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December 2008

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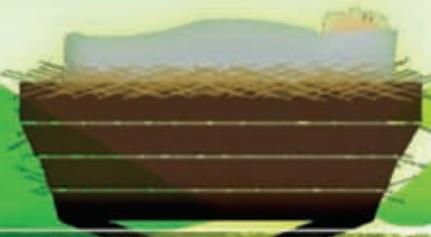
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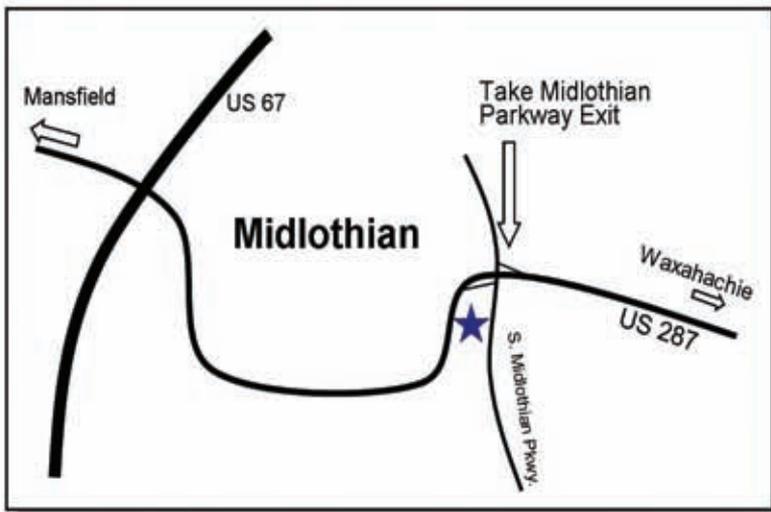
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**Publisher, Connie Poirier**  
**General Manager, Rick Hensley**  
**Managing Editor, Becky Walker**  
**Editorial Coordinator, Sandra McIntosh**  
**Creative Director, Jami Navarro**  
**Art Director, Chris McCalla**  
**Office Manager, Lauren Poirier**

**Midlothian Editor, Betty Tryon**  
**Contributing Writers, Alex Allred • Faith Browning**  
**Dr. Brad Collins • Nancy Fenton • Clay Money**  
**Photography, Ivey Photography • Natalie Busch**  
**Terri Ozymy • Monica J. Pechal**  
**Contributing Editors/Proofreaders, Pat Anthony**  
**Jaime Ruark • Beverly Shay**

**Advertising Representatives, Rick Ausmus**  
**Linda Dean • Will Epps • Carolyn Mixon • Linda**  
**Moffett • Steve Randle • Eddie Yates • Terri Yates**  
**Graphic Designers/Production, Julie Carpenter**  
**Allee Brand • Jana Jennings • Marshall Hinsley**  
**Arlene Honza • Brande Morgan • Pamela Parisi**  
**Jennifer Wylie**

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**Editor's Note**

*"Hark,' the herald angels sing,  
'Glory to the newborn King!"*

During the holiday season filled with the baking, cooking, shopping, gift wrapping, decorations and parties, it can be all too easy to push aside the true reason for this glorious season. Our nation cherished this day so much that a national holiday was created to honor it.

As you move through this season of joy, thanksgiving and praise, take time to remember the little babe born long ago, who brought hope and light to so many. This holiday we will gather to celebrate at Christmas functions and at places of worship to sing and give glory, just as the angels did so long ago. I look forward to bringing you more stories about your neighbors in the coming year. From all of us at NOW Magazines, we want to wish you Merry Christmas and peace and happiness in the New Year.



Betty Tryon  
MidlothianNOW Editor



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# United

# We Stand

— By Betty Tryon

The phone call started as so many do. Sick, scared, broke and hungry, with no one to turn to, a woman called the United Way. Richard Norman, executive director of the United Way of West Ellis County, took the call. “She was a diabetic and out of work. It was a heartbreaker. I referred her to Manna House. On our referral line, we get several calls a day like that,” he said. “We (United Way) refer [them] to agencies that we support, but if there is another agency they need to go to that is not a part of United Way, then we will certainly refer them there.”

Richard joined United Way as a board member in 1991 at the request of a friend. He became the executive director in 2006. “I liked that they were helping people in the community,” he stated. “We currently provide funding to 25 different agencies in Ellis County, who each have a working director. They help solicit funds for their agency. These are agencies that feed the hungry, provide shelter for the homeless and protect the abused.”

Some of the organizations United Way has assisted have directors who can empathize with the needs in the community. One director, who personally understands the needs of such services, was in great need herself many years ago. She has stated that the hardest thing she ever had to do was to ask

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for help. Another director previously had a home, family and a job, but a series of events led to her becoming homeless. Such personal life experiences allow them to be acutely aware of what is required to help someone else in this situation.

In describing some of the organizations, Richard said, “Daniel’s Den is also called The Samaritan House. They provide temporary shelter, primarily for women and children, but their outreach can extend to families if necessary.” Many of the agencies United Way supports focus exclusively on children. Two of them are the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) and The Gingerbread House. They



**“They provide temporary shelter, primarily for women and children, but their outreach can extend to families if necessary.”**

focus on children who have suffered child abuse. “There were close to 400 cases of child abuse in Ellis County in the last year. It is an ongoing, serious problem,” Richard explained. “Court Appointed Special Advocates protect the rights of the child all the way through the court procedures. The Gingerbread House in Waxahachie provides a child-friendly environment for investigators to come to the child.”

The agency receiving the most funding is Meals on Wheels. They serve approximately 800 meals each week in Ellis County. They get more funding because they serve more people. Richard recounts one of his experiences in delivering for Meals on Wheels. “When you are delivering, they give

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you instructions about how to deliver it. One of the homes I went to was a woman who had been very active in the community but is now bedridden. The instructions said to knock on the door, push it open and announce yourself. I did that and received no answer," he recalled. "I discovered her in her bed asleep, and I had a hard time waking her up. Of course, since she was in bed alone all day, when someone comes over, she wanted to talk. I couldn't stay too long because I had other deliveries. It is very humbling to see that."

The theme for the 2009 campaign is "Live United," and this year, Richard's wife, Pam, is helping out with fundraising. She is the volunteer campaign director this year. As a retired teacher and school administrator, and full-time grandmother to their four

**United Way gives people a chance to donate to those organizations in the community.**

grandsons, she has taken on a monumental task. Richard acknowledges that with current economical problems, it is a tough year for fundraising. The requests for help are becoming more numerous for the United Way because of the economy. "Everybody is having it a little tougher this year," he said. "We all have to pay a lot more for gas and groceries. Unfortunately, the need is a greater one this year."

United Way relies on several avenues to generate funds. The more prominent one is the payroll deduction plan. They also solicit individuals and businesses. "We get donations from all over the country. We also have collection cans in restaurants. It is not a big source of revenue, but it keeps it in front of everybody. Our largest contributor has been Chaparral Steel, now Gerdau-Ameristeel and TXI (Texas



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Industries, Inc.),” Richard said. They also raffle a beautiful handmade quilt by The Milford Center every year.

When Richard is not volunteering and serving as the executive director for United Way, he works at his business, Norman Financial Associates, located downtown in Midlothian. His business experience and education serve him well. He received his bachelor's degree in business administration management from the University of Texas in Arlington. He earned his master's degree in financial services at American College and his juris doctorate (JD) from Southern Methodist University.

When agencies apply for funding from United Way, they must submit their financial statements to the board.



“Harold Nolte is the chairman of the board. Every year we hold hearings where the head of each agency comes in and makes a request for funding. They must be a 501(c)(3) [nonprofit], and we check their documentation and give them a chance to explain their mission to the board and how they plan to use the funds,” Richard explained. “Sometimes their request is larger than we can accommodate. We look at the overall picture and make distribution based upon need. Food, clothing and shelter are the direst needs, so we give priority to them. United Way gives people a chance to donate to those organizations in the community. Those busy with their jobs find it hard to go out and do community service, but they can donate money.”

In this world, not everyone has the ability to stand up and take care of himself or herself all alone. The weak, the young, the disabled and the old need help. One person cannot meet all of the needs; we must all work together. It is nice to know that you can donate to United Way, an organization that helps so many, in so many ways. **NOW**

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# One Major Event

## After Another

— By Sandra McIntosh

Christmas has definitely arrived at the Cloud home, evidenced by the twinkling lights, priceless decorations and most of all, within the family memories Jim and Mandy have been making since relocating to Midlothian. The banking business prompted their move from Louisiana in 1990. After renting for a couple of years, John McMichaels, a neighbor and close



friend who also happened to be a well-known builder in the area, built the Southern, traditional-style home in the middle of what once was an old cotton field. “It took five months all total,” Jim said. “He started building in April of 1993, and we spent our first night here in mid-August.”

The house has definitely withstood the test of time. One day it was filled

with their children and then, seemingly, the next day, Jim and Mandy turned around to find themselves living in the “empty nest” stage of their marriage. At this stage, many couples feel the need to downsize. It was just the opposite with the Clouds. “We added the TV room off the kitchen and family room, when we started having grandchildren,” Jim said, explaining that a portion of the back patio was lost in the addition. “Empty nesting,” Mandy added with a laugh, “sometimes just means a larger nest.”

### At Home With

## *Jim and Mandy Cloud*





The home also boasts of a formal dining room to the left of the front entrance; a western room, which displays all Jim's "cowboy stuff" while also serving as the couple's home office; and outside offerings put in place on purpose



just for the couple's grandchildren to enjoy. Two barns for horses and one for hay, a greenhouse, a doll house and a full playground with a sand mountain make Mimi and Papa's house in the

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country a children's paradise. Seven acres allow the grandchildren — Madeline, Jamie, Jackson and Brooke — ranging in age from 8 to 4, a different kind of freedom than they enjoy living in the city. It also offers Elizabeth, the couple's youngest child, the opportunity to hone her skills as an award-winning barrel racer. "Brad and his wife, Janet, have two children, and Jennifer and her husband, Kyle, have two children," Mandy noted. "Elizabeth is married to her three horses," Jim jokingly added.

The Christmas holiday begins in mid-November, with the lengthy process

of decorating, both inside and out. New decorations are few in the Cloud household. "We were both raised to appreciate what we have," Jim said. They also have a deep appreciation for the finer things in life, which include the decorations that date back to the time when Jim and Mandy were toddlers themselves. "The stockings that Brad and Jennifer use belonged to me and my older brother, Scott, when we were kids," Mandy said. "My mom handmade them. I handmade a similar one for Elizabeth when she was born."

In all their years of marriage, Jim



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and Mandy never recall having anything but a real tree. "We cut down the biggest one we could find to fill the space," Jim said. "This has always been a fun family outing." The tree's wooden ornaments belong to the Cloud children and look beautiful alongside the stars that represent each grandchild.

Several of the tree's ornaments date back at least 100 years, each one with its own story. Many items have been passed down from one family member to another, but one of Jim's favorites is a glass-blown deer that once belonged to his grandmother who lived to be 90. The multicolored lights that go up

every season are stored in 40-year-old ice cream barrels. The angel, although a bit tattered and worn at 41, still takes her place atop the tree. A wreath, with special ornaments bearing the name of each family member adorning its greenery, always hangs above the fireplace mantle in the family room. It will soon be 25 years old.

Traditional Christmas bone china and the Gorman sterling silver snowflakes also hang on the tree in the formal dining room. Thirty miniature trees intermingle with snowmen, Santas and cookie cutters in the space above the kitchen cabinets and lighted green

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garland is draped along the fence line. The home is transformed into a Texas western winter wonderland.

One of the most noteworthy displays in the three-bedroom, three-bath home is found on the shelves of a wooden bookcase, located in the family room, where else? "Everything we do around here is a major event, and it's all about family," Mandy stated, referring to Thanksgiving, Christmas and the birthday celebrations, held 11 months out of the year. "The same Santa I took the kids to when they were little is the same Santa my grandkids go to each year."

Each framed photograph marks another year, starting with the couple's children and ending with their grandchildren. To visitors, the shelf and its contents are an open, three-



dimensional scrapbook, but to Jim and Mandy, it represents years of wonderful holiday memories with the promise of many more in the making. To say holidays at the Cloud home are over-the-top would be a gross understatement; Christmas may be the biggest event of the whole year.

Mandy has a very specific way in which she decorates. "The first thing



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to go up is the Nativity scene," she enthused, "and it's the last thing to come down. We have a birthday party for Jesus, but we get all the presents."

The day before Christmas Eve is also very special to Jim and Mandy. "We get all four grandchildren for the entire day," they both said in unison. Not only does it afford the parents a final opportunity for any last minute Christmas shopping for the children, it also allows Jim and Mandy the time



needed to prepare for the Christmas Eve gathering the following day. "Every year, we do a craft which works into the skit the children present for their parents," Mandy said.

One year, they made yard art that looked like oversized lollipops. Another year, the craft consisted of jingle bells on a rope which provided the background music for caroling. "Last year was hysterical," Mandy said. "After the annual parade, we all ended up in the garage, where the children had a Christmas ball." Christmas day, now that Jim and Mandy's children have children, is shared among the two households. One year they all travel to Brad's, and the following year they all meet at Jennifer's house.

For Jim and Mandy, life, love and the holidays are truly all about family. "We encourage each other all the time," Mandy said. "Family for us means one for all and all for one. We don't know any other way." **NOW**

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- ... when the Texas Rangers actually made the playoffs?
- ... when Aikman, Smith, and Irvin were Cowboy players not Cowboy Hall of Famers?
- ... when Ricky Williams won the Heisman Trophy as a University of Texas Longhorn?
- ... when Bill Clinton was President and Monica was just an intern?

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# Heartfelt

# Worship

— By Betty Tryon



No one knew how it would end. The woman standing in front of the congregation on Christmas Eve dipped her hand into paint and smeared it onto the canvas again and again. Utilizing the style of splat art, she captivated the audience with a beautiful celestial image. This display was not about her or her art. It was another way to celebrate a sacred moment. That energizing moment is what Tim Hale, Worship Pastor at First Baptist Church (FBC) believes enhances worship. He stated, “We use Dina Petty and her art on special Sundays such as Christmas Eve and Easter. Worship is a huge, important part of our service. Our church would not be the same without our worship.”

During the Christmas season, many churches express their celebration in

grand style, using theatric performances or even still life depictions of the birth of Christ. However, Tim wants holiday services at FBC to enhance what the congregation sees on Sunday morning. Because holiday services are special, he will add something unique that is in keeping with his philosophy of worship on a Sunday morning. He explained, “Every Sunday, we try to make every service an event. In our contemporary service, we use the arts to create a mood. We use video, drama, choreography and creative lighting.”

He added, “My goal for worship is to unleash emotive expression. God enjoys His children doing things with a glad heart and celebratory spirit. I learn most things about worship from my kids, Cassidee, 11 and Chloe, 7. Kids

worship easier. They learn how to trust God. It is in middle school that they become more self-conscious. Self-focus is a killer of worship. I believe that music ... can be used for the glory of God and presented in a way to point people to Jesus and to let them see Him. Maybe for the first time in their lives, they know what it’s like to experience God’s love or His presence.”

When he was growing up, Tim never thought his career would be in music. He recalled, “I grew up in Midland, Texas. Sports and football were a big part of my life. In my senior year in high school, I decided to quit sports and join the choir. My teammates were not happy about this, but I fell in love with music. This was a big fork in the road for me. I’ve always had a love for

music. I grew up in church singing and being introduced to all kinds of Christian music by my parents including, Second Chapter of Acts, the Imperials, Rich Mullins and more. Christian music was always playing in the car or at home and was very influential to my spiritual and musical growth. It wasn't until around my senior year in high school that I felt that God [might] be calling me into music ministry and discovered that He had gifted me musically."

It was at this point that Tim's wife, Cindy, played an important role in his decision to try his hand in music. He stated, "Cindy and I were high school sweethearts. She was in the choir, and they were always going places for competitions. I was curious about choir, so I decided to try out for it. I developed a passion and love for it. I joined the choir in high school at the beginning of my senior year and absolutely loved the experience. I loved the competitions; I loved the discipline that it helped develop and the tenacity that it took

**"My goal for worship is to unleash emotive expression."**

to practice daily in order to be the best I could be. I grew as a musician in that period of my life."

After graduating from high school, Tim went to Azusa Pacific University, a private Christian University in Los Angeles. As a singer, and in his words a decent piano player, he graduated with a major in music education with vocal emphasis. He explained the challenge of leaving a small town and moving to a large city, "Moving from Midland to Hollywood was a huge cultural shock for me. I went from a town with about 100,000 people and no water to a city

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of about million people and the Pacific Ocean, and I loved every minute of it. My wife, Cindy, and I were married during our college years.”

Tim’s love for music led him to serve in other churches before coming to Midlothian, thereby giving him a broad range of experience. He said, “We’ve been in Midlothian now for three years and absolutely love our church and community. We love the small town



feel with great schools that our girls love, and a wonderful family atmosphere that Midlothian offers. [We] feel like we’ve really found something special in this little town that three years ago, we’d never heard of.” It is here that Tim willingly pours his heart into his music and his work. “I have an awesome privilege every Sunday morning of seeing God work in the lives of His people through music and worship,” he said.

Using his skill to communicate God’s love through music and art, this Christmas Eve Tim and the worship team at FBC will once again lead their congregation in worship as they celebrate the birth of Christ. **ARTS NOW**

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Triwana Fisher, M.D. is board certified in family medicine and received her medical degree from Texas Tech University Health Sciences



Center School of Medicine in Lubbock. She completed her residency at John Peter Smith Hospital's family medicine residency program in Fort Worth. Dr. Fisher is interested in the management of acute and chronic diseases, women's health, dermatology procedures, adult and pediatric medicine. Dr. Fisher enjoys reading, watching movies, and traveling internationally.



## Hike for Heroes 5K in Midlothian

December 15, 6:00pm

The 13th annual Hike for Heroes 5K walk/run benefiting Midlothian Special Olympics will be Monday, December 15 starting at 6:00pm held at the MHS/Meadows Library parking lot. Registration forms available at the MHS front office or download from the MISD Web site at [www.midlothian-isd.net](http://www.midlothian-isd.net). Early registration is \$18, after December 5 registration is \$20. All participants will receive a specially designed t-shirt.

*If you are interested in sponsoring the Hike for Heroes please contact Laura Truett at 972-775-8226, ext. 1171.*

## Kitts wins Cross Country Girls 4A State Championship

MHS Sophomore Carly Kitts had a strong finish and won the girls 4A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP on November 15 in Round Rock, TX. Carly beat defending state champion Sara Sutherland of Highland Park. Carly ran her personal best time with 11.18.24 seconds over the two-mile course at Vandergriff Park.



## MISD Gold Performance Acknowledgements 2008

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) awarded seven Midlothian ISD campuses and the District with Gold Performance Acknowledgements (GPA). The GPA system acknowledges districts and campuses for high performance on indicators other than those used to determine accountability ratings.

The Gold Performance Acknowledgments reflect areas of academic performance and growth that go beyond state accountability ratings. The following is an overview of the Gold Performance Acknowledgments across the district:

**Midlothian ISD** - Commended Performance in Reading, English/Language Arts and Writing; TSI in English/Language Arts & Math.

**T.E. Baxter Elementary** - Commended Performance in Reading/ELA, Math, Writing and Science. Accountability rating is Exemplary.

**J.R. Irvin Elementary** - Commended Performance in Reading/ELA, Math, Science and Writing. Accountability rating is Exemplary.

**Longbranch Elementary** - Commended Performance in Reading/ELA, Writing, Science and Math. Accountability rating is Exemplary.

**Mt. Peak Elementary** - Commended Performance in Writing and Science. Accountability rating is Exemplary.

**J.A. Vitovsky Elementary** - Accountability Rating is Academically Acceptable.

**Walnut Grove Middle School** - Commended Performance in Reading/ELA, Social Studies, Math and Writing. Comparable Improvement in Math and Reading/ELA. Accountability rating is Recognized.

**Frank Seale Middle School** - Commended Performance in Reading/ELA, Writing, Social Studies and Science. Comparable Improvement in Math. Accountability rating is Recognized.

**Midlothian High School** - TX Success Initiative in ELA and Math. Accountability rating is Academically Acceptable. The 2008 District Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) will be available online at [www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2008](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2008).

## Teachers awarded \$24,733 by the MEF Star Patrol

The MISD Education Foundation (MEF) Star Patrol surprised teachers on November 17 with five innovative teaching grants totaling \$24,733. These grants are made possible through the non-profit foundation founded in April 2004 to benefit the teachers and students for innovative projects and programs. Thanks to the donors and sponsors, MEF has awarded over \$125,000 to teachers and students.



"Saving Our Greatest Resources - Helping First Year Teachers Succeed" for \$4,963.36 awarded to Karena Blackwell and Keegan Webb



Walnut Grove MS grant "Authentic Artifacts from an Ancient World" for \$4,995 awarded to Genevieve Bouldin, Ann Faudree, Sharon Sheridan, Cindy Mueller, Barbara Dixon, Robin McGee and Keegan Webb



Walnut Grove & Frank Seale MS grant "Lab Rats - Summer Science Camp" for \$4,971.08 awarded to Leslie Boehk, Leigh Emerson, Jason Guinn, Whitney Hattier, Barbara Mikulecky, Kaylee King, Mary Davis, and Cindy Mueller, Teresa Bannister, Jill Schaben, Dawn Richmond, Kim Hopkins, and Don Kirby



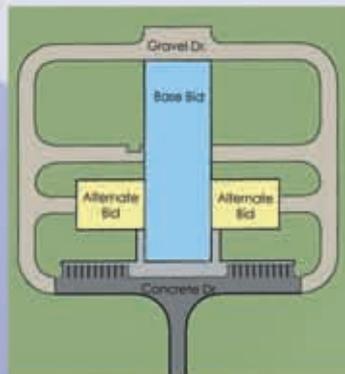
LaRue Miller Elementary grant "Tricycle Town" for \$4,998.15 awarded to Karla Ostroski, Jurae Greiten, Christy McAfee, Adrienne Mitchell, Teri Panza, and Karen Poland



LaRue Miller Elementary grant "iPod Applaud You" for \$4,805.95 awarded to Amy Clark, Tammie Thompson, Valree Milson, Krista Bruton, and Karyn Story

## Agricultural Science Facility Design Finalized

In November 2007, voters approved for MISD to build an Agricultural Science Facility for \$2,500,000. The site location is on the corner of North Midlothian Pkwy. and Mockingbird Lane. The School Board recently approved VLK Architect's design (see picture). David Boswell Director of Construction Projects, will oversee the construction of this project. The projected completion date is fall 2009.



Located at North Midlothian Pkwy & Mockingbird Ln.

### *It's a Wonderful Life* Theatre Performance

This unique performance will present a 1940s Live Radio Show style version of *It's a Wonderful Life* on December 5-6 at 7pm in the MHS auditorium. Tickets are \$5 reserved, \$3 adult general, and \$2 student general. General admission tickets purchased at the door. Reserve tickets purchased online at [www.seatyourself.biz/mhs](http://www.seatyourself.biz/mhs) or see Ms. Pierce at MHS.

During the performances the MHS Drama Club will also offer gift wrapping services as a fundraiser for their spring trip to New York City. Audience members may drop off gifts before the show and pick up their wrapped gifts when the show is over. Community members may stop by MHS for gift wrapping services from 6pm - 9pm on December 5-6. Cost of wrapping services is \$3 per gift.

### *Guys and Dolls* Theatre Performance

On January 29-31 at 7pm and February 1 at 2pm, MHS students will show their talent through a classic musical play titled *Guys and Dolls*. All performances will be at the MHS auditorium. Tickets are \$10 reserved, \$7 general admission. General admission tickets are purchased at the door. Reserve tickets online at [www.seatyourself.biz/mhs](http://www.seatyourself.biz/mhs) or see Ms. Pierce at MHS.

## Upcoming Entertainment for the Community. The public is welcome

### Choir Holiday Concert

Get into the holiday spirit by attending the MHS Choir Concert on December 11 at 7:00pm held in the MHS auditorium. Admission is free!

### All Bands Concert Holiday Music

Come listen to all three MHS bands entertain you with holiday music. The concert is December 16 at 6:30pm held at the MHS auditorium. Admission is free!



From left to right: Wes McGuyer, Lt. Moffitt, Capt. Silva, Robert Altman, Mark Widman, Chief McCaskill, Jesse Baltazar

# Touchdowns *for* Kids

— By Betty Tryon

Dust off your old pom-poms and noisemakers; it is time to cheer again! In the spirit of camaraderie, friendship and cooperation, members from Midlothian's very own fire department and police department will compete in their annual Guns & Hoses Football Game. This is more than just a game. Wesley McGuyer, firefighter paramedic and president of Fire Fighter Association, explained, "I got together with Nick Moffitt three years ago, when he was the president of the association, and we decided to start Guns & Hoses Football. The fire department usually has a toy drive with a toy drop before Christmas. What better way is there to raise more toys than to have a charitable event? The price of admission to the game would be a new and unused toy at the gate. If you don't have a toy, you can donate money. Some people bring more than one toy." At the first game in 2006, their truck was stuffed with toys after the game. Last year, they had two truckloads of toys.

The firefighters have a long history of donating toys

for needy children. They have a good idea about which toys are most needed at this time of year. "We prefer the older toys. Last year, we got a couple of bicycles," Wesley explained. Smiling, he added, "Obviously, we get a lot of fire engines. We seem to get a lot of toys for the age group of 4- and 5-year-olds. We need infant and baby toys for a lot of the single moms in Midlothian, and also toys for the 10- and 11-year-old age



group. All the toys are taken to Manna House immediately after the game.”

The firefighters and police officers now have two games under their belts. Each year they have learned more about their opponents’ strengths and weaknesses, as well as ways in which to improve the game. Looking forward to the challenge of this year’s game, Wesley said, “We used to have 15-minute

**At the first game in 2006, their truck was stuffed with toys after the game.**

quarters, but last year we scaled it down to 10-minute quarters, because the score was huge. I think it was 50 to 60 the first year. We still run the length of the field. It is high scoring and a lot of action. We have a lot of athletic guys on the police and fire department.” Laughing, he added, “Their second career should be playing football. They can really run and catch. One or two of them played for Midlothian in high school, and one in the police department plays flag football professionally.”

The two departments agreed to play flag football rather than tackle because of safety issues. The school district generously allows the players to use the football field. “The scorekeepers, announcers and line keepers donate their time. Whatever we ask for, they give,” Wesley said. The participants in the game will wear red and blue jerseys. Red is obviously for the firefighters, and blue for the police department. Usually, there is some good-natured teasing on the field. “One year, one of the firemen dressed up as a donut and went over to their side (police),” Wesley recalled. “Using a fishing pole, he tempted them with a donut hanging on the end of the pole, dangling it over them.”

Wesley knows the crowd will enjoy

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the fun side of the game, as well as donating the toys. However, there is a serious side to it. There may be many children living in our community who may not get a toy for Christmas. "You look around in nice neighborhoods and you don't see the great need for things like this. But as a fireman or a police officer, you are in every neighborhood, not just the rich and middle class," he stated. "There are hundreds of people in some neighborhoods that need help."



During the month of December, there will be many things that clamor for our attention. Wesley offers additional incentives to come and donate toys. "This will be an opportunity to meet every fireman and policeman in the city. Everyone on duty will be around the stadium, obviously leaving on calls when needed," he explained. "You get an opportunity to see a game that we play competitively. A lot of times, you don't get to see these people in this capacity and having fun. I think our game is better than the ones you see on TV." In addition to the game inside the stadium, there will be fire engines out front for the public to examine and an auto show hosted by Frank "Wormy" Miller. Lots of inexpensive food will be available and a half-time show to enjoy.

The fire department and police department with their big hearts welcome the chance to give to this community. This December, Midlothian will get to see them having fun with all of their antics and high scores. Surely, it will be a game to remember. **NOW**

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# WOW Factor!

— By Betty Tryon

on flowers. Flowers die, but this is something they can keep and use. People get so excited when I deliver, even if it is not for them. It's probably like what the flower delivery person gets. It is so much fun."

All of Jenny's baskets are custom made; beautiful samples of her work can be found on her Web site. "Just let me know the color scheme, what they want it for, when they need it and their price range. I do research for the area for gift baskets and can make them specific to the location. They can e-mail me or call for their requests," Jenny said. "I am always getting new and creative things, so there is no one way to do a basket. I give great customer service. I think people like to do business with someone who is on time and has something nice and unique that people enjoy and will be proud to give to other people and I will be proud to put my sticker on it."

Doing things creatively gives Jenny her logo, "Thinking outside the box." It begins with her business cards, which are not rectangular, but circular. Her creativity led her to put gifts not in a traditional box, but in a basket. Jenny also decided to operate her business completely online. "When I got pregnant with my son, I wanted to slow down a bit and a friend suggested gift baskets. She said I am really creative and have good marketing skills," she shared. "I told my husband that this combines some of my favorite things to do: shopping, designing, creating and marketing! It also allows me to be with my kids."

You do not have to be within driving distance to receive one of Jenny's creations. "I will ship anywhere," she said. Jenny makes sure everything she ships stays intact for the trip exactly as she packaged it, so that feeling of surprise and elation is still there for the receiver. Jenny launched her Web

Do you want to send someone something special and a little different? If they are Texans at heart, they may appreciate the Texas Basket from Jenny Conrad and her business of Conrad Creative. Nestled inside the basket, you might find a pair of boots doubling as a picture frame, Bronco Bob's barbecue sauce, a guacamole mix, Tabasco sauce and a snack mix. As unique as the contents are for a gift basket, the basket itself is an original with its look of rustic boards. Tacked onto the side are a tiny cowboy hat and boot, everything to give it that yee-ha! feeling.

If your taste runs more toward a sophisticated style, Jenny has you covered. Make the newly married couple feel special with a basket stuffed with Mr. and Mrs.' linen, a silver Mr. and Mrs.' cheese spreader, Mr. and Mrs.' towel and soap set, coasters and appropriate goodies to eat. Jenny stated, "I find unique and cute things that you can't find in the stores. When people buy a gift from me, it will be a wow factor. When I deliver it, people say 'wow!' for the same amount of money that you would probably spend on a gift certificate or

site in June and has already received many orders.

Before she began her own business, Jenny worked for many years in the business world. With a degree in marketing from Texas Christian



University, she has been recognized as Marketing Director of the Year from the Greater Houston Builder's association PRISM Awards and as Marketing Professional of the Year from Texas Association of Builder's Regional Star Awards, as well as receiving many other types of professional recognition. Jenny stated, "I have always been in marketing, which is more of a creative thing."

By combining her marketing skills and creative instincts, Jenny wants to create the perfect gift for you. You can contact her at (972) 822-6777, e-mail her at [jenny@conradcreative.com](mailto:jenny@conradcreative.com) or visit her Web site: [www.conradcreative.com](http://www.conradcreative.com). **NOW**



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# One *Extreme* Ambassador

— By Katrina D. McNair

For many fifth-graders, summertime means lazy days of sleeping late and taking a break from the books. For Kyle Mangum, however, this past summer was full of adventure on a journey that was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Kyle, a student at Frank Seal Middle School in Midlothian, spent part of his summer touring Europe as part of a program called People to People Student Ambassadors.

Created by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, the People to People Student Ambassadors program provides international educational opportunities for grade school, junior high and high school students. Believing countries could coexist in peace if citizens were able to communicate directly and effectively, President Eisenhower called a special conference in 1956 to conceptualize the program. Since 1963, the program has allowed thousands of American students to traverse the globe.

After enduring intense interviews with program personnel and obtaining references from teachers, Kyle received a congratulatory letter in the mail, letting him know of his acceptance. “I was like, ‘Wow — that’s awesome!’” Kyle said of his reaction when he received the letter.

Kyle’s itinerary was one that many adults could only dream of. Leaving the United States on June 19 and returning on

July 8 of this year, his journey included stops in France, Holland, Belgium, England, Wales and Ireland. Although Kyle was beyond excited about his trip, his parents were admittedly a little nervous sending him on his way, especially since this was the first plane ride he would be taking in his life. Tammy, Kyle’s mother, credits the program coordinators and the delegate leaders — advisors accompanying Kyle and his peers — with reassuring her and her husband that he would be well taken care of. “I can’t say enough about how they prepared us,” Tammy said. The preparation, which began in January of 2008, included classes for Kyle and his parents on everything from international etiquette and behavioral expectations to obtaining passports and packing lists. The program also required students and their parents to take part in four pre-departure orientation meetings, allowing them to meet fellow ambassadors and their families. “The support was incredible,” Tammy added, “and that was one of the main things that convinced me to attempt this program.”

A critical aspect of that support was assisting the families with their fundraising. Tuition for the program was \$6,000 and Kyle was very hands-on with helping raise the money. “We collected cans, sold flowers, and I helped baby-sit, too,” Kyle said. “They give you all of the tools and ideas to help you with fundraising,” Tammy added. The program also put the families in touch with fundraising agencies and provided letter templates, which were sent to friends and family members to assist with raising the tuition.

For Kyle, the trip was an eye-opening experience, and he was required to keep a journal of his experiences. “On the trip, we wrote every day and had to write about what we did,” he said. In addition to journaling during the trip, Kyle and the other students had pre-travel assignments, requiring them to learn about the places they would visit, as well as what it meant to be a part of the program and be a student ambassador. “Ireland was my favorite place. It was just so green,” Kyle expressed. “We got to go three-man kayaking,

try archery and do a scavenger hunt.”

Although the trip was full of fun for Kyle and the other ambassadors, they also learned about other countries’ customs and had the opportunity to see sights, which previously had only come alive in textbooks or movies.

Kyle’s schedule included trips to the world-famous Chateau de Versailles in Paris; The Louvre, home of the famous *Mona Lisa* painting; Buckingham Palace and canal boating in Amsterdam. Kyle also played “hurling” with a female Irish champion hurler while in Ireland. Hurling is a game similar to lacrosse here in the States.

Before he departed, Kyle’s parents had to review other skills with him, including how to use phone cards, learning exchange rates (students were in charge of their own spending money), hand-washing clothing and how to use an alarm clock. The experience has been good for both Kyle and his parents, for different reasons. “I learned more about the world. It’s like, whenever you do this, the world is a little smaller,” Kyle said.

“I expect a little more out of him now,” Tammy said. “I expect him to understand some things better. Now we can discuss some things that are global. He feels a little more connected now to what’s going on in the world, rather than just his circle of friends.”

The People to People Ambassador program has awakened a love for travel in Kyle, and he hopes he can participate in the program again in its high school division. The program’s Web site offers a vast array of information about program requirements and the benefits of participation — confidence, lasting friendships and an enlightened mind to name a few. For those who are interested in participating, Kyle offers very sound words of advice: “I would tell them, ‘Don’t be too upset or nervous, because it’s really cool. You’ll have a lot of fun wherever you go.’” **NOW**



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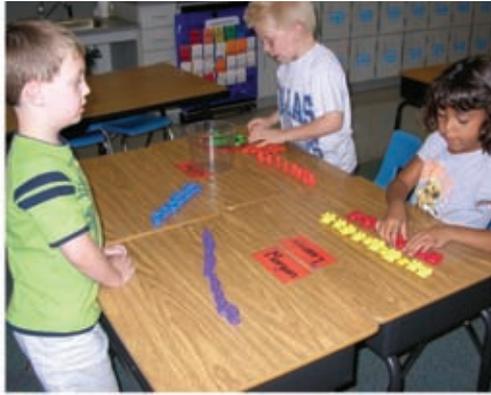
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The youngest softball player, top left, sported a hot pink batter's helmet. Mrs. Boyd's kindergarten class at J.A. Vitovsky, top center, learned how to sort objects and work together in groups. Registration for the MISD Education Foundation golf tournament, top right, started early. The fourth annual MISD Education Foundation golf tournament, second row left, saw hundreds in attendance. Two young girls, second row center, got ready to catch what they hoped would be a ground ball at the Midlothian Sports Park. Boys football practice, bottom left, was grueling, but fun. Girls, bottom right, get ready to take their turn at bat during a recent Midlothian Girls Softball Association game.

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A third grade student in Ms. Bly's class, top left, was one of many who made fossils. J.R. Irvin staff members, top right, were caught at the MISD stadium learning how to make letters, including a human "I." Mrs. Kunn's second grade class from Mt. Peak Elementary, second row left, learned about sound by using different instruments and mediums. Mrs. Miller, second row center, treated the first graders at LaRue to a story about sharing. Local firemen, second row right, made a visit to LaRue Miller Elementary to educate fourth grade students about the daily routine at a fire station. Second-graders, bottom left, had fun learning about continents through singing and moving around. Ethan H., bottom right, won the very large "Po" the panda bear for selling the most items for the Mt. Peak fundraiser.

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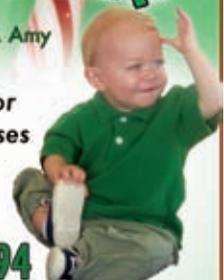
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# Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning



## IN THE KITCHEN WITH CONNIE SPENCER

### SKILLET ENCHILADAS

- 1 lb. hamburger
- 1/2 cup chopped onion (If someone does not like onion, use minced dried onions, they will never know.)
- 1 10-oz. can Old El Paso enchilada sauce (I use mild, but if you are tough, they have medium or hot.)
- 1 10 1/2-oz. can cream of mushroom soup
- 1/3 cup milk
- 2 Tbsp. green chilies, seeded, chopped and canned (optional)
- 8 corn tortillas
- 1/8 cup margarine
- 2 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese (mild, medium or sharp as preferred)
- 1/2 cup pitted ripe black olives, chopped (optional)

In a skillet, brown hamburger and onions; drain excess fat. Stir in enchilada sauce, soup, milk and chilies. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer 20 minutes. In a small skillet, cover tortillas in

margarine and heat both sides just until they are limp. Reserving 1/2 cup cheese and about a cup of sauce from the other pan, roll the tortillas up with the cheese and black olives, holding them together with a toothpick. Place them in the sauce, covering them with reserved cheese and sauce. Cover and simmer 5 - 10 minutes, until the cheese inside and on top has had time to melt. Serve with extra hot sauce and sour cream if you choose. Serves 4. Easy to double.

### CORN BREAD DRESSING

- 2 boxes Jiffy corn bread mix, baked as directed and set aside to cool
- 3/4 can chicken broth
- garlic powder to taste
- salt to taste
- pepper to taste
- 2 Tbsp. basil
- 1/4 cup onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup celery, chopped
- 1/4 cup pecans, chopped

5 hard boiled eggs, chopped

In a big bowl, crumble corn bread. Add chicken broth, garlic powder, salt, pepper and basil. Add onion, celery, pecans and eggs; place in greased pan. Bake for 30 - 45 minutes at 350 F, until it starts to brown on the top.

### HERSHEY BROWNIES

- 1 stick margarine
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 16-oz. can Hershey's chocolate syrup
- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 cup nuts (optional)

### FROSTING:

- 1 1/3 cups sugar
- 6 Tbsp. butter
- 6 Tbsp. milk

Sitting around a table sharing a meal with loved ones is a valuable memory Connie continues to pass on to her two daughters, Vanessa and Alicia. "I hung out in the kitchen, not cooking, but watching my mom make great meals for us," she recalled. "When we sat down to eat those meals, I knew they were filled with love."

Connie's style of cooking has changed over the years. "I used to cook a lot of big and fattening meals, which we had to change," she said, "or we would have had to get a much wider kitchen." Now that her girls are grown, she does not cook for them every day, so she now has time to try new ideas. Connie expressed, "I like to see what fun things I can make with the leftovers!" **NOW**

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1/2 cup chocolate chips

Melt margarine in a pan; add sugar, eggs and Hershey's chocolate syrup; beat together. Add flour, salt, vanilla and nuts. Spread in a 9 x 13-inch pan. Bake for 25 minutes at 350 F. While brownies are baking, prepare frosting by bringing to a boil sugar, butter and milk for 3 minutes; remove from heat. Add chocolate chips and stir until dissolved; spread on hot brownies. Waist bands beware!

## JAN'S RICE

1/2 medium onion, chopped  
1/2 cube margarine  
1 14-oz. can beef consommé soup  
1 small can sliced mushrooms or fresh mushrooms  
1 1/4 cups instant rice

Sauté onion in melted margarine until tender. Add all other ingredients; simmer until all moisture is absorbed, about 20 minutes.

## SWISS CHEESE FONDUE

3/4 cup cornstarch  
2 quarts cold water  
2 1/2 lbs. Swiss American processed cheese, sliced  
dash white pepper  
dash nutmeg  
dash garlic powder  
dash MSG  
3/4 cup Almaden Mountain Chablis

In a large pan, mix cornstarch in 2 cups water; add remaining water. Heat on low to medium; add a few slices of cheese at a time to water. When all cheese is added and melted, add remaining ingredients. Remove from heat, enjoy. We like to dip cubed wheat or white French bread. Rye is great too, just harder to find. Also try tiny little sausages, sliced Hillshire sausages or cubes of steak. This will store in the fridge for up to a month. I like to share it with neighbors.

## CHOCOLATE CRINKLES

3 eggs  
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar  
4 oz. unsweetened chocolate, melted  
1/2 cup vegetable oil  
2 tsp. baking powder  
2 tsp. vanilla  
2 cups all-purpose flour  
1/4 cup confectioners' sugar

In a large mixing bowl, beat eggs, sugar, chocolate, oil, baking powder and vanilla until well-combined with electric mixer. With mixer, beat in as much of the flour as possible; stir in the remaining flour by hand. Chill covered for two hours. Shape dough into 1-inch balls; roll in sifted confectioners' sugar, coating well. Place balls 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes at 375 F, until crackled in appearance. Transfer cookies to a wire rack to cool; sprinkle with more confectioners' sugar, if desired. Makes 48 cookies.

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# Embrace Life No Matter What

— By Tim Tobey

*Have you ever heard, “If I had only had more time ...”?*

As people grow older, some may have regrets about all the things they did not do. Not taking an exotic trip or missing visits to family members might top the list. Your list might even include not running a marathon. One of the biggest regrets may be not telling a loved one how much you care. One thing is for sure: The more you enjoy life and prepare for the unexpected, the fewer regrets you may have.

While no one can possibly do everything on a lifetime to-do list, there are plenty of ways to show people you care. One way is to make sure your family has the financial means to continue living their current lifestyle if you are no longer around.

Life insurance is one way to do just that. A strong economic foundation includes adequate life insurance coverage — enough to cover a mortgage, college tuition or outstanding debts.

There are many online sites that provide calculators to determine your life insurance needs. A qualified insurance professional can help you choose a policy to meet your needs and fit your budget. Once a policy is in place, you can revisit it, especially during different life events, to make certain the coverage is still appropriate.

Knowing you have provided for your loved ones will give you peace of mind so you can enjoy doing the things you’ve always wanted to do. It may not mean training for a marathon — but, then again, it might. **NOW**

*Tim Tobey is a State Farm agent based in Midlothian.*

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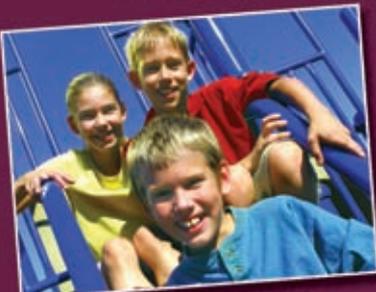
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# Childhood Obesity Can Be Deadly

## Harvard Study Finds That Overweight Children Risk Premature Death

— By Brad W. Collins, D.C.

Overweight children most often become overweight adults. Sure, there are those who seek guidance or find inspiration and commit themselves to a healthier lifestyle. Unfortunately, those success stories are few and far between. The majority of obese children leave adolescence for an adult life already ripe with health concerns. According to a study by Harvard's School of Public Health, those lives often end prematurely.

The Harvard study — published by the *Annals of Internal Medicine* — evaluated the health habits and medical records of more than 100,000 women who had provided data through the Nurses' Health Study (an ongoing federally

financed study on women's health issues) since 1989. Researchers found that those women who were overweight or obese at age 18, had a far greater risk of dying from cancer or heart disease before reaching middle age.

Today, one-third of U.S. children are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight, and the Harvard research confirms that childhood obesity is a death sentence. The physical and emotional strain on an overweight child is compounded by the type of behavior uncovered in this study. The obese youth were found less likely to exercise and more likely to have smoked and consumed alcohol. Let me be the master of the obvious, this is a recipe for a shorter life.

While the Harvard study did not establish whether permanent weight loss after age 18 decreases the risk of dying prematurely, parents and children should address their health regimen. Change the way you live, and you can alter the life path you currently travel. Chiropractic care is part of a maintenance program that includes proper diet, exercise and a healthy mental outlook. There is a reason that clichés become clichés. Treat your body like a temple, and that temple will stand for a long time. **NOW**

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# A Gardener's *Christmas List*

— By Nancy Fenton

It is the holiday season again, and a good time to talk about some of those items most wanted by your favorite gardener. This year, I purchased a Unifork for myself. The chief advantage to this tool is not the bright pink color, although it is easy to find even in a dark closet, but the weight. It weighs only three pounds! This is an easy-to-lift fork that is sturdy enough to turn wet compost or shovel heavy mulch. It does not dig very well in our hard clay, but neither will my other turning forks! It is not available in the stores, but can be ordered from [Unionjackstable.com](http://Unionjackstable.com).

I have worn out my pop-up garden bag and would love to have another one or two. I saw one at Sherwin Williams lately and the larger plant and lumber stores have had them. Gloves and small, sharp scissors are always good as are sweatbands and big brimmed hats. The catalogues have finally recognized that there are those of us who garden who are not six foot tall and 180 pounds and are now offering several light carts that look like they would carry a lot. I love my wheelbarrow, but it is getting increasingly harder to maneuver it around.

Gift cards to places that sell plants are good as are coupons redeemable for help in the yard and garden. Cleaning out that old garden area would be a great gift since many diseases winter over in the old stems and vines (especially tomato problems)! If your gardener is also a cook, Master Gardeners are putting together a new cookbook as we speak. It will have some great recipes. We have been trying them out all year!

Speaking of Master Gardeners, now is the time to sign up for the February training. Our County Extension Office has the applications and you can call (972) 825-5175 to have one sent to you. Here is hoping for a great holiday season for you and yours with love, laughter and lots of garden items under your tree! **NOW**

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# December 2008

## Community Calendar

### Every Tuesday

Midlothian Rotary Club meeting: Noon, Midlothian Civic Center, 224 South 11th St. (972) 775-7118.

### Second and Fourth Tuesdays

Midlothian City Council meeting: 6:00 p.m., City Hall, 104 West Ave. E.

### Third Thursday

ABWA Empowering Women Express Network monthly meeting: 5:45 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Circle. Please RSVP to Daphne Brewer at (972) 723-6551. [www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org](http://www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org).

### First and Third Thursday

Midlothian Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th St. (972) 775-7118.

### December 4

Navarro College SBDC How to Start a Small Business workshop: 2:00 - 4:00 p.m., Corsicana/Navarro County Chamber of Commerce conference room, 120 N. 12th St. To register, call Ophelia Mendoza at (903) 875-7667 or e-mail [ophelia.mendoza@navarrocollege.edu](mailto:ophelia.mendoza@navarrocollege.edu).

### December 6 - 8

Christmas Home Tour benefiting Mission Midlothian, 5:00 - 9:00 p.m. (214) 243-0426.

### December 8

Methodist Health System Mobile Mammography Unit will visit Midlothian Imaging Center, 2210 Bryan Place, Hwy. 287 at Plainview Rd. Call (972) 775-7410 for an appointment.

### December 11

African Children's Choir performance: 7:00 p.m., The Lighthouse, 1400 N. 9th St. The African Children's Choir's goal is to change Africa's future by providing education and hope for today's children. (972) 723-6197.

Navarro College SBDC Creating a Business Plan workshop: 2:00 - 4:00 p.m., Corsicana/Navarro County Chamber of Commerce, 120 N. 12th St. Call Ophelia Mendoza at (903) 875-7667 or e-mail [ophelia.mendoza@navarrocollege.edu](mailto:ophelia.mendoza@navarrocollege.edu).

### December 12

Internationally recognized Vocal Majority Chorus Christmas concert, hosted by the Midlothian Masonic scholarship foundation: 8:00 p.m., Midlothian ISD auditorium. For more information, contact Duke Burge at (972) 670-8193. Reserved tickets are available by going to [www.msftx.org](http://www.msftx.org).

### December 14

Ellis County Toy Run. Meet in downtown Midlothian; leave at 11:00 a.m.

### December 15

Special Olympics Hike for Heroes: 6:00 p.m., Meadows Library Parking Lot. Contact Laura Truett at (972) 775-8226, ext. 1171.

### December 17

Ellis County Christian Women's Connection's monthly luncheon: Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Hwy. 287 at I-35 East, Exit 401B, Waxahachie. \$13. Nursery vouchers available. Reservations preferred, walk-ins welcome. Contact either Kay at (972) 937-2807 or Mary at (972) 937-9984, or e-mail Kay at [windchime@charter.net](mailto:windchime@charter.net) no later than Sunday, December 14.

### December 22

Methodist Health System Mobile Mammography Unit will visit Midlothian Imaging Center, 2210 Bryan Place, Hwy. 287 at Plainview Rd. Call (972) 775-7410 for an appointment.

### December 22 - January 2

MISD closed for winter break.

### December 24 - 25

City offices closed.

### Merry Christmas!

For more community events, visit our online calendar at [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).

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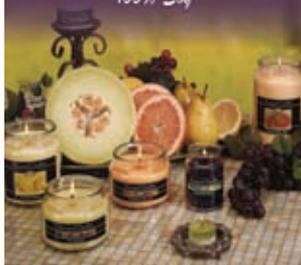
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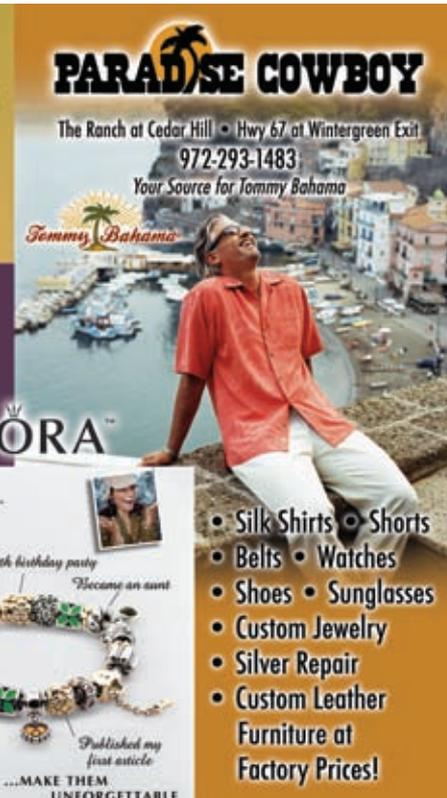
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at Waxahachie  
Pain Management Center