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M A G A Z I N E

MAY 2023

Mirror Images

Rita Cook takes a
unique approach to art

Also inside:
Scavenger Hunt

In the Kitchen With
Lindsey Prince and
Aaron Thrash

The Architect's Crown

James Riely Gordon
left his mark on Texas

Postal Customer

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Election Day - May 6, 2023

(7:00 am - 7:00 pm)

Red Oak Municipal Center and Eastridge Baptist Church

Early Voting is April 24-29 & May 1-2

Bill Foster

bfoster74@aircanopy.net



Place 3 Stands for:

- Provide leadership on policies
- Cost effective management
- Resist the "woke" agenda
- Demand academic excellence
- Ensure safety for students & staff

Kim Sturman

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Place 4 Stands for:

- T - Teach Classical Academics
- R - Respect Student & Parent Rights
- U - Unite Patriotism & Texas Pride
- S - Stop Marxist CRT and SEL
- T - Target Fiscal Responsibility

Penny Story

pennystorygov@gmail.com



Place 5 Incumbent Stands for:

- Enforce Drug Free School Zones
- Children belong to parents, not school/state
- ROISD should be an INDEPENDENT District
- ROISD should have INDEPENDENT Board
- Classrooms with U.S. Motto, U.S. & Texas Flag

Endorsed by:

Ellis County Republican Party, Ellis County Young Republicans,
True Texas Project of Ellis County and Texans for Freedom

(Pol. Adv. paid by Bill Foster, Kim Sturman and Penny Story)

VOTE "AGAINST"

The \$97.5 Million Dollar School Bond

Here's Why!

• **TAX INCREASE** "without limit as to RATE or amount!" The ballot reads: "The issuance of \$97,500,000 of Bonds by the Red Oak Independent School District for the purpose of constructing, acquiring, and equipping a new Middle School and levying taxes in payment thereof. This is a property tax increase."

• The total cost with interest the taxpayers will be responsible for is almost \$170 million dollars.

• Red Oak has not had a bond in 15 years - but we still owe \$110 million in bonds and interest.

• The total bondage to the taxpayers will be \$280 million in principal and interest if passed.

• **NO OVERCROWDING CRISIS** - 160% OVER CAPACITY IS A FALSE CLAIM MADE BY THIS DISTRICT!!

• The Crisis is Education!

• **AMERICA IS IN CRISIS** - Now is not the time to Build a new school!

Pol. Adv. paid by Texans for Freedom

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ON THE COVER



Rita Cook impacts Ellis County and beyond through art, writing and more.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Angel

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What's new at the library?

Whether you fancy yourself a reader or not, this month is a great time to investigate what your local library has to offer ... and it's more than books! For starters, those with children will want to note that Summer Reading Club continues to be one of the biggest programs of the year for Red Oak Public Library, with guest speakers and activities planned from June 1 through July 19. This summer's theme is "All Together Now!" as participants are welcomed to the city's brand-new library facility.

Beyond summer programs, Story Time for children aged 18 months to 5 years old takes place Tuesdays at 10:00 a.m. with library staff reading stories around a weekly theme. A number of other children's events and activities are scheduled seasonally, but the library doesn't forget about its adult readers, with Red Oak Book Club meeting every third Monday of the month from 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Guests with a valid library card can go online or use a free app on their computer, tablet or smartphone to borrow and enjoy eBooks and eAudiobooks from the library, with eBooks sent straight to one's Kindle. About 3,500 Red Oakians have library cards, and an estimated 2,000 people utilize the library monthly, so it may be time for you to find out what those folks already know. Library hours are Mondays through Thursdays from 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. and Fridays and Saturdays from 1:00-5:00 p.m. Now located at 101 S. Live Oak, the almost 6,000-square-foot library houses a collection of about 11,000 items, including more than 800 DVDs and 100-plus audio books. Besides a world of stories and fun events, the best part is, all programs are free and open to the public.

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North Ellis Co. NOW Scavenger Hunt



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To ensure your Scavenger
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One entry per person.

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Winner must pick up prize
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Chocolate Eggs were found
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Adopted at birth, redheaded and lefthanded, Rita Cook was always told she was special. She made a career of writing, but only recently discovered her painting skill. “In March 2020, I stayed with a friend in horse country Kentucky for a week. That trip resulted in 15 paintings of acrylic on mirror,” Rita reflected. “Thanks to the pandemic, I had found my soul’s calling.”

Up until then, Rita had worked as a professional writer and film producer, living and working in Dallas; Atlanta; Chicago; LA; Paris, France; New York’s Long Island; and, eventually, Red Oak. Today, she serves as the public information officer for the cities of Glenn Heights, Ferris and Wilmer, while she dives deeper into art. “About 25 years ago, I began travel and auto writing while also working as a journalist. I’ve also had 10 books published — two are metaphysical romances and a few are local books about haunted Dallas and Fort Worth,” Rita outlined. “Now, I can say I’ve also had an art exhibit in the Dallas Design District and work accepted into Madrid, Spain’s Monat Gallery.”

Rita’s art is unique in more ways than one. “I went to Goodwill looking for frames to repurpose for my paintings. I discovered old mirrors and thought, *I can paint on that*. The mirrors with frames I have found while traveling make my art stand out — the frames are part of the art,” Rita explained. “The mirror seems to create a subconscious depth that fascinates me.”

Rita’s mirrored art has taken over her apartment-turned-studio. “I bring home mirrors, and then just sit down on the floor with the huge frames in front of me and start putting on acrylic paint to see where it goes. I have colors in mind, but that is all,” Rita described. “I listen to meditation music while painting and get lost in the process and — a secret — I also talk out loud about what I see I am creating because I never know what a piece is going to turn out to be until it is done.”

Rita calls her current style, “a hint of Lyrical Abstraction meets Orphism.” “Abstract Expressionist painters have influenced me, as well as Orphic Cubism, which, in short, is abstract expression from the soul. Images that create moods through self-expression and color,” she described.

As “someone who before could not draw stick figures,” Rita has learned to trust her artistic intuition. “It is meditation for me, and I

also feel like sometimes I am tapping into someone else's subconscious. Like I am being shown what I need to paint for them, and then it is a matter of that person finding me and the piece of art when I am done."

A lifetime of mingling with artistic types helped Rita procure a large collection of art from friends all over the world. "When I started this new art journey myself, I began to tell my artist friends. Some weren't painting or were doing other types of art. Three of my artist friends actually told me that through my art, they were inspired to start painting again — painting for themselves and not what they were doing as a commercial job in art. I was flattered. They have been my biggest fans," Rita admitted.

A writer for local and national media, Rita is a political columnist for *The Ellis County Press* and editor of travel publication, *The Insider Mag*. She is also a photographer, dabbles in wood etching and is looking for places to showcase her art. She has representation in Europe, where she will share pieces at the Monte Carlo Art Show in August. "I currently have two pop-up locations for my Wolves and Ravens Art Gallery — The Southern Mercantile in Waxahachie and the Ol' Queen Theater Vendor Mall in Ferris."

Rita said she thrives when wearing many hats. She produced a dozen films while in LA and is currently raising funds to produce a film in Ellis County, *Hopeless in Texas*, while continuing her various other commitments.

Her brother and his grandchildren are an important part of Rita's inner circle, along with the artists who support her creativity. Rita said her art pieces are her children, having "birthed more than 100 of these little things on acrylics, mirror, canvas and watercolor paper. The colors of my children astound me," Rita praised. "So much so that I often fret and wonder why there aren't more colors to choose from in this infinite world of space and time."

Dubbing herself a world citizen with many creative callings, Rita notes it is sharing her art that fuels her. "When the owner of my mirror art piece looks at the images on the mirror, the mirror reflects back exactly what the owner is supposed to see," she promised. "But the soul and the ego can be friends, and the mirror will reflect what will be." **NOW**



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- Second middle school (Fall 2025)
- Long term solution
- Start building ASAP
- More opportunity for kids
- Smaller class sizes
- Reduced traffic around entire district & municipalities
- A real opportunity for future generations to succeed

A Vote Against

- Tax rate will likely *increase* to buy portables
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- Limits future planning options



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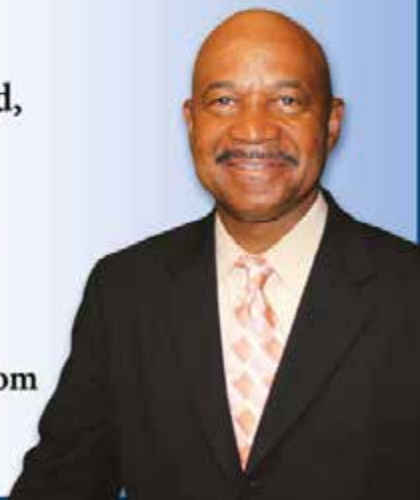
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Zoomed In: Connor Bergman and Logan Belschner

By Angel Morris

Senior Connor Bergman and sophomore Logan Belschner are recognized members of the Red Oak Mighty Hawk Band. Connor is a two-time band all-stater, earned all-region four times and qualified for all-area each of those years. "My middle school band directors thought I would have success on the euphonium. Now, I plan to pursue a performance degree with it at Texas Christian University," Connor noted.

Logan is the first ROHS bassoon player to make TMEA All State Band. During band season, he marches the euphonium. "My favorite instrument is the bassoon. It's a great team player in terms of its versatile range and tone," Logan explained. "My ultimate goal is to study music at a university and become a band director."



Regina Tucker, DeSoto High School's Director of Dance, performs at a Glenn Heights community event.



Casa of Ellis County Executive Director Kim Garlitz accepts teddy bear donations from Southern DFW Kappa Delta Alumni group's Judy Siebert, Dorinda Rickels and Karen McDivit.



Lynne Grandstaff (holding red purse) and hlh&r Metals Recycling sponsor First United Methodist Church Red Oak's table at the Handbags for Hawks fundraiser.



342 Nutrition cuts the ribbon on its new location at 600 Methodist St.



Moms Belinda Ferguson, Christie Peacock, Andrea Walton and Tina McLain discuss safety in Red Oak schools.



Waxahachie's Gracie Scott participates in Ovilla Christian School's Color Run fundraiser.



Adilyn, Brooke and Piper Treadaway enjoy the petting zoo during Vertical Church's Easter Egg Hunt.



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In 2005, at age 19, Lindsey Prince and Aaron Thrash met as a waitress and a cook in another state. Years later, they were reunited, became engaged and discovered they are “an amazing team in the kitchen,” Lindsey noted.

Aaron attended culinary school and worked at restaurants around the U.S., including roles as head chef, before entering the world of sales. A nurse since 2007, Lindsey works hospice in Ellis County. She is from a multicultural family that exposed her to a variety of cooking styles. “Continuing both sides of my family’s recipe legacies is important to me. The time spent in our kitchen helps us honor lost loved ones,” she admitted. “Aaron and I take pride in cooking for our family’s enjoyment and sharing that with our children.” **NOW**

Grandma’s Fideo

2 lbs. ground beef
Salt, to taste
Pepper, to taste
Garlic powder, to taste
Onion powder, to taste
16 oz. fideo
1 potato, chopped into small cubes

1/4 onion
1 Roma tomato
5 tsp. Knorr Caldo de Pollo
5 oz. tomato sauce
4 cups water

1. Season the ground beef with the spices. In another pan, fry the fideo (vermicelli) noodles until golden brown. Add the

ground beef and potato to the fideo.

2. In a blender or food processor, blend the onion, tomato, caldo de pollo and tomato sauce with the water.

3. Add the blended mixture to the pan of fideo, ground beef and potatoes. Cook for 15 minutes, or until the potatoes are soft.

Granny’s Creamy Cornbread

2/3 cup butter, softened
1 cup sugar
3 eggs
1 2/3 cups milk
2 1/3 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup cornmeal
4 1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt

1. Cream the butter and sugar with a mixer. In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs and milk.
2. In another bowl, blend the flour, cornmeal, baking powder and salt. Alternately add the egg/milk mixture and the flour mixture to the creamed butter, mixing after each addition.

3. Spread the batter in a greased 9x13-inch pan; bake at 400 F until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about 22 to 27 minutes. Serve warm.

Chicken Pesto Sandwich

The marinade is enough for up to 2 lbs. of chicken.

1 6-oz. chicken breast

Marinade:

1 cup zesty Italian dressing

1/4 cup pickle juice

1 Tbsp. minced garlic

1 Tbsp. pepper

Pesto Mayo:

1/4 cup mayonnaise

1 Tbsp. pesto (homemade or store bought)

1 Tbsp. pickle juice

Pepper, to taste

Spritzer:

1 Tbsp. olive oil

Juice of half a lemon

1 tsp. sugar

Pinch of salt

Sandwich:

1 ciabatta bun

2 Tbsp. pesto mayo (divided use)

1/2 cup spinach or arugula, spritzed

2 tomato slices

2 slices provolone

Salt, to taste

Pepper, to taste

1. *For marinade:* Combine all ingredients. Marinate the chicken breast for 4 hours — a maximum of 24 hours.

2. *For pesto mayo:* In a small bowl, mix all pesto mayo ingredients; blend until well incorporated.

3. *For spritzer:* In another bowl, repeat the same process with spritzer ingredients.

4. Grill the chicken breast until 165 F.

5. *For sandwich:* Toast the ciabatta bun. Place 1 Tbsp. of pesto mayo on the bottom bun and 1 Tbsp. of pesto mayo on the top bun.

6. Toss the spinach or arugula in the spritzer.

7. Build the sandwich with the remaining ingredients.

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