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Fashion Faves of 2024

Dress in style this winter

Also inside:
Scavenger Hunt

Leader of the Band

Justin Wood helps students
reach new heights

In the Kitchen With
Karleigh Sosebee



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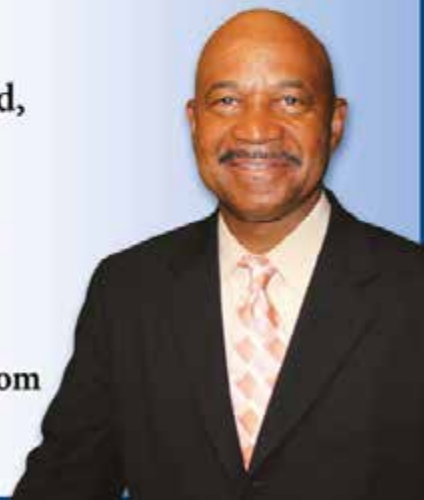
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ON THE COVER



Red Oak High School Band Director Justin Wood shares his philosophy on the importance of participation.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Angel

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Ring in the new ...

Many are familiar with New Year's traditions like kissing someone you love at midnight or singing "Auld Lang Syne." But January is a great time to consider other culture's habits, perhaps making note of ways to liven up your celebration next year!

While black-eyed peas is a popular dish said to bring prosperity to your New Year, in Spain the tradition is to eat green grapes instead. Representing each stroke of the clock at midnight, *las doce uvas de la suerte* (the 12 lucky grapes), must be completely eaten by 12:00 a.m. to usher in a year of good fortune. Luckier, still, is when the fruit is eaten while wearing red undergarments ... preferably ones gifted to you by someone else!

Fireworks are standard in the States, but in Denmark, New Year's noise comes from breaking plates. It is common practice to smash plates on the doorsteps of friends and family, symbolizing a break from the past. The larger the pile of shards on one's doorstep, the luckier year you can anticipate according to this tradition.

Also on the front porch, one might follow Turkey's lead, sprinkling salt on New Year's Eve to invite peace and prosperity through one's doors. Or, as is the practice in Greece, hang onions over your front door after church service on New Year's Day — to encourage fertility and growth.

Sparkly dresses and suits are not uncommon American New Year's party attire, but Brazilians prefer dressing all in white. Paying tribute to the Goddess of the Sea, locals toss white flowers and candles into the ocean.

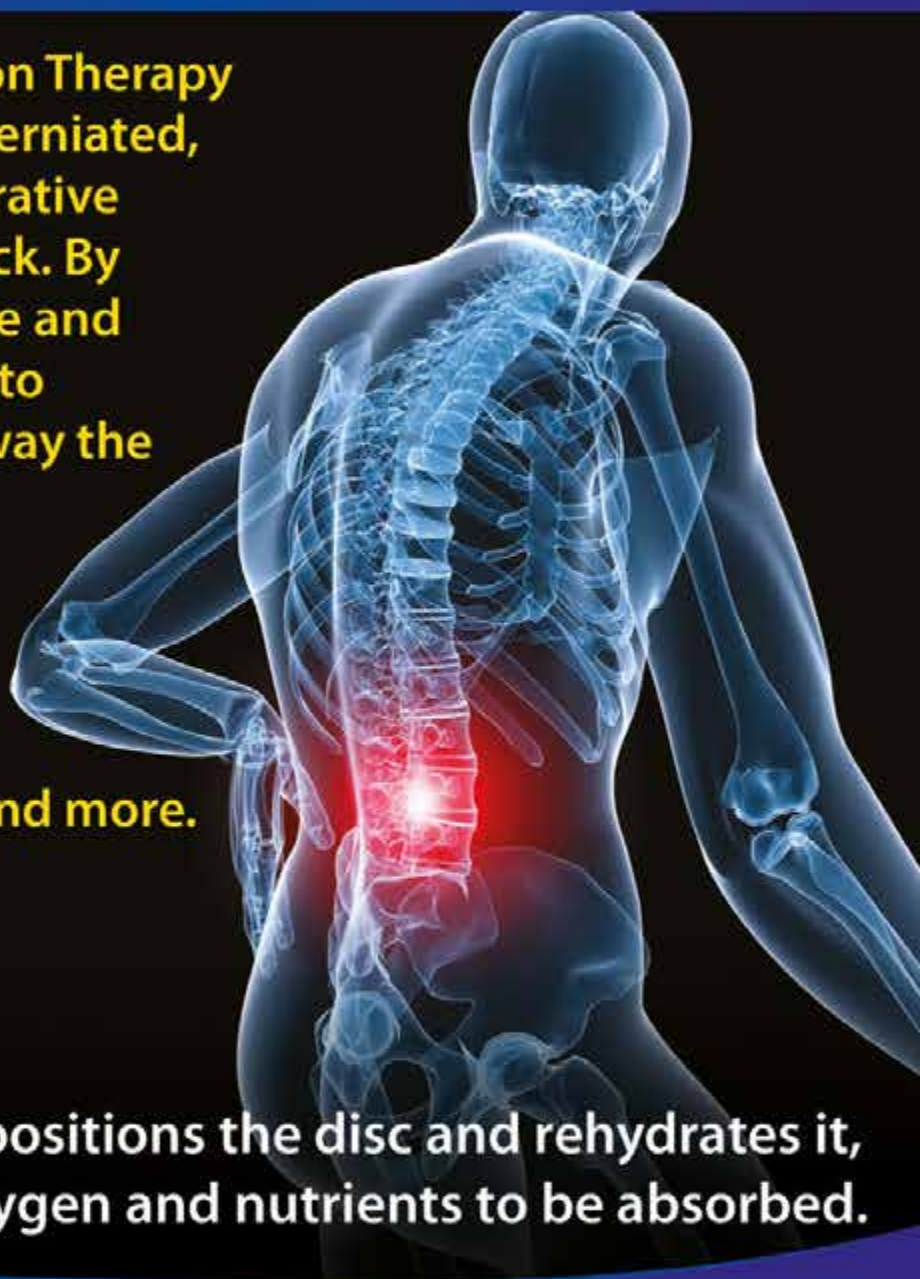
Perhaps the most logical of New Year's traditions is found in Puerto Rico. There many clean their homes from top to bottom ... because nothing beats a fresh start.

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LEADER *of the* BAND

— By Angel Morris

The Red Oak Mighty Hawk Band has been increasingly successful in the last few years, a fact many attribute to ROHS Band Director Justin Wood. “Band is one of the greatest things you can do in public school. It offers so many things for you to be good at, not just playing an instrument,” he noted. “It’s leadership, being part of a team, advanced thinking and knowing it’s OK to have flaws as long as you continue to improve.”

The band does keep improving, making finals in TMEA State Honor Band last summer, receiving Marching Band recognition and earning All State titles for many of his students. While recognition is important, Justin said it is not the priority. “When you ask a student their fondest memory of band, sure, the awards are cool. But it is the day-to-day moments they remember most,” he said.

That’s why Justin said making band relate to students’ everyday lives is essential. “My goal is to make band an enjoyable art form where the kids can learn. The better they get, the more they enjoy it, but the time commitment has to be worth the output,” he explained. “That means giving them life lessons, memorable experiences and ways to see what they learn in band can be used in life.”

Band has long been part of Justin’s daily life. “In sixth grade, I got to school and discovered my uncle had enrolled me in band,” Justin recalled. “He had refurbished his old trombone, and it was waiting there for me.”

Justin continued to play, and was a section leader and drum major at South Grand Prairie High School. He went on to earn a Bachelor of Music Education from Baylor University, and also his master’s. He would hold band director jobs for almost two decades before coming to Red Oak. “My own high school band director, Larry Barton, was my mentor, and I taught my first four years with him. He taught me how to be consistent — taught me the fundamentals of teaching band and to push myself to be better each day,” Justin credited.

“Another colleague, Laurencio Arroyo, taught me how to be more kind, to be more concerned with the kids themselves than about how they would ever play their instrument.”



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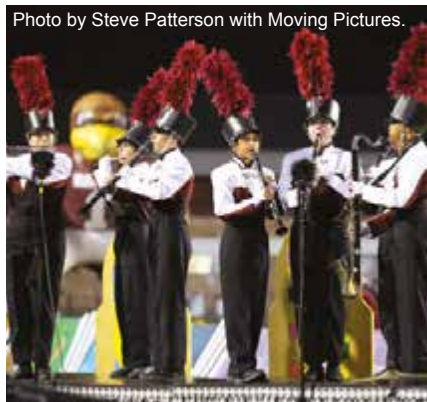
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In his fifth year at ROHS, Justin has hit his stride. “I feel at home at Red Oak and look forward to what the future brings for our program.”

Justin makes teaching seem easy, but recalls challenges through the years. “In my first year of teaching, they introduced email, and three of our best core teachers quit and never came back. We were still using mimeograph machines that made six copies a minute. I remember being excited I could have lunch while waiting on 100 copies for the band,” he laughed.

Justin noted how COVID changed the world of education, too. “The pandemic

forced the world into paperless contact. Now, at the push of a button on my cell phone, the entire band sees the right piece of music on their phones. The technology has absolutely changed how we teach and assess our kids.”

While education is always evolving, Justin said it is the support of family that allows teachers to be the best they can be. “When you have a spouse or parent in a service-oriented job, you give up a lot for them to pursue their passion,” he said, crediting his wife, Ashley, and daughters, Avery and Ella. “Your family deserves way more credit than they can ever be given.”

Justin hopes that being the best husband and dad he can be is some payback. As band director, he just strives “to make each day better than the one before” for students. “Band teaches you to be OK with your flaws and work on them at the same time. No one wins the race. It’s an art. Like life, you have to constantly work at getting better,” he shared. “You become like the people around you, and I’m a better person because of the kids I teach.”

Justin said teaching allows him to



learn about himself through students’ reactions and behavior, noting that people “take a little piece” of everyone they come in contact with. He admits one of his quirks is taking some small object when people leave his life. “When I moved away from my grandmother, I took a big rock from her yard and dragged it around with my family wherever we lived,” he recalled. “I still take something to remember people by ... I mean it in an endearing way. I don’t want to forget them!”

In all likelihood, Justin’s students take something when they leave him, too. “Of course, teaching instruments is the job,” he stated, “but having the students leave as better people for having been in the program, that’s the real goal.” **NOW**

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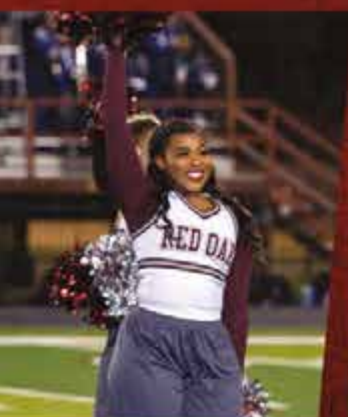


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Fashion Faves

OF 2024

— By Emma McKay

For many people, personal fashion can be challenging. It's hard to find clothes that make you look and feel good. The fear of your style choices making you stand out in an unpleasant way can be a beast of its own. Due to fashion's cyclical nature, you might already have this winter's trends in your wardrobe.

Burgundy is "in" again this season, which is good news for Aggies fans, whose closets are filled with burgundy's sister shade. This rich, warm color is perfect for the brutal Texas winter. There is no wrong way to wear solid-colored clothing. You could rock an entire outfit of burgundy pieces or add a splash of it here and there to tie the whole look together. To save a bit of money and closet space, try accessorizing with burgundy. Find a good, solid-colored burgundy coat, and you can make any outfit in season.

In a move that harkens back to the retro-futurism art style, metallic silver is having its moment in the wardrobes of fashion icons. Whether it be a shining polyester dress or

reflective chunky shoes, this trend is reminiscent of decades-old depictions of what the 2020s *might* look like. While silver is a solid color like burgundy, silver works best as the focal point of an outfit. If you are going to wear silver pants, don't pair them with a silver top, otherwise you might come across as a droid from *Star Wars*. Instead, pair it with a black, dusty rose or soft cream blouse. Silver shoes can be a fun way to make any casual or swanky outfit a bit more out of this world.

Classic prints such as polka-dot and plaid are back. Like with silver clothes, a general rule of thumb for printed fabric is to make it the centerpiece of the outfit. Pairing a polka dot blouse with a plaid skirt could unintentionally turn a casual outfit into a loud eye sore. Instead, the other elements of the ensemble should be solid colors that complement the printed fabric. That way, the eye will naturally gravitate toward the patterned piece, instead of getting lost in the noise. You could even pair your polka dot blouse with your silver heels or pull the burgundy look in with a plaid skirt to double your fashion points.

It's common knowledge in the fashion world that former style trends tend to cycle back into the mainstream eventually. This fashion season pulls items from several different decades back into people's closets.

Strolling in from the 1950s are the classic A-line and swing dresses. With their fitted bodices and flared skirts, these dresses are perfect for those who want to show off their form while still having fun twirling on the dance floor. Accessorize this look with a timeless strand of pearls or a peacoat for warmth.

Dust off the shoulder pads because exaggerated shoulders from the 1980s are officially back. Whether paired with a nice top and slacks or a T-shirt and jeans, a padded blazer makes nearly any outfit board meeting ready.

Double denim is the epitome of recycled fashions. Double denim has had a resurgence in popularity every decade since the 1970s. If you wish to pull this bold look off, you must be willing to commit. Your look should consist of either the same shade of denim or completely contrasting shades — think navy and white.

Oftentimes, it's the accessories that make the outfit shine. This winter, professional neckties and bold neckerchiefs can add the final touches to your outfit. While nothing beats the traditional black tie or a neckerchief in the same shade as your blouse, if you want your outfit to pop, try playing with opposing colors. You can even pull in patterned materials if you want your accessory to be your outfit's centerpiece.

Fashion works as a way of expressing oneself. It can be used to make one fit in or stand out in the crowd. Sometimes, it can be tricky figuring out how to make it work for you, but through constant study and willingness to experiment, you can master the art of fashion. **NOW**

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Travis Bruton

By Angel Morris

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Chamber members Mark Schrader of Verity Plumbing and Jennifer Schrader of Verity Bookkeeping Solutions support the community at a local event.



The caring ways of ROPD's Rebecca Pevehouse recently resulted in her being voted the Best of Ellis County Law Enforcement Officer.



Charles and Leanna Brady of Linebarger Groggan Blair & Sampson welcome visitors to the Chamber booth at Christmas in Red Oak.

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CookingNOW *In the Kitchen With* KARLEIGH SOSEBEE

— By Angel Morris

Preparing food with her grandmother, Honee, is a favorite memory for Red Oak's Karleigh Sosebee. "We baked, cooked and even had tea parties. I credit my love for cooking to her," Karleigh recalled.

A fan of famed chef, Gordon Ramsay, Karleigh had extra time to try new recipes during COVID-19. "After countless hours of tutorials on TikTok, I successfully achieved a chocolate soufflé. That success motivated me," she noted. "Then I found myself in the kitchen tackling Michelin Star Chef recipes."

A fourth grade teacher and new mom to a baby boy, Karleigh's meal prep focus has changed. "What used to be hours of delicate cooking is now fast and easy," she admitted. "Here are some of my go-to recipes!" **NOW**

Cajun Chicken Alfredo

Chicken:

3 Tbsp. olive oil
Fake Parmesan cheese, to taste
1 Tbsp. Cajun seasoning (I recommend Tony Chachere's.)
1 Tbsp. fresh garlic
Large pinch black pepper
1-2 lbs. boneless, skinless chicken breasts or thighs
Fresh lemon juice, enough to cover chicken

Sauce:

6 Tbsp. butter

1 Tbsp. fresh garlic
1 14.5-oz. carton heavy cream
About 1 cup chicken broth
3-4 cups Parmesan, freshly grated (or 3-4 6-oz. bags)
Salt, to taste
Pepper, to taste
Cajun seasoning, to taste
Noodles of your choice, prepared to package instructions

1. *For chicken:* Mix together the olive oil, fake Parmesan, Cajun seasoning, garlic and pepper. Coat the chicken in the mixture until fully covered.
2. Cook the chicken for 6 minutes on both

sides. Remove from the skillet; immediately squeeze the lemon juice over the chicken.

3. For sauce: In the same pan you cooked the chicken in, add the butter and garlic. Cook down until melted and fragrant.

4. Add the heavy cream and chicken broth; mix together for 1-3 minutes.

5. Slowly add the Parmesan; whisk together until melted.

6. Season with salt, pepper and Cajun seasoning; cook another 1-3 minutes.

7. Add the cooked pasta to the sauce; mix together.

Simple Beer Bread

3 cups all-purpose flour
1 Tbsp. baking powder
Kosher salt, to taste
1 12-oz. can beer (I recommend a dark beer like Shiner or a pumpkin beer.)
1/4 cup honey
6 Tbsp. cold salted butter, sliced into 8 pieces

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Grease a 9x5-inch loaf pan with butter.
2. Add the flour, baking powder and a touch of salt to a mixing bowl. Pour in the

beer and honey. Mix until combined. Pour or spoon the batter into the pan. Place butter slices on top of the batter.
3. Bake 45-55 minutes until golden brown. Slice and enjoy!

Crock-Pot Barbecue Chicken Quesadillas

- Olive oil, for greasing
- 4-5 chicken breasts, frozen or unfrozen
- 1 18-oz. bottle barbecue sauce
- 3 Tbsp. garlic powder
- 2 Tbsp. onion powder
- 1 1-oz. packet ranch seasoning
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste
- Butter, for greasing
- Tortillas
- Mozzarella, to taste
- Ranch dressing, to taste

- 1.** Grease a Crock-Pot with olive oil. Place the chicken in the Crock-Pot.
- 2.** Pour the barbecue sauce over the chicken. Add the garlic powder, onion powder, ranch packet, salt and pepper.
- 3.** Depending on how quickly you need the meal prepared, cook on high for 2-4 hours or on low for 6-8 hours (Crock-Pot temperatures vary).
- 4.** When time is halfway done, take out the chicken breasts. Put them on a separate plate. Grab two forks and begin shredding them. Place the shredded chicken back in the Crock-Pot to finish cooking.
- 5.** Heat a skillet; grease with butter.
- 6.** Prepare a tortilla by placing chicken on one half. Add mozzarella cheese on top. Fold over the other half of the tortilla.
- 7.** Place the quesadilla in the hot skillet. Cook on both sides for 3-4 minutes until golden brown.
- 8.** Cut the quesadilla into three sections. Serve with ranch.

To search for more great recipes from any of the **9 NOW Magazines** publications, visit www.nowmagazines.com.



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Dr. Alan M Taylor II

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Danica C., Midlothian, TX

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HAPPY NEW YEAR

JANUARY

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

Through 1/12

Holiday Grease Roundup:
Instead of washing your grease down the drain, recycle it for free! Stop by any day, any time, and drop off your used grease or oils in our outdoor steel drum. Public Works Building, 411 W. Red Oak Rd.

1/2

Ellis Christian Women's Job Corps' Spring Class Registration:

Free courses range from computer training and money management to setting boundaries, résumé writing and interviewing. Classes begin **January 30** and run 12 weeks

with morning and evening times available, **Tuesday-Thursday**, 100 Chamber Circle, Waxahachie. Learn more at <http://elliscwjc.life/> or by calling (972) 937-6620.

1/20

Catch-a-Trout:

Free kids fishing event. The Pond at Pearson Park will be stocked with trout from Texas Parks and Wildlife Neighborhood Fishin' Program. Registration: 8:00 a.m.; event: 9:00-11:00 a.m., 200 Lakeview Pkwy.

First Mondays

Red Oak Lions Club Meeting:

Joining Lions Club is a way to network with other businesses, community leaders and civic-minded people while helping your community. 6:30-7:30 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd. To learn more, call (469) 571-7265.

Third Mondays

Book Club:

New members always welcome. 6:30-8:00 p.m., Red Oak Library, 101 S. Live Oak St. For more information, email awatterman@redoaktx.org.

Wednesdays and Thursdays

Senior Citizen Center of Red Oak:

Enjoy coffee, juice and donuts each morning, as well as a sponsored lunch on first-third Thursdays and a potluck on fourth Thursdays. Also, games, puzzles, bingo and informative guest speakers. 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd. Call (469) 218-1217 for more information.

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

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