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Waxahachie **NOW**

M A G A Z I N E

December 2007

**A Victorian
Christmas**

**Capturing
God's Creations**

**Exploring the
Possibilities**

**Healthy
Kids are
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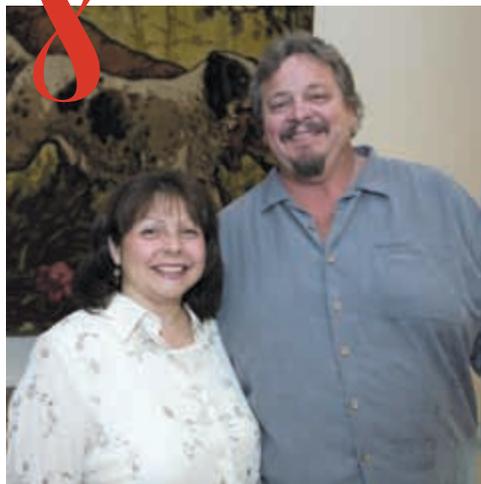
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Waxahachie **NOW**

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

Christmas is synonymous with family — the generational traditions, the gatherings that include close friends and the memories that could easily fill Santa's toy bag to overflowing. December's edition of *WaxahachieNOW* will no doubt complete your "wish list" for fun things to do this holiday season.

If strolling with the children tickles your fancy, be sure to read what the Seviars had to say about the Downtown Victorian Christmas Festival in the main feature. Travel back in time to experience the "reason for the season" during the weekend performances of *Bethlehem Revisited*. Prepare to have your senses stimulated as family traditions are shared at the home of Gilbert and Marilu Gonzales or see firsthand what Edwin Tobin's brush strokes have been able to create on granite slabs and rolled canvas.

There is something for everyone, so whatever you decide to do, please be safe and remember to have a very, merry Christmas!

Sandra McIntosh
Waxahachie Editor



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— By Ashley Carlino

It is that time of year again — the trick-or-treaters have come and gone, and the Thanksgiving leftovers have long since been devoured. The leaves have faded from red and gold to rusts and browns, and the cool winter air is finally upon us. The stores around town have begun playing that cheerful Christmas music, setting the tone for the magic of the season that lay ahead.

Whether or not you travel during the Christmas holidays, you can still enjoy a hometown holiday experience. The second annual Victorian Christmas is scheduled; after months of planning, a good time is almost a guarantee for all. Numerous events are offered, including: live music, carriage rides, vendor booths, a parade, home tours, Bethlehem Revisited and more.

Each offering is scheduled before the middle of the month, so unless your boss gives you travel time before the 12 days of Christmas, you will likely be around to join in the fun. “This year will be worlds apart from last year,” explained Virginia Sevier, historian and co-founder of the project. “We had a very nice first year last year, but this year we began preparations on January 1.” The Victorian Christmas will span a period of three weekends, beginning the Friday after Thanksgiving and ending Sunday, December 9.

Virginia and her husband, Coy, were approached last year

by Hilda Chapman of the Downtown Merchants Association to create this event. The Seviers were chosen largely because of their continual, dedicated contribution to another Waxahachie holiday spectacular, Bethlehem Revisited, a production initially started by members of the Central Presbyterian Church.

Coy, general manager of Southwest Festival, Inc., which owns and operates both Screams and Scarborough Fair, is highly experienced in the business of entertaining. “Bethlehem Revisited draws between 20,000 and 30,000 visitors over two weekends,” Coy added. “We really want to draw people to the area.”

The vision of Victorian Christmas is a shared one between the Chamber of Commerce, the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Downtown Merchants Association. “We want Waxahachie to be a tourist destination, like Granbury or Fredericksburg,” Virginia explained. “We want people to come here and spend the night in our hotels — eat in our restaurants.” The goal is to have something the community can enjoy and look forward to each year, while also accommodating visitors.

The Seviers’ community spirit comes from having grown



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up in small towns themselves. Virginia is originally from Bellaire, Texas, while Coy has his roots in Spring, Texas. They both lived in Hempstead, a town of about 3,000 people, where they owned and operated a local downtown coffee shop. While in Hempstead they continued their involvement in the Texas Renaissance Festival, which eventually led them to relocate to Waxahachie. "We came downtown and fell in love with it,"



Coy said. "That was 10 years ago. We had a tremendous turn out last year [at Victorian Christmas] — it was so well received, both locally and around the state. We have had the opportunity to add new stuff this year," Coy added.

New to this year's line up is a petting zoo and various local church choirs. Other activities include ice-skating and a train exhibit. Photos with Santa will be available, and school choirs will sing and perform skits. Carriage rides, sponsored by the merchants, will be offered. There will be a treasure hunt leading folks from shop to shop. "It is a wonderful shopping experience," Virginia said. "There will be book signings and special discounts."

All the merchants will be dressed in Victorian costumes and many of them will be in character. Coy, with his theatrical background, easily stepped into the role of "Lord Mayor" last year, a name given to him by some



of the merchants. His Victorian accent can effortlessly transport any audience back in time. James Jenkins, an attorney in the downtown area, dressed in costume and played the violin all day. "It was wonderful," Virginia said.

Vendors will be selling Christmas-themed gifts in their delicately decorated booths. Gifts will include Christmas ornaments, wooden toys, teddy bears, floral tapestries and more. Artisans will be selling stained glass, candles and jewelry. There will be free hot chocolate and wassail, a hot cider drink. "We want people to spend the day downtown, then walk to Bethlehem Revisited," Virginia explained. "We really want our local people to come out and enjoy it."

For a real local feel, take the Candlelight Home Tour, featuring a blend of 12 very distinct Virginian and modern style homes. Whatever the era, each home will be fabulously decorated down to the last holiday detail. Tour dates are Saturday and Sunday, beginning Thanksgiving weekend and continuing through Sunday, December 9. Tickets are \$15 per weekend.

Perhaps after the tour you will want to go back in time to ancient Bethlehem to experience the birth of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem Revisited. Watch the three kings deliver their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Performances

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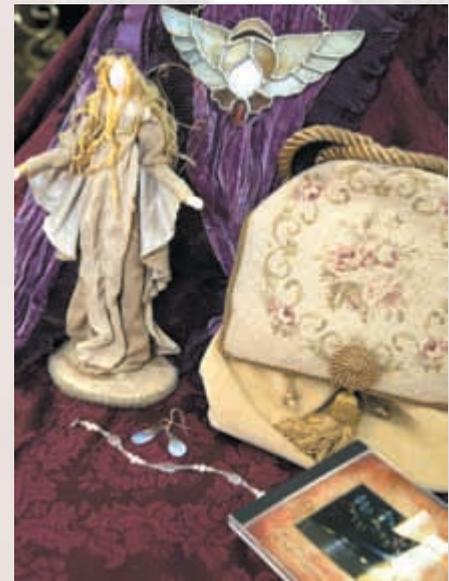
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are repeated every 30 minutes between 6 and 9 p.m. for the first and second Saturdays and Sundays of December. Bethlehem Revisited is located behind Central Presbyterian Church. Admission is free, but donations are appreciated. "People come from all over. Buses come from Louisiana and Arkansas," Coy said. "Six hundred people pull together to put on this powerful show with an even more powerful message." "There is such an effort between



the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Downtown Merchants and the Chamber," Coy added. "There is really much advanced planning." A number of Waxahachie's civic organizations contribute. All of the offerings are made possible, not only through generous sponsors, but with the help of many volunteers. The Seviers' daughters, Caitlin, 13, and Jessica, 25, have participated extensively in these events."

Take a memorable Christmas Stroll on December 8. Musical groups will be playing every weekend, also beginning the Saturday following Thanksgiving and continuing through December 9. Whatever your age, there is something for you at the Waxahachie Victorian Christmas. "So many behind-the-scenes people make these events what they are," Virginia noted, "so, make plans to come out and enjoy our lovely hometown during this wondrous holiday season!" ❧❧❧

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At Home With

Gilbert and Marilu Gonzales

Symphony *for the* Senses

— By Sandra McIntosh

Gilbert and Marilu Gonzales started out in San Antonio, Texas. In fact, it was home, or close to home, for both of them before they married and moved to Dallas, where they took up housekeeping for 30 years before relocating to Waxahachie. “We had been looking for a place outside the city, but not too far from Dallas,” Marilu said. “My sister and brother-in-law, Beth and Lynn Allen, had recently moved here. When we saw their home, we fell in love with it and decided to move here, too.”

Marilu remembers the first time she saw the modest abode she lovingly calls home today. “The house spoke to me,” she said, explaining that she had been carrying a picture of a white



cottage-style home with a large front porch area in her purse for no less than 10 years. “Oh, and let’s not forget the picket fence and the arbor,” she added with a grin. The resemblance was uncanny, and she knew immediately the home was meant for her and Gilbert.

On October 4, they celebrated their fourth anniversary in the two-bedroom, one-bath



home on Water Street, known by many longtime locals as the Naughton Cottage. They derive great pleasure in sharing the story they were told about the house with their friends and family. "The big house next door once belonged to G.W. Naughton," Marilu explained. "It is said that he built this smaller home for his granddaughter." Gilbert went on to say that the home's floor



plan has remained true. "Nothing has been added or taken away from the original design on the outside," he said. "Aesthetically, the inside has been totally redone. It's completely different on the inside." Just recently,



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the home was added to the historical registry and a historical marker was hammered into place on the front porch. Gilbert and Marilu agree that the research they had already completed prior to purchasing the home made this process seem easy.

When making changes to the interior, Gilbert and Marilu kept true to the home's cottage style, making sure to keep it quaint, cozy and inviting. Marilu even went so far as to celebrate Waxahachie and its rich history with a pair of hand-painted murals. "The courthouse clock tower is painted on the walls of the bathroom," she said. "I tried to copy the primitive artistic style of Rufus Porter, while also geographically honoring the home." She also added a large beehive on one wall in the dining area located directly off what she calls her "John Deere green" kitchen. "I wanted to recognize Burleson honey," she proudly said.

Marilu has a unique, eclectic style all her own. She seems to outdo herself



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during the holiday season with items that came from thrift shops, garage sales or outings to Canton's First Monday. It is readily apparent to those who are lucky enough to visit during this most special time of year. Their home is like a symphony for the senses. The wonderful smell is the first thing a visitor notices upon entering. The scent takes Marilu back to the days of her own childhood. "We push whole cloves in and around an entire apple. The cloves blend with the juice from the apple," she explained. "After Christmas, I wrap the apples up in tulle and tie them with a decorative ribbon. They smell nice for a good, long time." For the Gonzales family, this is what Christmas smells like. "A person's sense of smell is supposed to be the strongest of the senses," Marilu stated. "The smell of the clove apples evokes so many memories."

Christmas for Gilbert and Marilu is steeped in tradition, not only in the food they eat, but also in the placement



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of specific decorations. Their Italian baby Jesus is the first to go up and the last to come down. "He rests in a forest-like crèche, which includes pine cones, herbs and willow that we harvest ourselves," Marilu said. "It never changes. It remains in place on the antique extravaganza (similar to a china cabinet), which we use as a sideboard in the dining room, until the Feast of Epiphany, which [is] January 6."

Eyes are also drawn to the Christmas trees Gilbert and Marilu showcase throughout their home each year. Artificial trees are placed in the kitchen, the dining room and the guest bedroom. The tree in the kitchen is dressed with candy, gingerbread people, cookie cutters, cranberry garland and a single dough

decoration. "The dough ornaments were our keepsake ornaments, that was until the creatures began stirring all through the house," Marilu laughingly said, referring to the critters that made a meal out of most of the ornaments she and Gilbert had made when their



son, Brian, was little. "I'll never forget the laughter and the fun we had making them." The only dough ornament left worthy of hanging is the one with Brian's name on it. The tree in the dining

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room is almost all white, with silver accents that include opalescent balls with silver glitter and stars dating back to the early 1950s. Guests will once again enjoy the artificial flocked tree adorned with vintage German Lustre ornaments.

The fun for Gilbert and Marilu really



begins about two weeks into the overall decorating process. "We take a trip to the Rancho Poco Loco Tree Farm in Midlothian to chop down our live Christmas tree," Marilu said, adding



that this tradition started when they moved to Waxahachie. The live tree, decorated mostly with blown glass ornaments in shades of gold and green, will take its place in the parlor along with the circular parlor chair with tapestry inset and the divan constructed in Brooklyn, New York, dating back to 1923 — the same year the house on Water Street was built.

When asked to recall the most memorable gift received from Gilbert over the years, Marilu wasted no time with her answer. "It's got to be the snow globe of the sleigh in Central Park. It's a small gift that means so much to me, especially now that the



kids live in New York," she said, referring to Brian, now 33, and his wife, Ashley. As if decorating the inside and outside of their home is not enough, Marilu finds great pleasure in crafting snow globes from glass canisters and containers. "It's one beautiful, personalized gift for an entire family," she said. "I've been making these for the past 10 years. They're spread throughout the family."

As India Moon, the couple's 5-year-old Brittany Spaniel, greets you at the door, be sure to pay attention to your senses and let the symphony of sights, sounds and scents of the holiday season begin. **WOW**

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Capturing God's Creations

— By Sandra McIntosh

Edward Tobin was born with what he and his wife, Gwen, consider to be a God-given talent. His pieces are considered to be one-of-a-kind originals. “Some people are born with a spoon in their mouth,” Gwen said. “Edward was born with a paintbrush in his.” High words of praise coming from his wife of 43 years. “There’s just nothing he can’t paint,” she added.

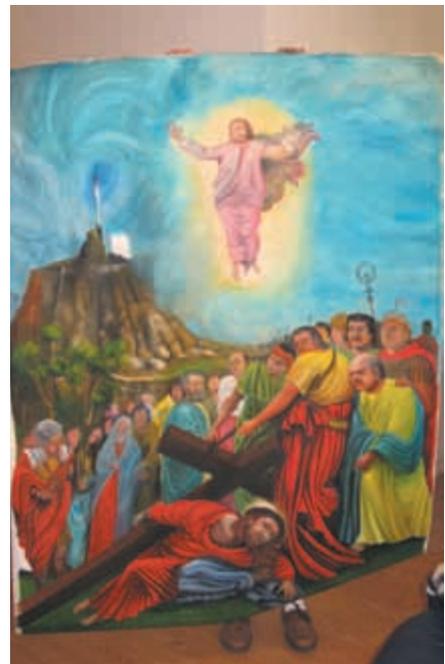
He has either been sketching, drawing, carving or painting all of his adult life. “I used charcoal, pen and ink and even a regular pencil, before graduating to watercolors and oil paints,” Edward said, as he shared pages and pages of Indians and horses he had drawn in his younger days. “It’s always been an outlet for me when I’ve been overly stressed or just when I’ve had some spare time to waste.”

Edward, born and reared in Australia, graduated with a bachelor’s in civil engineering from Duntroon, an Australian military academy similar to West Point in the States. After becoming an American citizen in 1963, he began working in the engineering field. “I’m proud to say I only worked at five different companies in all the years I worked,” he said, adding that the engineering business is stressful even in the best of times. “Painting throughout



the years has been therapeutic and relaxing,” he added. “I’ve always been able to have a release in my paintings.”

He will be the first to admit he has had no formal training. What people see depicted on canvas, china, bed linens, marble and granite are the pictures Edward has seen in his mind’s eye. The detailed sculptures in beeswax are also the beautiful end products of what he visualizes. The details have always been of the utmost importance to Edward. So much so, that he may spend weeks researching colors of clothing, weaponry and styles of saddles and bridles, before ever putting a paintbrush or sculpting tool in his hand. “The facts I find in my research must match the painting,” Edward



**ARTS
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said, explaining the history behind his painting titled *The Black Longhorns*. "Different time periods warrant different colors and overall ideas."

When research is complete, Edward gets started and within hours, he has completed another work of art. "He's fast," Gwen said. "The bluebonnet painting took him three hours from start to finish and the two oils of the ships at sea took him one day for each



painting." As Gwen complimented her husband's previous works, Edward began unrolling a large, oversized piece of canvas. As it was unwound, the age-old story of the crucifixion began to appear. Edward was able to capture the anger of the jeering crowd, as well as the pain mixed with love on Jesus' face. "I guess you could say I've been working on this one for about seven years. What you see only took

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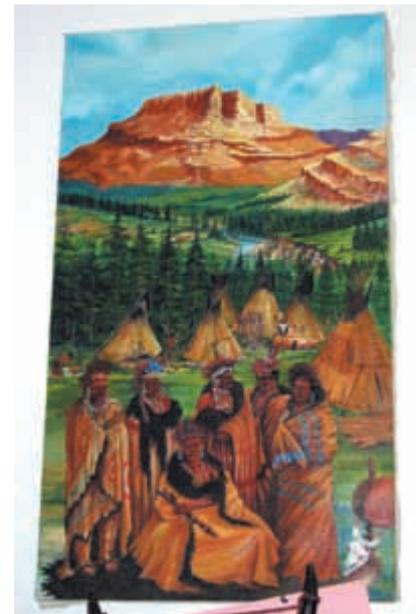
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six to seven hours to complete," Edward said. "It's still a work in progress. Someday, I'll get around to finishing it."

Since his retirement five years ago, Edward has been oil painting on slabs of granite and marble. This art form started following a freak accident. "My ex-son-in-law, North Townsel, was



working for a trucking company at the time," Edward explained. "An 18-wheeler filled with about half a million dollars in granite turned over on the highway. He challenged me to paint on some of the granite pieces."

Granite, for those who may not know, is a wonderfully, coarse-grained rock in a variety of colors. The hard, igneous rock consists of quartz, orthoclase and microcline. It takes all the aforementioned to make the stones called granite or marble. The biggest obstacle Edward

**ARTS
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faces when painting today is deciding what to paint on each piece, since each slab is a work of art, unique in and of itself. "I'm challenged to incorporate a foreground to the natural beauty of the stone," he explained. "The background is found in the natural colors the rock presents. It includes the fall or lay of the strata."

The granite oil paintings range in size from those large enough to be considered fire screens to smaller rocks that can be displayed on a side table or bookshelf. Wild and exotic animals look as if they are burrowed in a cave,



taking a catnap on a tree limb or preparing to pounce from a ledge. A family of raccoons sit on a tree limb and Texas Longhorns graze in an open field, while an African elephant makes his way through the jungle. While most artists will sketch what they are about to paint, all Edward does is dip his brush in the desired color and stroke it directly onto the granite. "I don't pre-sketch," he said. "I just paint!" Gwen confirmed Edward's statement when she shared his porcelain-painting experience with another local artist, Nettie McHone. "While others in the class spent four weeks completing one plate," Gwen said, "Edward came home with four plates."

Edward's goal when creating a new piece of artwork has always been to capture the beauty of all of God's wonderful creatures. "As an artist, I strive to make the setting as close to nature as possible," Edward explained. "I try my best not to diminish the natural wonder God has provided." **ARTS NOW**

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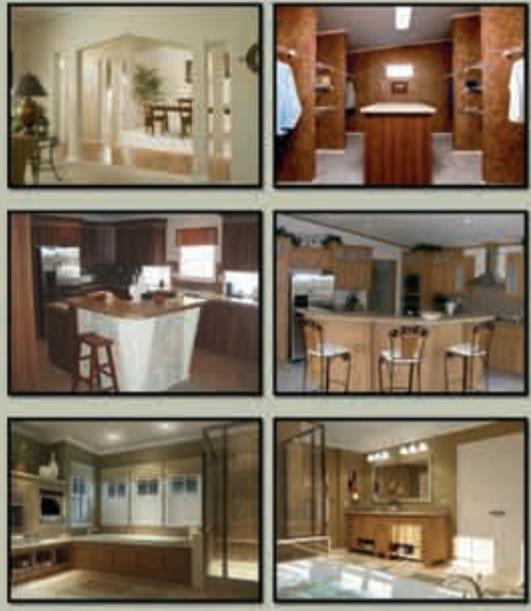
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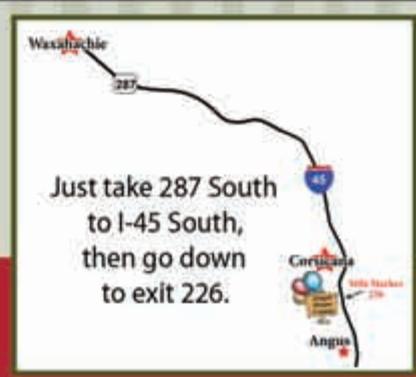


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Healthy Kids are Happy Kids

— By Sandra McIntosh

Thomas Jefferson once said, "Exercise and recreation are as necessary as reading. I will say rather more necessary because health is worth more than learning." Kendra Urban, longtime reading teacher turned physical fitness instructor, could not agree more. "A healthy body means a brain that is more apt to stay focused and alert for learning," she explained. "It's all about teaching children to make good choices at a young age."

Kendra's affiliation with Stretch-n-Go, a fabulously fun fitness program for children ages 18 months to age 12, began in July 2006 with three school campuses. Today, her rewards are found at schools in 30 locations including Waxahachie, Ennis, Palmer, Maypearl, Ferris, Cleburne, Granbury and Fort Worth. She feels her prayers were answered the minute she first learned about the program that originated in Galveston, Texas, in 1992 and is currently being offered on six continents. Michael, her husband of three years, has always been the one to whom she has looked for encouragement. This adventure has been no

different. "He's always telling me he's proud of me," she added, with a smile.

The exercises and curriculum, which make up the weekly 30-minute sessions for each campus, were developed under the supervision of an advisory board consisting of pediatricians, nutritionists, fitness professionals and educators like her. Sessions are not limited to physical fitness; they also



include but are not limited to boot camps, ballet classes and cheer clinics. "Children work differently than adults," Kendra added, "so the way we work out with the children is much different, and the certification for the instructor is

Sports NOW

much different.” Before introducing herself to her first class of young students, Kendra had to be youth fitness certified and also earn certifications in first aid and CPR. “The class is designed for the children,” she said. “It’s interval training made fun. The kids are having so much fun, they don’t realize they’re



“The kids are having so much fun, they don’t realize they’re exercising; making their bodies strong, fit and healthy.”

exercising; making their bodies strong, fit and healthy.”

The exercise portion consists of a warm-up, stretching, floor exercise and low aerobic activity, which are all designed for young children. Kendra will work with the children for a few minutes to get their heart rates up. Then she will teach at a slower pace to get their heart rates back down. Coaches make the classes enjoyable, as well as memorable by being animated with the age group they find themselves working with from day-to-day. A good example is the all-famous and ever-popular beach week. “I begin the class by asking the kids if they’d like to spend some time playing on the beach,” Kendra said. “I tell them we

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will be swimming with the dolphins, the starfish and the mermaids."

As Kendra demonstrated the exercises, it was easy to see what it is the children find so fun and fascinating. Jumping jacks with a starfish begins to work their cardiovascular systems. The upper body gets a vigorous workout



when she asks them to walk like a crab. As a group, they sit on the ground, holding their legs, knees and ankles together. "Now swim like a mermaid," she said, as she leaned back and flapped her legs like a make-believe mermaid would flap her tail when taken out of the water. "This exercise works their core. It's all about teaching them balance, agility and functional motor skills such as locomotive skills, non-locomotive skills, manipulative and maneuvering weight."

For the first time in 100 years, as reported by the World Health Organization, today's children have a lower life expectancy than their parents due to obesity and sedentary lifestyles. After punching the numbers, the American Academy of Pediatrics reported that one in five children in America are overweight, and all children should participate in a regular form of exercise appropriate for their development level and physical health status. "By age 5, if children haven't learned the basic skills, they may never realize their full potential," Kendra added. "Kids that learn exercise and nutritional skills early are more likely to do better in

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Sports ~~NOW~~

class than those children who don't."

Being familiar with all the facts, Kendra's goal is to continue making physical fitness fun and entertaining, while also teaching the children to make it part of their daily routine. The earlier they begin the better, as far as she is concerned. She also loves the



"Kids that learn exercise and nutritional skills early are more likely to do better in class than those children who don't."

way the Stretch-n-Grow curriculum, always led with music coinciding with the day's session, will cause the children to use their imaginations. "They have to use their imaginations while exercising," Kendra said. "They have to be able to visualize being on the beach. They have to imagine the hot sand under their feet. As a coach, I feel like a lost gift is being retrieved."

Getting parents involved is also important. Always one to think of everything, Kendra has been able to successfully master this problem with the use of a copy machine. "Every week, the kids get a curriculum handout sheet," she said. "It includes the muscle of the week, the exercise of the week and pertinent information for the parents. I want the kids to be famous for being healthy. Healthy kids are happy kids!" ~~NOW~~



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Business
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The Spurs
Stop Here
— By Dia Catalani

Waxahachie Texans are a cool breed. They enjoy a style all their own that says, “We’re from Texas,” and in all likelihood, their boots and jeans, at the very least, came from their favorite hometown western wear store.

At Bethany’s Western Wear, where they sell quality western and casual wear, you can get boots, jeans and hats that show off your own unique look. Fun, western-style things for you and your home at good prices are just a couple of the reasons the store is a favorite of local residents. “We have cool clothes that are fun to wear, from hard-core western to more contemporary western fashion,” said Pam Mitchell, storeowner.

The store has been a Waxahachie fixture since Pam’s mother, Opal Bynum Long, opened it in 1982, naming it after her granddaughter, Bethany. Bethany, now known as Mrs. Millican to students at a Palmer school, also makes this business unique since Bethany’s Western Wear is a three-generational,



Business NOW

all-woman-owned establishment. "Mom usually only comes in on Saturdays now," Pam laughed, "just to make sure I'm doing things the way I should do them."

Pam is the store's buyer and she attends Dallas Market several times



"We have the latest look everyone is wanting to wear, and we're always updating our selection."

each year to search for items she feels are most sought after. Personalized, excellent customer service is another reason people shop here often, Pam said, noting that a local merchant often provides a level of service that larger stores cannot match. "Heck, I know most of my customers by their first name," Pam said. "We try to do things here that are special; things to let people know we value their business. We keep our prices low and comparable to the large chain western wear stores."

The store has evolved with new generations of customers, too, offering contemporary western wear that appeals to a younger crowd. A sampling of brands carried here include Cinch, Resistol, Cruel Girl, Justin, Jama Old West for boys and girls, Rocky Mountain and Wrangler's 20X.

Fashionable western boots are one of the most popular items Bethany's sells, and the most requested item for Christmas gifts. Some currently on display include a fun, camouflage-print

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is an old fashioned café with a distinct feel of yesteryear. Come join us for a good home cooked breakfast or lunch. Our breakfast features a build-your-own omelet and pancake bar and gourmet coffee. Our lunch menu offers a daily entrée special, soup, fresh salads and sandwiches. Let us tempt you with desserts from our made-with-love family recipes.

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cowgirl boot, as well as the new square-toed boot available in styles for men, women and children. "We have the latest look everyone is wanting to wear, and we're always updating our selection," Pam said, "and if we don't have what you're looking for in stock, we'll be glad to order it for you if at all possible."



If you are looking for a gift that says, "We're from Texas," Bethany's is your one-stop-shop. A sampling of items carried here include: Cow Creek Jewelry made of semi-precious stones by a local artisan, wooden riding broncos for the children, locally-made scented candles, decorative pillows and western-style crosses and wind chimes. If your Christmas gift wish list does not include a new pair of boots, Bethany's offers many items that are likely to be requested. High-quality leather wallets, billfolds and cell phone holders are popular, as are colognes and silver key rings. The jewelry selection rivals that of many stores and includes beaded ankle bracelets and sterling silver and turquoise necklaces, bracelets and earrings.

For more information, call (972) 937-7051 or log on to their new Web site at www.bethanyswesternwear.com. If you would like to stop by for a look, place a special order or take advantage of their convenient layaway program, Bethany's is one block northeast of Ferris and Marvin avenues at 215 Second Street. They are open weekdays from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. **NOW**



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As young adults, we grow up wondering what life after high school has to offer. We continually ask ourselves, “What are we going to be when we grow up?” Through the Waxahachie Fire Explorer Program, both young men and women ages 14 to 20, are finding out early if being a firefighter is all they dreamed it would be. “It’s a well-rounded program,” John Barrett, firefighter, adult advisor and program director said. “The program gives as much insight into being a firefighter as possible. The ‘mini’ academy gives those considering a career in firefighting a firm foundation if they decide to pursue a career as a firefighter after high school.”

The explorer experience is designed by Learning for Life, an extension of the Boy Scouts of America, and is sponsored by the Waxahachie Fire Department. Like the Boy Scouts, each area is broken down into a specific post number. The Waxahachie Fire Explorers operate under post number 405. Fire explorers are provided the opportunity, free of charge, except for the purchase of uniform shoes, to experience the fire service firsthand — through classroom instruction and hands-on skills training in subject areas such as: firefighter safety and personal protective equipment, fire science, fire

extinguishers, first aid and CPR, fire suppression, fire prevention, search and rescue, ladders, ropes, knots and rappelling, forcible entry and hazardous materials.

Recruiting drives are held at different times throughout the year and only when one or more openings are available. Fire department representatives with specific expectations will visit the Ninth Grade Academy and Waxahachie High School. Before those interested can actively participate and consider themselves bona fide fire explorers, they must first meet specific criteria, successfully complete the interview process and make it through the probationary period. “Those interested must be at least 14 years old,” John explained. “They have to have completed the eighth grade and they must carry a passing grade point average.”

Once the initial criteria is met, those still interested will be interviewed by two firefighters, also known as adult advisors, and two current Waxahachie Fire Explorer officers. “The process is fair and objective,” John explained. “The prospects are graded on dress, how they speak and their overall first impression.” John also stated the most important trait an explorer can possess throughout the program is attendance.

Education **NOW**



“It’s all about giving back to the community.”

“The ability to show up means getting the most out of the program,” he said. “We try to find individuals who aren’t going to have to choose between several extracurricular activities, so we look for those who will be most able to attend.”

Once new recruits are chosen, they immediately begin learning the overall culture of the fire department through orientations and an initial ride-along. To make sure they understand each area, they are given mandated written tests. “On the first ride-along, the engineer on duty will evaluate the explorer,” John added. “Once this is done and they pass, the probationary period is over.” Finally, the prospect becomes an explorer.

Being an explorer encompasses so much more than bookwork and riding along on the engine during a fire call. Explorers are physically fit, community-minded individuals. One day they may be at Station Three located on YMCA Drive running, jumping rope and doing

serious comedy

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sit-ups and push-ups to increase their baseline counts, while helping to build a house for Habitat for Humanity on another day. "It's all about giving back to the community," John said. "We look for individuals who care about helping people."

Once an individual becomes an explorer, they can remain in the program until they celebrate their 21st birthday. Even if participants decide firefighting is not their life's calling, they will take aspects of the program with them into the career field of their choice. "They learn about discipline, accountability, answering to authority, respect, prioritizing and the importance of time management," John added. "If nothing else, we are teaching them to be ethical, caring leaders in a team-oriented environment."

One of the most impressive facts is that the program is run by its youth members. Each year, the explorers elect their peers into positions of responsibility such as captain, lieutenant, secretary and treasurer. The advisors



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stand behind the explorers, providing support, guidance and instruction. Since firefighting is a team endeavor, explorers are also taught the importance of working together as a team, not only at their assigned fire station, but also during the Dallas Fire Games. "They are allowed to demonstrate the hands-on skills they've learned," John explained, "while attempting to win trophies and bragging rights." This past year, Post 405 added to their list of awards as they placed first in the room search competition. "Friendships that last a lifetime," John added, "are also formed here."

John realizes that the group is only as strong as their weakest member and as fast as their slowest runner. His understanding may very well come from the fact that he was an explorer with the Denver, Colorado Fire Department as a teenager. "The passion and desire to be here outweighs stamina and physical capabilities," John said. "As the explorer motto states, we are 'training our best for a better tomorrow.'" **NOW**

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Around Town **NOW**



Ribbon cuttings were held recently, at left from top to bottom: Paradise the Perfect Gift Store, Midway Airport, F&F Electric and Anglen Automotive. Santa Claus, directly above, is coming back to town. Be sure to go by and visit him during the Victorian days of Christmas in downtown Waxahachie!

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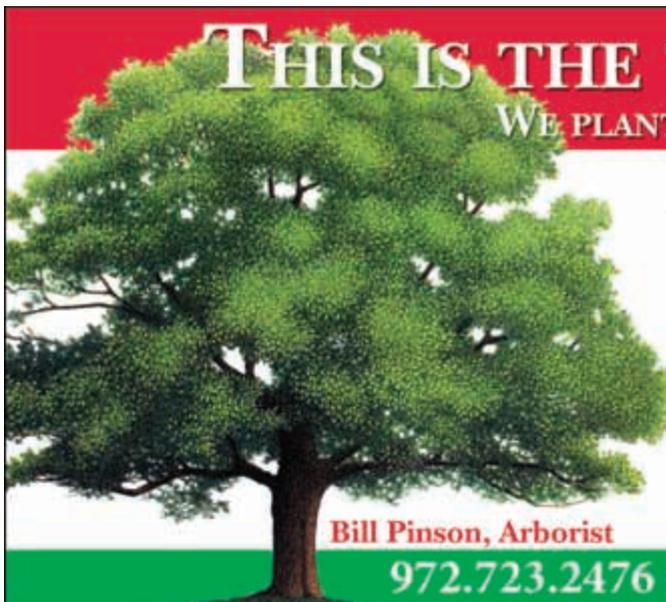
Around Town **NOW**



A ribbon cutting, top left, was held at JCPenny's new location. A couple of 3-year-old "Blue Jays," top center, conferred during a recent soccer game. Jennifer Vespa as Sparkle the Tooth Fairy, top right, educated the youngest students at St. Joseph Catholic Church on the importance of proper hygiene. Several additional ribbon cuttings were held recently at Advanced Home Inspections, middle left; Alpha Promotional Products, directly above; and AMP Math Tutoring, bottom left.

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Christmas for Your Gardener

— By Nancy Fenton

The holidays are here, and the old question of what to get for your favorite gardener is with us again. I've seen some fun and interesting things this year and thought I would share them with you.

There are lots of "rubber like" shoes out there this year, which really do well in the garden. Most of the discount stores are carrying them, and you can get some high-end ones through the catalogs. Look for ones with a back to them since the ones that just slide on tend to let the mud

and dirt slide in the back. They are great to kick off at the door when the phone rings and do not take much more than a rinse off with the hose when you are finished!

Broad-brimmed hats are literally lifesavers for some of us. The more frequent appearance of suspicious sores on the face, which might be cancerous, is reason enough to shield that skin as much as we can. There are several kinds of hats around, but my favorite is straw with an attached sweatband inside to catch the product of hot, hard work. It also makes the hat fit better. Do not omit the string that holds the hat on in the wind. It cannot do your gardener much good if they are off chasing it! There are also some collapsible ones that fold up into a disc and can be carried easily in a pocket or bag.

If you want to go big this Christmas,

look at a small cultivator. There are electric models, which only weigh about 11 pounds. That is about right for those of us in urban areas without acres to plow. The collapsing sacks with wire in them, which stay open when you are filling them and then smash down for storage when empty, are great for easy pick up of stray branches and other yard trash.

When in doubt, go for a gift certificate to your gardener's favorite garden store or online catalogue. Young people can go for a "gift certificate" of several hours of complaint-less yard work of the gardener's choice. Be it shoes, hats, gloves or plants-to-be, your gardener will appreciate you knowing just where their interest lies. Have a great holiday! **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener in Ellis County.

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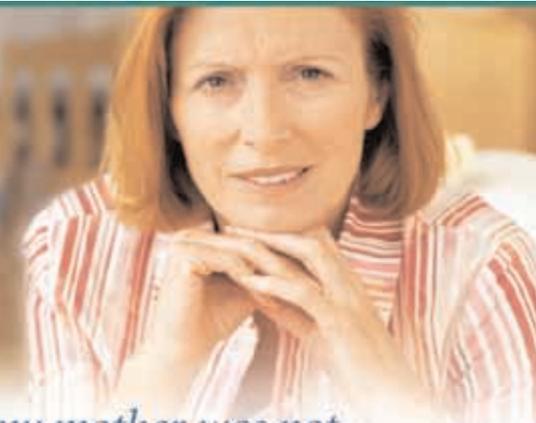
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Look Who's Cooking

— By Melinda Hines

IN THE KITCHEN WITH MARY ANN BAKER

Mary Ann enjoys baking for her friends and family during the holidays. “I have two children, five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren, and I love to spend time with them at Christmas. I can spend days in the kitchen baking,” Mary Ann said.

One year she baked each child seven different kinds of bread. They liked them so well that now it is a tradition. “I make them their favorites and give it to them when they leave to go home,” she said. Mary Ann also gives the bread and other treats as gifts. “The candy came from Mississippi and no one else in Waxahachie has had the recipe for the Yankee Layer Fruitcake, until now. It is a very good Christmas cake,” Mary Ann said. **NOW**

PUMPKIN BREAD

PUMPKIN MIX:

- 4 well-beaten eggs
- 3 cups sugar
- 1 cup Wesson Oil
- 2 cups pumpkin

DRY MIX:

- 3 1/2 cups flour
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- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. nutmeg

ADDITIONS:

- 1 Tbsp. flour
- 1 cup pecans
- 1/2 cup dates or raisins

In large bowl mix eggs, sugar, oil and pumpkin. In another bowl, stir together the flour, salt, baking soda, cinnamon and nutmeg. Combine dry ingredients with pumpkin mixture, alternating with 3/4 cup water. Beat until smooth. Sprinkle flour over nuts and dates and add to mixture. Put in 5 1-lb. empty coffee cans, filling

half full. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour. Let cool.

TUPPERWARE BREAD

- 3 pkgs. dry yeast
- 3 3/4 cups warm water
- 6 Tbsp. sugar
- 6 Tbsp. softened butter
- 4 Tbsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 10 cups flour

Dissolve yeast in warm water. In another bowl combine sugar, softened butter, salt and eggs. Add yeast mixture and flour. Mix until moist. Seal and burp bowl. Sit in warm water. Let it rise until seal pops off. Divide into 4 greased loaf pans. Let rise 30 minutes. Bake at 330 F for 30 minutes. Yield: 4 loaves.

STRAWBERRY BREAD WITH SPREAD

- 3 cups flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 2 cups sugar

- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 10-oz. pkgs. frozen strawberries, thawed
- 1 1/4 cups vegetable oil
- 4 eggs, well-beaten
- 1 tsp. red food coloring
- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened

Combine the first five ingredients. Make a hole in the center of mixture. Reserve 1/4 cup strawberry juice for spread. Pour strawberries, oil and egg into hole. Mix by hand until all ingredients are thoroughly combined. Add food coloring. Pour into two greased and floured 9 x 5 x 2.5-inch loaf pans. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour. Cool thoroughly. Blend strawberry juice and cream cheese to spreading consistency and spread on cooled bread. Yield: 2 loaves.

YANKEE LAYER FRUITCAKE

CAKE:

- 1 cup sugar
- 2 egg yolks
- 1/2 cup syrup
- 1 large apple, grated
- 2 cups flour

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- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup nuts
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2/3 cup sweet milk
- 1/2 cup pineapple
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. allspice
- 1/2 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/2 tsp. cloves
- 1 tsp. vanilla

ICING:

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup sweet milk
- 1 cup chopped dates
- butter the size of an egg
- 1 cup pineapple
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- 1 cup coconut

CAKE: Mix all the cake ingredients as you would most any other cake and bake in two 9-inch cake pans about 30 - 45 minutes at 350 F. **ICING:** In saucepan combine all icing ingredients except pecans and coconut. After removing from heat add pecans and coconut.

CROCK POT CANDY

- 1 16-oz. jar salted peanuts
- 1 12-oz. bag semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 2 1 1/2-lb. bars white almond bark, broken in pieces
- 1 16-oz. jar unsalted peanuts
- 1 large bar German sweet chocolate, broken into pieces

In a large crock pot layer all ingredients and cook on low for 3 hours without opening lid. After 3 hours stir and drop by teaspoons onto waxed paper. Yield: 150 pieces.

APRICOT MINI LOAVES

LOAVES:

- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 6 Tbsp. milk
- 5 Tbsp. butter or margarine, melted
- 4 1/2 tsp. honey
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup pancake mix
- 1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts
- 1/4 cup finely chopped dried apricots
- 2 Tbsp. raisins

GLAZE:

- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 tsp. honey
- 1/8 tsp. ground cloves
- 2 - 3 Tbsp. milk

LOAVES: In a bowl combine the egg, milk, butter, honey and vanilla; stir in pancake mix just until moistened. Fold in the walnuts, apricots and raisins. Pour into two greased 4.5 x 2.5 x 1.5-inch loaf pans. Bake at 350 F for 22 - 28 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean. Cool for 5 minutes before removing from pans to wire racks. **GLAZE:** In a small bowl combine the glaze ingredients. Drizzle over warm loaves. Cool. Yield: 2 loaves.

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Do Not Let *Wild* Markets Give You the Jitters

— By Jeff Trojacek

If you watch the financial markets, you have seen just about everything in the last few months. First, the Dow Jones Industrial Average raced from 13,000 to 14,000 in record time. Then, in about four weeks, the Dow lost all these gains and fell below 13,000. What is a long-term investor to do? Before we answer that question, it might be useful for you to understand why the market soared so quickly and then plunged so far so fast.

The Dow's big gain was fueled, in large part, by strong corporate profits, low interest rates and relatively low inflation. But in the past few weeks, those impressive corporate profits and the economic boom in Asia helped kick already-high oil prices even higher. Furthermore, problems in the credit market, particularly in regard to mortgage-backed securities, have shaken investors' confidence. These factors are widely thought to be somewhat responsible for the sell-off in stocks.

Will the decline continue, and, if it does, how far will stock prices fall? No

one can really answer these questions with any certainty. Keep in mind that "corrections" (declines of 10 percent from a market peak) are actually a normal part of the investment process, and we have not seen a correction since spring of 2000. So, what is happening now is no cause for panic. Also, market declines often begin and end without warning. Furthermore, even in the midst of these turbulent times, investors still have reason to be optimistic. After all, the economy is growing faster than three percent annually, inflation and interest rates are still low, corporate earnings continue to outpace analysts' expectations and economic growth has been strong overseas.

In any case, regardless of what is happening in the markets, you will want to consider these moves:

• **Focus on quality.**

There is never a "wrong" time to buy quality investments, but there is also never a better time than when the market is shaky. Quite simply, during market downturns, quality investments — such as stocks of

some large companies in developed markets* and top-rated corporate bonds — tend not to drop as far as riskier investments. Quality investments generally bounce back faster when declines are over. Just keep in mind that there are no guarantees that past performance is an indication of future results.

• **Look for buying opportunities.**

The best buying opportunities often occur when the market is down. That is because a market slump tends to drag down all stocks, even those with good prospects for future growth. Consequently, you might find "good deals" among those stocks whose fundamentals are strong but whose price has dropped substantially.

• **Think long term.**

To put some perspective on the market decline, look back 20 years, to the summer of 1987, when the Dow Jones Industrial Average stood at around 2,500. Since that time, the Dow has gone up more than 400 percent — not including fees, commissions, sales

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charges and taxes, which would have a negative effect on these results. Of course, as you have no doubt heard, past performance is no guarantee of future results. Still, if you do not let short-term drops send you to the investment "sidelines," your patience and perseverance may give you an opportunity to be well-positioned for the long term.

No one likes to see the stock market shed so much wealth in a short period of time. But if you concentrate on quality, look for good deals and think long term, you can navigate the sometimes-bumpy roads of the investment world and continue on your journey toward your important financial goals. **NOW**

** Special risks are inherent to foreign investing including: political, social, economic and currency risk.*

Jeff Trojacek is an Edward Jones representative based in Waxahachie.

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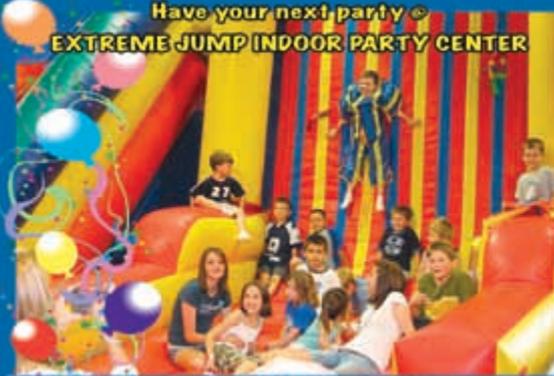
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Advanced Imaging Technologies Women Should be Aware Of

In their busy lives, women can sometimes neglect their health, but waiting until symptoms develop can be dangerous — especially when it comes to serious illnesses, such as heart disease, cancer or even osteoporosis. It is important to know what tools are available to “take a peek inside” before a serious problem develops.

Here are six common imaging procedures — available at the Baylor Imaging and Diagnostics Center at Red Oak — of which you should be aware:

Mammography: Annual mammograms are recommended for women over the age of 40 to check for breast abnormalities that could potentially be cancerous. Women in Ellis County now have access to digital mammography.

“With digital mammography, the image is ready in seconds. Physicians

can adjust the brightness and contrast to help detect small calcifications, masses and other changes that may be early signals of breast cancer,” said Ronny Rose, director of radiology services at Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie.

CT or Computerized Tomography: A CT scan is a more advanced version of a traditional X-ray. CT scans use a large X-ray camera that circles the body piecing together images, known as “slices,” to create a three-dimensional view of the inside of the body.

“The images produced by our 16-slice CT scanner are phenomenal. It’s almost like having an internal camera that shows us exactly what’s going on in your body,” Rose said.

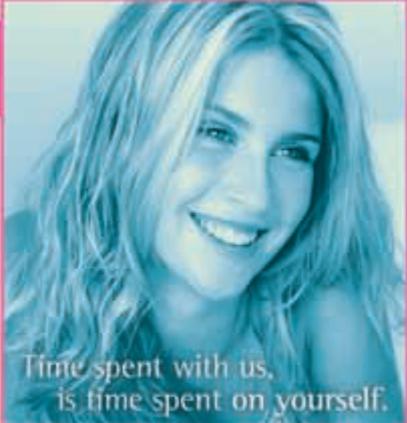
Calcium Scoring: Calcium is vital for good bone health and aids in many cellular functions throughout your

body, but a significant calcium buildup in the heart and coronary arteries can be an early sign of cardiovascular disease (CVD). A diagnostic test known as a computerized tomography (CT) heart screening can detect the amount of calcium buildup in your arteries by computing a “score” to help determine your risk of CVD.

“Patients with a high score should see their internist or cardiologist for a stress test,” said Mark Fulmer, radiologist on the medical staff at Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie.

Chest CT Scans: We all know that significant exposure to tobacco smoke puts us at risk for lung cancer. Once a smoker quits, their risk for lung cancer is lowered significantly, but unfortunately, the damage has already been done to their lungs.

“CT scans of the lungs can detect



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pea-size cancerous growths before any symptoms develop. Studies have shown that CT scans are beneficial for detecting lung cancer at its earliest stages,” Dr. Fulmer said.

Ultrasound: Ultrasound imaging has been around for many years and continues to become more advanced. Using high-frequency sound waves, ultrasound can produce images of the organs and blood vessels and can be used to identify the source of pain, swelling or infection, or provide the first pictures of a growing baby during pregnancy. Physicians may recommend ultrasound scans to check for thyroid problems, and it is often used in addition to mammograms or to view the inside of the pelvis to check for cervical or ovarian cancer.

Bone Densitometry Scans: Of the 40 million Americans who suffer from osteoporosis, 80 percent of them are women according to the National Osteoporosis Foundation. A simple bone density scan can detect osteoporosis early on and determine your rate of bone loss long before any fractures or breaks occur.

“A bone density test is recommended for all women over age 65, those considered at high risk for osteoporosis and women who suffer from frequent fractures,” Rose added.

For more information about any of these imaging procedures and those available at the Baylor Imaging and Diagnostics Center at Red Oak, consult with your physician. **NOW**

** Physicians are members of the medical staff at one of Baylor Health Care System's subsidiary, community or affiliated medical centers and are neither employees nor agents of those medical centers, Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie or Baylor Health Care System.*

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Renfro Healthcare Center in Waxahachie has introduced an innovative new treatment for patients who suffer from dysphagia, a painful and often debilitating swallowing disorder.

Known as VitalStim® Therapy, the treatment uses non-invasive electrical stimulation to help re-educate the throat muscles needed for swallowing. Cleared for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, VitalStim® Therapy is applied externally and delivers small electrical currents to the neck to stimulate inactive or atrophied swallowing muscles. With repeated therapy, throat muscles are retrained until the patient reaches an optimum level of swallow function.

“VitalStim Therapy is truly a breakthrough in treating dysphagia”, said Sarah L. Britton, MS, CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist at Renfro Healthcare Center. “Since introducing VitalStim at Renfro, we have seen some exceptional outcomes that probably would not have been possible with traditional approaches to therapy. Patients have shown dramatic improvements in their ability to swallow and have returned to more normal diets – and a better quality of life – much sooner than we’ve seen in the past. Even patients on feeding tubes have responded well to the therapy.”

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December 2007 Community Calendar

December 5

Kiwanis Club of Waxahachie meeting, 12 - 1 p.m. at Ryan's Grill, 1400 N. Highway 77. Members and guests are welcome. For further information, please contact Marilyn Benedict at (972) 351-3377 or visit www.kiwanis.org.

December 6

HealthMarkets Care Assured will host a free PowerPoint presentation concerning a new option for Medicare benefits from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. at the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce office, 102 YMCA Drive. Call (972) 693-6600 for details.

December 7 and 8

Step back in time and walk the streets of ancient Bethlehem as Mary and Joseph did the night of Christ's birth at Bethlehem Revisited. The re-enactment is free, but donations are welcome. Performances, repeated every 30 minutes, will be held from 6 - 9 p.m. behind Central Presbyterian Church located at 402 N. College Street. Call (972) 937-2390 for details.

December 8 and 9

The Candlelight Home Tour will be open for visitors from 2 - 8 p.m. Four dazzling homes will be featured for your viewing pleasure. Call the Chamber office at (972) 937-2390 for details.

Come to the Courthouse Square in downtown Waxahachie and enjoy a Victorian Christmas Celebration. December 8 from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. December 9 from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. Activities include holiday market vendors, choirs, carolers, costumed characters, carriage rides, photos with Santa and so much more.

December 11

Meet people, network and promote your business during the Waxahachie Business Interchange Leads Group from 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. at Hastings Entertainment, 791 Highway 77N, Suite 101. Open to all Waxahachie Chamber members. Non-members can attend a total of two (2) times. Cost is \$1 per person. Come prepared to give a 30-second "commercial" for your business. Coffee and pastries provided. There will also be door prizes and cash giveaways. Call the Chamber at (972) 937-2390 for further information.

December 13

The Chamber Chairman & Member Appreciation Reception will be held from 4 - 6 p.m. at Citizens National Bank, 200 N. Elm. Admission is free. Come help us celebrate the outgoing chairman of the board and give thanks to the members. Refreshments provided. RSVP to (972) 937-2390.

The Kiwanis Club of Waxahachie and Advantage Academy will sponsor "Advantage Academy Key Club of Waxahachie" from 7 - 8 p.m. at First Assembly Fellowship Hall to introduce the Key Club to the community. Key Club members will be "pinned" by their parents. For more information, please contact Marilyn Benedict at (972) 351-3377.

December 15

After Hours Improv Comedy Show will begin at 8 p.m. at The Texas Theater, 110 W. Main Street. Adults are \$10 and children 10 and under are \$6. Tickets may be purchased online at www.AfterHoursImprov.com, by phone at (972) 937-9839 or at the box office.

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