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DESOTO ISD K & PRE-K ROUND UP

DeSoto Town Center - April 6-8

DeSoto ISD will host a Pre-K Round Up for DeSoto ISD students to register on Monday, April 6 through Wednesday, April 8 at the DeSoto Town Center, 211 E. Pleasant Run Rd. Starting in the fall, Pre-K students will attend the new **DeSoto Discovery and Design Early Childhood Academy** which will be located at the current Amber Terrace Elementary following a conversion this summer!

A child is eligible for Pre-K if the child is age 4 on or before Sept. 1 and any of the following: on free- or reduced-meals; child is non-English speaking; child is homeless; a military child; or child of state conservatorship. Check the district website for registration materials needed for eligible Pre-K students!

Spring STAAR Testing Schedule

The value of instruction always has, and always will be, measured by an end of learning assessment tool. DeSoto ISD, like all districts, takes snapshots along the way to ensure knowledge has been gained and continue building on a foundation of education. These common assessments or benchmarks allow us to move forward, re-teach or intervene if necessary to 'check' on progress of student learning. The state also wants to know how well each student is learning, compared to each other and themselves the previous year. The current testing system - STAAR - is the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness.

Remember to make sure students get a good night's sleep and eat a healthy breakfast before testing. The following dates are the upcoming spring STAAR testing dates.

- March 30 - Gr. 4 & 7 Writing 1; English I
- March 31 - Gr. 4 & 7 Writing 2; Gr. 5 & 8 Reading
- April 1 - English II
- April 20 - Gr. 5 & 8 Math
- April 21 - Gr. 3-4, 6-7 Math; Gr. 8 Social Studies
- April 22 - Gr. 3-4, 6-7 Reading; Gr. 5 & 8 Science
- May 4-8 - Algebra I, Biology, U.S. History
- May 12 - Gr. 5 & 8 Reading (Retest)



Calendar

Friday, April 3 - Good Friday Holiday, No School, All ISD Closed
April 6-8, 7 a.m.-7 p.m. - PreK & K Round Up, DeSoto Town Center
Tuesday, April 7, 7:30 a.m. - Coffee & Conversation, Northside Elementary
Saturday, April 11, 6 p.m. - Education Foundation Gala, Hilton Garden Inn
Monday, April 13, 6:30 p.m. - Board Meeting, Board Room
Tuesday, April 21, 7 a.m. - Coffee & Conversation, DHS & FC Library
Saturday, April 25, 9 a.m. - DeSoto ISD PTA 5K, Eagle Stadium

NEWS TO KNOW

Hall of Honor Nominations

Nominations will be accepted January 30 through April 1 for the DeSoto ISD Hall of Honor. Forms are online for both the DHS Alumni Hall of Fame and Distinguished Service Award categories. The Hall of Honor Induction Ceremony will take place Friday, May 1 at DeSoto High School. For more information, visit www.desotoisd.org.

Coffee & Conversations

Join Supt. David Harris for candid conversations about your campus and DeSoto ISD.

- Tuesday, April 7 - 7:30 a.m.
Northside Elementary
- Tuesday, April 21 - 7 a.m.
DHS & Freshman Campus
- Tuesday, May 19 - 7:30 a.m.
West Middle School

Foundation Gala April 11

Join the DeSoto ISD Education Foundation as they honor the top 25 seniors of DeSoto High School and raise funds for future innovative instruction through grants to our teachers at the Emerald Gala on Saturday, April 11 at 6 p.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn in Duncanville. Tickets can be purchased through the Foundation office at 200 Belt Line Rd. or call 972-223-6666 for information.

Male Leadership Symposium

DeSoto ISD is hosting a Male Leadership Symposium on Saturday, May 2 at DeSoto High School for students in grades 6-12, and a parallel event for student's fathers at Freshman Campus. The goal is to provide workshops in the areas of leadership, college readiness, STEM careers, social justice issues and community involvement to prepare students for success. Guest speakers at the event include Lamman Rucker, Hill Harper and an NFL Athlete Panel.

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ON THE COVER



The women of Sharing Hearts bring hope and comfort through inspirational gifts.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Hello, Southwest Friends!

Today, I am wondering what makes a person beautiful or successful or even valuable? Are people sometimes unbeautiful, unsuccessful, without value? So often we say, "Oh, what a beautiful baby!" Are their unbeautiful babies? We brag about our children's successes. But what about when they don't succeed or, heaven forbid, they fail? How

do we speak of them then?

I think most people have been told, "You have value because you exist." True, but that leaves one still questioning just what does value or beauty or success consist of? While success may be earned through hard work and due diligence, value and beauty are things we give through acknowledgement. Another frequently verbalized thought is, "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."

Join me, won't you, in expressing the value and beauty you see in others, so together we can make this a month marked by success.

Beverly

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-Marco Rivera

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Sharing Hearts Warming Hearts

— By Sydni Massey



The underlying snip, snip, snip of scissors cutting fabric adds rhythm to the symphony of chatting, laughing and paper folding coming from the Sharing Hearts workroom. Twice monthly, a group of United Methodist Women, called Sharing Hearts, gathers to craft notes, pillows, blankets and teddy bears in hopes of bringing comfort to those going through difficult times in the community surrounding First United Methodist Church Duncanville.

In 2009, Joyce Whiteley's granddaughter, Amber Ramos, a labor and delivery nurse at Charlton Methodist Medical



Center, told her about the need for baby blankets, gowns and booties for the bereavement program in the labor and delivery ward. Eager to step in and help, Joyce organized a group of ladies to begin making the needed items. Over the years, the group has changed a lot. They no longer make items for the bereavement program, but they have found other ways to help out where it's needed most. "The purpose of Sharing Hearts is to strengthen the connection between our church and our community through mission work," Joyce said. "We are committed to providing hope, comfort, inspiration and encouragement, or just to bring a smile in a most difficult time for the patient."

One of the biggest projects the group takes on each month is creating breakfast tray favors for Charlton. These favors include a note of encouragement, a small embellishment and sometimes a treat. For each day the group distributes favors, 270 notes are needed. Their goal is to create enough for four days each month. One of Joyce's favorites was a decorated, plastic Easter egg made to look like a bunny. On the inside, the ladies placed a poem comparing the empty egg with the empty tomb of Christ. Each season and major holiday helps set the themes for these favors. "A lot of the things we do I have seen elsewhere and think

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are cute,” Joyce said. “Each card has an encouraging message. We want to lift the recipients up and let them know we care for them, and we are praying for them.”

Fleece pillows and blankets are two of the groups’ other big projects. Joyce approached Dr. Allen Schneider about finding more ways for the group to help.



He suggested the comfort pillows. Originally, these were made for the surgical floor but are now distributed among many departments.

The comfort pillows are sewn at home by a few of the ladies and then brought to the meeting where they get passed around and the fringe is cut. Once completed, these are given to the hospital or to other community members in need of comfort. At times, the workroom closet is filled with fleece pillows and blankets, but a need will arise, and they are quickly depleted. “In 2011, we started making small teddy bears for children in the emergency room,” Joyce



said. "We made nearly 200 the first year. Our community has a need, and we want to share God's love."

Sharing Hearts usually doesn't get a chance to meet or see any of the people who receive the breakfast tray favors, blankets or comfort pillows. Joyce and a few of the ladies will drop them off. A nurse will call to tell them when they are running low. Occasionally, someone will send a thank you note after discovering Sharing Hearts. The back of each card given with a Sharing Hearts craft has a sticker that reads, *Prayerfully Created by Sharing Hearts Circle of UMW @ First Methodist Duncanville.*



"We have received quite a few thank you notes over the years, which I keep in our scrapbook," Joyce said. "There is one from a lady who was in the hospital over the holidays and had no family to visit her. She wrote that our card meant the world to her, and when she was having a

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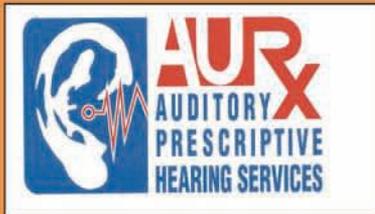
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hard time she would read it over and over again. When I hear that, I know we are doing a good thing.”

Sharing Hearts averages around 30 members across a range of ages. Since they meet twice monthly on Wednesday mornings, the group has more stay-at-home moms and retired women. Occasionally, they will meet on a Wednesday evening to let their working cohorts join in on the fun. The room is rarely quiet, and there is never a shortage of laughs. If they can turn their meeting into a way to celebrate a holiday or birthday, they certainly will. Each



of the ladies brings a skill to the group they would otherwise be without. Many of them are versatile and will jump in where needed. A few of the ladies have very specific strengths they contribute. “Doris Poole is our glue gun master, Marilyn Pierce writes poems and Carol Hershberger makes teddy bears,” Joyce said. “All of our ladies are talented, and we all work so well together.”

The church gives the group a small stipend, but the majority of the money they need for supplies comes directly from their pockets. “I’m always looking through the dollar bins at stores,” Joyce said. “We love to put little embellishments on our cards. The cost of printing is high, so we try to keep our other costs low. We want to be able to do as much as possible throughout the year.”

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Joyce travels to different United Methodist Women's circles and volunteer groups to spread the word about what Sharing Hearts does in the Duncanville community. Her hope, along with the others in the group, is that more people will begin groups like theirs. As a group of 30 women, they are not capable of making enough breakfast tray favors, comfort pillows, blankets and teddy bears to reach every hurting person in the community. Sharing Hearts also opens their doors to students in need of serving in their community. They are on the approved list of community service for nurses. "Last spring, our Children's Adventure group helped us make breakfast tray favors before Easter," Joyce said. "It was wonderful to see them take part in making a difference. They were



able to go with us when we delivered them, and it was good for them to see where their final product ended up."

Members of the group are constantly listening to needs throughout the community to see where they can assist. In the future, they are hoping to add walker bags to their list of crafts. These bags can be draped across walkers, allowing the user to store books, drinks and other personal items safely. They noticed the need among some of the members of their church. "If our ladies hear about a need, they follow through," Joyce shared. "Even if we don't know how to make it, we find a way." **NOW**

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DHS Student Advances to State FCCLA Competition

Duncanville High School senior Jocelyn Elizalde qualified to compete at the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) State Conference in April after receiving first place honors in the recent Recycle and Redesign STAR event at the FCCLA Region III Conference in Waco.

Jocelyn's "Coca-Cola Takes You Everywhere" project is a dress she constructed out of recycled Coca-Cola aluminum cans and plastic bottle labels. She designed the bodice and overlay skirt of the dress with aluminum cans and the short skirt with labels. Jocelyn worked for more than 22 hours to construct her garment. Congratulations, Jocelyn, and good luck at the State Conference!



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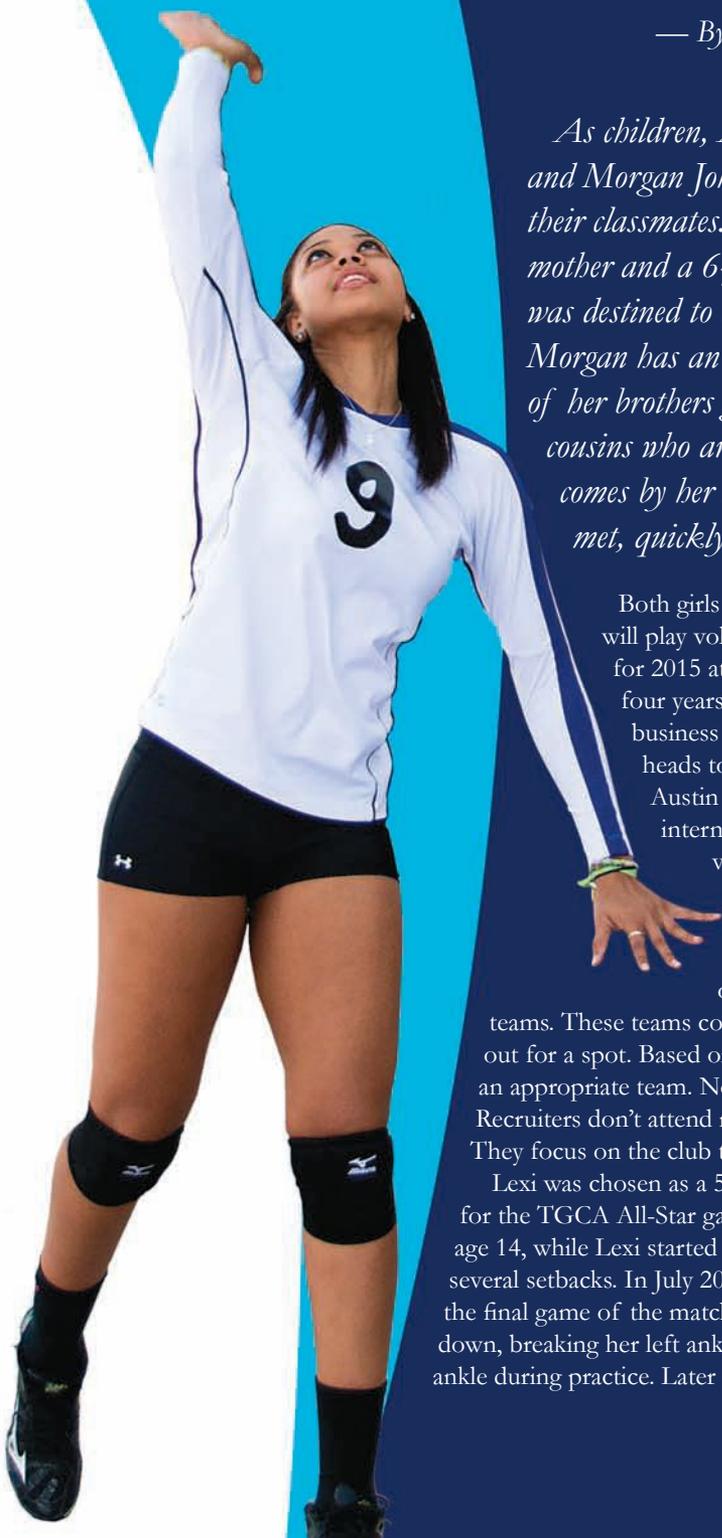
— By Lisa Bell

As children, Alexis (Lexi) Burke and Morgan Johnson towered above their classmates. With a 5-foot-11-inch mother and a 6-foot-7-inch dad, Lexi was destined to be the tallest in her class. Morgan has an idea where she and one of her brothers got their height. She has cousins who are over 6 feet tall, so she comes by her height naturally. The girls met, quickly becoming inseparable.

Both girls have full scholarships. Lexi will play volleyball as their No. 1 recruit for 2015 at Texas Tech University for four years, while working toward a business management degree. Morgan heads to The University of Texas at Austin to work toward a degree in international business on a four-year volleyball scholarship.

Both of these DeSoto High School seniors are well over 6 feet tall and play volleyball not only for the school but also on club teams. These teams consist of elite players who must try out for a spot. Based on skill level, players get placed on an appropriate team. Not all who try out make it to a team. Recruiters don't attend many high school volleyball games. They focus on the club teams, looking for the best players.

Lexi was chosen as a 56-A Red Volleyball All-Star Alternate for the TGCA All-Star game. Morgan started playing volleyball at age 14, while Lexi started playing later than most. Lexi has faced several setbacks. In July 2013, at a USA National Tournament, the final game of the match began. Within minutes, Lexi went down, breaking her left ankle. In January 2014, she broke her right ankle during practice. Later in 2014, she underwent an emergency





appendectomy. In spite of the obstacles, she persevered, keeping a good attitude. She even decorated her crutches with rhinestones and color. "Since I was going to be down, I might as well be comfortable and in style," Lexi said.

Morgan supported Lexi during those down times, sticking close and encouraging her best friend. "I'm with Lexi 25-8," she said.

"Persevere. Don't give up. Keep working hard and let the skills come. It will pay off in the end."

Morgan was chosen as one of the 56-A Red All-Stars for the TGCA All-Star game. She was named a 2014 First Team Under Armour High School All-American and the District 8-6A Volleyball MVP. As an Academic All-District player, along with five teammates, she also earned a spot on the All-Regional Team, the 2014-15 TGCA Volleyball 6A All-State Team and is expected to be named to the Texas All-State Team before the school year ends. The list of their awards and accolades is a testament to the skill both girls have for the game.

Because of the breaks, Lexi now wears ankle braces for every game and practice. Having experienced many sprains,

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Morgan also wears braces or tapes her ankles. The girls have learned to prevent injuries. They know the agony of sitting injured on the sidelines, watching their team and not being able to help. Neither one likes that feeling.

Ironically, both girls played the trombone in seventh grade. Both also tried basketball, the obvious choice for someone so tall, but neither one really liked basketball. Lexi declared she wasn't good at it. Volleyball clicked. She likes being tall, which enables her to block well in volleyball, and her height gives her an intimidation factor on the court. Her sparkling, bubbly personality leaves her less frightening everywhere else.

Part of a very athletically talented family, Morgan tried different sports. She preferred the deeper bonding she found in volleyball. With smaller teams, the girls



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Proud coaches stand with college-bound volleyball stars. Pictured left to right: Asst. Coach Tiffany Williams, Morgan Johnson, Alexis Burke and Coach Rhea Reed.



become close friends — especially with the high school group. “It’s like one big sister family,” she said.

In spite of their all-star status, Lexi and Morgan interact well with their teammates. As captains during their senior year, the other team members look to them for leadership. Both girls embrace the role. At the same time, they are quick to tell the other team members they need them. They can’t make a play without another girl passing the ball to them. Because of their passion and love for the game, they have fun during practice. Seldom serious, they can be challenged with leading their team to get serious at game time. Before every game, the friends do a chest bump, a tradition shared only between the two.

Coach Rhea Reed loves having the girls playing together both from a skill



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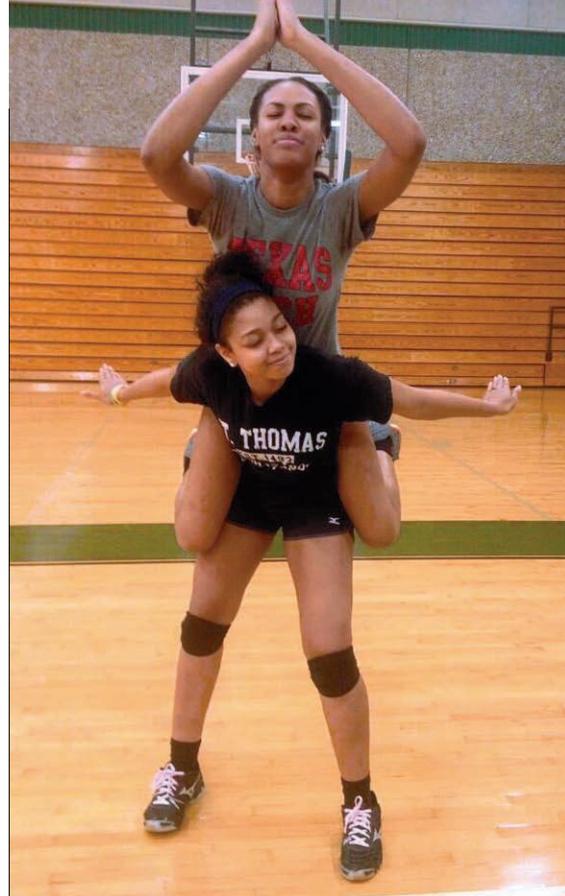
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and a leadership perspective. She first met Morgan as an 8-year-old child, so watching her grow has been exciting. "They have a passion and genuine love for the game. They are not selfish and want to see their teammates do well," Coach Reed said. "Coaching is about bonding with them as individuals, as well as athletes. I'm very proud of them."

Lexi and Morgan play for different clubs — Lexi for Texas Image Volleyball and Morgan for Texas Advantage Volleyball — so they face each other from opposite sides of the net. Smiling and looking goofy, the competition strengthens their relationship. They defy each other with good-natured bantering and come away having merely played a game. In the coming years, they will face each other at college level. The thought excites them, since they won't see each other every day. They'll only be able to see each other at tournaments and when they're both at home.

Volleyball isn't an easy sport. Hours of practice are required. At the club team level, the girls also pay a fee, travel to tournaments and undergo grueling schedules, discipline and conditioning. Parents sacrifice time and money to attend and watch their children succeed. The girls sacrifice free time. Fortunately, most of their friends are also on their



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volleyball teams. They have little time for socializing, due to volleyball practice, games and tournaments, in addition to school and family. Lexi also manages to hold a part-time job.

But it is worth the sacrifices to them. Both girls agree, they have gotten used to finding an equilibrium. Lexi points to her mother as the one who helps keep her balanced. "She's my best friend," she said. "She's always there." Along with above-average grades, Lexi already has a certificate for cosmetology courses she's completed and a vision to own and manage multiple salons in the future. Off the court, she accepts leadership roles whenever asked. An extravert, she's always ready to take charge.

Morgan also leads in academics as a member of the Honor Society. While a part of her wants to coach college volleyball in the future, she also plans to pursue a career as a PR specialist.

"We're very proud of Lexi," her mother, Tanya said. "To be offered a scholarship from Texas Tech literally on her 16th birthday is amazing. And these are young girls, not football players."

Morgan's dad, Ivan, also expressed pride in his daughter. "She's had to work hard. She started late, at 14. I'm proud of her accomplishments," he said. "She's No. 12 in her class. We're a UT family, and it's her dream school."

To beginning players both girls say: "Persevere. Don't give up. Keep working hard and let the skills come. It will pay off in the end." A full scholarship to major universities? Indeed, their perseverance paid well. **NOW**

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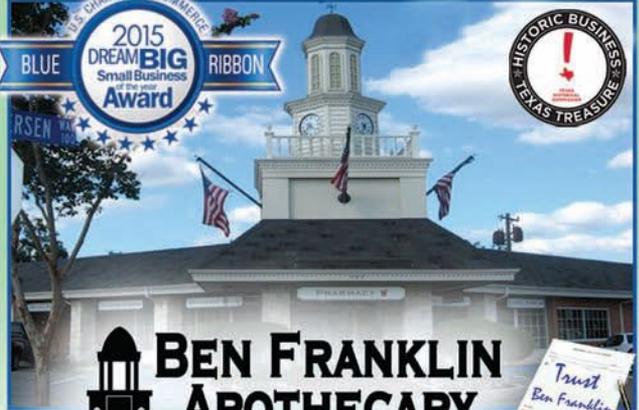
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Faith & Family

— By Lisa Bell



A human foot brought Chris and Sherry Bowers together in 1996. That may sound a little strange, but not for two podiatrists in residency. Attending an Arlington conference, surrounded by established doctors, he approached her. They shared a foot that weekend. As the conference closed, the young professionals traded pager numbers. "We've talked pretty much every day since then," Sherry said.

Chris was born in New Jersey but grew up in Richardson. Sherry came from a Chicago suburb. With her mother living in Duncanville, completing her residency in Texas made sense.

When ready to start a family, they chose Cedar Hill and built a house in a new subdivision. Although they loved the neighborhood, they eventually decided to relocate. While



At Home With Chris & Sherry Bowers



out driving one day, they spotted their current house. The doors immediately caught Sherry's attention, and even though they suspected the house was outside their price range, they wanted to see the interior. They loved the majestic house but didn't seriously consider making an offer.

About six months later, while researching another house in the area, they ran across a listing. "Isn't that the house we saw," they both asked. The listing price had fallen into their price range, so they made an offer. Completed two years earlier, the house had never been lived in, so it was dirty but perfect and new. The Bowers family was at Walt Disney World the day they closed, in 2009.

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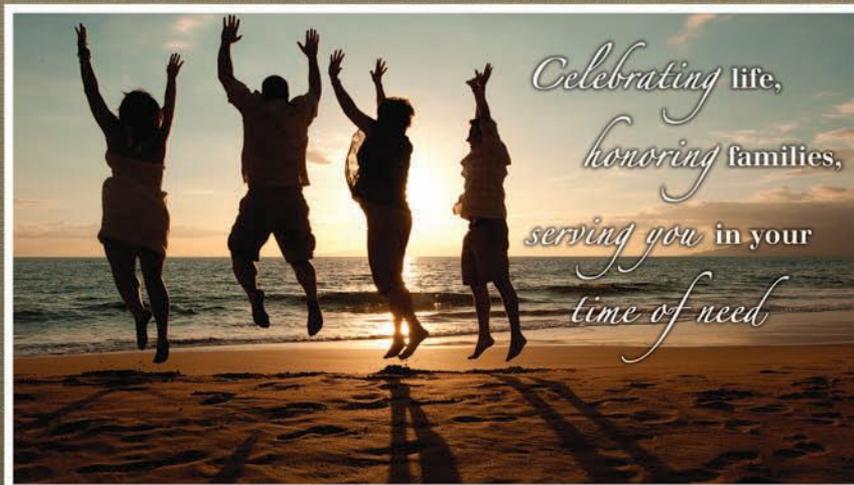
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Chris and Sherry have two beautiful daughters. Julia, 13, loves horseback riding and sports. She plays soccer and is starting lacrosse. She also loves music. Jamie, 10, is creative, with a love for fine arts — music, art and drama. She plays soccer, as well.

From the moment they enter the Bowers' home, guests feel a welcoming atmosphere. Much more than a house, the home is filled with the family's warmth and love. The entryway indicates the two most important things in their lives — family and faith. A large decorative cross hangs inside the doorway, and a portrait of family adorns the staircase landing.

Throughout the house, family pictures and crosses decorate the walls. The crosses carry meaning for each of the

family members. "The crosses are a symbol," Sherry said. "Christ is what the cross stands for and what He did for us. That's what I want people to feel when they come in — warmth, love, openness and acceptance. The same way He accepts us."



"It's important for us to show our faith," Chris added. "That's who we are."

The living room features a ceiling more than 20 feet high. Comfortable, elegant furniture sits in the center of the room, creating a cozy place to gather. Located just off the kitchen, Sherry can entertain guests with ease.

A wall of crosses decorates the informal dining area. The largest, located in the center, came from a school auction, the class project from Julia's kindergarten year. Displayed proudly, the beautiful work of art graces the eclectic collection gathered from many different places.

Beautiful granite countertops surround the kitchen. An oversized island provides plenty of workspace, while leaving room to move around. With features like a double oven and corner pantry, time



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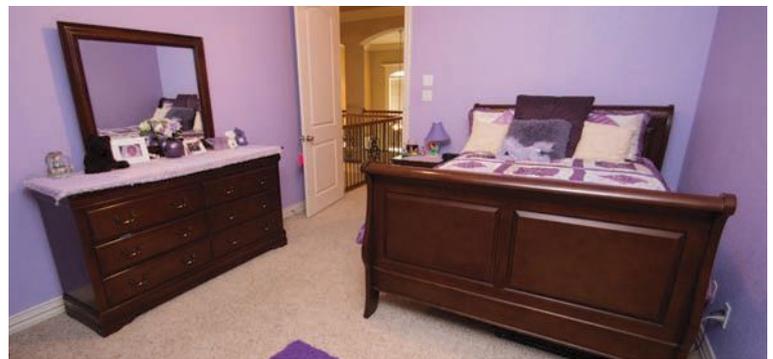
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in the kitchen is a pleasure. A plaque hanging above the doorway reads, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*. The words epitomize the heart of this family.

A full china cabinet in the formal dining room holds very special pieces. Sherry's grandmother gave them the bulk of their china — a tradition she practiced for each of her granddaughters. They also have some dishes Chris' parents received when they married. One special dish came from one of Sherry's patients. "She insisted," Sherry said. "She wanted me to have something nice when we built our first house." They have other pieces belonging to her grandmother and great-grandmother.

A spare bedroom houses exercise equipment — the perfect place to work off the stress of a busy day. Chris has a traditional practice, treating all types of foot issues. Sherry travels to retirement centers and assisted-living residences, where she treats seniors. Neither wants to do what the other one does long-term, although they won't rule out someday having a practice together. At home, they share an office with a desk for him and one for her.

Another spare bedroom is a mother-in-law suite. Spacious with an adjoining full bathroom, they have a wonderful place for overnight guests. Mixed in with the tan walls used through the entire house, Sherry has added roses to the



decor. As her favorite flower, their use on the bedding and in a large painting works well for the room. The sweet gentleness of the theme suggests stopping to relax.

A spacious master bedroom features a sitting area, one of Sherry's favorite places in the home. Next to a bay window, the chair and table grouping provides a great hideaway to take phone calls or sit and chat with a friend. The master bathroom has separated sinks and features a walk-through shower behind a large garden tub.

A railed opening at the top of the stairs provides a view down to the living room, connecting the second story in a unique way. At one end of the upper hallway, a large open space provides a study for the girls. They each have their own desk and computer.

Jamie's room is purple and feminine. Obviously, she loves dolls, as evidenced by the many porcelain ones decorating



her room. Many of them are beautiful princesses, souvenirs from Walt Disney World, the family vacation spot every other year.

While Julia also has a collection of Disney princesses, her room represents her tastes and maturity. Decorated in red, black and white, a Texas A&M University football helmet sits in the center of the dresser.

The family room has comfortable sofas and is also used as a music room. Jamie's keyboard and Julia's guitar call this room home. A media room complete with a wall-sized screen and theater seating serves as a great space for entertaining. Sandwiched between the two rooms, Chris' Coca-Cola collection fills a room. A refrigerator and wet bar make entertaining a snap.

The house is an amazing work of architectural beauty. The Bowers' values make it a home of faith and love. **NOW**

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Left to right: Emily, Natalie, Trang and Sy.

Seeing Perseverance Through Helps Ophthalmologist Focus on Successfully Serving the Community

— By Hope Oriabure

Dr. Trang Le is a board-certified ophthalmologist who specializes in the treatment of glaucoma and cataracts. But before she was a doctor, she was a 10 year-old-girl who emigrated from Vietnam. Dr. Le, her mother, grandmother and two sisters were all sponsored by a Lutheran Church in Baytown, Texas. Later, Dr. Le and her family would be joined by her father. When Dr. Le arrived in Baytown, she was met with several challenges and admits while it was a difficult process to learn the language and adapt to a new way of life, these challenges helped build her character.

“In my situation I had to grow up faster (than other 10-year-olds), but it helped me be self-sufficient and adaptable,” Dr. Le said. “When I left Vietnam, I had to leave friends behind, so when I made new friendships here, I appreciated them more.”

Eventually, Dr. Le and her family left Baytown and moved to Massachusetts. Both Dr. Le and her sister graduated valedictorian of their high school classes. Their success was not a surprise but a destination, with a road paved by education and the belief that self-motivation determines one’s future in life. As a family practitioner and surgeon in Vietnam, her father, Dr. Lan Le provided a wide range of medical services. With Vietnam’s doctor shortage, he worked very long hours ending with rounds at the hospital seven days a week. Upon coming to America, Dr. Lan Le

was unable to practice medicine here and made the challenging decision to continue his profession in the United States. Despite his medical experience and background, this decision required Dr. Le’s father was required to complete a medical residency. She was inspired by her father’s dedication and knew she wanted to be a doctor, too. Both Dr. Le and one of her sisters are medical doctors today. Her husband, Sy Le, is also a physician.

Dr. Le attended Rice University for her undergraduate degree, then Baylor University for medical school and completed her residency in Arizona. Dr. Le then completed a fellowship or training in a medical specialty at UT Southwestern in glaucoma. She started working at EyeCare Associates of Texas and has been with the practice ever since. Here, Dr. Le continues her belief in the vital role education plays in our lives by educating patients to ensure that they understand their conditions, as well as the risks and benefits of treatment options. She continues to instill in her children the value of education. “We encourage our children to take their education seriously, because it’s valuable and can never be taken away.” Dr. Le said. These are not just feel-good words but a legacy that helped a little girl from a war-torn country navigate her path



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Love Your Neighborhood

— By Beverly Shay

Neighbors are generally thought of as the people we live next to or near. And a neighborhood can be defined as a section inhabited by neighbors and usually having distinguishing characteristics. Several decades ago, neighborhoods were an extension of families, where everyone looked out for everyone else, especially the children. An interesting current survey could ask people how many of their neighbors they relate to or even know. Perhaps it is accurate to say most people want “good neighbors” and to live in a “good neighborhood.” But what does this look like?

Every municipality lists their offerings to residents, most of which are practical and include services such as: water and utilities, law enforcement, parks and recreation, building inspections, public works and courts, etc. The city council of Cedar Hill has set strengthening neighborhoods as a top priority. Under their guidance, Stacey Graves and Leah Walker head up Cedar Hill’s



Clifton Felts, parks superintendent, works with Neighborhood Services to let people know what is available locally.





"We encourage neighborhoods to develop relationships."

Leah Walker and Stacey Graves are all about connecting neighbors with one another.

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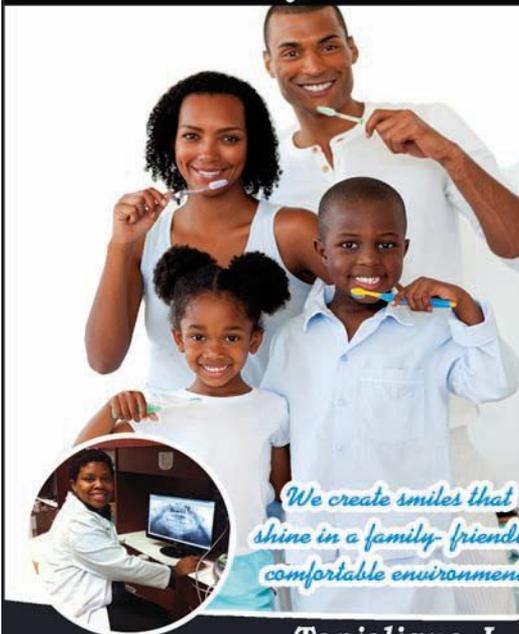
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recently combined department of code enforcement and neighborhood services, which exists not so much to deal with compliance issues and infractions as it does to facilitate events and programs so neighbors and neighborhoods can engage and use the programs and services provided by the city.

Stacey grew up in Hays, Kansas, graduated from high school and moved to Wichita, where she lived for 10 years before moving to Texas. "I had relatives in DeSoto and Ovilla, so I was drawn to south Dallas," Stacey recalled. "But when the Realtor showed us Cedar Hill, I liked it and knew this was where I wanted to live." When Stacey went in to have her water turned on she saw a notice for an opening in the code enforcement department. "I applied and got the job." Stacey had worked as an investigator in the consumer fraud division for the DA's office in Kansas. "I grew up in a family of public service. My father was a firefighter, and my brother is a paramedic. I knew from early on I would work in public service, as well."

Stacey's husband, Joseph, works as an environmental code enforcement investigator with Grand Prairie, so the family commitment is being passed along to the next generation, as well. "We have a vested interest in Cedar Hill. Our four boys, ages 18-27, all attended school in Cedar Hill," Stacey

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indicated. "I am also a board member of our neighborhood HOA. I love Cedar Hill. It's a beautiful place. I love all the different neighborhoods, because there is such a sense of belonging here." Having gotten to know her neighbors through various neighborhood events, Stacey finds her job in neighborhood services satisfying and is excited about the events and programs they offer throughout the city.

Leah is the perfect *compadre* for Stacey. "We both just love service," Leah confided. "And I love working with Stacey. I want to be involved in everything and serve on every committee!" While Stacey has been with the city of Cedar Hill for 17 years, Leah is a comparative newbie, with two years under her belt. Born and reared in New Orleans, Leah has been in the Dallas area for five years now. "My mom really didn't want me living in New Orleans after the hurricane, so I followed her here, first to Duncanville and then to Mesquite," Leah admitted with a grin. Leah is full of grins and exuberance and an ongoing zest for life.

Leah's background is fitness. "I was a high school athlete, and in college, I really worked out a lot. One of my instructors said I should get certified as a trainer — turned out to be a great way to pay for college!" she said. Leah has been a certified personal trainer and

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group fitness instructor for 12 years. “I liked getting paid to be fit, but the fitness field can be stressful, since it is driven by finances. So when a friend told me Cedar Hill was looking for a health and wellness coordinator, I was excited about making the move.”

Leah’s job with the rec center involved supervising the fitness facility, classes, programs and trainers. “I loved engaging with residents and began doing events in different Cedar Hill neighborhoods,” Leah said. “I basically fell in love with this city. The people here are warm and friendly. And the city is genuinely concerned and caring about their communities and neighborhoods, as well as being very supportive of their employees.”



Both Leah and Stacey appreciate how the city believes in advancing their employees through financial aid for further education. Leah had earned a bachelor’s degree in communication from the University of New Orleans in 2006. She attended Dallas Baptist University for her master’s in kinesiology, which she earned in 2014. “DBU’s big thrust is servant leadership, and I found myself wanting to impact this community even more than I was. When I saw this job posted, I thought, *I can be a servant leader to the community*,” she explained. After securing the job, Leah decided to move to Cedar Hill. “I felt such peace about the job. I feel like I have come home. This is where I belong.”

These two enthusiastic citizens and employees of Cedar Hill simply want to see every neighborhood providing enclaves of security and safety and engaging in the sense of community, ownership and pride that comes when people get to know each other. “Strong neighborhood awareness and

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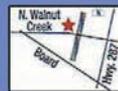
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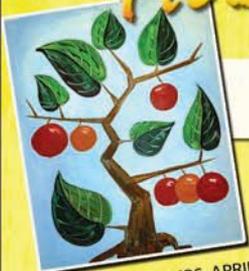


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commitment in the form of cleanup, programs and just getting to know each other provides a sense of protecting their investment,” Stacey emphasized. “These kinds of relationships help reduce crime, as well as train the future leaders growing up in these families.”

Stacey and Leah work with a nine-member Neighborhood Advisory Board comprised of citizens who have resided in Cedar Hill at least two years. Together they develop programs and provide education. They also provide an online service listing resources, events and even a photo album. Stacey proudly mentioned several of their offerings. “We encourage neighborhoods to develop relationships. Our printing and postage program offers \$400 to qualifying neighborhood groups to help with printing and postage for newsletters, membership recruitment and bulk mail outs, etc., enabling groups to use their budgets for actual events.

Neighborhood Services provides welcome bags to pass out as a means of meeting new residents. They have created a matching grant program for eligible projects sponsored by neighborhood associations. Projects could include landscaping, seasonal decorations, park improvements and after-school activities. For a limited time each year, one to two trees are available for residents to plant in their front yards as a citywide effort to promote and enhance the natural beauty of Cedar Hill.

Stacey and Leah want to see neighbors relating with each other, involved in projects to enhance the value of property, security and sense of contentment of the city as a whole. “We want people to love their neighbors,” Stacey reiterated. After all, Cedar Hill likes to be known as a place where neighborhoods grow naturally. **NOW**

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Outdoor Living *Texas Style*

— By Carolyn Wills

Understandably it's no surprise Texans have long loved the joys of cooking and eating "out." Where else (OK, besides California) is the climate so conducive to outdoor living and the people so inclined to share great weather and food with family and friends? Texas is where perfectly prepared barbecue reigns as the undisputed goal for bragging rights, the governor's inaugural celebration fare and clearly the all-time favorite at holidays, family gatherings and Western-style weddings.



Even our original and beloved TV show, *Dallas*, is credited with affecting America's outdoor cooking. According to www.lagrillislands.com, when the Ducane Company, a grill manufacturer, was asked to create a special island grill for the wealthy oil-drilling and cattle-ranching Ewings, their prefab design, consisting of dual grills surrounded by spacious counters, not only fulfilled the Ewings' needs but resulted in a huge demand from homeowners, which in turn, led to a whole new product line for the grilling industry.¹ The original *Dallas* series aired from 1978 to 1991, and today, that special prefab grill remains a backyard standard for many outdoor cooks.



Dallas, though, is not alone in its influence. Today, broadcast channels like HGTV and DIY Network have introduced homeowners to the bigger, brighter, fancier world of fully functioning outdoor kitchens. Outdoor kitchens, aka patio or summer kitchens, have been around for decades, but according to www.outdoorkitchenfranchise.com, it took a collapsing housing market to spark their super surge in popularity. In

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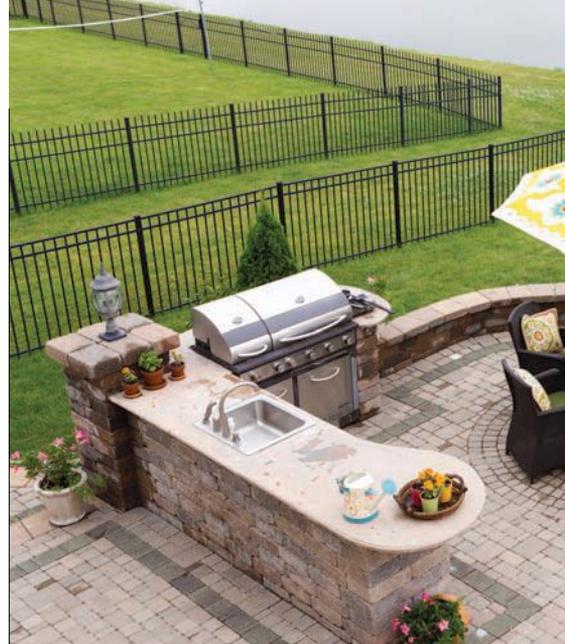


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the mid-2000s, the housing market plummeted and many homeowners saw the wisdom in and even necessity of staying home, remodeling. In the process, they realized the advantages of outdoor living, especially in climates like Texas.²

In a 2012 Residential Trend Survey, the American Society of Landscape Architects found America's infatuation with outdoor kitchens is continuing. So, what's it all about, then, this interest in cooking, dining and entertaining in the wide (or not-so-wide) expanses of the backyard?

First, the Downsides:

- An outdoor kitchen is forever linked to weather conditions.
- Kitchenware and appliances can suffer from exposure and, potentially, are also vulnerable to theft.
- Noise, smoke and odors might challenge neighbors.
- Depending on layout, materials and features, an outdoor kitchen can be costly to build, and without careful consideration of standards, values and market conditions, their end return could prove negligible.
- Costs are not declining. From a few simple features to a chef's dream, outdoor kitchens range in cost from \$3,000 to upwards of \$100,000. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, high-end outdoor equipment manufacturer, Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet, says their average outdoor kitchen built in 2012 cost \$40,000, up from \$30,000 in 2010.³

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Now, the Upsides:

- Outdoor kitchens are fun, which is the No. 1 reason to have one. They encourage time outside, cooking, relaxing with family and friends, swimming (if there's a pool), watching TV, having parties or intimate dinners and enjoying food that can only taste so good because it's cooked outside. Let's face it, nothing compares to the flavor of a grill or an outdoor pizza oven.
- They add to a home's livable space and entertainment options.
- They help equalize cooking duties and encourage group participation with meal preparation and cleanup.
- They engender a certain pride of ownership. With luck, when it's time to sell they become a hot selling point with potential profit on investment, or at the very least, an extra drawing card for potential buyers.
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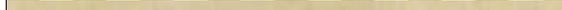
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What You Need to Know:

- Outdoor kitchens designed with homeowners' needs and budgets in mind offer the greatest return on enjoyment, investment and peace of mind.
- The grill must be the star attraction.
- Hiring a contractor is a good idea. (Some projects may allow for do-it-yourself skills, but professionals are needed when plumbing, electrical and gas are involved.)
- Use wisdom: Be aware of neighborhood home values, stay close to that standard and beware of overbuilding.
- Permits, codes and standards vary by city. In Texas, permits are generally required for any home improvement beyond painting or simple cosmetics. Be aware and adhere to codes and standards (another advantage in hiring a contractor).
- When designing an outdoor kitchen, it's smart to complement the home's exterior, decorate for the comfort of the indoors and resilience for the outdoors and to pay attention to flooring, walls and ceilings.
- Within budget, it's advisable to buy top-of-the-line appliances starting with the best barbecue grill.



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Today, outdoor kitchens can be accessorized to the hilt with the likes of Sub-Zero refrigerators, stoves, pizza ovens, bread warmers, custom cabinetry, stone work, soaker sinks, trash compactors, barbecues, espresso makers, wine coolers and kegerators. They can be shaded by a pergola, canopy or finished ceiling and accompanied by sound systems, ceiling fans, flat screen televisions, sofas, outdoor rugs, cocktail tables, fire pits, water features and fancy landscaping.

For homeowners who love cooking, entertaining and the outdoor lifestyle, the upsides of having a personal outdoor kitchen greatly outweigh the downsides. Options are endless. Building can involve do-it-yourself, budget-conscious work and the whole process can be done in stages. Texans, other than the Ewings, can also afford the joys of an outdoor kitchen, since Texas is the perfect place to have one! **NOW**

Sources:

1. "Grill Islands; Your Customizable Outdoor Kitchen." LA Grill Islands. www.lagrillislands.com.

2. "Outdoor Kitchen Market Grows as the Housing Market Shrinks." Soleic Outdoor Kitchens. Outdoor Kitchen News, Outdoor Living Industry. Posted November 29, 2012. www.outdoorkitchenfranchise.com.

3. Jackson, Candace. "Take it Outside." *Wall Street Journal*, June 21, 2013. www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324188604578543622976022866.

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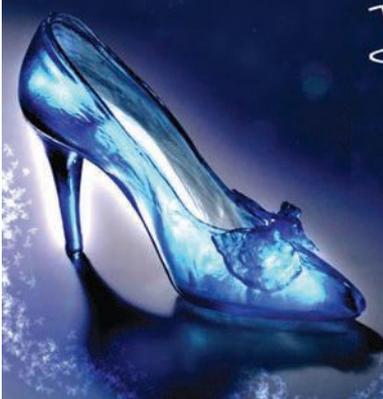
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— By Beverly Shay

Bert and Pam Maxwell met and began their life together because of insurance. “In 1983, we met in Dallas, when Pam came to work at the Allstate regional office where we were both managers,” Bert recalled. Allstate Insurance was a part of Sears, Roebuck & Co. from 1931-1993, when it became a publicly traded company. Allstate is the nation’s largest publicly held personal lines insurer. “When we left operations (agent support) in 1986 to become agents, I worked at Sears in Dallas and Pam worked at Six Flags Mall.”

The insurance business has developed exponentially. “Back then, agents mailed in handwritten applications to the Regional Operations Center to have the policies input and issued. Different

units within the ROC were responsible for specific parts of the issuing process,” Bert said. “Now, agents write all of their own policies, and main operations, as we knew it, is a thing of the past.”

“What I enjoy most about being an insurance agent is developing relationships with our customers,” Pam added. “We get to know them as we help them determine their insurance needs. Each family represents much more than a business transaction.”

“We replace uncertainty with certainty and give them peace of mind,” Bert explained. “People come to trust you and become comfortable seeking advice for many things that come up in their lives.”

Business **NOW**

Bert and Pam, who married in 1987, came to DeSoto in 1988. "Shortly after that, Allstate began changing their concept of selling insurance. They wanted us to move into the neighborhoods, get involved in the communities and work where we lived," Bert stated. "We were already living in DeSoto, so we opened our office together here in 1990. Initially, we were still two separate agencies, but in 2000, we merged the agencies. I bought her business," he said.

The Maxwell Agency currently services over 3,000 policies for more than 2,000 customers. Most customers have two or more policies. Their mission is to provide a complete line of personal insurance products and excel in the area of customer service. They endeavor to treat each customer in the same manner they would like to be treated. They focus on establishing and building long-term relationships that will continue to develop and grow for generations. "Our customers come from a broad spectrum of income levels," Bert added.

Insurance products include auto, home, life and commercial coverage. They also insure motorcycles, RVs, renters and landlords. Their full-service financial offerings include life insurance, annuities, IRAs and business insurance. The Maxwell Agency (officially named II Max, Inc.) includes three licensed agents: Susy Rios, Mario Finley and Christian Ramirez, and Maya Martinez serves as administrative assistant. With the aid of ongoing education and a strong support, both regionally and nationally, they are able to serve almost every specific need an individual may have. They have been recognized as a Premier Allstate Service Agency and are in the top 10 percent of agencies nationwide.

While raising their two children, Chelsea and Cameron, Pam concentrated primarily on marketing and administrative duties from their home office. With their youngest in college, she plans on being more visible in the office. "I have always maintained my license," she said.

As you may have heard before, you are in good hands with Allstate. Bert and his team work very hard to make sure you are ready for life and all the risks that may accompany it. Stop by and see what the Maxwell Agency can do for you. **NOW**



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Gross Allstate Insurance Agency was awarded Distinguished Business of the Year for 2014 by Cedar Hill Chamber of Commerce.



Little Dribblers (ages 4 and under) hit the courts at the DeSoto Recreation Center.



Members of Xi Rho Beta Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi honor their 2014-2015 Sweetheart, Sharon McGinnis (sixth from left), with an afternoon tea at the historic Adolphus Hotel in Dallas.



Cedar Hill City Manager Greg Porter shows his support for Dogwood Canyon by braving the rain and running the colors in a half marathon.



Pastor Jim Hennesy and his wife, Becky, are chosen as Cedar Hill's Man and Woman of the Year.



Robotics teams from Woodbridge Elementary School in DeSoto are ready to compete.



Teachers and staff at Hyman Elementary in Duncanville celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday!



Eight DeSoto ISD middle school students were able to show 10 Prairie View University dairy goats at Fort Worth Stock Show and Rodeo.



Students at Hastings Elementary School in Duncanville celebrate Black History Month.



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Even if you qualify to convert your traditional individual retirement account to a Roth account, it doesn't mean you should. The right answer is probably tied up in concerns about personal income tax rates, your plan for your estate, the current state of your finances and, in a sense, your best guess about your future tax circumstances.

Here are the principal differences between the two IRA plans:

Traditional IRA

Created in 1974, the traditional IRA allows qualified income earners to invest a pretax amount each year into an account that grows free of taxes until the funds are paid out in distributions that are taxed as regular income. After you turn 70 1/2, you must begin taking required minimum distributions (RMDs).

Roth IRA

The Roth IRA, in effect since 1998, turned the original idea on its head. Retirement savings contributions come from after-tax money, but your investments grow tax-free and distributions taken after attaining age 59 1/2 are tax-free if you've owned the account for at least five years. You are not required to take RMDs from Roth accounts, so switching traditional IRAs into Roth IRAs appeals to many investors.

Conversion Factors

Before you decide to convert, however, here are some important considerations:

- Do you have the money to pay the taxes due on conversion? In the year you convert, you'll have to pay the taxes due on the pretax contributions and earnings,

preferably without tapping into your IRA money. If you are under age 59 1/2, you may also have to pay a 10-percent penalty.

- Your traditional IRA withdrawal counts as regular income and may throw you into a higher tax bracket. One solution may be to convert small amounts over time.
- Is time on your side? Do you have enough years between the time you convert and when you retire to allow your new Roth to regenerate the income lost to taxes?
- Will you need to take distributions in retirement and will your post-retirement tax bracket drop (say from 25 percent to 15 percent)? If so, converting to a Roth may not make sense, because you'll be paying a lesser rate on your post-retirement traditional IRA distributions than you paid to convert.
- Do you plan to leave all your IRA money to heirs? If so, converting probably makes sense, because the Roth IRA doesn't require you or your surviving spouse to deplete the funds during your lifetimes by taking RMDs.

As is the case with so many financial decisions, converting to a Roth IRA makes eminent sense for some and little sense for others. If you would like to discuss the right course for you, please don't hesitate to call your financial advisors. **NOW**

Material prepared by Raymond James for use by its financial advisors. Investors should consult a tax advisor before deciding to do a conversion.

Jonathan Pope is a Raymond James Financial Advisor based in Duncanville.

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Measles Again

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

What is going on with measles? The United States was well on its way to eliminating this viral infection from this country. But today, measles (*rubeola*) is making a distressing comeback in big numbers. Recently, a visitor to Disneyland ended up bringing more than expectations for a fun-filled day. This person brought measles, which set off a reaction of contagion across multiple states and involving over 100 people. Many of those who were diagnosed with measles were directly connected to the case at Disneyland.

Over the years, there has been a steady decline in immunization rates. More and more citizens are traveling to countries that are still battling the disease. Reason dictates if you haven't been vaccinated, travel to a country with measles and come in contact with someone with the infection, you are more than likely to contract the infection and bring it home with you. Those who come in contact with you who have not been immunized will more than likely get measles, too. And, so the cycle will repeat itself until the immunization rates start to rise again.

Measles is highly contagious, which makes it so easy to catch from another person. Adding to the difficulty of contagion, measles is transmissible about four days prior to the rash's appearance. The symptoms of coughing, runny nose, sore throat, fever and conjunctivitis are symptomatic of many respiratory

illnesses. Unless someone knows they have been exposed to measles, the diagnosis of measles probably will not be made until a rash known as Koplik spots appear.

Measles is not a benign illness. Thirty percent of people who get measles also develop secondary infections such as pneumonia, bronchitis, inflammation of the brain, diarrhea and ear infections. Measles in pregnant individuals can lead to premature birth or even pregnancy loss.

If you do contract measles, rest as much as possible. Take palliative measures to ease your symptoms, such as fever reducers and drink lots of liquids. Fever can be dehydrating. A humidifier can be helpful for your cough and sore throat. Check with your doctor before taking herbal supplements or vitamins for your symptoms.

If you want to eliminate your chances of contracting measles, then immunization is the most recommended course of action. If you choose not to take advantage of immunization, then please follow your doctor's instructions on what to do in case of a local outbreak. The only way to avoid the illness is to get your shots. **NOW**

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

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April 1, 8, 15

Volunteers certified by the AARP will be providing free tax assistance to elderly and low-income citizens: 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Duncanville library, 201 James Collins Blvd. Bring a copy of last year's tax return, Social Security cards for all on tax return, as well as any 1099 and W-2 forms.

April 2, 3, 5

The Living Last Supper presented by Duncanville Community Chorus **2nd:** 7:00 p.m.; Good Friday Service **3rd:** 7:00 p.m.; Easter Services **5th:** 6:45 and 10:30 a.m., First Presbyterian Church, 543 Freeman St. (972) 298-3043.

April 4

Miracle Weekend Easter Egg Hunt: 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Virginia Weaver Park, 631 Somerset Dr., Cedar Hill. Joint venture: Church on the Hill and CH Parks and Rec. Dept. for children 10/under; family entertainment. Bring your own basket.

April 4, 5

Saturday Easter Vigil: 7:00 p.m. Easter services: 7:45, 9:15 and 11:30 a.m., St. Anne Episcopal Church, 1700 N. Westmoreland, DeSoto. (972) 709-0691.

April 7, 21

Coffee and Conversations with Supt. Harris: 7:30 a.m. **7th:** Northside Elementary. **21st:** DeSoto High School.

April

Waxahachie Symphony Orchestra presents SAGU Jazz Band: 7:00-9:00 p.m., SAGU Performance Hall. Visit www.waxahachiesymphony.com for more information.

April 11

Read-A-Thon for teens: 3:30-5:00 p.m., DeSoto library. In support of D.E.A.R. Day, teens (13-18) are invited to bring and read their favorite book, magazine, newspaper or eBook or choose one from the library to read. Pizza will be served!

Lifestyle Business, Health & Wellness Expo: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Ln. For more information, call (972) 937-2392 or visit www.waxahachiechamber.com.

April 14, 21

DeSoto High School culinary arts will be serving full-menu dinners by reservation only: beginning at 5:00 p.m. with last reservation at 8:00 p.m. Bistro seats 24 guest at six tables at a time, so reservations are for one hour only. Cash only. Registration: (972) 230-0726 or email tiffany.hubbard@desotoisd.org

April 16

Congestive Heart Failure Workshop: 3:00 p.m., Methodist Charlton Medical Center. For anyone living with heart failure: nutritional ideas, answers to medical questions, physical activity options, recognizing depression and more. (214) 947-9694.

April 17

Senior Dance, featuring Jimmy Gomez: 7:00-9:30 p.m., Hopkins Senior Center, 206 James Collins Blvd, Duncanville. Cost: \$5. (972) 298-0667.

April 18

The 2015 African American Educators Hall of Fame Program: Noon, Hilton Garden Inn, 800 N. Main St., Duncanville. An induction ceremony will be conducted to honor educators and others who have made significant contributions to the African American Education experience in Dallas County. Lunch will be served. Tickets are \$50 each. (972) 298-6980; gwenjb@swbell.net.

April 20

Passport to the Planet: Cedar Hill Earth Day and Arbor Day celebration: 5:00-7:30 p.m., Cedar Hill Government Center, 285 Uptown Blvd. Learn tips on how to live green, attend conservation workshops, visit with environmentally conscious vendors, enjoy performance by Vocal Trash.

April 24

Lecture Luncheon (last meeting of year): 11:00 a.m., Clarion Hotel, I-35 & Wintergreen. Dallas Zoo vice president Sean Greene will regale us with great guest experiences at the zoo and his recent safari experiences. He has managed wild animals on David Letterman's *Late Show*, *Good Morning America* and *Larry King Live*. (817) 417-0476.

April 25

Kid Fishing: 9:00 a.m.-noon, Briarwood Pond, 1615 Laurel Springs, DS. Register: \$5 at DS Rec. Ctr. (972) 230-9651.

April 26

5th Annual Shooting for the Star Golf Tournament: late registration: noon; shotgun tee-off: 2:00 p.m., Country View Golf Club, 240 W. Beltline Rd., Lancaster. Lancaster

Chapter #943 Order of the Eastern Star. Preregister: \$60; day of tournament: \$65; two mulligans/golfer: \$10 each. (972) 567-8218 or (972) 951-0330.

April 27

Southwest Dallas County Parkinson's Group support meeting: 6:30-8:00 p.m., Trinity United Methodist Church, 1302 S. Clark Rd, Duncanville. Speaker: Dr. Ahmitabh Gupta, movement disorder specialist at Texas Health Presbyterian. (972) 298-4556.

May 2

Heave-Ho Fire Truck Pull: 9:00 a.m., Armstrong Park, 100 James Collins Blvd., Duncanville. **Reg.:** 9:00 a.m.; **opening ceremony:** 10:00 a.m.; **first pull:** 10:15 a.m.; awards following all pulls. This event supporting Special Olympics Texas and greater Dallas area athletes pits highly competitive teams of 12 against another for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place each in fastest public safety pull, fastest civilian pull and fastest youth pull and most money raised. Cost: \$300/team; \$45/individual. See www.sotx.org/firetruckpull to get started. For info: (214) 943-9981 or (972) 780-5027.

11th Annual Mother & Son Dance: Mardi Gras in May 7:00-9:00 p.m., DeSoto Civic Center. \$30/couple; \$15/additional child includes food, door prizes and professional photo. (972) 230-9651.

Ongoing:

Wednesdays

Preschool/toddler story time: 10:30 a.m., CH library. Engaging activities will enhance an emergent reader's ability to identify letters and numbers, increase vocabulary and develop stronger social skills via stories, songs and finger plays.

Thursdays

Pajama Time Family Story time: 6:30 pm., CH library. Children, bring your favorite stuffed animal and wear your pajamas for bedtime stories, finger plays, songs and family time.

Last Thursdays (through May)

The Desoto Art League: 7:00 p.m. Desoto Presbyterian Church, 212 W. Pleasant Run Rd., Desoto. Artist demonstrations, refreshments and an open show each spring. Details: www.desotoartleague.com

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

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In the Kitchen With Gene Sims

— *By Beverly Shay*

Gene Sims is pretty much synonymous with the Cedar Hill Food Pantry, having been a volunteer or employee there for the past 25 years. She is faithful, diligent and well-loved and often tired. But needing only to cook for herself and Marvin means they can keep it simple now.

“When the boys were home and we lived in the country, I had a big garden and loved canning the vegetables,” Gene recalled. Now the boys are gone with families of their own, but when we get together, it’s, ‘I can cook better than you can.’ The food prepared varies from Southern cooking, which I love, to one-of-a-kind fancies created by one of the kids or grandkids.” **NOW**

Grandma Lee’s Special

Serves 4.

- 1 lb. ground meat**
- 1 10.5-oz. can chicken noodle soup**
- 1 15-oz. can mixed vegetables**
- 2 1/2 cups instant potatoes**

- 1.** Brown ground meat and drain. Combine soup and vegetables; add to meat. Place in baking dish.
- 2.** Make mashed potatoes according to package directions. Top meat mixture with potatoes.
- 3.** Bake for 20 minutes at 350 F.

Potato Chip Dinner

- 1 6.5-oz. bag potato chips**
- 2 5-oz. cans tuna**
- 1 cup milk**
- 1 10.5-oz. can cream of mushroom soup**

- 1.** Crush potato chips. Place a layer of chips in the bottom of a baking dish.
- 2.** Combine tuna, milk and soup in a saucepan; heat until smooth. Pour mixture over chips. Top with remaining chips.
- 3.** Bake for 15-18 minutes at 350 F.

Traphene’s More, Please

Serves 10.

- 2 onions, chopped**
- 1 green pepper**
- 3 cloves garlic**
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil**
- 1 lb. ground meat**
- 1 No. 2 (20 oz.) can tomatoes**
- 3 Tbsp. chili powder**
- 1 cup water**
- 1 4-oz. can sliced mushrooms**
- 1 15-oz. can black-eyed peas**
- 1 15-oz. can whole kernel corn**
- 1 8-oz. pkg. pasta of choice, cooked**
- 2 cups cheese, grated**

- 1.** Sauté onion, pepper and garlic in oil, until soft; add meat and cook until meat is browned. Add tomatoes, chili powder and water. Cover and cook over low heat for 30 minutes.
- 2.** Add mushrooms, peas and corn. Taste to see if any seasoning is needed and add to taste. Add pasta.
- 3.** Pour 1/2 of mixture into a casserole dish; sprinkle 1/2 of cheese over mixture. Pour in remaining mixture and top with remaining cheese. Bake for 20-30 minutes at 350 F.

Joyce’s Crock-Pot Stroganoff

- 1 lb. frozen, boneless chicken breast**
- 1 10.5-oz. fat-free cream of mushroom soup**
- 16 oz. fat-free sour cream**
- 1 envelope dry onion soup mix**
- Egg noodles, cooked (optional)**

- 1.** Place chicken in the bottom of a Crock-Pot. Combine next 3 ingredients and pour over chicken. Cook on low for 7 hours.
- 2.** Mix in noodles before serving, if desired. Serve with crisp garden salad and hot rolls.

Work Day Roast

- 1 3-4 lb. lean roast**
- 2 cups dry pinto beans, rinsed (not soaked)**
- 1 onion, chopped**
- 1 6.75-oz. can chopped green chilies**
- 1 10-oz. can Ro-Tel (or tomatoes)**
- 1 8-oz. can tomato sauce**

- 1.** Put meat in a roasting pan. Add all other ingredients, plus any seasonings you like. Cover roast with water.
- 2.** Cook covered in oven at 250 F for 12 hours.

Breakfast Casserole

- 4 slices bread, torn in pieces**
- 6 eggs**
- 2 cups milk**
- 1 cup Colby/Jack cheese, grated**
- 1 lb. ground sausage, browned**
- 1 tsp. dry mustard**

- 1.** Place bread in a 10x10-inch baking dish.
- 2.** Beat eggs and milk. Add cheese, sausage and mustard; mix well. Pour over bread.
- 3.** Bake covered at 350 F for 30 minutes. Uncover and bake 15 additional minutes.

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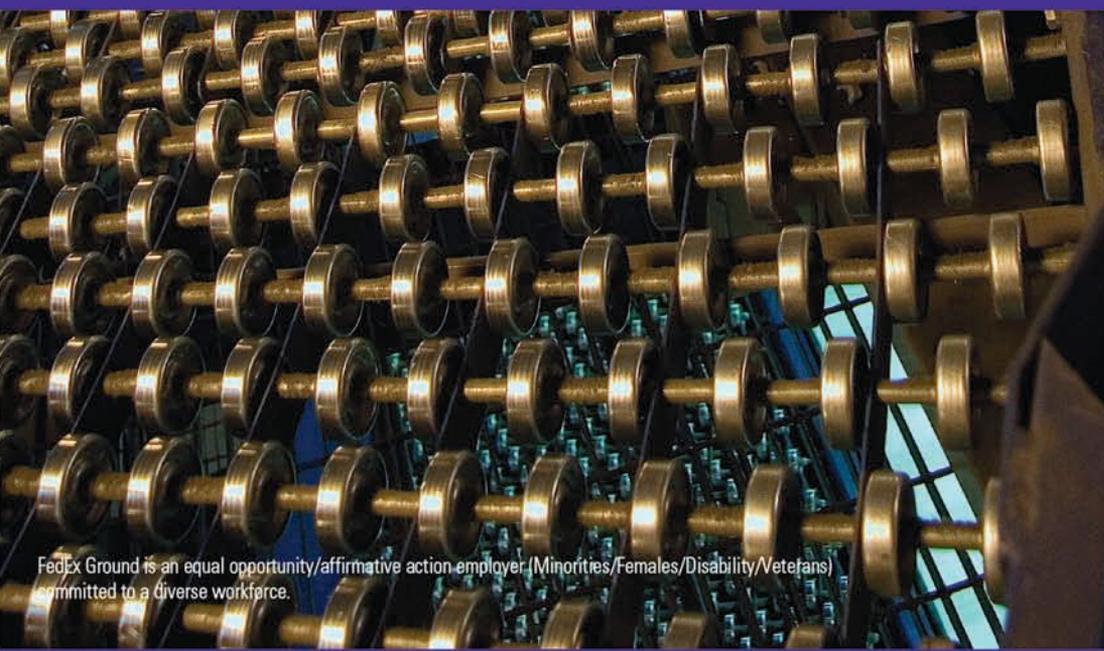
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