

The Community Magazine Serving Mansfield and the Surrounding Area

# Mansfield NOW

M A G A Z I N E

March 2008

**A Symbol of  
Strength  
and Dignity**

**The Voice  
of Education**

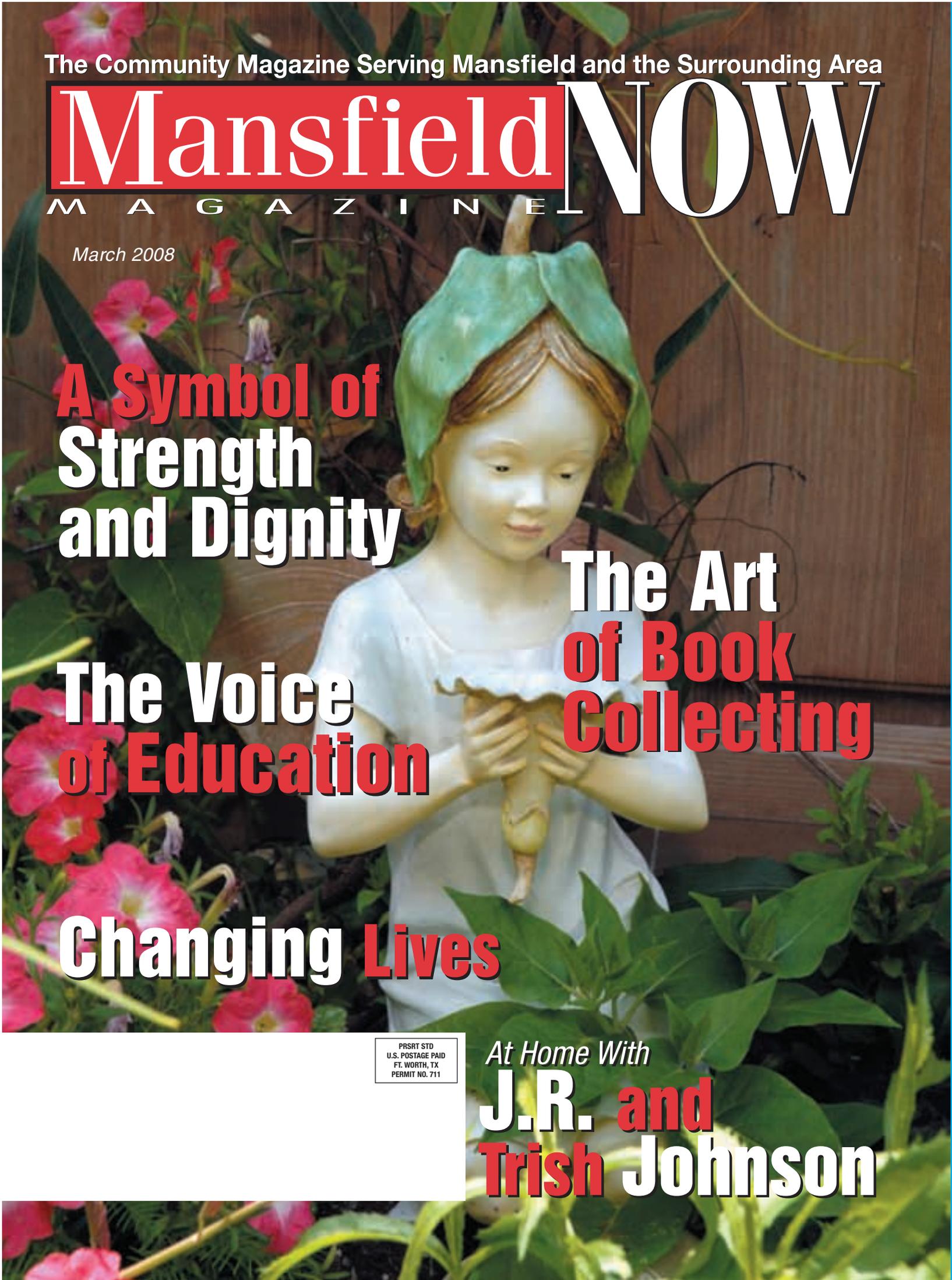
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*At Home With*

**J.R. and  
Trish Johnson**





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Kevin Cato  
**CENTER:**  
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Cynthia Smith, M.D., D.A.B.P.M.R.

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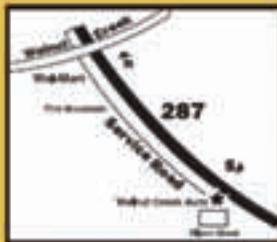
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Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$35 per year or \$3.50 per issue. Subscription and editorial correspondence should be sent to: NOW Magazines, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates and other information, call (817) 477-0990 or e-mail us at: rhensley@nowmagazines.com.



# Mansfield NOW

## Editor's Note

*Dear Friends,*

In like a lion, out like a lamb. The month of March is known for its tumultuous weather with extreme highs and lows. The reference to lambs and lions is connected to the constellations Leo, the Lion, and Aries, the ram or lamb. It is believed that the positions of these constellations in the sky relates to the weather in the beginning and end of the month. Thus, the lamb and the lion. But rest assured, there are no *lambs* in Mansfield!



There is no better month than March to highlight the strength and tenacity of Dr. Robin Shofner or the determination and grit of Dr. Dave Williams. Educator Kathy Meek, named "Teacher of the Year," shares a passion for reading and the belief that one person can make a difference.

Truly, *MansfieldNOW* showcases citizens who are more powerful than any early spring storm. They are a force to reckon with. Enjoy!

Very truly yours,  
*Alex Allred*  
*MansfieldNOW* Editor

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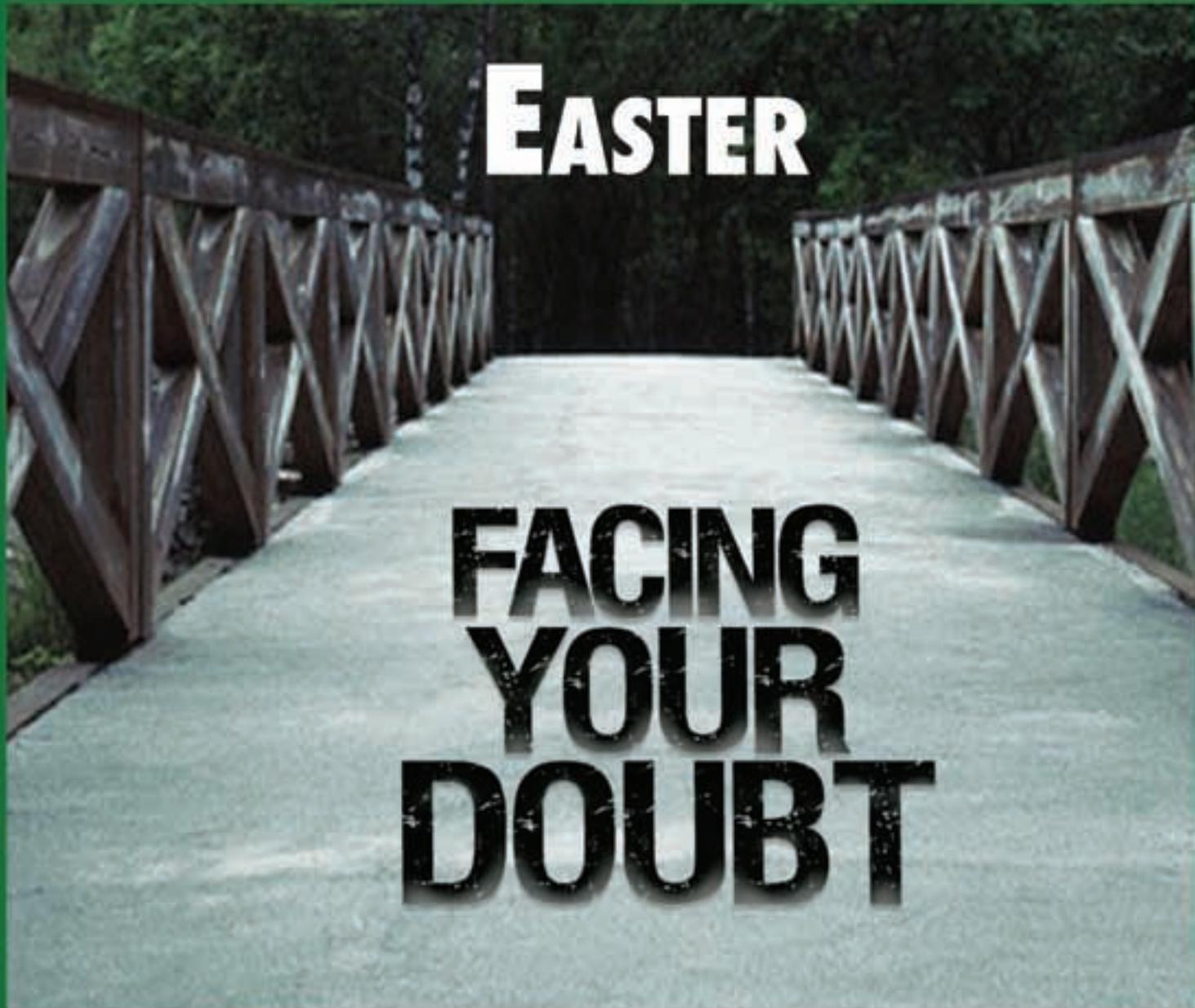
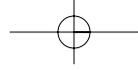
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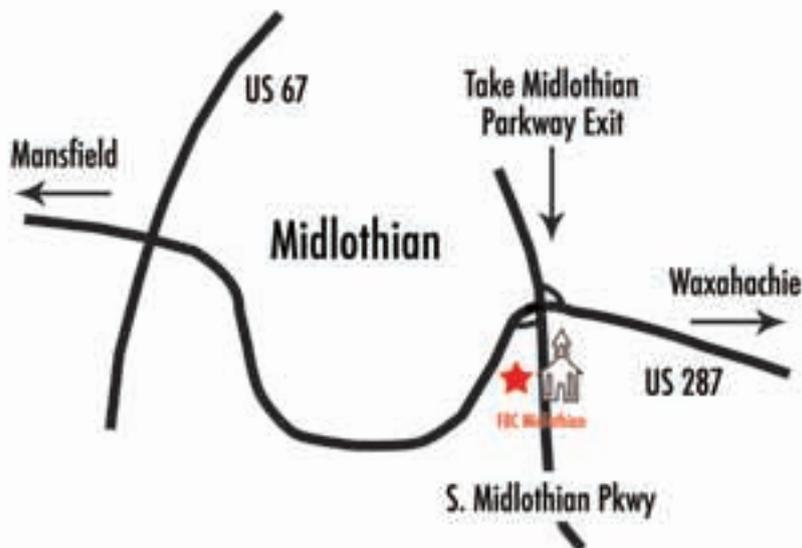
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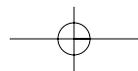
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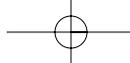


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# A Symbol of Strength and Dignity

— By Alex Allred

It is easy to watch the news, read the reports and become disillusioned about our fellow humans. At times, there seems to be a growing disregard for humanity. Then, along comes a woman like Robin Shofner. She is a modern day angel who has dedicated her life to helping others. Yet her daily activities require a level of strength and determination which few of us could ever understand.

Anyone who meets Robin, sees a

All she ever wanted to be was a veterinarian. “And I always knew I wanted to have children right away.” Nothing was going to stop her from these goals. So, within one year, and with what can only be described as phenomenal fortitude, Robin healed, graduated and married the love of her life.

After giving birth to her son, Justin, in 1986 and her daughter, Brittany, in

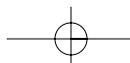


beautiful, vibrant woman with warm, expressive eyes and a wide smile. Today, she is a talented jewelry designer, the president of her homeowners association and a full-time veterinarian. But this strong, active and talented horsewoman is also a survivor.

While studying to become a veterinarian at Texas A&M University, Robin was involved in a horrific car accident. Her back was broken when a friend drove their vehicle head-on into another truck. Initially, family feared she might suffer some paralysis, but when a doctor told her she needed to quit her studies at A&M, “I checked myself out of the hospital in my wheelchair,” she said.

1990, Robin felt something was wrong. However, she was repeatedly told by doctors that what she was experiencing was normal. One doctor told Robin, “We’re all tired. You just have to deal with it.” Robin knew better.

She is reluctant to share that she was diagnosed with lupus in 1992, because, above all things, she is determined not to be defined by the disease. Lupus is an autoimmune disease in which the body actually works against itself. Typically, the human body produces antibodies to protect itself against viruses, bacteria and antigens. With this disease, the body cannot differentiate between foreign substances and its own cells,



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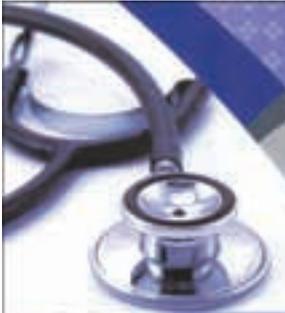
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Anjani Amin, M.D., is board certified by the American Board of Family Medicine and is a member of the Texas Medical Association, Tarrant County Medical Association, Texas Academy of Family Physicians and the American Academy of Family Physicians.

Dr. Amin received her undergraduate degree in biology from the University of Texas at Austin and her medical degree from the American University of the Caribbean.

Dr. Amin takes great pride in being able to provide personal and comprehensive care to her patients while considering the context of their family and community.

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affecting joints and organs, including heart, lungs and kidneys. An estimated one to two million Americans have some form of lupus, most with only a mild form. But for people like Robin, the disease can be fatal. Ninety percent of people with lupus are women, most diagnosed during their childbearing years. But because it can be so hard to diagnose, many people go untreated for great lengths of time.

Robin was living her dream. She was working in a large animal clinic



in Houston, named "Animalitarian/Humanitarian of the Year" by the Texas Veterinarian Association and was rearing her children when the devastating diagnosis of lupus was given. To make matters worse, her employers did not want to deal with her illness and fired her. Robin fought back, winning a lawsuit, and instead of giving up her dream or taking the advice of some medical experts who said she should quit, she opened her own clinic.

"I remember," said Robin's husband, Matt, "we had a temporary clinic in Sugarland." Cages of animals took over his home. "People were seeking out her services. They loved her."

Once, while working at the vet clinic at A&M, Robin was given a horse because of her commitment to the beautiful animal. Clients have taken her in as a member of their own family, following her wherever she

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goes. Today, the families in her Mansfield suburb know they can call on Dr. Robin when their family pet is sick or injured.

“But what really amazes me, is everything she can deal with,” Matt said. “She’s in constant pain. She has a pain level I know I can’t relate to.” It is, he believes, one of the things that makes her such a remarkable veterinarian. “She understands the pain an animal is in. She is not going to deny an animal treatment or medication if they’re in pain.”



Her bedside manner is beyond compare. “Especially with kids,” said Matt, noting that when Robin must put an animal down, she goes to great lengths to help the family’s children process through the experience. “She always explains to the kids about life and death. She’s been doing this for 22 years, and still cries when she puts them down and [she] stays with the family.”

The outside world sees her as she really is — strong, independent, deeply affectionate and caring. “But I have to pace myself. I know that,” Robin admitted. That is her greatest challenge. On good days, Robin takes on the world. Her enthusiasm is boundless. On bad days, however, “It’s bed rest,” Matt said. “Before she was diagnosed, she was always on the go. Now, we’re always telling her to take it easy, to pace herself, but it’s hard for her. She just doesn’t know how.”

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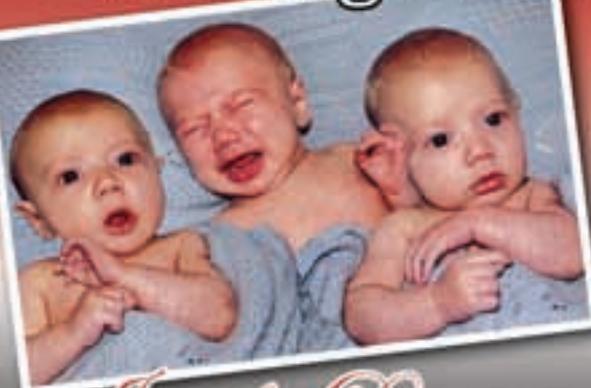


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she admits, she has cycles. For Robin, it is essential that her illness does not define who she is, yet oddly, it does. She stands as a symbol of strength and dignity. She is a woman who offers hope, who reminds us how far determination and grit can carry us and allows us to hope that we, too, could be as noble and strong as Robin.

“I never want people to know,” Robin said. “But I do tell them when I know I appear distracted. I don’t want them to think that I don’t care



about them.” Always, Robin puts the feelings of others before her own. “The way I see it,” she smiled, “I have a lot of reasons to live. I have a great life. So, if I get to stay alive but have to have lupus, I’ll have lupus!”

“You would never know she’s sick,” said Matt, Robin’s greatest fan. While Robin is quiet about her illness, Matt is not. “She’s incredible, isn’t she? She has a good game face. She’s not afraid to speak her mind and make things right. She’s not one to stay in bed and feel sorry for herself.” According to Matt, if anyone could change the world, it would be his wife. Once a little girl who simply had a dream to help animals, Robin has overcome life-altering events and redefined who she is as a woman. One never knows how they might behave in the face of adversity, but Dr. Robin has found out. **NOW**

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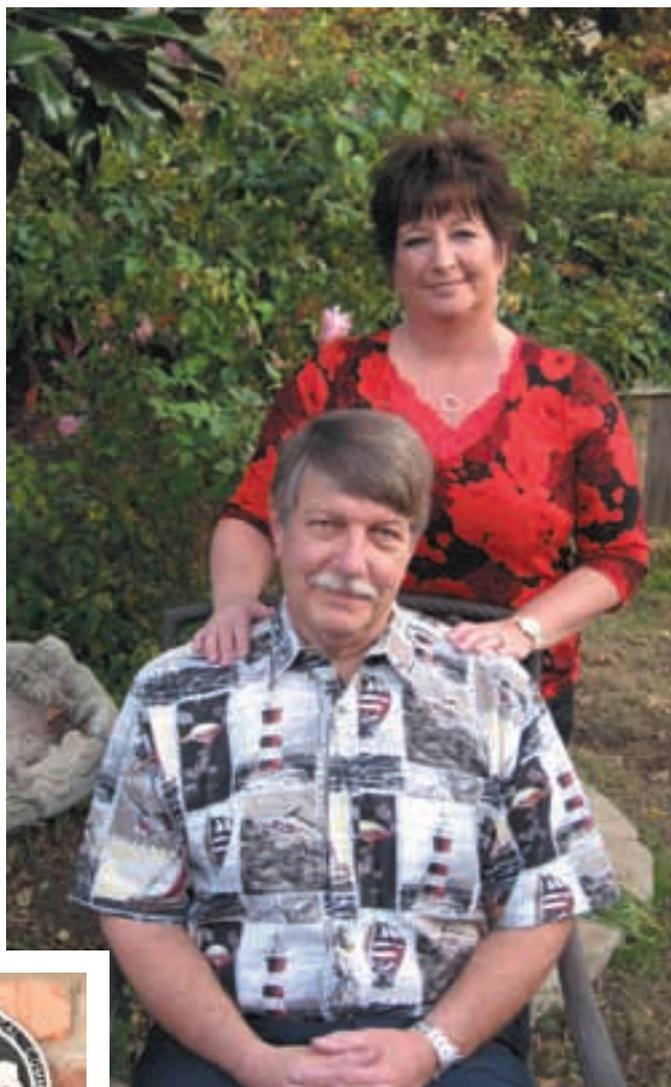
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# German Heritage Abounds

— By Sandra McIntosh

J.R. and Trish Johnson lived in Cedar Hill for 15 years prior to relocating to the Mansfield area. Once the decision to downsize was made, the first thing the Johnsons did was put their home in Cedar Hill on the market. “After having the house on the market for two years, we had a buyer come along who gave us 10 days to move out,” Trish said, explaining that the proposal to sell, find a new home and move came on a Sunday. “The following day, our Realtor faxed us information on a home in Mansfield that met the criteria we were looking for.” J.R. and Trish toured the home that same day. Within 24 hours, they made an offer and a contract was drawn up. “A week later we were signing the papers,” J.R. said, “and at the end of 10 days, we were moving in.”

Although the move was fast and furious, J.R. and Trish could not be happier with their new three-bedroom, two-bath abode they purchased four years ago. As the home’s first owners, they were drawn to the overall quaint, country feeling the location offered from the very beginning. “The house and the location had great character,”





Trish reiterated. "We are close enough to walk to the downtown area and we enjoy the parks in Mansfield, too. It's the perfect place!"

At first glance, the home's interior style appears to be traditional, but Trish said it is also a bit eclectic. "Each room is different," she said, as J.R. shook his head in agreement. After 26 years of marriage, J.R. has learned firsthand what living with a licensed interior designer entails. "Trish is always changing things," he said, referring to her 25 years as a designer. "I can't tell you how many bedroom suites and dining room tables we've had over the years."

Trish knows what she likes, and she works hard to make it happen, both inside and outside the home. There are times she will find something in the trash or along the side of the road that immediately becomes something she can put to use in her own home. "I see things differently. I see what it can be," she said, with confidence. She also



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The study, located to the immediate right of the entryway, is considered J.R.'s room. Since he has spent years in the communications department of the Federal Emergency

considers herself to be a spontaneous buyer. A great example of one such costly purchase is the Nixon painting, which hangs above the fireplace mantle in the living room. Trish has a natural ability when it comes to mixing the expensive with the not-so-expensive, as evidenced by the lamp next to the wingback chair beside the fireplace. "I found that floor lamp in someone's trash," she said. One of her many gifts is an ability to visualize the overall value of things, especially those things that no longer mean anything to anyone else.



Management Agency (FEMA), it was only fitting that this room be decorated in a nautical theme. "I've always loved boating," J.R. added, "and our son, Shawn, was in the United States Coast Guard." J.R.'s love for science fiction can also be found in the study as he talks about one of his newest acquisitions. "The Gothic gargoyle oversees the room,"

he said, with a hint of laughter in his voice. "He tells me if I've been naughty or nice." The dark plank flooring replicates floors that at one time used to be found in warehouses. Its

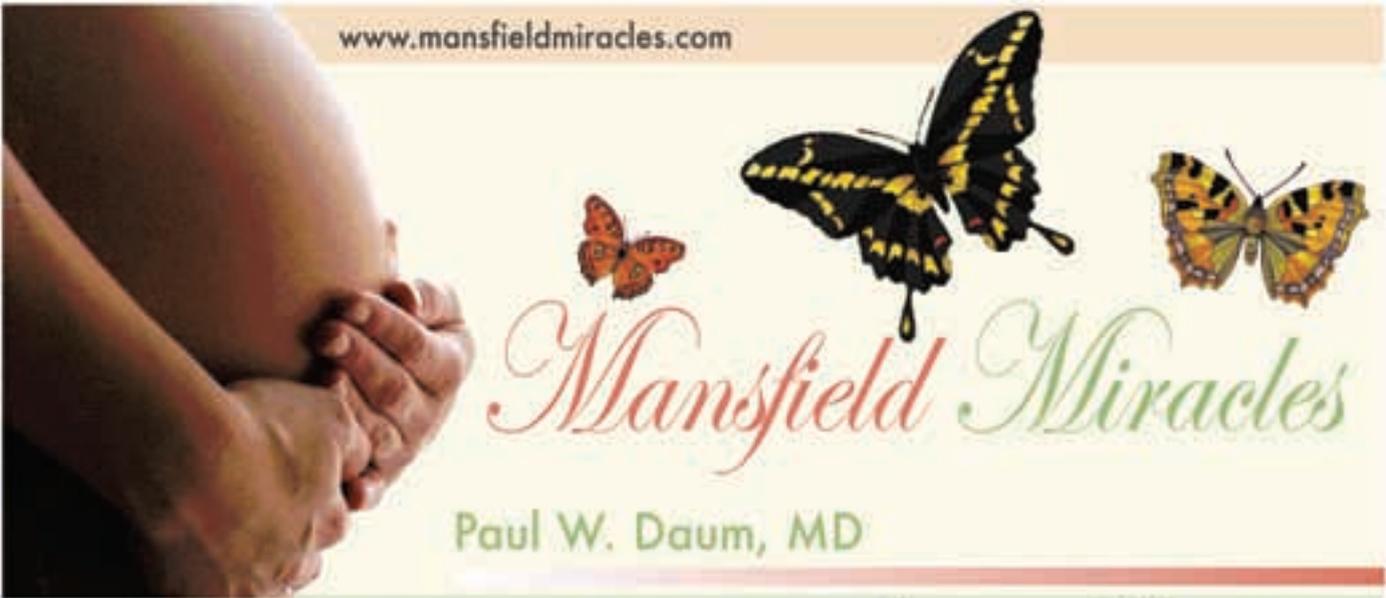
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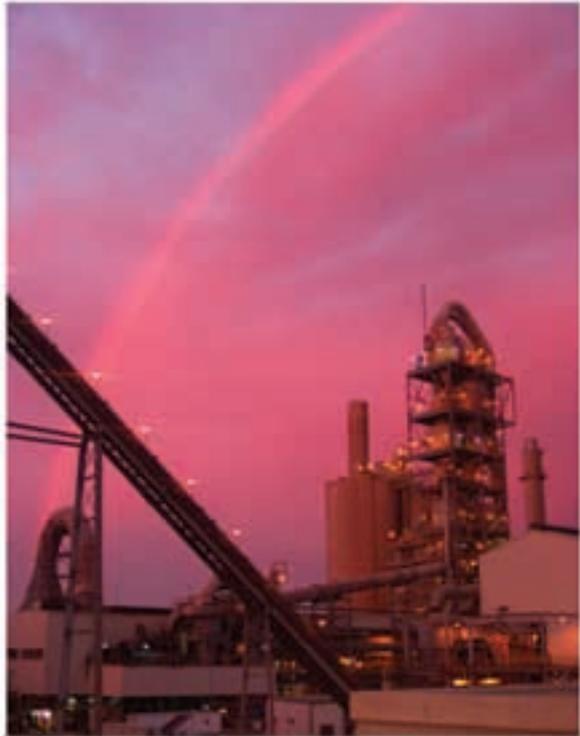
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rustic nature adds character, while also being what Trish considers “dog proof.”

When asked about collectibles, Trish was quick to answer that she is not one to collect because she “likes it



all.” One common thread found throughout the home’s interior is Trish’s German heritage. “Every room has at least one special piece of antique furniture from Germany,” she explained. Examples include a rocker in the master bedroom dating back four generations and a camel-back trunk in the guest room that once belonged



to Trish’s great-great-grandparents. “My brother found the trunk buried behind the chicken coop,” she said, as J.R. laughed once again at the memory of restoring the trunk that the ground casing had preserved. The Victorian love seat, also located in the master suite, was another one of Trish’s finds, which

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J.R. refurbished to its original state.

As a certified Master Gardener, graduating with the class of 2002, Trish found that her new home offered a blank canvas when it came to landscaping. Within the first week, she drew up plans for the patio area, the sprinkler system and the shed that looks more like a child's playhouse. The water garden is home to another of Trish's many roadside treasures. "I found the stump on the side of the road," she said, still laughing at the memory of getting the oversized piece of wood into the backseat of her car. "The sound of the water is very relaxing."



Trish's eclectic style does not stop at the back door. It extends into the backyard, which the couple says is just an extension of the indoor living area. Garden fairy statuettes and perennials take their rightful place among antiques randomly placed around the backyard and within the garden itself. The old door with its antique knob, the top section of an ancient kitchen cabinet, a second, smaller door with glass still intact, rusty buckets and watering cans are great conversation starters, as well as finishing touches to a garden, that when in full bloom, is breathtaking. "I call it shabby chic," Trish said.

Not long after the couple moved to



their new home, J.R. was diagnosed with cancer. "The backyard became my place of therapy," she added. While putting in the soil allowed Trish a means to relieve the stress she was under, it also offered a peaceful place for J.R. to relax; somewhere aesthetically pleasing to the senses while he went through the treatment he needed to become a cancer survivor.



J.R. and Trish share a close relationship with their neighbors as evidenced by the "open gate policy" and stone walkway that has been incorporated since moving to Mansfield. "We meet in our pajamas for coffee," Trish added. They also spend quality time with family, friends and their 7-year-old grandson, Colt, aboard the *Knotless*, their cabin cruiser kept in a covered boat dock at Eagle Mountain Lake. When not spending time with family and friends or working around the house, Trish can most generally be found educating the younger generation on the importance of water conservation. Working toward becoming a naturalist, Trish finds enjoyment and fulfillment in teaching others about the wonders found in nature. In fact, she put life in a nutshell when she said, "We enjoy the best of both worlds!" **NOW**



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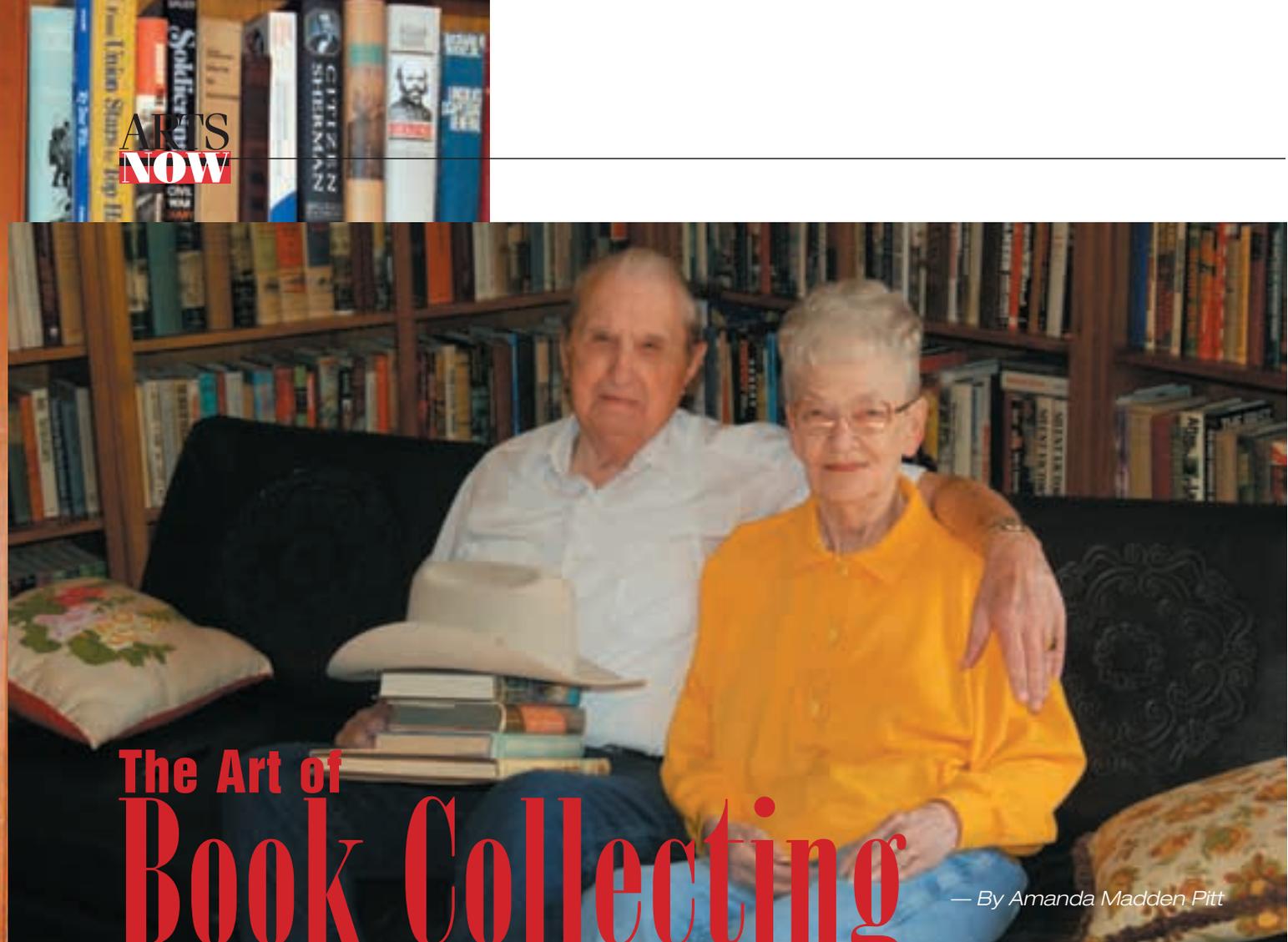
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# The Art of Book Collecting

— By Amanda Madden Pitt

The walls of the Walkers' Mansfield home are lined with artist renderings of General Stonewall Jackson, Beauregard, Joseph Wheeler and Nathan B. Forrest to name a few. Even more impressive is a collection of books more than 5,000 strong. Not one of them is a duplicate. Titles span a variety of categories and genres: true crime, World War II, military history, the Civil War, Western history and religion. The books have been painstakingly cataloged by Bill Walker himself in an intricate system that divides them by author and subject matter. Although Ella Walker, Bill's wife, loves fiction mystery novels, as a connoisseur of nonfiction, Bill's shelves hold only that. "Books are my passion, and the Civil War is my love," he said.

Fittingly, a bust of his favorite hero, Robert E. Lee, stands guard at the edge of one of the three floor-to-ceiling bookshelves positioned throughout the

couple's Mansfield home. Also included in his personal collection are battle relics such as a German officer's helmet from World War I, a book entitled *Songs the Soldiers and Sailors Sing* and other pieces of combat gear. Bill even specially designed a small, mobile study desk. It was handcrafted so that he could easily roll out old maps and research material during study. On it sits a 20-pound dictionary and a pocket full of maps.

Leadership and heroism are two values that motivate his collecting bug. Finding the truth about battles fought, won and lost on American and foreign soil is another passion that drives Bill to collect and learn more about the great state of Texas, as well as the history of our nation as a whole. Bill's love of history books goes deeper than just the art of it. The Walker family has strong ties to defending this nation, and they have traced members of their lineage

# ARTS NOW

back to almost every battle since the Spanish-American War. Even their granddaughter, Michelle, served a term as a Marine. Bill, himself, served in World War II and his father, Ralph Henderson Walker, gave his life for his country in World War I. Bill's late grandmother, Clara Knipp, was also a patriot and supported Bill's work as mayor. In a scrapbook of his political term compiled by his mother, Billie Walker, as a gift to her son, a single quote sums up the depth of the Walkers' deeply rooted ties to family and patriotism:

"A people that takes no pride in the



noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by remote descendants." — Macaulay.

Bill and Ella were born and reared in Mansfield. They can remember a time when movies at Farr's Best Theatre were only \$0.09 per person. "I used to go down and sit and talk with some of the older leaders of Mansfield when I was kid. I guess that's when I first became interested in Mansfield history," he said.

Ella's love of history and family shows

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**ARTS**  
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as well, and her prize possession is a pair of Mrs. Clara Knipp's childhood shoes. The tiny lace-up boots have been bronzed and mounted on a placard for preservation; the inscription reads *Clara Mama Knipp, 1873*.

Meeting Bill and Ella means hearing the stories of those they hold dear, and according to Ella, her mother-in-law

**“I used to go down and sit and talk with some of the older leaders of Mansfield when I was kid. I guess that’s when I first became interested in Mansfield history.”**

was a hero in her own right. She went to college in the 1800s and reared a family as a single mother after the death of her husband. Ralph, a medic in World War I, died from the effects of mustard gas after going into a gas-infested fox hole to rescue a wounded soldier. Bill was 9 years old at the time, and remembers how Mansfield business owners helped him through the loss of his dad. Mr. Blessing, in particular, was a father-figure to Bill, taking him under his wing while also taking him fishing.

A passion for reading and collecting books was a family pastime for Bill and Ella while rearing their two children. Today, the pastime has grown into an art form of sorts. Bill loves to share his library with grandchildren, students who need resources for research and friends who have an interest. Bill says that the hardest part of the library now is planning for new carpet, which will have to be installed around the shelves, along with deciding what to do with the books in the future. “My library is open to anybody, but not to take books home,” he said laughing. “Even kin can sometimes be hard to get a book back from!”

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Sports  
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# Changing Lives

— By Alex Allred

Long before the recent TV show *The Biggest Loser*, Dr. David Williams dedicated his life to personal fitness, the business of people and the idea of saving lives. Dr. Dave, as he is best known, received an athletic scholarship to Boise State. There, he went on to become an all-American in wrestling and an academic all-American. He also earned his degree in physical education and his master's in exercise science. It was then, he said, "I realized there are a lot of people who really need help."

He would not yet know how prophetic this statement was. Dr. Dave moved on to earn his doctorate in kinesiology at Texas A&M. Dr. Dave's dissertation focused on the benefits of exercise with children.

While many personal trainers take the required courses in exercise and nutrition before becoming certified, typically a six-month commitment, Dr. Dave dedicated an entire decade to the idea of "helping others." Almost instantly, he found his clientele. Or, rather, they found him. He began his first job as a strength and conditioning coach at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas. His area of expertise extended from summer to winter sports, inside the pool or on the track. But as his reputation grew, he moved beyond the collegial athletes.

"Dallas is a real hot bed for Olympic athletes," Dr. Dave said. During the 1996 Atlanta Games, 13 of the athletes were his clients. He began training professional baseball and football players. By professional standards, 1996 was a very big year. It was also a year that would forever change his life.

"That was when Jake was born," Dr. Dave said. Today, Jake (11) is the older brother of Caden (9) and Kylie (6). But it was Jake who truly made his father recognize his own tremendous talents.

"I think God gave him [Jake] to me because I can be a positive influence in his life."

When Jake was about 2 1/2 years old, he was diagnosed with autism.



"He had all the classic signs," Dr. Dave said. "He developed normally until he turned 2, then he started to lose his speech and social skills. Of course, you're in denial, thinking it can't be your kid. So many people who have kids with autism can't help them. It can be really difficult. But Jake is the

light of my life. I realize the potential that he has."

Within the small circles of elite athletes, Dr. Dave continued to be sought out, but as Jake's needs grew, Dr. Dave shifted his priorities. Once a professor at the Tarrant County College, he became a full-time trainer to gain more flexible hours with his own children. In doing so, he also became the kind of trainer he always wanted to be. Suddenly, he was picking up clients no other

trainer wanted to deal with. People with Parkinson's disease, physical handicaps, as well as the morbidly obese became his



# Sports NOW

most treasured clients.

Steve Cosio is living testament to this. While his only complaint was the need to get in shape, he said, "Dr. Dave has a really good caring heart and wants to help people. He's always been very concerned about people, not as clients but as friends. With him, there is no ulterior motive. He just wants to help."



Steve said, "I was the guy who weighed 135 pounds and was afraid to join the gym." But with the help of Dr. Dave, Steve is in the best shape of his life and no longer in need of a chiropractor. In fact, his entire family works out with Dr. Dave.

He helped Deb Taylor overcome a personal tragedy and believe in herself once more while losing more than 150 pounds. "He's been nothing but incredible every step of the way," she said, detailing the small steps Dr. Dave laid out for her. "He gives assignments

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## Sports ~~NOW~~

so that when I'm not with him, I'm still thinking about the work that has to be done."

Rather than shy away from the more serious problems, Dr. Dave dives in. With one client who has Parkinson's, Dr. Dave said simply, "She has good days and bad days, but I expect her to make results on the good days and not slack off."



Dr. Dave is emboldened to the idea of never giving up and never giving in ... not for his clients and never for his own children. Last year, he created the Texas Autism Foundation to raise awareness for other families.

"It affects one out of every 150 children. It's the biggest childhood epidemic in the nation, and it's just getting higher and higher but people don't know anything about it. Therapy is so expensive, and it's breaking families. I want to help."

Always, he wants to help. Dr. Dave personifies the personal trainer. He has changed and saved lives.

"He's an incredible father," Deb said. "An incredible man. He cares so much. I see it in his face, hear it in his words and I admire him so much for it."

So, who wants to be a personal trainer? **NOW**

For more information about Dr. Dave's Fun Run and autism, go to [www.getfitwithdave.com](http://www.getfitwithdave.com).

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## Business NOW

# True Blessings

— By Alex Allred

While they are busily providing for their community, offering comfort and aid to families, they are also dispelling myths about the funeral business. Gone is the image of the melancholy undertaker who lurks about. The staff at the Blessing Funeral Home are engaging, surprisingly witty, extremely compassionate people, who, each individually, came into the business with one motive: to serve the public.

“Part of the job that I love,” said Kelly Wallace, funeral director and manager of the Blessing Funeral Home, “is that we take an unbearable circumstance and try to make it healthy and meaningful.” For that reason, Kelly explained, he does not like the word, “closure.”

“It’s not closure, because normal, or what was once normal, for a family takes on a new meaning. Everything for them has changed.”

As a result, the staff admits, “We become emotionally invested in our families.”

Family, of course, is the key word. Although the business has changed hands throughout the years, Blessing Funeral Home has always been a family business. Today, it stands as one of the oldest businesses in Mansfield, currently owned by Jim and Jimmy Lucas. Located at 401 Elm Street on a beautiful, sprawling estate, it was actually founded prior to 1905 by T. E. Blessing. Before the family business was moved to the



*“We become emotionally invested in our families.”*

*The Blessing Funeral Home staff is ready to serve others in their time of need.  
Back row, left to right: Darrell Elliott, Jason Arellario and Butch Evans.  
Front row, left to right: Pat Elmore, Kelly Wallace and Sue Wallace.*

two-story mansion, the house was once the location for the Mansfield Male and Female College, believed to be in operation as early as the 1860s.

Throughout the decades, the mansion has undergone many facelifts, yet the business motto holds steadfast.

“Virtually every funeral home offers the

he calls, ironically enough, a blessing. Also a musician, Butch Evans was inducted into the Rockabilly Hall of Fame for his contributions as a piano player, but only came to Blessing Funeral Home after he left a banking career.

“I started banking in the 1960s when you could actually help people.



same merchandise,” Kelly said. “It’s the service that separates us. It’s the service.”

It was a combination of curiosity and luck that led Kelly, former musician, into his career as a funeral director; one that

You could help them secure loans and buy a home.” Today, Butch said, major corporations own most banks. “You have no authority to help anyone, and it’s become very impersonal.”

## Business NOW

Only when his friend, Langdon Withers, the former funeral director asked Butch to help out, did he discover how much he enjoyed helping people and becoming an instrumental part of their lives during their greatest hour of need. "I look at it as a ministry," Butch said. Butch then decided to begin a second career and went back to school to earn his degree as a funeral director.

For Jason Arellano, "I became curious after my father died." At the tender age of 14, he became involved in a mentoring program and began working at a local funeral home. Eventually he earned his degree as a funeral director and with his family, lives on the second floor of the Blessing Funeral Home. Like both Kelly and Butch, Jason was drawn to the emotional component with the overwhelming desire to help his fellow human beings.

"That people trust us with their loved ones, that they come to us," Jason said, "is an honor."

Kelly's wife, Sue, and Sue's sister, Pat Elmore, along with Darrell Elliott serve as staff. Together they are a close-knit group, thoroughly enjoying each other's company as they strive to serve others. In fact, it is because of this chemistry that they are able to provide so well. Throughout the halls of the funeral home, there is a tremendous amount of love and laughter. Over the years, old and new friends come "just to visit." According to Kelly, "we like it that way. Our doors are always open."

When the Wallace's beloved Labrador retriever, Tucker, died last year, residents of Mansfield sent flowers and cards. For them, Tucker was more than the dog who hung out on the front porch. Tucker silently comforted those who did not know how to express their grief to another person. He was loyal, affectionate and always there; much the same will always be said of the Blessing staff who may be contacted at (817) 473-1555 or [blessing@familyowned.net](mailto:blessing@familyowned.net). **NOW**

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# The Voice of Education

— By Alex Allred



Watch a person with animals and you get a peek inside their true character. It was Mark Twain who once wrote, “The man who regards his own life and that of his fellow creatures as meaningless is not merely unhappy but hardly fit for life.” Though Kathy Meek was unaware of those words, she has lived by that philosophy all her life. So, then, it was no surprise to anyone when she rescued, “a crazy little shih tzu dancing down Interstate 35.” Kathy laughed, “I have the dogs that no one else would take.” This would include Lucy, a pit bull who would have otherwise been put to sleep.

Day-in and day-out, Kathy also works with over 160 students at T.A. Howard Middle School. Preadolescence combined with fears and anxiety, changing hormones and social cliques

does not make for the most productive teaching environment, yet Kathy hardly seems to notice.

“I get excited about every school year,” Kathy said. “I look forward to coming here each and every day. I love these kids and I love working with them. This is a really great age!”

In her 33 years of teaching, Kathy has taught every grade level from the first to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but middle school, she said, “is my favorite. They are still so young and impressionable. I can really make a difference here.”

Indeed, she has. In May 2007, Kathy learned she had been nominated “Teacher of the Year” for the Mansfield ISD. Three months later, she beat out 40,000 teachers to earn the prestigious title of “Region 11 Teacher of the Year” and was identified as one of the top 20

## Education **NOW**

teachers in the entire state of Texas.

Widely respected for her incredible enthusiasm and patience, Kathy credits her gift to her mother. "She was my biggest cheerleader. She is the one who imbedded the 'you can do anything' philosophy in me." Today, Kathy has passed that on to her own students.

Truly, this is her calling. After 17 years with the Burleson ISD, Mansfield



came calling when they were in search of a reading specialist. Now in her sixth year and just months away from the 2008 Olympics, Kathy has created a school-wide reading competition at T. A. Howard. "It's the Reading Olympics!" Complete with gold, silver and bronze medal winners and her catch phrase, "We read to succeed here at T.A. Howard," Kathy is determined to make her students lifelong readers.

Her enthusiasm is so genuine and so strong that even her husband, Charles, has caught on. "He jokes that he wants to become a teacher. He hears how I talk about the kids all the time. I always have a kid I want to adopt and bring home and he says, 'You know, I really think I would like it [teaching]. You just always seem to love what you do so much.'"

But, Kathy admits, the art of teaching has become more challenging over the years. "Oh, listen. It's gotten harder because we have to get their attention. These kids have grown up with computers with all the lights, graphics and action. It is harder to get them hooked on books.

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“Even a decade ago if someone had told me I would be using all the tools I do now to teach, I wouldn’t have believed it.”

Never afraid to take on a new challenge, Kathy has introduced New Age technology into her classrooms. “I use things off the Internet, hook up to the television monitor, so kids can see it on united streaming [a digital video-on-demand teaching service], videos and clips off the Internet. I will do whatever it takes to get kids into books.”

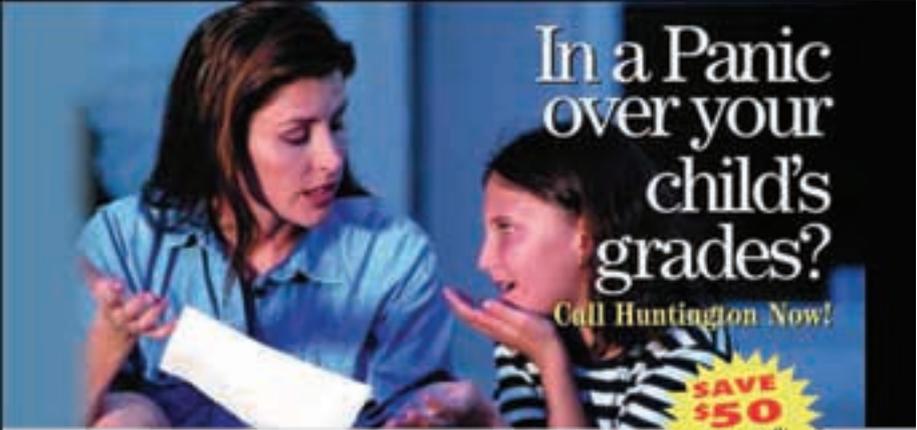
Her ongoing, attention-grabbing line with her kids is, “I taught [singer] Kelly Clarkson in Burleson. That’s my one claim to fame.”

In truth, Kathy has not yet fully come to understand her fame or her legacy. In her 33 years of teaching, she has taught thousands of students. To her students, she is a fun, outgoing, out-of-the-box instructor who makes learning enjoyable.

“She is ‘the voice’ of T.A. Howard,” said Assistant Principal Brandee King. “Her number one goal is to make sure every student is reading. She really is amazing. She is always willing to go that extra mile for the students.”

“I can’t explain it,” Kathy said. “Reading is my passion. I want each of my kids to succeed. I want to see each of my kids walk across that stage at their high school graduation. I want them to love to read, and I want them to know that Ms. Meek believed [in] them. Maybe then they will believe in themselves and do whatever they set their minds to.”

It is her goal to teach until she reaches her 40<sup>th</sup> year in the profession. Maybe then this incredible woman, lover of books and words, collector of all creatures will fully understand her own importance. It was also Mark Twain who once said, “The important thing is not to stop questioning.” But it was Kathy Meek who said, “What can be better than learning?” **NOW**



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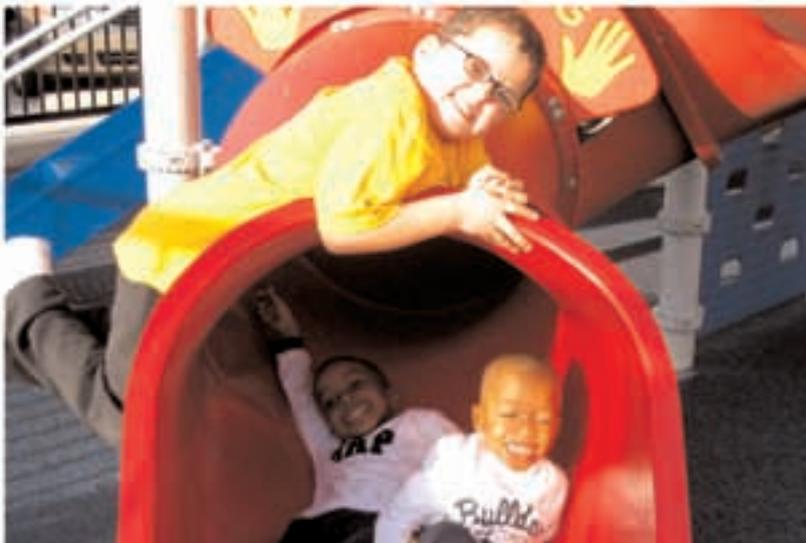
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# Around Town

## NOW



Everyone who attended Business After Hours at Chili's, top left, also enjoyed a delicious cake baked especially for the event. Girl Scout Troop No. 3544, top middle, sold cookies and took donations for "Project Troop to Troop." Ribbon cuttings were held, at right from top to bottom: Allstate Jim Jones, Cartridge World and Gwendolyn's Photography. Bethlehem Baptist Church, second row left, recently joined the Chamber of Commerce. Boys at a local playground, bottom left, played on one of winter's warmer days.





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# Around Town **NOW**



Ribbon cuttings were held, top left to third row left: Palio's Pizza, Laura Swearingen Team and La Quinta Inn. The Mansfield Bucks, top right, celebrated a win with coaches Chris Howard and Danny Clark. Doctors, lawyers and chiropractors, second row right, spent an evening of fun at Chili's during December's Business After Hours event. David Etley, Derek Bradburry and Charles Walker, bottom left, spend their spare time as youth basketball referees. James Morales, bottom right, celebrated his 6th birthday at Chicken Red.



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**R**ichie finds enjoyment in preparing the simple. While some may say a sandwich is just a sandwich, Richie makes the ultimate peanut butter sandwich. “My inspiration is my audience, as my 3-year-old daughter asks for a peanut butter sandwich almost daily, so I guess that qualifies as my cooking fame.” Richie said.

As Webmaster and communications specialist for the Mansfield ISD, Richie enjoyed creating the *MISD Staff Recipe eBook*. “I had an idea to take these recipes and put them into a collection for the staff,” he said. “The staff was already sharing their recipes with each other, so I opened it up to a larger audience online. We hope the staff eBook will put some of our favorite dishes into homes in the Mansfield community.” **NOW**

*To view more of your neighbors' recipes, visit our archives at [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).*

## IN THE KITCHEN WITH RICHIE ESCOVEDO

### CHICKEN TORTILLA SOUP

By Kayla Villarreal

- 2 - 3 boneless chicken breasts (boiled and cubed)
- 1 medium yellow onion
- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 2 10 3/4-oz. cans chicken broth
- 1 28-oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1/2 cup hot sauce
- 1/2 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. garlic powder (or one clove garlic pressed)
- tortilla chips
- Shredded cheddar cheese

\*options  
frozen corn  
fresh sliced zucchini

\*substitutions/additions

Use chicken broth from boiled chicken instead of canned broth and/or add two chicken bouillon cubes for fuller flavor.

Sauté onion in butter. Mix all ingredients in large stockpot. Bring to a boil; reduce heat. Serve hot over tortilla chips and top with shredded cheese.

### SLAM-DUNK SQJALAPEÑO RELISH

By Julie Mullins

- 3 1/2 cups sugar
- 2 cups apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 lb. jalapeño peppers  
(remove seeds and membrane, julienned)
- 1 medium yellow onion (julienned)
- 4 medium carrots (julienned)
- 1 large red bell pepper (julienned)
- 1 Tbsp. dill seeds
- 1 Tbsp. yellow mustard seeds

Combine sugar and vinegar in non-reactive stockpot

over medium heat. Stir and heat until sugar dissolves. Add vegetables; bring to a boil. Simmer 20 - 25 minutes until thickened. Add spices; simmer for 30 - 40 minutes. Stir occasionally. Remove from heat; cool to room temperature. Relish will thicken as it cools. Drain most of the liquid leaving only a small amount. Store relish in covered container in refrigerator.

### MARINATED VEGETABLE SALAD

By Becky Dodenhoff

- 1 14-oz. can artichoke hearts (drained and halved)
- 1 8-oz. package sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1 medium zucchini (cut into thin strips)
- 1/4 cup sliced green onions
- 1/2 cup Italian dressing
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 4 cups torn green leaf lettuce
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes (halved)
- 4 oz. mozzarella cheese (cubed)
- 1/4 cup ripe black olives (sliced)
- 2 Tbsp. Parmesan cheese (grated)

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# Who's Cooking **NOW**

Combine first four ingredients in heavy duty Ziploc bag. Pour dressing and balsamic vinegar over vegetable mixture. Turn bag to coat. Cover and marinate in refrigerator up to 4 hours turning bag occasionally. Combine vegetable mixture, lettuce, tomato halves, mozzarella cheese and olives in large bowl. Toss gently to coat. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and serve.

## SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE

By Shelia Betzel

- 5 - 6 sweet potatoes (baked)
- 1 cup milk
- 2 eggs
- 1 stick butter
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. allspice
- TOPPING:**
- 3/4 cup crushed corn flakes
- 1 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 stick butter
- 1 cup chopped pecans

Mix baked potatoes and remaining ingredients well. Bake at 350 F for 25 minutes. Mix topping ingredients; use to top potato mixture. Bake an additional 25 minutes.

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# Take the *Drama* Out of Insurance

—By Lezlee Liljenberg

It is amazing that more information is not published about insurance. It is rarely mentioned, if ever explained. Being familiar with insurance can put a homeowner in a great situation. The drama encountered concerning homeowner's insurance is avoidable!

### Start Early: What Lies Beneath

One never knows what is beneath the insurance claims of a home. Water damage, fire and theft, along with other claims, are not required to be disclosed on a Seller's Disclosure Form. However, there may be occurrences associated to the home that can cause difficulties in obtaining insurance. It may not prevent the buyer from obtaining the insurance, yet it can easily delay the closing until all matters have been determined.

An insurance agent will run a CLUE report. In this report they will see all of the past claims for the seller and those on the home. Why does this matter? Example: The home has had four thefts in the past two years. The buyer may find this very important, and may want to know if there is a crime problem in the neighborhood. If the buyer waits until a few days before closing to place insurance, this could cause issues.

### Credit Matters: Mission Possible

Credit does matter with insurance carriers, but it is not an "impossible mission" to get good coverage at affordable pricing. The reason many buyers wait to research insurance is because

they may be told that it will hurt their credit (FICO Score). This is a myth and can be very misleading.

In the state of Texas, insurance companies still determine economic risk. When an insurance company considers the risk, it is what one might deem as a "soft hit." It should not show up on credit reports that the lender is considering for the loan. Loan officers are sometimes wary of this, and may tell clients to wait for insurance while they are still attempting to get the loan solidified. It is important to learn more about the home being purchased.

### Flood Insurance: Dark Waters

The most important fact to know about flood insurance is that it should be the same price from carrier to carrier. Why? Because it is offered through FEMA and then written by an insurance carrier to manage the policy. If the client gets a low-ball offer from a carrier, then be assured it is not an "apples-to-apples" quote. Many times the parties involved think it is a competitive position for the insurance companies. These policies are not something for which the insurance companies determine the pricing. Again, it comes from FEMA.

Due to growth, weather conditions and changes in infrastructure, there has been a vast amount of flooding in the past few years. All of these circumstances have triggered FEMA to remap flood zones. What this can mean is that the seller never needed flood insurance; however, now the buyer is required to purchase this in accordance with the lien holder. Knowing whether or not a home is in a flood zone is easily obtained information and a trusted insurance agent can assist with this. **NOW**

*Lezlee Liljenberg is an Allstate representative based in Arlington.*



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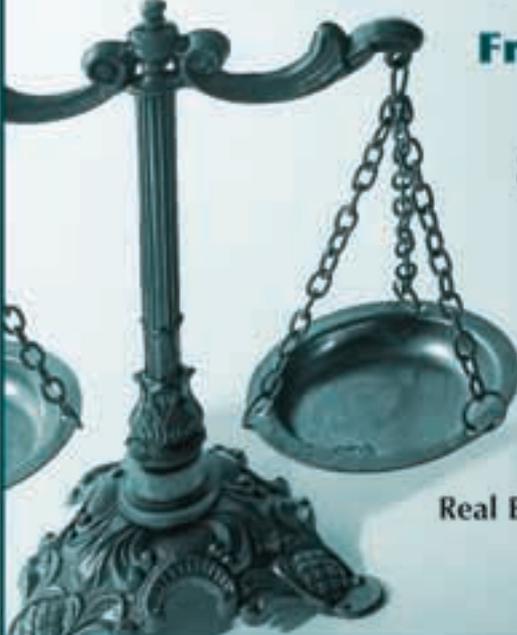
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# Walking Toward the Cure

— By Sandra McIntosh

One person can make a difference in the fight to eradicate cancer. Dr. Gordy Klatt, a colorectal surgeon, had a strong desire to grow the income of his local American Cancer Society office. He decided to personally raise the money by running marathons, something he had enjoyed doing all his life. Thus, the first American Cancer Society Relay For Life event was born in Tacoma, Washington, and has grown into an annual event that lit the fire within an entire nation.

While circling the track at Baker Stadium at the University of Puget Sound, Dr. Klatt had plenty of time to think about how others could get involved in similar events in their own communities. His vision included a 24-hour team relay event that could raise money to fight cancer. Today, people from neighborhoods, both large and small, are making an impact in the fight against all cancers as they put one foot in front of the other.

Relay For Life is a fun-filled,

overnight gathering designed to celebrate survivorship and to also raise money for continued research and programs for the American Cancer Society. Teams of people congregate at area schools, fairgrounds and parks to take turns walking, running or skipping laps throughout the night and early morning. The overall goal is to keep at least one team member on the track at all times.

Angie Fanning has gone from captain of a team in her hometown of Burleson to currently serving as the co-chairperson of the Mansfield Relay For Life event. "It's such a meaningful time," Angie said. "It touches you in such a way you want to participate year after year." Her main motivation was her grandmother, who lost her battle with brain cancer 22 years ago. Today, the survivors keep her coming back for more. "Survivors give everyone hope," she said, further

explaining that she participates because she believes she is helping others.

Angie feels the best way to bring awareness to Relay For Life is to remain actively involved. This year, she is happy to report that more young people than ever are stepping up to carry the torch. "A student at Pantego Christian Academy has a personal goal of \$30,000," Angie said. "All she wanted for her 8th birthday was for people to make donations to the local Relay For Life event. She's well on her way to her goal with the \$600 she's received so far."

The Relay For Life event will be held in Mansfield on March 28, beginning at 6:00 p.m. and culminating at 6:00 a.m. March 29. This year's event will be held at Katherine Rose Park. For more information, please call Stephanie Corbin-Helms at (682) 554-3360 or Angie Fanning at (817) 247-4233. **NOW**




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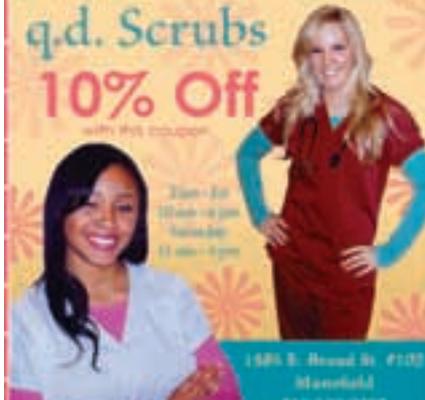
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*Dr. Harrison trained at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, Texas and has moved to the Mansfield/Arlington area to provide a wide range of general surgical needs for its residents.*

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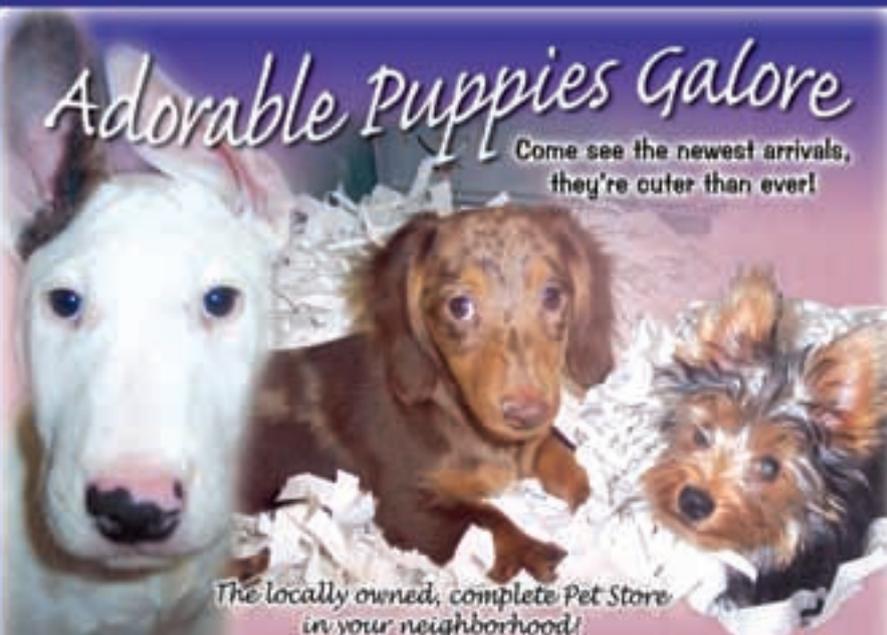
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# March 2008 Community Calendar

**Monday – Friday**

The Young at Heart, for ages 55 plus, meet at the MAC between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. For more information, call (817) 453-5420, ext. 2227.

**Every Tuesday**

Small business counseling provided by SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives). 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Mansfield Chamber offices, 114 North Main Street. Call (817) 473-0507.

**Every Wednesday**

Mansfield Public Library hosts On My Own Story Time for 3 to 5 year olds from 10:30 – 11:00 a.m. Call (817) 473-4391.

**Every Thursday**

Mansfield Public Library hosts Special Kids' Story Time from 10:00 - 10:30 a.m. Please register for this special-needs program in advance by contacting Annette at the library at (817) 473-4391.

Mansfield Public Library hosts Toddler Story Time for 2 year olds from 11:00 - 11:30 a.m.

**Every Friday**

Kiwanis Club of Mansfield meets at 7:00 a.m. at Ryan's Grill. Membership and other information can be obtained by calling (817) 473-9886.

**March 3**

Mansfield Activities Center hosts the Senior Dance for senior citizens from 7:00 – 9:30 p.m.

**March 4**

Senior citizens trip to the Kimball Art Museum from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. For more information, contact the MAC at (817) 453-5420.

**March 6**

Mansfield Child Care will discuss "SIDS, SBS and Infant Brain

Development" at 7:00 p.m. in the Mansfield Library community meeting room, located at 106 Wisteria Street. Visit their Web site at [www.mansfieldchildcare.com](http://www.mansfieldchildcare.com).

Luncheon Charity: Stuffed Animals for the Alliance For Children. Performance of "Texas Heritage Western Day" by Paul Geisel and the Woods Chapel Band. Contact Marilyn Gerloff at the Walnut Creek Country Club. Program beings at 11:00 a.m. For reservations or more information, contact Pauline Taylor at (817) 477-2340.

**March 8**

Mansfield Library hosts Teen Book Club for ages 12 to 17 at 2:00 p.m. The library is also looking for teen volunteers. Call (817) 473-4391.

**March 11 and 25**

Texas Ladies Networking meets from 11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Ryan's Grill in Waxahachie. Call (214) 587-1221.

Kiwanis Afternoon Club meets at Ryan's Grill on Hwy. 287 in Mansfield. Visitors welcome. (817) 453-0872

Mansfield City Council meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. at Mansfield City Hall, 1200 East Broad Street.

**March 14**

Deadline to nominate for the Mansfield Parks and Recreation Department "PARD" -ners Award. Do you know someone who has improved the quality of leisure opportunities through recreation and parks programs? Nominate them for the award by filling out a nomination form at the Mansfield Activity Center at 106 S. Wisteria. Call (817) 804-5797.

**March 17 – 21**

MISD Spring Break

Check out activities for children at the MAC, including an Animal Extravaganza on March 18! Call (817) 453-5420.

**March 18**

Mansfield Public Library's "As the Page Turns" adult book club meets every third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m.

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

For more community events, visit our online calendar at [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).

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