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ON THE COVER



Sara Garcia with the Chamber readies for the big day.

Photo by Opaque Visuals.

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Editor's Note

Hello, Midlothian!

My April Fool's Day prank on my kids turned into a prank on me! You know the sprayer attached to your sink? Well, turn the water off; tape the handle of the sprayer down; aim it at the victim; wait for them to turn on the water; and get your guffaw. I got the big guffaw on all three kids. A few hours after the last one was pranked, I went into the kitchen to clean up, turned on the water, and I'm sure you know what happened. I've never seen those kids laugh so hard. The most revealing moment to me was I did not think it was so funny. Hypocritical, I know, but there you have it. Being on the receiving end of a joke is not always fun. Considering the feelings of other people *before* the joke is something I now keep in mind. Play nice this April Fool's Day!

Betty

Betty Tryon
MidlothianNOW Editor
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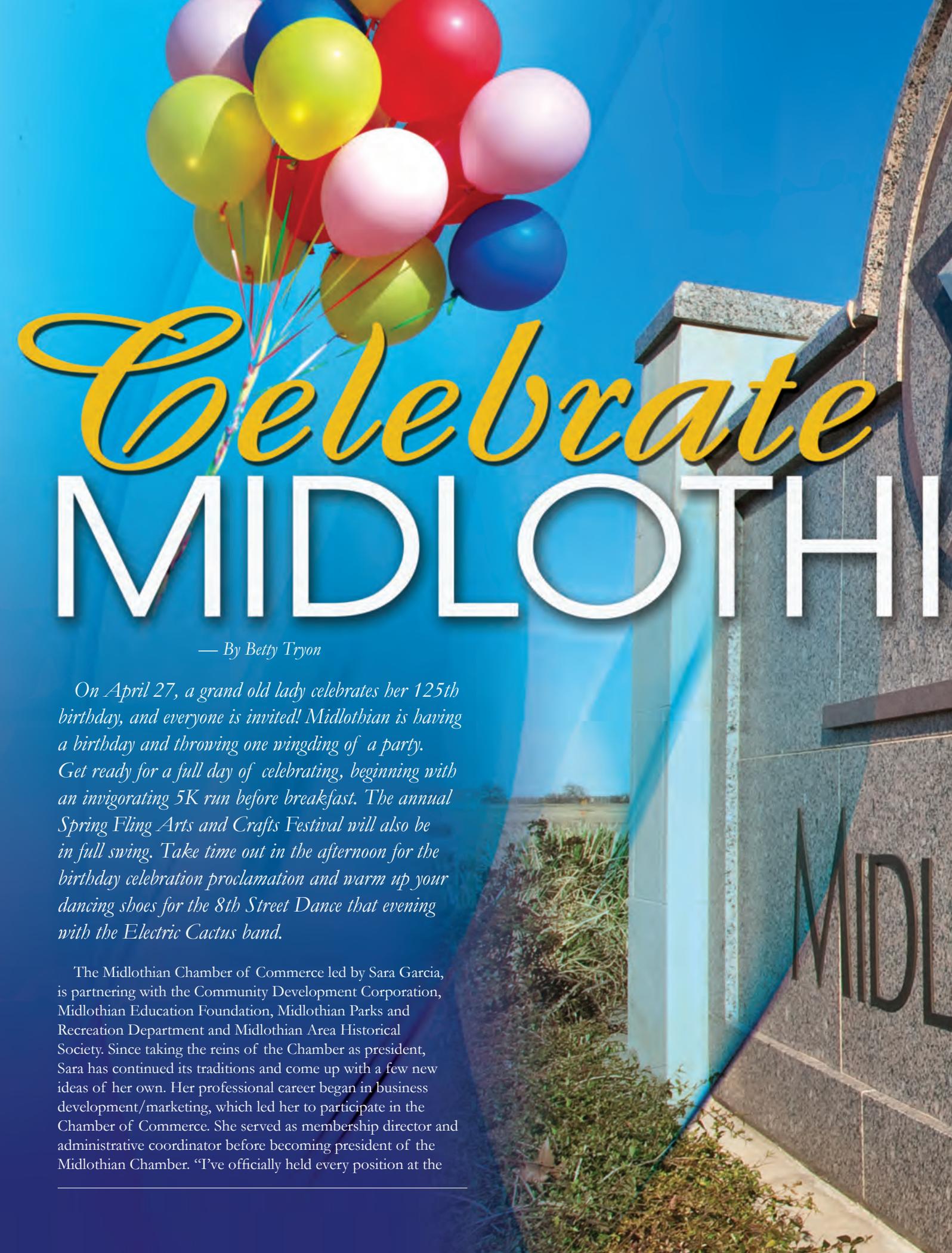
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Celebrate MIDLOTHIAN

— By Betty Tryon

On April 27, a grand old lady celebrates her 125th birthday, and everyone is invited! Midlothian is having a birthday and throwing one wingding of a party. Get ready for a full day of celebrating, beginning with an invigorating 5K run before breakfast. The annual Spring Fling Arts and Crafts Festival will also be in full swing. Take time out in the afternoon for the birthday celebration proclamation and warm up your dancing shoes for the 8th Street Dance that evening with the Electric Cactus band.

The Midlothian Chamber of Commerce led by Sara Garcia, is partnering with the Community Development Corporation, Midlothian Education Foundation, Midlothian Parks and Recreation Department and Midlothian Area Historical Society. Since taking the reins of the Chamber as president, Sara has continued its traditions and come up with a few new ideas of her own. Her professional career began in business development/marketing, which led her to participate in the Chamber of Commerce. She served as membership director and administrative coordinator before becoming president of the Midlothian Chamber. “I’ve officially held every position at the

Midlothian is having a
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Chamber,” Sara remarked. “Becoming president was one of those unintentional opportunities. My intention was to take over as interim until they could find the person we thought was the best fit. Once I got to know the aspects of the position, it felt like a good fit for me. One of my first priorities for the Chamber has always been increasing our membership benefits, to know essentially how much bang for the buck each member is getting with their membership. We want to offer all the essentials we can to provide benefits to our businesses and help them be successful within the community. Midlothian is such a tight-knit community that if we don’t have all the resources needed, there are other organizations here we can build a solid partnership with and work on getting it done.”

The Chamber has approximately 900 businesses with 425 members. Many activities are organized by the Chamber for networking. There are after-hours events hosted for members by members and weekly membership luncheons. “Our diamond in the rough networking opportunity is our Leadership Midlothian program,” Sara added. “Not only are you learning about the city, but you are essentially building your core business network for your professional career. The Leadership program takes more of an in-depth look at the inner workings of Midlothian.”

Once a year, the Chamber provides the opportunity to acknowledge some of the standouts in the community. One of the new awards is the Non-Profit Award of the Year. Midlothian is a very civic minded community and has 41 nonprofit organizations. “It’s amazing how much work of the city gets done by volunteers and with nonprofit

organizations,” Sara remarked. “Many needs of the community are met this way. There are a lot of people behind the scenes who help take care of our fellow residents. I enjoy being president of the Midlothian Chamber, because I truly believe our work is an invaluable resource to the community. Whether I am making introductions between businesses, promoting one’s services or just educating businesses on the resources available to them, it doesn’t feel like work to me. I love being able to answer questions or solve predicaments for our businesses and residents alike.”

Midlothian produces its volunteers and businesses from a rich history that deserves to be celebrated on its birthday. Karen Kay Esberger, a member of Midlothian Area Historical Society has written two books chronicling the story of the city. She exposes the myth of the popular tale of Midlothian being named by the train conductor on May



Back row, left to right: Standing: Carisa Carroll, Renee McElheney and Brett Kemp. Front row, left to right: Marni White, Gina Moore, Sara Garcia and Billy King.

10, 1883, the day lots were first sold for Midlothian. Karen recounts the history to set the record straight. “As early as June 3, 1881, the *Waxahachie Enterprise* referred to this community as Midlothian,” she wrote. “At that time, R.M. Wyatt was surveying and securing right-of-way for the Chicago, Texas and Mexican Central Railway to build a track near the Barker community. In August, 1881 the *Enterprise* reported work was progressing rapidly, and the Lebanon Grange Store was talking about building a large building near the depot. The newspaper reported on May 19, 1882,



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that a petition had been signed and sent to 'Washington City' to 'change the name of our post from Barker' to Midlothian. The *Enterprise* noted on June 9 of that year that the 'Mexican Mustang' had been sold to Santa Fe. All this led up to the sale of lots in Midlothian on May 10, 1883. In April 1888, the community was incorporated into a city."

And thus, a city named Midlothian was born. Karen can actually point back in history to the first location of our community before it became a town. "The first village was called Lebanon on land belonging to B.F. Hawkins, a son of William Hawkins who settled Hawkins Spring. Lebanon was on the west side of 14th immediately south of the cemetery. It is just weeds and brush now. Lebanon Spring can be reached through the MidTowne development, last I knew. The first church and school were there." By 1892 the population was between 600-800 people, and the businesses had grown to 25.

It is fitting on the 125th birthday to take a look back at the people and images from the town's beginning, and a part of Midlothian's history is the buildings. Some of them are still standing, one of which is the Smith house located on Avenue D. The Gothic Revival style home was built by John Campbell in 1885. Long before Navarro Community College opened in our city, the first institution of higher learning was Polytechnic Institute founded in 1883. At one point during the early years, it was called Midlothian College. When it was demolished, it is rumored that some of the bricks were used to build the bandstand at Kimmel Park where the institute was located.

Karen explained her passion for history. "I think it's important for all the early families to be remembered, to know the hardships they endured to make us a town, to know the roles of churches and schools in building our society. We need to know the history of buildings, too, both homes and businesses. It's interesting to know who built what, when they did so, and how architecture changed over time. Oral history is especially important to preserve memories of those early days." Midlothian's birthday is a great time to look back and celebrate. **NOW**

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Bennie Leonard is building a legacy for his granddaughters, Madisyn Svetlecic and Avery Leonard, and his nieces, Abigail and Rebecka York.



LEAVING *a* Legacy

— By Chelsie Sanders

Building relationships has always been an important part of Bennie Leonard's life, but about 10 years ago he started working with wood in an effort to build a legacy. It became something to remember him by for those in his life. "I started making wardrobes in the shape of doll houses when little girls started becoming a part of our family. We had two sons, so when the opportunity arose to make these wardrobes, I just couldn't resist," Bennie said with a hint of joy in his voice.





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Bennie grew up near Midlothian, just north of Venus, where he lived on a farm as one of nine children. He often reflects on his life there and is reminded of how it instilled such a strong work ethic in his life. "My father was a hard worker, and he raised us all to be hard workers as well. It was also my father who gave me my determined attitude," Leonard remembered. It was that determined attitude that helped him commit his life to the Lord and leave home when he was merely 18 years old. He married his high school girlfriend from a neighboring school and set off for college in Missouri.

Many years later, his job led him back to Midlothian, where he felt led to start a church. "The opportunity was there, and the time was just right," Bennie stated. His woodworking hobby took off once he was settled back in Midlothian, and it seemed to take off quicker than he had expected. Bennie decided to make a wardrobe when he saw how much the little girls in his life loved to dress up. He made them so they could have a special place to hang their dress-up dresses and

"Building relationships is an important part of ministry, and I always want my hobby and faith to go hand-in-hand."

keep their dress-up shoes neatly lined up on the bottom shelf.

The first doll house wardrobe was made for his niece, and he still remembers her excitement when she received it with all her new dress-up clothes hanging in it. From there, it became sort of a tradition. One of the main reasons Bennie started the trend of making wardrobes for the girls in the family is he wanted to give them something to remember him by for many years to come. "I wanted to leave them a legacy, in a way. I wanted them to have something that would last," he shared. Just like his work ethic and determination led him to his career, he was just as

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it. Psalm 127:1

determined and hardworking with the wardrobes. Bennie made sure he built the wardrobes with materials that would last for a very long time.

The process of creating the wardrobes has become a constructive way for him to deal with the stress in his life. "Being a pastor is a full-time job that I love, but the time I spend working on my projects has become a great relief of stress for me," he confessed. The process of constructing a wardrobe doesn't take a lot of time, but Bennie doesn't have a lot of extra time on his hands. He has been able to shorten the process, because he has an idea of what he is doing and how best to follow patterns. Now that the process has become a routine, creating the wardrobes really has become a time for Bennie to be at peace while creating lasting memories for others.

After Bennie made such beautiful creations for the children in his family, people around him started to notice the true skill and dedication that went into each project. It was then that his family encouraged him to continue his hobby and not just as a family tradition. "My sons encouraged me to branch out of just making these for family, and they convinced me to share them with others, as well," he said with happiness in his voice.

That encouragement might be what led to Bennie's decision to start making more children's furniture, as well as little crafts for boys, instead of just wardrobes for girls. He's since crafted beds and furniture for friends and family, as well as a baseball bat and baseball holder for one lucky little boy. Bennie can also be found around town with his dollhouse wardrobes at different festivals and events.

When Bennie started to add different details to his wardrobes, he decided he wanted to include his faith. Being

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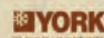
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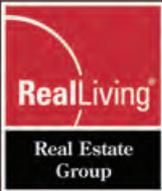
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a pastor at Liberty Baptist Church, he wanted there to be a deeper meaning to the wardrobes other than a memory of the maker, and it was important for him to share the pastoral side of his life. He decided to put a verse on the top shelf as a reminder for those who used the wardrobe. The verse he chose was Psalm 127:1 which reads, "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain."

He chose that verse to instill spiritual importance in the children for whom he created wardrobes and other creations. "My intention was to teach them to build their lives and relationships around Christ," he said with a smile. That verse now sits on the majority of the wardrobes he has made, and he truly hopes that the children take it to heart and remember what it truly means to have a solid foundation.

Bennie started handcrafting the dollhouse wardrobes to leave a legacy and as a way for his family to have something to remember him by. But it became another way to express his faith and share that faith with others. Creating went from being a sweet little project for the little girls in his life to a way of ministering to all children, both boys and girls, while leaving behind more than a materialistic legacy. "I wanted to remind the kids to build their lives and relationships around Christ. That is also my intention as a pastor. Building relationships is an important part of ministry, and I always want my hobby and faith to go hand-in-hand," he said.

So when you see one of the wardrobes in the shape of a dollhouse, remember there is more there than meets the eye. They represent a legacy of love, hope and faith. **NOW**



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Texas Heaven

By Dianne Reaux

At Home With Jim and Jackie Rider



When Jim Rider retired from his 30-year career in the military, he and his wife, Jackie, believed Mansfield would be the perfect place to enjoy quiet, country living. And they were right — for a while. “When we first moved to Mansfield,” Jim explained, “the population was around 9,000, and it was a beautiful, peaceful area.” But as the town grew, they began looking for a new home away from the hustle and bustle of city life. They wanted to enjoy country living, and a location offering peace and quiet was a top priority. They also wanted a home that could showcase the memorabilia they’d collected from their travels.



The Riders have been married for 52 years, and they have seen a lot of the world, because Jim is a retired Air Force colonel and aerospace engineer. “I was a test pilot,” he shared. “I flew fighter jets and worked in flight testing facilities.” His military career included many stateside assignments in Arizona, California and Washington State. There were also international tours in Australia, Japan, Korea and England. Although Jim no longer flies fighter jets, he still enjoys being a part of the aviation community, but these days it’s much slower and lower to the ground. “I’m a member of the Texas Soaring Association, and that’s where I saw a notice that had been posted about a home that was for sale in Jordan Ranch,” he added.

“It took us about a year before we decided to move,” Jackie said.

“We were ambivalent about moving, and one major reason was we’d been established in Mansfield for 23 years. Moving

The prospect of
peace and quiet
overcame the logistics
of the move.

our household was going to be a major undertaking,” Jim stated. But eventually, the prospect of peace and quiet overcame the logistics of the move.

When guests enter the Rider home, they are welcomed into a beautiful and spacious, open floor plan that has hints of Tuscan decor. The Tuscan color palette is appealing to them because the colors are taken from nature — cool, blue shades of the ocean and sky, relaxing shades of green that are seen in the landscape and wine vineyards. And don't forget the brilliant yellow, orange and red hues of the Mediterranean sun rising and setting. The decor the couple chose gives their home a rich, warm feel they have come to love.

Sitting on six acres, their house rests atop a high vantage point, and the open floor plan lends itself perfectly to the sunlight that filters into their home. It enhances the colors painted on the walls, or it subdues them, depending on the time of day. “The house was painted by Tonya McPherson,” Jackie said. “She worked with us on our home in Mansfield, and we just loved her work. She was honest with us about what she thought worked and what didn't. We listened to her, and she listened to us. We love the results.” Tonya painted the living room and dining room an olive green using a decorative texture technique, which resulted in an area that combined beauty, form and function.

The master bedroom was painted in a beautiful seafoam green and the small en suite bathroom was enlarged. “The remodeled bathroom was my vision,” Jackie admitted. “The closet for our room was just too small, so



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the contractor took out the wall that separated the bathroom from the small closet. The former closet space was incorporated into the bathroom to make it larger, and the guest bedroom I used for my crafting hobbies was converted into a walk-in dressing room/closet.”

The kitchen was updated with granite countertops, and Tonya lent her decorative expertise when she used a whitewash technique on all of the cabinets. “She also created the backsplash

using stones, and I handpicked many of them,” Jim said.

“I spent so much time buying rocks that everyone at the store knew me by name!” Jackie said. The windows in their breakfast area open the kitchen up to a beautiful view of the pool/patio living area. The sliding glass backdoor also features a smooth, gliding screen, which allows them to enjoy the picturesque views while in the kitchen. “At just the right time during the mornings and

evenings, the views of the sun rises and sunsets are magnificent,” Jackie shared.

The home is beautifully decorated with accent pieces found in exotic places all over the world. “I love to shop,” Jackie shared, “and I would rather buy something for our home than buy something for myself.” Fish bowls from Korea, a hibachi and kimonos from Japan, a “used” tribal spear from Papua New Guinea and heavy metal shields from England are just a few of the

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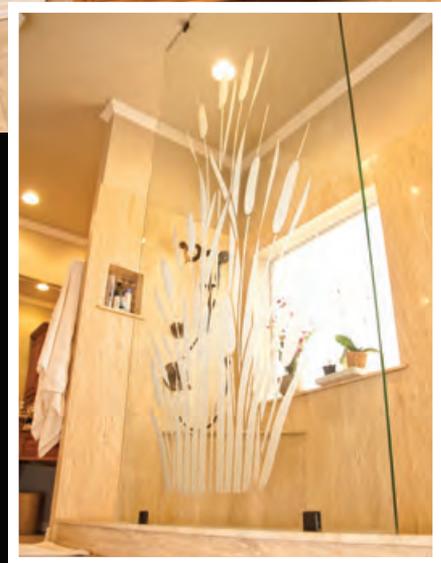
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interesting pieces on display.

Art is also prominently featured throughout their home, and much of it was painted by Jim's grandmother, Maudie Sailor Hutchison. "My grandmother was an artist," Jim shared. "But during her era, women were discouraged from being artists, so it wasn't something she could do to make a living. She was able to make a little money when she worked as an art teacher showing her students how to paint china plates and vases." Mrs. Hutchison also painted with watercolors and oils.

While Jim enjoys spending time at the Texas Soaring Association, Jackie enjoys volunteering one day a week at the Wesley Mission Center in Mansfield. For years, Jackie was an avid golfer, and Jim can't help bragging a little on his wife. "Jackie has been the women's golfing champion at every golf club we have ever been members of, including the



Royal Canberra Golf Club in Canberra, Australia,” he shared with a broad smile.

In the Rider home, Jackie is the resident artist. She has a passion for crafting, and she enjoys taking crafting classes. Unique pieces of her work made from needlepoint, quilting and ceramic mosaics are on display throughout the home. She also loves to sew and design purses, and she shares her work with others, often giving items away as gifts.

Many people dream of finding a little piece of heaven on earth, and when the Riders found their home in Jordan Ranch, that’s exactly what they found. So the next time you are able to slow down and gaze westward while the sun slowly takes its evening bow there’s a good chance Jim and Jackie will be sitting out back on their patio watching the same beautiful Texas sunset, as they enjoy their own little piece of Texas heaven. NOW



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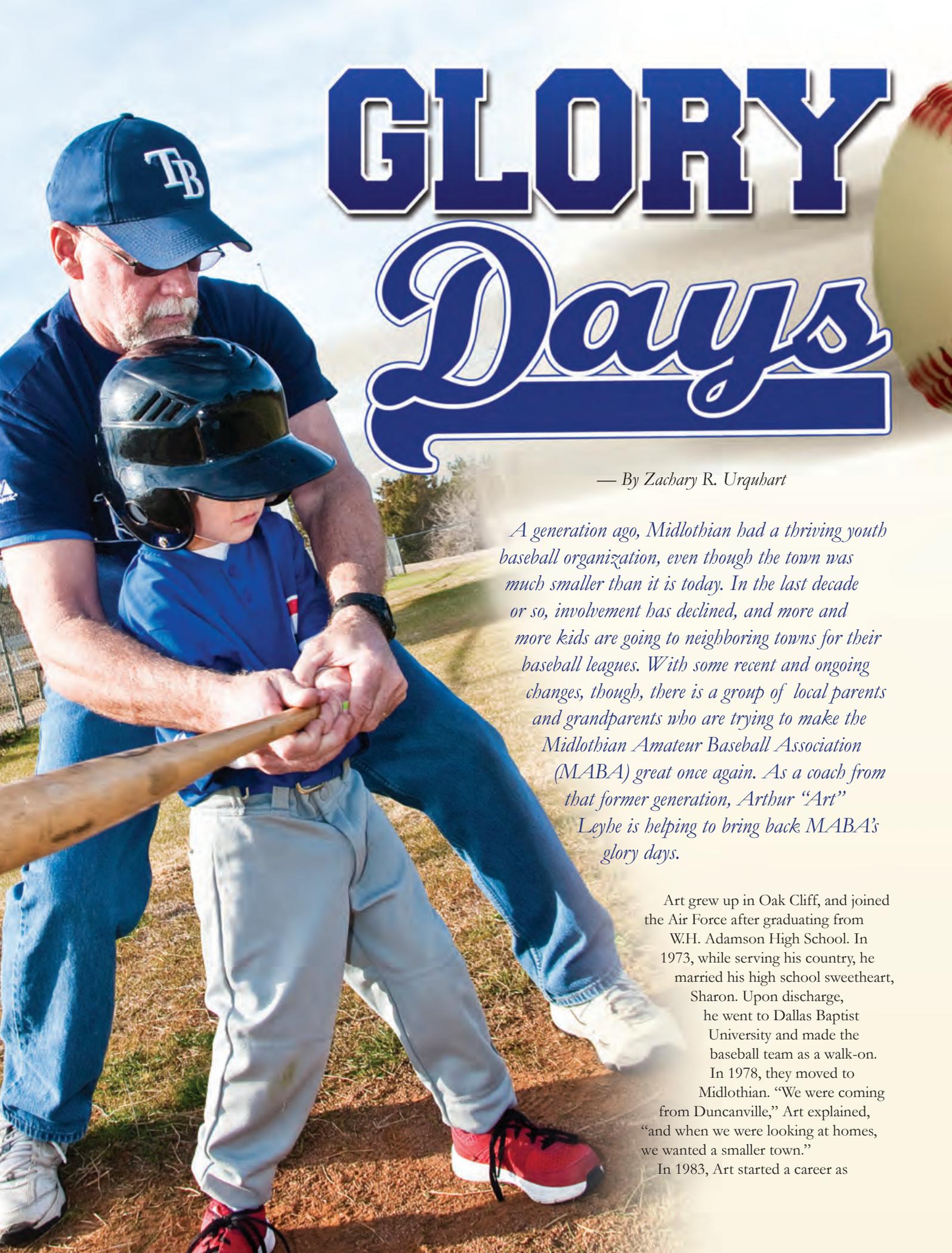


		
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GLORY

Days

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

A generation ago, Midlothian had a thriving youth baseball organization, even though the town was much smaller than it is today. In the last decade or so, involvement has declined, and more and more kids are going to neighboring towns for their baseball leagues. With some recent and ongoing changes, though, there is a group of local parents and grandparents who are trying to make the Midlothian Amateur Baseball Association (MABA) great once again. As a coach from that former generation, Arthur “Art” Leybe is helping to bring back MABA’s glory days.

Art grew up in Oak Cliff, and joined the Air Force after graduating from W.H. Adamson High School. In 1973, while serving his country, he married his high school sweetheart, Sharon. Upon discharge, he went to Dallas Baptist University and made the baseball team as a walk-on. In 1978, they moved to Midlothian. “We were coming from Duncanville,” Art explained, “and when we were looking at homes, we wanted a smaller town.” In 1983, Art started a career as



a Duncanville firefighter. He retired from the Duncanville Fire Department in 2009, and Sharon retired from Mazda Inland Port Facility, in town, a few years ago. Art and Sharon have two children. Both live in Midlothian: their daughter, Skye, is 34 and works in Las Colinas. Their 31-year-old son, Matt, is a firefighter in Cedar Hill. Thanks to Skye,

"THEY RESPOND TO ART, AND HE'S A GUY THAT BRINGS THE PASSION AND ENERGY TO MAKE THINGS BETTER."

they have one grandchild, Breckin, who is 6 and attends J.R. Irvin Elementary School.

Art has been involved in baseball since he was a child. "I loved it growing up. I was Mr. Baseball," he said. After his playing days, he returned to the sport, thanks to his son. "I coached Matt from T-ball all the way through," he shared. While Matt was coming through the

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MABA, Art ended up being one of the parents who volunteered to make sure the kids had a strong, quality league. “I was president or vice president for years back then. Danny Rodgers, myself — there was a group of us that got together to run the league.” Matt ended up playing baseball for the Panthers, and that’s when Art figured his coaching days were over. But as everyone knows, things can change.

When Breckin started showing an interest in playing baseball, Art thought he would be able to go and watch from the stands. He laughed, “One day Breckin came and asked me if I would coach his team. I still think maybe his momma put him up to it.” Art started coaching again, almost two decades after he thought he was done.

When he got involved with the MABA again, Art could see that things were different than he remembered. “Twenty years ago, the league was bigger than it is now, even with Midlothian being so much larger now,” he clarified. “But that’s changing. The league has started getting some new people involved, and there are folks who want it to be as strong as it used to be again.” Of the 10-man board, only Ian Caldwell is a holdover from the old regime. Art coached Breckin’s T-ball team for two years and will be moving up with them into coach pitch. Fortunately for the league, that opens the door for him to take on a new role.

Coaches cannot serve as commissioners for their own division. Now that he is coaching a higher age group, Art is the new commissioner for the youngest league. He is taking over for one of his former players. Ian moved to Midlothian when he was young, and he remembers playing basketball with Art’s son. “Matt and I were really good friends once I moved here,” Ian recalled. “We played

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together for years.” Ian has been the T-ball commissioner but is ready to hand off the reigns to Art. He compared himself to Art. “I don’t know how to coach the kids like he does,” Ian admitted. “They respond to Art, and he’s a guy that brings the passion and energy to make things better.”

Ian is excited about some of the things MABA has in the works to improve and garner more exposure for the league. “One of the big things I’m working on is local merchant sponsorships,” he said. “We are trying to upgrade our fields and scoreboards, so we are trying to get more involvement from the community.”

Art agrees, as he recalled the way youth baseball used to be. “We are trying to convince businesses to be involved,” Art stated. “We haven’t had working scoreboards in forever. Back in the day, people and companies would do a lot, and we are trying to bring that back.” Art and Ian are insistent that as the league



grows, they have to be able to keep registration fees down so that no kid is unable to play because of money. “We’ve always done scholarships, and we will make sure that any kid who wants to, can play,” Art added.

Ian has handed over the role in the T-ball league, in part so that he can focus on the behind-the-scenes responsibilities. “Most of what happens is done by people volunteering their time,” he explained. “But right now, they have to coach and take care of the actual games.

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Front row, left to right: Tanner Wyatt, Jackson Wyatt, Luke Wyatt. Back row, left to right: Dylan Moore, Kyle Allen, Arthur Leyhe, Breckin Leyhe.

I'm trying to work more on the business side of things."

Art agrees with that sentiment. It's clear that all of their volunteers are greatly appreciated. Art talked about the coaches, "for the most part, once you agree to coach a team, you usually end up staying with them each year. One of the things we're working on now is preparing the coaches, too. Some of these guys are just here filling a role, so we want to make sure they're ready to teach and develop the skills the kids will need."

While their styles and abilities may not be the same, Art and Ian share a clear, common goal: making MABA better. "I think it's important for Midlothian kids to play together," Art said. "It fosters community."

Art and Ian are also excited about MABA branching out into select leagues. "At first we were a little hesitant," Art expounded. "But this will allow kids who might be a little further along to play on a local team, but at a higher level. They will play with Midlothian kids, against teams from the surrounding cities."

With all of the changes in the works, it's only going to be a matter of time before kids from those nearby towns are driving to Midlothian to join the league here. At the very least, Art confidently declared, "Kids don't need to drive far to play baseball. We want people to know we have a top product right here." **NOW**

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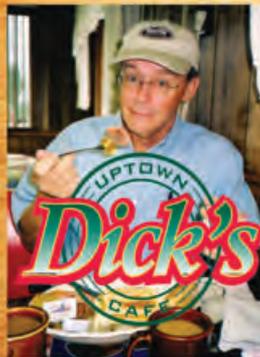


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Climbing To New HEIGHTS

— By Alex Allred

MCDONALD
DIANE BITTICK
Mt. Peak Elementary

Unlike her fellow teachers, Diane Bittick came into teaching a little later in life. Prior to that, she was in retail for 16 years, director of a Mother's Day Out program and an at-home mother to her two children. Her hardest job, she said, "was going back to school and being a full-time mom." Not only did she earn her teaching degree in 2006, she graduated summa cum laude from Texas A&M University-Commerce through Navarro College. "I didn't start [school] thinking grades would matter that much to me. I just wanted to finish," she said. But as she got further into academics, grades became very important. "I'm proud now."

How appropriate that Diane was hired to teach at Mt. Peak Elementary School where the motto



is, "Climbing to New Heights!" With a new perspective about education, grades and achieving goals, Diane stepped into the new world of first-graders. "It can be really overwhelming," Brianna Campbell said. Brianna, along with Diane, Codi Gudgy and Lori Jackson, make the perfect team for the first grade at Mt. Peak. They meet regularly to compare lesson plans and bounce ideas off of each other while laughing and/or commiserating over their students.

"We are so many things," Lori said, "nurse, mother and of course, teacher. But we also have to be good listeners, investigators and problem solvers. Sometimes, our kids just need a friend and," she said with a sigh, "sometimes, we have to be the bad guy."

This is where the team is most important. Brianna had previously come from a school system that discouraged team teaching. "But Principal Childers encourages teams here!" she said. Brianna feels that working with Diane made the transition into teaching much easier. "She's extremely organized and patient. I think she works six months in advance."

"She's so smart," Codi said. Having come from a school system with team teaching, Codi understands the nuances of having trust and respect for one another. In what other job could 20 people in the "office" be doing 20 different things? Although each day has a very clear schedule, at any given moment someone could be standing on a chair, bursting into song or tears, demanding to tell a pet story, attempting to pull a ponytail or tattling.

"We're not just teaching academics," Diane said. "At this age, we're also

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Like a wet sponge, a healthy disc is flexible. A dry sponge is hard, stiff and can crack easily. This is how many disc problems begin. Because of the way each disc is attached to the vertebra above and below it, a disc cannot "slip" as commonly thought. However, trauma or injury to the spine can cause discs to bulge, herniate or worse, rupture. This can be quite painful, putting pressure on the spinal cord and nerve roots, often interfering with their function.

The chiropractic approach to disc problems is to help restore better motion and position to the spinal joints. Besides reducing disc bulging, better spinal function helps decrease inflammation so the slow process of healing the surrounding soft tissues can begin. Many patients have avoided needless surgery or a dependency on pain pills by choosing conservative chiropractic care.

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Left to right: Brenden Steel, Slater Callahan, Diane Bittig

teaching them how to function socially, how to walk in line, raise a hand, win and lose and how to be kind. We know that our students don't have a choice about coming to school, but they do have a choice about attitude.

"With the team," Diane said, "we figure out the best way each child learns. They're first-graders so, for the most part, they love school. They are inquisitive and people pleasers. They want to please you. But we also know that every child has a story. You have to get involved with that child and form that relationship to understand where they are coming from and what's going to help them learn to the best of their abilities."

Over the door to her classroom, Diane sends a very clear message to her students: To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world. "Her class is fun," said one 6-year-old student, "but you're always learning something, too."

Indeed, the day is jam-packed. Diane gets to campus early "to get my mind mentally prepared," so that by 7:45 a.m. as the morning announcements are given, "we are taking attendance, getting a lunch count and doing a warm-up activity." No doubt, this all takes place while someone ponders if a button could fit in an ear or, better yet, a neighbor's ear. "Our whole morning is a language arts reading block, [consisting of] spelling, parts of speech



ck, James McLellan and Nia Hall.

or shared writing activities until recess.” During this time multiple students may show a crossed-fingered hand signal that symbolizes the crossed leg, “the international sign for potty!”

“By the first grade,” Brianna said, “they are learning to work independently.”

“But everything is about practice,” Codi said. Again and again, they will practice to not interrupt and to sit still.

Boundaries, from not touching the person sitting next to them to understanding rules, are taught every day. “We all need boundary training,” Diane said. Children like structure, but so do teachers.

“It’s true,” she laughed. “Adults are the same way. We need those boundaries, my whole team does. We are very different personalities, and we teach a little differently, but we have the same expectations. We’re on the same page.”

“I feel very blessed that Mt. Peak has such a wonderful population of supportive parents who share those great expectations of their children and are so involved in their children’s education,” Diane continued. “They have great respect for educators. I realized that is not everywhere. I feel like I live and work in a bubble in a great district, in a great school, with a great team and a great family.”

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Lori Jackson, Briana Campbell, Diane Bittick and Codi Gudgel form the first grade team at Mt. Peak Elementary,

her room, Diane decided she needed a change following her father's passing in 2011, her daughter going off to college and the death of her mother last summer. Using vibrant colors and zebra print patterns, the only other thing needed was her team and her students. They were a lifeline for Diane. "First-graders can be brutally honest," Brianna said. "But they can also tell you the most precious thing at a time when you most need to hear it."

"Their sense of humor is really fun, too," Diane said. "Children 6 or 7 years old may get a joke if it's on their level, like a knock knock joke. Knock knock. Who's there? Olive. Olive who? I love you. But when they start making up jokes, they think it's so funny. It will make no sense, but it is a developmental thing they are attempting. Sometimes, the other kids will look at them and not laugh. Knock knock. Who's there? Olive. Olive who? Broccoli."

These are the moments that keep Diane in her bubble. They keep her happy and eager to teach her young charges each day. As class goals are met, rewards are given. The mere mention of a popcorn party can motivate even the most distracted of her students. "And who doesn't love Dance Party Fun?" exclaimed one young student.

After recess, the students have quiet time for reading, lunch, science, social studies and specials, with math as the final subject. "The last 10 minutes of the day, we 'pack and stack.' They head home, and I catch my breath," Diane smiled. For Diane and her team of super teachers, it is quiet time to prepare for the next day. **NOW**

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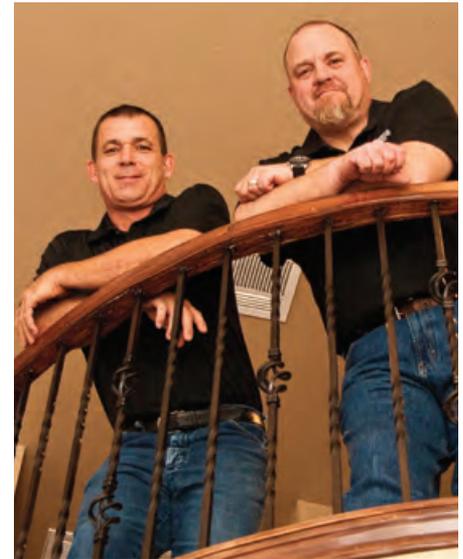


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From left:

Bob Snelling and Todd Hemphill have a business and friendship partnership that works.



Dream Maker

Southern Star Construction Services sells dreams.

— By Betty Tryon

A great friendship makes great business sense with Todd Hemphill and Bob Snelling, co-owners of Southern Star Construction Services. As next door neighbors, these two friends came together with a successful business model using each other's strengths. "My background of 25 years in the business world has been primarily in technology and banking," Todd stated. "Bob and I have been in business for a year. He has a 30-year background in general contracting. That's how we got into the construction business. He has owned several different construction companies in the past and has spanned the spectrum as far as the construction business is concerned. Bob was also project manager for a general contractor who built schools, prisons and large government buildings."

Each man operates the business according to his expertise. Bob takes care of the day-to-day construction aspects of the business, while Todd is in charge of the marketing, financial and operations side of the business. "Part of the business is purchasing properties and holding them either for lease or refurbishing them and selling them," Todd explained. "With the property purchase and lease aspect of the business, we do all the work ourselves as far as the renovation is concerned. Once we buy a property, then our crews are the ones that refurbish them and get them ready for sale or lease. We are a one-stop shop for construction!"

For the residential side of their construction business, they build new homes, swimming pools and outside kitchens and

remodel existing homes. Southern Star Construction Services can do anything needed in the construction world, but their business specialty is residential remodeling. "People look at the areas of their homes that will provide the highest resale values or the areas that will bring them the most pleasure," Todd remarked. "In the remodel areas, it is the bathroom, kitchen and outdoor areas where people like to entertain. There has been a big trend in outdoor kitchens. Here in Texas we have so many warm days throughout the year, so many people are extending their homes outside."

Todd and Bob's wives, Shelley and Lynn respectively, have been helpful in interior decorating. "Lynn, especially, has had a lot of experience in decorating because of Bob's many years in construction," Todd stated. "We pride ourselves on handling everything in-house and using everything in our backgrounds to provide that experience to our customers."

On the commercial side of their construction business, they specialize in church construction. "We have done a lot of work with area churches, as well as retail establishments. We did multiple renovations to a church in Dallas from adding street lights and reconfiguring office space to adding new rooms and services within the buildings themselves."

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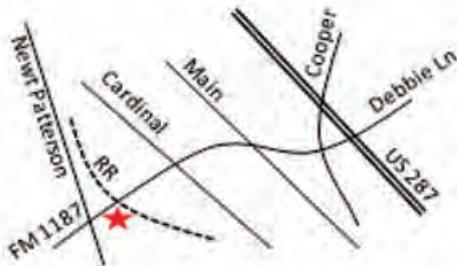
During School Board Appreciation Month, LaRue Miller Elementary honored Todd Hemphill, MISD Board Trustee.



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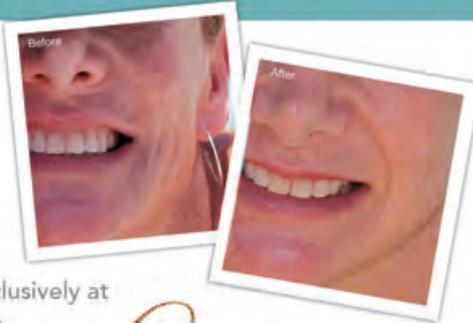
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At Odds With Social Cues

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

From an online discussion on Asperger's syndrome, you can feel this mother's anguish as she describes her son. "My only son, who is almost 8 years old, has Asperger's. He doesn't understand personal space. He wants friends, but no one wants to listen to him ramble on about his interests for hours at a time, and he speaks very loudly. He gets beat up at school for talking too much. He can't help it. He gets very frustrated very easily. He doesn't understand things the way we do and has his own explanation as to why things occur and stands by them. School will always be very difficult for him. Homework is almost impossible. Socially he will always have difficulties."

She described in painstaking detail of how her son just does not quite fit in his group of friends. He has a developmental disorder called Asperger's syndrome, which affects a person's ability to interact effectively with others in a social situation. Even though someone with Asperger's displays a lack of social skills and difficulty in communicating, children with this disorder usually have normal intelligence and language skills. Some individuals with Asperger's have superior intelligence. Albert Einstein has long been thought to have had Asperger's syndrome.

Susan Stokes, an autism consultant states, "Children with Asperger's syndrome tend to exhibit a lack of effectiveness in social interactions rather than a lack of social interactions." These children

may feel awkward when trying to interact with others. A child can join others in a conversation and completely take over the direction and tone as it suits them to do so. They do not have the sense of inhibition and social tweaking children normally learn as they mature. They cannot discern social cues from others or understand others' points of view. They usually show an extreme, almost obsessive, interest in a few very specific topics, such as cars or one particular aspect of a sport. In communicating their interest, they will talk incessantly and in great detail about engines or schedules totally disregarding another's lack of interest in the conversation. They are unaware of the social cues or the normal give and take in a conversation. They are not able to read the expressions on the faces of others. Physically, they may have an awkward gait or seem clumsy and have some fine motor difficulty.

Asperger's syndrome has no cure, so the goal of treatment is to improve communication skills, social skills and behavior management. With specialized intervention, many children with Asperger's grow into well-adjusted adults, as they mature and learn new skills. **NOW**

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

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April 8 — 12

MISD Round-Up: Kindergarten, Pre-K, Head Start: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. Students must attend school within the attendance zone assigned by MISD. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to register their child at their attendance zone campus during the week of **April 8-12**. For more information call (972) 775-8296.

April 13

Navarro College Brilliance-Fifth Annual Scholarship Event: 6:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center. Funds raised at the annual scholarship gala support Ellis County students pursuing their dreams of a college education. Advance tickets are required, due to limited seating: \$75 per person, \$600 per table. For reservations or information, contact Lynn Pike at (972) 923-6439 or lynn.pike@navarrocollege.edu.

Midlothian Citywide Spring Cleanup Day: 8:00 a.m.-noon, Public Works Service Center, 1050 N. Highway 67. The city's annual participation in the Great American Cleanup — working together with Keep Midlothian Beautiful. This free service

is only available to City of Midlothian residents. For more information, call (972) 775-1083.

Kids Fishing Derby: 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Sight of the new Community Park. Call (972) 775-7177 for more information.

April 16 and May 14

2nd Annual Midlothian ISD Citizens Academy: 8:30-11:30 a.m. Learn more about your school district by participating. You will have an opportunity to take part in an interactive learning experience. Participants will go behind the scenes and meet district staff, see the day-to-day operations and learn how MISD creates a climate of success in both academics and extra-curricular activities. Space is limited. Please contact Jana Hathorne, public relations coordinator, for any questions at (972) 775-8296, ext. 1037 or e-mail info@midlothian-isd.net.

April 27

Midlothian ISD Education Foundation's annual 5K Run: 9:00 a.m., MHS campus. Awards will be given to the top three 5K runners in each age group and one overall male and one overall female finisher.

Online early registration is open through **April 22**. After that date, all registration is on-site and prices are increased. Please contact Marni White at (972) 775-8296 x 1281 or marni@misdef.org with any questions.

Spring Fling and 125th Anniversary Celebration: Noon - 9:00 p.m., Heritage Park 234 N. 8th St. A full day of fun including the Spring Fling Arts & Crafts Show, 125th Midlothian Anniversary Celebration and 8th Street Dance.

April 29, 30

Early Voting for City Council Election: 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Circle. Early voting for the City Council election for Place 3 and Place 4. Call (972) 775-7101 for more information.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to Betty.tryon@nowmagazines.com.

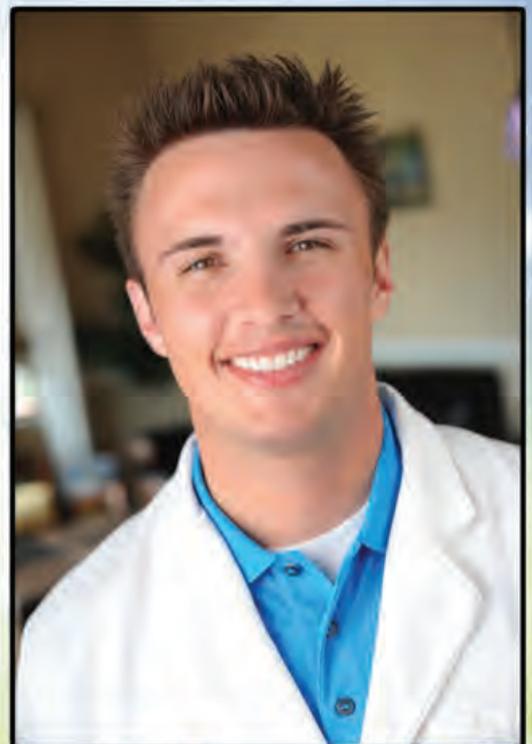


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In The Kitchen With Shirley Lotts

— *By Betty Tryon*

Many of us tremble at the thought of cooking for a large crowd, but not Shirley Lotts! “I would rather cook for a large group than just a couple of people,” she admitted. “I mostly cook for our family.” With 16 adults and grandchildren in her family, she gets lots of practice. Her joy of cooking for a crowd stemmed from a childhood of cooking meals for the harvesters who helped on her family’s farm. “I like to see people happy and enjoying themselves. I feel good food can help that happen. I like to say I cook with love, and I hope my love for cooking comes through when I serve people.” **NOW**

Swiss Steak (West Virginia Style)

A dish my grandmother and mom used to make.

- 1 lb. sirloin tip**
- 2 Tbsp. cooking oil**
- Salt and pepper, to taste (divided use)**
- 1 onion, chopped**
- 1 green pepper, thinly sliced**
- 1 cup ketchup**
- 4 potatoes**
- 1 pkg. baby carrots**
- 1/2 head cabbage, sliced in 1/2-inch wedges**

- 1.** Brown sirloin tip in oil on both sides; add salt and pepper.
- 2.** Put steak in a roaster. Cover with onion and green pepper; pour ketchup over top. Add water just to the top of the meat.
- 3.** Cover and bake in oven at 350 F for an hour. Take pan out and add potatoes, carrots and cabbage around meat, adding water, if

needed. Salt and pepper vegetables.

- 4.** Cover and continue baking for about an hour, or until vegetables are tender.

Cherry Surprises

- 1 cup butter, softened**
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar (plus additional for coating cookies)**
- 1 tsp. vanilla**
- 1/2 cup pecans, finely chopped**
- 1 1/4 cups flour**
- 16 oz. candied cherries**

- 1.** Cream butter and 1/2 cup powdered sugar until light and fluffy. Add vanilla, nuts and flour; mix well.
- 2.** Wrap dough in waxed paper and chill several hours.
- 3.** Take small amount of dough, flatten into round shape and place a cherry in the center. Wrap dough around cherry. Repeat process until all cherries are wrapped in dough.

- 4.** Put on ungreased cookie sheet and chill 15 minutes.
- 5.** Bake at 350 F 15-20 minutes. While still warm, roll in powdered sugar.

Floured Potatoes

A recipe my grandmother and mom used to cook.

- Potatoes, thinly sliced (about 1 potato per person)**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- Flour, enough to dredge potatoes**
- 1/2 onion, chopped**
- 2-3 Tbsp. butter**
- 4 slices bacon, uncooked**

- 1.** Slice potatoes.
- 2.** Add salt and pepper to flour; dredge potatoes in flour.
- 3.** Layer potatoes in greased baking dish. Add onion; dot with butter.
- 4.** Add bacon to top layer; bake at 350 F for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, stirring a couple of times as potatoes cook.

Chicken and Dressing Casserole

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- 1/2 tsp. poultry seasoning**
- 2 sticks margarine**
- 2 14-oz. pkgs. yellow Pepperidge Farm Cornbread Stuffing**
- 2 10 3/4-oz. cans cream of chicken soup**
- 1 cup chicken broth**

- 1.** Boil chicken breasts with salt, pepper and poultry seasoning until very tender.
- 2.** Cool and tear into bite-sized pieces.
- 3.** Melt margarine; stir into stuffing until moist.
- 4.** Add layer of stuffing in a greased 9x13-inch baking dish; top with chicken pieces. Spread cream of chicken soup over chicken. Repeat layers, adding stuffing on top.
- 5.** Pour chicken broth over top of casserole just to moisten.
- 6.** Bake at 350 F about 30 minutes, or until hot through.
- 7.** Serve with cranberry sauce.

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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