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M A G A Z I N E

APRIL 2023

Figure Flex

Brittane Johnson adds
bodybuilding to her résumé

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

Featured Business:
Access Self Storage
And Truck Rental

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Nikki McGroarty

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Apr. 7, 15 – Good Friday/Easter Holidays (No School)
Apr. 12 – Coffee Talk w/ Superintendent Sanford
Apr. 17 – ROISD School Board Meeting
Apr. 18-May 12 – Texas State Assessments
Apr. 24-28 – Celebrate Texas Schools Week
Apr. 25 – Elementary Open Houses
Apr. 27 – Secondary Open Houses
May 1-5 – Teacher Appreciation Week
May 24 – Last Day of School
June 4 – ROHS Graduation

Details at RedOakISD.org

ON THE COVER



Busy Red Oak wife, mom and accountant, Brittanee Johnson, has also become a bodybuilding champion.

Photo by
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EDITOR'S NOTE



Angel

Angel Morris
North Ellis Co. NOW Editor
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Getting down to earth ...

I have to admit, even though Earth Day was born the same year as me, I knew little of what it's all about besides what's implied in the title — celebrating our planet. Since its inception on April 22, 1970, however, Earth Day has come a long way. What started as an environmental protection cause has evolved into an “educational revolution” according to the website, earthday.org.

“In the decades leading up to the first Earth Day, Americans were consuming vast amounts of leaded gas through massive and inefficient automobiles. Industry belched out smoke and sludge with little fear of the consequences from either the law or bad press. Air pollution was commonly accepted as the smell of prosperity. Until this point, mainstream America remained largely oblivious to environmental concerns and how a polluted environment threatens human health.”

Then came the New York Times bestselling book *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson in 1962, explaining how pollution and public health are intertwined. Awareness and concern for living things was heightened. Partnering his own and other's growing interest toward the environment with the student anti-war sentiment of the time, Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson presented the idea of college campus “teach-ins” to be held April 22 (smartly between spring break and college finals to increase student participation). Ultimately, a national staff of 85 young activists decided to reach beyond college campuses, spawning the term Earth Day and expanding to events around the country. In 1990, the event became global and Senator Nelson received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for founding the day.

Today, Earth Day encompasses climate and environmental literacy, conservation and restoration, pollution elimination efforts, dietary change, regenerative agriculture and more. Check out the official website to see how you might celebrate the planet today.

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FIGURE FLEX

— By Angel Morris

Brittane Johnson is proof that you can do what you set your mind to, even if that means being a working wife, mom and active church ministry member who decides to become a bodybuilder, too. “As most busy families know, it takes a lot of planning. I’m always proud of how we manage to fit everything in,” Brittane, who has two sons with her husband, Jonathan, acknowledged.

Raised with health consciousness, bodybuilding was not an odd consideration for Brittane, who made time for exercise during her demanding career in the accounting industry. “My mother instilled a love for fitness at an early age. Growing up with brothers, we would have push-up and sit-up competitions. I always had a love for weightlifting and cardio,” she noted. “I would be caught at work doing calf raises and dips at my chair when I needed a second to refocus. Once I entered my late 20s a lot of people would ask if I competed because of the conditioning of my physique. I always wanted to compete because I admired the women from the *Gladiator* show, who were also bodybuilding athletes, and WWE.

“The opportunity to get on a stage to show your hard work and transformation, was exciting. I took the time to look up competitors from all categories, and what those categories entailed,” Brittane continued.

After much research and preparation, Brittane’s first Figure Bodybuilding competition was in 2020, at the National Physique Committee Show of Champions in Austin, where she finished fourth in the Masters and fifth in the Open divisions. “Although I didn’t come in first, I fell in love with the relationships you make with the other competitors and the pageantry of it all,” she reflected.

Up next was the NPC City Limits Championships in Waxahachie in May 2021, where Brittane placed second in Open Class A. “In August 2021, I went to compete in the NPC Texas Classic, winning first in Masters over 35 and Open Class A, resulting in me taking the whole Figure win with first in the overall competition,” Brittane enthused.

In the Overall competition, winners for each Class battle one another in flex poses. “That year, the winner received paid admission to the National Qualifying competition in Pittsburgh. Using that motivation, I went on to compete in the NPC North American Championship Open Class B. I won my class, which resulted in earning my Pro Card,” Brittane noted. “That definitely is on my top most exciting moments list. My husband and coach had prayed for me to get my pro card in four shows, and God made it happen!”

Brittane was hooked. In September 2022, she made her Pro Debut at the Sasquatch Pro, in Seattle, Washington. “To compete as a pro was a different experience. The promoters spoiled us with free daily workouts at their local LA Fitness. They had gift bags filled with bodybuilding treats, etc. I placed fourth out of 27 beautiful Figure athletes that day. I got to stand and battle, in first call outs, with athletes who had already gone to Mr. Olympia (the super

bowl of bodybuilding) more than once,” she recalled.

Now Brittaneé anticipates the 2023 season. “The rules for this season have changed. Points are no longer an option. Competitors now must win first place to make it to Mr. Olympia,” Brittaneé explained. “So, let the battle begin.”

Brittaneé said preparation for shows requires 16-20 weeks of consistent workouts, diet and pose practice, plus wardrobe, appearance and travel planning. “There are a lot of challenges when choosing to go after this goal. Finding the right circle of people, the right nutritionist, posing coach, etc.,” Brittaneé explained. “Not to mention trusting that the results will come if you put in the work.”

At the same time Brittaneé was tackling her bodybuilding goals, her family bought its Red Oak home, and she began a new job. Inspired by her mom and encouraged by her husband, Brittaneé also credits bodybuilders Sheilahe Brown and Dana Linn Bailey as those who motivated her.

Now, Brittaneé looks forward to motivating others. “I’m proud of how God has used me to encourage others to live healthier lives. Many friends trust me to provide them workout advice,” she noted. “Growing up, I didn’t see a lot of women the way I wanted to look, so to help more women be comfortable with having muscle means a lot. And making sure my boys know that a woman can be strong on the inside and out.”

Brittaneé is also active in dance and marriage ministries within her church and is the Dallas KPMG African ancestry business resource group community service committee lead. So, if you think life is too busy to try a new adventure, consider Brittaneé’s story. “My husband and I always agreed that we would encourage all goals and dreams for ourselves and the kids, within reason. That means we must plan each week to the T, but accept that sometimes we have to be flexible, too,” she said. “Those times, you just have to commit to picking up your workout on other days. Most importantly, just get started. If it doesn’t challenge you, it doesn’t change you. You only get one vessel. It’s up to you to keep it in its best condition.” **NOW**



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— By Angel Morris

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Access Self Storage Owner Doug Hunt has watched the industry change during his 38 years of involvement. “When I first started, many facilities had no security — certainly not climate-controlled units. Management would be in an office the size of a match box. The facility was a metal building with roll-up garage doors,” Doug reflected. “Our storage facilities now are much more attractive, with the majority climatized. They are totally enclosed with a coded keypad for entry and cameras recording every move.”

At Access, storage units as large as 10-by-25-foot or as small as 5-by-5-foot are available by month or long term. Credentials are required to access the gated facilities, which are staffed by a resident manager. “With their new access control system, customers don’t even have to get out of the car. The gate will open via a Bluetooth app on their phone,” Doug explained.

Shredding stations, packing and moving supplies and even a conference room for customer use can be found at Access. Also, U-Haul trucks can be rented for local or cross-country transport.

Doug opened his first Ellis County location in Red Oak in 2009, providing features that are standard at all his new locations, including Midlothian, Lancaster and DeSoto. Customers range from those moving and in need of temporary storage, to those clearing their homes of infrequently used items. "Many people use storage due to a crisis. Someone dies and the family needs someplace to put everything, so the house can sell. Divorce causes people to use storage, or roommates going their different ways. Fire, flood, tornadoes — you name it. There are lots of tragedies causing need for temporary storage," Doug, who has provided free storage for victims of local tornadoes in years past, noted. "I'm glad to be there for people in those times of need."

Founded with Doug's father in 1972, and maintained with his brother, David, Access makes a habit of giving back. "Access likes to partner where we can make the greatest impact. We've been a big supporter of the Chambers of Commerce in our areas," Doug explained. "We also like to partner with education foundations. We've been the Louis Vuitton sponsor for Handbags for Hawks since Red Oak Education Foundation started it."

Access Storage further assists others through camp and college scholarships, as well as donating to nonprofits. Doug has served many terms on the Ovilla City Council, earned the Red Oak Masonic Lodge Volunteer of the Year Award, Lancaster Chamber Golden Gaither Award and Man-of-the-Year from DeSoto Chamber of Commerce. Doug and David are also co-chairs for fundraising with Texas Self Storage Association, raising almost \$2 million for the Shriners Hospitals for Children in Galveston.

Access Storage is the recipient of many recognition awards, including the Consumers Choice Award, received every year for a decade, and Best Storage Facility by the *Waxahachie Daily Light*. "The profit we make in this business helps us help others," Doug admitted. "I love what I do and enjoy giving back to the community."

Doug encouraged would-be storage users to visit one of his Access Storage locations. "Just look at how full your garage is," he suggested. "This summer, don't make your car bake out in the driveway ... let that car get out of the sun!" **NOW**

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Zoomed In: Amber Parker

By Angel Morris

Reading about a family earning the Guinness World Record for most members graduating from the same university, Oak Leaf's Amber Parker wondered if her family had a shot at that title. "I posted on our family Facebook page, asking who had graduated from Texas Tech. It took eight years to collect everyone's paperwork, and by then, we'd had 10 more graduate from TTU," Amber explained.

The timing turned out perfectly in that the Wuensche family Guinness World Record was attained at the start of Tech's 100-year anniversary. "The university set up a photo shoot at Womble Stadium — 28 attended, holding pictures of 30 that could not attend, for a total of 58 graduates: 44 family members, and 14 spouses," Amber noted. "All in all, 109 total family members have attended since 1953; four generations. We're very excited about this record and sharing it with Texas Tech."



Wooden Elementary fifth-grader, Dillon Rocio, earns first place in the Special Olympics basketball skills competition.



Red Oak Police Lieutenant Jason Meeks discusses safety, fraud and identity protection at the Senior Citizens Center of Red Oak.



Corie Enge, Carter Washington, Makayla Harris and Bryson McNeal are winners of the District Science Fair held at Life School Red Oak Elementary.



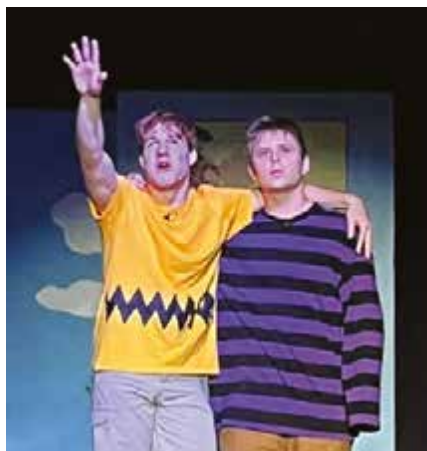
Gwen Ryan marks her 93rd birthday with family and friends.



Kristi Pickard shows off her auction winnings at the Red Oak Education Foundation Handbags for Hawks fundraiser.



Dallas County Commissioner John Wiley Price and U.S. Black Chambers Board of Directors Chairman Charles O'Neal speak at a Glenn Heights Black History Month event.



Seniors Jake Nelson and Peter Tharp portray title roles in Ovilla Christian School's production of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

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**Urgent
Health
Warning:**

An Important HEALTH WARNING for Men and Women Age 55 or Older!

**Do You Suffer from *Pain, Burning, Numbness,*
or *Tingling* from Nerve Damage Caused by
Diabetes, Infection, or ANY of the Other
Conditions Listed in this Urgent Special Report?**

*If so, now you can virtually end your discomfort,
protect your health, and help you live a more active life.*

Dear Suffering Friend:

Tens of millions Americans have nerve damage — a condition known as “neuropathy.”

The most common symptoms of nerve damage are pain, burning, tingling, and loss of feeling in your feet, legs, and fingers — with the pain ranging from mild to almost unbearable.

If you are diabetic, and especially if you are also age 60 or older, odds are that your nerve damage has been caused directly by your diabetes — although many younger diabetics also have nerve damage from this potentially deadly disease.

But many OTHER people with these symptoms — pain, burning, and tingling — are NOT diabetic, yet also suffer from nerve damage.

According to the Mayo Clinic, the many diseases and conditions that can destroy the nerves in your extremities and limbs include:

- | | | |
|------------------------|--|------------------|
| ✓ Alcoholism | ✓ Repetitive motions such as typing | ✓ Chemotherapy |
| ✓ Autoimmune diseases | ✓ Bone marrow disorders | ✓ Tumors |
| ✓ Vitamin deficiencies | ✓ Certain prescription medications | ✓ Infections |
| ✓ Liver disease | ✓ Falls, sports injuries, and other trauma | ✓ Kidney disease |
| ✓ Underactive thyroid | ✓ Wearing a cast or using crutches | |



***New hope — and better health —
for men and women with nerve damage ...***

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CookingNOW

In the Kitchen With NIKKI MCGROARTY

— By Angel Morris



Nikki McGroarty began cooking for fun in her 20s, and — now in her 50s — has been enjoying it ever since. “I became interested in the Food Network and watched to learn everything I could. I was a quick study,” she explained.

Nikki introduced her New Jersey-raised husband to barbecue, Mexican food and Southern cooking. “Now, he won’t eat out for much of those foods because he loves mine. He ate at a restaurant back home, and the manager asked how it was,” Nikki recalled. “He said it wasn’t as good as the Texas version his wife makes.”

Nikki appreciates that her mother and grandfather were fans of her food, too. “My mom had me bring many favorites to get-togethers, and my granddad said my No-bake Cheesecake beat any restaurant!” **NOW**

Homemade Enchiladas

- 1 12- to 14-oz. jar salsa, your choice of heat and texture (divided use)
- 2 lbs. at least 80/20 ground beef
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 3 pkts. taco seasoning
- 1 cup water
- 1 16-oz. can refried beans
- 1 to 1 1/2 16-oz. pkgs. finely shredded fiesta blend or Mexican blend cheese
- 1 8- to 10-count pkg. large flour tortillas

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Pour half the salsa in the bottom of a 13x9-inch baking dish. In a large skillet, brown the ground beef and onions. Drain the grease; return the meat and onions to the skillet.

- 2. Add the taco seasoning and water, mixing until the beef is fully seasoned. Mix the beans into the beef-onion mixture until evenly blended.
- 3. Put a handful of cheese on a tortilla, add the meat-and-bean mixture and another handful of cheese. Roll like a burrito; place in the baking dish on the bed of salsa. Repeat with the remaining tortillas, sprinkling cheese around the outside of the baking dish and pouring remaining salsa down the middle. Heat until the top of the cheese is melted and bubbly.

No-bake Cheesecake

- 1 8-oz. pkg. Philadelphia Cream Cheese, room temperature

- 1 8-oz. container sour cream
- 1 cup sugar (May substitute Splenda to make it virtually sugar free; crust has some sugar.)
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 8-oz. container whipped topping
- 1 prepared graham cracker crust
- Cherry pie filling, to taste (optional)

- 1. Using a hand or stand mixer, cream together the cream cheese and sour cream until smooth. Add the sugar and vanilla; mix well.
- 2. Fold in the whipped topping. Add the mixture to the crust. Let set overnight.
- 3. Add the cherry pie filling on top, if desired, when ready to serve.

Nikki’s Banana Pudding

This recipe can be made mainly sugar-free by using sugar-free instant pudding and zero-sugar Cool Whip.

- 2 5.1-oz. boxes vanilla instant pudding
- 2 5.1-oz. boxes banana cream instant pudding
- 6 cups milk
- 2 8-oz. containers whipped topping
- 2 bunches bananas, sliced
- 1 box Nilla Wafers

1. Combine the first 3 ingredients. Set in the refrigerator for about 1 hour, then put into a serving bowl.

2. Fold in each container of whipped topping separately (you may not use all of the second container). Fold in 1 bunch of sliced bananas. Go around the bowl in a circle with 2 Nilla Wafers on each column around the outside of the mixture.
3. Slice more bananas for the top, placing them in a circle. Cover the bananas on top with more Nilla Wafers. Let set for several hours up to overnight.

Navajo Indian Frybread

I use the dough only setting on my bread maker. If done manually, let the dough rise in a greased bowl with a towel over the top in a warm place.

- 1 .25-oz. pkg. active dry yeast
- 1 Tbsp. white sugar
- 1 1/4 cups warm water (divided use)
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1 cup warm water
- Vegetable oil, for frying

Taco Toppings:

- 2 lbs. ground beef
- 3 pkts. taco seasoning
- 1 cup water
- Shredded lettuce
- Shredded fiesta blend cheese
- Diced tomatoes

1. *For frybread:* Mix the yeast, sugar and 1/4 cup water in a large mixing bowl; set aside until the yeast mixture forms a creamy foam layer on top, about 5 minutes. Whisk the flour, salt and baking powder in a bowl. Stir the flour mixture into the yeast mixture by thirds, alternating with the warm water in thirds. Beat to make a firm dough.
2. Cut the dough into 6 pieces; roll each piece into a ball on a floured work surface. Roll out the dough balls into flat round tortillas.
3. Heat vegetable oil in a deep fryer or large saucepan to 350 F. Gently place the tortillas, one by one, into the hot oil; fry until golden brown on both sides, turning once (2 to 3 minutes per side). Drain on paper towels; set aside.
4. *For toppings:* In a large skillet, brown the ground beef; drain off the fat. Return the beef to the skillet; add taco seasoning and water. Cook until the meat is completely covered, and the water has evaporated. Add the beef, lettuce, cheese and tomatoes atop the frybread.

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