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On The Cover



Charles Wagliardo teaches others the importance of motorcycle safety.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Happy Mother's Day,

April showers helped my flowers grow, but it took a nice-sized gift card, kneepads and some good old sweat and tears to get them planted in the flowerbed. Planting spring and summer flowers should have taken a couple hours, but that was definitely not the case in my front yard. The soaker hose came up and was replaced with something less costly. I don't remember how many bags of "good dirt" were added, but my backache indicates it was more than two or three.

I realize June is a month away, but I encourage you to mark your calendars early. On June 2 and 3, the annual Gingerbread Trail event will feature six beautiful homes. Hmm, I wonder if my mom would like to celebrate Mother's Day a few weeks late. I guess I won't know until I ask her!



Sandra

Sandra Strong
WaxahachieNOW Editor
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To have a business survive 40 years is a major accomplishment. Deciding to end a service you have been involved with most of your life is heart wrenching. However, due to the high demand the collision repair industry is placing on our time, my wife, Rhonda, and I have decided to no longer be in the towing business. We had a long, prosperous run to say the least.

In 1972, my parents, Chuck and Maxine Anderson, opened Ellis County Auto Repair. The collision repair business and the need for a tow truck went hand in hand. As the collision repair business grew, so did the need for our tow trucks. In the early '70s, there were few companies running 24-hour towing services, so my dad got onto the Waxahachie P.D., Ellis County Sheriff and Texas Highway Patrol rotation lists. When I was a teenager, my dad woke me up in the middle of the night to go with him on law enforcement calls.

Since both my parents worked at the body shop, providing transportation for us to school and various functions began to cause them problems, so at the tender age of 15, I was lucky enough to get a hardship license to drive my brother and youngest sister to school and myself to work. Once I became more familiar with the tow trucks, my dad allowed me to do calls by myself. I loved it and the challenges and experience it provided. I gained trust from my dad, law enforcement and our customers, who knew when they phoned, day or night, I could take the call and safely get their vehicle to the repair shop. For many years, the only vehicle I had to drive, for both personal and business reasons, was the tow truck. In fact, when my son, Ryan, was born, I took his mother to the hospital in a tow truck!

I saw it all while involved in the towing business — from death and destruction on the highways to moving precious cargo for others. Before rescue equipment was available to our local fire departments, we would often help extract people safely from their crashed cars, using our boom, cables and chains — our version of the modern day "jaws of life." My dad and I took pride in our trucks and what we could do with them. We never, ever refused a call due to the complexity of the situation.

Although we are getting out of the towing business, we will

continue to operate our collision repair facility. Since 1972, we have provided residents of Waxahachie and surrounding counties with superior auto-body repairs. Our original location was in downtown Waxahachie. We then moved to a larger downtown location in 1986. We were at that shop until Ellis County Commissioners decided to build the new courts and office complex on our land, and we had to move. In 2010, we opened a new high-tech shop on North 77 to better serve our customers.

Now with a 23,000-square-foot shop, we have all the room we need to repair any vehicle with collision damage. We consider ourselves "collision repair specialists," and there is literally nothing we cannot do to repair a damaged vehicle. Our goal is to provide superior service at a fair price and get a wrecked car back to its pre-loss value to the best of human ability.

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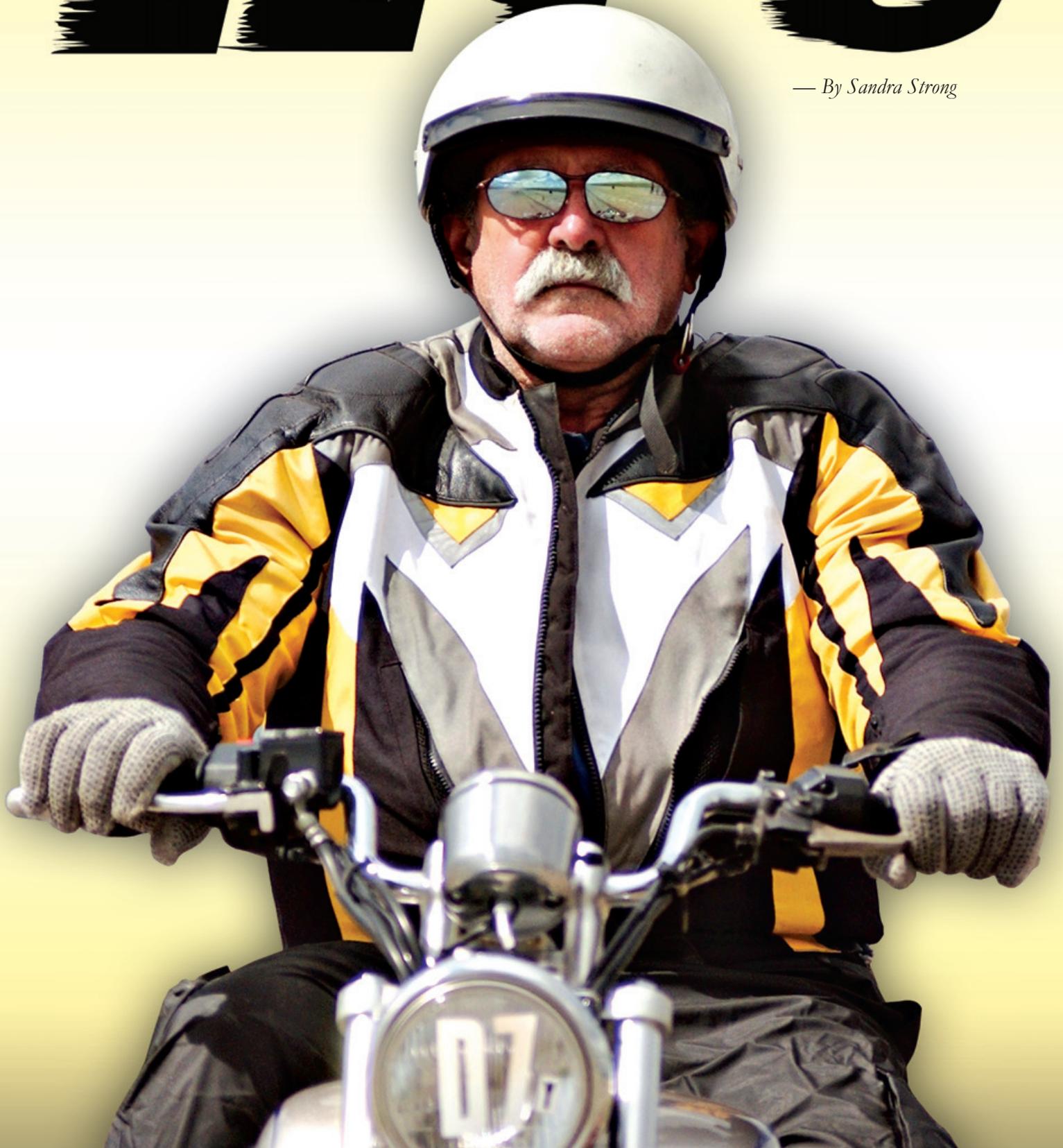
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LET'S

— By Sandra Strong



RIDE

Charles Wagliardo has always had a passion for things that go fast. "I guess it's a guy thing, the wild child syndrome," he said, remembering his younger days as a teenager. "I did everything my older siblings did. I rode bicycles, go-karts and motorcycles. If it had wheels, I was on it."

So it really came as no surprise to family and friends when, 13 years ago, Charles decided to teach others the importance of motorcycle safety. His desire to teach was prompted by a basic motorcycle course Charles took with his youngest son when his son was 17. "I was a self-taught rider," Charles admitted. "I soon found out there was so much I didn't know."

Charles spent one year working under

the tutelage of another instructor before making the break to do his own thing. "Before I could venture out on my own, I had to become a licensed instructor," Charles explained. "I also had to have a contract with the state, which is renewed every two years."

The safety course didn't become mandatory until two years ago, so like Charles, there were a lot of self-taught motorcycle riders and enthusiasts. The



course he teaches today provides one half of what it takes to secure a license. The other half is a written exam administered at the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

Charles teaches two classes — the basic class for beginners and an experienced class for those who, like Charles, are self-taught riders. "The basic program is designed for the beginning rider, the person who's never sat on a bike before," Charles said. "Since the motorcycle course became mandatory, we've seen lots of individuals in the basic class who have been riding for a long time, but they now must have the schooling to get their motorcycle license." The classes are taught on the weekends — biweekly in the fall and winter, weekly during the spring and summer months. "We have been lucky to have the support of the Navarro College," Charles said. "We start off in the classroom. Then



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“Before I could venture out on my own, I had to become a licensed instructor.”

we move out onto the campus property for the hands-on portion of the course, which is four-and-a-half to five hours both Saturday and Sunday.

The two-day class is for beginners. Charles’ goal for this class is to teach riders how to properly maneuver to be able to ride safely on the street alongside other vehicles. During classroom time, they are told about the basics and what will be expected of them once they get outside. “We read, we discuss and we watch a video,” Charles stated. The program is based on the strict guidelines of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) based out of California. It’s a multi-sensory course that’s taught in sequential order. One skill builds on the next.”

Classroom time is broken down into sessions that deal with specific points. “All points are centered on safety,” Charles said. “Sessions include: riding gear, basic maneuvers, special riding situations, carrying a passenger and what can happen while riding under the influence.”

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“The 17 exercises introduced in the classroom are taken to the riding area,” Charles continued. “They put what they’ve learned in class to the motorcycle.”

The most difficult things for new riders to master in the basic course are balance and coordination. “Using your hands, feet and head at the same time is so important when riding,” Charles admitted. “But, practice really does make perfect.” Unless the conditions are hazardous, the class is held rain or shine. If they happen to be outside in the rain, many of the safety tips learned in class for inclement weather can be put to the test.

“Speed seems to come easily for most students, which make the classroom and riding times so important,” Charles stated. “They learn proper speed, especially in turns.”

All instructors are Department of Public Safety (DPS) and MSF certified. FBI background checks are also part of the instructors’ credentials. “We have students who range in age from 15 to



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80," Charles said. "These background checks are so important since we deal with minors."

In the state of Texas, it's mandatory for all riders under the age of 21 to wear a helmet. At the age of 21, it becomes the rider's choice. "We teach them to ride in full gear," Charles said, explaining that full gear includes helmet; motorcycle jacket, pants and boots; gloves and eye protection. "And we do stress the importance of wearing a helmet no matter your age. It just makes sense."

All schools must also be DPS- and MSF-approved. "The only real difference will be found in the personality of the instructors," Charles said. "All our instructors work hard to help each student succeed, as well as enjoy the class."

Charles has firm guidelines to follow set up by the MSF and DPS. His natural personality and love of motorcycling is apparent in his teaching method. When everyone in class is following his directives, the overall experience of motorcycle safety school becomes one of student-centered camaraderie and fun. "Safety rules and issues are my primary concern with students," Charles reiterated.

The month of May is designated as Motorcycle Safety Month, but Charles believes motorcycle safety is something that should be practiced on a daily basis. "You can't buy the family groceries on a bike. You really don't want to ride it in bad weather," he said. "Don't buy a motorcycle to save money, buy a motorcycle for the love of riding."

In his 13 years as a teacher, Charles has learned that students need to be teachable in order to learn. In days gone by, motorcycles were synonymous with gangs, drugs and alcohol. That is no longer the case. Charles has taught the motorcycle safety course to riders from all walks of life — from housewives and teachers to doctors and lawyers.

Charles also brings his own philosophy to class. "Find a bike you are comfortable on," he shared. "Use the Three Bear mentality. Not too big, not too small, just right. Learn to ride with confidence, and always remember to be as safety conscious as possible." **NOW**

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COMMITTED for the Cure

— By Katie Almond



The word “cancer” rarely conjures an image of hope. In fact, it’s quite the opposite. The American Cancer Society Relay For Life brings a new frame of reference to the cancer battlefield by creating connections between cancer survivors, caregivers and the community. “It’s really all about being there and being involved in the community,” said Denise Owens, media chair for the Central Ellis County Relay For Life.

Relay For Life offers cancer survivors and those who have lost loved ones to the disease the opportunity to reach out and find a warm hand in the darkness. People connect to form teams. The teams connect to form a specific local relay event. The relay events connect to fight the common enemy — cancer. These connections are life-changing. Relay For Life does more than just raise money to support the American Cancer Society. The relay gives communities across the globe a chance to celebrate the lives of people who have battled cancer, remember lost loved ones and fight back against the disease.

There are three Relay For Life events in Ellis County — Central Ellis County, Ennis and Midlothian. Originally, all the Ellis County events were held together. The split occurred when participation grew so much that finding a single venue within the county large enough to accommodate everyone became impossible. “The Central Ellis County Relay draws about 1,000 people,” Event Chair Frankie Watson said. “If you add Ennis and Midlothian, it’s more like 2,000. Finding a place for that many people was too hard, but that’s a good problem to have.”

Frankie became involved with Relay For Life through a church she was attending in Ellis County. “It happened about nine years ago. My best friend is a cancer survivor. It’ll be 28 years this

Labor Day. The first year I participated in the Midlothian Relay, the next year I did Midlothian and Erath County, and it just snowballed from there," Frankie said.

That's a pretty big snowball. Frankie is the go-to gal for the Central Ellis County Relay. She and the other dedicated subcommittee chairs are responsible for coordinating an event that raises upward of \$125,000 yearly for the American Cancer Society. In fact, when proceeds from all three Ellis County Events were combined, the total raised last year was more than \$400,000. That puts Ellis County in the top three fundraisers for similarly-sized communities in their five-state area. Not too shabby, considering that there are 55 events in North Texas alone.

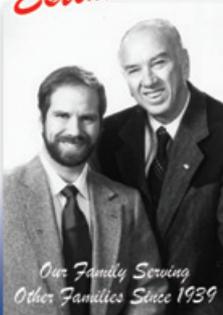
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Denise became involved in Relay For Life through a co-worker about nine years ago. She lost an aunt to breast cancer and started doing Relay For Life and the Susan G. Komen 3-Day walk. "After a couple of years, I continued with just Relay For Life because, for me, it felt more personal. The 3-Day is great [for breast cancer], but Relay for Life is for all kinds of cancer and all ages can participate," Denise explained.

Denise has served on the Ellis County Relay For Life committee for five years in various capacities. Staging a relay event

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“To see the money you raise actually benefit the people in your community means so much to me.”

is an enormous amount of work. Every committee chair expends significant time and energy in their service to the cause. Denise described it this way, “Every year when the committee goes through the struggle of putting the event on, it is such a full-time job. But then you go and see the survivors do their opening lap, and then you go through the luminaria ceremony. It doesn't matter how many times I've been through it, I still cry. I'm still moved.”

The proceeds from Relay for Life go to the American Cancer Society, but also have a direct impact on local communities. “To see the money you raise actually benefit the people in your community means so much to me,” Denise stated.

“There's an 800 number cancer patients can call any time of the day or night if they have a question or if they're just scared,” Frankie added. “When insurance won't pay for a prosthetic, they can go to the American Cancer Society for that. When a patient loses their hair through chemo, they can get a wig. If someone doesn't have family

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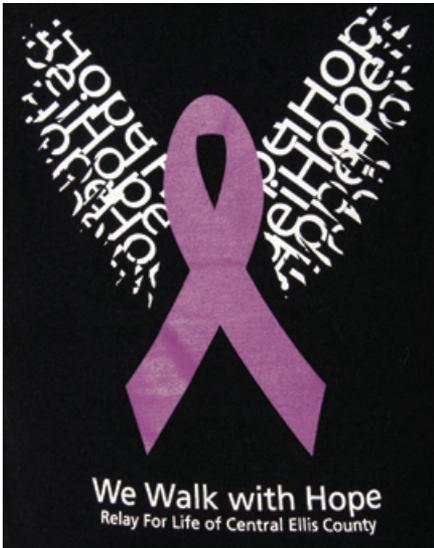
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or friends able to drive them to their appointments, they'll be put in touch with someone who can."

The goal of finding a cure for cancer elicits support from every sector. Ellis County residents are very supportive of the Relay For Life. "People in the community are great. They're really dedicated to the cause," Denise smiled. Corporate sponsorship has taken a hit, however, and the committee is actively seeking new corporate sponsors to fill the void.

Ellis County doesn't limit its support to dollars donated. The number of relay teams increases every year. "I know we have three new teams this year," Frankie said. In addition, there are those who aren't on a team, but still come out to watch and support.

Frankie and Denise were enthusiastic about spectators. "They can come at any time during the night to watch and visit with the teams or even participate," Denise stated. In particular, cancer survivors are encouraged to attend the event and participate in the opening lap of the relay, which is exclusively for

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survivors. The Survivor Lap is a way to honor their courage and achievement. “We want you to know that you’re considered a survivor the day you receive your diagnosis and every day after,” Frankie declared.

This year, Relay For Life is being held in the new parking lot at Lumpkin Stadium at Waxahachie High School. In previous years, the event took place at the Sports Complex, but scheduled maintenance necessitated a move. The smooth relocation to a new venue is another example of the support Ellis County offers Relay For Life.

Relay For Life will take place from 7:00 p.m. June 8 until 7:00 a.m. June 9. Every hour is filled with games, activities or ceremonies. From the Mr. Relay Lap where men wear dresses and carry purses to gather trackside donations to a Poker Lap where everyone gets a playing card at the end of each lap, and the best poker hand wins after five laps, Relay For Life is a celebration. “Relay is a fun way for us to feel like we’re actually accomplishing something,” Denise smiled.

Relay For Life is about courage and survival, remembrance and honor. To sum up her commitment to staying involved, Denise said, “I set a goal back when I started this. I wanted to do something so if my children hear the words, ‘You have cancer,’ they don’t think it’s a death sentence.” **NOW**

Cancer survivors wishing to participate in Central Ellis County Relay For Life should contact Donna Daniell at boribovi25@yahoo.com.



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dream house

AT HOME WITH
Donald & Ericka Allen

— By Randy Bigham

pages of picture albums, but make their home feel like the dream house they hoped it would be when they bought it six years ago.

Although Donald is from Ennis and Ericka from Palmer, they met in Dallas where they were neighbors in 2001. “We had mutual friends, but we never met each other growing up,” Ericka said. “We started dating, got married and moved to Coppell, but we never felt like it was our home. Each time we would drive back to Ennis or Palmer to visit our families we talked about how great it would be to live closer to our parents.”

That was music to the ears of Charles and Nancy Allen and Roger and Vickie Stacks who welcomed their children back to Ellis County in 2005. Donald and Ericka

Despite the patter of little feet, Donald and Ericka Allen maintain an orderly, stylish home. They admit caring for their two children keeps them so busy they have time for little else, but the young couple isn't complaining. Charlie, 4, and Edith, 3, are the delight of their lives. These are the times when memories are made, and through the moments they share and laugh about, the family cherishes their time together. Donald and Ericka enjoy the scurrying feet, the smudged faces and the everyday happenings that not only make the



had found the perfect house on a street in Waxahachie that had a sentimental attachment for Ericka. "Each year when I was a kid," she recalled, "my parents would take us down this street to look at the Christmas lights. I remember the street just glowed."

Finding their dream house wasn't easy. When the Allens first started house hunting there was nothing that caught their eye. "We knew we wanted an older home, but we didn't want one that we had to spend a lot of money on to restore," Ericka admitted. She had her heart set on a house on the street she remembered from childhood, but there were none for sale at the time.

In June 2005, the Allens were considering a home they liked on University Avenue, but they hesitated, and fate stepped in. "After we visited that house, I suggested we drive down the street. I loved just to look," Ericka

recounted. "Well, we came upon our house, and there was a For Sale by Owner sign in the front yard." Donald called the number on the sign, and the owners invited them in to look over the house. "We walked in, and the house was just gorgeous," Ericka enthused. "I immediately fell in love with it. I pictured us living

there forever. We made an offer the next day, and it became ours."

Today, life for Donald and Ericka is all about the little ones underfoot, but one would never guess it. Their home is impeccable — no scattered toys, spilled juice or signs of crayon-happy fingers. "We are kept pretty busy chasing the kids around," Donald confessed. "But they're at that age where you have to do that, and we love them." It's a wonder the pair manage to juggle full-time jobs




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(Donald works for Cisco and Ericka for Trac-Work), raise little Charlie and Edith and keep their beautifully decorated home in ship-shape condition. But anyone visiting the enchanting stone house with its modified Tudor facade and red-painted front door will be greeted by clean interiors furnished in good taste.

Built in 1931, the house was originally owned by J.E. Roach, one-time principal for the old Waxahachie High School (now Global High), and renovated in 2002.

The interiors are a sparkling example of modern and antique elements combined, from the dining room with its pastel blue walls and white woodwork to the master bedroom in green and white. Hardwood floors are original in the front rooms, and expertly matched in the recently expanded portion of the house.

The dining room table is a mock-period style resembling Duncan Phyfe, and a large buffet-hutch gives a nod to the past but is absolutely new, made by

Donald's cabinetmaker father. Several pieces in this room contribute to its vintage charm. Donald has framed the house's architectural plans on one wall. The effect is striking. "I was glad to see these," he said, "because they are true blueprints. And the owners' names are marked on them." Placed beneath the framed plans is an Art Deco phonograph, completely restored. "All that's missing are some old records to play on it!" Donald laughed. On the opposite wall

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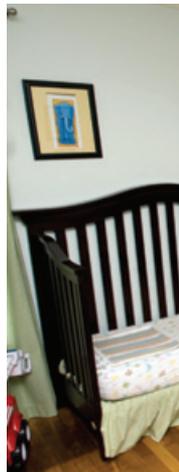
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In fact, shopping for special vintage finds is one of the few hobbies Donald and Ericka have time for in their busy lives as parents. “Donald and I love to shop for antiques,” Ericka said. “We try to buy locally as much as possible. I collect vintage plates, and most of my plates come from the antique stores in Waxahachie.” Among favorite haunts are Gran’s Antiques, Klassy Klutter and the Gingerbread Mall. They also bought several pieces in nearby Forreston. Although



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the newer pieces the couple mixes with period furniture look like expensive Ethan Allen purchases, Ericka confessed they are “90-percent Pottery Barn.”

Along with her plates, Ericka collects elephants — porcelain, ceramic, carved, painted, any kind of elephant that will fit in a display case. “When I was a girl, my father went on a trip and came back with a little elephant as a gift,” Ericka remembered. “It started there.”

Throughout the house, elegance and practicality converge to form a seamless whole. The master bedroom sports an iron bed with modern linen and curtains, antique furniture and a built-in bookcase that Donald and his father installed. The master bath is all in white with distinctive glass accents, and the living room which overlooks a deck contains a comfortable neutral-tone sectional. The kitchen is a symphony in white. The breakfast table is new with antique chairs. Edith’s and Charlie’s rooms are pink and blue respectively, and reflect the toddlers’ playtime preferences: dolls for Edee, as she is nicknamed, and fishing for Charlie.



This family enjoys all outdoor activities. “We love boating and jet skiing,” Ericka said. “Our kids, especially Charlie, love it, too. Last year was the first year he rode in a tube. This year, we are going to try and teach him to water ski.” Donald and Ericka have other plans for fun times ahead with their kids as they look forward to many more years of making memories in the house of their dreams. **NOW**



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Playing Off

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— By Katie Almond

He sells pipe valves and fittings to municipal waterworks, and she is retired from retail sales and management. They've been married for almost 24 years. At first glance, George and Sherry O'Connor might seem like any typical couple, but just ask them about art. That's when the stories come tumbling out.

George and Sherry are very active in the Ellis County Art Association, where they've been in over 40 plays together, and she paints and sculpts, and he designs and builds theater sets. "Her art and our theater, it kind of helps keep us sane and grounded in less mundane things," George explained.

Sherry and George met in Atlanta when he transferred there for work. Shortly after his arrival, George asked an acquaintance, "Where do you go for fun around here?" The reply was, Studebaker's, a popular nightclub in Atlanta.

Sherry told it this way. "I was there with my girlfriends from work on a Thursday night. Studebaker's had a \$1 cover charge with a great free buffet, and we were all single girls on a budget. George walked up and asked me to dance. We've been dancing ever since," she smiled.

Sherry is originally from the Northeast, while George hails from Waco, Texas. He has a quiet charm, full of warm smiles, that's the perfect foil for Sherry's effervescent personality. Theirs is the perfect partnership with the added fact that both are passionate about creating and supporting art.

Sherry grew up in a house where art was just a part





of daily life. Her mother was an artist, whose beautiful watercolor paintings hung throughout the family home. Sherry started drawing at very early age, but her efforts weren't always appreciated. "I had a teacher who would say things like, 'Sherry, trees aren't purple.' I realize now how sad that was. She wanted me to look at things exactly how they

were, and I've always looked at things how *I* see them," Sherry asserted.

When she was in high school, Sherry was forced to switch to an art class when the choir class she wanted was full. "I did *not* want to take art. Well, I got in the art class, and I kept making A's. I thought the teacher must be giving everyone an A, but that wasn't it at all. She actually wrote me a note that said

'You are very good at this, continue with it.' From that point on, art was my thing. I can't imagine my life without it now," Sherry declared.

George began his theatrical career as a youngster. "Growing up in Waco, one of my best buddies in about fourth or fifth grade encouraged me to get involved with what was then called the Paul Baker Children's Theater," George said. Paul Baker was



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also head of the drama department at Baylor University. When Paul relocated to Trinity University a few years later, George and some others followed him. They spent their summers in San Antonio working on all sorts of artistic and theatrical projects under the name Youth In Motion.

After high school, George enrolled at The University of Texas at Austin in their celebrated fine arts program. "I remember one particular play that I did. I was on the same stage with an Emmy-winning actress, a Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, an artistic advisor to the American National Theatre and Bruce

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McGill, who was recently inducted into the Texas Film Hall of Fame,” George reminisced.

George knew that technical theater would provide a more direct route to paying jobs after college, so he learned how to design and build sets. He worked as shop foreman for The University of North Carolina at Greensboro theater department for a few years, but even technical theater didn’t provide a reasonable standard of living.

He moved back to Waco to pursue other career opportunities, and theater became his avocation. One summer, he built sets for the Lone Star Musicals in Galveston. More recently, he and Sherry lent their backstage skills to the Bishop Arts Theatre Center, where they designed and built sets. As George explained to his father once, “Dad, your avocation is golf. Mine is theater. Your avocation costs money. Mine makes money.”

Sherry and George have lived in Waxahachie for six years. During that time, they’ve become passionate supporters of the Ellis County Art Museum. They have served as officers in the Ellis County Art Association and participate in every way they can to support the Art Museum.

The Ellis County Art Museum is located on West Main Street in a historic landmark building that needs quite a bit of work. The museum is filled with the work of local artists and is also home to adult and children’s art classes, art workshops, plays and civic meetings. “It’s a community treasure,” Sherry affirmed.

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Despite the challenges of plein air painting, Sherry loves this event. "Painting outside in the heat and the



wind, I can't tell you how many times I had to re-anchor my canvas because it just plain blew off," Sherry laughed.

Creativity is the fabric of life for George and Sherry. "It helps that we both have imaginations, because I'll say 'Hey, I got an idea! Why don't we do this?' George will say, 'Yeah! And while we're doing that, why don't we ...' We play off each other," Sherry admitted.

For the artsy couple, there's always something new to learn, always a fresh project just around the corner. Sherry is thinking seriously about taking up writing. Diving into a new creative discipline doesn't seem to daunt her at all. "Maybe I'll write a book. Maybe I'll illustrate it, too," Sherry said.

If youth is a state of mind, George and Sherry know the secret. They have a taste for courage over timidity and for adventure over a love of ease. Perhaps Sherry sums it up best with one simple statement, "I think art is our life." **NOW**



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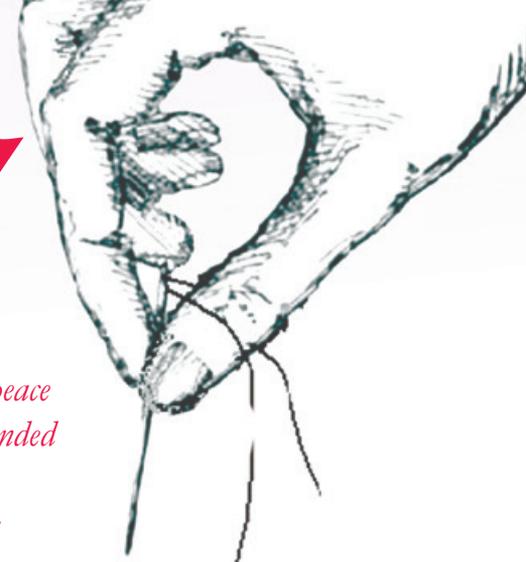
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Wholehearted

— By Randy Biggam

Alecia Peters is on a mission to help sufferers of domestic violence reclaim peace and trust in their lives with the local, faith-based initiative she founded two years ago. “When abuse happens, the heart and mind are crushed,” she said. “It takes the power of God to heal that.”



Her organization, Healing Hearts Center, is already providing relief and referrals out of the Ellis County Sheriff's Office, and peer counseling through a crisis hotline. But a full-time outreach center and shelter are needed to serve women and children who find themselves in situations of abuse. "In 2011, there were over 600 reported incidents of domestic violence in Ellis County," Alecia said. "In 2009, two victims were murdered as a result of domestic violence. So the need for a shelter here is great. The average may be 600 incidents, but the actual number may be quadrupled if you consider cases that go unreported."

Since Waxahachie is in the heart of the county, it makes the city the logical choice for a central office and shelter. "Our focus is on establishing a permanent shelter, whether through the donation of a house or of land for building one," Alecia said. "Right now we have no set location for sheltering women and children

who have endured abuse, so we have to rely on temporary emergency placement.”

She hopes the community will continue aiding the center, so more victims of abuse and assault can be helped. “We are extremely grateful for the heartfelt support of various churches, schools, businesses and individuals throughout Ellis County,” Alecia confessed, “but we want to increase our fundraising efforts in order to get a shelter up and running as soon as possible.”

The young woman who is the guiding force behind Healing Hearts Center acquired her passion for helping others in critical situations as a social worker, but also through personal experience. “As a survivor of domestic violence, I can empathize more effectively with those to whom we provide peer counseling,”

“The purpose of Healing Hearts Center is to end domestic violence and sexual assault in Ellis County and surrounding areas.”

Alecia admitted. “And when I can help people get out of a bad place, it’s that much more gratifying, because I was once in their shoes.”

Healing Hearts’ vision statement reflects her personal goals: “We are the hand that compassionately empowers and affectionately guides hurting individuals, and which encourages them to live enriched, purposeful lives in safety and serenity.” Alecia hopes those who receive aid and shelter through her outreach will learn to “make healthy decisions for themselves and their family,” as well as find “restoration and wholeness in spirit, soul, and body.”

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From left to right: Deputy Ken Hatcher, Lourdes Plata (secretary on the board of directors), Alecia Peters (sitting) and Irene Vitosky (treasurer on the board of directors)

domestic conditions keeps Alecia motivated to make a difference. Statistics are indeed shocking — one out of three women in Texas will face domestic violence, and five children, many under the age of 5, die every day from abuse or neglect nationwide. “The purpose of Healing Hearts Center is to end domestic violence and sexual assault in Ellis County and surrounding areas,” Alecia said. “Our mission is to eradicate these problems by providing emergency housing, crisis intervention and prevention education throughout the community.”

The work is complicated because of the emotional toll abuse afflicts on victims. “Their self-esteem has been eroded, and they feel they don't deserve a better life,” she said. “But we are here to tell survivors of abuse that there is help, and that they can prosper away from their abusers. Everyone has a right to be safe. No one has a right to violate your safety.”

By raising awareness of the urgency to remove victims from desperate conditions, Alecia hopes businesses and other agencies will partner with her to build a shelter to meet the needs of women and children seeking a safe haven, while helping to rebuild their lives.

Alecia has no doubt Healing Hearts will meet its goal of establishing a shelter for battered women, with the continued help of the community. “Donations make a tremendous difference,” she said. “We thank everyone whose donations have

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made it possible to continue our services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. We are blessed to have such generous donations. Healing Hearts Center is a nonprofit organization and donations are tax-deductible."

Since the group's first board meeting in September 2010, businesses, law enforcement agencies, churches, schools and individuals from across the county have pledged their support to the work Alecia and her staff of volunteers are accomplishing. "I really want to single out the board of directors for Healing Hearts for embracing the need for a local shelter," Alecia said. "Irene Vitovsky and Lourdes Plata have been a great help to me." She also credits the police departments of Waxahachie, Ennis and Red Oak for their assistance and partnership.

Healing Hearts Center received its tax-exempt status in March last year, and has since become a member of both the Ennis and Waxahachie Chambers of Commerce. The group has also partnered with local businesses to raise funds — notably with Chili's in Waxahachie, Ennis and Cedar Hill, which donated a percentage of the purchases from diners who presented a Healing Hearts campaign flyer. Alecia gives speeches to civic clubs, schools and other parties who are interested in learning more about Healing Hearts.

The 24-hour hotline has been a key undertaking in the center's fight to end

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domestic violence. “We also offer peer counseling to survivors. We complete risk assessments and develop goals and safety plans,” Alecia explained. “If you need help, we are here 365 days a year. We provide free and confidential support, referrals and crisis intervention.”

The most fulfilling aspect of Alecia’s work is the knowledge she is helping save lives. She has witnessed many heartwarming success stories throughout the years, seeing women with little self-confidence gain a sense of empowerment, seek education to better their lives and the lives of their children and find spiritual enlightenment in God. Through Healing Hearts, she knows she will see many more happy endings. Meantime, she and her volunteer staff continue in their dedication to getting the message out. “Education is the greatest weapon we have to combat domestic violence and sexual assault,” Alecia concluded. “But our status as a faith-oriented outreach is also crucial to our approach. The name Healing Hearts is inspired by Psalms 147:3 – ‘God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.’ And that is God’s will.” **NOW**

Editor’s Note: For more information call (972)388-4777 or visit www.healing-hearts-center.org. Crisis hotline: (800) 828-7983.



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KARATE

Kids

— By Cindy Malone



Matt Gibson, Martin Mendoza and Donald Goldman are best friends. They also could not be more different. The one thing they do agree on, and participate in together, is the World Martial Arts Club, the martial arts program at Waxahachie

Faith Family Academy. The Waxahachie academy is a sister school of the larger Faith Family Academy in Oak Cliff. It is a pre-K through 12th grade, parent's choice charter school based on an advanced arts program and a stellar academic program.



Martial arts students, Martin Mendoza, Donald Goldman and Matt Gibson are at the ready on the mats!

A few years ago, an art teacher, Thomas Kramer, was approached by a student who knew he was experienced in martial arts. "The student had heard me say I knew martial arts," he admitted. "He asked if I could coach him with a few things."

Thomas hadn't thought of it before, but the request opened his eyes to the need some of these students had. Thomas had watched as some good, hardworking kids struggled with their tempers and how to handle discipline. He knew martial arts could be a perfect tool for teaching the principles of self-control. After asking the principal, it was suggested Thomas start an official school club to encourage more participation.

Thomas had once helped teach jujitsu at the University of North Texas, and some of his co-teachers from there now come to visit Waxahachie FFA to help him teach different disciplines like judo, kung fu, kickboxing and karate. World Martial Arts Club (WMAC) meets several times a week after school. Their enrollment has continued to grow to where there are now eight to 10 co-ed students enrolled in the program. Matt, Martin and Donald, although not elected leaders, are definitely the most involved and outspoken of the bunch. They are the unofficial ambassadors of the group, getting other students to join and participate.

Matt and Martin play baseball together for the YMCA. Martin spends any extra time, which isn't much, playing the video game, Modern Warfare. "I eventually





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want to join the military before going to college," Martin said. Martin also really likes to read, but this seventh-grader isn't reading the books that are popular among his classmates. He prefers to read "war stuff."

Donald loves sports, even though martial arts is the only one in which he participates. "My mom worries about me getting hurt playing too many sports," Donald explained. Donald, an eighth-grader, loves math, his computer classes and Boy Scouts. He has achieved Star Rank in his Troop, No. 141, out of Desoto. One day he has hopes of becoming a chef.

Matt isn't sure exactly what he wants to do after finishing school, but as a seventh-grader, he has plenty of time to decide. He loves math, calling it "my easiest subject," and Boy Scouts.

Each boy joined the martial arts club for his own reasons. "I have a few anger and temper issues," Martin confessed. "Martial arts help me with my self-control." He also loves the self-defense moves he learns.

For Matt, it began as a way to stay out of trouble, giving him "something to do after school." It has grown into something more for him though, as he advances through the stages of the program. The stages are beginner, intermediate and advanced, as opposed to belt colors like in other programs.

Donald's reason for joining the club is very different from the other boys. At his previous school, he was bullied for perhaps not being the most popular kid. He has found his place in the WMAC and true friends in Matt and Martin. Not surprisingly, his favorite moves to learn and practice are the self-defense moves.

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Martin's favorites are the take-downs, the moves that win. Matt likes it all. Martin and Matt agree that the stretches are their least favorite part. Donald specified with a smile, "grappling against Martin," is his least favorite part of the club.

Each practice starts off with a strict conditioning program of stretching, cardio and strength training. The coach then leads them in drills, reviewing the moves they have already learned. Next they learn their new moves and work with those. "Only after that," Thomas explained, "can those kids with signed permission slips and current physicals grapple with each other for practice." The club practices in what was formerly the sanctuary of a church. The church had three domed buildings, which the school currently uses for a cafeteria, a gym and locker room. They only have a few mats to use and a back room in which to store their equipment.

Grappling helps the boys train for competitions. Although they have only been able to compete in one tournament, they did pretty well. Well, except for Donald, who "lost in 10 seconds." Luckily for him, his sense of humor and stick-with-it attitude allows him to laugh at that statistic. Martin came in second overall in his weight, age and experience class. Matt placed first in his class.

The next competition these boys are eligible to compete in is coming up later this month. However, the competitions are not cheap. The less expensive competitions can cost more than \$80 for each student. "Last year, the boys took it upon themselves to sell candy to raise the money for the tournament," Thomas explained. "I was proud of their initiative." This year, more of the kids

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want to compete, so Thomas is looking into a larger fundraiser to help anyone who is eligible, and wants to compete, get to the tournament.

Along with perhaps going to more competitions, Thomas has a few other goals. "I would like to raise money to buy more equipment," he shared. "Right now we are using thin gym mats. I would like regulation martial arts mats."

Martin's personal goals are "to remain on the A/B honor roll at school. I also want to be more fluid in the way I move between moves."



Matt agrees staying on the honor roll is important. He has a loftier goal of "coming in first at the NAGA competition in May."

Donald's goals are simple. "I want to rank higher in competition. I really need to improve my reflexes and speed. I might even try to join more sports."

Thanks to the martial arts club, there's a feeling of camaraderie among kids who don't play "main-stream" sports. Although the WMAC is not regulated by the UIL, Thomas has a no pass, no play rule to keep his kids working hard academically, as well as physically. Martin, Matt and Donald might not otherwise be close friends, but thanks to the WMAC and Coach Kramer, the boys are getting a chance to work together to not only improve themselves and each other, but the school as well. **NOW**

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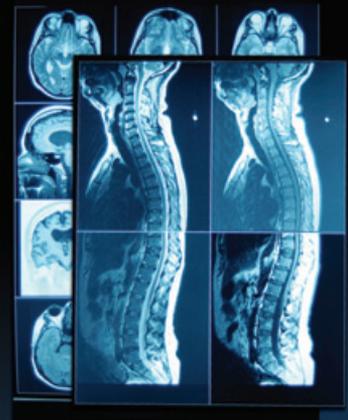
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Simple Call

— By Cindy Malone

As Cathie Robertson walked through the talent tunnel onto the stage at Carnegie Hall, she reflected on the magnitude of the performance she and the other musicians were about to give. She took the time to breathe and remember the steps it took for her to be there, celebrating the Lord and living what seemed, for that moment, an experience of a lifetime.

Cathie grew up in a family of musicians in Colorado. Her grandfather was a minister at a local church. One day, without notice, his pianist moved, and the small congregation was left without the music that played an important role in each service. Cathie's mom, just a young child at the time, sat down behind the piano, and as if by miracle, began to play by ear each hymn she had grown accustomed to hearing every Sunday. "She truly had a gift from God," Cathie recounted.

Later, Cathie's mother married a minister of music. Her dad played several instruments in a southern gospel band, and everyone in the family sang, including



her brother, who is now the minister of music at Life Fellowship Church in Westminster, Colorado.

Cathie met her husband, John Robertson, when they attended the same church in Northglenn, Colorado. In 1974, they married and moved to Jacksonville, Texas, so John could attend Jacksonville Bible College. However, life happened, and college was put on hold for children and jobs. Cathie and John quickly found their church home at First Baptist Mixon, where Cathie, following the path of her parents, became minister of music. The Robertsons have three children: John, Jesse and Sara, all born in Tyler, Texas.

In 1986, the family moved to Waxahachie so John could pursue ministry again. Once they got here, the opportunity to open his glass company, Ray Bland Glass, was one John couldn't ignore. He decided to become an active deacon member at South Prong Baptist Church where they were attending church, and Cathie once again became the minister of music. "It was a very rewarding job. I led the choir, directed all the musicals, including Easter and Christmas with the kids, and helped with vacation Bible school," Cathie explained.

She recently resigned her position at South Prong after more than 17 years of service. "We planned on visiting other churches until we found one we liked, but we fell in love with Farley Street Baptist on our first visit," she said. Perhaps in the future she will help with the music there, but until then, her job as secretary to the Athletics, Safety/Security of Waxahachie ISD, a position she has held since 1993, will continue to keep her busy.

One day, her brother, Les Gilmer, called her excitedly to invite her to meet them in New York to join with other church choirs, and sing on stage





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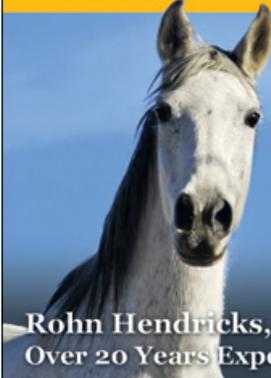
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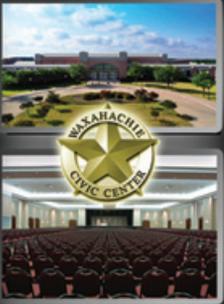
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at Carnegie Hall with The Annie Moses Band. “The Annie Moses Band, a traveling bluegrass gospel group, came to my brother’s church to perform,” she explained. “They were putting together a nationwide group of Christian singers and instrumentalists to perform at Carnegie Hall in January. They invited him, and in turn, he invited me. Although it wasn’t paid for, Cathie wasn’t going to let this opportunity pass her by.

Cathie began her mission of raising the money. She knew there was a need for people to work the games at the stadium for the Indians during football season and other functions. She became the elevator operator, assisting everyone who needed to come to and from the press box. “I figured, I needed to raise the money for New York by raising the elevator,” Cathie laughed. “I became the elevator lady.”

After raising the money for the trip, she flew by herself to New York City to meet with over 200 other musicians. “Luckily, they had sent the songs and arrangement by e-mail.” Cathie said. “We still needed lots of practice, but we were all pretty serious.” She wasn’t alone once she got there. She met up with Life Fellowship, her brother’s church, and they didn’t let the opportunity to do a little sightseeing pass them by.

“We visited the Empire State Building. We saw *The Phantom of the Opera*. We stood by Ground Zero. We attended church at The Brooklyn Tabernacle. Other than that, we did very little shopping and a whole lot of walking,” Cathie remembered. But only being there for three days, the musicians had to do more work than play — a responsibility they were overjoyed to have. They

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rehearsed Thursday and Friday, so they would be ready for the concert Saturday night.

“During first rehearsal, a member of The Annie Moses Band spoke to the group. He gave a devotional about our everyday dwelling place and how important it is to invite God into our dwelling place on a daily basis,” she said. For that day, Carnegie Hall was their dwelling place, and for at least one night, God would live in Carnegie Hall, invited in by the voices of 200 singers, strings and percussion, being led in person by a director and in spirit by the Lord.

“While we were waiting in the performers’ room for dress rehearsal,” Cathie remembered, “one of the event hosts came in to prepare us for the historical feel of the hall. As the choir filed in one by one, we could hear the voices of chattering choir members fade into silence as we soaked in the beauty and history of Carnegie Hall. Our director, Camp Kirkland, opened our final rehearsal in prayer, and then led us into one of the most universal hymns, “How Great Thou Art.”

The concert sold out all 2,800 seats. “We sang at least 12 songs with two standing ovations and two encores,” Cathie said, completely humbled by the love they experienced. “I just wish I could get those feelings on paper, so people could understand the richness of those precious hours. The presence of God has never been as prevalent in my life as it was on stage at Carnegie Hall.”

Cathie will be spending the next several months learning and experiencing her new church home and resting. She has been going nonstop for more than 20 years, and is ready to take some time to listen to God for what He wants of her next. But unable to take a break from the music she’s loved her entire life Cathie once again started singing in April with the choir at Farley Street Baptist Church. **NOW**

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Renee Chase is proud of the BMW she earned as a Body by Vi representative. The local Body by Vi group shares in her success while also promoting the 90-Day Challenge.

One Shake at a Time

Renee Chase and Margarett Butner are waging war against obesity one shake at a time.

— *By Sandra Strong*

Renee Chase knew for a long time that she needed to own a business of her own. “I have reinvented myself so many times,” she explained. “I finally found what I was looking for in ViSalus. I love being my own boss.”

Renee was introduced to the ViSalus network marketing venture by a friend. When she met with the friend, she asked the right questions to learn all she could about the product. “I followed my heart and jumped right in,” she confessed. “I robbed my rent for the \$500 investment it took to get started.”

In the first week, Renee had a full return, and then some, on her initial investment. The first full month, she reached the level that earned her a personal ViSalus BMW. “In two months, I was

able to replace my past salary,” she beamed. “And the business just continues to grow.”

Currently, Renee is proud of the team she’s built in such a short time. Her almost 400 team members live all across the nation. Her team encompasses 40 states, as well as two provinces in Canada. “Margarett Butner is one of my original team members,” Renee shared. “She also lives in Waxahachie. We promote the 90-day health challenge. We’re waging war against obesity one shake at a time.” Since launching in 2005, ViSalus Sciences has been making a positive impact on life, health and prosperity across the U.S. and Canada, thanks to people like Renee and Margarett, who are passionate about the product and

its results. The company's Body by Vi 90-Day Challenge combines leading health products with support to help individuals achieve their weight-loss and fitness goals, save money along the way and win from millions of prizes every year. The company continues to strive to achieve the best of the three principles that defines its very name — *Vi* being the root for life, and *Salus*, which represents health and prosperity.

Renee and Margaret have seen firsthand the benefits of the 90-Day Challenge. Renee does not mind sharing her personal experience at all. In fact, it's testimony to the success of the product she believes in. "I was 25 pounds overweight," she explained. "Just 60 days after starting the shakes, I'd lost 15 pounds and 13 inches — all with no extra exercise regimen. I found that drinking one shake at breakfast boosts my metabolism throughout the entire day."

"This is by far the most gratifying thing I've ever done."

The 90-Day Challenge is really quite simple. Those taking the challenge must first set their personal health goal. Specific kits are available for each goal, ranging from athletes and moms, who just want to lose a few pounds, to others who have a desire to get off certain medications. "People just want to get healthy," Renee emphasized. "Almost anyone can handle 90 days of most anything. It is much easier to successfully complete the challenge with a friend. There's lots of encouragement and accountability between friends."

Renee stepped out in faith and is reaping the benefits. Sharing the heart-driven business with others allows them to reap the same benefits — losing weight, getting fit and driving a ViSalus BMW. All anyone interested has to do is give Renee or Margaret a call.

"This is by far the most gratifying thing I've ever done," Renee admitted. "I get paid to have parties. Seeing the success stories is a win-win-win kind of life." Needless to say, Renee is loving life! **NOW**

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— By Nancy Fenton

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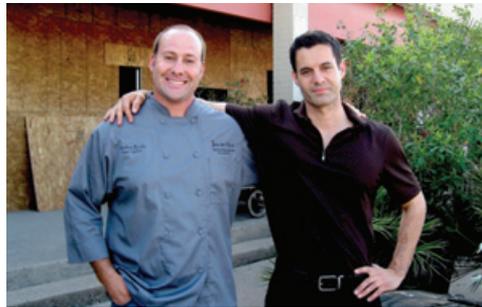


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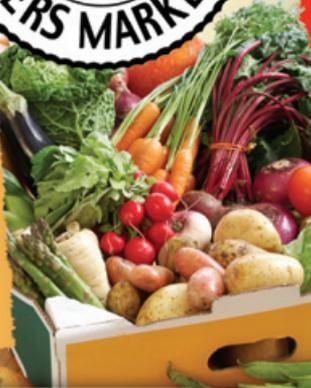
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Retirement Planning — Nearing Retirement

— By Adam Rope

Most people have an ideal retirement age in their head. Perhaps you hope to retire early and travel the world, or stop working right at age 65 — for years, the traditional retirement age. Or maybe you're nearing your 60s, or even your 70s, with no desire to slow down.

Essentially, the decision when to retire is yours. And it's one you should consider carefully and base on a number of factors, such as your retirement savings, when you'll begin collecting Social Security, your plans for retirement and your health.

Do I Have Enough Money?

Whether you've been stashing away money since the beginning of your career, or started a retirement fund a little later than you intended, you're likely wondering if you have enough savings to stop working. Financial experts estimate that you'll need between 70 and 80 percent of your pre-retirement income to maintain your standard of living. Yes, less than 100 percent, because hopefully you've paid off your mortgage and other installment loans, aren't carrying a heavy load of credit card debt, and no longer have costs associated with children, such as child care or college tuition. Plus, you'll no longer be saving for retirement.

To determine your post-retirement income, you may want to start with a thorough examination of all the resources you're planning to use during retirement. These might include a combination of funds from Social Security, your pension, a 401(k), an IRA, mutual funds, stocks and bonds, annuities and savings accounts.

Be sure you know how much you can expect from Social Security. Knowing the amount of your benefits is essential if you're planning to rely on them during retirement. Remember: You can start receiving Social Security benefits at age 62, but you'll receive more money each month if you wait until your U.S. government-deemed full retirement age. Your benefits will continue to increase the longer you wait to file, up until age 70.

Am I on Track?

Now that you're aware of your resources, calculate your retirement income to

see if you're on track. If you're unhappy with the results, you can try making some small changes to boost your retirement savings these last few years, such as increasing your savings as much as you can, making sure you're contributing enough to your employer-sponsored plan to receive the full match, and contributing the maximum to your IRA. Remember, you can make "catch-up" contributions if you're over 50, which are additional contributions to your IRA.

You may also consider tightening your budget to increase your savings. At the same time, to make your post-retirement budget lower, work to pay off credit card debt and your mortgage.

Should I Reevaluate My Investments?

Now may be a good time to conduct an asset allocation analysis to compare how your assets are invested in stocks, bonds and cash. Since you're nearing retirement, you need to consider the risk of your portfolios. You may want to seek a combination of investments that are more conservative, because you have a shorter time frame to compensate for the inevitable fluctuations of the market.

You also might consider investing part of your retirement savings into an annuity. Annuities are often offered by insurance companies, which make a series of payments to you in exchange for a single premium or series of premiums. These payments can continue for a defined length of time or an indefinite period, such as your lifetime. Deferred annuities begin at a set time in the future and help you accumulate money for future use.

Should I Readjust My Plan?

If you fear that the amount in your retirement fund won't be enough to get you through the rest of your life, you may want to adjust your timeline. Retiring a few years later will give you more time to save, and more time for your savings to grow. **NOW**

Adam Rope is a State Farm agent based in Waxahachie.

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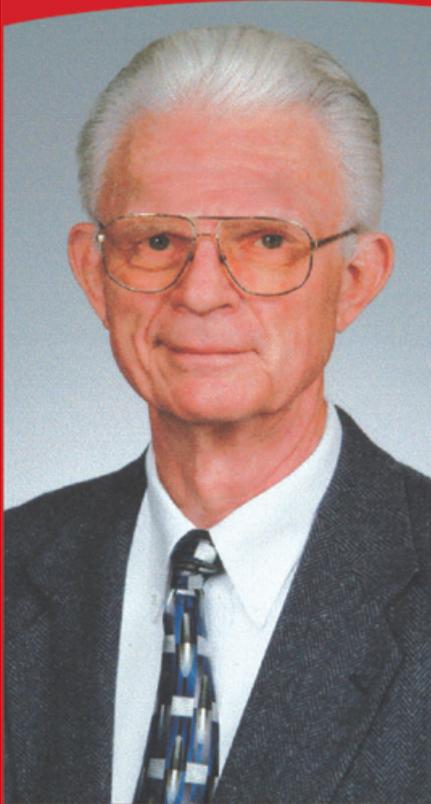
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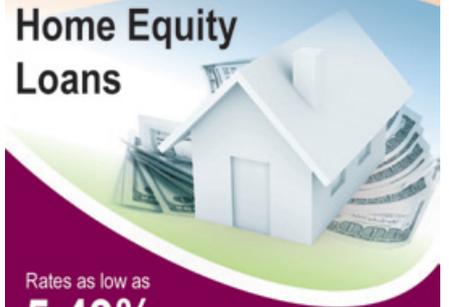
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Good Night

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

You have been here before, and the familiarity is depressingly tiresome. After a long day, you climb into bed needing a good night of restorative sleep. Instead, you get hour after hour of watching time pass on the clock, or the sleep you do receive is short and sketchy. You may have insomnia. Insomnia is difficulty getting to sleep or difficulty being able to stay asleep.

Numerous causes for insomnia can be found. Perhaps it could be from something as easily diagnosed as not being able to unwind because of a stressful day, being physically uncomfortable because of room temperature, too much noise, being hungry or too full or due to illness. Anything stimulating before bedtime, such as: some illegal drugs, cigarette smoking, alcohol intake, coffee drinking or exercise may hinder your chances of falling immediately to sleep. Because of physical ailments, certain medications may interfere with your sleep pattern. Your mattress may not be conducive to a good night's sleep. Medical conditions, such as: breathing problems, obesity, fibromyalgia, menopause and urinary problems can be killers of a good night's sleep.

Whatever the reason, insomnia can take a toll on your life with impaired function of your everyday activities. Inattentiveness and drowsiness with physical and mental fatigue can create problems at school, work and certainly while operating a vehicle. There are things you can do to alleviate or abate insomnia. If the cause is from a physical condition then efforts to ease that condition may solve the problem. If the cause is mechanical, such as a poor mattress, changing it may help. Avoid caffeine and nicotine in the evening. Sometimes a glass of warm milk helps. Try to go to bed at the same



time every night and get up at the same time in the morning. Though it may be tempting to oversleep on weekends, doing so could disrupt your sleep pattern. Keep your strenuous exercise earlier in the day. Make your bedroom a comfortable cozy place to be. Try eating your heaviest meal at midday rather than in the evening. Sometimes, just a warm, relaxing bath could be just the ticket to take you to dreamland. If medication is warranted, follow your physician's instructions, and do not fall into the trap of increasing the medication to fall asleep quicker or stay asleep longer. Perhaps a different type of sleep medication may solve the problem. An estimated 30 to 50 percent of the population suffers from insomnia. You can do something other than counting sheep to avoid being part of this statistic. **NOW**

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

An advertisement for Morgan Orthodontics. It features a 'Wall of Smiles' with three black and white photos of smiling patients. The text includes: 'Come join our WALL OF smiles', 'To see more photos visit our website at www.morganortho.com', 'Call today for your consultation. 972-938-1688', '104 PROFESSIONAL PLACE • WAXAHACHIE', and a list of services: '• School-friendly Schedule', '• Interest-free Financing', and '• Most Insurances Accepted'. It also includes the Morgan Orthodontics logo and the American Association of Orthodontists logo.

May 4-6

Waxahachie Community Theatre presents *South Pacific*. Friday: 7:30 p.m.; **Saturday**: 7:30 p.m.; **Sunday**: 2:30 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium in Getzendaner Park. Advance tickets: seniors/students: \$10; adults: \$12. (972) 646-1050 or wct.texas@gmail.com.

May 5

Ellis County Barbeque Cook-off: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Getzendaner Park. For entry forms, rules and information contact Maria Urias at (972) 937-4477 or Rhonnie Tompkins at (972) 935-9188. All proceeds benefit Daniel's Den.

Annual Cinco de Mayo Fiesta: 11:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m., downtown Waxahachie. Contact Julissa Martínez at (817) 781-9532 or www.waxahachie5de5.com.

Design Your World Conference celebrating 100 years of Girl Scouts: 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., The University of Texas at Arlington, College of Engineering, Nedderman Hall, 416 S. Yates St. Cost: \$10. www.stemforgirls.wordpress.com.

May 10

Fun Bunch: 4:00-5:30 p.m., Texas Motorplex, 7500 W. Hwy. 287. (972) 937-2390.

May 11 and 12

Old Fashioned Singing Project: 7:00 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium at Getzendaner Park.

May 12

Mother Daughter Tea: 10:30-11:30 a.m., Nicholas P. Sims Library. No registration required. (972) 937-2671 or children@simslib.org.

May 19

Waxahachie Downtown Farmers Market: 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. every Saturday through October 20.

2nd Annual Historic Run for REACH 5K: 8:00 a.m., 109 South Jackson Street. Registration: children under 12/\$15; runners or walkers over 13/\$25. For online registration/information contact Nisa at (972) 723-1053 or www.reachcouncil.org.

June 1

Gingerbread Classic Golf Tournament: 11:00 a.m., Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Business Hwy. 287.

June 2

Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-in: 8:00-11:00 a.m., Mid-Way Regional Airport. Breakfast tickets: ages 8 and above/\$6; ages 3-7/\$3; children 2 and under/free. Event and parking are free. Contact Tammy Bowen at (972) 923-0080.

June 2 and 3

44th Annual Gingerbread Trail Home Tour and Arts & Crafts Fair: **Saturday Only**: Downtown Farmers Market, Midlothian Classic Wheels Benefit Car Show. **Saturday and Sunday**: Tour of Homes, Arts & Crafts

Fair in Getzendaner Park, Plein Aire painting and art show, historic courthouse tours, activities for all ages in Getzendaner Park. Contact the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce (972) 937-2390 or Ellis County Museum (972) 937-0681.

Ongoing:

Sundays

GriefShare, a grief recovery support group: 2:30-4:00 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County, 2734 W. Hwy. 287 Bypass. www.cowboychurchofelliscounty.org.

Third Saturdays

Waxahachie Jamboree: 7:00-9:30 p.m., Women's Building, 407 W. Jefferson Street. Contact Hoyt Patterson at (214) 535-3473 or www.waxahachiejamboree.com.

Fourth Saturdays

Bristol Opry: 7:00 p.m., featuring local singers/musicians. Sponsored by Bristol Cemetery Association and Caring Hands of Bristol. Contact Jim Gatlin at (972) 846-2211.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to sskoda.nonmag@sbcglobal.net.



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In The Kitchen With Diane Hood and Joyce Wright

— *By Sandra Strong*

Diane Hood and Joyce Wright are wives, mothers and bakers. They love to bake cupcakes, muffins, cookies, candies and a large variety of party treats. “My passion is baking,” Diane said. “I enjoy following traditional recipes, but I also love experimenting with recipes to make them my own.” Diane does this by adding or changing ingredients, while trying to make them healthier, too.

As teacher’s aides at St. Joseph Catholic School, the pair is referred to as “2 Moms Bake,” the same name as their newfound business. “I was registered, but had not yet started pastry chef classes at El Centro College,” Joyce shared, “when the idea to bake for others was born. It’s been a great way to enhance what I learned at El Centro.” **NOW**

Pineapple Muffins

Vegetable oil spray

- 1/2 cup light brown sugar, packed**
- 2 cups plus 2 Tbsp. self-rising flour**
- 7 Tbsp. unsalted butter, room temperature**
- 1/2 cup sweetened flaked coconut**
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar**
- 1 large egg**
- 1 8-oz. can crushed pineapple, undrained**
- 1/2 cup milk**
- 1/2 tsp. pure vanilla extract**

- 1.** Place rack in center of oven; preheat oven to 400 F. Mist the bottom of muffin tin with spray; set aside.
- 2.** For crumble: Mix brown sugar, 2 Tbsp. flour and 1 Tbsp. butter in a small bowl. Work butter in with a fork. Stir in coconut; set aside.
- 3.** For muffins: Add remaining butter and granulated sugar in a large mixing bowl. Blend with electric mixer on medium-high speed until creamy. Add the egg, pineapple with

- juice, milk and vanilla; blend on low speed until just combined. Stop the mixer; scrape down the sides of the bowl with a spatula. Mix in the remaining 2 cups flour. The batter will still be a little lumpy.
- 4.** Spoon 1/4 cup batter into each prepared muffin cup, filling two-thirds of the way full. Sprinkle a heaping tsp. of crumble topping on each muffin; gently pressing the topping into the batter.
 - 5.** Bake muffins until lightly golden, about 18 to 20 minutes. Remove from oven, cool on wire rack for 5 minutes. Lift muffins from cups using the end of a knife. Place them on wire rack to cool for 15 minutes.

Whole Wheat Banana Bread

- 2 1/4 cups whole wheat flour**
- 3/4 tsp. baking soda**
- 1/4 tsp. salt**
- 3 ripe bananas, mashed**
- 1/4 cup plain yogurt**
- 1/4 cup honey**

- 2 eggs**
- 1/3 cup oil**
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease large loaf pan. Whisk together the flour, baking soda and salt.
- 2.** In a separate bowl mix mashed bananas with yogurt, honey, eggs, oil and vanilla. Fold the banana mixture into the flour mixture until blended. Do not over mix.
- 3.** Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake for 40-50 minutes or until inserted toothpick comes out clean.

Butter Pie Crust

- 1 1/4 cups all purpose flour**
- 1/4 tsp. salt**
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, chilled and diced a little smaller than pea size**
- 1/4 cup ice water**

- 1.** Chill all ingredients, including bowl, before use.
- 2.** Combine flour and salt. With fingers, rub in butter. Stir in water, 1 Tbsp. at a time, only until mix forms a ball. Do not overwork dough. Let dough rest in refrigerator for 4 hours or overnight.
- 3.** Roll dough out to fit a 9-inch pie tin. Carefully roll the dough back onto the rolling pin or fold in fourths to transfer to tin.
- 4.** Lay the dough into tin, being careful not to stretch it to fit. (Dough will shrink back when baked.) Flute the edges.
- 5.** For a prebaked crust, prick the crust bottom and sides. Bake until crust is golden. For a baked pie, fill raw crust and bake.

Buttermilk Pecan Pie

- 1/2 cup butter**
- 2 cups sugar**
- 2 tsp. vanilla**
- 3 eggs**
- 3 Tbsp. flour**
- 1/4 tsp. salt**
- 1 cup buttermilk**
- 1/2 cup pecans, chopped**

- 1.** Cream butter; add sugar 1/2 cup at a time. Add vanilla. Stir in eggs 1 at a time.
- 2.** Mix flour and salt. Slowly add to creamed butter mixture. Stir in buttermilk.
- 3.** Spread pecans in bottom of unbaked pie crust; pour mixture on top. Bake about 1 1/2 hours at 300 F.



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