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JUNE 2014

Gift of Detail

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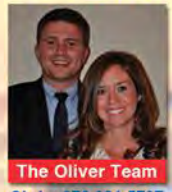

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ON THE COVER

Anne Weary finds inspiration in her outdoor studio.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Jump into June!

That's exactly what I did! I jumped in the car and traveled to Florida to spend some quality time with my hubby's family. The best part of the journey was that my youngest son and his family, Easton included, jumped in the car, too, and tagged along with us. Gasoline for the trip: hundreds of dollars. Hotels and fast food along the way: hundreds more dollars. Easton taking his first little steps in the sand as the ocean splashes around his ankles: beyond priceless.

June is also the month we honor our dads on Father's Day. Although mine is finally settled into his new home in heaven, I will remember him as I celebrate my sons, who are now both fathers with sons of their own. As I watch my grandsons grow into little boys, I am finally realizing what "coming full circle" really means.

Sandra

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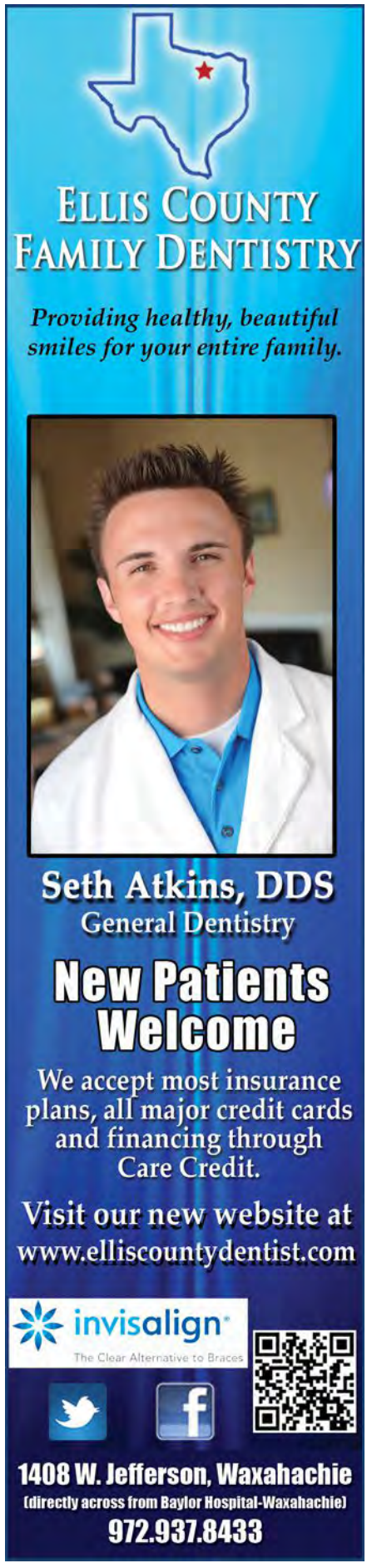

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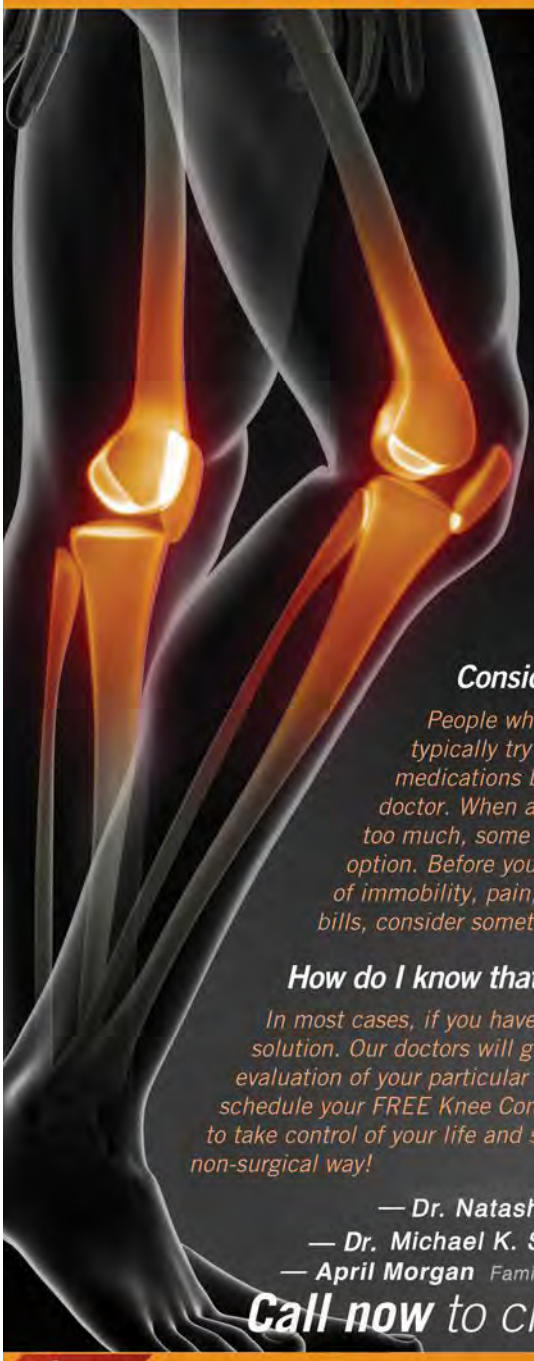

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- Has a recent car accident caused you a knee injury?
- Have you had a direct blow to the knee from a fall?

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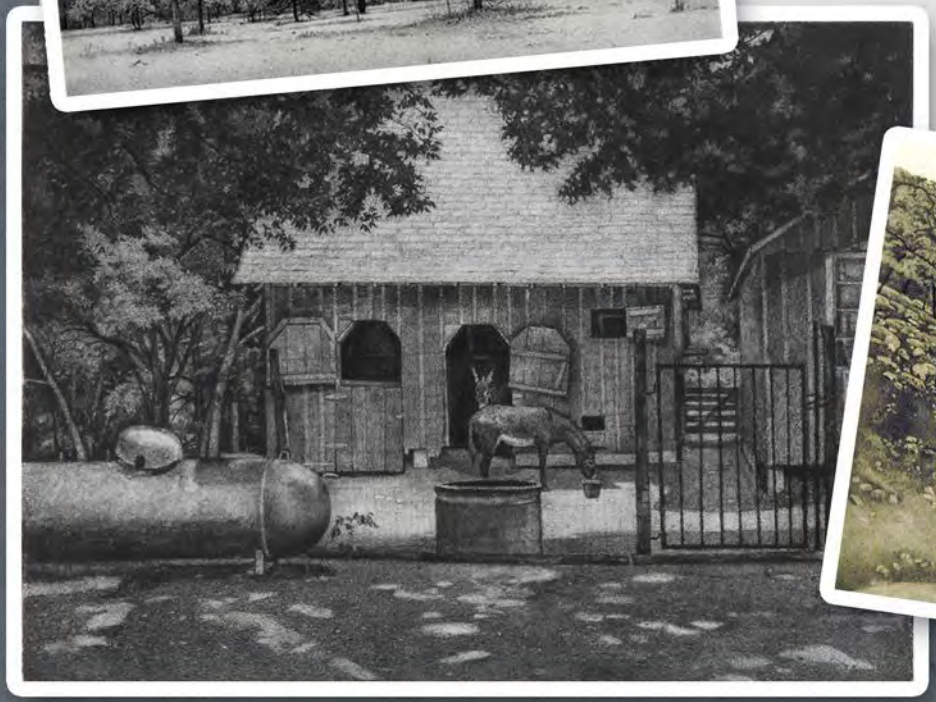
Gift of Detail

— By Sandra Strong

The sun comes up as Anne Weary collects her supplies for charcoal drawing. While some artists would venture to their indoor studio, Anne pulls on her boots and makes the trek into the woods behind her home. The 10-minute walk leads her down a foot path to a rustic, weather-worn card table and matching metal chair. "This is my studio in nature," Anne said, with excitement for what the beautiful summer day brings in way of inspiration. "I have lots of favorite places in the woods."

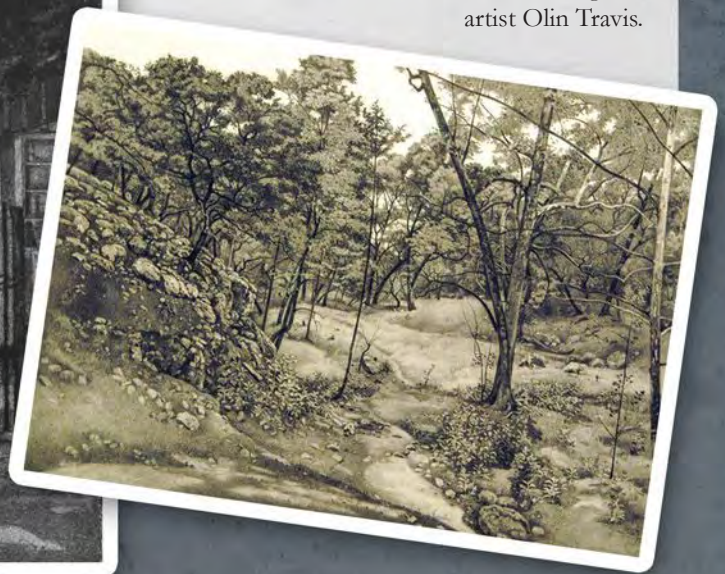


Her inspiration comes from all aspects of the wooded area and creek that runs the length of her 136-acre ranch in Italy. The wild animals that flourish around her as she creates include while-tailed deer, mountain lions, bobcats, coyotes and families of pigs wallowing in the mud along the edge of the creek bed. "I purchased this place because of the natural woods. I was homesick for large oak trees," Anne explained. "Nearly 80 percent of the land is unspoiled by man. This land is what inspires me to draw."

To fully comprehend the depth of Anne's love for capturing nature in its most untouched form, you must travel back to the time when she was just a toddler on horseback. "I grew up on a horse exploring the countryside in a very special place," she shared, remembering Casa Del Sol Ranch, the 100-acre family farm in Garland, Texas. "The farm had a beautiful forest along Spring Creek. The creek was lined with magnificent white limestone cliffs."

Anne grew to love the woods and the animals that made their homes there. The woods were a rare hardwood forest with trees dating back 500 years. The uncut trees, trout lilies and violets intrigued Anne. Her goal early on was to preserve and protect the woods and the animals she loved from vandalism. "All I ever wanted to be was a professional artist," she admitted. "From my love for and experiences growing up in the woods, I came to have a strong love for nature and animals. In fact, I much prefer the solitude of nature and animals to people."

As soon as her artistic aspirations were verbalized, Anne's parents became her strongest supporters. Her professional training began when she was 12, under the tutelage of artist Olin Travis.



"It's almost a *spiritual* thing for me. Through my *drawings*, I really want people to see how *beautiful* a bending tree is or the peak light of noon on a Texas summer day."

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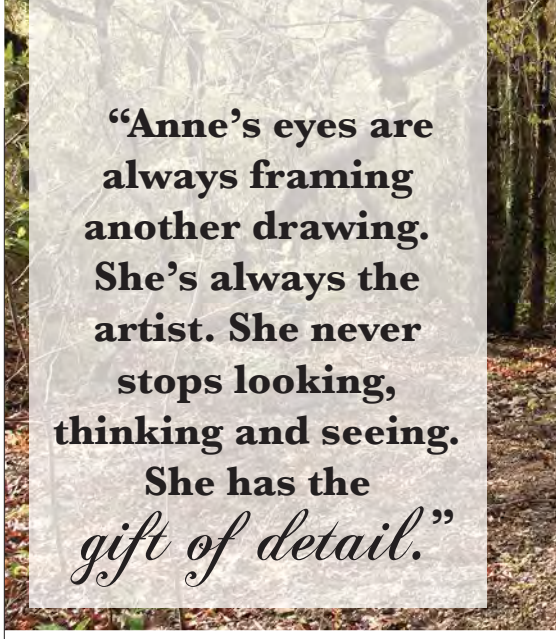


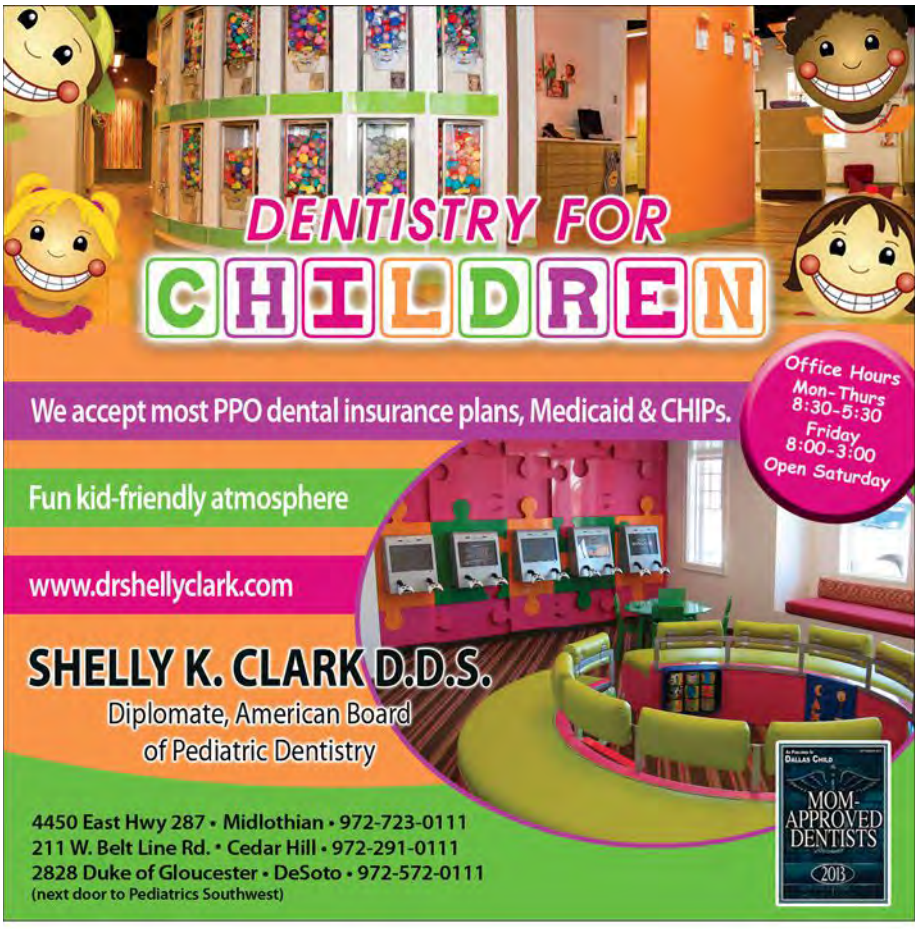
The pair studied still life, portrait and landscape painting. "Olin would paint outside with me," she said, referring to the art of plein air painting. "We worked several days a week at our ranch painting the woods."

In the late 1960s, Anne also worked closely with Donald Vogel, founder of Valley House Gallery in Dallas, the same gallery that represents her artwork today. "Don was my mentor," she confessed. "After seeing my work, he encouraged me and helped me grow."

As a young adult in the '70s, Anne attended the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art in Philadelphia, the oldest art school in the country. The academy's focus was, and still is, on traditional techniques based on realism. Anne worked with Lou Sloan, a teacher and plein air landscape painter, who took her and several of her fellow students to paint at the Pocono Mountains, Catskill Mountains, Delaware Water Gap, Lancaster County and Maine. During her time at the academy, while on a trip to Yale University to view a drawing exhibit by British artists, Anne's choice of artistic medium changed. Her epiphany inspired Anne to put the paints down and pick

up pencils. "I felt I was released to use drawing as my medium. Paint no longer seemed natural to me, but charcoal did," she admitted. "The drawings captivated me with the small amount of color. I could actually feel the color." Anne graduated with a four-year certificate in 1978 and was given two prestigious awards for excellence in drawing.

After graduating, Anne returned to her home in Garland to draw Spring Creek with its limestone cliffs and natural beauty, as life continued to move forward around her. Land taxes increased dramatically, forcing the family to sell the farm. Thankfully, Anne was able to work with the Nature Conservancy in Texas to save some of the untouched land she'd worked so hard to preserve in life and in



her artwork. "I was able to save forest along the creek," she explained. "It's now known as the Spring Creek Forest Reserve." She relocated to Medina, Texas, where she built a small home in the Hill Country. Fifteen years later, she began to feel her home, six miles off the paved roads, was a little too remote, thus she moved to Ellis County.

Her life experiences have taught Anne how to create the illusion of color in charcoal and pencil. Her works today are intimate drawings that show perfect attention to the details around her. Each tree branch is captured in its entirety, as are the animals she adores. "I love trees and animals so much," she explained. "It's almost a spiritual thing for me. Through my drawings, I really want people to see how beautiful a bending tree is or the peak light of noon on a Texas summer day."

Bringing the things she loves in nature to life in her drawings is what Anne does best. In the summer months, she draws in the great outdoors. In the wintertime, she climbs in her car and drives to a spot of her choosing. She turns on the heater and begins to sketch. She's drawn on a boat in Arkansas, while a huge alligator swam in the waters beside her. She's moved her table and chair to the creek bed running with fresh rainwater in hopes of completing a drawing she started in the middle of a dry spell.

The commitment Anne has as an artist is evident in the completed works she has on display in her home and at Valley House Gallery in Dallas. "Her work is autobiographical. It shows the ease with

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which she lives in tandem with nature," said Cheryl Vogel, Donald's daughter-in-law, and curator of the gallery. "Anne's eyes are always framing another drawing. She's always the artist. She never stops looking, thinking and seeing. She has the gift of detail."

A day for Anne isn't complete unless she's had a drawing pencil in one hand and a pencil sharpener in the other. Anne is currently working on a series of drawings inspired by Brushy Creek, found in her immense backyard. "I'm working my way down the creek," she said. "The giant trees are why I bought this property." The woods are Anne's beautiful "cave haven" in the summer, as leaves sparkle like crystals amidst the sunlight. This natural setting is definitely where Anne does her best work. NOW

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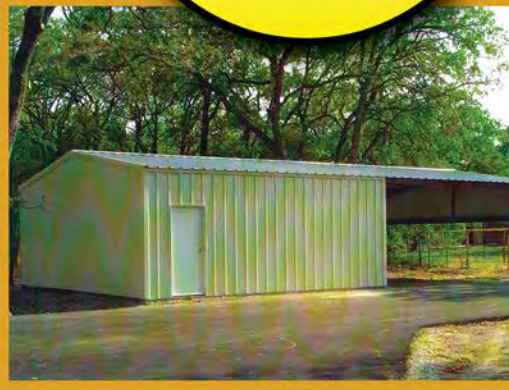

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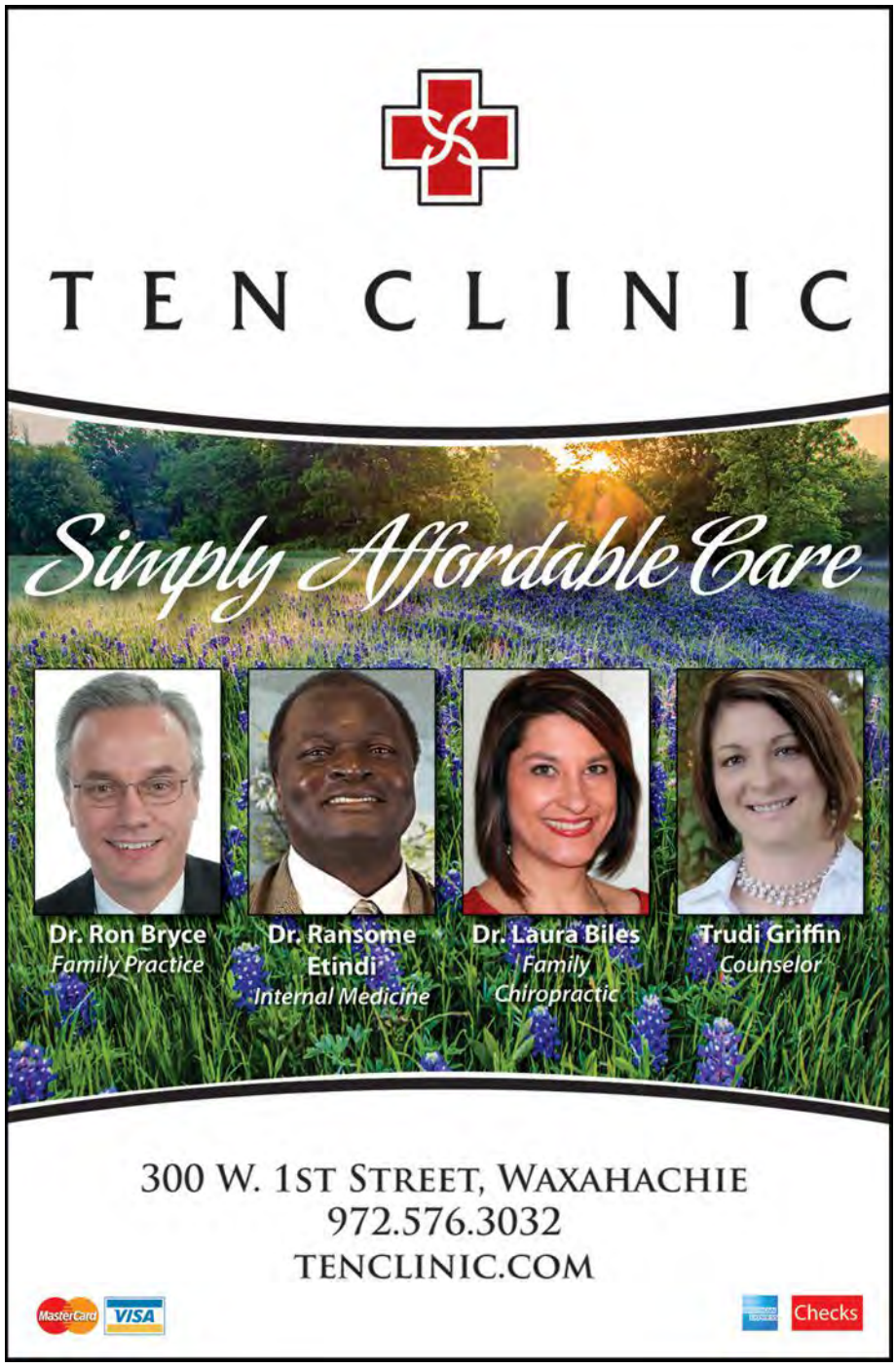
An Unconventional Couple

— By Sara Edgell

What do international travel, online dating and Gypsies have in common? Well, nothing really, but it is what Russ and Joanna Noggle have in common. In fact, it's how their love story begins.

God was at work when He brought two widowed hearts together five years ago. Joanna had recently lost her husband of 35 years, Cecil Gresham, to rheumatic heart-related health problems. Together the two had done mission work in children's homes for years. Similarly, Russ had lost his wife of 43 years, Sharon, to cancer. They, too, had a background in working with children, international philanthropy and evangelism. After the deaths of their spouses, neither Russ nor Joanna had expected a second marriage awaited them in the near future, but neither were opposed to it either.

In January 2009, Russ made the trek back overseas to an orphanage where Joanna had previously been working. One cold afternoon, the little Gypsy children were showing Russ photographs, one of which just happened to be of Joanna. Out of curiosity, he inquired about the enchanting woman, and the Gypsy kids told him all about her, commenting specifically about how wonderful her homemade macaroni and cheese was. "That was my recommendation," Joanna jokingly said. At the end of his stay, the children gave Russ the picture to take



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home and made him promise he would email Joanna to let her know how the kids were doing. That's how the two began their period of virtual courting.

At first, Joanna thought the emails were coming from a young man, perhaps a young college intern. After all, no one would willingly go to Romania in the dead of winter. But after much correspondence, she realized that he, too, had lost a spouse, and he had a heart for

doing God's work. The two shared their stories with one another via computer and soon realized just how much they had in common. Divine intervention swooped in and brought these two lonely, kindred souls together — and to think it all started with little Gypsy orphans!

In the months before they met online, they both desperately wanted to continue working overseas, but it was a taxing, if

not impossible, endeavor to do alone at their age. So naturally, they turned to their Lord for guidance, asking for a new mate so they could continue doing their missionary work. "We knew it was a God thing," said Joanna, as they were married a short four months after that first email was sent.

"We knew the Lord was involved," Russ shared, "so I proposed the second day we saw each other."

The pair were married on April 4, 2009, and have been happily pursuing their common passions in life ever since. Beyond their romance, their shared interest in the well-being of children solidified their relationship. In fact, they live their life together according to one

simple Bible verse found in James 1:27: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world." Therefore, the couple formed a faith-based, evangelistic ministry called Compassionate Hope, which focuses on Eastern European and Turkish ministries. "That's really our story of how God brought us together," Joanna affirmed.

Through the foundation, they travel overseas several times a year to work in orphanages and to minister to impoverished children and their families. Additionally, they also focus on trafficking intervention ministries.

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"People do not realize how easily orphans in these countries simply disappear, because they have no one to worry about them or notice they're missing," Joanna said. Mainly, they now travel to Romania and Moldova, but have a long history of working in the Ukraine, as well. Joanna's son actually handles the foundation's work in the Ukraine these days. But, where there is a need, Russ and Joanna will provide in one way or another.

They describe the Ukraine as a quaint and wonderful land. "The people there are just wonderful, the best people anyone would ever want to meet," Russ stated. They have found Moldova to be a land of beauty and wonderful people. Moldova, a land-locked country on the border of Romania, is also where the Noggles do most of their work. The couple describes Romania as the barren land of determined, hard workers. In essence, they evangelize in the land of Dracula, although they have never been to the popular tourist attraction for which the area is known. In the end, each country struggles with poverty and has high orphan and trafficking rates. That's why Russ and Joanna focus on these places in particular.

Their work in these countries entails church planting, youth evangelism outreach and village evangelism, as well as assisting the Village of Hope and New Hope Eurasia (Turkey and Moldova). Russ and Joanna train camp workers and educate pastors and social workers to help them learn how to

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keep track of children better. They also help build churches, greenhouses and other necessary buildings. They provide appliances, clothing, shoes and groceries, while also meeting medical needs. They even gave a woman several chickens this last year. Joanna always makes sure to take along Hershey chocolate bars to hand out. "They have wonderful chocolate there, but they just love ours," she proclaimed.

Meeting the physical needs allows the spiritual needs to be met more easily. "It starts with being interested in the person and ends with us giving them the tools to be self-sustaining," Russ explained.

Ultimately, the driving force behind their missionary work is to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the children. As a social worker, Joanna knows all too well the trials and tribulations of being in the system, so to speak. As a child, she lived in six foster homes before being adopted at the age of 6. "We do this for the children," Joanna admitted, "to salvage dear little children."

After 14 trips together, the couple experiences great joy each time they are able to return to the orphanage in Romania as man and wife. Coming full circle, they are always anxious to see the Gypsy children who have made such an impact on their lives. The children, too, are elated to see the newlyweds now together. It just goes to show their good work has not gone unnoticed. Just as Russ and Joanna have done for others, others have done for them. No matter how unconventional their relationship came to be, these two are without a doubt meant to be together. NOW

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A GOOD DAY *All Around*

— *By Carolyn Wills*

When a young journalist and recent graduate of Austin College in Sherman, Texas, arrived as the new city editor of Mount Pleasant's The Daily Tribune*, it was a good day all around. The newspaper was adding a talented writer who enjoyed city business. Melissa, the young writer, was moving closer to the dream of owning a newspaper. Most importantly, she and resident graphic designer/advertising and layout artist, Thomas Swedoski, were meeting at a time and place where they could fall in love.*

The two married and moved near Beaumont, Texas, where they owned and operated a weekly newspaper in nearby Buna for seven years. They had a daughter named Lyla. When they found out they were expecting their second daughter, Emily, they sold the newspaper and made a great adventure out of finding their next home. They drove to communities in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas. When all was said and done, Waxahachie reigned triumphant.

"Thomas and I fell in love with downtown Waxahachie," Melissa smiled. They also fell in love with a very special house. "We wanted to live in a neighborhood with older, mature

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landscapes," she said. As they pulled into the arched driveway of a large, brick, ranch-style home fronted by two stalwart trees, they knew they were home.

Today, Thomas and Melissa have been married for nine years. Lyla is 3 years old, and Emily is 2. In 2012, following their great adventure, the Swedoski family moved into their four-bedroom, nearly 3,000-square-foot custom home, along with their beloved dogs, Buddy and Midnight. The house, built in 1991, stands on an acre in an area of older, distinctive homes. In addition to its beautiful foliage, the neighborhood is a visual treat of architectural variety.

The Swedoski's front door opens to a foyer with a 14-foot ceiling, wood-patterned tile floor, an arched window over the door and two tall, white columns bordering a spacious central room. "I like that the living room is open and airy," Melissa said. "We have big furniture, and the pieces fit. Our previous house was cave-like, so it's wonderful to have a tall entrance and a living room with so many windows."

One wall, anchoring a large brick fireplace in the living room, serves to divide the living room and den. Furnished with built-in bookcases, flat-screen TV, keyboard and a

myriad of games and toys, the den is also one big playroom. "Our house is very kid-friendly," Thomas smiled. "The only 'no-kid-toys' room is the master suite."

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To the right of the foyer is a formal dining room, accented by a deep cranberry-red wall and spacious enough to accommodate the family-sized table and hutch that once belonged to Melissa's parents. "The cranberry and tan walls were already here," Melissa commented. In fact, except for the kitchen, Thomas and Melissa have kept the existing color scheme. "We're also happy that most of the floors were carpeted," she added. "With young children, I'm not a fan of hardwood."

Decisions about the house are truly a combined effort for Thomas and Melissa. "He has a far better eye for color," she smiled. "I enjoy decorating, especially with family pictures and also for all the holidays."

"Fortunately, there wasn't a lot of renovation to be done," Thomas explained. "The master shower had to be retiled. In the backyard, we removed an old divider fence, installed a new one around the swimming pool and added a heater for the pool."

Their most involved project was the kitchen. Thomas tackled the tasks of painting cabinets to highlight black granite countertops and replacing the backsplash with a light translucent tile. Previously, the cabinets were finished with a coffee wash for a shabby-chic effect. The cabinets are now bright white, contrasting with the dark granite and tile, creating an updated kitchen that is stunning and functional.

The kitchen connects to a small eating area converted to Lyla and Emily's arts and crafts room, with child-sized table and chairs and cubbies for artwork and supplies. "I love that this house is not completely an open floor plan," Melissa shared. "We can see from openings in the kitchen into the arts and crafts room and into the den, so the girls can play while we're cooking or in the office, yet each room maintains definition."

A fourth bedroom, located off the den, serves as Thomas and Melissa's office. They each work from home now.

She is a freelance writer and successful family lifestyle blogger, and he is a photographer, graphic designer and writer. Typically, their highly functioning, two-person office with an abundance of technology is abuzz with activity.

The remaining three bedrooms are located to the left of the living room. "Lyla's room is one of my favorites," Thomas said. "It is close to the foyer, so it shares the high ceiling." Big enough to accommodate Lyla's bed, bookshelves, dresser and her very own princess cottage, Lyla's room is also a favorite with both girls. Lyla and Emily's rooms are decorated with colorful decals. Emily's room has a built-in bookcase and a "big girl" bed she will use someday that once belonged to a teenaged Melissa.

The couple's master suite is the ideal parents' retreat. The accent wall, painted a deep brown, is the perfect backdrop to their magnificent leather-and-wood sleigh bed. "The bedroom suite is the first furniture we bought together," Melissa said. Two additional and very special pieces are Melissa's wedding chest and another handmade chest fashioned from a cedar tree felled by Hurricane Rita. "Rita hit the year we moved to Buna," she explained. The master bedroom is connected to a spacious bathroom and also features two separate his-and-hers closets.

Beyond the inviting backyard in-ground swimming pool is a large brick workshop Thomas hopes to convert to a pool house someday. About an eighth of the enormous backyard is dedicated to Buddy and Midnight. "They're both about 9 years old now," Thomas said. "We think Midnight was 1 when she showed up as a stray at the newspaper in Buna." Two weeks after they brought Midnight home, they found a buddy for her and named him Buddy. Both are Labrador Retrievers, the same age, and each is a rescue.

Truly, the day was great when Thomas and Melissa first met. It led to a dream fulfilled, two beautiful daughters, one great adventure, and now, this family chapter in Waxahachie. "We love our home," Melissa said. "We have young children, and we certainly don't want to live in a museum. This home is very cozy, friendly and inviting, and it is also elegant and grand." NOW

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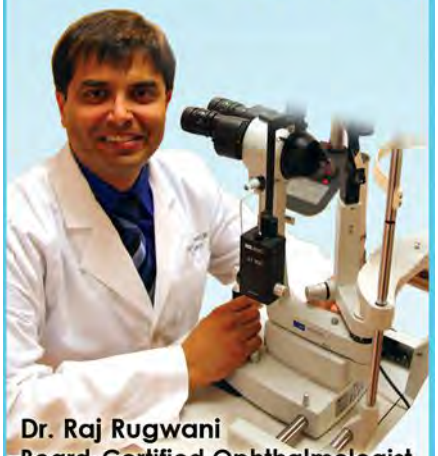

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OUT OF THE SHAD

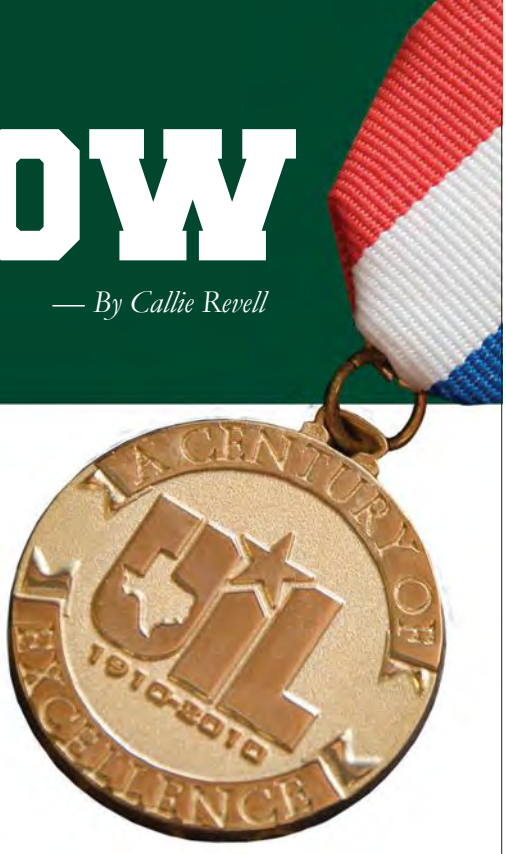
The Neal name is familiar at Waxahachie High School. Matt, Tiffany and Caleb Neal have each made their marks by graduating at the top of their respective classes and serving as drum majors for the Spirit of Waxahachie Indian Band. They, along with their mother, Winnie, have a close bond that has stood strong through the years. As Caleb prepares to begin his college career and his future, he focuses on preserving the Neal legacy, while making his own name.

Proud mom, Winnie, supports her son, Caleb Neal, as he meets his goals.

His siblings have cast a long shadow with their many accomplishments. Matt graduated from Waxahachie High School in 2008 and went on to graduate from Texas A&M University in 2012. Caleb describes him as a tone-setter, remembering how Matt decided to become a drum major and the valedictorian of his class, a rare and difficult feat. "Matt set the bar for us," Caleb said. His older sister, Tiffany,

OW

— *By Callie Revell*



graduated from WHS as the valedictorian in 2010 and graduated this year from Texas Tech University with a degree in bilingual education. Tiffany was one of the first band members ever to make drum major her sophomore year. She currently has plans to do mission work in Guatemala. Caleb describes Tiffany as much more artistic than Matt, who is more mathematical. "God has blessed us all so much," Caleb remarked.

Caleb has striven to follow in his siblings' footsteps from an early age. "He came to me and told me he wanted to be drum major and valedictorian," Winnie remembered. "I said, 'Caleb, you don't have to be Matt and Tiffany.' He was different from the other two. But he told me, 'Mom, those are my goals.'" To accomplish his goals, Caleb set aside

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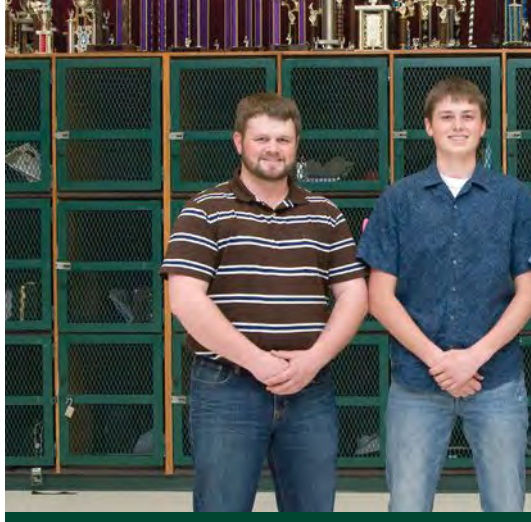

Rich Armstrong (second from right) ha
Neal siblings: Matthe

countless hours to practice his instrument and focus on his schoolwork. "It's not uncommon for me to wake up at 1:30 in the morning to find him still studying," Winnie said.

"I wanted 97 and above, because I knew I couldn't be beat with 97 and above," Caleb said. His high standards and his fear of failure began to wear on him. After making the All-State Band as a freshman, a notable accomplishment, he set his standards even higher. "At the end of my sophomore year, I felt all this pressure," Caleb said. "It wasn't like I had slacked off. I tried even harder than I did my freshman year." Despite his efforts, he didn't make the All-State Band that year. His disappointment from that experience has changed his entire

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as been the band director for all three
w, Caleb and Tiffany.

outlook. "As hard as it was not making it my sophomore year, I can see how God really used that throughout my high school career and how it has changed my attitude," he added. Caleb went on to make the All-State Band his junior and senior years.

His new attitude was tested last summer when Caleb received discouraging news: he had dropped from valedictorian of his class to salutatorian. "One semester made the difference," Caleb said. "Even when I found out I was No. 2, I didn't want the same thing to happen as had when I didn't make All-State my sophomore year. I remember feeling I wasn't a good player anymore because I had set my worth in that. I didn't want the same thing to happen to being No. 1. I'm content with being No. 2. I know I tried hard."

Caleb starts each day by reading the Bible, and finds encouragement through Colossians 3:23: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." Caleb's heart is different, and now, he's pursuing his goals for the right reasons. "As high school has gone on and college looms in the future, I think my goals have kind of changed," he said. "Now, I want to do the best I can do to bring God glory. I want to give it all I've got."

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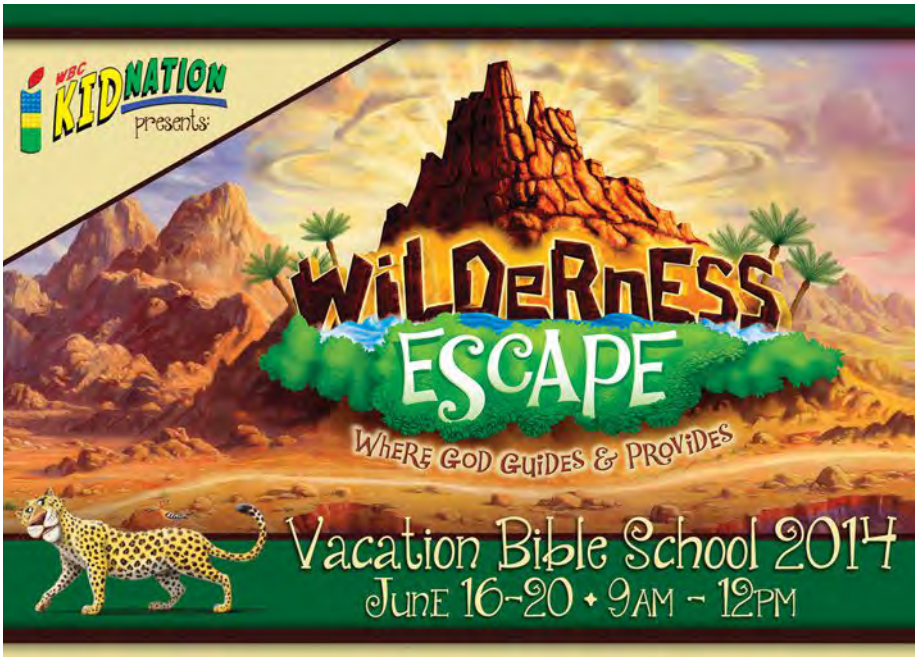
competition in their family, and Caleb's older siblings have inspired him to push himself to succeed. "I want to beat them," Caleb joked. "I've tried to carve my own path, but I also want to do a lot of the stuff they did." Although their accomplishments are all similar, the ways they have achieved their goals reflect their individuality. "We each led differently," Caleb said. "I wasn't comparing myself with them, wondering if I was doing a better job or worse job. I thought of them as good leaders and good drum majors, so I wanted to learn from them. I tried to learn from their mistakes and their successes." Caleb's siblings have supported him, and his entire family has encouraged him to follow his dreams.

Part of Caleb's success has branched from his humility. Throughout his life, he and his family haven't been afraid to lean on others and ask for help when they need it. "These kids are not who they are because of themselves, but because God used a lot of people to invest in them," Winnie said.

Caleb expresses his sincere thanks to Scott Rosenberger, Lee Coleman and Butch Price, who have mentored him. Caleb also owes a great deal of his success in band to his director, Rich Armstrong, and his private instructors, Keith Davis and Angelyn Seppeler. "We're not anything special. We've done so many things wrong," Winnie insisted.



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"We just want to extend to other people the same grace they have extended to us. I think all four of us would say that."

Caleb's love of music keeps him motivated and grounded. He's grateful he had the chance to be involved with the band program at school. "It gave me a place to be. I feel that when you are accepted, you want to do better," he explained. "It kept me disciplined and taught me how to plan out my time." Although Caleb has extremely limited free time, he dedicates several hours a week to playing guitar at Waxahachie Bible Church. "I really enjoy that," he said. "Find something you enjoy doing on a weekly basis during your time off. You've got to make time for yourself."

Caleb will attend Texas Tech University in the fall of 2014, majoring in mechanical engineering, with plans to one day become an engineer. "I want a degree I can market and sell so I can provide for my family," he said. However, he's leaving another door open, too. "While I'm at college, I would like to get involved in a worship team at a church. After graduating from Texas Tech, I'd like to attend seminary and someday become a worship pastor," he said. Whatever path he chooses, his future looks bright, as he steps out of the shadow of his family and into the sun to find his own way. NOW

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Wagging Tails

— *By Carolyn Wills*

Pets can brighten a day, lend an ear, touch a heart, give some mischief and, alas, be an expense and leave us much too soon. A whopping 68 percent of U.S. households, 82.5 million homes, own at least one, according to a 2013-14 National Pet Owners Survey conducted by the American Pet Products Association. To that, add findings from a 2011 online survey by The Harris Poll showing that nine out of 10 owners view their pets as members of the family and, clearly, for most Americans, pets matter.

Anyone who has marveled at a cat, enjoyed the perfect horseback ride or looked into the eyes of an old dog knows the special language between human and animal. On the simplest level, pets are our companions, but they can also be conduits to physical, competitive and/or social outlets. Today, labels like "horse people" and "dog people" are familiar, and clubs, training facilities and activities exist for just about every breed, talent and interest.

Remarkably, Americans care for an estimated 20.6 million birds, 95.6 million cats, 83.3 million dogs, 8.3 million horses, 158.6 million fish, 11.5 million reptiles and 18.1 million small animals. That's a lot of millions supporting pets, particularly against the realities of their expense and shorter life expectancy.

What, then, draws us to become "pet parents"?

1. Having a pet is an opportunity to care for something outside of ourselves. Pets personify unconditional love and a wondrous

connection to nature. They're also great entertainers, and as creatures of habit, can serve as a grounding force in our lives.

2. Health and welfare benefits can be found in pet ownership, too. APPA cites several studies supporting the pet connection as being good for us:

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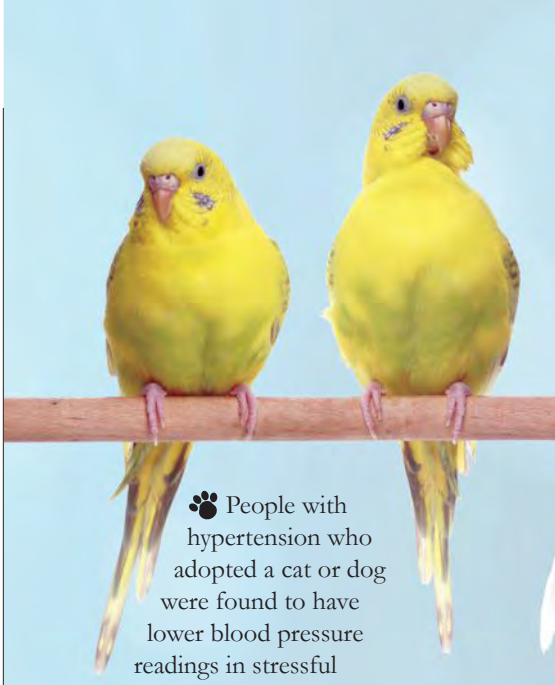

People with hypertension who adopted a cat or dog were found to have lower blood pressure readings in stressful situations than those who did not own pets. (Dr. Karen Allen, State University of New York at Buffalo.)

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Pets inspire greater psychological stability, which for humans, may add a measure of protection against heart disease. Studies indicate pet owners

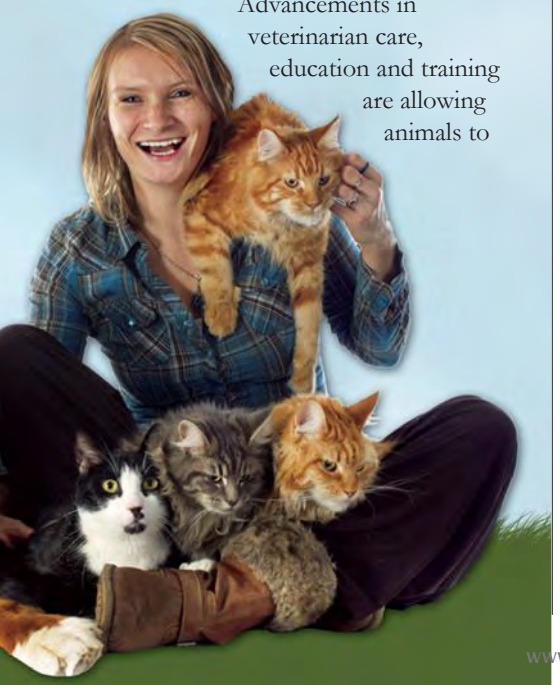
tend to make fewer doctor visits. (National Institute of Health Technology Assessment Workshop: Health Benefits of Pets.)

APPA also notes that autistic children tend to be more responsive when a pet is in the area, and children who have pets often perform better in school.

Senior citizens and dementia patients have shown a tendency to react more positively around pets. Baby boomers have the largest instances of pet ownership, and as they transition to empty nesting are keeping pets longer.

These benefits and privileges come with responsibilities. Truly there is no such thing as a free puppy, and although according to the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy (NCPPSP), about 65 percent of pets are acquired from friends and family for free or at low cost, pet owners must provide medical care and prevention for their pets.

Advancements in veterinarian care, education and training are allowing animals to



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live longer and healthier. Medical care includes such basics as vaccinations, heartworm preventative (in Texas nearly 1-in-45 heartworm tests in dogs are positive), spaying/neutering and might also include microchipping, vitamins and pet insurance. Much, too, has been learned about the importance of dental maintenance.

Currently APPA estimates that, at most, 3 percent of dogs and 1 percent of cats are insured. Investing in pet insurance is on the increase, though, at an expected annual rate of 10 percent and may especially be pertinent for horse owners considering the cost of equine surgery. Annual medical expenses for a dog are generally just under $1,000 and for a cat around $650.

Annual costs of pet food, including treats, begin at around $300. Where this investment ends depends on the sizes and quantity of pets in a household.

Grooming is also essential. Horses need farriers. Dogs and cats require regular grooming and nail clipping and some breeds are best groomed by a professional.

A growing population of pets, awareness of their needs and the

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many options for activities have spurred development in America's pet industry. In 2014, an estimated $58.51 billion will be spent on pets in the U.S., and that's a lot of billions. Today's pets are being treated to orthopedic dog beds, designer clothing, IQ-raising toys, seat belt systems, automatic water and food dispensers plus a myriad of foods from basic to breed-specific to organic. Travel-related pet services, after-care (burial) services, pet day care, dog parks, pet portraits and products are all in demand.

More than at any time, people have access to pet-specific information via specialized broadcast programming, publications, social media, clinics and events, breed associations, veterinary journals and pet industry studies. Individual pets have gained fame as social media "stars" with their own Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and blogs. As the industry grows and people increasingly grasp the peril of unwanted animals and unscrupulous/uneducated breeders, more rescue operations and organizations are forming and tolerance is lessening toward all abuse of animals.

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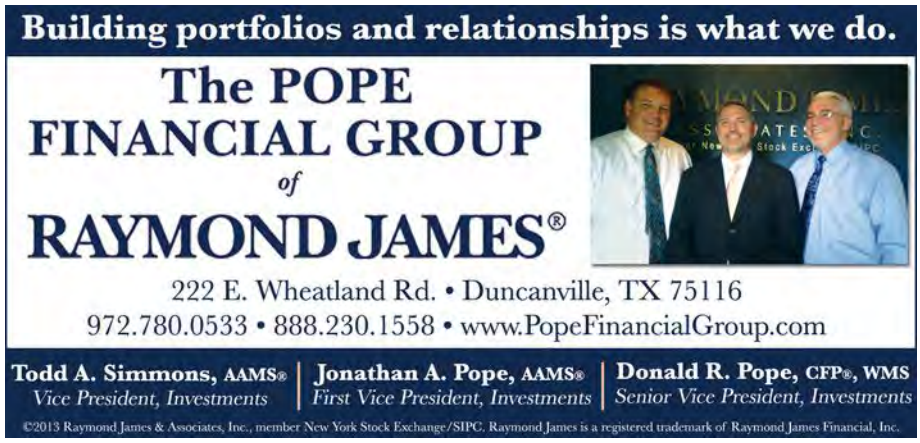

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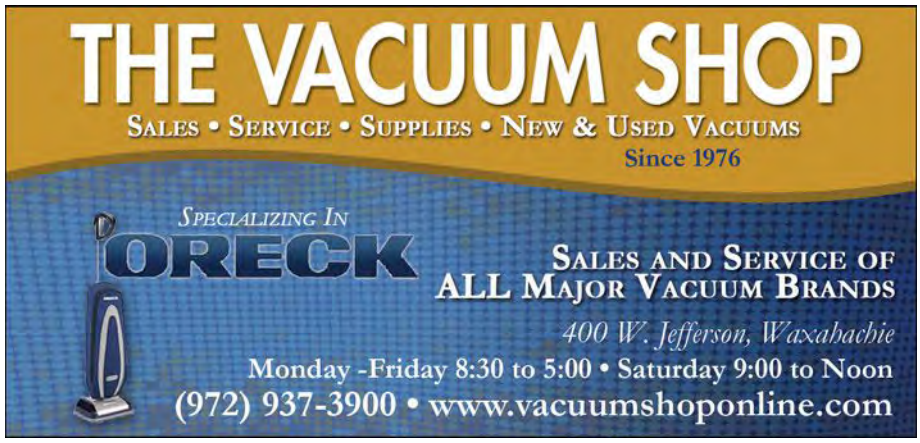
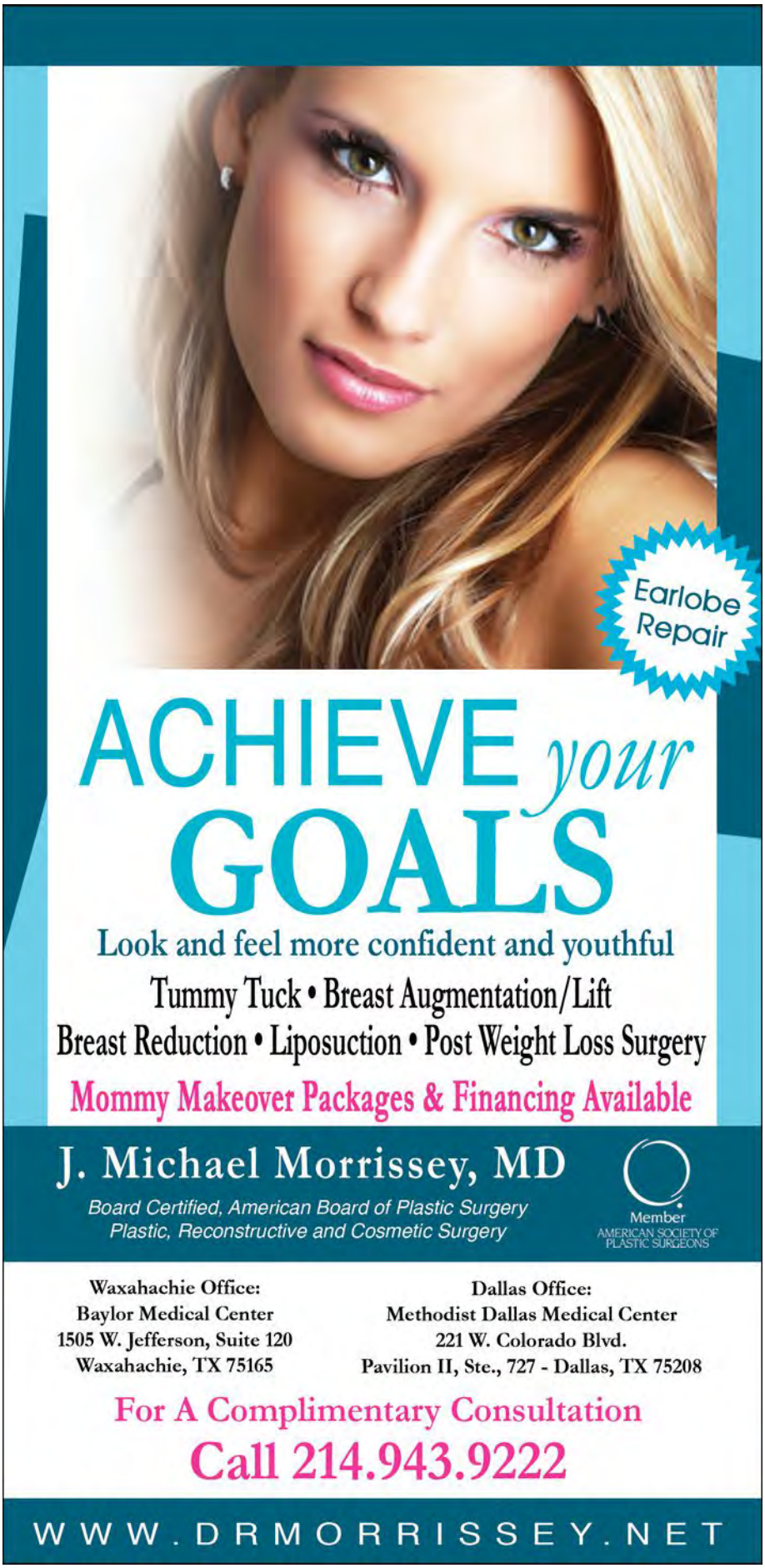
Marble Falls, this festival unveils the new sculpture displayed around town, while local artists enjoy setting up their plein air paintings throughout the area resplendent with auctions, artist receptions and more!

Pass a lazy afternoon by touring the wineries around Lake LBJ — nine in all — and they all have awards and honors

in common. Uncork a crisp Sauvignon Blanc or a chocolaty Tempranillo in a scenic setting and toast the day. If you prefer for someone else to do the driving, take advantage of a company that provides chauffeured tours while pouring on vineyard trivia and insights to the area en route.

Marble Falls is surrounded by the best Texas has to offer nature lovers. Many country and farm-to-market roads wind gently through the Texas Hill Country. If you don't mind slowing down and getting lost for a little while, you might see some scenery that makes a vacation worth taking. Take a tour of a nearby cavern or a boat tour and look to the skies to catch a glimpse of a bald eagle. If birdies and other types of eagles are more your style, hit the links on one of 12 golf courses within 20 minutes of Marble Falls —





many with designer names like Jack Nicklaus, Tom Fazio and Robert Trent Jones III.

Canoes are another great way to get around in the Hill Country. You can take a guided canoe tour, or set out on your own for a relaxing day trip. Find yourself at one with the outdoors on a fishing expedition to any one of the seven Highland Lakes, either on your own or with an experienced fishing guide. And the Texas air is never fresher than in one of our nearby state parks. Hunting, fishing and camping activities are popular here. Native game fish abound in lakes and streams. Fall and winter hunting seasons offer plentiful wildlife and excellent wing shooting of migratory and native game birds.

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Whether you have your own horse or you want to ride the range on a rental, there's nothing quite like seeing the Hill Country cowboy-style. Many of the LCRA and state parks have riding trails. Several local riding clubs and ranches will help get any greenhorn started.

For those who prefer the resort life, choose from one of the many lakeside resorts to make the most of our scenic waters. The friendly staff in the local visitors' office is just a phone call away, at (877) 638-3927. They can help you plan the trip that fits your fancy and takes advantage of each of the area's attractions, from lazy days on the water to wine tasting to horseback riding to hiking, biking and rock climbing.

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By Alisha Workman. Photos courtesy of: Marble Falls/Lake LBJ Chamber of Commerce & CVB.

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General Manager Wes Spence believes second-to-none customer service and a good word-of-mouth reputation are two of the most important aspects of managing a successful dealership.

Communication Counts

Wes Spence and his staff are focused on grassroots marketing.

— By Sandra Strong

Waxahachie Ford • Dodge • Chrysler • Jeep • Ram, also known in the surrounding community as Waxahachie Autoplex, is under new ownership. When Wes Spence came on board as general manager in August 2012, he had several changes in mind that have since come to fruition. "I wanted to bring our advertising dollars back to the local community," Wes shared. "My focus was on grassroots marketing."

The dealership has given back in several ways these past two years. They sponsor the annual Texas Country Reporter Festival. They give a sizable donation to the Waxahachie Booster Club, as well as share in sponsorships to the Cherokee Charmers and the WHS cheerleaders, in their strong desire to help build tomorrow's leaders. "We also do a lot for the WISD teachers," said Bobby Malatia, operations manager. During summer months, the Autoplex honors four WISD teachers who have been selected as "teachers of the year" by their peers. "They each get to drive a new car for the summer months," Bobby added. "They have such a good time." Once the new school year begins, the cars are returned and offered as demos, making this idea a win-win for all concerned.

Perfect attendance at Waxahachie High School also has its rewards. At the end of each semester, students who have not missed a day that semester are given a coupon. Coupons then go into a drawing held at the end of the school year. One student

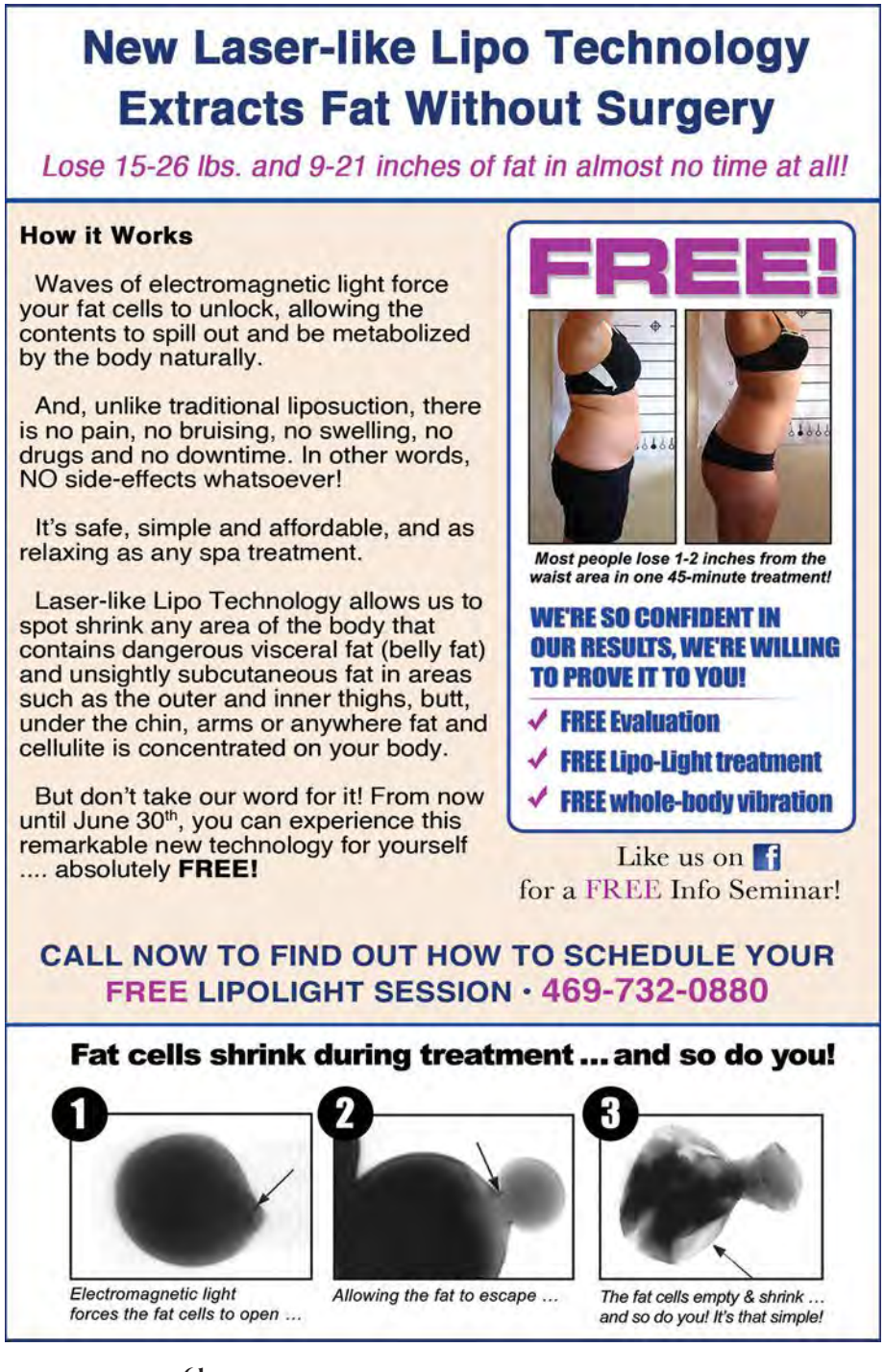
will reap the reward of a new car for their perfect attendance. Waxahachie Autoplex will also be giving away, based on corporate sponsorships, a new Ram truck during the 2014 homecoming game. The car giveaway took place in April when the dealership donated a vehicle to the Dulin Brothers Scholarship Foundation for the WHS baseball booster club. The WHS librarian can be seen in her newest requisition — a new van donated through the generosity of the Autoplex and other local businesses — to aid in the district's summer reading program. "These donations are part of our grassroots marketing plan," Wes reiterated. "Our main goal is to continue giving back to the community that has given so much to us."

Wes is definitely a people person. His professional rapport was honed while working as a police officer in the Houston area for nearly a decade. When it came time to make a change, Wes credits his personal ownership in a car collision center as the main reason he turned in his badge for a career in the car dealership business. "I take my job here seriously," Wes said. "This is how we feed our families, so being involved in every aspect of the dealership is very important to me."

For Wes, second-to-none customer service and a good word-of-mouth reputation are also important aspects to managing a successful dealership. "I refuse to sell someone a bad car, new or used," Wes explained. "I will personally go the extra mile to make a customer happy."

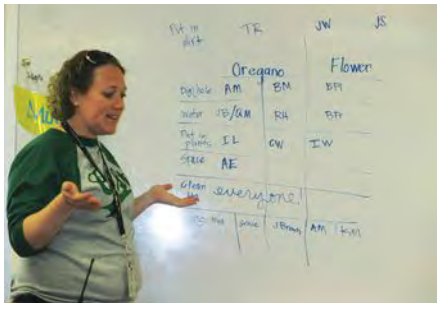
A new 4.5 million dollar building project is currently underway. The re-grand opening event is slated for early 2015. The new facility will offer a state-of-the-art collision center, drive-through carwash and quick lane oil change service. "Buying a car is probably the second largest purchase a person makes, so we're ready to make their car-buying experience memorable," Bobby said. "We want customers to be happy and love their car."

"Communication counts," Wes added. "I want honest feedback from our customers. Repeat service is a must-have, so satisfied customers are also a must-have." NOW



A large crowd gathers at the Ellis County Courthouse for One Voice Day United In Prayer.

Third graders at Clift Elementary School prepare to plant flowers and herbs in the school's garden.



Holly Reid uses a bar graph to illustrate a math problem.

A ribbon cutting is held for the Rogers Hotel.

Jim Pitts thanks students from SAGU for volunteering at Renfro Healthcare Center.

Waxahachie's Hanna Larson helps with a trombone demonstration during the Dallas Symphony Orchestra Brass Quintet performance at Canterbury Episcopal School.

PGR members Rick Crabb and Brad Shotts stand tall with Cindy Dietz-Marsh at her son's, Danny Dietz's, memorial in Littleton, Colorado.

Jessica Gowin, Meridith Gonzalez, Andi Wilson and Jenna Dutschmann enjoy their visit on the patio at the College Street Pub.

Hodge-Podge prepares to cut the ribbon at their new location on Franklin Street.

Southern Champion Tray give native saplings to students at Northside Elementary School in honor of Earth Day and Arbor Day.

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Asset allocation is a technique used to spread your investment dollars across several asset categories. Stocks, bonds, cash or cash alternatives are the most common components of an asset allocation strategy. However, others may be available and appropriate as well. The general goal is to minimize volatility while maximizing return (though asset allocation alone can't ensure a profit or eliminate the risk of a loss). The process involves dividing your investment dollars among asset categories that do not all respond to the same market forces in the same way at the same time. Though there are no guarantees, ideally, if your investments in one category are performing poorly, you will have assets in another category that are performing well. The gains in the latter will offset the losses in the former, minimizing the overall effect on your portfolio. Remember that all investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal, and there can be no guarantee that any investing strategy will be successful.

The number of asset categories you select for your portfolio and the percentage of portfolio dollars you allocate to each category will depend, in large part, on the size of your portfolio, your tolerance for risk, your investment goals and your time horizon (i.e., how long you plan to keep your money invested). A simple portfolio may include as few as three investment categories, with a percentage of dollars divided among, for example, cash alternatives, bonds and stocks. A more complex portfolio may include many more asset categories or break down each of the broader asset categories into subcategories (for example, the category "stocks" might be further divided into subcategories such as large cap stocks, small cap stocks, international stocks, high-tech stocks and so on).

Determining an appropriate asset allocation may be the most important single investment decision you make, because it will likely have more impact on your overall return than the selection of individual investments. Don't hesitate to get expert help if you need it. And be sure to periodically review your portfolio to ensure that your chosen mix of investments continues to serve your investment needs as your circumstances change over time. NOW

This information was developed by Broadridge, an independent third party. It is general in nature, is not a complete statement of all information necessary for making an investment decision and is not a recommendation or a solicitation to buy or sell any security. Investments and strategies mentioned may not be suitable for all investors. Past performance may not be indicative of future results. Raymond James & Associates, Inc. member New York Stock Exchange/SIPC does not provide advice on tax, legal or mortgage issues. These matters should be discussed with an appropriate professional.
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Todd Simmons is a Raymond James Financial Advisor based in Duncanville.

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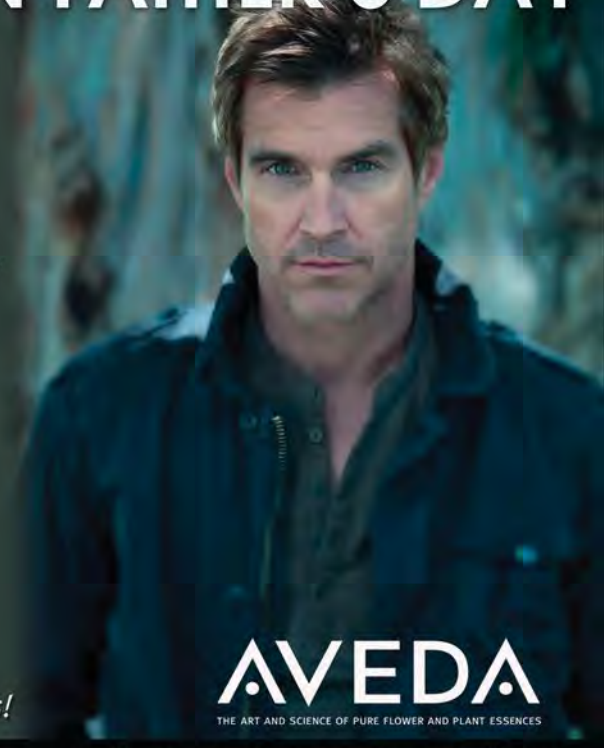

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Through December
Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market: Saturday, 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., S. Elm St. Visitors will find fresh produce, baked goods, gourmet foods and great gift ideas. For more information, call (469) 309-4111.

June 7
Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-in: 8:00-11:00 a.m., Mid-Way Regional Airport, located off Hwy 287 between Waxahachie and Midlothian. Breakfast tickets: $6, adults and children 8 and over; $3, children under 3. Free parking. For more information, call (972) 923-0080 or visit www.mid-wayregional.com.

Brunch With My Daddy & Dad With His Little Princess: 9:00 a.m.-noon, Ryan's Grill Buffet & Bakery, 1400 N. Hwy 77. Limited seating available for girls ages 5-18 and their dads. $10/person. For tickets, call (972) 748-4026 or (972) 748-4026.

Metal Art Exhibit: 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (rain or shine), 217 E. Main St. Recycle, reuse and repurpose for art's sake. Free event. Visit www.metalartexpo.com for further information.

June 7, 8
46th Annual Gingerbread Trail Historic Home Tour: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Tickets are available at 201 S. College St. Adult tickets are $15. Tickets for children ages 5-12 are $7. Tour a special selection of five homes. Call (972) 937-0681 or visit www.gingerbreadtrail.net for more details.

Gingerbread Trail Arts & Crafts Show & Antique Market: all day event, Getzendaner Park, free admission and parking. For more information, call (972) 937-0681 or visit www.gingerbreadtrail.net.

June 9 — July 23
Summer Golf & Wellness Camps: 9:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Monday-Wednesday, Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 Hwy 287 Bypass W. **June 9-11**, beginner/intermediate; **June 23-25**, beginner/intermediate; **July 7-9**, beginner/intermediate; **July 21-23**, advanced. Each camp is $140. Price includes lunch. Mondays will focus on nutrition. Tuesdays will focus on exercise and stretching. Wednesdays a leader in the community will come and talk about leadership, integrity and hard work. For more information, contact Laura Hargrove at (817) 673-0356 or at laurahargrovegolf@gmail.com.

June 12
Second Thursday Ladies' Night Out: 5:00-8:00 p.m., downtown Waxahachie.

June 28
Waxahachie Cow Creek Country Classic Bike Ride: sponsored by the Waxahachie Rotary Club. Visit www.cowcreekcountryclassic.org for more information.

July 3, 4
Pink Petals & Patriotism Crape Myrtle Festival: **July 3**, 5:00 gates open for tailgate party, 7:00-9:00 p.m. concert by Escape — The Dallas Journey Tribute Band with fireworks to follow; **July 4**, 10:00 a.m., downtown parade honoring veterans.

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

Complexity in Lupus

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Leslie Hunt, a contestant on the *American Idol* TV show defines lupus as the biggest hindrance in her life. She is only one of the 1.5 million Americans with lupus. Lupus erythematosus is an autoimmune disease where the body targets its own cells for destruction. The cause of this devastating turn of events is unknown. Some scientists, however, believe any one or a combination of these triggers may precipitate it: hormones, stress, genetics, sunlight, some medications and the environment. Because it is an autoimmune disease and possesses the ability to occur and create havoc to any organ in the body, it is very complex in its actions, diagnosis and treatment.

When lupus manifests itself, common symptoms are: pain, swelling, fatigue, inflammation and a characteristic butterfly rash on the face. Other symptoms will be specific to the organ affected. Lupus can be a challenging disease to diagnose because of its possible wide-ranging effects. The disease can be mild or life threatening, short-lived or protracted. Some symptoms can have a rapid onset with a short duration, or there can be a progression of symptoms over years. If all of that were not challenging enough, the disease can be confused with other diseases, because early symptoms are not distinct enough and can mirror many other diseases or disorders. Symptoms also vary from person to person.

Diagnosis might be difficult, but it is not impossible. Being treated by a physician who is very familiar with lupus, such as a rheumatologist or immunologist, is important. Your doctor will take an in-depth medical history and do a very thorough physical examination. This can establish a baseline for symptomatology for the disease, as well as give the doctor a clue as to what triggers or exacerbates symptoms. Some of the laboratory work done is a complete blood count (CBC), urinalysis, blood chemistry, tests for specific antibodies and erythrocyte sedimentation rate.

Treatment will depend on where and how lupus manifests itself. As symptoms progress, other clinical professionals may be called upon for assistance or consultation, such as a cardiologist if lupus is in the heart, a nephrologist if the disease is in the kidneys or a dermatologist for the skin. Other professionals who may be included on the health care team are psychologists, nurses and social workers. Your health care team will create the best treatment plan for your age, symptoms and your general health. Coming up with a plan will take much observation, tests and time. Putting a conscientious effort into finding a way to live your best life with lupus is the first step toward good health. 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.

In the Kitchen With Kathy Parker

— By Randy Bigham

Of German descent, Kathy Parker grew up in Waco, nurtured and nourished by a family of great cooks. "Homemade bread, cakes, pies, cinnamon rolls and pickles were just a few things my family was fantastic at making," Kathy recalled.

After a 26-year career in education, Kathy now puts her own culinary skills to the delicious test by teaching kids how to cook at Waxahachie ISD's Lighthouse for Learning. Inspired by food websites and TV shows, Kathy loves preparing meals for the sheer delight of it. "I really enjoy my mom's handwritten recipe books," Kathy admitted. "When I prepare one of her recipes, it makes me feel like she's standing beside me. And that makes me happy!" NOW

Mexican Cornbread Casserole

1 lb. ground beef
1/4 cup onions, chopped
1 tsp. each salt and pepper
1 6 1/2-oz. pkg. cornbread mix
2 eggs, beaten
2 Tbsp. jalapeños, chopped
2 cups cream style corn
3/4 cup milk
1 cup Colby cheese, grated

1. Brown meat and onions with salt and pepper.
2. Combine cornbread mix, eggs, jalapeños, corn and milk until well-blended. Stir in cheese. Pour half of cornbread mix in greased pan. Top with meat mixture.
3. Pour remaining batter on top; bake for 25-30 minutes at 425 F.

Pineapple Mandarin Orange Cake

Cake:
1 box yellow cake mix
1 cup vegetable oil
4 eggs
1 11-oz. can mandarin oranges, drained and mashed

Icing:
1 20-oz. can crushed pineapple
1 5.1-oz. box instant vanilla pudding
1 16-oz. container Cool Whip

1. *For cake:* Grease and flour three 10-inch cake pans. Preheat oven to 325 F. Combine all cake ingredients; beat at medium speed for about 3 minutes.
2. Pour batter evenly into the three pans. Bake for about 20 minutes, or until cake leaves the side of the pan. Cool completely.
3. *For icing:* Combine all three icing ingredients; stir until well-blended.
4. Spread icing on each layer, sides and top of cake. Refrigerate cake until ready to serve.

Chicken and Peaches

1 2 1/2- to 3-lb. chicken, cut up
1 1/2 cups evaporated milk (divided use)
1 cup flour (divided use)
2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
1 tsp. paprika
1/2 cup shortening
1 29-oz. can peach halves, drained
1 8-count can biscuits
1 cup water

1. Preheat oven to 425 F.
2. Dip chicken pieces in 1/2 cup evaporated milk. Roll chicken pieces in mixture of 2/3 cup flour, salt, pepper and paprika. Set aside remaining flour mix.
3. Melt shortening in a 9x13-inch baking dish by placing in oven; remove dish from oven; add chicken, skin side down. Bake uncovered until tender, about 40-50 minutes, basting occasionally with pan drippings.
4. Arrange chicken on one end of pan; place peach halves on chicken. Separate oven-ready biscuits; place on other end of pan. Bake 15 minutes until biscuits are brown. Remove food to plate and keep warm.
5. *For gravy:* Blend remaining flour with pan drippings. Gradually stir in 1 cup water. Boil and stir 2 minutes. Stir in 1 cup evaporated milk. Heat through, but do not boil. Season to taste.

Papa's Apple Dumplings

1 cup sugar
1 stick butter
1 1/2 cups water
1 cup flour
2 tsp. baking powder
Pinch of salt
2 apples, peeled and diced
3/4 cup milk
1 Tbsp. cinnamon

1. Bring sugar, butter and water to boil; cook for about 2 minutes.
2. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt, apples and milk.
3. Pour hot sugar mixture in a 9x13-inch pan. Drop batter mixture by large spoonfuls onto hot mixture, making about six dumplings.
4. Sprinkle with cinnamon. Bake at 350 F, basting several times, for about 20-30 minutes.

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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