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February 2008

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**the Pitts**

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Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$35 per year or \$3.50 per issue. Subscription and editorial correspondence should be sent to: *WaxahachieNOW*, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates and other information, call (972) 937-8447 or e-mail us at: rhensley@nowmagazines.com



# Waxahachie NOW

## Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

February is the month for heart-shaped boxes of chocolate candies, dozens of red roses, poetry penned with loved ones in mind and cupid's bow and arrows. It is the time when love permeates the air. This month's edition is a testament to the love, dedication and commitment found in individuals within the Waxahachie community.

Surviving the Depression and wartime separations, Bill and Charlene Pitts share their 65-year love story in our main feature, while Judy Baergen invites us into her home resembling a romantic Valentine's Day card, which has come alive in white and shades of blue. Beverly Worthington shares her passion for the whimsical in the art feature, as Carol Anderson and Aaron Ehly teach us valuable lessons on unconditional love through their real life experiences.

Be blessed beyond measure as you enjoy what *NOW* has to offer. You may even want to have some Kleenex handy.

Sandra McIntosh  
WaxahachieNOW Editor



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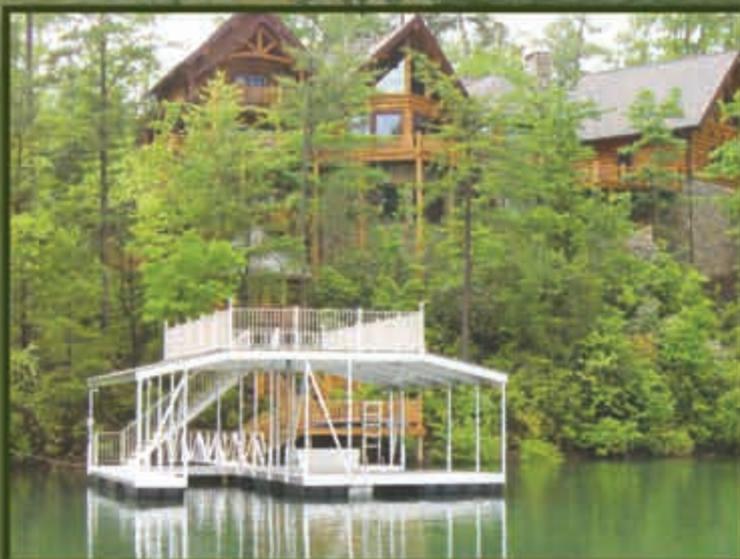
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# Love is the Pitts

— By Jaime Ruark



Bill and Charleene Pitts are love personified. Past and present come together in beautiful harmony for this couple who have been married for 65 years. History dances across their faces, stories fill their shining eyes and love for each other and appreciation for their life together echoes back and forth as they finish each other's sentences. "We were childhood sweet hearts; we've known each other since I was in the fifth grade and he was in the sixth. I was born in Waxahachie, and Bill was born in Ennis, but he got here just as quick as he could! In school, he was the bell monitor, so I always knew when he was coming down the hall. When he passed by my class he'd always give me a great big wink. That's what stole my heart," Charleene reminisced, traces of the sweet school girl still sparkling in her face. "We went all through high school as steadies and on to Trinity University."

The two would go on dates, often to the dime movies, where Bill was hired to help when, as he joked, a "little film, maybe you've heard of *Gone with the Wind*, came to town." He helped pop the popcorn and set up a candy booth, the



beginning of what is now called a concession stand. He moved up through the theater's ranks, working as a ticket taker and then as the projectionist. "I worked seven days a week and got paid \$35, which was big money back then. I was making more than some grown men with families because this was during the Depression," Bill said. "I liked him working that job because I was always able to see all the movies for free!" Charleene interjected with a chuckle.

Bill entered Trinity University on a full music scholarship, having distinguished himself in the Waxahachie band, and began schooling for a physics degree. "Our parents were good to us. There wasn't anything during our growing up years that we had to do without. Some things we thought we wanted and couldn't have, but we never needed anything, and many did," Charleene expressed.

The two were, in fact, on one of their dates on the fateful day of December 7, 1941. With the past welling up in her eyes, Charleene shared, "We had our usual Sunday afternoon date, and we were riding around the square with the radio on. They broke into the music program with a special announcement.

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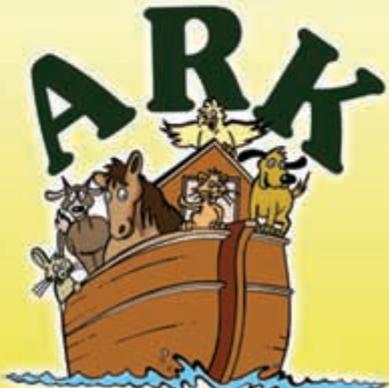
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Pearl Harbor had been bombed. We just stopped and looked at each other. It was such a shock! We knew from that moment our lives were going to change."

Indeed, that day brought many changes for Bill and Charleene, as it did for the whole nation. War meant



Bill would enlist after Christmas. "I knew at my age there was no reason to wait for the draft, so I joined the Army Air Corp and got started," Bill explained, his brave heart as apparent in 1941 as it is today. Soon after, he began aircraft mechanic school. "We decided we wouldn't get married right then," he added. "We'd wait until the war was over, unlike a lot of people."

He was eventually stationed in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where his parents and Charleene could make the 500-mile journey to visit him as they were able. However, time and distance began to weigh heavily on the couple and true love could wait no more. By Charleene's third visit, "It was time for us to have a very serious talk," Bill said. "We decided we couldn't wait any longer. We wanted to be married!"



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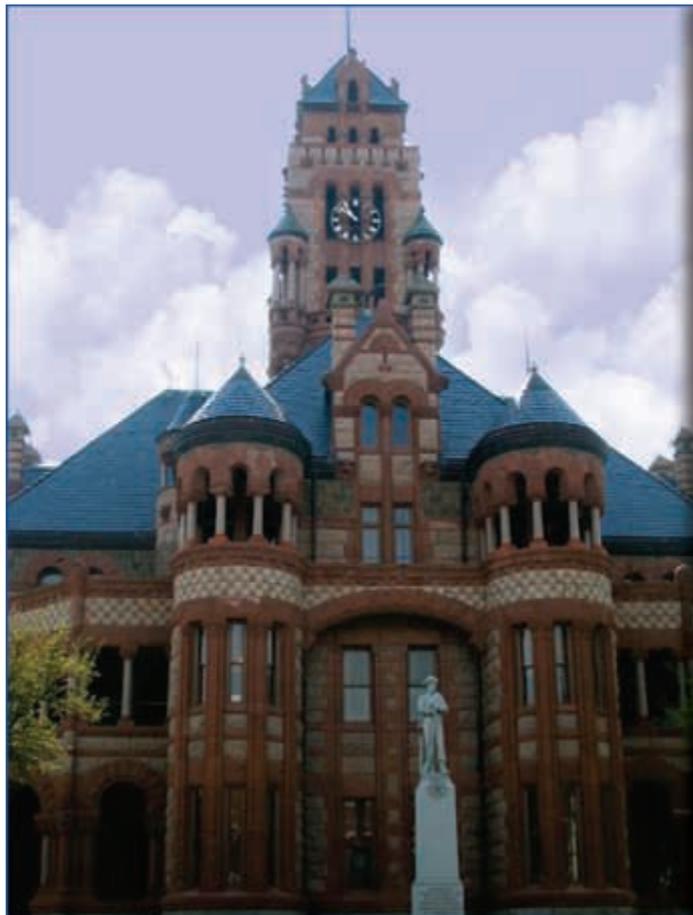
Bill obtained a pass, but it was only a 50-mile day pass. If caught outside that radius he would be declared AWOL. A little thing like that could not stand in this couple's way; a family wedding at home quickly followed on July 14, 1942. "We had such a sweet, little ceremony. It was exactly how we had wanted it from the beginning, with family and a few friends," Charleene recalled. "My florist bill was \$25! We still have that bill." In fact, the Pitts' home is a veritable museum,



An early portrait of the Pitts family.

with maps that chronicle their extensive travels, photograph albums filled to the brim with pictures of the world history they were a part of and notebook after notebook of love letters, each one read and re-read, lovingly treasured and carefully kept.

It is impossible to chronicle all the memories and experiences the couple shared during this time of love and war, when goodbye seemed a word too often spoken as they were separated for long amounts of time. Sometimes as many as six weeks would go by without news of Bill. Until she could join him, Charleene was able to live at home with her parents while Bill trained at Yale University in Boca Raton, Florida. Yet, even being in the same



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town meant they would have to stay under different roofs, because Bill was not allowed to lodge off base. The young bride stoically lived alone, seeing her husband only in passing. “It was hard, but it was better than nothing,” Charleene asserted, as Bill added, “After the evening meal, we would

**“If we could just be together, I would’ve lived in a pup tent.”**

meet at the post office on the Yale campus, say hello, get a kiss and go.”

Charleene again moved home the Christmas of 1943, when Bill was shipped overseas. “I like to say I had an all expense paid tour of Europe for two years,” he joked, in his sweet-natured way. His trip took him to England, France, Belgium, Luxemburg, Holland, Germany and Czechoslovakia. When VE day came at last in May, 1945, yet another obstacle threatened to keep the Pitts apart. Bill was part of the occupying army and rather than come home, he was whisked away to Japan. “When I got that letter telling me he couldn’t come home,” Charleene said, “I just wanted to die and didn’t care if I did!”

The couple was finally reunited in San Antonio, and because of so much time spent apart, they were both nervous and excited at seeing one another. Bill experienced what he calls “reverse gang plank fever” at seeing the bride he had spent so much time away from, the woman he now calls his “best friend, the person I respect the most.”

Charleene, with happy tears in her eyes, said, “I waited in that hotel room for him, and the knock on the door and his voice telling me it was him — that was beautiful, beautiful music. Going through those bad times, that’s what makes you appreciate the good. I always said, ‘If we could just be together, I would’ve lived in a pup tent.’ We’ve been happy and truly blessed.” **NOW**

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# Finding Rest in Her Nest

— By Sandra McIntosh



## At Home With Judy Baergen



If home is truly where the heart is, then Judy Baergen's heart is found in the three-bedroom, two-bath home she lovingly refers to as her "Blue Heaven." The home is predominately white in color and decor, but Judy has been able to incorporate several shades of blue to give her cottage-style abode a romantic, comfy feel that she enjoys coming home to. In fact, the words on the walls of her home office just about say it all. "This home is my nest," Judy said, referring to the hand-painted definition of the word "nest" which serves as the

border to this windowed room where a portion of Judy's collection of New York State bluebird plates are displayed. "The definition simply reads, 'a snug retreat or refuge, a resting place, home...'" A butter pat with a hand-painted bluebird design in the center, similar in size and shape to a small coaster, is mounted to the wall, acting as the period to the words that describe the entire home in a single sentence.

Judy did not live in Waxahachie prior to the purchase of her home in





November 2005, nor was she reared in the area. However, this does not mean she was unfamiliar with everything the small community had to offer. "I used to come participate in the annual antique show at the Chautauqua Auditorium, and I also had a booth at the Dove's Nest when Cindy Birch first moved to the Jefferson Street address in the late '80s," she remembered. "I got to know Cora Martin and Claudia Morris. When I'd come to the shows, I'd stay with my newfound friend Cora." It was like this for years, until Judy and her late husband, Darrel, moved from Fort Worth to Abilene. Once they moved, it became too much for Judy to drive back and forth to Waxahachie to tend her booth, so she soon gave that up. It also became imperative for her to spend more time close to home, caring for her ailing husband of 38 years and dealing with his untimely death, followed by the



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passing of her mother.

As Judy's life settled into an easy rhythm without her loved ones, she decided to get back in the "antiquing rat race," so to speak. "I started coming back to the antique shows," she said. "It was like the years away had never happened. We were all able to pick up exactly where we'd left off." It was during one of these shows that she once again ran into Cindy. Judy had

been "itching" to move closer to her three children, John Darrel Jr., Jeff and Jennifer, as well as her six grandchildren. The conversation with Cindy turned the "itch" to move to Ellis County into a real possibility when Cindy overheard a Waxahachie homeowner discussing her desire to sell her house. "The owner of the house was trying to sell her home at the time," Judy explained. "Someone told her about my desire to move to the area. Cindy overheard the conversation, so the first thing she did after returning to her shop that day was to give me a call. She told me the house was a perfect fit for me."

Judy did not make an offer on the house until nearly a year after the phone call from Cindy. "The owner gave me a firm price that I was able to live with," she said. "The contingency was that my house in Abilene had to sell first. That took another four months." It may have taken Judy a while to get here, but she will be the

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first to say "she got here as quickly as she could."

Settling into her new surroundings came easy for Judy because the home was almost exactly how she wanted it. Few changes have been made to the property in the two years she has called Waxahachie home. The differences on the exterior began when Judy had the porch railing lowered, making it, once



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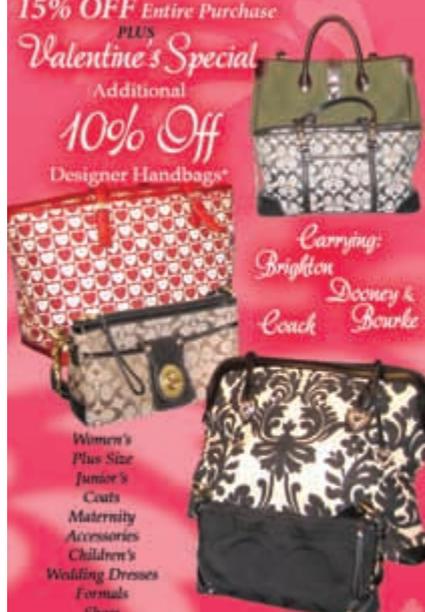
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again, historically correct. She also changed the color to what she refers to as "blue heaven." The bright white trim transformed the home into the cottage style Judy had been hoping for all along.

The only painting she has done on the inside of the home has been to add "blue heaven" to the ceiling in the master bedroom, add the lighter shade of blue to her home office and turn the island in the kitchen that was once a deep green to the bright white seen today. "I also added a backdoor to the office that goes out to my 'secret garden,'" Judy said. "I had to add dirt, plant and lay a stone walkway before I designed the waterfall that's home to my goldfish." When asked if she takes

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her morning coffee out back as weather permits, she just laughed and said, "No, I only drink ice coffee and Dr Pepper out back. It's very relaxing."

Everything displayed in the home was Judy's, and it all means something to her. The space above the doorless kitchen cabinets is home to an array of collectibles. Dolls made in Nashville, Tennessee, take their rightful place in an antique wagon purchased on a trip to New England. Several wood cutouts



including a rooster, a goose, a slice of watermelon, a gingerbread cookie cutter and Uncle Sam can also be seen. "My dad was a craftsman," Judy said, with pride in her voice. "He cut out all the shapes and my mom painted them."

At one time years ago, the intricately carved desk in the office belonged to Darrel's parents. "It probably dates back to the early 1900s," she added. The original dark wood finish is complemented by white wicker pieces Judy has used to finish dressing the room that boasts of dark wood accents. The white porcelain chandelier in the family room, directly above the dining table, dates back to 1889. It once belonged to Judy's mother. "At one time, it was more Victorian," Judy said. "Now it's a bit shabby-chic." The pine pie safe, also found along one wall in the family room, put a broad smile across Judy's face as she remembered the trip the young family took over 40 years ago. "We found the piece in an antique store in New Mexico," she explained. "We had to put the seats down in the station wagon and the two boys had to ride on top of the pie safe from New Mexico to San Marcos."

The home is a menagerie of too many unique, eclectic keepsakes to name, including: a child's daybed turned into a coffee table, antique dressers with knobs made from saucers and massive collections of mother-of-pearl buttons, blue and white dishes and china in red and blue. It is a place that offers a snug retreat or refuge; a resting place. "Like I said before," Judy interjected, "it's my nest and I love it!" **NOW**

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# Therapeutic *Passion*

— By Sandra McIntosh

Even growing up, Beverly Worthington loved pretty things. She laughs as she recalls school photographs that date back to grade school. “I always had some kind of necklace on,” she said. “As a matter of fact, I still have the jewelry I wore in high school, as well as the earrings you see in my graduation photo.” Her passion for creating the whimsical and eclectic pieces she wears today began later in life when her late husband, Roy Worthington, was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. “The classes became my therapy,” she remembered, adding that the first item she completed was a zipper pull. “After a couple lessons, I began to teach myself by trial and error.”

As Roy’s illness began to consume the family and Beverly’s mom also became sick, Beverly felt it necessary to push her creativity aside. She did not pick the art of jewelry design up again until much later, following the passing of both her loved ones. “When I did go back to it,” Beverly explained, “I went with what I’d previously learned, even though I still today direct problems and questions to a good friend of mine.” Beverly’s

love for crafting her own wearable artwork caused her to convert the smallest bedroom in her home into a craft room where she quickly began to organize the items she had been collecting over the years. There is a bookcase nearly overflowing with craft books. Containers, all neatly categorized and labeled, hold pieces in silver and gold, as well as stones in all shapes, sizes and colors imaginable. She really has no preference. “I love working with it all,” she said. “Stones, glass, wood or metal. It all just depends on my mood.”



Antique pieces and old jewelry finds bring Beverly hours of therapeutic release as she takes the necklace or bracelet apart, only to put it back together again. “I take the beads that are salvageable, redesign them and make something brand new,” she said, “and I wear everything I make.” Going to work for Citizens

National Bank in 1978 out of necessity meant wearing tailored suits every day. A customer gifted her one day with a colorful peacock pin, so from that time on, she always wore a pin to work. Now that she is retired, she enjoys her handcrafted

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necklaces on a daily basis. In fact, she rarely leaves home without one.

When asked if she had a favorite piece, Beverly wasted no time in going to one of many jewelry boxes to remove one very special necklace. "The wooden cross was carved by the late Gene Waldeck, an artist from Red Oak. He gave it to me on black cording," she replied, as she held it up for a closer look. She was fortunate to find some old glass beads and redesigned the necklace. "It has such sentimental value," she said, "because of the friendship Gene and I shared."

As Beverly continued to get on with life, she took up traveling. On one such trip to Florida, she came home with another unique, one-of-a-kind craft idea. "I admit, I'm a flea market, garage sale junkie," she said, laughing because of the truth behind the statement. "I was driving around that day along the beach when I spotted a sale." Prior to venturing out, Beverly had made a silent promise to herself that she would only look; she would not buy anything more. While walking along the beach, she came upon an artist who was selling what she called "button bouquets." Since she had vowed not to buy anything, Beverly left it behind. "I couldn't get the bouquet out of my mind. It made me smile," she said. "I talked myself into

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going back and buying it.” That same button bouquet is currently displayed atop the refrigerator for all to see and enjoy.

Beverly crafted just a few of the whimsical button bouquets for her family and close friends, never thinking twice about selling them to the public, that was until Cindy Birch, owner of the Dove’s Nest, delivered a rug and quickly spotted the bouquet. “Cindy wanted several for her shop,” Beverly explained. “They appear to be quite popular.” Replenishing the supply based on the demand has become somewhat of a small challenge, but Beverly is up for it. “The fun comes in shopping for unique, large, oversized buttons,” she said. “I’m always on the lookout for the bigger buttons and those I like to call ‘personality’ buttons.” Beverly is also always on the hunt for small-necked decorative bottles. They seem to hold the bouquet together better. The most fascinating aspect of the bouquets is Beverly’s inability to duplicate them. “There is no way to make two matching bouquets,” she explained. “I couldn’t even if I tried. They’re all true originals.” Her inspiration comes from within. What she sees in her mind’s eye is what she sits down to create.

Needless to say, Beverly is one of those individuals with a zeal for living and she has been able to put that excitement and positive energy into her jewelry and button bouquets. “Everything in life is an experience,” she humbly said. “I’m not going to let a single moment pass me by.” **NOW**



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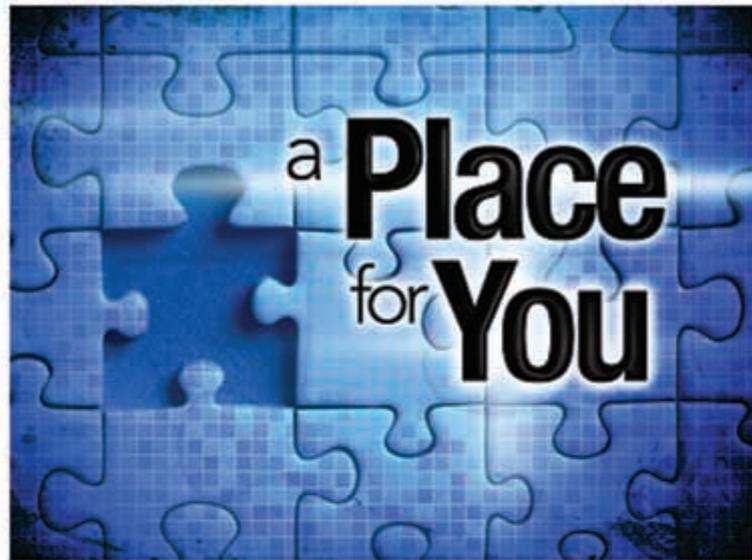
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# Field of

# Dreams

— By Alex Allred

Since the debut of the baseball movie, *Field of Dreams*, the title-turned-sports-phrase has acquired a dual meaning. Aaron Ehly understands both. It is a physical place, the baseball field, where opportunities and careers can be made. It is also a state of being.

Throughout his high school career, Aaron was an exceptional athlete, and was named Most Valuable Player among his baseball peers at Cedar Hill High School in 1996. He proved himself on both the baseball and football fields and was offered a college scholarship in both sports. He chose baseball.

He attended Northwood University in Cedar Hill, earning a degree in business while living out his dream to play baseball. He had his eye on a much bigger prize — the big leagues. Aaron could easily see himself playing with the pros as a catcher. He began training and playing with a semipro

team, the Ft. Worth Cats and had been doing very well until just before opening day. “I got cut right before opening day,” Aaron said. “Just like that.”

The dream was over. Aaron had invested all his time, energy and hope into baseball, so when the announcement was made, there was no backup plan. “A friend helped me get a job as a home mortgage officer,” he said, “but after awhile, I really missed the game.”

That was when he realized he wanted to coach. A natural with children, Aaron has been described as an incredibly patient and easygoing young man with a gift for teaching. “When I first met him,” said Cheryl Presnall, principal of Faith Family Academy in Waxahachie, “I could see that he was a very self-motivated, level-headed young man, which,” she added with a chuckle, “is pretty valuable for a coach and teacher.”

While Aaron was incredibly



aggressive on the field, he brought a new kind of competitiveness to the school. “I want to build an athletic program here,” he said. “I hope to start a 1-A UIL {University Interscholastic League} program and begin a winning tradition here.” Without question, this

# Sports NOW

is a lofty goal. When Aaron decided he wanted to begin a teaching career, the first person he spoke to was his wife, Kim. Together, they have three young children. A sudden career move might have been frightening to someone else, but Kim was supportive. "I knew he



would be really good at it," Kim said. "When he talked to me about it, he was just so excited. This was something he really wanted to do."

It was something he had to do. "It's why I gave him the opportunity," Cheryl added. Although he had no teaching experience, something told her to take the gamble. "You could tell there was just something about him," she explained. "He's excited, he's motivated. He's a great role model for the kids."

Rather than go to a larger school with an already-developed sports program, Aaron also took a gamble. The academy is a smaller charter school with no indoor basketball facilities, no training field for baseball, no track or grand gym. Still, he accepted the position as head coach of the boys' and girls' basketball program and the boys' baseball team.

What Aaron lightly terms as "a challenge," other coaches would see as an impossibility, as he juggles training and game schedules around available facilities. There were even bigger challenges as most of his students lacked the basic fundamentals most students receive in the public school setting. "What was most surprising," Aaron said, "was how many [students] didn't know the basic rules of sports." Even the most basic rules of baseball and basketball were foreign to many of

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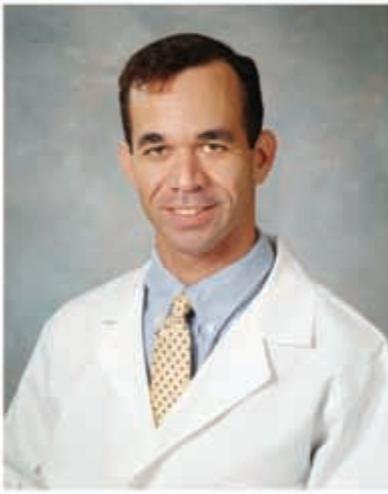


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his new charges. Truly, his field of dreams replicated the Kevin Costner movie, in which a baseball field or, in the case of Aaron, the sports program, must be built from the bottom up.

At once, he planned a golf tournament to raise funds for new



uniforms and training equipment. “He also started a football raffle and has really been reaching out to the community for these kids,” Cheryl said. When he began to struggle with the girls’ basketball team, he was instrumental in bringing in Nicole Pahl, a former athlete from Kansas State University, with years of experience working in the men’s highly successful basketball program. “Aaron really wants the kids to have success,” Nicole said. “He will go above and beyond to make things happen for them.” Clearly, he is already building that winning tradition.

What instantly struck Cheryl, and everyone who has met Aaron, is his winning spirit. Quite unwittingly, he has adopted the now famous line, “Build it and they will come,” to develop his own program. Not if, he said, but when his baseball field is built and his indoor facilities are complete, he will build that winning tradition. Already the students have responded. While other new coaches must recruit talent, word has traveled the halls of Faith Family Academy and the students are coming to him. “That’s why I’m here,” he said. “I’m going to stay here to build a successful program. It would be really neat to say that I had been a part of that.” This is his field of opportunities, champions and dreams. **NOW**

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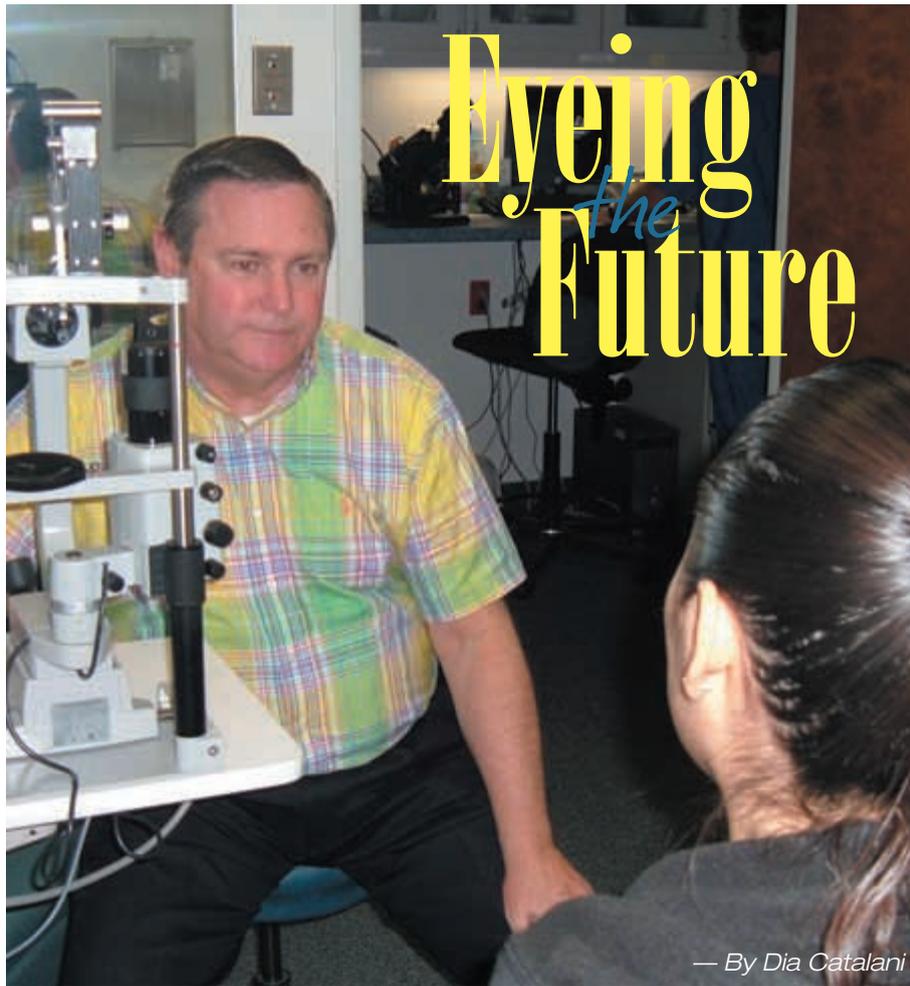

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— By Dia Catalani



Paige Pollard, O.D. is ready to conduct your eye exam.

Seeing can be considered one of the most important of all senses. As people age, the condition of their eyes can affect their livelihood, quality of life and even their outlook on the future. Who to trust for eye care is an important decision. David W. Reagan, M.D., is among the top ophthalmologists in North Texas, and is the only Ellis County physician who performs corneal transplants.

The staff at Dr. Reagan's ambulatory surgery facility, Reagan Eye Center, is among the best in the field and provides compassionate care during the treatment of children and adults. Establishing your eye care history with a team of professionals like those at Reagan Eye Center is as important as a relationship you build with your primary care physician. "In treating our patients, we have the most technologically advanced

equipment and the highest level of personal care," Dr. Reagan said. "I personally spend time with every single patient — not one will be seen without me hearing from the patient what their symptoms and concerns are, and giving them ample time to do so."

Reagan Eye Center lives up to its reputation as a commendable and professional accredited eye center — one of which every person who requires eye care should take notice. The Joint Commission, established in 1951 to develop state-of-the-art standards that focus on quality and safety within hospitals and other health care facilities, recognizes Reagan Eye Center for the staff's commitment to the industry's highest performance standards. Nationwide, only about 15,000 health care facilities carry this certification,

which entails rigorous evaluations followed by strict adherence to practice disciplines.

Paige Pollard, O.D., provides eye exams at Reagan Eye Care. As an optometrist, Dr. Pollard uses specialized equipment and medically based training to recognize eye diseases and conditions, recommending treatment plans based upon individual results. "Comprehensive eye care not only includes determining the prescription for glasses or contacts, but also dilation," Dr. Pollard said. "Dilation of the eyes detects ocular disease, even in patients who are not having symptoms of a problem. We can also see the first signs of other health issues, like diabetes, by looking into the eyes, and make the proper referral, if needed."

Reagan Eye Center is the only Ellis

## Business NOW

County facility that performs the refractive laser surgery commonly known as LASIK. The center also provides glaucoma therapy, diabetic eye care and ReSTOR cataract procedures, which can eliminate your dependence upon eyeglasses for reading or driving. Dr. Reagan also performs upper eyelid lift procedures and offers Botox cosmetic injection treatments. The center's eye



care professionals also include certified opticians and contact lens specialists. If you undergo a LASIK procedure, Linda Henderson will assist you in scheduling and preparing for the surgery. Rosemary Smith, RN, is Dr. Reagan's nurse administrator at the specialized surgery center; she oversees all medical procedures and helps patients feel comfortable. "We do whatever we can to help them feel at ease — before, during and after their visit," Rosemary said. "We see patients of all ages, so we also work with parents to help them to feel comfortable when their child is being seen."

If you have never undergone a full eye exam, do not wait for a problem to arise. Place your trust in the professionals who are dedicated solely to the diagnosis and treatment specific to eye care needs. Read about the extensive patient safety measures and healthcare provider protocol established by The Joint Commission on accreditation of health care organizations online at [www.jointcommission.org](http://www.jointcommission.org). Reagan Eye Center has clinics in Ennis, DeSoto and Mansfield, as well as a clinic and surgery center in Waxahachie at 101 YMCA Drive. For more information, log on to [www.reaganeyecenter.com](http://www.reaganeyecenter.com) or call (972) 938-7909. **NOW**

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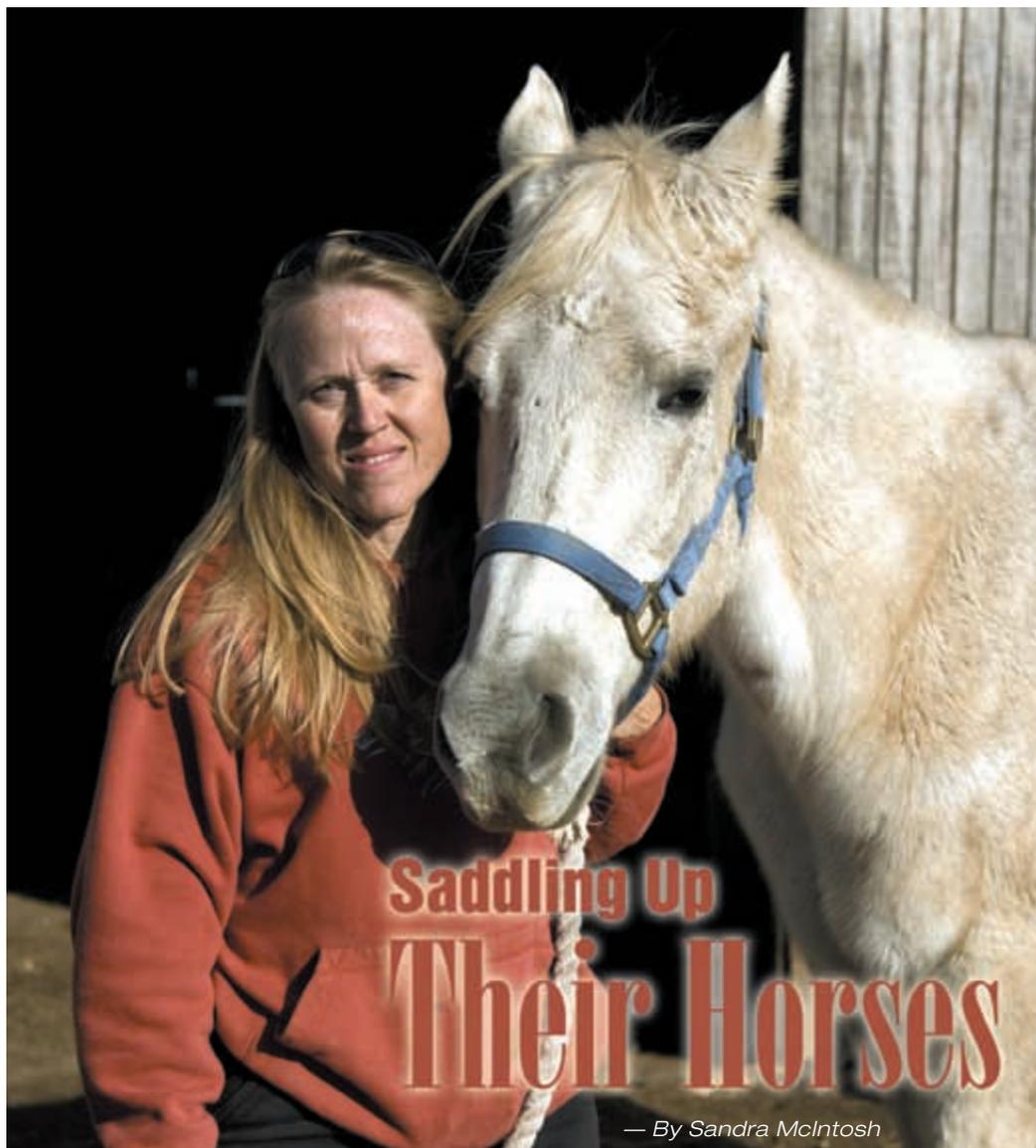
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# Education **NOW**



Carol Anderson, president and certified therapeutic riding instructor, saw a need in Ellis County. The decision to open the doors to Reins of Life, a therapeutic riding center between Waxahachie and Midlothian, came to fruition in the fall of 2005. Realizing she has been “in the right places at the right times” gave her the courage she needed to take a step of faith and open a facility for individuals with physical, emotional and/or cognitive disabilities. “I had volunteered at similar centers in Keller and Cedar Hill,” Carol said, referring to a small percentage of the

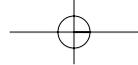
volunteer hours she has given freely throughout the past 20 years. “What’s accomplished in the arena between the horses, the riders, the parents and the volunteers is what the program is all about. Riders are empowered and volunteers are blessed. I want them all to look forward to coming out to the arena.”

That feeling of empowerment about which Carol speaks so passionately comes from watching challenged riders, (ages 5 to adult) do something most able-bodied individuals are fearful of trying. “It takes strength and bravery to get up on a horse and ride,” she said.

“They [challenged riders] know they are doing what others are scared to do. There’s also a satisfaction that comes in knowing I’ve given parents and loved ones hope to see that their child or family member can do whatever able-bodied people can do.”

All the horses at Reins of Life go through an extensive three-month probationary period before riders are ever allowed to “saddle up.” “It’s my responsibility to assess the overall condition of the horse,” Carol explained. “I must be able to see a horse move. I need to know if they’re able to transition





## Blooming Trees for Springtime

— By Nancy Fenton

Hopes for spring are around the corner, and all those pretty blooms are more than a sparkle in the eye. Did you plant for spring color? It is a bit late for this year, but you can put in some small ones now for a burst of color next spring. Look around and decide which ones you like best and get to it!

The showy white blooms on the 12 - 20 foot sprawling trees are dogwood. The roughleaf is a good variety for our area. Those orchid-shaped white, pink or burgundy colored flowers are signs of the desert willow, a sure thing for our alkaline, dry soils. Bright pink flowers on a 12 - 20 foot tree will

indicate Mexican or red buckeye, Mexican plum or redbud. While most of these are under-story trees, growing best in the dappled shade of our old oaks, the more sun the better for the desert willow and buckeyes. All of these smaller trees have bright colors that shine through while the larger trees are just beginning to bud out and contrast nicely with the golden daffodils and multicolored crocus on the ground. By the time the trees leaf out fully and the temperatures rise, they are ready to rest awhile and grow more branches for bloom the following spring!

Vitex is one of the versatile plants which can be as large as you want it, and it can be pruned into a large tree or a large shrub. Its vibrant purple or pink blooms resemble a lilac and droop much like a lilac. One of the largest I have seen is in Waxahachie's Getzendaner Park, directly across from

## Great Outdoors NOW

the new restroom facility. There are several large vitex hedges around the town if you know what you are seeing. Those showy small bushes that are covered with many blooms in yellow, pink and cranberry are probably japonica. There are several varieties, but they are all beautiful in the spring.

Look with fresh eyes as you drive around and decide which ones fit into your yard and then start looking for the plants. You can plant containerized trees anytime of year, but fall and spring are best. Just remember to plant those trees high so that as the ground settles the root flare will still be visible, mulch them heavily, and water once a week for at least the first year. You, too, can be the envy of your neighborhood with beautiful spring-blooming trees! **NOW**

*Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener in Ellis County.*

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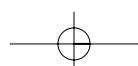
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# Around Town **NOW**



Waxahachie resident Faith Browning, top left, enjoyed a visit with Santa during David Allen's performance at the Chautauqua Auditorium. Ribbon cuttings were held, at left from top to bottom: Health Markets, First Floors Carpet One and Multiplex. Santa's helpers, top right, greeted those attending David Allen's annual Elvis Presley concert. Paaco from PAACO's Used Cars, bottom center, welcomed customers with Texas hospitality and a 10-gallon hat.

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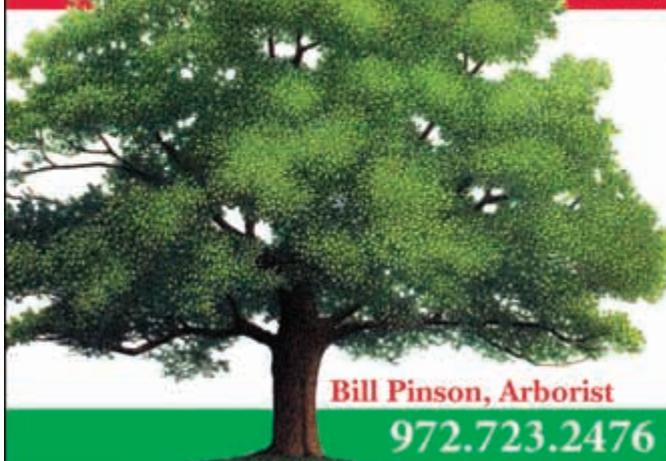
# Around Town **NOW**



The Ellis County Matt Dawgs, top left, started wrestling season with a bang as evidenced by the smiles on the faces of Nicholas and Madigan Shook. Holiday Inn Express, top right, held a ribbon cutting. David Allen, as Elvis, bottom left, gave Courtney Kilgore a "smooch" and a scarf. WaxahachieNOW community editor Sandra McIntosh, middle right, posed with David Allen and Faith Browning following three hours of memorable Elvis music. Alan Ritchie, bottom right, walked around the downtown area with his pet goats.

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## Look Who's Cooking

— Melinda Hines

Jerry's love of cooking began as she helped her mother with down-home cooking. Later, her homemaking teacher, Mrs. Hayle, showed her how to be creative, but simple. "She opened a whole new door about cooking and food presentation," Jerry said. Although she does not have any specialties, Jerry's family and friends love her hamburgers. "My real joy is when my family and friends come over," she said, "and I surprise them with old and new dishes."

She has owned two country and western bar and grills and even caters weddings, birthdays and more. Jerry is a self-proclaimed recipe-clipping- and cookbook-junkie. "I have 75 or more cookbooks," Jerry explained, "and I love to make food creations that put a smile on people's faces." **NOW**

### IN THE KITCHEN WITH JERRY BROWN

#### OREO FREAK-OUT

- 1 pkg. Oreo cookies, crushed
- 1/2 gal. vanilla ice cream, softened
- 1 jar caramel ice cream sauce
- 1 jar chocolate ice cream sauce
- 16 oz. whipped topping
- 1 chocolate candy bar

Press crumbs into a 9 x 13-inch pan. Layer ice cream, caramel sauce, chocolate sauce and whipped topping over crumbs. Shave chocolate bar over top. Freeze for 3 - 4 hours before serving.

#### MEATBALLS IN MUSHROOM SAUCE

- 1 lb. ground beef

- 1/2 lb. ground pork
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2/3 cup Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 tsp. oregano
- 1/2 tsp. thyme
- 1 11-oz. can cream of mushroom soup
- 2/3 cup water

Combine first 6 ingredients in bowl; mix well. Shape into small balls. Brown in skillet; drain. Blend soup and water in bowl. Pour over meatballs. Simmer for 25 minutes. Sprinkle with parsley.

#### CHEWY CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

- 1 cup butter or margarine
- 4 1-oz. semisweet chocolate squares

- 1 1/2 cups chopped pecans
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 4 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

Melt together butter and chocolate in a heavy saucepan over medium heat; stir in pecans. Remove from heat. Combine sugar and next 3 ingredients. (Do not beat.) Stir in chocolate mixture. Place baking cups in muffin pans; spoon batter into cups, filling three-fourths full. Bake at 325 F for 35 minutes. (Do not over bake.)

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- 4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves



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## Who's Cooking **NOW**

- 1 1/2 cups margarita drink mix (without alcohol)
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. finely shredded lime peel
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp. lime juice
- 1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 4 medium tomatoes, sliced
- 2 medium avocados, halved, seeded, peeled and sliced
- 1/2 medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 tsp. cracked black pepper

Place chicken in plastic bag set in shallow dish. In bowl combine margarita mix, cumin and lime peel. Pour over chicken; seal bag. Refrigerate 2 - 8 hours. Drain marinade and discard. For charcoal grill, grill chicken on rack of uncovered grill directly over medium coals for 12 minutes or until chicken is no longer pink (170 F), turning once halfway through grilling. Remove chicken from grill and cool slightly. In a medium bowl, combine mayonnaise, lime juice and cayenne. Coarsely chop chicken. Add to mayonnaise mixture. Gently toss. Line four salad plates with tomato slices. Top tomatoes with chicken, avocados and red onion. Sprinkle with black pepper.

### ORANGE-GLAZED PORK ROAST

- 4 - 5 lb. double loin pork roast, boned, rolled, tied
- 1 clove of garlic
- 1 cup Smucker's sweet orange marmalade
- 1 inch piece gingerroot

Place roast fat side up on rack in roasting pan. Insert meat thermometer in thickest part. Bake at 325 F for 2 - 3 hours or to 170 degrees on meat thermometer. Combine garlic, marmalade and gingerroot in saucepan. Cook over low heat until bubbly, stirring constantly. Remove garlic and gingerroot. Brush glaze over roast 2 or 3 times during final 30 minutes of roasting. Remove to serving platter. Garnish with orange slices and watercress.

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## Take Advantage of Higher IRA Contribution Limits

— By Jeff Trojacek

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to boost your retirement savings, you can count on some extra help from your Uncle Sam. That is because you will be able to contribute more to your IRA in 2008. This is a great opportunity for you — so you will want to make the most of it.

Here are the details: The contribution limit for both Traditional and Roth IRAs will increase from \$4,000 per

year in 2007 to \$5,000 per year in 2008. If you are 50 or over, the annual limit will rise from \$5,000 to \$6,000. (Keep in mind, though, that your ability to contribute to a Roth IRA may be limited by your income; see your tax advisor for more details.)

Of course, if you were not putting in the maximum amount to your IRA in 2007, you might think there is even less of a chance that you will fully fund your IRA in 2008. It is certainly true that \$5,000 or \$6,000 is a considerable sum — especially if you try to pay it all at once, but you do not have to do that. While it might be to your advantage to fully fund your IRA early every year — you would be giving your money more time to potentially grow — you can make smaller contributions

the first three months of 2009. That means you could put in \$333.33 per month, if you are under 50, or \$400 per month, if you are 50 or older.

Even those amounts might pose a challenge to your cash flow, but you need to consider just how important it is to save for retirement. Many financial experts say that you will need between 80 percent and 100 percent of your preretirement income just to maintain your lifestyle. If you plan on traveling extensively, purchasing a vacation home or incurring other significant expenses during your retirement years, you may need even more money. That means you will have to rely on all your available resources — your Social Security, your 401(k) or pension and your other savings and investments, of

## An IRA is one of the best retirement savings vehicles around.

throughout the year. In fact, you actually have until the tax filing deadline of each year to fund your IRA for that year. So, if you chose, you could spread your 2008 IRA payments over 15 months — 12 months in 2008, and

which an IRA can be a significant part.

An IRA is one of the best retirement savings vehicles around. A traditional IRA has the potential to grow on a tax-deferred basis, which means your earnings can potentially grow faster

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than they would on an investment on which you paid taxes every year. A Roth IRA's earnings have the potential to grow totally tax-free, provided you do not take withdrawals until you are 59 1/2 and you have had your account for at least five years. Furthermore, you can fund either type of IRA with virtually any security you choose — stocks, bonds, Certificates of Deposit (CD), Treasury bills, etc. Depending on your income level, you might even be able to deduct some, or all, of your Traditional IRA contributions from your taxes. (Roth IRA contributions are never tax deductible.)

As you can see, you will be helping yourself greatly if you contribute the maximum amount to your IRA in 2008, and all the years beyond. ~~XXXX~~

*Jeff Trojacek is an Edward Jones representative based in Waxahachie.*

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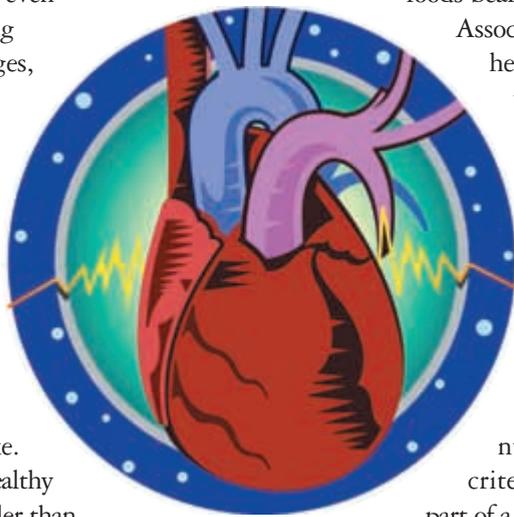
# Heart-Healthy Shopping

## Made Simpler

(NAPS) - If you're like the average shopper, you spend nearly three-quarters of an hour on each trip to the grocery. Many shoppers spend even more time scrutinizing food labels and packages, studying ingredient lists and labels for low fat, low cholesterol items. In fact, eight out of ten Americans say they are seeking out these types of foods in order to reduce their risk of heart attack and stroke.

Fortunately, heart-healthy shopping can be simpler than many people realize. According to dietitians, it helps to look for foods

carrying the American Heart Association Food Certification Program's heart-check mark. The foods bearing the Association's red heart with the white check mark have been evaluated to ensure they meet the American Heart Association's nutritional criteria and can be part of a heart-healthy diet for healthy people over the age of two. In order to carry the



heart-check mark, a single serving of a food product must:

- be low fat (less than or equal to 3 grams);
- have low saturated fat (less than or equal to 1 gram);
- have low cholesterol (less than or equal to 20 milligrams);
- have a sodium value of less than or equal to 480 milligrams for individual foods; and
- contain at least 10 percent of the Daily Value of one or more of these nutrients: protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, iron or dietary fiber.

Meats must meet the USDA's standards for extra lean.

The heart-check mark is a convenient

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grocery shopping tool because you can see the information on food products when you're making your purchasing decision. Amid the dizzying array of food healthy claims, you can rely on the American Heart Association's heart-check mark. Shoppers can be confident because the information comes from what many consider the public's most reliable source of nutrition information, the American Heart Association.

For more information on diet and nutrition, visit [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org) or call toll free (800) AHA-USA1 and ask for a free copy of the *Shop Smart With Heart* brochure.

For a complete list of certified products, visit [www.heartcheckmark.org](http://www.heartcheckmark.org).

Source:

American Heart Association Food Certification Program.

**NEW THERAPY FOR SWALLOWING DISORDERS NOW OFFERED AT Renfro Healthcare Center**

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

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

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



**"VitalStim Worked For Me!"**

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Admissions Director  
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# February 2008 Community Calendar

**First Wednesday**

Red Moon Café, located at 3701 N. I-45 in Ennis, will host an evening of karaoke from 8:30 p.m. - midnight.

**Every Friday and Saturday**

Live bands at the Red Moon Café. Be sure to check their Web site at [www.theredmooncafe.com](http://www.theredmooncafe.com) for all upcoming events.

**Second and Fourth Tuesday**

Waxahachie Business Interchange Networking, 7:30 - 8:30 a.m. Network with other professionals and promote your business. Bring \$1 entry fee and plenty of business cards. Coffee and pastries will be furnished. Call (972) 937-2390 for location.

**February 7**

Ribbon cutting for Sears, 10:30 a.m. at 600 N. Highway 77, Suite E. For more information, call (972) 937-2390.

**February 9**

Join the Waxahachie Jazz Orchestra and special guest artists from 6:30 - 10:30 p.m. for an evening of fine food and dancing to the sounds of big band and jazz music. A silent auction presenting packages designed especially for this event will also be held. Call the Chamber of Commerce at (972) 923-4627 for more information.

Daddy/Daughter Dance at the Cedar Hill Rec. Center, 310 E. Parkerville Road, Cedar Hill. \$20 per couple and \$10

for each additional child. Ages 4 - 8, 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Ages 9 - 12, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Registration deadline: Feb. 2. Call (972) 293-5288.

**February 11**

The Chamber of Commerce executive board will meet at noon at their offices located at 102 YMCA Drive.

**February 12**

Ribbon cutting for Simplicity Salon & Spa, 10:30 a.m. at 401 Highway 77 N.

**February 18**

Waxahachie ISD Lighthouse for Learning — Adult Community Education classes begin for the spring semester. Classes are offered on Monday and Thursday evenings at Waxahachie High School. Please contact the community education office at (972) 923-4631 or e-mail Melissa Cobb at [mcobb@wisd.org](mailto:mcobb@wisd.org) for further information.

**March 1**

LifeStyles Home & Family Expo, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. at the Waxahachie Civic Center located at 2000 Civic Center Lane. This event, hosted by the Chamber of Commerce and CVB, will feature "A Taste of Waxahachie".

**March 29**

Meals on Wheels 3rd annual BBQ Benefit. Location TBA. The fundraising event will include dinner, entertainment and an auction with all proceeds going to benefit Meals on

Wheels. For more information, please call (972) 351-9943.

Master Gardeners of Ellis County will host the annual Ellis County Lawn and Garden Expo at the Waxahachie Civic Center located at 1950 N. I-35 E from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. This comprehensive educational extravaganza will include over 100 lawn and garden-related exhibitor booths, keynote speakers, gardening workshops for children from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. and a variety of adult workshops. Gaye Hammond will introduce children to the joys of growing roses at 1:00 p.m. Neil Sperry will speak on growing green at 2:00 p.m., and Dotty Woodson will share the art of landscape planting that will flower all summer at 3:30 p.m. The Master Gardener plant sale will feature butterfly-attracting plants, natives, heirloom tomatoes and hard to find plants. For sponsorship and exhibitor information, please send an e-mail to [expo.ecmga@yahoo.com](mailto:expo.ecmga@yahoo.com) or call James at (972) 814-0699.

**April 5**

Keep Waxahachie Beautiful Trash-off, 10:00 a.m. - noon between Broadhead Road and 813 (Brown) on 287 Bypass. This event is part of the partnership between Keep Texas Beautiful and the Texas Department of Transportation. To take an active role in keeping your community clean, contact Linda at (972) 937-2390 or e-mail her at [Ineedham@waxahachiechamber.com](mailto:Ineedham@waxahachiechamber.com).

To have your events posted on the community calendar, e-mail us at: [smcintosh-nowmag@sbcglobal.net](mailto:smcintosh-nowmag@sbcglobal.net).

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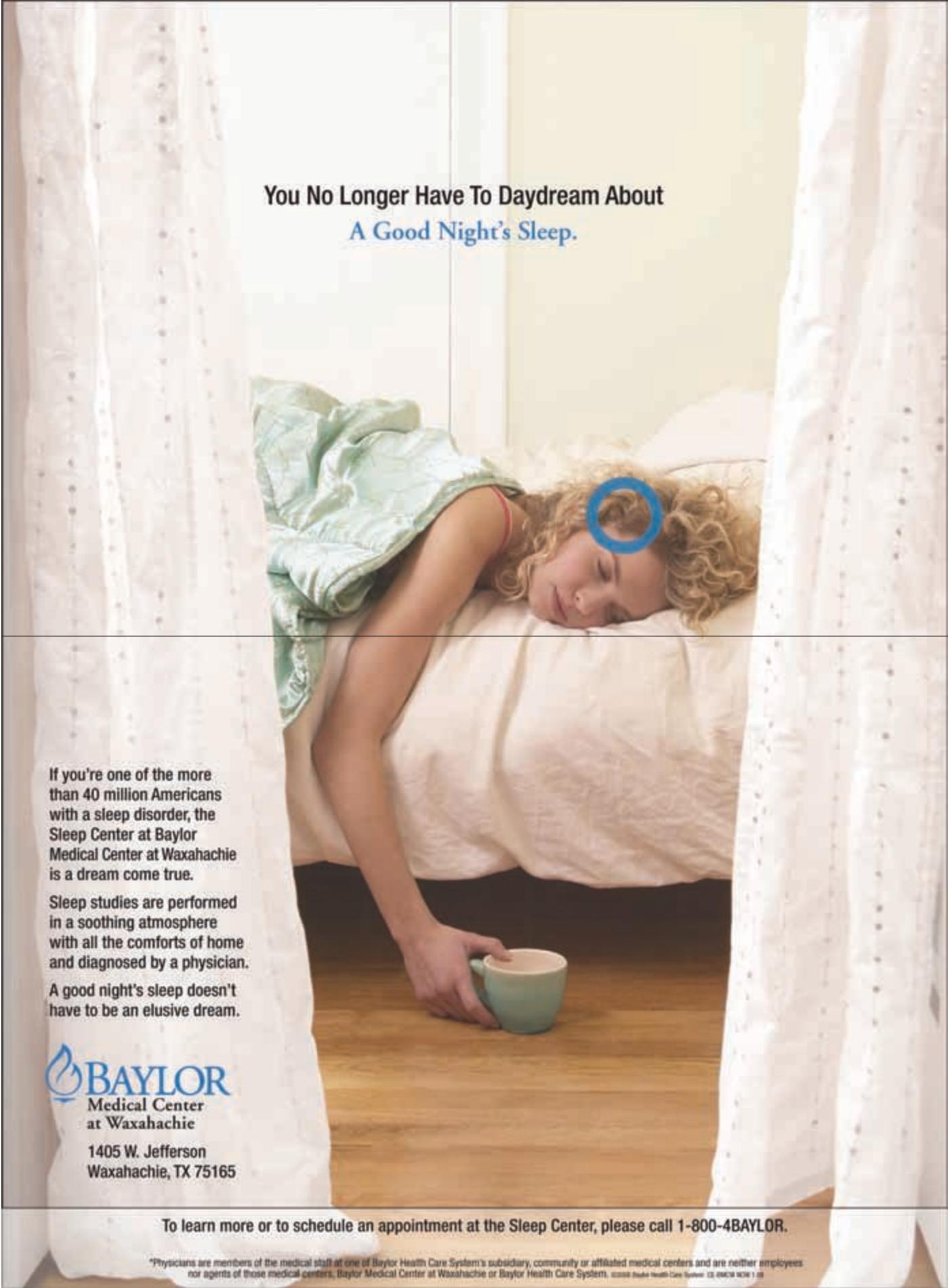
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