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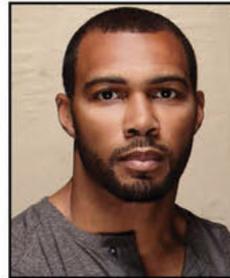
1,000 students invited to DeSoto ISD Male Leadership Symposium

DeSoto ISD has opened online registration to fill the 1,000 spots available for the 3rd annual Male Leadership Symposium to be held Saturday, April 22 from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. with keynote speakers actor **Omari Hardwick**, attorney/CNN analyst **Bakari Sellers** and DeSoto's own NFL star **Zachary Orr** headlining the main event! The event is open to students in grades 6-12 from DeSoto ISD and surrounding districts.

Online registration closes April 17!

Students will enjoy a breakfast session and then participate in awesome breakout workshops with business and civic leaders presenting how they have used Courageous Leadership to excel in their career field. Students can choose which career field most interests them from four major areas - STEM, Business, Law/Government, and Arts & Entertainment. Special speakers will also engage students during the free lunch!

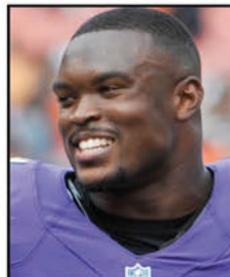
The event will provide relevant conversations for young men that will help them grow socially, academically, and professionally. The emphasis will be on attributes of courageous leaders including self-discipline, resilience and respect. The men of our community will provide our young men tools to be the next generation of courageous leaders.



Omari Hardwick



Bakari Sellers



Zachary Orr

Pre-K & Kinder Round Up

DeSoto ISD will host a Pre-K & Kinder Round Up for new students to register on April 3-5 and May 1-3 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the DeSoto Town Center, 211 E. Pleasant Run Rd. DeSoto ISD offers free Pre-K for eligible students age 4 on or before Sept. 1 (Kinder is age 5). DeSoto ISD offers a tuition-based program for non-eligible students.

Check the website (desotoisd.org) for registration materials needed for student enrollment!

PREK ROUNDUP

- STEP 1 - REGISTER ONLINE**
Register at desotoisd.org
- STEP 2 - CARNIVAL**
April 3-5, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. or
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207 E. Pleasant Run Rd.

What to bring:
Parent photo ID AND proof of residency
Student social security card, birth certificate, shot record

Calendar

April 6-8, 7 a.m.-7 p.m. - PreK & K Round Up, DeSoto Town Center
Monday, April 10, 6:30 p.m. - Board Meeting, Board Room
Thursday, April 13, 7:30 a.m. - Coffee TALK at Ruby Young Elementary
Friday, April 14 - Good Friday Holiday, No School, All ISD Closed

NEWS TO KNOW

Education Foundation Gala

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 22 at 6 p.m. at the DeSoto Civic Center. Tickets can be purchased through the Foundation office at 200 E. Belt Line Rd. or call 972-223-6666 for information.

STAAR Testing Schedule

The value of instruction always has, and always will be, measured by an end of learning assessment tool.

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.

May 1-5

- EOC Algebra, Biology, U.S. History window

Mon., May 8

- Grade 3-4 & 6-7 Math

Tu., May 9

- Grade 3-4 & 6-7 Reading
- English III

Wed., May 10

- Grade 5 & 8 Science
- Algebra II

Th., May 11

- Grade 8 Social Studies

Summer School and Camps

DeSoto ISD has posted the district summer school and camp schedule for 2017, including many of the camp links for registration. Please visit the Summer Camp link online for dates, times, and costs!

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Modern Worship
10:30 AM

Spanish Worship
11:00 AM



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ON THE COVER



Dr. Robin Harris displays some of the tools of international arts.

Photo by Shane Kirkpatrick.

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Editor's Note

Hello, Friends!

"The time has come," the Walrus said, "To talk of many things: Of shoes — and ships — and sealing-wax — Of cabbages — and kings ..." This famous line from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, is one many people will remember from childhood. It's silly. But it fits here. We talk about a little bit of everything in the pages of *SouthwestNOW*, because the people of our three communities do a little bit of everything.

Shoes could be an article on running — or a shoe collector. Ships could be anything from a sailboat on Joe Pool to world travels to the scene you just painted on the walls of your 4-year-old's room.

Sealing wax? Do any of you do calligraphy? Or collect old signet rings? Or engrave traditional Chinese name chops?

Cabbages? Well, all kinds of vegetables show up on the cooking page every issue, but some of you must already be getting early produce from your gardens.

Maybe you are the king of your sport. Or maybe you play a king at the community theater or at a Renaissance Faire.

Keep the stories coming!

Adam

Adam Walker
SouthwestNOW Editor
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Helping



Art

Sing

— By Adam Walker

If you met Dr. Robin Harris in the grocery store, you might not know she is quietly changing the world through art, but she is. Robin is one of a small group of local people involved in preserving and celebrating the local art forms of people near and far.

From 1995-2004 Robin and her husband, Bill, lived in the Russian north, much of that time in Siberia with the Sakha people. That's when she first became interested in ethnomusicology, the study of how different peoples and cultures make and use music. She noticed that Sakha people mostly used Russian music in their church services, but they really didn't connect with it like they did with their own styles of music. Russian music





“ People everywhere have the right, and should have the option, of worshiping and serving God using their own heart music and arts.”

was foreign to them, and made them feel marginalized. Their own music sang in their hearts. This simple discovery changed Robin's life.

She began studying the music of the Sakha, especially their epic song style called *olonkho*. This form of sung epic poetry was very important to the Sakha people as a way to preserve their history and culture, but it was dying out. The Soviet policies regarding ethnic minorities had not encouraged the preservation of minority cultures, and most of the masters of the *olonkho* art form had died or were very old. But the Sakha wanted to preserve their heritage, and Robin got to know some of the singers who were reviving the form. “I really care about the singers of *olonkho*,” Robin said. “They’ve become my friends.”

She’s had plenty of time to build those relationships as she continued her study of the form for her Ph.D. Now she’s rewriting her dissertation into a scholarly

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book on olonkho. "I document how, in 2005, UNESCO named olonkho as 'a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity,' launching a movement to keep it from being lost forever." Robin has spent nine years writing this book, motivated by the desire to do her part in revitalizing one of humanity's treasures.

But Robin's commitment to ethnoarts, the study of how different cultures use art, is deeper than just one culture and their art. She teaches at GIAL's Center for Excellence in World Arts (CEWA — pronounced see-wah) helping students learn the tools to study and advocate for the unique styles of painting, sculpture, dance, music and drama of cultures all over the world, including here at home.

So why is she so passionate about the arts? "The arts, especially local arts, ethnoarts, can be used in powerful ways to meet people's felt needs around the world. In many cultures, their own art forms have been devalued and marginalized. We train people to value and respect local arts — how to research both the arts and the artists — so those local arts can be used by a community to meet its own goals for justice, human thriving, identity, trauma healing — and do it in culturally appropriate ways in churches and in people's personal spiritual lives."

Because the arts are so powerful, an artist can say things to his or her own culture through them that can't be said any other way, sometimes things that can't even be put into words. "Art is more memorable than just words. Arts use the eyes, the voice, the body, not just the brain."

Robin smiled. "My friend, Brian Schrag, always says, 'Arts energize

everything.' People feel love when you care about their arts. It's a way of loving and accepting people." Brian, the founder of CEWA, played an important role in Robin's adventure in this field.

Back in 2006, Brian and Barbara Schrag started hosting evenings in their home for their students and other people interested in ethnoarts to gather and exchange ideas. Robin experienced one event back in 2008, while visiting from Atlanta. When she and Bill moved to Duncanville, they started alternating hosting responsibilities for these arts nights. Then when the Schrags downsized and the Harrises upsized their houses, Robin and Bill took over hosting duties. "It just happened that now we're the ones with the big front room," Robin explained. The groups they host come from CEWA, where Robin teaches, from the church the Harrises attend and elsewhere. And the big front room gives space to bring out the instruments: djembes, all kinds of guitars, flutes, even a grand piano which their daughter, a trained concert pianist who has played Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center, plays when she is in town. "It's often a multigenerational event. The recent arts night we hosted for our church had participants from age 4 to 84. We've had LEGO sculptures, poetry, dance, drama, music, spoken word, classical piano, painting, calligraphy, woodcarving, story ropes, anything you can imagine!"



Robin also co-teaches a workshop called Arts for a Better Future locally at CEWA, as well as in Alaska, England and at other international locations. The workshop equips participants to study, describe and encourage local art forms around the world. "Last year I traveled to South Africa, Guatemala and Brazil to present ABF workshops," she explained.



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Although it is a faith-based workshop, anyone of any or no faith is welcome to attend. “The principles we teach for understanding and respecting the arts are useful for anyone.” The workshop lasts for one week and always ends with an arts night at which the students are welcome to present arts they love. It might seem like a lot of work, but Robin says otherwise. “It’s really not a lot of work. We are just providing a venue for people to share. We do it as often as possible. Sometimes, we have 50 people in our house for pot luck dinners and to share arts they are passionate about.

“We’ve found that people will create more art just because an art night is coming up, and they want to have something new to share.” Robin was careful to explain, “It’s not a talent show. It’s about building community and embracing imperfection. Our students are going to go out into the world to encourage and foster creativity. We want them to practice their own creativity right here.” The people who come to these arts nights are varied. “Sometimes, they are people interested in the program at CEWA, or they have been overseas and are interested in sharing what is happening over there in the arts. But we also host arts nights to celebrate holidays like Christmas and the beginnings of semesters and graduations for our students. We’ll have five masters-level students graduating this year.”

Robin summed up her motivation for all she does in one sentence. “People everywhere have the right, and should have the option, of worshiping and serving God using their own heart music and arts.” **NOW**

Editor’s Note: For more information, visit www.gial.edu/arts.



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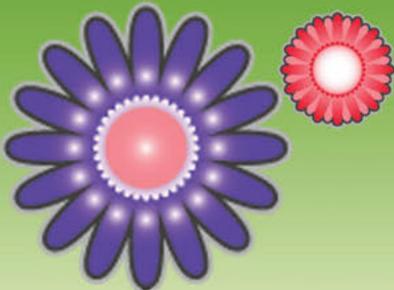
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Many Stories TO TELL

— By Rick Mauch

Every house has a story. In the home of Bernard and Renita Berry of DeSoto, the stories are plentiful and inspirational. A long concrete sidewalk with three terrace steps in the middle of it leads up to the brown and tan brick home with rust-colored trim. Terra-cotta flower pots filled with purple and gold flowers line the steps and encircle one of two large trees in the yard, hinting that this is a home where vibrant colors are appreciated.

Upon entrance, the pops of color continue. The off-white tile floor in the entry is covered with two narrow area rugs with gold and rust geometric patterns. Against one wall, a small, comfortable wooden bench invites guests to “take a load off.”

“When we moved in everything was blue,” Renita remembered. “We even had a blue couch.” Now, their formal living room features a rustic red, overstuffed couch and loveseat. Another highlight of the room is a vintage, blonde wood china cabinet. It has special meaning to Renita. “My grandmother gave it to me. She always knew I

*At Home With
Bernard and
Renita Berry*

liked it,” she said. Renita loves its ornate woodwork. Glassware is displayed on the scalloped shelves on the bottom and both sides of the base, and the mirrored hutch on top provides space for photos and other curios.

One of the signature features of the 2,000-square-foot home is the perfectly blended color scheme. Bernard credits Renita for success in this area. “She does know how to blend colors, so they look good,” he said.

The kitchen is an example of her decorating skill. Here she has blended cream cabinetry with the stainless steel sink and appliances. The colors are tied together by the gray and cream stone backsplash and silver-gray floor mats.



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The wallpaper in the kitchen and kitchen nook includes tiny blue-gray flowers.

The focal point of the den is the fireplace, complete with a 12-foot brick wall that stretches 8 feet across. They've converted it into an electric fireplace that lights up and heats instantly with a touch of the remote.

Above the hallway between the living room and kitchen is Bernard's special creation. On a large ledge that would otherwise be empty, he has created an office scene using a small desk and chair and a plant. During the holiday season, they put a Christmas tree up there, along with some fake snow. Bernard

even adds a train for the holiday setting. "I just thought since the space was there, why not do something special with it?" he explained.

On the wall of the guest bedroom is a series of five pictures. They depict a small boat traveling through a harbor on its way to join a group of other boats. "Being an old Navy man, I love



the water," admitted Bernard, who retired from the Dallas County Sheriff's Department after 30 years.

The master bedroom includes a quaint miniature bench, perfect for sitting and putting on shoes, and a chifforobe that houses a high-definition television and books. Books are important to Renita. In

fact, her love of stories led her to start writing her own. As an author, who goes by the pen name R. Jay Berry, she writes Christian books of historical significance based largely on lessons learned from her grandmother. "She would tell me about decisions in her life," Renita recalled. "I heard a message in her stories."

Renita's grandmother passed away in 2006. Since then, Renita has published four books, including a trilogy featuring lessons on listening to parents, communication and compromise and letting the Lord guide you. The fourth book, *Forever Love*, is the first in what she calls the *Forever* series and was released last year. Her fifth, *Forever Friends*, is due to be released later this year. "I'm in that



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book,” Renita said, noting it’s about eight ladies who used to work at the Dallas County Sheriff’s Department, which is where she met Bernard.

Renita, 62, left DCSD and spent three decades as an administrator in the Dallas Independent School District. Among her positions were assistant superintendent and executive director for academic resources. She retired in 2009.

While with the DCSD, Bernard rose to the rank of lieutenant. He held that rank for the final 22 years of his career there. He worked in a variety of departments, including the jail and civil division. But his favorite duty was working fugitive warrants. “I liked it because we traveled all over the country. She even let me go to Hawaii,” he said, nodding to Renita and chuckling.

Bernard retired from the DCSD in 2003, but then joined Renita in working for DISD as a police officer for the next three-and-a-half years. And, yes, he has plenty of his own stories to tell. “As I became more interested in being an officer, it was like I adopted a lot of students,” he said. “I was at a school near Love Field one day, and the kids were walking down the hall. One little girl looked at me and asked me, ‘Are you Martin Luther, the King?’ I guess they had just studied him. That makes your heart go out to them. I was



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really just having fun with that job, and it was great.”

But, he said, the stories we see in TV police shows and cop movies aren't always like real life. While watching, he'll often say to Renita, "That's not real."

What is very real, though, is their love of life and the many stories it offers. For example, they love to tell the tale of how their German Shepherd got the name Strawberry Sundae. "I'm not sure what I was thinking at the time," Bernard said, smiling. "We didn't want her to have a person name. We wanted her to have a fun name. First it was Sundae. Then I thought some people might get her confused with the day of the week, so we added Strawberry."

"Our veterinarian calls her Strawberry," Renita added, "but to the family, she is Sundae."

The idea has caught on with other members of the family. Their 37-year-old son, Stephen, has a Pit Bull named Peanut Brittle, and Renita's mother has a Chihuahua named Hot Cocoa. "I told my husband if we get another dog, we have to give it a meat name like Sirloin or Burger," Renita said.



The house has undergone some growing and changing over the years. For example, they added a sun room out back. "When we put it on, we envisioned wicker furniture, a TV, a sanctuary," Renita said. But it has become Sundae's room. "It makes her happy," she said, laughing.

They also love their family dearly. They care for her elderly parents, who live in Oak Cliff. "I'm there just about every day, picking up medication and running errands," Renita said. "It's a job, but one I wouldn't trade. Isn't that what we're supposed to do, care for our parents? They have lived through so much in life. They have so many stories of their own to tell, too." **NOW**

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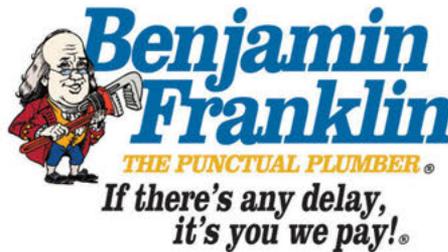
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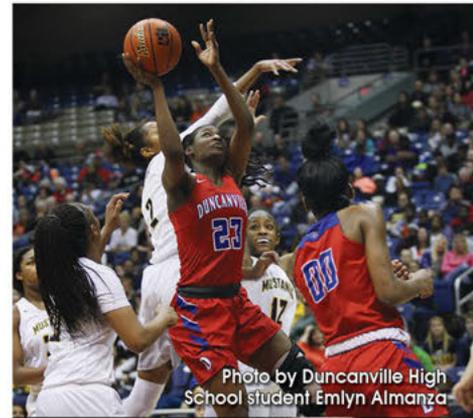


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Cinderella Effect

— By Rick Mauch



Don't tell Jessica Sultemeier she's disabled. That word in no way applies to her life. "Disabled means you are not able," she said. "I am able. I have a handicap, but I am able to do a lot of things." That's an understatement. The 31-year-old 2003 Duncanville High School graduate sings, acts and dances — and she does so with a pair of prosthetic legs. "I call it the Cinderella effect," Jessica said. "Nothing changed about her personality when she went to the ball. Her fairy godmother just changed the way she looked, but she was the same person inside. She just got a pretty dress and got to go party."

In late 2008, less than a year after graduating with a degree in history and a minor in vocal performance from The University of Texas at Arlington, Jessica was stricken with Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, in both feet. "I was choreographing and teaching, dancing 14 hours a day," she recalled. "When you dance you get bruises on your feet."



ella

The bruises became infected. She was also diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, and, in March 2009, the combination of the two led to the amputation of both legs from just below the knee. But it didn't stop her from continuing what she loves to do. "You wake up and see bandages at the end of your knees," she said. "You're either going to let it beat you, or you're going to beat it and keep living. I wasn't going to let it beat me." In fact, Jessica has enjoyed some of the best years of her life following the amputations. She's performed in 33 musicals in her life, including a dozen following the amputations.

A dancer since age 5, she has also continued in that art. For example, in the spring of 2013, she was cast in the chorus of *In the Heights*. "I went to the director, and he said I had to prove I could keep up — that I couldn't be afraid to show my legs onstage," Jessica said. "That was the first cast list I ever cried about seeing."







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Jessica is never shy about showing off her prosthetic legs and feet. In fact, she has fun doing so. For the Scarborough Renaissance Festival, she painted them to look like moving mechanical parts when she walked. “When I moved the gears cranked,” she said. “You’ve just got to embrace it.”

This past summer, Jessica portrayed Mrs. Banks in the musical *Mary Poppins* at Love Your City Theater in Cedar Hill. She bonded with the role. “In the musical, unlike the movie, Mrs. Banks has a hidden strength I definitely associate with,” Jessica said. She also played the Baroness in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* at Cedar Valley College in the fall of 2015. She called it a dream role for personal reasons. “My brother and I used to sing songs from the movie,” she said. “My brother and I were in *A Christmas Carol* at Cedar Valley in 2014. That was special, also.”

She’s also played Glinda the Good Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*. Along with the aforementioned theater groups, she performs with the Waxahachie Community Theatre and the Dallas Symphony Chorus.

“Jessica is one of the most talented performers in the Metroplex,” said Tawnya Lee, director at Love Your City. “She is a true professional in every way, dripping with talent, completely versatile, and yet so humble and willing to do whatever it takes to make each show she is in a success.”

And while she is the only one in her family with serious performing chops, it is clear her family does have a connection with theater. For example, her mother was especially happy when Jessica was cast as Marian Peroo in *The Music Man* in 2007 at Cedar Valley College. “That is my mom’s favorite musical,” Jessica said, noting that the family cats are named Amaryllis and Winthrop, the children in the show.





But Jessica does much more than perform. She works with private and homeschooled children with mobility issues and volunteers with war veterans dealing with the same challenges. “I want to be a difference maker,” she said. “I’ve been given a very rare opportunity. I was only in a wheelchair six months waiting on my new legs. Then, two weeks after getting them, I was walking. Four weeks after that, I was driving. I’m on my legs now 16-18 hours a day. I take them off to sleep.”

Jessica works hard to show others that life does not have to come to a halt following amputations. She battles to make sure amputees realize they have not lost any beauty. “I was working with a man who had lost his legs below the knee. He said he was ugly now,” she said. “I crawled over to my chair, wheeled over, put on my legs, stood up and rolled my pants legs down. He crawled over to me and said, ‘Tell me how you did that.’ I said, ‘The first thing you’ve got to do is get up.’ That was a year ago. Last I heard, he was getting his knees checked for prosthetics.”

Kids, she said, are the toughest with whom to work. She said the biggest challenge often comes from the adults accompanying them. “Kids will come up to me curious, wanting to look at my legs, and the parents will tell them to stop and not stare. I tell them to push all the buttons they want,” Jessica said.

“Kids see superheroes and realize they became that way because something happened in their lives. The Flash got struck by lightning and came back with super speed.”



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Blake Womack, a good friend, said of Jessica: “She has been nothing but resilient in her trials in life. She’s an example to live by, not just for amputees, not just for people with disabilities, not just for women, but everyone. She makes singing and acting look easy and simple. She always wants to try new things.”

Jessica has even auditioned via video for a show in New York City, *The Glass Menagerie*, since the amputations. Though she didn’t get the role, she said she did get personally contacted by the producer. “A Broadway producer called me to read. If that’s as close as I ever get to Broadway, that’s pretty cool,” she said.

Jessica, who proudly claims she lives an eighth of a mile from Duncanville, still has ties to her alma mater. Her mother works for the school district as a receptionist, and Jessica, who was on the drill team, sometimes visits her old program. She even choreographed a musical for the school. “They’ll always be in my heart,” she said.

As for the future, Jessica cites a song from *Mary Poppins*. The title is “Anything Can Happen.” “We’re not broken,” she said. “We have super powers. I can’t get shocked anymore because I’m grounded. I can walk on hot coals.” **NOW**



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DO WHAT YOU CAN, BUT KNOW YOUR LIMITS

- *Trust your instincts.* If your task is focused on changing the style of your existing backyard, you can probably find ideas online or by watching decorating shows on television. That, coupled with trips to home goods stores, flea markets and garage sales may be all you need to easily give yourself a new backyard.

- *You can do more than you know.* One popular idea these days is to add a shade area in the back with a pergola, instead of building a sunroom or extending your roof. You will want a professional to pour new concrete, but you can likely add the beams and create the roof

A photograph of a wooden coffee table on a deck overlooking a swimming pool. The table is made of light-colored wood with curved legs. On the table, there is a potted plant with white flowers. In the background, there is a stone wall and lush greenery. The pool water is visible in the foreground, and a person's leg is partially visible in the bottom right corner.

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Before After



yourself. Consider corrugated tin, a relatively inexpensive option that offers shade in the summer and the joy of listening to the rain in the fall.

- *Seek help when needed.* While DIY projects can save money and be a fun way to spruce up your home, there are many things you simply cannot do without a professional. You have plenty of options, depending on your project, so be sure to look into both large and small companies to find the one perfect for your needs.

PICK THE RIGHT HELP

- *Interview several businesses.* Before you agree to spend a large amount of money, meet face-to-face with multiple companies. If you are adding a pool and redoing the porch, meet with some that do only one part and some that do it all. A great pool company does not necessarily build great patios, and vice versa. Make sure bids have the same language in charges, so you are comparing fairly when looking at pricing offered. And ask for proof of insurance. Otherwise, you could be liable for on-the-job accidents.

- *They will all sound good.* When talking to prospective contractors, realize that they have people whose job is to earn your business. While you should definitely rule out any company from which you get a bad feeling, do not assume the first nice guy you talk to deserves your business. Talk to people you know who have used such contractors, and ask them about their experiences.

- *Know what others say.* Before asking for references, ask for a firm number of installations or projects the company did the year before. Then, ask for

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Joshua Thibodeaux

those references. If they only give you information on half of the jobs they did, that might indicate half of their recent clients were unsatisfied.¹ And check online sites like Yelp or Google reviews, but do so with doubled caution. Companies will sometimes pay people to post positive reviews, so those cannot always be trusted. On the other hand, negative reviews are written with emotional vim and vigor, so one or two bad experiences do not necessarily mean the company cannot be trusted overall.

DECIDE WHAT TO BUILD

- *Choosing between screens and sunrooms.* Whether you already have a patio or not, adding a covered area can be a nice addition to transition from the house to the yard. A screened porch is probably a simpler and less costly job, but weather, kids and pets may all necessitate repairing the screen every few years. A sunroom offers better protection from the elements, but it will likely increase the cost of your project. A sunroom will also increase the square footage of your house, which can be a nice selling point, but also may have tax implications.²

- *Make it legal.* Unless you are adding screen to existing framework, you will probably need a permit for your porch project, and adding a sunroom will definitely need one. Even if you are doing the work yourself, you still have to file with the city. It is a relatively simple process that starts with going to your town hall. If your plans are denied, you can either appeal or amend





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the plans to meet the code. Every city code has nuances, so be sure to swing by your municipal building beforehand. There will probably be considerations for size, building material, air conditioning and electrical. You might also have neighborhood requirements for exterior style, so be sure to take all of that into account when choosing what to build.³

- *Make a splash.* In some areas, you are only allowed to build above ground, so it is of primary importance to check with your city. Assuming you are hiring someone to install an in-ground pool, there are two main questions: How big will it be, and what will it look like? The size will be largely determined by the space you have and how much surrounding construction you want. Before you stress yourself trying to find a way to add the biggest pool you can, remember that most people just like splashing around, so bigger is not always better.⁴ And depending on your lot, building a little smaller pool might let you add diving rocks, a beach entrance or a slide. Talk through all of those options with your contractor before you settle on a design.

The Texas heat will be here soon. By getting the necessary permits, finding a contractor you trust and coming up with a plan you love, you can get the backyard you have always wanted this summer. **NOW**

1. <http://www.riverpoolsandspas.com/blog/bid/81335/The-One-Key-To-Choosing-a-Swimming-Pool-Contractor-Without-Getting-Ripped-Off>
2. https://www.trulia.com/voices/Property_QandA/Is_an_enclosed_sunroom_counted_in_total_sq_footage_-339621
3. <http://www.midlothian.tx.us/74/Building-Permits-Inspections>
4. <http://www.riverpoolsandspas.com/blog/bid/29149/How-to-Choose-the-Right-Swimming-Pool-Size-for-You-and-Your-Family>



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Integrity is more than a buzzword to Dick North.

Thinking Big for Your Future

Dick North works to help you find the house you really want. — By Adam Walker

Spring is a great time to be thinking about buying a new home or selling your old one. School is about to be out, and people will be moving. Dick North wants to help you dream bigger. He knows the local real estate market and has his thumb on the pulse of the community he serves thanks to his experience as a former president of his HOA and years as an activist in DeSoto city government.

After 21 years as a postal inspector, Dick retired in 1995 from a job that gave him an intimate understanding of government regulations and how they work. During his time with the postal service, he had over 20 relocations, so he understands real estate across the nation, and all the pitfalls and advantages of buying and selling. But retirement was only the beginning. “Retirement involves doing what you like,” Dick said. “And that’s what I’m doing.” He

started his journey in the field of real estate when he decided to become a real estate agent in order to save the commission on yet another of his own moves.

Customer satisfaction is always the most important thing to Dick. “I once had a couple from California who had sold their house there for big bucks and could afford anything they wanted in the market here,” he reported. “I showed them a number of houses, but none of them were just right, or they were bought by someone else first. So, we decided it made more sense for them to rent first and take their time. I found them a good rental at a great price. That gave them time to get familiar with the area until we found them the perfect house to buy. It had everything they wanted.”

Dick’s outgoing personality helps him get to know his customers

and cultivate relationships, so he can learn what they really want. "Building trust is very important if you want to understand what a customer is really looking for."

He's also willing to go the extra mile to provide service. "Any time the phone rings, I answer — day or night," Dick smiled, remembering a story. "I've even had customers call after midnight, and I've gone to show the house!" When he says his hours are 24/7, he means it!

Flexibility is also important. "No one really knows what the 2017 market will look like, but interest rates will not get better than they were in 2016. You have to be able to adapt." The depth of Dick's background will help him do just that, adapt for the benefit of all his customers.

“Building trust is very important if you want to understand what a customer is really looking for.”

As important as thinking big is for Dick and his customers, integrity is just as important. It's a quality he's been cultivating for decades, going back to his time as a postal inspector investigating identity theft, mail scams and auditing the internal procedures of post offices large and small. Think how that kind of integrity can work for you as you make one of the most important financial decisions of your life. He strives to be the kind of agent you want on your side.

Whether you are looking for a new build or a government repossession, if you need help qualifying for HUD, Fannie Mae or other assistance programs, Dick can help you find the right home for you and your budget. He's only a phone call away. **NOW**

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Annie Mae Hughes, Calversia Byrd and Johnny Thomas view DeSoto's Black History Month display.



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Don't Keep Family in the Dark About Your Plans

You might work diligently at building a financial roadmap for your retirement years and a comprehensive estate plan. But you can't just *create* these strategies. You also have to communicate them. Specifically, you need to inform your spouse and your grown children what you have in mind for the future — because the more they know, the fewer the surprises that await them down the road.

Let's start with your spouse. Ideally, of course, you and your spouse should have already communicated about your respective ideas for retirement and have come to an agreement on the big issues, such as when you both plan to retire, where you'll live during retirement, and what you want to do as retirees (volunteer, travel, work part time and so on).

But what you both might have let slip through the cracks are the important specifics related to financing your retirement. You'll need to answer several questions, including these:

- When will you each start taking Social Security?
- Are there strategies for maximizing both of your Social Security payments?
- When will you need to start tapping into your respective retirement accounts, such as your IRA and 401(k)? And, once you do start withdrawing from these accounts, how much should you take out each year?

You may want to work with a financial professional to address these issues. But however you proceed, you and your spouse need to be "on the same page" regarding the key financial components of your retirement.

Now, consider your grown children. You need to clearly communicate your estate plans to them, not only for the sake of openness and honesty, but also because they may well play active roles within those plans. So when talking to your children, make sure you cover these areas:

• *Durable power of attorney.* You may well decide to give one of your grown children the durable power of attorney to pay bills and make financial choices on your behalf if you are unable to do so.

• *Estate executor.* An executor is the person or entity you name in your will to carry out your wishes. An executor has a variety of responsibilities, so you'll want to choose someone who is honest and capable of dealing with legal and financial matters. Again, you could ask a grown child to serve as your executor, but, to avoid potential conflict of interests among your children, you might want to go outside the family. Talk with an attorney about how best to name your executor.

• *Status of will and living trust.* Assuming you have already drawn up a will, share it with your grown children. The same is true with a living trust, a popular estate-planning tool that may allow your survivors to avoid going through the time-consuming, public and expensive process of probate. A will and a living trust will obviously contain a great deal of information your children should know about, so take the time to explain your thinking when you created these documents.

You want to enjoy a comfortable retirement, and you want to leave a meaningful legacy through your estate plans. To help accomplish both these goals, you need to include your loved ones in your arrangements, so open those lines of communication. **NOW**

Edward Jones, its employees and financial advisors are not estate planners and cannot provide tax or legal advice. You should consult your estate-planning attorney or qualified tax advisor regarding your situation. This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Vernon Folks is an Edward Jones representative based in Cedar Hill.



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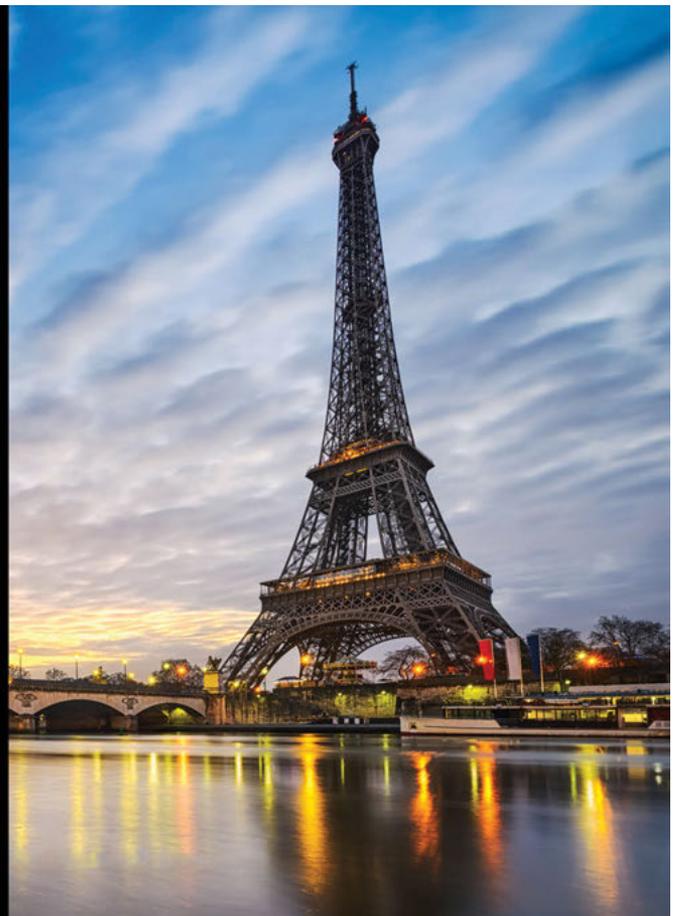
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April 3

The Life and Times of Walt Whitman: 6:00 p.m., Zula B. Wylie Public Library, 225 Cedar St., Cedar Hill. Prof. Robert O. Harris Jr. presents on Walt Whitman.

April 8

Best Southwest Everything Teen Expo 2017: 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., DeSoto Town Center. Teens register free at www.desototexas.gov/everythingteenexpo.

April 10

Garden Party: 11:00 a.m., Duncanville Public Library, 201 James Collins Blvd., Duncanville. Kick-off party for the Edible Library. Come prepared to dig in the dirt. Tools, seeds and supplies provided. Look for the canopy near Nance St.

April 12 — 14

Jerusalem Revisited: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Windsor Park Baptist Church, 750 Pleasant Run Rd., DeSoto. Free.

April 13

CHISD Does Fashion With Flair: 11:30 a.m., Alan E. Sims Recreation Center, 310 E. Parkerville Rd., Cedar Hill. Fashion show and luncheon benefitting Cedar Hill Shares food pantry. Tickets available. Call (972) 293-2822 or (972) 293-0411.

Duncanville ISD District Art Show: 6:30-8:00 p.m., Duncanville High School-East Cafeteria, 900 W. Camp Wisdom Rd., Duncanville. Free admission.

April 15

Miracle Weekend Easter Egg Hunt: 10:00-11:00 a.m., Doggie Egg Hunt; 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., egg hunt for kids 10 and under, Virginia Weaver Park.

Walk for Life Community Event: 8:00 a.m., Duncanville High School track, 900 W. Camp Wisdom Rd., Duncanville. Benefitting special needs, cancer, sickle cell and psoriasis. Register and donate at blessedtobeasurvivor.org.

April 21

Registration deadline for 2017 Fire Truck Pull benefitting Special Olympics. Event to be held **May 20**, at Armstrong Park in Duncanville. Contact Doug Ray dray@sotx.org or Officer Doug Sisk dsisk@duncanvillepd.com (972) 780-5027.

April 22

Third Annual DeSoto ISD Male Leadership Symposium: 8:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m., DeSoto High School, 600 Eagle Dr., DeSoto. Relevant conversations for males in grades six through 12. Contact Debbye Garner (972) 223-6666 or garner@desotoisd.org

April 24

Earth Fest Cedar Hill: An Earth Day and Arbor Day Celebration: 5:00 p.m., Cedar Hill Government Center, 285 Uptown Blvd., Cedar Hill. Family friendly event.

April 29

50+ Cedar Hill Citizen Open House: 10:00 a.m.-noon., Cedar Hill Community Center, 1704 Mansfield Rd., Cedar Hill. Discuss the current senior center and future programming. Come let your voice be heard.

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In the Kitchen With Rostinn Holmes

— *By Rachel Smith*

At age 15, Rostinn Holmes immersed herself in her late grandmother’s wisdom of cooking by watching her make various foods from scratch. “I thought that was so cool, so I promised myself I was going to cook just like her,” she beamed. After her grandmother became ill, Rostinn often sought her approval by preparing her grandmother’s recipes step by step. “To see the smile on her face,” she admitted, “let me know she was proud of me.”

Rostinn also bonded with her daughter through experimenting with various kinds of lemonade. They have already embraced the public with their catering company, LeMonADE with Love and Catering. “Making new foods or drinks relieves my stress,” she shared. “I’m always happy to see a pot or pitcher empty after serving it.” **NOW**

Cast-iron Skillet Cornbread

- 1 cup yellow corn meal**
- 1 cup flour**
- 1 cup milk**
- 1 egg**
- 1 tsp. baking powder**
- 1/4 tsp. salt**
- 4 Tbsp. sugar (more if you like sweet cornbread)**
- 1/3 cup cooking oil**

- 1.** Mix all ingredients together well, except the cooking oil.
- 2.** Preheat oven to 400 F. Pour oil into a cast-iron skillet and heat until oil bubbles.
- 3.** Pour cornbread mixture into skillet; reduce heat to 350 F. Bake until brown. Let sit for 15 minutes before cutting to prevent crumbling.
- 4.** Cut and serve.

Savory, Flavoury Greens

- 2 bunches turnip greens**
- 2 bunches mustard greens**
- 2 bunches collard greens**
- 2 chicken bouillon cubes**
- Preferred spices for water, to taste**
- 1 small white onion, sliced**
- 4 Andouille sausage links, sliced**
- 1 cup olive oil**
- 1 Tbsp. jalapeño, chopped**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1 Tbsp. red pepper flakes**

- 1.** Pick and clean each bunch of greens. Cut up collard greens to cook.
- 2.** In a large pot, add water, bouillon and any other preferred spices. (If you’d prefer spicier water, add a pinch of kosher salt.)
- 3.** Slowly add greens; cook until boiling. Add onion, sausage and then remaining

ingredients. Let cook, covered, on medium heat for about 1 1/2 hours, until greens are dark in color. If collards are still hard, cook an additional 20 minutes on low heat.

Chicken Alfredo Stuffed Potatoes

- 4 baked potatoes**
- Kosher salt, to taste**
- Foil**
- 3 boneless chicken breasts**
- Black pepper, to taste (divided use)**
- White pepper, to taste**
- Garlic powder, to taste**
- Meat tenderizer, to taste**
- 1 16-oz. carton heavy whipping cream**
- 1 bag shredded Italian cheese blend (divided use)**
- Butter, to taste**
- Garlic salt, to taste**
- Parsley flakes, to taste**

- 1.** Rinse potatoes for about a minute in warm water; pat dry. Lay them on a plate and sprinkle salt on top, ensuring salt gets all around potato.
- 2.** Preheat oven to 350 F. Wrap each potato in a thin layer of foil; poke holes in potatoes. Place in oven, spacing out on the rack; bake about 1 1/2 hours to ensure they are fully cooked.
- 3.** Rinse and slice chicken; season with black pepper, white pepper, garlic powder and meat tenderizer. Let cook in a skillet about 15 minutes on medium heat. Remove from oven to let cool; shred meat.
- 4.** Add chicken back to skillet; add whipping cream and cheese blend, reserving a handful of cheese for later. Stir until thickened; let sit until potatoes are done.
- 5.** Remove potatoes from oven; slice open. Add butter, garlic salt and black pepper. Place remaining cheese blend in the center; add chicken Alfredo mixture. Sprinkle with parsley flakes and serve. *Note:* Potatoes should be moist, and you are able to eat the skin.

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FRIDAY

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE - 7PM
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SATURDAY

EGGSAPALOOZA | 9AM-1PM
- EGG HUNTS | BIRTH - 5TH GRADE
- SKY DIVING EASTER BUNNY
- FREE EVENT

SATURDAY NIGHT SERVICE - 6PM

SUNDAY

SERVICES - 7AM | 9AM | 11AM
- CHILDCARE PROVIDED

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