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FEBRUARY 2025



## Growing Up Girl Scout

Local moms and daughters  
build Scouting bonds

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Scavenger Hunt

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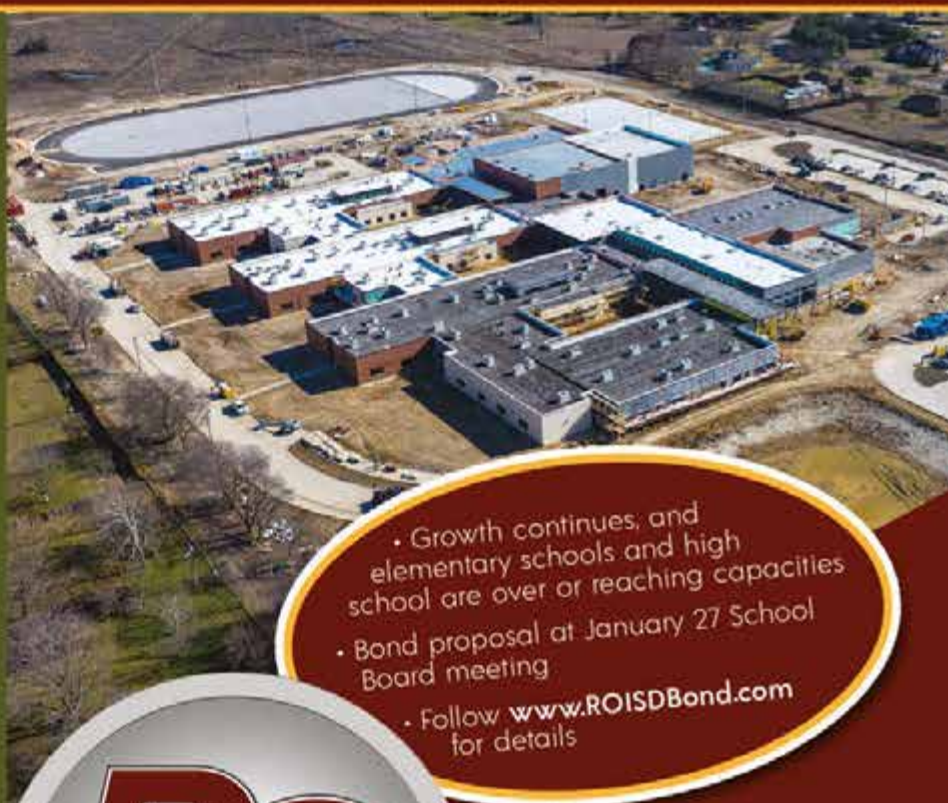
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## Spring Dates

- Feb. 13 – North Texas Food Pantry
- Feb. 14 – Staff Development (No School)
- Feb. 17 – Presidents Day Holiday
- Feb. 24 – ROISD School Board Meeting
- Mar. 3-7 – Celebrate Public Schools Week
- Mar. 4 – Elementary Open Houses
- Mar. 6 – Secondary Open Houses
- Mar. 6 – North Texas Food Pantry
- Mar. 9 – Daylight Savings Begins
- Mar. 10-14 – Spring Break
- Mar. 24 – ROISD School Board Meeting
- Mar. 26 – State of the District @ ROACOC  
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- Apr. 18 – Good Friday Holiday
- Apr. 21 – Easter Holiday

Details at [RedOakISD.org](http://RedOakISD.org)



ON THE COVER



Girl Scout Troop 338 has been led to success by Amanda Stapleton and Kim Luce.

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# EDITOR'S NOTE



Angel

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## February folklore ...

Meaning, "to cleanse," February comes from the Latin word februa and was named for Februalia, a Roman purification festival. It may be the shortest month of the year, but it is not lacking in interesting facts. It was originally the last month of the year, added to the Roman calendar in 713 B.C. In 450 B.C., it was moved to the second month.

Since the Romans considered even numbers unlucky, all months originally had 29 days. When someone discovered the sum of all months was an even number, one day was removed from February to make the total odd (and, thus, not unlucky). While other months eventually included 30 or 31 days, 28 stuck for February (except on Leap Years, when it has 29).

In modern times, February became recognized as Black History Month, officialized by President Gerald Ford in 1976. February 1 is observed as National Freedom Day, as on this day in 1865, President Abraham Lincoln signed a joint resolution abolishing slavery.

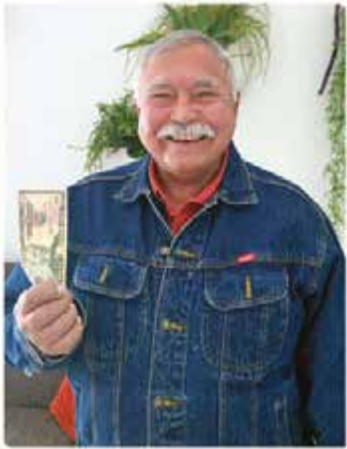
Other celebratory days in February include Groundhog's Day February 2, Valentine's Day February 14 and President's Day February 17 (originally established to honor George Washington and Abraham Lincoln who were born this month, but now recognizes all who have held the office).

Other days of note in February include Ice Cream for Breakfast Day (first Saturday), Super Bowl Sunday (second Sunday) and National Wear Red Day (first Friday) raising awareness toward heart disease in women. Among many other celebratory opportunities, February 17 is Random Acts of Kindness Day.

February zodiac signs include Aquarius and Pisces, and the birthstone is amethyst. February is said to be one of the most frequently misspelled words in the English language. Even if we can't spell it, we can find some way to enjoy it.

## February's fun!

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Local residents since the ages of 5 and 6, Kim Luce and Amanda Stapleton believe Ellis County is a great place to raise a family. Being in a particular organization added to their hometown spirit. “I was a Girl Scout growing up. I became a troop leader right out of high school, but had to step down after a few years, so I could focus on college,” Kim recalled.

In 2021, Kim signed up to be a leader for her daughter’s Girl Scout Troop 338. “I wanted Kaley to try something new that I really enjoyed as a child,” Kim said. “I decided to become a leader, because I enjoy working with young ladies and watching them grow.”

Amanda served as a volunteer for the troop when her daughters, Emma and Maddie, joined that same year. In 2023, she became co-leader of the troop. “I wanted to be more hands-on with the planning process of teaching the girls in our troop how to grow and find success in all the different areas of Girl Scouts,” she noted.

Following in Kim’s and Amanda’s footsteps, Troop 338 is made up of 20 young ladies with a heart for their community. “Our troop has used the funds



# Growing Up Girl Scout

— By Angel Morris



earned from several cookie seasons to support our community and its residents,” Kim shared.

In the past three years, the troop’s service includes adopting two residents at a local nursing home to “show some love over the holidays”; putting together and donating 12 birthday boxes to North Ellis County Outreach; and collecting and donating Girl Scout cookies to the Red Oak Police





Department, CASA of Ellis County and Texas Baptist Home for Children. "Since cookie sales are a huge part of allowing us to do these types of things, we have sold cookies outdoors in rain and below freezing temperatures," Amanda stated. "The girls are very dedicated!"

Ranging in age from 8 to 11, each Scout has different goals. "Our Juniors are currently working toward earning their Bronze Awards, and each girl is always looking for more ways to help out in our community," Kim said.

Participating in these activities and making new friends is what draws most girls to Scouting. "They love the time they get to spend together, the hustle of cookie season and

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celebrating our achievements in big ways,” Amanda outlined.

While having fun with friends is important, Girl Scout participation goes far beyond that, the co-Troop leaders explained. “Participating in Girl Scouts builds character and confidence. We encourage our girls to get out of their comfort zones and try new things. It also allows them to overcome fear, and sometimes failure, in a safe environment,” Kim underscored.

Mother-daughter bonding is another perk of Girl Scout life, the leader moms admitted. “Being a troop leader has been great for my relationship with my daughters. We have time set aside almost weekly to spend together and make memories, while teaching them life lessons in fun and meaningful ways,” Amanda shared.

Kim added, “I love getting to spend extra time with my daughter doing something we both love. I do feel like this experience has brought us closer and will be a time that she remembers for years to come, just as I remember my own Scouting activities.”

February is a visible month for Girl



Scouts, who are out in the community making annual cookie sales. They are happy to share their experiences with those who want to learn more about the organization.

When not Scouting, Kim enjoys making crafts, traveling and hanging out with her family. Amanda likes camping, family movie nights and attending Ovilla’s Vertical Church.

The Troop leaders remind local

moms, Scouting is not just for daughters. “There are so many girls that are interested in Girl Scouts, but we need more volunteers to help guide them,” Kim said. “Leading a troop is a great investment of your time, and you can make such a positive impact on the girls.” **NOW**

*Editor’s Note: To learn more about participating in Girl Scouts, visit [gsnetx.org](http://gsnetx.org).*

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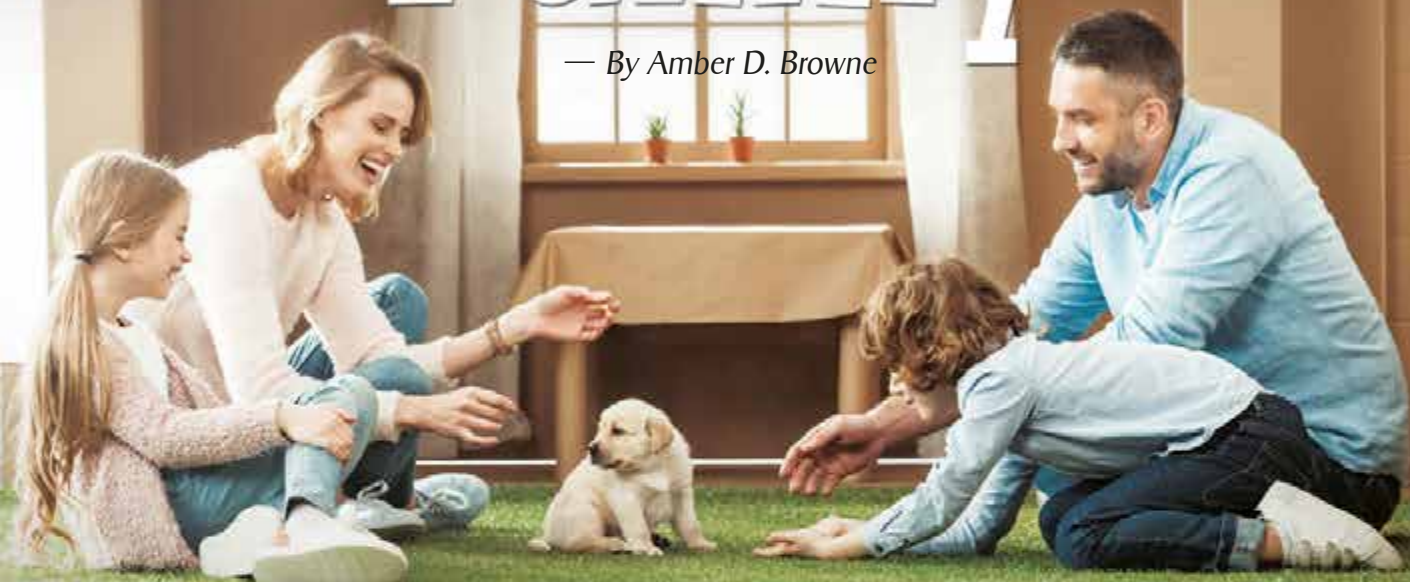
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# Fido for the Family

— By Amber D. Browne



*For most couples with little ones, a pet is a necessity. Dogs provide hours of playtime for children, teach responsibility and offer unconditional love and companionship. But which dog breeds are best for children? The answer varies for each family depending on multiple factors including yard space, allergies and the child's age, among other things.*

Soon-to-be dog owners with large, enclosed yards could choose more energetic breeds, since the dog has plenty of outdoor room for exercise. According to the American Kennel Club, the Labrador Retriever is friendly and active, and as America's most popular breed, fits well with families. The Golden Retriever is obedient and devoted to its owner. Because of its patience, the breed does well with young children. The Beagle is also known to be great with children. The breed enjoys companionship, and its playful demeanor will provide hours of entertainment.

Apartment renters or homeowners with limited yard space could decide to add a smaller breed to the family. Small-to medium-sized breeds include the Bulldog, which is a patient pup, and the Bull Terrier. The Bull Terrier can be mischievous, but was bred to be a companion dog and is good with older children. Another popular breed for families is the Poodle. With multiple sizes available, a miniature Poodle might be an option for families living in an apartment.

Because it is hypoallergenic, the Poodle is one breed better fit for families suffering with allergies. Another breed for allergy sufferers is the Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, which has a happy disposition and is a devoted companion. Depending on the age of the child, parents must decide if a puppy or mature dog would be the perfect fit for the family. Puppies need to be trained, but the dog will grow and mature along with the child. An older dog will most likely have some training and can provide several years of companionship for an older child. As the child ages, he or she can take on more responsibilities when caring for the pup. Younger children can help brush, feed and water the dog. Older children can walk the dog or even bake fresh puppy treats in the kitchen.

Whether parents decide to purchase or adopt the pup, they must do their research. Most adoption or rescue agencies know the breed or have an idea of the breeds if the animal is mixed. Whatever the case, families should look for a calm and friendly temperament, how the breed might interact with other pets, research possible health problems and determine if the dog will incur grooming expenses. Although adding a furry family member to the pack is a big responsibility, the memories made with children and adults alike are unforgettable. **NOW**





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# Be My DIY

— By Angel Morris



*Handmade Valentine cards for a classroom giveaway not only save money, but they are a great way to tap into your child's creativity and occupy them for an afternoon. If getting started is a challenge, however, it can help to offer a few prompts for kids to copy or build upon.*

Your first step, however, is to round up construction paper, markers, crayons and any other craft supplies that may come in handy. If your child wants to put their cards in an envelope, keep the size of the envelopes you have on hand in mind when cutting construction paper for cards. The less your child has to step away to find necessary supplies, the smoother the card crafting will go!

If kids have a hard time getting started on their own, it can help to create a few sample cards for them to follow. You might ask them to think of their favorite movie character, a game they enjoy playing or even popular slang among their classmates. These are great jumping off points for messages to include on valentines. If all else fails, here are a few simple themes to consider:

**Tic-Tac-To My Heart.** After cutting paper to the size that will fit your envelopes when folded in half, have children write the words "You Won ..." atop the front of the card. In the remaining space of the card, draw a tic-tac-toe board (also known by kids today as a hashtag symbol). Cut out three red hearts and glue those in boxes diagonally down the board. Fill in some of the remaining squares with X marks. On the bottom of the card front, the words "My Heart" complete the message. Children can write "Happy Valentine's Day!" inside, or just sign their name.

**Puzzle Perfect.** Have children draw two connected puzzle pieces. Draw one half





of a heart within one puzzle piece, completing the rest of the heart on the other piece, so that one full heart is seen across the two pieces. Draw the pieces large enough so that they will cover a good portion of the front of the card when cut in two. Color the heart, then thickly outline the puzzle pieces in black. Cut apart the two puzzle pieces, gluing one piece in the center of the card front, and the other on the inside of the card. Children can write a variety of messages related to puzzles on the card, such as (outside) "Our Friendship," (inside) "Is a Perfect Fit!" Or (outside) "Like a Puzzle Piece," (inside) "You Complete Our Class!"

**Lucky in Love.** Help children cut out four small hearts from green construction paper, then glue them atop the card front in the shape of a four-leaf clover, drawing a stem to the ground. Write something like, "I'm SO Lucky ..." atop the card. Inside, cut out a single red heart, also drawing a stem from it to the ground. The inside message can be any variation of why your child feels lucky: "You're My Friend," "You're My Classmate" or, even, "You're My Valentine."

Remember, you can always go with a smiley face heart on the front and "Happy Valentine's Day!" inside. Simple is heartfelt, too! **NOW**

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## Zoomed In: Jaksyn Brown

By Angel Morris

Competing among 120 preteens from across the country, Red Oak seventh-grader Jaksyn Brown was recently named the 2024-2025 National All-American Miss Preteen. "Winning the title is such an incredible honor," Jaksyn shared. "I'm excited to represent our nation for the next year and continue advocating for self-love and authenticity."

Having competed for the title multiple times, Jaksyn's is a story of perseverance. "I hope my resilience is an example to any person who wants to achieve a goal," she noted.

Jaksyn is a published author and motivational speaker. Her movement, Celebrate Your Crown, promotes confidence for girls with textured hair. She is also a member of the City of Red Oak Teen Advisory Board and a student government participant at St. Philip's School and Community Center. "My mission is to empower young people, to celebrate their 'crowns,'" she said, "and be proud of who they are."



*The Ovilla Service League donates to the Ovilla Police Department Toy Drive.*



*Paramedic Specialist Alejandro Rodriguez and Firefighter Paramedic John Chapman attend the opening of Glenn Height's new All Abilities Park.*



*Girl Scout Troop 338 uses a portion of cookie sale proceeds to purchase clothing, necessities and toys for local children in need.*



*Boy Scout Troop 247, Troop 652 and Pack 228 assist at the First United Methodist Church Red Oak pop-up food pantry.*

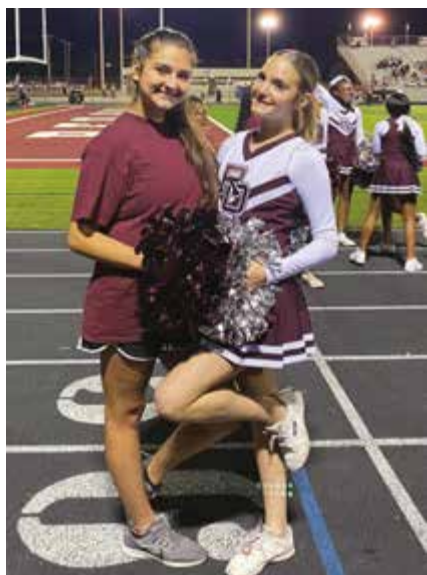




Consuelo Primero, owner of Hugo's Mexican Grill & Cantina, and Jeremy Young, from North Ellis Co.NOW and a board member of the Red Oak Area Chamber of Commerce, attended Hugo's ribbon-cutting ceremony.



The Cuellar family celebrates Life School Red Oak's four-day school week and record re-enrollment.



Red Oak High School alumni cheerleader Elysia Parras supports her sister, Abby Maum, a current cheerleader who is graduating this month.

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Sesame Beef

## CookingNOW IN THE KITCHEN WITH JANE MCCASLAND

— By Angel Morris



Oak Leaf resident Jane McCasland doesn't remember a time when she wasn't in the kitchen with her parents. "Then, watching my chef father teach my own children how to make pot roast in an old-fashioned, cast-iron Dutch oven became a favorite cooking memory of mine as an adult," Jane noted.

Her favorite thing to bake is pound cake. "Because it is economical, simple to make and tastes so good," she said.

Knitting, reading and cooking classes are Jane's favorite ways to spend her time. "I also serve on the Midlothian Civic Center Board and Ellis County Children's Advocacy Board," she continued, "and I am Charter Organization Representative for the Midlothian units of Boy Scouts of America." **NOW**

### Million Dollar Pound Cake

**1 lb. butter**  
**3 cups sugar**  
**6 eggs**  
**4 cups flour**  
**3/4 cup milk**  
**1 tsp. vanilla**  
**1/2 tsp. almond extract**

1. Preheat the oven to 300 F Grease and flour a tube pan. Cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
2. Add the eggs, one at a time. Add the flour, alternating with the milk, beginning and ending with the flour.
3. Add the vanilla and almond extract.
4. Bake for 1 hour and 40 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

### Fried Mozzarella Egg Rolls

**Oil, for frying**  
**12 egg roll wrappers**  
**60 pieces pepperoni**  
**12 pieces mozzarella cheese (String cheese works best.)**  
**Pizza sauce, for dipping**

1. Heat the oil to 375 F
2. On top of 1 egg roll wrapper, place 5 pieces of pepperoni in a row. Place one piece of cheese on top.
3. Fold the corners in and over the cheese. Moisten with water to seal. Roll tightly.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 with the remaining wrappers. Fry each wrapper for 1 minute on each side. Drain on paper towels. Serve with pizza sauce.

### Cane River Dessert

**1 cup flour**  
**1 stick butter, melted**  
**1 cup pecans, finely chopped**  
**4 cups whipped topping (divided use) (I prefer Cool Whip.)**  
**1 cup powdered sugar**  
**1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese**  
**1 3.9-oz. pkg. chocolate pudding mix**  
**1 3.9-oz. pkg. vanilla pudding mix**  
**3 cups milk (divided use)**  
**1 HERSHEY'S cocoa bar**

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F Mix the flour, butter and pecans. Spread the mixture in a 13x9-inch pan. Bake for 20 minutes; let cool.
2. Mix 2 cups of the whipped topping, powdered sugar and the cream cheese. Spread over the cooled crust.
3. Mix the puddings separately with 1 1/2 cups of milk for each. Let it stand to thicken for a few minutes. Pour and spread the chocolate first, then the vanilla, over the cream cheese layer.



4. Refrigerate. Before serving, top with the remaining whipped topping and chocolate shavings from the HERSHEY'S cocoa bar.

Cookies & Cream Fluff

Best served very cold.

- 2 cups milk
- 1 3.4-oz. box instant vanilla pudding
- 1 8-oz. container whipped topping (divided use) (I prefer Cool Whip.)
- 15 Oreo cookies, or more to your taste, crushed

1. Stir the milk into the pudding for 2 minutes. Gently fold in half of the container of whipped topping.
2. Stir in the Oreo cookies. Chill until ready to serve.
3. When ready to serve, top with the remaining whipped topping and more crushed Oreos, as desired.

Sesame Beef

- 4 Tbsp. soy sauce
- 4 Tbsp. white sugar
- 4 Tbsp. oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 1 lb. thin round steak, cut into strips
- 2 Tbsp. sesame seeds
- Broccoli, to taste (optional)

1. Mix the soy sauce, sugar, oil, garlic and onions in a large bag. Add the steak strips to the bag.
2. Cover; refrigerate for a minimum of 30 minutes, preferably overnight.
3. Cook in a wok or frying pan until brown, about 5 minutes. Add the sesame seeds; cook an additional 5 minutes.
4. Variation: Make this beef with broccoli by stir frying some broccoli before cooking the beef. Add the broccoli and heat it through when close to done.

To search for more great recipes from any of the 9 NOW Magazines publications, visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).



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# HAPPY Valentine's Day FEBRUARY

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

2/8

## Dancing With the Ellis County Stars:

Local "celebrities" dance for your entertainment and the benefit of Texas Baptist Home for Children. 6:00-9:00 p.m., Grand Ballroom, Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Ln., Waxahachie. Purchase tickets and vote at <https://tbhc.org>.

2/19

## Heart Smart Conference:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service speakers address keeping Ellis County residents' hearts healthy. 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m., with discussions beginning at 9:00, 10:00 and 11:00 a.m., followed by

a health fair at 1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Senior Center, 122 Park Hills Dr., Waxahachie.

2/21

## Purse Bingo:

Compete for designer purses, enjoy great company and support a meaningful cause. Proceeds provide life-changing mentorship to struggling high school students. Snacks provided. Ages 21 and older. 6:00-9:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Ln., Waxahachie.

2/22

## Touch-A-Truck:

This event allows children of all ages to explore and learn about first responder vehicles,

construction equipment and city service vehicles up-close and in action. 9:30-11:00 a.m., Red Oak Municipal Center, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. Call (469) 218-1270 or email [schovanetz@redoaktx.org](mailto:schovanetz@redoaktx.org) to learn more.

## First Mondays

### Ellis County

### Art Association:

Open to all. Refreshments: 6:00 p.m.; announcements and business: 6:30 p.m.; art demonstration: 6:45 p.m., First Baptist Church, 450 Hwy. 287 Bypass, Waxahachie.

## Tuesdays and Thursdays

## Walking Club:

For all fitness levels. Track your progress. Enjoy healthy competition. See who can walk the farthest. Free. 8:00-10:00 a.m., Glenn Heights Community Center indoor track, 1938-D S. Hampton Rd., Glenn Heights. Email [GHCC@GlennHeights.tx.gov](mailto:GHCC@GlennHeights.tx.gov) or call (972) 223-1690, ext. 425, to learn more.

## Free Tutoring:

Available for grades K-12. Snacks provided. 4:30-6:30 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 Daubitz Dr.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [angel.morris@nowmagazines.com](mailto:angel.morris@nowmagazines.com).



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David Espinoza of Shepherd Roofing and Renovations wants to see your roof done right. "We offer roofing services for both residential and commercial customers. We can do everything from small roof tune-ups to full replacements. We do asphalt shingle roofs, tile, slate, standing seam metal roofs, synthetic wood shake, TPO. You don't see many tar and gravel roofs anymore, so we don't do those, and real wood shake isn't even legal in Texas anymore," David informed.

"Our roof tune-ups are \$199 with the coupon in the magazine. But pricing is on a case-by-case basis. So contact us for a free quote. We do free inspections. We use drones to see your whole roof. We even have a thermal imaging drone, to show where you have heat loss. We use the most up-to-date inspection equipment. We like to use advanced technology to provide the best answers to our clients."

Renovations are the other part of what they do. "We do a lot of storm restoration. We also renovate after plumbing breaks and fires. We are the preferred renovation company for several insurance companies when you have flood damage. We replace flooring, baseboards and cabinets. We do drywall, painting. We also install, replace and clean gutters and install leaf guards. We also do repair and replacement for wood and fiber cement siding, also called Hardie board."

David is proud of his team's years of experience in the industry. "Together, we

have more than 100 years of experience. My dad and my uncles were all roofers. I worked summers with my dad since I was a teenager, but I got into this full time in 2012. I think we have some of the best communication in the business. We email you our estimate, so you have it to look at. We text you, to let you know when we're on our way to your house or business. We send you pictures and videos of the job in progress, so you know what's happening, and so there's evidence of the work that's being done. We have one of the best workmanship guarantees out there. Most companies guarantee their work for three to five years. We guarantee for 10 years. We have a lot of quality control and check on our crews to be sure the work is done right. When we speak to you, we aren't giving you a sales pitch. We have a conversation about your roofing issues. We don't up-sell. We make recommendations, but then it's up to you. My philosophy is to treat our customers like as if it was my grandmother's roof. We find and diagnose issues and share what we know from our experience. We give you options, and let you make the decisions."

**"Together, we have more than 100 years of experience. My dad and my uncles were all roofers. I worked summers with my dad since I was a teenager, but I got into this full time in 2012."**

David looks at his business differently. "We're a small business with Christian values. I set out to always do the right thing. I have given free roofs to people in real need, like an elderly lady who had holes in her roof. She didn't have the money to fix it, so she just wanted us to tarp it. I decided to re-roof her house for free. We're a business, and we're about making money, but we're also here to help. I want to help my family, but also the community."



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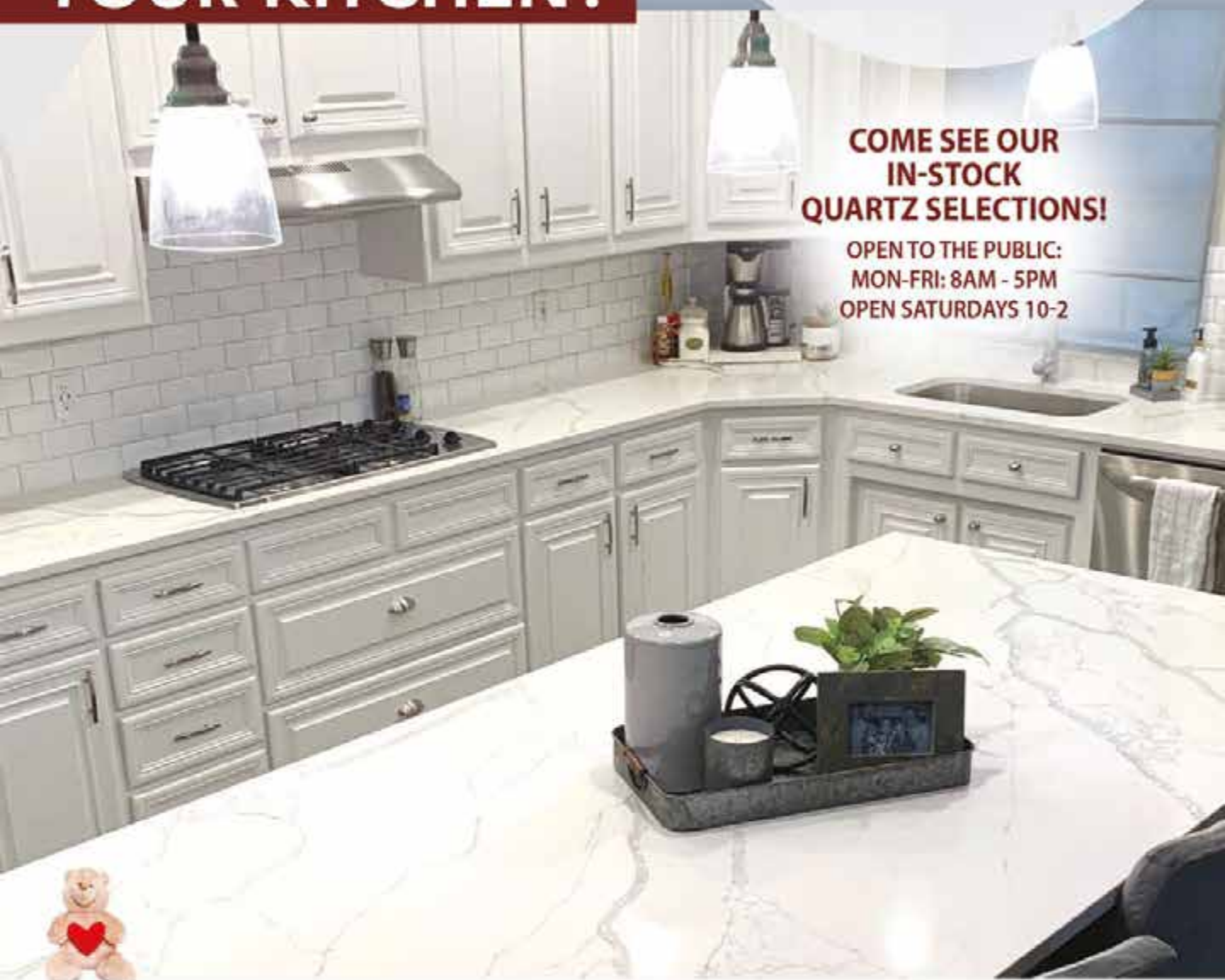


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