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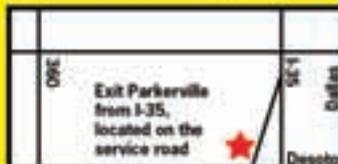
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The entry hall at Eastridge
Elementary is graced by this mural
painted by Courtney Powers.*

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Editor's Note

Welcome, sunny days!

Now that we are officially over the winter months, it is nice to look forward to more sunny days. Through our April edition, let us meet new and exciting people who reside within our community. There are many talented and inspirational people in our towns, who would gladly enjoy visiting with you and sharing their personal stories. First we will be awed by local high school baseball player Taylor Currey and the gifted and talented teacher, Melissa Hancock, whose bright dispositions are encouraging examples of the power of overcoming adversity with positivity. Then we will visit with Derek Barnes, an adorable and talented fifth-grader, who possesses the ability to warm your heart through the performing arts. To complete our journey, grab a blanket and sit under the trees as you meet Anna Bazan-Parker. Her account of journeys both near and far is sure to impart the importance of cultivating kindness.



May you enjoy the warmth of spring and of our cities,

Diana Merrill Claussen
Red OakNOW Editor

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Cultivating Kindness

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

There are special people who put others in front of themselves every day. Such selfless compassion reflects the measure of a person's character while truly helping to make the world a better and kinder place.

For local resident Anna Bazan-Parker, helping others is not only her passion, it is her mission — literally. Anna can be seen all over our area, and abroad, aiding others in need. Her desire to help not only runs strong in her heart, but in her life and actions.

"I love to serve people," Anna said. "I especially have a calling to serve in mission work," she added. The opportunity to become a missionary started through her church in 2001. That is also when she decided to help



the people of Mexico. "Since that time, I have taken five trips to help the Mission Divinia in Matamoros," Anna shared. "When we go, we help the needy by taking food, clothes, books and also vitamins for the children. We also assist the churches financially, while ministering with the people we meet. We try to make the people there feel special."

Anna's compassion for others, especially for the people in Matamoros, is completely transparent in all aspects of her life. She has visited this highly impoverished and crime-laden city with mission groups, couples' groups and has even brought her husband, Michael, and teenage son, Alex, to experience the adversities the city's inhabitants face on a daily basis. "I translate for our speaking engagements in Mexico, and this helps to bridge the communication gap," she said, noting that this is one of her most

important responsibilities when she visits Matamoros.

Through these trips, Anna and her family have learned many valuable lessons from the people they help. Anna, her fellow missionaries and her family were all greatly impacted when they visited the city's garbage dumps. "There is a lot of poverty in Matamoros, and we saw countless families living in the dump," she shared. "Most of their houses were made from cardboard boxes. While at the dump, we also saw garbage trucks come into the site; and the people would climb up on them just to get something to eat. This is one of the many heartbreaking things we have seen and experienced."

However, helping others has filled Anna with more joy than sorrow. "On our trips, when we take donated supplies to the people, it is amazing to see how some of the simplest things like giving out toothbrushes mean the world to



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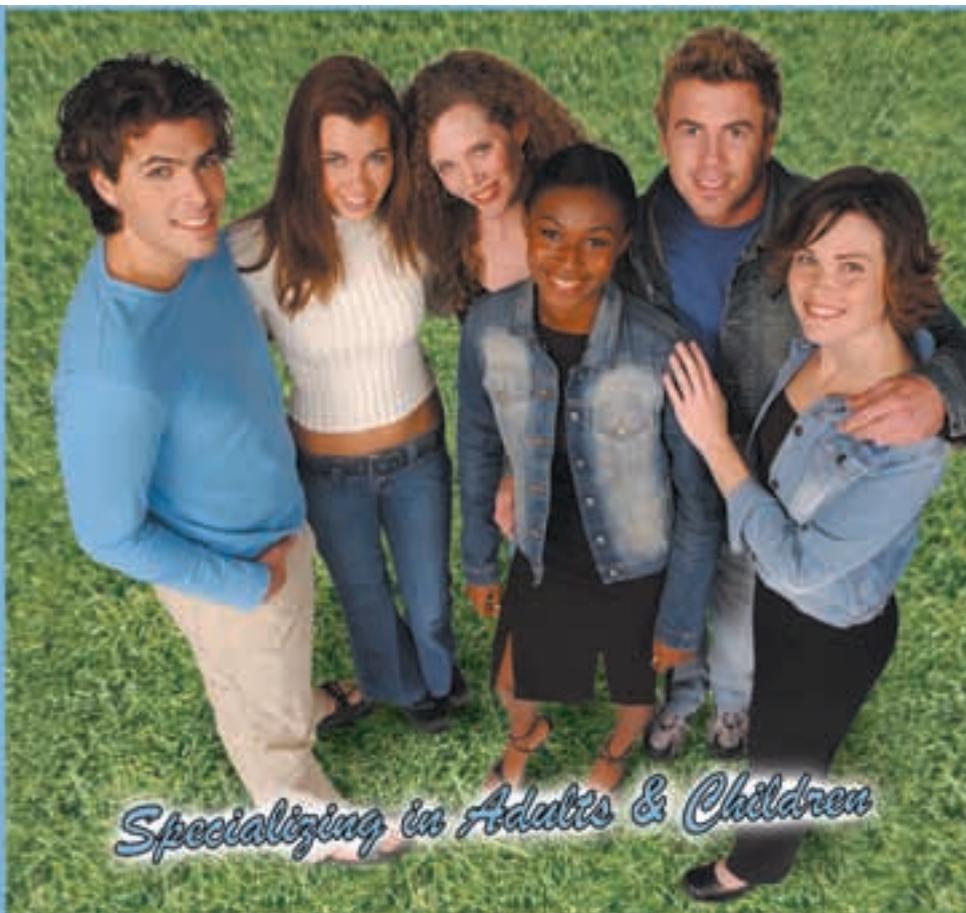
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them," she shared. "It really causes great happiness to the kids and puts a smile on their faces. Even the smallest of things can bring the biggest ... joy to people," she reflected. During her trips, she has also encountered many moving expressions of gratitude from those she has helped.

Anna believes that through helping others, her family, in turn, has been helped. "My husband, Michael, went on a couples' mission trip with me, and it was a life-changing experience for both of us," Anna said. "We went to Matamoros with five other couples. That trip brought us closer in our relationship and in our life."

Last December, Alex accompanied his mother and her church group to Mission Divinia. "That trip and experience changed his life as well," Anna added. Upon Alex's return back to the States, he realized there were some things that he needed to change. He began making different choices regarding the types of movies he watched and the kinds of video games he played. "He also thinks more about what he's going to say now before he speaks," Anna commented.

In February, a mission group from Anna's church went to New Orleans to minister and work. "We took classes to prepare for this trip," she said. While there, Anna's team met up with over 300 young adults from the Master's Commission program, who had come from as far away as Canada. Together, the group set up a stage where their dance ministries and all of their arts groups could perform. "On some days, we worked 18 hours, and it was a lot of work," she said, referring to the time they spent ministering on the streets.

"While we were there, we visited homeless areas and impoverished neighborhoods where ... Katrina hit," Anna said. "We also met many people whose houses had been flooded by the waters." Meeting those people and seeing the effect of the hurricane had a deep impact on Anna. "There is still a lot of hurt and anger in New Orleans

because of the hurricane,” she shared. “The people feel like they are living in a war zone, and that there is still a lack of support.”

Anna is thankful for what these trips have done for her and how they have changed her life. “It is amazing that we get to go to places to feed, clothe and show the people love,” she shared. “It is my joy when I see people’s lives being touched, and I believe that helping others gives you joy and peace.”

In July, Anna will be returning to

“Even the smallest of things can bring the biggest ... joy to people.”

Mexico for a women’s conference to minister to the ladies at Mission Divinia. For now, though, she will continue to work and help those in need right here in our community. Besides collecting donations and participating in supplies drives for her mission trips, Anna also likes to volunteer at the local outreach center and is a couples’ “small group” leader through her church.

“Anna is very involved with her family and the community,” North Ellis County Outreach Director Denise Butler said. “She volunteers at her church and up at the outreach whenever we need her, and she is always willing to come in and help. It is neat to see people like Anna with the heart to serve where they are needed, whether locally or abroad.” Anna believes when someone helps their community, they are actually enhancing it. “I love to reach out and help the community,” Anna said.

“If God can use me, He can use anybody,” she smiled. **NOW**

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Steeped in Rich History

— By Sandra McIntosh

At Home With John and Mary Lou Bass

John and Mary Lou Bass are quite comfortable in their home, nestled back off the road that once belonged to John's parents. The structure itself was the brainchild of John's sister. "My older sister actually drew up the plans while she was a student in high school," John said. "That was back in the late 1940s."

When the frame home was built in 1949, its original location was in the Hutchins-Lancaster area. How it made its way to its present location is a story within itself. "When my parents decided to move from one location in the country to another in the mid-70s," John said, "they cut the frame house in three pieces and had it moved here." Once the home was pieced back together, it underwent the first remodel. John and Mary Lou did not take ownership of the house until 1992 after John's parents passed away. At that time, the home was surrounded by 346 acres of prime farm land that had been in the family since 1850, the same time John's great-great-grandfather relocated to Texas from Tennessee.

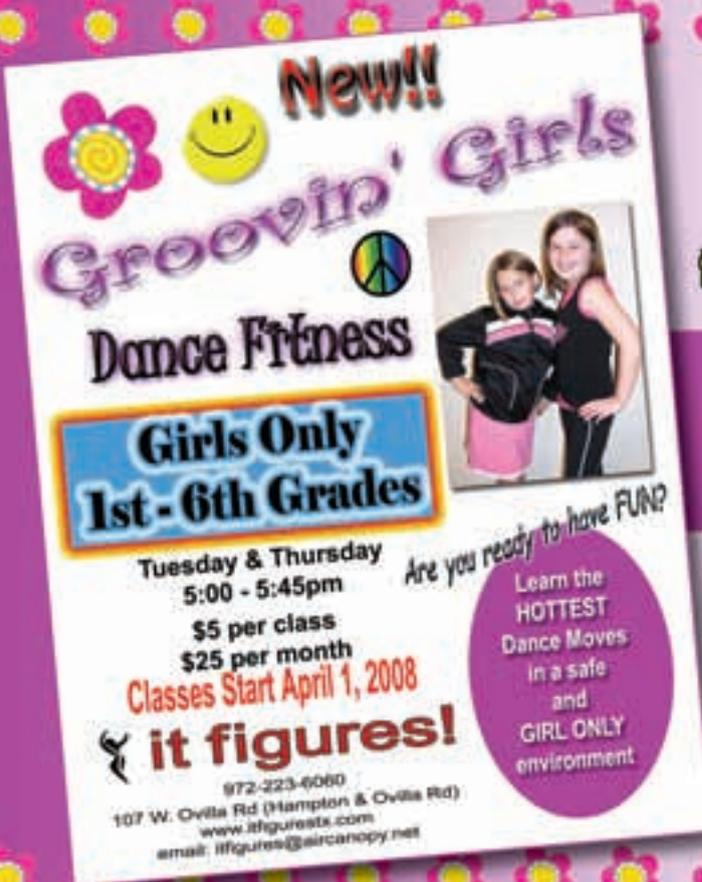
"One thing my great-great-grandfather brought with him was a quarter horse named Shiloh," John remembered. "Shiloh became one of the most famous quarter horses during that period in time." Today, the home John and Mary Lou share rests on 20 acres. The remaining acreage has gone into the development of a highly restricted, gated community John lovingly named Shiloh Downs.

The home's first remodel included bricking the exterior, a fresh coat of paint for the interior, along with a few necessary changes and repairs. A mud

room and bath were added to the south end of the home and the garage was converted into John's home office.

The second remodel, which took place just a couple years ago, was so extensive that John and Mary Lou had to move out. "We gutted the whole house," Mary Lou said. "We had to, in order to make the great room effect we wanted." Now the home boasts three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a formal dining/living room combination, a home office, a kitchen with a cozy breakfast nook, where the couple takes most of their meals and a family room





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now big enough to easily accommodate the couple's family and friends who visit quite frequently.

John and Mary Lou grew up in the Hutchins area, where they both graduated from Wilmer Hutchins High School. "There is only a one-year difference in our ages," John quipped, "but there was a three-year difference in our grade levels." Needless to say, while John graduated and went on to college at Texas Tech University, Mary Lou finished her schooling. The couple will celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary next month. The one thing about the home that means so much to Mary Lou is the way it makes her feel after a long day away. "Just driving down the driveway is so calming," she



said. "It's peaceful." She also laughed at the fact that with so many pecan trees, one would think they would have pecans to spare, but that is not the case at all. "We usually never get a single pecan," she explained, "because of all the squirrels."

The home is filled with many antiques, collectibles and family heirlooms. There is an old Victrola — a record player for those who may not remember — that once belonged to Mary Lou's grandmother and now takes its place in the family room. "You put the record in the top," Mary Lou said, as she demonstrated that the Victrola was still in perfect working order. "You



crank it and the sounds of the record come out. The doors in the front can be closed to quiet the volume of the music." The buffet along one wall in the formal dining area is another antique piece, which also belonged to her grandmother. An antique crystal punch bowl and vase are lovingly displayed behind the glass, serving as gentle reminders of family members who have passed on.

A pie safe from John's side of the family is also located in the formal dining room. Dishes and pink glassware dating back to Mary Lou's childhood are found in the pie safe. The Vaseline glass in a rich shade of lime green

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belonged to John's mother. "I guess you could say the pie safe represents the whole family," Mary Lou said, as John nodded his head in agreement. Vases are a predominant collection found throughout the house, as well. "When I see one I like," Mary Lou added, "I buy it!" One vase that Mary Lou picked up still had its \$2.99 price tag in place.

The home is steeped in family history, as evidenced by the glass-topped coffee table, which dates back 60 years, and the breakfast table that has been in John's family for as long as he can recall. "I can remember the table stretching on forever," John said, further explaining the table on rollers used to have up to 10 leaves, which could be added to accommodate guests and family during holiday gatherings when he was a boy. "My mom used to say it was the longest table she'd ever seen." Mary Lou's grandmother's chairs take their rightful place under the table.

One item in the kitchen that holds particular sentimental value for the couple is the teddy bear cookie jar. "I



gave it to my mom when I was 3 years old," John said. "His mom wrote a note and put it in the cookie jar saying it belonged to him," Mary Lou interjected, opening the jar only to pull out the original note. Old black irons, truly used for ironing back in the day, are now used as bookends to hold in place and display all of Mary Lou's favorite cookbooks.

There are so many things which could be mentioned, if there were the space to do so. There is a cherry wood desk and chair, a china vanity set, a glass jewelry box and a rocking chair that Mary Lou's uncle used to sit in, as well as wooden

tables painted by John's mother and assembled with wooden pegs. "If the house could speak," Mary Lou laughingly said, "it would probably groan."

While the couple loves the outdoors and the nature that surrounds them, their favorite hobby is to take the weekend off and go to Shreveport. For them, just getting away becomes relaxing and fun. With 50-plus years behind them, this must be part of the secret to the longevity of a good marriage. "We have always agreed to disagree," Mary Lou said. "We have fun and we love to laugh." **NOW**

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Blooming Talent

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Youngsters can often inspire and melt even the hardest of hearts. Whether through laughter, conversation or even intellect, children just always seem to know how to break down the barriers we as adults occasionally build. Sometimes, they can just steal your hearts as does the character Tiny Tim in *A Christmas Carol*.

Red Oak has such a child: local resident Derek Barnes, who, like many children, loves to play with friends, his animals and his siblings Michael, Sarah and Emily. He also likes to perform in plays. Derek was first encouraged to perform by his art teacher, Ms. Pitts, at Eastridge Elementary. So when he decided to sing the National Anthem around town, he immediately fell in love with performing onstage. "I've always done plays," Derek said. "We also did a lot of singing and running lines at church and school. It was great when my teacher asked us kids to sing at the Mr. and Ms. Red Oak Pageant, a girls' basketball game and for the Red Oak Education Foundation's Fun Walk."

During the summer of 2007, Derek's aunt, Darla, encouraged him to take his love of performing to the next level, so he decided to take acting classes and audition and perform in local theatrical productions. From there, this 11-year-old's life has burst and bloomed with opportunities galore.

It all started with *Robin Hood*, when the Missoula Childrens' Theater offered a week-long camp through the Grand Prairie Arts Council. "I was one of the horsemen in *Robin Hood* and it was a good experience," this well-spoken young man said, adding, "I really liked how I made a lot of new friends, too."

Derek's second performance was in a production of *The Music Man* with the Waxahachie Community Theater. "This was the first time Derek was able to act with both children and adults," Derek's mom, Melissa, said. It was also his first time to be more independent and responsible; he had to be on time, work and perform with others without having his acting coach by his side. For many, this could be scary; however, for Derek, it was an exciting opportunity to grow and learn from veteran actors and he relished every moment.

He also appreciated acting in his third and most recent production, *Ebenezer Scrooge*. You guessed it — Derek actually *did* play the part of Tiny Tim, complete with a very convincing accent. "When I auditioned for Tiny Tim, I sang something from *The Music Man* at my audition," Derek said. "They called me a few weeks later and told me I got the part." This is when Derek said he became a little nervous, and who could blame him — this would be the



biggest show of his life thus far!

The *Ebenezer Scrooge* production had been running for 26 consecutive years at the Pocket Sandwich Theater in Dallas. Many within the production have played characters in *Scrooge* for over a decade. There are a total of 25 people in the play, and only eight of them are children. At first, Derek didn't know how good his skills were as compared to the others, especially the veteran actors. "There were 25 shows of *Scrooge* we performed in during its run last season, and I learned a lot," Derek stated. "I've also learned you can't get mad if you make mistakes, while learning to improvise when those mistakes happen." Derek said he also liked getting paid to perform. "I made \$10 a show and now have \$250," he smiled.

So far, Derek said acting has been fun and he is really progressing in his skills. Although the characters he has

**ARTS
NOW**

played have shared his upbeat personality, he is looking forward to evolving as an actor and continuing in his young professional career. "Before every audition, I spend time learning my songs, lines and even accents," he shared. "I really try to get myself into the character by trying to experience what they would feel in certain situations. Eventually, I'd like to make a career out of acting by doing Broadway or even acting with animals like they do at Sea World."

Being an avid animal lover, Derek and his family recently rescued a pregnant cat who has since delivered her babies. He also enjoys playing

Youngsters can often inspire and melt even the hardest of hearts.

with his Christmas present, a Bearded Dragon Lizard. Besides having fun with his animals, family and friends, Derek also loves singing, playing the piano, reading, playing jokes and learning anything he can. "He loves to work out math problems and logic riddles with his dad, too," Melissa shared.

"My dad and mom like to encourage things that make us happy," Derek said. "I've never seen my mom not smiling and my dad will take all the time in the world to explain something to us. In general, I just really love them."

Melissa is not only proud of Derek, she is excited he has found something which is a passion for him. "Acting has helped him a lot in learning maturity, time management with school and in growing," Melissa said.

Keep on the look-out for this local rising star. Derek plans to try out for the Waxahachie Community Theater spring production of *Li'l Abner*. This young bud is really blooming! **ARTS NOW**

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Sports
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Hitting the Curve Balls

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

**“Every day,
his life is about
baseball. It really
is his passion.”**

They say that in life, you never know what you will get dealt. For 17-year-old Taylor Currey, life is inevitably about taking the good with the bad, and turning the negatives into positives. Baseball and positive thinking have enabled this young man to “hit all the curve balls” life has tossed his way.

“Taylor has been playing organized baseball for over 13 years,” his mother, Jenny, shared. “He would be out in the front yard when he was small, playing tee ball with his little plastic bat. As a matter of fact, his first word was ball,” she smiled. Taylor remembers playing and learning a lot about the sport from his dad, Tommy. “Dad and I always played catch in the backyard,” Taylor said. “He bought me a pitching net and made me a pitchers mound.”

From the time he was a toddler, baseball has always been the outlet to help Taylor through adverse times in his life. “I like baseball; it is a release for me,” he said. “Baseball is my escape, and my release is physical. If I get it out physically, then I can get it out emotionally. What I learn from baseball, I can use in life.” Taylor then shared some very interesting baseball, as well as life insights. “If you respect the sport, it will pay you back,” he said. “I’ve thought a lot about baseball in regard to life. If you respect life, it will pay you back as well.” Taylor’s maturity and perceptions are reflections of his good judgment. “Baseball has kept me busy and away from trouble. The girls really like it, too,” he laughed.

Jenny agreed the sport holds many positives for youngsters. “Baseball has kept Taylor disciplined and it gives him a good outlet, especially when he is a little high-strung,” she shared. “Every day, his life is about baseball. It really is his passion.”

For Taylor, those days start early every day. “On some days, my work-out begins at 6:30 a.m.,” he said. He then attends school and after the last bell, he can be found out on the diamond pitching or playing second base until 7:00 p.m. “This year, though, we don’t have the depth to play permanent positions,” Taylor explained. “Playing multiple positions, though, helps us to learn all aspects of the game. Although it’s a challenge, it’s fun.” His upbeat attitude in any situation reveals his ability to focus on positives, even when he is

working extra hard on the field. “I like that my coach is tough on me sometimes,” Taylor said. “He helps give me the boost that I need in life and on the field.”

Taylor credits Coach Autrey for inspiring him in many different aspects of his life. “When my dad passed away in 2006, I needed a father figure that I liked,” Taylor said.

“That is when I met Coach. He really knows a lot about life in general.” The Curreys credit many within our community for helping them during that difficult time. “We have come to rely on Coach Autrey for advice,” Jenny shared.

Through his personal tragedy, Taylor said he was able to reflect and grow. “I learned from that,” he shared, including a personal analogy: “It’s like a star baseball player — when the player [dad] leaves the team, you have to take on more responsibility. This then forces you as a team member to get better. We are just trying to start our life over and this has definitely made us stronger. We are a good family. My dad



Sports NOW

was the core of everything, but his passing has made me a better person.”

Jenny and Taylor have a loving and dynamic relationship. Taylor credits his grandparents and mom for being his biggest supporters. “He really helps me so much,” Jenny said with pride. “A lot of times he motivates me, too.” Her son has not only accepted more responsibility, but has also learned and grown through adversity. Taylor’s drive and level-headedness can be seen in all aspects of his life, especially in the classroom.

“Sometimes you have to learn to do your work during school and to study at night. It is sometimes hard when you don’t ‘get’ schoolwork as easily as others do, but I just take responsibility of getting it done anyway. I’m kind of



like the ‘shut up and do it’ kind of person,” he revealed. “Especially when he sets his mind to something,” Jenny playfully added.

One of his current goals is to continue playing the sport he loves at Red Oak High School and then go to college after he graduates. “I am looking to get a baseball scholarship,” Taylor said. “I want to get bigger and faster, and am willing to get better.” During the spring and summer, Taylor will also play for the Dallas Tigers and is looking forward to the opening of the high school’s new baseball field.

Until then, Taylor plans on continuing to do his best, while remaining positive and enjoying each and every day to the fullest. “Taylor is really funny,” Jenny said, referring to her son’s upbeat attitude and good sense of humor. “I got that from my dad,” he smiled. **NOW**

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Business
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The Luxury of Home

— By Alex Allred

As you walk into the Red Oak Town Village luxury apartments office, you are instantly greeted with the welcoming promise of “urban comfort and convenience uniquely blended with the tranquility of country living.” The amenities include a resort-style pool and lounging area, four grills and a fitness and business center with two computers with a printer and scanner for the residents.

To say the apartments are nice is a vast understatement. The living areas range in size from 679 square feet to over 1,300 square feet of some of the best facilities around. Vaulted ceilings, garden tubs, island kitchens and built-in computer desks, available in select units, are truly state of the art, but it is the staff who make the apartment complex feel like a community of its own.

“We are a little neighborhood,” said Michelle Jones, manager of the Red

Oak Town Village. With over 500 residents, Michelle is proud to say, “We’re a very diverse community.” Young families, singles, senior citizens and baby boomers all share in the gated community. “This is a happy place,” she added.

When the owner, Ali Sharaf, decided to build, he envisioned an upscale luxury apartment complex for long-term residents, as well as for those in need of transitional housing. “Whatever their needs,” Michelle said, “we want this to feel like home.”

No doubt, it is for this reason Michelle was offered the position of manager. After nearly 22 years in the medical field, she was looking for a career change, and began work as a

leasing agent. It was the perfect fit for this “people person.” An elegant, confident woman, Michelle pays tremendous detail to customer service and satisfaction, including offering cookies, fresh out of the oven, to children on Friday afternoons.

“Yes, every Friday when the bus lets the kids out, I give each one a cookie,” Michelle smiled. Initially, there were



Business NOW

only a few children, but as the Red Oak Town Village reputation grew, and more and more families moved in, "I went from baking eight or nine cookies to as many as 30. But they love it!" As a mother and now a grandmother of two, she knows it is the little touches that can mean so much.

Ali brought Michelle on from another apartment complex six months before the Red Oak Town Village opened its doors. "[I] had some input into the decoration for the club house," Michelle explained. Again, the detail and dedication she offered as decorator coincides with her duties as manager. From financial matters to maintenance and leasing, Michelle insisted that a good team is what makes their apartment complex stand out. With assistant manager Daphne Shabarant, another refined and gracious woman, they are committed to learning the name of each and every tenant. It can be no coincidence that Ali has hired such representatives to care for his residents.

"Daphne has a way of making people feel special," Michelle said. "Together, we're very dedicated to our residents and this complex. It really is about the team. We have a great relationship with each other." This outlook has carried over into the community of Red Oak. While Michelle is a relative newcomer to the town, she concedes that the area "feels like home."

In the months to come, the apartment complex will be expanding by adding a second phase. "We're very excited about that," Michelle said. With an additional 110 units, the Red Oak Town Village will be one of the biggest of its kind within the surrounding area, and without a doubt, Michelle and Daphne will be there with a cookie and a smile.

Red Oak Town Village is located at 200 South Ryan Drive. For more information, call (972) 576-3330 or visit www.redoaktownvillage.com. **NOW**

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Education
NOW

Letting

Grow

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

The most valuable gift you can give is your time. Local teacher, Melissa Hancock, gives more than her time; she gives her whole heart.

Melissa teaches the gifted and talented programs at both Eastridge and Wooden Elementary schools. Her heart for working with all children is what makes this extraordinary resident so special.

“I work under the ‘umbrella’ of gifted education and resource, so I teach the full spectrum of children with special needs,” Melissa said.

Teaching special-needs students, however, is not all this humble, dedicated and giving educator is credited with doing. Melissa holds degrees in elementary education and special education, while also receiving her certification to teach English as a second language. Melissa believes with her drive for helping all children learn and excel, she can truly make a life-changing impact on the students she touches.

She especially enjoys making a difference in children’s lives and their learning experiences by encouraging the students to get in touch with their creative side. “I am the Red Oak coordinator for a national program called Destination Imagination,” Melissa shared. “This is a program held throughout the district for all public school children. Their ages range from kindergartners through the 12th-graders,” Melissa said. “Early in September we host an open meeting where parents can enroll their child into the program, which then starts at the beginning of the school year.”

Once a parent registers their child to participate in the program, the child is placed on a team with a parental or volunteer team manager. “I facilitate, organize and teach the team managers the skills they will need for their group,” Melissa continued. “We never have enough volunteers to be managers.”

Through Destination Imagination, children are given



different types of creative, thought-provoking and artistic-based challenges. Some of the tasks given require the child to instantly follow instructions. These challenges can range from improvising an act or performance to manipulating and building from a given cluster of materials. Destination Imagination also teaches many skills through artistic means. Challenges provided for the groups range from technical, mechanical and scientific to theatrical. Each group can have up to seven students participating. This year the program is made up of 12 teams who will be competing with other districts within their grade level.

The purpose of the Destination Imagination program has many aspects, and Melissa’s personal purpose is heartfelt. “Through the program, we teach higher level thinking skills and creative/critical thinking,” she shared. “We also try to encourage the kids to think outside of the box. That creativity then leads to innovation, which is what the world is looking for today. Creativeness is something that will help them with their future, and will set them apart so they can be successful. They have so much fun in the program, they don’t realize they are learning.

“Every activity I do in the gifted program could benefit every child,” Melissa stated. “Through the school I give in-service seminars to the instructors to help assist them to differentiate learning for each individual student, including gifted [children]. I then help the instructors teach the different types of students to learn at a higher level and to think more critically.” She then shared an important aspect of teaching:

Education **NOW**

“When I make learning enjoyable, the kids retain things better, and also, they learn faster when it’s fun.”

Melissa revealed her personal insights on working with all types of children: “Each child has a gift. I encourage parents to help their children dream, because innovation and great things happen when kids dream.” Melissa also shared the importance of allowing children to realize, pursue and follow their dreams, no matter who they are or what their abilities. “My husband and I have four children,” Melissa shared. “We have two boys who are gifted and two daughters with Down syndrome.”

Melissa’s two daughters have shown her the importance of reaching one’s dreams. “Our oldest daughter, Elizabeth, has had heart problems and is a leukemia survivor, while our youngest, Sarah, had heart troubles, as well,” she revealed. Both had surgery to repair their hearts and are now busy learning and having fun just like other children their age. They enjoy skiing, and Melissa said Elizabeth is very independent. “She is in the Special Olympics here in Red Oak and on many athletic teams, too,” she added.

“Before I had Down children, I did not have a positive attitude, because they are different, but now I know they are mostly like regular kids,” Melissa shared, revealing some personal insights about what she has learned from her girls. “It showed me that we should be more accepting of people’s differences, because the girls can do things that other kids their age can do,” Melissa beamed.

She also shared how proud she is of her sons, who help take care of their sisters. “Our boys help the girls overcome a lot of their inabilities without enabling them,” she said. Through it all, Melissa and her family have grown closer and are a true reflection of the power of nurturing, loving and letting grow. **NOW**

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Around Town NOW



The Robinson children, top left, had fun at the ball fields. Nancy Drake and her dog, Lucy, top middle, watched an afternoon ball game. Local baseball players, top right, stretched between innings. The Eitel family, second row left, enjoyed a sunny afternoon on the porch. The ROISD Hawkettes, bottom left, recently competed in the Texas Regional in Rowlette and the Alamo State Dance Classic. The ROISD Practical Parent Education group, middle left, held their 4th annual "Phyllis Dodd Memorial Parent of the Year" award ceremony. Vincent Doblado, middle right, received a resolution from Texas State Representative Jim Pitta congratulating him for saving the life of his friend, Ian Nance. Brittni White and Abby Hartman, second row right, enjoyed a day at the park with their puppy. Ethan Black, bottom right, won a first place medal when the ROISD Special Olympics team traveled to a competition in Dallas recently.



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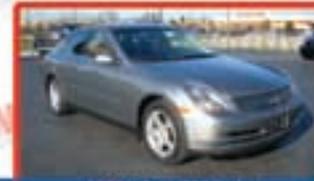
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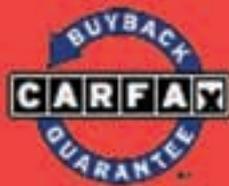
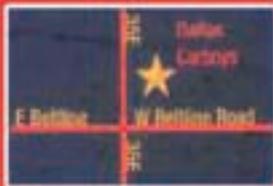
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Lynne learned the basics and gleaned a love of cooking from two special women. “I liked to help my mom and grandma,” Lynne said. “I remember having a children’s cookbook that Mom got with box tops from Domino Sugar.”

You cannot tell by her wonderful recipes, but Lynne believes food can be delicious without taking hours to prepare. She finds pleasure in the simple. “I guess it would be simplistic to say because I like to eat, I cook, and I enjoy watching people enjoy what I’ve cooked,” Lynne added. She lives by a few rules of thumb. “It is important to always make enough for planned guests, invest in and use good kitchen equipment and finally, know that if you feed them, they will come.” **NOW**

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

IN THE KITCHEN WITH LYNNE GRANDSTAFF

GRANDMOTHER EASTERWOOD'S LEMON PIE

1 14-oz. can Eagle Brand Milk
2 egg yolks (save whites for meringue)
1/2 cup lemon juice (concentrate works, but fresh is best)
pie crust — baked and cooled (pastry or graham cracker are both good)

MERINGUE:

2 egg whites
1/4 tsp. cream of tartar
1/4 cup sugar

Blend the Eagle Brand Milk, egg yolks and lemon juice; pour into the cooked and cooled pie shell. Chill. While chilling, make the meringue topping. Add the cream of tartar to egg whites and beat at high speed with an electric mixer until foamy. It should begin to make soft peaks. Slowly sprinkle in sugar, while continuing to beat until peaks are stiff. Top the pie with the meringue, being sure to seal the edges. Bake at 325 F until lightly browned. Chill until ready to serve.

GREEN CHILI CHICKEN SOUP

3 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
2 1/2 cups diced green chilies with juice (5 4-oz. cans)
1 15-oz. can chopped tomatoes with juice (Use Ro-Tel for part of this if you like a little spicier flavor.)
1/2 cup diced onion

2 large potatoes, diced into about 1/2-inch cubes
1/4 tsp. white pepper
2 chicken bouillon cubes
3/4 Tbsp. garlic powder
1 Tbsp. cumin

Put eight cups of water into a soup pot that will hold at least one gallon. Add three boneless skinless chicken breast halves. Bring to a boil. Skim fat from surface of water. Simmer for about 10 minutes. Remove chicken and cut or shred into bite-size pieces. Return chicken meat to the water and add the remaining ingredients listed above. Bring to a boil; simmer for at least 2 hours. If the soup gets too thick, add very hot water and heat through.

GREEN CHILI HOMINY

1 cup chopped onions
4 15-oz. cans white hominy, drain and reserve liquid
1/2 cup hominy liquid
1 Tbsp. juice from pickled jalapeño
1/2 lb. grated sharp cheddar cheese
1 2.8-oz. jar Hormel Real Bacon Bits
1 cup fresh seeded and chopped Anaheim peppers
1 to 2 pickled jalapeños, seeded and finely chopped.

Sauté the onions in a little butter, PAM or chicken broth. Set aside. Heat the hominy in a separate sauté pan, stirring often. When heated thoroughly, add the hominy liquid and jalapeño

juice; bring back to high temperature; add 3/4 of the cheese. When the cheese melts, add half the peppers and bacon and all of the onion. Pour into a 9x13-inch pan prepared with PAM. Sprinkle with the remaining cheese, bacon and peppers. At this point, it can be refrigerated, frozen or baked. Bake at 325 F until cheese on top melts, about 15 minutes; 40 minutes if refrigerated. Note: I sometimes prepare this in a 12-inch cast iron skillet and then just bake it in the same. Serves 10 - 12. Can easily be doubled.

ITALIAN MEATBALLS

3 slices bread torn into pieces
1/2 cup milk
2 eggs
1 lb. ground beef or 1/4 lb. pork sausage — Italian, spicy or regular. This is optional, but makes a big difference in taste.
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 Tbsp. snipped fresh parsley, or 1 Tbsp. if dried
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. dried oregano, crushed
1/4 tsp. pepper
1 jar or your own spaghetti sauce

In a medium sized mixing bowl, soak the bread in the milk for 3 minutes. Add 2 eggs; mix well. Add the ground meat or sausage, cheese, parsley, salt, oregano and pepper. Mix until well blended. With wet hands or meatball shaper form the meat into small balls (should make about 24). In a skillet (cast

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Who's Cooking **NOW**

iron if you have it) put 3/8-1/2 inch of olive oil and heat to 350 F. Brown the meatballs slowly. When browned, poke with a toothpick. If done, the juice will be clear or will not run out at all. In another pot, heat your spaghetti sauce and add meatballs. One jar is enough for half the recipe of meatballs and will feed 3-4 people. You can cool and freeze the extra meatballs for a quick meal another night or use them the next day for a yummy meatball sub. Be sure to simmer the meatballs in the sauce for at least 30 minutes while you cook the pasta. Watch carefully! Do not let the sauce burn! Serve with spaghetti, fettuccine or linguine noodles, a green salad and garlic or Focaccia bread.

PERFECT APPLE CRUMB PIE

6 - 8 tart apples, pared, cored and thinly sliced (Yield 6 cups)
 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
 1 cup sugar or Splenda
 1 tsp. cinnamon
 1/8 tsp. ground nutmeg
 dash of salt
 3 Tbsp. rum, spiced or regular or red wine (whatever you have open)
 pastry for 2 9-inch pie crusts
 2 Tbsp. butter, cut into tiny pieces

CRUMB CRUST TOPPING:

1/2 cup sugar or Splenda
 1/2 cup brown sugar or brown sugar substitute (Splenda)
 2 tsp. cinnamon
 3 Tbsp. flour
 1/2 cup of nuts (Whatever you like; I use walnuts.)
 couple of handfuls of oatmeal - regular or quick
 1/4 cup butter, melted

Taste the apples; if they are not tart enough, sprinkle them with about 1 tablespoon of lemon juice. In a large bowl, combine the flour, sugar, spices and a dash of salt. Put apples in the bowl; toss until evenly coated. Line 9-inch pie plate with pastry. Fill with the apples; dot with the butter. Pour the rum or wine evenly over the apples. **CRUMB CRUST TOPPING:** Mix all ingredients together. Spread evenly over the apples. Bake at 400 F for 35 - 40 minutes. Watch the crust and cover the edges with foil if getting brown too quickly.

PIZZA

PIZZA DOUGH:

1 1/3 cup unbleached flour
 1 tsp. sugar
 1/2 tsp. salt
 1 package yeast (regular or rapid rise)
 2/3 cup 110 F water
 3 Tbsp. olive oil
 1/3 heaping cup flour (for turning out dough)

PIZZA TOPPING:

1 cup pizza sauce
 1 lb. shredded cheese (your choice)
 Variety of your favorite pizza toppings

Place first four ingredients in bowl. Stir to mix, leaving a well in middle to catch liquid ingredients. Add olive oil to hot water. Pour water and oil into center of well. Mix until all is moistened. Beat until dough is elastic (3 to 5 minutes). Add heaping 1/3 cup of flour. Mix to make a soft dough. Flour cutting board; turn out dough, scraping all from bowl. Sprinkle with flour; knead until smooth and springy, adding flour a little at a time. Shape into ball; place into an oiled bowl. Turn dough to coat. Cover with clean cloth; leave in warm draft-free area to rise to double in size: 40 - 45 minutes regular yeast, 20 - 25 minutes rapid rise yeast. Preheat oven to 350 F. Oil pizza pan or spray with PAM spray. Hold dough with finger tips; allow gravity to pull it down. Turn to shape into circle half as wide as your pan. Gently pull edges to cover remainder of pan. Spread with pizza sauce, cheese and your favorite toppings. Turn oven up to 500 F; place pizza in oven. Bake for 15 minutes or until evenly browned on top and edges. Cool 5 minutes before cutting.

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Traditional IRAs – Savings Vehicles With Tax Advantages

— By Andrea Walton

There are many ways for you to build a retirement nest egg. One of the more popular is the Traditional Individual Retirement Arrangement (IRA). Deferred taxes is one of the reasons for that popularity.

Contributions to a Traditional IRA may be deductible from your income, lowering the federal income tax for which you are responsible. Federal income tax on your IRA will be deferred until you begin taking withdrawals, usually when you have retired and may be in a lower tax bracket. Generally, you can qualify for a tax deduction if you are not a participant in an employer-sponsored retirement plan. For 2007, if you are covered by a retirement plan at work, your deduction for contributions to a traditional IRA will be reduced (and then phased out) if your modified adjusted gross income (AGI) is:

- More than \$83,000 but less than \$104,000 for a married couple filing a joint return or a qualifying widow(er).
- More than \$52,000 but less than \$62,000 for a single individual or head of household, or
- Less than \$10,000 for a married individual filing a separate return. You must begin taking minimum annual withdrawals from your Traditional IRA by April 1 of the year after the year you reach 70 years of age. Those withdrawals will be taxed as ordinary income.



There are a number of options available to you when you open an IRA. Various investments may be used and should be chosen based on your circumstances. Talk to a qualified financial professional to find out how you can take advantage of

the tax benefits of a Traditional IRA. **NOW**
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Health NOW

AUTISM *Challenges*

— By Betty Tryon

A mother shopping with her son had dressed him in an unusual T-shirt. It read “I’m not a bad boy; I have autism.” There you have it — the incredible challenge parents face as they integrate their autistic child into society. The cause of autism, a developmental disorder in the brain, has not been fully determined. It could be either hereditary or environmental or both. Part of the social stigma stems from the fact that although the child looks normal, by common social standards he or she behaves inappropriately.

The most defining trait of autism is social dysfunction, and poor social interaction is descriptive of one form of the disorder. The child’s behavior does not result from lack of parental or personal discipline. He lacks control over his behavior, exhibiting characteristics such as: avoiding bodily and eye contact and resisting human touch like cuddling or hugging.

The autistic child also behaves in an awkward manner socially due to problems with verbal and non-verbal communication. The child may speak phrases repeatedly or may never speak at all. Autistic children demonstrate difficulties in interpreting facial expressions or cues that others may be sending about a social situation. They also lack empathy — the ability to understand another person’s feelings. As a result, many autistic children can initially make friends, but the friendships typically do not last long.

Another manifestation in their social behavior is repetitive movements, which appear purposeless, such as body rocking and flapping of arms. They may engage in the self-destructive behavior of biting themselves. Compulsive and ritualistic behavior are also a part of the disorder, and children afflicted with autism may become highly agitated if routines or schedules are changed. Stability becomes an anchor to them in their unstable world.

All children affected with this disorder will display symptoms differently and with degrees varying from mild to extreme. Consequently, the disorder can

be a huge challenge for a family, but the autistic child can improve with treatment and with age. Treatment focuses on educational and behavioral interventions tailored to the child’s needs. Medications are directed toward treating psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, hyperactivity and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

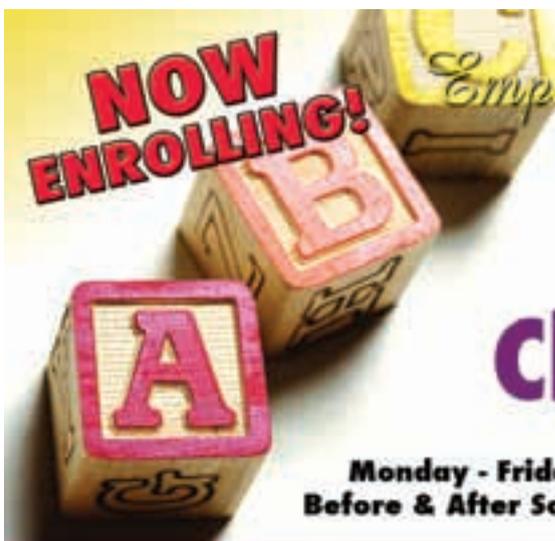
Although there is no cure, there is hope that with intervention, the child can learn and gain a modest amount of independence. The earlier the intervention, the more positive

the outcome. The amount of support needed to sustain people with autism as they grow into adults will be directly proportional to the severity of the disorder. The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke conducts research in order to better understand the nature of this disorder and to find and provide relief.

You can find more information about this subject at www.autism-society.org, the Autism Society of America. **NOW**

This article is for general information purposes only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult with your physician for questions regarding this topic.





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April 2008 Community Calendar

Every Monday

Celebrate Recovery, a Christ-centered recovery ministry, meets at First Baptist Church of Red Oak, 103 West Red Oak Road. (972) 617-3591. View more information at www.redoakcelebraterecovery.com.

Second and Fourth Mondays

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

Third Mondays

Oaks Church leadership forum: 7:30 a.m. at the Waxahachie Civic Center. (214) 376-8208.

First and Third Tuesdays

Training Academy for Dental Assistants' free sessions begin at 5:30 p.m. (972) 842-2999.

Preschool story time: 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. at the Red Oak Library. (469) 218-1230. Check out their Web site at www.redoakpubliclibrary.org.

Red Oak Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m. at 207 West Red Oak Road. (972) 617-3577.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

Alcoholics Anonymous: 7:00 p.m. at First United Methodist Church, 600 West Red Oak Rd. Non-smoking. (972) 617-9100.

Thursdays

Gamblers Anonymous: 8:30 p.m. at First United Methodist

Church, 600 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-9100.

Second Tuesday

Wagon Wheel Saddle Club meeting at 7:30 p.m. (972) 223-8118. www.freewebs.com/wagonwheelsaddleclub.

Third Wednesday

Ellis County Christian Women's Connection luncheon: 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Hwy. 287 at I-35 South in Waxahachie. Cost is \$13.00. Vouchers for child care available. For reservations, call (972) 937-2807 or (972) 937-9984.

Second Thursday

American Cancer Society Support group meets at 7:00 p.m. First United Methodist Church, 600 West Red Oak Rd.

Third Thursday

American Business Women's Association meets at 5:45 p.m. Waxahachie Civic Center. Contact Stephanie Kinnison at (972) 938-0703 or e-mail her at stephanie@customcaregivers.com.

Last Thursday

DeSoto Art League meeting. For more information, www.desotoartleague.com.

April 5

Fire Rescue CPR classes: 9:00 a.m. Call in advance to register. (469) 218-7713. www.redoaktx.org.

April 12

2008 Gerry Ann North Fun Walk and Red Oak ISD Health

and Information Fair at Red Oak Elementary. Registration: 7:30 a.m. Walk/Run: 8:30 a.m. (972) 617-4320. www.redoakisd.foundation.org.

April 19

Plant Swap: 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Ovilla City Park. (214) 738-4314.

June 7

Mid-Way Regional Airport's Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-In: 8:00 – 11:00 a.m. Public invited. Breakfast tickets cost \$6.00 (one child under 8 eats free with a paid adult ticket). Event and parking are free. Classic Airplanes and Fighters, plane rides/Discovery Flights, remote control model flyers, Flight Demo (T-28s), The Classic Swing Band, Midlothian Classic Wheels and other attractions. Call Tammy at (972) 923-0080.

To have your events posted on the community calendar, e-mail us at: dclausen.nowmag@sbcglobal.net.
For more community events, visit our online calendar at www.nowmagazines.com.

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