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APRIL 2013

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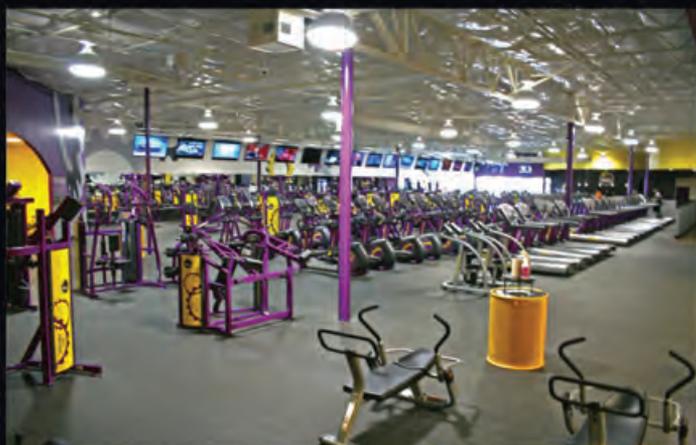
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Publisher, Connie Poirier

General Manager, Rick Hensley

EDITORIAL

Managing Editor, Becky Walker

Southwest Editor, Beverly Shay

Editorial Coordinator, Sandra Strong

Writers, Darryl Fenton . Katrina D. Lewis

Angel Morris . Betty Tryon

Editors/Proofreaders, Pat Anthony

Pamela Parisi

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla

Artists, Julie Carpenter . Casey Henson

Martha Macias . Felipe Ruiz

Arlene Honza . Brande Morgan

Shannon Pfaff

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Director, Jill Rose

Photographer, Opaque Visuals

ADVERTISING

Advertising Representatives,

Jami Navarro . John Powell . Linda Dean

Rick Ausmus . Teresa Banks . Laura Fira

Bryan Frye . Melissa McCoy . Vicki Meeks

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ON THE COVER



Josh Townsend finds himself drawn to pianos wherever he goes.

Photo by Opaque Visuals.

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Editor's Note

Hello, my Southwest Friends!

April. Warmth. Fragrance of flowers. The scent of earth. A milestone birthday for my daughter. A jumble of thoughts fill my mind as I anticipate the freshness of spring and the opportunity to be outdoors, which, of course, brings the beach to mind. Ah to be a horse, so I could legitimately bolt and race some sandy shore. Surely I must pencil in a road trip to somewhere on my calendar!

So what does spring stir in you? Are you a child of the earth, ready to plot out beauty and organic delights in your yard? Are you an artist itching for a canvas? A traveler wannabe like me? Or maybe you're a scholar or a teacher rallying the minds of your students to stay the course until the school year is finished.

I hope whatever it is you set your mind or hand to do brings refreshment to you!

Beverly

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SouthwestNOW Editor
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The Making of



By Katrina D. Lewis

“Never judge a book by its cover” is how the saying goes. For anyone who happens to encounter Josh Townsend, judging a book by its cover would be a big mistake. Josh, a 15-year-old Duncanville resident, looks like your typical teenager, and in many ways, he is. However, most typical teenagers have not suffered a life-changing stroke as a child, endured years of physical, occupational and speech therapy — or become a well-known, virtually self-taught and in-demand pianist.

As a toddler, Josh did not hit certain milestones as far as speech and motor skills go. Despite the concerns of his mother, Kevalyn, Josh’s teachers and a few doctors insisted nothing was wrong with him. Relying on her instincts as a mother, Kevalyn knew something was not quite right.

“In my baby pictures, when I would smile, my left eye would be sort of closed, and my right eye would be open,” Josh said. “I had trouble walking, and I couldn’t hold things in my left hand. I had no strength.”

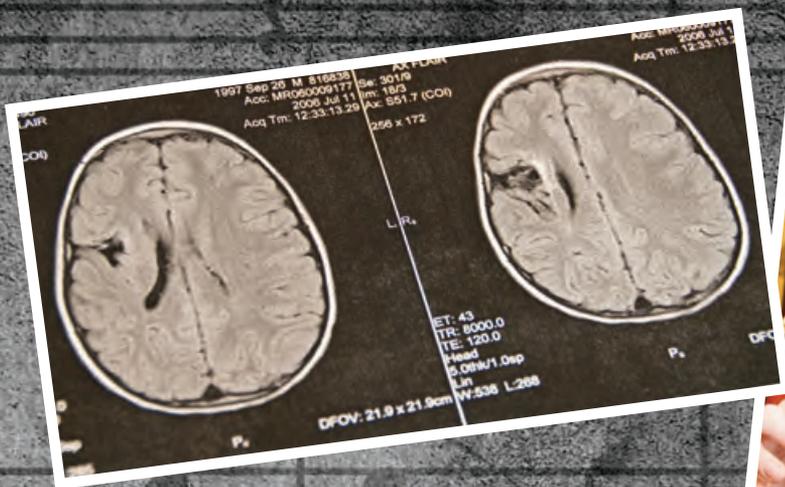
“I kept saying something was wrong with my baby. The teachers kept saying he was fine, but he wasn’t,” Kevalyn said,



recounting how she noticed Josh’s reading and other physical skills were not on the same level as his peers.

After a teacher shared her concerns, Kevalyn took Josh to Children’s Medical Center in Dallas. Josh was in second grade when she finally had an answer. He had suffered an undetectable stroke as an infant. Doctors have never been able to determine why it happened.

Looking back, Kevalyn realizes had she known exactly what was wrong with Josh, he might not have turned out to be the kid he is now. “The neurologist said his stroke was like that of a child with cerebral palsy,” Kevalyn said. “So they said he really



.....
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shouldn't be [unclear] to walk or talk. [unclear] want to limit him. If anything, we pushed him. I think our expectations would have been lower now had we known."

With a diagnosis in hand, Josh and [unclear] began a schedule that involved various therapy sessions twice a week. [unclear] had to concentrate on improving his speech and gaining strength in his left hand. His vision had been impaired, and he also had asthma. At the time, Kevalyn was still in nursing school, but with the [unclear] of Josh's school, Josh was able to have extra help in the classroom with a resource teacher's aide.

Although it takes him a bit longer to [unclear] information than other students, Josh has above-average retention capabilities. However, the hectic therapy



schedule at his few limitations began to cause extreme stress headaches that literally had him unable to do anything but lie down in the nurse's

Josh has been homeschooled and is thriving, socializing often with the other in his community and his church.

At church, like many musicians, Josh felt some unseen force guiding him to the during the song service and actually sat down to watch the piano player," he said. "I didn't really know what a piano was. All I knew was that it was for making music, and the lady was moving her fingers."

Josh was 3 at the time, and in his



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Young mind, simply moving his fingers across the keys would make his piano at home produce the same beautiful melodies he'd heard at church. "I went ahead and just started banging on it, and I thought I was doing pretty good," he said laughing. "I thought I was making the same music as the lady at church. Turns out my mom and everyone else thought different. But they didn't say anything. They just let me go on, making my music."

During this time, Josh was still unable to fully use his left hand and would peck out notes using one finger, even though he had full use of his right hand. As he grew older, Josh began to express interest in taking lessons and approached one of his mother's friends, who provided two private lessons. Since he was unable to properly position his fingers at all times, it proved challenging. So he decided to continue teaching himself, with assistance from one of the country's most-renowned gospel artists, Bill Gaither. "I used to watch his videotapes, and I watched the piano player. I gained



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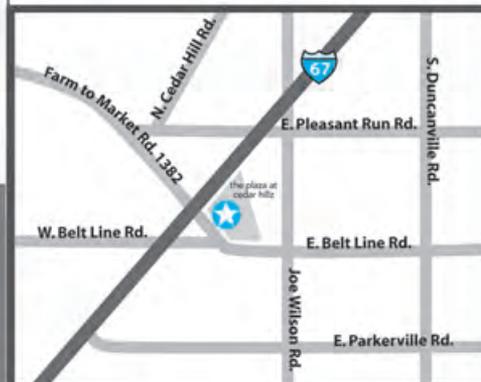
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stuff from those VCR tapes,” he said smiling. “I’d watch them until the tapes disintegrated. I learned by ear. I could work it out on the piano after a few tries. Once I gain it, I have it.”

“Hours and hours, literally,” Kevalyn admitted. “He would just play what the people were playing.” Once he has memorized a song and caught the melody, Josh’s improvisation skills engage, allowing him to add soulful riffs and runs to traditional southern gospel songs.

Playing in his grandfather’s church is not the only place Josh has showcased his skills while being an inspiration to others. While driving home one day from an appointment, Josh had the overwhelming urge to play a piano, any piano. Kevalyn remembered there was one in the D.L. Hopkins Senior Center in Duncanville, so Josh stepped inside to ask permission to play. “It has a gravitational pull,” Kevalyn said. “It doesn’t matter where we are, the piano will pull him in.”

Since that time, Josh has played during lunch at the center and has been invited back to be a part of productions, dancing, singing and playing with CenterStage, the center’s performance group. Josh has proved quite popular at the center, learning the names of those who attend and being welcomed into their lives. Josh is recognized by many of them when he’s out and about in Duncanville, and Kevalyn likes to joke that “he has more grandparents than anyone I know.”

Josh has taken his talents — and his remarkable testimony — far past Duncanville city limits. After forming a relationship with The Old Paths Quartet, a southern gospel group, Josh had a chance to tour with them recently, traveling to eight states in seven days. The tour stopped in Florida, Alabama and Missouri, to name a few, with crowds sometimes numbering in the thousands hearing him play.

Although his story is beyond inspirational and his talent is unquestionable, Josh remains refreshingly humble about what he can do and wants to ensure he is reaching others when he plays. “I recognize I’ve been blessed with his talent,” he said. “I like to play songs you can feel — music you can relate to — music you can get a blessing from.” NOW

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Seven Eagles earn TCU scholarships

In just the fourth year of participating in the twelve-year old program, DeSoto High School students are proving their worth to the Texas Christian University's Community Scholars program. Seven more students were named to the Community Scholars program at the school – earning each a \$200,000 scholarship for a total of \$1.4 million! Seventeen DeSoto students have earned this scholarship over the past three years bringing the total to 24 students. TCU's Director of Intercultural Services Timeka Gordon praised DeSoto High School and the district for their involvement and college ready prepared students. "DeSoto does a phenomenal job preparing students and they are very successful in this program."

- Congratulations:
- Kayla Adams
 - Ke'Arriuss Brunson
 - Ernest Dominick
 - Ogagaoghene Emego
 - Micah Jennings
 - Brianna Neal-Gipson
 - Samuel Ramirez

Six campuses receive ENERGY STAR rating

Since our energy conservation program began with Cenergistic, DeSoto ISD has saved more than \$1.4 million. This amount is equal to the salaries of 28 teaching positions in our budget for 2012-2013. We have literally cut our energy consumption by over 20%. And we expect these savings to grow as we further refine our program. Our energy conservation program has been so successful we were recently notified that six buildings in DeSoto ISD have earned ENERGY STAR certification from the Environmental Protection Agency.

DeSoto ISD buildings earning ENERGY STAR certification include:

- Amber Terrace Elementary
- Cockrell Hill Elementary
- Northside Elementary
- Frank Moates Elementary
- Woodridge Elementary
- Ruby Young Elementary

To earn ENERGY STAR certification, buildings must rate in the top 25 percent nationwide for energy efficiency.

Calendar of Events

Mon., April 8, 6:30 p.m. - DeSoto ISD Board Meeting, Board Room

Sat., April 13 - Education Foundation Gala & Auction, Hilton Garden Inn

April 15-19 - Volunteer Appreciation Week

Friday, April 12 - DeSoto Reads and DEAR(Drop Everything & Read) Day

Fri., May 3, 5 p.m. - Hall of Honor Induction Ceremony

May 6-10 - Teacher Appreciation Week

Saturday, May 11 - Election Day (School Board Election)

News to Know

Nominations are being accepted through April 4 for the DeSoto ISD Hall of Honor. Forms are online for both the DHS Hall of Fame and Distinguished Service Award categories. The Induction Ceremony will take place May 4 at DHS. For details, visit www.desotoisd.org.

STAAR Testing: Spring testing dates for STAAR include April 1-4, April 23-26 and May 14-15. End-of-course tests will be taken over two weeks in May.

A **WINGS Ribbon Cutting** will be held on Thursday, April 4 from 5-6:30 p.m. for the new WINGS location in the former Belt Line Elementary. Where I Now Gain Success (WINGS) is a dropout recovery program for students ages 17-25 who have dropped out of a Texas public school. Students complete courses through the computer-based program to earn their diploma from DeSoto HS.

Students at Northside Elementary will receive \$2,500 for their school after winning second place in the Texas Association of School Boards video contest. The theme was "Texas Public Schools Rock!"

DeSoto Reads, a collaboration with the district and DeSoto Library, will kickoff April 2 at the City Council Meeting and will run through the month of April. This year's book is *A Lesson Before Dying* by Ernest Gaines. Events include: play performances by the African American Repertory Theater, book clubs and discussion groups plus the DeSoto Reads and Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Day on Friday, April 12 across the city.

Looking to get new DeSoto gear? Check out the new **DeSoto U Spirit Store** at DeSoto High School before- and after-school and during lunch periods. The store will sell school spirit clothing, classroom supplies and other items.

DeSoto ISD is accepting open enrollment applications from students not living in the district boundaries who wish to attend DeSoto schools beginning in the fall. Students entering grades K-12 are currently eligible. Packets and eligibility criteria are available at 200 E. Belt Line Road.



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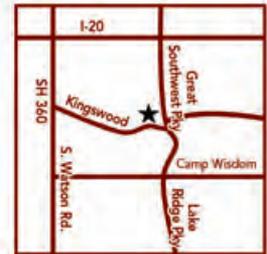


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HAPPY HOMEMAKERS

— By Angel Morris

Randall “Cubba” and Denyce Inmon can’t imagine living anywhere but the Best Southwest. Denyce was a lifelong resident of Duncanville until moving across the street into Cedar Hill in 2011, and Cubba, who had lived in Oak Cliff since third grade, got here as fast as he could. They purchased their current home in August 2011, saw it remodeled by Bill Noles and unpacked one month later. “Our family and lifelong friends and church family from First Methodist Duncanville live here. We feel totally at home

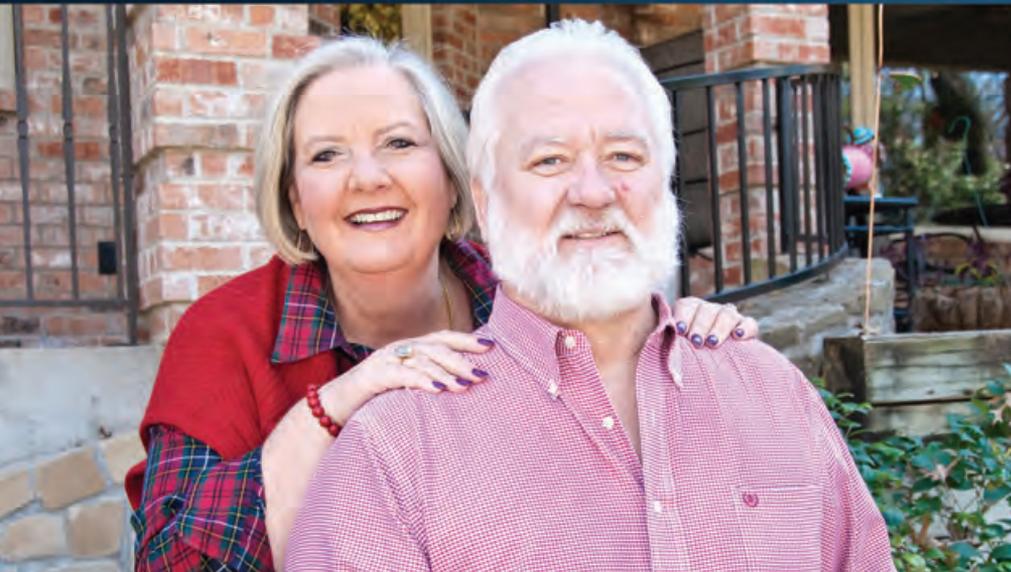
in the Duncanville/Cedar Hill area,” Denyce said.

The duo met because of hometown ties, as Cubba’s sister had lived next door to Denyce’s sister on Duncanville’s Cherry Street. “We met 38 years ago and were married two years later. Our sisters were neighbors. Eventually, all our nieces and nephews convinced us to get married, so they could be related to each other,” Cubba joked.

Settling into a home in Swan Ridge, the couple remodeled to suit their needs and lived there comfortably for 26 years. A few years back, however, the urge to move struck. “There were two things we wanted in our new home. First, and most important, was a workshop for Cubba, as we head toward retirement. He loves to work on cars, especially a 1965 Ranchero and a dune buggy, refinish furniture,



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build wood items, and he is a stained glass hobbyist,” Denyce said.

Their new home, bordering Cedar Hill and Duncanville, has a four-car garage with a two-car loft for hobbies and crafts. A man cave with room for Cubba’s exercise equipment is in the loft, as well. For Denyce, who wanted a view, the wooded surroundings and creek running alongside the backyard made the new house a hit. “Both of us were sold on this lot and location, although the home itself left a bit to be desired,” Cubba said.

By remodeling, the Inmons have transformed the traditional-style house into their dream home, featuring soft,

contemporary decor. Guests are greeted by the remodeled open-concept kitchen and dining area. “It made the home livable, since all who come to visit always gather in the kitchen. The 18-foot-long, double-height bar gives ample counter space and makes serving for large parties easy,” Denyce noted. “We hosted seven parties and over 200 people between Thanksgiving and Christmas last year and have always had enough space in the kitchen to serve everyone without feeling crowded.”

The large, casually furnished great room flows just beyond the dining room and kitchen, with a glass wall overlooking

the backyard. “It is an extremely relaxing space. Our family loved the view from the warmth of the fireplace into the backyard as it snowed on Christmas Day!” Denyce recalled. Another unique aspect of the great room is one wall featuring antique family photos and Denyce’s unique clock collection. “It always sparks conversation and tells a great history of both our pasts,” Denyce said.

Throughout the remodel process, the Inmons moved the utility room, attaching it to the master suite with accessibility from the master closet, so clothing can be conveniently chosen, worn, laundered and returned to the closet. The move of the original laundry room made space for a dish pantry off the kitchen, Denyce’s favorite part of the remodel.



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“We also took two master bedroom suites and turned the square footage into usable space for our particular needs. We were able to create a larger master bath, his-and-her walk-in closets, the utility room and an office for Denyce — perfect for our lifestyle,” Cubba said.

Denyce praises Cubba’s bargain-hunting ability. “When the home was purchased, it had no appliances. Cubba found all new appliances for less than 50 percent of retail costs by using Craig’s List and shopping outlet stores,” Denyce said.

Cubba furnished his office for less than \$500, scouting an oak rolltop desk, bookshelf and file cabinet. He bought a nightstand at a garage sale for \$5 and refinished it for his bedside. Additionally, he refinished two chairs he found roadside — one for his office and one for Denyce’s. In the process, he discovered the chairs were from the early 1900s.

Other favorite pieces include antique guest bedroom furniture handed down from Cubba’s parents and an antique secretary given to Denyce from her sister, Sharon Smith (longtime Duncanville ISD teacher and beloved basketball coach). “I am proud of my newly created black, red and white contemporary piece painted by my sister-in-law, Pat Smith,” Denyce also remarked.

Since completing two phases of remodeling, the Inmons agree the home’s interior is complete for now and have set their sights on landscaping. “The first major exterior project was filling in a large coy pond, which we covered with Oklahoma flag stone and made a large fire pit and waterfall in its place. It is a great gathering spot for friends in our backyard woods,” Cubba said.

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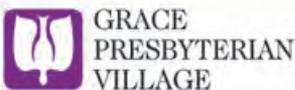


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Besides the successful auctioning in their backyard oasis, the Inmons are particularly pleased with their success in renovating the once tall and boxy great room by adding a railing 15 feet off the floor that focuses attention toward the lower level.



The family also appreciates the home’s double master suite design: one downstairs for them and one upstairs for guests, each complete with its own bathroom en suite. “It’s a great arrangement for holiday guests,” Denyce said. Or, for visits from daughter Vanessa, a Duncanville High School and Texas A&M graduate who moved to Fort Worth for a job with Lockheed Martin.

“We love her visits, and we love when she travels, because we get to keep our granddog, a Basset Hound named Fred,” Cubba said.

The Inmons favor traveling and are part of a group dubbed The Travelin’ 12, all fellow church members. And while they are fans of Southern Methodist University and Duncanville athletic teams, they are perhaps most comfortable watching sports on their large, flat-screen TV.

“We would encourage anyone shopping for a home not to get stuck on the way a house looks at first sight,” Cubba said. “This house had many barriers at first look, but we loved the lot and location. With some imagination and remodeling, if the price is right, anyone can make a place their perfect home!” **NOW**

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— By Beverly Shay

SOUTHSIDERS

Runners by dawn and professional people by day, these women wanted something more than getting and staying fit — they wanted to affect a health trend in the community. “Really, we should say communities,” said Annie Smith, who together with Alice Kelly, spearheaded the club. “We live in Dallas, Duncanville, DeSoto, Cedar Hill, Grand Prairie, Lancaster — all over!” The we of that statement includes some 40-50 runners and walkers who make up the Southsiders Running Club, which was started in conjunction with a social network of runners called Black Girls Run. “But now, we have all ethnicities, and sometimes men join us as well,” Annie remarked.

These women exude good health, a sense of esteem, humor and camaraderie. They tease and cajole one another, while remembering how they were when they joined and applauding how far each of them has come. Not everyone can come all the time, but all their members are active. They run four to five times a week — early — at 5:00 a.m.! On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, they run at Zeiger Park in DeSoto. On Thursdays, they run through Uptown Village in Cedar Hill. Weekday runs are about an hour. But on Saturdays, they stretch it to two hours out at Joe Pool Lake.

Some Southsiders were runners before joining the group. Some were not. Alice, who grew up in Dallas, ran cross country in high school, first at Brighton High School in Colorado, where her family lived for a while, and then at Roosevelt High School, the magnet school from which she graduated. “My mom died really young, and I am determined to beat the odds. Besides, I love running and the peace, therapy and prayer time it provides. I think it helps me love my 23-year-old son and my fiancé,” Alice remarked. Alice not only runs, she is also an executive assistant for a health care co-op and a yoga instructor.

Annie, who’s from Monticello, Arkansas, never really thought about running until she began gaining weight. “I’d stop and start — and stop again, but last year I got serious. Now I love running. It’s like therapy to me, too,” she said. Like most of the women who join Southsiders, Annie, who works as a change manager for AT&T, finds the consistent exercise to be the perfect foil for averting work challenges and fatigue.

Denise Harris grew up in Clarksdale, Mississippi. She was visiting a friend in Dallas after graduating from college and decided to stay. She now lives in Dallas. “I had been working out and riding a bike because of my family’s health history of high blood pressure and diabetes. But last July, I joined the Southsiders — as a walker, not a runner!” Denise remarked. “Now I can run up to nine miles.” She has also gone from squeezing into a size 12, which she admits should have been a size 14, to comfortably wearing a size 10. Her Southsider running buddies are just as proud of her as she is of herself. Denise appreciates the motivation the other women provide. “I am out there because of them, and because I run, then I am

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ready for the kids when they come into my classroom,” said Denise, who teaches reading to sixth- and seventh-grade students at W.H. Atwell Middle School in Dallas.

Chandra Martin, born in Galveston, but mostly a Dallasite, now lives in Cedar Hill. She, too, ran cross country at Roosevelt High School. “I enjoy having my morning meditation with



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God while I am out running. It gives me peace," she said. Chandra is a real estate administrator and a hair stylist. The women readily admit having a hairstylist among them is a plus, given the unique challenge exercising and sweating imposes on African-American hair. Chandra was once over 200 pounds, but with the encouragement of Alice and many other Southsiders, she was able to



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Chandra Dennis-Martin, Alice Kelly and Denise Harris believe in getting healthier simply by using their own two feet.

increase the mileage of her workouts, which in turn played a large part in her ability to loose over 60 pounds in less than a year.

Not all the Southsiders are Southerners. Natasha Gordon hails from Brooklyn, New York. She traveled quite a bit with her job. She began running seriously in November 2010, while living in Chicago. She ended up settling in DeSoto, because her brother lives here. Natasha is a speech and language pathologist for adults. "I keep running because I have found friends in this group who keep motivating me to be a better person," Natasha said.

"And she has really reshaped her body!" Annie said with obvious admiration. Both Alice and Annie, who used to run at the same park for years, yet never knew each other, have become certified running coaches this past year.

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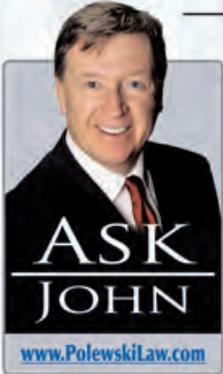
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Their main goal is to get people off their couches and have them experience the self-esteem boosters that will change their lives and lifestyles. “Everyone is welcome,” Alice enthused. “If you think you can’t do this, you are exactly the one we are talking to. You will find yourself supported and encouraged from the beginning to the end of each exercise period. No matter how hard it was at first, I always wanted to come back the next day.”

“We tell everyone to be patient with themselves and with their body,” Annie added. “You set your goals, and we’ll work with you — whether you run or walk. We have an army of walkers! There will always be someone at your level and your pace, with similar goals.”

Each of the women was pleased at the kindness everyone shows. No one puts anyone else down. “You get to know their stories and share tips on how to get healthier and slimmer — simply using your own two feet,” Alice remarked. The women in the club share informally about eating clean foods, what to do with your hair, how to retard the aging process and other topics of mutual interest. “Walking and/or running are two of the easiest, least expensive ways to get in shape,” the women agreed. **NOW**



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— *By Beverly Shay*

Resource One Credit Union is a full-service financial co-op, owned and operated by its members. They provide free checking, while keeping other fees minimal to none. The credit union was founded in 1936 and currently serves over 270 employer groups and the communities of Dallas and Northwest Harris County (Houston), which includes over 40,000 members.

Clarence Nash, the Cedar Hill branch manager since 2002, has worked in finance ever since he graduated from high school in Sulphur Springs, Texas. “My speech teacher’s husband, S.T. Garrison, was the bank president, and he both mentored and encouraged me,” Clarence recalled. His education includes an associate degree in arts and science from El Centro College and graduation from Southern Methodist University with

certification in banking and finance. Clarence has managed several different banks through various name and ownership changes in Oak Cliff, Lancaster, Dallas and Fort Worth, both in retail operations and personal banking. He’s been married to Sandra, an auditor, since 1984, and they have one son, Daniel, who is 13.

“One of the things I really like about Resource One is the personal service we offer,” Clarence remarked. “We get to know our members by name, and we truly listen to their story, looking for a creative solution or plan for each one’s need. We don’t simply grant or deny a loan based on their credit score.”

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and services and branch member/owner since May 2005. The beauty of a credit union is people helping people — people contributing money to lend to each other. “And so,” Jennifer continued, “we have all types of loans: auto, personal, mortgage, credit card consolidation, home equity, second mortgage, credit building loans. We also offer a personal finance manager at no cost.”

One of their popular offerings is a here today, here tomorrow loan of \$1,500, of which you receive \$750 now and the other \$750 once the loan is paid off in one year. All banking can be done from home, and they offer all the apps for iPhones and Android. To join Resource One, it’s best to come in person, so your particular needs can be discovered and met, but you can apply online.

“This location, opened in November 2009, is the 77th location,” Jennifer stated. “Resource One Credit Union has eight branches in Dallas/Fort Worth and two in Houston. We are open to anyone who lives, works or worships in Dallas and Harris County.”

“One of the things I really like about Resource One is the personal service we offer.”

“All banks want to make a profit, which is necessary, but we want to keep the human element — both to and for individuals and the community as a whole,” Clarence remarked. “That’s why we support education by providing literacy education for children, partnering with other local businesses to teach financial integrity in real life. Last year, we were able to present the Dave Ramsey financial seminar to 17 families — because we believe relationships need to have a strong financial basis. We support, promote and implement values like integrity, discretion and partnership as opposed to judgment. No matter what your financial situation, we offer no shame. We offer the opportunity to help you grow. That’s how *we* grow.” **NOW**



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The Cedar Hill Museum recorded an oral history with Vinus and Robert Nelson while they were visiting the the old Tindle place where they were raised on the west edge of town.



Eighth grader Derrick Neal, of Cedar Hill, recently won the school level National Geographic Geography Bee at Canterbury Episcopal School in DeSoto.



Janet Harris, Don McBurnett and Amy Jackson at Best Southwest networking event hosted by Duncanville Chamber at Hilton Garden Inn.



Aaron Chaves, Northwood University senior and entertainment and sport promotion management major, participates in campus blood drive.



Kathy Petty shops for flowers with the help of Farmer's Delight employee Marc Woolsey.



Mylisa and Mataya Mitchell, both wearing pink, celebrate their seventh and second birthdays with family and friends.



Lanetta Brookins and her mother, Vernetta Murray, use the computer lab at the DeSoto Public Library.



Beverly Shay painted her first painting ever under the tutelage of Robin Ingle at Cedar Hill's Creative Arts School's Party Like Picasso.



DeSoto Youth Advisory Council attended the 13th Annual Texas Youth Advisory Commission Summit in Port Arthur, Texas.



Hope Hererra enjoys an afternoon at Armstrong Park with Mariab and Zach Hummell.

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Not everyone gets one, but it's always a welcome sight — a tax refund. If you receive a refund this year, how can you best put it to work?

The answer depends, to a large extent, on the size of your refund. In 2012, the average tax refund was about \$3,000, according to the IRS. Let's look at a few possibilities for how you might use this amount:

- **Help fund your IRA** — In 2013, you can now put in up to \$5,500 per year (up from \$5,000 in 2012) to a traditional or Roth IRA. And if you're 50 or older, you can put in an additional \$1,000 per year above the new contribution limit. Consequently, your \$3,000 refund could cover more than half of your maximum IRA contributions, or slightly less than half if you're 50 or older. And if you don't think that \$3,000 would make much of a difference, consider this: If you invested the \$3,000 in an IRA that earned a hypothetical 7-percent annual return, and you never put in another dime, you'd end up with nearly \$23,000 after 30 years. And if you put in that same \$3,000 per year to your IRA — well below the maximum — every year for 30 years, earning that same 7-percent annual return, you'd accumulate more than \$303,000. (Keep in mind that you'd eventually be taxed on your traditional IRA earnings; Roth IRA earnings grow tax-free, provided you meet certain conditions.)

- **Pay off some debts** — In the last few years, Americans have done a pretty good job of lowering their individual debt loads, according to the Federal Reserve. But if you still have some outstanding loans or a credit card balance that carries a high interest rate, you might want to consider applying your tax refund to these debts.

The lower your monthly debt payments, the better your cash flow — and the more money you'll have available to invest for your future.

- **Help build an emergency fund** — Life is full of unexpected events. If you need to purchase a new furnace or pay for an expensive car repair or incur a hospital bill, will you have the money available? If you don't, you might be forced to dip into your IRA or other investments. This move could result in taxes and fees; more importantly, it will reduce the financial resources you're counting on to help meet your long-term goals. You can help avoid this problem by building an emergency fund containing six to 12 months' worth of living expenses, kept in a liquid, low-risk account. Your tax refund could give you a nice start to this fund.

- **Invest in a 529 plan** — If you have children (or grandchildren) whom you'd like to send to college, you may want to invest in a 529 plan. Your earnings grow tax-free, provided withdrawals are used for qualified higher education expenses. (Withdrawals for other purposes will result in taxes and possible penalties.) Contribution limits are quite high, so you can put in significant amounts each year — including a \$3,000 tax refund.

As you can see, you've got some attractive options for using your tax refund — so consider them carefully. If you can apply more resources to your various financial goals, you may find yourself in a better position in the future. **NOW**

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Darryl Fenton is an Edward Jones representative based in Cedar Hill.

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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 20

Kid Fish at Briarwood Park: 9:00 a.m.- noon, 1625 W. Beltline Road, DeSoto. Cost: \$5. (972) 230-9651.

Earth Day/Arbor Day Tribute: 10:00 a.m.-noon, Cedar Hill library: storytelling, music, kid-friendly recycled crafts and limited number of free trees available for qualifying Cedar Hill citizens. (972) 291-7323.

April 23

Sha-Shonda Porter will review/autograph The Devil Stopped By at Friends of the Duncanville Public Library meeting: 7:00 p.m., Duncanville Public Library, 201 James Collins Blvd. (972) 780-5050.

April 26

Bridges Safehouse Banquet: 6:45 p.m., Trinity Church. Tickets: (469) 272-4441.

April 27

Dining and Dialogue Dinners in DeSoto: 6:30 p.m. To register: www.desotodd.org or (972) 230-9648.

April 29

Southwest Dallas County Parkinson's Group: 6:30-8:00 p.m., Trinity UMC, 1302 S. Clark Rd., Duncanville. (972) 298-4556.

May 4

Cinco De Mayo Celebration: 2:00 p.m., Cedar Hill library. Mariachi band, piñata treats and more!

4th Annual Mother/Son Dance: 7:00-9:00 p.m., DeSoto Civic Center. Tickets (includes photo) on sale in April: couple/\$30; additional son/\$15; no tickets at door. (972) 230-9651.

First Sundays

The Duncanville United Group (a community organization working for the betterment of the Duncanville community), meetings: 5:00-7:00 p.m. For location: duncanvilleunited@yahoo.com .

Wednesdays

3D Voice: Public Speaking for Children, ages 10-14: Wednesdays: 6:00-7:00 p.m. Cost: \$60/4 wk., Cedar Hill Recreation Center. (972) 293-5288 or cedarhilltx.com/classes.

Third Thursdays

NAMI Dallas Family Member Support group for families who have someone with mental health disabilities: 7:00-8:30 p.m., Trinity United Methodist Church, 1302 S. Clark Rd. Madeline Kelley: (972) 298-9378.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to beverly.shay@nowmagazines.com.

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In The Kitchen With Alicia Isang

— By Beverly Shay

Alicia Isang loves to cook, so much so that she teaches cooking classes for children at her church, Hillcrest Baptist Church. “Cooking is fun, but most importantly, I like to know what I am consuming,” Alicia stated. She likes down-home cooking, and her favorite spice is chipotle. Because her husband is from West Africa, she makes many African dishes, such as *fufu*, *Jollof* rice and fried plantain.

“I have invented some of the recipes I cook for family and friends,” Alicia said. In fact, she has a small catering company called Alicia’s Sweets and Catering. She has served at weddings, church and business banquets, parties and birthday gatherings. Alicia also enjoys reading and has had several of her poems published. **NOW**

Alicia’s Buttermilk Pie

- 2 cups sugar
- 6 Tbsp. flour
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup buttered Crisco
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 baked pie shell

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. Combine sugar and flour; beat eggs; add to sugar and flour mixture.
3. Add Crisco and buttermilk. Mix well; fold in lemon juice.
4. Pour into chilled pie shell. Bake for 10 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 F and bake for 35 additional minutes. Do not open oven while baking.

Springtime Jell-O Salad

- 1 large pkg. lime Jell-O

- 10 small marshmallows
- 1 cup Cool Whip
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 16-oz. can chopped pineapple, drained
- 1 cup mild cheddar cheese, grated
- 1/2 cup walnuts or pecans

1. Mix Jell-O according to package directions.
2. Dissolve marshmallows in hot Jell-O. Add remaining ingredients. Chill until set.

Summer Sand Tarts

- 1/2 stick butter
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 2 tsp. water
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- 1/4 cup powdered sugar

1. Cream butter and sugar. Add flour, vanilla and water. Add pecans. Chill.
2. Shape into balls by the tablespoon. Bake at 325 F for 20 minutes. Cool; roll in powdered sugar.

Alicia’s Sweet and Hot Stuffed Red Jalapeños

- 6 slices bacon, cooked crisply
- 1/2 cup cream cheese
- 6 large red jalapeños, seeded
- 6 strips bacon, uncooked
- Pam cooking spray
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- Toothpicks

1. Crumble cooked bacon; mix with cream cheese. Spoon mixture into jalapeños.
2. Wrap uncooked bacon around jalapeños; spray each pepper with cooking spray; roll in brown sugar. Secure bacon to peppers with toothpicks.
3. Place on baking sheet; bake at 350 F for 30 minutes, or until browned.

Pink Lemonade Pie

- 1 8-oz. can frozen pink lemonade
- 1 8-oz. can Eagle brand sweetened condensed milk
- 1 12-oz. can crushed pineapple, drained (optional)
- 1 8-oz. carton Cool Whip
- 1 premade graham cracker crust

1. Whip first 4 ingredients together; pour into pie crust.
2. Chill until firm.

Alicia’s Jalapeño Corn Muffins

Makes 24 muffins.

- 1 1/2 cups cornmeal
- 2 tsp. salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 4 Tbsp. flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 cup oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1/2 cup jalapeños, chopped

1. Mix all ingredients well. Pour into greased muffin pan.
2. Bake at 400 F for 30-40 minutes.

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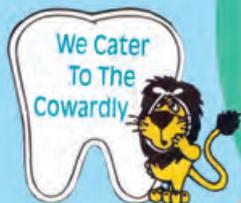
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