

Waxahachie NOW

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JUNE 2011

FUNCTIONALITY

LANAEE VESS TURNED TO WELDING AS A WAY TO RELEASE HER CREATIVE ENERGY.

The Art
in Charter

Also Inside

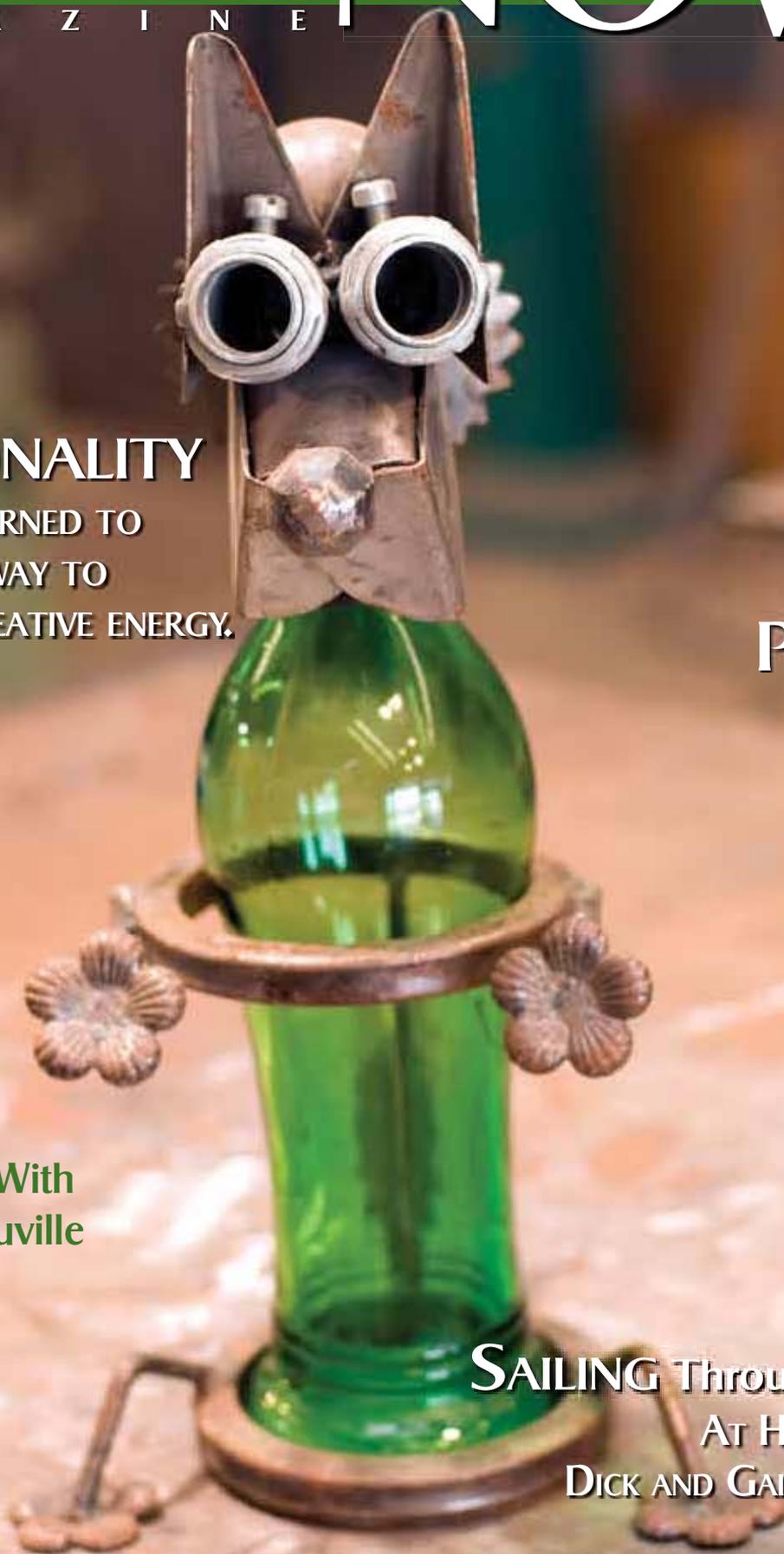
That Perfect Fit

In the Kitchen With
Lorraine H. Douville

Joy's
PRAYER

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Bottle puppy — unique and functional.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

Contents

June 2011 • Volume 8, Issue 6



8 Functionality

Determination and talent move LaNae Vess forward in the world of welding.

36 All Things Texas

The heart of Texas goes deeper than Shiner Bock beer and bluebonnets.

14 Joy's Prayer

Hard times are at the door of Daniel's Den, the only emergency shelter and transitional housing facility serving all of Ellis County.



20 Sailing Through Life

At Home With Dick and Gail Dawson.

28 The Art in Charter

Art-focused charter school, Faith Family Academy, develops a preschool program that jumpstarts learning.

42 BusinessNOW

48 HealthNOW

49 OutdoorsNOW

50 FinanceNOW

52 CookingNOW

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Editor's Note

Hello, Waxahachie Friends,

I've been waiting for June to roll around on the calendar so I could honor my dad. I failed to wish him a happy birthday in my April editor's note. He turned 79, and I feel horrible that I didn't sing his praises.

Thankfully, we have Father's Day on the 19th. It only seems right that Superman celebrates his birthday on the 30th. My dad and Superman are one in the same to me. As far back as I can remember, my dad didn't leap tall buildings, he never wore a pair of blue leotards, and he doesn't have a big "S" on his chest. His "mark" is found in his humble spirit and quiet, yet strong, nature.

I wish all the fathers out there a very happy and blessed day. Leave the lawnmower in the shed and just spend some quality time with your loved ones. We're not guaranteed tomorrow, so why not just enjoy today!



Sandra

Sandra Strong
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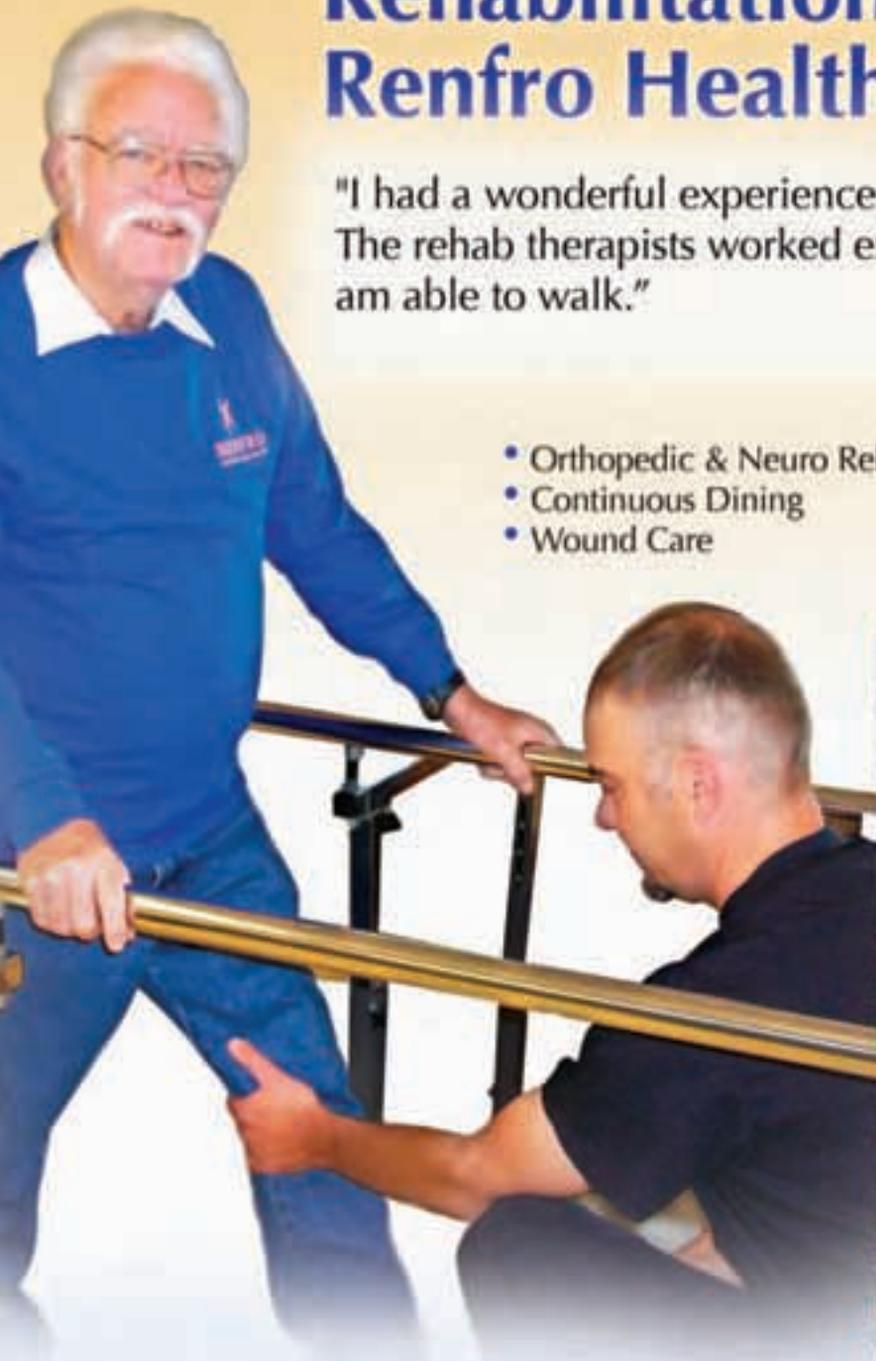
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Functionality

— By Sandra Strong

LaNae Vess never could have imagined what she would be doing with her spare time once she decided to leave corporate America. “I just knew I didn’t want to keep my children, Shelbi and Kyle (who are now grown), in daycare,” LaNae admitted. “I needed an avenue where I could stay home and care for them, but I also needed something to do with my creative energy.”

The family lived in DeSoto during LaNae’s time of self-discovery. After long work weeks at Lockheed Martin, Kevin would come home and spend hours in the backyard shop perfecting the craft he has worked most of his life. “Kevin was born welding,” LaNae stated. Kevin just smiled.

“I learned how to weld when I was about 12,” he stated. “I’ve been welding ever since.”

LaNae got this notion that she, too, wanted to learn to weld, and who could better teach her than Kevin? She remembers the first day she walked out back to ask him about it. “He looked at me and sort of laughed,” she confessed.



“I told her to go back in the house,” Kevin said.

This same scenario played itself out numerous times before Kevin finally relented. As LaNae looks back on her “first lesson,” she can’t help but laugh out loud. “It was somewhat of a disaster. I got burned almost immediately,” she recalled, still wincing at the memory of the pain. She learned that weld slag, the elements found in the sparks coming out of the weld, fly. In this case, they flew and landed inside her shoe.

Six months after that first encounter, LaNae went back to ask Kevin for another try. “I was more determined than ever to learn how to weld,” she said. “Kevin would create something really cool and give it away. I wanted him to teach me so I could make decorations and artwork for my home.” This time she didn’t get burned, thus starting a journey that has brought her tremendous joy. As she looks around their Waxahachie home, she finds great pride and satisfaction in what she has been able to create.



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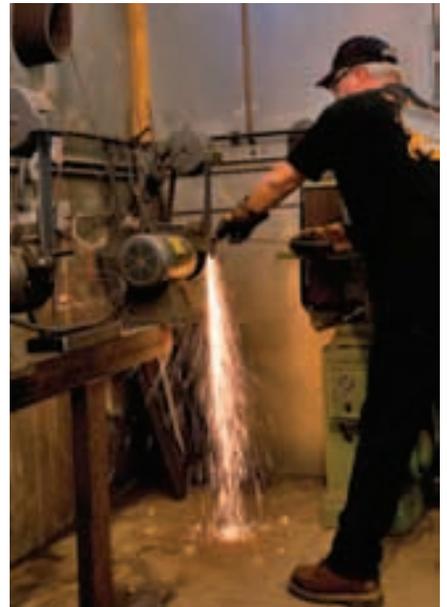
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When visitors come into the home, they can look in any direction and find evidence of the “monster” Kevin created. The fireplace screen is one of many she has handcrafted over the years. The “kissing fish,” which hang over the dining room window, were hammered out of copper and welded into a stylish metal frame. The wall art found in the entryway is fittingly named *A Day in the Life*. The collage includes a half-sun, half-moon and two brass birds. The sun is constructed from copper, while the moon is metal, with a few touches of brass. Just recently, LaNae created her “bottle puppies,” designed from scrap metal and random nuts, bolts and washers.

Some of the items guests admire most include the plate racks. At first glance, they appear to be identical, but on closer inspection, it is apparent each of the four have their own distinct qualities. “I don’t



care how many of the same piece I do," she stated. "No two will ever be alike."

One request she had from a friend was for a unique Halloween costume. "She wanted a 'Queen of the Damned' costume," LaNae said, explaining this particular character was the lead in a recent vampire movie. LaNae outfitted her friend in a breastplate, belt, headdress and necklace, all constructed from a variety of metals. "She won third place in the costume contest," she said. "I can only imagine how detailed the first and second place costumes were."

As Kevin described LaNae's second "first real lesson," his pride regarding his wife was evident. "She was a little bit nervous, but her determination was everything," he admitted. "She picked the process up a lot faster than some of the students I've had."

"Kevin was real impressed with what I was able to do," she smiled. "He'll tell

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you that I can cut better than he can."

These two share so much more artwork than merely welding. The tools of the trade include Mig welders, Tig welders and several sizes of plasma torches. Each of the three is used for a specific type of welding, which in most cases is dependent on the type of metal being used at the time. "Mig welding is wire-fed welding," LaNae explained. "It's what I use most of the time." Mig welding is primarily used for commercial metals and heavy steel.

The Tig welder is used on cooper and aluminum. "It's a much stronger weld," Kevin added. "The penetration of the weld is deeper."

The plasma torch has become one of LaNae's favorite tools, with which she effortlessly cuts raw metal into the shapes and sizes she desires for whatever project she is working on at the moment. "It's all done freehand," she said.

Back in 1995, the couple realized there was a demand for the products they were crafting, so they turned their craft into a family-owned business, Steel Images Welding & Design. The smaller items they crafted for family and friends locally turned into much larger pieces that are displayed throughout the world from Singapore and Russia to Tokyo, Kuwait and Dubai. The art, although beautiful, also possesses a great deal of functionality. One overhead gate they made is hinged on one side to allow 18-wheelers entrance to the owner's property. "I like taking the idea someone had on paper and bringing it to life; giving it dimension," she said. "I think I can make anything, but Kevin's the quality-control guy. He makes sure its functionality will withstand the test of time."

"We really do work well together 90 percent of the time," Kevin said. "We haven't strangled one another or divorced. Overall, I wouldn't trade it for anything." **NOW**



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JOY'S *Prayer*

— By Carolyn Wills

Most children in America will never know what it's like to be homeless, yet, sadly, some will. "One of the greatest tragedies of homelessness is its effect on kids," Joy Ranton, executive director of Daniel's Den, said. "It has always baffled me how the word 'homeless' to many people means alcoholics, drug addicts or lazy people who won't get a job when, statistically, only about a third of the homeless population fits into that category and two-thirds are those who have fallen on hard times."



Unfortunately, hard times are approaching the door of Daniel's Den, the only emergency shelter and transitional housing facility serving all of Ellis County. "It was established in 1996," Joy explained, "as a faith-based, nondenominational, Christian shelter assisting individuals in crisis. In 2000, a transitional housing program called Samaritan House was added." Both services currently share a large four-story house in Waxahachie. The emergency shelter has 10 beds with stays limited to three nights, and the transitional housing has accommodations for up to 22 women, children and married couples



with stays limited to six months.

"United Way of West Ellis County is our faithful supporter," Joy said. "We would not be here if it weren't for them." A question mark, however, exists concerning the significant funds traditionally provided by the national Emergency Food and Shelter budget and an Emergency Shelter grant. "The budget has been gridlocked and cut almost in half and [remaining funds] will first go to the major cities with the largest homeless populations," she said. "We're not giving up, though, and we will continue to pray that some of the funding will trickle down to us. We don't know for sure it isn't coming; we just know that it isn't here."

Joy's prayer for Daniel's Den goes beyond the fact it has been her workplace for five-and-a-half years. "The people who stay here are willing to do something different with their lives, and that's a worthy cause," she said. "I believe God can take the bad things that happen in life and use them to glorify Him and help people." She is quick to point out her belief is backed by experience. "I was the manager of an insurance company for 10



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years in Athens, Texas, when I began to make a multitude of bad choices, all out of God's will. The last one was a poor marriage that landed me in Waxahachie and ended in homelessness. I never slept on the street, but I did sleep in the back seat of my car, stayed with friends and camped out at an abandoned house."

Joy, who knew she would not qualify as a single woman, never pursued residency at Daniel's Den. But an acquaintance appealed to the board president, and Joy was permitted to move into the emergency shelter. "I'm not one to sit and twiddle my thumbs," she said. "I looked for a job every day, cleaned the house in between and hoped for interviews. The position of executive director at Daniel's Den had been vacant for some months and, eventually, the president asked if I would be interested in seeing if I could withstand being on call around the clock." Joy was given the pager and then the job before she ever filled out an application. "I don't know that I could have done this job for more than six months if I had not known what it is like to be homeless."

Thanks to Joy, the Samaritan House now has a room reserved for a single woman, and the program serves mothers, single women and legally married

couples. “By government standards, we have a 78-percent success rate,” she explained, “based on those who move in and are eventually able to move out and rent a place. We are not an enabling facility, and most clients who go through the program learn something truly worthwhile while they are here.” The program provides case management and job search assistance, and residents agree to attend a local church, find employment and adhere to a savings plan. “Our goal [for the residents] is self-sufficiency,” Joy said. “Until I came here, I had no idea how many people have no idea about the basics of caring for themselves. I’m so grateful to my family for having a strong work ethic. There are exceptions though.



Shortly after entering the program, one resident quickly found the most wonderful job and skyrocketed over the poverty level.”

To qualify for the transitional program, a woman or married couple must be residents of Ellis County, pass a drug test (random tests are also given), have no outstanding warrants, have an income below the poverty level as defined by the government and be able to work. Residents can stay for up to six months and must sign a contract to follow the rules. “Last year, I had over 400 phone

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calls from people who did not take advantage of any services because of the drug test and/or the rules," Joy said, "and that's why people who come here tend to be serious about wanting to change. Bad choices are usually what land us here. Whether someone is from the Taj Mahal or the gutter, choices brought us here."

Joy is the only employee at Daniel's Den — which makes her case manager, "dorm" mother, office administrator, public speaker and "sometimes" cook. "Since mothers usually arrive with more than one child, the majority of our clients are kids," she said. "We have had one mother with six kids and one who came to us from the hospital with her newborn baby. We have also had a 74-year-old woman."

Keenly aware of how long grant processes take, Joy is applying for as many grants as she can. "Our board of directors is working tirelessly, too," she said, "as are at least four area churches. As it stands, though, without some emergency funds, we will soon not have enough money to stay open." When asked what she will do if Daniel's Den must close, she said, "I cannot wrap my mind around the thought that God is going to shut this down. A year ago, on Mother's Day, I moved into a house and finally took all of my things out of storage. My oldest son is home again, and I run on faith every day."

The quilt that was on her bed when, as a homeless woman, she moved into Daniel's Den now hangs on the wall in Joy's office. "I was so incredibly grateful to be here," she said. "Without this place, I don't know what I would have done." **NOW**

For more information on Daniel's Den, contact Joy Ranton at (972) 938-0103.

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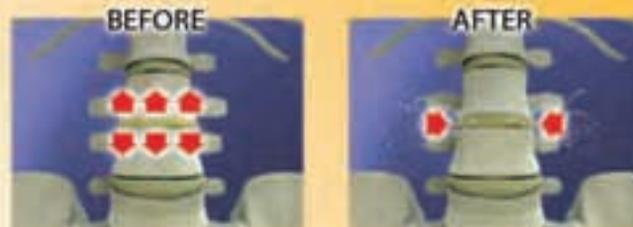
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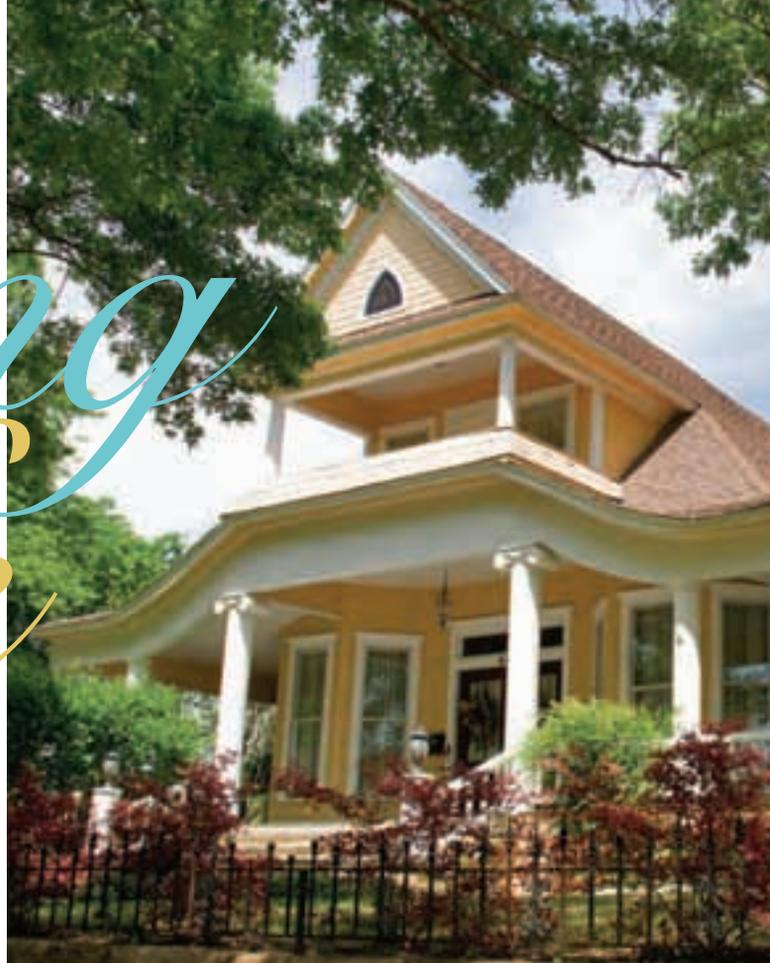
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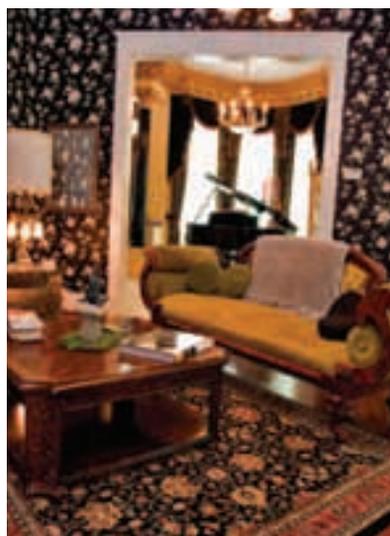
— By Julie B. Cosgrove



At Home With Dick and Gail Dawson

For the past five years, Dick and Gail Dawson have called the historic gingerbread house on Oldham Street home. But, that isn't where this story begins. It started in California then continued on a sailboat in the Caribbean, their only residence for several years.

Life in the San Francisco Bay area was amazingly wonderful for Gail. "I had my gorgeous house, my ministry in my local church and a floral business. I had three amazing kids — Brian, Jennifer and Karen. I adored it." Dick was in the oil industry selling fuel to ships all over the world. He had been a swift boat captain in Vietnam and never let go of the desire to sail. So, with the grown





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kids out of the nest, the Dawsons sold almost everything they owned, including the house and her floral business, and bought a boat on the island of St. Martin in the Caribbean. The rest of their belongings were left in a 5x8 storage unit. They lived on the sailboat for several years until they bought a beach house in St. Martin. "Everything came with it," Gail said referring to the house, "the furniture and even the silverware and dishes. It was all we needed."

The Dawsons lived in the Caribbean for 10 years. They traversed the Atlantic and

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sailed in and around the coasts of Europe. But they worked as well. Dick would deliver sailboats to their new owners. He and Gail would also do what they kiddingly call drug runs. "The churches would send boxes of medical supplies, and we would sail them to the little islands and to the clinics and people," Gail explained. They also helped missionaries and after hurricanes, made humanitarian runs to deliver water and food.

In his spare time, Dick discovered a ministry of his own. "Many of the local children in the Caribbean, strangely enough, do not know how to swim or sail. I found some little kid-sized sailboats in Europe and bought them." In collaboration with a local church, he helped teach over 60 island children to swim and sail.

So how did this energetic couple end up in Waxahachie five years ago in a nationally registered historic home? Both believe it was providence. Two major events happened to redirect their sails, so to speak. The first was when their boat sank in 2004 during Hurricane Frances. Then, Gail's parents passed away within a short time of each other and left her with



what Gail termed, a "huge house full of family antiques. It was amazing. That's why we bought this house. It's all here now?"

Gail waved her hand around the stately wide-open, double parlor flanked by large columns leading to crown molding of gilded plaster around the high ceilings. The red velvet Victorian chairs and settee are part of the treasure trove of heirlooms. On the other side a grand piano is set, which Gail loves to play. "Dick told me I needed to buy the grand piano I always wanted, and it fit perfectly here. It's so much fun." Dick's pride and joy is a wall clock from 1724, which once hung in his great uncle's house in Indiana. It now hangs in the main hall.

Other notable rooms include the Magnolia Room, a side parlor that shares a twin fireplace with the well-sized formal dining room illuminated by the original stained glass window. "We actually use this



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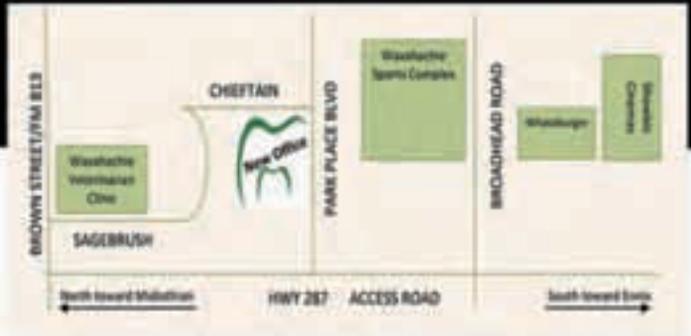
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dining room all the time,” Gail admitted. Her kitchen, a tasteful blend of old world and modern amenities, opens up to a casual dining area. “She has two of everything,” Dick said, “two refrigerators, two stoves, two dishwashers.”

Gail shrugged, “I love to cook and bake.”

The four-bedroom, four-bath house has a total of six fireplaces. The master bedroom, with a view onto the enclosed porch out back, has a double-sided fireplace. Three of their fireplaces are still original coal-burning ones, but the others have modern gas logs. When asked how much renovation they had done, the Dawsons admitted not much. “Most was done by John Huggins in a major overhaul between 1999 and 2001,” Dick stated.



“He took the house down to the studs, then rewired and replumbed it and added central air, while all the time keeping the historic integrity.” The sweeping grand staircase is not original to the house, but fits so well with the architecture, one would never know. The gilded crown molding and medallions around the chandeliers were handmade in plaster by an old world craftsman to maintain authenticity.

The Dawsons have added their personal touches. Floral designs blend seamlessly with family heirlooms and nautical themes, a testimony of this couple’s love and respect for each other. One bedroom on the lower level is decorated in a nautical theme, incorporating her grandfather’s bedroom set with plotted maps and pictures of their sailing life.

Taking advantage of an on-site renter in the apartment over the three-car garage, Gail and Dick still make trips to the Caribbean now and then. He sails chartered boats to the new owners, while she is a newborn specialist. With a wink Gail said, “I guess you might say he delivers and I play nanny.” Gail also has a nanny business in Waxahachie. She assists



parents of newborns, especially multiple birth babies, to develop routines.

Upstairs in the Oldham home Gail has added more of her personal charm. Their granddaughter's room is in pinks and whites, sprinkled with her grandmother and mother's baby clothes. The second bedroom holds a wardrobe full of vintage pieces including her grandmother's light blue, chiffon prom dress. The hallway is a gallery of family photos, tying the maternal and paternal ancestors through time to the Dawson's seven grandchildren — Andrew, 21; Ashley, 18; Madison, 16; Sabrina, 15; Dawson and Drake, both 13; and Harrison, 9. Gail beamed with pride. "They are amazing. They are real people and have had their trials, but they are wonderful. All of them," she laughed. "We can't take the credit, really. We were gone so much while they were being raised." Obviously, the parents of these grandchildren learned their lessons well from Dick and Gail's strong faith and embrace-life philosophy.

Much of the Dawson's time is spent working on the house and the one-acre, landscaped yard with a double-sized pool. They also spend time with their two dogs, Mitzi and Maggie, as well as a fluffy cat appropriately named Duchess. The seamless blending of whimsy and class is reflected in their home and their lives. "Dick admits he always needs a project and keeping an historic home in tip-top shape is right up his alley," Gail mentioned. "Life is meant to be fun. God meant it to be amazing. I have always said if it isn't fun, I don't want it."

Dick slipped his arm around her shoulders and said, "She makes life fun."**NOW**

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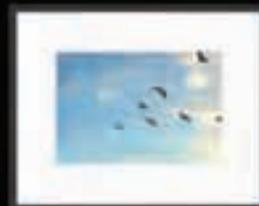
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The *ART* in Charter

— By Sydni Thomas

Walking across the campus of Waxabachie Faith Family Academy (FFA) does not take very long. There are two buildings and each has only one hallway. It can easily be mistaken for a small-town school where everyone knows each other's names. As a charter school, FFA has the charm and appeal of a private school, without the tuition fees. Each student receives specialized attention in a small-classroom setting.



Starting in the fall of 2011, FFA hopes to begin the only 3-year-old preschool program in Waxahachie. FFA began as a private school and later applied for and was accepted as a charter school. They have two campuses, the one in Waxahachie and the other in Oak Cliff. Currently, they offer classes from 4-year-old prekindergarten through 12th grade. Admission is not limited to Waxahachie residents, and the student body is made up of many commuters.

The 3-year-old program is still in the planning stages and is contingent upon enrollment numbers. If 30 to 35 students apply and enroll, the program will offer a choice between enrollment in one of two half-day classes — one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. “This program is great for moms who still want to have their child at home for part of the day, but also give them the chance to jumpstart their learning,” Principal Shara Backus said. “For working parents, we have several daycares in the area that will pick the students up each day and keep them until they get off from work.”

The focus of the program will be learning letters, letter-sound recognition and socialization. Students will learn to function in a large group setting and play games with simple rules. Daily singing and physical activity will also be a part of the schedule. “It’s different than playing with a friend at home,” Shara said. “The structure of school and socialization is huge. Students will be further ahead by the time they reach kindergarten. A student coming into kindergarten who has never been in a classroom setting needs a great deal of time to adjust to the rules and behaviors of school.”

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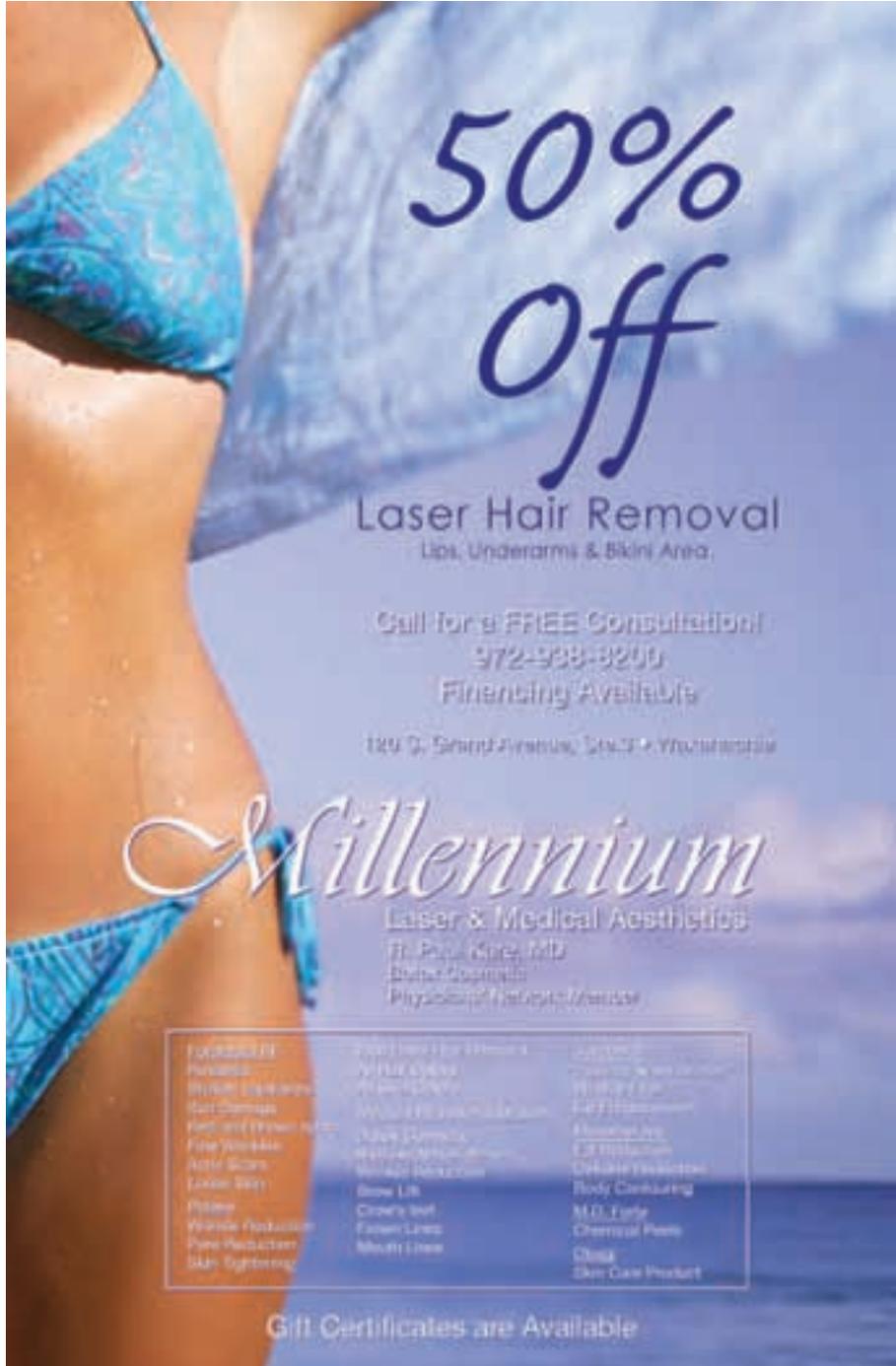
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Front row, left to right: Braden Noe (1st grade), Shara Backus, Matt Glasco (4th grade), Keira Milka (1st grade). Back row left to right: Sid Glasco (11th grade) and Julian Mejia (9th grade).

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certification in early childhood education. “We have highly qualified teachers,” Shara said. “That is something that a lot of people do not realize when they are looking at pre-K programs. While daycares and churches run excellent programs, they do not have the background in education targeted at increasing learning.”

FFA’s 4-year-old program receives funding through federal grant money that allows FFA to purchase pre-K curriculum from eCircle, offered by Cal-Tech, which also provides onsite and online training. If the 3-year-old program forms, it too will be federally funded. Preschool teachers would be provided with top-of-the-line materials and resources from eCircle. Most of the funding FFA receives to operate its programs comes from grants. As a charter school, focused primarily on the arts, many of these grants are based on the art programs offered at FFA. The only funding supplied to them by the state comes based on attendance. FFA must locate the rest from grants and donations. “The budget crisis that everyone is hearing about won’t affect charter schools like it will public schools,” Shara said. “Charter schools will weather it a little bit better, because we are used to working with limited funding. We don’t receive funding from local tax



dollars and retail tax. We operate like a business, and we have had to learn to work smarter and tighter. We apply for a lot of federal grants, and our students never go without.”

Grants have allowed small schools to have technology, learning resources and programs that rival even the largest public schools. In addition, FFA follows the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills guidelines (TEKS) and curriculum for grades kindergarten through 12 is provided by C-Scope. Each building has a computer lab with the latest technology, and every classroom has a SMART Board installed for interactive learning.

The school grows a little each year. This past year there were 240 students enrolled. Each grade is small enough to make up one class with 15 students on average. Academically, FFA offers most of the same classes and programs as public schools, including business, art and foreign language classes. They even have a prom each year. “Classrooms are small,” Shara said. “I can see the difference coming from schools with larger classes. Students shine. They are all popular and well liked. Their personality comes through. They have a lot of opportunity for success.”

The hallways at FFA do not feature sterile tiles and plaster one might expect when entering a school. Instead they are covered from wall-to-wall with pieces of student artwork. High school students enter artwork they have created at school

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in local art shows. The art teachers at FFA receive training throughout the year from world-renowned artists.

The athletics program is on the rise, providing opportunities in both middle and high school. They already have successful baseball and softball programs, both of which made it to the playoffs this past year. The fields next to the school are leased for practice and games. Next year, FFA will expand their program with the addition of a soccer and six-man football team. "Many of the students would not have had the opportunity to play sports in this capacity had they attended larger schools," Shara said. "Because of our smaller size, the athletes here are successful and get to play."

Shara began teaching in the Red Oak Independent School District. She has taught almost all of the elementary grades including preschool. She came to FFA two years ago from Midlothian's Baxter Elementary where she was the assistant principal. Coming to FFA was the first opportunity she has had to work with older students. "My daughter attended a charter school, so I knew a little bit about them before I came here," Shara said. "For the most part, this has been new territory for me. It has been a great experience."

There have been several changes to FFA since Shara joined the family. As the school continues to grow, Shara has many ideas that will offer more opportunities for students while keeping the appeal of the small-school atmosphere. "In the future I hope that we will have enough students for two or three classes per grade level," Shara said. "Studies have been done that show art careers are going to be on the rise in the years to come. The arts are the future and we offer that here." **NOW**



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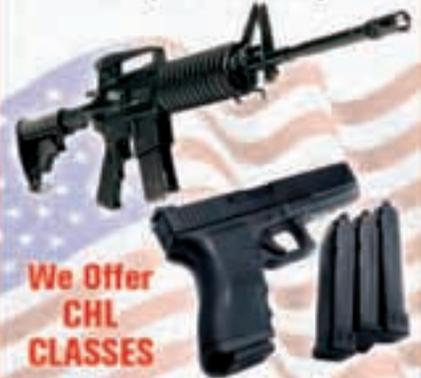
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All

Things

— By Janice C. Johnson



Mark Gorman opened his band's rehearsal, not with a song, but with a question. The group had performed in a songwriters' show the night before, and Mark wanted everyone's opinion about which were the best parts of the performance versus which ones needed extra work. "How about you, Mike? What do you think went especially well?"

Mike Hunter, bass guitarist and vocalist, commended the others on the song titled "All Night Long." He remarked, "The opening was great – really smooth."

Guitarist, Dave Yocum, agreed, adding, "Half the room gave us a standing ovation."

Keaton O'Neal, the band's youngest vocalist at age 16, favored "Todo el Tiempo" as the best piece from the performance. Then the four men went on to review the few trouble spots – a missed entrance here, a technical issue there, a tricky dual guitar phrase gone awry.

Mark, who teaches choral music at Palmer High School,



Texas



previously performed for several years with a different group of musicians. He quit traveling to be home more as his sons reached their teen years. "This is a new incarnation of the Mark Gorman Band," he said, nodding to his colleagues. "We are rearranging some of my songs to a more acoustic, with less of a 'high-octane' sound."

In "All Night Long," the title track to Mark's latest CD, that acoustic sound gives the upbeat and danceable Texas swing-style a cozy warmth. The cheerful lyrics salute an assortment of Texas places and things, including the narrator's love interest.

Besides music, Mark also has a passion for Texas history and heritage. He explained that among the cowboys who worked here in the state, only about one-third were white, many of whom he described as "resilient, self-reliant,

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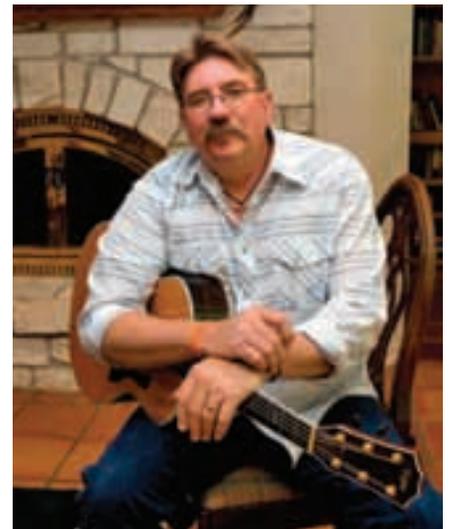
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Scotch-Irish-Anglo Calvinists from Tennessee.” Another third were African-Americans, and the rest *vaqueros*, Mexican cowboys. They all worked and relaxed together, so Appalachian, spiritual and Mexican elements blended into the music that arose in those days.

Many more tributaries now flow into the river that makes up Texas music. From German settlers to rock 'n' roll, “Texas music has a depth to it that music from other parts of the country doesn't,” Mark said. His moustache twitched a little as he caught himself lecturing. “I've been a classroom teacher for 23 years – I guess educating the audience just comes naturally,” he admitted. “Anyway, we try to represent the whole spectrum of Texas music.”



The *vaquero* influence appears in the bilingual “*Todo el Tiempo*,” which suggests a cross-cultural romance, and the mariachi-flavored “24/7” which, Mark conscientiously pointed out, is not in the *true* mariachi style. Like most skilled musicians, he takes features from the existing body of music and makes them his own.

His songwriting goes beyond the clichés of Interstate 35 and Shiner Bock beer, transporting his listeners to many places in Texas. Most of his original songs spring from a true experience, his own or one he has heard about. The song “On Galveston,” for instance, which Mark wrote after vacationing in the city with his wife, describes many concrete details that make the island come alive. “We're trying to paint a picture, to evoke a feeling of remembrance – even if you've never been there before,” he said.



Mark grew up in Dallas, attending the same high school as did Stevie Ray Vaughan. When he thinks of Texas music, he thinks not only of Stevie Ray, but also of Lyle Lovett, Asleep at the Wheel, Willie Nelson and others. He has also had opportunity to rub shoulders with such greats as Gary P. Nunn. Once, as Mark opened for Gary's band, Gary sat in the audience watching. Then, near the end of his own performance, he invited Mark onto the stage and loaned him his guitar to play. Mark never forgot the gesture. "That was like giving me his stamp of approval," he recalled. The two have performed together on other occasions since then. "There's a lot of that give-and-take in Texas music — the older musicians kind of 'knighting' the younger ones," he said.

The band resumed rehearsal with "Mockingbird," again troubleshooting and polishing some tricky spots before launching into the song's waltz rhythm. As Mark led, Mike's subtle bass guitar and mellow vocals supported the poignant ballad, and Keaton's tenor blended in smoothly. Dave's sparkling guitar *obbligato* echoed the sounds of a birdcall. The last notes of the simple tune faded away, leaving behind a gentle melancholy.

"The mockingbird is a metaphor for a disloyal friend," Mark explained. "This song is powerful because it does not give details." Instead, each listener may read his own story into the song. Mark went on, "It's a simple song, but it took three years to write." With the basic idea for the piece in mind, he had been searching for just the right blend of simplicity and ornament. Then, one afternoon as he sat on his back porch, he related, "it just fell out of my guitar."



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Mark's recent title "Bluebonnet Skies" is more overtly sad. It was born from hearing of a young person who saw a close friend die after a highway accident. The Texas setting makes this song of love and grief hit close to home for Mark's audiences.

Despite being reared in Dallas, Mark is no city slicker. Far from being "all hat and no horse," he has plenty of substance – plenty of horses, too. In past years, he has trained horses at a Christian camp in Alaska. Today, he owns and works with several of the animals on his Waxahachie ranch. When the band rehearses in "the bunkhouse" instead of the main residence, they often notice a pinto or palomino sticking his head in through the window to listen – or possibly to ask for a handout.

"I've always loved the guys I've worked with, but this bunch is really special," Mark observed. "We have a lot of camaraderie – it's just very comfortable." That bond partly comes from the atmosphere of mutual respect and interdependence among the group. As they help and advise each other, all four members' contributions flow seamlessly into each song, allowing it to carry the listener wherever they wish.

Mark's caring for people is evident in each area of his life, from his devotion to family and respect for his colleagues, to his warm, friendly stage presence and humanitarian involvement. Besides volunteering in Alaska, for instance, he also traveled overseas to support Russian orphanages for several years.

Now that he has two sons in college and one almost there, Mark is ready to take his talented band back out on the road. "I'll need the extra income," he said. "Besides — road stories are the best stories." **NOW**

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Soap goddess, Susan Soros, displays a variety of her handmade soaps.

That Perfect Fit

Handcrafting soaps is a true labor of love that only happens through the magic of chemistry.

— By Sandra Strong

Susan Soros, proud and educated owner of Soap Goddess, opened her shop in downtown Waxahachie in October 2010, but she had been creating soaps since early 1997. For her, it all began in California when she visited a farmer's market. Susan saw a man selling soap his wife had handcrafted, and she thought that was something she might want to learn to do. She quickly found out information on making soap was scarce on the Internet, so she put herself to work reading lots of books. "I did a lot of experimenting at first," Susan explained. "Each type of oil used lends a different property to the soap. Olive oil, for instance, is used for moisturizing, while coconut oil produces a rich lather."

Having sensitive skin herself, Susan wasn't long into the process before she came up with a soap specific to sensitive skin.

She soon began giving bars of soap to family and friends. These same family members and friends gave her the encouragement she needed in 1997 to branch out into the resale/wholesale business. Susan began her journey in the entrepreneurial business world in a small work area in her garage. She began to frequent artisan shows and take full advantage of the Internet. "I love making soaps," she confessed. "The business took off quickly once I got my Web address. I was able to provide homemade soaps all over the world. I'm happy to say my soaps have been sold to customers as far away as Japan."

Susan still visits holistic-type expositions and fine arts events where handcrafted, holistic offerings are more readily found. As an artisan, she takes great care with each and every soap order,

whether the bars are displayed in her shop by the dozen or shipped half-way around the world in a bulk quantity of 1,000 or more bars. “The largest order I’ve had to date was for a credit card processing company,” she remembered. “They held a convention for members on their client list. They had reserved rooms at a hotel, and the order called for each guest to have a bar of soap on a soap dish in their rooms when they arrived.” That one order consisted of 2,500 bars of soap.

Making her soaps from scratch is the most important aspect of the business to Susan. To share the process in detail would be impossible. It all has to do with the “process of saponification,” or in layman’s terms, turning the oils into soap. “How the process begins all depends on the size of the order,” Susan explained. “It’s a true labor of love that only happens through the magic of chemistry.”

“I wanted a high-quality line for myself, and customers wanted more than soap.”

The line of body products offered at Soap Goddess stemmed from the popularity of her large variety of soaps. “I wanted a high-quality line for myself,” she said, “and customers wanted more than soap.” The line of skin care products Susan has created includes sugar scrubs, lip balms, bath salts and several choices in aroma therapy.

Susan also has her own line of heirloom quality jewelry, which includes rosaries and religious pieces. Other artisans featured in her shop offer aromatic candles, hand-warming coffee mugs and an assortment of hand blown glass items. Artwork from a Corsicana artist is also on display. “They have to be somewhat special,” Susan said, referencing the wares offered at Soap Goddess. “When items fit, I include them.” **NOW**

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DJ Mike Crow has fun talking to Dale Watson during his Live-On-Air performance at the 106.9 The Ranch Coffee House.



Felty Elementary fourth-grader, Madison Zandt, poses with Governor Perry after she lowered the flags to half-mast in honor of PFC Joel Rameriz.

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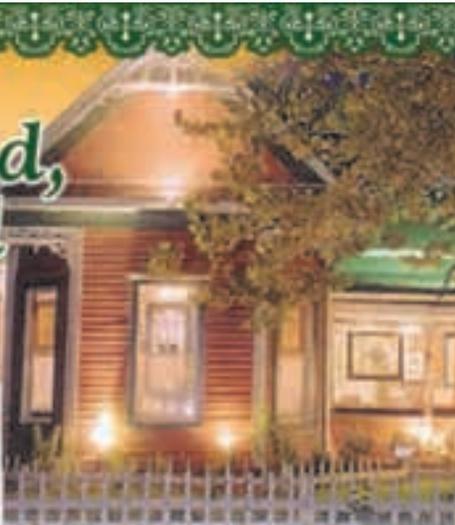
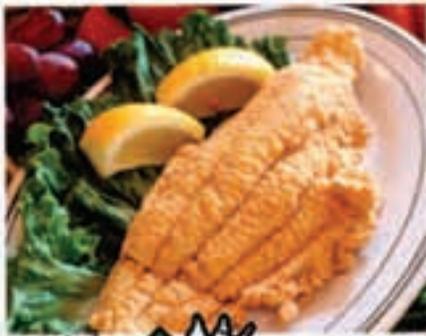
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Stop Obesity in Children

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Childhood obesity became a hot news item courtesy of First Lady Michelle Obama. Even though there is much political discussion about the government's role, an open dialogue about this subject is necessary. An alarming statistic of childhood obesity tripling in the last 30 years begs the question why.

Genetics and hormonal imbalances play a part, of course, but the truth is that today's youth are less active and have more access to high caloric foods than ever before. Fast-food restaurants in easy proximity filled with fattening, cheap food are easily accessible. You can even supersize a modest portion for mere pennies. Countless hours are spent watching TV, playing video games or social networking on the computer. When you look at how easy it is to gain weight in America, the question is not why are children becoming more obese, but why aren't more?

Unfortunately, although reasons for this trend abound, explanations do nothing to mitigate the damage of obesity in children. Children find themselves at risk for diseases that only used to be commonly found in adults. Diabetes, cardiovascular disease, bone and joint problems are just a few of the possible pathological and orthopedic complications. In addition, self-esteem issues come into play with overweight children. Societal pressures regarding a specific body image of thinness can weigh heavily in an adolescent's mind. Bullying or harassing of children because they are overweight is common and tragic.

Now that childhood obesity has reached the national consciousness, many programs are in place to help reduce the number. However, a child does not need to go to a program to lose weight. The "fix" is within easy reach with thoughtful and considerate deliberation. Decreasing sedentary habits is crucial. Encourage children to limit their time in front of the television or computer and join a sport or club. Replace chips and candy with



fruits and trail mix. Limit soft drink consumption and drink juice and water. Water mixed with a small amount of fruit juice is better than flavored water purchased at the store. Make a concerted effort to serve and eat less carbohydrates and fatty meats and replace them with leafy green vegetables, lean cuts of meats and whole grain products. Drink low fat milk and watch those meal portions. Be a great role model for your child with your food choices and level of activity. Do not put your child on a diet without the advice and guidance of your physician. The risks of obesity are great, but the good news is with work and determination, the remedy is within reach. **NOW**

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

An advertisement for Morgan Orthodontics. On the left, a group of seven staff members, including Laura Morgan, D.D.S., are smiling. The background is a field of sunflowers. The text on the right reads: "Are you ready for a summer Smile." followed by a list of services: "School-friendly Schedule", "Interest-free Financing", and "Most Insurances Accepted". It also includes the American Association of Orthodontists logo and contact information: "Call Today For Your Complimentary Consultation", "104 Professional Place • Waxahachie", "972-938-1688", and "Office Open For Appointments Monday - Thursday".

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Ferns in the Shade

— By Nancy Fenton

Looking for light, airy plants for that shady place in your yard? In central Texas, there are only a few landscape ferns that fit the bill, tolerating the prolonged heat and drought, as well as our alkaline soils. Before you run out to buy those great ferns, take a hard look at your soil. Ferns typically need rich organic soil — 3 inches of finished compost turned into the soil. Most ferns take deep shade, as well as partial sun, but prefer a moist, lighter soil. The compost plus a thick mulch layer will help maintain an even moisture level.

One of the most commonly seen ferns is the Southern maidenhead fern. You can see it along creek banks, but after it's established it will tolerate six months of drought and still remain green. The newer Mairis's hardy maidenhead is even more hardy and vigorous. They grow 10 to 15 inches tall and survive freezes if they are heavily mulched.

Holly fern and wood fern are both fairly large, growing up to 3 feet tall and wide. They are both tolerant of alkaline soils, as well as drier weather. They do winter burn, but if heavily mulched will come back twice as strong the following season. The large ferns are bold, dark green and make a great color statement in a shade garden.

Autumn fern and Japanese painted fern are about the only color additions available for a Central Texas fern garden. The autumn fern's coppery new growth is a pleasant change from the varying shades of green as is the silver/gray dappled look of the Japanese painted fern.

Unless you have lots of shade and ready access to water, you might want to keep the ferns you buy in pots, either the original pot or one size larger if the roots start growing out the bottom, until October when it finally cools off! Like any new plants, ferns need to be watered daily for seven days and then weekly *whether it rains or not!* Watch what kind of mulch you put down. Some mulch will set up and pack down, making a water-resistant layer. I like the fresh chips from our local tree service rather than the finely shredded variety.

Enjoy your shade this summer, and make it even more beautiful for years to come.

Do you have more questions? Call Ellis County Master Gardeners at (972) 825-5175 or check out the Web site at www.ecmga.com. **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.

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Are you financially exposed?

— By Adam Rope

Many people realize the need for life insurance but keep putting it off until it is too late. You may think that life insurance is confusing, expensive and complicated. You may think you don't know enough to make the right decisions for you and your loved ones. Postponing this decision leaves you and your family exposed financially.

Assumption #1: I'll always be able to buy life insurance. You could develop a health condition that makes you uninsurable or could make life insurance too costly for you.

Assumption #2: I'll get life insurance later when I'm older or have a family. Life insurance may be needed at all stages of life. Whether married or single, male or female, with or without children, you may have financial obligations that need to be met. Life insurance provides financial security for you and your loved ones.

Assumption #3: My family and I are covered by the group insurance at work. To meet the future needs of your family, you need to have seven to 10 times your annual income. Most group term insurance amounts offered by employers won't meet this need. And, when you don't work for that employer any longer, you usually lose that coverage.

Assumption #4: My husband has life insurance, so I don't need it. Women often live longer than men but not always. There are countless stories of men who had to shoulder the family financial burden along with the emotional burden after their wife passed away.

Assumption #5: My family can cover funeral and burial expenses. Burying a spouse or loved one is the most stressful time in a family's life. Having life insurance can reduce financial concerns for the family.



Take the time now to review your needs and provide adequately for yourself and your family. For more information, contact an insurance professional. **NOW**

Adam Rope is a State Farm agent based in Waxahachie.

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Calendar

JUNE 2011

June 3

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

June 4

Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-in: 8:00-11:00 a.m., Mid-Way Regional Airport, 131 Airport Drive, Midlothian. Breakfast tickets are \$6 for age 8 and above, \$3 for ages 3 to 7, free for all those under the age of 2. Event and parking are free. Contact Tammy Bowen at (972) 923-0080.

June 4, 5

43rd Annual Gingerbread Tour of Homes: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., five private homes will be on the tour. Visit the Chamber of Commerce Web site at www.waxahachietxcoc.com for details.

June 10

Chess Interactive Theater presents *Once a Pawn a Time* geared for children 4-10: 10:00-11:00 a.m., Nicholas P. Sims Library, presented by Red Oak Homeschoolers outside on the front lawn. Contact library at (972) 937-2671.

June Summer Moonlight Movie: 9:00-11:00 p.m., *Mega Mind* in historic downtown Waxahachie on Franklin Street between Jackson and College. Call (972) 937-7330, ext. 198.

June 10-12

Old Fashioned Singing with Dinner on the grounds of historic Chautauqua Auditorium. For information or to order tickets, visit www.WaxaOFS.com or call (972) 923-2709.

June 11

Salvation Army Rummage Sale: 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., 620 Farley Street.

June 15

Library Beach Party: 4:00-5:00 p.m., Sims Library, for ages 11-18. Events include a Hula Hoop contest, sand art and more.

June 19

Father's Day

June 21

Urple Fishing Play: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie Senior Center, 122 Park Hills Drive. Call (972) 937-8271.

June 22

Book Time With Ronald McDonald: 10:00-11:00 a.m., Lyceum at Sims Library, as part of the Texas Reading Club Program. Visit our web site at www.children@simslib.org for information.

June 24

June Summer Moonlight Movies: 9:00-11:00 p.m.,

The Blind Side in historic downtown Waxahachie on Franklin Street between Jackson and College. Call (972) 937-7330, ext. 198.

June 25

25th Annual Cow Creek Country Classic Bike Ride: 7:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., WHS Ninth Grade Academy, 275 Indian Drive. Various routes. Sponsorship is provided by Waxahachie Rotary Club.

June 29

Independence Day: 10:00-11:00 a.m., outside event at Sims Library. Boy Scouts will teach flag etiquette followed by an Independence Day-themed craft and snack provided by Junior Service League. Call (972) 937-2671.

July 2

Crape Myrtle Parade, Battle of the Bands and Fireworks: 10:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. The Crape Myrtle Parade in downtown Waxahachie: 10:00 a.m. Tailgate party at Lumpkins Stadium: 5:00 p.m. Crape Myrtle Battle of the Bands: 6:00 p.m. H-E-B Fireworks Show: 9:00 p.m.

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

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In The Kitchen With Lorraine H. Douville

— *By Sandra Strong*

Lorraine H. Douville lived in New Orleans until Hurricane Katrina devastated her home with 12 feet of water. Only then did she make the journey to Waxahachie. “Fresh seafood was readily available in New Orleans,” Lorraine said, “so gumbo, shrimp fried rice, stuffed crabs, jambalaya and oyster patties were routinely prepared.” Today, Lorraine finds pleasure in cooking special holiday meals and seasonal vegetables. “I also enjoy baking fruitcakes and making pralines,” she added.

Her “little red book” is filled with favorite recipes she uses all the time. “The recipes are from my mother, my mother-in-law, my sister, my niece and so many of my friends. They’re all excellent cooks.” Lorraine’s other hobbies include reading, writing letters to friends and walking to get her daily exercise. **NOW**

Wash Day Red Beans

- 1 lb. Camellia red beans**
- 1 large onion**
- 2 ribs celery**
- 4 cloves garlic**
- 2 bay leaves**
- 1 lb. skinless smoked sausage**
- 1 stick margarine**
- 2 tsp. minced parsley**
- 1 tsp. powdered ginger**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**

- 1.** Wash beans and place in 2 quarts of hot water. Simmer for 45 minutes.
- 2.** Finely dice onion, celery and garlic. Add to the beans; add bay leaves.
- 3.** Boil smoked sausage for 10 minutes, then cut into 1-inch pieces.

- 4.** Add sausage and margarine to beans; continue cooking.
- 5.** When beans begin to soften, mash some of the beans against the side of the pot. This will result in creamier beans.
- 6.** Add parsley and ginger 15 minutes before beans are fully cooked; salt and pepper to taste.
- 7.** Serve over hot rice. You may substitute any meat of your choice for the sausage.

Okra Gumbo

- 2 lbs. fresh okra, sliced**
- 2 serving spoons canola oil**
- 1/4 cup flour**
- 1/2 lb. skinless smoked sausage**
- 1 lb. crabs (4-5 whole crabs)**
- 2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts**

- 1 large onion**
- 4 cloves garlic**
- 1 small bell pepper**
- 1 rib celery**
- 2 lbs. shrimp, peeled and deveined**
- 2 8-oz. cans tomato sauce**
- 1 32-oz. box Rachel Ray’s chicken stock**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**

- 1.** Fry okra in two separate batches using a serving spoon of canola oil in each batch. Sprinkle flour over the okra to prevent from becoming ropy.
- 2.** Cut smoke sausage, crabs and chicken breasts in 1-inch pieces before frying them in a 5-quart stock pot. Fry for approximately 10-15 minutes.
- 3.** Add cut up vegetables to pot and sauté for 10 minutes. Add shrimp and fry for 5 minutes more.
- 4.** Add tomato sauce and chicken stock, plus 2 cans of water and the fried okra.
- 5.** Simmer 20-30 minutes. Serve over hot rice.

Artichoke Bake

- 2 14-oz. cans artichoke hearts**
- 1 8-oz. can seasoned bread crumbs**
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese**
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped**
- 1/2 cup olive oil**
- 3/4 can of water**

- 1.** Mix all the ingredients in a baking dish.
- 2.** Cover and bake for 30-35 minutes at 350 F.
- 3.** Uncover and bake an additional 15 minutes.

Carrot Soufflé

- 1 lb. carrots, sliced**
- 2 eggs**
- 1/2 stick butter**
- 1/4 cup flour**
- 1/4 tsp. baking powder**
- 1 cup sugar**
- 1/4 tsp. cinnamon**
- Powdered sugar**

- 1.** Cook sliced carrots in boiling water for 20 minutes or until tender the day before preparing the soufflé. Chill.
- 2.** Process all remaining ingredients and carrots in a food processor until smooth.
- 3.** Spoon into a lightly greased baking dish. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour or until set. Dust with sifted powdered sugar.



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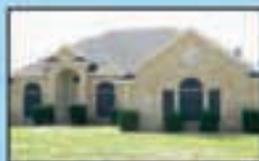
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