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M A G A Z I N E

NOVEMBER 2024

## On the RISE

Special Education  
is Tangela Mason's  
specialty

2024 Holiday  
Shopping Guide

In the Kitchen With  
Kim Elder

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

Featured Business:  
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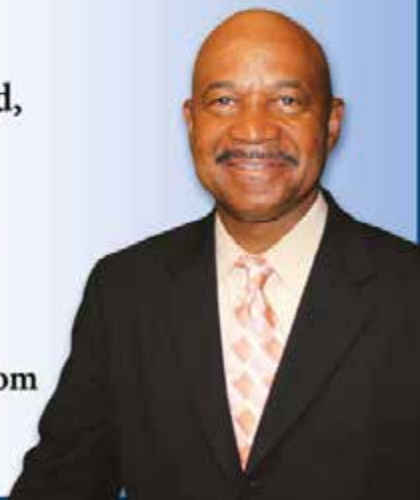
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ON THE COVER



Longtime educator Tangela Mason helps students with intellectual or developmental disabilities succeed.

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

*Gratitude and attitude ...*

Whether you consider Thanksgiving an opportunity to acknowledge the abundance in your life from one year to the next, or the chance to understand the myths vs. facts of the holiday's history, November is a time when many of us emphasize gratitude. We can certainly be thankful that learning from the past enables us to do better in the future (although the current political climate may have us feeling this is not true). If nothing else, we can reflect on our own struggles and the lessons learned from them. Because when we know better, we do better, right?

In the spirit of giving thanks for history's and life's lessons, here are some ways to be mindful this November. 1) Make a point of noticing each day one small thing that brings you joy: Pulling out your favorite cool-weather sweatshirt. A walk on a bright autumn day. That first sip of pumpkin-spiced latte. 2) Leave a thank-you note for those who impact you: The donut shop owner who bags your order before you're in the door. The co-worker always ready with a joke. The teacher who noticed your child struggling. 3) Set a family goal of no complaining and gently redirect one another when you do. Being mindful is the first step in overcoming negative thoughts.

Lastly, make a point to learn from your mistakes, past and present. Discuss with a trusted friend or your family how those choices impacted you, and remember how you grew from those situations. After all, acknowledging our history and learning those lessons is how we avoid repeating them. And having that chance is something to be thankful for.

*More than platitudes!*



*Angel*

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# On the RISE

— By Angel Morris

*Tangela Mason never backs down from a challenge, a trait that made her the perfect choice to teach the adult RISE program at Red Oak High School. RISE — Reaching Individual Success and Experiences — helps adult students (age 18-22) with intellectual or developmental disabilities assimilate into everyday life outside of school. “I came to Red Oak to teach 3- and 4-year-olds, but a year later, I was asked by the Specialized Learning leadership team about expanding the department’s RISE program and, of course, I was interested!” Tangela noted.*

Before joining Red Oak ISD four years ago, Tangela had a 20-plus year career in Cedar Hill ISD’s Special Education Department. “I had the opportunity to work with all grades and with students of various ability levels,” she recalled. “But I began feeling like I needed a change, and I had to listen to the call.”

Tangela’s experience in education dates back to college in the 1980s. “I worked for three years on my teaching degree, but stopped to be a wife and mother,” she outlined.

Once her three children — daughter, Ebony, and sons, Stephen and Kentrel, were grown, and after the unexpected death of her husband in 2002 — Tangela completed her Bachelor of Arts and Science with a minor in Disciplinary Studies at Dallas Baptist University. “Then my daughter challenged me to see if she or I could complete a master’s degree first, so I enrolled at Concordia University Texas and finished in 2014 with a Master of Education,” Tangela stated.

Tangela’s tenacity works in the RISE program’s favor. “I’m a strong believer in helping my students to become independent and productive citizens, but for developmentally disadvantaged young adults, this requires a lot of support from the community,” Tangela explained. “Part of my role with RISE is encouraging the partnerships that help my students succeed. I really have to advocate for businesses and organizations to give these students a chance.

“This means educating the community on the capacity of my students and getting businesses to buy into supporting them with jobs and other opportunities,” Tangela continued.

Students participating in the RISE program are taken to experience typical activities, such as shopping, eating in local restaurants, accessing resources like the library, recreation center and other adult services. They also study money and learning to budget, interview skills and preparing job applications. “We are currently volunteering and partnering with Walgreens in Red Oak, a thrift store in Midlothian, an RV-park in Palmer and Applebee’s in Waxahachie,” Tangela listed.



**“Seeing my young adults thrive and having the community embrace them and join in their growth has been so rewarding.”**



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To contribute in her home city of Cedar Hill, Tangela is a citizen volunteer for the fire department and sits on the board of the local food pantry. In Red Oak, she gets involved with Chamber of Commerce events and Special Olympics. "Anything I can do that spreads information about RISE is important," she shared.

The program is a great opportunity for the community to work collaboratively with the school district by welcoming adults with disabilities as employees, volunteers and patrons, Tangela noted. Along with building community relationships, Tangela had



to gain the trust of the parents of her students. "This was uncharted territory when things started. Parents had to entrust me to provide safety and security in this new journey for their students. But they began to see their students would develop the skills they would need to be productive citizens and live more independently.

"I'm very passionate about giving my students this chance to showcase their many, sometimes overlooked, talents, and I will continue to advocate for them," Tangela added. "I encourage the community to partner with me and to

share in the joy that the RISE program can bring to Red Oak and its residents."

As with many school programs, more funding would help expand RISE. "Finding funding to grow the program and time to coordinate partnerships continue to be challenges, so I encourage anyone who wants to learn how to participate to reach out to me," Tangela said.

Meeting the needs of her students can be demanding, and Tangela prioritizes reading, daily walks and travel with family when time allows, all of which bring her peace of mind. She said she has to be her best to best serve her students.

"Seeing my young adults thrive and having the community embrace them and join in their growth has been so rewarding," Tangela admitted. "It's not only a personal achievement for me, but it gives me the opportunity for self-discovery. After all, my students aren't the only ones who should always be aiming to learn new things!" **NOW**

*Editor's Note: To learn more about partnering with RISE, email [Tangela.Mason@redoakisd.org](mailto:Tangela.Mason@redoakisd.org)*

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Dr. Allala is a graduate of the Texas A&M School of Dentistry. "When I started there, it was still Baylor. My diploma has both names on it," she recalled. "I specialize in oral surgery, and we're really good at it. I'm nothing without my team. We do everything in dentistry. I like being well rounded. I enjoy being an overachiever, so I'm constantly taking continuing education, keeping up with all the

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**"I LIKE BEING WELL ROUNDED. I ENJOY BEING AN OVERACHIEVER, SO I'M CONSTANTLY TAKING CONTINUING EDUCATION, KEEPING UP WITH ALL THE NEWEST TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGY."**

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BusinessNOW

# Gravy and More

— By Angel Morris

**Gravy and More**  
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Red Oak, TX  
(469) 405-7757  
[www.gravyandmore.com](http://www.gravyandmore.com)  
[eat@gravyandmore.com](mailto:eat@gravyandmore.com)  
Facebook & Instagram: @gravyandmore

**Hours:** Monday-Saturday: 6:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

If you're longing for a taste of home, brother-sister duo Michelle Bezanilla and Phillip Hughes invite you to their restaurant, Gravy and More. Michelle and Phillip bring decades of experience to the table, both having started in the restaurant industry as teenagers. "Michelle's first job was at a little family restaurant, where she ended up training other staff because she took her job seriously,"



Phillip recalled. "I started out washing dishes and bussing tables, then chose the management path, working with companies like Landry's, Houston's, Yard House and Sysco."

The siblings held corporate careers for many years, when Phillip discovered the vacancy of a former restaurant building in Red Oak last year. "We were looking in the greater DFW area but wanted something with a hometown feel," Phillip noted. "My kids attend ROISD, and we love this community. Not to mention my commute to the building is seven minutes, so I was all in."

Open since June 1, 2023, Gravy and More serves breakfast and lunch, featuring comfort favorites like biscuits and gravy, steak and eggs, country fried steak, pancakes and waffles, along with other traditional breakfast fair. "Our signature dish is made from scratch daily, with bacon, sausage, ground beef, and sautéed



onions mixed in a perfectly seasoned creamy gravy served over humongous biscuits,” Phillip described. “For lunch, you’ll find meatloaf, along with burgers, sandwiches and salads. We feature a 12-ounce corned beef Reuben sandwich served hot with a choice of side item like fried pickles or cheese curds or our delicious French fries and freshly made coleslaw.”

Phillip credits Michelle with naming the restaurant and with its most unique menu item. “I loved cooking from an early age and perfected biscuits and gravy after many years of testing different scratch recipes, so Gravy and More was born,” he said. “In addition to the restaurant name, Michelle’s greatest contribution is the delicious zucchini bread we serve, a treasured family recipe that she learned in her youth.”

As former owners of a bakery in their hometown of Santa Clarita, California, the siblings offer a variety of other loaf flavors, as well, plus fresh baked cookies, all adding to the restaurant’s down-home vibe. “Besides great quality and service, you’ll enjoy the hoppin’ atmosphere with loud music — from classic rock to ‘80s pop to the divas,” Phillip described. “And the fact that we’re family-owned will always be evident, with us owners visiting diners’ tables to see if there’s anything we can do better and our kids here helping out.”

While Phillip said Gravy and More is “not the cheapest outfit in town,” he promises “enormous portions” with quality ingredients and flavor. “Appetizers range from \$5-\$13. Most breakfasts are in the \$11-\$17 range, and most people have found that we are thrilled to split items for them,” Phillip explained.

Gravy and More supports ROISD band and sports, as well as a local car club, and donates to the Chamber of Commerce scholarship fund. They will further add to the community with Zucchs, at the corner of Hwy. 342 and Eagle Drive, featuring lunch and dinner entrées, salads and desserts.

“Ultimately, we want to offer a great experience with quality food folks can appreciate,” Phillip said. “And we will likely always be closed on Sundays. Family day.” **NOW**

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## Zoomed In: Eli Morales

By Angel Morris

While volunteering during a community trash cleanup along Cockrell Hill Road in Ovilla, Eli Morales noticed a ring amongst the brush. Searching for its owners, cleanup organizers posted a photo of the ring — which bore the Gryphons Motorcycle Club of Ellis County insignia — on Facebook. “Mr. Darrell Nichols let me know he had been in a motorcycle accident a year ago on Cockrell Hill Road. He lost his ring during the accident,” Ovilla City Council Mayor Pro Tem Kimberly Case explained.

“When I found it, I didn’t think much about it, but we talked about getting it back to its owner, and I thought that would be cool,” Eli said.

Darrell was so pleased, he gave Eli a reward and remarked, “There is still good in the world.”



*Staffers welcome guests to B&B Theatres Red Oak.*



*Aaliyah Edwards and Kinslee Perkins win the 10U Division of the National Championship Sports MVP Showcase that was hosted recently in Red Oak.*



*Bombardier, presenting sponsor for the Red Oak Area Chamber of Commerce Founders Day Festival, provided its Challenger 650 fuselage for event goers to tour.*



*Mayor Sonja A. Brown introduces Sylvia Craddock, who incorporated Glenn Heights with her husband in 1969, at the city’s 55th anniversary celebration.*





Musician Quentin Moore performs for Glenn Heights' residents.



Shayla Ingram and Crystal Butcher work the Red Oak Police Department booth at National Night Out.



Kamden Luce displays one of the eight boxes of World's Finest Chocolate candy he sold for the Red Oak Middle School fundraiser.

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# CookingNOW *In the Kitchen With* KIM ELDER

— By Angel Morris



Kim Elder became interested in cooking as a girl, spending time with her grandmother. “I remember standing in a chair to use the mixer as my grandmother gave instructions,” Kim recalled. “Afterward, I looked at all the dishes we had to clean. It was a comical, bittersweet moment ... those dishes weren’t going to clean themselves!”

Her grandmother’s 7UP Pound Cake is a favorite to this day. “I love seeing the reactions on each customer’s face when they taste it,” said Kim, who started her own bakery, Sweeties in a Cup, after surviving breast cancer. “I was baking too much, and someone had to enjoy it!”

Kim enjoys watching football and track after raising three sons, who were active in sports. “I also love shopping,” she admitted. “Especially for a good pair of shoes. They just have to be stylish and ‘Sweetie’ approved!” **NOW**

## 7UP Pound Cake

*Cake:*

**3 sticks butter, room temperature**  
**3 cups sugar**  
**5 eggs, room temperature**  
**3 cups flour**  
**2 Tbsp. lemon flavor**  
**3/4 cup 7UP**

*Glaze (optional):*

**2 cups powdered sugar**  
**1 tsp. vanilla flavor**

**3 Tbsp. lemon juice**  
**1/4 cup 7UP**

**1.** For cake: Preheat the oven to 325 F. Cream the butter and sugar until creamy.  
**2.** Add the eggs, mixing in one at a time.  
**3.** Add the flour, lemon flavor and 7UP; mix for 2 minutes. (Do not overmix.)  
**4.** Pour the batter into a well-greased Bundt pan. Bake 1 hour and 15 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted comes out clean. Let the cake stand in the pan for about 5 minutes. Turn the cake over on a plate or platter, and remove the pan.

**5.** For glaze (optional): Mix all the ingredients until smooth. Drizzle the glaze over the cooled cake.

## Pistachio Salad

**1 3.4-oz. pkg. pistachio Jello-O instant pudding mix**  
**1 20-oz. can crushed pineapple**  
**1 1/2 cups miniature marshmallows**  
**1/2 cup pecans, chopped**  
**1 8-oz. container Cool Whip, thawed**

**1.** Combine the pudding mix, pineapple, marshmallows and pecans in a large bowl; mix well.

**2.** Blend in the Cool Whip; chill until ready to serve.

## Death By Chocolate

**1 16.3-oz. box brownie mix, plus ingredients per box instructions**  
**10 oz. Heath or Skor candy bars (about 10 candy bars)**  
**3 3.9-oz. boxes Jell-O chocolate mousse mix or pudding, prepared per box instructions**  
**1 16-oz. container Cool Whip**

**1.** Prepare the brownies per box instructions; set aside to cool.



2. Break up the candy bars. Break up the cooled brownies; put half of the brownies in a large glass bowl or casserole dish.
3. Cover the brownies with half of the mousse and half of the whipped topping. Then add half of the crushed candy. Repeat layers with the remaining ingredients. Refrigerate and enjoy when ready!

### Decadent Fudge Cake

*Two kinds of chocolate drizzles make this cake stand out on any dessert spread.*

- 1 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 1/2 cups flour
- 1 1/2 cups semisweet chocolate morsels (divided use)
- 2 4-oz. bars sweet baking chocolate, melted and cooled
- 1/3 cup chocolate syrup
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 4 oz. white chocolate, chopped
- 2 Tbsp., plus 2 tsp. shortening (divided use)

1. Preheat the oven to 300 F. Heavily grease and flour a 10-inch Bundt pan.
2. Cream the butter in a large bowl; gradually add the sugar, beating well at medium speed of an electric mixer.
3. Add the eggs, 1 at a time, beating after each addition.
4. Dissolve the soda in the buttermilk, stirring well. Add to the creamed mixture, alternating with the flour, beginning and ending with the flour.
5. Add 1 cup of the morsels, melted chocolate, chocolate syrup and vanilla, stirring just until blended.
6. Spoon the batter into the prepared pan. Bake for 1 hour and 25-30 minutes, or until the cake springs back when touched. Invert the cake immediately onto a serving plate; let cool completely.
7. Combine the white chocolate and 2 Tbsp. shortening in the top of a double boiler. Bring the water to a boil. Reduce the heat to low, cooking until the mixture is melted and smooth. Drizzle the melted white chocolate mixture over the cooled cake.
8. Melt the remaining morsels and shortening in a small saucepan over low heat, stirring until smooth. Let cool. Drizzle over the white chocolate on the cake.

To search for more great recipes from any of the 9 NOW Magazines publications, visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).



### North Ellis Co. NOW Scavenger Hunt



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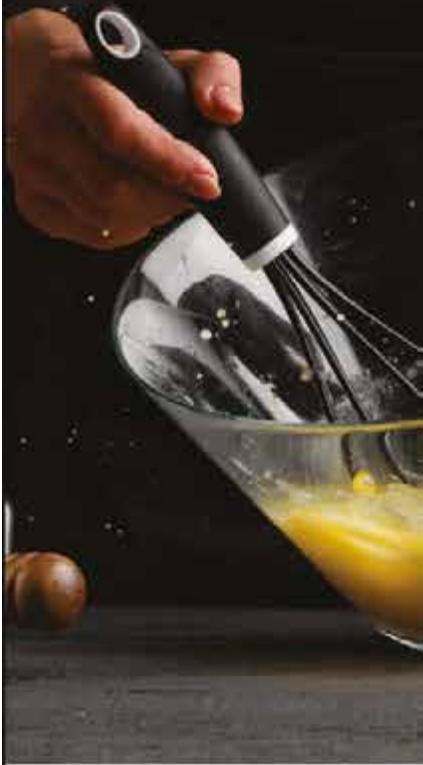
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# Happy THANKSGIVING NOVEMBER

Some events may have been cancelled or rescheduled while we were at press.  
Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

11/1

## **Dia de los Muertos Program:**

Local eateries compete for best chips, salsa and tacos based on people's choice. Crafts and musical performance by Red Oak Music's mariachi band. 5:00-7:30 p.m., city of Red Oak Community Room, 101 S. Live Oak St. Learn more at [www.redoaktx.org](http://www.redoaktx.org) under Parks Events.

11/2

## **Emergency Preparedness Workshop:**

Learn crucial tips on food and water safety, preparing your home for weather disasters, packing a go-bag and creating an emergency kit for your pets.

10:00 a.m.-noon, Waxahachie Police Department, 630 Farley St., Waxahachie. To register, contact Danae Hicks at (972) 825-5175 or [danae.hicks@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:danae.hicks@ag.tamu.edu).

11/9

## **Christmas Market:**

ROHS Annual Special Needs Prom fundraiser. Free admission, vendors, silent auctions, pictures with Santa for donation. 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., ROHS Cafeteria, 220 TX-342.

## **Flag Retirement Ceremony:**

Flags retired with grace. 2:00-5:00 p.m., VFW Post 3894, 1405 N. I-35, Waxahachie. Contact Laura Bell Laughlin at (817) 925-6754 for more details. A Toys for Tots

collection box will also be at the Post throughout November. Contact Kelly Longbine at (214) 802-6014 with any questions.

## **Red Oak Area Chamber Gala:**

Silent and live auctions. 6:00-10:00 p.m., Red Oak Municipal Building, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. Register at <https://redoakchamber.chambermaster.com/eventregistration/register/5493>.

11/14

## **Ellis Christian Women's Job Corps' Graduation:**

The Fall 2024 Class celebrates completing the free 12-week training program that includes résumé writing,

interviewing, computers, money management and Bible study. Learn how the program impacts women and their families. 7:00 p.m., One Church, 6060 FM 1387 Midlothian. The next session begins 1/27/2025. Learn more at [elliswcjclife.com](http://elliswcjclife.com).

11/16

## **Meet the Author:**

Red Oak Friends of the Library present Coach Ricardo Miller who wrote *Effective Living*. 2:00-4:00 p.m., Red Oak Library, 101 S. Live Oak St.

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

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