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M A G A Z I N E

MAY 2025



On the Grow

Mayor Mark Stanfill shares about the state of the city

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

In the Kitchen With
Amanda Randel

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David is proud of his team's years of experience in the industry. "Together, we

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"Together, we have more than 100 years of experience. My dad and my uncles were all roofers. I worked summers with my dad since I was a teenager, but I got into this full time in 2012."

David looks at his business differently. "We're a small business with Christian values. I set out to always do the right thing. I have given free roofs to people in real need, like an elderly lady who had holes in her roof. She didn't have the money to fix it, so she just wanted us to tarp it. I decided to re-roof her house for free. We're a business, and we're about making money, but we're also here to help. I want to help my family, but also the community."

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Stepping out ...

Do you think it's scarier to try new things when you're young or when you're old? I'd imagine young people think adults — with their life experiences and wisdom — have it easier, while adults figure that youth — with their fearlessness and aspirations — are better equipped to try something new.

Truth is, we all have fears at every age. The difference I see is that some keep trying. As a former teacher, I'd say that "stick-to-it-tiveness," also known as grit, is the best indicator of future success. After all, quitters never win. Yet getting up the courage simply to try can be hard, and sticking to it even harder.

Former President John F. Kennedy is credited with saying, "Every accomplishment begins with a decision to try," in his 1961 inaugural address as he stressed the importance

Angel

Angel Morris
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of taking steps to move forward. Merely wishing for something is not likely to make it so. Progress can only happen if you decide to give it a go.

With impending graduations, students and parents alike have the chance to step out of their comfort zones and try new things. From starting college or careers to planning for retirement and navigating empty nests, every stage of life brings opportunities if only we're willing to try (and try again). So, what will you attempt this year? Here's to doing so despite your age ... or your fears.

Step it up!

May 2025
Volume 20, Issue 5

ON THE COVER



From school trustee to mayor, Mark Stanfill has long been part of Red Oak's evolution.

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North Ellis Co. NOW Scavenger Hunt



Find 5 hidden Birds

in 5 different ads in this issue (not counting the one above).

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Carrots were found on pages 3, 5, 6, 9 and Back Cover.

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On the Grow

— By Angel Morris

Red Oak Mayor Dr. Mark Stanfill has experienced the city's evolution firsthand after moving here in 1979. "We've definitely had growth with the widening of roads, housing developments and new school buildings. I remember getting a grocery store was a big deal!" he recalled. "And now, with the movie theater and sports fields, the whole family can find nearly everything you need in Red Oak."

Mayor Stanfill graduated from Red Oak High School in 1983 and went on to earn his degree in bio-medical science toward becoming a doctor of veterinary medicine from Texas A&M University, where he met his wife, Karen. The couple married and eventually returned to the area to start a family.

Opening Animal Hospital of Ovilla in 1999, the Stanfills moved from Lancaster to Red Oak to be more engaged in the community. They became particularly involved with the school district, from where their children, Ellen and Benjamin, would go on to graduate. "Karen held many volunteer roles, including serving as PTA president and with the ROISD Education Foundation," Mayor Stanfill listed. The couple are founding members of the foundation, and Mayor Stanfill served on its board for eight years before becoming a school board member for 14 years.

"Local politics wasn't on my radar until I was asked to fill an empty school trustee position 20 years ago. I really enjoyed serving the community that way," Mark shared. "Then the position of mayor became available at a critical time for the growth of our city, so I ran for mayor."

Working with the city council, the mayor has helped Red Oak navigate change. "There will be continued growth in residents, retail and industrial. We do our best to manage that growth, so it happens at the appropriate speed and in the appropriate places. We are working hard to keep our police, fire and infrastructure on top of the growth," he noted.

Two years ago, Mayor Stanfill announced that Red Oak would join Midlothian as home to one of two Google Data Centers in Texas. In a recent State of the City Address, he joined council members in describing major milestones of 2024. "Expanded housing with new neighborhood development, plus retail construction were two major areas of note in the last year. The Legacy Square Development is home to B&B Theatres, with bowling, arcade, a full-service restaurant and indoor/outdoor recreation. Take 5 Oil Change and Seven Brew Coffee were notable openings. Schneider Electric completed a 100,000 square-foot facility, joining the Google and Compass data center projects."

Red Oak Senior Citizen Community Center saw many updates. A new walking trail opened behind Mulberry Court and Ash Street, joining other trails with upgraded solar lighting. Watkins Park basketball court was resurfaced, also receiving solar lighting. Red Oak Public Library introduced a Maker Space with 3-D printers, sewing and embroidery machines, plus new grant-funded digital learning stations.

With an eye toward future growth, the Methodist Pump Station ground storage tank completion added 1.5 million gallons of water capacity. The city's Pavement Management Plan upgraded a number of roadways. Internal technology advancements improved city operations, including enhanced cyber security for data protection and upgraded fiber circuitry for service delivery.

The city reported strides in equipment and employment for police and fire personnel, including a crime victim liaison, a crime scene drone team, a mobile security trailer and a brush truck for wildland fire response.

“Supporting city staff and funding key projects while keeping our tax rate low requires strategic planning and sound financial management,” Mayor Stanfill underscored. “Red Oak is well prepared to manage growth, embrace new opportunities and maintain its current ad valorem property tax rate of \$0.696886.”

The mayor said S&P Global upgraded Red Oak’s long-term bond rating to AA+, the second highest rating a city can achieve toward fiscal responsibility.

This year, construction of a third fire station will begin on the west side of I-35 and upgrades to the Animal Care and Control facility are planned. Construction of the 1.5 million-gallon Daubitz Elevated Storage Tank will begin, more than doubling the city’s elevated water storage.

The Pierce Street Sewer Main Improvement Project, ongoing road improvements, plus TxDOT’s Loop 9 construction continue in 2025. A new

9-acre park in the Oaks subdivision and 22-acre Oaks Trail Park with a workout-equipped trail are on this year’s horizon, too.

Olive Garden restaurant is expected to join other retail openings, along with a new 7-Eleven at the corner of Cole and Ovilla roads. Compass Data Center has a second location planned, while Databank and Powerhouse have also announced local tech hubs.

In his seventh year as mayor, Stanfill can reflect on one of his favorite recent accomplishments. “Negotiating the arrangement between ROISD and the city to develop what is now the new government center and sports complex from a vacant school property that couldn’t be easily utilized by the district was important,” he said.

The mayor is particularly in tune with how investment in youth benefits a community. He served on the board of the Red Oak Youth Basketball Association, was an Assistant Scoutmaster for Boy Scout Troop 524 in Ovilla and has been a youth leader at Ovilla United Methodist Church.

He knows offering family-friendly activities plays a big role in attracting people to Red Oak. July’s Red Oak White




and Blue, Fall Festival, Christmas in Red Oak and Red Oak Night Out, plus fishing events and movie nights build a sense of community. “I love seeing people come out to our events. The library has a lot of great events. Sports leagues have enough fields that they can now play in the city,” he noted. “It’s important that residents feel connection with the place that they live, and I think we’re really seeing that in our town.

“We have strong schools, opportunities to eat, shop and play, and different types of housing available,” Mayor Stanfill listed. “We’re ready to build on our momentum, creating new opportunities and improving the quality of life for everyone who calls Red Oak home.” **NOW**



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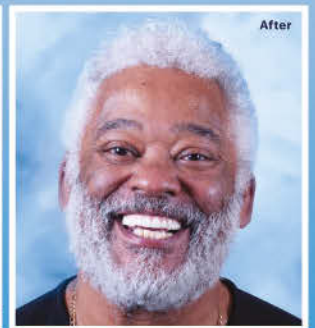
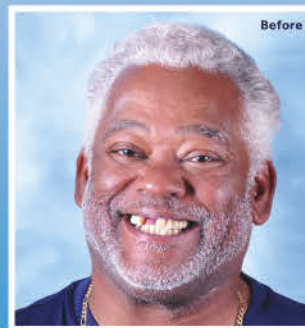
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Zoomed In: Melissa Spoelstra

By Angel Morris

A former Red Oak High School mascot, Melissa Spoelstra's interests have turned from hawks to angels. "I started noticing people talking about angels, seeing the supernatural portrayed in media, and realized I didn't know that much about what the Bible says about these creatures," she shared.

Melissa decided to trace angels from Genesis to Revelation. The end result is a video study with Lifeway Women releasing in November. "Each participant guide contains a unique code giving access to all eight teachings associated with this project, which were filmed with a live audience in Waxahachie," she explained.

Melissa's other interests include walking, reading and Jazzercise — things she's happy to be able to enjoy near home. After graduating from ROHS, Melissa attended college in Chicago, where she met the Canadian she would marry. "I lived in Canada, then Ohio for the next 28 years, until returning home to Texas in June 2022!"



Glenn Heights Mayor Sonja A. Brown has been appointed to the National League of Cities Small Cities Council and the NLC Council on Youth, Education and Families.



Red Oak Police Officer F. Serrano offers service with a smile during Cops at the Coop, hosted by Chick-fil-A and the City of Red Oak.



CareFlite offers one of the many service vehicles available for tours at Red Oak's annual Touch-A-Truck event.



Zach Stillwell and Ethan Bateman share a message with visitors to Ovilla Road Baptist Church's youth event, WKND.



ROISD Trustee Sean Kelly shares stories with students during Read Across America Day.



Laura Corkery, a Certified Life Mastery Consultant and owner of True You Living, helps guests delve into their visions at The VISION Workshop™ held in the Red Oak Area Chamber of Commerce Conference Room.



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Lemon Loaf Cake

CookingNOW

IN THE KITCHEN WITH

AMANDA RANDEL

— By Angel Morris



Amanda Randel began baking at around age 12 and has appreciated it ever since. “I’ve always loved baking cookies. My grandma would make seasonal cookies with the grandkids when we were little, and we looked forward to it every season,” she recalled.

Amanda and her husband, Aaron, moved to Midlothian from Cedar Hill almost three years ago. The mom of two young daughters, she has been a hairdresser in Red Oak for seven years, sometimes gifting her clients with homemade treats. “My grandmother not only taught me to enjoy baking,” Amanda shared, “but also the joy of making delicious baked goods to share with others!” **NOW**

Lemon Loaf Cake

Cake:

- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 3.4-oz. box instant lemon pudding mix
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 Tbsp. butter, softened
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 tsp. lemon extract
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup sour cream
- Zest of 1 lemon

Frosting:

- 3 Tbsp. butter, soft but not melted
- 3 Tbsp. lemon juice

1 tsp. lemon extract

1 1/2 cups powdered sugar

1. *For cake:* Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line the bottom of a 5x9-inch loaf pan with parchment paper. Spray the pan and parchment paper with nonstick baking spray; set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine the first 5 ingredients.
3. With a stand or hand mixer, combine the remaining ingredients, except the zest. Mix until evenly combined.
4. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the wet, scraping the sides of the bowl. Add the lemon zest; mix until just combined.
5. Pour into the pan. Bake 55 minutes, or until the center is fully set, and a toothpick inserted comes out crumb-free.
6. Cool in the pan 5-10 minutes. Run a knife around the sides of the pan, invert and

remove from the pan, removing parchment paper from the bottom. Finish cooling on a wire rack.

7. *For frosting:* Combine the butter, lemon juice and lemon extract with a hand or stand mixer. Gradually add the powdered sugar, beating until smooth and creamy.

8. Evenly spread over the loaf top. Refrigerate to set the frosting completely before slicing. Refrigerate leftovers in an airtight container.

Browned Butter Chocolate Chip Cookies

14 Tbsp. unsalted butter (divided use)

3/4 cup brown sugar, packed

1/2 cup granulated sugar

1 tsp. salt

2 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

1 egg, plus 1 yolk

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 tsp. baking soda

3/4 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

4 oz. bittersweet chocolate, chunked

Sea salt (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F. Prepare 2 large baking sheets with parchment paper. Place 4 Tbsp. butter in a large mixing bowl; set aside.

2. Set a medium heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium-high heat; melt the remaining butter, about 2-3 minutes, then whisk constantly until it begins to sizzle, then foam. The butter will become golden brown with a nutty aroma. *Note: Do not let it burn!*

3. Remove from heat; pour over the butter in the large mixing bowl. Stir until completely melted

4. Add the sugars, salt and vanilla; whisk until combined. Add the egg and yolk, whisking until smooth, about 30 seconds. Let stand 3 minutes.

5. Meanwhile, in a small mixing bowl, whisk together the flour and baking soda.

6. Whisk the butter with sugar mixture for 30 seconds. Let stand 3 minutes.

7. Stir the flour mixture into the large bowl; mix until just combined. Fold in the chocolate chips and chocolate chunks.

8. Create balls of dough 3 Tbsp. in size. Place 6 cookie dough balls on each sheet, sprinkling with sea salt. Bake 12-14 minutes, rotating the sheet halfway through. Cool on sheets for 2-3 minutes before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely.



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