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March 2008

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At Home With

Mattie
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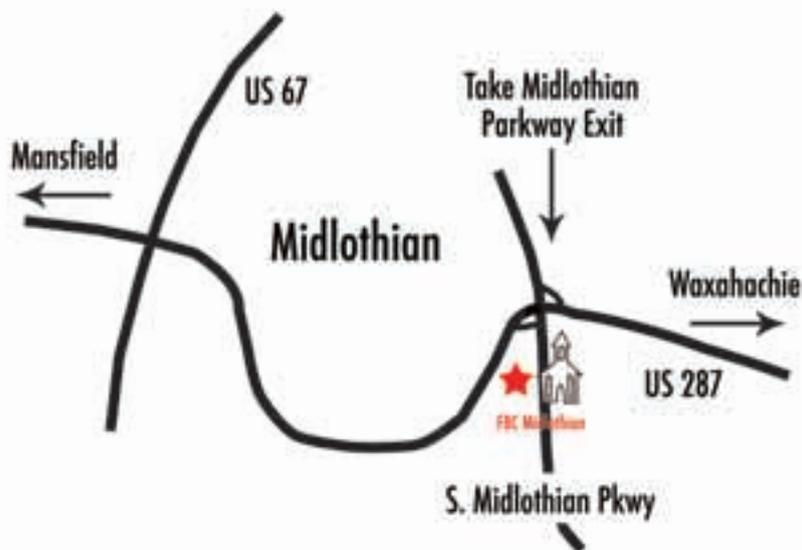
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Beautiful flowers decorate Mattie
Thompson's backyard.*

Photo by Terri Ozymy.

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Midlothian NOW

Editor's Note

Hello, Midlothian!

The month of March heralds new life. As warmer days release winter's grasp on the land, it is a joy to watch brown turn green with each passing day. Keeping Midlothian green is always on the mind of Jim Berman, Parks and Recreation manager for the city of Midlothian. Read about his plans to bring more trees to our city and enjoyment to our parks.



Mattie Thompson works hard every year to bring great beauty to her home and enjoyment for her neighbors. As a Master Gardener, she is indeed masterful in the art of producing life and color. She has created a true "Alice in Wonderland" environment. Read about it in our home feature.

Dave Wyrzten and Matt Lichtenwalter have created gaming history with their new video game. Follow their fictitious family through the book of Exodus.

I hope you enjoy celebrating the resurrection of Christ this Easter with your family and friends in your place of worship.

After spending time outside in the sun, come in and relax with your neighbors' inspiring stories.

Betty Tryon
MidlothianNOW Editor

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“Our goal with Midlothian Forever Green is to have 7,000 trees by 2015.”

Green ^{All} Around

— By Betty Tryon

With spring right around the corner, Master Gardeners and those not as masterful, begin to prepare lawns and gardens for a brand new season of growing. Thanks to Jim Berman, Parks and Recreation manager for the city of Midlothian, plans for keeping the city green continue year-round. He remarked, “When I first started working here, this department managed water, sewage lines and maintenance. We now

the maintenance, care and mowing of all the city parks. With such a small staff, Jim occasionally has to get on a mower himself.

Jim came to Midlothian with 18 years of experience working in larger cities, one of which had a population of 48,000 people. Since beginning work here in 2004, the parks have received a lion’s share of his attention. “One of the first things I did when I started to



have a specialized program for our parks. The Parks Department handles the maintenance of existing facilities, construction of new facilities and planning for future facilities.”

The Parks Department consists of Jim, an assistant and four laborers. This department is responsible for all

work here was to rewrite the parks and recreation master plan and rewrite the rules and regulations for the parks.”

Few people realize the scope of land that makes up Midlothian, a reality that challenges Jim daily. “What is unique about Midlothian,” he said, “is that within the city limit the population



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is 15,000, while the school district population is 28,000. The school district is twice the size of the city. My service area is larger than the city's tax base. The school district boundaries were drawn so large because back in 1940 it needed to cover enough farming area to make sure they had enough students!"



One of Jim's many goals for our city is to have Midlothian become the first Tree City USA in Ellis County. Jim saw a need for trees nearly a decade ago. He commented, "Trees help filter out the air. When the sports park was built in 1999, one of the first things I noticed was that there were no trees. If you look at an aerial map of Midlothian you see mostly flat, open land. Any density in trees is along creeks and streams."

Even though the need for additional trees is clear, acquisition of those trees has spurred Jim's competitive nature. "I am very competitive, being first is important to me. We have started a tree nursery and are growing trees from little saplings. We have 580 trees growing at water tower number two. Presently, the Parks Department takes care of them." In pursuit of his goal of having more trees in the city, Jim has also established the Midlothian Forever Green project. "Our goal with Midlothian Forever Green is to have 7,000 trees by 2015.

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I am glad to say that we are halfway there. Since I came on in 2004, we have planted 3,500 trees.”

Because of the enormous responsibility of caring for the parks, the Tree City USA project is going slower than Jim would like. It is left up to him to implement his notable plans. “One person can’t do all of that. It is difficult



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to get enough volunteers together to work on it,” he said. “I would like to get a group of individuals together to write a 501(c)(3). I think there would be more community pride if members from the community do it. I have been trying to get the word out to sports’ associations and volunteer groups. The city can provide all the material to go with it.”

There are three qualifications necessary for Midlothian to become Tree City USA. One is to have a tree board. Second is to have the mayor make a proclamation for the city. Third, a tree preservation ordinance would have to be in place at the cost of \$2.00 per capita per year. Jim commented, “It would come out to \$30,000 a year. The money would be spent on pruning, planting and removal of dangerous trees, such as trees with overhanging branches onto the road. Money is not what is holding us up. TxDOT program spent \$300,000 on trees when the bypass was built.”

Jim acknowledges other programs in place that would also provide funding for beautification of the city. “We get fees from the oil rigs to the city. Also, we got rid of bandit signs. Those are signs that Realtors used to put up on the weekend and take down when the weekend is over. That is why we called

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them bandit. In their place, we have what I call kiosk signs. They are the blue signs put up around town with advertising on it. The fees generated by the kiosk signs come to the city and the money is set aside for beautification. We want to be able to plant trees on public property, medians and parks.”

Jim has other plans for our city, such as providing trails in Midlothian. He is working to have trails that connect throughout Midlothian to eliminate the need for walkers, joggers or bicyclists



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to ever get on a road. Another goal Jim has is for a huge community park. “If a kid is over the age of 13, they don’t have anything to do if they don’t play sports. I don’t know how many e-mails I have received from kids who want a skate board park. I want the community park to have a 3-acre pond so the kids can fish without trespassing on someone’s property. We have the money to purchase the land. Now we have to find the land and a willing seller at a price we can afford.”

Regardless of the challenges, Jim works hard to provide a much-needed service for the city, which even those who live in the county can enjoy. “I want to have more programs for the community. For example, in the month of May, I want to have something every weekend. The Spring Fling is that month and we want to have a band that night in Kimmel Park. This is my community. My kids are here and my grandkids will be here. It is important to me that this is a great place to live.” **NOW**



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Laying Down Roots

— By Alex Allred

There is a certain poetic irony in the fact that Mattie Thompson became a Master Gardener. She is a woman deeply committed to her roots. She is a woman dedicated to caring for and nurturing others. Today, she works as a nurse at Baylor Medical Center in Dallas, but when she moved from Arkansas over a decade ago, it was a bigger move than anyone could have imagined. With “two friends, no job and no place of my own,” Mattie said, it was one of the biggest changes of her life, but certainly not the last.

It is no surprise to anyone who knows Mattie that her area of interest in the health care industry is geriatrics. “I love geriatrics,” Mattie said. “It’s about respect. They [the patients] have history to share.” Throughout her life, Mattie has always been interested in history.

She immediately established roots in the Walnut



At Home With Mattie Thompson



Grove area, but after a year and a half, with her children grown, she began house hunting again. Without knowing precisely what she was looking for, Mattie knew she wanted something that would emulate who she was: warm, nurturing, evergreen. "As soon as I walked in," Mattie said, recalling the

"We have to show our children respect. We have to lead so they will learn how to lead."

first time she walked through the front door of what is now her home, "I said to my real estate agent, 'Jane, this is my house!' We made an offer that day."

The layout was perfect for Mattie, with an open foyer, hard wood floors and earth-tone colors throughout the house. Sage green walls perfectly offset the white couches in the living room. What makes the couch and chair set so interesting is that they were both covered in dark fabric and they were not yet a set when she found them. One had been discarded, the other stood alone in an antique shop, but Mattie saw them as a pair, re-upholstered in a lavish, silken white fabric, complete with throw pillows and draperies.

A complete contrast to this is the



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large black iron pot that sits nearest the front door. "It was my grandmother's," Mattie said. Over 100 years old, one can only imagine the remarkable history attached to this pot. She remembers as a child watching adults use the pot to boil quilts for cleaning, as well as freshly slaughtered hogs.

Evidence of her grandmother and parents are prominent in her home's

decor. Dressers, antique mirrors, picture frames and old pottery bowls once belonging to her parents are found throughout, but it is her ability to blend the old and new, the familial and filial treasures that has created the home Mattie always dreamed of.

In the kitchen, cows and roosters offer the feel of a country home while reminding Mattie of her father. An old

wooden hutch, a "rescue" she made in Mississippi with a home-care client, an antique sewing machine and a miniature coal-burning stove again offer a contrast to her modern-day touches. Square napkins serve as valances at the window and elegant glassware are both beautiful and functional.

For Mattie, everything is a find, including the magnificent king-sized brass bed in the master bedroom — another rescue, another treasure, just one hundred dollars. It was the "as-is" condition of the home, which allowed Mattie to move right in, rescue and restore her treasures and explore her greatest passion.



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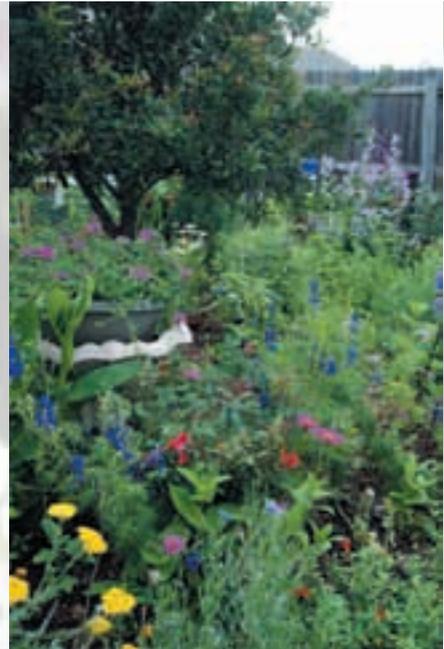
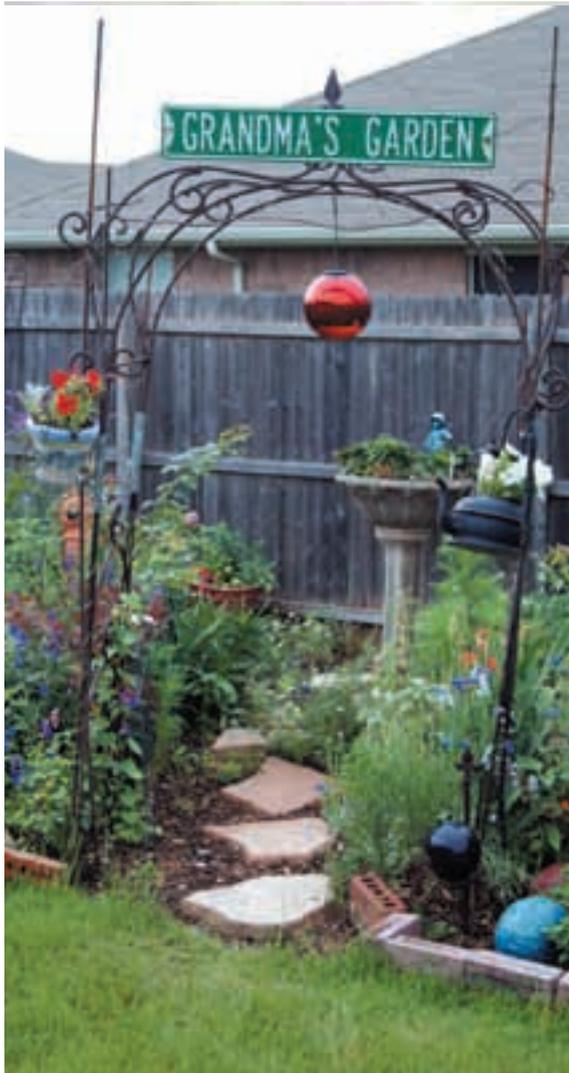
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Just as she has always decorated, Mattie has gardened. In 2004, she decided to take a Master Gardner class when she decided to do extensive work around the outside of her house. In the front yard, she extended the flowerbed and brought in decorative rocks to build up the walls. She also learned which plants are most conducive to the Texas climate. Wild flowers, lamb's

ears and catnip are just some of the plants that adorn the front of her home. Beyond the wooden fence, however, is a testament to the artist inside of Mattie.

When she purchased the home, she had a vision of a lavish garden complete with a porch where she and her friends could relax and visit. Almost instantly, she hired a contractor to

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build a cedar porch to run alongside her house, allowing her to simply step outside from the kitchen into her own little paradise. "This is where Ms. Mattie said she was going to have her tea parties," laughed contractor Tony White. Using fiberglass material, Tony built a sunroof, giving an atrium effect to the porch. Lining the side of her home

"This reminds me of my grandmother."

are refinished tables and chairs, potted plants and an array of knickknacks that only Mattie could have accumulated, all with the promise of a lively tea party indeed. "When the gates are closed, it feels like I'm in a different world," she added. "This is my outside room. It's a part of me. This is my stress reliever." Privacy drapes can be rolled up tightly against the cedar beams to her sunroof or rolled down to offer complete seclusion from the outside world. Umbrella plants, evergreen wisteria, Japanese maple, nandinas, pink rose bushes, wild flowers and vines are a feast for the senses. The aroma is sweet, the scenery festive. Embedded in the soil, among the plants are treasures beyond the imagination. Cookie jars, broken plates, a bowling ball and kettle, cups, a twin-sized brass headboard and a handmade bench entwined in vines add color and curiosity to her garden. Truly, her backyard is

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Of all her treasures, there is one that is most telling of who Mattie is. Throughout her home, inside and out, she has worked hard to embrace her past and her future. Her style is whimsical, elegant, altruistic and traditional. "This," Mattie said quietly, "reminds me of my grandmother." During the tour of her beautiful home, she lingered over the picture of an African-American woman, arms placed on her hips, wearing late 19th century clothing. The woman stands alone in a field, proud, strong and determined. Hers is an expression of inner strength and fortitude, but only when a stranger draws a comparison between the woman in the portrait and Mattie does Mattie give pause for consideration. Mattie had viewed the portrait to be a tribute to her past.

After almost a three-decade career in the health care industry, caring for thousands of strangers and rearing a family of her own, Mattie has now turned her attention to her three grandchildren. Of the three, her two young grandsons live close by and visit daily. "They've changed my life," Mattie said, noting that it is more important than ever that she serve as a strong role model. "No matter what," she said, "we have to show our children respect. We have to lead so they will learn how to lead." No doubt, the woman in the portrait would be proud! **NOW**

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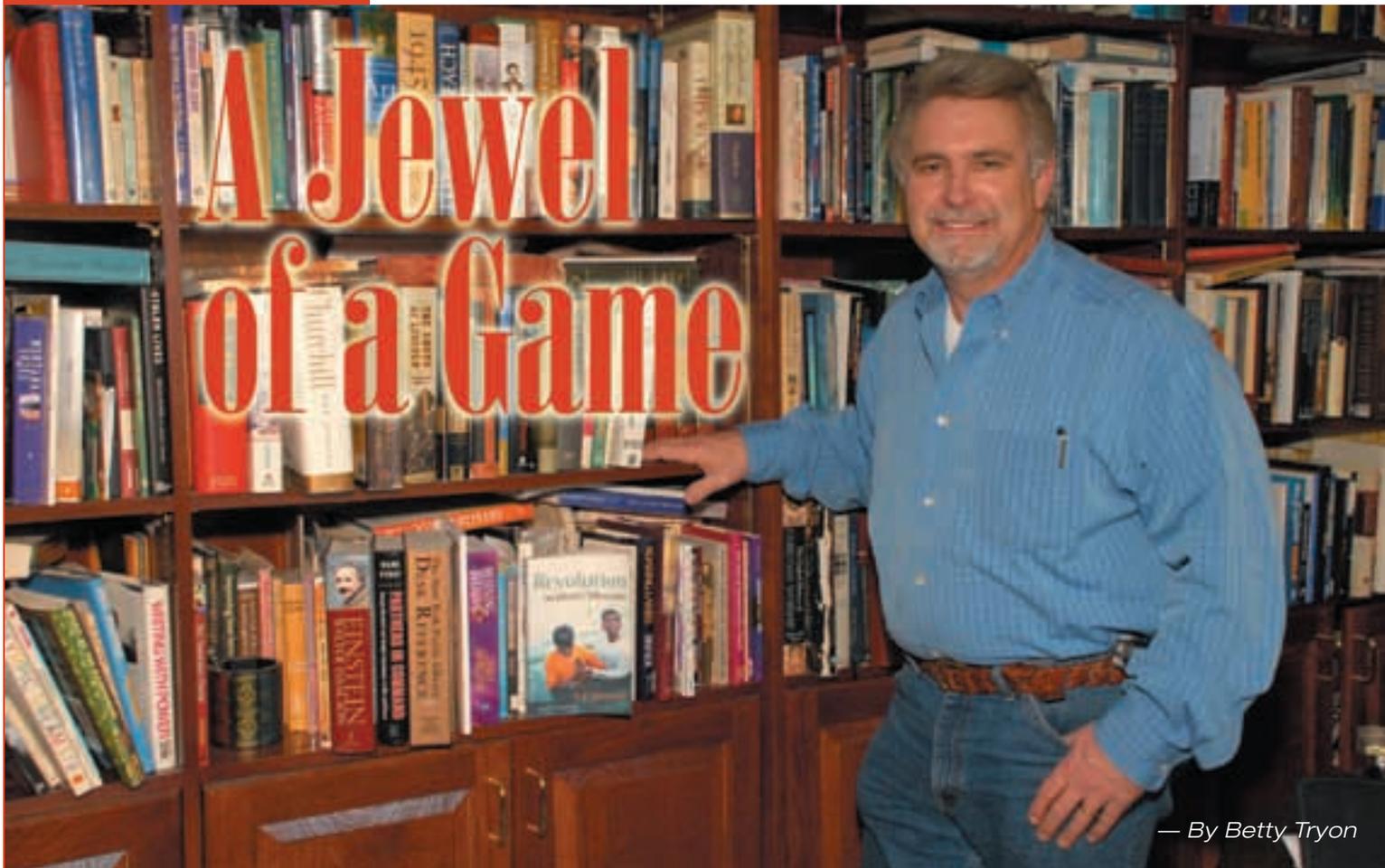
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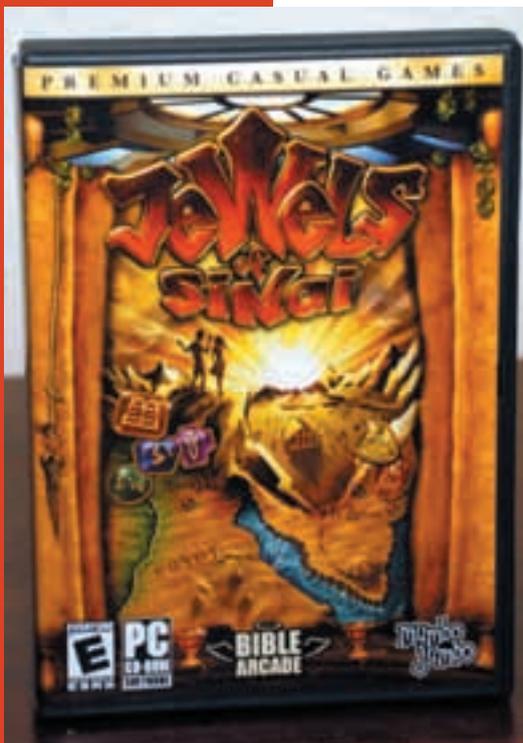
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ARTS NOW



— By Betty Tryon



"Fifteen hundred years before Christ, Pharaoh ruled the world. ... His golden war chariot thundered deep into Syria with his armies plundering rich cities and trampling them down into submission." So begins the great adventure of the *Jewels of Sinai*, a new computer game. This is not your big brother's video game. "This is a new thing in video games. It is the first time a cartoon and video game have been combined," said Dave Wyrzten, pastor of Midlothian Bible Church who can now add cartoon video game creator to his résumé.

Dave developed the script for the cartoon, but the originator of the game itself was Matt Lichtenwalter. Dave explained, "Matt is the developer of the game. He started thinking about how *The Passion of the Christ* raised a lot of interest, and while listening to a sermon one Sunday, he thought to develop a video game that explained the Old Testament. So, we created a graphic plot-driven novel with a video game about a fictitious Israeli family enslaved in Egypt. Through their eyes, we tell the story of Moses. When Moses goes before Pharaoh, you go with him. The game had to be accurate with names and places. The script had a detailed description of what the cartoons would be. It took about a month to come up with the story. We chose the book of Exodus because it is a well-known story and for the message of deliverance. We want to do the book of Numbers next."

With the help of Dave and Matt's ingenuity, a person does not merely

**ARTS
NOW**

play a game, they also learn a story. According to Dave, "The player would learn what the Israeli family was going through with God, with Yahweh. The point of the video is you will know all the major events and characters in the book of Exodus. The message is God loves people who are under bondage. The 'I AM' means 'I'm for you; I am

"We chose the book of Exodus because it is a well-known story and for the message of deliverance. We want to do the book of Numbers next."

going to be present with you."

Dave and Matt received much assistance from other team members who just happened to live in another country. "We have a team in Russia that put the video game together," Dave explained. "We communicated on the computer. I came up with the cartoon ideas and the story; the artist in Russia would draw the cartoons; Matt produced it and did the music."

The mechanics of the game involve progressing through the different levels to obtain all the jewels. Dave explained, "It is a matching game with power levels. There are 50 levels in all. At the end of every level you get more of the cartoon, and clues as to what the jewels are and what they mean. At the end of the game, you get all of them. For example, one of the jewels is a split rock. Moses explains how it relates to Israel's history and how it gives us clues to who the Messiah might be."

Matt's expertise in developing video games has enabled the sale of the game to go from being primarily on the Internet to being distributed by Mumbo Jumbo, one of the largest companies that produces and markets premium casual games. The game became public for purchase in the

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month of August. Dave stated, “Matt made presentations to Mumbo Jumbo. ... They asked him to make a full-blown presentation to the executives and sales force.” Matt is currently the vice president of product development for Mumbo Jumbo, a leading video distributor in retail. He has an impressive background in the world of casual games. One of the games he has



Matt Lichtenwalter and Dave Wyrzten created the *Jewels of Sinai* game.

created is *7 Wonders of the Ancient World*, a popular game series. He also developed a video game for President George Bush’s Web site during his 2004 presidential campaign.

Dave’s history with the video game market includes editing and rewriting the clues for other games. “This is just another medium for communicating. My dad started on radio during a time when it was a new medium for Christianity. A lot of Christians thought they shouldn’t be on the radio. The Christian video game is just another new venue.”

This game appeals to a broad family audience. It is wholesome entertainment, and children love to play it. Dave remarked, “We have received a lot of positive feedback from many kids. A teenager came up to me all excited about the game. He said he had played it all afternoon.” Using their collective artistic and innovative skills, Dave Wyrzten and Matt Lichtenwalter have created another way to make learning about the Bible fun. The journey they take through the book of Exodus makes great family entertainment. **NOW**

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Sports
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Angling for the Best

— By Betty Tryon

Blazing a trail on water, Karen Sanchez makes her mark on history. At the 2007 Forrest Wood Cup fishing competition in Hot Springs, Arkansas, Karen became the second woman in history to make a top-ten finish. Smiling as she remembered the event, Karen said, "I was so excited. I thought that I wouldn't make the list. I was the last person to qualify. There are three days of competition, and that first day I did well. Going into the final day, I found out that I had finished ninth. I was a local celebrity for a day. I could hear people say as I walked by, 'That's Karen Sanchez!' There are a lot of fans and media that follow the championship.

I tried not to be intimidated by all of it and just enjoy the day."

Karen's history making accomplishments as a lady angler in the world of fishing began as a way to spend more time with her husband. "My husband, Davy, and his dad were in

competitive fishing; they would compete all the time. The only way I could hang out with my husband was to go with him. Davy and I started entering couples' contests, but we didn't get along that well on the boat so we decided to fish separately," she said smiling. "He is now my manager and does a great job."

Karen did have some childhood experience fishing before she and Davy went out together.

She speaks of one such event, "I grew up fishing with my dad. When I was 10 years old, we used to go to my aunt's farm in Arkansas and catfish. One evening while fishing from shore at Ray Robert Lake with my brother and dad, the wind picked up and I could see lightening. My dad started yelling, 'Get in the truck!' He went to help guide boats coming in to the shore, and in our rush to get to



Sports NOW

the truck, I accidentally hooked my brother in his finger. We later found out that we were under a tornado warning.”

Karen's skill with a fishing rod has certainly improved over the years; instead of her brother, her most recent unusual catch is a garfish. She catches

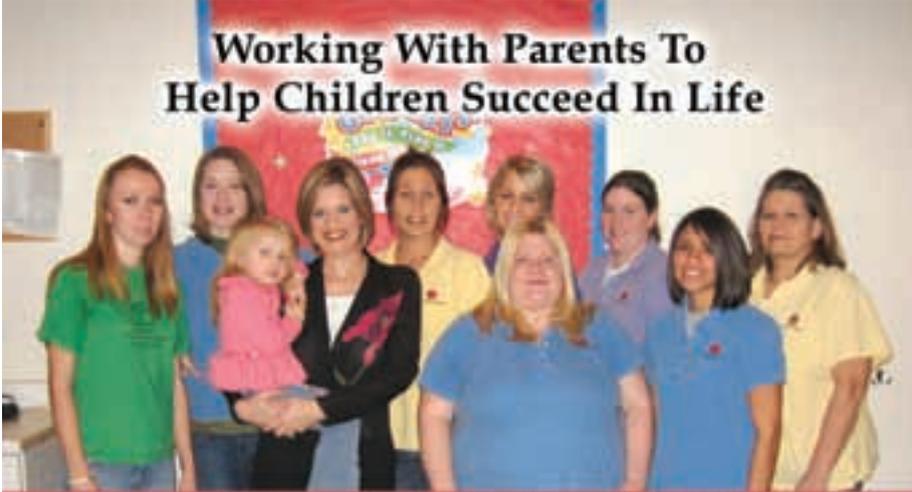
“I love fishing because I love being outside and seeing the sunrise and the sunset.”

mostly smallmouth bass, largemouth bass and spotted bass. Karen's best place to fish is Lake Erie in Detroit, Michigan. She stated, “Lake Erie is like a miniature ocean. You can't see across it. You can have 6- to 8-foot waves when the wind starts blowing. I have caught big smallmouth bass there and it is a fight to get them in the boat.”

Karen began her competitive career as a co-angler in the back of the boat. A co-angler is the person who fishes off the back of a professional's boat. She explained, “The professional angler has his own boat and is paired with a co-angler. At the competition, a draw determines to whose boat the co-angler is paired. The co-angler has no control over the boat and must adapt to the person with the boat. They run the boat and decide where to fish. Every tour has 200 professionals and 200 co-anglers.”

The fishing industry has local, regional and nationwide competitions. Nationwide is where the tour takes place. Karen's sponsor for tournament play is Wal-Mart and she plays on the Forest L. Wood tour (FLW). The FLW is affiliated with Fox Sports. Karen stated, “There are only six women on tour, so you get good opportunities for spots on the news. I have been on *FLW Sports Southwest* show four times and

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also appeared in Wal-Mart commercials. There are open tournaments where anyone who wants to fish can pay the fee and be on tour."

Karen's success comes because of hard work. Practice before a competition can mean 12- to 14-hour days. In addition to her career as a lady angler, she works full-time as an IT manager



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at a computer company in Dallas. She hopes someday to be able to fish full-time. "I love fishing because I love being outside and seeing the sunrise and the sunset. It's a good break from working in the city."

Karen's achievements are an inspiration to all lady anglers. She recognizes this as a sport which women can play. "In the last five years there has been a huge increase in support of women. There have always been women who fished. You look at the fishing legends now and their wives were anglers in the 1970s. We now have women moving into what is a male-dominated sport. There is no reason why a woman can't fish alongside a man since there is no strength issue. The men you fish with have been fishing 20 or 30 years and some have made millions of dollars in their lifetime. I'm not out here to out-fish him. I do have to be a little aggressive because we are competing, but I enjoy learning from them. I get to learn from the best." **NOW**

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Back to Basics

— By Dia Catalani

Dr. Brad Collins is a walking testament to the benefits of chiropractic care. In fact, he became a chiropractor because his own upbringing taught him that this alternative approach to healthcare really could work miracles. If you are a firm supporter of traditional medicine, read how this young doctor is positively changing the health of babies, parents and even a few of our near-centurions — all without the use of medicine or surgery.

Dr. Collins, a native of the Texas panhandle, got his first chiropractic adjustment when he was a young boy. His parents, a school superintendent and a teacher, believe that given the right treatment, our bodies can better their immune system and fight illnesses. Now that he is a medical professional, one of the first things Dr. Collins discusses with new patients is that unlike traditional medicine, alternative healthcare programs require you to be proactive in your own wellness. This entails taking an honest assessment of what you eat and drink, the lifestyle you lead and the way you handle

environmental and self-imposed stresses. “This isn’t like going to the doctor to get an antibiotic or a shot every time you get sick. Education is a major part of my treatment programs, as well as helping people understand that our nervous system

controls our body.

I also want to teach people how to live well and avoid having to go to a chiropractor for the rest of their life,” said Dr. Collins, who owns Midlothian

Chiropractic. “Once you remove those chemical, physical and mental stresses, which are affecting your nervous system, your body can begin to heal. It’s known that 75 percent of chronic diseases are lifestyle-related. Chiropractic treatments stimulate the nervous system and allow the body to use its energy to strengthen their immunity to germs and illnesses.”

“Education is a major part of my treatment programs.”

Serving as the chiropractor for the Midlothian School District’s sports teams, Dr. Collins teaches athletes how to live in a healthy manner now, while they are young. Children, whose rough-and-tumble play takes a toll on

their bodies, are especially receptive to chiropractic treatments. Dr. Collins noted that his patients exhibit fewer earaches, sinus problems and colds. Pregnant women and mature adults experience circulatory benefits and chiropractic treatments

have even been known to cure adult bed-wetting.

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indicate the abnormalities this test will find, since the SEMG detects high- and low-electrical current within muscle and variances in skin temperature along the spine. The test can help Dr. Collins map his treatment plan and help you understand what your role will be in getting better.

“Chiropractic treatments involve a process and once you get to a healthy stage, the goal is to keep you there. To be totally healthy though, you must take into consideration all those things that are contradictory to getting better,” Dr. Collins said. “My family practices all the things I teach and so does my staff. My job is to teach that it’s not just about living without pain, it’s about living a healthy life.”

Dr. Collins also offers adult patients a body-detoxifying program, which cleanses the buildup of harmful toxins and can help you to lose weight. Dr. Collins and several staff members attest to the effects of the program, which can be complemented by other all-natural supplements. If you are ready to see the practical benefits of chiropractic treatments in your family, set an appointment by calling Robin or Ashley at Midlothian Chiropractic. The telephone number is (972) 723-1155. The office is located in downtown Midlothian at 306 West Avenue E. **NOW**

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Hugh O'Brian, actor in the 1950s' popular television series *Wyatt Earp*, envisioned the future with young people reaching their highest potential and being good citizens. To that end, he started the Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Award (HOBY). The program encourages the youth of America to actively pursue change for the good of society through effective leadership. Every year, schools across America take a long look at their sophomores and choose one individual to represent their school at the HOBY annual leadership seminar. Sarah Van Dyke will represent Midlothian High School this year.

According to Sarah, "Any high school can choose a sophomore to represent the school. The organization holds seminars in every state. Not every



school participates, but it is open to any high school across the country. Hugh O'Brian founded this organization in 1958. I think he thought we needed an organization to produce leaders in the community to help future generations. At the Leadership Seminar, the goal is to encourage kids to think for themselves. It also encourages volunteerism. The organization wants to help make good leaders who will have an impact on their community."

Rita Dragoo, who serves as the college liaison at the high school, explained the process of selecting students, "After the students apply, a committee reviews the students' activities, class rank and grades. They also write an essay. Sarah was chosen because the committee was impressed with her involvement outside of school. She had a good balance between community service and extra-curricular activities."

Remembering her experience, Sarah said, "I learned about the award when the school made an announcement about it. Also, my mom and my English

Education **NOW**

teacher encouraged me to apply. I filled out an application that was sort of like a résumé and listed my extra-curricular activities and grades. I'm mostly an A-student taking pre-AP [Advanced Placement] and AP classes. The essay was about what leadership means to me. I also had to have teacher references."

Although new to the community,

"You have to try; you may not be the best, but you have to try."

Sarah did not waste any time becoming a volunteer and joining others who serve in worthy organizations. "One of the activities I've been involved in is helping at Manna House one summer. During Vacation Bible School, I was the leader for the class of third-graders. My dad's business does a lot of stuff with MDA [Muscular Dystrophy Association] and I sometimes help with that. As a member of the student council we do things to help the teachers and we volunteer at Mission Midlothian."

The HOBY Award is all about leadership roles and skills as a leader. One of Sarah's leadership experiences occurred during one of her classes. She stated, "When I am in a leadership role, I try to do my best. I follow the rules the best way I can. In Mrs. Whitehead's class, I was assigned leadership of a class project. I had to assign tasks to the students in my group, make sure everything was done and put it all together. After the project was assembled in the right order, then I presented it to the class."

Sarah's desire always to do her best is reflected in her pleasure activities. "I love to draw and paint. I love art and want to take art classes all through my school years. I am very competitive and I would be disappointed in myself if I hadn't tried harder."

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Doing your best and trying to achieve your highest potential are goals instilled in Sarah as a young girl. “My parents made it important when I was little to get good grades,” she recalled. “Now I think it’s important to make good grades to get into college and get a good job. My parents always said, ‘You have to try; you may not be the best, but you have to try.’” Sarah’s



Sarah and her mom, Melanie.

parents not only encouraged her with words but also by their deeds. She was inspired when her mom, Melanie Van Dyke, returned to school to get an education degree. She now teaches at Midlothian High School.

Sarah is looking forward to attending the Hugh O’Brian Leadership Award Seminar, which will be held at Texas Christian University (TCU), May 15-18. She stated, “I get to meet kids from all over Texas. The seminar is three days long and we spend the night at TCU. The student who attended last year gave me an idea of what to expect at the seminar. We will play games, do some volunteer work and have motivational speakers. At the seminar, I want to meet different people and to get something out of it, and also have fun.”

Hugh O’Brian conducted his life with this belief, “I believe every person is created as the steward of his or her own destiny with great power for a specific purpose: to share with others, through service, a reverence for life in a spirit of love.” For Midlothian High School, that person is Sarah. **NOW**

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Great Outdoors **NOW**

When is a **Rose** Not a **Rose?**

— By Nancy Fenton

One of the best long-blooming plants for our area is a “rose” that is not really a rose! The common name is Rose of Sharon or Althea and it blooms continuously from spring through fall. This six to 15 foot, small shrub can be trimmed up into an attractive small tree with a festive topknot of blooms or left to its upright, but sprawling, natural shape. One of its best attributes is that it can take the extremes of our finicky

weather in stride and do quite well with little water. Of course, a wide choice of colors does not hurt either!

The single lavender and single white are the most common, but the doubles are more than twice as pretty. As a relative of the hibiscus family, it has large circular, ruffled blooms in striking colors, but with none of the temperamental need for “hothouse treatment.” Rose of Sharon goes into the ground and happily stays there to thrive through our hot summers and cold winters!

With a long European heritage starting in the 16th century, Rose of Sharon was brought to American soil by the colonists as a favorite plant, and has come into the national interest once more. The originals probably were “pass a long” plants given to family as they set out across the world on their quest for new horizons.

Hybridization in the 1960s and '70s expanded the size and the color choices. Some of the newer varieties such as Lavender Chiffon, Blue Satin and Olana, may be available in the nurseries. The standard double white and pink as well as the single purple will be available at the coming Ellis County Master Gardener Spring Expo scheduled for Saturday, March 29 in the Waxahachie Civic Center.

All of these hardy plants tolerate our alkaline soils and prefer compost rather than heavy doses of fertilizer. They bloom on new wood so should be pruned lightly in late winter, while still leafless, to stimulate that topknot of bright blooms. Find a place with full to partial sun and give these beautiful, hardy “roses” a try! **NOW**

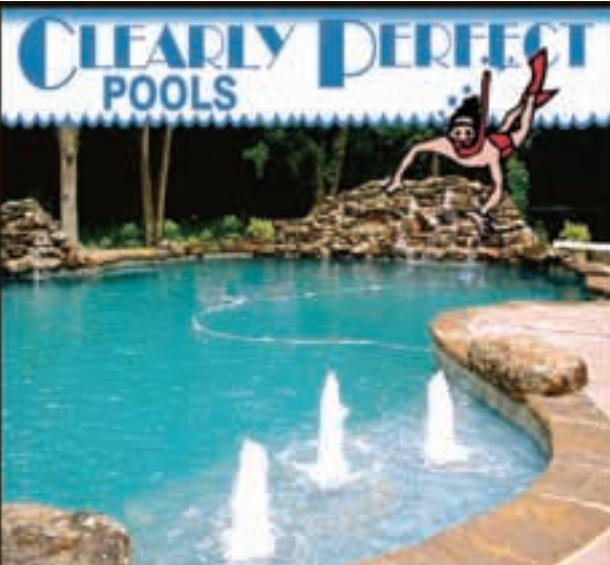
Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener in Ellis County.



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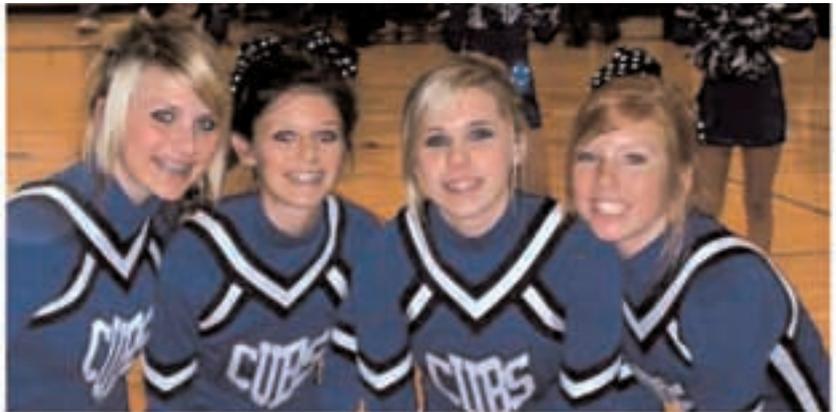
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Around Town NOW



Navarro College Players Jennifer Berry, Travis Wallace and Heather King, top left, performed in *Suite in Two Keys*. Lori Lehman, bottom left, is an MISD Education Foundation founding donor. Eighth grade cheerleaders from Frank Seale Middle School, top right, showed their cub spirit. Ribbon cuttings were held, second row right to bottom row right: Snap Fitness, Today Movers and Tier One Networks.







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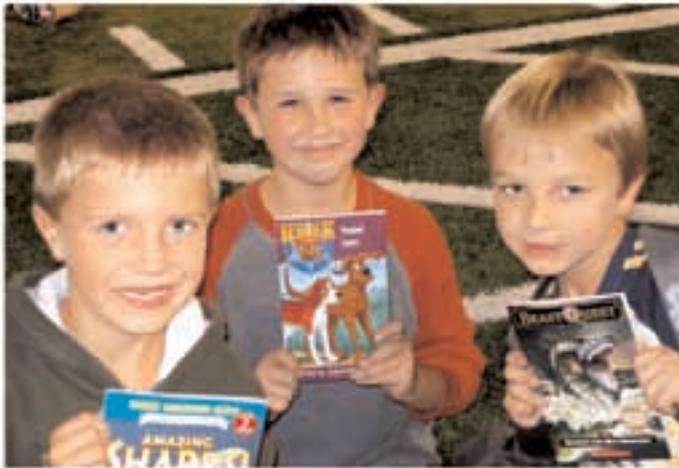
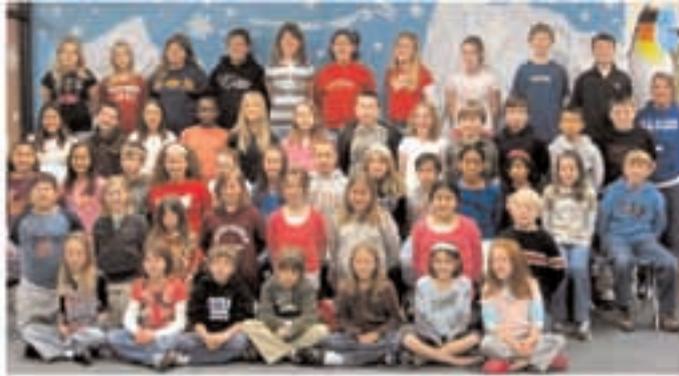
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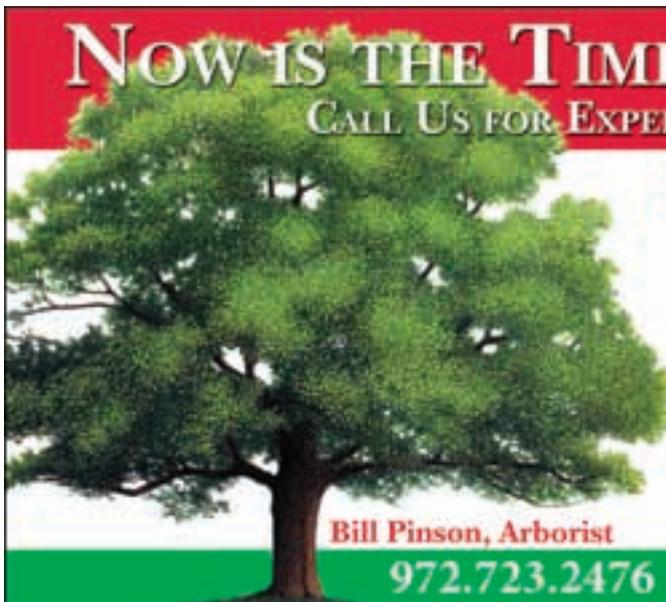
Around Town **NOW**



The 2007-2008 Baxter Safety Patrol, top left, braved the weather each morning by greeting students as they arrived at school. Students, second row left, enjoyed reading and sharing their books at the annual Field of Readers in the MISD Multipurpose Stadium. A ribbon cutting, bottom left, was held for Ron Holmes, Independent for Pre-Paid Legal Services, Inc. Principal, Karen Childers, top right, received a hug from a large python during Mt. Peak Elementary's Math/Science Night. Ribbon cuttings were held at Hidden Meadows, second row right, and the UPS Store, bottom right.

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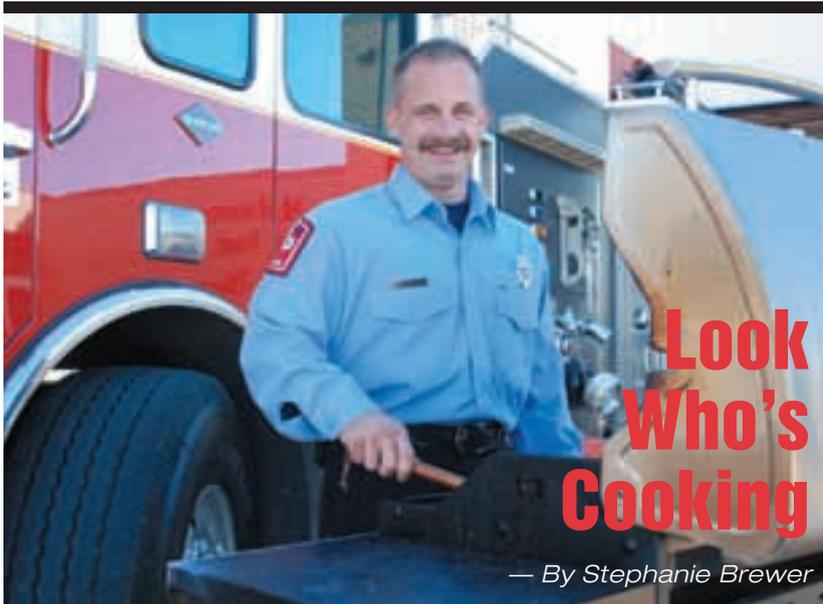
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— By Stephanie Brewer

Scott's accomplishments as a firefighter for the Midlothian Fire Department also extend to a lifetime of cooking. A graduate of El Centro's Chef School in Dallas and grandma's kitchen, Scott knows the joys of cooking. "When I cook," he said, "my family and friends are with me and we are together."

His grandmother took care of him as a boy, and they spent their time together talking and cooking. "Grandma would put new tastes together that others wouldn't even think of, but any good cook who hasn't burned anything yet hasn't really cooked," Scott said. Scott has no specific favorites, just great taste that is healthy for you. Scott says, "Cooking is about togetherness. A hunger and passion for it is the greatest thing in the world." **NOW**

To view more of your neighbors' recipes, visit our archives at www.nowmagazines.com.

IN THE KITCHEN WITH SCOTT SMITH

STUFFED CABBAGE

(TRY IT EVEN IF YOU DON'T LIKE CABBAGE)

- 1 large green cabbage (about 2 1/2 lbs.)
- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 garlic, finely chopped
- 2 cups cooked rice
- 8 oz. ground beef
- 8 oz. ground pork
- coarse salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1 Tbsp. dried parsley flakes
- 1 medium green pepper, grated
- 2 celery stalks with leaves, finely chopped
- 4 oz. spaghetti sauce (favorite flavor)
- 1 Granny Smith apple, peeled, cored and chopped

Using a paring knife, remove center core of cabbage. In a large non-reactive stockpot, bring 2 quarts water to a boil. Add cabbage and cook 2 - 3 minutes or until outer leaves are bright green and tender. Lift cabbage from water; remove outer leaves. Return cabbage to boiling water; repeat brief cooking and

removal of leaves until all leaves are cooked.

Reserve 2 cups cabbage cooking water. Trim thick center vein from bottom of each leaf. Reserve four large outer leaves to line bottom of Dutch oven. In a medium skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add onion and garlic; cook until golden and tender, about 8 minutes. In a large bowl, combine onion mixture, rice, beef, pork, salt, pepper, parsley flakes, green pepper and celery. Stir to combine. Add about 1/3 cup rice filling to one cabbage leaf. Fold sides of cabbage over, filling and starting with the stem end, roll the cabbage up. Repeat with remaining leaves and filling. Line a 5-quart Dutch oven with reserved outside leaves. Transfer stuffed cabbage leaves to Dutch oven. Pour the spaghetti sauce over stuffed cabbage leaves to almost cover them (add water if needed). Sprinkle apple over top of cabbage leaves. Bake for 1 to 1-1/2 hours at 350 F or until cabbage is very tender and meat is proper temp.

CHILI-GARLIC ROASTED BROCCOLI RECIPE

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, eyeball it

- 5 - 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 Tbsp. grill seasoning blend (recommended: Montreal Steak Seasoning by McCormick Grill Mates)
- 1 large head broccoli, cut into thin, long spears

Preheat oven to 425 F. Place extra virgin olive oil, garlic, chili powder and grill seasoning in the bottom of a large bowl and add the broccoli spears. Toss to coat broccoli evenly, then transfer to a large nonstick baking sheet. Roast the broccoli until ends are crisp and brown and stalks are tender, 17 - 20 minutes.

ROASTED SQUASH AND MUSHROOMS

- 2 yellow squash, sliced (use food processor for quickness)
- 2 zucchini, sliced
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms
- 2 Tbsp. minced garlic (buy the big jar of already minced garlic)
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil

Who's Cooking NOW

Cajun spice of your choice, to taste

Mix all ingredients in a bowl and coat with olive oil. Spread veggies on a foil covered baking sheet; season with Cajun spice or any spice of your choice. Bake in the oven at 350 F for 25 minutes. You can add onions and/or peppers. When done, flavor with organic marinara sauce.

CHEW

(This is a combo of chili and stew hence the name CHEW.)

- 1 - 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. minced garlic
- 2 lbs. ground turkey
- 2 Tbsp. ground cumin
- 2 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 12-oz. jar of Wal-Mart thick and chunky salsa (or your favorite)
- 1 10 3/4-oz. can of diced tomatoes or Ro-Tel tomatoes
- 1 lb. bag of frozen mixed veggies (corn, peas, carrots, green beans)
- 1 14 1/2-oz. can Ranch Style Beans
- 1 - 2 cups chicken stock

Coat bottom of skillet with about 1 - 2 tablespoons olive oil; heat and sauté garlic; then add meat and brown. Once meat is brown, add ground cumin, chili powder, salsa and tomatoes. Then add frozen veggies and beans. Add 1 - 2 cups of chicken stock depending on how thick you like your chili. Heat to boil; simmer for 20 - 30 minutes.

GRILLED CHICKEN, ITALIAN MEATBALL, STIR FRY STEW

- 1 3-lb. package frozen cooked meatballs
- 3 chicken breasts, grilled and cut in 1-inch squares
- 2 Tbsp. minced garlic
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 1/2 cups frozen bell pepper and onion (stir fry)
- 2 14 1/2-oz. cans diced tomatoes with Italian herbs undrained
- 2 cups chicken stock

Cook meatballs according to directions. Grill and cut chicken breast. In a large pot, cook garlic in olive oil; add stir fry veggies. Cook until soft; add tomatoes plus juice. Add chicken stock to desired thickness (should be like a soup). Add chicken and meatballs; heat until boiling, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Serve with Parmesan cheese sprinkled on top.

RUN A MILE PEANUT BUTTER CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

- 1 package frozen chocolate chip cookies
- 1 package peanut butter cups
- vanilla ice cream

Cook cookies according to directions. When the cookies come out of the oven immediately mash a peanut butter cup into the middle; let it melt a little. Serve with ice cream. *When finished eating, go run a mile!*



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What is the Value of My Home?

— By Tim Tobey

Some of you may be asking yourself, “Does my insurance coverage fit my needs? Do I have enough coverage to replace my home in the event of a serious loss? What affects my premium?”

These questions create a need for you to regularly review your homeowners’ insurance and to consider other questions such as: Have you recently remodeled or improved your home? Has the rate of inflation risen since your last appraisal? What influences the building construction costs in your area?

As you consider these issues, it is important to understand that real estate values measure the market value or selling price for a home. For insurance purposes, it is important to estimate the current replacement cost which is the amount needed to hire a contractor to repair the damage or to rebuild the home to its pre-loss condition. Dwelling replacement costs used by insurance companies do not include the value of the land. Market conditions in your area may impact the amount it will cost to rebuild your home if you experience a loss.

Building contractors or professional replacement cost appraisers are a good source for obtaining an estimated replacement cost for your home. Estimates from these sources should reflect your home’s specific features and details.

Once you know the estimated cost to replace your home, you can decide how much insurance coverage fits your needs.



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You should also consider other policy endorsements such as back up of sewer and drain coverage, or additional coverage for personal articles with high values such as jewelry, fine arts and collectibles.

You may want to consider higher personal liability coverage or the need for flood insurance which is provided by a separate policy. In addition to the amount of coverage you decide to purchase, your premium is impacted by optional endorsements you select, your claim history, the amount of your deductible, company longevity and multiple policy discounts such as home/auto.

Finally, remember to periodically review your insurance coverages with your agent. That will ensure you have the coverage you need. **NOW**

Tim Tobey is a State Farm agent based in Midlothian.



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Health NOW

Early Detection is Best Prevention

— By Sandra McIntosh

A person's best prevention for colorectal cancer is early detection and immediate treatment. Individuals who undergo regular screening for colon cancer greatly reduce the risk of having a colorectal cancer. These available screenings include fecal occult blood tests, sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy and polyp removal.

Fecal occult blood testing should be done every year with a flexible sigmoidoscopy every five years. Double-contrast barium enemas are recommended every five to 10 years. A colonoscopy still remains the most sensitive test for detecting colon polyps and tumors, and is recommended every 10 years. Once polyps have been found, they should be removed and from that point on, the patient should begin to undergo colonoscopies on a more frequent basis. Other things a person can do to prevent, as well as lower their risk, include the following:

- Quit smoking. Extensive research has proven that smoking is clearly

linked with a higher risk of colon cancer.

- Take an aspirin on a daily basis.

Because of the potential side effects associated with aspirin, this daily dose is not recommended for everyone.

Consulting your physician would be the first plan of action.

- Take a safe dose (1 mg.) of folic acid on a daily basis.
- Take part in physical activity on a daily basis.
- Make fruits and vegetables a part of your daily food intake.

The United States Agency for Health Care Policy and Research also recommends that people older than 50 who have an average risk for colorectal cancers undergo screening for colon cancer. They also recommend that individuals aged 40 and older who have a family history of colorectal cancer undergo screening.



Symptoms of cancer of the colon and rectum can be exhibited in several different ways. People sometimes overlook some of the symptoms of colon cancer, attributing them to other

causes. Many attribute all rectal bleeding to hemorrhoids, but it can be a symptom of cancer. Other overlooked symptoms include: an iron deficiency that causes fatigue and pale skin;

abdominal pain and distension; unexplained, persistent nausea or vomiting; unexplained weight loss; change in bowel movements; and rectal pain. Recent studies show that the average length of symptoms, from beginning to end, is 14 weeks, but there is no association between the length of symptoms and the size of tumor.



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Health NOW

Another way you can fight colorectal cancer is by getting actively involved in walking for a cure like Dr. Gordy Klatt did in the mid-1980s. As a colorectal surgeon, Dr. Klatt had a strong desire to grow the income of his local American Cancer Society office. He put his plan into action by holding the first American Cancer Relay For Life event in Tacoma, Washington. The event has grown into an annual gathering of cancer survivors, as well as family and friends, who have lit the fire for an entire nation. To find out more about the Relay For Life event in your immediate area, please visit their Web site at www.relayforlife.org. 

Sources:

1. *Sanofi Aventis*.
colorectalcancerinfo.com.

2. *eMedicineHealth Web site*
www.emedicinehealth.com/colon_cancer.

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"VitalStim Therapy is truly a breakthrough in treating dysphagia", said Sara L. Brianas, MS, CCC-SLP, Speech-Language Pathologist at Renfro Healthcare Center. "Since introducing VitalStim at Renfro, we have seen some exceptional outcomes that probably would not have been possible with traditional approaches to therapy. Patients have shown dramatic improvements in their ability to swallow and have returned to more normal diets - and a better quality of life - much sooner than we've seen in the past. Even patients on feeding tubes have responded well to the therapy".



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March 2008 Community Calendar

First and Third Thursdays

Midlothian Lions Club meeting, 7:00 p.m., Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th Street. (972) 775-7118.

Second and Fourth Tuesdays

Midlothian City Council meeting, 6:00 p.m., Midlothian City Hall in Council Chambers, 104 West Ave. E.

Every Tuesday

Midlothian Rotary Club meeting, noon, Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th Street. (972) 775-7118.

March 3

American Business Women's Association (ABWA), Great Visions Charter Chapter Midlothian Monthly meeting, 6:15 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center. \$10.00 for dinner. Please RSVP to (972) 948-0811. Guests are welcome! Visit www.midlothianabwa.com.

March 4

Navarro College Small Business Development Center (SBDC) will sponsor a workshop on Small Business Startup Basics, 10:00 a.m. - noon, Prosperity Bank Conference Room, 500 North I-35 in Red Oak. Registration is required. Contact Dottie Ueberroth at (972) 937-2174 or dottie.ueberroth@navarrocollege.edu.

Election Day

March 8

Suite in Two Keys by the Navarro College Players, 7:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center Theatre Bluebonnet Room. Complimentary admission with donations accepted. (972) 775-7228.

March 10

Midlothian ISD Board meeting, administration building, 6:30 p.m.

March 11

Ellis County Job Fair, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, Hwy. 287 at I-35. For employers, booths are \$25, with lunch, table and two chairs provided. RSVP by 5:00 p.m. March 3rd. Contact Loree Scott at (972) 937-8114, ext. 220 or lscott@dfwjobs.com.

March 13

Creating a Business Plan workshop, 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., Prosperity Bank Conference Room, 500 North I-35 in Red Oak. Cost is \$20.00.

Leads to Success Group meeting, 8:00 a.m., Chamber offices.

March 17 - 21

Midlothian ISD Spring Break

March 19

Ellis County Christian Women's Connection monthly luncheon, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Hwy. 287 at I-35 South. Cost is \$13.00. For reservations, call Kay at (972) 937-2807 or Mary at (972) 937-9984 or e-mail windchime@charter.net no later than the Sunday prior to the luncheon.

Identity Theft Briefing, 12:00 p.m., 2nd @ Main Place. A light lunch will be served. RSVP to mainplaceinfo@sbcglobal.net or (972) 723-0017.

March 22

Easter Egg Hunt, 10:00 - 11:00 a.m., Kimmel Park.

March 24

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting, 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church (new meeting location), 621 N. Grand

Avenue (across from SAGU). Visit www.cqguild.org for directions and more information.

March 25

How to Get Government Contracts workshop, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Prosperity Bank Conference Room, 500 North I-35 in Red Oak. \$40.00 to the first 15 registrants. Registration is required. Contact Dottie Ueberroth at (972) 937-2174 or e-mail her at dottie.ueberroth@navarrocollege.edu.

March 27

Leads to Success Group meeting, 8:00 a.m., Chamber offices.

March 29

3rd Annual Meals on Wheels BBQ Benefit, Loma Linda Events Pavilion, Rockett. Reception: 6:00 p.m. Dinner: 7:00 p.m. Call (972) 351-9943 or visit www.servingthetchildrenofyesterday.org.

March 30 - 31

MISD Teacher Job Fair, Walnut Grove Middle School. March 30: 4:30 - 7:30 p.m. March 31: 9:00 a.m. - noon. Please bring copies of your résumé, current college transcripts and teaching certificate or college letter of anticipation. For more information, contact the Personnel Department at (972) 775-8296.

To have your events posted on the community calendar, e-mail us at: btryan.nowmag@sbcglobal.net.

For more community events, visit our online calendar at www.nowmagazines.com.

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