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JUNE 2025

House of Hope

Norma Belcher leads the efforts of a local outreach

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In the Kitchen With Leslie Kyle

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Angel

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Happy halfway ...

As a lover of all things Christmas, I must admit I'd only recently learned of Leon Day. Leon is Noel spelled backward, and it's the name given to June 25, the halfway mark to Christmas. I wonder, then, why we tend to see Christmas in July sales, rather than June, which now that I know about Leon, would seem to make more sense. But I'll take any reason to celebrate the holiday in advance, so let's learn a little about Leon Day together ...

According to the website awarenessdays.com, June 25 is the perfect excuse for Christmas enthusiasts to begin crafting their holiday craft plans, choosing seasonal decor themes and perhaps even early gift shopping. For others who aren't quite *that* Type A, it can just be a time for some mid-year Christmas cheer, watching traditional movies, baking treats and listening to carols that have a special way of lifting spirits.

If you really want to get in the spirit of Leon Day, consider it an opportunity to spread (early) Christmas cheer in your home or community. Pay for the order of the person behind you in the drive-thru, send a card of appreciation to someone who deserves it or give a small gift to your roommate, spouse, neighbor or friend. Drop off those clothes or canned goods you've meant to donate. Clean up litter during your neighborhood walk. These unexpected efforts are easy ways to bring joy to others and yourself. You don't need a reason to be a gift, but Leon Day can be a reminder to keep Christmas in your heart all year.

Listen to Leon!

June 2025
Volume 21, Issue 6

ON THE COVER



A trying time turned one local family toward Manna House, where they now serve in leadership roles.

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SENIOR HOME CARE

House of Hope

— By Angel Morris

Tragedy can change one's life for the worse, or it can set one on a better path. For Midlothian's Norma Belcher and her husband, Craig, a boating accident led to helping thousands of locals in need through the years. In 2003, while on a fishing trip at Lake Waxahachie, Craig was seriously injured when the boat he and two friends were in hit a bridge. The second passenger died, while the third was uninjured.

By the time Norma learned of the accident and reached the hospital, the chaplain had been sent because Craig's injuries were so extensive — a broken back, chipped hip bone, severed tongue and a leg so damaged they considered amputation. While recovering in the hospital, Craig also received a thyroid cancer diagnosis. "All of this left us in a tight situation," Norma recalled. "That's when I walked into Manna House for the first time."

For those unfamiliar, Manna House is an outreach program in Midlothian serving those with a variety of needs, from food to utilities assistance. Sometimes, those who receive its services return as volunteers to give back to the program, as did Norma and Craig. "My first role started as an administrative assistant/client liaison, and then my role progressed to director of client services to assistant director in 2017," Norma recalled.

In January, Norma replaced longtime Manna House leader Sissy Franklin, as the new executive director. Craig, has volunteered with Manna for 14 years, serving as director of operations for eight, and the Belcher children, Brooklyn, Payton and Ethan grew up volunteering there, too. "We moved to Midlothian in November 1998 hoping to find a cozy place to raise our kids. We wanted a place with a strong community that we could get involved in," Norma noted, with Manna House providing just that.

When her involvement with Manna House first began, Norma wondered how she would make a difference there. "I was questioning myself, wondering if I had made the right decision in committing to such a big undertaking, and one morning my first





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client to walk in was a mother with her daughter who just gave birth to a baby making her a teen mom,” Norma reflected. “I was immediately humbled when I heard their story. The teen daughter had given birth, but the baby had died. They were just trying to feed the family that was coming in for the baby’s funeral, and it completely broke me and confirmed I was right where I needed to be, pouring into our community physically and spiritually!”

To help locals in need, Manna House relies on monetary donations. “Programming funds have decreased county- and state-wide, and we’re feeling the effect at a local level,” Norma admitted.

Norma has watched the outreach program grow and change with the city’s evolving needs, making donations even more important. “Once Manna offered food and paid bills,” she said. “Today, Manna doesn’t just help neighbors get by, we join forces and combine resources with other organizations to help launch them onto a path of recovery.”

To strengthen bonds across organizations, Norma is also a Midlothian Chamber of Commerce board member and a partner with Unite Ellis, another nonprofit partnering churches and community organizations to collaboratively assist Ellis County residents in need.

The Belchers have been members of Harvest Hill Church since the boating accident in 2003, when the church and the community came together to assist the family with food and finances. “I want to be involved because I deeply love my community,” Norma shared. “My heart is in our community and this county!”





This aligns with Norma's role at Manna House. "My goal as a new director is to lead the charge in making an impact in Ellis County by serving more, partnering with many, and bringing hope to all," she said.

When not helping others through her work, Norma relaxes through retail therapy. "I love to shop, and that usually looks like me running to Hobby Lobby or Home Goods with my daughter or thrifting at Heaven's Attic (a Manna House resale store)," Norma admitted.

Norma also enjoys time with family. "I'm most proud of being married to Craig for 34 years, and I enjoy time with our grown children. I also love that I get to be 'Honey' to my four sweet grandsons," she said.

These opportunities can be credited, in part, to the boating accident years ago, which motivated Craig to turn to God, and according to Norma, saved their marriage. Witnessing the miracles of his recovery supported by Norma's nurturing care, plus the community's outpouring of assistance, turned a tragedy to a life of service for the Belchers, with Manna House and the people it serves on the receiving end of their dedication.

"The organization is important to the community because we are helping our own neighbors, family and friends through their crises," Norma noted. "It's not just a job you show up to and walk out of mindlessly. I take it personally to reach as many people as we can because I know what it feels like to sit on the other side of the desk." **NOW**

Editor's Note: To learn more about assistance offered or volunteer opportunities, visit mannahouseoutreach.org.

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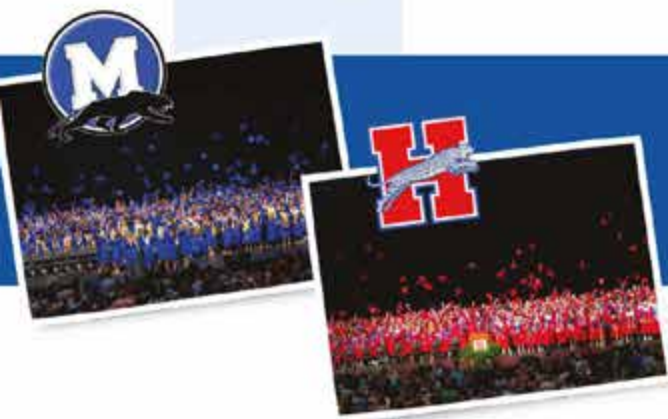
- 5 National Merit Commended Students
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- 6 Destination Imagination teams advanced to Lone Star Finals, 4 advanced to Globals
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CLEAN AS A WHISTLE

— By Bill Smith



Sometimes just a rinse with a garden hose is all you need to remove a little dust and debris from your front porch, and maybe some spray cleaner and a little elbow grease will take care of the exterior surface of your doors and windows. However, when the grime has been there for a while, or you want to clean porous surfaces, such as concrete or brick, your best bet may be to use a power washer.

If the project is small and something you may be inclined to repeat several times each year, then purchasing a power washer may be your most economical route. Should your project be one that you seldom have to perform or one that would require more power than a consumer-size power washer can handle, the tools can be rented from your local hardware or home improvement store. Electric- or gasoline-powered models are available. Whatever route you choose, be aware that you may be working with higher pressures than you are used to, and you should follow the instructions carefully including the use of proper safety precautions.

Like most do-it-yourself projects, proper preparation will

make the job go smoother. Clear the space to be washed of anything that could be considered delicate or hazardous. For instance, if you are going to clean the patio, remove things like potted plants and children's toys or bicycles. Set patio furniture and grills to the side. If the area is large enough, plan to wash half of the area and move the patio furniture to the area that you cleaned when it is time to tackle the other half.

Sensitive plants and landscaping can be covered with tarps. Note where your outlets are and possibly tape over them with duct tape. Sweep the area thoroughly to remove any rocks or other debris that could become projectiles if caught up in the water pressure.

Depending on the size of the job, you can choose either a gas- or electric- power washer. For larger, heavy-duty jobs, a gasoline washer may be best because they are generally the most powerful. A typical gasoline washer may generate 3,000 pounds of pressure per square inch (PSI). For smaller jobs, such as cleaning outdoor furniture or grills, an electric pressure washer generating 1,300-1,400 PSI may be more appropriate.

Pressure washer nozzles come in different sizes. A smaller opening will generate the most cleaning power, so that should be a consideration based on what your project is. While some nozzles may be adjustable, the heavy-duty gasoline-powered washers will often come with several choices to attach to the spray gun.

Select the correct nozzle size for your project. Attach it to the spray gun, and attach your water hose to the washer. Make sure the connections are sufficiently tightened. Your home's water supply should be sufficient, but if you want to test it beforehand, a good indicator that it is adequate will be reflected if you can fill up a five-gallon bucket in less than two minutes.

Remember you are working with a significant amount of force. When you turn the power washer on, make sure it is on the lowest setting. Turn it up gradually, and you will feel the pressure increase. Do not use a higher setting than your project requires.

Begin cleaning using a pattern. Start at the top and move side to side. A wider nozzle opening will clean a larger area faster, but a narrower spray will provide deeper cleaning. You will find the "sweet spot" early into the project, but you can adjust it as needed if you find an area that needs more pressure to remove a stubborn stain.

Note that some power washers may include a heat option that creates steam. There are surfaces that may require this much power, but it can also be damaging to some surfaces like brick, concrete or masonry. Some people refer to a washer that generates heat as a "power washer" and one that does not produce heat as a "pressure washer." Others use these terms interchangeably, so again, refer to the instructions, and take the proper precautions. Probably one of the first rules of any do-it-yourself project should be to use the proper tool for each individual job.

After your job is complete, carefully turn off the water and release the pressure according to the instructions. Do not immediately remove the hose, as pressure may have built up. Turn the machine off. Now, step back and admire your work! **NOW**

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1. <https://www.homes.com/blog/2018/01/7-things-you-should-know-before-you-power-wash-anything/>.
2. <https://www.homedepot.com/c/ah/how-to-use-a-pressure-washer/9ba683603be9fa5395fab9010ddcd7ab>.

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Zoomed In:
Tom Moore

By Angel Morris

Tom Moore has always found fulfillment in giving back to the community through various volunteer projects. “I first became aware of Mentors Care while serving on the school board, and my wife, Cyndi, became a mentor in the program,” Tom recalled. “When the school district needed someone to join the Mentors Care board in 2013, it was an easy decision for me to step up. We’ve been proud to support and be a part of this incredible program ever since.”

This month, Tom will put his golf skills to the test in the annual Mentors Care fundraiser golf tournament. “It’s a great way for companies and individuals to spend time with those that make Mentors Care run and help raise money for them to grow the organization,” he noted. “In the end it all goes back to doing what’s best for the students.”



Braxton Wadley of 8U Midlothian Football, encourages people to stop for a fundraising car wash.



Midlothian ISD recognizes Jason Crawford from Heritage High School and Kayleigh Jenkins from Irvin Elementary as Secondary and Elementary Teachers of the Year.



A group of runners from Midlothian, Waxahachie and Mansfield qualify to run the 26.2-mile Boston Marathon.



Cox Automotive volunteers serve with Habitat for Humanity-Ellis County.



Bryan Vickers from Creekside Church leads participants in worship at the city’s Day of Prayer gathering.



Kim Michelle, Anna Hammonds and Shelly Skinner attend the recent Mentors Care Annual Purse Bingo fundraiser.



Bridges Training Foundation volunteer Chelsea Sims participates in a game of hopscotch at the organization’s clubhouse.

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— By Angel Morris

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Hours: Monday-Friday: 7:15 a.m.-4:30 p.m.
Saturday-Sunday: Closed



Since opening in Fall 2024, International Leadership of Texas (ILTexas) Mansfield Heritage K-8 has offered a unique educational experience for students in Midlothian, Mansfield and Grand Prairie. As a free public charter school, its mission is clear. “Our mission is to prepare students for exceptional leadership roles in the international community by emphasizing servant leadership, mastering the English, Spanish and Chinese languages, and strengthening the mind, body and character,” Principal Alyssa Johnson said.

A Unique Trilingual Approach

ILTexas stands apart with its trilingual education model. All students, from kindergarten through eighth grade, study English, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese. In grades K-5, students participate in a Spanish-English dual language immersion program, while Mandarin is introduced through Specials classes. This approach ensures students are equipped with the language skills to succeed in a diverse and connected world.

Mandarin, in particular, plays a strategic role. Recognized by the U.S. Department of Defense as a National Security Language, Mandarin proficiency prepares students to engage diplomatically and professionally

with China — one of the U.S.'s primary global competitors.

Federal support underscores the importance of this work: ILTexas received a \$6 million grant from the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) through its World Language Advancement and Readiness Program, as well as \$385,000 from the National Security Agency's STARTALK program to enhance Chinese language instruction.

Select ILTexas students have also been awarded scholarships through the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y), a U.S. State Department program that enables them to travel to countries like Taiwan for immersive language study — at no cost.

Leading Through Service

Leadership development is a cornerstone of the ILTexas experience. The school lives by the motto "Others Before Self," with a servant-leadership curriculum rooted in the same values taught by the U.S. Marine Corps. Students learn from the Corps' 14 Leadership Traits — like loyalty, integrity and initiative — and 11 Leadership Principles, such as seeking self-improvement and taking responsibility for one's actions.

Each year, every student completes an "Others Before Self" service-learning project. These student-led efforts foster empathy, teamwork and a deep understanding of civic responsibility.

Beyond the Classroom

ILTexas also offers a robust selection of fine arts and athletic programs, providing students with opportunities to shine outside the classroom. Whether on the stage, in the studio or on the field, students are encouraged to pursue excellence in every area of their education.

For students who continue with ILTexas into high school, leadership development grows even deeper. The Leadership Speaker Series gives students the chance to learn directly from global leaders — including figures like former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, former Mexican President Vicente Fox and U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff General Charles Q. Brown Jr.

In addition, ILTexas is home to the largest Marine Corps JROTC program in the country, with nearly 28 percent of the high school student body participating. Through this program, students build discipline, leadership and a sense of purpose that sets them apart in college and beyond.

Applications for the 2025-2026 school year are currently open. Visit ILTexas.org/apply to apply today! **NOW**



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Olive Slaw



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IN THE KITCHEN WITH

LESLIE KYLE

— By Angel Morris



From the time she was a little girl, Leslie Kyle remembers helping her mom in the kitchen. “She would always tell me little tricks that would make a dish or desert taste better or ways to dress a plate to make it look appetizing,” she recalled. “I’ve always enjoyed hosting dinners for family and friends over the years.”

Leslie reflects on times she and her mom would prepare holiday meals together. “Those are memories I hold close to my heart. Preparing the family recipe of dressing was a method that involved a little of this, a little of that, tasting and figuring out if it still needed something. The goal was to make it taste like my Nannie’s. There was never a written recipe.”

In 2003, Leslie and her husband moved to Midlothian with their three daughters. Today, she enjoys working outside planting flowers. “This is a great place to raise a family, and we have many wonderful memories,” she credited. “Once I retire, I’m hoping to try my hand at vegetable gardening.” **NOW**

Olive Slaw

Slaw:

- 1 large cabbage, shredded in large slices
- 1 medium bell pepper, chopped or julienned
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 8 stuffed olives, sliced

Dressing:

- 1/2 cup salad oil of your choice
- 1/2 cup cider vinegar
- 1 tsp. dried mustard
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. celery seed
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper

1. *For slaw:* Place the cabbage in a large bowl; add the bell peppers, onions and olives. Toss until the ingredients are well combined.
2. *For dressing:* Mix together all the dressing ingredients. Stir the slaw into the dressing until well mixed. Taste; add more of any ingredient as desired. Chill 1 hour before serving.

Corn Bread Salad

- 1 cup cherry or Roma tomatoes, diced
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1 bell pepper, diced
- 1 4-oz. jar diced pimiento
- 8 oz. Hellmann’s mayonnaise (or slightly more)
- Salt, to taste

Pepper, to taste

2 8.5-oz. pkgs. corn bread mix, cooked and crumbled

1. Mix the tomatoes, onions, bell peppers, pimientos, mayonnaise, salt and pepper until well combined.
2. Combine the crumbled corn bread with the tomato mixture. Mix until combined. You can garnish the salad with extra tomatoes, if desired.
3. Cover; refrigerate overnight, or 24 hours is even better.

Lemon Fruit Salad

- 1 20-oz. can pineapple tidbits
- 1 29-oz. can mandarin oranges
- 1 1.34-oz. pkg. lemon pudding
- 2-3 bananas, sliced
- 1 6-oz. jar maraschino cherries, drained

1. Drain the pineapple juice and mandarin orange juice into a bowl. Add the lemon pudding; mix well.
2. Add the bananas, pineapple, oranges and cherries to the pudding mixture. Mix to combine.
3. Refrigerate and serve cold.

Chocolate Chip Cake

- 1 box marble cake mix
- 2 3.9-oz. boxes instant chocolate pudding
- 4 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup milk chocolate chips

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease and flour a Bundt pan.
2. In a mixing bowl, combine the cake mix, pudding, eggs, water, oil, vanilla and chocolate chips. Mix until well blended.
3. Pour the batter into the prepared Bundt pan.
4. Bake for 50 minutes. Cool 10 minutes before removing from the Bundt pan.



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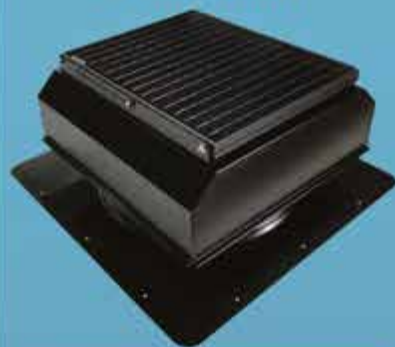
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SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

— By Virginia Riddle

A city just north of the Red River, Ardmore, Oklahoma, is a treasure trove of fun for the whole family. A nostalgic step back in time begins with travels through tree-covered, gently rolling hills whether by vehicle, RV or train service from Fort Worth. Historic treasures, including the train depot, line the downtown streets. Parks dot all areas of Ardmore, and Oklahoma's largest state park, Lake Murray State Park, is about a 20-minute drive from downtown.

The city's heritage revolves around ranching in the Chickasaw Nation and the arrival of the Santa Fe Railroad in 1887. Before the turn of the century, Ardmore boasted the largest inland cotton market in the world.

Twice in the early 1900s, the city was nearly destroyed by fire and a gasoline explosion, but with oil discovered in 1913,

the city was rebuilt. The 1918 Santa Fe Railroad Depot has been rehabilitated back to its original use, and a walking tour of downtown is available. Catch Amtrak's daily, round-trip Heartland Flyer from the depot.

Museums and the arts abound. Greater Southwest Historical Museum exhibits showcase agriculture and petroleum aspects of the area. The Chickasaw Cultural Center connects visitors with Native American history. Vintage dolls line the walls of the Eliza Cruce Hall Doll Museum, and the Military Memorial Museum preserves military history and honors those who have served. The Charles B. Goddard Center for the Visual and Performing Arts is a theater, dance, music and visual art venue.

Public events and galas are scheduled throughout the year. Visitors will find a full array of hotels, motels, bed-and-breakfasts and eateries for every budget and appetite since modern Ardmore lines Interstate 35.

If getting back to nature is the goal, visitors can hike more than 40 miles of trails, admire historical sites, enjoy water sports, swim, play miniature golf, ride horses or cruise the 700 acres of unmarked ATV riding trails at Lake Murray State Park. With 12,500 acres; a large sports facility for baseball,

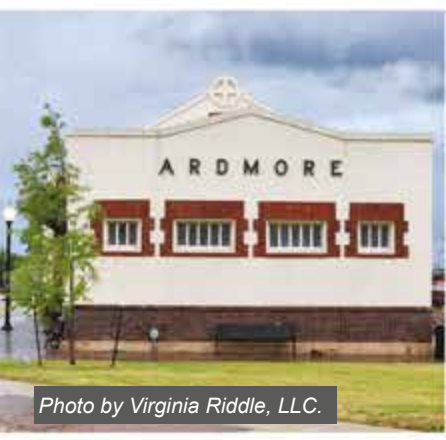


Photo by Virginia Riddle, LLC.

softball, tennis and golf; and a large, clear water lake, Lake Murray State Park is a multifaceted gem. Be sure to book a spot on the pontoon boat's moonlit guided cruise around the lake.

One can also book a room at the lodge; an RV site; floating cabins; or one of the 56 cabins in the woods, which were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s when the CCC and the Works Progress Administration worked together to create the lake and park. The lodge offers meeting rooms, a ballroom, catering and a restaurant.

Located on the southwest side of the lake, the Lake Murray Nature Center at Tucker Tower gives visitors a look at the flora and fauna of the area. Tucker Tower, built by the WPA, is a striking sight. Named for Fred Tucker, a state senator when the tower was constructed, it is believed the original intent was to be a vacation home for the state's governors. It never served that purpose, nor did Senator Tucker reside there.

Don't have your own sports equipment, horse or boat? No problem. The Lake Murray Marina rents wave runners, island cruisers and miniature golf equipment. The Lake Murray Riding Stables offers trail rides, weather permitting, and the golf course has a driving range, putting green, 18-holes and instructors.

Relax, drift back in time and into nature. Ardmore is a place where new experiences and memories can be made and shared. **NOW**

- Sources:
- 1. www.achp.gov/preserve-america.
 - 2. www.exploreadmore.com.
 - 3. www.travelok.com/state-parks.

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		3			1			
5	6				8		7	
	4		7			3	8	

Medium

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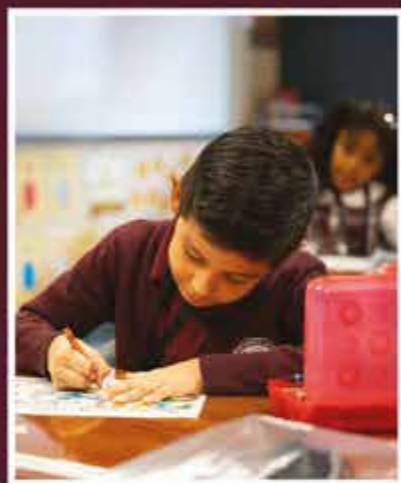
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JUNE

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6/7

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Movies In The Park:

Bring the family and friends to the showing of *Moana 2*. Bring chairs or blankets for lawn seating. Movies start at dusk,

around 8:00 p.m., Midlothian Community Park, 3601 S. 14th St.

6/13

Daddy Daughter Dance:

This year's theme is "Let's Have a Wicked Time." Dads and daughters are encouraged to wear theme-related costumes. Includes a meal, dancing and photo opportunities. Tickets sold in advance by phone or in person at the Conference Center. \$30/couple; \$10 for each additional daughter. Event time: 6:30-9:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Circle Dr. (972) 775-7125.

6/14

Summer Concert Series:

Free music by Shameless, a Garth Brooks Tribute band.

Food available for purchase. Outside food, drink and coolers are allowed. Bring chairs/blankets for lawn seating. 7:30-9:30 p.m., Community Park, 3601 S. 14th St.

6/16

Mentors Care Golf Tournament:

Charity golf tournament supporting programs for local students in need. Registration: 9:00 a.m.; shot gun start: 10:00 a.m., Walnut Creek Country Club, 1151 Country Club Dr., Mansfield. For more information, visit www.mentors.care or email susan.baker@mentors.care.

6/28

Independence Day Parade:

This year's theme is "America Celebrates Independence Day." Award categories: Coast to Coast - Best Use of Theme; Red, White & Wow! - Best Decorated, Stars, Stripes & Saddles - Equestrian/Animal Unit; America the Beautiful - Best Overall. 10:00 a.m., Downtown Midlothian. To enter the parade or learn more, visit midlothian.tx.us/640/Midlothian-Independence-Day-Parade.

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

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