

The background of the entire cover is a photograph of a pond filled with various colorful koi fish. The fish are in motion, creating ripples in the water. The colors range from bright orange and yellow to white and dark blue/black. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

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Koi Kisses

Japanese koi are Amber Penney's one and only vice

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ON THE COVER



Amber Penney loves getting kisses from her koi.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Once a mom, always a mom!

In my humble opinion, no truer statement has ever been penned. When you really think about it, mom covers a much broader spectrum than a title or name. We're cheerleaders, boo-boo kissers, taxi cab drivers, curfew enforcers, homework helpers, broken heart menders, advisers, dietitians, counselors and peacemakers. We wash clothes, clean up messes and teach our children how to drive. I've been called lots of names in my 53 years, but "mom" has been the best one to date. It's the name I answer to most often, and I wouldn't trade the awesome responsibility for anything. I'm hoping my mom feels the same way!

As a mom, I can't help but feel great sadness about the recent tragedy in West, Texas. At NOW Magazines, our thoughts and prayers are with all those in West who are working to rebuild their strong community.

P.S. We have some exciting news! Our Red Oak magazine is expanding and the name is changing to *North Ellis Co. NOW Magazine*. We are proud to be serving Red Oak, Ferris, Bristol, Pecan Hill, Oak Leaf, Glenn Heights and Ovilla, increasing the circulation of this publication to 17,200. With publications in 10 markets, our total NOW Magazines circulation is over 245,000. Thanks for being a part of our growing family!

Sandra

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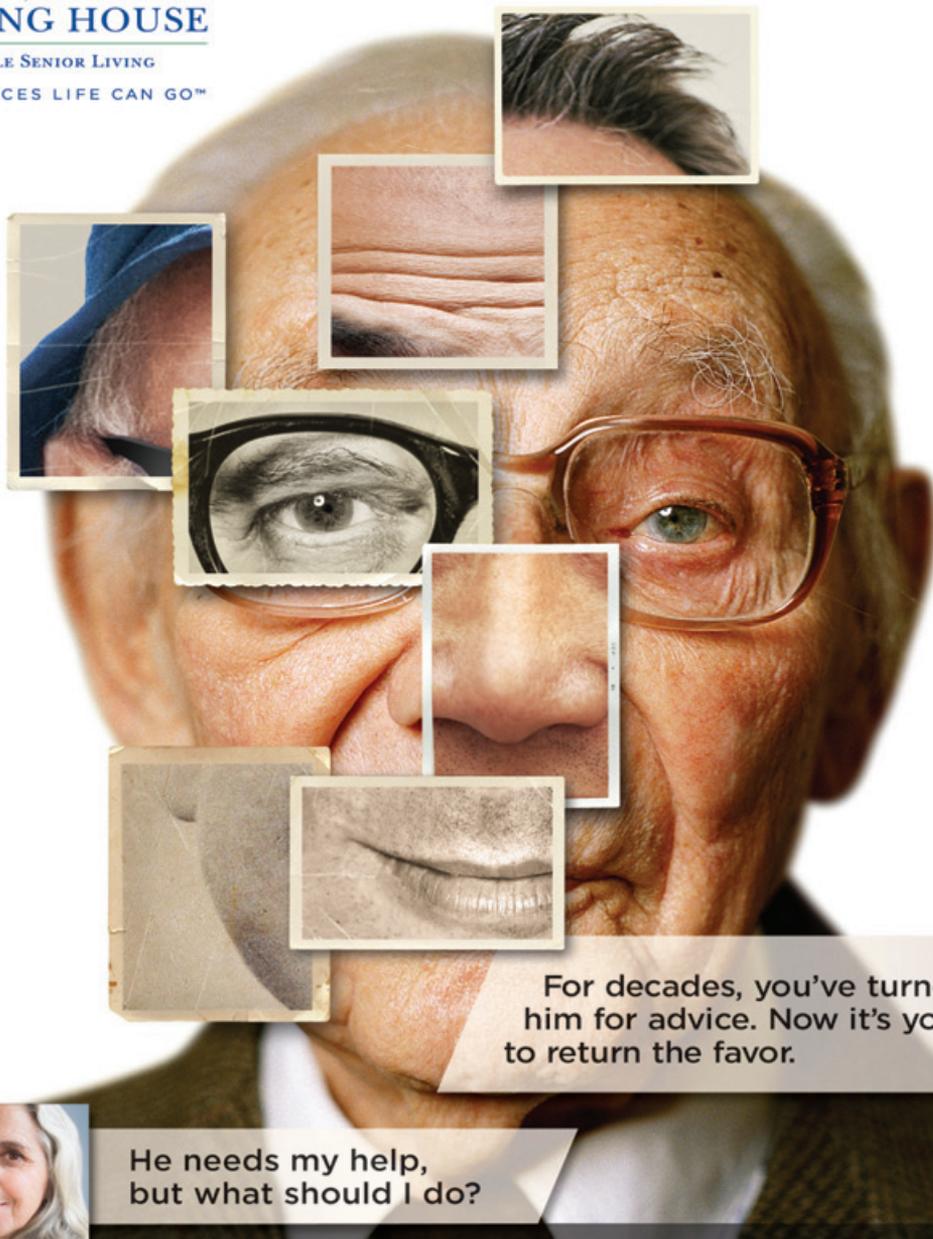
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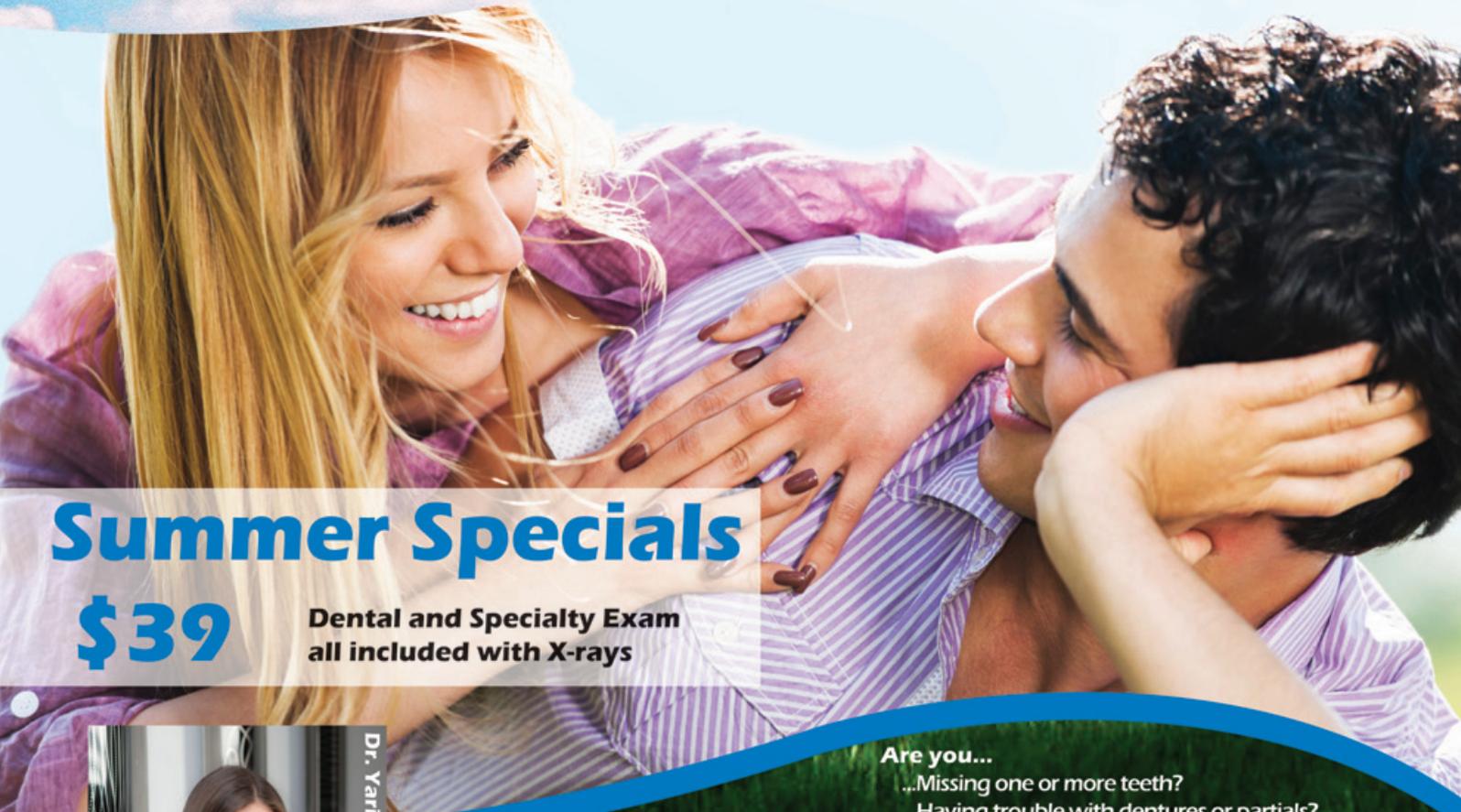
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Koi Kis



Amber Penney has been in love with butterfly koi and standard fin Japanese koi for nearly five years. Her passion for this unique breed of fish began when she and her husband, Marc, purchased a small garden pond kit. Amber was at work one day following this purchase when she began making small talk with one of the patients in the office. "I was telling her about my 'small' pond," Amber shared. "She immediately began to tell me about her 'big' pond filled with brand new baby Japanese koi."

The patient gave seven baby koi to Amber as a gift to complete her pond. They came home to their new pond in a storage tote. But, Amber soon realized the koi were too large for the small pond. "You need 10 gallons of water per inch of koi," Amber explained. "If you have five koi that are each one-inch long,



ses

— By Sandra Strong

“They can hear me coming. When I open the back door they’re right there by the side of the tank waiting for me. I put my hand in the water so they can give me what I like to call *koi kisses*.”



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then you would need a 50-gallon pond or tank. If those same five fish grow to three inches in length, than they need a pond or tank with at least 150 gallons of water.” Amber can’t help but laugh as she remembers that patient. “I thought little babies,” she declared, holding up her thumb and index finger about an inch apart, “not babies that swam in a pond big enough for the patient, her raft and her very large collection of koi.”

Unfortunately, Amber and Marc lost their first two koi ponds due to inexperience and a lack of understanding. Before they were able to regroup with a third pond, they spent months saving money to recoup the loss of the two previous ponds. “I was finally able to order 200 babies,” Amber said. “I



received 400 tiny koi that looked like thin hairs with eyeballs. The person I bought them from said I'd lose about 200, but I didn't lose a single one." Amber realized she didn't have the room needed to keep them all, so she immediately placed an ad on Craigslist. "I had to get rid of them in a hurry because my pond was not large enough to accommodate that many fish," she said. "When you have too many it quickly becomes 'survival of the fittest.'"

The overwhelming success of the third pond led to a venture that is, for Amber, more pleasure than business. Just recently, Let's Be Koi was created. One pond has now grown into no fewer than six ponds and/or tanks, swimming with 800 to 1,000 beautifully marked Japanese koi in a rainbow of colors — navy, green, purple, sky blue, red, yellow, orange, black, silver, white, gold, bronze, brown and cream. "The Japanese koi are like snowflakes," Amber said. "There are no two alike. You may have five yellow, two orange, two white, two red and four blue, but they will all be marked differently."

Amber also compares the koi to dogs. "They are easy to train, and they each have their own personality," she explained. "They can hear me coming. When I open the back door they're right there by the side of the tank waiting for me. I put my hand in the water so they can give me what I like to call koi kisses." Some of the koi will eat food out of the palm of her hand, while others swim over the back of her hand to get their bellies rubbed. But, she's found they all love to give her koi kisses.

One oversized pond is in the backyard,

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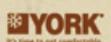
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and a second pond at the front entrance is currently a work in progress. Several tanks on the back patio hold koi in different stages of maturity. An aquarium inside the home is where Amber keeps any new purchases. "New koi must be quarantined for at least two weeks before integrating them with other koi," Amber stated. "One sick fish can infect an entire pond or tank. You can end up losing an entire pond if you're not careful."

Weather and water temperatures also have an effect on the koi, especially when it comes to food intake and activity levels. "Water temperature dictates body functions in the fish," Amber said. "When the weather is cold, the water is cold. Cold water means a less active fish. Less food is given to them, too, because they have a difficult time digesting it. They are in a semi-hibernated state during the winter months."

One fun fact Amber enjoys sharing is the koi's ability to come back to life after being frozen. "Koi can freeze solid in a pond. Once the water thaws out, the koi come back to life. They are so amazing!" Amber added. "When the temperatures get to the 70s and above, the koi begin to jump and splash. Their body functions are at 100 percent. This is when the koi are at their best."

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temperature is, should not be floating on the bottom or on the top of the tank,” Amber stated. “A lethargic fish is usually not a healthy fish.”

Small koi can grow very quickly when temperatures begin to warm up and when their food intake increases. Fifty percent of a koi’s growth is done in its first two years. “It’s normal for Japanese koi to get three feet long by the time they reach adulthood,” Amber said. “And their colors don’t really pop until they’re older.”

All koi are born with a certain number of color genes. “You can guess what color they’re going to be,” Amber laughed, “but you never know for sure until they are mature. They may begin white with a few dots of color. As they mature, the white can become the less dominate color. It’s the pattern and color combination that makes a Japanese koi a Japanese koi.”



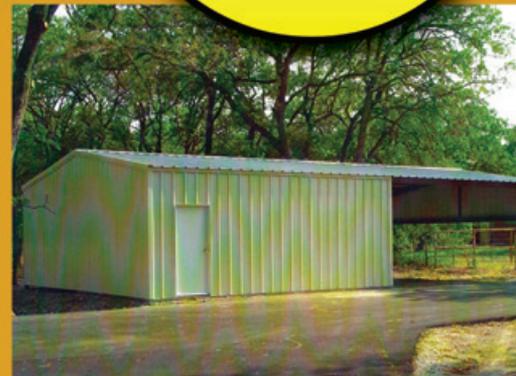
Amber finds enjoyment in working with her fish every day. They offer a calmness she is unable to find anywhere else. “Koi to me is alcohol to another,” she confessed. “They are my one and only vice.”

Marc feeds off Amber’s passion for the fish. His support is evident in the ponds he’s designed, as well as in the way he helps Amber maintain them. “I do have to prod him along sometimes,” she admitted with a smile, “but he’s 100-percent supportive of me and my love for the koi. He enjoys them because I enjoy them.” **NOW**



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A Unique Bond



By Hope Teel

Jim Kauffman, a longtime volunteer for the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program in Waxahachie, met Comodric Edwards four years ago when he signed up to get a big brother in the eighth grade. They've since formed an extraordinary bond, and although Comodric graduates high school this year, thus leaving the program, the two are confident they will remain close friends.

First impressions often have a large impact on one's thoughts of another, whether it's a brief introduction through a mutual friend or a simple exchange of greetings as you meet someone for the first time. Sometimes these impressions forge an immediate connection, while in other instances it is important to keep in mind the old phrase, "Don't judge a book by its cover." This concept was epitomized when Comodric met Jim. "I remember meeting Jim like it was yesterday," Comodric shared. "When I first saw him, I sized him up and I



remember thinking, *Well, this is going to be just like having another parent to chastise me about homework and stuff. We'll never have fun!*

However, Comodric's thoughts quickly changed course as he and Jim began to converse in a discovery of multiple shared interests, which paved the way for a wonderful, lasting friendship. "We really have a lot in common for Jim to be in his 70s and for me to be a teenager," Comodric laughed. "It's like we are the same age, only I don't have grandchildren!"

Essentially, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) is a mentoring program in which community members volunteer as "bigs" to befriend children, ages 6 to 18, who in turn become their "littles." Comodric's interest in the program peaked in the seventh grade when he inquired with his counselor about getting involved. The very next year, he met Jim.

Jim began volunteering in BBBS almost 10 years ago, and he remembered being surprised at the thorough background check done on potential volunteers. "They're very serious about making sure the community members signing up for BBBS are good people," Jim said. "I had to answer more questions in that process than I did when I got a security clearance in the Air Force," he laughed.

Their weekly, 45-minute visits began under monitored circumstances labeled as school-based visits. Comodric and Jim realized and discussed their

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numerous common interests including history, ocean liners and old trains among many others. Labeled by his friends as “an old soul,” Comodric enjoyed having someone to share these interests with immediately. “No one at school was ever interested in hearing about the Titanic or history like I was,” he said, “but with Jim,

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I always had someone to talk to about my interests! We talk about it all the time now, and I am always excited to see him because I normally have something new to tell him!”

Comodric realized his affinity for history at an early age while flipping through the channels looking for



something to watch on TV. KERA was showing a special on the Titanic, and it quickly prompted his curiosity on the subject of history in its entirety. "It really sparked my interest and made me want to learn more about it," Comodric stated. "Now I'm always curious about different things, and I'm continually researching different parts of history."

Jim fondly remembered learning about Comodric's interest in history, ocean-liners and in the Titanic in particular. Jim brought an extra long tape measure to their visit that week, and he and Comodric went out in front of the school and measured off the 880-plus feet that would have been the length of the Titanic. "It was very interesting," Jim shared, "and Comodric just happens to be the quintessential expert on ocean liners for most of the 20th century." Eventually, their visits transitioned into the community-based phase, in which Jim met Comodric's family, and they were able to visit outside of school. "My grandma and mom love him and always say, 'Thank God for Jim!'" Comodric shared. "So he has just been really a great help and a great friend overall."

Since they began community-based visits, Jim and Comodric fell into the habit of frequenting the coffee shop at Hastings, chatting about history among other things and often perusing the books. "We happened to be interested in a lot of the same things," Jim shared, "and a lot of the things we're interested in most of my friends don't particularly like either! It's that exchange between us that is just great."

Normally, they try to get together once

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Whiplash is a common ailment after a rear-end car collision. Even low-speed car accidents can result in whiplash, which is the result of a sudden jolt that causes unnatural movement of the cervical spine located in the neck. The result is often painful, stiff muscles and an inability to move the head in certain directions without discomfort.

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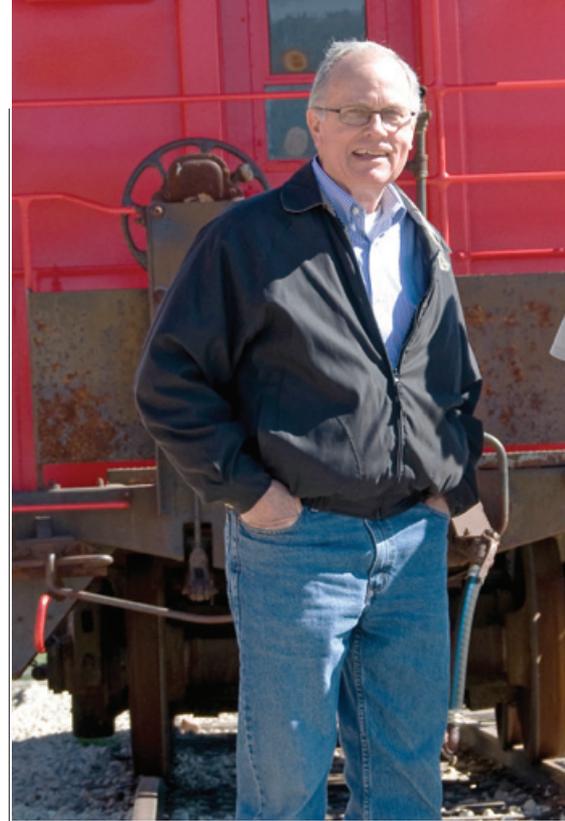
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a week. "We don't always pull it off due to circumstances, but over a year, we probably visit 45 out of the 52 weeks," Jim stated. Aside from coffee shop and bookstore visits, Jim and Comodric have taken the train to Fort Worth, visited several museums and have often caught up over lunch or dinner. "We've done all sorts of things that I had never done before," Comodric shared.

They agree that their time together has been well spent, from memories of

*"It's like we are the
same age, only I don't
have grandchildren!"*

fun trips together to their coffee shop visits, to just having a good friend to confide in anytime. "What I really enjoy about the program is just hanging out with Comodric and knowing what a

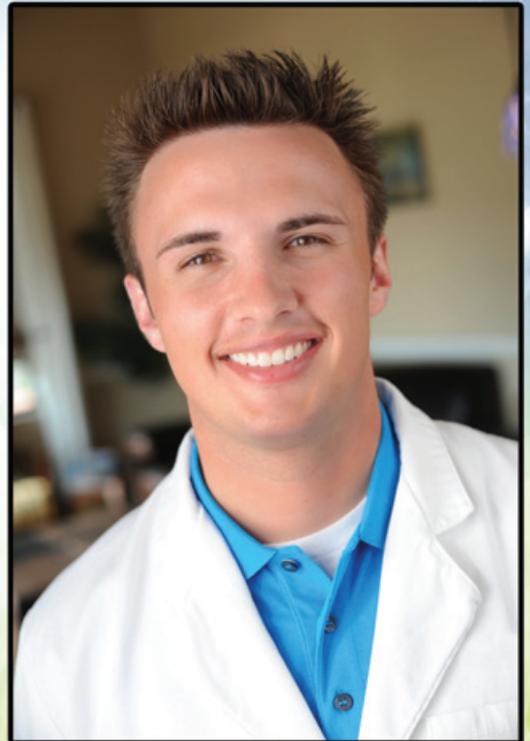


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great friend I have in him. I can call him anytime, and he's always ready to go and happy to see me," Jim shared. "I think that ranks high with anybody!"

Comodric also shared his thoughts on how beneficial the BBBS program has been for him. "I've become a better person than what I used to be. I'm now set on completing goals, not just setting them and forgetting about them," Comodric said. "Jim has really helped me with that. He's also helped me prepare for college and for the real world!"

Approaching the end of their time in the program together, they're both thankful for the positivity, knowledge and companionship they've gained from one another over the past four years. "Everyone I know that volunteers with this program comes away feeling like they've gotten more out of it than they've actually given to their littles," Jim stated. "And I'm sure the littles feel the same way, but in the end it is just an exchange of good things." Although Comodric graduates from high school this spring, he and Jim are confident in their plans to keep in touch and to remain good friends, despite the fact that Comodric will be leaving the program this year. **NOW**

Editor's Note: Those interested in volunteering for the Big Brothers Big Sisters program in the Waxahachie area may visit www.bbbs.tx.org for more information.

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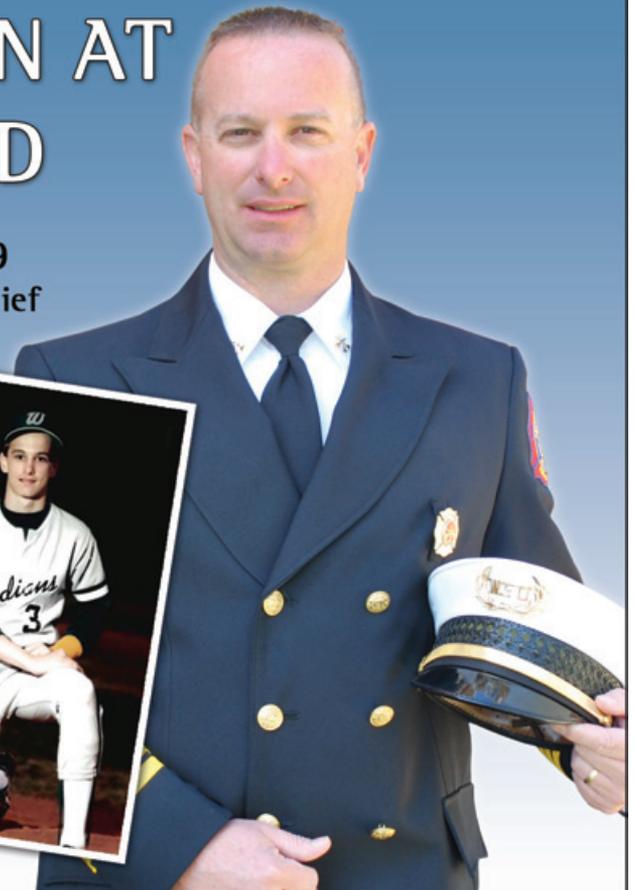
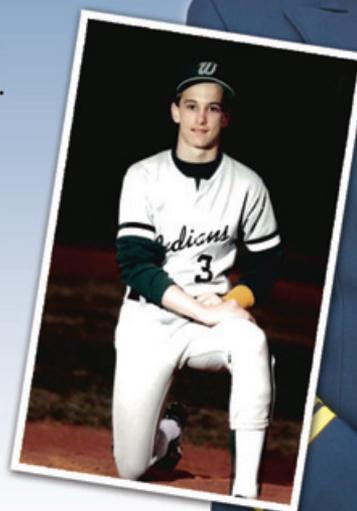
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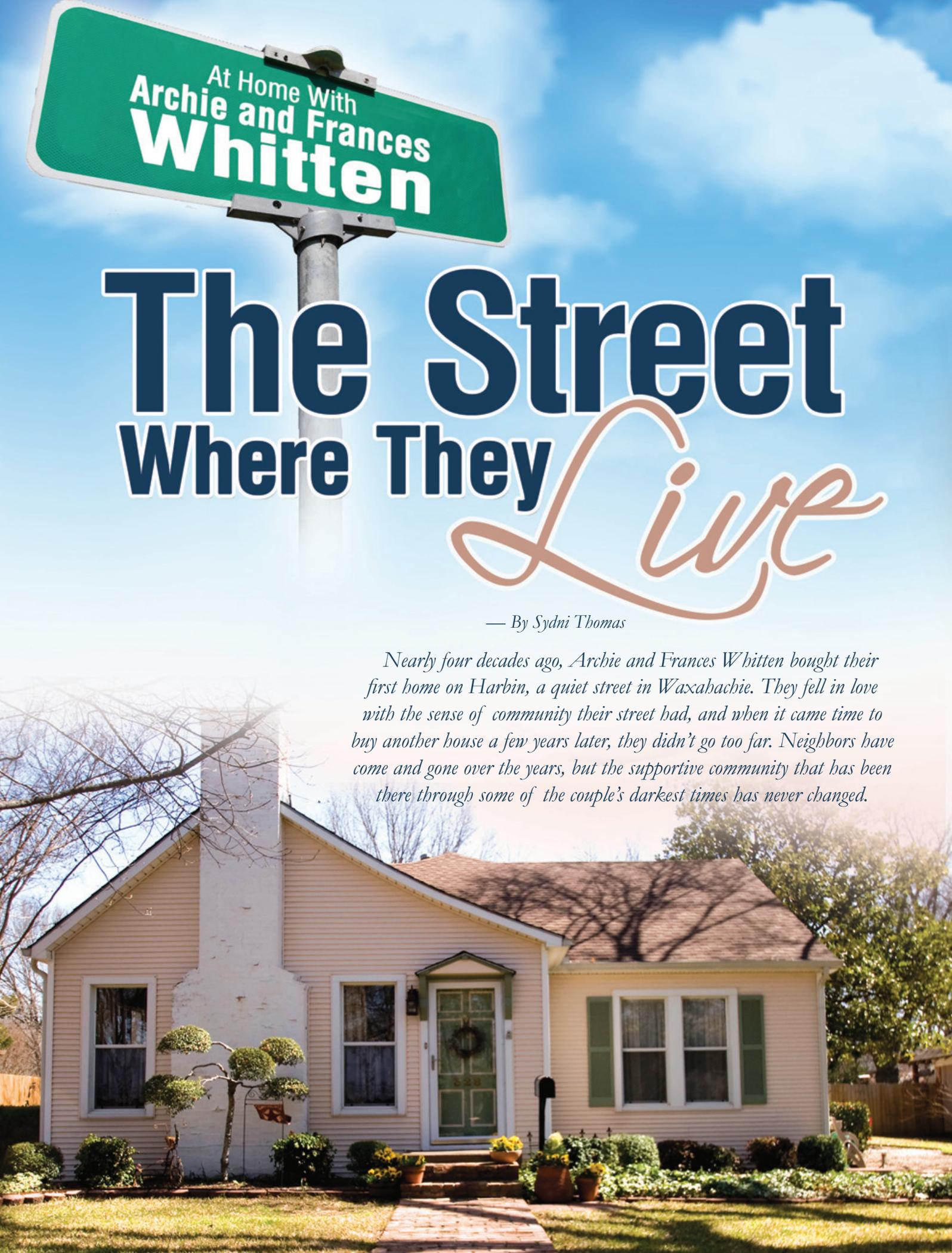
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At Home With
Archie and Frances
Whitten

The Street Where They *Live*

— By Sydni Thomas

Nearly four decades ago, Archie and Frances Whitten bought their first home on Harbin, a quiet street in Waxahachie. They fell in love with the sense of community their street had, and when it came time to buy another house a few years later, they didn't go too far. Neighbors have come and gone over the years, but the supportive community that has been there through some of the couple's darkest times has never changed.



Archie and Frances met each other when they worked at Harris Hospital in Fort Worth. They were married in 1973 and moved into an apartment in Irving. The crowded city was not Frances' ideal place to live. As a Maypearl native, Frances was used to rural living and having family close by. Knowing Archie would enjoy it, Frances brought him to the Waxahachie Gingerbread Trail a short while after they had been married. After one look around town, Archie was ready to move. "It wasn't long after that we purchased our home," Frances said. "We really liked Harbin. Most of the people living on it were older and had been there for some time. When we moved in, it was like we had a new family all of a sudden."

In the summer of 1980, when all the heat records were broken, the couple moved into their second home on the same street. Most of their neighbors have since moved on, and the couple is no longer the youngest on the street. Archie has been retired for a little over a year

now and is spending more time at home than ever. The yard of their 1930s, three-bedroom home has become one of his biggest projects in retirement. Keeping the lawn, flowerbeds and trees in pristine condition is important to the Whittens. Their favorite room is a screened-in porch add-on at the back of the house. The cool breeze of the fans and shade from the large trees in the backyard has turned this room into their retreat when the Texas summertime becomes unbearable. "We spend a lot of time outside," Archie said. "The backyard gets a lot of shade from our trees, but when it is too sunny or hot we get a lot of use out of our sunroom. It's the best room in the house, and we spend the most time out here."

When owning a house for nearly 40 years, changes are expected. The Whittens have taken their time making necessary changes and have preserved the original character of the house. Archie and Frances complete all of the projects



they can, and if they don't know how to do something, they learn. The kitchen has undergone several makeovers since they purchased the house from various paint colors to the new countertops and cabinets. "Retirement is a great time to take on new projects," Archie said. "I'm ready to retile the bathroom and install a shower, but it's going to take a little more convincing."

The guest bathroom has an antique, rust-colored, claw foot bathtub with sentimental ties to Frances' childhood. When she was 4 years old, Frances' family had the bathtub put in, making



it the first indoor bath they ever had. Frances and her extended family lived on the same piece of land, but in separate homes. After her parents and siblings moved away, Frances' grandparents gave her the bathtub. "It's not a big bathtub," Archie said. "I have no idea how her six-foot, two-inch father ever fit in it."

Inside the home, the couple has very few purchased pieces of furniture and knickknacks. Almost everything is a family heirloom full of history. Little nooks throughout the house contain

old letters, photographs, drawings and treasured pieces of family history that tell stories of their ancestry and life together. The kitchen table is one Frances and her family grew up eating around.

In the couple's bedroom, they have a collection of family furniture including an antique dresser that once belonged to her grandparents, dating back to 1913. Their bed is one of the few purchased pieces they own. They bought it in hopes of restoring it and selling it, but after the project was complete the couple decided



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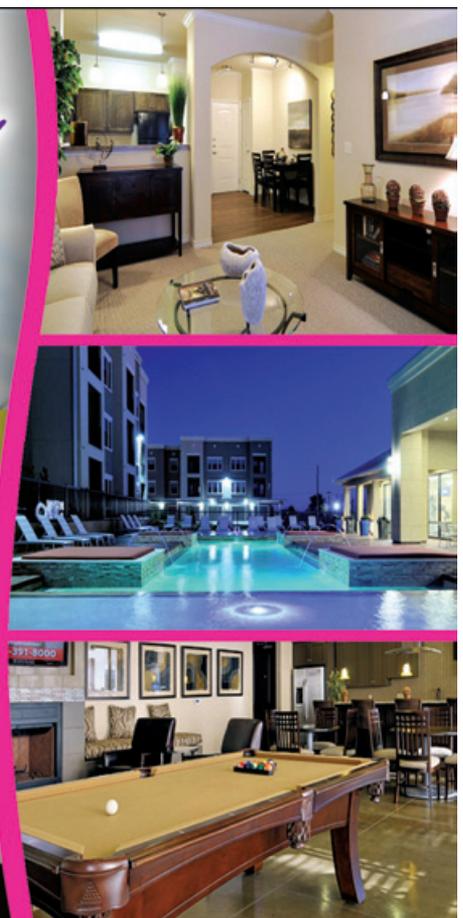
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to keep it for themselves. "In the living room we have a drawing of the home where I grew up," Frances said. "It's nice



to be able to look back on it, because it isn't like that anymore, and we've all moved away."

Just like the furniture, the artwork in the home has sentimental ties. Most of the pieces were created and painted by their late son, Derek. He was a young artist, aspiring thespian and musician. Derek's pencil drawing of the family's current home hangs in the living room. Proud of their son's talent, Archie and Frances use the walls of his old room as a gallery for many of his creations. "One of Derek's favorite photographs was of Archie during Desert Storm sitting on a cot outside of a tent," Frances said. "He loved that photograph so much that he painted Archie a copy so that he could keep the photograph."

Through Derek's room is an entrance to Frances' sewing room. Sewing has been a part of Frances' life since before she was in first grade. Her grandmother had her cutting out doll patterns and sewing clothes before she could read and



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write. Frances tried her hand at selling her creations in an antique store run by her sister in Jefferson, but discovered that she enjoyed making things more for friends and family. "I credit my grandmother for my sewing skills," Frances said.

"She'd never tell you, but Frances is a very talented seamstress," Archie said. "When I retired she made me a lap blanket, just in case I got cold."

"My grandmother is also responsible for my cooking skills. She was talented, and I'm glad she taught me," Frances added.

As retirement got closer for Archie, the couple worried what life would be like when they spent their entire day cooped up in their home. It turned out to be better than they thought, with endless time for weekend trips to visit relatives, afternoons sitting in their screened-in porch enjoying the weather and full days of getting lost in books. The Whittens love their



home and street, so spending most of their time there and with neighbors is enjoyable. "Our neighbors have been here for us during our hardest times," Frances said. "Harbin Street is a small



town where we know most everyone and take part in each other's lives. We love our small house and the street it sits on." **NOW**

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The *Pride* of

WAXAHACHIE

— By *Cindy Malone*

Most people use the cliché, “marching to the beat of her own drum,” when they want to say someone is a little odd. But in the case of Haley Nutt, she not only proudly marches to the beat of her own drum, but those of her band leaders, her drum majors and the Texas Christian University fight song.

Haley graduated third in her class from Waxahachie High School (WHS) in 2011. She went to every game and cheered for the Indians. However, she never donned a skirt or carried pompoms. Instead, she stood on the sideline with mallets in hand and played percussion for the Spirit of Waxahachie Indian Band. Haley didn't need the cheerleaders to get her pumped up — she brought her own cheering section: her mother, Christi Nutt, and her grandparents, Bobby and Jo Ann Williams. “When we moved to Waxahachie, where I have taught school for 30 years,” Christi explained, “my parents, Haley and I built a house.”

Beginning in first grade, Haley took piano lessons, learned

how to read music and listen for rhythm. In sixth grade, she joined the band and fell in love with percussion, not just drums, but in her case, the xylophone and marimba. In high school, those instruments become part of the pit, the percussionists that stand on the sideline. “Of course, the drum line gets most of the attention, but a lot of the rhythm — the extra sounds are made by us on the sideline,” Haley explained.

Haley's band director, Rich Armstrong, recognized a passion and a gift in Haley and encouraged her to work on her talent and see where it could take her. It led her to a position as drum major her junior and senior year at which she excelled. As one of the two drum majors her junior year, she led the Spirit of Waxahachie Band to an eighth-place finish in the finals. But even with those awards, the best part of Haley's senior year was getting to do community service and working with the sixth graders who were new to band. “Maybe that's why I want to teach now,” she mused.

As proud as Haley is to have graduated from WHS, the district is equally as proud to have her as a graduate. In fact, when her drum corps came to Dallas for a competition last July, Mr. Armstrong and the WHS band brought two busloads of

students to cheer her on. "Haley is an amazing musician with great passion, drive and demand for excellence," he said. "Her intelligence, partnered with a great work ethic, is inspiring. She continues to be an amazing role model for all young musicians."

Beyond the awards the band won, Haley's awards include All Orchestra, All Area, All Region and UIL State Solo

"Haley is an amazing musician with great passion, drive and demand for excellence."



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Contest and All State Piano. With that type of musical talent, combined with her excellent academic achievements, Haley received a merit/band scholarship to attend Texas Christian University (TCU).

The summer after graduation, Haley traveled with Dr. West and TCU



percussion to Australia for 10 days. "We played a concert at Sydney Opera House. It was amazing, and Australia was beautiful," Haley remembered. The trip also introduced Haley to other freshman in the band. Now, four of them share a suite. "It's cool because we are all in

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the same class, and we get along great," Haley said.

Even though she attends college on a band scholarship, Haley still had to tryout for her position. She made the marimba in front ensemble, the highest level for pit players. Not easy to get into, Haley was

the only freshman in the group that first year at TCU.

Haley studies music education in hopes of being a band leader or percussion instructor someday. "Or maybe a science teacher or in a professional orchestra," Haley smiled. Like most college sophomores, her plans change each time she takes a class she loves. She took more than 28 hours as a freshman and brought 36 hours with her from high school.

Thanks to that, she has the freedom to take fun and interesting electives.

This past summer, after her grueling freshman year, Haley joined Crossman Drum and Bugle Core, based out of San Antonio, the only world-class drum corps in Texas. Much like select sports, a






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player has to tryout and then pay to be in the group. But in return, Haley traveled all over the east coast of the United States competing in over 30 venues, playing in the Drum Corps International competition. The contest concluded in Indianapolis, where Crossman made it into the finals for the first time since 2006. "It was a blast! We were living out of suitcases, sleeping on gym room floors. When I got home on August 13, that was the first real shower I had in a month," Haley laughed.

During the summer, she spent almost all of her time in San Antonio preparing for the competition or traveling with the corps. She was only able to spend a short time at home, something Christi understands, even if she doesn't like it much. "I am definitely her groupie," Christi shared with pride. "I hate it that I didn't see her much last summer, but she is having fun, and I know she is safe with her group of friends."



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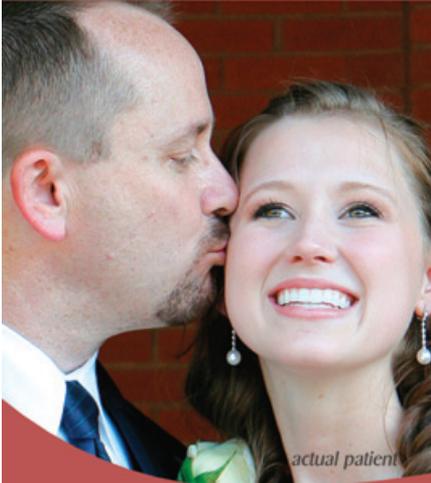


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Haley had plenty of time to grow accustomed to traveling this year since TCU joined the Big 12 Conference, and the band traveled with the team to every game, as opposed to last year when the band only flew to the Poinsettia Bowl. "It should be fun. The one exception was



when the percussion section competed in the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in Austin, where we won first place!" Haley explained, noting none of them minded being in Texas for that event. "The routine for PASIC is based on the Book of Revelations and is pretty intense. The things we get to do

"She continues to be an amazing role model for all young musicians."

are complex, but fun. There are some parts that sound chaotic before it all comes together. For a pit player, there is nothing better than going crazy with the mallets!"

Even though the fast-paced craziness is fun sometimes, Haley still enjoys herself when life is more controlled. Haley had fun in the spring when she played in the wind ensemble band. She is ahead of the game in college hours, but still plans to stay until her regular graduation date of May 2015. "I am having too much fun as a Horned Frog," Haley said. "The school is amazing: big, but small enough to not be overwhelming. The band works hard and plays hard. I am a part of something special." For the next two years, Haley will be marching for the Pride of TCU, but she is, and will forever be, the pride of Waxahachie. **NOW**

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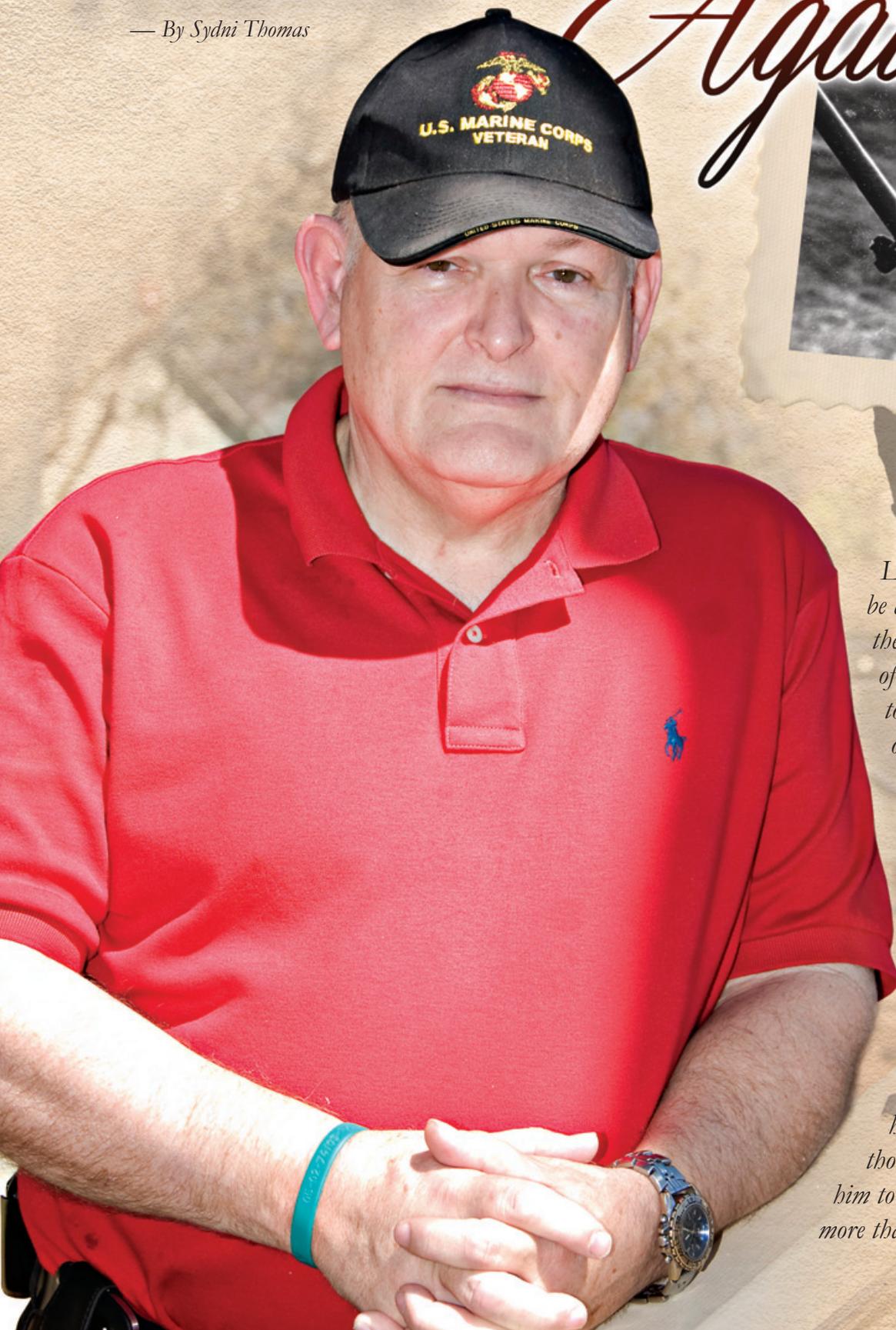
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THERE AND BACK

— By Sydni Thomas

Again



Life for a young couple can be difficult starting out, and there isn't always the luxury of time when learning how to provide for someone other than oneself. Richard Landis didn't finish school and was working at a candy company when he realized providing for a family took planning and more money than he was bringing in. These hardships set him on a path that took him around the world, gave him a career he never thought possible and allowed him to rear a family he loves more than anything.



Richard created a list of qualities he hoped to find in a lifelong companion. He had not yet met a woman who came close to matching those qualities, until his mother set him up with a pretty young lady she worked with that she thought he



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would like. Unsure of what she would be like, Richard took a chance and called her.

Their first date was the day before Halloween. Three weeks later on Thanksgiving, Richard married Ann in a small ceremony with just witnesses and the preacher. The couple had a larger church ceremony in the spring in front of their friends and family. Financial hardships hit the couple from the start. They struggled to find enough to support themselves. The situation became even more difficult with the birth of their daughter, Shawn. There were special days when the couple took the money to buy one Happy Meal from McDonald's as a treat for Shawn. Shawn would eat as much as she wanted, Ann would eat a little bit and Richard would finish what was left. "Getting married so young, we didn't think everything through," Richard said. "I knew I wanted to marry Ann, and to this day she is the love of my life, but I could not provide for her and our children in the way I should. Something had to change."

Change came when Richard enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1971. The Marines opened a new world of opportunities for the Landis family, but at a great sacrifice. One of the hardest times for Richard was when he set sail on a deployment to the Mediterranean just after his second child, Beau, turned 6

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months old. Being away from his young family was unbearable at times.

The night before he was supposed to return home, he was told he would cross deck to deploy with the 4th Marine Brigade aboard the *USS Mt. Whitney* to the North Atlantic. As his family waited for him shoreside, Richard changed ships and wasn't able to see them. After seven years of separation, Richard was finally on his first stateside tour at Quantico, Virginia. Once that was completed, he received another set of unaccompanied overseas orders. Richard resigned his commission and moved his family to Dallas. "My wife kept me going through the tough times of my deployment," Richard admitted. "Being away from my family was the hardest thing, but they were my reason for joining the Marines."

At the time of his enlistment, the Marine Corps was the only military service taking candidates without high school diplomas. He was able to complete his basic education and earn a bachelor's degree in mathematics from The University of Oklahoma. It was one of the few programs he could participate in while deployed on ship, where he studied. Every time the ship docked in Naples, Italy, and liberty call was given, he would spend his days taking tests and turning in assignments. While on his only stateside tour, he sacrificed time

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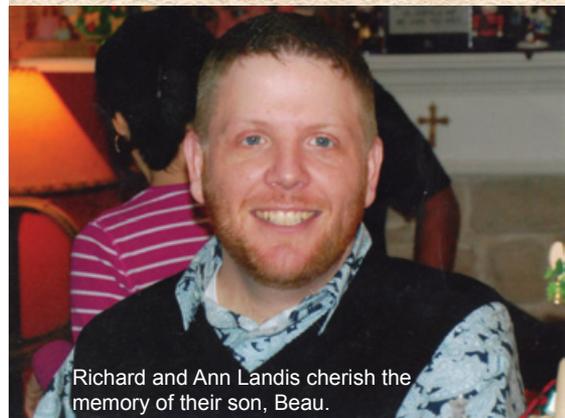
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Richard and Ann Landis cherish the memory of their son, Beau.

from his family to earn a Master of Arts in Human Resources from Pepperdine University and a Master of Science in System Management from University of Southern California in hopes of bettering his family's future. After leaving the Marines in 1983, Richard earned two more master's degrees in engineering. In 2009, he accomplished a lifelong goal of earning a doctorate in Engineering from Texas Tech University. He was the oldest person in his graduating class. "Degrees are keys," Richard said. "It's what you do with the keys that open the doors. They lead you somewhere, and now I have a bunch of keys."

Richard was also selected for the enlisted commissioning program. He was one of the last classes at Officer Candidate School to be classified as an officer and a gentleman. Richard's military career was spent in Marine Corps Intelligence. He was also a tactical air controller, call sign "Hobbit," who provided ground control support for Marine Corps intelligence. After leaving the Marines as a Major Selectee, Richard worked at E-Systems in Garland. Richard was unexpectedly called back as a special advisor in support of Charlie Company, 302nd Military Intelligence Battalion stationed in Germany in December 1990. Desert Storm kicked off 30 days later on January 17, 1991. While he was deployed, Raytheon purchased E-Systems. He and his family returned back to work in November 1995 after the successful completion of NATO operations in the Balkan War conflict. Still with Raytheon today, Richard works as a senior principle systems engineer. Most of the work Richard does is not something he can talk about, even with Ann. "Over the years I have gotten to help write amazing algorithms for amazing things, but

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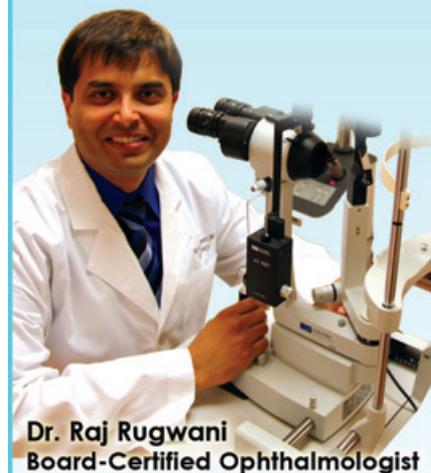
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commercial technology wasn't capable of keeping up," Richard said. "Today, the commercial technology is becoming available, and we are seeing these algorithms come to life."

While Richard's career and education have been a major focus in his life, his greatest joy comes from his family. When Beau moved to Waxahachie, it wasn't long before they followed him. Shortly after that, Shawn and her family moved there also. Still feeling as though he missed out on a significant portion of their life while he was in the military, Richard wanted to be as close to them as possible. Thinking about leaving them a legacy, Richard and Ann purchased Waxahachie's Catfish Plantation six years ago. The family took over the business with Ann and both of Richard's children running things during the week while Richard continued his full-time job. The business and family changed drastically in 2010 when tragedy struck. Richard, Ann and Beau were involved in a car accident where Beau didn't survive. "I missed the first three years of Beau's life," Richard said. "Now he's gone. Joining the military was a good opportunity, but I paid a great price. We all pay in some way, some sooner than others, some with their life."

Joining the military was a means of survival for Richard and his young family. That journey opened doors Richard did not imagine possible, but they came at a great price for the Landis family. "It was an honor to serve," Richard said. "It meant survival for my family. I chose to continue serving even after I left the military because it's hard to walk away." **NOW**

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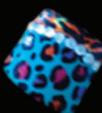
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Chile, beans and corn make up the basic ingredients of the addictively flavorsome New Mexican cuisine found all over the state. These ingredients give chile a different flavor than that of Mexican and Tex-Mex food. Visit in September during the green chile harvest to enjoy propane-powered roasters pumping the aroma of chile into the air.

You can find chile on the menu year-round in Albuquerque. Some local favorites include green or red chile stew, blue corn enchiladas and carne adovada (pork simmered in a red chile-based stew) and for dessert, *sopapilla*, a fried puffy pastry best enjoyed with a drizzle of honey. If your mouth isn't watering yet, that's OK. Albuquerque has a diverse array of culinary offerings that will satisfy any appetite.

With weather this gorgeous, opt to enjoy your meal *al fresco* at one of the many pooch-friendly patios. When airport has been replaced by sunport at the city's official aircraft transportation hub (Albuquerque International Sunport), you know you're in for some big rays.

Albuquerqueans enjoy over 310 days of annual sunshine, making it nearly impossible to spend a few days here without getting a serious dose of vitamin D. The Sandia Mountains, making up the tail end of the Rockies, blush a vibrant pink at sunset. It's no accident that *sandia* means watermelon in Spanish.



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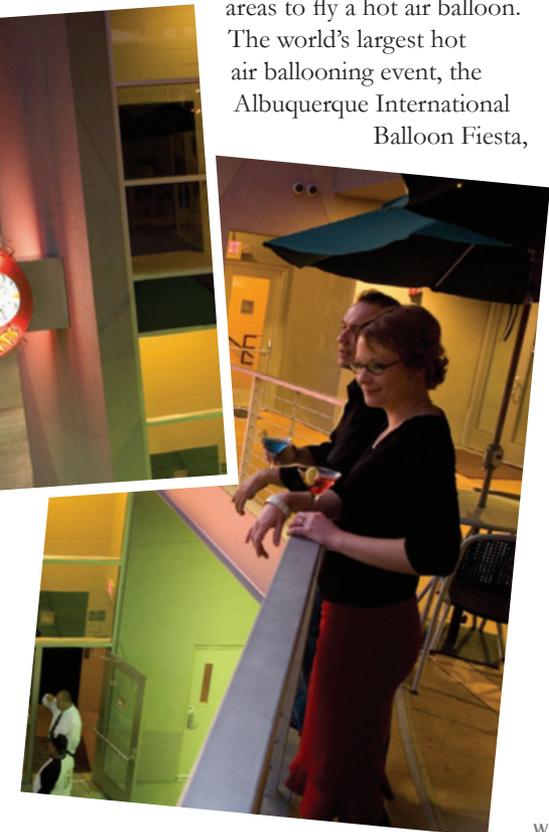
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Sunshine combined with a surprisingly high elevation of 5,326 feet make this high-desert city a four-season destination. The city boasts a ski area located just 30 minutes from the metro that adventurers can drive to or arrive at via North America's longest aerial tram, The Sandia Peak Aerial Tramway. Albuquerque also enjoys over 400 miles of bike paths and trails, some of the Southwest's most beautiful — and affordable — golf courses, paddle craft opportunities along the Rio Grande and an “Albuquerque Box” wind pattern that makes it one of the country's most lucrative areas to fly a hot air balloon. The world's largest hot air ballooning event, the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta,



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Great weather, excellent tax incentives and the ability to transform into nearly any city or location (including Mars) make Albuquerque an ideal location for film and television crews. From *Breaking Bad* to *The Lone Ranger*, this Southwestern city hosts many filming projects. Check out a local film tour for a glimpse at popular site locations. It's Hollywood without the frill, and film crews seem to like it that way.

It would be difficult to visit Albuquerque and not stumble upon Central Avenue, what was formerly known as Route 66. The city grew up along the nation's Mother Road and still flashes vintage neon signage along with aesthetic treatments modernized from the route's heyday. A visit along Central Avenue will take you from the volcanoes on the city's far west side past Old Town, the ABQ BioPark, into downtown and through the trendy Nob Hill district. It's one of the longest preserved stretches of Route 66 in an urban area.

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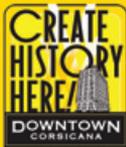
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Albuquerque's neighborhoods are as diverse as its culinary offerings. For familiar, upscale retail and dining options, check out the ever-developing ABQ Uptown, the city's newest shopping district. Visit Old Town for a taste of Southwestern history with local shops, galleries and museums. Enjoy dinner and a cocktail in trendy Nob Hill, featuring some of the city's best restaurants, boutiques and nightlife options.

New Mexico is commonly referred to as The Land of Enchantment. How appropriate that enchantment, by definition, means to fill (someone) with great delight; charm. Whether it's the people, the sky or the chile that beckons you, prepare to be enchanted by Albuquerque. It'd be hard to resist such an invitation. **NOW**

By Kelly Ryan. Photos by Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau. For more information on planning your trip to Albuquerque, please visit www.ItsATrip.org or @VisitABQ on social media.



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From left:

Davie Kujawa, owner of Turquoise Haven, admits she couldn't do all she does without the help of her office manager, Gale Keith, and jewelry specialist, Casey Barrentine.

GROWING PAINS

Turquoise Haven styles your life so you can live your style.

— By Sandra Strong

Life for Davie Kujawa changed drastically in what she considers to be a very short time. Seven years ago, a visit to the local Bead Barn was where the artistic talent blossomed into a thriving business — Turquoise Haven. “I took my first beading class at the Bead Barn,” Davie remembered. “That’s where the passion first started.”

After extensive growth locally and throughout the United States, Davie realized she had to make some changes in her business operations. Turquoise Haven may have closed its doors to daily customers on March 1, but Davie’s plan for the second Friday and Saturday of each month has seen its rewards. “I was so busy working on wholesale orders that I felt like I was neglecting my retail customers,” Davie admitted. “Now I can be

totally available to them one Friday and Saturday a month during the sample sale.” The beauty of these two days is that Davie is available to her faithful retail clientele. “The customers receive all the attention from me they have grown accustomed to in the past,” Davie added.

Davie takes great pride in the overall care she bestows on her customers. Her goal from the very beginning was to dress the whole client from head to toe, whether she’s working on the retail or wholesale end of the women’s apparel and accessory business. The decision to close to her everyday retail customers didn’t come easy for Davie, but she knew something in her business life had to give. “I knew I had to focus on one thing,” she said, “so I chose to branch out more fully into the wholesale business.”

Going back to the four merchandising markets Davie and her crew attended in January will help put the major growing pains Turquoise Haven is experiencing into perspective. "We came home that month with 500 wholesale orders," Davie confessed. "That means we had orders for 500 new customers." That's a great place for Turquoise Haven to be, but it added another layer of pressure for Davie and her staff.

Everyone's workload increased tremendously. Six stay-at-home moms and two high school girls do a large majority of the bead work. Casey Barrentine oversees jewelry production and design. Davie's sister, Amy Johnson, is the company's Web site guru, and also does a lot of the beading. Davie admits she couldn't do what she does without her office manager. "Gale Keith can do it all," Davie said. "She works all day and then goes home at night to make all the belts we offer to our customers."

Although as a company they are busier than ever, Davie and her staff still take time out to give back to the community where Turquoise Haven got its start. "We

"WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR NEW THINGS."

are hosting a benefit fashion show right before Mother's Day in honor of Shadoh Campbell," Davie shared. "She's a new mom who used to model and bead for us. She's battling cancer for the second time. This benefit is the least we can do."

Turquoise Haven offers it all from a full line of women's apparel, boots and accessories to their newest venture — home decor. "We are always looking for new things," Davie confessed. "We are always learning new things and coming up with new ideas. We've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go." **NOW**

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Becky Bryant shops for the perfect handbag at Beads N Bling.



Inclement weather did nothing to hinder the large crowd in attendance at the new Baylor Medical Center Waxahachie groundbreaking ceremony.



Shirley Jones is all smiles during the Ellis County Master Gardner Lawn and Garden Expo.



Junior Master Gardener and Pettigrew Academy student, Mosi Clark, doesn't mind posing in front of a large grizzly bear.



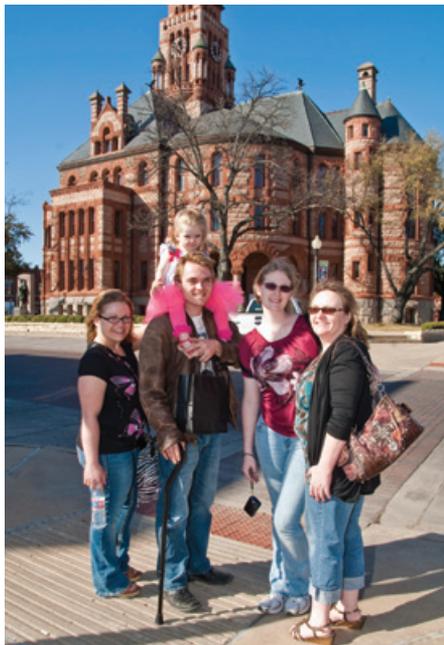
Rebecca Avery, Eli Avery, Lily Ramsey and Loretta Avery cool off with a frozen treat from Sno Biz.



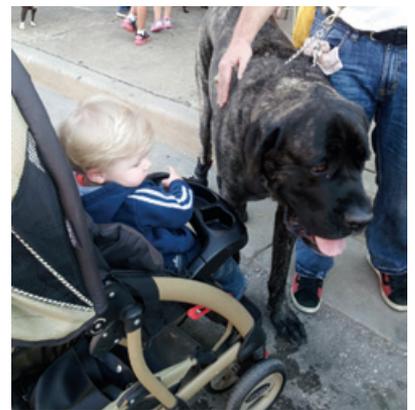
Kindergarten students from Northside Elementary spend the afternoon at Chapman Park as community volunteers read to them.



Twisted Frog patrons, Adam Dyer, Stacey Carter, Marcus and James Armstrong and Bubba Black, enjoy happy hour beverages.



Brooklyn Guzman sits on David Gibson's shoulders after an afternoon of shopping on the square with Jackie Guzman and Sarah and Susan Gibson.



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How consolidating your debt can be helpful.

Many Americans today are dealing with debt from various sources. If you're struggling to pay off multiple loans or credit cards, you may want to consider consolidating your debt. Doing this can save you time, money and stress.

According to Heather Jarvis of *U.S. News & World Report*, "Consolidation is like refinancing — you get a new loan or credit card, the new loan or card pays off your old balances, and you pay the new rate instead." Chances are each of your loans or credit cards have different interest rates, and chances are those rates are pretty high. By consolidating, you can group all your debt into one payment at one interest rate, allowing you to pay it off faster and without so much extra interest.

There are additional perks to consolidating your individual loans or credit cards:

Stay more organized with one monthly payment.

By consolidating your loans or credit cards, you'll have only one payment to worry about each month. This will eliminate having to write a handful of different checks and keep track of all those statements.

Cut down on extra fees.

If you were having trouble keeping up with your various payments, you may have been struggling with late fees or other penalties. One lower payment can help you avoid these fees.

Eliminate your debt faster.

If you're paying a lower interest rate with your new consolidated loan or credit card, you may have more money to put toward your payment, helping you to pay down your debt faster.

Improve your credit score.

Multiple loans and credit cards, if not kept up-to-date and default-free, can significantly impact your credit score. As you begin to pay off your debt, your score will improve.

Jenny McCune of Bankrate.com said, "Interest rates haven't been this low for decades, tempting some consumers to take on additional debt to ease existing credit woes. The goal is to consolidate various higher-interest balances into one easier-to-handle, less-costly package."

If you have questions on how to save money by consolidating your loans or credit cards, reach out to a local financial institution in your neighborhood. Some of them will even provide the balance transfer service for free, so do your research and find a financial institution that's right for you. **NOW**

Aaron Penny is the branch manager at the Neighborhood Credit Union in Waxahachie.

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Ready for a Hot, Dry Summer?

— By Nancy Fenton

Now is the time to start preparing for summer. One way to do that is to incorporate organic matter in your existing beds. If you are starting over, as I am in my front yard, it's the prime time to add compost, leaves and other nitrogen sources. Most plants and trees have their feeder roots in the top 8 to 12 inches of soil, and those roots burn easily. So, if you use "hot stuff," such as fresh manure or high-nitrogen green clippings, wait a few weeks before planting new plants in order not to burn their roots.

The next step is to decide what kind of mulch you want. There are several different looks you can go for with your yard, as mulches are available in several colors. Check the labels, however, because many mulches are colored with dyes. Rock is one alternative, as is chipped bark. Pine, oak and local trees are all good and can be chipped or shredded. I find the shredded bark has a tendency to matt in my beds, so I prefer the chipped bark. I try to catch the local tree trimmers with chippers and ask them if they can leave me some. They are usually delighted with not having to pay to drop it at the dump!

If you are buying mulch, order enough to cover your beds 3 inches deep. This helps the soil under the mulch moderate the temperature and retain moisture. Plants prefer constant soil temperature and moisture, and it doesn't take as much water to maintain heavily mulched, healthy plants.

The general rule of thumb is that one cubic yard will cover 100 square feet (10 x 10) to a depth of 3 inches. If you are buying bags, look at how many cubic feet is in each bag. A cubic yard is equivalent to 27 cubic feet. If a bag covers 3 cubic feet, you will need nine bags to cover 100 square feet at a depth of three 3 inches.

If your beds already have some mulch, don't remove it! Allow the old to decompose, and just add enough new mulch to get it up to 3 inches. Rocks are always an alternative, but they do reflect a lot of heat. Plants mulched in rock need to be accustomed to heat and not need much water. You see lots of rock yards in dry areas out west. There's nothing wrong with using rock, but be prepared to trade out not having to renew the mulch as often for the reflected heat the rocks throw up.

Whatever type of mulch you choose, do it soon before the soil heats up too much. Bulbs will come up through it with no problem, but don't count on plants that are supposed to reseed themselves. Thick mulch gives one last advantage — it is a great weed block when coupled with layers of newspaper! Even if a few stragglers pop up, they are easily pulled. **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.

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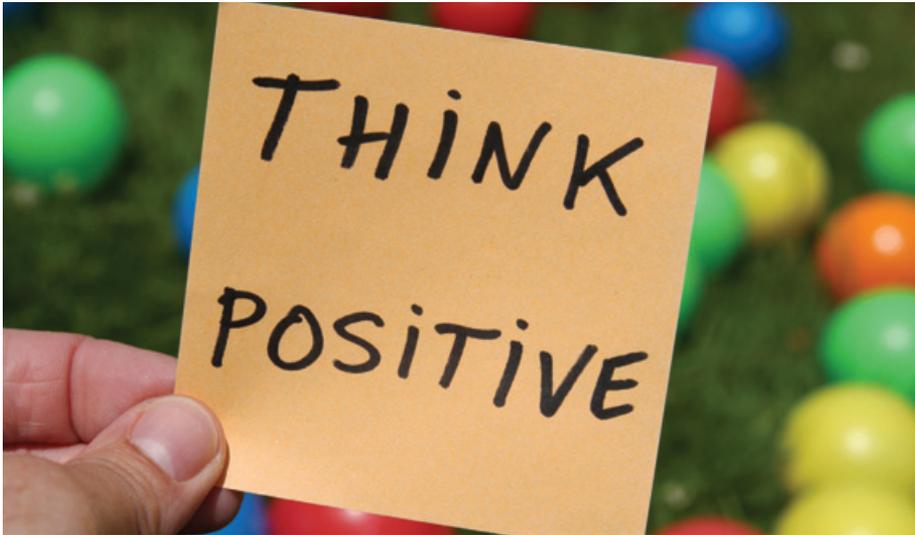
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Help for a Good Day

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Your first conscious feeling when you wake up in the morning could be a great barometer for determining whether this will be a good day or a bad day for you. Your mental health can lift you up or hang around your neck like a wet blanket. It is just as important as your physical health, and the month of May is designated as National Mental Health Month in the United States. This month, advocates for good mental health hope to raise the awareness of its importance and the realities and challenges of mental illness.

Your mental health is defined as your overall approach to life. Those who enjoy a good sense of mental health generally boast positive feelings of well-being and are able to appreciate their life and enjoy other people. The challenges that come with day-to-day living can be handled in an appropriate and satisfying manner if you have a positive outlook. Many factors determine your mental health. How you are physically is one factor. If you are suffering from a chronic, debilitating disease, the stress associated with the disease will negatively impact your mental outlook. Stress is unavoidable in life, but an overload of it can literally kill you. Sometimes, in addition to your physician, a mental health care professional can offer just as much in the area of treatment.

Your mental health status reaches into every corner of your life. For example, it can affect how you eat. Many times, food is used for comfort. Overeating can lead to obesity and a host of complications. Having an unhealthy self-image and a lack of self-confidence can lead to destructive eating patterns. A teenager experiencing this may engage in bingeing or become anorexic.

There are many things you can do to improve your mental mood. Sometimes, it helps to get a fresh perspective: take a walk in the fresh air, chat with a trusted friend, avoid the company of those who have a negative outlook, watch an upbeat and positive movie, exercise, get a good night's sleep, take the time to work on something that brings you pleasure. If you need help, do not hesitate to contact a mental health professional. Contacting one no longer has the stigma it did in the past. Because of the efforts of those who diligently work in the field of mental health, attitudes have changed for the better. People are more open to help and are more accepting of mental illnesses. Just as you guard your physical health, your mental health needs attention, too. **NOW**

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

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May 2

You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown: 7:00 p.m., WHS Fine Arts Center, Waxahachie. Special benefit performance for Penny Jurkash and Josh Walker.

May 3 — 4

Waxahachie Cinco De Mayo: **Friday**, 6:00-11:00 p.m., Friday festival kicks off; **Saturday**, 11:00 a.m.-7:30 p.m., festivities continue with a concert by Los Desperadoz. E-mail waxahachiecincomemayo@hotmail.com.

May 3 — 5

Waxahachie Community Theatre presents *Gays and Dolls*: **Friday** and **Saturday**, 7:30 p.m., **Sunday**, 2:30 p.m.; Chautauqua Auditorium. Call (972) 646-1050 or visit www.waxahachiecommunitytheatre.com.

May 10 — 11

Waxahachie's Old Fashioned Singing presents "Heaven's Front Porch": **Friday**, 7:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 3:00 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium, 300 S. Grand St. Call (972) 923-2709 or visit www.waxaofs.com.

May 11

Cheesy Strider Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson's Self Help Group meeting: 10:00 a.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 N. Grand St. Linda DeFrank at (972) 937-1276.

Pancake Breakfast benefiting Tails of Hope Pet Rescue: 8:00-10:00 a.m., Applebee's, 601 U.S. 77. Paula Davia at Paula@txtailsofhope.org.

May 18

Church Shredding Event: 10:00 a.m.-noon, First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin.

Heroes of Midlothian Benefit 5K Run: 8:30 a.m., MISD Multi-Purpose Stadium, 1800 S. 14th St., Midlothian. For more information, call (214) 395-0143 or visit www.heroesofmidlothian.org.

May 23

Awaken: An Evening With Priscilla Shirer: 7:00 p.m., The Oaks, 777 N. I-35 Service Rd., Red Oak. Register at <http://awakenmay2013.eventbrite.com/>.

June 1 — July 31

Desoto Art League Annual Art Show: City Center, City of DeSoto, 211 E. Pleasant Run Rd., DeSoto. **Entries will be accepted on May 29 only.** Visit www.desotoartleague.com or contact Bryan Reynolds at (469) 337-8367 or at dalspringshow@gmail.com.

June 1

Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-in: 8:00-11:00 a.m., Mid-Way Regional Airport, Midlothian. Breakfast tickets: 8 and over \$7, 7 and under \$3. Parking is free. Call (972) 923-0080 or visit www.mid-wayregional.com.

June 21

Launch of the 5th Annual 100th G.R.E.E.N. (Golfers Rallying to Erase the Effects of Neglect) Marathon: Noon, Thorntree Country Club, 825 W. Wintergreen Rd., DeSoto, 2:00 p.m. shotgun start.

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

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In The Kitchen With Melissa Sulak

— By Sandra Strong

As the oldest of five children, Melissa Sulak's opportunities to cook were abundant at an early age. She credits her cooking skills to her mom and her grandmother. "They are/were fabulous cooks who enjoy passing down their kitchen skills and recipes," Melissa shared. "I started making sandwiches for the family when I was 2, and I can't recall a single visit to my grandparent's house that didn't include cooking."

Melissa shies away from recipes that require special or hard-to-find ingredients. She enjoys cooking with readily available ingredients. "I'm a 'tweaker' when it comes to recipes. The first time I make a new dish, I make it strictly by the recipe as a baseline," she admitted. "After that, I start tweaking to make it my own." **NOW**

Scalloped Potatoes

Makes 4 servings.

- 4 cups potatoes, thinly sliced**
- 3 Tbsp. flour**
- 4 Tbsp. minced onion**
- 1 tsp. salt**
- 4 dashes pepper**
- 4 Tbsp. butter or margarine**
- 2 1/2 cups hot milk**

- 1.** Heat oven to 350 F. Make 3 layers using 1/4 of the potatoes for each. Sprinkle with 1 Tbsp. flour, 1 Tbsp. onion, 1/4 tsp. salt and a dash of pepper for each layer. Dot each layer with 1 Tbsp. butter or margarine.
- 2.** Top with remaining potatoes, onion, salt, pepper and butter or margarine.
- 3.** Pour milk over layers. Bake covered for 30 minutes. Uncover; continue to bake for 1 hour.

Chicken Salad

Makes enough for 4 sandwiches.

- 1 1/2 cups baked chicken, chopped**
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise**
- 1 medium stalk celery, chopped**
- 1 Tbsp. onion, minced**
- 1/2 tsp. salt**
- 1/4 tsp. pepper**

- 1.** Mix all ingredients together.

Sugar Cookies

Cookies:

- 2 cups margarine**
- 2 1/4 cups sugar**
- 1/4 tsp. almond extract**
- 1/4 tsp. orange extract**
- 2 tsp. vanilla**

- 3 eggs**
- 1/4 cup milk**
- 6 cups flour**
- 4 1/2 tsp. baking powder**

Meringue Powder Glaze:

- 4 cups powdered sugar**
- 2 Tbsp. meringue powder**
- Water**

- 1.** For cookies: Thoroughly cream margarine, sugar and flavorings. Add eggs; beating until light and fluffy. Stir in milk. Sift together dry ingredients; blend into creamed mixture. Divide dough into 6 portions. Chill for 1 hour or overnight.
- 2.** On lightly floured surface, roll dough to 1/8 inch. Cut into desired shapes with cookie cutters. Bake at 375 F on greased cookie sheet for 6-8 minutes. Cool slightly; remove from sheet. Cool on rack.
- 3.** For glaze: Combine sugar and powder. Add water; gradually mixing well after each addition until thin with a flowing consistency. Ice cookies with glaze.

Gingerbread Cookies

Makes about 40 medium-sized cookies.

- 5 1/2 to 6 cups all-purpose flour**
- 1 tsp. baking soda**
- 1 tsp. salt**
- 2 tsp. cinnamon**
- 1 tsp. ginger**
- 2 tsp. nutmeg**
- 1 tsp. cloves**
- 1 cup shortening**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1 1/4 cups molasses**
- 2 eggs, beaten**

- 1.** Thoroughly mix flour, soda, salt and spices; set aside.
- 2.** Melt shortening in large saucepan. Cool slightly. Add sugar, molasses and eggs; mix well. Add 4 cups of dry mixture; blending well.
- 3.** Turn mixture out onto lightly floured surface. Knead in the remaining dry ingredients; mixing by hand. Add a little more flour, if necessary, to make a firm dough.
- 4.** Roll out on a lightly floured surface to 1/4-inch thickness. Cut into desired shapes with cookie cutters.
- 5.** Bake on ungreased cookie sheet at 375 F. Bake small to medium-sized cookies for 6-10 minutes. Bake large cookies for 10-15 minutes.

When an apple a day isn't enough!

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