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The country life is still alive
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Mansfield
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The Community Magazine
Serving Mansfield and
the Surrounding Area
MAGAZINE

Editor's Note

Greetings!

In April, it is easy to start thinking about spring cleaning. Indeed, April is a busy month. Did you know that April is National Mathematics Month? Other April observances are: National Garden Month, National Welding Month, National Humor Month and National ... no wonder ... Anxiety Month. Whew!

On April 13, it is (I'm not making this up) "Blame Someone Else Day," and April 25 is National Zucchini Bread Day. However, the month of April also has National Keep America Beautiful Day. This makes me think not only of keeping my country litter free, but healthy and happy as well. When we think of cleaning house, this should extend beyond our own backyards to our neighborhoods, state and country. Perhaps a senior needs help with her lawn care or a child is in need of a mentor. There are so many ways to keep America beautiful. This is your month to do your part.

Your friend,
Alex Allred
MansfieldNOW Editor



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What began as an act of heartfelt kindness ended in heartwarming irony. Generosity is a regular part of Bernie Kennedy's life, but while on his way to donate food to an area school, Kennedy suddenly experienced something very irregular. Thanks to quick thinking and rapid medical response, he narrowly avoided a heart attack—something he helps others avoid on a daily basis.

As the director of cardiology services at Methodist Mansfield Medical Center, Bernie Kennedy knows a thing or two about the heart. So when he experienced a fluttering sensation in his chest he immediately went to Methodist Mansfield for help. Tests revealed that Kennedy's heart was beating 168 beats per minute (60–80 is normal), and he was in atrial fibrillation with rapid ventricular response.

"I knew I wasn't having a heart attack, but something was very wrong."

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"I'm so grateful to our cardiology staff and what they did for me," raves

Kennedy. In addition to Methodist's comprehensive diagnostic services, they now offer advanced intervention procedures such as bypass surgery, valve replacement, angioplasty, stenting, endovascular repair, and more. "Now we can offer an even more valuable service to the Mansfield area," Kennedy says.

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continues, "I can tell you as both a cardiology director and as a patient, it's a blessing to have access to high quality care right here at home." To get to the heart of what's new at Methodist Mansfield Medical Center, call them at 877-637-4297 or visit www.methodisthealthsystem.org.



—Bernie Kennedy
Director of cardiology services at
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Ambassador to Mansfield

— By Alex Allred

Felix Gundani, like so many other Mansfield residents, is a transplant. Although he moved here because of family, he is grateful for the location. “I always wanted to live in a country place,” he smiled. “It doesn’t get any more country than this.”

To truly appreciate this sentiment, you must first know a little more about Felix. He is not from Dallas or any other American city. He is from Malawi, a small country in Africa, landlocked between Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania. The native language is Chi-Chewa. “It is only spoken in our country,” Felix said. Much of the English he learned came from both lessons in school and from American television. Shows like *Seinfeld*, *Scrubs* and *Oprah* are very popular, though he is quick to point out that it is not he who watches *Oprah*. “My mom loves her,” he explained.

Economically, Malawi is a country dependent upon agriculture, thus Felix’s interest in country living. Almost 90

percent of the population does some kind of subsistence farming, with tobacco and tea as their greatest crops, but for Felix and his family, a far greater emphasis was placed upon education. As soon as he graduated from high school, Felix visited the American Embassy to inquire about a visa so he could attend college in the U.S.

“When I went to the American Embassy back home, they recommended

that I choose a major,” Felix said. He chose accounting, but is already eyeing marketing and economics as an alternative. With an uncle already established in the Arlington area, “I sent off my certifications to Navarro College and was approved!”

As easily as that, Felix packed his bags and was on his way to America. While this would be a daunting journey for many, leaving their homeland and family



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behind, Felix did not hesitate. Because of the American influence already present in his homeland and his perfect command of the language, a move to the United States was not considered as frightening or mysterious as it might have been even a decade ago. As long as he could remember, education was always seen as a way to rise up. Education had always been so important to his family that they would travel great distances to get it. His father, who died in 1997, had studied abroad in the United Kingdom, as did his



mother and older sister. His “baby” sister, at the tender age of 15, “is already going to the university! She is going to go to law school.”

In 1999, Felix discovered another passion. Beyond education, it was something that offered him opportunities to meet new people, travel and dream. “After Dad died, my grandmother was taking care of us and she just died as well. Mom was in school in Scotland, so she took my two sisters and me with her. That year, I fell in love with soccer.” Although soccer is a national pastime in Malawi, he hated it. When friends would ask him to play, he would say, “I’ll be right back,” then run away. However, when he lived in the United Kingdom, Felix developed his skills and a love of the game. While it could certainly be argued that the sport found him in his greatest time of need and distracted him from the emotional loss of family, it opened up raw emotions.

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As an athlete on the field, he was boundless. Through his teen years, he grew as a team player, learning how to “read” the field, slow things down and analyze where and how to move.

“People tend to say that I change when I play soccer,” Felix said. “I’m not the nice Felix anymore. I’m throwing tackles all over the place.” Indeed, he is two entirely different people. Off the field, he is extraordinarily polite and studious. A very handsome man with a brilliant smile, his British accent is what is most infectious. In his classes at Navarro College, it is not uncommon to see young American women, in

**“It makes an
impact on my
life every day.”**

particular, swoon as he speaks. For his fellow Texans, it is a treat to hear him describe an argument as a “row,” or friends as “mates.”

He is described to be a joy among the teaching staff and, ironically, one of the best English students on campus. Though he continues to turn in handwritten papers, as he does not own and has little access to computers, he is a solid “A” student.

On the field, however, Felix loves to talk trash. He is vocal, demanding and barking orders to his teammates.

Renowned for his ability to drive the ball downfield and score, he is equally committed to the idea of assisting. “I’m always looking to play for the team,” he said. “Not for myself, I don’t have time for that. I just want to do what’s best for the team and play.”

Soccer, he said, has given him focus. “It makes an impact on my life every day.” More than a degree, something for which he aspires for the future, Felix would love to play professional ball. As his reputation builds in the D/FW area, Felix hopes to find a permanent home with a team. “I would love to

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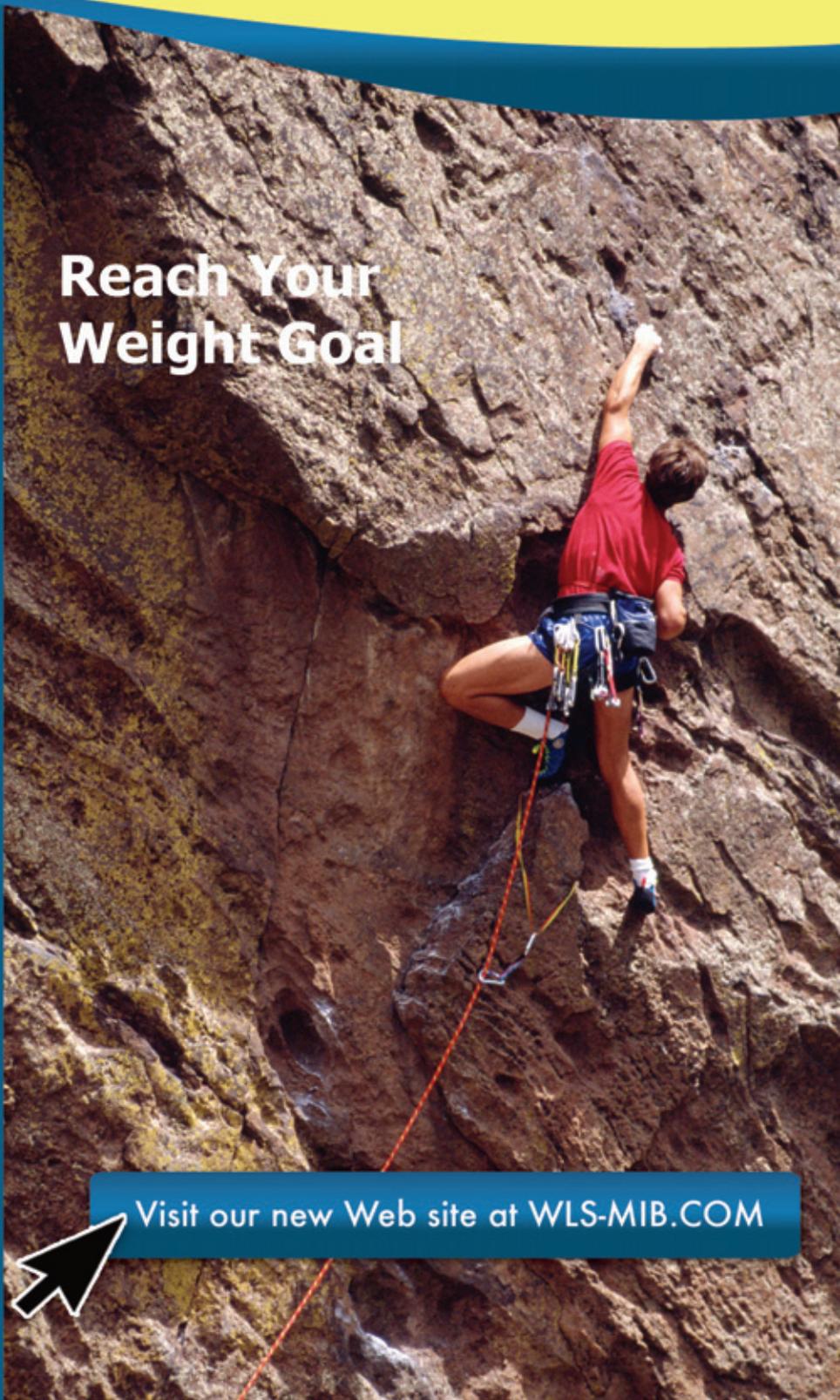
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play with a semi-pro team, too," he said. Eventually, he plans to return home to work in Malawi and be with his family.

Though no longer present in the physical sense, his father remains a strong role model for Felix. Known for his kind and gracious spirit, people were naturally drawn to him. His mother is a present reminder of strength and courage. "She is the rock of our family, doing everything by herself for 11 years. She is my hero," Felix expressed.

"In the 1980s, she was fired from a post at the same branch [bank] where she is working now, but a few months into her layoff, she looked at the building and said, 'I will be back.'" She now works as the human resource manager at that very bank. From the moment his father died, his mother



stepped up taking on the roles of both parents, supporting the family in an economically challenged country and instilling the importance of education in all three of her children. To settle for anything less, even if it were in another country or across the ocean, was not acceptable.

As a citizen from Malawi, Felix is a wonderful ambassador to Texas, reminding us how very similar we all are. He has dreams, loves his family and aspires to be the best through education, hard work and determination. When he is on the field, he makes believers of us all — bringing a joy and passion that translates into any language. To cheer for Felix Gundani is to cheer for a dream. **NOW**

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On the Green

in Walnut Creek

— By Amanda Madden Pitt

Imagine the greenest courses and firm, sandy soil with rolling, wooded hills on the horizon. Golf carts may be rare, but enthusiasts prepared to walk can look forward to golfing St. Andrews, Carnoustie and Muirfield — a few of City Councilman Mike Leyman's favorite courses in Scotland. On Mike's trip last summer with his son, Matt, the two golfed eight courses in nine



At Home With

Mike Leyman





days, and it was just about as perfect as it could have been. "I don't know if I'd even go back, because it would be hard to beat that trip," Mike said.

If he could, the Mansfield Independent School District chief of police would probably live on the greens of Scotland, but his life is in Texas. "Mansfield has been very good to me and my family," he said. His little slice of golf heaven is on the Walnut Creek course, connected to the subdivision in which he lives. His home decor also features antiques and golf collectibles positioned with decorative style throughout the open living area and bedrooms. "That's my daughter's doing. She's very good about that kind of stuff," he said. "This is her bedroom suite. They downsized so she asked if I would keep it here, and she moved it all over."

Mike golfs four to five tournaments each year and one of his dream courses is Pebble Beach, California. Some might ask, "Why golf?" To that, he would reply with a smile: "I've always been involved in athletics of some form or fashion, and when you get older, you migrate to golf. I have some antique golf clubs. Anything I have is really kind of golf related." Then, as if having suddenly remembered, he pointed to some shelves in the living room. The shelves, aligned vertically across the wall-to-wall entertainment center, are full of frames and golf memorabilia, but hobby paraphernalia is not all that

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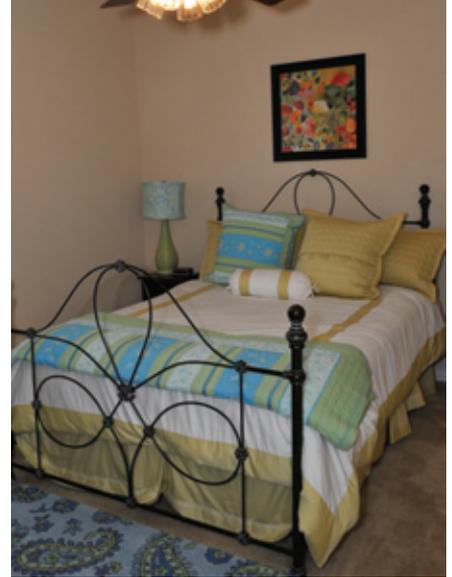
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is displayed. "I have a couple of artifacts that were passed on from my mother," she said, referring to two wooden hand-carved miniatures, a grandma and a grandpa. "These were my mother's. To be honest, these were the only things left, I guess." Several generations old, the carvings were passed down from Mike's grandmother, to his mother and to him.

Then Mike pointed to the pictures. "This is my daughter and her husband. Matt is over there with his crew. That's

Matt when he graduated in Annapolis. That's now his wife, at that time [she was his] girlfriend. They've gone together since high school. That's my daughter next to the helicopter. She is a neonatal flight care nurse at Children's [Medical Center] in Dallas." As he pointed at the pictures displayed on the entertainment system shelves, pride crept across a resolute demeanor, and through his eyes peered the dad and grandfather from behind a tough

cop exterior.

In little comments about loved ones, Mike revealed the family behind the seasoned police chief. He has a lot of which to be proud. Mike has two children and three grandchildren. His daughter, Michelle Smith, and her husband, Spencer, live in Dallas. Matt works for Beck Construction, and lives in the metroplex along with his wife, Pam, and their three children, 5-year-old Corbin, 3-year-old Drew, and 2-year-old



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Evan. Mike's adult children are a reflection of his life of service to the community.

Matt attended the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Virginia, and served six years in the Marine Corps. "My daughter is somewhat of a heroine," Mike said, and most would agree with him. Michelle was involved in the effort to help relieve Katrina victims. While in route from the New Orleans hospital to Dallas, their chopper had to be set down in a field due to mechanical issues and all power was lost, including the life support needed to keep a sick

baby alive. "She told me," Mike said, "Dad I wasn't going to let that baby die on my watch, especially since his mom and dad were on their way to Dallas. I was determined to get the baby with mom and dad before he passed." Michelle and her work partner were successful, and the baby arrived in Dallas on a Thursday night. "The mom and dad were just ecstatic about all the work Michelle and her partner did to keep him alive," Mike said. Though the child was born chronically and fatally ill, because of Michelle and her



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partner's dedication, he was able to spend his last few days in the arms of his loving parents.

The 2,536-square-foot home is a retirement hiatus of sorts for Mike. Admittedly, the house is a large one with its three bedrooms, office space and two-and-three-quarter baths, but it was just too good a deal to pass up. "I only really live in about three rooms of this place," Mike said. With its radiant barrier roof, the home is very energy efficient.

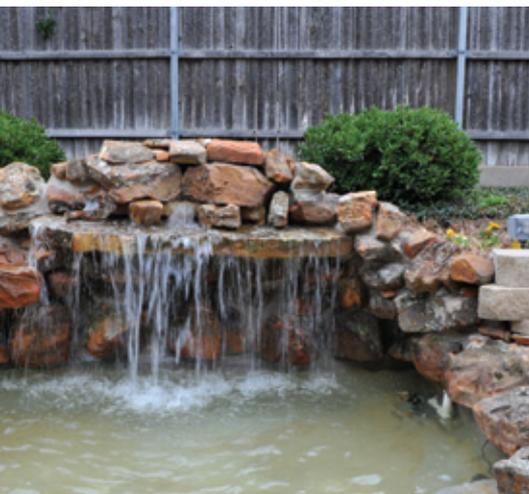
Mike has dedicated 30 years of service to protecting the Dallas/Fort Worth metroplex. "Well I guess you could say I have a little bit of broken service," he said. He served as an officer in Arlington for 10 years before accepting the position of Mansfield chief of police, where he served from 1979 through 1986, then as deputy chief of police of Richardson for 16 years until he retired from municipal law enforcement and entered his current position, school district chief of police. In his current position as a councilman in Mansfield, Mike is serving his second year, and has the opportunity to lead the way in regional transportation. "I really just ran to give back to the community, to pay back in some measure all they've done for me," he said. Currently, he is involved in future city planning to bring the T Line out of Fort Worth and the DART rail to the Mansfield





area. His daughter is a big fan of the light rail and lives close enough to take the rail just about anywhere she needs to go. Mike is also the Mansfield Boy Scout district chairman.

So when does he sleep? What does this city official do when he is not working, planning for the future of



the community, on the golf course or cooking out for the grandchildren and watching them splash in the fountain he had built in the backyard last summer? A buddy of his suggested once that the only thing for such a bachelor to do is set up shop in a local bar with a sign that reads, "Now accepting applications." For now, though, Mike is having enough fun playing golf and giving back to the community. "I've always wanted an English bulldog." Possibly in the near future, he will make that newest addition to the family a reality. **NOW**

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Front Porch Musician

— By Mary Pritchard



Have you ever wondered what might be going on in Texas on any given day and time? Well, Mansfield resident Steve Cosio has engineered a Web site just for you. TXFest.com breaks down the state of Texas into seven regions and keeps an updated list of festival events for each area. “I started the Web site because I could not find one central place that listed all the festivals going on in the state of Texas,” Steve said. “The summer of 2007, my wife and I were planning a road trip that would take us to Galveston, San Antonio, Austin and through the Hill Country. We wanted to find festivals in areas we were passing through, but we knew of none.”

Steve wondered how difficult such a site would be to create. “Turns out there are from 500 to 600 festivals in Texas during any one year, and to keep track of them is quite an undertaking,” he said. “Google has become my best friend. Several Web sites list regional events and I added them to my master list.” Steve’s site is unique in that it covers the entire state.

“Festivals are abundant in the state of Texas,” Steve continued. “The most popular themes are music (58 festivals, including

bluegrass, country, jazz and blues); food (52 festivals that include everything from tomatoes in Jacksonville to strawberries in Poteet to sausage in New Braunfels and Spam in Austin; arts (30 festivals); fiestas (18 festivals); and Oktoberfests (15 festivals).”

He noted that Mansfield plays host to three annual festivals: The Arts Festival held in Historic Mansfield at Steven’s Garden and Grill each June; The Pecan Festival held at Catherine Rose Park each September; and a street festival held on Historic Mansfield’s Main Street each October.

Steve’s life, however, is not totally taken up with his festival postings. Besides plying his trade as a radio advertising

broker, he collects guitars and plays them, as well as the keyboard and various percussion instruments. For recordings, he also uses a rain stick. Steve is a self-taught musician who feels he has “a God-given ability to figure out how to play an instrument.” He plays in his church choir and his children are musically inclined, as well. “Daniel, who is 11, has composed



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several songs, and my 8-year-old daughter, Sofia, sings on some of my recordings,” he proudly stated.

One of his six guitars is his “travel guitar.” It has the same neck as a regular guitar, but the body is small enough to get in the overhead compartment of an airplane. “The guitar I play every

“Steve is a self-taught musician who feels he has a God-given ability to figure out how to play an instrument.”

day is a Taylor Big Baby,” Steve said. “At least six days a week, I will come into my music room and play from 10 minutes to an hour.

“Part of my love of music is having a group of six guys come over once a month,” Steve explained. “We all play acoustic guitars, and we may make music all night. Two members of the group are doctors, two are CEOs — everyone has their day thing going. It’s just a great release to get together for a few hours to play and tell stories. The front porch feeling of playing is what comes to mind. There’s not that aspiration of forming a band.” Steve added, however, that he would welcome playing in a coffee shop.

Steve was reared in San Diego, California. He and his family moved to Mansfield in 2004 when his wife took a professorial position at UTA. In San Diego, Steve worked for 20 years in radio. He produced and directed talk shows and created parody songs. “One of my guitars was always at the radio

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station," he said. "Music is such a great stress reliever."

Steve got his start in music when, at the age of 12, his parents bought him a piano. He only stayed with the piano for a year because he didn't like the "arduous lessons." However, he soon took up the flute and played it for three years.

The sale of the flute financed the purchase of a truck that Steve needed to haul equipment in because, by his early 20s, he was a disc jockey for weddings



and other events. Steve then bought an acoustic guitar, a guitar chord book, a Beatles songbook, and taught himself to play. He loved the Beatles' music, and the songbook showed the chords. That was the beginning of his collection of guitars.

Steve later bought a baby grand piano from a friend. "The piano became a new love up until the day in 2007 when we donated it to a church," he said. "I had just started putting together the jam session nights. In the music room, we had to keep looking around the piano at each other, so it had to go. And, I already had the keyboard." Steve describes himself as a "front porch player," so if you see someone relaxed in a chair on his front porch playing a guitar, you might want to stop for some easy listening. Everyone is always welcome. **NOW**

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MGP:

Most Grateful Player

— By Alex Allred

Say the name “Thomas Johnson” in a room full of coaches in the Dallas, Fort Worth, Arlington and Mansfield school districts and watch the visceral reactions. There is admiration, pride, even a twinge of jealousy as Thomas has been labeled one of the most gifted athletes of his generation.

“He’s an incredible athlete,” said Head Coach Phillip Farhat of the Oak Ridge School in Arlington. “He is a special, special athlete with a kind of speed, strength and quickness you just don’t see.”

Indeed, he is a sensation. As a freshman, Thomas made the varsity football team and was named Most Valuable Player by his teammates. He astonished coaches, players and sports fans by playing almost every position on the field. “He was a wide receiver, running back and our quarterback,” Phillip said, “but he also played tackle and was one of our leading defensive players.”

By the age of 10, Thomas held the world record in long jump and was ranked third in the world in his age category for the 200-meter dash. Dubbed a natural talent, Thomas seemingly had the world by its tail.

“He has a chance to get a scholarship anywhere in the country he wants to go,” Phillip predicted. “That’s how good he is.” Those athletic abilities underscore his indomitable spirit and some very special people who have become his lifelong teammates. The real story began well before he ever donned a helmet for the Oak Ridge Owls.

“I was going to school in Dallas, and getting into trouble,” Thomas said. Then he met his adoptive family. Ted Ehrhardt had been in Dallas, watching young track athletes to recruit for his football team when he noticed Thomas. Initially, Ted gave his business card to Thomas’ mother who quickly determined there was no way to transport her son back and forth to practices. As a single mother, it was an impossible task.

Undeterred, Ted began picking Thomas up for practices and games, but along the way, he saw beyond the great athlete. "He's a phenomenal kid," Ted said. Suddenly, "I didn't want him to grow up as just another athlete in Dallas." An injury, Ted knew, could end everything. "He's better than that. Maybe athletics will take him all the way to the NFL, but if not, he needs to have a great education," Ted stated.

What happened next is a beautiful story of selflessness and the ultimate meaning of teamwork. "We wanted to bring him here to our home in Mansfield," Ted said. With three sons of their own, Ted and his wife, Stacey, had talked about taking Thomas in. In



fact, it was Thomas who had kidded about the possibilities. In Dallas, Thomas was not doing well in school. Although an incredibly bright student, his grades were not reflective of that, and with his mother working evenings, Thomas was flailing. Instinctively, Thomas understood he needed help.

"That's the kind of athlete he is," Phillip said. "He's very coachable, very open, but he also has great instincts. He just knows. ..."

After playing for "Coach Ted" for three years, Thomas looked to him as a father figure. In spending so much time with Ted and his own boys, Thomas knew he wanted more.

"A lot of 14-year-olds just kind of float around," Ted said, "but Thomas

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keeps his eye on a solid goal. He has so much desire, he wants to be better — a better student, a better person, a better athlete. He just needed someone to show him the right path."

It was Linda, Thomas' own mother, who broached the idea with Ted. Although she is still very active in his life, she saw opportunities for her son that she knew he could never have living with her.

Today, those wishes are coming to fruition. His grades are up; he is happy and healthy, but perhaps not as happy as his football coach. "I'm very excited," Phillip laughed, noting that he has Thomas for another three years. "But really, it's about his work ethic."

Just as Ted saw something special all those years ago, Phillip also sees Thomas as a leader. "He's a leader by what he does. He comes in early before school and meets with his teachers, works hard in the weight room and produces on the field." But what is most endearing to those who have worked with Thomas is his demeanor. Described as humble, quiet, gracious and appreciative, he is truly a star that shines. "Obviously, he's been through some hardships, but he's with a caring family who provide him with a lot of love and support," Phillip said.

At a very young age, Thomas has already learned how to appreciate life in a way that takes most adults decades to embrace. When asked what he dreams of for the future, he speaks not of the NFL, but of family. "I want my family to be more close to me than what they are now," he commented. Of Coach Ted he said, "He means so much to me because he's like my father. He stood up and took me in as his own, and I appreciate that. I really appreciate that!"

What happens on the field is just the fallout of his positive energy. "I'm just grateful that I can play!" he enthused. **NOW**

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In Good Hands

— By Alex Allred

It can be said that Michael Bank's profession chose him, not the other way around. In fact, Michael's extensive medical background was based in sports medicine. After earning his bachelor's and master's degrees, he began a career as a team trainer. As an athlete himself, Michael enjoyed helping other athletes. "But I could only do so much," he said. "I could offer rehab or ice them, but I couldn't really fix them."

Despite his dedication to sports medicine, two things happened that would ultimately send him back to school for yet another degree. The team doctor with whom Michael worked also had his own chiropractic practice. "When the season was over, he asked me if I wanted to work with him during the summer."

There, he saw people come in hurt and leave happy. However, it was not

until Michael was injured himself that he truly came to understand the importance of chiropractic care. He had been competing at a national level in rowing, preparing for a big race, when he separated a rib from his spine. The pain was excruciating, but even still, Michael was hesitant to call his chiropractor friend for help. "I was scared to get adjusted," Michael admitted. Finally, pain won over trepidation and Michael received his first adjustment. "And I knew that was what I wanted to do for a living," he said.

Today, Michael is the proprietor of Back 2 Wellness Chiropractic. After eight years with another practice, Michael decided it was time to go out on his own and is proud to say his is a family owned, family run practice. With his wife, Claudia, managing the office and

his sister-in-law, Grisel Acosta, as an assistant, their clinic is different. Beyond the family atmosphere and bilingual services provided, Michael is in the unique position to blend sports medicine and training with chiropractic care. "It all compliments each other," he said. "For example, if you just adjust a bone, there is nothing that makes you hold that adjustment. It can move back out of place, but with therapeutic exercises, we can stretch ligaments and perform exercises to hold the adjustment." While other chiropractors may simply address the immediate issue, Michael looks long-term with his patients.

It is for this reason that Back 2 Wellness has built such a strong clientele. Known for his almost obsessive attention to detail, Michael constantly strives to better himself by attending as many clinics and seminars as possible. He earned a post-graduate certification in brain traumatology and whiplash injuries at the Spine Research Institute of San Diego and recently picked up a certification for Motor Vehicle Collision and Forensic Risk Analysis

from the Center of Automotive Safety and Health Board. While chiropractic schools only offer a number of techniques within the standard 11-week course, Michael studied as many techniques as possible, eventually settling for one called the Gonstead technique.

While Michael explained that every chiropractor has a different style or technique, his is certainly popular in Mansfield. Awarded the Solid Gold Best of Mansfield award as the "Best Chiropractor Clinic," in the city, he is able to help people of all ages. From

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toddlers to seniors, "We really get to know our patients. We become friends," Michael said. While Michael jokes about how many clients have become friends he likes to "hang out with," the key is, "They are extremely comfortable coming to us with physical and even personal problems, and I take tremendous pride in caring for the whole person," he said.

While the shingle out front may read, Back 2 Wellness Chiropractic, Michael uses his early experience as a team trainer to treat all of his patients. "On the field, you have to learn how to move and think quickly," he smiled. When a patient walks through his door, they become part of his team. How well they heal becomes a very personal issue for the doctor because, after all, he is always taking one for the team. **NOW**

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Miranda's *New* Moves

— By Alex Allred

The irony is that Miranda Utkin had been living in El Paso when the call of a child brought her to the Mansfield school district. “My sister had just had a baby,” Miranda smiled, “so I wanted to live near her.” She had no great desire to be a teacher; she simply wanted to be near her new niece. However, when she heard that UPS offered great benefits, including school tuition, she accepted the job and changed her life.

She earned her degree in education at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA), and it was there that she met her future husband, Oleg Utkin. Her grades of interest were middle school. “Even though I like to dabble in everything, I really love language arts and reading,” she shared.

In her last semester at UTA, Miranda worked at Mary Orr as a student teacher where reading teacher Linda Showalper acted as her mentor. “She made me love reading more than I already did,” Miranda mused. It was at Linda’s urging that she attended a job fair in Mansfield and met Della Icenhower Intermediate School Principal Duane Thurston.

“You can tell when people love kids and care about other people,” Mr. Thurston said. “It shines through, especially in her.”

“The day I graduated, Principal Thurston called and offered me a job,” Miranda said, still beaming at the memory. “Woo-hoo!”

Miranda quickly learned, “I didn’t learn anything in college,” she laughed. “I don’t think I really learned anything until I stepped into my own classroom. You just can’t ever underestimate kids. They are so amazing. Even as young as they are, they are so strong in their convictions. They believe in what they believe, and you have to respect that.”

As Miranda discussed the lessons and knowledge she has gained from her own students, Mr. Thurston could not be more proud. Rather than come into the school with her own agenda, she was open to her students, her fellow co-workers and parents. “She is great at building relationships with parents, the staff and students. She is a natural,” he said.

Almost immediately, Miranda became a sponsor of the drama club and a Spanish Club. Working with fellow teacher, Alicia



DeFierro, Miranda used native Spanish-speaking students to lead the classes, “so they can show what they have,” Mr. Thurston said. “This is so important because they [ESL students] are often overlooked.” It was an educational idea that really turned some students around. “It made a difference in the life of one girl [in particular], and that is what all of this is about,” he said.

After just one year, the fifth grade language arts teacher was nominated “Teacher of the Month” by her peers last September. Although Miranda was happily surprised, she was also proud. “I love that this [nomination] came from my peers. I wish you knew how great all the teachers are here. We have so many good teachers on our campus!”

In fact, Della Icenhower Intermediate is an interesting blend of teachers. Partially new hires, the school also inherited many teachers from Mary Orr when the school split five years ago. Both Miranda and Mr. Thurston believe that combination has made theirs an exceptional school.

Still, few would argue that it is an unusual teacher who allows her students to teach her dance moves for her own wedding. “We have so many kids that I try to get to know them outside the classroom,” Miranda explained. “I try to go to all the socials. Last year, they taught me the dance ‘Soldier Boy.’”

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You do this hopping thing to one side and switch, then, crisscross your legs,” her voice trailed off. “It was pretty funny because we played it at my wedding.”

By Miranda’s own admission, dancing and telling jokes to her students are not her forte. “My jokes aren’t very funny,” she shared. Despite that, her open, engaging personality has captivated her students. Using pop culture, current events and their own books to form a book club, Miranda has learned to challenge her students. “They love it.” By relating topics to their personal lives, Miranda has tapped into an effective teaching tool. “They know I care,” she said.

“I come from a pretty humble background,” Miranda shared. “I understand that things don’t always come easily, and you have to work for

“She is great at building relationships with parents, the staff and students.”

what you want.” In fact, when she began college, she did so with the idea of finding a career path that would make her the most money. “But as I was going through all my classes, I realized this was not for me.” She wanted more. “I wanted to be a role model for my niece and other children.”

More than offering the latest educational tools or sponsoring drama and Spanish clubs, Miranda hopes to give the greatest lesson of all. Miranda explained that when students see a teacher as someone who cares, as someone who also strives to learn and better themselves, “We can relate a lot better and, I think, that helps us all learn. I’m passionate about the kids and passionate about what I do,” Miranda said, and she is always looking for some cool new dance moves! **NOW**



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Around Town

NOW



Downwinder members Stephen Smith and Jim Schermbeck, top left, discussed clean air, green cement and future plans for Mansfield. Ribbon cuttings were held at: Golden Mechanical, top center; Alternative Funeral Services, top right; and Moonrock Solutions, bottom left. Rachel Matthews, second row left, checked books out at the Mansfield Public Library. The Mansfield Activity Center Choir, A-Choired-Talent, bottom right, took time to pose for a photo.

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Ribbon cuttings were held for: Sandi Hamm DDS, top left; and Olive the Beauty Lounge, top right. *MansfieldNOW* editor Alex Allred, second row right, prepared to race in the Texas Motor Speedway duathlon. Downwinder members Sandra Breakfield, Becky Bornhorst and Carolyn Bell, bottom left, posed for a photo. Jillian, bottom right, listened to story time at the Mansfield Public Library.





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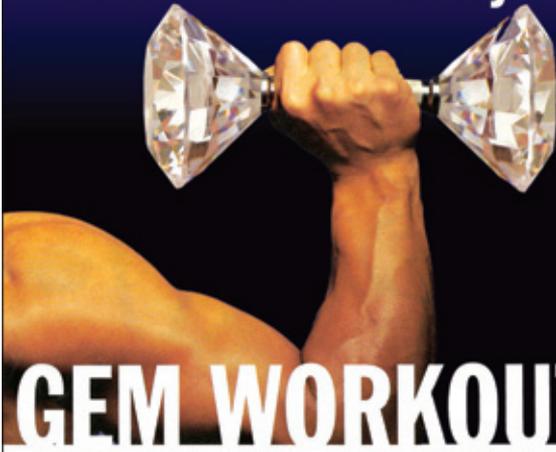
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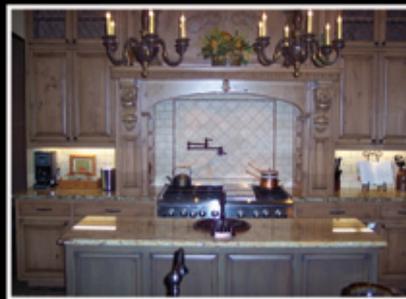
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References available



Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning

IN THE KITCHEN WITH MELONIE OSTERLOH

Growing up surrounded by love is why Melonie is so grateful for all her blessings. “I grew up around some of the finest women and homemakers — from my own aunts and grandmas to ladies in my church, who took me under their wing as a small child. They all played a part in teaching me the love and laughter that can come from spending time in the kitchen together,” she said.

Melonie finds her greatest blessing in her four children, Eric, Dana, Rachel and Aaron. “I love to bake with my children,” she expressed. “I still have the same yellow mixing bowl that my mom and I used to make a batch of cookies, and I use that same bowl to make cookies with my children.” **NOW**

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

RUSSELL'S MACARONI AND CHEESE

- 2 to 2 1/2 cups elbow macaroni
- 1/4 cup butter
- 3 Tbsp onion, chopped
- 3 Tbsp. parsley, minced
- 3 Tbsp. pimienta, chopped
- salt, pepper and paprika, to taste
- 1 lb. sharp cheddar (Vermont white is best.)
- 2 cups milk
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten

Cook macaroni in boiling, salted water until tender. Drain and pour cold water through it. Mix macaroni with a little melted butter, onion, parsley, pimienta and seasonings. Put half the macaroni mixture into a deep, buttered casserole dish. Sprinkle half the cheese onto the macaroni. Add remaining macaroni mixture; top with remaining cheese. Add milk to the eggs; pour over macaroni. Dot with butter; bake uncovered at 350 F for 50 minutes. The top will be golden brown and bubbly. You can change this from a

side dish to a casserole by adding leftover ham!

AUNT MIM'S EGG SALAD SPREAD

Here's a great way to use up those hard boiled Easter eggs!

- 4 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- 1/2 cup dill pickle relish
- 1/2 cup celery, finely chopped
- 3 Tbsp. mayonnaise or salad dressing
- salt and pepper, to taste

Mix all ingredients together and serve on rolls, crackers or lettuce

LORRAINE'S SUGAR COOKIES

- 1/2 cup butter
- 1 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs, well beaten
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder

- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. milk, if needed

Cream butter and sugar together. Add well-beaten eggs; stir. Add vanilla. Sift flour, baking powder and salt together; add to wet mixture. Add milk if dough seems too dry. Roll dough into balls and pat to shape. Sprinkle with sugar and bake at 350 F for 8-10 minutes. Be careful not to overbake.

AUNT RUTH'S SHOO-FLY CAKE

An alternative to the PA Dutch wet bottom pie and makes a great breakfast cake!

- 3 cups flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup oil
- 1 cup molasses
- 2 cups boiling water
- 1 Tbsp. baking soda

Mix flour, sugar and oil together to form crumbs. Set aside 1/2 to 3/4 cup of the crumbs for topping.

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Who's Cooking **NOW**

Mix molasses with 2 cups boiling water; add baking soda to the molasses mixture and stir. Stir wet and dry mixtures together; pour into a 9 x13-inch baking pan. Sprinkle on the reserved crumb topping; bake at 350 F for 30-40 minutes. Can be served as a dessert with whipped cream or break up warm chunks of cake into a bowl and top with milk for a sweet breakfast treat!

PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH HAM, GREEN BEANS AND POTATOES

1 bone-in ham (or a ham bone if you have leftover ham)
1 lb. fresh green beans or 4 cans cut green beans
4-5 lbs. potatoes, pared and cut up

In a large stock pot, cover ham (or ham bone) with water. Cover and cook slowly for a couple of hours until ham is cooked through and water has become a nice ham broth. Remove ham (or bone), cut ham into cube-sized bites and set aside. Clean and break-up green beans; put them and ham back into the broth. Cook an additional 25 minutes. Add potatoes; cook slowly until ready. If you use canned green beans and leftover ham, add them after the potatoes are done so they retain good flavor. Ladle into bowls and serve with bread/rolls and butter.

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Irritable Bowel Syndrome

— By Betty Tryon, R.N.

Oh no, it is starting up again, you think despairingly as you clutch your abdomen and bend over in agony. If you are a sufferer of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), you know the drill. You are in for a lot of pain, diarrhea and that weak, wasted feeling when it is all over. The only thing that makes this bearable is knowing it will not last long.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome, for all of its distressing symptoms, is one of the more common gastrointestinal disorders. Some of the different names assigned to IBS are spastic colitis, spastic colon and irritable colon. While not a disease, it is a functional disorder with a collection of symptoms consistent to this condition. IBS is not a progressive disorder, does not cause cancer, inflammation or abnormal changes within the bowel tissue. No one knows what causes IBS. Since it is a functional disorder, portions of the intestines function improperly. Some physicians think this is because of faulty signals between the brain and the intestines. Because of the malfunction or miscommunication, the contractions in the intestines may speed up and trigger diarrhea or they may slow down causing constipation. Another cause of IBS could be hypersensitivity

in the bowels of people prone to this syndrome.

The more prevalent symptoms are abdominal cramping, bloating, gas, diarrhea and/or constipation. There can be mucus in the stool. The severity of the symptoms may differ on a daily basis. Diagnosis can be made from the troublesome symptoms and findings through a physical examination. The physician may run tests to rule out other problems. Since the cause is unknown, alleviating the distress from IBS remains the best treatment. Some relief can come from avoiding situations, which trigger this condition, such as managing your stress level, eliminating foods in your diet that may provoke symptoms, such as dairy products, caffeinated drinks and fatty foods. Being aware of how some medications affect you may also prove helpful. There is some evidence

women with IBS will experience an attack due to hormonal changes. Medication can be prescribed for the abdominal discomforts of constipation, diarrhea and pain.

If you experience any of these symptoms, it is important to visit your physician. There are many health problems which can occur with problematic intestinal symptoms. Presently, there is no cure for IBS, but if you take care of yourself and follow your doctor's guidelines, you can minimize the symptoms. **NOW**



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



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April 2009

Community Calendar

Monday- Friday

Young at Heart (for residents ages 55 plus) meeting: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Mansfield Activities Center. (817) 453-5420, ext. 2227.

Every Monday

Basic line dancing for seniors: 10:30-11:30 a.m., Mansfield Activities Center.

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

Second and Fourth Mondays

City Council meeting: 7:00 p.m., Mansfield City Hall, 1200 Broad St.

Every Monday and Wednesday

Bingo: 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Mansfield Activities Center.

Every Tuesday

Bouncing Babies story time for infants to 24 months: 10:30-11:00 a.m., Mansfield Public Library.

First and Third Tuesdays

Training Academy for Dental Assistants free informational session: 5:30 p.m. (972) 842-2999.

Every Thursday

Toddler Story Time for 2-year-olds: 11:00-11:30 a.m.,

Mansfield Public Library.

Every Friday

Mansfield Public Chess Club: 4:00-6:00 p.m., Mansfield Public Library.

Mansfield Kiwanis Club meeting: 6:45 a.m., Methodist Mansfield Medical Center, 2700 E. Broad St. (817) 473-9886.

Every Saturday

Thinking about getting a pet? Check out the City of Mansfield Animal Control. Saturday hours: 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Weekday hours: 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

April 4

Mansfield Trash-off: 9:00 a.m.-noon, 1200 N. US 287, next to the vacant medical building (close to Tarrant Dialysis and Kindred Hospital). Volunteers needed to help pick up trash from the US 287 frontage road area and the small creek. Volunteers will receive a free T-shirt. First 100 volunteers will receive a Wal-Mart gift card. (817) 276-4240.

Mansfield Fire Department free CPR classes: 8:00 a.m., Station 3, 3100 E. Broad St. Class size limited to 20 people. Must register in advance. Contact Training Lieutenant Steve Gutierrez at (817) 804-5772.

April 9

Mansfield Child Care discussion: 7:00 p.m., Mansfield Public Library Community meeting room, 104 S. Wisteria St. www.mansfieldchildcare.com.

April 15-20

"Cost of Freedom" American Veterans Traveling Tribute: Grimes Park, 500 E. Centre Park Blvd., DeSoto. (972) 224-3565. info@desotochamber.org.

April 21

Mansfield Economic Development Commission meeting: 6:00 p.m., Mansfield City Hall.

Adult book club meeting: 6:30 p.m., Mansfield Public Library. This month's discussion: *I'm Proud of You* by Tim Madigan.

Mansfield Park Facilities Development Corp. meeting: 7:00 p.m., Mansfield City Hall, 1200 East Broad St.

April 24 and 25

Writer's workshop: Mansfield Public Library. Meet author Tim Madigan. (817) 473-4391.

April 25

Yellow Rose Charity Fest, hosted by the Mansfield Women's Club to benefit the cardiac unit at Methodist Mansfield Medical Center. Dinner, casino, live and silent auction at the K-Star Ranch. Tickets are \$40.00 and can be purchased at the Wells Fargo Bank in Mansfield or at the Methodist Mansfield Medical Center. Contact Kim McClure at (817) 477-0181.

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



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