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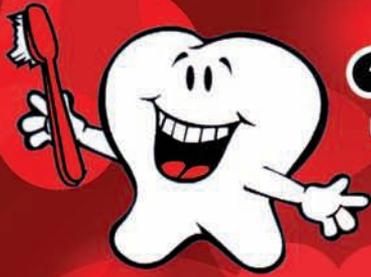
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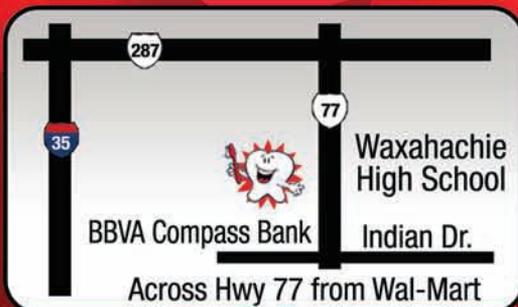
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Writers, Stephanie Marchbanks
Jonathan Pope . Virginia Riddle
Craig Smith . Melissa Swedoski
Carolyn Wills
Editors/Proofreaders, Pat Anthony

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla
Artists, Kristin Bato . Morgan Christensen
Martha Macias . Brande Morgan
Shannon Pfaff . Anthony Sarmienta

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Director, Jill Rose
Photography Coordinator, Amy Ramirez

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ON THE COVER



The dream Cynthia Williams had as a child is now coming true.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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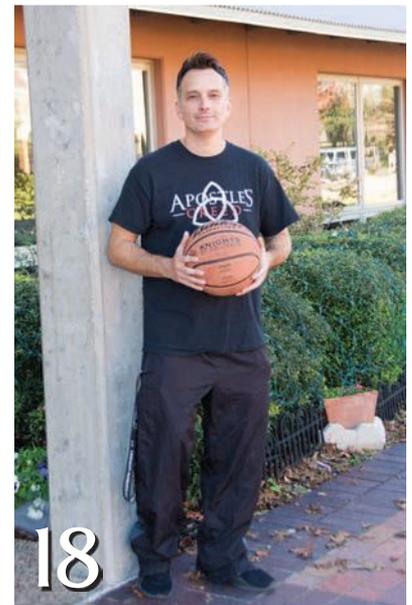
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Editor's Note

Happy Valentine's Day!

In addition to celebrating our loved ones, February is also the month we celebrate Black History and all it means to us as one nation under God. We're familiar with the stories of Harriet Tubman, George Washington Carver, Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr., but what about the African-American heroes in our own personal lives? My first memory goes back to fifth grade when my parents moved from

Dallas to Palmer. What a change that was! My first friends were Evelyn Brown and Faye Gary. The light color of my skin didn't matter as they made me feel welcome in my new surroundings.

As an adult, I think about people like Cora Whitlock. With a great deal of patience and love, she took a headstrong, "speak before she thought" mother and transformed her into a woman with purpose, when it came to advocating for her children. Our friendship is one that begins right where it left off each and every time we meet.

Thanks to all who helped mold and make me who I am today!

Sandra

Sandra Strong
WaxahachieNOW Editor
sandra.strong@nowmagazines.com
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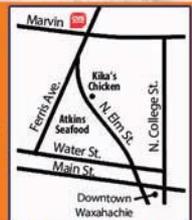
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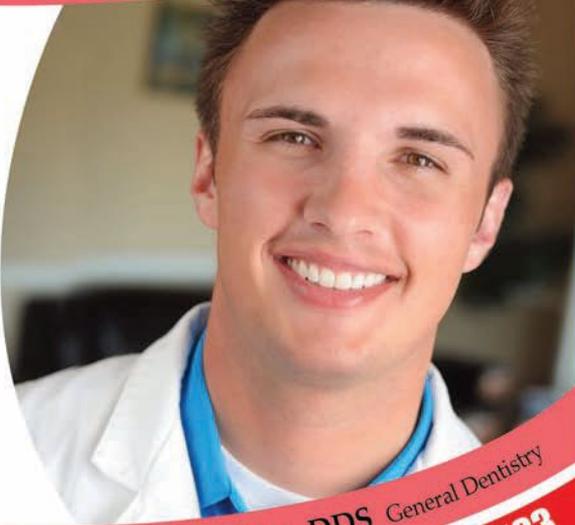
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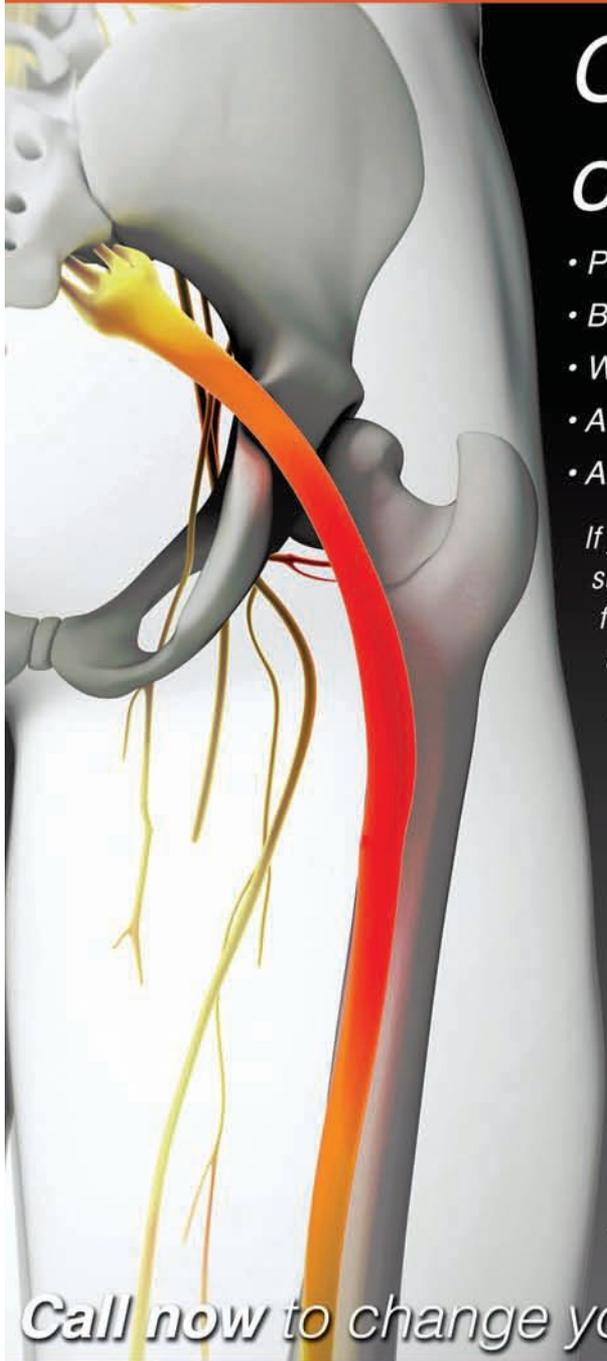


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LADDER TO LEADERSHIP

— By Sandra Strong



Much like the late Martin Luther King Jr., Cynthia Williams had a dream as a young girl. As an adult, she wanted to one day own a day care facility. Her desire was to offer a safe place where children could come to learn by example. Today, as the assistant principal at Dunaway Elementary, she is living her dream in a much bigger way than she imagined. “Dunaway mirrors a day care center, but

on a much larger scale,” Cynthia admitted. “My goal is to build relationships where the positives outweigh the negatives.”

The examples she has been blessed to follow come from a long lineage of successful individuals in her immediate family, as well as fellow educators she’s worked with in the past 20 years. Both groups have equally influenced the way she conducts business. David Terry Sr. and Birdola Terry are the grandparents who raised Cynthia. Birdola was a strong woman who passed her



passion and grit for life on to her granddaughter. David taught Cynthia the importance of being friendly to everyone, no matter what. “My grandparents, along with my mother, Gladys Marie Terry, raised me and my two brothers, Adrian Terry and Vincent Terry,” she added.

Jackie Mims and Caron Elaine Spears, aunts who have cheered the Indians on as Cherokee Charmers, took footsteps that encouraged Cynthia to do the same. Wanda Terry and Johnnie Faye Wilson are two more aunts who have played a big part in Cynthia’s life. Jackie’s daughter, Melissa Mims, also holds a rung in the ladder to leadership, as did Ruth Sutton, Evelyn Coleman

“My goal is to build relationships where the positives outweigh the negatives.”

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and Edith Finley, names that are well known in the community because of their giving-back spirit. Each of these individuals have inspired Cynthia as she pursued her own career in education. “I guess you could say my desire to be in the field of education is generational,” Cynthia shared. “Family and friends are very important to me. Each one has influenced me in their own specific way.”

Cynthia is definitely not new to the area. In fact, she was born and raised here, and she too was a Cherokee Charmer. She loved playing basketball, and the success she garnered running hurdles for WHS earned her a scholarship to the University of North Texas where she acquired her bachelor's degree in child development. After graduating, her journey to finding her own rung on the ladder began. “I taught in Conroe before returning home to teach special ed geometry at the high school level,” she said, also mentioning that she was at WHS for 14 years before moving into her newfound role as assistant principal.

While at the high school, Cynthia did so much more than teach geometry. Early on, her relationship with Beverly Swett took on a much deeper meaning than just being fellow educators, but you have to go back 20 years to understand the magnitude of their relationship. Beverly



started the Black History Program at the high school in 1990 as a way to celebrate Black History Month. "When I came on board," Cynthia remembered, "I worked alongside Beverly to help enhance the program to what it is today."

And to understand the program still in place, you have to go back in time to 1915, half a century following the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in the United States. In September of that year, a Harvard-educated historian by the name of Carter G. Woodson and Jesse E. Moorland, a well-known minister, founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. This organization was dedicated to researching and promoting the achievements made by black Americans and other individuals of African descent. The group, now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, held a national Negro History week in 1926. They chose the second week of February for the event in order to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass.

Thanks in part to the Civil Rights Movement and a growing awareness of black identity, Negro History Week evolved into Black History Month, which is celebrated throughout the month of February. Black History Month, or National African American History

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Month, became official when President Gerald R. Ford recognized it in 1976 as the perfect time to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of life.

These two milestone events have inspired schools and communities throughout the nation to hold celebrations, organize history clubs and host performances and lectures, quite similar to the Black History Program offered at WHS. "The event at the high school is held once a year at the end of February," Cynthia said. "The program offers music, dances and poetry readings that celebrate our heritage." The Black History Program brings all generations together. The younger children are performing, and the older adults are sharing the history — a history that offers the younger generation their own ladder to leadership.

There are no real hard-and-fast rules associated with the Black History Program. Participants can be males and/or females who represent ages from preschool to retirement. In its 20-year tenure, the program has seen many success stories. One such story that comes to mind for Cynthia involves twin sisters who performed several years prior to graduating. "They are in college living their dreams now," she shared, "but they continue to come back to inspire and teach others about their history and heritage."

While teaching at the high school, Cynthia knew it was time to take hold of another rung on her ladder of education, so she returned to school,

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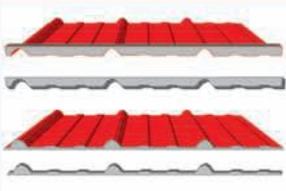
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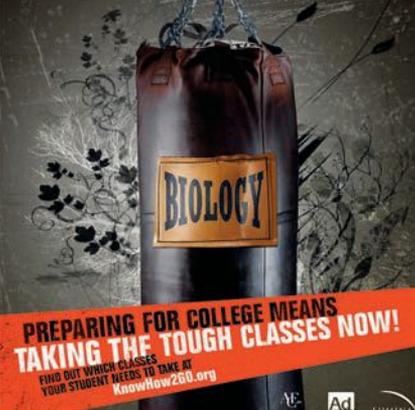
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earning her master’s degree in educational administration from Texas A&M University-Commerce. This degree allowed her to move into her present position as it came available. Cynthia admits there are major differences in working with younger children, but the end result for her is still the same. “Elementary-age students need more individual attention than those at the high school level,” she said, mentioning that older kids are just little kids in bigger bodies. “I choose to show them that extra-special attention, and, sometimes, it’s as simple as a high-five when they enter the building in the morning.” She helps guide and care for 575 students, 35 teachers and five support staff members when she wears her assistant principal’s hat.

As a single mom of two, Cynthia uses the same positive philosophy at home as she does while on campus. Michael High, her oldest son, is a sophomore at the University of North Texas, while her youngest, Caleb High, is a sophomore at WHS. “I’ve raised them here because I felt it was important to have them grow up where I grew up,” she stated.

One day, Cynthia’s goal is to be a principal in the district, but until that time, she is content right where she is. As she continues to “learn the limits” in her new role, you can rest assured she will look for the positive in all situations, as she moves one rung closer to the top of her ladder. “This is my life,” she said with a smile on her face. “I’m living my dream!” **NOW**

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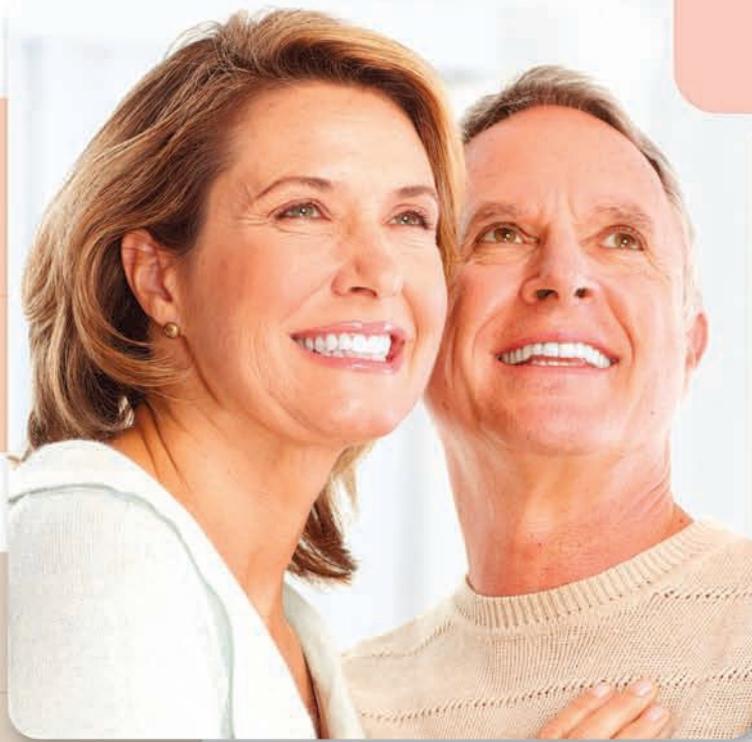
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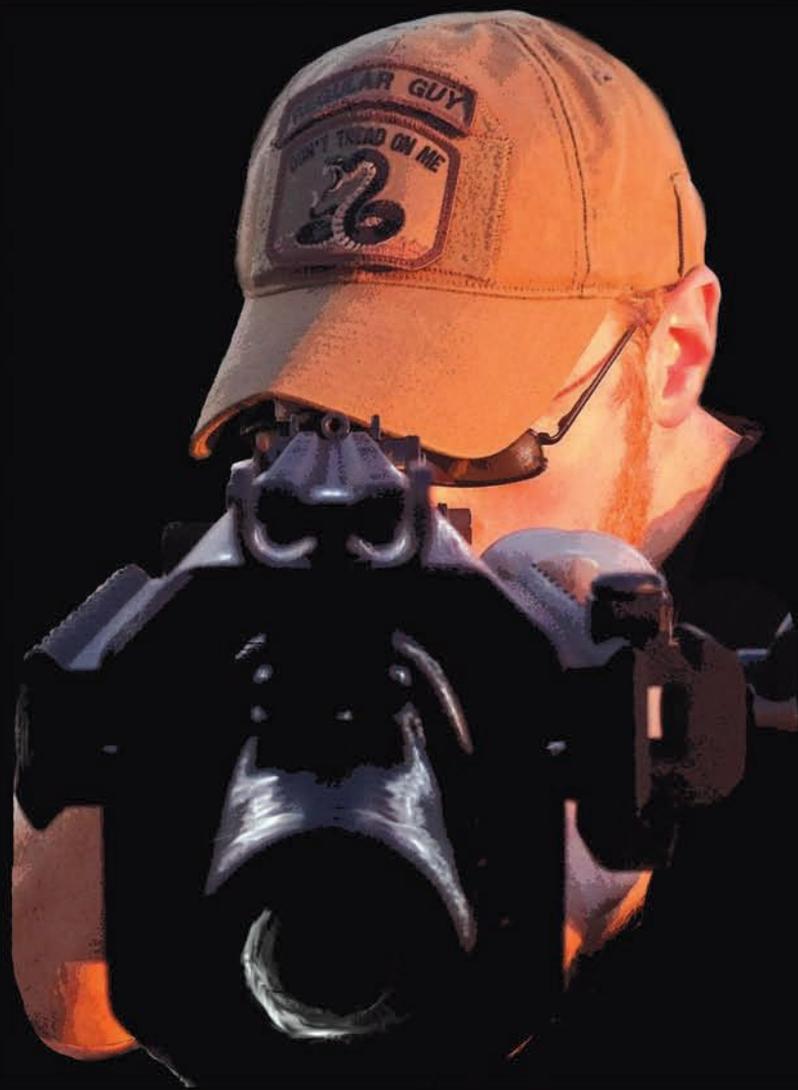
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In fact, bouncing, smiling children wait at the door for entrance to Isaac's class, but it's quickly apparent they respect their lively teacher. When Isaac tells them to, "Listen up," students answer him with, "Yes, sir." Isaac acknowledges them in return by thanking them with a nod.

Curriculum developed by the Catholic Diocese of Dallas guides Isaac's classes, covering all aspects of what students should be achieving through the year: physical skills, health, nutrition and safety. Every session opens with prayer, giving thanks to God as a first priority. "Being a private school, we can pray. And whether Catholic or not, parents enroll their students understanding that there will be spirituality throughout the day," Isaac pointed out.

Following prayer and warm up exercises, each day has its own format. Mondays introduce a new lesson or follow up on a previous one, but explore a concept or practice that will develop into a full activity on Friday. An example

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would be just the dribbling aspect of basketball. Wednesdays are workout days, where normal warm up time is expanded with sets and stations designed to dive in deeper to muscle building. For about 25 minutes, students do situps, pushups, wall squats, tiptoe exercises for their calves or, maybe, run laps, broken up by periods of rest. "Fun Fridays" are the culmination of what was introduced on Monday — for example, a full game of basketball.

Isaac finds it important to build self-esteem, which proves difficult in a P.E. setting, due to the competitive nature of most sports. "P.E. is not really about competition," Isaac observed. "It's about individual attention, and in a group setting, that's a challenge. I involve all students. I'm not a coach. I operate from a teaching mentality."

There is always a discussion in Isaac's classes to accompany the lesson, whether the topic is nutrition or exercise or even an academic situation that arises. Maybe a student is not turning in work, and Isaac becomes aware of that. A lifelong parishioner at St. Joseph, Isaac knows many of the parents, and he doesn't hesitate to ask a student what those parents would think. "It's more than just P.E. and running around. It's about growth. I have the tough conversations, if necessary," Isaac admitted. "I treat them as my own children."

A father of seven children, Isaac is experienced in parenting. He and his wife, Danielle, live in Forreston, about 10 miles south of Waxahachie. They are dad and mom to 20-year-old Marisa, who works in Waxahachie and is also pursuing a teaching degree; son, Jordan

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(17), a senior at Waxahachie Global High School, who is exploring options for college and military; son, Christian (16), a sophomore at Waxahachie High School; son, Adrian (15), a freshman at Global; son, Dominic (11), a fifth grade student at SJCS, who is joined there by Bianca (7) and Claudia (5).

Because of his role as a father, Isaac is disturbed when he sees injustice involving children. It drives him to want to do something to make things better. "I have seven children," Isaac asserted. "I'm sensitive to children's needs. I genuinely care."

Also of help to Isaac is the fact that his life started and flowed in this area. Having been born and raised locally, he was baptized at St. Joseph and attended Marvin Elementary through the fifth grade. He graduated from St. John Catholic School in Ennis, and he remembers always wanting to teach. After high school, he attended Navarro College, but the demands of a young family eventually caused him to put education on hold to earn a living. Ultimately, he was able to carve out a successful career in banking and real estate. But the call of teaching was never far off. "I never abandoned my dream," he admitted. "My dream was always to teach."



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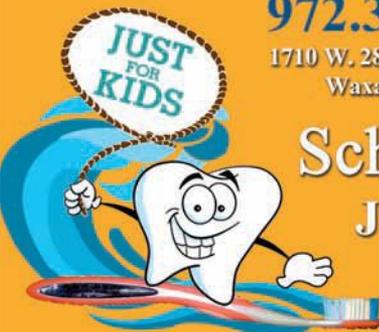


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In 2013, Isaac made the decision to return to his lifelong goal. He jump-started his training process, beginning part-time and continuing online, but as he got closer to his objective, he decided to devote himself full time in order to serve an internship at Marvin Elementary two days a week. Again, his roots bridge him, and at times, he sits on the Marvin playground looking out over the field, and memories flood back. It's a full-circle feeling.

Another connecting thread for Isaac is Danielle's attendance at Navarro College. For 20 years, she worked as a stay-at-home mom, but now, it's her turn to imagine. She is studying nursing and is scheduled to finish in May. "She's fulfilling a dream, too," Isaac mused.

It's not all work and no play for the Martinez family, however. Isaac plays lead guitar in the blues-rock band, Blue Ellis, which is comprised of St. Joseph dads. Their sound is influenced by The Rolling Stones. For the past 10 years, Isaac and Danielle have directed the Daddy-Daughter Dance, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus, a Catholic fraternal benefit society.

And as a teacher, Isaac is guided by memories of his own mentors. "I think about the teachers in my life, and I remember them all," he shared. "Some had a great impact. I want somebody, somewhere, years from now, to remember me, and think, *Hey, that's Mr. Martinez; He taught me. He coached me.* I want them to be proud and excited, realizing that I genuinely tried to help them."

As for St. Joseph school, Isaac has glowing words. "We have an outstanding educational program here, and that comes from the top down. Our principal, Debbie Timmerman, has been in education in Waxahachie for over 30 years. She has a good handle on academic achievement," Isaac emphasized. "I'm in a good place." **NOW**

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Who knew that destiny could be guided by a Bassett Hound named Fatso? It happened the day Sissy Williams spotted the charming 1926 cottage near a Waxabachie walking trail. "I was fortunate to see the house as soon as it was listed," she smiled. She eagerly wrote the check, thrilled to be freed from putting Fatso in the pick-up and driving to their walks. Yes, she loved the house, but according to Sissy, she bought it for Fatso.



Two years ago, Sissy had been living the idyllic country life in Freestone County, her picturesque cedar house on 10 glorious acres surrounded by 2,500 acres that would never be developed. It was the place for her daughter, Savannah Williams, to grow up and, for 22 years, it provided Sissy with the opportunity to reconnect with horses and the gifts of nature. The location was also great, allowing her to travel as a private investigator and polygraph examiner, until everything changed.

One rainy day on Interstate 45, Sissy's Miata hydroplaned and slammed into the cab of an 18-wheeler. Miraculously, she was not hurt, yet, in that moment, life shifted. "By then, Savannah was living in Waxahachie," she shared. "I had long since sold the horses, so I said to myself, 'I don't need to be isolated anymore.'" She knew it was time for a new dream.

Sissy sold her beloved property and, with just 30 days to spare, sold most of her furniture, all of the equipment and the bulk of her belongings. While considering options, including her friends' slower-paced lifestyle outside of the United States, Sissy stayed with her daughter. "I was traveling a lot, but when off the road, Fatso and I would do a lot of walking," she smiled. The closer she grew to family, Fatso and Waxahachie, the more she considered a place larger than Savannah's rented carriage house. She longed for a house to call home near a dog park.

"I'm lucky to have lived in wonderful places," she shared. As a child, she lived in Houston and spent summers and holidays at her grandparents' 4,000-square-foot home in the Texas town of Wortham. It was the best of both worlds — city and country. "That's something I love about Waxahachie," she said. "It's a good size with lots to do. People are interesting and the neighborhoods are beautiful."

On either side of Sissy's home is a charming house equal in size. The three houses share a short street in a neighborhood of giant to mid-sized older homes. Hers was built in 1926. "Before I bought it, someone had picked the perfect color scheme," she smiled.





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Creams and tans highlight an area of rich rust-colored scalloped shingles. Combined with a peaked roof and chimney and wretched door, her house is especially warm and welcoming. “One of my first projects was to rip out and



replant all of the flowerbeds,” she said. She also had the side patio resurfaced with flagstone and added a custom wrought iron gate, making the curb appeal even more delightful.

Her home opens to a living room with time-honored wood floors, deep baseboards and tall ceilings. “I had everything painted tan with bright white trim,” she said. “The floors and trim are original to the house and, eventually, I want to restore the transoms that

once topped the front and living room doors.” A lovely white fireplace mantel notched with a subtle flower design tops what was once a shallow coal fireplace. “It appears, at one time, the fireplace was open on both sides so that it warmed the living and adjacent room,” she added.

The special furniture and mementoes Sissy kept after leaving Freestone County are now home again and, truly, they are treasures. Three pieces

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To the right of the office/den is a kitchen with white cabinets and black counters and a large separate area for the washer and dryer. “The kitchen was painted green and red when I bought it,” she smiled. “I’ve toned it down. The size is great, and I look forward to updating it. But I will keep the integrity of this precious house.”

“Then there’s the master bath,” Sissy said with a grin. “It needs a complete ‘up do.’ Painted a dark gray with green floor tiles, it [has an] old claw-foot tub and features an unfortunate extra door that opens to the kitchen.”

The master bedroom and bath are secluded toward the back left of the house. A beautiful framed print of Arabian horses (Sissy’s favorite breed) hangs prominently on the wall next to the bed. On the opposite side of the room, a window looks out to the new flagstone patio. The view includes an old bicycle leaning against a corner, serving now as a fun, decorative planter.

One of the quotes that can be found throughout this wonderful house says, “One shoe can change your life ... ask Cinderella.” It would seem, at least for Sissy, that one dog named Fatso can do the same. **NOW**

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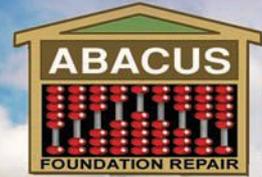
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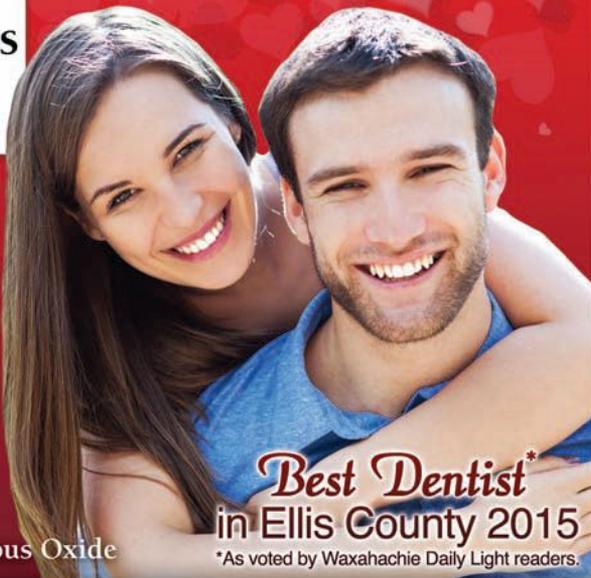
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Promoting Preservation

— By Melissa Swedoski

The historic fabric of Waxahachie is woven from numerous threads: industry, individuals, farms, railroads and more. From the beginning, Waxahachie was a city on the rise, as each generation built on the foundation laid before it. Here in the 21st century, the heart of the turn-of-the-century commercial and residential hub remains, as historic downtown undergoes renovation and beautification projects in all corners. Championing the goals of progress, while preserving historic gems of the past, local nonprofit Historic Waxahachie Inc. focuses on promoting historic preservation.



“Historic Waxahachie Inc. has accomplished so much over the years with strong, supportive members,” Nancy said, “but there is more to do. This place matters!”

Sitting in her own historic home, Historic Waxahachie Board President Nancy Post recognizes that the organization’s work is not always well known. “We play an important role in keeping Waxahachie historic and authentic,” Nancy said. “Historic Waxahachie helped lay the groundwork of things we are seeing in our city now.”

“I’m so grateful that Waxahachie has worked hard to preserve its history,” Publicity and PR Chair Kathleen Bowen added. “It’s taken a lot of people with great pride in the community.”

Nancy explained how a small group of local citizens concerned about preserving the rich historic fabric of the community founded the group. “They worked hard to establish the historic overlay and set the rules and regulations. It’s all part of the city’s master plan, including historic preservation. It’s not just the individual properties, but whole areas are protected.”

Part of that pride consists of bringing the past to life. Historic Waxahachie not only has developed historic walking and driving tours of the city, but they also provide guided tours of the Ellis County Courthouse. The brochure for the walking tour covers numerous landmark buildings in the downtown corridor, and visitors are provided with detailed architectural highlights, along with a history of the businesses and homes.

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When the Texas Downtown Association met in downtown Waxahachie, Anita Brown enlisted the help of Historic Waxahachie. This one event differed from the normal tour in its size and scope.

“The Texas Downtown Association was in Waxahachie for a conference,” Kathleen explained, “so we sponsored an event to give them tours with the historic characters.” Historic Waxahachie partnered with many local citizens and Waxahachie Community Theatre for “A Trip Through Time” at the courthouse, where attendees met Sheriff Wilson from 1910, Cowboy Tex from the late 1800s, Waxahachie founding father, Emory Rogers, and other colorful characters. “We got great feedback because people love to visit Waxahachie as a tourist destination,” Kathleen said.

“The story of the history of this community is so rich,” Nancy added.

One aspect of the town’s legacy from the early 1900s prompted Historic Waxahachie to commission the “Legends” baseball mural on the north side of the Parks and Recreation building. “We have an extraordinary baseball

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history in this town, so David Hudgins suggested we use it," Nancy explained, paying homage to the years when the Detroit Tigers, Cincinnati Reds and Chicago White Sox held spring training camps here. The board hired Eyecon Studios to produce the mural, and at the 2015 debut, community members joined the artists, designer and painters. "People could identify players and share their stories," Nancy said. "Telling our stories and preserving our history really helps to build community," Nancy said. "It is what makes Waxahachie so special."

The group has undertaken other projects in downtown, including twice moving the Wyatt Office, the oldest commercial building in existence in Waxahachie, in order to save it from demolition. Next to it on College Street is the Calaboose, an old local lockup for minor crimes, built for \$850 in 1880. In fact, Kathleen pointed out, "Historic Waxahachie paid to have the eagles placed back on the courthouse," one of the more stunning visuals on the building. Historic Waxahachie is also spearheading the bright red caboose restoration at the train depot in downtown, a favorite photo spot for local residents. The group is currently getting the site ready to open for tours inside the car. "We have done a lot of projects," Kathleen said with a smile. "We are a small group of volunteers who have done a lot."

In 1975, a survey of downtown and nearby residential areas was conducted, with many properties added to the National Register of Historic Places. With another in 1985, Historic Waxahachie recently hired Hardy, Heck and Moore, Historic Preservation Planning and Management, to conduct

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another. "It's so important to document our historic resources," Nancy said. The Texas Historical Commission provided a grant for the survey, and the city is matching it. The survey will identify which buildings are still standing and which ones have been destroyed, while also checking deterioration, renovations or upgrades. "Preservation is good business," Nancy added. "There are attractive state and federal tax credits for renovation for businesses in specific designated historic districts."

One of Historic Waxahachie's primary roles is recognizing quality historic preservation, by granting historic markers to buildings and giving awards for the year's best preservation projects. "Many people think," said Annette Cooper, former chair of the Historic Marker committee, "that only old Victorian homes qualify for markers. In fact, a home needs to be only 50 years old, with its exterior historic features preserved, to qualify for a marker. HWI encourages people with bungalows, minimal traditionalist and ranch houses to apply. All types of historic homes are important."

"By recognizing great preservation work and the positive changes to our community, we encourage more preservation," Kathleen added.

The group also works to protect areas with a historic identity, as they did when alterations were proposed for Marvin Avenue. "The city's traffic calming plans would have changed the entire streetscape," Nancy said. With so many historic homes located on the busy thoroughfare, several homeowners voiced concerns to the city council, along

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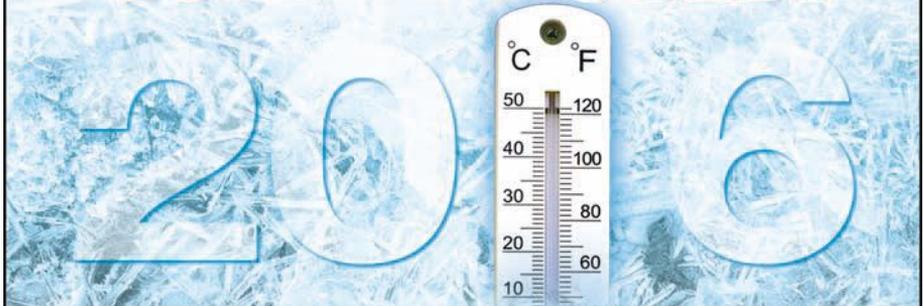
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with Historic Waxahachie members. In the end, the city decided to cancel the proposed changes. "Advocacy is definitely a big part of what we do," Kathleen said.

Physical preservation is accentuated with oral histories the group has collected, from an interview with Sheriff Wayne McCollum about the 1929 jail, to 104-year-old Mattie Borders reminiscing on growing up in Waxahachie, all before she founded CARE. "We want to get more citizens to do oral histories and add to the collection," Kathleen said, "just like we want to get more homes with historic marker designations."

The group's website has membership information and all the oral histories, as well as instructions on applying for a Historic Waxahachie Inc. marker. "If you are new to the group, you will be so impressed by how much a small group can do," Kathleen said.

"Historic Waxahachie Inc. has accomplished so much over the years with strong, supportive members," Nancy said, "but there is more to do. This place matters!" **NOW**

Editor's Note: For more information or to become a member, visit www.historicwaxahachie.com.

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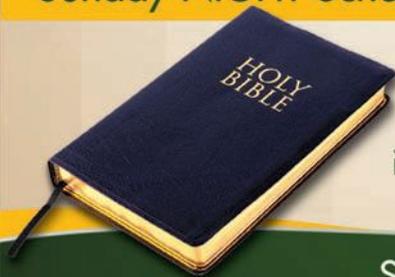
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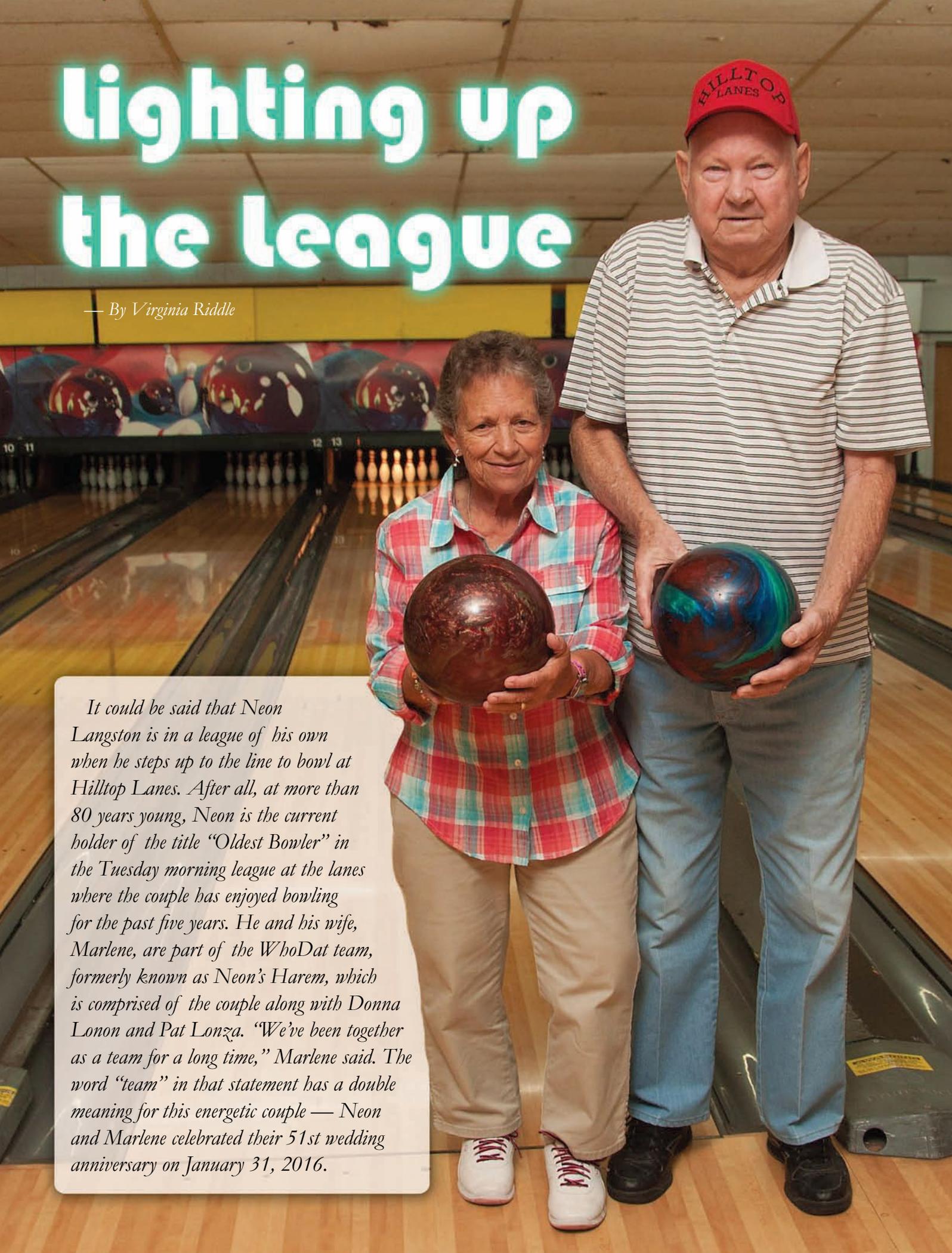
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Lighting up the league

— By Virginia Riddle



It could be said that Neon Langston is in a league of his own when he steps up to the line to bowl at Hilltop Lanes. After all, at more than 80 years young, Neon is the current holder of the title “Oldest Bowler” in the Tuesday morning league at the lanes where the couple has enjoyed bowling for the past five years. He and his wife, Marlene, are part of the WhoDat team, formerly known as Neon’s Harem, which is comprised of the couple along with Donna Lonon and Pat Lonza. “We’ve been together as a team for a long time,” Marlene said. The word “team” in that statement has a double meaning for this energetic couple — Neon and Marlene celebrated their 51st wedding anniversary on January 31, 2016.

Neon grew up working on his family's farm while going to school in Mississippi, but he moved to California to seek his fortune and forge a life. He found work at a General Motors plant and met Marlene at a mutual friend's party. Born in Boston, Massachusetts, Marlene was basically a California girl having come there in a family caravan when she was only 6 months old. After their marriage, Marlene babysat children in the couple's home, and Neon rose to lead man on the line before retiring with 33 years of experience with GM. The couple has a son, Greg, and "a great daughter-in-law," Dawn, who live in Waxahachie. Neon and Marlene have enjoyed living in Waxahachie for the past 17 years enabling them to be a part of their grandchildren, Coral and Cody's, lives. Coral is a freshman at Baylor University, and Cody is a 10th-grader at Waxahachie High School. "We are very proud of our grandchildren," Marlene said.

Neon started bowling on a league team after work while they lived in California. He also took up the game of golf, which he still enjoys. Interestingly, Neon is a left-handed golfer but a right-handed bowler. "He does everything right-handed, except golf," Marlene revealed.

Left- or right-handed, "I like to win at everything," Neon remarked. "But when I am bowling, even if I am not winning, I have three women with me! I love making strikes, but win or lose, we bowl because we enjoy it. The sport gets us out of the house. We love the people we get to meet. I just love everything about bowling," he added.

Marlene agreed. "It is exercise for us," she said.

There is usually a full house at the bowling alley on Tuesday mornings, but there are always people around if the couple just wants to stop to chat while sharing a meal. "It is great to be around a lot of nice people. Waxahachie is such a friendly city. We like living here," Marlene remarked.

"I talk to everyone all over town," Neon added.

"And everyone knows and really enjoys visiting with him," Marlene was quick to add.

Bowling a perfect 300 game isn't a priority with this couple. It is clearly the



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fun, fellowship and exercise that matters to them. Neon's top game, to date, has been 196 and Marlene's is a 164. "I am a lover, not a bowler," Neon quipped. When he does get frustrated, Neon has been known to "take a little kick" aimed at the equipment, which prompts the owner to offer a friendly chastisement. However, Neon is proud of his ability at turning splits into strikes (knocking down all the pins when there is a gap between them). The couple enjoys watching college bowlers on television, and Neon also enjoys watching professional baseball games and golf tournaments on TV.

"For right now, Neon especially likes following Jordan Spieth, the up-and-coming young golf pro who is from



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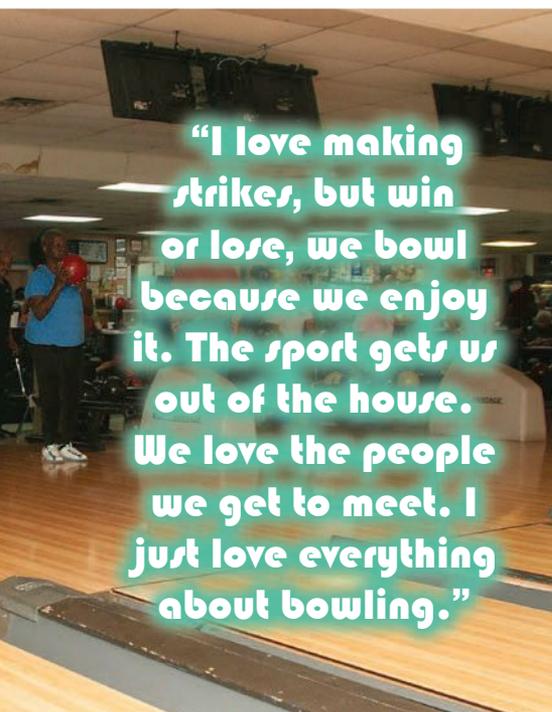
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Dallas and is the recent winner of the Masters,” Marlene said. While Neon still enjoys playing an occasional round of golf locally, he keeps up a regular schedule of practice at home. “We have six acres, so he gets out there and hits balls just to see what else he can hit,” Marlene said laughingly.

The couple has other interests, as well. “We enjoy activities, such as playing cards and bingo at the Waxahachie Senior Activity Center, but most especially, we enjoy the center-sponsored trips to the Choctaw Casino in Oklahoma,” Marlene said.

Neon says he has no interest in animals, farm or otherwise, since he spent so much of his growing up years caring



“I love making strikes, but win or lose, we bowl because we enjoy it. The sport gets us out of the house. We love the people we get to meet. I just love everything about bowling.”

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for them, but Marlene loves animals. She readily admits, “The animals all love Neon anyway.”

“But *she* has the dogs, cats and donkeys,” Neon emphasized.

Three seems to be the magic number in each species, and that is not the only trend noted as the pets’ names are enumerated. “The dogs are Sugar, Spice and Cocoa. The cats are Bella, Bob and Tigger. And the donkeys are Taco, Enchilada and Fajita,” Marlene said proudly. A broken arm as a result of her interaction with one of the donkeys has not kept Marlene from loving and caring for her home menagerie.

Neon and Marlene have enjoyed traveling in their fifth-wheel RV to far-flung destinations like Washington State and have returned to California and Mississippi on numerous occasions to visit family and friends. Another such trip is a part of their future plans.



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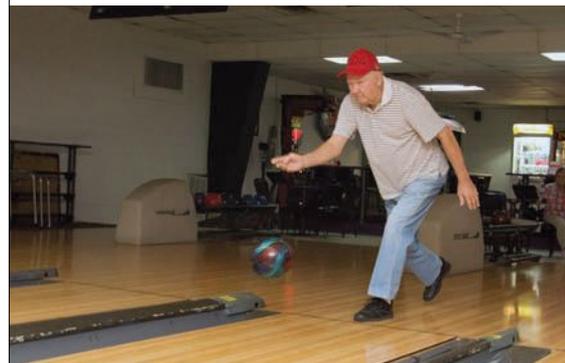
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Pat Lonza, Elliott "Neon" Leon, Marlene Leon and Donna Lonon gear up for another game of bowling.



In their retirement years, Neon and Marlene are together almost 24/7. Their conversations reveal that while Neon is the comedian, Marlene does a great job of playing the "straight man." When asked the secret to their success in achieving 51 years of marriage, Marlene said, "I let him think he is right no matter if he is really completely wrong." She agrees with the sage advice that a couple should never go to bed mad at one another, but she also subscribes to the philosophy of being truthful with each other and respecting one another. "I really feel blessed to have a husband like Neon. He has been the best husband that any woman could ask for, and he has been my world. I love Neon, and I would do anything for him, and I know he feels the same way about me," she said.

And maybe that is the real secret to success in life, love, marriage and bowling — enjoying being together while sharing and caring for each other. Whether working or relaxing, this couple has been of one spirit for more than half a century. **NOW**

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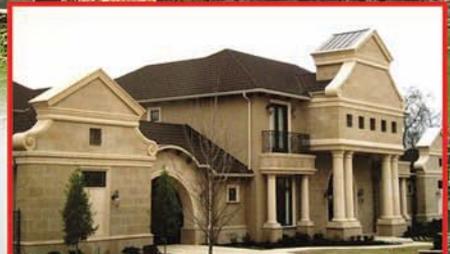
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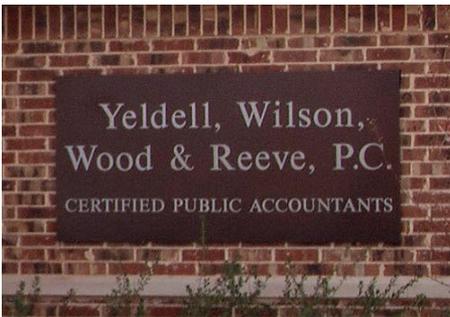
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The level of surprise provided at Yeldell, Wilson, Wood & Reeve well exceeds clients' expectations time and time again.

Relationship Driven

Yeldell, Wilson, Wood & Reeve offers the highest level of professional services. — By Sandra Strong

The dedicated staff at Yeldell, Wilson, Wood & Reeve and its partners, Greer Yeldell, Glen Wilson, Tracie Wood and Joyce Reeve, have been serving clientele in and around Ellis County and beyond for more than 40 years from their home office in Ennis. As the customer base has continued to grow over the years, it became time for their presence to be known in Waxahachie with the opening of their new office located conveniently on Sycamore Street. “Two years ago, after looking at many rental properties, we purchased the land,” Glen shared. “We wanted the best possible location, and I think we have it here.”

“To better serve and add to our clients is what prompted our decision to add a sister office in Waxahachie,” Greer added. “The time was right, and it just made sense.”

The natural expansion in the full-service company has made

it much more convenient for their new clients, as well as their long-term, existing clients. The combined decades of experience and advanced training, which includes continuing education for partners and staff alike, lends to the personalized, quality service clients have come to expect with Yeldell, Wilson, Wood & Reeve. “Providing a family atmosphere is of the utmost importance,” Tracie said. “We treat clients the same way we want to be treated.” This specialized treatment is much like a relationship between close friends. Yeldell, Wilson, Wood & Reeve firmly believes their success is a result of the success their clients, now second generation, enjoy.

As one of the largest full-service firms in Ellis County, the company’s offerings are broken down into three “umbrellas of expertise.” Taxation focuses on federal and state tax returns,

Business **NOW**

IRS representation, retirement and estate planning, trust tax preparations, nonprofits and litigation support. Attest includes audits, reviews, compilations and agreed-upon procedures. Accounting encompasses monthly, quarterly and annual bookkeeping; payroll services; and general ledger and financial statement preparation. "We also have QuickBooks ProAdvisors on staff. We offer it all," Joyce stated. "The work we do is equal across the board. It's all related, and goes hand-in-hand."

"They feed into one another," Greer added.

"We are building an investment in the community."

The client base at Yeldell, Wilson, Wood & Reeve includes, but is definitely not limited to, businesses and industries, both large and small; individuals; nonprofits; and governments. Clients have come to trust the firm's level of service — a level that well exceeds clients' expectations time after time.

Tracie and other team members will be a full-time presence at the Waxahachie office, while Greer, Glen and Joyce and the remaining team will be commuting to and from Ennis, as needed. Several employees have been with the company for 25 years or longer, which says a great deal about the relaxed, family-oriented atmosphere the firm provides. "During the busy tax season," Tracie said, "we are always eager to talk to potential new team members with preferred tax and audit experience."

"We are building an investment in the community," Greer reiterated. "We want this to be the best place to work where the grass is real green on both sides of the fence all year long." Yeldell, Wilson, Wood & Reeve takes great pride in the tradition that has been established from the firm's beginnings as a relationship-driven partnership. It's always been about the clients, and it will, no doubt, continue to be all about the clients. These are real people who make a difference in the lives of the real people they serve. **NOW**



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Jane Savage and her four-legged friend, Fiona, are long time residents of Waxahachie. Fiona loves her leathers.



The divine ladies at Divine Flowers prepare for the Valentine's Day rush with a bouquet of beautiful red roses.



Employees from HEB serve up free hot dogs and chili pies as a way to thank customers during a recent event that celebrated their first year in the newly remodeled store.



Gracie Lenzger and Hannab Hensley at the Seven Student Ministries at The Oaks.



Kelley Wiser accepts her Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce plaque at the ribbon cutting ceremony held at The Wiser Salon.



Waxahachie Senior Center volunteer Ann Sullivan puts the finishing touches on a personalized stepping stone.



Grace Church Ovilla's Senior Pastor, Justin Jackson (in the cap) works diligently with church elders and volunteers to organize the Waxahachie tornado relief donations that were staged and available at the church.



The first fans brave the cold temperatures to be sure they get great seats at the Star Wars 'The Force Awakens' movie premier.



Jenny McQueen and Tera Wartsbaugh at Ellis County Family Dentistry are excited about getting their copies of Waxahachie NOW.

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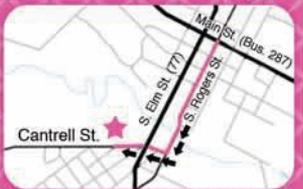


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New Year, Renewed Beneficiaries

This year, resolve to review and update your beneficiary designations.

There is one resolution you can keep this year — and every year — that will improve your own well-being and state of mind. It will also help ensure the financial well-being of your loved ones well into the future.

A Great Way to Start the Year, Every Year

A lot can happen in 12 months. Remember that every life event — births, adoptions, disabilities, deaths, marriages, divorces, even moving — should trigger a review and update of your estate documents. That's why it is important to review your beneficiary designations at least once a year to ensure your assets are properly passed down. You'll never regret reviewing your estate plan, and around New Year's is a great time to do it. Your financial advisor can help you coordinate with a qualified estate planning professional.

Before You Bestow

Too often, issues arise during the transfer of assets simply due to lack of knowledge of estate laws. Learn and understand the laws that govern transfer of property in your chosen state, and be aware that beneficiary rules can vary from asset to asset. For instance, retirement and insurance accounts generally default to a spouse. If you want your children to inherit your retirement savings, you must name them on the appropriate documents and have your current spouse sign a waiver. Spousal laws vary by state, so be sure to consult your state's specific legislation.

Avoid Uncertainties, Be Specific

Life events, such as divorce and remarriage (especially if you have children from both marriages), may muddy the waters for your heirs. Without explicit instructions and properly documented beneficiaries, your family could end up in court to

settle your estate. Asset titling is especially important when you and your partner are not married. Legally, your partner may not have the same rights a spouse would.

Back up Your Beneficiaries

Beyond primary beneficiaries, you should also name one or more secondary ones. These are called contingency beneficiaries, and they are a good safeguard to have in place should something happen to you and your primary beneficiary at the same time.

Make the Transfer

While retirement, insurance annuity and trust accounts require beneficiary designations, some, like a traditional brokerage account, do not. That's why you should consider placing a Transfer on Death (TOD) registration on your brokerage account. A TOD registration is a powerful tool that allows you to designate beneficiaries for your brokerage accounts, and it supersedes a will or trust. If you're married, a joint registration would allow the surviving spouse to receive the assets. Should both account holders pass away, the TOD would take effect, passing your assets down to your designated beneficiaries, often without a fee.

New home, new estate laws — moving? Make sure to review your new state's requirements when you relocate and update your estate plan accordingly. **NOW**

Material prepared by Raymond James for use by its financial advisors. The information contained herein is general in nature and does not constitute legal or tax advice. Jonathan Pope is a Raymond James Financial Advisor based in Duncanville.

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New Warning Signs of a Heart Attack

Undoubtedly everyone has heard about the problem of gum disease, periodontal disease or “pyorrhea,” which can cause bad breath, loosening of the teeth, abscesses and pain in the gums. People with periodontal disease have a lifelong simmering bacterial infection around the gum pocket that releases a steady stream of toxic chemicals, causing chronic inflammation of the gums. We have long known about the destruction that periodontal disease can do to the teeth and gums, but recent research is showing that the bacteria that cause gum disease can also affect other organs of the body, resulting in blood clots, heart attacks, strokes, lung problems, premature low birth weight babies and increased complications with diabetes. Early detection of gum disease is now imperative for the maintenance of the health of your entire body, as well as the health of your mouth.

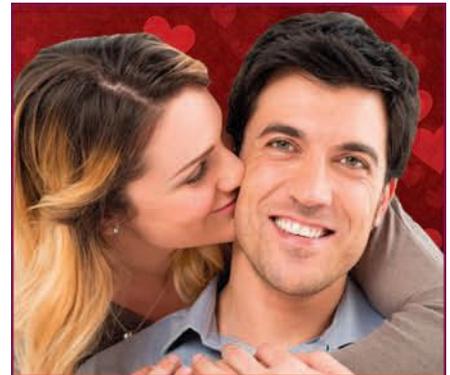
Approximately three-quarters of adults over the age of 35 have some degree of periodontal disease. It is virtually painless until the final stage, when a tooth will definitely be lost. The disease occurs inside the gum pocket, where the bacteria are hidden and protected unless cleaned out, making it difficult to see the warning signs. Some signs of the disease to look for are:

1. Red, swollen gums that bleed when brushing.
2. Persistent bad breath.
3. Spaces that start to form between teeth due to their loosening.
4. A chronic sore feeling in and around the gums.

If you suspect these warning signs apply to you, it is important to see a dentist for a complete exam, X-rays and treatment plan. Treatment includes deep cleaning in the gums under a local anesthetic (for comfort), recommendations for improving the cleaning regimen at home (including special brushes, floss and water irrigating devices that flush plaque and bacteria out from the gums), possible gum surgery to eliminate the gum pockets and a schedule of regular professional visits.

With research showing the health of the mouth is an indicator of overall health, any possible steps should be taken to eliminate periodontal disease and keep your mouth as clean as possible. Your teeth and life are definitely worth the investment! **NOW**

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Throughout February

Lighthouse Gallery Art Exhibit: **Monday**, 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.; **Tuesday-Friday**, 8:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 9:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m.; Lighthouse Coffee Bar, 1404 N. 9th St. This is a student show which features works from students in the SALT and DASCHE homeschool associations from across Ellis County.

February 1

Southwest Children's Chorus informational meeting: 6:30 p.m., Hampton Road Baptist Church, 400 N. Hampton Rd., DeSoto. Parents of third-eighth graders interested in the active chorus are encouraged to attend. For more information, call artistic director Michael King at (214) 649-3231 or at info@swchildrenschorus.org.

February 2, 16

Ellis County HEALS support group meeting: 6:30 p.m., 408 Water St. The group hopes to connect with survivors of suicide loss in Ellis County, while giving them a safe place to share their struggle and pain. For more information, email elliscountyheals@gmail.com or follow them on Facebook.

February 4

WHS Band Midwinter Concert: 7:00-8:30 p.m., Fine Arts Center, WHS.

February 5

DEAR (Drop Everything and Read) Day: 8:45 and 10:15. Contact Melissa Cobb at mcobb@wisd.org or (972) 923-4631 to reserve your place to read!

February 6

Jazz Café Dinner & Dance: 6:00-10:30 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.spiritofwaxahachie.com.

February 11

Daddy Daughter Dance – A Glass Slipper Event: 6:00-9:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. Tickets are \$15 each. Tickets went on sale January 1 and must be purchased in advance at the Waxahachie Civic Center. Tickets will not be sold at the door. For more information, call (469) 309-4040.

2nd Thursday Ladies Night Out: 5:00-8:00 p.m., downtown Waxahachie at participating businesses.

February 13

Cupid Shuffle 5K & 15K: 7:50 a.m., 15K begins; 8:00 a.m., 5K begins, start and finish at Getzendaner Park, Waxahachie. You can

register online at www.reachcouncil.org/ events. Wear your tutu and your valentine-inspired socks. For more information, email nisa.hurd@reachcouncil.org.

CASA Fundraising Gala: Waxahachie Civic Center. For details and starting times, visit www.casafelliscounty.com.

February 19 — 21

15th Annual Chili Cook-off: Ellis County Youth Expo Center. For more information on the daily events, call (972) 937-1870 or visit www.elliscountycac.org.

February 22

Lighthouse for Learning Community Education Spring semester begins. Over 50 classes to select from. Call (972) 923-4631 for more information.

February 27

Baylor University Jazz Band: 7:00 p.m., SAGU Hagee Center. Back by popular demand, the group will team up with the WHS Jazz Band for a few encore pieces.

March 5

Ellis County Women's Expo/Business, Health & Wellness: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. Event will include health screenings, door prizes, fashion and shopping. Over 100 vendors. Tickets: adults \$5; children under 10 are free. For more information, call (972) 937-2390 or visit www.waxahachiechamber.com.

Ongoing:

Mondays

Celebrate Recovery: 7:00-9:00 p.m., The Avenue Church, 1761 Hwy 77. For more information, call (972) 937-5301.

Celebrate Recovery: 7:00 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County, 2374 Hwy. 287 Bypass W. For more information, call (972) 935-9801.

Fourth Mondays

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave.

Mondays and Thursdays

Fitness Revolution: 6:30 p.m., Salvation Army, 620 Farley St. Work out to fun aerobics choreographed to upbeat Christian and wholesome music. \$15 per month. Call (214) 477-1164 for more information.

Tuesdays

Story Time at Sims Library: 10:00-10:40 a.m.,

children 3 and older. Program features themed book readings, songs, puppets and crafts that teach children early literacy skills in preparation for kindergarten. E-mail children@simslib.org for more information.

Waxahachie Toastmasters meeting: 6:30 p.m., Lyceum at Sims Library. For more information, call (469) 245-8681.

GriefShare meetings: 6:30 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County in the sanctuary Youth Inc. room. For more information, call (972) 935-9801 or visit www.cowboychurchofelliscounty.org.

Third Tuesdays

Ellis County Veterans Networking Group: 6:30 p.m., Ryan's Steakhouse, Waxahachie. Come join the group for dinner and listen to what the guest speaker for the evening has to share. For more information, call Mike Lamb at (214) 763-0378.

Thursdays

Genealogy Research Assistance: 2:00-4:00 p.m., The Genealogy and Reference Department will be offering the tools needed to search for your ancestors. Attendees will be able to exchange information, share creative solutions, generate resources and solve these mysteries.

Junior Master Gardeners Club: 3:45-4:45 p.m., Sims Library. Club is for children ages 5-12. If you have an interest in gardening, come for gardening related activities and help maintain the Sims Library garden.

Fridays

Business Networking International meeting: 8:00-9:30 a.m., LaQuinta, 311 Stadium Dr. For more information, call (469) 222-9160.

Second Saturdays

Cheesy Striders Multiple Sclerosis & Parkinson's Self Help meeting: 10:00 a.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 N. Grand St. For more information, contact Linda DeFrank at (214) 514-5236.

Fourth Saturdays

Bristol Opry: 7:00 p.m., featuring local singers and musicians. For more information, contact Jim Gatlin at (972) 846-2211.

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

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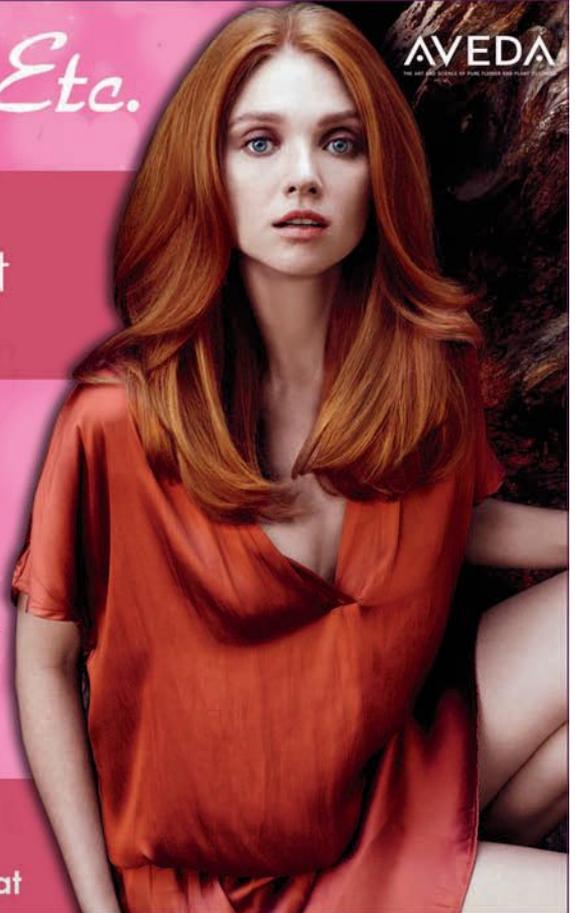
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In the Kitchen With John Seaberry

— By *Sandra Strong*

John Seaberry grew up in West Africa as a missionary kid. He spent a year in France as a 5-year-old, and then he lived in six different countries in West Africa. “I was able to eat foods from all those places and experience their style of cooking,” John remembered. “Without a doubt, living in so many places influenced my style of cooking and taste.”

John is a “low and slow smoker type” of guy who loves to cook with fresh ingredients. “I start with what I know, leaving the rest to trial and error.” John also believes that cooking is the one action that can bring two strangers together for a common gathering. “You should see smiles when you are done cooking,” he said. “Smiles mean happiness.” **NOW**

Stuffed Jalapeños

- 1 lb. tube ground sausage**
- 1 8-oz. container cream cheese spread**
- 1 10- to 15-oz. jar favorite salsa**
- 1 Tbsp. garlic powder**
- 5 large fresh jalapeños**
- 10 slices bacon, not thick sliced**
- 10 toothpicks**

- 1.** Cook half of the sausage completely; drain. Scoop about half of the cream cheese into a bowl. Pour about a cup of salsa into the bowl with the cheese. Mix together until blended. Add garlic powder; mix thoroughly. Put the bowl in the freezer.
- 2.** Cut stems off peppers. Remove seeds using a vegetable peeler or a small knife. Once the seeds are gone, cut the peppers in half from top to bottom.
- 3.** Remove the cheese mixture from the freezer. Have bacon and toothpicks ready.

Grab a pepper half and fill the cavity with the desired amount of the cheese. Tightly wrap a piece of bacon around the pepper. Secure the wrapped pepper with a toothpick to keep the bacon from unraveling.

- 4.** Grill on low so the bacon does not burn. These can also be cooked in the oven at 385 F for 20 minutes.

Fire House Chili

- 3 lbs. meat (ground beef, chili meat, venison, etc.)**
- 1 large sweet onion**
- 2 bell peppers, any color**
- 5 cloves garlic**
- 1 16-oz. can kidney beans, drained**
- 1 16-oz. can pinto beans, drained**
- 1 15-oz. can French onion soup**
- 1 15-oz. can tomato sauce**
- 1 28-oz. can diced tomatoes**

- 1/4 cup flat leafy parsley**
- 4 Tbsp. chili powder**
- 2 Tbsp. cumin**
- 3 Tbsp. smoked paprika**
- 4 Tbsp. salt**
- 3 Tbsp. ground black pepper**
- 2 Tbsp. cayenne**
- 1 32-oz. bottle Zing Zang Sriracha or habanero peppers, optional for a more heated flavor**

- 1.** Brown meat, making sure it is thoroughly cooked. Remove from pan and place on paper towels to drain. Leave grease in the pan for later use.
- 2.** Finely chop vegetables. Place them in the skillet with the leftover grease and cook at medium heat until soft. Drain to remove excess fat and grease.
- 3.** Open and add canned items to a Crock-Pot, making sure to drain the liquid from the beans. Add the meat and the vegetables, giving the mixture a good stir. Add the dry ingredients, followed by half the bottle of Zing Zang. Stir again.
- 4.** Turn the Crock-Pot to high; cook for 4 hours. If you want it to cook all day, turn the heat to low. You can add peppers for a more heated flavor. Be sure to stir often.

Tator Salad

- 6 large Yukon Gold potatoes**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- 10 strips bacon**
- 3/4 cup Philadelphia Chive Cream Cheese**
- 6 Tbsp. mayonnaise, not Miracle Whip**
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded**
- 3 Tbsp. fresh dill**
- 1/2 cup chives**
- Hard-boiled eggs, to taste (optional)**

- 1.** Peel potatoes. Cut them into bite-sized cubes. Place cubes in a pot; add cold water. Add a pinch of salt and pepper to taste. Turn heat to high.
- 2.** Cook bacon until crisp. Allow to cool. In a bowl, mix together the cream cheese, mayonnaise, cheese and dill. Chop the bacon as fine as you desire; add to the bowl. Chop the chives; add half of them to the mixture.
- 3.** Once the potatoes are cooked, decide if you want hot or cold potato salad. If you choose cold; chill them in the refrigerator. Use a spatula to fold the potatoes into the wet mixture, but be careful not to mash them. Sprinkle the remaining chives on top before serving.

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