkey, hang down your head and cry. Hang down your head, Tom Turkey, for you are sure to die.’”

The Thanksgiving luncheon is an opportunity for city employees to show their appreciation and provides a special way for employees to thank the center’s volunteers. “The tradition has always been that the city employees come in and serve the lunch. Every other day of the year, we use volunteers, but that day all the volunteers also just get to sit down and be waited on,” Elaine said.

Although the two are usually featured at different times, the Thanksgiving Day meal goes hand-in-hand with the fall event, for which planning began in June. This year, the event will take place on Thursday night, November 19. The performance is a theatrical production titled *A Hee Haw Christmas*. Fifty people from the center and the community will be featured in the production, and those in attendance can expect to see, “Hee Haw honeys and Hee Haw hunks performing skits,” Elaine said. “I was so excited, because I’m getting an outhouse for the stage.”

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Last year's fall event had a '50s theme entitled *Happier Days*. A recent dinner theater event, *Dinner at 8 Dead by 9*, was a story about a gathering in honor of the patroness of the arts. The story unfolded after her unfortunate death as she fell face-first into a plate of spaghetti. The following acts were filled in displays of comedy and tragedy, as each character plead a case of innocence in the brightly dialogued game of who-done-it.

"I have the best job in the whole world. I get paid to do all of this fun stuff, and it's just amazing to me. I love being the director, I don't like standing up being the star. I love seeing other people stand up to take the star roles," Elaine said.

Yet nothing makes this director happier than seeing the lives of the center's participants impacted. "They have to meet us halfway. They have to be willing to socialize and open up. Coming to the center requires them to ... be around other people," remarked Elaine.

One touching story that stands out in Elaine's mind is of a man whose determination to be in a theatrical performance took his mind off of chronic hip problems, which turned out to be just the therapy he needed. Elaine recalled the determination in his voice when he said, "I told my daughter, 'I don't care what happens; I'm going to do this play.'" His involvement took the focus off of his problems, and for the time being, the hip became a nonissue. Stories like these prove the Hopkins Senior Center to be a place where participants can forget their worries and come together just to have a good time. **NOW**

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— By Jaime Ruark

At Home With Bruce and Billie Ballengee

The Ballengee home is quite an impressive structure, and not only because of its unique design or its marriage of modern living with Southwestern flair. The house is remarkable because it manages to be imposing, with its larger-than-life tower, while still blending into the

surrounding natural landscape. With its exposed steel beams and clean lines, it is contemporary without being cold or uninviting. Its innumerable prehistoric fossils are a testament to the past, while the home is a sign of the technologically advanced present. The house is a veritable art museum, with countless paintings and pottery, while still being a relaxing, comfortable home to the Ballengee family.

Bruce and Billie's 7,200-square-foot, five-bedroom, seven-bath house, built on two lots comprising four acres of land, also had quite an impressive beginning. "It took us a while to buy both lots, and we actually owned the property for several years before we began building," Billie recalled. "It took us a year to design and two years to build." The couple had Gary Cunningham, owner and founder of Cunningham Architects, help them dream up a design that was completely original and eco-friendly. "He let all his junior architects compete in a prototyping competition," Bruce said. "All the designs were wonderful; we decided to take the best of several.

One of them was a completely glass house, and there was another one that was like a massive fortress." The final design ended up being a loosely integrated amalgamation of those two concepts — a house, which won the architects an award from the American Institute of Architecture.

Bruce, founder, president and CEO of the information technology firm, Pariveda Solutions, recently received an Outstanding Corporate CEO award, and Billie, a lawyer-turned-stay-at-home mom, is heavily involved in a variety of community activities. They have been married for 28 years. "We met at Baylor University when I was still in high school. I was there for a summer workshop. We were both on the high school debate team, and he debated in college," Billie shared. "Bruce judged my partner and me in a debate round." The couple became friends when Billie went to college, married in 1981 and are the proud parents of Jason, Brooke and Will.

The home's decor is a blend of Bruce and Billie's style. While Bruce made decisions regarding the outside





of the house and Billie's suggestions reigned supreme inside, the couple made most major decorating decisions together. "He's more willing to give in to my tastes than most husbands would be, but we both made some compromises," Billie smiled, pointing out the black marble-top tables, embedded with marble conical fossils, in their kitchen and dining area. "This was my second choice, but it was the right decision. We had them made to match the granite countertops."

Warm colors, especially deep maroons and vibrant reds create a cozy atmosphere throughout the house despite the contemporary style. "We like modern, but we wanted it to feel warm. So much of the modern style is cold and stark white. You'll find no white in our house, except for Brooke's room because we let her pick her colors," Billie noted. In the living area and master bedroom, large paintings depicting stoic Indians in regal garb and vivid face paint perfectly accent the color scheme, while floor-to-ceiling windows create a beautiful natural backdrop. "We wanted to bring the outside in and the inside out," Billie added.

The walls of the home are an interesting conversation starter, although it takes an investigative eye to find some of the treasures Billie has hidden throughout the rooms. Megalodon teeth, shark teeth, raw amethyst, volcanic opal and ash, crystal and fossilized trilobite exoskeletons, sea anemones and lobsters are just a few of the things embedded in the rock and stone. "There's over 400 tons of rock in this house," Bruce said. "We

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really wanted to make sure we used all natural materials.” From a petrified wood coffee table to walls made of American clay, the house is truly a study of nature. “This clay is a fairly new product and it’s very ‘green,’” Billie noted. “If there’s a scratch on it or you decide to change around some artwork, you just spray a little water on it and trowel it and it’s smooth again.”

While much of the cabinetry and endless bookshelves in the residence are made of cypress wood, and some of the flooring and the kitchen island were fashioned from mesquite, Pecky cypress was used for some of the walls and ceilings, another beautiful, natural and interesting choice made by Billie. “I’m from Louisiana and I grew up loving Pecky cypress. It’s full of holes caused by worms,” she explained, as Bruce interjected, “She has an aunt and uncle who live in south Louisiana and they were wiped out by Hurricane Audrey. Their house was picked up and moved about a hundred feet. The

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only wall that survived was a Pecky cypress wall. Then they got wiped out again by Rita and flooded by Ike. The one thing that survived three hurricanes was the cypress.”

Bruce and Billie both have offices, separated by a sitting room, where more of their favorite art, pieces they have given each other for anniversaries, are displayed. These include prints of one of Bruce’s favorite artists, R.C. Gorman. “You’ll notice a distinct difference between our offices,” Billie laughed. “His is always in pristine condition and mine is never in pristine condition, which is why we chose to have separate

offices.” Billie’s office houses one of her prized possessions, a stately Hungarian wood inlay of a church cathedral, which hangs opposite her grandfather’s Depression-era gun.

The glass tower, 900 feet in elevation, accessible by stairs or elevator, houses the largest flat screen television in the home. The second floor (the lower portion of the tower) is home to Brooke and Will’s bedrooms, each with their own private bath and a sitting area. The tower also boasts a breathtaking panoramic view of the area. “You can

see downtown Fort Worth, the new and old Texas stadiums, the dam at Joe Pool Lake and downtown Dallas from the inside, as well as the outside on the covered patio complete with comfortable chairs,” Bruce said. “It’s probably hard to believe, but it’s difficult to see our house — it blends in with the woods, which was intentional.”

The Ballengee house is a work of art, a testament to history and a warm and inviting home. “It was quite an undertaking,” Billie said, “but it was worth it. We love it here.” **NOW**



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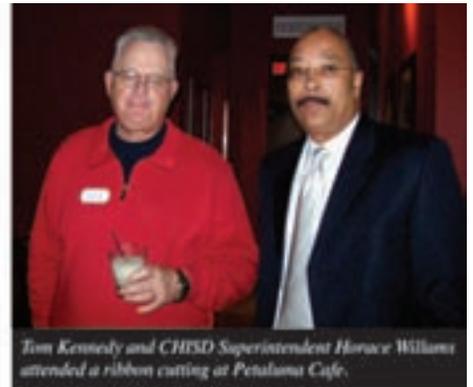
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Clint Dean poses with 105.3FM/KXAS Channel 5 sports host Newy Scraggs at David's Seafood Grill.



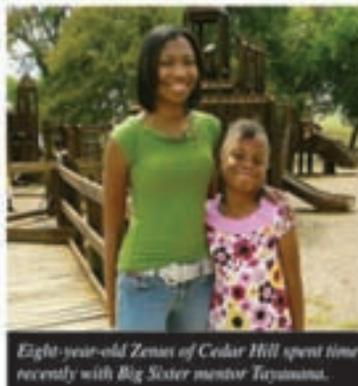
Carrie Ingram suits up to rock climb at the one year anniversary party for Edible Arrangements.



Tom Kennedy and CHSD Superintendent Horace Williams attended a ribbon cutting at Peninsula Cafe.



Lisa Speaks and Dr. Kirtland Speaks welcomed guests at the September Chamber Night Out.



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Rochelle McKown, M.D., sees tremendous advances in minimally invasive and robotic gynecologic surgery and feels that "the advantages are amazing." Dr. McKown graduated from Texas Tech University Health Science Center and has also served as a clinical instructor at Methodist Dallas Medical Center.

For Theresa M. Patton, M.D., "The challenges of adolescent and young adult care, as well as obstetrics" have always been of particular interest. Dr. Patton graduated from the University of Missouri-Kansas and is a former chief resident of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Methodist Dallas Medical Center.

Kecia L. Foxworth, M.D. knows what it's like to be a new mom. "Having recently given birth to two beautiful children, I am very in touch with moms-to-be." Dr. Foxworth graduated from Meharry Medical College School of Medicine and is a former Chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Bayne Jones Army Community Hospital.

Sandra Lozano, M.D. says, "I am fortunate to work with such extraordinary women physicians. Being fluent in Spanish, I enjoy providing care for the Hispanic women in our community." Dr. Lozano is a former Chief Resident of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Methodist Dallas Medical Center.

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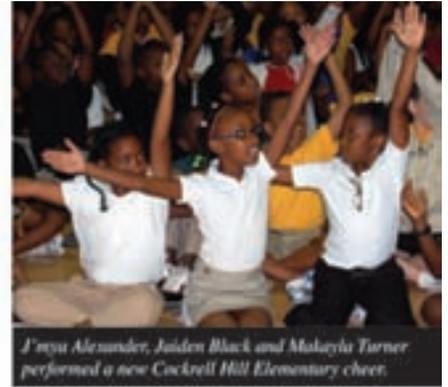
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Sybil Anderson and Isabella Wiyhs enjoyed the arrival of fall on the CES playground.



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F'nyu Alexander, Jaiden Black and Malaysia Turner performed a new Cockrell Hill Elementary cheer.



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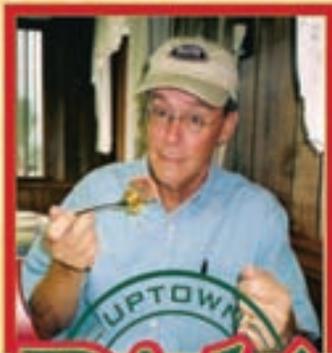
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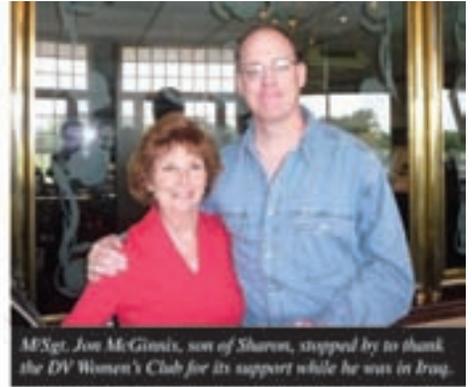
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A press conference was held recently at City Hall to announce the opening of Bob Knight's Fieldhouse.



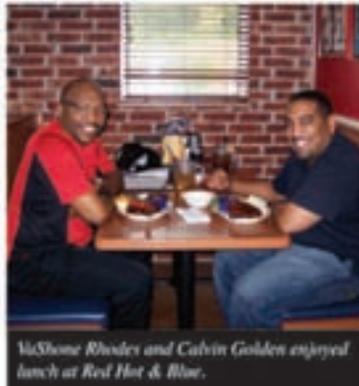
Bella viewed the clock exhibit which she helped inspire, now on display at the Duncanville Library.



MSGt. Jon McGinnis, son of Sharon, stopped by to thank the DV Women's Club for its support while he was in Iraq.



Keep Duncanville Beautiful Board geared up for the 6th Annual Toy Recycling Drive.



ViaShone Rhodes and Calvin Golden enjoyed lunch at Red Hot & Blue.



Sandra Crowe and Jerry Frazier enjoyed refreshments at Glenda Kay's Gifts & Collectibles' 10-year anniversary celebration.

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The Thinker Artist

— By Beverly Shay



Mention *The Thinker* and most people will conjure up a sculpture of a man sitting head on hand in obvious thought — an apparent statement of passivity. Raymond Walter Seibert is also a thinker, but there is nothing passive about him or his thinking. Ray's take on life is computer-like in its processing, evaluating, concentrating, conceiving and constructing. He is an artist with a bent toward engineering or an engineer with a bent toward artistry, but there is not a passive cell in his non-stop thought process.

At 6 years of age, Ray decided to build a house from a soap box. "This is my future house," he told his mother. Later in life, he built a house in Austin on Lake Travis "with the help of 40 others." Design and art have always been interests of his, although he lacked confidence when young. He credits his teachers at Adamson High School in Dallas, especially Dr. Frances Freese, who begged Ray to apply himself. Ray switched to a language arts major at The University of Texas at Austin (UT), so he could maintain his good grades; he did eventually also earn a mechanical engineering degree after 20 years of night school at UT Arlington.

Ray's interests vacillated between engineering and English; he has always wanted to write the great American novel. He has 1,400 pages that "will never be published," but he has written several books. He also studied dance, ballet, modern dancing, acting and radio, TV and film for one semester at UT. "I was atrocious at dance, but I love the grace and have always leaned toward the arts," he remarked. Ray defines an artist as: "Someone who is aware, who cares and wants to share." He also loves photography and while he has four great shots that have been published and reproduced, he said his skills are not sufficient to make a living through photography.

"In 1974, I took over the heating/AC business my father had started in 1949. I have continued in that business as my livelihood," Ray stated. Within this business context, Ray's engineering inclination kicked into invention mode. His interest in solar heating/AC, birthed at UT, led him to

install solar panels at his own home. Ray's mind whirls with information on solar hydronics and photovoltaics, collectors, BTUs (British thermal units), integrated circuitry and cost-effective and -comparative electricity production, as well as facts and figures on the successful use of solar energy in countries like Japan and Germany. "Solar, at that time, was just not profitable as a job pursuit," Ray commented.



Of course, that did not stop him from dabbling and inventing. Some of his inventions are functional and efficient, others aesthetic or fun; lately they tend to be more artistic. Of his work-related inventions, he commented, "I have a knack for finding the right device for the right job." His projects include energy sources for L.E.D. lights for

under-water photography, nickel-plated bellows, a heated mouse pad, misting AC devices and pottery techniques.

Ray's artistic ventures include making jewelry from gem stones, using lost wax casting to create silver pieces; writing music and books and painting

poured pottery. His latest artistic invention is a technique for book binding, which he has effectively used to promote those whose works express the beauty around them. "I have found it is easier to sell people than anything else. Promoting others is key. It's not good enough to just get yourself work; performance should be a part of all of us — it puts an 'edge' on us to achieve something higher than we would on our own. Artists, those who share what they see, should be supported. Art is expression, and to be produced it has to be merged with money," Ray emphasized.

"I believe juxtaposition and synchronicity working in our lives prove that God is everywhere and cares for us. Events occur in our lives that lead us into timely ventures for a reason," Ray remarked concerning the timeline of events in his own life. "Part of my own writing journey came about because a friend of mine with Parkinson's disease wanted to write his memoirs. I, too, began to write at that time. I found that publishing companies are hard to get into, and distribution can be challenging. So I went to my friend and asked him to let me publish his book for him through my company, Advanced Concept Design Books. I have now published three of his books that have been nationally distributed," Ray reported. "His faith in letting me do that for him led me to find other authors who would allow me to distribute their works."

He developed his own hand book-binding process. "I can bind about 20 books in an hour, although I usually only do about five. I have bound around 300 books in the last month," Ray remarked. Being an engineer, he tested about 100 types of glue before settling into a process he is not likely to reveal. In encouraging others to pursue their own talents, Ray repeated his motto: "Be aware. Care. Don't ever give up. Share." **NOW**

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A Gem in DeSoto — By Alex Allred

There is a hidden treasure in DeSoto, which is truly filled with jewels of every variety. From pendants, rings, earrings and watches to cuff links and exquisite strands of pearls, Caves Jewelry boasts some of the most precious gems in the world.

But not to be outshone by the quality of its jewels, Caves Jewelry has built a stellar reputation of excellence in the world of fine jewelry. As a master Independent Jewelers Organization (IJO) jeweler, owner Jerry Caves has undergone intense scrutiny and training, developing a discerning eye for jewels, while remaining committed to helping the consumer with a “confident purchase.”

“We have a passion for what we do,” Jerry said. So much so that Jerry has authored several articles advising readers on how to select and purchase the right gem or stone. For Jerry, it is far more important that a buyer be knowledgeable and able to appreciate a jewel than for him to simply make a sale.

Indeed, he is only one of nine certified gemologists in the Dallas/Fort

Worth area; a distinction which came about after the American Gem Society contacted Jerry to become a member of its elite roster. Also a member of the Gemological Institute of America and the Independent Jewelers Organization, Jerry and his Caves Jewelry were featured in *Town&Country* and *Harper’s Bazaar* magazines. Suddenly, Jerry was traveling



around the world, purchasing the finest diamonds from Antwerp, Belgium, “the largest cutting center in the world,” selecting precious sapphires in Australia and black pearls from Tahiti. It is a far cry from his modest upbringing in the Oak Cliff/DeSoto area where he

once declared a desire to become a home builder. While he jokes that he was merely emulating the professions of those around him, he had no real passion for anything.

He tried his hand in sales, “but I got tired of traveling all the time,” he said. By chance or fate, Jerry was hired to work with a jeweler and a passion was



awakened. After six years of learning the day-to-day operations of the business, “I realized I could do this on my own.” While he earned his certification and began to build a reputation, his place of business was just a 100-square-foot office, but his potential for growth was



limitless. "There was never a question of whether I would make it," he smiled.

Indeed. Today, Caves Jewelry is a 2,500-square-foot building Jerry had constructed to create a more personable, welcoming atmosphere for his customers. "I wanted more of a home setting," he said, adding while his is a business built on integrity and trust, it is also about relationships and family. In business for nearly 30 years, he has served entire generations of families for every imaginable occasion. "I just wish more people realized what they have right here. They don't have to go into Dallas for fine jewelry." The irony is he is once again traveling. Though this time, Jerry does not mind. In fact, he loves it. Since he personally inspects and selects each jewel, Jerry can tell you details about each purchase, each trip and each exquisite gem. Not only can he guarantee the quality of his diamonds, but he proudly assures any purchaser that "there are no blood diamonds!" As a member of the IJO and American Gem Society, Jerry can confidently assure the quality of his jewelry. Caves Jewelry has been voted one of 25 of the Best Independent Jewelry Stores in America by Jewelers of America.

Caves Jewelry is located at 220 E. Pleasant Run Road. Hours are: Monday-Wednesday and Friday, 10:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; Thursday, 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.; and Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. For more information, call (972) 230-0950. **NOW**

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DeSoto ISD: Engaging Parents and Community

DeSoto ISD continues to strive for parental and community involvement in district events, activities and everyday learning. Changes in several communication tools and programs have enhanced opportunities and involvement.

Active Parenting, available through elementary counselors, provides practical ways to tackle the challenge of raising children ages 5-12. Participants will learn skills to develop cooperation, responsibility and good character and positive discipline techniques.

Grandparents' Academy is a four-session program to provide grandparents with educational experiences with their grandchildren. Class topics include family history, African drumming, and financial literacy.

DeSoto ISD has established a **Parent Awareness Line** for parents, staff and students to learn about various topics such as drugs and alcohol, mental health, stress and depression, health and nutrition, parenting and safety. Details online at www.desotoisd.org under the Parent Assistance Center.

Web site updates have included virtual tours of all 12 campuses and the alternative school. Tours include exterior shots as well as the cafeteria, library, classrooms, gyms and much more! Also online, we have added direct links to the vsi.net login for parents to quickly access their student's information.

Finally, **Parent Involvement Week** is coming in November with a variety of activities, but the biggest draw is the Parent Fair and Parents v. Staff Basketball Game on Saturday, November 14 at McCowan Middle School. The Fair begins at 11:30 a.m. and the games begin at 1 p.m. All proceeds will benefit the PTA Council Scholarship Program.

Contact the Parent Assistance Center for questions and details at 972-274-8212 Ext. 221.



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by Monday, Nov. 2.

District Earns Superior Rating

DeSoto ISD received, for the seventh consecutive year, a rating of "Superior Achievement" under Texas' FIRST financial accountability rating system.

The district earned a score of 83 out of 85 points that measure the district's financial management and reporting. This year's score is up four points from last year.

The Schools FIRST (Financial Accountability Rating System of Texas) was developed by the Texas Education Agency in 2001.

calendar of events

- November 7, 6 p.m.** - Seniors Prom (age 55 and up)
- November 16-20** - Parent Involvement Week
- November 23-27** - Thanksgiving Holiday, No school
- December 3** - DeSoto ISD Christmas Choral Concert
- December 5** - Annual DeSoto Parade of Lights
- Dec. 21-Jan. 1** - Winter Break; school resumes Jan. 4

www.desotoisd.org

Back to the Basics

— By Debi Choate

The snowball started with an inspection. When Jenny took her car in for an inspection, she had no idea that it would need new tires and a new catalytic converter. After these expenses, she didn't have enough to pay one of her credit cards. She figured she'd just make it up later, but when Jenny missed one payment, the interest rate nearly doubled. Then the rates on her other cards went up, even when she hadn't missed any payments. Her minimum payments on all of the cards increased, and suddenly her money didn't quite last until the next paycheck.

This scenario is all too common these days. It could be a lost job or unexpected medical cost, but one month with unplanned expenses can impact years of your life. One way to avoid this is to go back to the basics by creating or revisiting your budget. With just a few easy steps, you can better prepare yourself to weather the financial storms.

Step 1: Understand your spending habits.

Look at where and how you are spending your money. Many tools exist to help show you your spending, such as Microsoft Money, Quicken or Mint.com, a free online budgeting tool. Getting a good understanding of where you spend your money may show you great places to save. One gentleman who started tracking his spending with one of these tools realized that he was spending \$150 on his "daily cup of coffee." By simply changing where he bought it, he saved \$100 a month.



Step 2: Aim to be debt free.

Now that you've spotted where you can create savings, determine the best way to use them to your advantage. One tool that may help you is Debt in Focus, an online, anonymous tool that can analyze your financial data and help you understand your debt. By reviewing and understanding all of your debt, you'll be able to see where your extra savings will be able to make the most impact.

Step 3: Build your budget.

Build a realistic budget that covers your expenses and allows for a little "rainy day" savings. Most importantly, be honest with yourself as you budget. If you know you'll go to the movies a couple of times a month, plan it in. If you've never built a budget before, and you'd like a little more direction, look at some of the free online resources.

Step 4: Reassess...reassess...reassess.

Once your budget is built, keep revisiting it and finding new ways to save. A few good questions to ask yourself are:

- Have your credit card rates changed?
- Could you get a lower rate with a debt consolidation or home equity loan?
- Could you refinance your vehicles to a lower rate to save?
- Have you "shopped around" for insurance lately to ensure you're getting the best rates?

With a simple plan and a little saving, you'll be better prepared if the unexpected happens to you. **NOW**

*Debi Choate
Community Relations Officer
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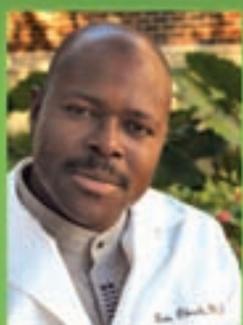
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Swine Flu & Pregnancy

— By Arika Harden

With the recent pandemic outbreak of the H1N1 “swine flu,” patients are looking to their physicians more than ever for information, medical attention and even hope. Among some of the more susceptible groups of people the Center for Disease Control recommends getting the vaccine, pregnant women are encouraged to act quickly. A pregnant woman who gets any type of flu can be at risk for serious complications and hospitalization. Here are some common questions and answers you or someone you know may have about the vaccine:

1. Will the seasonal flu shot prevent the H1N1 flu?

No. The seasonal flu shot is not expected to protect against the H1N1 flu. Similarly, the H1N1 vaccine does

not prevent the seasonal flu. Both shots are recommended for pregnant women.

2. Will the H1N1 vaccine harm my baby?

No. Flu vaccines have not been shown to cause any harm to a pregnant woman or her baby. The seasonal flu shot is already proven safe and recommended for all pregnant women. If you experience early flu-like symptoms at any point, please see your physician.

3. What can I do to reduce my chances of getting the H1N1 flu while pregnant?

- Be cautious and aware of the people around you. If you feel like they are showing visible symptoms of being ill, stay away.
- Wash your hands often, especially in public places.
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze.
- The best preventive measure you can take is getting vaccinated. **NOW**

Arika Harden

V&M Coordinator - Trinity Women's Center

For more information visit www.cdc.gov/flu

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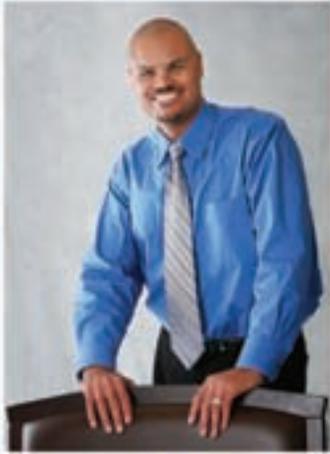
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Mondays

New Ballroom Dance: 7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Cedar Hill Rec. Center, 310 E. Parkerville Rd. Cost: \$80/couple for four sessions/month. (972) 293-5288.

Tuesdays

Wii games, chess, Cranium, dominoes and other games available for teenagers: 4:30-6:00 p.m., Zula B. Wylie Library meeting room, Cedar Hill. www.zulabwylielib.org.

Sound Options Pregnancy Center "Baby and Me" free classes: 6:00-8:00 p.m., 658 Big Stone Gap, Duncanville. Open to the public. For pregnant or new moms with babies up to 6 months. RSVP to (972) 230-8101.

Wednesdays

Rotary Club of Cedar Hill: 7:00-8:00 a.m., CH Recreation Center, 310 E. Parkerville Rd.

Wednesdays and Fridays

Preschool story time at CH Library: 10:30-11:45 a.m. (972) 291-7323.

Thursdays

Sound Options Pregnancy Center "Effective Parenting" free classes: 4:00-6:00 p.m., 658 Big Stone Gap, Duncanville. Open to the public. For pregnant or new moms with babies up to 6 months. RSVP to (972) 230-8101.

Fridays

Walking program: 9:00-10:00 a.m., Methodist Charlton Medical Center, Conference Room 6. (214) 947-4628.

Saturdays

Cedar Hill Recreation Center presents Star Force One. Includes tap, ballet, jazz, hip-hop, lyrical, song and dance and competition dance teams. Beginner/advanced classes: 8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. for ages 2-adult. Ballet and tap for special needs children. Register at Rec. Center.

Saturdays through December 19

DeSoto Public Library and Cedar Valley College offer GED study classes at the library, 211 E. Pleasant Run Rd. Reading and writing classes: 10:00 a.m.-noon. Math classes: 1:00-3:00 p.m. To register, call (972) 860-7800.

First Mondays

Readers on the Hill Book Club: 7:00 p.m., CH Library. (972) 291-7323.

First and Third Wednesdays

Duncanville Business Interchange: 7:30 a.m., Chamber offices.

First and Second Fridays

Line dancing: 11:00 a.m. - noon, Methodist Charlton Medical Center auditorium. Reservations required. (214) 947-4628.

Second Mondays

Diabetes Management Support Group: 6:00-7:30 p.m., Methodist Charlton Medical Center auditorium. (214) 947-7262.

Second Tuesdays

Dallas Area Writers Group: 7:00 p.m., CH Library. www.dallaswriters.org.

Second and Fourth Tuesdays

Cedar Hill Lions: noon-1:00 p.m., Good Shepherd Church, 915 Old Straus Rd. (972) 291-0651.

Second Wednesdays

Cedar Hill/Duncanville Early Childhood PTA: 10:00 a.m., Cedar Hill Hope Lutheran Church, 917 N. Straus Rd.

Second Saturdays

Baby Boutique Resale: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Sound Options Pregnancy Center, 658 Big Stone Gap, Duncanville. Gently used baby items and clothing up to size 3. Open to the public. (972) 230-8101.

Monthly Classic Car Show, benefiting Bridges Safe House in Cedar Hill: 4:00-8:00 p.m., Sabor A La Mexicana Restaurant and Tortilla Factory, Duncanville. No age limits on cars. Trucks and motorcycles welcome. Contact Bobby Kight at (972) 742-9233 or Toni Kight at (972) 742-3377.

November 3

Good Morning DeSoto: 7:30 a.m., the Chamber, 2010 N. Hampton Rd. Sponsored by independent Mary Kay consultant Wanda Williams.

November 5

13th Annual Author Appreciation Gala, sponsored by Friends of the Duncanville Public Library: 7:00 p.m., Parkview Room of D. L. Hopkins Jr. Senior Center. Honoring Texas author Hoe Nick Patoski. Catered by Rose Cameron of the Barbecue Pit in Waxahachie. Cost: \$15/person or \$90/table of six. Purchase tickets from Friends or library.

November 7

DeSoto ISD Seniors Prom (for residents age 55 plus): 6:00 p.m., McCowan Middle School, 1500 Majestic Meadows Dr., Glenn Heights. Call (972) 274-8212 for reservations.

November 12

Canterbury Episcopal School fall open house: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., 1708 N. Westmoreland Rd., DeSoto. RSVP to (972) 572-7200.

November 13

Volunteer Appreciation Membership Luncheon: 11:30 a.m., DeSoto Town Center, Blue Bonnet Rooms, 211 E. Pleasant Run Rd.

November 14

First United Methodist Church Annual Fall Festival: 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., 127 N. Roberts Rd., Cedar Hill. Community fundraiser for missions and church projects, featuring a continental breakfast from 8:00 a.m.-9:30 a.m., silent auction, live auction from 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m. Contact Nancy Meyne at (214) 435-9744.

American Association of University Women (AAUW), Southwest Dallas County branch meets at the University of North Texas, Dallas campus, 7300 Houston School Road, Dallas 75241. Building tour: 10:15 a.m. State Senator Royce West speaks at 11:00 a.m. Open to public. (972) 709-1957.

November 17

Good Morning DeSoto: 7:30 a.m., the Chamber, 2010 N. Hampton. Sponsored by DeSoto ISD and Lee Merryman.

November 19

DeSoto Art League monthly meeting: 7:00 p.m., DeSoto Presbyterian Church, 212 W. Pleasant Run Rd. Acrylic painting demonstration by artist Carolyn Bell. Contact Sandy Reese at (972) 217-1546 or www.DeSotoArtLeague.org.

For more community events, visit our online calendar at www.nowmagazines.com.

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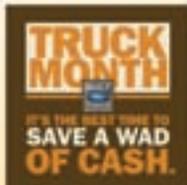
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From left to right: Dr. Cealee Thomas, OB/GYN; Dr. Cecily Jones, OB/GYN; Dr. Gayle Smith-Blair, Psychiatrist (behind); Dr. Catherine Thomas, OB/GYN; Dr. Donald Blair, OB/GYN (behind); Sharon Roberts WHNP; & Gina Vincent WHNP

*Happy Thanksgiving ...
But godliness with
contentment is a great gain.
1 Timothy 6:6*

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