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DECEMBER 2013

SPECIAL SECTION:
2013 Holiday
Shopping
Guide

Hand in Hand

Feeding the needy makes
Judi Hejny one happy gal

Illuminating Joy

At Home With Klyne and Becky McCarty

Yuletide Cheer

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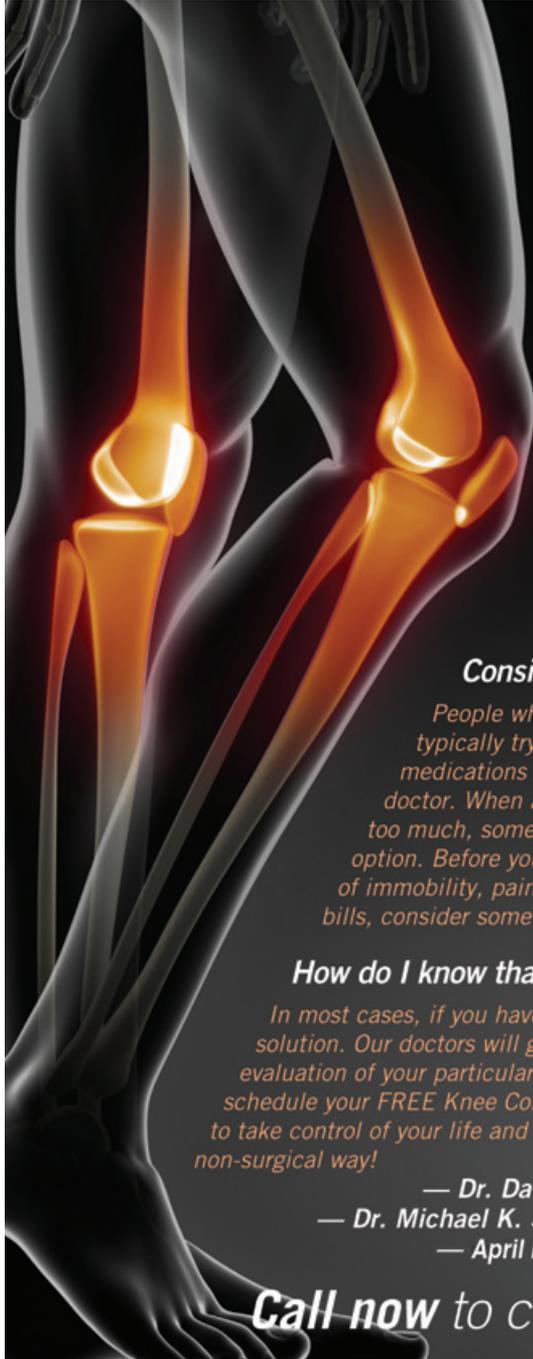
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ON THE COVER



The McCartys' home is aglow with the warmth of Christmas.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

"It's a bolly, jolly Christmas"...

That Yuletide lyric and others like it are the first indications the Christmas holidays are approaching. We sometimes groan at all the money we'll spend and dread the increased poundage the dinner table brings, but once we hear a happy Christmas tune, we're suddenly in the spirit of the season.

We adults know the real meaning of Christmas — and all but very young children know it, too. But still we succumb to the bright lights, festive sounds and inevitably commercial

dimension of the holiday. How can we resist?

In Ennis we get a foretaste of the season with our Parade of Lights Christmas parade. Every year, the parade is bigger and better, and it's fun to see old friends in the crowd. We're also fortunate to have so many beautifully decorated homes, one of which, owned by Klyne and Becky McCarty, we feature in this issue.

Randy

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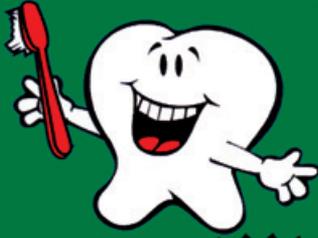


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*“The generosity of
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is always amazing.”*

Hand in Hand

— By Donnielle Tyner

As a long time Ennis resident, Judi Hejny has been active in various community programs, but none have compared to the fulfillment she has derived from her involvement with Helping Hands of Ennis. “I hate the circumstances people are in, but I love my job!” Judi explained. “And when someone tells me thank you, I feel honored.”

Daughter to two Ennis natives, Judi was born in Germany when her father was serving in the Army. Eventually the family returned to Ennis, and Judi graduated from Ennis High School in 1979. Judi is executive director for Helping Hands, but she modestly describes herself as “the paperwork gal.” She’s not very comfortable in the public eye, but when it comes to aiding Helping Hands, she’s glad to do what she can. “I’m always happy when Helping

Hands benefits,” she admitted with a shy smile.

Helping Hands was founded 25 years ago by three women who saw a need to alleviate hunger in the community. Later, the trio offered financial assistance to people struggling to pay their rent or utility bills. These services are supported by the Ennis United Way and occasionally by Emergency Food and Shelter and TXU. Helping Hands’ primary mission is to feed and clothe the people of Ennis. Helping Hands owns an on-site thrift shop, which is how the company pays their own monthly bills. “The thrift shop is, in its own way, a great service to the community,” Judi pointed out. “It’s a place for people to come and purchase quality goods at a low cost.”

Judi describes the services offered through Helping Hands in a similarly straightforward way. “We help families in crisis,” she said. “A crisis is something out of people’s control that causes them to be in need. If they meet the necessary qualifications, the organization is more than happy to help.”

In order to qualify, individuals come into the office to fill out a



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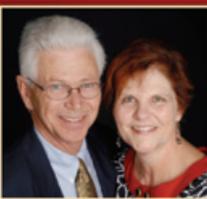




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simple two-page application. They will then be interviewed by a staff member. Once they are approved, they can usually leave with a food box the same day. If the client needs services longer than 30 days, the situation is reviewed. "Everything is considered on a case-by-case basis, and we hate to turn somebody away, but we have to be good stewards of what we are given," Judi said. "We would love to be able to close our doors because no one is hungry. That would be a great problem to have, but I don't see that happening any time soon."

In order to continue feeding the hungry of Ennis, Helping Hands hosts an event at the Knights of Columbus Hall every September called the Taste of Ennis. Participating Ennis restaurants prepare meals from their menus. For a \$10 entrance fee, those attending can have a taste from each selection. This fundraiser offers the residents of Ennis a chance to sample a variety of restaurants, while also allowing the restaurants who take part to advertise their fare. The event is usually well-attended, and while lasting only an hour-and-a-half, the evening raises a considerable sum for Helping Hands. "We are so thankful to all the people who sponsor Taste of Ennis and the restaurants who participate as well," Judi shared with evident emotion. "The generosity of the people in Ennis is always amazing."

Although the Taste of Ennis fundraiser is its biggest event of the year, Helping Hands profits greatly from donations year-round. "We're always thrilled when people make the effort to have a food drive," Judi said, "because



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that's one more way we are reassured we are not in this alone. It really is a community effort."

While appreciated, donations aren't always exactly what clients require. Helping Hands receives items from the Texas Food Bank, an organization that can purchase products at a great discount, but the group cannot provide everything that is most needed. This means that when Helping Hands has to purchase food, it is at the same cost as an average person, which adds up fast. In order to truly aid Helping Hands, donations of nutritionally rich foods, such as fruits and vegetables, are greatly welcomed. "We don't accept vitamins and medications, alcohol, out-of-date products, homemade foods or processed meats such as deer, pork or beef," Judi explained. "We will, however, accept homegrown fresh fruits and vegetables."

Every Friday, the North Texas Food Bank collects fruits, vegetables or baked goods from local stores. The organization's representatives never know what they will get, but deliveries can weigh up to 4,500 pounds. Helping Hands can only keep a certain amount, so on Fridays they're able to give away food to people who aren't clients of the agency. This is just one more way Helping Hands of Ennis shares with the community what it's given.

Judi praised the generosity of Ennis residents. Every donation counts, she stressed, even the ones Helping Hands aren't able to use. "We always try to find a home for every item we receive," Judi said. All clothing donations not used through Helping Hands are shared with

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Charity Shoes and Clothing. This group will then take the gently used clothing and airdrop them into Third World countries. Out of this arrangement, Helping Hands receives .4 to .14 cents per pound donated. "Every little bit helps," Judi maintained.

Locally, such businesses as Ennis H-E-B and Pizza Hut donate bread and pizza weekly. These donations are items which Helping Hands couldn't afford to purchase, and they are received consistently. "These are just two examples of unsung heroes in the community," Judi declared with admiration. Helping Hands even receives help from outside the community. One recent example was when The Avenue Church in Waxahachie brought a group of 20 people to help clean up the property and build a storage shed.

Helping Hands is an organization vital to Ennis and its residents, providing a service for those who are in dire situations, including many who never thought they would ever have to ask for help. There are a number of ways residents can support Helping Hands in its mission — donations, volunteering at the thrift shop or sponsoring a food drive. The agency's volunteers always appreciate calls from individuals asking what they are most in need of.

"I'm overwhelmed sometimes when I think of how blessed we are," Judi said with joy and humility. "There's always a reason to say thank you around here!" **NOW**



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ILLUMINATING

Joy

AT HOME WITH
Klyne &
Becky McCarty

By Donnielle Tyner



For Klyne and Becky McCarty, Christmas is a cherished time of year reflected inside and outside their home. The McCartys are known for their Yuletide light show set to music, which has dazzled viewers for four years. "Christmas is one of my favorite holidays," Becky admitted. This love of celebration, family and the community is revealed in their dedication to bringing the joy of the season to all who pass by their home.





When she isn't decorating for Christmas, Becky, former owner of Puddin's Cafe, loves to cook and entertain in her kitchen, her favorite part of the house. "The kitchen is my sanctuary," Becky said. And it's easy to see why. The space is what every chef, professional or amateur, dreams of — a large island, Sub-Zero refrigerators, espresso maker and a pot-filler above her stove are just a few of the amenities available to Becky.

During the Christmas season, Klyne removes the rustic light fixture above the kitchen island in order to hang an upside down Christmas tree. The idea was introduced to Becky on a shopping trip, and she was inspired to choose this unconventional ornament. Not only do the McCartys enjoy their peculiar holiday addition, but it's a favorite with guests as well. Also in the kitchen rests an antique hutch, handed down to Becky from her grandmother. The 50-year-old piece has been in her family for as long as she can remember, and today holds several pieces of her decorative plate collection.

Throughout the home are beautiful pieces of furniture, which Becky, a self-proclaimed estate sale and Craigslist junkie, has found for next to nothing.

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Craigslist, and the dining room pieces and antique rocking horse were found at an estate sale. “We’re kind of frugal,” Becky proudly confessed.

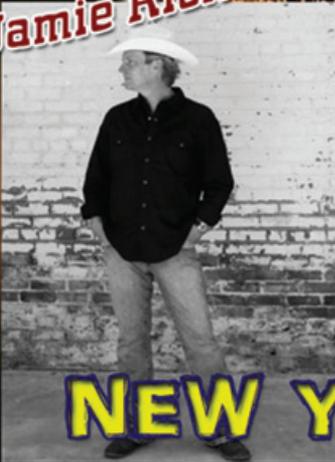
Another thrifty find — an old rice bed that Becky sanded down and repainted white — has found its home in the downstairs bedroom. Another unique Christmas tree is displayed in this room, too. “We call it the fairy tree,” she said with a smile. Dainty and iridescent, the tree is considered by the couple to be a holiday representation of their niece, Sophie.

Each year, the McCartys have seven full-sized Christmas trees in their home, three of which are part of the light show. The tree in the living room, decorated in a classic style, was their first one and displays antique and other family ornaments. Elsewhere reside more unique trees, such as the western tree located in the upstairs game room. Many of the trees and decorations are purchased at Dollar Stores, thrift shops or after-holiday sales at other area stores. “Nobody knew until now,” Becky explained. “But I didn’t pay a lot for any



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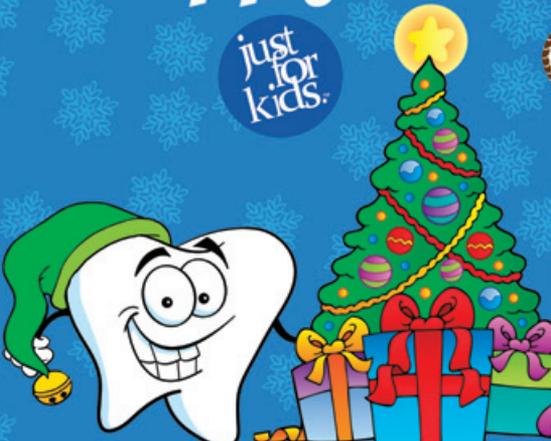
Upstairs there’s a game room, equipped with a classic pinball machine that Klyne, a pinball buff, restored himself. Attached to the game room is the media room, *the* place where the couple’s family and friends hang out. Becky intended on having a back porch, but the design wasn’t feasible so she settled for a balcony that overlooks their backyard and a neighboring field. On Sundays, they enjoy watching neighbors roping their cattle. “When it’s not too hot, we like to come out here and sip on some iced tea and enjoy the view,” Becky added.

The fence between their property and the cattle field is where the story of the Christmas light show began. Becky, who previously worked for a bank, was planning to host the corporate Christmas party at her house. While watching *Good Morning America*, a YouTube video came on, showing a home’s light show, and Becky encouraged Klyne to recreate it for her party.

He had it figured out in less than two weeks. The Christmas light show, with music that now takes place in the couple’s front yard, started out in their backyard, running along the fence line and included a few trees. Klyne also built a miniature version of the mega Christmas tree that’s currently part of the show and stands 20 feet high. “It was awesome,” Becky declared. “I actually miss that the light show has been moved from the back. At night when it was still in the backyard,

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we'd get into bed and leave the curtains open. We would just lay there and watch."

After that first Christmas party, Becky wanted a way of playing the sound through something other than computer speakers. Klyne suggested purchasing an FM transmitter. Klyne uses a do-it-yourself website forum for ideas on updating and expanding the light show, and according to Becky, shares his tips with anyone who cares to listen. The programming and editing of the show is a yearlong endeavor. "We listen to Christmas music 12 months out of the year, because he is usually changing up the sequencing in some way," Becky shared.

Klyne tries to have the plan for the light show finalized by February and anything added after September has to wait until the following year. "I have to know where everything is going to be, so I don't have to make adjustments at the last minute," Klyne explained. The McCarty Christmas light show begins on Thanksgiving night, so Klyne takes the week off while the entire family and their neighbors get together to set up what's become an annual event. Each year, the couple tries to expand and update the light show. What started out as one circuit board and a handful of lights now encompasses 14 circuits, 6,000 channels and 10,000 individual LED lights.

When they can, Klyne and Becky recruit neighborhood kids to help hand out candy canes and hot apple cider to motorists who stop by to take in the excitement of the show. "Christmas is one of my favorite holidays for more than one reason," Becky pointed out. "It's first and foremost the celebration of the birth of Jesus, but it is a time when family and community make much more of an effort to come together. I love that! I love for people to feel welcome here." Becky thinks they really do because of the growing number of visitors and the fact that all of them are courteous. "We really appreciate that for our neighbors' sake," she added.

The driving force behind the annual light show the couple hosts is found in their devotion to Christmas and to the community at large. Their dedication to spreading the fun of their favorite holiday by illuminating that joy has become a labor of love. **NOW**

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A Heav SOU

— By Rick Herron

In the 19th century, poet and educator Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, “Music is the universal language of mankind.”

Brandon Hixson intuitively knew that unarguable truth from an early age, and he’s cognizant that in today’s modern world, music — including his own creations — is available to a larger number of people than ever before.

As worship pastor for Tabernacle Baptist Church, Brandon is able to express his deeply held passion for music in many ways, both inside and outside church walls. One of the most rewarding vehicles for expressing his talent as both a writer and performer of music is through the group Racing Gravity, which he formed with friends four years ago. “I was working at First Baptist in Cedar Hill and had met some musicians in Dallas who shared my love of contemporary Christian music,” he remembered. “We started playing together on Monday nights, and after three months of refining our sound we started working on songs I personally wrote.”

Only No

Since then, the group has recorded several albums and has been privileged to work with many well-known musicians. In August, Racing Gravity performed with Jason Castro of *American Idol* television fame at Covenant Ranch Arena in Caddo Mills. "The first song we recorded was 'Only By His Grace,' which we sent to several Christian radio stations," Brandon said. "The station KLTU played it on the air, and it was a very cool experience to hear it on the radio." Since then, the song has been at times the No. 1 spot on the Indieheaven.com Top20, as well as taking the No. 4 spot on Indieheaven.com's Fan Faves. "Topping two charts at once was a wild experience," Brandon admitted.

The band, which has its own Facebook page and website (racinggravity.com), has recently refocused its goals regarding touring versus playing local venues, and today often travels short distances to play on Friday and Saturday evenings. The new schedule allows Brandon to be available Sunday mornings at Tabernacle. "We usually rehearse here at the church on Friday nights and perform at Saturday night events in the area," he said. The band is comprised of six members: Brandon, who plays the saxophone and sings lead vocals; Don Nielsen, keyboard and background vocals; Don Barber, guitars and background vocals; Dave Ervin, guitars and background vocals; Billy Peters, drums; and Stan Harris, bass guitar.

All members of Racing Gravity, in addition to natural talent, share an



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underlying love of God they are able to express through their music. Brandon said his own musical background began in 1982 when he was 5 years old, riding in the back seat of his mom's car. "She had the radio on, and a song was playing," he recalled. "I saw her start to cry. That moment permanently imprinted on me how powerful music can be if it could make my mom cry. I remember thinking that good music, in addition to being entertaining, should do something. It should make you feel something.



Somehow, I knew inside me that good music is a powerful tool."

His biography on the band's website states that Brandon "has been able to achieve a lot of his musical ambitions. He has played all styles of music from rock to country and from Southern gospel to jazz. His music has been featured alongside some of the greatest artists in Christian music —Wayne Watson, Point of Grace, Switchfoot, Mitch McVicker and Rhonda Gunn, to name a few."

Born in Waco, Brandon and his sister were the children of a single mother who fought drug addiction. He remembers his childhood in Dawson as being a difficult

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time in his life. "When I was 9 years old, I accepted Christ and became a Christian," he said. "In fact, my sister, grandmother and grandfather all became Christians together at the same time, which was pretty awesome." He remembers his grandfather as "one of the finest men I ever knew," and together with his grandmother, Brandon witnessed both become strong Christians who became very active in church.

In a relatively short time, however, Brandon would experience the



devastating loss of his mother to cancer, followed by the death of his grandfather and grandmother. His faith in God and close relationship with his sister pulled him through the heartbreaking losses.

A high point in Brandon's life came when he met his wife, Karen, while attending East Texas Baptist University in 1998. They married in 2000, and today the couple has two children — a son, Caleb, born in 2005, and a daughter, Caylin, born in 2009. Brandon worked as band director for the Dawson Independent School District for six years before moving to Ennis in January 2013.

Along with music, Brandon's faith in

Merry Christmas

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God continues to be an integral part of his daily life. "When I'm writing music, I try to create songs that will encourage others in their own personal faith," he said. "I feel like I can give back through the music I write, because I try to write music that's about real life and things everyone goes through." He believes it's vital to be completely genuine through the lyrics and sounds he originates.

That extends to his work as worship pastor, where his primary responsibility is to make sure the musical presentations, including choir and backup instrumentals, are ready to go for every Sunday morning service. "I do the musical arranging," he explained, "work with the choir, create musical videos designed to enhance the particular sermon, do audio engineering and video editing."

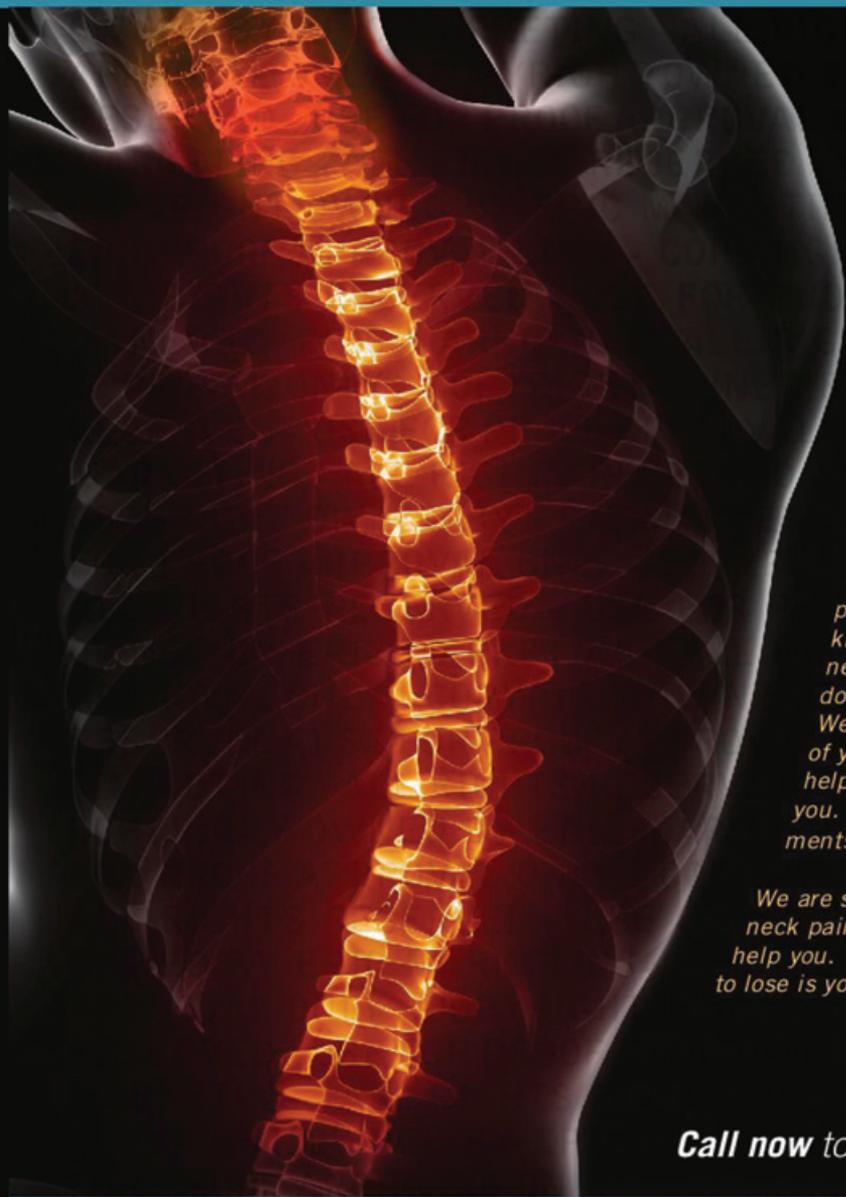
Whatever the future holds for Brandon and his family, one thing's certain — they have no plans to move away from the home they've found in the Bluebonnet City. "My wife and I consider ourselves planters," he laughed. "We get somewhere and stay! We don't like moving." He's especially impressed with the church's progressive atmosphere, one he thinks is very effective in reaching the congregation as well as visitors, both of which he sees growing at a steady rate.

"Church attendance has doubled in the last few years, and they have a goal of reaching 1,000 members," Brandon said. "I really like their mission of bringing people through the doors and touching the hearts of those who are hurting and struggling, because that's one of the main reasons I write music." Many new projects await this musical prodigy, and his abiding faith in God will continue to serve him well as he touches others with his inspiring music. **NOW**

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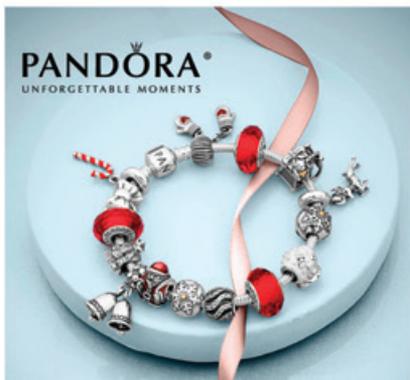
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Yuletide CHEER

— By Sandra Strong

Do you need activities to fill the long, cold winter evenings and weekends leading up to Christmas day? We may have the answer in the Christmas crafts featured in this month's edition. We hope they fill your home with lots of holiday warmth and cheer.



TWEET TREE

This holiday craft idea is a bit messy, but children will love watching neighborhood birds devour the three ornaments they have created. And who knows? They may even see a squirrel or two.



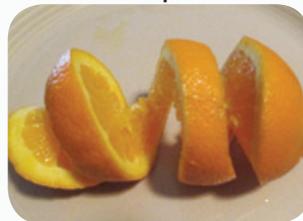
Finished example of popcorn garland.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY

- 2 small pkgs. microwave popcorn
- Heavy thread
- Scissors
- Needle
- 3-5 medium oranges, refrigerated
- Paring knife
- Twisted jute twine
- Peanut butter
- Kitchen knife
- Bird seed
- 3-5 pine cones



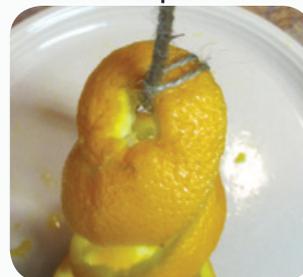
Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4

HOW TO DO IT. ▼

1. Make popcorn garland

by popping the corn per package instructions. Allow to cool. Using double thread cut at a length of your choosing, string popcorn.

2. Make orange swirls

by cutting a swirl pattern in oranges with a paring knife starting from the navel. Make sure to cut deep enough to reach the pulp. For safety, parents of younger crafters will need to do the cutting. If the swirls break, don't worry. You will just have more swirls for your tree.

3. Carefully pull

or cut pulp from peel. Remove navel to make hole.

4. Thread twine

through hole to complete hanger. If the peel breaks, a hole will need to be made with the paring knife in the pieces without a navel. Make sure loop in twine is large enough for the swirl to hang freely from the tree limb.



Step 5

5. **Smear peanut butter** on white side of peeled swirl. Sprinkle heavily with bird seed.



6. **Make Peanut butter pine cone** by tying twine to the top of the pine cone to make hanger.

7. **Generously dot** the tips of the pine cone with peanut butter. Sprinkle heavily with bird seed.



Steps 6-7

8. **Decorate** an outdoor tree with your bird-friendly ornaments and then watch the birds enjoy eating what you've created.



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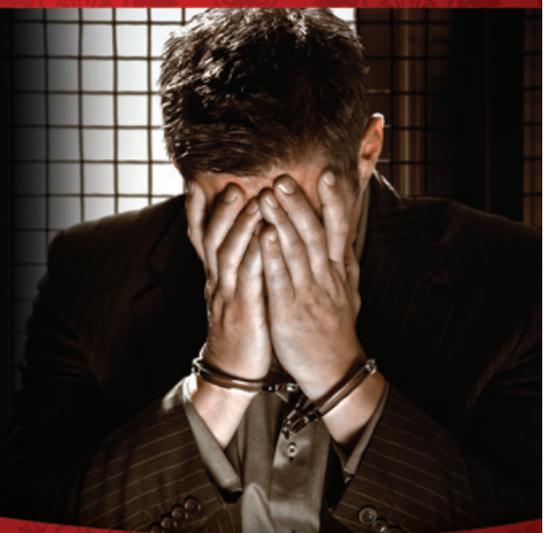
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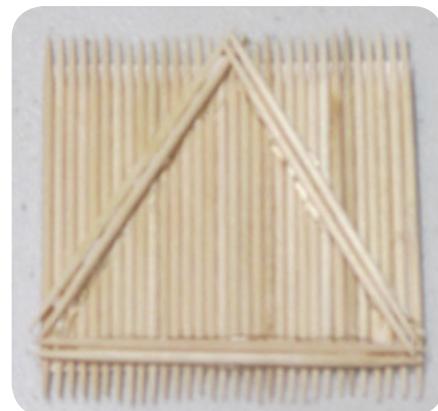
Children learn the reason for the season using a few items that can easily be found around the house. The completed ornament will be a Christmas keepsake for years to come, or several can be crafted at one time to give as gifts.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY TO MEDIUM

- 38 toothpicks
- 1 piece tag board (2 5/8x2 1/8 inches in size)
- Craft glue
- Scissors
- 2 dry butter beans
- 3 dry black-eyed peas
- Cool melt hot glue
- 1 yellow button shaped like a star
- 3-inch length twisted jute twine

HOW TO DO IT. ▼

1. Attach 32 toothpicks to the tag board using craft glue. The tag board may need to be trimmed on one side depending on size of toothpicks. Let dry.



Step 2

2. Create manger by attaching the remaining toothpicks in a triangle, two picks to each side, using craft glue. Let dry.

3. Create Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus by attaching beans using cool melt hot glue as shown in photo for steps 3-4. Hot glue button in place. Let dry.

4. Glue looped twine to back to complete ornament. Hang on the family tree or use as a package decoration.

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Steps 3-4

FRAMED WREATH

This can be an alternative to the traditional holiday wreath. When complete, it will make a unique piece you may choose to keep for yourself or share with someone special. There are so many ways to embellish your frame. Your imagination is your only limitation.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: MEDIUM

- Wood picture frame, size optional
- Spray paint, color of your choice, (optional)
- 3-5 yds. wired holiday ribbon
- Scissors
- Floral wire
- Wire cutters
- Cool melt hot glue
- Ornamental embellishments, (size and number used, optional)
- Twisted jute twine

HOW TO DO IT. ▼

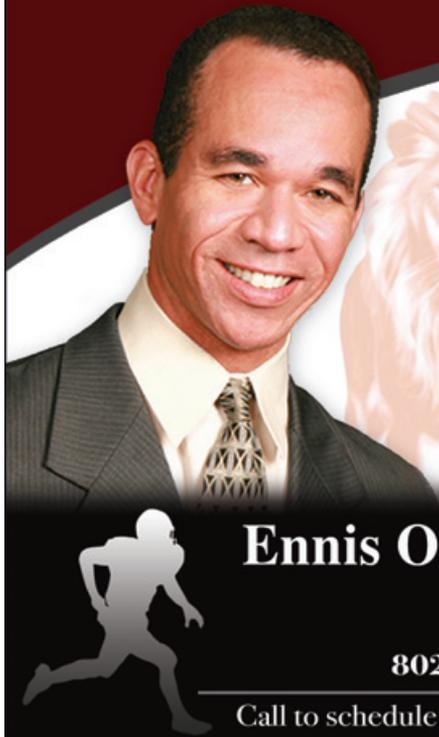
1. Create foundation for wreath by painting frame. It's best to spray two light coats to keep paint from running. You can also use a decorative frame that doesn't need to be painted. Both examples are pictured.



Step 1

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Step 2



Step 4

2. Make bow by folding ribbon end-over-end into layers. The length of the layers will depend on the size of bow desired. More layers will make a fuller bow. Longer lengths will make a larger bow. Leave a longer length on the first and last fold to make the tails of the bow.

3. Create the center of the bow with floral wire. Twist the wire tightly around the center of the layers several times to secure. To form center knot, take the longest tail and wrap it around the center. Tie to the shorter tail in back of bow. Make sure wire is still accessible. Fluff ribbon. Cut tails evenly to complete.

4. Attach bow to frame using the wire, making sure to cut any excess wire with wire cutters. Reinforce with hot glue if desired.

5. Add finishing touches to wreath using ornaments, photos, Christmas cards and/or holiday embellishments.



Step 5

6. Make hanger from twine and attach to the back of frame with hot glue. Hang completed wreath on your front door or display on a wall or mantel in your home. **NOW**



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ELVES IN ACTION

— By Sandra Strong



Some people are just born with it — that heartfelt desire to give back to those in need. Members of the Gold Wing Road Riders Association, a motorcycle club with a mission, are some of those people who see a need and work diligently all year long to make holiday dreams come true for the children and teens in the community. Lee and Linda Gravley and Bob and Sue Tompkins are two couples within the group who have found their calling on the second Saturday of December. “There’s a great need for what we do,” Lee said, referring to the association’s annual toy drive held on the Citizens National Bank parking lot directly

across the street from Waxahachie High School. “If we didn’t do this, CASA wouldn’t get the quantity of items they need to make Christmas a happier time for so many children in Ellis County. We see a need, and we enjoy helping fill that need.”

“We’ve found a great majority of people want to give back,” Linda added, “but they aren’t sure how. The toy drive gives them an option.”

Under the leadership of Rhodie Rawls, Court Appointed Special Advocates is a nonprofit organization focusing on improving the lives of children in the county who have been neglected or abused. The group depends on the giving spirits of those in the motorcycle association. Without them, it would be nearly impossible to bring holiday cheer to the ever-growing

number of children in need within the community. "Everything we do all year long is filtered through Rhodie," Sue said. "She knows best how to disburse the toys and cash donations we receive, not only on that Saturday, but throughout the entire year leading up to the annual toy drive."

Lee and Linda have been giving back in one way or another for 21 years, while Bob and Sue have only been in the motorcycle club for a couple years. As for CASA, this will be the



seventh consecutive year the GWRRA has banded together to help the local nonprofit organization. "Donations come in all year long," Bob explained. "The toy drive is for children birth to age 18. We don't want to forget the teens, so a good bit of the cash donations we receive goes toward gift cards for the older children."

No doubt, both couples enjoy the wind in their faces and the scenery along the way as they travel on their trikes (three-wheeled motorcycles). "Riding gets in the blood," Lee stated. "You either love it or you don't. If you love it, you can't get enough of it. It all depends on the person."

"Until Bob bought the trike, I wouldn't ride," Sue admitted. "Now, we ride everywhere together."

And ride they do — every chance they get. Bob and Sue's longest trip has been to Kerrville, Texas, while Lee and Linda have travelled as far as Fox River, Illinois. "Our first long trip took six weeks from start to finish," Lee remembered.

But, both couples absolutely love what they see and hear during the toy drive. Volunteering for the event is something



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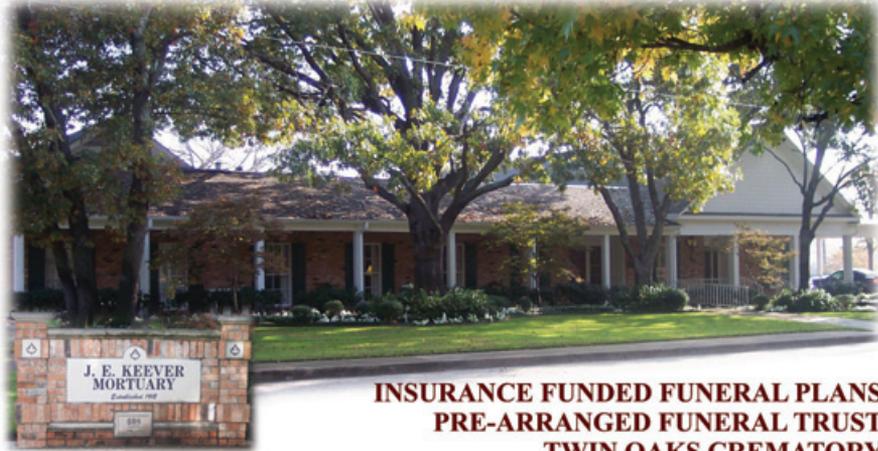
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neither couple plans on missing, as long as they are able to ride and brave the sometimes inclement weather. The passion for what they do is apparent in the excitement they exude as they retell stories from last year's event.

Linda doesn't recall a drop in giving, even when the recession hit several years ago. "People seemed to give more during what some would consider a tough time," Linda said. "It's also heartwarming to see kids come with toy donations. One little boy brought a soccer ball because soccer was his favorite sport. Several little girls donated Barbie dolls and makeup. They give what they themselves love most."

"The spirit of giving is huge," Bob



Lee and Linda Gravley and Bob and Sue Tompkins wouldn't miss a toy drive for anything.



added. "People do give all year long, but it seems as if they give so much more during the annual toy drive."

People driving by grab what change they have, while children show up for the event with piggy banks under their arms. "They donate money they have saved all year," Sue said with emotion. "Some families are giving back what they received. They are paying it forward."

"Last year, a pizza delivery guy stopped by several times during the day to donate the tips he made," Linda shared.

"We also bought bicycles last year," Sue recalled. "That was one of the big items needed to fill the wishes. We receive whatever the need is, because those giving make it happen."

"People must feel sorry for us," Lee

Merry Christmas

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said with a laugh. "We stand out in any kind of weather — sleet, rain, wind, freezing temperatures and even pretty weather."

Lee, Linda, Bob and Sue may be givers with big hearts, but they are also on the receiving end of the Christmas season and the wonderful spirit the toy drive brings out in others. Bob can hardly contain his emotions as he remembered several people who made donations last year. "I had my Army hat on my head," Bob said. "As people dropped off their donations, I would tell them, 'Thank you.' At least five people extended their thanks to me because of my past military service. Their comments made me feel good."

Anyone can help during the toy drive. Rhodie usually brings her family and several of her friends and staff members. "Some help out for about an hour," Lee stated, "while others stay all day."

When the day of the annual event begins, the trailers are empty. But, it doesn't take long for them to be packed to overflowing with toys and items for the older children. And they can be packed to overflowing many times throughout the day. "Events the size of the toy drive happen so much easier when a group is involved," Sue stated. "You do it one time, and you're hooked."

What inspires couples like Lee and Linda and Bob and Sue to get involved in such a worthwhile undertaking? "Back in the days when we were young, we took care of ourselves, with nothing extra to give back to others," Sue explained, as the other three nodded in agreement. "We know what it's like not to have a lot, so giving to others now because we are able to is why we do what we do."

They realize the toy drive would not happen without the continued dedication of club members, Rhodie and her staff from CASA and most importantly, the overall public. Everybody involved with the event has an integral part to play, and it takes everyone doing their part for the drive to be a success year-after-year. "Ellis County is filled with so many caring, giving individuals who aren't aware of a need until they are made aware of a need," Linda said.

"Sometimes," Lee added, "the giving is as simple as a hot cup of coffee on a cold Saturday in December." **NOW**

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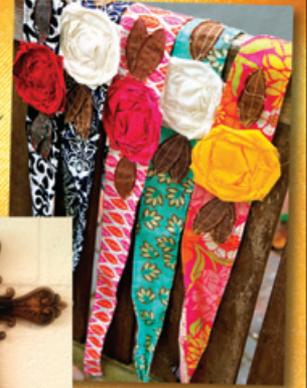
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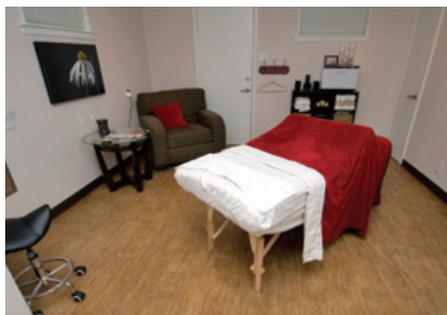
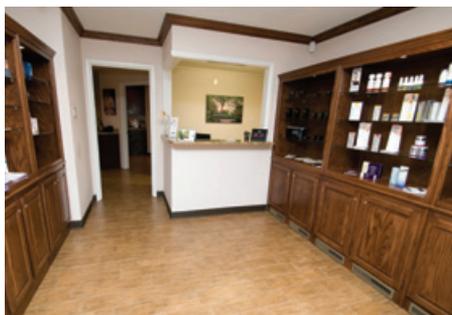


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— By Angel Morris

What began as a single treatment room in Ellis County Medical Associates' offices has expanded to a full-blown spa right next door. An internal medicine physician for 29 years, Dr. Larry Jinks ventured into the spa arena after patients began asking about cosmetic procedures. "It started with laser hair removal in 2009," Dr. Jinks said. "Then clients wanted more. If they would ask about something, we would research to see how we could meet their wants and needs."

In 2011, the Med Spa opened in a building adjacent to ECMA with three employees, including office manager Christina Wilhoite. Today its staff has doubled, and services have grown by 70 percent. "The demand and the business change often, so we do the same," Christina observed. "The staff is certified in their

areas of expertise, and we are constantly researching and training to do what we do better."

What they do, exactly, is provide a range of cosmetic services from basic facial to liposuction, with many options in between. Massage, nail services, eyelash extensions, spray tanning and teeth whitening are on one end of the spectrum; facial injectables and laser resurfacing on the other. "We are best known for Botox and fillers, as well as laser hair removal, facials and physician-grade cosmeceuticals," Dr. Jinks pointed out. "And with every procedure, we're known for our hospitality and care. It's not unusual for a client to tell us, 'You've changed my life!'"

The Med Spa experience begins with a free, no-obligation consultation, during which clients learn Dr. Jinks' five

recommendations for skincare, from proper cleansing to repair. Faithful and potential clients can also learn more at quarterly special events hosted by Med Spa, where expert speakers offer information and product representatives share samples. “We’re about educating the consumer,” Dr. Jinks explained. “We’re not an assembly line. We talk with clients about what it is they want, and then devise a plan that can best help them achieve those goals. Our services are often just a springboard to other things people want to improve — from changing their diets to exercising.”

“Aging is necessary, but looking old is optional.”

Christina is joined by Maurissa Cole, Jennifer Ivy, Kristi Leal and Stacey Bobalek in handling the majority of Med Spa services. Dermal fillers and liposuction are the types of procedures for which Dr. Jinks steps in. “It makes me really happy when Christina calls next door and says someone is here for a treatment from me,” Dr. Jinks said. “Seeing them leave with a smile on their face and a gleam in their eye really puts a spring in my step!”

Ultimately, according to this expert and his dedicated staff, that’s what cosmetic procedures are all about. “We’re the pampering place,” Dr. Jinks added. “Our clients can stop in for a cool drink or just to visit. They can host a meeting in our office or simply call us for advice, and they do. If we can provide knowledge on taking care of their skin, and ways to look and feel better, then we’ve done our jobs.”

With the slogan “Aging is necessary, but looking old is optional,” Dr. Jinks helps clients achieve a natural, not overdone appearance. “I want clients to leave looking like they haven’t had ‘work’ done, but like they’ve gotten a good night’s sleep,” he shared. “My clients leave with my signature on their face, and they’re walking billboards of my work. A beautiful client is our best advertisement. It’s how we make clients for life!” **NOW**

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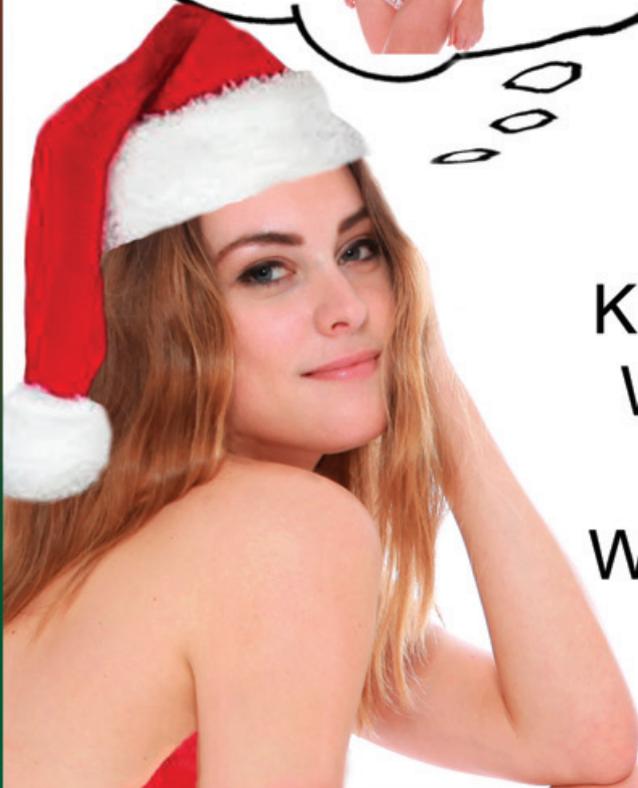
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How Can Younger Investors Cope With Tough Times?

As Americans, we're used to thinking we will inevitably do better than our parents' generation. But, for now at least, this type of progress may be facing some roadblocks — and this inability to gain ground financially can have real implications for today's younger people and their approach to investing.

Before we get to the investment component, though, let's quickly review the nature of the problem. In a nutshell, younger Americans — those in their 20s and 30s — have accrued significantly less wealth than their parents did at the same age, according to a recent study by the Urban Institute. Here's why:

- **Bursting of housing "bubble"** — Many younger people who bought houses shortly before the housing bubble began deflating in 2006 now find themselves to be "underwater" on their mortgages — that is, they owe more than their houses are worth. Consequently, they have less opportunity to build home equity — which has been an important means of building wealth for past generations.

- **Student-loan debt** — The median balance among all households with student-loan debt is now more than \$13,000, according to the Pew Research Center — and debt levels are much higher for recent graduates. It can take years to pay off these debts, and the money being used for debt payments is money that can't go toward building wealth for long-term goals.

- **Wage stagnation** — For several years, the job market has been pretty bad for younger workers. And even those with jobs aren't making much headway, because wages, adjusted for inflation, have largely stagnated for over a decade. Less income clearly equates to less opportunities for investing and creating wealth.

Still, even given these somewhat grim realities, younger people can help

themselves build resources for the future and make progress toward their long-term goals. If you're in this group, what can you do?

For starters, pay yourself first. Set up an automatic payment each month from your checking or savings account into an investment vehicle, such as an IRA. At first, you may only be able to afford small sums — but, over time, you may be pleasantly surprised at the amount you've saved.

Next, every time your salary goes up, try to increase the amount you put into your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan. Because you typically contribute pretax dollars to your 401(k) or other plan, the more you put in, the lower your taxable income. Plus, your money can grow on a tax-deferred basis.

Here's another suggestion: Don't be over-cautious with your investments. Many younger investors, apparently nervous due to market volatility of recent years, have become quite conservative, putting relatively large amounts of their portfolio into vehicles that offer significant protection of principal but little in the way of growth potential. Of course, the financial markets will always fluctuate and downturns will occur — but when you're young, and you have many decades in which to invest, you have time to overcome short-term declines. To achieve your long-term goals, such as a comfortable retirement, you will unquestionably need some growth elements in your portfolio, with the exact amount based on your risk tolerance and specific objectives.

These aren't the easiest times for young people. Nonetheless, with diligence, perseverance and a measure of sacrifice, you can gain some control over your financial fortunes — so look for your opportunities. **NOW**

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Jeff Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

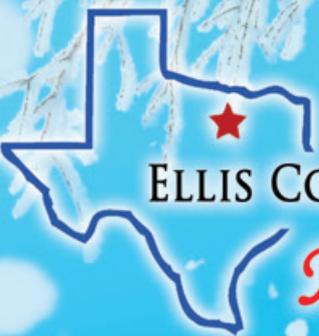
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Each year, nearly 200,000 women and 2,000 men in the United States are diagnosed with breast cancer, making it one of the most common types of cancer among women in our country. While there is no way of guaranteeing that a person won't develop breast cancer, there are certainly steps that can be taken to reduce risk. Learning to recognize the symptoms of breast cancer, understanding what puts a person at high risk of developing the disease and actively monitoring breast health are all very important in the fight against breast cancer.

What are the symptoms of breast cancer?

In its early stages, breast cancer often has no symptoms. However, the following symptoms may be present as a tumor develops:

- A lump in the breast or underarm that persists after your menstrual cycle
- A marble-like area under the skin
- Swelling in the armpit
- Persistent breast pain or tenderness
- Any change in the size, contour, texture or temperature of the breast
- A noticeable flattening or indentation on the breast
- A change in the nipple, such as an indrawn or dimpled look, itching or burning sensation or ulceration
- Unusual discharge from the nipple

Who is at risk of developing breast cancer?

- **Women with a history of breast cancer** have a 3- to 4-times increased risk of developing a new breast cancer, unrelated to the first one, in the other breast or in another part of the same breast.
- **Women with a family history of breast cancer.** Having a mother, sister or daughter who has (or has had) breast cancer increases your risk for developing the disease. The risk is even greater if your relative had cancer in both breasts or developed the breast cancer before menopause.

- **Women over age 50.** About 77 percent of women diagnosed with breast cancer each year are over age 50, and almost half are age 65 and older.

- **Women with a previous breast biopsy result of atypical hyperplasia or those with a previous abnormal breast biopsy** indicating fibroadenomas with complex features, hyperplasia without atypia, sclerosing adenosis and solitary papilloma.

- **Carriers of alterations in either of two familial breast cancer genes called BRCA1 or BRCA2.**

- **Caucasian women** are at a slightly higher risk of developing breast cancer than are African-American, Asian, Hispanic and Native American women.

- **Women who have their first child after age 35 or never had children.**

- **Women who started menstruating before age 12.**

- **Women who begin menopause after age 55.**

- **Overweight women**, with excess caloric and fat intake (especially post-menopause).

- **Women who have two to five alcoholic beverages a day** are 1.5 times more likely to develop breast cancer than women who drink no alcohol.

- **Those exposed to excessive amounts of radiation**, especially before age 30.

- **Women who use Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) for an extended period of time.** (Risk seems to return to that of the general population after discontinuing use for five years or more.)

What steps can be taken to prevent breast cancer?

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle can prove powerful in preventing breast cancer. It's important to eat right, stay active and maintain a healthy weight. Women should also perform breast exams at home every month and make annual exams with their gynecologists a priority. Most importantly, if you notice a change in your breast, talk to your doctor immediately. Like most forms of cancer, early diagnosis and treatment can be critical. **NOW**

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Through December 22

Third Annual German American Holiday Market "Christkindl": **Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays**, Noon-9:00 p.m.; **Fridays**, Noon-10:00 p.m.; **Saturdays**, 10:00 a.m.-noon; main entrance next to the Rangers Ballpark in Arlington at Six Flags and Ballpark Way. Admission and parking are free.

December 5

Official Lighting Ceremony: 5:30 p.m., NW Main St.

Ennis Christmas Parade of Lights: 7:00-8:00 p.m., downtown. Holiday-themed floats, spotlighting local businesses, schools and individuals, compete for top placement in best entry contest. Sponsored by the Ennis Chamber of Commerce. For more information, contact the Chamber at (972) 878-2626.

December 6, 7

Waxahachie Junior Service League Christmas Market and Preview Party: **Friday**, 6:00-9:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. Friday's Preview Party will feature an exclusive shopping experience and will include cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and entry into the market on Saturday. Market will include unique gifts,

photos with Santa and more. Proceeds directly benefit the Ellis County community. For more information, visit www.waxahachiejssl.org.

December 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15

Bethlehem Revisited: 6:00-9:00 p.m., Central Presbyterian Church, 402 N. College St., Waxahachie. Admission is free, but donations are welcome.

December 7

Christmas on the Square: All day event in historic downtown Ferris sponsored by the Ferris Downtown Association. Parade starts at 1:00 p.m. Food contests, Santa photos, live music, silent and live auctions, hayride, retiring of colors by Boy Scouts and free evening family movie performances and the popular Holiday Light-up Parade.

Ennis ISD Winter Coat Drive: Off-Site Bank of America ATM, corner next to EISD Administration Building.

December 13 — 15

Waxahachie Community Theatre presents *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*: **Friday and Saturday**, 7:30 p.m.; **Sunday**, 2:30 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium, Getzendaner Park. Tickets: \$10 age 5 and above. For

complete information, visit www.waxahachiecommunitytheatre.com, contact the box office at (972) 646-1050 or email wct.texas@gmail.com.

December 14

YMCA 5K Santa Run: 10:00 a.m., event begins at the corner of College and Franklin streets in downtown. Activities will be ongoing from 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. For more details and information, contact Jon McLaughlin at (972) 937-9622 or at jmclaughlin@ymcadallas.org.

December 21

Ryan Wilt Memorial Event: Ryan's Run and Teezy's Tourney: 8:00 a.m., Lakeview Camp and Conference Center, 5128 FM 66. Ryan's Run consists of a 5K all-terrain course or a 1-mile fun run/walk on a paved pathway. Teezy's Tourney consists of friendly games of three-on-three basketball. Proceeds for the event will go to a deserving WHS senior each year, as well as toward the building expansion at Rockett Baptist Church. Visit www.ryanwiltmemorial.weebly.com for more information.

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

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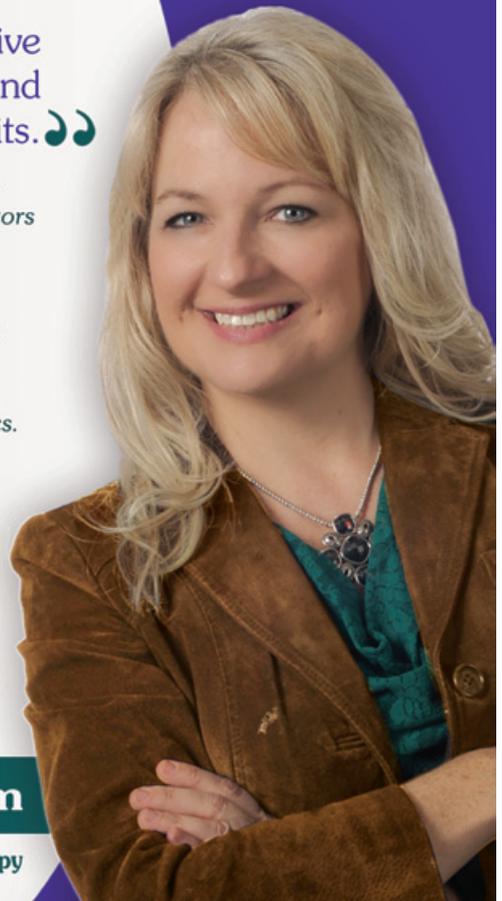
In addition to my osteopathic degree, I also have a Masters in Public Health and Preventive medicine. I see a need for education about nutrition, as we see the epidemic of diabetes, obesity and other chronic diseases growing!

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In The Kitchen With Sandra Strong

— *By Randy Bigham*

For Sandra Strong, editorial coordinator for NOW Magazines, food means family and vice-versa. “My family is the main reason I love to cook and try new things in the kitchen,” Sandra said. “Every Tuesday night we have family night. My boys, their wives and my two grandsons gather around the table and share a meal. I’ve waited a lifetime for this type of family gathering. I cherish my Tuesdays.”

Sandra finds inspiration in her cooking from her mother, who always worked a full-time job but never failed to get supper on the table. Despite her skill in the kitchen, Sandra admits to sometimes being all thumbs. “I still find myself reading directions on items I’ve cooked more than 100 times over the years,” she laughed. **NOW**

Momma Billie’s Burritos

- 1 lb. lean ground beef**
- 1/2 large onion, diced (optional)**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- Burrito seasoning packet**
- 2 16-oz. cans ranch style beans, undrained**
- 10 ct. burrito-sized flour tortillas**
- 2 16-oz. cans Wolf Brand Chili (no beans)**
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese**

- 1.** Brown ground beef; drain grease. Add onions, salt, pepper, seasoning and beans. Stir over low heat until mixture is hot and well-blended.
- 2.** Fill tortillas with mixture. Roll and fold in at both ends before placing in a 9x13-inch baking dish. Pour chili and cheese over the burritos making sure to coat each one evenly.
- 3.** Bake uncovered at 350 F for 35 minutes.

Great and Yummy Queso

- 1 lb. lean ground beef**
- 32-oz. block Velveeta Cheese**
- 8-oz. cream cheese**
- 10-oz. can Ro-Tel tomatoes**
- 10.75-oz. can cream of mushroom soup**

- 1.** Brown ground beef; drain grease. Set aside.
- 2.** Cut cheeses into cubes and place in Crock-Pot. Pour in Ro-Tel and soup. Cook on low setting for 30 minutes. Add meat and continue to cook on low heat for an additional 30 minutes, stirring several times.

Apple Enchiladas

- 1 21-oz. can apple pie filling (can substitute)**
- 10 taco-sized flour tortillas**
- 1/2 cup cinnamon**

- 3/4 cup margarine**
- 3/4 cup sugar**
- 3/4 cup brown sugar**
- 1/2 cup water**

- 1.** Spoon filling onto tortilla. Sprinkle with cinnamon and roll up. Place seam down in a glass baking dish. Repeat with all 10 tortillas.
- 2.** In a saucepan, mix remaining ingredients together. Heat on medium until boiling; stirring constantly. Reduce heat; stir for 3 more minutes.
- 3.** Pour mixture over enchiladas; let set for 30 minutes before baking at 350 F for 20 minutes. Best when served warm.

Hobo Hamburger Stew

- 5-6 lbs. lean ground meat**
- 1 medium onion, diced**
- 2 16-oz. cans green beans**
- 1 16-oz. can carrots**
- 2 16-oz. cans corn**
- 5 16-oz. cans sliced potatoes**
- 1 16-oz. can peas (optional)**
- 1 16-oz. can Ro-Tel tomatoes**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- Squirt of ketchup**

- 1.** Brown meat; do not drain. Place meat with remaining ingredients (including juice from canned goods) into Crock-Pot.
- 2.** Simmer all day on low. Serve with combread and/or your favorite crackers.

Max’s Spicy Oyster Crackers

- 16-oz. pkg. plain oyster crackers**
- 1 1-oz. pkg. Hidden Valley Ranch Salad Dressing Mix**
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil**
- 1/2 tsp. dill weed**
- 1/4 tsp. lemon pepper**
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder**

- 1.** Mix all ingredients together in a large bowl making sure to coat all the crackers. Bake at 275 F for 15-20 minutes. Pour out on wax paper. Allow to cool before serving.

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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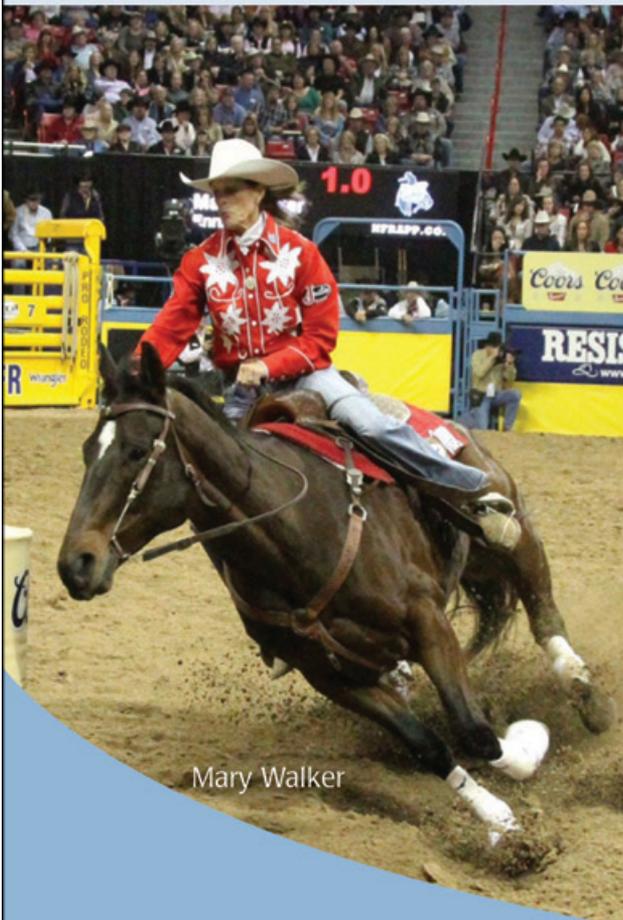
The highly-trained physical therapists and occupational therapists focused on Mary’s capabilities rather than disability to put her back in the saddle and on the trail to recovery and independence. Ennis Regional Medical Center congratulates Mary’s season title win at the 2012 National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas.

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