

# CorsicanaNOW

# M A G A Z I N E

FEBRUARY 2026

# Running Healthy

Bobby Watkins  
is there when a  
patient needs help

# In the Kitchen With Amelia Mathes

## Also inside:

# Scavenger Hunt

## Featured Business: Watkins Development Construction Services



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February 2026  
Volume 23, Issue 2



**Virginia Riddle**  
CorsicanaNOW Editor  
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## ON THE COVER

Overcoming  
obstacles is  
Bobby Watkins'  
daily journey.



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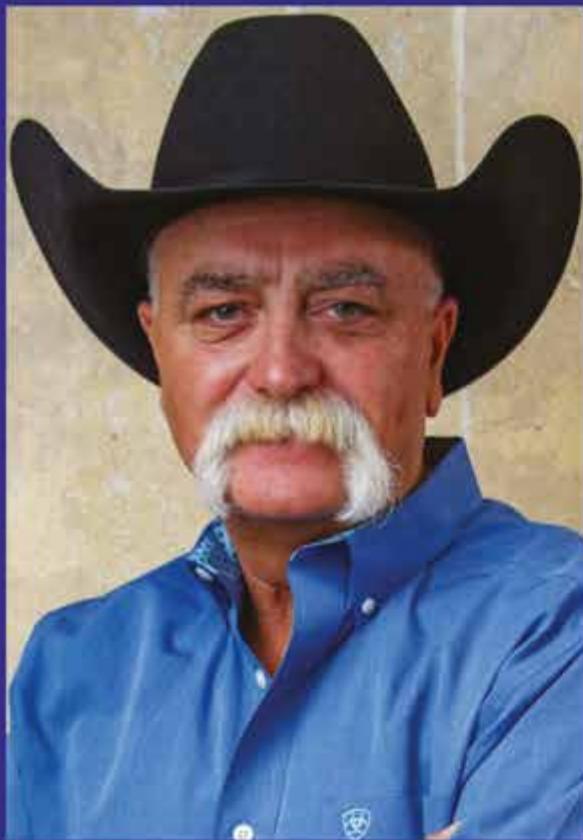
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# KEEPING IN TUNE

— 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.”



*"I have an enormous amount of empathy and sympathy for patients. Telling my story seems to calm them down."*

— By Virginia Riddle

# RUNNING HEALTHY

Running 6 miles a day on a treadmill would be challenging for most people. But for Bobby Watkins, it's an accomplishment he's worked hard to achieve and enjoy, and it's his way of working on his health while helping others work toward achieving healthy goals. Bobby's been on both sides of the hospital bed as a patient and as a certified medical assistant. "I'm in nursing school now, because I want to help others and fix health problems like those that have affected my family," he explained.

Bobby inherited renal and cardiac problems from his mother's side of the family. "I lost my mom when she was only 28 years old due to those problems, and then I was in the system living mostly in San Angelo and Lubbock," he recalled. After graduating from high school in Waco, Bobby returned to San Angelo only to become homeless. "Jason Thompson, a preacher, found me living on the Dallas streets," Bobby said. "He put me in touch with resources that helped me. He and my friend, Paul Miller, have seen me through all my health issues."

While Bobby resides in Corsicana, he's employed at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital Dallas. Until recently, he worked in the same cardiac unit in which he was once a patient. Then he was transferred to help internal medicine doctors. "I'm excited about the change to internal medicine because I can learn so much more than just focusing on heart issues. Having so many medical issues myself helps me big time in my profession," Bobby explained. "I have an enormous amount of empathy and sympathy for patients. Telling my story seems to calm them down."

Renal failure reared its ugly head in Bobby at age 11. Since then, he's had multiple issues, but all are related to his underlying genetic renal and cardiac problems. "In all, I've had 36 surgeries to date, and I've almost died four times," Bobby said. By age 25, he had to have both hips replaced. Dialysis created calcium clots in both legs, costing him his left leg below the knee and two toes from his right foot. Clots also caused a heart attack, which necessitated triple bypass surgery. "I knew heart attack symptoms and got help," Bobby said. "After the surgery, I had to take a nursing school final exam from my hospital bed." He's had different organs removed due to the renal problems, including having a kidney transplant. "My transplanted kidney isn't working like it should be due to the cardiac surgery, so I'm back on the transplant list and on dialysis," Bobby added.



When not at work or working on earning his BSN degree from Chamberlain University-Irving, Bobby enjoys life in Corsicana. "I like the people here and love the way the town looks, and I enjoy going to some of the get-togethers/events downtown. I rode in the bike ride that was downtown," he said. Bobby enjoys baking, has taken up painting abstracts in acrylics and works out in a local gym on his days off. When in Dallas, he works out at the hospital's gym. "I don't mind the drive from Corsicana to Dallas to work and to class. It's usually a relaxing time for me unless traffic is bad," he explained.

"I'm always looking for answers,

whether in class or otherwise," Bobby stated. "When a patient asks me a question, if I can't answer it, I'll move hell and high water trying to find the answer. Knowing what to expect when I'm a patient and understanding what the doctor is saying is critical to me personally, and I know it's helpful to my patients."

Learning has been an important part of Bobby's personal medical journey. He received his medical assistant training through Concorde Career College-Dallas where he was consistently on the Dean's List and has continued that honor at Chamberlain. He's received Lamplighter honors and has been Student of the Month at Chamberlain.

While he waits for another kidney transplant, Bobby will work out to maintain his fitness level. "With my prosthesis, walking long distances can be tiring," he said. "I also must take a lot of medications, especially for anti-rejection. Otherwise, I do pretty well."

Every February since 1964 has been American Heart Month, and Bobby encourages people to learn CPR

and the symptoms of heart trouble/heart attack. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, heart disease, no matter the cause, accounts for one in five deaths in the U.S., and nearly 80 percent of those deaths could have been prevented with lifestyle changes. "Listen to your body and medical professionals," Bobby shared. "Keep up with medical lab results. Know your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers, and question everything. Do the cardiac rehab, physical therapy or occupational therapy needed to get back to moving and doing."

Inspired by his family medical history to keep learning and taking care of himself, Bobby is looking forward to the day when, after graduating and passing the licensing exam, he can help his patients even more through nursing and the knowledge he's gained through his BSN degree and personal medical journey. He concluded, "I'll continue to share my journey with others. Life is too short. You must grab it, hold on to it and enjoy every minute." **NOW**

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BusinessNOW

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— By Virginia Riddle

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Watkins Development Construction Services, a Corsicana-based design and construction firm since 1978, provides complete services for industrial, commercial and residential projects both large and small. "We make it our business to find the perfect fit for your needs," Phil Seely, project manager, stated. "We focus on the overall project delivery to create cost-effective solutions. Experience counts as these professionals see each project through the design, planning, pre-construction and construction phases, turning clients' wishes and longtime dreams into reality."

Owned by Loran Seely, P.E., and president, Watkins Development has its own custom fabrication and trim shop for metal work and an equipment yard for civil work. "We service the community with metal fabrication and installation, concrete repair/replacement and calculation/analysis," Phil explained. Projects range from fabricating and installing industrial buildings for Atmos to repairing damage on residential property, proving no job is too big or too little for Watkins Development to expertly handle. "We take pride in everything we do," Phil added. "We're passionate about serving our community because this is our home."

A team of 25-30 people, depending on project needs and time of

year, are employed. "These tradespeople have a wide range of diverse skill sets matched well to the demands of each customized project. Our design and construction professionals provide a true partnership with our clients, helping them reach their goals and objectives," Phil said. "We have proven effective in offering and delivering comprehensive building design and construction services. Our broad experience, gained over these 40-plus years with building everything from residential barndominiums to large factories, serves clients well." WDC projects include work at the Corsicana Airport and Navarro County Emergency Management Building; multiple industrial buildings for large- and small-scale industrial projects for Guardian, Pactiv, Polyguard and other local industries; building commercial properties for local businesses; designing and constructing various residential barns and sheds of all sizes — as well as site preparation, foundations and paving for new construction projects.

Watkins Development Corporation is uniquely staffed by three engineers with 71 years' collective experience managing all aspects of construction. Loran, a registered professional engineer, oversees all designing, engineering, estimating and construction projects. Phil, following in his father's footsteps, joined the company in 2015 after earning his engineering degree in 2009. He assists in designing and estimating projects and coordinating OSHA requirements/training. Chris Valek, P.E., joined the engineering team in 2021 after earning his engineering degree in 2014. He assists with design, engineering and estimating, bringing engineering knowledge with a positive feel for customer service to the team.

Rounding out the management team are Operations Manager John Douglas, and office staff, Jody Dragoo and Angela Grant. John has been fabricating and erecting metal buildings for 45-plus years, making him a valuable and knowledgeable team member. In addition to overseeing the daily operations of multiple ground crews, he is responsible for conducting OSHA-approved safety training for forklift and aerial lift operators. Jody and Angela manage deadlines, dollars and day-to-day office operations. "Our office staff cheerfully communicates with our customers, suppliers, bonding agent and governmental agencies," Phil explained. "This is a great team that you, our clients, can rely on."

They actively support the local community by taking part in fundraisers for various organizations. "We are committed to faith, family, our clients and constant improvement," Phil said. "Try us, we aim to please!" **NOW**

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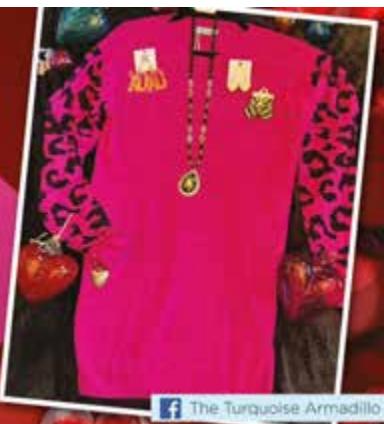
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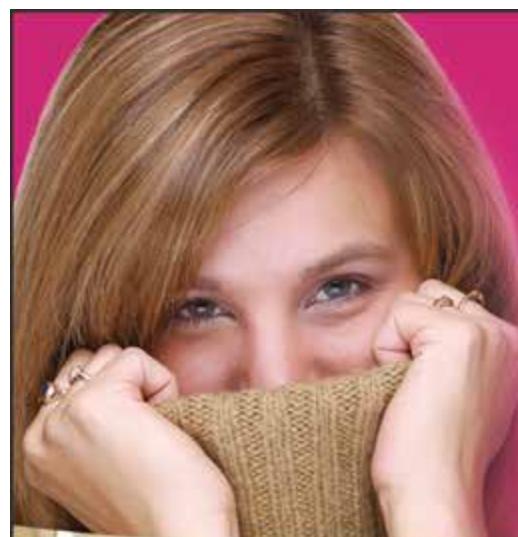


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## Zoomed In: Rhett Kearns

Living history and antique cars are two of Rhett Kearns' interests that seem to track well with his position as the Pearce Museum director. A graduate of Eastern Washington University and Georgia Southern University, Rhett had formerly been the educator/interpreter at Ft. McKavett State Historical Site, trading a desert climate for Corsicana. "My wife, Katelyn, and I like the hospitable people and good food here, and we're still away from big cities," Rhett stated.

Rhett — yes, he was named after *Gone With the Wind*'s Rhett — enjoys recreational homesteading, especially bee keeping, and traveling. "My dad was in the Air Force and then a commercial pilot, so I've been to 35 states, Europe and the Middle East," Rhett explained. "I invite everyone to join us at the Pearce for the March 14th Living History Day."

By Virginia Riddle



Veronica Reyes entertains at The Patio.



Fred Torres and Ivy Tirado, HOWI representatives, speak to NARFE Chapter 1191 members.



Outdoor Painters Society artists attend WLAC's opening reception for their works.

# NOW



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Million Dollar Spaghetti

## CookingNOW IN THE KITCHEN WITH AMELIA MATHES

— By Virginia Riddle



Amelia Mathes enjoys cooking for her family and at Kinsloe House. "Most of my cooking at home is Italian or down-home cooking," she said. Bread making, grilling and smoking different foods are also favorite cooking pastimes.

Her family has a garden, so they grow vegetables enabling Amelia to make her own tomato sauces. "We also process our own meat, mainly chicken and deer, and enjoy being able to provide as much as we can of the food we eat," Amelia explained.

"I find most of my recipes online. I usually add or subtract different ingredients and spices to make it my own," she continued. "I'm inspired for what I'm going to cook by what's on sale. I enjoy trying new recipes, and I'm always happy to learn new cooking methods." **NOW**

### Cabbage Roll Soup

**2 tsp. vegetable oil**  
**1 lb. ground beef**  
**Salt, to taste**  
**Pepper, to taste**  
**1 medium yellow onion, diced**  
**2 garlic cloves, minced**  
**4 cups cabbage, chopped**  
**2 medium carrots, chopped**  
**4 cups beef broth**  
**3 8-oz. cans tomato sauce**  
**1/2 cup white rice, uncooked**  
**1 bay leaf**

**3 Tbsp. brown sugar**  
**2 Tbsp. parsley, chopped**

1. In a Dutch oven, heat the oil. Season the ground beef with salt and pepper; cook until browned.
2. Add the onion and garlic; cook for 2-3 minutes. Add the cabbage, carrots, beef broth, tomato sauce, white rice, bay leaf and brown sugar; stir until combined.
3. Bring the soup to a simmer; cook for about 25 minutes until the rice is tender. Remove the bay leaf; sprinkle servings with parsley.

### Million Dollar Spaghetti

**1/2 lb. ground beef**  
**1/2 lb. ground Italian or pork sausage**  
**Salt, to taste**  
**Pepper, to taste**  
**1 small onion, chopped**  
**2 garlic cloves, minced**  
**24-oz. marinara sauce (divided use)**  
**16-oz. spaghetti noodles**  
**3 Tbsp. butter**  
**8-oz. cream cheese, softened**  
**1/4 cup sour cream**  
**1 cup cottage or ricotta cheese**  
**2 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded**  
**2/3 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated**

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. In a large skillet, crumble and cook the ground beef and sausage; season with salt and pepper.
2. Remove most of the grease; add the onions and garlic. Cook for a few minutes until the onions are translucent. Add the marinara sauce, reserving 1/2 cup for later use; stir to combine. Set aside.
3. Cook the spaghetti according to package directions until just al dente; drain. Place the hot spaghetti in a large mixing bowl with butter and the 1/2 cup reserved marinara sauce; toss to combine.
4. In another small bowl, combine the cream cheese, sour cream and cottage cheese.
5. Pour half the spaghetti into a 9x13-inch pan. Top with a cheese mixture layer; add the remaining spaghetti. Add the meat sauce; smooth into a layer. Top with the mozzarella and Parmesan cheeses.
6. Bake 30-40 minutes or until the mixture is hot and bubbly. Check it at 20 minutes; if the cheese is browning, cover with tin foil. Cool for at least 15 minutes before serving.

### Meal in One

**1 lb. hamburger meat**  
**Salt, to taste**  
**Pepper, to taste**  
**1 16-oz. can Ranch Style Beans**  
**1 15.25-oz. can whole kernel corn, drained**  
**1/2 cup onion, chopped**  
**1 16-oz. can tomatoes, drained**  
**1 box Jiffy Corn Muffin Mix**  
**8-oz. cheese, shredded**

1. In a skillet, season the meat with salt and pepper. Brown completely; drain.
2. Stir in the beans, corn, onions and tomatoes.
3. In a bowl, mix the corn bread according to package directions; pour the uncooked corn bread mix over the meat mixture. Top with the cheese.
4. Bake in the skillet at 350 F for about 20 minutes or until the corn bread is done and the cheese is lightly browned.



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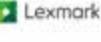


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