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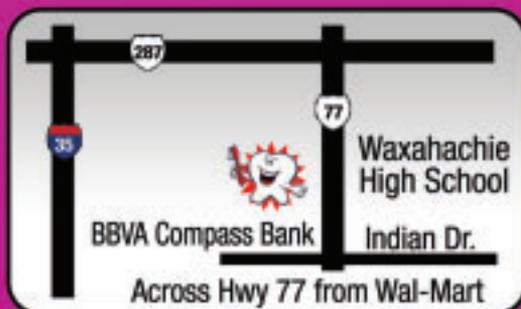
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**ON THE COVER**



*Committee members  
continue cultivating life skills  
in today's youth.*

*Photo by Amy Ramirez.*

# CONTENTS

 April 2016 • Volume 13, Issue 4

**8 Genuine Desire**  
The Ellis County Youth Commercial Heifer Show prepares children to be successful in business.

**18 Birds of a Feather**  
John Reagan organizes an annual banquet to raise money for wetlands.

**28 Beautiful Upgrades**  
At Home With Dan Francis.

**36 Where She's Supposed to Be**  
Rae Whitehead teaches her students to create with imagination.

**44 Added Appeal**  
Pergolas are cool in more ways than one.



- 52 BusinessNOW
- 54 Around TownNOW
- 56 FinanceNOW
- 57 HealthNOW
- 60 CookingNOW

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## Editor's Note

*Spring has sprung!*

Is your picnic basket packed with all your favorite yummys? Are your tennis shoes out of storage? Are the tires on your bicycle aired up and ready to go? If not, you need to get busy, or you might miss out on a wonderful spring day. The season to be outdoors in all God's splendor has arrived, and if you're like me, you'll want to take advantage of every spare minute.

As you go about your day, remember those you come in contact with. Smile when they look your way. Help them get their groceries from the store to the trunk of their car. Be mindful of those around you by asking yourself how *you* can make their day better. It really could be as simple as a friendly smile, a small wave or an affirmative nod of your head. I challenge you to also take notice of the activity "springing up" around you — new green foliage, flowers in bloom and children's laughter as they play in the spring air.

I hope you enjoy the challenge!

*Sandra*

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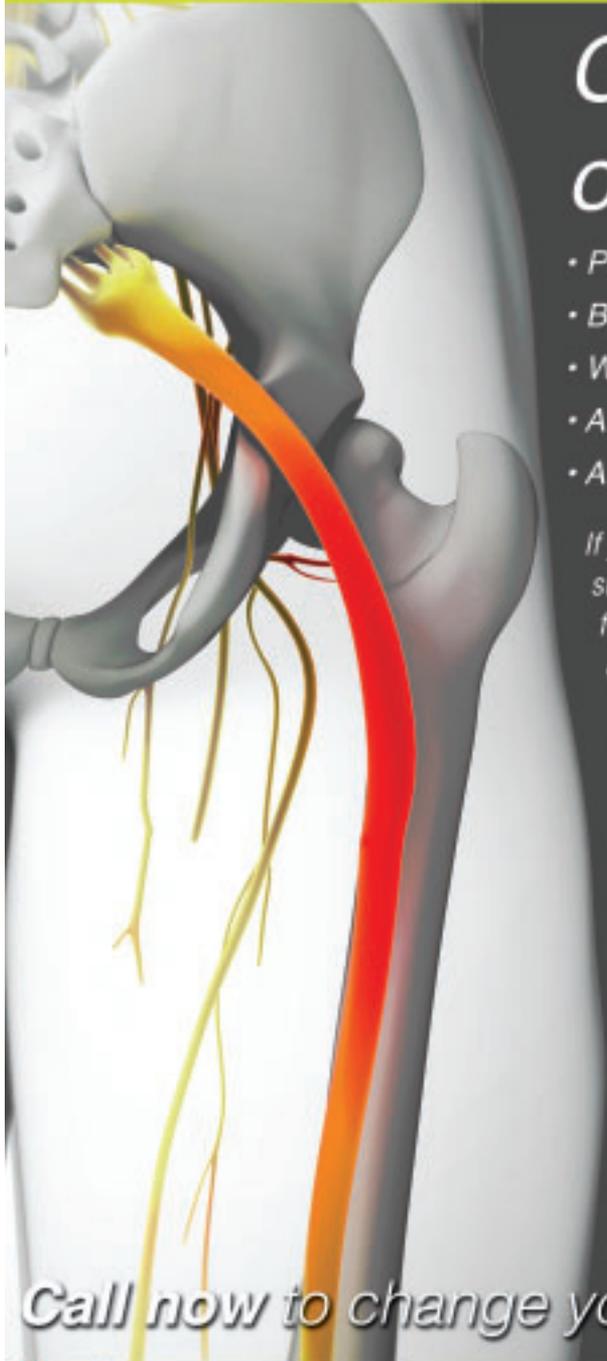
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# GENUINE Desire

— By Debbie Durling





“We want  
them to be  
responsible  
producers.”

*A rising star in Ellis County is the new nonprofit organization that aims to prepare children to be successful in personal finance and business through ranching experience. The Ellis County Youth Commercial Heifer Show and Sale began two years ago. Looking for an alternative to the traditional halter heifer show, a group of professional farmers and ranchers began visiting other programs across the state. They took the best parts of those programs and added a few of their own, which resulted in a heifer show and sale that gives children, ages 8-18, real-life experience in not only raising an animal but also in running their very own business.*

Page Bishop, 4H agricultural and national resource agent of Navarro County; Moe and Kelly Francis; Bruce Wilks; Art Hall; and John Paul and Heather Dineen are the founders of this endeavor. “The big picture of this show and sale project is that children learn to manage the business of cattle well. Those are life skills that will go with the participants anywhere,” John Paul said.

The project begins with an orientation in January, where children learn what is expected in the program. After that, those who do decide to participate secure two heifers. Land is also necessary. It takes about three acres of land per heifer. Keeping animals in a pin and feeding them regularly is discouraged, as that is not the way it is in the real world. Cattle need to roam and graze. Feeding is for after the frost when there is no grass to graze.

The participant is required to totally fund the project, which usually entails securing a loan from a bank or elsewhere. Then the heifers, which must be under 24 months old, are brought to the validation event in May. The young ranchers are taught to tag, vaccinate, inspect for ear ticks, etc. They are in on the process from beginning to end. Speakers are also invited to come to the validation, so the students

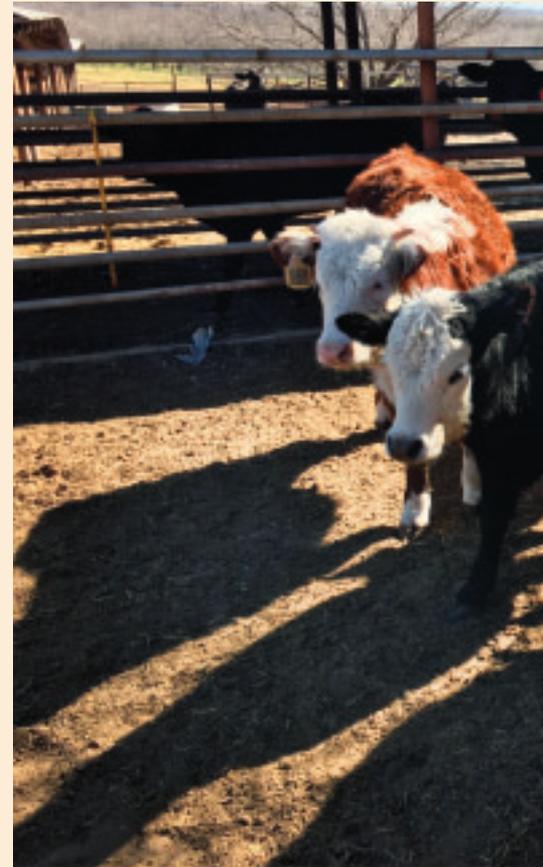
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can gain more insight and understanding into the care of their animals. One such speaker has been a veterinarian, who speaks on the care of the animals. He also remains available throughout the project for consultation, when needed. "We want them to be responsible producers," Moe explained.

A record book must be kept of the complete process beginning with the money to fund the project to budgeting everything that is needed to raise the cattle until they are sold and picked up by the buyer. "It's like a scrapbook of the project, from beginning to end," Moe explained. This book includes the financial ledger, budget, expenditures,

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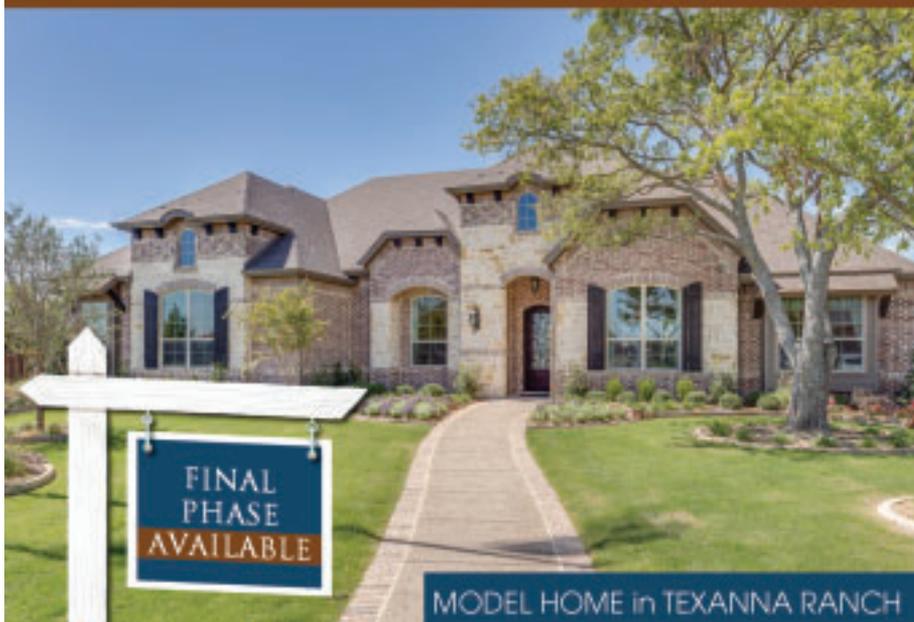


vet needs, feed costs, pictures, etc. It becomes part of the final evaluation at the show and sale of the heifers.

Another element evaluated at the final show and sale is the ability of the student to answer questions in an interview. The judges are cattle buyers in the real market. The questions are about the process of raising the heifers and funding the project. Questions such as, "Why did you choose this breed?" or "What unforeseen challenges did you face?" are expected to be answered by the students in an effort to assure the participant actually carried the project through for themselves, from beginning to end.

Last year's winner of "Junior Herdsman 2015," Amelia Dineen, said she used to be shy and had a nervous giggle when speaking to adults. The first year she competed, she was very nervous during the interview. However, in her second year, she was more comfortable being in front of the panel of judges. "I can look people in the eye now," Amelia said with a confident smile. Mom and dad, Heather and John Paul, chirped in that it was the judges giggling instead of Amelia this past year. "This is what we want," John Paul shared. "We want to inspire confidence and other life skills

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at the Ellis County Youth Expo Center. On Thursday, the week of the show, the heifers are checked in and kept in a stall that is 10 feet by 10 feet. On Friday, events such as tractor shows and beef cattle updates are held to entice more producers to come to the show and buy the cattle. Activities are also provided for the kids like creating a belt from leather or getting to see the Farm Bureau Mobile Learning Barn. Between Thursday and Saturday, the cows are shown, interviews are done and the sale takes place. On Sunday, the pens must be left completely clean by the participants. By the end of the project, students have built relationships with local ranchers and buyers that will be resources for them in their next project.

The first year, the program had 13 children validate heifers, and 11 finished all the way to the sale and show. The second year, 15 validated, and all 15 made it to the finish in October. The show is presently open to Ellis, Kaufman, Navarro, Hill and Johnson counties.

The committee members who founded this program have a genuine desire to cultivate skills in young people that will benefit them throughout their lives. They share their experiences with the youth who have participated over the past two years with an air of excitement and vision for what this program can mean for the future. **NOW**

*Editor's Note: For more information, call John Paul Dineen at (214) 236-0407.*

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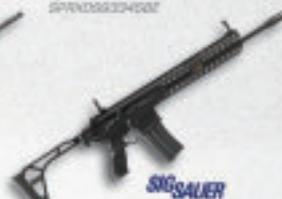
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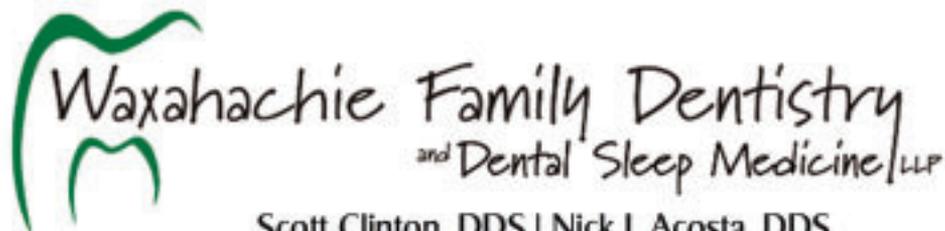
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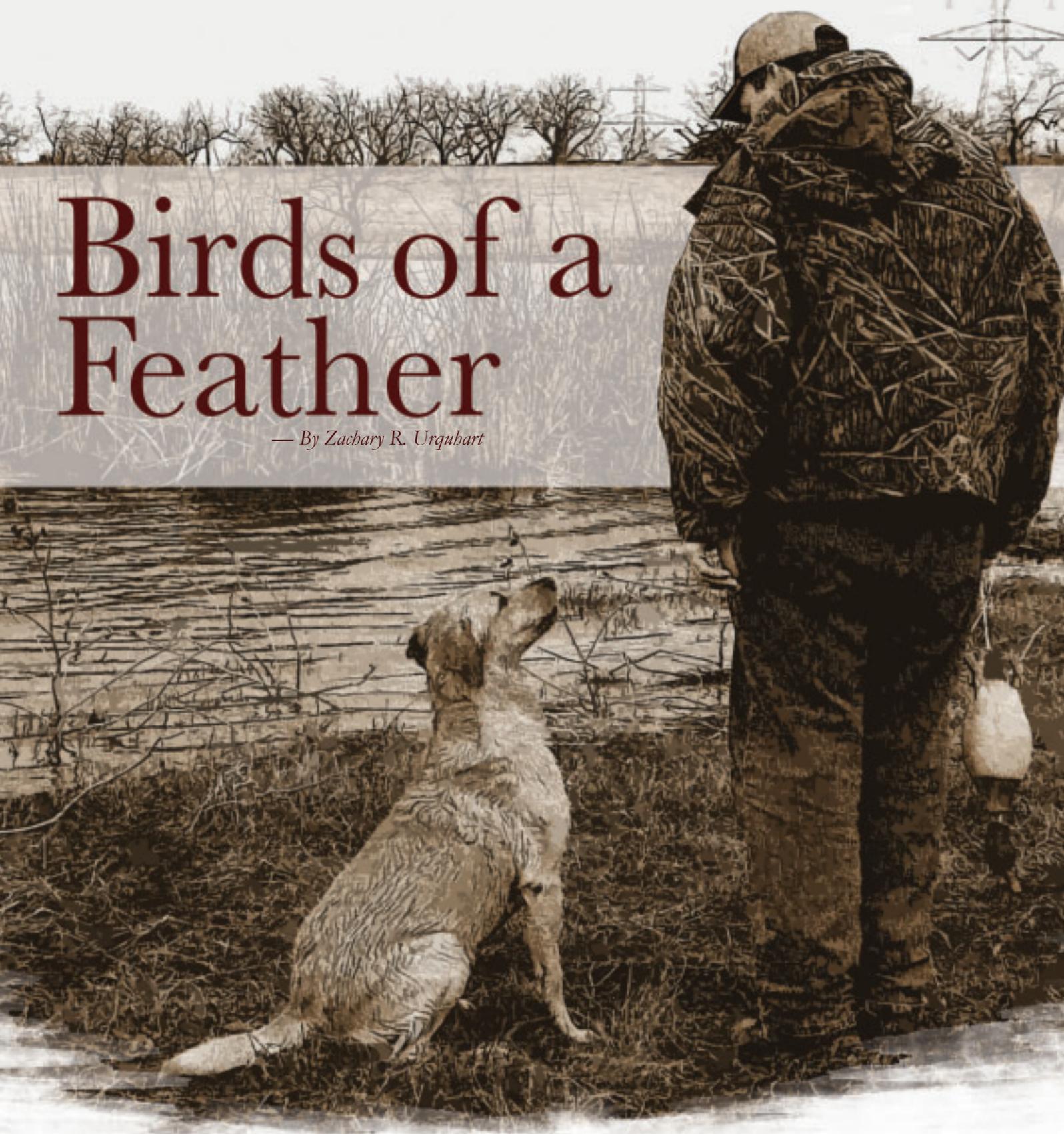
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A photograph of a person in a full-body duck decoy costume, including a hat and a large, textured body, standing in a field. A dog is sitting on the ground in the foreground, looking up at the person. The background shows a line of trees and a utility pole under a cloudy sky. The title 'Birds of a Feather' is overlaid on the left side of the image in a large, dark red serif font.

# Birds of a Feather

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

*There is a group of people who wants very badly to help preserve nature, and you probably would not guess it. They raise funds, increase awareness and spend a considerable amount of energy working to create and sustain wetlands for dozens of animal groups who desperately need help. When most people see the simple duck-head profile that serves as the logo for Ducks Unlimited, they may not know that is what the group is all about. But John Reagan and the members of Ellis County Ducks Unlimited are doing what they can to help birds of a feather flock together.*

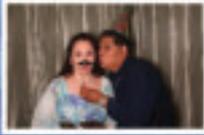


John grew up in Waxahachie and, after high school, went to Abilene Christian University. He met Holly in sixth grade, and they dated throughout high school and college. "We went to Brown Street Church of Christ together, and then went to ACU together," he explained. John and Holly were married in 1999, and they have two children, Jackson and Madelyn. "Jackson really likes getting out to hunt with me," John said. "Holly and Madelyn enjoy going, but they aren't crazy about it." John is a financial advisor for Wells Fargo Advisors, and Holly teaches at Dallas Christian School in Mesquite, where their kids attend school.

John and his family moved to Midlothian almost 15 years ago, so other than his college years, he has lived somewhere in Ellis County most of his life. He has been involved in many things throughout the area, and that involvement includes serving as the chairman of the Ellis County chapter of Ducks Unlimited for over a decade. "There's no crazy story about it," he recounted. "I have been an avid hunter and fisherman all my life, so I knew about DU even as a kid. Fifteen years ago, I went to an event with a friend, and I started helping out." Helping out quickly turned into taking a leadership role with the organization. "About a year after my first event, the current chairman told me I should take over, and I've been the Chairman of Ellis County Ducks Unlimited ever since," he added.

Though it was his hunting background that originally got him involved, John is quick to point out that Ducks Unlimited is not just an organization for hunters.

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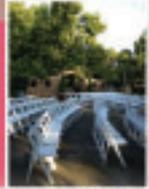


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“The group started in the 1930s to conserve wetlands,” he explained. “We raise money that is spent trying to get laws to protect habitats from development, designing new wetland areas and increasing awareness around the nation.” One of the things DU does is work with farmers and ranchers to preserve their natural wetland areas. “For a lot of farmers, if they can plow it, they will,” John said. “We encourage them not to give up their land for development, and we also offer incentives not to fill in their marshes.”

While part of Ducks Unlimited’s work is keeping people from destroying wetlands, they also have to react to natural wetland destruction. “Rising water levels and other geographic factors have destroyed a lot of wetlands in the Gulf Coast, especially in Louisiana,” he detailed. “That is where we will have engineers figure out ways to pump water in and out of areas during different seasons to increase land for ducks and other water fowl.”

The end result of the organization’s massive fundraising and conservation effort is seen in their raw numbers. In the last 75 years, Ducks Unlimited has conserved well over 13 million acres of land across North America and influenced another 118 million acres on the continent. One of their major works is protecting breeding areas, especially in the Northern United States and Canada. “The money we raise in Ellis County goes to the central office in Memphis, Tennessee, and they send it where it’s needed,” John explained. “A lot of the

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funds go where the ducks are breeding, because if they don't have somewhere to breed, nothing else will matter."

Many people think of Ducks Unlimited as a hunting organization. Though that is not quite accurate, John admits that hunters and outdoorsmen do typically support the organization. "By preserving wetlands, you increase habitats for ducks, but you are really increasing lands for birds, deer and other wildlife, as well as people," he described. One effect is an increase in animals for hunting, so it is not surprising that hunters are key supporters of Ducks Unlimited, and that's why John and the Ellis County group raise funds in the ways they do.

The committee's goal is to raise as much money as possible to send to Memphis each year. "We have two annual fundraisers," he said. "We sell a calendar every fall, and for 50 bucks, you become



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a member, you get the calendar, and you are entered into a raffle each day of the year. We give away over 700 guns, and two times a year, we give away four-wheelers.” The big fundraiser, though, is the annual banquet the committee organizes every April.

“We may or may not raise the most money, but the Ellis County event is the biggest by attendance across the state of Texas,” he boasted. When John took over more than a decade ago, their yearly banquet was hosting a couple hundred people. Thanks to his work and that of the rest of the committee, though, Ellis County Ducks Unlimited ranks near the top in the state and across the nation. “There are over 2,600 chapters nationwide, with 145 in Texas,” he explained. “Ellis County was number eight in the state and in the top 20 for the nation in funds raised last year.” They have routinely filled the largest local venue over the past few years with their annual banquet. “We couldn’t have a bigger event unless we left Ellis County, but then we would lose some of the hometown feel,” he added.



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The banquet is typically the last Friday in April, and it has become a social event that joins family, friends and co-workers together to support a great cause. In addition to a meal catered by a chef that comes in from Louisiana, the evening is full of fun. “We do a 50-gun raffle, which everyone loves,” he detailed. “We have dozens of packages from duck calls to a Heli Hunt package that will be offered in the live and silent auctions, as well as many other raffle games and door prizes.”

While the yearly banquet largely attracts a crowd of hunters and outdoorsmen, the cause is about so much more. John and Ellis County Ducks Unlimited are creating and preserving wetlands, one banquet at a time. **NOW**

*Editor's Note: This year's banquet will be held at the Waxahachie Civic Center, Friday, April 29. For more information, email [elliscountynu@earthlink.net](mailto:elliscountynu@earthlink.net) or visit [www.ducks.org/texas/events/40887/ellis-county-dinner-waxahachie-tx](http://www.ducks.org/texas/events/40887/ellis-county-dinner-waxahachie-tx).*



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# Beautiful Upgrades

— By Melissa Swedowski

## At Home With Dan Francis



*There exists a dividing line among potential homeowners: those who prefer new builds and those who prefer established homes. When Dan Francis decided he was finally ready to strap in for the wild ride of homeownership, little did he know it would become a showcase not only for his musical loves, but also for his traveling passion — a passion that graces the walls, as well as the coffee table.*

During his nine-year tenure as Howard Junior High's band director, Dan hesitated to purchase a home. He preferred to keep things agile, keeping himself free of worrying over maintenance or remodels. When the spirit moved him to buy his own square of Waxahachie dirt, he realized it was the perfect place to retire. "It's a good location," he said. "It's near downtown Dallas and Fort Worth, and since I was one of the first to get in on this development, my choice of lot, layout and plans worked well."

The simple, elegant landscaping provides substantial curb appeal for the corner lot. The brick and stone façade opens to a vaulted entryway, with limestone on the front and brick as an accent in the archway. Dan had a very distinct vision for his home, and although it might have taken longer to complete than he anticipated, the results were worth the effort. Off the entry to the right is the formal dining room, but Dan had a more interesting plan. "I've been playing pool since high school, and I wanted this layout for the pool room," he explained. "This





is the first table I've ever owned." The red felt-topped beauty required a 2-foot extension on the front of the house to make room for it, as Dan noted with a wry grin, explaining that the left front pocket is a little too close to the wall, but he remains philosophical. "There's so much going on in a new house, especially with upgrades, you learn not to fret about it," he admitted.

Across the entry is a third bedroom, now a study, filled with evidence of the professional musician at work, with several instruments on one side of the room. With the upgrade of French doors in place to allow more light, one wall is filled with rows of compact discs, along with a retirement gift from his students and family pictures. Stepping back into the hallway, visitors enter the open-concept kitchen, dining area and living room. Dan's design style makes itself evident, with optimum space for his true love — music.



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“Really, with this house plan, I could have a whole wall to devote to TV, stereo and surround sound,” Dan said with a satisfied grin. “I wanted a really good stereo system.” With the fireplace to the side, the large living room wall provided the perfect resting point for the flat-screen TV, especially since Dan was adamant he wasn’t following a home design fad. “My main thing was the living room layout,” he said, “because the stereo



system and TV were not to be anchored on the fireplace.” The speakers and subwoofer combination elevates the two-channel stereo system into the luscious ambient sound Dan was hoping for. “I really did all of this for the opportunity to listen to the music,” he said, as the orchestral surround sound provides the illusion that the performer is in the room.

Turning to the dining room, the love of music and art continues. For his

retirement, Dan decided to travel abroad once a year. Last October, he traveled to Italy, including a stop at the Vignamaggio Winery, where he snapped photos of the countryside with tiny, delicious details. Five of the photos now hang in the dining area, adding not only a pop of color to contrast the teak wood table, but also clarity for the viewer. “It really gives you a sense of time when you know you’re looking at 300-year-old cypress

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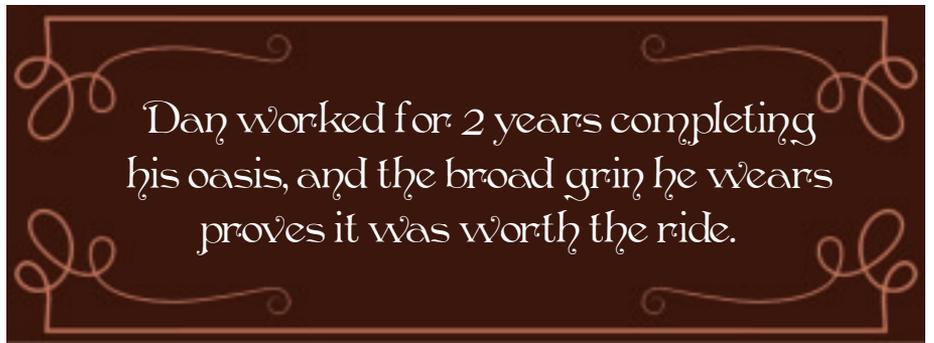
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 Dan worked for 2 years completing his oasis, and the broad grin he wears proves it was worth the ride.



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trees," he said. "They've been making wine there for 600 years. It really gives you a different concept of time."

Another canvas of the trip resides in the pool room, from the medieval town of San Gimignano. "I was standing at the top of Torre Grossa, and I got the most amazing panoramic shots," he said, opting to bring one to life in his home. Overall, he took 750 pictures, which he put together to create a coffee table book of his adventures. The book rests on the effortlessly cool Ekornes furniture in the living room, which Dan said, "moves with you. When you lean back, the seat comes out slightly." The hardwood floors throughout the house are spotted with rugs that share the same pattern, but flipped colors in each room.

One of Dan's proudest upgrades are the bathroom designs, with clean, crisp, white lines. "I wanted a 'look,'" Dan explained, "so I chose porcelain." The gorgeous floors give way to identically colored tile on the bath and shower, which are made of slightly different porcelain. The smaller of two walk-in closets leads to the laundry room,



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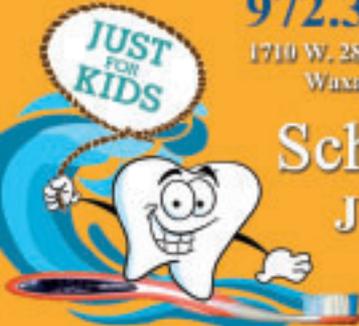
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sparkling with the same black and white counters. The guest bath also has porcelain floors, partnered with gray walls and black and white counters.

The final bedroom serves as the guest haven, decorated as the “retro room,” complete with a bedroom suite that once belonged to his aunt. “I paid to have it redone,” he recalled, “and in order to have it refinished, they had to take it apart, re-glue it and re-do all the stain.” The room is dotted with family photos, along with curtains and a rug that were chosen with the assistance of an interior decorator.

The cozy backyard led Dan to reveal one of the rationales in his decision to take the location. “The energy efficiency aspect of this lot is tremendous,” he said. “There are no west-facing windows, so the patio never sees any sunlight.” Dan had the patio extended three feet in order to provide more room for a table and grill. When deciding the finish for the patio, he opted to go with concrete and a half-inch cap, which he then had stained. “It almost looks like stone,” he smiled.

Dan moved effortlessly through the home, noting that, “I don’t like wasted space.” With a streamlined kitchen containing hand-chosen granite countertops and an elevated island allowing for barstools, Dan was fastidious in his upgrade decisions. There are doorway arches and crown molding, imposing 10-foot ceilings, hardwood floors and spectacular lighting and plumbing fixtures. Dan worked for two years completing his oasis, and the broad grin he wears proves it was worth the ride. **NOW**

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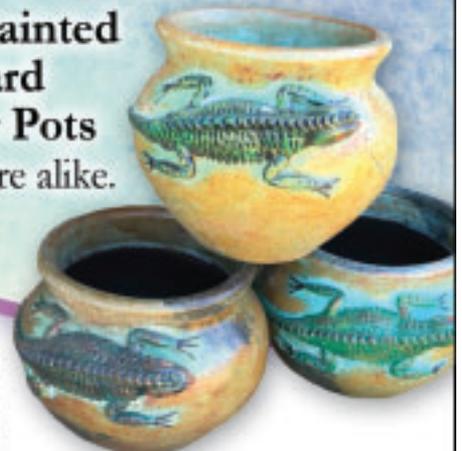


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# Where She's Supposed to Be

— By Sandra Strong

*What is art? Merriam-Webster says it best: "Art is something that is created with imagination and skill that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings." Rae Whitehead, Ninth Grade Academy's visual arts teacher, is art in the human form. She takes the dictionary's definition*

*out of the book and brings it to life each day for her students. "I guess I was born with an artistic gene," Rae admitted. "My grandmothers and my mom were all crafty. My dad is a creative problem solver, and so was my grandfather." As one can see, she comes by her love of all things art naturally.*

Rae had aspirations to study to become a band director, but after her freshman year in college, she knew without a doubt that was not the career path for her. During her sophomore year, she took an art class that woke up the artistic monster within her. Not long into the course, her instructor gave her words of encouragement that served as confirmation. She changed her major and graduated with a BFA in art education from Texas State University.





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When it was time to put her education to work in a classroom, Rae returned home to the district from which she graduated. Her teaching career began at Waxahachie's Ninth Grade Academy, and it's been her home away from home ever since. "My time of student teaching was spent with junior high students, but when I got to my own ninth grade classroom, I knew I was where I was supposed to be," Rae shared. "Ninth grade students are trying to find their way in high school as freshman."

Being able to take on responsibility and own the choices they make as students is important in Rae's classroom. Throughout the year, she will instruct her students on the fundamentals of each phase or area of art, then it's up to the students to take what they've learned and add their imaginations and artistic abilities to produce a beautiful and, in many cases, meaningful piece of artwork.

Rae begins each new school year with foundations units that include 2-D design, 3-D design, color theory and drawing. 2-D design teaches students how to make a good composition. "The artwork needs to be visually appealing," Rae explained, "and interesting for people to look at."

Each of her classes during the day will incorporate the same art lesson, but the way Rae teaches each class will vary because each group of children is different. "The abilities vary with each class and, sometimes, with each individual student," she reiterated. "I gear what I say and how I say it to accommodate

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the group of kids in front of me at the time. It takes me at least a month at the beginning of the school year to understand all my students.”

The understanding comes as Rae builds the early one-on-one relationships she feels are important when tapping into a child’s creativity and artistic ability. “I think teaching art allows me to develop these relationships faster than any other subject I could teach,” Rae said. “I get to move freely around the room as I talk to the students.” If students meet her requirements — process and effort, not final product and grade — they will be successful in her class. And the most difficult part of her job is trying to convince her young artists there is no “one right” answer. “It’s difficult for them to understand that one student’s answer or completed artwork can be different from another’s,” she stated. “In my class, individuality is a plus!”

Rae does have the ability to “write her own curriculum” as long as she addresses and includes TEKS. She has guidelines to follow, but she is not limited to the sequence in which they are taught. As the first semester begins, students are given a sketch book that actually becomes their personal art book. Rae has been keeping her own sketch books for the past several years as visual examples for her students, and these books are a testament to her vivid imagination and talent in all areas of visual arts.

Methods shared in the first semester include lessons on pencil and shading, basic composition rules, color theory

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and available mediums. Pencil and shading teach students value and depth, while basic rules teach them how to put things together for interest. During color theory units, Rae instructs on how to mix colors using the three basic colors found on the color wheel, plus black and white. Mediums include colored pencils, watercolor pencils, collage, oil pastel, chalk pastel, acrylic, print making, water color and painting with coffee and tea. As students learn each new method, they draw, paint or create a sample in their sketch books. "I give them the techniques, and then tell them to play," she added. "They get the chance to be creative." Every element and principle learned throughout the school year has its own page in their sketch books.

Some of the more popular methods Rae has incorporated into her lesson plans include stop motion animation, decalomania, plastic bag printing, zentangles, the history of graffiti and steampunk, the most recent art form directly related to the evolution of students. Stop motion animation is similar to a digital flip book. Decalomania is the art of drawing over tinted glue after it's dried. Zentagles are made up of millions of different patterns, but students focus on just 16 in class. The students' assignment is to create four individual tiles using at least five of the 16 patterns per tile and a pattern can only be used twice within the four tiles. "I teach them how to break down any pattern they come across by



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practicing on 16 of them,” she explained further. Steampunk art mixes modern ideas and technology with those from the past that are based on steam power prevalent in the 19th century and taking place in a recognizable historical time or a fantasy world.

Each of the mediums taught and learned requires students to use their imagination. “I try to expose them to as many techniques as I can to, hopefully, inspire them to want to continue on,” Rae said. “I personally don’t have a favorite method. I love to play with new things I find. I experiment, and then I introduce it to the students. My joy comes when I see faces light up with each new media introduced.”

Rae has found that some students love it all, while others may not. The same goes with art criticism. One person can love the piece and another might not. “Teaching them about art criticism helps students think about multiple solutions,” Rae impressed, but this has proven to be one of the hardest things for her ninth grade charges to grasp. They want only one right way, and art is not that cut and dry. Art really is in the eye of the beholder. **NOW**

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# Added Appeal

— By Carolyn Wills

*How cool is it to add a pergola to a home? Potentially, very cool. With the right design, this time-tested outdoor structure can increase a home's curb appeal and useable living space, and when the time comes to sell, it might be the one "extra" that wins a buyer's heart.*



The love affair between homebodies and pergolas began long ago. Earliest evidence traces back to a garden plan belonging to an Egyptian high court official around 1400 B.C. Initially, pergolas were perceived as elite structures reserved for the wealthy. In the mid-1600s, they were seen at European villas and majestic estates while, at the same time, in Eastern Asia, they were being treated to curved beams to match magnificent arched pagodas. During the Italian Renaissance, architects and garden designers upped the artistic aspect by using enormous and dramatic stone pillars.<sup>1</sup>

Today, these structures are in reach of most homeowners thanks to modern technology and materials. Although, for the most part, not as elaborate as their forerunners, present-day pergolas offer function and affordability at a time when "at-home" outdoor living is high on the list for homeowners and buyers.

A recent preference survey by the National Association of Home Builders and *Better Homes and Gardens* shows that, in 2016, homebuyers of all ages want storage, energy efficiency and outdoor space. What's more, emerging homebuyers



known as Millennials especially want outdoor living places to entertain family and friends.<sup>2</sup>

This excitement is not limited to emerging buyers nor is the trend new. In 2014, Saber Grills surveyed 1,500 homeowners to discover 83 percent say outdoor living space is their favorite part of the home. Interestingly, Saber Grills calls Baby Boomers “super relaxers”



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who consider outdoor amenities as major factors in home buying and who are also very engaged in making those amenities comfortable.<sup>3</sup>

Across all ages, then, home ownership is sparking a desire for outdoor living spaces, be it a pergola, deck, patio, porch, pool, outdoor kitchen, garden, stand-alone fountain, fire pit or barbecue. On the simplest level, pergolas are practical and relatively affordable. On a grander scale, they can tie together multiple outdoor structures, lend definition to landscaping and upgrade a home's aesthetics.

If popularity inspires options, it's understandable that pergola styles, sizes and materials seem endless these days. As with any home addition, though, preplanning is the difference between loving or regretting a finished project. The following are essential "preplanning pergola" considerations:

## Purpose

First, consider how the pergola will be used. Is it to shade a garden or passageway, cover a patio, extend entertainment space, tie together existing structures or, maybe, add a quiet spot for meditation or yoga? Will it need features like lighting and electricity?

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## Budget

Today, pergolas are made of everything from vinyl and fiberglass to varieties of wood. Construction options range from “do-it-yourself kits” found at home improvement stores, retailers and manufacturers, to skilled do-it-yourselfers building from scratch, to hiring a professional designer and/or architect and contractor. Costs, then, vary dramatically.

Writing for the website, Landscaping Network, North Coast Gardening owner,



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Genevieve Schmidt, said, "Installation of a small open-roof pergola made of inexpensive wood can be as little as \$3,000 while more elaborate pergolas with solid cedar or redwood beams and a solid roof can run \$15,000 or more, particularly if engineering and permits are involved." She adds that Dan Berger of LandPlan's Landscaping, Inc. in Pleasanton, California, cites costs ranging from \$3,000-30,000 with the higher end reflecting large structures with a solid roof.<sup>4</sup>



## Design

Typically, pergolas are square or rectangular with a slatted, latticed or solid roof supported by two or four beams. They require weather-resistant materials which are, most commonly, painted or stained cedar or redwood, and they can be free-standing or attached to a structure like a house or garage.

Optimum pergola size and design is best dictated by budget, anticipated use, sun patterns, landscaping, style and size of the home, property and any other outdoor structures. For example, a pergola that is 10 feet by 10 feet with at least an 8-foot ceiling height will comfortably accommodate two chairs and a small table. If the intention, then, is to entertain large gatherings and/or accommodate an outdoor kitchen, the project definitely calls for a bigger structure. Pergolas are adaptable to any width as long as they include the proper number of beams to support the roof.

Accessories are also important considerations. A simple garden or garage pergola is quite different from an elaborate dining/entertaining space with needs for lighting, electricity and climate control.

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complex as a mix of general, task, overhead and accent lighting. For safety's sake, all lighting or other electrical fittings in or near a pergola should be waterproofed to a rating of IP67 or better and, importantly, all electrical installations should be performed by a licensed electrician.<sup>5</sup>

Other possible pergola accessories include solar panels, misters, ceiling fans and heaters. Solar panels lend energy efficiency, while misters and ceiling fans (especially in Texas) provide comfort on hot days and nights. Free-standing or wall-mounted heaters serve warmth in colder times.<sup>6</sup>

When incorporating any accessory, it's important to hire experienced installers and licensed electricians. As an afterthought, accessories can be costly and time-consuming, so preplanning is critical. Pergolas are the answer to outdoor fun with the comforts of home. **NOW**

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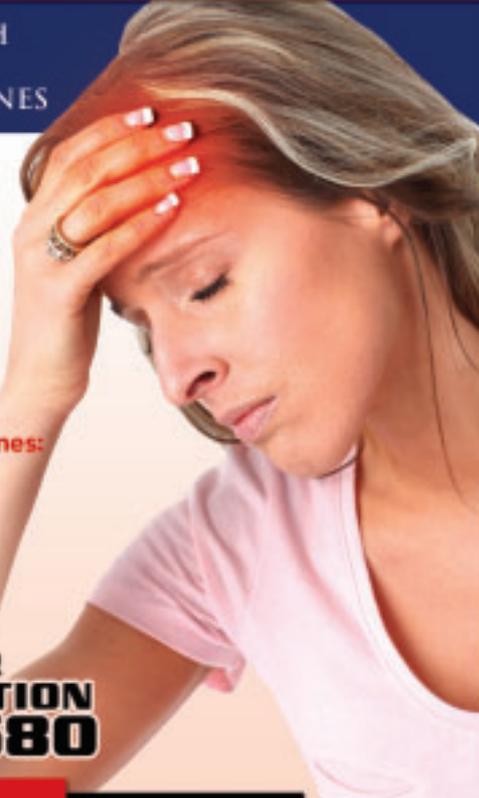
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Dub and Sherrie Green enjoy shopping for the unique items customers, both new and repeat, have come to expect to find at The Studio.



## Unique Originality

*Affordable to premier means there's something for everyone at The Studio.*

— By Sandra Strong

Dub and Sherrie Green, proprietors of The Studio, are Waxahachie natives, both born and raised here. As longtime entrepreneurs, the couple has delved into many areas of business in their journey as husband and wife. “It was 14 years total last month at The Studio, with the last four at our new address,” Sherrie said, referring to their time in local business. “Our son, Scott Green, was the catalyst that really got The Studio started.”

Scott took them on a trip to Mexico. Not long after they arrived, they ran into a guy who had rocking chairs for sale. Needless to say, The Studio opened its doors soon after that trip at the old location on Hwy. 77, not far from their new, present location, also on Hwy. 77. As the signs for the new business

were being made, Sherrie decided she wanted to add jewelry to the offerings, so jewelry was added to the sign, as well as to their new business cards.

In the beginning, Dub and Sherrie had a showroom featuring rustic furniture, metal stars in all shapes and sizes and a modest selection of jewelry and accessories that could easily be mixed and matched. Today, customers can still purchase furniture through special order options, but the jewelry choices have grown to include something for everyone, both in style and price range. Fashion jewelry offerings from 14 years ago grew into one-of-a-kind jewelry pieces that include Native American works of art that the couple purchase on their frequent trips to New

Mexico. “We purchase lots of items at flea markets,” Dub said. “New Mexico is where we have shopped for years. And we still, to this day, enjoy wholesale antique shopping in New Mexico.” The relationships they’ve built over the years in New Mexico have turned into lasting friendships.

“We were selling small amounts of turquoise at the start,” Sherrie added, “but customers began to ask for it more and more. Now, the shop has a large selection of turquoise jewelry — affordable to premier — to choose from that includes rings and bracelets, as well as beautifully handcrafted squash blossom necklaces that make their own statement.” The Studio is also home to jewelry pieces that Sherrie has beaded herself.

Dub and Sherrie love to shop for things they themselves like. Each item is unique in the fact that it’s been handpicked by them. “Two necklaces may have the same color stones, but no two are exactly alike,” Sherrie explained. “As The Studio evolved, turquoise just seemed to become more and more popular.”

The Studio is definitely not limited to jewelry. An array of unique originality can also be found in the vintage counter, the horsehair pottery, the whirly gigs, the stained glass windows, crosses, stars, candles, chimes, decorative art poles and outdoor patio furniture. Dub and Sherrie’s goal has always been to purchase as much of their merchandise from the United States as possible. One prime example is the wind chimes that have become so popular. “They are crafted at a very successful business in Austin,” Dub shared.

When this journey began, Dub and Sherrie had no idea how successful The Studio would become. They had no idea they would move to a larger, more spacious building. But one thing they did know — they wanted to take the journey together. “We’re not sure when we’ll retire and call it quits,” Sherrie said.

As Dub nodded in agreement, he smiled and said, “Who really fully retires these days anyway?” **NOW**

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*An open house and grand opening with a Chamber ribbon cutting is held at Hip Haute & Happening.*



*Members of the Waxahachie Mother's Club meet at the Ellis County Museum for their monthly meeting.*



*Ellen and Micah Duke of A Better Outlook Counseling Service happily accept their New Member Waxahachie Chamber Plaque at their recent ribbon cutting.*



*Sammy Perez of Sammy's Tacos & Seafood gets the eatery prepared early for the busy day ahead.*



*Mike and Mary Stedman share a table with Darlene Hardy during an evening out for those who suffered home damage during the 2015 end-of-year tornado. The event was sponsored by Chick-fil-A.*



*Rebecca Biddle with Waxahachie Family Dentistry completes paperwork on one patient so she can ready the office for the next patient.*



*Jariny and Zy'Reiona Jefferson pick out matching bunny rabbits for Easter.*



*Yieldell, Wilson, Wood & Reeve, P.C. are on hand for any questions attendees have at the Women's Expo.*



*Several members of the Early Morning Coffee Group from the Grand Reserve and Country Lane apartments share friendship and good conversation.*

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# Online Credit Monitoring Tools

Have you ever wondered what information is on your credit report? You should. Your credit report defines your entire reported credit history and is a major determining factor for future credit.

You may want to consider monitoring your credit report at least once a year, if not once a quarter, to make sure it's accurate and up to date. Take the necessary steps to report any errors you find immediately. Mistakes and omissions still affect your credit score!

## Safeguard Against Identity Theft

Another reason to check your credit report is to safeguard against identity theft. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) estimates that 9 million Americans have their identities stolen each year. Your credit report will show if someone has opened a credit card account in your name. Not only will the new account be listed, but also the amount owed or delinquent on the account. (Yes, delinquent. You can be sure that the thief opening credit cards in your name isn't paying the bills.)

If you suspect you've been the victim of identity theft, you'll need to place a fraud alert on your credit report, close those accounts and file a police report and a complaint with the FTC.

## Get Your Free Credit Report

The Fair Credit Reporting Act guarantees you a free credit report once a year, by law, from each of the three national reporting agencies, or credit bureaus: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. Why all three? Your credit score and report may vary by agency, depending on the information it has received from lenders.

AnnualCreditReport.com is the only authorized website for ordering free credit reports through the Fair Credit Reporting Act. All others making such claims have been known to either charge a fee or require you to buy other services to receive a "free" credit report.

It's important to note that only your credit report is free. You can purchase your credit score directly from the credit bureaus or from FICO (formerly known as Fair Isaac Corporation), the company that created the first credit score system. The fee for a one-time look at your credit score is about \$15 for one credit bureau's score and report, and \$40 for scores and reports from all three.

## Use a Monitoring Service

You can also use a monitoring service to monitor your credit reports daily. These services, which cost around \$15 a month from the credit bureaus and FICO, alert you when your credit score changes and monitor all three of your credit reports for the following:

- New accounts
- Credit inquiries
- Increases in balances
- Changes in account status
- Inactive accounts becoming active
- Changes to and new public records and collection agency records
- Name changes
- New addresses and phone numbers

Many people find this type of service useful and worth the price because they're immediately tipped off about any fraudulent activity. Whether you're checking your credit report or score quarterly or annually, or having it monitored for you more frequently, only use an agency authorized to provide credit reports. Credit inquiries by unauthorized agencies may lower your credit score in the short term. **NOW**

*Adam Rope is a State Farm agent based in Waxahachie.*

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## Power Mowers Pose Danger to Feet

Lawn care season is back, and homeowners need to protect their feet and the feet of those around them when using rotary-blade lawn mowers. Each year, some 25,000 Americans sustain injuries from power mowers, according to reports issued by the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission. The blades whirl at 3,000 revolutions per minute and produce three times the kinetic energy of a .357 handgun. Yet, each year, foot and ankle surgeons continue to see patients who have been hurt while operating a lawn mower barefoot. Children under the age of 14 and adults over the age of 44 are more likely to be injured from mowers than others. Anyone who operates a power mower should take a few simple precautions:

- Don't mow a wet lawn. Losing control from slipping on rain-soaked grass is the leading cause of foot injuries caused by power mowers.
- Wear heavy shoes or work boots when mowing — no sneakers or sandals.
- Don't allow small children to ride on the lap of an adult on a lawn tractor. Children can be severely injured by the blades when getting on or off the machine.

- Mow across slopes. Never go up or down.
- Never pull a running lawn mower backwards.
- Keep children away from the lawn when mowing.
- Keep the clip bag attached when operating a power mower to prevent projectile injuries.
- Use a mower with a release mechanism on the handle that automatically shuts it off when the hands let go.

If a mower accident occurs, immediate treatment is necessary to flush the wound thoroughly and apply antibiotics to prevent infection. Superficial wounds can be treated on an outpatient basis, but more serious injuries usually require surgical intervention to repair tendon damage, deep clean the wound and suture it. Tendons severed in lawn mower accidents generally can be surgically reattached unless toes have been amputated. **NOW**

*Christopher Schmitt, DPM  
Member of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons  
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### April 1, 2

Waxahachie Old-fashioned Singing: Chautauqua Auditorium. For more information, visit [www.waxaofs.com](http://www.waxaofs.com).

### April 2

David's March the Purple and Gold Celebration Run: 9:00 a.m., check-in; 10:00 a.m., 5 K race begins; 11:00 a.m., Purple and Gold Run begins. Registration fees: 5K, \$35 per person; Purple and Gold 1K, \$10 per person. All proceeds benefit the David B. Bush Memorial Scholarship. You can register online at [www.sagu.wufoo.com/forms](http://www.sagu.wufoo.com/forms).

North Ellis County Business & Community Expo: 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Red Oak High School, 122 SH 342, Red Oak. The event includes a variety of businesses, schools, nonprofit organizations, health providers and more. Free admission with one can good that benefits the North Ellis County Outreach. For more information, call (972) 617-0906.

Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra: 7:00 p.m., SAGU Hagee Center. This will be the grand finale performance for the Waxahachie Symphony Association's 2015-16 season.

### April 9, 10

Scarborough Renaissance Festival: 2511 FM 66, Exit 399A on I35 E. For more details, call (972) 938-3247 or visit [www.srfestival.com](http://www.srfestival.com).

### April 11

Premier Concert – Combination Concert featuring The Waxahachie Area Concert Band and the SAGU Wind Ensemble: 7:00 p.m., SAGU Campus in the auditorium of the Hagee Building. The concert is free and open to the public.

### April 12

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association Chapter 1191 monthly meeting: 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Ryan's Buffet, Hwy. 77. The event also includes a guest speaker. For membership information, call (214) 850-4783.

### April 12, 26

Ellis County HEALS support group meeting: 6:30 p.m., 408 Water St. The group hopes to connect with survivors of suicide loss in Ellis County, while giving them a safe place to share their struggle and pain. For more information, email [elliscountyheals@gmail.com](mailto:elliscountyheals@gmail.com) or follow them on Facebook.

### April 16

WPA Warrior Run and Flapjack Fever: 8:00-11:00 a.m., Waxahachie Preparatory

Academy, 1000 Butcher Rd. 5K, for all ages, begins at 8:30 a.m. with a 1/2 mile fun run for ages 7 and under and a 1 mile fun run for ages 12 and under to follow. The event includes food, flapjacks, fun and fitness for the whole family with special prizes for the most red, white and blue dress. Register at [www.wpacademy.org](http://www.wpacademy.org). Call (972) 937-0440 for more information.

Waxahachie Music 'N Art Walk: 2:00-8:00 p.m., historic downtown Waxahachie. For more information, visit [www.downtownwaxahachie.com](http://www.downtownwaxahachie.com).

### April 21

Ellis County Amateur Radio Club: 7:30 p.m., Ellis County Sheriff's Office Training Center, 2272 FM 878, Waxahachie. For more information, visit [www.wd5ddh.org](http://www.wd5ddh.org).

### April 22 — 24

Vintage Market Days: Ellis County Expo Center, 2300 U.S. 287 Bypass. For more details, visit [www.socentralteas.vintagemarketchdays.com](http://www.socentralteas.vintagemarketchdays.com).

### April 26

Beth Oakes Art Festival: 5:00-8:00 p.m., 3251 Ovilla Rd., Worship Center at ORBC. The event, hosted by Ovilla Christian School, is free. For more information or for details on submitted artwork, email Jami Navarro at [jnavarro@ovillachristianschool.org](mailto:jnavarro@ovillachristianschool.org).

### April 30

Take it to The Box Prescription Drug Return: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., WHS Parking Lot, 1000 N. Hwy. 77. The Box is a place to properly dispose of unused or expired medications quickly, safely and anonymously. For more information, contact IMPACT Waxahachie at (972) 937-1531 or visit [www.dpri.com](http://www.dpri.com).

### May 5 — 7

Waxahachie Cinco de Mayo Festival: Singleton Plaza in historic downtown Waxahachie. The event is hosted by ECHO.

### May 6 — 8

*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*: **Friday and Saturday**, 7:30 p.m.; **Sunday**, 2:30 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium, Getzendaner Park. Presented by the Waxahachie Community Theatre. Tickets: \$15 for adults, \$12 for seniors and students. For more information, call Terri Roberts at (972) 825-4814.

### Ongoing:

#### Mondays

English as a Second Language class: 6:30-

8:00 p.m., Sims Library. Learn English or come to brush up on your English-speaking skills. Free to the public.

#### First Mondays

Friends of Sims Library meeting: 10:00-11:00 a.m., library meeting room, 515 W. Main St. Newcomers are always welcome.

#### First and Fourth Mondays

Avenue Moms: 10:00 a.m.-noon, The Avenue Church, 1761 N. Hwy. 77. Register online at [www.events.theavenuechurch.com](http://www.events.theavenuechurch.com) or call the church office at (972) 937-5301 for more information.

#### Mondays and Thursdays

Fitness Revolution: 6:30 p.m., Salvation Army, 620 Farley St. Work out to fun aerobics choreographed to upbeat Christian and wholesome music. \$15 per month. Call (214) 477-1164 for more information.

#### Tuesdays

Story Time at Sims Library: 10:00-10:40 a.m., children 3 and older. Program features themed book readings, songs, puppets and crafts that teach children early literacy skills in preparation for kindergarten. E-mail [children@simslib.org](mailto:children@simslib.org) for more information.

Waxahachie Toastmasters meeting: 6:30 p.m., Lyceum at Sims Library. For more information, call (469) 245-8681.

GriefShare meetings: 4:00 and 6:30 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County in the Youth Center Kindergarten Room. For more information, call (972) 935-9801 or visit [www.cowboyfaith.org](http://www.cowboyfaith.org).

#### Fourth Tuesdays

Ellis County Technology (ECT) meeting: 6:30 p.m., LaQuinta. For more information, call Wendy Merritt at (469) 256-8989.

#### Thursdays

Buckout Arena Ministry: 7:00 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County, 2374 W. Hwy. 287 Bypass. For more information, call (972) 935-9801.

#### Fourth Saturdays

Bristol Opry: 7:00 p.m., featuring local singers and musicians. For more information, contact Jim Gatlin at (972) 846-2211.

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [sandra.strong@nowmagazines.com](mailto:sandra.strong@nowmagazines.com).*

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## In the Kitchen With Anne Schroeder

— *By Sandra Strong*

Anne Schroeder learned to cook from a number of sources — her mom, other family members and her friends. Still to this day, she has special recipes that originated with her mom, and she enjoys exchanging recipes with her friends. “I really like to fix delicious meals for my family and friends,” Anne shared. “I like recipes that don’t have a long list of ingredients, but that taste good.”

Growing up in North Dakota, Anne learned to prepare dishes that were of the German, Swedish and Norwegian style of cooking. “They’re not spicy,” she explained, “just well-seasoned with lots of butter and cream.” Anne rarely invents her own recipes, but she has found great enjoyment revising recipes she finds to make them some of her favorites. **NOW**

### Cherries in the Snow

- 2 8-oz. containers Cool Whip**
- 2 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese**
- 1/3 cup powdered sugar**
- 1 10-inch premade angel food cake, cut or torn into small bite-size pieces**
- 1 21-oz. can cherry pie filling**

- 1.** Mix Cool Whip, cream cheese and powdered sugar together. Put cake pieces in a large mixing bowl.
- 2.** Fold the Cool Whip mixture into the cake pieces. Pour the mixture into a 9x13-inch pan. Randomly drop pie filling over the top to complete the dessert.

### Ham Biscuits

- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce**
- 2 Tbsp. yellow mustard**
- 1 cup butter, softened**
- 30 Hawaiian rolls**

- 2 lbs. deli ham, thinly sliced**
- 1 lb. sharp cheddar cheese or cheese of choice, thinly sliced**

- 1.** Mix the Worcestershire sauce and mustard into the butter. Butter both sides of rolls. Add ham and cheese to complete the biscuit sandwich.
- 2.** Bake, covered, at 350 F for 20-30 minutes.

### Mom’s Butter Cookies

*Makes 3-4 dozen.*

- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour**
- 3/4 tsp. baking powder**
- 1/4 tsp. salt**
- 2/3 cup butter**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1 egg, well beaten**
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla**
- 2 Tbsp. milk**
- Buttercream icing of your choice**

- 1.** Mix flour, baking powder and salt together. Set aside.
- 2.** Thoroughly mix butter and sugar together until creamy. Stir in the egg. Add the vanilla.
- 3.** Add the dry flour mixture in 2-3 portions, alternately with the milk, making sure to begin and end with the flour mixture.
- 4.** Roll dough out to 1/8-inch thick on a lightly floured board. Using cookie cutters, cut cookies into desired shapes. Bake on a greased baking sheet at 400 F for 8-12 minutes, or until slightly brown around the edges.
- 5.** Once cooled, ice with buttercream icing.

### Corn Chowder

- 1 15-oz. can whole kernel corn, drained**
- 1 15-oz. can diced potatoes, drained**
- 1 10.5-oz. can potato soup**
- 1 cup milk**
- 2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, grated**
- 1/2 lb. diced ham**
- 1 Tbsp. parsley**
- Salt and pepper (optional)**

- 1.** Mix all ingredients together. Heat on the stove before serving.

### Whiskey Chicken

*Sauce:*

- 1/3 cup soy sauce**
- 1/3 cup sugar**
- 1/3 cup whiskey**

*Chicken:*

- 4 chicken breasts**
- 2 Tbsp. butter**
- 3 or more garlic cloves, minced**

- 1.** *For sauce:* Mix all sauce ingredients together.
- 2.** *For chicken:* Brown chicken in butter and garlic on medium heat. Add sauce. Make sure to turn the chicken often to absorb the full flavor of the sauce. Can be served over brown rice, if desired. You can also use chicken wings to prepare as a great appetizer.

**To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).**

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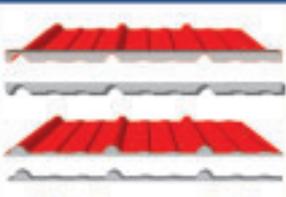
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**April 2nd-April 9th:  
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Owner Wes Spence was the biggest spender last year with the purchase of 2 Grand Champion Steers, 1 Goat and 1 Sheep, all of which were donated back to the kids. What will he do this year?

**April 9th: Navarro College, Brilliance  
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**April 8th – May 30th: Scarborough Fair  
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**April 21st: Scarborough Fair  
Ticket Hit at Waxahachie Nissan  
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**April 22nd: WISF Golf Classic  
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**April 24th: Shooting 4 The Stars  
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**April 29th: Ducks Unlimited  
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