

# Southwest

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M A G A Z I N E

# NOW

NOVEMBER 2015

## Building in Love

At Home With Eric  
and Mira Rollins

2015  
Holiday  
Shopping  
Guide

## When Artificial Becomes Real

Gamers are finding a  
new purpose for their  
technology skills

An Advocate for Children

One in a Million

Dealing With Problem Pets

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# EAGLE EXPRESS



## Accelerating Expectations 2020

### STRATEGIC PLAN

#### Help us develop the 5 year plan!

The district has contracted with *Engage! Learning Inc.* to incorporate the DeSoto ISD community in developing the strategic plan for the next five years. Over the next six months, outreach efforts to garner input from all segments of our community will include three Strategic Plan Summits in October along with an online survey followed with narrowed Focus Group sessions. The plan is to hear the desired district outcomes of every interested constituent – what will DeSoto ISD look like in five years?

#### STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

- Design Team – Th.-Fri., November 12-13
- Create Team Days – Th.-Fri., December 10-11
- Lead Session 1 – Monday, January 4
  - Board Update Report – Monday, January 11
- Lead Session 2 – Tuesday, January 12
- Lead Session 3 – scheduled if needed
- Board Presentation, Special Called Meeting – Monday, March 7, 6:30 p.m.

### DeSoto ISD Family Academy

A morning conference for DeSoto ISD parents offering over 20 different sessions to choose from on parenting at all ages, family financial literacy, college preparation and much more! [Sign up at www.desotoisd.org!](http://www.desotoisd.org)

- Campus contest for 'most school participants!'
- *Early Bird Registration* by Nov. 2 - drawing for prizes!
- Free breakfast for all participants!

Saturday,  
November 14  
8 a.m.-12 p.m.  
DeSoto HS  
600 Eagle Dr.

### Parent Power Hour

**Parents are Tutors 2** Parents will be given tools and resources to assist their students with today's rigorous curriculum. They will also learn how to guide students to gain the knowledge and complete assignments.

Wednesday,  
November 4  
6 p.m.  
Ruby Young ES  
707 Young Blvd.

### Calendar

- Tuesday, November 3, 6:30 p.m. 1st Tuesday ISD Town Hall, McCowan MS
- Monday, November 9, 6:30 p.m. Board Meeting, Board Room
- Saturday, November 14, 8a-12p DeSoto ISD Family Academy, DHS
- Friday, November 20, 6 p.m. Parent Power Hour: Parents are Tutors 2
- November 23-27 Thanksgiving Holiday
- Tuesday, December 1, 6:30 p.m. 1st Tuesday ISD Town Hall, Northside ES
- Saturday, December 5, 6 p.m. DeSoto Hometown Parade
- Tuesday, December 8, 7:30 a.m. Coffee & Conversation, Woodridge ES
- December 21-January 1 Winter Break, students return Jan. 5

### NEWS TO KNOW

#### PARENT PORTAL

A reminder to all secondary parents that all progress reports and report cards will be posted in Parent Portal. Paper copies will not be sent home. Be sure to log in and check your students grades, attendance and much more.

#### DESOTO ISD - STEM WEEK

DeSoto ISD will be celebrating STEM Week from Oct. 31-Nov. 6!

- **Sat., Oct. 31 at DHS**  
West Point LEADS Day  
robin.ford@desotoisd.org
- **Tues., Nov. 3 -**  
T-STEM Dedication
- **Wed., Nov. 4**  
STEM Parent Night
- **Fri. Nov. 6 at Perot Museum**  
STEM Conf. and Challenge

#### LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

DeSoto ISD began the International Male Leadership Magnet Academy at West Middle School this fall. This winter the district will host the first Girls Leadership Conference on Saturday, December 12 and the 2nd annual Male Leadership Summit in the spring. If you are interested in being part of one or both of these events, contact DeSoto ISD at 972-223-6666.

#### 1ST TUESDAY TOWN HALL MEETINGS - 6:30 P.M.

Join for an open conversation about DeSoto ISD.

- Tuesday, November 3 - McCowan Middle School
- Tuesday, December 1 - Northside Elementary

#### CITY PARADE DEC. 5

Join DeSoto ISD for the annual DeSoto Hometown Holiday Parade on Saturday, December 5. The parade travels down Hampton Road by City Hall.

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## ON THE COVER



Eric and Mira Rollins are thankful for their lovely home.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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## Editor's Note

*Wonderful Southwest Friends,*

I find it entertaining at times to Google things and see what comes up. I Googled November, looking to write an "original" editor's note for this month traditionally marked by Thanksgiving. Amazing how bleak many find November to be. Imagine my relief when I found this quote from Cynthia Rylant's work *In November*:

"In November, the earth is growing quiet. It is making its bed, a winter bed for flowers and small creatures. The bed is white and silent, and much life can hide beneath its blankets."

Since I am writing this note well ahead of the actual month, it's hard to know what sort of weather will present itself for a Texas November. We could well be just cresting fall colors, but the making of a winter bed, blanketed in silent white sounds quite appealing.

Enjoy giving thanks!

*Beverly*

Beverly Shay  
SouthwestNOW Editor  
beverly.shay@nowmagazines.com

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# 43 ANNUAL HOMETOWN HOLIDAY PARADE

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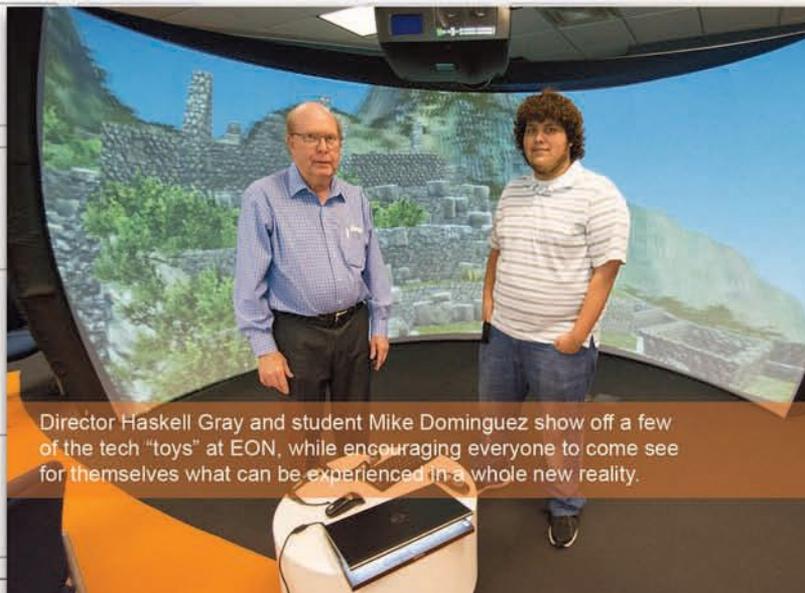
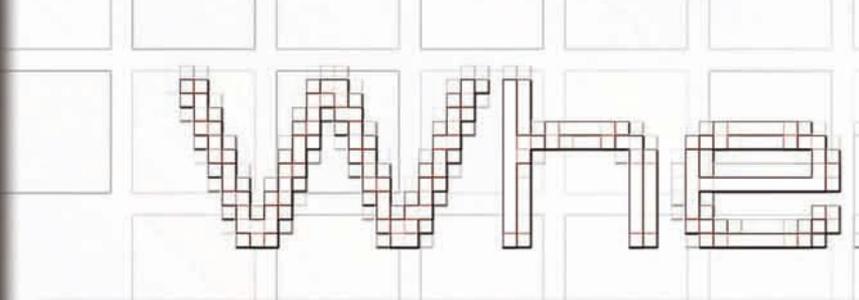


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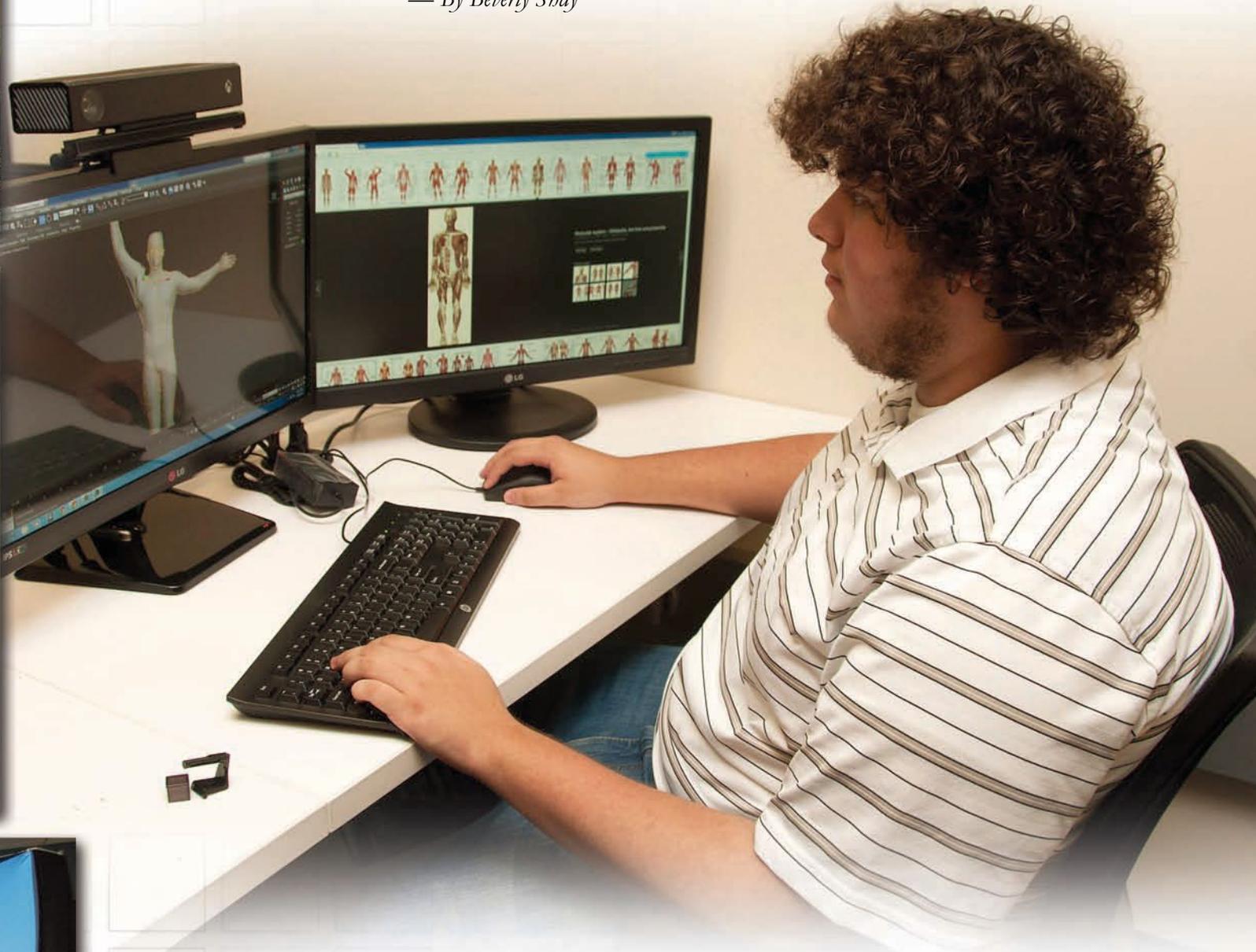




Director Haskell Gray and student Mike Dominguez show off a few of the tech "toys" at EON, while encouraging everyone to come see for themselves what can be experienced in a whole new reality.

# Artificial Becomes Real

— By Beverly Shay



*Duncanville boasts a very unique school, the only one of its kind in the United States, one of only seven in the world. The exclusive, hands-on technology is cutting edge, and tuition is free. Those who attend the one-year course will be creating and implementing advances in the fields of sports training, surgery and medical treatment, education, multiple facets of the transportation industry and marketing, to name a few. The brave new world of technology is rendering just about everything you have learned obsolete within three to five years. But this school is not only currently cutting-edge, they are developing the next level of technology. And they are recruiting students for their next round of classes in February and March.*

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Mike Dominguez, 18-year-old member of the inaugural class, declares his experience at this school literally a dream come true. "I was always the kid who was bored and dozing off in school," Mike admitted. "I'm a gamer, and all I ever wanted to do was become an amazing game developer. Now I am in school learning everything I ever wanted to learn — for free, and I am so energized and passionate about my education!" The first thing Mike learned how to make was a 3-D fork, then a table setting, a table, a room, a chandelier. "We created texture for the walls and furniture and added animated humans to the scene," Mike recalled. "We were having fun, but we were learning."

"This is the first part of training offered here at EON Reality Entrepreneurial School," stated Haskell Gray, director of the school. "We are training the students to create real-time, interactive 3-D applications. During the initial training, lasting about eight weeks, students learn to model, creating images (or using already created ones) and changing them to fit the EON software. They use CADD (computer aided design and drafting) and 3D Studio Max. Once they have created their models and imported them to the software, they can begin to visualize what can be done with them, scripting a program in the second phase of learning. The rest of the year is spent developing the project stage. The students are divided into teams of modelers and programmers, developing real projects that will fund the school, enabling us to offer free tuition."

The 3-D computer creations are now captured in virtual and augmented reality for interactive application in real-life scenarios. The school not only trains students to use software to create



the projects, it is also a technology showcase. Here, ideas can be formed into storyboards and pilots, which can illustrate proof of concept. “To demonstrate the effectiveness of both the training and projects, various versions of virtual and augmented reality can be experienced,” Haskell explained. “Taking a tour provides an understanding of the types, values and sustainable revenue of projects completed so far. These can be experienced via personal systems, group systems or immersive systems.”

For example, the Icube, is a multisided immersive system, where sight, sound, touch and even smells can be virtually assimilated, for edutainment (learning that is fun) such as in an interactive aquarium where even sharks and whales not found in traditional aquariums can be observed, or training for repairs on pipelines. Apps experienced here involve movement and sensations, vibrations — all the stimuli found in real life — along with access to an immense library of information and schematics. With virtual and augmented reality, it’s as if you stepped *into* the resources of the Internet and can immediately apply the information to solve problems or direct mechanical objects. This and other offerings supply simulator training combining multiple pathologies, such as those used for eye surgery, where the anatomy is completely 3-D. Such advances enable virtual examinations and provide 15 years’ worth of knowledge previously only achieved by actual experience.

Another huge application is sports training. “This is quite fascinating,” Haskell shared. “The interactive mirror enables players to see themselves, practice various moves with virtual players approaching them and develop the mental muscle memory to play well — without

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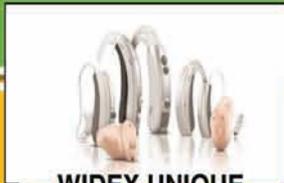
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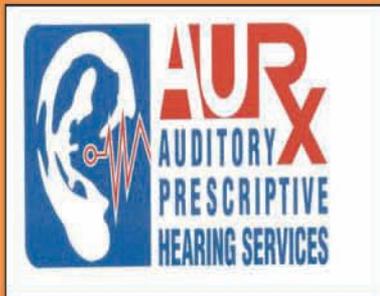
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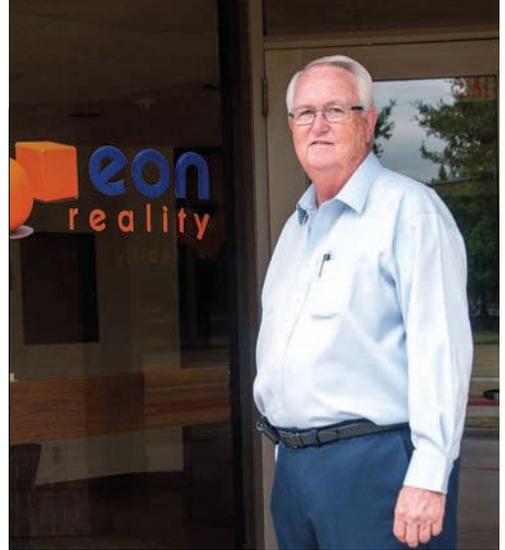
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risk of injury. This is highly popular with coaches in football, soccer, baseball and basketball so far.”

Studies show the retention rate of virtual and augmented learning is some 80 percent higher than traditional learning techniques, with 30 percent improvement of test scores for 90 percent of the students. Interactive learning is simply far more enjoyable, and the manipulative opportunity makes learning immediately applicable. No longer do geologists need to travel to places like Oklahoma to learn rock crop analysis. They can see it all on the Icatcher or with an Ibench. “Our showcase demonstrates the immersive and interactive quality of the projects, which have been created and are being developed by the students here. It is really something to be sampled,” Haskell added. From large systems, such as an Idome, to smaller systems, such as an Oculus Gear VR into which you insert your smartphone, or augmented reality glasses that respond to a key found in QR code, gathering information via technology is far more advanced than even a few years ago.

According to *Emerging Future*, in five years, technology will have advanced 32 percent, in 10 years 1,000 percent. In seven years, technology will have improved 1 million times since the year 2000. What children are learning in school today will become outmoded before they graduate. The fascinating world of gaming has absorbed so many of our technology-bent generation, but with a school such as EON Entrepreneurial, reality is literally placed at their fingertips.

Cliff Boyd, a member of the team of community leaders responsible for

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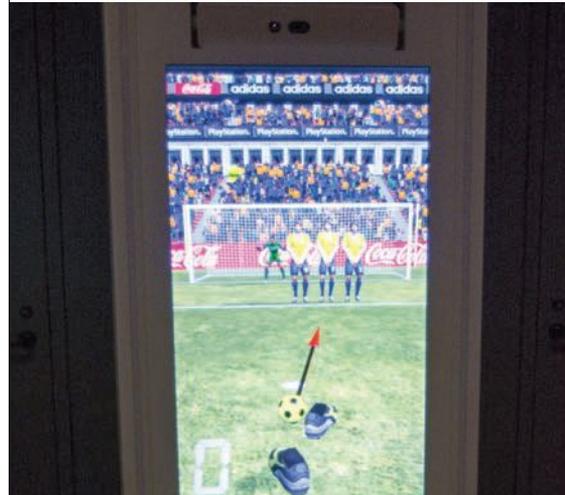
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bringing the school to Duncanville to serve the entire southwest U.S. region is thrilled to have EON here. "From a business perspective, the model is perfect. We are providing such an inimitable learning opportunity for students who are then creating a resource bank for product that will improve the manner of life for so many people," Cliff stated. "This showcase will prove to be a great asset for the 12 cities making up the Best Southwest by drawing revenue to our hotels, restaurants and grocers. Only one other city in the United States currently offers the showroom, and we are the only one offering both the school and showroom. This will strengthen our emerging Best Southwest cities."

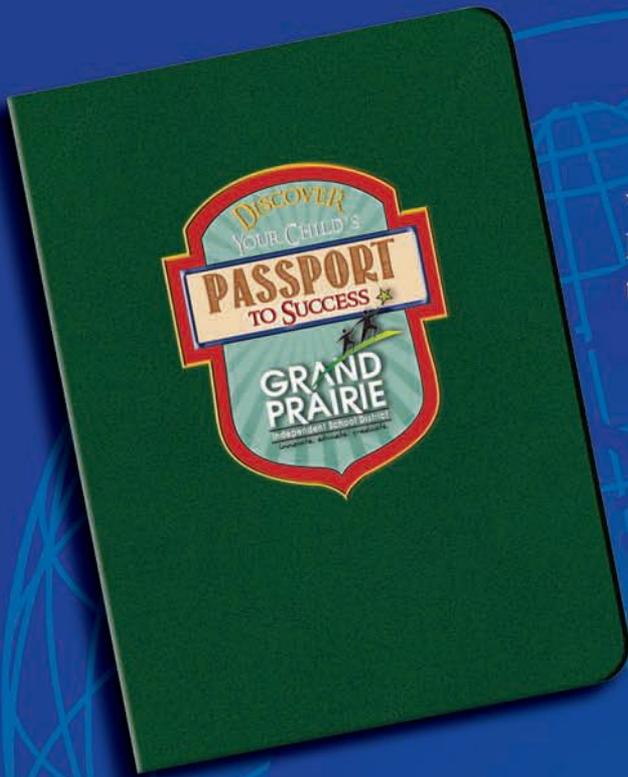
Cliff is eager for the students to take on projects like juvenile diabetes. He envisions a virtual portrayal of the progress of the disease v. the progress of proactive deterrent through healthy eating and exercise. "If we could use virtual programs in elementary school health classes, the clarity of choices could affect the health of generations to come." Such is just the tip of the iceberg of the possibilities found in virtual education. **NOW**

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# An Advocate for Child



*Sandre Moncriste, relatively new to the DeSoto ISD school board is seasoned in championing children's causes and rights. For her, being on the school board is all about the child. "I have been, and always will be, a voice for children," Sandre calmly emphasized. "I want public school education to positively impact each child because children come first. Period."*

Sandre has quite a bit of experience when it comes to speaking up for children. She grew up in Jamaica and moved to Dallas at age 14 to join her mother who was already working here. Sandre

# ren

— By Beverly Shay



graduated from Hillcrest High School, earned her bachelor's in English with a minor in history from Wiley College in Marshall — known as “home of *The Great Debaters*,” Sandre added with a grin, referring to a movie starring Denzel Washington, who played Melvin B. Tolson, a professor at Wiley who rather controversially started a black debate team in 1935. Her career as a speaker had a good foundation.

Before earning her juris doctorate at St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Sandre worked as an aide for State Senator Bill Ratliffe in Austin, during the time he sponsored a school finance law dubbed Robin Hood in 1993. Perhaps the experience was a seed bed for the

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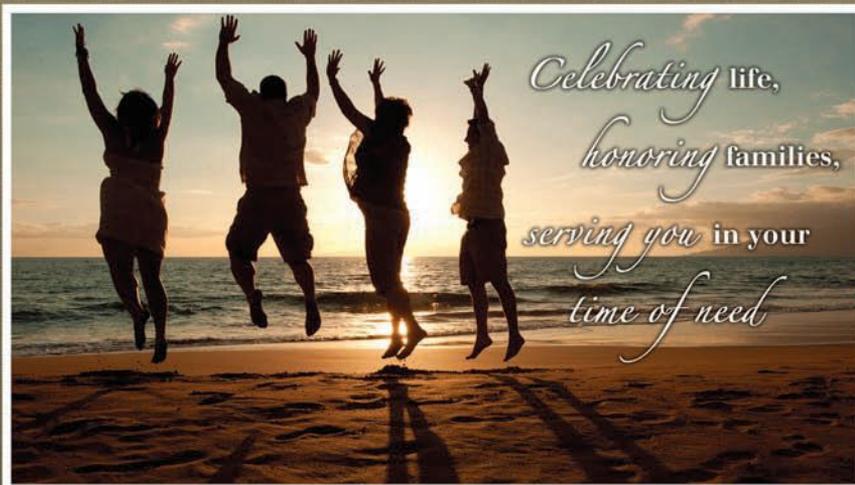
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DeSoto ISD Superintendent Dr. David Harris and Sandre Moncriffe pose with DHS cheerleaders at the Back 2 School Fair.

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future mingling of her law career and educational service.

"I have always been fascinated with law," Sandre explained. "I would wonder how does law come to be? How is it developed? How is it enforced? Who came up with these rules? I was fascinated with the judicial and legislative branches of government." Her first job involved two years of appellate work for those with disabilities in regard to Social Security in San Francisco. She met her husband, Berford, at Texas Southern University in Houston, where they were both summer interns in the Ronald E. McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program designed to encourage minority students to pursue postgraduate programs.

Once back in the Dallas area, Sandre opened her own family law practice, where for 10 years she handled issues such as divorce and child welfare, support and custody. "Then I felt it was time for a change. When the opportunity came to



work in the juvenile department doing child welfare for the district attorney, I felt it was a good move,” Sandre confirmed. With her heart for children, Sandre makes every effort to see rules are followed if children must be removed from the home by CPS. “The state is the client. I provide advocacy for the client to help find a better resolution for the children. Family reunification is our first priority — we want children to be safely with some family member. Evoking termination of parental rights is a very serious, permanent solution — one we try to avoid unless it is the only way a child can be safe. I am glad to say most cases can be resolved without going to that extreme.” However, when heroin, cocaine or meth are being used and/or assault or neglect are occurring, removing children is automatic. “I feel we are doing good work for these children who so deserve help. It is simply too heartbreaking when we feel we have discovered situations too late,” Sandre added. Her calm demeanor and inbred grace must bring comfort into the severe scenarios she encounters on a daily basis.

Sandre and Berford bought their DeSoto home in 2003. Their two daughters were born in '05 and '08. “We simply love DeSoto, and when our children were ready to start school, we visited Ruby Young, where our neighbors’ children attended,” Sandre recalled. On the tour, they fell in love with the school and its approach. “My

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husband and I are both products of public schools. We believe parents are the ones who determine how well their children do in school, and we wanted to know the teachers and administration and be involved,” she added.

And involved she became — almost immediately. “On the very first day of school, my daughters came home and told me there was no recess. My older daughter said they had P.E., and my younger daughter said there were no slides in P.E.” The matter needed investigation, so Sandre began to research why this was. She found no recess was a districtwide practice, so she addressed the principal, the superintendent and ultimately, the school board, and the situation was put on the agenda for discussion. TEA requires a student health advisory council (SHAC) to make recommendations on issues concerning student health and wellness, which included recess. “I was appointed by the school board to the SHAC committee and became the chairperson,” Sandre admitted. “Working together as a team of parents, teachers, school nurses and coaches, the SHAC committee recommend a reinstatement of recess. The school board then created a policy mandating recess for 30 minutes per day. Ours is one of the few districts who have made a policy regarding recess, thus ensuring recess will continue to be a part of the children’s school days for years to come. If adults are given 15-minute break times to keep their work from suffering, why would we think children don’t need a break from their work, as well?” Sandre queried.

Sandre plans to continue her involvement via PTA. “I want to be informed about my children and the entire district. Maybe it stems from the type of work I do, but I really want to

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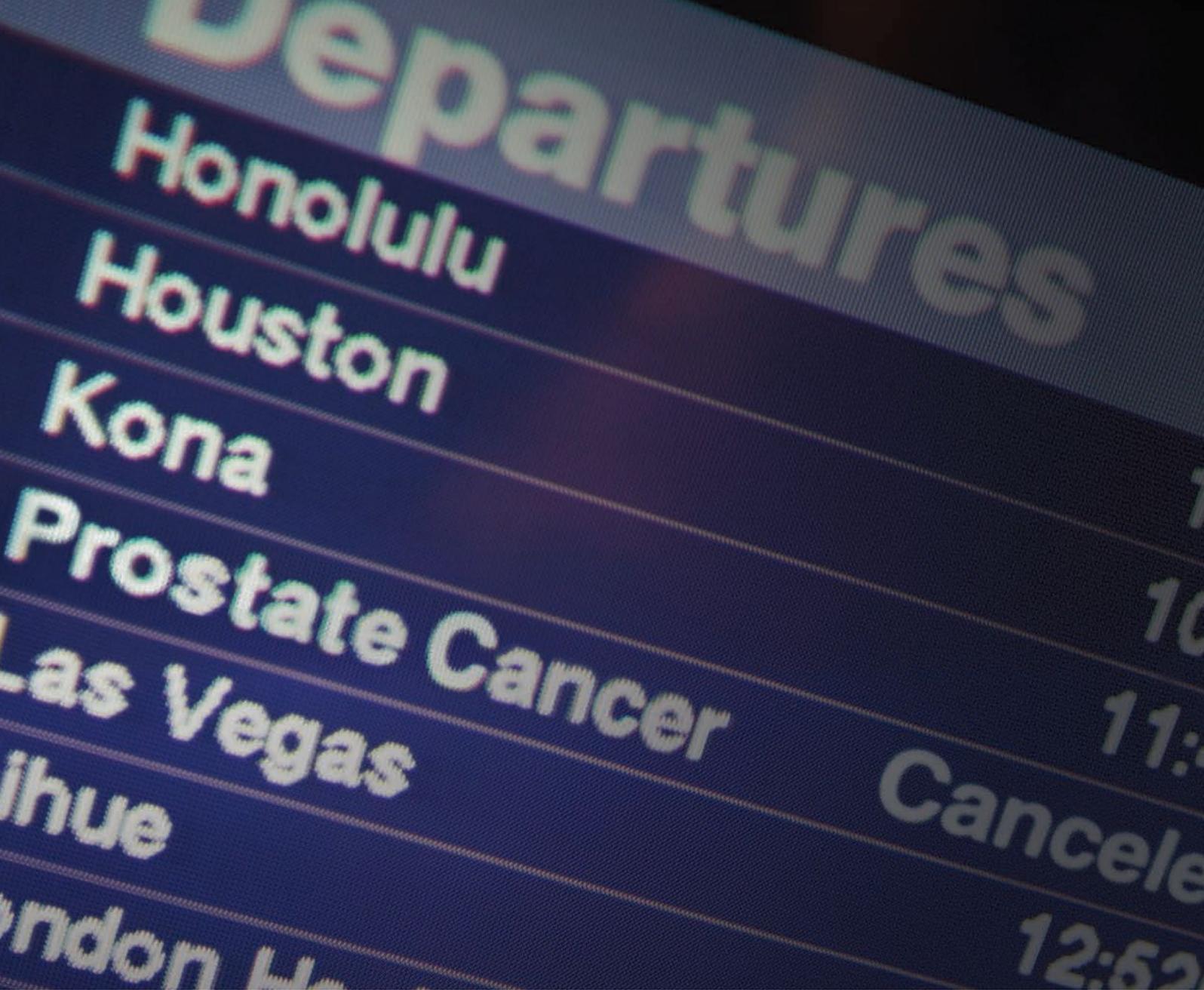
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positively affect many children,” she said. “Not all parents know how to navigate the school district or even understand the proper chain of command for resolving issues. I have become a go-to parent, because I have an understanding of school systems. Indeed, many referrals in the courts come from schools.” With her husband’s encouragement to follow her passion to positively impact not only her children, but others, Sandre ran for a position on the school board. “I have such a strong affinity for teachers who operate in *loco parentis* and their quests to impact children. I want to do what I can and leave the district a better place than I found it, not only for my children, but for those who will come along in the future.”

When she has free time, this Delta Sigma Theta sorority member loves to travel — to Jamaica (of course), among other destinations and plans on taking her mom on a cruise for her 70th birthday. She’s also an avid reader who enjoys utopian fantasies, along with the occasional biography. And despite having an active and time-consuming career, Sandre is the type of parent who makes time to help at the school, run errands and be involved. But that’s not all — she also leads a Girl Scout troop for K through seventh-graders. “I enjoy instilling courage, confidence and character,” Sandre stated. At her core, she will always be an advocate for children. **NOW**

*Editor's Note: Photos of swearing in ceremony by Beth Trimble, DeSoto ISD Communications Office.*

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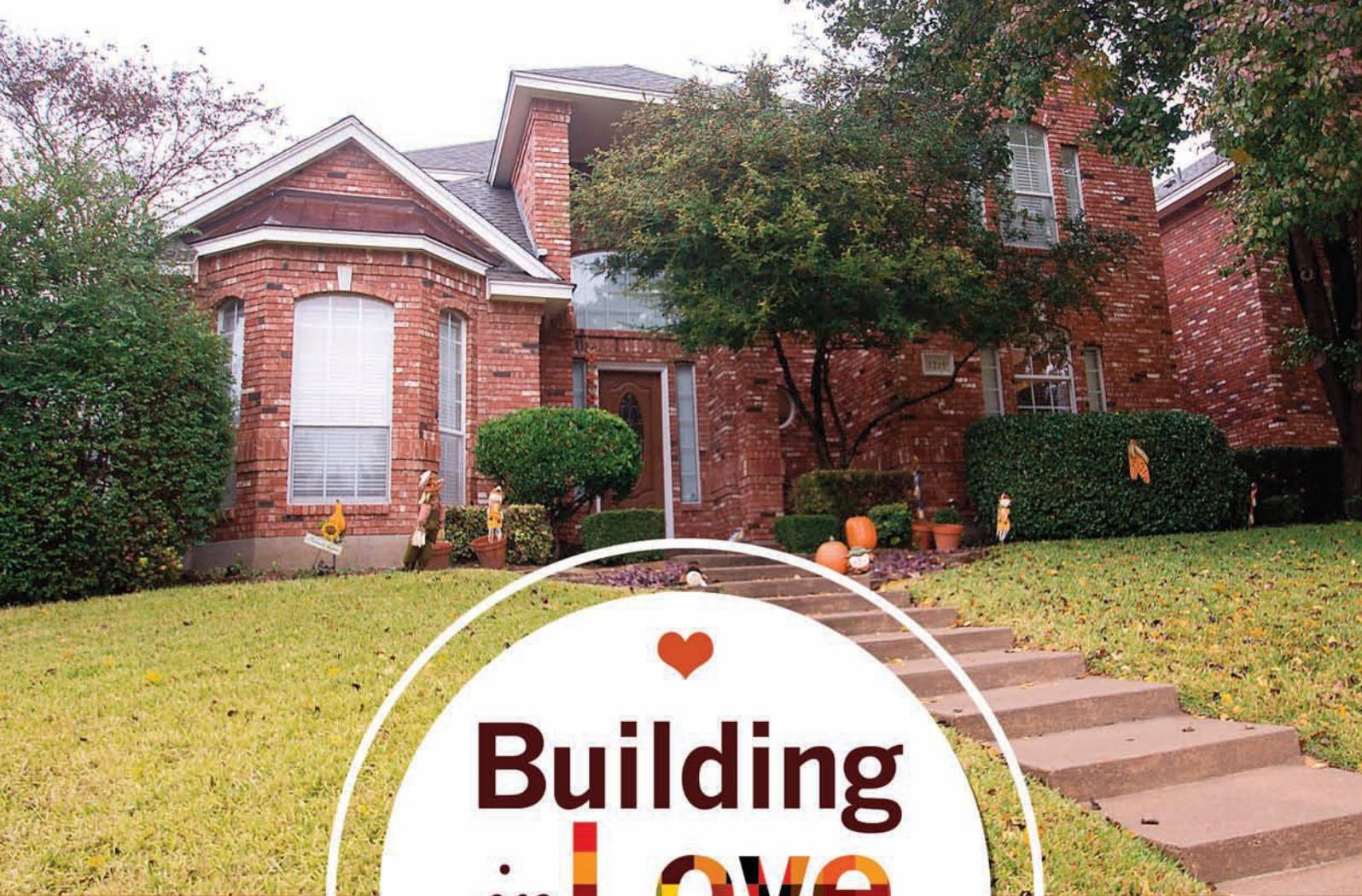
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# Building in Love

— By Katrina D. Lewis

## AT HOME WITH Eric and Mira Rollins

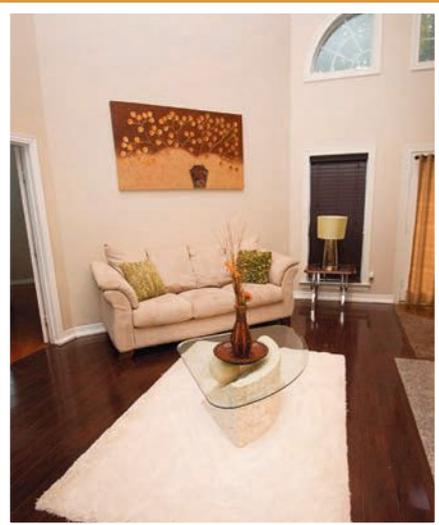
Life takes you to unexpected places. Love brings you home. *The words of this quaint saying completely embody the spirit of Eric and Mira Rollins' family, their passion for adoption and stylishly refined, yet charming, Cedar Hill home. Eric, a senior manager for a soft drink company, and Mira, an occupational therapist, attended high school together at Skyline in Dallas. Although the two shared the sprawling campus' hallways, their love connection wouldn't come until later. "My story is that he cheated off of my Spanish work, but he disagrees with that," Mira laughed.*

"We were just mere associates in high school, but she did have a massive crush on me," Eric said, teasing his wife. Whichever story you believe, Eric and Mira's connection seemed destined. After graduating from their universities, they



crossed paths again at Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas where both are members. An initial six-hour conversation in February 2006, led to a whirlwind romance, culminating in a November wedding later that year.

The newlyweds settled in Kingswood, a Cedar Hill neighborhood, before moving to their current home in the Wildwood subdivision within Lake Ridge. They have lived in their home for three years, falling in love with the neighborhood's unique character. "My wife has always liked older neighborhoods," Eric said. "And I've also always liked Lake Ridge," he said of the area known for its mostly contemporary development style. "But we didn't know about this portion of Lake Ridge. So, this was a perfect match. And the first thing we were looking for was more space."



Eric and Mira had a very good reason for seeking out more space as they dreamed of starting a family. But like many young couples, they were left reeling when they discovered they would be unable to have biological children. Although disappointed, the couple had an abundance of love to spare, perfectly fulfilling a dream that had rested in Mira's heart for a long time. "I tell everyone from the time I could remember, God just told me I was going to adopt. This was before I could even put it into words and knew what it was," Mira confessed. "And even when we were just dating, I shared with Eric this was something I wanted to do."

"Initially, I was onboard being in support of her idea," Eric said. "But once we went through the approval process, it became a passion of mine, as well." After

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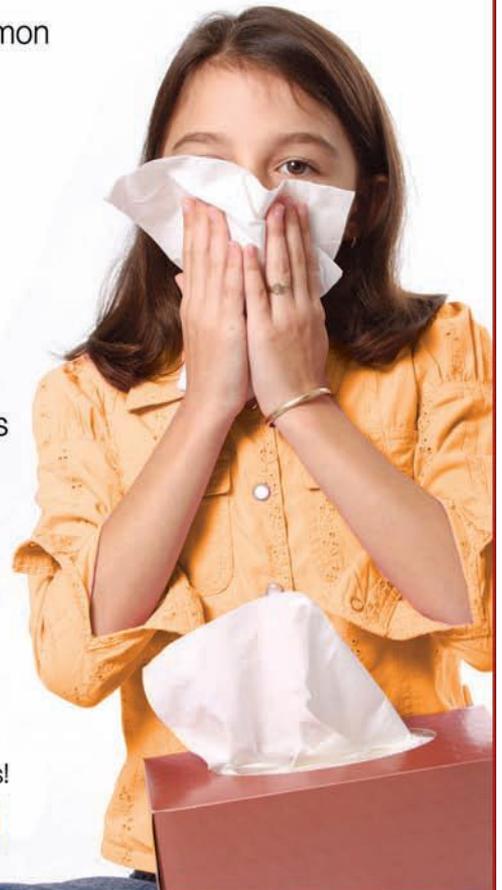
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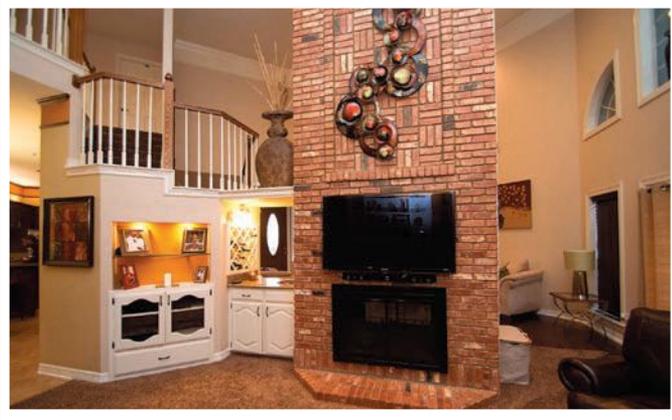
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tone-colored tiles leading off to a formal dining room to the left. A splash of vibrant orange and yellow blossoms fill a centerpiece on a gleaming glass dining room table, a lasting memento from the couple's wedding day flowers.

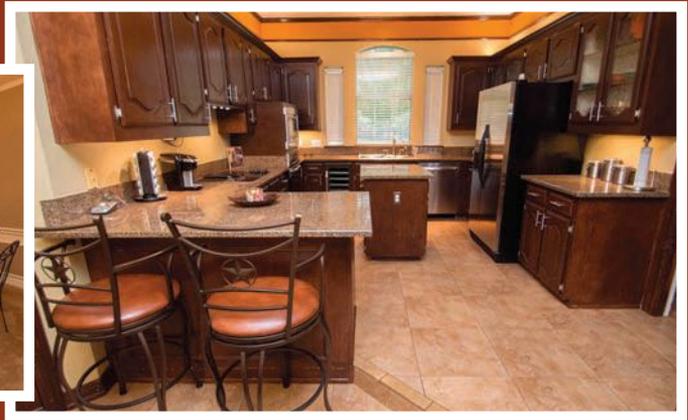
To the right of the entryway lies the kitchen. Dark, richly-hued cabinetry spans the perimeter, framing a marble-topped island. The gleaming granite countertops are an exact match of the island, with flecks of white, gray and brown adding warmth to the kitchen's silver appliances. Deviating from plain white, the trim lining the ceiling in the kitchen is the same chocolate color as the cabinets, with a muted band of yellow adding a splash of color.

Just off the kitchen is the home's master bedroom. Eric and Mira retiled the fireplace, adding to the room's calming blue,

tons of paperwork, months of in-depth classes and background checks, the couple estimates they've had 15 foster children in their home over a two-year span.

Originally built in 1989, their open floor plan is roughly 4,100 square feet, with five bedrooms and four-and-a-half bathrooms. The home, sizable when originally purchased, has reached its current size through extensive remodeling and additions.

"I like the maturity of the neighborhood. The folks who live in the community have been here for quite some time. We just feel it's a good place to raise a family," Eric added. Their entryway features neutral, earth



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white and brown color palette. A spacious master bath inspires a relaxing vibe, complete with an enormous glassed-in shower area, bathed in an abundance of natural sunlight.

Completing the circular floor plan that opens up the downstairs, is a second living area with a large, leather sofa and chaise, perfect for the family to kick back and relax on. Halfway up one large wall is a custom art niche cut-out with four shelves — home to family photos and art.

"I really like pictures, and we didn't have enough space for them. It was actually Eric's idea, and it worked out really well," Mira said. The room also boasts a bricked, floor-to-ceiling fireplace the couple added. A small wet bar, original to the home, is next to the fireplace.

A door from this secondary living area leads to the backyard, where the pool steals the show. It's a favorite gathering place, especially for Eric who spends plenty of time cooking on the large barbecue grill and smoker.

Ascending stairs to the second floor, rooms immediately to the left and the right of the staircase belong to the couple's two younger children, Kariss and Kaleb. Ages 3 and 6, both are usually called by their original birth names of Danielle and Yuriah. "Their old first

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names are now their middle names. When you're fostering, you don't 100-percent know the end of the story, so we called them by their given names in case the adoptions didn't go through," Mira explained. "And because we used those names so long, it's sometimes hard to call them what we named them. But, it's a good way to recognize who they were before they came to us."

The media room is farther down the hallway they added to extend the home's size. Overlooking the backyard, the room has two rows of plush leather, movie theater-sized chairs facing a large built-in television. Continuing down a smaller hallway is where the couple's oldest son, Kaden, now 15, has his room. The space gives him a bit of the privacy teenagers crave.



With all of the renovations and additions the couple has completed and still has planned, it could be asked — why not just purchase a bigger home? "We actually tested the market and everything," Mira added. "But it just circled back to the fact we are south-side people. And for our money and for what we liked, this is the house, and this is the neighborhood. So we said, let's just make it what we want."

Watching her husband play with Danielle in the media room, Mira reflects on her favorite part of her home. And her words are telling, touching on both the home and the family. "We fell in love with the house and have since, fallen in love with what we've done with it," she said. "It's ours, and we have a place where our entire family is comfortable." **NOW**

*Editor's Note: Eric and Mira were especially excited to have their home featured in November, which is National Adoption Month.*

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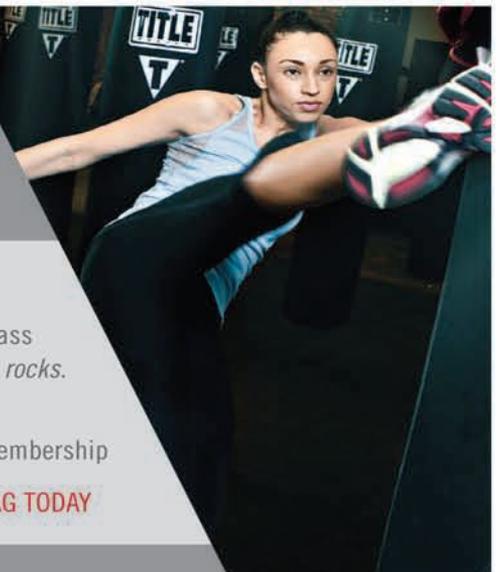
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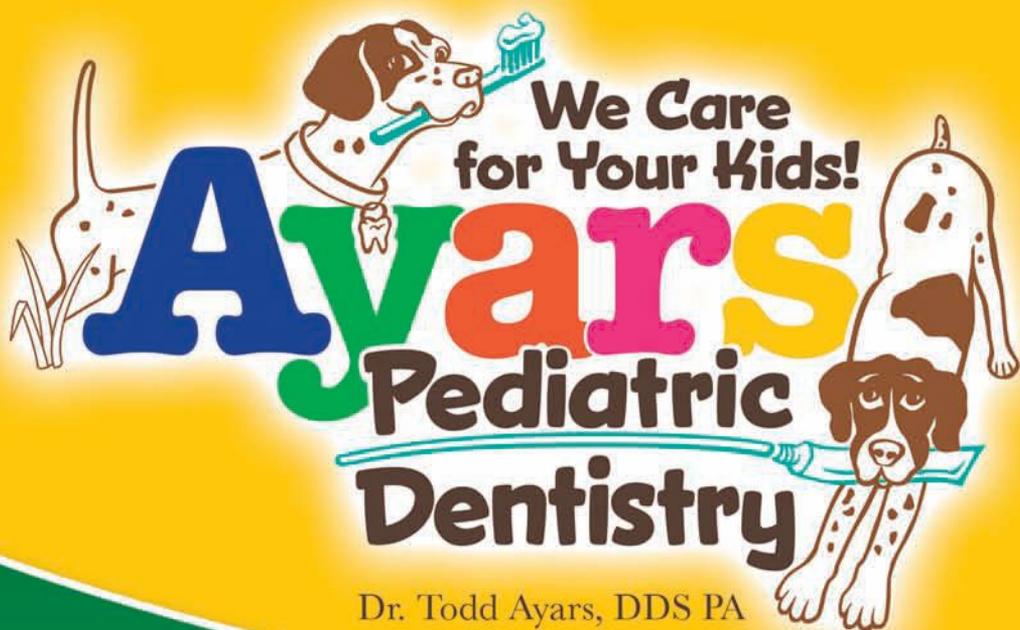
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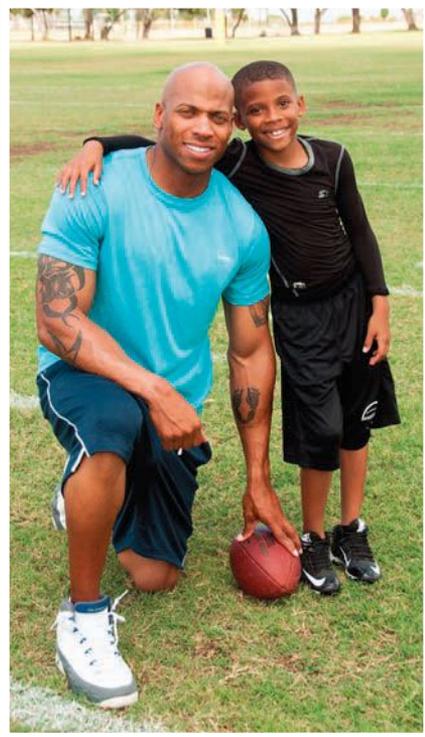
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# ONE IN A Million

— By Sara Edgell



*Fame and fortune are two things many people dream of, but what they don't dream about is the effort and focus required to attain this sort of highly desirable status in life. In addition to setting goals, one has to demonstrate dedication, determination and drive to reach these feats. While the promise of the easy life commonly associated with wealth coupled with the fanfare and adoration stemming from fame sounds enticing, in reality, most things worthwhile in life are, in fact, not easy at all, and constantly being in the limelight can cause a person to go blind. These are important lessons Dante and Renetta Wesley have learned over the course of their marriage and his*



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With nine years under his helmet, Dante played in the NFL first for the Carolina Panthers, then the Chicago Bears and finally the Detroit Lions. His tenure as a professional cornerback even included going to Super Bowl XXXVIII with the Panthers in 2004 and Super Bowl XLI with the Bears in 2007. But it all started back in a sleepy college town in Arkansas, at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff actually, where Dante was

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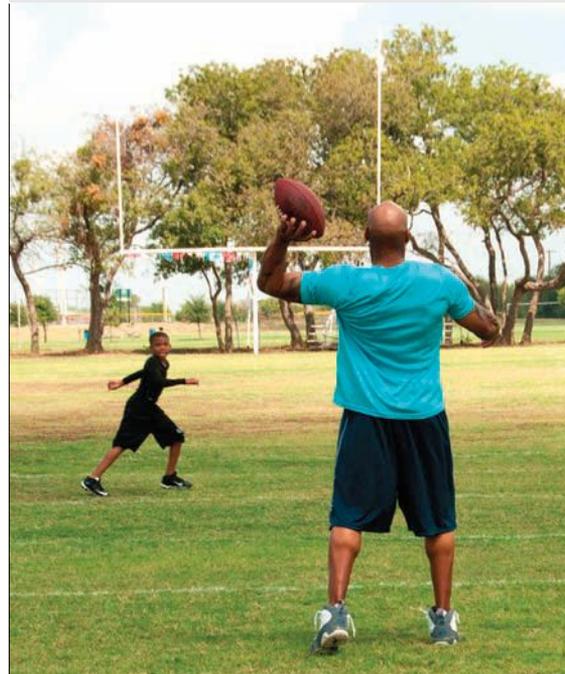
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playing college football, and Renetta was working toward her education degree.

The two met briefly, in passing, one year before their fates truly collided. As Dante sat in class, just about to fall asleep, he saw Renetta pass by and was instantly attracted. He immediately woke up and left class to pursue her. "I didn't even like him at first," Renetta smirked. Nonetheless, it didn't take long before Dante's charm and persistence won her over, and the two were essentially inseparable.

When Dante's NFL career took off, Renetta left her job teaching and accepted the position of a professional athlete's wife. As Dante explained, "The wife really takes it all on, but no one really knows what all the wife does."

The highs and lows of winning and losing games, suffering injuries and frequent absences can be extreme and demanding, but Renetta took it all in stride, sharing in his triumphs, as well as tending to his struggles and needs. "He chose me as his wife," she smiled. "My greatest joys in life are being Mrs. Wesley and our two beautiful kids."

The family relocated as Dante committed to play for different teams. Along the way, their daughter, Skylar, and their son, Dante II, were welcomed into the family. They lived in several big cities across the country but remained close-knit and family-focused.

Unfortunately, just as an NFL player takes hits and blows on the football field,

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so, too, can an NFL player's marriage off the field. With Dante's status came ready access to virtually anything and everything imaginable. The two learned firsthand how the NFL could destroy their marriage — if they let it. "I tried to help mold him into the man I saw he could be," she explained. Despite a few fumbles and yards lost, Renetta's effort worked. The Wesleys faced the opposition and prevailed on the gridiron stronger than ever. They were unwavering in their conviction to God, each other and their family, which strengthened their marriage. "I was out in the streets and living some kind of way that wasn't good for my family," Dante shared openly. "Growing up, I was raised in a family of individuals. Renetta had it different. She taught me what it means to really be a family."



With his family intact, and his marriage thriving, Dante eventually retired from football, and the Wesleys settled in Cedar Hill, where Renetta's sister lived, and the family had often visited. They fell in love with the area and decided to make it the place they called home. "The people here are wonderful," Renetta said. "We love it here."

Inspired by their struggles, the couple wrote a book focusing specifically on the challenges NFL marriages commonly face and how to overcome those challenges together. Titled *F.A.C.T.S.*,

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which stands for faith, attraction, communication, trust and sex, it takes an in-depth, uncensored look at professional sports marriages. The fundamentals explored are truly the basics of any relationship. However, the fame and fortune attached to NFL marriages can have exceedingly detrimental effects on the relationship. "The NFL divorce rate is about 75 percent," he explained. Thanks to their unwavering teamwork, trusting dedication and gritty drive, they beat the odds and want to help others to do the same.

Additionally, Dante speaks at local schools and colleges sharing his motivational message about hard work and making right choices. "To play every year, you have to keep getting better, which takes hard work and dedication beyond working out and dieting. The NFL has 1,500 players, but only 1,300 actually play," he said. "You may be really good in high school or college, but in the NFL, *everybody* is really good." Two things he prides himself on are his dedication and discipline, two important character-building qualities the NFL enhanced in him. Sharing this with others, especially young people, is a passion for Dante.

Renetta, too, reaches out to others through the family's church, Abundant Life Church of God, and her children's schools. Currently, she is focusing her energies on forming a husband and wife



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relationship month, honoring marriage and learning effective ways to strengthen the connection between husband and wife. Together, they also use their experiences and wisdom to help others through couples' counseling. "At the end of the day, a couple has to be honest with each other, but also with themselves. There can't be any comparisons to others and their relationships," Renetta said. By showing others how to communicate openly and to have faith in one another, as well as in God, they are reaching couples afflicted by challenges regardless of fame and fortune. For them, it's all about healing the heart of the family unit.

In the grand scheme of things, Dante and Renetta are most proud of their accomplishments as a family, including their shared and devoted efforts to their children and keeping their marriage together. "We are both very well rounded, humble people," Renetta explained. "The money and fame was never needed. It wasn't and isn't who we are."

In today's society, divorce is so common that witnessing two people who have undergone serious struggles, yet prevailed to become stronger and more dedicated to one another than before, is truly inspiring. "My greatest joy is my family," Dante beamed. "At the end of the day, people will come and go in life like seasons, which is why family is so important. And a good family stems from a solid marriage." **NOW**



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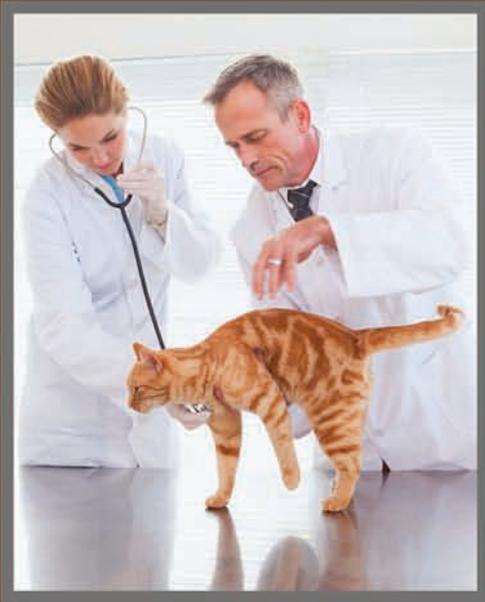
— By Melissa Rawlins

*Whether dog or cat, a pet depends on its human for more than just food, water and love. They also require structure, which will prevent many problems faced by parents of four-legged children.*

Even though different animals react differently to circumstances and training, common amongst both felines and canines are separation anxiety and food aggression. Both

problems inspire some very nasty behaviors that are enough to make you feel like withdrawing your love and, sometimes, your food! Instead, remember that vast resources are available to help resolve your pet problems and restore peace at home.

Veterinarians are a wealth of knowledge about your pet's health. Since your animal's behavior is often the vet's best clue to what's going on inside your pet's body, you'll find conversation



with your vet an informal source of pet training information. For instance, you will want to have your cat tested for a urinary tract infection if you notice them spraying urine. While there, your vet will discuss with you the fact that when cats spray urine, they are either marking territory or indicating stress.



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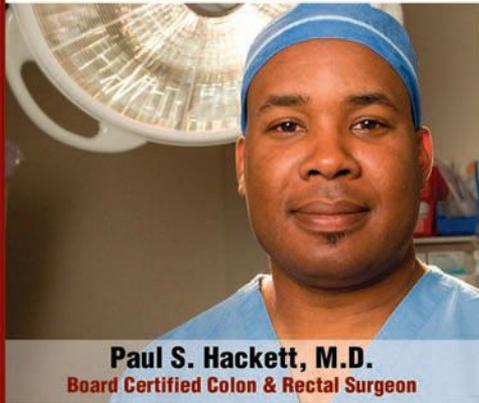
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Your job is to manage your cat's behavior, since you can't train this instinctive reaction out of them. First, look for environmental triggers like your own schedule or other cats. Some cats are agitated by the slightest changes in routine. Many felines feud, and urine spraying is part of their arsenal. All you can do as a steward is keep the fighters separated. Most importantly, feed them in distinctly different locations where they cannot see each other.

Similar mitigation is necessary when dogs exhibit food aggression, which the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals simply calls food guarding. Their research says that unless you fear your canine will bite you, you can employ desensitization and counter-conditioning techniques to change the way your dog feels about people approaching him when he has food. The ASPCA website warns never to punish or intimidate the dog that guards food. This could be dangerous and, possibly, derail the relationship you're building with your dog.

A variety of reasonable precautions ensure safety for people and other dogs. Simple procedures to prevent drama include:

- Leave dogs alone while they're eating.

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- Feed dogs in a separate room, in a crate or behind a barrier.
- Provide dogs with adequate amounts of food so the canines feel less motivated to guard.
- Do not attempt to take away stolen or scavenged food from dogs.
- Cause the food-aggressive dog to realize that food is provided by you by placing the food bowl at your feet or requiring the dog to eat directly from your hand.

One key to dwelling in a peaceful kingdom is empathy. According to Emily Gilliland, a young mother who has also trained her own cats and dogs for over six years, it makes all the difference when you understand how your animal is feeling about the task or behavior at hand. Commonly, cats jump up on counters and tables reserved for human use. Emily patiently uses a spray bottle of water or an air can to chase them off surfaces, and then sets it on the counter where the cat was. This teaches the cat they will not be comfortable where they once felt welcome.

Repetition is another key. "As a 2-year-old child, a dog has the ability to grasp simple commands only after many repetitions," Emily said. "They also can problem-solve simple tasks. Our communication is skewed, though.

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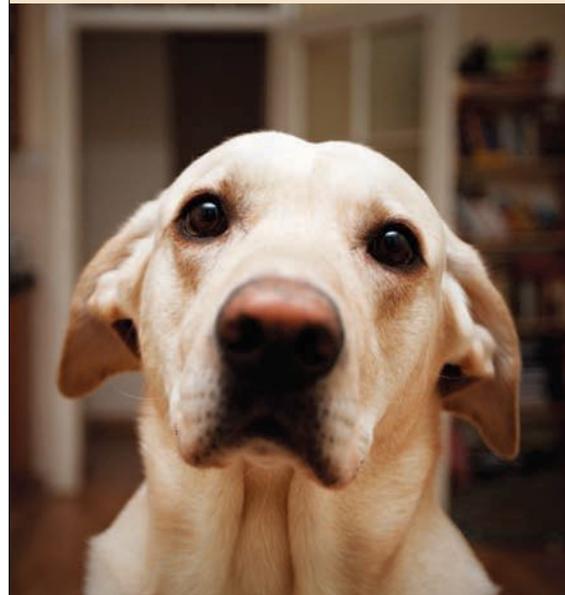
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Animals can be misunderstood because they communicate not with words, but with subtle cues. Remembering this when training and behavior shaping can have a significant impact on the end result and reduce overall stress levels for all involved — canine and child included.”

Emily experienced the joy of a strong trust and loving bond with all her animals after investing patience and energy. “Training my pets is beneficial to both my pets and me,” she said. “They are expected to behave in a particular way, and they have learned to expect the same from me.”



Whether taking in a new dog or changing your schedule, Emily suggests watching for symptoms of separation anxiety that include, but are not limited to: excessive chewing, destruction of doors when keeping the dog inside, pacing, whining, barking and window surfing. There is a simple solution. Have the dog lie or sit in a room, and then leave, closing the door and waiting five seconds before returning. Repeat this procedure, stretching the wait time progressively to 10 seconds, then 45, then a minute-and-a-half and so on. “As you do this, the dog will start to realize you will come back,” Emily said. “Adding in a treat or a little play time on your returns will certainly make this a positive experience in the dog’s mind.”

Promoting positive experiences is part of being what the American Kennel Club calls a responsible owner. Responsible owners have well-mannered dogs and cats. If you discern that you



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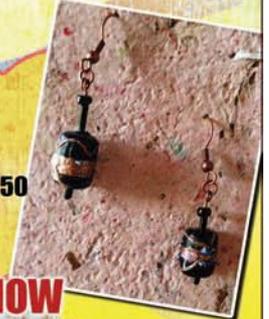
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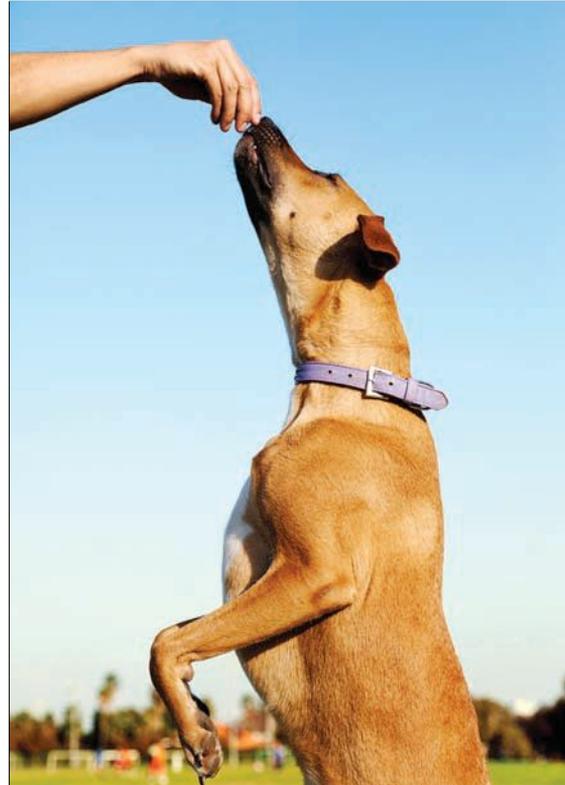


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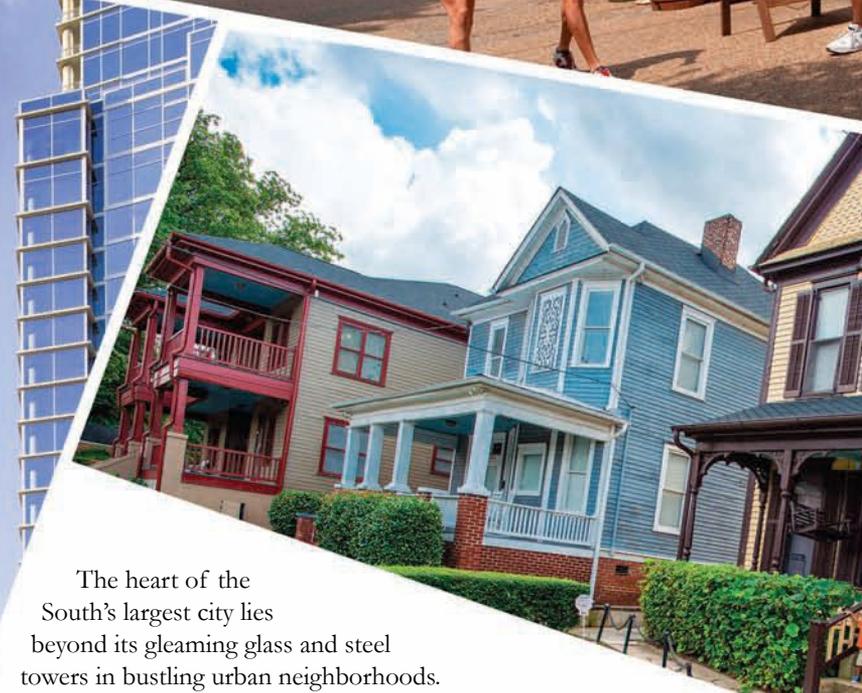
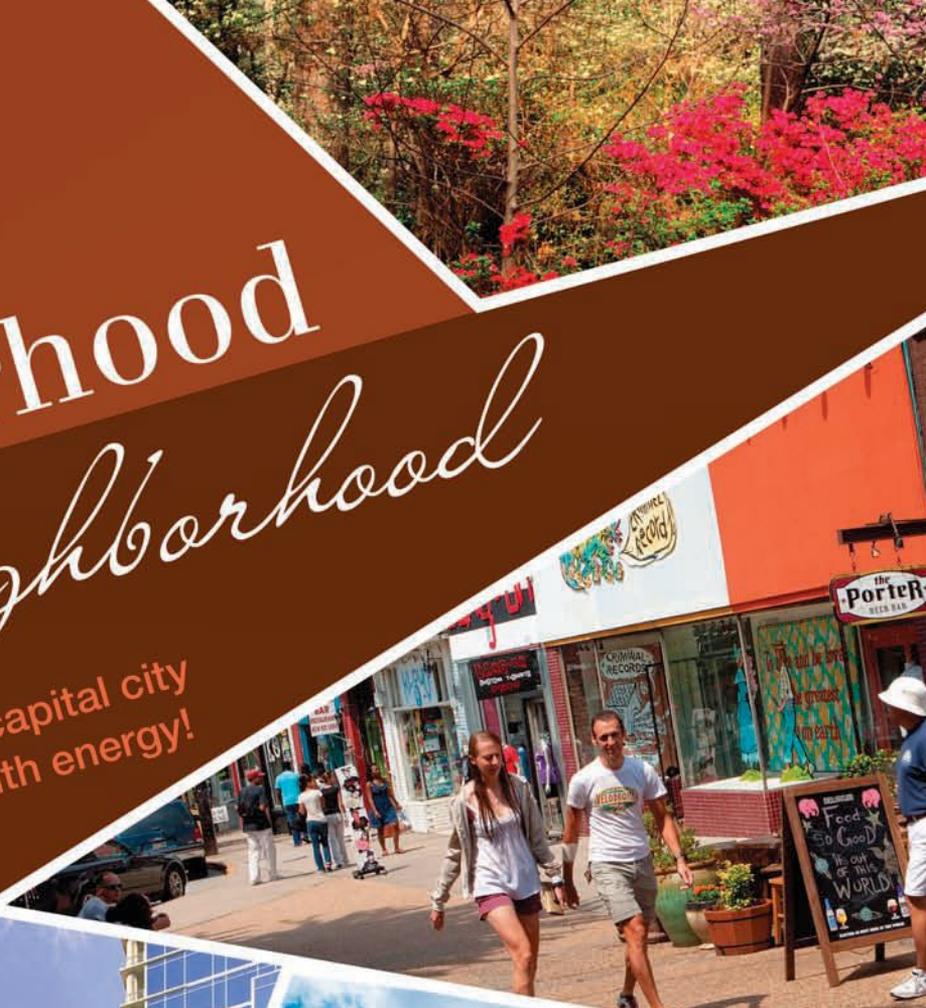


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## Artist Enclave Castleberry Hill

Just southwest, Castleberry Hill etches out a space among former warehouses. Today, the community is made up of local artists and entrepreneurs, including the successful Atlanta Movie Tours, which offers tours of locales from *The Walking Dead*, *Hunger Games* and other popular films. Here, art galleries mix with organic garden spas, wine bars and tapas lounges. Locals and visitors enjoy lively 2nd Friday Art Walks, where businesses open their doors for wine, music and fun.

## Atlanta's Heart of the Arts: Midtown

Style and substance take center stage in Midtown along Peachtree Street. The famed boulevard connects three major neighborhoods while cutting a swath of culture through this district known as Atlanta's heart of the arts. Midtown boasts the largest concentration of arts facilities and organizations in the Southeast, with 25 different arts and cultural venues, more than 30 permanent performing arts groups and 22 various entertainment facilities. Locals thrive on the tree-lined lanes just beyond Peachtree Street and congregate to play at Piedmont Park.

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### Trendsetting Westside

On the Westside, a blending of Georgia Tech culture with nearby loft communities has sprung into a focal point for a new design district in old industrial spaces. It's the go-to place for interior design mavens looking for lighting, textiles, fabric and furniture. Like other Atlanta neighborhoods, the dining scene is thriving here. Long-time homesteaders Anne Quatrano and Clifford Harrison's famous Bacchanalia restaurant begat the city's best kitchen shop, Star Provisions, plus two other restaurants, Quinones and Abattoir. Nearby top-rated JCT. Kitchen & Bar, The Optimist, Miller Union and Antico Pizza Napoletana join the throngs of eateries catering to the city's sophisticated palate.

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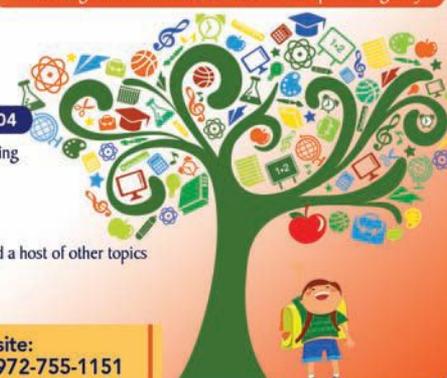
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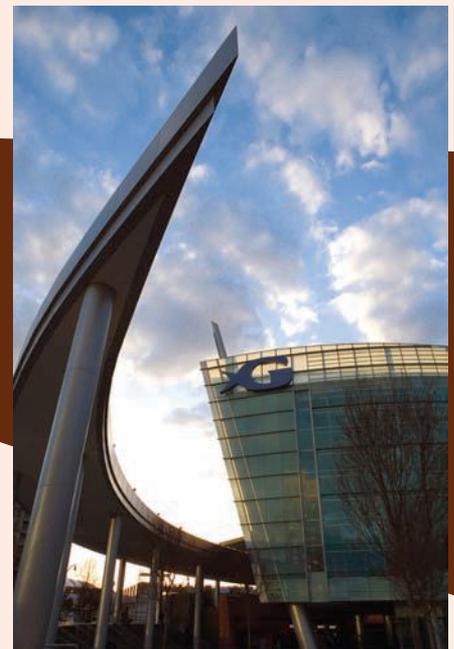
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and landscape designs jut up against the skyscraper backdrop. The scene edges into a Bohemian style in Little Five Points, where vintage dress matches the creativity of tattoos. While spots like Junkman's Daughter have become *de rigueur* for the young, others can't resist the kitschy places like The Star Community Bar and Little Vinyl Lounge, with a shrine to Elvis. But all is not grunge here. Performing arts venues such as 7 Stages Theatre, Dad's Garage Theatre and Variety Playhouse lend artistic authenticity to Little Five.

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## Old Meets New in Atlanta's Old Fourth Ward

What's old is new again in Old Fourth Ward, where this neighborhood continues to redefine itself. Edgewood Avenue has experienced a resurgence, transforming into a hotspot. This street has several options for enjoying the night, including Joystick Gamebar, Sister Louisa's Church of the Living Room & Ping Pong Emporium and The Sound Table. Once an epicenter of African-American commerce, the Sweet Auburn Historic District continues to flourish on the city's southeast side. Auburn Avenue, known in the 1950s as the nation's most affluent African-American street, houses a curb market, bakeries and clubs near the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site and Ebenezer Baptist Church.

As you navigate Atlanta, neighborhood by neighborhood, you'll begin to buzz with its energy. Go to [Atlanta.net](http://Atlanta.net) for additional resources and to plan your visit. **NOW**

By Stacy Shade. Photos © 2015, Kevin C. Rose/[AtlantaPhotos.com](http://AtlantaPhotos.com).



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Batteries Plus Bulbs is like an old-style hardware store filled with modern technology and plenty of assistance in determining the correct product.

# Light Up Your Life

*With over 45,000 items in stock, Batteries Plus Bulbs offers even more than their name implies. — By Beverly Shay*

This family-owned franchise could be named Batteries Plus Bulbs Plus Service, because they are all about providing quality products and the assurance you are buying exactly what will meet your requirement. With over 45,000 items in stock and a knowledgeable sales team willing to discern customers' needs, you'll enjoy the Batteries Plus Bulbs experience. "We offer more than products," stated Paul Fuglie, who co-owns the store with his wife, Deb, and son, Travis Covey. "We can never really take too much time to listen to what a customer would like, and then talk them through the options to find the best solution."

Employees are rigorously trained and must pass 120 training modules over a three- to six-month period, becoming certified on each product. Prior to placement in stores, products are

also tested, certified and warranted by the company. Franchise owners like Paul, Deb and Travis participate in owner forums where organic knowledge, training and experience is shared and have access to a veteran consultant or product specialist. "Each of us have our favorite area of expertise, but all of us can knowledgeable offer every product," Deb added.

"We will test, repair or rebuild anything we can before recommending a new purchase," Paul emphasized. "Our company is the No. 1 retail business repairing devices, completing 260,000 repairs last year with an estimated half-million-plus this year. We analyze batteries for cars, laptops, cell phones, watches, look at charge ports and adaptors and rebuild Ni-Cad drill packs." They sell and install 40-50 watch batteries a

month. Water-damaged phones are sent to experts at our Wisconsin lab. Many customers are referrals from cell phone providers and other electrical retailers, who only carry batteries for their current product line. “They know we can repair or replace any type of battery,” Travis shared, “so it creates a good partnership in customer satisfaction.”

Store offerings include: batteries and bulbs for flashlights, camcorders, cell/smart phones, products for cars/trucks/trailers (free vehicle battery installation), fluorescent, ballast, HID, LED, specialty LED, halogen, decorative, colored and flood lights, 3-way specialty, photo/flash power, exit/emergency lighting, alkaline, sealed lead, chargers and jump packs, gifts, gadgets and more.

One of Paul’s favorite gift items is a starter pack for jumping your car, which can also charge cell phones and laptops. “Fitting into your glove compartment, it jumps a car four to five times before it needs recharging, eliminating use of cables,” he shared. “We love passing on the LED savings to customers. Switching to LED lighting uses 65-75 percent less energy. With a lifespan of 22 years (when burned three hours a day) and immediate energy savings, your investment will be paid for in two years,” Paul explained, noting an average house has 63 bulbs.

“LED produces no heat, lessening the need for AC and eliminating the risk of fire around insulation. When used outdoors, the lack of UV means no bugs are attracted!” Deb shared. “Every day our store offers a 15-percent discount to teachers, police, city employees, EMT, firemen, active/retired military and Facebook friends who show their ID.”

Travis is excited about bringing their consultative sales programs to businesses, churches and schools, so they can experience the massive energy savings of converting to LED. He recommends online shopping and even home delivery services. “We install for homes or businesses, and you can try out our products before a significant purchase,” he shared. The entire team is grateful for the welcome they have received in Cedar Hill and love passing on the savings to these Southwest communities. **NOW**

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Neighborhood Service Coordinator, Leah Walker, was recently invited to the White House in celebration of Cedar Hill's participation in the First Lady's Let's Move Initiative.



Steve Martin shared his heart and patriotism on Duncanville's Night of Remembrance for 9/11.



LaDarius Henderson, a 9th grade Collegiate Magnet Program student at DeSoto High School selected to serve as DeSoto Fire Chief for the day, spends time with Chief Jerry Duffield.



Trinity Christian School's mascot, Toby the Tiger, made a surprise visit to the elementary classes to promote the fall fundraiser!



Linda Stottlemire, Rhoda Chance, Lu Abbondanzio, Janice Mock and Nancy Costa are ready to serve the women of Xi Rho Beta Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi in Duncanville.



Veteran Bryan Reed, Deputy State Captain with the North Texas Patriot Guard (back center), spoke to students about 9/11 and the "bullies" who tried to change America, and how in many ways it made us stronger.



Some students from Cockrell Hill Elementary School wear adorable first responder costumes including firefighter, police and medical personnel in memory of 9/11.



Duncanville High School students use skills learned in their television production class to run the district's new digital scoreboard.



First Lady Michelle Obama addresses participants in her Let's Move Initiative, which included Leah Walker of Cedar Hill.

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# The Importance of Being Average

It's not uncommon for investors to check their portfolios against the equity indices that are tallied daily after financial markets close, but they're not all designed to be portfolio measuring sticks. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, for example, is meant to gauge the market as a whole and, in the process, reflect the entire U.S. economy. Although investors cannot invest directly in an index, here is a brief look at some of the major ones.

## Dow Jones Industrial Average

Any time you hear "the market's up," the reference is probably to the Dow Jones Industrial Average, first published in 1896 when Charles Dow listed a dozen companies he thought represented the industrial economy of his time. Among them was General Electric, the only original member in today's list of 30 companies. There's nothing permanent about membership in the Dow. In June, faltering General Motors Corporation (after 83 years) and Citigroup, Inc. (after 12) were replaced by Cisco Systems, Inc. and Travelers Companies.

The Dow is certainly the most referenced financial index. Despite the fact that there are only 30 companies listed, they represent a select group of the most highly capitalized and influential U.S. companies.

## NASDAQ Stock Market Composite Index

Created in 1971, NASDAQ was an acronym for National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotation, an electronic stock market. Computer systems facilitate trading and provide price quotations for actively traded over-the-counter stocks, and compute daily the value of its composite index of 2,811 companies (as of August 2009). No longer considered the province of obscure

companies, among NASDAQ members are Amazon.com, Inc., Staples, Inc. and Microsoft Corp.

## S&P 500

In 1941, Standard Statistics merged with Poor's Publishing (founded in 1860 by Henry Varnum Poor to publish railroad manuals) to form Standard and Poor's. For decades, it rated corporate and municipal bonds, but in 1957 Standard & Poor's created the S&P 500, which today is one of the most respected benchmarks of the overall U.S. stock market. The S&P 500 index consists of 500 stocks chosen for market size, liquidity and industry group representation. Larger and more diverse than the Dow, it is considered more representative of the U.S. market.

## Dow Jones Wilshire 5000 Total Stock Market Index

True to the term "total" in its name, the Wilshire 5000, first published by Wilshire Associates in January 1975, today includes more than 6,500 tradable securities. Dow Jones began calculating this index in April 2004.

The Wilshire 5000 includes all U.S.-headquartered equity securities with readily available price data, and is one of the broadest indices to track overall market performance. It is updated monthly to add new listings and remove delisted equities. **NOW**

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# A Belly Full

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Your belly bulge may carry a huge price you hadn't counted on. There are two types of fat in the abdomen — subcutaneous and visceral. Subcutaneous fat lies directly underneath your skin. Visceral fat in the abdominal area lies underneath the muscles and wraps around your organs. They both carry a risk for your health, when in excessive amounts, toward the possible development of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other sundry illnesses. However, abdominal visceral fat can be far more dangerous.

An impressive study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* concluded that central obesity (beer belly) carried as great a risk to your health as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day or having an extremely high cholesterol level. The results qualified as being globally applicable, since the study was conducted in five separate studies around the world. There were 16,000 participants with coronary artery disease. Those with central obesity were more likely to die from the disease than those with a different pattern of fat distribution. Men had a higher risk of dying than women. Another startling conclusion is that this discovery pertains even to those who have normal weight and a small amount of belly fat.

Why does belly fat carry such a great risk? According to Dr. Francisco Lopez-Jimenez, the study's lead investigator and director of the Mayo Clinic's Cardiometabolic Program, "Visceral (belly) fat has been found to be more metabolically active. It produces more changes in cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar. However, people who have fat mostly in other locations in the body, specifically the legs and buttocks, don't show this increased risk."

There is a way to determine your risk by looking at your waist to hip ratio or WHR. Using the WHR you can determine whether or not you are more at risk for developing serious diseases. It's

all about the distribution of fat. You can calculate your WHR by first getting your waist size by measuring with a tape measure at the smallest point. Get your hip measurement by putting the tape measure around the widest part of the hips. Divide the waist circumference by the hip circumference.

Here are some of the indicators for your measurements:

Male: WHR close to 0.9 — Ideal. Very low health risk.

Female: WHR close to 0.7 — Ideal. Very low health risk.

Male: WHR 0.95 or less — Low health risk.

Female: WHR 0.90 or below — Low health risk.

Male: WHR 0.6 to 1.0 — Moderate health risk.

Female: WHR 0.81 to 0.85 — Moderate health risk.

Male: WHR 1-plus — High health risk.

Female: WHR 0.85-plus — High health risk.

The WHR is an indicator, not a certainty. However, it makes good health sense to take the WHR test. Armed with this knowledge, you can start working on being your best healthy self. **NOW**

**Sources:**

<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/womens-health/articles/2011/05/02/belly-fat-43-heart-disease-can-be-deadly-study>

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/223919.php>

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

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## Through November

Food for Fees, DeSoto library. Clear overdue library fees: \$1/item (not applicable to replacement fees for damaged/lost items). Funds and donations distributed by the DeSoto Food Pantry to local needy families. Unopened, non-perishable, undamaged, unexpired, labeled items: canned soups, fruits, vegetables, (NO tomato sauce/paste), meats (chicken, Spam, Vienna Sausages, NO tuna), pasta. Boxed pasta, rice, cereal (12-oz. boxes or larger), baking mixes. Also: laundry detergent, dishwashing liquid, toothpaste, shampoo, deodorant. No home-baked/canned items. No glass containers or candy. (972) 230-9665.

## November 2

Dia de los Muertos: 6:30 p.m., outdoor amphitheater at Cedar Hill library. Celebrate and learn about this Mexican holiday that focuses on gatherings of family and friends to remember friends and family members who have died.

## November 4, 18

Credit Boot Camp (adults 18 and up): 6:00 p.m., DS library. Christi Bell, motivational speaker, teaches about personal finance, creating wealth and living well, joined by Tiana Long, senior field trainer with Financial Education Services. Registration required at library or (972) 230-9661.

## November 6, 7

Over the Edge: **6:** 4:00-7:00 p.m.; **7:** 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.: Oak Cliff Bank Tower. Event presented by Special Olympics Texas and Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Texas. Unleash your inner superhero! Rappel down a 15 story building to support more than 53,446 Special Olympics Texas athletes! Extreme adventure with extreme community impact. Kristie Crone (kcrone@sotx.org), Doug Ray (dray@sotx.org), Steven Schuh (sschuh@sotx.org) or (214) 943-9981. [www.sotx.org/overtheedge](http://www.sotx.org/overtheedge).

Waxahachie's Old Fashioned Singing Project presents "Heaven's Front Porch": **Friday,** 8:00 p.m., **Saturday,** 3:00 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium, Getzender Park, Waxahachie. Tickets will be available at the door. For more information, visit [www.waxaofs.com](http://www.waxaofs.com).

## November 7

Holiday Craft Bazaar: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., First Christian Church Duncanville, 203 S. Main St. Sponsored by Disciples Women. (972) 298-2166.

## November 7, 14

Fall Festivals of Cultures: 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., International Museum of Cultures, 411 U.S. 67 Frontage Rd., Duncanville. Each event includes the museum's special

collections, guest speaker, craft activities for the children, food, music and dance from specific cultures. Cost: adults/\$5; school-age children/free. Nov. **7:** American Indian; **14:** Children around the world.

## November 8

Bishop Dunne Catholic School Open House: 1:00-3:30 p.m., 3900 Rugged Dr., Dallas. (214) 339-6561.

## November 9

Family Fun Night: 6:30 p.m., Cedar Hill library. Featuring Native American culture.

## November 10

Methodist Charlton Auxiliary: 12:30 p.m., auditorium, Charlton Methodist. Medical Center visitors are welcome to join the potluck lunch where we will discuss holiday decorating ideas.

## November 10, 20

Smart Money Boot Camp (ages 10-12): 6:00 p.m., DS library. Christi Bell talks about how money work and other topics. Registration required at library or (972) 230-9661.

## November 12

Smart Money Boot Camp (ages 13-18): 6:00 p.m., DS library. Christi Bell talks about how money work and other topics. Registration required at library or (972) 230-9661.

## November 12 — 14, 19 — 21

*Rehearsal for Murder* written by Richard Levinson and William Link, directed by Elisa Guse: 8:00 p.m., Duncanville Community Theatre. Reservations recommended: (972) 780-5707. [www.dctheatre.org](http://www.dctheatre.org).

## November 13 — 15

Waxahachie WWII Weekend & Reenactment: downtown Waxahachie. The "big battle" reenactment will be at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday.

## November 14

Make It! @ Your Library: 1:00 p.m., CH library. Scroll saw demo — discover how to get started with wood scrolling. (972) 291-7323.

The Cruisers Club Car Show and Toy Drive: 2:00-5:00 p.m., Cancuns, 273 W. Ovilla Rd., Red Oak. Bring toys or monetary donations for Children's Health at Parkland. Silent auction features clocks made by a member.

## November 18

Show Me the Money!: 6:30 p.m., CH library. Financial aid planning workshop for teens. (972) 291-7323.

## November 19

Congestive Heart Failure Workshop: 3:00

p.m., Methodist Charlton Medical Center. For anyone living with heart failure: nutritional ideas, answers to medical questions, physical activity options, recognizing depression and more. (214) 947-9694.

STAAR Testing Success Parent Workshop: 6:30 p.m., CH library. (972) 291-7323.

## November 20

Senior Dance, featuring 92nd Roadhouse (C&W): 7:00-9:30 p.m., Hopkins Senior Center, 206 James Collins Blvd, Duncanville. Cost: \$5. (972) 298-0667.

## November 20, 21

Habitat for Humanity Festival of Trees: 5:00-9:00 p.m., **Friday;** 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., **Saturday,** Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 N. Grand Ave. For more information, email [elliscountynhfh@gmail.com](mailto:elliscountynhfh@gmail.com).

## November 21

Habitat for Humanity Home Ownership Program: 11:00 a.m. (972) 291-7323.

T.A.G. (Teen Advisory Group for 7th-12th graders): 3:30 p.m., DV library. Earn community service hours by sharing your views about the teen area of the library. (972) 780-5052.

## November 23

Crafternoons: 1:00 p.m., CH library. (972) 291-7323.

## November 24

Movie Day: 1:00 p.m., CH library. *Finding Nemo*. (972) 291-7323.

## November 25

Lego Mania: 1:00 p.m., CH library (972) 291-7323.

## December 4

Wrap-It-Up Vendor Fair fundraising event for the Methodist Charlton Auxiliary: 8:00a.m.-4:30 p.m., Methodist Charlton Hospital Lobby. Reservations for vendors: Sarah Drew-Watson: (214) 947-7875 or Andrea Young: (214) 542-7452.

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [beverly.shay@nowmagazines.com](mailto:beverly.shay@nowmagazines.com).*

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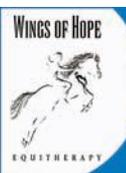
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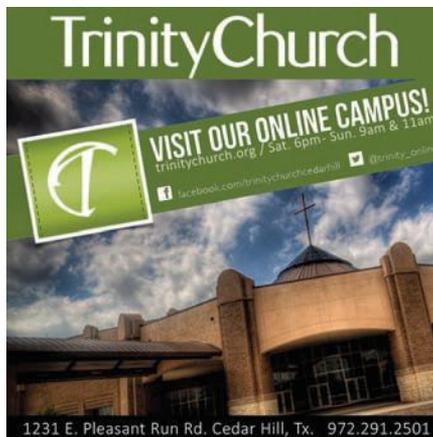
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## In the Kitchen With Michael Douglas and Kevin Morrow

— *By Beverly Shay*

“A man has to eat, so he might as well eat well,” shared pitmaster Michael Douglas. He perfected the art of Texas barbecue by watching YouTube videos and loves smoking with various types of wood. “The standard for Central Texas-style barbecue is post oak,” he shared, remembering trips with his grandpa to Lockhart, Texas. While he prepares the meat, his friend, Kevin Morrow, a former chef, makes the sides.

Kevin, known as a culinary artist, remarked, “I’d rather be in the kitchen with friends. That’s where the magic happens.” Kevin uses well-seasoned, cast-iron skillets and clay soup pots. “It’s less about the presentation and more about the eating now,” he admitted. Kevin enjoys going to friends’ kitchens and cooking up a meal from what they have on hand. **NOW**

### Smoked Brined Turkey

*Poultry Brine:*

- 1 gallon water**
- 1 cup coarse kosher salt**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 1/2 cup brown sugar**
- 1/2 cup honey**
- 3/4 cup soy sauce**
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar**
- 4 Tbsp. black pepper**
- 3-4 Tbsp. garlic, chopped**
- 1 Tbsp. allspice**
- 2 10-lb. bags ice**
- Turkey**
- Olive oil**
- Barbecue seasoning of your choice**
- Apple wood**

- 1. For brine:** Heat water with salt and sugars, until all is dissolved. Add next 6 ingredients and cool.
- 2.** Pour brine over 1 bag of ice in a cooler. Submerge turkey completely. To keep turkey submerged, place the second (unopened) bag of ice on the turkey.
- 3.** Brine turkey for up to 48 hours, flipping turkey every 6-8 hours.
- 4. To cook turkey:** Rinse turkey thoroughly. Coat the skin with olive oil and rub turkey, inside and out, with your favorite barbecue seasoning.
- 5.** Prepare smoker for steady temperature of 275 F with apple wood. Cook turkey to an internal temperature of 165 F at the thickest part of the thigh.
- 6.** Remove the turkey from the smoker; tent the bird with foil, and let it rest for 30 minutes before slicing.

### Texas Smoked Prime Rib

- 1/2 cup coarse kosher salt**
- 1/2 cup coarse mesh black pepper**
- 1 Tbsp. each: garlic powder, onion powder and chili powder**
- 1 tsp. each: cayenne pepper and cumin**
- Olive oil**
- 1 USDA prime grade rib roast (with or without bone)**

- 1.** In a bowl, mix dry ingredients into a rub.
- 2.** Oil roast thoroughly; cover entire roast liberally with the rub.
- 3.** Prepare smoker for steady cooking temperature of 275 F with 75 percent oak and 25 percent mesquite wood. Cook to 135 F at centermost thickest part of the meat.
- 4.** Remove from smoker; tent roast with foil for 20-30 minutes before slicing.

### Au Gratin Potatoes With Caramelized Onions

- 2 lbs. red new potatoes**
- 1 large red onion, finely chopped**
- 1 stick butter (divided use)**
- 2 cups breadcrumbs**
- 1/2 qt. heavy cream**
- 3 lbs. cheddar cheese, grated**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**

- 1.** Slice potatoes as thin as possible. Boil in water until slightly tender, but not falling apart, for about 35-40 minutes. Drain water.
- 2.** Sauté onion in half a stick of butter until very brown and caramelized. Set aside.
- 3.** Melt remaining butter; mix melted butter with breadcrumbs.
- 4.** In a saucepan, heat cream to almost boiling; blend cheese in gradually until melted and smooth, stirring constantly. Add salt and pepper to taste.
- 5.** In a 13x9-inch baking dish, layer potatoes, cheese sauce and onion until dish is 3/4-full. Cover with foil and bake at 350 F for 1 hour. Remove foil, top with breadcrumbs and bake uncovered for 15 minutes, or until browned. (Add additional cheese if desired). Let set for 20 minutes, so it won’t be soupy. (May substitute macaroni for potatoes.)

**To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).**

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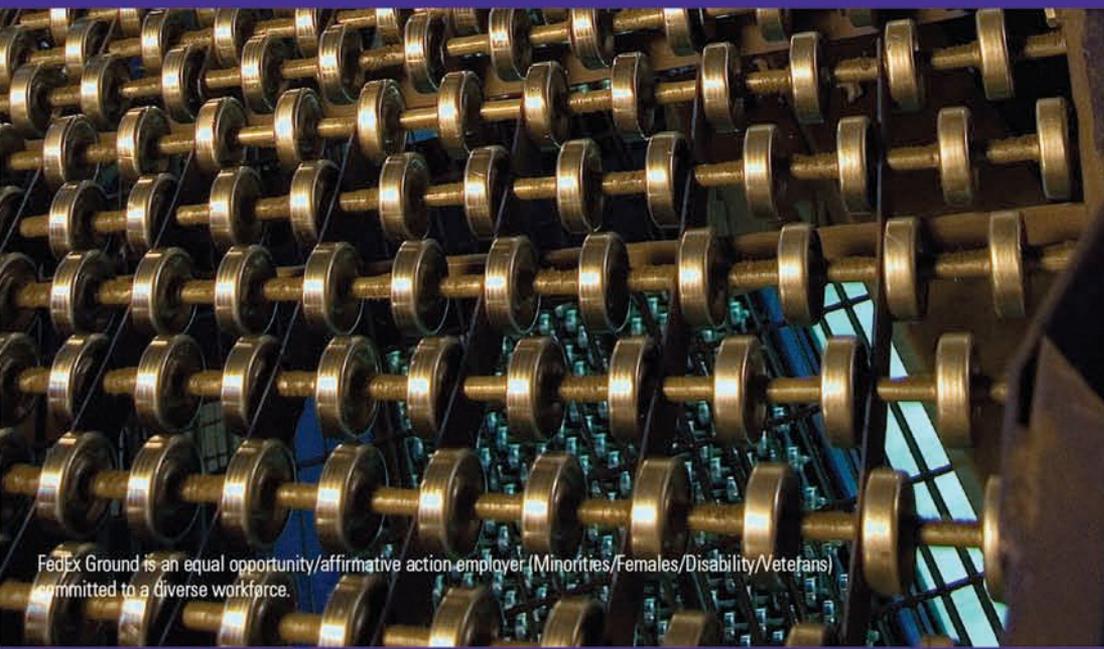
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