

The Community Magazine Serving Red Oak and the Surrounding Area

Red Oak **NOW**

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M A G A Z I N E

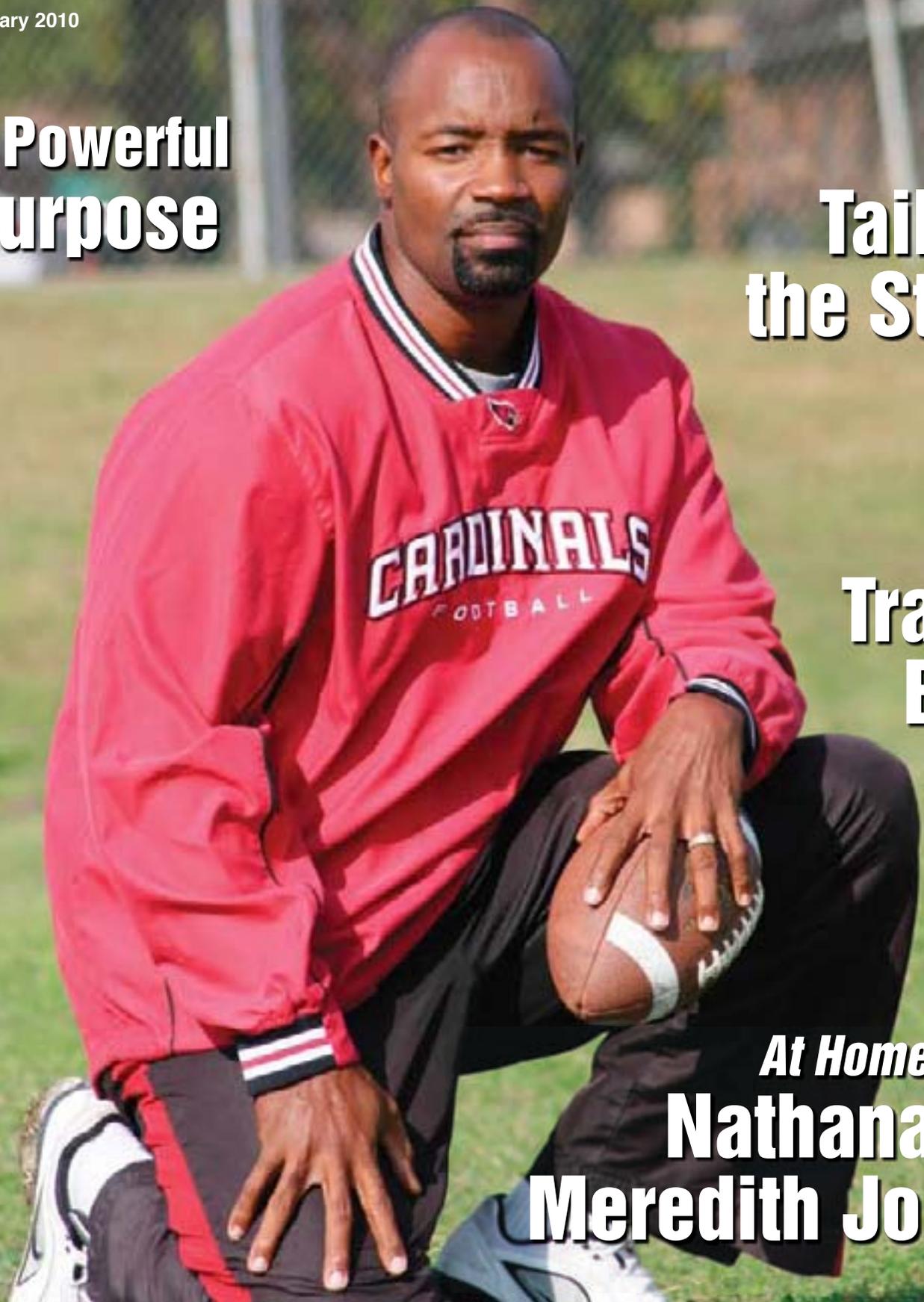
January 2010

A Powerful Purpose

Tailing the Story

Travel BUG

At Home With
Nathan and Meredith Jones



General Information

The Community Adult Education Program of Red Oak ISD is conducted for the benefit and enjoyment of community patrons. Classes held on ROISD campuses are offered for ages 18 and up regardless of where they live. Classes are offered for non-credit. Financial support for the program comes from the class fees. Payment for classes must, therefore, be received before students attend classes. Children are not to be brought to class. Classes will begin as scheduled without notification. No confirmation of enrollment is sent out and you will be notified only if the class is cancelled, or the schedule changes.

Late Fees

Community Adult Education registration forms must be received three (3) business days prior to the first class meeting. If received later, a \$10 late fee will be assessed.

Refund Policy

The Community Adult Education Program is funded solely from tuition. Once a class had made or is in progress, expenses for the teacher and materials are set. Therefore, the following procedures must be followed:

- For classes cancelled because of lack of enrollment, 100 percent of tuition will be refunded.
- No refund will be given after the second class meeting (whether the student has attended or not).
- Late fees are not refundable unless ROISD cancels the class.

Request for a refund must be made by contacting Red Oak ISD, 972-617-2941. It normally takes two to three weeks to process a refund check.

Returned Checks

A \$30.00 service fee will be collected for each returned check.

2 Easy Ways to Register... **Registration will be on a first-come, first-serve basis.**

1. Mail-In:

CHECK– Fill out the registration form, make check or money order payable to Red Oak ISD. Mail to Red Oak ISD, Community Education, P.O. Box 9000, Red Oak, TX 75154.

2. In-Person:

You may register at the Red Oak ISD Administration Building, located at 156 Louise Ritter Blvd., Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

If you do not hear from us, you can assume you are enrolled. You will not be called to confirm that we've received your registration. You will be notified of any time change, date change or class cancellation. Cancelled classes will be made up by extending the program. Classes are expected to begin as scheduled, without notification. If you want a receipt for your payment, please provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Use the form provided to register for your course(s).

COMMUNITY ADULT EDUCATION REGISTRATION FORM

Mail registration form and payment to: Red Oak ISD Community Adult Education, P.O. Box 9000, Red Oak, TX 75154.
Registration must be received three business days prior to the first class meeting to avoid a \$10 late fee.

Name: Last		First	MI	
Mailing Address		City	State	Zip Code
Email Address		Daytime Phone		Home Phone
Course Name		Course Tuition		Course Site
Check #		Cash		Receipt #
Course Locations				

Shields Elementary
223 W. Ovilla Rd.
Glenn Heights, TX 75154

Red Oak High School & West Campus
154 Louise Ritter Blvd.
Red Oak, TX 75154

Red Oak Intermediate
401 E. Ovilla Rd.
Glenn Heights, TX 75154

It is the policy of Red Oak ISD not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or handicap.



Community Adult Education Classes

**Learn a new skill! Improve your current skills!
Add new talents to your lifestyle.**

Red Oak ISD offers a variety of classes that can help you with your professional and individual talents. Courses are for four weeks and will be held weekly beginning February 1, 2010 thru February 25, 2010. The total cost for each four-week course is \$35.

BASIC EXCEL

Thursday 6:00pm-8:00pm **Red Oak Intermediate**
Learn the basics of Microsoft Excel. The class will cover basic functions, charts, and formulas.

INTRO TO POWER POINT

Tues. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Red Oak Intermediate**
Learn basic Power Point skills to help develop dynamic, professional presentations and slideshows. All beginner and some intermediate topics will be covered over the duration of the course. Upon completion, the student will have knowledge needed to create detailed, animated slide shows with confidence.

SIGN LANGUAGE

Tues. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Shields Elementary-Library**
Classes will cover the alphabet, numbers, words, phrases, and sentences. Bring a list of things you would like to learn to enrich your signing vocabulary. This is an informal class which is only offered as an introduction to sign language.

BASIC EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Mon. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Red Oak High School West Campus**
Never worry again about what you might do in those "what if" situations. Learning a few basic emergency medicine techniques can give you peace of mind. Class topics include CPR, splinting, basic human physiology, Heimlich maneuver, common sports injuries, infectious disease management, stroke, cardiac arrest and unstable angina, allergic reactions and more.

COMPUTER MAINTENANCE

Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Red Oak High School**
This "hands on" atmosphere gives individuals the opportunity to learn basic computer maintenance. Individuals will acquire the basic skills and knowledge to service and repair their own computer.

INTRO TO COMPUTERS

Tues. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Red Oak Intermediate**
This course is designed to introduce students to basic knowledge and skills to use a computer, the world wide web, and e-mail. The class offers an introduction to a variety of software applications, primary forms of internet communications, e-mail, and web pages. Students will also learn how to send and receive e-mails, browse web pages, and more.

CONVERSATIONAL SPANISH

Tuesday 6:00pm-8:00pm **Red Oak Intermediate**
Do you work with people with whom you cannot communicate and would like to learn the basics? This course is for adults who have no previous conversational knowledge of Spanish or who have not had Spanish-language training in many years.

CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY

Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Shields Elementary School Library**
Students will learn several areas of law enforcement including Texas Penal Code, Traffic Code, Code of Criminal Procedures, as well as Crime Prevention, Investigation, Juvenile Law, along with light forms of defensive tactics. The classes will be instructed by Red Oak ISD Police Officers.

NEW GROOVES WITH OLD SCHOOL MOVES

Mon. 5:00pm-7:00pm **Red Oak High School West Campus Cafeteria**
Line dances, cupid shuffle, cotton eyed joe, electric slide (4 different versions), calypso, salsa, and more.

PHOTO STORY

Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Red Oak Intermediate**
Learn to create PhotoStory from beginning to end with this free application. Final product produces a video quality slideshow from photos, videos, and text documents. The ability to incorporate additional free software allows for even more expansion of the final product. Each student can bring approximately 50 photos to use in their personal PhotoStory, but photos will be provided if needed.

SCRAPBOOKING USING SOFTWARE

Tues. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Red Oak Intermediate**
Learn to make photo greeting cards, photo invitations, and scrapbook pages using free online scrapbooking software. Create professional looking photo cards and layouts that look like they can be published in a magazine! This is all digital: no scissors, no glue, no mess!

CROCK POT COOKING IS FUN!

Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Red Oak High School**
Learn to cook economically with a crock pot. Great food to sample, and copies of all recipes. A \$5 supply fee will be collected at the first class.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Tues. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Shields Elementary**
Media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, created using high accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media uses Internet and web-based technologies (Facebook, Twitter) to transform broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues.

BEGINNERS INVESTING

Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm **Red Oak Intermediate**
Learn the basics of investing and help set your own goals for your money. Class topics include: investment vs. speculation, budgeting, stocks, exchange-traded funds, mutual funds, bonds, bond funds, certificates of deposit, annuities, real estate investment trusts, commodities, derivatives, available savings and retirement accounts, asset allocation, and more.

ZUMBA

Tues. & Thurs. 7:00pm-8:00pm **Shields Elementary Gym**
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Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$35 per year or \$3.50 per issue. Subscriptions should be sent to: NOW Magazines, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates or editorial correspondence, call (972) 937-8447 or visit www.nowmagazines.com.



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On The Cover

Rod Jones, who spent 11 years playing for the National Football League, found his post-retirement purpose in training local young men to become strong leaders.

Photo by Natalie Busch.

Editor's Note



Happy New Year!

There are many in this community who have lived, learned and are passing their experiences on to help, assist and motivate others — not just by teaching, but by reaching out and leading by example. This issue focuses on the lives, hopes and dreams of just a few of our neighbors. This month, you will meet a young husband and wife who are great role models and a former NFL player who teaches boys to be men.

May this New Year be prosperous for both you and yours.

Sincerely,
Diana Merrill Claussen
Red OakNOW Editor

P.S.

We are always looking for people, homes, artists, educators and cooks/bakers to feature in our publication. If you have someone you would like us to consider for a story, please e-mail me at: dclaussen.nowmag@sbcglobal.net.

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Travel Bug

Whitney Ellis has a passion for travel, but Texas will always be her home.

— By Amanda Madden Pitt

Along with her mom, Patty, and her dad, William, and their two dogs, Charley and Samantha, Whitney Ellis has lived in Red Oak for 11 years, over half of her 21 years of life. Growing up, Texas was all she had ever known. “We love everything Texas. This is our home,” said Patty Ellis, a former Waterford Oaks school teacher.

Whitney is proud to be a fifth-generation Texan, reared in the Lone Star State like her father, grandparents, great-grandparents and so on. Family is important to the Ellises, which is why Whitney now lives at home in a second dining area that has been converted into her bedroom. Transforming this room enabled Whitney’s grandmother, Elizabeth Campbell Ellis, to move in. “I moved back home to help take care of my grandmother,” Whitney explained.

It is easy to see by looking around the Ellis home that someone in the family likes to travel. “I used to tell my mom that when I grew up, I wanted to travel around the world. She would always reply, ‘You’d better marry a rich man,’” Whitney remembered. Though she talked with Patty about exploring the world from the time she was a little girl, it was not until her 16th birthday in 2005 that Whitney’s dream became a reality. In July 2005, mother and daughter ventured out of the country, both for the first time, to Mexico with the Baptist Missionary Association (BMA). “I had been on group trips before, but always just across the states, never internationally,” Patty said.

Whitney and Patty’s experiences during their first trip overseas might have been shocking to some, but this mother/daughter duo call their adventures amazing. “I remember one night when the women were cooking tamales over an open fire for us,” Whitney recalled. “They were so good, but as we ate, we noticed that there were no more chickens running around in the yard.” In one day, the women had killed, plucked and prepared fresh chicken for their tamale dinner.

With William and Patty’s blessing and support, other trips for Whitney were soon to follow, these without mom and dad. Whitney set out to Ghana, West Africa, in June 2006; Russia in July 2007; and finally China in June 2008. While her experiences in each place were hardly reminiscent of her





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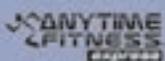
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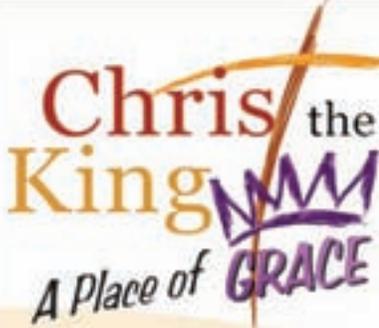
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beloved Texas in food, culture and landscape, with each new adventure Whitney was always the first to try the different things each culture had to offer. These incredible experiences usually included interesting food. "I actually ate a pig's ear," she said. "I was one of the few on the [BMA] team who would try it, and it tasted just like what I would imagine a pig's ear to taste like — rubbery." Another experience Whitney recalls happened on her trip to Russia, where she and her team walked an average of 20 miles each day to post flyers advertising a youth conference they were hosting in a remote northern Russian town.

Whitney's collections from around the world speak for themselves, telling their own stories of a very mature and kindhearted 21-year-old traveler. One such special item, a carved wooden symbol, hangs around Whitney's neck. Though it probably only cost a few American cents, the necklace has eternal value to her. Handcrafted in Ghana, the symbol means "Except God, there is no other God." Other special treasures include: lanterns and origami from China, handcrafted dolls from Russia and hand-dyed fabric from Ghana. Among these beautiful pieces are items from places she hopes to one day visit, including Guatemala, India and Germany. Her church friends at Bear Creek Baptist all know that mission work has become a life-changing passion for Whitney, and many of them bring her treasures from their faraway travels as well.

Even though Patty has told her daughter there will be no more travel for now unless it is associated with college, Whitney has found a way to work travel into her near future. She plans to study abroad in Scotland while pursuing a special education bachelor's degree and eventually a master's degree in psychology. Unable to pick a favorite place because each one was so different



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and unique, Whitney most appreciates the exposure to different cultures and diversity that her travels have given her. Her advice to other young people with similar desires to see the world is simple: "If you're gonna do it, do it now, because you never know what the future will hold."

This statement is one that is close to Whitney's heart, a lesson she learned thanks to her brother, Wilson Erby Ellis, who passed away at the age of 24. Born with a congenital heart defect, Wilson was not supposed to live past childhood, but not only did he surprise the doctors, who termed him a "miracle child," he surprised his family as well. "Wilson's goal in life was to travel Texas," Whitney shared. Another lover of all things Texas, Wilson traveled the state, moving away to San Marcos to attend college and spread his wings.

In his short life only a little over two decades long, Wilson impacted more people than many are able to touch in a full lifetime. "Not just because he was my son, but Wilson was truly an amazing person," Patty said. Hundreds of people gathered at his funeral to celebrate the one they called "the mystery man" because they never knew what he would do or who he would influence next. "Always the first to help, Wilson could get anyone to do anything, and despite the constant pain he lived with, he never complained," Patty added, remembering a time her son and some friends traveled to South Texas and crossed over the border. Whitney was also out of the country, so Wilson called home and said, "Mom, I just wanted to remind you that you have no children in the country right now!" That was his humorous way of telling her, if only for a moment, he had finally ventured out of Texas.

Lovingly remembered by his family, Wilson's life is also celebrated by his many friends in a fitting manner. A couple of times each year, the WEE Remembered charity organization, a homeless outreach begun in Wilson's honor, distributes WEE bags (backpacks full of life's necessities) to those in need. Wilson's love of life and God lives on in those he inspired, perhaps none more so than his world-traveling sister. There may be many future travels that take Whitney and her family far away from Red Oak, but Texas will always be their home. **NOW**



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Making Their Own Beautiful Music

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Walk into the home of Nathan and Meredith Jones and be prepared for excitement around every corner. When it came time to design their residence, the Joneses were very excited to add their own extra touches. “I used to build homes for three years, so I knew a lot about design ideas,” Nathan said, thankful that their builder, Maple Leaf Homes, was very flexible and included many extras at no additional charge. “They let us choose where our fireplace got to go when the house was halfway finished being built,” he added. “Later, we asked them to add a laundry chute and they did.”

The home’s original plans were for it to be a four-bedroom, two-bath residence. Plans changed, however, and the young couple asked the builders to make their home into a three bedroom residence, extending the footage in the master suite. “So, they made our bedroom and bathroom both two feet



At Home With Nathan and Meredith Jones

larger and our closet was built with an additional four feet. Actually,” he laughed, “our master closet is four feet smaller than the original fourth bedroom would have been.” It is so large, it would leave anyone with a penchant for extraordinary closets quite envious.

When the first-time home builders began envisioning their plans, they knew that in the future they would want to have children, but at the time, that future was not on the near horizon. Now, the 1,900-square-foot home offers plenty of room for 3-year-old Elijah and his brother, Josiah, who is 11 months old, to play, run and have as much fun as they want. “This house is where we wanted to start our family,” Nathan said. Meredith added, “As our family has grown, the house has grown with us.” The Joneses are thankful for having the home built to be child-friendly, with walls that have rounded corners, and the boys’ bedrooms are linked with both video and sound cameras, providing extra assurance regarding their children’s well-being.

The house is not only fun for the Jones family, but also



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exciting for visitors who are gleefully welcomed by the happy boys and family cat, Bella. The boys are very good about giving gentle pets and lots of love to Bella, and it is obvious the family kitty loves them, too. After the hugs and excited welcomes, visitors cannot help but notice the home's spacious vaulted ceilings, arched doorways and lovely crown molding as they are led from the entryway into the first room belonging to baby Josiah. Meredith wanted to make each of her children's rooms very significant and special for the family.

Spanning one-and-a-half of the room's walls is a large tree with extended branches and variously colored leaves, which Meredith painted freehand. The blue, green and brown shades create a soothing haven for any adult or child. "One day I just thought about it, drew the designs and picked out some colors," Meredith said. Adding to the artistry of the room, she also painted a collage of animals such as giraffes and turtles. "It never feels like it's completely done," said the humble mother who created a room that could easily be featured in any

interior design or art magazine.

Elijah's room, of course, also received Meredith's creative touch and motherly care. "This was his crib room, but later we transformed it into his 'big boy' room," she said. By Elijah's bed is a decoupage of theme stickers from the Disney/Pixar movie, *Cars*, which spell his name. Carrying on his *Cars* theme, a bright comforter covers Elijah's cozy sleigh bed. "He loves anything auto-related and especially loves trains," Meredith shared. "Elijah was so obsessed with the *Cars* movie that I decided to draw and paint a twisted road on his walls so he could roll his little cars along the road-covered walls."

Meredith does not deem herself a painter, yet her artistic touches

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throughout the home are quite professional. She is in the beginning stages of decorating the hall bathroom. "I enjoy using my hands to make things. I am going to make the kids' bathroom very bright and give it an underwater theme," she smiled.

Venturing toward the dining area, one cannot help but notice how artistically talented the rest of the Jones family is. A keyboard and music stand sit in the dining room and a collection of Nathan's guitars line the hall closet. "I play electric, acoustic and bass," Nathan said. There are also two pianos in the home, one for Meredith and the other for the boys. "Meredith is in the Dallas Symphony Orchestra Chorus and our kids are really into music, too," Nathan smiled, pointing out the tot-sized grand piano in the living room that both Elijah and Josiah love

to play.

Music is indeed a big part of the Jones household. Both Meredith and Nathan work in the music department at Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie. The couple loves making music so much they share that love with others in their time away from work. Nathan writes music and teaches guitar while Meredith teaches vocal classes. "She teaches vocal and is the director of chapel worship, and I teach lead guitar," Nathan said. "We also write music together," he smiled. In March, Meredith will be working with the Dallas Symphony for a performance of *Carmina Burana*. "I mainly teach voice, but piano is my second favorite instrument," she said.

Music is not the only thing that unites this couple. The Joneses have

also traveled around the world, both seasoned travelers since childhood. "My dad was an evangelist, and so I have been to 25 countries," Nathan said, explaining that many of those trips were to do missionary work. Meredith has traveled internationally as well. "I have been to England [and] Singapore, and we even went to Italy for 10 days for our honeymoon," she smiled, admitting that France, a country both have visited on several occasions and vacations, is her favorite. The breakfast nook, kitchen and living room clearly represent a French flair and theme, from the scrolled breakfast table to the Eiffel tower statuettes and French art lining many of the walls. It is easy to see how much the couple enjoys incorporating different cultures and nations within the walls of this warm and lovely home. **KNOW**

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Donna Easley poses with friend Dexter after she speaks about accepting other's differences.



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Second grade teacher Vicki Jackson receives the trophy for Outstanding Customer Care.



ROHS Special Olympics team members Alberto Tellez, Elizabeth Coronado, Vidal Gamino and Rocky Wildman.



Jennifer Grier and her son Reid attend story time at Red Oak library.

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Tailing the Story

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

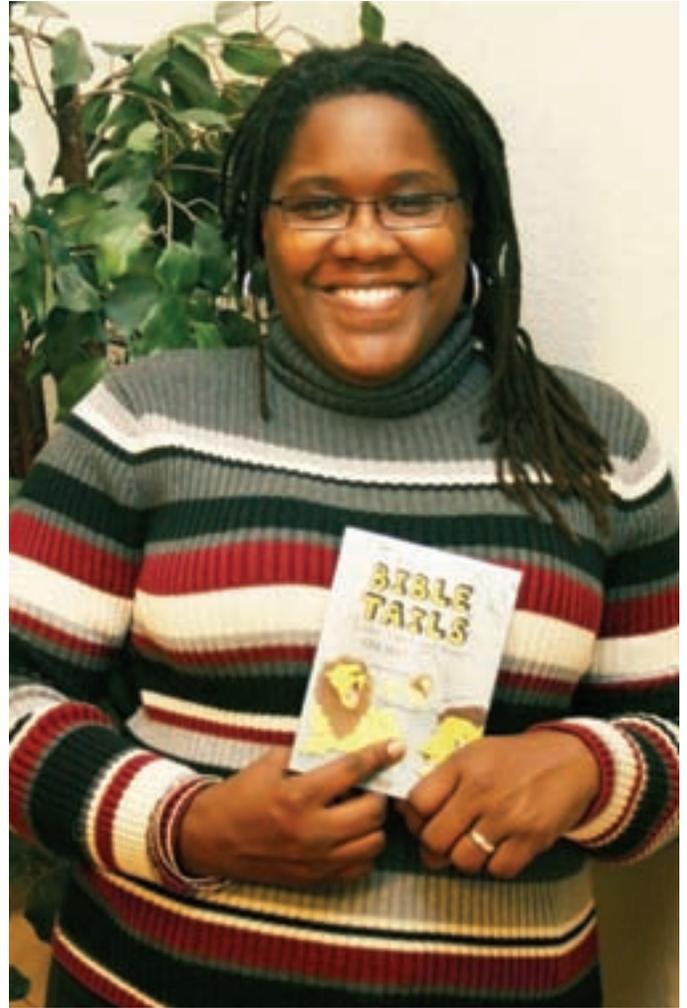
To become a published book author is not an easy task. Many within the publishing industry might recommend acquiring an agent, while others suggest sending story ideas or “query letters” to possible publishers. Local book author, Deborah Drake, decided to take the biggest risk of all and become a self-published author.

In the quest to find a self-publishing company, Deborah spoke with her friend, Tammy, who informed her she had used Tate Publishing & Enterprises LLC, a publisher out of Oklahoma. “My friend, Tammy, had published a book with them and had great results,” Deborah said. So, Deborah started working on a book series of Bible stories for children. She called the series *Bible Tails*. She used the word “tails” in her series name instead of “tales,” because, she explained, “the collection of Bible stories is told from the perspective of animals.” When asked how she came up with the ideas for her stories, Deborah shared, “When I was little, I wanted to be a veterinarian. I am an animal lover!”

In the first book of her series, *Lions, Tigers and Bears, OH MY*, the individual stories are told by cats, lions, sheep and even a fly named Schyler. “I was inspired to write this first book when I was just sitting in my living room,” Deborah said, recalling how the story just flowed from her pen to the paper. “I really can’t take the credit for writing the book, though, because I believe it was divinely inspired.”

Deborah’s publisher has set up many venues across the Dallas/Fort Worth area for her to meet the public and even do book signings. “I had my first book signing at Borders Books in Dallas and the staff at the store told me that this had been the first time a self-published author had ever sold out,” she smiled. Deborah is extremely pleased with the publisher she used, whom she credits with helping her sell her books in many local stores. “They not only have booked me at signings, but I just did my first book fair. They have promoted me at many different venues,” she said, adding that she will also be reading for children during the Red Oak Public Library’s guest reader events.

Deborah has already established a few fans, but her biggest are within her own family. “My two girls, Shelby and Jessica,



are great supporters, and they love my stories. They are also my editors. It is definitely my husband, William, though, who is my biggest fan,” she smiled. “My church has even surrounded and helped encourage me. They even sell my book at my church’s bookstore,” she beamed.

Deborah is currently working on her second book: *Fish, Dolphins and Whales*. “It is the story of Jonah from the perspective of the birds who witnessed Jonah and the whale,” she explained. Another book in the works is from the story of when the ravens fed Elijah, told, of course, from the raven’s point of view. “I am also working on a novel called *A Proper Way to Reminisce*. The story is about five sisters who go their separate ways, but in their latter years they end up getting back together,” she added. “My ultimate goal is to write every story in the Bible geared toward kids and then maybe one day, open a book store.” To date, Deborah has sold over 600 books.

Education is highly important in the Drake household; reading and writing is the foundation to their children’s learning. “My kids read a lot,” Deborah said. “My husband is always excited that the girls read all the time because we believe that

“I really can’t take the credit for writing the book, though, because I believe it was divinely inspired.”

reading is the jumpstart to success.” Deborah’s children are straight “A” students in school and have been known to read 10 books in two months. Deborah encourages her children by being very involved in their lives. “If we are not aware of what is going on with



“I want to one day give back to this city because I really love our community and its closeness.”

our kids, then you will lose them [to the streets]. Get them outside and away from the television,” she advised. Deborah hopes to one day see a place in Red Oak where children can stay all day and read. “I would love to do a project like that. We need a place where the kids can go and be creative. Plus, I want to one day give back to this city because I really love our community and its closeness,” she continued.

Deborah’s family has always supported her, and she, in turn, makes sure to provide encouragement and exciting learning experiences for them. “We are big supporters of the arts,” she exclaimed. “We love taking the kids to the Black Letters and Arts venue to see productions performed by children. Their programs are not only creative, they encourage my kids to live out their dreams and know that we support them,” Deborah said. “It is very important for children to see other kids chasing their dreams because it makes them think that if those kids can do it, then maybe they can, too.” **NOW**

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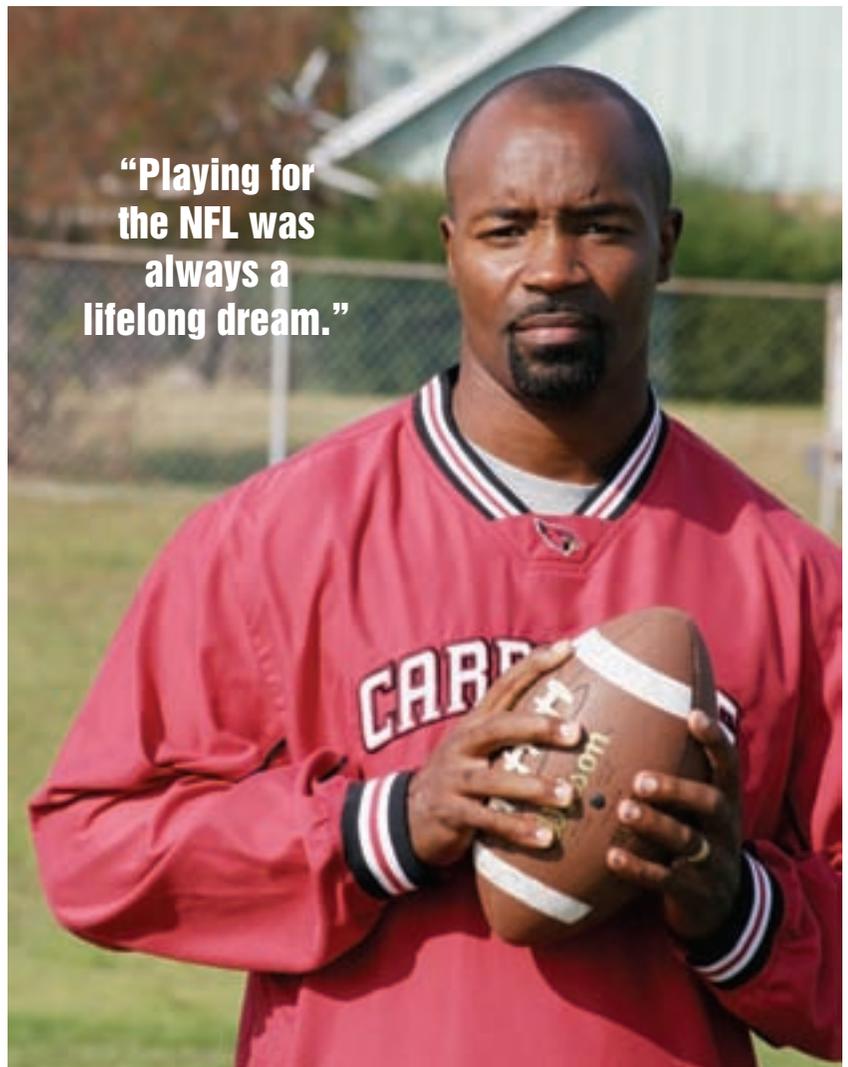
— By *Diana Merrill Claussen*

When Rod Jones started playing football, he was in the sixth grade. “My dad was the coach, and he cut me from the team on the very first day,” Rod recalled. When Rod got back into the sport in seventh grade, he found himself usually sitting on the bench instead of running on the field. “I came from a family of football players and grew up in Oak Cliff,” he added. “Everyone on my street all played sports, from football and basketball to track.”

Although Rod had not excelled in his favorite sport of football while growing up, he never let his desire and determination die. Nothing could keep him from his dream, including his size. “Up until ninth grade, I only weighed about 100 pounds. The kids would always laugh at my size,” he said. Rod considered himself to be a “frail kid” especially when compared to his two older brothers. “They were physically tough, so they forced me to become physically strong, too,” he explained. “I learned to not be afraid of the larger kids. My brothers also helped me to realize I was just as tough as they were.”

Like many other young children playing football, Rod hoped to one day play on the National Football League. “Playing for the NFL was always a lifelong dream,” he shared. Although he never had a sturdy frame, Rod knew who he was and what he was capable of accomplishing. “Anybody who is small or short is used to being the way they are. I just knew my strengths and used them to improve on what I needed to,” he added.

Through the inspiration, and sometimes irritation, of his older siblings, Rod began lifting weights. “That is when I got bigger, faster and stronger. Their support made a complete difference in my life,” he grinned. Rod also credits his 4-foot-11-inch mom and 5-foot-11-inch dad for making a huge impact



“Playing for the NFL was always a lifelong dream.”

on his life. “We were considered poor,” he said. “Both of my parents worked hard and sacrificed a lot for us kids. Whatever I needed for school or football, they would get it for me.”

By the time Rod became a high school senior, his desire to play had grown along with his body frame. “I played on my high school team as a 150-pound senior and also ran track,” he said. Rod later received scholarships in both sports to attend Southern Methodist University (SMU). He studied hard, played hard and became a two-time champion on SMU’s team. He was later scouted for the NFL, weighing in at 169 pounds. “There were a few scouts looking at me, but one actually told me I was too small and wouldn’t last long playing professionally. It was discouraging, but I took it with a grain of salt and ended up being the first cornerback drafted in the first round of the 1986 season,” he said. “I ended up playing for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for four years — 1986 to 1989 — and then was traded to the Cincinnati Bengals and played from 1990 to 1996. The average playing span for an NFL player is three-and-a-half years. I played for 11.”

After leaving the NFL, Rod had to find his post-retirement purpose. “We don’t find our purpose in life; our purpose finds us. It is then our job to recognize, then accept it,” he advised.

It was when Rod reflected on the many mentors and people who had touched his life that his purpose came calling. “I had some great coaches,” he said. “I realized that I wanted to train and lead young men to become strong leaders.”

Drawing on his life experiences, Rod started his own special athletic leadership program. “I have been training in sports for over 20 years,” he said. Now Rod uses those years of



training to help his students and clients, but the physical aspect of his program is just the beginning. “What I do in my program gives me the opportunity to disciple these young men. I take biblical applications and apply it to their lives. Therefore, the change is not only on the field, but off the field,” he said, explaining that he draws on his experience as a youth minister. “I have a gift with kids and can be really goofy,” he smiled.

Rod trains athletes from 12 years and up in speed, strength, conditioning, control and technique in whatever sport they play. “I like to help make them better at their sport and will even go over their game films with them,” he said. He encourages his athletes to lead positive lives off the field. “They have to live it and have the drive to reach their goals to become an unstoppable individual,” he expressed.

Sometimes, Rod has to practice a “tough love” of sorts with those in his program. “I’m going to tell them what they need to hear, whether they like it or not,” he noted, “but I know that 30 years later, they will appreciate what I have taught and said.” **NOW**



Furry Friends

Creature comforts await your pet at Pampered Pooch.

— By *Diana Merrill Claussen*

Growing up in a family of animal lovers, Monica Mathews always knew she wanted to be involved with helping her four-legged friends. “Our family used to train bird dogs and have a kennel,” Monica’s father, Fred, explained. “Both of my daughters have been around dogs since they were 2 years old.” The more Monica was around animals, the more interested she became in learning about their upkeep and care. “I have always wanted to have a career with animals,” said Monica, who has now been in the grooming business for eight years.

When Monica was in high school FFA, she showed cows for three years. After graduation, “I started working at a kennel and then became one of their dog bathers,” she said. “I had a mentor who started teaching me from very early on, so

most of my training has been hands-on.”

For additional practice, Monica used her long-haired dog, Penny, as her “guinea pig.” “My family encouraged me to take classes in animal grooming,” Monica said. After receiving the proper amount of training, “I decided to open my own shop for many reasons. I am not in this business to make money; I am in it because I care about the dogs and how they are treated. People’s dogs are their children, their family members.”

When Monica and her mom, Cindy, put together a grooming business, Pampered Pooch, the duo established a few policies about the shop and its services. “We require they are current on their shots and vaccinations,” Monica said of her furry clients. “I also let my customers know my shop is fully open



From left:

Monica Mathews, lead groomer and part-owner; Pampered Pooch shop; Monica grooms a pet; a basset hound waits for its turn to be groomed.

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to them so they can see the cleanliness and how the animals are kept and treated. Plus, the area and equipment are always fully sanitized after each use.”

Pampered Pooch works with every breed of dog. “I am one of the few shops that will take all breeds, all sizes and all coat lengths,” Monica said. “Large dogs need care just like small dogs do.” Pampered Pooch specializes in specific grooming styles for each breed but, Monica is willing to work with her customers to give customized cuts to their specifications.

Most dogs need grooming maintenance every six to eight weeks. If owners brush their pets between visits, it not only helps the dog, but the groomer as well. “If a

“I am one of the few shops that will take all breeds, all sizes and all coat lengths. Large dogs need care just like small dogs do.”

pet has matted hair, it is very constricting to their skin almost like a cast,” Monica explained. “It is very uncomfortable for them.” Getting an animal’s nails trimmed is also very important for its health and well-being. “Long nails can cause arthritis in their legs and walking defects. That makes it essentially very bad for their bone health.”

Monica’s basic service always includes: hair cut, wash, ear cleaning, nail clipping and gland maintenance. Monica also performs specialized services such as: hand scissor work, whitening baths and teeth brushing. “I also offer specialty shampoos, hair bows, nail polish and bandanas at no additional charge.” For customers living within the city limits of Red Oak, Pampered Pooch offers low cost transportation of the animal to and from their home.

“When a client’s dog is done being groomed, I will call them immediately and let them know they may pick the dog up at anytime,” she said. “I see no point in keeping them in a cage all day if they don’t have to be in one. This is how my clients see that I am in this business for the dogs and that they can trust me.” **WWW**

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A Teacher You Can Count On

— By *Adam Walker*

Mary Porter understands fourth-graders who do not like math. She used to be one of them, but now she loves the math. What caused her to change her mind? Teaching.

Many students come to school convinced that math is too difficult, that they will not be any good at it and that it is OK to be bad at math. Mary was one of those students even into her college years, but when she had to learn how to teach it to her students, math finally

clicked. “Teaching math changed my concept. In order to explain something, you have to really understand it,” she said. Once she finally understood, she started to love math. “Now math is like a game. There is so much variety.” That is what she hopes to pass on to her fourth-grade students – a love of math.

“I love it,” Mary reiterated. “You can tie math into anything. It’s related to everything, and fourth-grade math is basic life skills. Fractions, decimals,

two- and three-digit multiplication, long division, basic geometry — these are daily life skills.” Mary likes to bring those basic life skills into her lessons. Her students practice by “going shopping.” Menus and shopping lists form basic tools of instruction when, “Students are given \$100 and then have to figure out what a family of four can eat.” Students get to practice addition, subtraction and figuring change while doing something they will need every day in real life.

Mary believes in varying the activities in the classroom. Student attention spans are short, so she likes to mix the activities up and teach the same concept several different ways in one class period. Sometimes students build shapes. Sometimes they work on the overhead projector. Sometimes they become the teacher, getting to call on classmates to answer questions, or having to explain a concept they have just learned to the rest of the class.

Building relationships is another area Mary stresses. “It helps to motivate students when they know you care if they learn, and kids will shock you with what they can learn.” Maybe this is why students from Mary’s 21-year teaching career at Red Oak Elementary come back to see her and check for their pictures on her Wall of Fame when they come to enroll their own children in her class. Mary loves to get updates on where past students are and what they are doing now. She loves to hear stories about past students who now have families, have graduated from college, are doing well in high school, are entering careers in international finance or are still having fun with math in sixth grade. One of her former fourth-grade math students is now a fellow teacher at Red Oak Elementary. That is one of the benefits of staying at one school for so long.

Many of her students come to her classes already convinced that they cannot do math, but according to Mary, “Many of them are better than they think they are. If I can make it fun for them, they won’t hate it. I start with the basics and then gradually get harder.” She also emphasizes the need to go over things more than once, in more than one way. “I just keep rewording my answers until

they understand. Sometimes, it's the words that get in the way." This can be especially true for English as a Second Language students who may not know many of the common math words in English yet. When Mary encounters this, she has to start with building basic math vocabulary. Of course, there are always students who announce after the first problem, "I don't get this!" Mary reminds these students that they cannot expect to understand everything the first time, teaching them to be patient and to give it more time because "students are always coming up with new and beautiful ways to solve problems."

"I've never taught two years the same way. Go beyond the textbook and take examples from lots of different books."

When asked which concept was her favorite to teach, Mary responded, "Fractions and number lines, because there are so many ways to teach them, and I can use three or four different ways for each concept." Mary's students get to draw their fractions. Then they play blindfolded guessing games with their geometry, which can be edible if they are building pyramids and cubes out of marshmallows and toothpicks, but you have to know how many sides, edges and vertices you have first. They use old-fashioned balance scales with individual weights to measure the weights of footballs, skeins of yarn and wet rags before checking their work with a modern kitchen scale. "It's amazing how close the kids get," she said. "They're very accurate."

So what advice does this experienced teacher have for anyone considering teaching as a career? "Don't be intimidated by math. Talk to math teachers and ask to visit their classes to observe them in action. Also, vary it up. I've never taught two years the same way. Go beyond the textbook and take examples from lots of different books." After 21 years, she ought to know. **NOW**



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In The Kitchen With Dan Hodson

— By Faith Browning

Dan Hodson started his adventures in cooking when he was in high school. His mother worked, so he would prepare simple snacks to satisfy his hunger until dinnertime. “When I got a little older, my buddies and I were always going on fishing trips and would be gone many days at a time, so if you didn’t cook, you didn’t eat,” he explained. “Once I started cooking, I found it fun and relaxing experimenting with different things in the kitchen.”

In his spare time, Dan enjoys watching NASCAR, the Steelers play football, hunting, fishing and competing in barbecue competitions. “Staying up all night with all the different teams and enjoying the camaraderie is something I’ll never forget,” he said. One of his favorite things to do is to find someone who says they do not like to eat certain foods, make that dish for them *his* way and try to get them to like it. **NOW**



Fruit Dip Appetizer

1 jar marshmallow fluff
1 pkg. whipped cream cheese
Fresh strawberries, apples, bananas, grapes, pineapple, etc.

1. Combine marshmallow fluff and cream cheese in a bowl. Mix thoroughly.
2. Enjoy with fruit.

Sweet Potato-crusting Fish

1 sweet potato, grated
1 cup whole wheat flour (seasoned to taste)
3 egg whites
3 Tbsp. canola oil
4 fillets cod/catfish/tilapia

1. Peel and grate sweet potato; place in a shallow bowl.
2. Place flour in a separate bowl.
3. Beat egg whites in a separate bowl; set aside.
4. Heat sauté pan; add oil.
5. Dip fish fillets into flour, then egg whites and lastly into grated sweet potato.
6. Sauté in pan for 3 minutes per side. Serve over rice.

Frogmore Stew

Old Bay Shrimp Boil seasoning (1 bag per person or more to taste)
Several lemons, halved (optional)
Redskin potatoes (2 per person, depending on size)
Spicy smoked sausage or polish kielbasa, cut into 1-inch slices (1/4 lb. per person)

Cob corn, broken into halves or thirds (1 1/2 ears per person)

Shrimp (1/2 lb. per person)

Butter

Cocktail sauce

1. Fill large steamer pot halfway with water. Add Old Bay Shrimp Boil Bag(s). Several halved lemons may be added as well.
2. When seasoned water comes to a boil, add redskin potatoes; boil for 20 minutes.
3. Add spicy smoked sausage; boil for 5-10 minutes.
4. Add corn; boil another 5 minutes.
5. Add shrimp; cook for 3 minutes. Drain and pile on a newspaper covered table.

Almost anything that is good boiled, such as crabs or crawfish, can be added. Keys to making a successful Frogmore Stew: spicy boiling water, stagger the addition of the ingredients and do not overcook the shrimp!

The Secret 3-2-1 Smoked Spare Ribs

Spare ribs (membrane removed)

Salt and pepper (or a rib rub)

Apple juice

Meat thermometer

Aluminum foil

1. Remove membrane from ribs, dust with a rub or salt and pepper and place on smoker grate or in the oven for about 3 hours. This first stage is over when you see the meat starting to pull back from the bone about 1/4 inch. This

normally requires about 3 hours or so if you are able to maintain 225 degrees in your smoker.

2. Remove ribs from smoker or oven and wrap in heavy duty foil. Before closing foil, splash ribs with apple juice. Place ribs back in smoker or oven; cook for 2 hours at 225 F.
3. Remove foil and place unwrapped ribs back into smoker or oven to firm a little before serving. Keep a close eye on the ribs at this point; remove them when they reach 172 F, which should take about 45 minutes to an hour. Let the ribs sit on the counter for about 15 minutes before slicing to allow the juices to redistribute throughout the meat.

Two Smokin' Dudes With Wood Rib Sauce

3/4 cup yellow mustard

3/4 cup red wine vinegar

1/2 cup white sugar

3 Tbsp. dark brown sugar

2 Tbsp. butter

2 tsp. salt

1/2 Tbsp. Lea & Perrins Worcestershire Sauce

1/2 tsp. soy sauce

1/2 tsp. Tabasco sauce

1 1/2 tsp. course ground black pepper

1 tsp. white pepper

1. Combine ingredients in medium saucepan, stirring to blend.
2. Bring to boil. Lower to simmer for at least 30 minutes.
3. Let stand at room temperature 1 hour before serving.

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Giving Credit — *By Andrea Walton* Where Credit is Due

During the loan approval process, a question that customers often raise is, “What do they look for on my credit report?” and “What is a credit report, anyway?”

Credit reports are used by the majority of potential lenders to assess your credit worthiness and help determine whether or not to approve your loan. A credit report documents your financial history for the previous seven years and contains personal information such as your name, address and social security number, as well as information about your credit card use and payment history, mortgage payment history and installment loan payment history. The report also contains your employment information to give reviewers a sense of your ability to make future payments. There is one exception to the seven-year rule; if you declare bankruptcy, this will remain on your report for 10 years.

Your credit report may also contain your credit score — a number between 300 and 850 — that is used to predict whether you will repay a loan. Your credit score is based on your payment history, the total amount you owe, the length of your credit history, any newly acquired credit and the type of credit you are using. Many lenders use this number to determine whether or not to approve your loan. Oftentimes, this number also correlates with the interest rate on your loan; a higher credit score will often be granted a lower interest rate on the loan.

A lot of valuable information is contained on your credit report, and lenders rely heavily on this tool. As a customer, you, too, should give your credit report the attention it deserves — after all, it can affect your ability to build the life you desire.

Effective September 1, 2005, all consumers in the United



States are entitled to one free credit report every year from each of the three major credit reporting companies — Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. For more information on ordering your free credit reports, visit www.annualcreditreport.com. **NOW**

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Third Monday

Ellis County Aggie Moms: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin. Call Cheryl Bell at (972) 723-0341.

First Tuesday

PrimeTimers Senior Group meeting: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Oaks Fellowship, 777 S. I-35 East. Fun, food and fellowship. RSVP to (214) 376-8208.

Buffalo Creek Grief Recovery Group meeting: 9:00 a.m., 1329 Brown St., Waxahachie. (972) 937-5999.

AA meeting: 8:00 p.m., Lonestar Cowboy Church, 1011 E. Ovilla Rd. (972) 576-0900.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

Alcoholics Anonymous meeting: 7:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-9100.

Sound Options Pregnancy Services parenting classes: 658 Big Stone Gap, Duncanville. For more information and to register, call Freda at (972) 230-8101.

Every Wednesday

Family Story Time: 10:30-11:30 a.m., Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. All ages welcome. (469) 218-1230. www.redoakpubliclibrary.org.

Wednesdays and Thursdays

Senior Citizens Club meeting: 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd. Games, exercises and activities. (972) 576-2777.

First and Third Thursday

Senior luncheon. No cost to residents, \$5 for all non-residents. Pre-register the Tuesday before event. (972) 576-3414.



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First Friday
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Every Friday
 Celebrate Recovery meeting:
 7:00 p.m., 320 E. Ovilla Rd.
 (972) 617-3591.

First Saturday
 Red Oak Fire Rescue CPR classes:
 9:00 a.m. Call early to register.
 (469) 218-7713.

Second Saturday
 Lonestar Cowboy Church Motorcycle group ride. 1011 E. Ovilla Rd.
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January 18
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January 27
 Red Oak Area Chamber luncheon:
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 Contact Shelley Oglesby at
admin@redoakareachamber.org for more information.

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