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JANUARY 2014



Pondering and Visiting

At Home With Denny
and Tammie Hoffart

Man on a Mission

R.G. Huff's escape valve becomes a
musical memory for others

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ON THE COVER



The Old Fashioned Singing Project keeps brush arbor music alive.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

CONTENTS

January 2014 • Volume II, Issue I



8 Man on a Mission
Old Fashioned Singing Project evokes many emotions.

18 Making Resolutions Stick
Stay on track to reach your weight-loss goals with these small steps.

28 Pondering and Visiting
At Home With Denny and Tammie Hoffart.

36 You Are Their Voice
Rhodie Rawls believes in fighting for others.

44 Jim Being Jim
Jim Goss defines retirement in a different way than others.



52 BusinessNOW
54 Around TownNOW
56 FinanceNOW
59 HealthNOW
60 CookingNOW

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Editor's Note

Here's to your new beginnings!

Even though it's a new year with new beginnings for most, life at my Ponderosa remains the same. We're enjoying Mother's company, but we're learning to play cards with her only when we want to feel like the biggest loser. Free time is still spent loving on my grandsons. They don't mind my loud, quirky personality. Isn't that the way grandmothers are supposed to behave? If not, please don't tell me. I like being their loud, quirky granny.

Resolutions play a big part in the coming year for so many. Not me! I admit I'm weak when it comes to a juicy burger and fries. Or just maybe my taste buds and my sense of smell are at fault when I blow a diet or exercise program. The voices in my head have nothing to do with it, right?

All of us at NOW Magazines wish you a Happy New Year!

Sandra

Sandra Strong
WaxahachieNOW Editor
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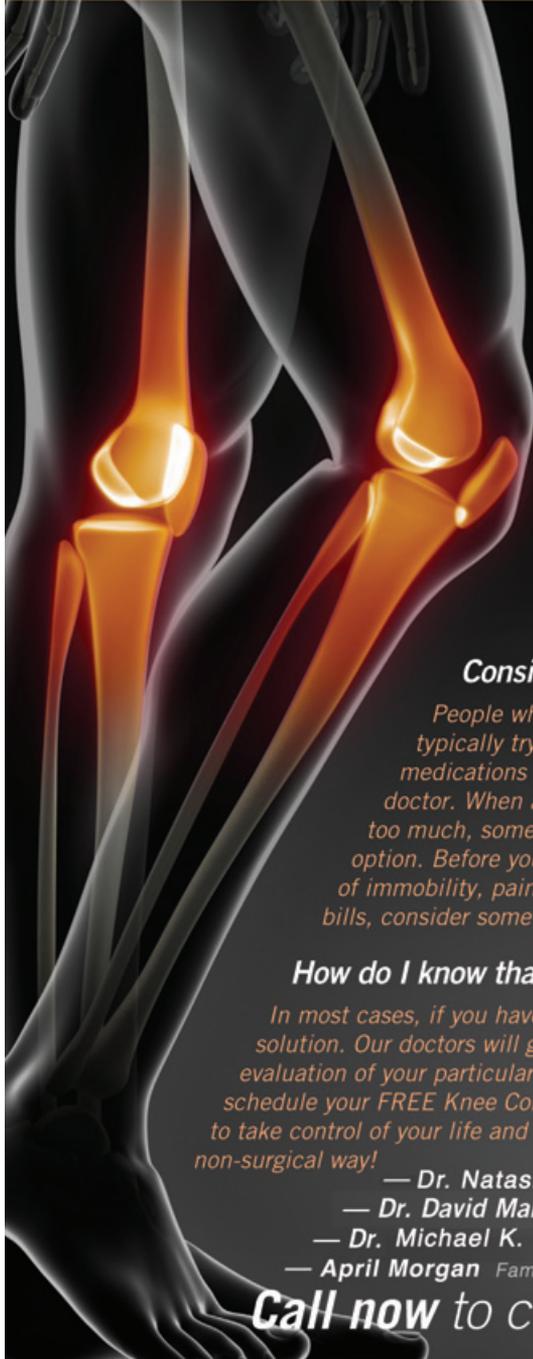
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- Have you had a direct blow to the knee from a fall?

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Man on a Miss



Music evokes so many emotions — laughter, tears and more laughter laced with tears. At least that's how R.G. Huff sees things from the stage of the Chautauqua Auditorium. "One minute, the audience will be laughing out loud," said R.G., artistic director behind Waxahachie's Old Fashioned Singing Project. "And then suddenly, those same individuals will start crying."

The staged musical begins its fourth year this coming March, but as R.G. looks back on the previous years, he has come to realize his idea has been worth the full-time, year-round commitment it takes to present six shows a year. "I had been dreaming of something like this for a long time," he admitted. "On Mother's Day four-and-a-half years ago, I was driving

through Getzendaner Park when I had a 'light bulb' moment. I knew the Chautauqua Auditorium would be the perfect venue for the Old Fashioned Singing Project." After speaking with a representative from the city and learning the historic auditorium could be rented for just such a production, R.G. hit the ground running, and he hasn't looked back since.

To fully understand R.G.'s love for music, people and the emotion they can elicit, one must go back to the time when R.G. was just a young man. He grew up as an only child in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, where his dad was a truck driver and his mom was a first-grade teacher. He went to high school with Dolly Parton and her younger sister, Stella, with whom he is still close friends today. "I cut my musical teeth on southern congregational songs," R.G. readily admitted. "My passion began with brush arbor music." This type of music has its roots in the old brush arbor church revival meetings. A trestle or arbor would be covered with brush from the neighboring field. This covering shaded the area, making it comfortable for those who

ion

— By Sandra Strong



“The goal has always been to keep the history of brush arbor music alive, while sharing the charm of Waxahachie with out-of-towners.”

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gathered to sing and fellowship. "It was a simpler time," he added.

So it comes as no surprise that when R.G. was a teenager in the final year of high school, he felt the call of God on his life. He knew he had been given the right gifts to follow the call. "I had a good sense of humor, and I'm very creative," he admitted. "I knew these two qualities would work well in ministering to others." At 18, R.G. told his parents he wanted to go into the ministry. Although his dad wanted him to go where the money was, both his parents supported him fully once they realized how serious he was.

Not long after graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, R.G. found his way to Waxahachie as the minister of music at First Baptist Waxahachie. Many of the still local, long-time residents remember his Christmas pageant productions, which received rave reviews in the mid-'70s through

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the mid-'80s. The quality and attention to detail found in these productions gave him the credible reputation he needed to create Waxahachie's Old Fashioned Singing Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of historical congregational singing, especially in the southern American states.

The staged productions are the result of R.G.'s extensive research, as well as his passion for music. Songs chosen for the productions are arranged for a



12-voice vocal ensemble and sung to live piano accompaniment by longtime member Melinda Boyd. R.G.'s work ethic is beyond strong, and still to this day he enjoys applying his creativity to whatever he puts his mind to. The singing project is no exception. "Although I am a traditionalist, I don't subscribe to doing things the way they've always been done," R.G. explained. "The buzz-phrases 'thinking outside the box' and 'paradigm shift' were a part of my approach long before I ever heard them."

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R.G. admitted the initial year was one filled with many ups and downs, but he knew he was on the right track after he received reassurance from the community at large. “The goal has always been to keep the history of brush arbor music alive, while sharing the charm of Waxahachie with out-of-towners,” he shared. “First and foremost, I wanted it to be spiritually entertaining. Secondly, I wanted to showcase the Waxahachie community and all it has to offer those who visit, as well as those who call it home.”

The show’s title, *Heaven’s Front Porch*, will remain the same this year. “The title has gotten so much tread,” R.G. stated. “A lot of the music and outline will be the same, but the plot will most definitely change.” The cast, made up solely of volunteers, share their own personal stories throughout the production. “All the stories are true,” R.G. said. “Some are funny. Some are poignant. And some are both. The stories will change from year-to-year, but the emotions remain the same.”

The programs, designed by R.G., are also a labor of great love. Each song listed is followed by the year they were published. The oldest, “On Jordan’s Stormy Banks,” dates back to 1787. R.G. wrote the lyrics and composed the music to two of the songs that were written exclusively for the Old Fashioned Singing Project — “The Old Fashioned Singing” and “Heaven’s Front Porch.” The many others are beloved hymns or songs, which R.G. found through extensive research to have first appeared in print prior to 1950.

R.G., as evidenced by the Old Fashioned Singing Project’s growth, has also been blessed with the gifts of teaching and administration, which have been applied throughout his long

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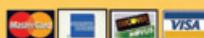
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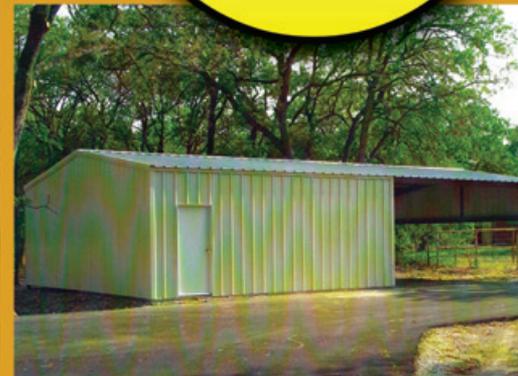
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Chett Haynes, minister of music at First Baptist Waxahachie, and R.G. Huff, sing in harmony.



career in the ministry. The board of directors, made up of Chett Haynes, Stu Dorsey, Joan Morton, Linda Robbins and Deborah Tidwell, is more than happy to have him at the helm of the organization. "I admit, I'm not a strong singer or keyboard person," R.G. confessed with a smile. "My gifts are found on the motivational scale. A college professor once said, 'If a brick wall could match pitch, R.G. could convince it to sing ... and enjoy it.'"

Staying active and busy beyond the singing project is something R.G. is passionate about, too. He continues to hone his teaching skills as an educator at Dallas Baptist University and on the Midlothian campus of Navarro College. "While I am 63 years old, I don't think of myself as an AARP member, even though I am! The person in this mirror isn't as old as he appears."

R.G. still has more energy than even he knows what to do with. But rest assured, between his present ventures and the journeys he has yet to dream up with Carlita, his wife of 21 years, he will always be a musically inclined man on a ministerial mission. "My escape valve," he said, "becomes a musical memory for others."

*Editor's Note: Visit www.waxaofs.com for more details about the coming year. **NOW***

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MAKING

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STICK

— By Jill Rose

Be realistic.

With the New Year comes a clean slate and a chance to start over. Bad habits and lifestyle choices can be altered with resolutions and goals, and the not-so-great living of the last few months slowly becomes a memory. Whether you want to work out or eat healthier, resolutions can help change your life for the better. Follow these simple guidelines, and this year your healthier resolutions may stick.

You have probably made hundreds of yearly resolutions, yet given up within a few months. Frequently, giving up is due to unrealistic expectations of quick achievement. When setting goals, it's easy to get carried away with grand ideas, but this can set you up to fail. Although it would be amazing to achieve our goals in just weeks, realistically, it will take time — especially when it comes to weight loss. Excess weight/fat did not show up overnight, instead it culminates from decades, or even a lifetime, of poor eating habits. Losing 10 pounds may take you six months or more. Adjusting your goals to your current situation and



not where you want to be in a year, will prove a key to success. Perhaps you plan to run a marathon, but have never run farther than a mile. Break large resolutions like this into smaller, attainable goals: running a 5K in three months, a 10K in six months, a half marathon in nine months and a full marathon in a year. Breaking goals into smaller increments allows you to reach milestones quicker and will motivate you to continue.

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Find your true motivation.

In order to stick to your resolutions, you have to be honest about your motivations. Motivations rooted in pleasing others often result in frustration and disappointment. Determine what motivates you — not others — in order to do well. Find your true motivations by asking yourself the following:

Why do I want to live a healthier life? To feel better? To look better for a special event? To impress someone?

Am I afraid of taking risks or failing?

What has stopped me from keeping my resolution in the past?

What can I do differently this year?

When thinking of giving up, what will I say or do to keep my resolve?

Answering these questions first will not only clarify your true motivations, it will prepare you for obstacles.

Write it down.

While setting realistic goals and determining your motivations may seem like a no-brainer, writing them down is crucial. This is a great way to visualize what you want to accomplish. Write your goal on a sticky note and post it somewhere highly visible, like the bathroom mirror or refrigerator. Seeing what you want staring back at you every day helps keep you focused.

Do you want to eat better and lose weight? Awesome! But what changes will you make in your day-to-day routine to obtain your goals? Will you cut out junk food? Eat more fruits and veggies? What is your weight-loss plan? Will you eat less, work out more or a little bit of both? When and where will you work out? Although these are basic questions, they make obtaining your desired result possible. By mapping out your strategy for achieving your goal when you make your resolution, you can see the work it will take and visualize what you want.



Monitor your progress.

Perhaps the most vital part of sticking to your resolution is monitoring your progress. If your resolution is to eat better, keeping a food journal is an absolute necessity. No longer is it necessary to write down everything you eat in an actual journal. Apps like MyFitnessPal and LIVESTRONG.COM allow you to record foods quickly and easily, while monitoring your calories and macronutrients. The key advantage is accountability, providing a visual reminder of your progress and warning you when you begin to veer off-path.



If losing weight is your goal, use a journal to monitor your weights and measurements. Most fitness experts advise weighing and measuring once a week. Just a reminder: If you are lifting weights or participating in a muscle-building program, it's not wise to use the scale as a monitoring device. While muscle and fat weigh the same, muscle takes up less space. In the process of



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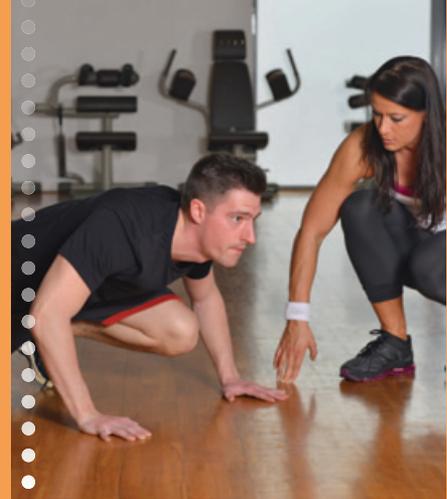


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Accept that you are going to mess up.

Making life changes — no matter how big or little — is hard. Whether with work, kids or just life in general, mistakes are made. Workouts are missed. Cookies are eaten. Things don't go as well as planned. Using these obstacles to convince yourself the goal is too hard makes it easy to give up. Accepting you can't always adhere to your plan can make it easier to achieve your goals. Modify your resolution/goal as needed. If you plan to work out five days a week but you can't find the time, adjust your goal

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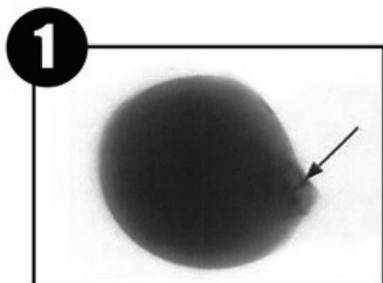


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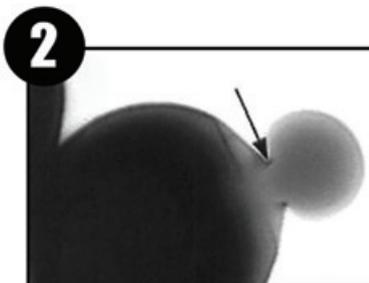
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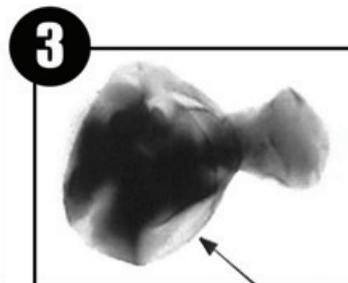
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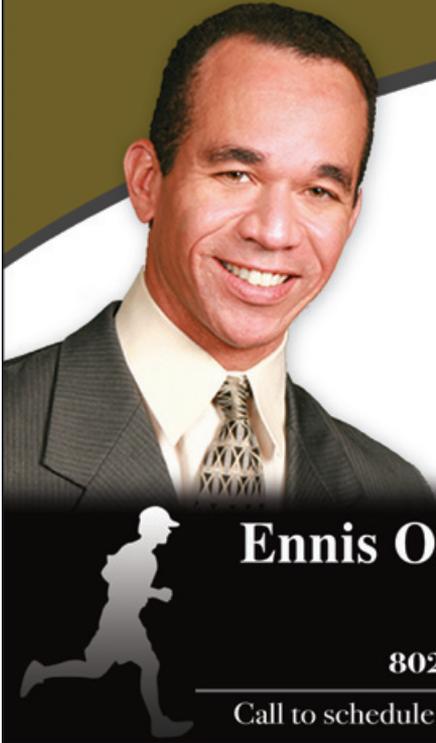
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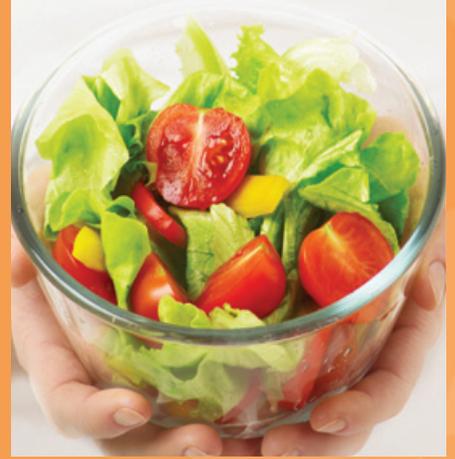
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PONDERING



and

Visiting

— By Carolyn Wills

When Denny and Tammie Hoffart want a relaxing moment in a busy day, they simply need to cross their street. Their lovely two-story, redbrick home faces the scenic highlight of their Waxabachie neighborhood, a fountain-centered pond with lush landscaping, plenty of ducks and choices of benches from which to ponder or visit. “The pond is so pretty at night,” Tammie smiled. “One year, a mallard abandoned her eggs in our flower bed. It was a lot of work, but we raised the ducklings in our garage until they could survive on their own. Now when we’re at the pond and whistle, they come to us!”



AT HOME WITH DENNY &



The Hoffarts bought their 2,500-square-foot home when the neighborhood was still developing and before homes on either side were built. "Ours was finished in 2006," Denny shared. "We're the first owners." Today, their four-bedroom home has been customized to the visions, talents and skills of this hardworking couple. "Tammie is the decorator, and I do the work," he grinned. "I love color," Tammie explained.

TAMMIE HOFFART





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Shades of Santa Fe are her favorites. “We’ve done all of the painting ourselves except for the living room ceiling, which is so high that we needed a painter to do it.” The living room is set back from the second floor to allow for a tall slanted ceiling. “It’s painted in Ralph Lauren Venetian Red,” she said. Earthy tan walls complement the ceiling, enhance the massive stone fireplace and serve as a perfect backdrop for southwestern-style wall hangings.

The living room opens to a central dining area and a stunning kitchen. “The kitchen floor is laid with Italian porcelain tile,” Denny said. “Tammie designed the

pattern using tiles of various sizes and shades, and I installed it. We also laid the larger tiles in the entryway.” In the kitchen, Denny added a tumbled marble backsplash and an island surrounded with stone. Rich cabinets and counters mixed with soft shades of tan in the exceptional tile work, has truly made theirs a showcase kitchen.

Toward the front of the house, just to the right of the entry, is a very special room. “We call it the sitting or front room,” Tammie said. While the room maintains the southwestern colors and is accented by a gorgeous cowhide area rug, it also embraces a sense of elegance



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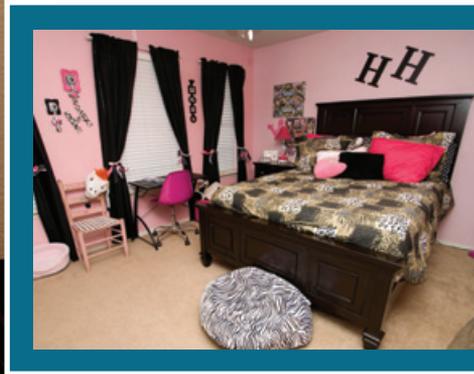
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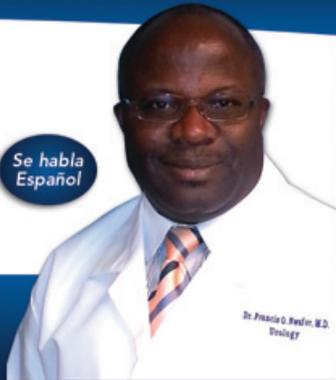
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and history. A big grandfather clock once belonging to Denny's grandmother is prominent as are his grandmother's original oil paintings. "Denny's grandmother was an artist, and we are blessed to have inherited some of her paintings," Tammie explained. Another breathtaking fixture in the front room is a gorgeous chandelier. "I discovered a lighting company that was going out of business, and that's how we were able to buy these amazing light fixtures," she smiled. "I was so lucky."

"We entertain at home and decorate a lot," Denny said. "We celebrate Tammie's birthday on Halloween."

"Both of our families come for Christmas," Tammie added. "We put the tree in the front room, and every year it fills wall-to-wall with presents and people."

Denny's and Tammie's master bedroom is downstairs along with a bathroom they have recently completely redone. Three bedrooms are upstairs, plus another room that may be as special as the front room, only for very different reasons.

The game room is furnished with small round leather chairs in the shape of a basketball, soccer ball, football and baseball. "They were another lucky find," Tammie smiled. The room is a place for family and friends to hang out, watch TV, play games and enjoy a fascinating display of sports memorabilia. "Denny played high school football," she said. "I played soccer, volleyball and softball, and was a cheerleader."

Denny's collection includes professional football helmets from the many stadiums he has visited, plus, a framed Earl Campbell football jersey. The most important items, though, speak of his friendship with current Denver Broncos right guard, Louis Vasquez. "I worked with his dad for 20 years and have known Louis since he was a little kid," he explained. Denny and Tammie watch every Broncos game and frequently travel with Louis' parents to watch the games from the stadium sidelines.

The upstairs bedrooms include those belonging to their daughters, Haley and Hannah, and the guest room. The quiet, tasteful guest room is home to two priceless, antique, hand-carved wooden duck decoys given to Denny when his brother passed away.

Twenty-year-old Haley is a graduate of

Waxahachie High School and a student at Navarro College. Her beautifully furnished room is presently filled with books, papers and the many trappings of a college student. Ten-year-old, fifth-grader Hannah has the hot pink princess room with all things befitting a princess.

Two other essential members of the Hoffart family are the beloved Yorkshire Terrier, Cassie, and Schnauzer, Chester. "They're good friends, but Cassie prefers to be inside, and Chester likes to be outside." Tammie shared.

Both Denny and Tammie were born in Houston, although they never met there. Each had grandmothers who lived in Corsicana, interestingly, back-to-back on the same street in the same neighborhood, yet Denny and Tammie never met while visiting there. Ultimately, each family moved to Corsicana and, at last, Denny's and Tammie's parallel paths connected at Corsicana High School. Today, they have been married for 25 years. Besides two beautiful daughters, they share their devotion to other family members, both present and in memory. They support each other in faith, work, love of home and a passion for sports.

At their day jobs, they are supervisors. Denny serves as the building and grounds supervisor for Waxahachie's Dart Container Corporation. Tammie is the supervising nurse for Waxahachie's Baylor Medical Center Emergency Room and is also working toward her bachelor's degree at The University of Texas at Arlington.

When Hannah was born, Denny left his job at Dart to be Mr. Mom for three years. "I was so ready to go back to work," he smiled. "Thankfully, Dart was ready for me, too. That's when we decided to move to Waxahachie. It changed our lives."

One day, a big storm blew through and knocked down most of the fences in Denny's and Tammie's neighborhood. The next morning, Denny was fixing his fence when he noticed his neighbor's fence was down, too. "We love this community and couldn't ask for better neighbors," he said. "The straight-line winds had caused a lot of damage. I fixed our fence and, then, our neighbors' and, before we knew it, I was fixing fences all week."

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YOU ARE THEIR VOICE

—By Callie Revell



Rhodie Rawls has lived in Waxahachie for the past 30 years with her family. She and her husband spent 12 of those years as foster parents for children in need in Ellis County. Sixty-five foster children and five adopted children later, Rhodie knows her calling is fighting for abused and neglected children. Her passion led to her current position as executive director of CASA of Ellis County.

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates. When children are removed from their homes, the judge working the case appoints a CASA volunteer as their guardian ad litem. This allows the volunteer to become the child's voice in the legal system and fight for the best possible outcome for the child. A CASA volunteer obtains information about the child's case from all involved parties and presents the information to the judge in court. The goal of a CASA volunteer is to move a child through the system as quickly as possible and into a safe, permanent home.

In 1977, Seattle Superior Court Judge David Soukup started CASA as a way to better understand children in the foster care system on a case-by-case basis. "He had all these children who had been taken away from their families," Rhodie explained. "He was having to make lifelong decisions for children without enough information." Today, CASA has spread across



the country and boasts more than 77,000 volunteers. "It's in every state now, so it works," Rhodie stated.

CASA of Ellis County is now in its 10th year serving Ellis County. In the beginning, the idea of starting a branch here began with its central ideal — having a passion for caring for foster children. "We had 65 children come through our home, and there was no CASA program in Ellis County when we were foster parents," Rhodie said. "As a foster parent, we really don't have much of a voice. I felt like I needed to be their advocate, because often these kids just don't have a voice."

Rhodie knew Ellis County Judge Bob Carroll, who, at the time, heard many Child Protective Services (CPS) cases. Judge Carroll saw a need for improvement and learned about CASA from other judges. After forming an initiative to bring it to Ellis County, he asked Rhodie to serve on a steering committee based on her interest in CASA. "As a foster parent, I didn't know much about CASA, but during those 12 years and 65 children I had two who had CASA volunteers. I saw what their involvement was and how neat it was that they had someone who cared about them in the community." Once CASA was established, Rhodie was eventually asked to step in as executive director.



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At first, Rhodie was hesitant to accept the position. “I thought my ministry was taking care of little children. That’s what I wanted to do, but with CASA I had an opportunity to impact every child in Ellis County who goes through foster care.”

CASA works well, because volunteers are assigned to children in their own community. After recruiting volunteers, CASA trains them to be, according to Rhodie, a “voice for children going through the system.” Volunteers not only visit with the child, but many times will become involved in the child’s life like teachers, parents and counselors. “As a CASA volunteer, you are an advocate for that child,” Rhodie added.

Volunteers take on only one case at a time and work that case from start to finish. This ensures all children in the system get the undivided attention they need and deserve. “CPS is a



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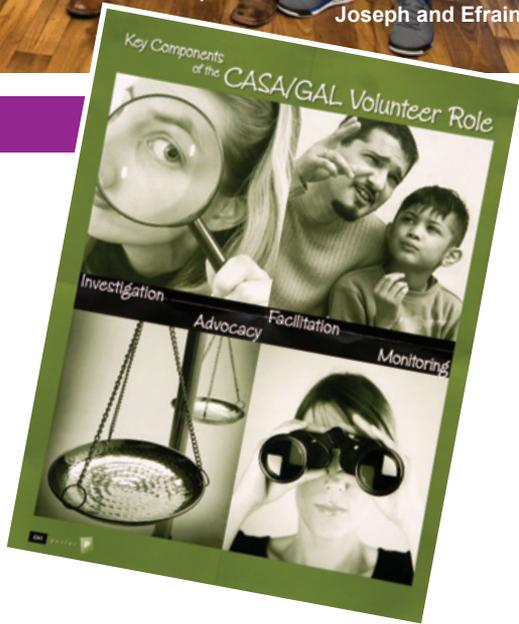
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Rhodie and Don Rawls (center) pose with their adopted children: Mikie, Iven, Ezzie, Joseph and Efrain.



much overburdened system. Their caseworkers might have 30 or 40 kids on their caseload, and we only assign our volunteers one case at a time, but that's what makes it work," Rhodie explained. "That's the beauty of it." A child who might be just a name on a piece of paper to someone gets the full attention of a trained volunteer who is there to advocate and serve them.

"The kids who have CASA volunteers seem to have much better outcomes in the system than those without one. Statistics prove it," Rhodie said. "They don't get lost in the shuffle or linger in foster care." Rhodie believes in the merit of a responsible adult representing a child in the legal system. "At least we know that somebody is looking out and making the best recommendations to the court, so when the judge has those difficult decisions to make, he has all the

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"I love kids, and I've always worked with kids. I feel like it's an opportunity to make a great impact on so many little lives."

facts about the child," she pointed out. "We're very fortunate in Ellis County. We have a great CPS department." CASA is a program set up to complement CPS and foster programs, and it is working. "In Ellis County, we serve 100 percent of the kids," Rhodie said proudly. "Only a handful of counties in the state have been able to do that."

CASA's signature fundraising event for the year is their Share the Love Gala. The fourth annual Share the Love Gala will take place at the Waxahachie Civic Center on February 15 and is open to the public. A silent and live auction will benefit CASA of Ellis County. The night will also offer fine dining and entertainment. Attending the gala is an excellent way to show support of CASA and its goals for the communities of Ellis County. "We also need auction items and sponsors," Rhodie added.

However, CASA has an even more pressing need. "We need volunteers," Rhodie admitted. "We always need a pool of volunteers to pull from because things

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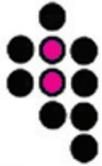
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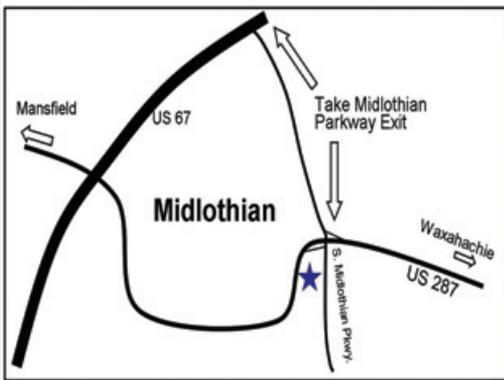
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happen. Right now, almost every active volunteer is on a case, and we're currently training a new group of volunteers."

To become a CASA volunteer requires 30 hours of training after an extensive interview process and background check. CASA volunteers do not need any type of legal or social work background to be considered. As the population of Ellis County grows, the number of children in the foster care system increases causing CASA to have a greater need for volunteers than ever before. Those interested in becoming a volunteer can find an application on the CASA website: www.casaofelliscounty.org.

For Rhodie, becoming involved with CASA changed her life for the better. "I seriously cannot imagine doing anything else with my life," she said. "I love kids, and I've always worked with kids. I feel like it's an opportunity to make a great impact on so many little lives."

Rhodie encourages anyone interested in CASA to become involved and start fighting for abused and neglected children in the community. "If not us," Rhodie insisted, "then who?" **NOW**

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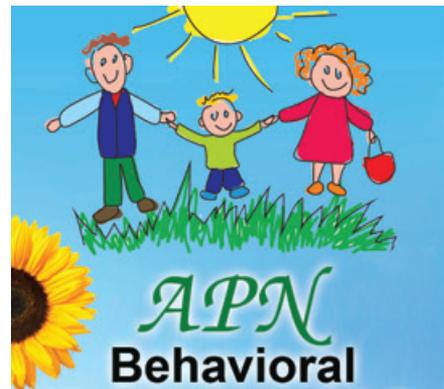
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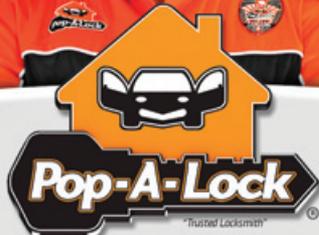
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A man wearing a yellow cycling jersey, black shorts, a red and grey helmet, and sunglasses is riding a bicycle on a dirt path. He has a black backpack and is looking forward with a serious expression. The background shows green foliage and a wooden fence.

Jim Being Jim

— By Jon Peeler

Weather in Texas is hard to predict, except in the month of August. August promises hotter-than-normal temperatures and drought-like conditions. One other constant in August, and the rest of the year for that matter, is Jim Goss, a longtime bicyclist who can be seen somewhere in and around Waxahachie peddling his way from one venue to the next. And Jim doesn't plan on changing his daily routine any time in the future.

At first glance, Jim doesn't look like the stereotypical endurance athlete, but that's exactly what he is. Each year he sets out on a personal quest. He doesn't yearn for trophies or ribbons, and he will probably never be seen racing on TV. But, Jim's personal race with himself is still nothing less than amazing.

Jim's birthday is celebrated in August. His goal, which began at the age of 80 and continues today, is to ride his age. "Last year I turned 83," he said. "I rode 83 miles." These milestone rides may surprise a lot of people, while astonishing many others. But, to all those who know Jim personally, it's just Jim being Jim. He is a man who seems to be capable of almost anything he sets his mind to. You see, once Jim starts something, he becomes passionate about it, and then he doesn't really know how to quit.

He moved from Houston to Waxahachie with Arlene, his bride of 60 years, in 2009. The plan had been to retire closer to the grandchildren. But anyone familiar with Jim's routine would agree his definition of retirement is much different than the one found in *Marion-Webster*. At least four days out of the week Jim can be found in his shop on North Jackson Street laboring diligently over whatever project he happens to be working on at the moment. "I'll make just about anything people want and fix just about anything people need repaired," Jim said, as he leaned back in his chair. "I have the tools and equipment to do woodwork or metal work. It's really not that hard. You just have to take your time. I think anyone could do it."

But upon closer inspection, it is immediately obvious that not just anyone could do what Jim does. The precision in his work is typical of the man he is. The detail in the custom beehives he designs is proof positive he puts lots of tender loving care into his creations. There are not too many items Jim hasn't worked

“I really only do it all because I don’t like to sit down for very long.”

with over the years. “I even repaired a unicycle a local attorney brought in one time,” he shared. “It’s always fun figuring out what’s needed on the items brought in or those I am asked to build.” Jim jumped at the opportunity to turn a 50-year-old Volkswagen into a drivable piece of art. His strong desire to figure things out is what really makes Jim tick. He does what he loves, so he doesn’t consider it to be work.

This desire to do all things with an eagerness to learn all he can about it, whatever it may be, is another quality that makes Jim unique. “I ran for years,” Jim said, as he began to explain his bicycling saga. “I guess I rode a bike a little at that time in my life, too. But, I didn’t really start riding a lot until my legs finally gave out on me when I was about 55. That’s when I really starting riding my bicycle. That’s when it became important.”



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“I have the tools and equipment to do woodwork or metal work. It’s really not that hard. You just have to take your time. I think anyone could do it.”

And ride he did. When Jim moved to the area, riding was his way of finding the various things the Waxahachie community had to offer. “I love riding the trails around Getzendaner Park,” Jim said, retelling one of many great cycling stories he has cataloged away in his mind. “I always liked the landscape up and down the trail. So when I saw some people working on one of the flowerbeds, I pulled over and started talking to them.”

And so began his relationship with the Ellis County Master Gardener’s that continues to be one of Jim’s favorite pastimes today. Many of the butterfly trash cans the community is so used to seeing came from Jim’s shop. “I help take care of the butterfly garden on the trail,” he explained. “When they



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need me to teach classes in the area, I help do that, too.”

While it may be hard to put a finger on one thing that defines Jim, more and more his annual birthday ride has become one of his greatest accomplishments and also serves as his driving motivation. He spends a great deal of time and energy preparing for it. In fact, his training begins several months before the actual ride. What little free time he does have is generally spent riding his bike or walking the trails surrounding Getzendaner Park. “When my wife was able, we rode the trails together a lot more than I do now,” Jim said. “I’m not trying to win



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any races out there.” But, Jim does like to ride every day when the weather is fine enough, and around here it usually is.

“I wasn’t sure if I was going to make the ride this year. I had a little fight with some prostate cancer,” Jim said in an almost dismissive tone. For most people that alone would have been a life-changing event. But once Jim decides he is going to do something, not even cancer can stop him. “All it really meant was I didn’t get to start training until late June,” Jim admitted. “But after all that time in the hospital and the surgeries, I was ready for the change in scenery.” What better place for Jim to find that change than on the trails that wind through the park he has spent so much time helping to develop and landscape?

Is Jim planning to ride 84 miles on his next birthday? Jim’s answer is simple and to the point. “Well, I don’t know why

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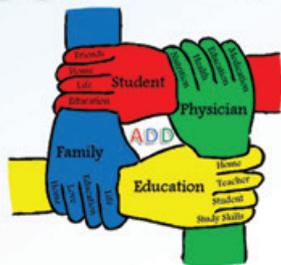


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I wouldn't," he said with a smile. And perhaps that is Jim's greatest secret. He just keeps things simple. "I really only do it all because I don't like to sit down for very long."

The world looks a little different from the seat of a bicycle. Things are slowed down to a level that's a little easier to appreciate. Things that would normally fly past a car window in little more than a blur come clearly into focus. People who would have been no more than a roadside figure have become friends. Cracks and bumps in the road you never would have noticed become intimately familiar. And if you're Jim Goss, you discover a community along the way. **NOW**

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Cody Edge, Kathy Edge and Noah Chapman don't believe in cutting corners. They, along with Chuck Edge, not pictured, believe in arming prospective gun owners with as much information as possible.

Knowledge is **POWER**

Like any other tool, a firearm needs to be used properly.

— By *Sandra Strong*

Chuck and Kathy Edge purchased Shooter's Edge in April 2011. As a federally regulated business, they have certain rules they must follow when buying and selling firearms to the public. "There was so much to learn when we first started this venture," Kathy remembered. "And the rules are continually changing."

Cody Edge, the couple's son, is the general manager for the company that's grown successfully in the past three years. He and his parents share the same philosophy when it comes to guns, whether for protection or pleasure. "Customers need to understand what they are buying before they purchase a gun," he explained. "We feel it's a liability to sell a firearm to

someone who knows nothing about them."

"Knowledge is power, and so is a big, strong flashlight," Kathy added with a smile. The Edge family and their staff believe in arming prospective gun owners with as much knowledge as possible, so as not to leave any room for doubt. "The first thing I ask someone who is in the market for their first firearm is if they know someone who already has a gun. Can they go shoot with them? A buyer needs to have a realistic perspective on firearms in a confined environment prior to buying one," Cody stated. "If we had a shooting range in back, I'd want everyone to shoot before buying a gun."

Business **NOW**

“A firearm is like any other tool,” said Noah Chapman, sales associate and longtime family friend. “You need to learn all you can about it in order to use it properly.”

Most customers visit Shooter’s Edge looking specifically for a firearm. But, the shop also stocks a full range of other items that aid in self-defense and personal protection. The list includes several types of pepper sprays and stylish flashlights with strike bezels perfectly sized for a female. These flashlights look very much like a tube of lipstick. “Statistics say that 50 percent of the population is scared of the other half,” Kathy said. “I don’t want women, or anyone for that matter, to walk in fear. That’s why it’s so important to educate our customers and let them know what’s available to them.”

Chuck, Kathy and Cody decided to take the educational process from the shop into the classroom. In doing so, many individuals have gained the knowledge the Edges so want every firearm owner to have. “The classes not only teach what gun owners need in order to get their handgun license,” Kathy explained, “it allows them to get comfortable with their new handgun. The classes we offer are so much more than handgun and rifle knowledge, they teach options in overall personal protection, too.”

Chuck has made his career in law enforcement, so growing up around firearms was commonplace to Cody. “Guns were a nonissue,” Cody shared. “They were not a secret, so there was no temptation associated with the fact they were in the home. The minute a gun comes into the home there has to be a conversation,” he added. “Remove the mystery, and you remove the temptation.”

Shooter’s Edge really is a mom-and-pop, family-owned and -operated corporation. Cody’s wife, Nancy, rounds out the team as the educational director and information technologist. “We don’t believe in cutting corners,” Kathy said, as Cody nodded in agreement. “We take the time to do what we need to do for every customer’s comfort and success.” **NOW**

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Grant Mathews, 2, enjoys lunch at TaMolly's with his parents.



The Hawthorne and Bennett families take a walk with their dogs along the trail in downtown Waxahachie.



Raul Crives, climber with Charlie and Sons Tree Service, prepares to cut several limbs that are heavy with ice.



Matthew Goss and his father, Karl, trim the trunk on the family's Christmas tree.



Construction continues on the Kirven Avenue rehabilitation project.



Ryan Martin and Preston Harris get ready for Target shoppers who wish to purchase the newest Xbox.



Waxahachie's Bryan Frye and fiancée, Joyce Sebesta, enjoy a wintry day at the Ft. Worth Botanical Gardens.



Betty Woodard, longtime employee of Belk's, prepares to help a holiday shopper.



Lavina Sepeda, Roman Flores and Guille Lopez spend quality time out in the winter weather.



Caitlyn McDaniel, 11, shows off her gingerbread train kit with a huge holiday smile.

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Four Retirement Savings Mistakes to Avoid

Nearly 50 percent of American adults worry that they'll outlive their life savings, according to a Gallup poll. Fortunately, with a few tweaks to your financial strategy, you can help strengthen your savings posture and preserve your money for as long as possible. Steer clear of these retirement savings mistakes:

- **Saving very little — or not saving at all**

“It's important to start early and save often,” said Helen Stephens, principal of the Helen Stephens Group, LLC, in Fort Worth, Texas. Create a goal to put 10 percent of your pretax income toward retirement. You don't have to do it all at once. You can build up to that. If it's easier, start at 5 percent, then increase to 6 percent next year, and so on. “Regular contributions are what's important over time,” she said.

- **Giving up on the notion of a retirement savings plan**

Though it's best to start saving early on, it's better to start late than never at all. The thought of starting can be overwhelming, so work with a financial planner to devise a plan that fits your situation and determine how much you need to save to meet your goal. “Rather than avoiding the inevitable need to plan for retirement, create a modified picture of your future,” Stephens said. “As long as you have a diligent approach to retirement savings, you can rectify the situation.”

- **Cashing out when you change jobs**

This is the mistake Stephens sees most often. If you cash out before age 59 1/2 not only do you risk moving to a higher tax bracket, you may have to pay a 10-percent penalty tax. You're better off leaving the money in your former employer's plan or rolling it over into either your current employer's plan or to an IRA. Also consider the fees associated with the plan/account and the available investment vehicles. “If you roll



it over, it can work for you on a tax-deferred basis until you reach retirement,” Stephens said.

- **Carrying too much debt into retirement**

Debt — whether from a mortgage, car or credit card — can put a dent in your best-laid retirement plans. “A family should work with their financial planner to have a plan in place, not only for retirement savings, but for cash flow planning as well,” Stephens said. “This plan would include debt elimination.” **NOW**

Neither State Farm nor its agents provide tax, legal or investment advise. Please consult your own adviser regarding your particular circumstances. Adam Rope is a State Farm agent based in Waxahachie.

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January 4

Elvis Birthday Celebration with David Allen: 7:00 p.m., Farr Best Theatre, 109 N. Main St., Mansfield. Reserve your tickets online at www.FarrBest.Tix.com.

January 8

WISD students return to class following Christmas break.

January 13 — 15

Freedom on Hooves: 8:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m., John Justin Arena in Will Rogers Memorial Center, 3400 Burnett Tandy Dr., Fort Worth. During the Fort Worth Stock Show's Chisholm Challenge, the public can watch the fun of competition between riders from Wings of Hope, in Egan, and many other Texas equine therapy centers. For event details and schedules, visit www.chisholmchallenge.com.

January 15

The Ellis County Christian Women's Connection meeting: 11:30a.m.-1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club. Cost is \$13. Vouchers for mothers requiring childcare are available. This is a very positive, uplifting and refreshing time for women and includes a delicious lunch and featured guest speaker each month. For reservations, women can contact Margaret at (972) 825-3559.

January 16 — 18

Wizard of Oz: 7:00 p.m. **January 16-17**; 2:00 and 7:00 p.m. **January 18**, Red Oak High School Performing Arts Center, 122 S. Hwy. 342, Red Oak. Previous musical productions include: *Grease*, *Singin' in the Rain* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Children and senior citizens, \$7; adults, \$10. Visit www.rohstheatreboosters.org/ for more information.

January 18

Calamity Janes: 8:00 p.m., Farr Best Theatre, 109 N. Main St., Mansfield. Reserve your tickets online at www.FarrBest.Tix.com.

January 20

Martin Luther King Day: student/staff holiday.

January 25

Run For Their Lives 5K Hero Run: 8:00-10:45 a.m., Getzendaner Park, 400 S. Grand Ave. This is the third annual event hosted by the Texas Baptist Home for Children. Proceeds will benefit the Post Adoption Services Ministry. A silent auction will all be part of the fundraiser. Register online at www.tbhc.org or call (972) 937-1321, ext. 229 for more information.

Drake Milligan/Shake, Rattle and Roll for P.E.O.: 7:30 p.m., Farr Best Theatre, 109 N. Main St., Mansfield. Reserve your tickets online at www.FarrBest.Tix.com.

January 26

Annual Aledo Chili Supper: 5:00-8:00 p.m., Aledo Community Center, 104 Robinson Ct., Aledo. The supper will include a silent auction and a style show. The cost is \$5 per adult and \$3 per child age 8 and under. Please contact (817) 441-9009 to find out more information.

January 28

Girl Scout monthly volunteer meeting: 7:00-8:30 p.m., Brown Street Church of Christ, 2471 Brown St. For more information, visit joinus@gssu251.org.

January 30

FirstLook of Ellis County annual fundraising dinner: Together for Life: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 N. Grand Ave. Reservations are required. For more information, call (972) 938-7900.

February 7

Waxahachie ISD's Drop Everything and Read Day: reading times are 8:45 and 10:15 a.m. Contact Melissa Cobb at mcobb@wisd.org or (972) 923-4631 to find out more details

February 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23

Clue: The Musical: Fridays and Saturdays, 7:30 p.m.; Sundays, 2:30 p.m., Ennis Public Theatre, 2705-C N. Kaufman St., Ennis. Reserve tickets at info@ennispublictheatre.com or call (972) 878-7529 for more information.

February 14 — 16

13th Annual Chili Cook-off and Barn Dance: Ellis County Youth Expo. For more information, contact John Wyckoff at (972) 937-1870 or john.eccac@ectisp.net or visit www.elliscountycac.org.

Ongoing:

Mondays

Celebrate Recovery: 7:00-9:00 p.m., Lighthouse Coffee Bar, 1404 N. Ninth St., Midlothian.

Third Mondays

Ellis County Aggie Moms meetings: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin. For more information, visit www.elliscountyaggiemoms.org.

Fourth Mondays

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meetings: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave.

Tuesdays

Story Time at Sims Library: 10:00-10:40 a.m., children 3 and older. Program features themed book readings, songs, puppets and crafts that teach children early literacy skills in preparation for kindergarten. E-mail children@simslib.org for more information.

Fourth Tuesdays

Ellis County Technology (ECT) meetings: 6:30 p.m., LaQuinta. For more information, call Wendy Merritt at (469) 256-8989.

Second Thursdays

Crackpots meetings: 6:30 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ennis. Call Vicki Bell at (469) 285-4845 or Myra Morrissey at (972) 998-5868 for more information.

Fridays

Business Networking International meetings: 8:00-9:30 a.m., LaQuinta, 311 Stadium Dr. For more information, call (469) 222-9160.

Story Time at Sims Library: 10:00-11:00 a.m., presented by the Jr. Service League, children 3 and older. In addition to reading books, children will participate in a craft and receive a snack. Call the library at (972) 937-2671 for more information.

Third Saturdays

Waxahachie Jamboree: 7:00-9:30 p.m., Women's Building, 407 W. Jefferson St. For more information, call Hoyt Patterson at (214) 535-3473 or visit www.waxahachiejamboree.com.

Fourth Saturdays

Bristol Opry: 7:00 p.m., featuring local singers and musicians. For more information, contact Jim Gatlin at (972) 846-2211.

Sundays

GriefShare meetings: 2:30-4:00 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County in the sanctuary Youth Inc. room. For more information, call (972) 935-9801 or visit www.cowboychurchofelliscounty.org.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to sandra.strong@nowmagazines.com.



A Hard Freeze

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Who knew something so numb could eventually hurt so much? Unfortunately, that revelation comes to many frostbite victims. Exposing yourself to hazardous weather can bring regrettable consequences, one of which is frostbite. Frostbite occurs when the skin and underlying body tissue is damaged due to extremely cold temperatures. There are several stages of frostbite beginning with frostnip, which causes minimal and reversible injury to the skin, to severe frostbite, which causes extensive and permanent damage.

With frostnip, the skin is pale and numb and can usually be resolved with a warm water bath. With frostbite, the skin is white, blue and/or mottled and feels hard or frozen depending on the degree to which the area is affected. Medical attention is required. The areas most affected are the exposed areas of the body — hands, feet, nose and ears. Some of the signs of frostbite are:

- Sensation of pain at beginning of frostbite
- Progression of numbness depending upon exposure
- May feel wooden or numb
- Pale with waxy appearance
- Blisters
- Swelling

If you suspect frostbite, get out of the weather immediately to a warm and dry place. Take off all wet clothes. Wrap in a warm blanket. Do not use heating

pads or fireplaces. They are risky and not recommended. Do not rub the area. Do not walk on frostbitten feet. Children must be carried. Walking on frostbitten feet can cause more damage to the tissues. As the area rewarms, it can have a burning, stinging sensation. Sometimes, the pain is intense and may require medical intervention for resolution. As skin rewarms, there is the possibility of blisters. Cover the blisters with protective gauze and do not pop them.

Contact your physician or go directly to the emergency room. All frostbite should be evaluated by a physician immediately. You especially should not delay if you see any of these symptoms: running a fever over 101 F, development of blisters, development of thick drainage, blue or black areas, loss of sensation and/or feeling sick.

The best way to treat frostbite is to avoid getting it. Keep a careful eye on the forecast if you need to go out. Dress warmly in layers. Use mittens instead of gloves. Cover your head and wear a cap that covers your ears or use ear muffs. Change immediately any part of your clothing that becomes wet. Limit your time in the freezing temperatures. By paying attention to detail you can avoid the painful lesson and consequences of frostbite. **NOW**

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

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In The Kitchen With Pat Cox

— By Sandra Strong

Pat Cox has fond childhood memories of the time she spent in the kitchen with her mother and grandmother. She remembers them being excellent cooks, teaching her all they knew about down-home cooking. Pat grew up cooking fried chicken and chicken fried steak with creamed gravy. “I also learned how to cook lots of fattening sauces and desserts,” Pat admitted.

Three years after Pat married her husband, Jimmy, he was diagnosed with Type I diabetes, and the way she prepared meals changed. She quickly learned healthier ways to prepare tasty meals. They are baked, grilled or stir-fried now. Desserts are sugar-free and include lots of fresh fruit. “We are blessed today to have sugar-free pudding, Jell-O, cake mix and icing. I enjoy experimenting with all of them.” **NOW**

Angel Food Chewy Cookies

Makes 28 chewy cookies.

- 1 box angel food cake mix**
- 1/2 cup carbonated orange drink**
- 1/4 tsp. almond extract**
- No-stick cooking spray**

- 1.** Mix cake per box directions, substituting orange drink for water; add almond extract. Beat until stiff.
- 2.** Spray cookie sheet with cooking spray. Drop mixture by heaping Tbsps. onto baking sheet. Bake at 350 F for 9 minutes. Remove from cookie sheet immediately; cool.

Fresh Strawberry Pie

- 1 4-oz. box sugar-free strawberry gelatin**
- 1 4-oz. box sugar-free vanilla cook & serve pudding**

- 2 cups water**
- 1 pint fresh strawberries**
- Cool Whip, sugar free**

- 1.** Mix gelatin, pudding and water. Cook and stir continually until clear.
- 2.** Cut strawberries into bite-size chunks; add to mixture. Top with Cool Whip.

Triple-layer Lemon Pie

Makes 8 servings.

- 2 cups cold milk**
- 2 4-oz. pkgs. Jell-O lemon flavored instant pudding**
- 1 Tbsp. lemon juice**
- 1 6-oz. graham cracker pie crust**
- 1 8-oz. tub Cool Whip, divided use**
- Lemon peel (optional)**

- 1.** Pour milk into large bowl. Add pudding

mixes and lemon juice. Beat with wire whisk for 2 minutes making sure to blend well. Mixture will be thick. Can add more lemon juice if desired.

- 2.** Spread 1 1/2 cups of the pudding into the bottom of pie crust; set aside. Add half of Cool Whip to remaining pudding mixture. Stir gently until well-blended. Spread over pudding layer in crust. Top with remaining Cool Whip.

- 3.** Refrigerate at least 3 hours before serving. If desired, garnish with lemon peel. Store leftover pie in refrigerator.

Sugar-free Apple Pie

- 6-8 apples**
- 1 1/2 cups apple juice**
- 1/2 Tbsp. cinnamon**
- Dash of nutmeg**
- 3 tsp. cornstarch, as needed**
- 1 9-inch pie crust**

- 1.** Slice apples to your liking. In a saucepan, cook apples in apple juice until soft. Mix with cinnamon and nutmeg. Only add cornstarch if you need to thicken mixture.
- 2.** Pour mixture into pie crust. Bake at 350 F until edge of crust is golden brown.

Thumbprint Cookies

Makes 20 cookies.

- No-stick cooking spray**
- 1 8-oz. pkg. sugar-free, low-fat yellow cake mix**
- 3 Tbsp. orange juice**
- 2 tsp. orange peel, grated**
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla**
- 4 tsp. strawberry all-fruit spread**
- 2 Tbsp. pecans, chopped**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray baking sheets with cooking spray. Beat cake mix, orange juice, orange peel and vanilla in a medium-sized bowl with electric mixer at medium speed for 2 minutes, until mixture looks crumbly. Increase speed; beat 2 more minutes, until a smooth dough forms. Dough will be sticky.
- 2.** Coat hands with cooking spray. Roll dough into 1-inch balls. Place balls 2 1/2 inches apart on baking sheets. Press center of ball with thumb. Fill each thumbprint with 1/4 tsp. fruit spread. Sprinkle with nuts.
- 3.** Bake 8-9 minutes, or until cookies are golden brown and lose their shininess. Do not over bake. Remove to wire racks; cool completely.

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