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M A G A Z I N E

FEBRUARY 2026

## Keeping in Tune

Tyler Heltzel fills his  
life with music

In the Kitchen With  
Winter Manley

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

Featured Business:

Orthodontics by Birth & Fletcher

Postal Customer

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A photograph of a woman wearing a cowboy hat and a red shirt, smiling and holding a black dog. A young girl in a denim jacket is also smiling. The background is bright and sunny with some greenery. There are also stylized flower illustrations: a purple one in the top left and a large pink one in the middle right.

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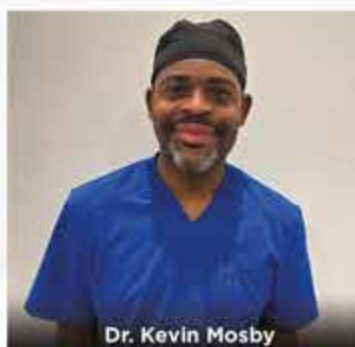
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February 2026  
Volume 20, Issue 2



**Emma McKay**  
*BurlesonNOW* Editor  
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## ON THE COVER

High school band  
director Tyler Heltzel  
plays with the  
Brazos Chamber  
Orchestra and  
various other  
groups.



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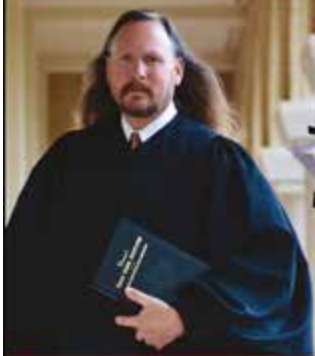
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# KEEPING IN TUNE

— By Emma McKay



*Since joining band on a whim in middle school, Tyler Heltzel has seized every opportunity to learn and play music. “It’s about the joy of music and love of music,” Tyler shared. “There’s something emotional and even spiritual about it whenever you’re performing — a connection with something outside of yourself.”*

“In high school, I started spanning out and playing some other instruments and then some other instruments after that,” he said. Tyler plays the trombone, tuba, saxophone, guitar, bass and percussion, among many other instruments. “I enjoyed trying on different instruments. Most people, when they’re performing, have [instruments] they prefer. I just enjoy playing.” With an insatiable need to learn more, Tyler earned his degree in music education at Tarleton State University.

“Then I stopped [playing music] for a while. I went and got a job at a restaurant and was trying to turn it into a career. There was a local group that was like, ‘Hey, come bring an instrument. Come jam. Come hang out.’” After spending time playing with that group, Tyler realized he’d been pursuing the wrong career for the past five years and needed to get back into music.

Inspired to share his passion with others, Tyler taught private music lessons, eventually transitioning to teaching band at Baxter Junior High in Everman. “This is my fourth year as a teacher.” Like his teachers before him, Tyler helps students find instruments that get them excited to play. “When you see someone that really starts to get into it and enjoy it and love it, well, it’s a good feeling,” he shared.

Outside of the classroom, Tyler exercises his musical abilities by playing with a jazz band, a country band and a mariachi group. “I perform pretty regularly. I play different instruments in all of them. It’s always fun whenever they all line up back-to-back-to-back. I’ve definitely had some weeks for my calendar that are performance Monday, Tuesday, off Wednesday, performance Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. I wouldn’t change it for anything!”

In September 2024, Tyler began performing as a percussionist with the Brazos Chamber Orchestra, which provides free shows to Burleson, Cleburne and Granbury. “They asked me to fill in, and then I just never stopped showing up,” he said.

Just as he does with all the other bands he plays with, Tyler plays a variety of instruments for the Brazos Chamber Orchestra. “If you play percussion, you don’t play one instrument — you play about 100,” he said. “The first thing I have to [think about] anytime I get music for Brazos is, *Alright, I need a cymbal, a tambourine. I need some shakers. I need a triangle. Here’s my list of about 15 things that I need to have for this concert.* It’s an entirely different monster all by itself, but it’s fun. It makes you work, for sure.”



Before each performance, Tyler thoroughly sets up his tables, laying each instrument in their specific place. During some parts of the concert, he must rapidly switch between playing different instruments, so keeping his table intentionally organized helps him move through the piece. “If you pick up the wrong thing, you make it the best you can.”

One of his favorite parts of performing with the Brazos Chamber Orchestra is the connection he’s found with others. “There are a lot of really fun moments whenever we’re performing. The conductor and I will occasionally share some glances during a piece, whenever something

goes really well — or should not have happened.” During one rehearsal, Tyler accidentally picked up and played the wrong instrument at the wrong moment. He fondly remembers quickly setting down that instrument and sharing one of those glances with the conductor over his own mistake.

As evidenced by the different styles of bands he participates in, Tyler enjoys getting to play different genres of music with the orchestra. “They play some really great music there. There’s some jazz stuff, some pop stuff, and they do a lot of classical orchestral music that’s really in-depth.” He appreciates getting the chance to play music he’d normally not try. “There’s always something in each concert that we do that’s really cool,” he said.

“Music is a good way to communicate,” Tyler continued. “I’m not much of a talker, generally, but music is a good alternative form of expression and communication.” Musicians like Tyler understand the raw emotions that can be conveyed when performing live music. “Having that human aspect of it is a lot of fun.

Seeing people in the crowd react to it is also pretty great. There’s always something different from performance to performance.”

Not only does music allow Tyler to communicate with the audience, it allows him to communicate with his fellow musicians. “Music lets you see what people are thinking. You’re getting to share ideas and thoughts without even really speaking. Being in that setting where everything’s already very emotionally charged, really lets you connect to those around you. Music makes you vulnerable.” Through music, Tyler has maintained deep friendships with others, some of which are with people from his days at Burleson High School.

When he was younger, spending hours practicing and progressively improving, he dreamed of a life full of playing music. “And I’m getting to do it. I don’t necessarily want to be some professional musician, touring around the world, or some world-famous teacher or anything like that,” he explained. “This is what I was going toward.” **NOW**




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# Orthodontics by Birth & Fletcher

— By Emma McKay

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“I wanted to be in health care for as long as I can remember,” Dr. Sheila Birth said. “[Orthodontics] is the best because you can change people’s lives.” Since its Burleson branch opened 12 years ago, Orthodontics by Birth & Fletcher has been correcting the teeth of the community and preventing countless oral surgeries.



“We’ve got a reputation in orthodontics as early adapters,” Dr. Birth shared. “I think something that set us apart is technology with aligners.” Over the years, Dr. Birth and her team have worked on almost 8,000 cases, using a combination of Invisalign and Spark Aligners to treat them. “If it’s a really difficult case, we choose aligners because we can do things with them that we can’t do with braces. That’s the opposite of what almost anybody else will tell you.” Due to the number of cases they’ve treated, they’ve been invited to exclusive educational opportunities, expanding their knowledge in the field and allowing them to take on more advanced situations.

Recently, Orthodontics by Birth & Fletcher has begun implementing the use of a dental monitoring app. “It’s analyzed by AI. The patient takes a photo or a video [of their teeth] every week, so we can make sure the aligners are tracking like they should.” By remotely monitoring their patients’ teeth, they are able to tell patients when they need to schedule an appointment to treat a specific issue, preventing unnecessary trips.

“She wants to advance us to the point where these people can live their lives but still get top-notch care without having to be in here every time you turn around,” Dana Huggins, one of the managers, added.

Throughout her career, Dr. Birth has discovered that orthodontic ailments can cause many larger issues, many of which she chronicled in her e-book *The Orthodontic Cure*. “It’s been proven that if kids snore, they don’t have a good airway. They don’t get the oxygen they need, and it may lead to ADHD. That happened with my youngest son.” After his doctor couldn’t treat the problem, Dr. Birth started working to expand her son’s overcrowded mouth. “Pretty quickly, he stopped snoring,” she said.

**“SHE WANTS TO ADVANCE US TO THE POINT WHERE THESE PEOPLE CAN LIVE THEIR LIVES BUT STILL GET TOP-NOTCH CARE WITHOUT HAVING TO BE IN HERE EVERY TIME YOU TURN AROUND.”**

With patients who have overcrowded mouths, Dr. Birth works to prevent tooth extraction. “When you [extract teeth], it makes the mouth smaller and pushes the tongue back into the airway. Then you run into airway problems, and they’re more likely to get sleep apnea,” she explained.


Dr. Birth is proud of her capable staff, many of whom have worked with her for decades. “They’re smart. The team adapts to change. I come up with an idea, and they help me implement it,” she shared. “The key to it all is a team.”

“She’s very humble,” Manager Jennifer Goodwin said of Dr. Birth. “[She] treats everybody the same. She loves to be able to teach.” Not only does Dr. Birth’s staff love her, but her patients do, too. “We have a patient who dresses up as Dr. Birth every year for Halloween!”

Dr. Birth and her team adore their patients and the community around them. They have enjoyed collaborating with the other practitioners around town and visiting with all their patients. Dr. Birth smiled, “I love what I do.” **NOW**




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## **Zoomed In:** Josh and Samantha Gambrell

By Emma McKay

Samantha and Josh Gambrell recently spent the day fishing at Bailey Lake. Although by mid-day they'd only gotten a few bites, the two were more grateful for the time they spent together. The couple met online three years ago after Josh moved to Texas from North Carolina. "We just got married, about a year or so ago," Samantha, a Burleson native, shared. "We've got a lot in common. We're outdoorsy types."

When they're not in nature or at home watching TV dramas, the two are busy at their jobs. "We work a lot. I dispatch for CareFlight, and he's a truck driver."

Whether the future takes them back to North Carolina or keeps them in Texas, Samantha confirmed one thing, "Burleson will always be my home."



*Josie, Gage and Jameson Frye stroll around the stalls at the Burleson Farmers Market.*



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Madison Halbert of Avery Rose Apothecary sells stones and jewelry to the community.



Jaden Caver and Jayleen Smith enjoy a sunny Saturday morning walking in the park.



Cindy and Joslynn Jones find local gifts and goods at the Burseson Farmers Market.

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Ad Council

Some signs to look for:

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- No babbling by 12 months
- No words by 18 months

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Waffles With  
Strawberry Cream Cheese Dip

# CookingNOW

## IN THE KITCHEN WITH WINTER MANLEY

— By Emma McKay



“I really like cooking because it teaches you new things in a super fun way!” Winter Manley exclaimed. The 10-year-old cook enjoys discovering and creating new recipes to share with her loved ones. “My waffle and strawberry dip is my favorite, and everyone I know loves it. I just put things together, and it turns out so good!”

Since she was 3, Winter’s mom, grandma and aunt have been teaching her different cooking techniques, supporting and inspiring her. She even took classes for six months at Young Chefs Academy in Fort Worth. “I love cooking for other people, and I love when people try my new foods, and it makes them happy. Food brings people together,” she stated. “I hope I continue this fun passion forever!” **NOW**

### Waffles With Strawberry Cream Cheese Dip

**8 oz. cream cheese, softened**  
**1/2 cup powdered sugar**  
**1/2 tsp. vanilla extract**  
**1/2 cup fresh strawberries, finely diced or mashed**  
**Waffles, cut into strips**  
**Fruit for dipping**

1. In a bowl, beat the cream cheese until smooth.
2. Mix in the powdered sugar and vanilla extract until creamy.

3. Fold in the strawberries.
4. Chill 15-30 minutes for best texture, if desired.
5. Serve with waffle strips and extra fruit.

### Baked Mac and Cheese

**2 cups elbow macaroni, uncooked**  
**2 Tbsp. butter**  
**2 Tbsp. flour**  
**2 cups milk**  
**2 cups cheddar cheese, shredded**  
**1 cup mozzarella or Colby Jack, shredded**  
**1/2 tsp. salt**  
**1/2 tsp. black pepper**

**1/2 tsp. garlic powder (optional)**  
**Paprika, to taste (optional)**

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F.
2. Cook the macaroni according to the package directions. Drain; set aside.
3. In a saucepan, melt the butter over medium heat. Stir in the flour; cook for 1 minute.
4. Slowly whisk in the milk; cook until thick (about 3-5 minutes).
5. Turn off the heat; stir in the cheeses, salt, pepper, garlic powder and paprika until the cheese is melted and the sauce is smooth.
6. Mix the cheese sauce with the macaroni.
7. Pour into a greased baking dish. Sprinkle extra cheese or buttered breadcrumbs on top, if desired. Bake 20-25 minutes until bubbly.

### Biscuit Pizza Bake

**1 16-oz. can refrigerated biscuits**  
**1 cup ground beef or Italian sausage, cooked**  
**1 cup pizza sauce**  
**2 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded**  
**1/2 cup sliced pepperoni**  
**1/2 tsp. Italian seasoning (optional)**

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Grease a 9x13-inch baking dish.
2. Cut the biscuits into quarters; layer them in the baking dish.
3. Sprinkle the cooked ground beef or sausage evenly over the biscuits.
4. Pour the pizza sauce over the top.
5. Add the mozzarella, pepperoni and any desired toppings, such as mushrooms, bell peppers, olives or onions.
6. Sprinkle with Italian seasoning, if desired.
7. Bake 25-30 minutes, until the biscuits are cooked through and the cheese is bubbly.
8. Let cool a few minutes before serving.

### Buffalo Chicken Dip

**1 cup chicken, cooked and shredded**  
**1 cup cottage cheese**  
**1/2 cup cheddar or mozzarella, shredded (optional)**  
**2-4 Tbsp. hot sauce**  
**1/2 tsp. garlic powder (optional)**  
**Salt, to taste**  
**Pepper, to taste**  
**Green onions, to taste (for garnish)**  
**Cilantro, to taste (for garnish)**

1. If baking, preheat the oven to 350 F.
2. In a bowl, mix all the ingredients; transfer the mixture to a small baking dish.
3. Bake 15-20 minutes until bubbly and lightly golden on top. (Skip this step if serving cold).
4. Garnish with green onions or cilantro.
5. Serve with tortilla chips, crackers or celery sticks.

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Danisha Chapman, winner of the \$50 cash prize from NOW Magazines, said, "I look forward to reading the magazine each month along with seeing the recipes, coupons and city monthly activities and playing the scavenger hunt game."

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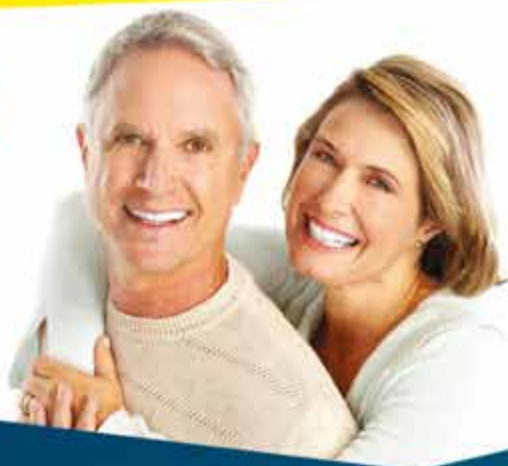
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