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Power of the Pivot

Megan Gordon earns her third Teacher of the Year title

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Dr. Francine Rhinehart, DPM

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Angel Morris
MidlothianNOW Editor
angel.morris@nowmagazines.com
(972) 533-7216

ON THE COVER

Megan Gordon turns her creative journey into a blueprint for Midlothian's future entrepreneurs.



Photo by
Anthony Sarmienta

*Publisher, Connie Poirier
General Manager, Rick Hensley*

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*Managing Editor, Becky Walker
Midlothian Editor, Angel Morris
Office Assistant, Kristin Bato
Editor/Proofreader, Virginia Riddle*

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

*Creative Director, Chris McCalla
Artists, Jerri Akers . Kristin Bato
Martha Macias . Anthony Sarmienta*

PHOTOGRAPHY

*Photography Director, Chris McCalla
Photographer, Anthony Sarmienta*

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*Advertising Representatives,
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— By Angel Morris

Power of the P

For Megan Gordon, the classroom isn't just a place where facts are memorized. It's a stage, a studio and a creative laboratory. A graduate of Cedar Hill High School, Megan's journey to becoming a cornerstone of the Midlothian Independent School District was a series of "pivots" — a term she now teaches her entrepreneurship students — that led her from a middle school choir room to the innovative halls of The MILE.

The seeds of Megan's teaching philosophy were sown under the mentorship of her middle and high school choir teacher, Melissa Logan. "She was the teacher who really helped me bloom," Megan recalled.

Megan followed her musical passion to Texas Tech

University, initially majoring in vocal performance. However, the major left her feeling uninspired. In her first pivot, she changed her major to advertising. Paradoxically, the change gave her more freedom to create. She began gigging at local coffee shops, eventually releasing two independent albums. By 2005, she graduated with a degree in advertising and a minor in English, with a tool kit of creative skills she didn't yet know would define her career.

Despite her detour into advertising, the call of the classroom remained. As a youth intern and camp counselor throughout college, Megan had always been drawn to mentorship. At age 24, she had an epiphany: She needed a career that could sustain both her life and her creative spirit.

She earned alternative certification and, at 25, walked into her first classroom to teach seventh-grade English ... the exact same room in Cedar Hill where she'd sat as a seventh-grade math student. The transition wasn't easy. "My first year of teaching was rough," Megan admitted. "It never felt like a successful day."

Success then was measured by making it through



ivot

the school day without tears. Although the days were tough, the spark was there. Over the next four years at Permenter Middle School — where she was named Teacher of the Year in 2012 — and a subsequent 12 years at MISD's Walnut Grove Middle School, Megan discovered the "absolute joy" of the profession.

After more than a decade teaching English, Megan pivoted again. Drawing on her advertising degree, she took over the media, yearbook and graphic design programs at WGMS. While she loved the fast-paced, creative nature of capturing school history, the relentless schedule of events, production and sales began to take a toll.

Facing burnout, but wanting to preserve the love for teaching

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that still remained, she decided to resign. The day after her resignation, Dr. Shannon Blake, principal of The MILE (Midlothian Innovative Learning Experience), reached out about an opening in the INCubatoredu entrepreneurship program.

The MILE is a state-of-the-art career and technology campus where students gain hands-on experience in fields ranging from culinary arts to cybersecurity. For Megan, the program was the perfect culmination of her diverse background: business, marketing, performance and education.

"Teaching entrepreneurship really combines all of my interests," Megan, who has operated several side businesses herself, said.

In her classroom, entrepreneurship isn't just about starting a business. It's about a mindset — risk-taking, self-assurance and the ability to fail forward. A favorite success story involves a group of students who spent two years creating a digital fashion platform for customers to sell

and buy ethical, modest, sustainably made attire. Addressing the dark side of fast fashion, the team connected their business ideas to a larger purpose. The company has taken its idea to State in business competition for the second year in a row. "When students build ideas that better the world, that's exciting," Megan noted.

Megan's success is bolstered by the culture of MISD. She credits leaders like Principals Brian Blackwell, Carly Woolery and Dr. Shannon Blake for fostering an environment where teachers are empowered to take risks. Whether it was turning her middle school classroom into a 1950s underground beatnik coffee shop for poetry readings or taking her Practicum of Entrepreneurship students to Midlo Scoops to get the scoop on how local businesses are run, Megan has always been encouraged to go for it.

Megan's goal is to be a "Mrs. Logan" for her students. She seeks out the timid learner who needs a

push and the outsider who needs to know they belong. Seeing her former middle school students now thriving as high schoolers at The MILE has been one of the greatest rewards of her career.

Coming from a family with entrepreneurship in its blood — ranging from printing presses to terracotta studios — Megan Gordon was born to create. Today, she is creating the next generation of leaders. Her excellence has not gone unnoticed. She was recently named 2026 Teacher of the Year at The MILE, making her a three-time recipient of the honor across three different campuses.

So, whether she is leading a Jazzercise class, repurposing vintage finds or coaching a student through a business pitch, Megan remains a testament to the power of the pivot. "I actually wasn't sure I'd be a lifelong teacher," she reflected. "I thought, *I'll do this for now and see how it goes.* Well, 18 years later, and I'm still here." **NOW**

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Dr. Francine Rhinehart, DPM

Dr. Francine Rhinehart's journey into podiatry began on the running track, not in a classroom. As an elite collegiate runner, she discovered she enjoyed helping others while also seeking out unconventional approaches to injury prevention and treatment. That dual passion led her into podiatric medicine, where she's spent 14 years combining her love of sports medicine with a dedication to patient care.



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"Since I'm no longer surgical, my passion is very much into health and longevity," Dr. Rhinehart said. "I'm currently studying to be certified in American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine and incorporate this into my podiatry practice."

Dr. Rhinehart offers foot care including comprehensive relief for heel spurs, bunions, arthritis and gout; treatment for minor fractures and tendonitis; and specialized care for Morton's neuroma. "We also treat metatarsalgia (ball of the foot) caused by things such as thinning fat pads. We use collagen-building fillers to restore natural cushioning long-term," Dr. Rhinehart said. "Other causes could be biomechanical or overuse injuries, arthritis and can be treated by numerous options." For stubborn, chronic injuries, the doctor could also



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After completing her undergraduate degree, Dr. Rhinehart earned her Doctor of Podiatric Medicine from Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine in Independence, Ohio. She completed her residency through the Sisters of Charity Hospital in New York, and continues training with the International Aesthetic Foot Society. She's also published work on rheumatoid arthritis using a functional medicine approach and maintains ABPM board certification.

Dr. Rhinehart's approach emphasizes preventive care and innovative solutions. "I can help patients keep their feet in good health and slow down their progression toward surgery," Dr. Rhinehart said. "We offer cutting-edge solutions dedicated to diabetic foot care and wound prevention, allowing diabetic patients to receive early intervention for foot issues."

Dr. Rhinehart remains active in the Midlothian community where she lives with her husband and two children. She's involved with Vertical Church in Ovilla, participating in Bible studies and the worship team. She donates to support Ovilla Christian School, Firehouse Kids, Manna House and North Ellis County Outreach.

Dr. Rhinehart is committed to serving the full spectrum of foot health needs. "I praise God that I'm here to do His work. I love treating everything," Dr. Rhinehart said, "from general podiatry to the anesthetics all the way to my current training in functional, preventative and anti-aging medicine." **NOW**

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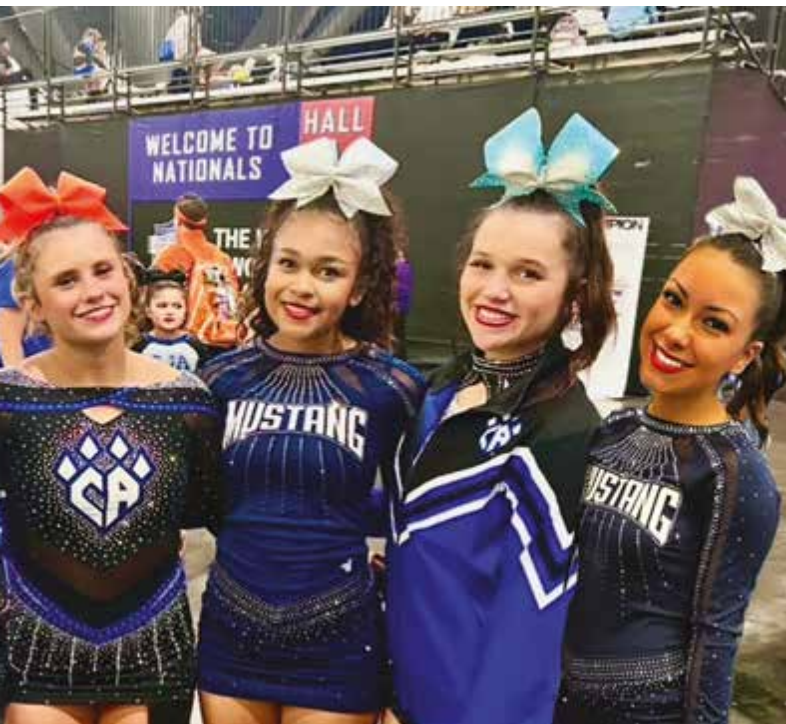
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Zoomed In: Midlothian Cheerleaders

By Angel Morris

Earlier this spring, four Midlothian High School cheerleaders got to compete against one another via the elite competitive teams with which they train outside of school. The athletes showed their skills during the National Cheerleaders Association All Star National Championship in Houston.

The participants were sophomore Presleigh Benner, who, having been in competitive cheer for eight years, represented team Cheer Athletics Plano; sophomore Preslie Fitch, who has been in competitive cheer for four years, and was on the NCA championship team, Mustang Cheer Dallas; freshman Estelle Benner, a seven-year competitive cheerleader who performed with CA Plano; and sophomore Reagan O'Bryant, a three-year competitive cheerleader who was also on the MCD Championship team this year.



Allayah Simone McCoy (center) receives a Midlothian Masonic Scholarship Foundation award of \$3,000.



Alyssa Brauchler and Alyson Galavez represent Manna House at the Emergency Preparedness and Safety Conference.



Dr. Francine Rhinehart, DPM PLLC (right) with her youngest daughter, Eve, and aunt, Lynn Stroud, at the office ribbon cutting.



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Zoomed In: The Knight Family

By Angel Morris

Knight of Love at the Midlothian Conference Center recently honored Danny and Lyne Knight, a couple with a unique love story. While both have passed, their spirits live on. "It's a celebration of two incredible lives and the love they poured into everyone around them," Heaven Woolverton, the Knights' daughter, said. "Each year, this honors our parents' legacy, carries forward their spirit and continues spreading the kindness, strength and love they lived every day."

Also organized by sons John and Danny Knight, this year's event raised \$255,000 for Ellis County Children's Advocacy Center and \$18,500 for Fellowship of Christian Athletes. "This continues to be a powerful reflection of love in action," Heaven shared, "and a meaningful way to continue the legacy that Knight of Love was built upon."



Walnut Grove Middle Schooler Layni Dickerson earns second place in the Lions Clubs International Peace Poster Contest.



Midlothian Panther Soccer Head Coach Austin Guest marks 800 career wins.



Members of Congressman Jake Ellzey's office recognize Bear, Roscoe and their MPD partners, Officer Rittimann and Officer Mills, on National K-9 Veterans Day.



Fire Chief Dale McCaskill (right), and his wife, Terry, help break ground for Midlothian Fire Station No. 4.

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While Cinco de Mayo (the commemoration of Mexico's victory over French forces at the Battle of Puebla in 1862) is a relatively minor holiday in Mexico, it has become a vibrant celebration of Mexican culture and cuisine in the United States. These authentic recipes showcase the bold flavors that make Mexican food so beloved around the world. **NOW**

Homemade Guacamole

- 4 ripe avocados
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup onion, diced
- 3 Tbsp. fresh cilantro, chopped
- 2 Roma tomatoes, diced
- 1 tsp. minced garlic
- 1 jalapeño pepper, minced
- 1 pinch ground black pepper

1. Cut the avocados in half. Remove the pits; scoop the flesh into a mixing bowl. Mash with a fork until the desired consistency is reached, leaving some chunks for texture.
2. Immediately add the lime juice and salt, stirring to prevent browning.
3. Fold in the onions and cilantro; mix well.
4. Add the tomatoes, garlic and jalapeños; stir gently to combine.
5. Season with black pepper; adjust the salt to taste. Serve immediately with warm tortilla chips.

Chicken Tacos With Fresh Salsa

- 2 lbs. boneless chicken breasts
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil

- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1/2 tsp. paprika
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 4 medium tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 cup white onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- 2 Tbsp. lime juice
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 12 corn tortillas
- 1 cup lettuce, shredded
- 1 cup queso fresco, crumbled

1. Brush the chicken breasts with the olive oil on both sides.
2. In a small bowl, combine the spices; rub the spice mixture generously over the chicken.
3. Grill or pan-sear the chicken over medium-high heat for 6-7 minutes per side until cooked through.
4. While the chicken cooks, prepare the salsa by combining the tomatoes, onions, cilantro and jalapeños in a bowl.
5. Stir in the lime juice and salt; mix well.
6. Once the chicken is done, let it rest for 5 minutes before slicing into thin strips.
7. Warm the corn tortillas in a dry skillet or over an open flame until pliable and slightly charred.

8. Assemble the tacos by layering sliced chicken onto each tortilla and topping with fresh salsa, shredded lettuce and queso fresco.

Mexican Cinnamon Ice Cream

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup whole milk
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 4 large egg yolks
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon

1. In a saucepan, heat the cream, milk, sugar and cinnamon sticks over medium heat until steaming.
2. Remove from heat; let steep for 30 minutes, then remove the cinnamon sticks.
3. Whisk the egg yolks in a bowl. Slowly add the warm cream mixture while whisking constantly.
4. Return to the saucepan; cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until thickened.
5. Stir in the vanilla extract and ground cinnamon; chill completely.
6. Churn in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's instructions. Freeze until firm.



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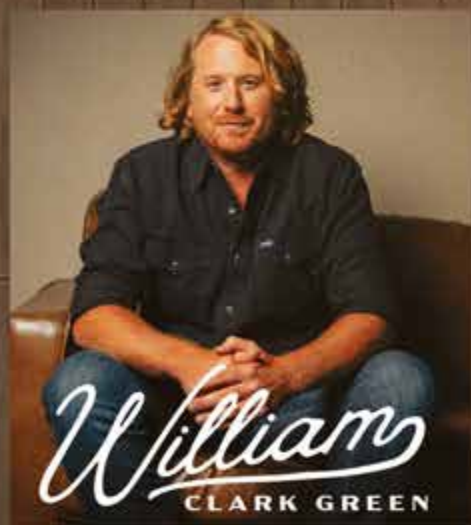
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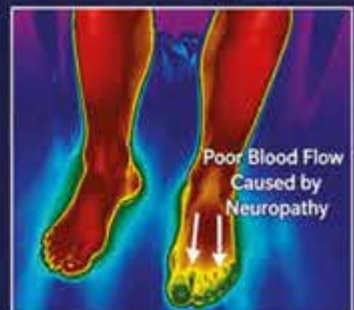
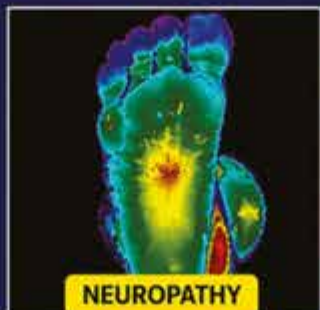
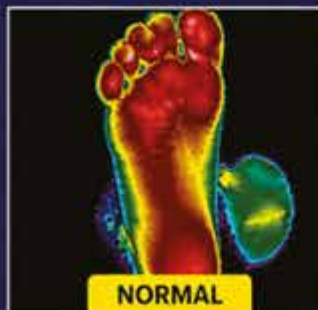
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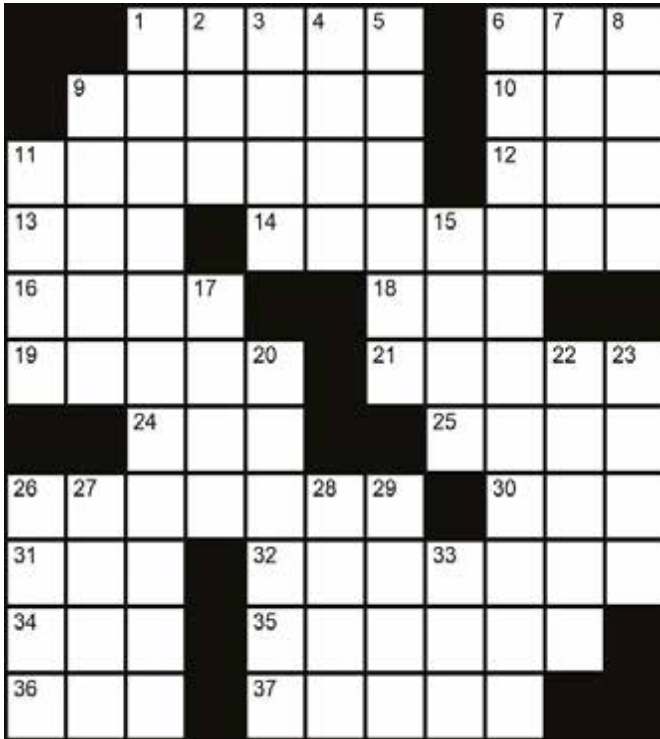
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Find puzzle answers within this magazine. Online versions and solutions are also available at www.nowmagazines.com.

Across

- 1 World's gambling center
6 Check
9 The Donald's youngest
10 Lawyers' league
11 Homilies
12 Range of knowledge
13 "... a stupid question ..."
14 Manipulates seals we dissected
16 Brainy sort
18 Monogram for Jesus
19 Loft
21 "Unleaded" coffee
- 24 Ammo for a non-lethal weapon
25 Battle of --- Alto, 1846
26 Polls
30 "Blame It on ---" (1984 Michael Caine movie)
31 "Market basket" cost measure
32 Sushi wrap
34 AMEX alternative
35 "Darkness ---" (Koestler novel)
36 Bath water tester
37 No longer stuck with

Down

- 1 Going rate
2 Upper limb
3 Boast
4 Jim-dandy
5 Tacit
6 Handles ecofreaks at butchers
7 First murder victim
8 Prohibits
9 Assailed on all sides
11 Narrative of heroic exploits
- 15 Loyal Fort Benton dog
17 "The Great Gate of ---" (Modest Mussorgsky)
20 Comic Sid ---
22 Not from here
23 "... glorious ---" ("Oliver!")
26 Caber tosser
27 "He's --- no good"
28 Abominable snowman
29 Quartz grains
33 Solicit

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Easy

		3		9				
4								6
		8	6			2	3	
			7			9	5	
						4	1	8
2								
		4	8					
5	1			2	4			
		9	5		3			

Medium

6			5			7		
	4				1			
		1						
		4						9
5		2				6		
3				4	7			1
1					8	4		
	3		9		2			6
	2					9	7	

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		1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8					
		M	A	C	A	U		T	A	B					
9		B	A	R	R	O	N		10	A	B	A			
11		S	E	R	M	O	N	S		12	K	E	N		
13		A	S	K		14	W	E	A	15	S	E	L	S	
16		G	E	E	K		17		18	I	H	S			
19		A	T	T	I	20	C		21	D	E	C	A	F	
						24	P	E	A		25	P	A	L	O
26	27									28	29		30		
S	U	R	V	E	Y	S				R	I	O			
31		C	P	I			32	S	E	A	33	W	E	E	D
34		O	T	C			35	A	T	N	O	O	N		
36		T	O	E			37	R	I	D	O	F			

Easy

7	6	3	1	9	2	8	4	5
4	9	2	3	8	5	7	6	1
1	5	8	6	4	7	2	3	9
6	4	1	7	3	8	9	5	2
9	3	7	2	5	6	4	1	8
2	8	5	4	1	9	6	7	3
3	2	4	8	7	1	5	9	6
5	1	6	9	2	4	3	8	7
8	7	9	5	6	3	1	2	4

Medium

6	8	3	5	2	9	7	1	4
9	4	5	3	7	1	2	8	6
2	7	1	4	8	6	3	5	9
7	6	4	2	1	5	8	9	3
5	1	2	8	9	3	6	4	7
3	9	8	6	4	7	5	2	1
1	5	9	7	6	8	4	3	2
4	3	7	9	5	2	1	6	8
8	2	6	1	3	4	9	7	5

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