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Virginia Riddle
CorsicanaNOW Editor
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ON THE COVER

Cooking with kids unleashes imagination, empowerment and creativity.



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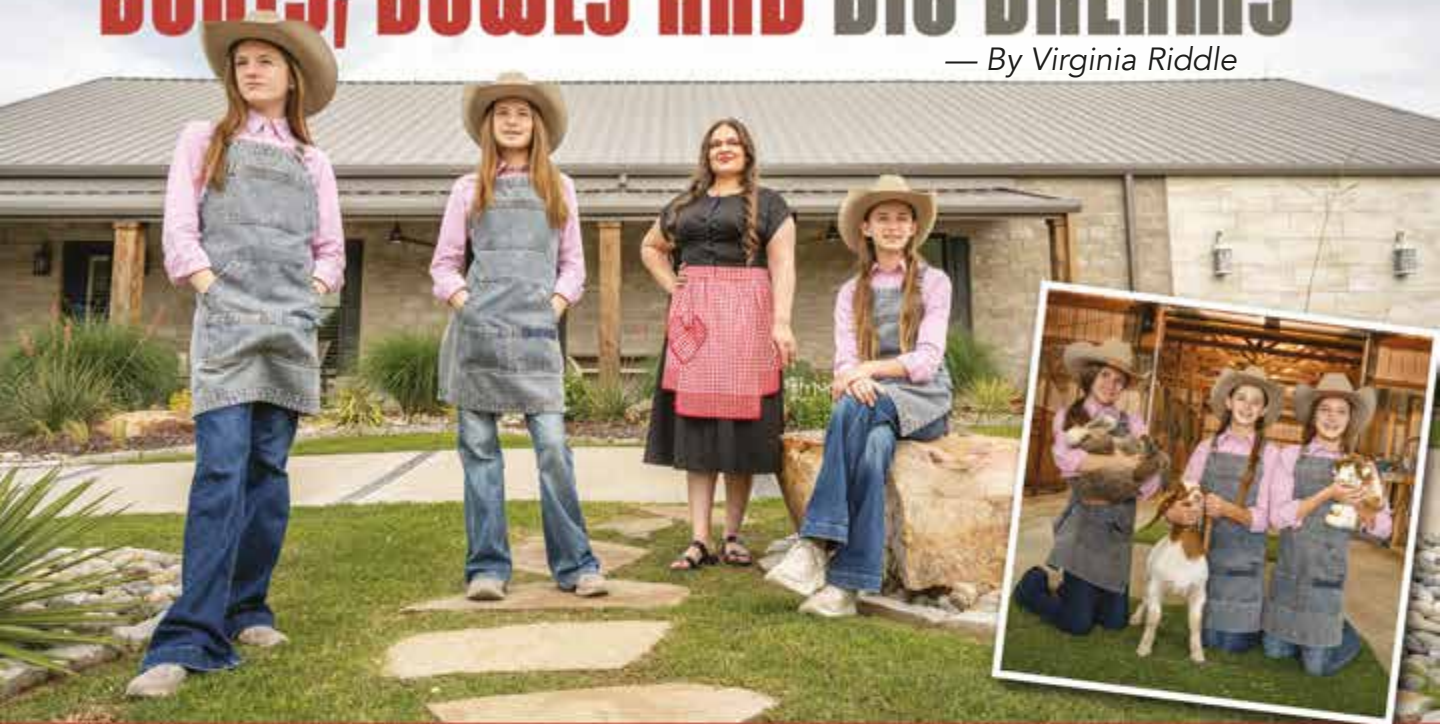
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BOOTS, BOWLS AND BIG DREAMS

— By Virginia Riddle



Some cowgirls work animals. Some cook grub. Some display other talents, and then there are these cowgirls who do it all. Georgia Kate Hillock, Jocelyn Ray "Jocie" Judson and Dakota Kate Judson successfully compete in 4-H as the Cooking Cowgirls Team. They also compete in crafting and livestock showing. "We learn new culinary skills fast, memorize information and mirror good behavior in the kitchen in order to be ahead of the other teams," Georgia said. "We want to win belt buckles."

The girls began competing in cooking three years ago, and professional cook, Adelaide Castillo, became the team's coach in 2025. "The team's name was suggested by our friend and a senior competitor, Audrey Herrin," Adelaide said. Her mom and grandma started Adelaide on her cooking journey, and she's a former 4-H competitor in livestock and in FFA creed speaking and agribusiness information speaking.

Sisters Jocelyn and Dakota added, "Adelaide helps us by teaching culinary skills and not being too tough but being a good friend. She teaches us better communication skills and how to work together as a team."

Cooking competitions begin with the team receiving a meal subject assignment of preparing a main dish, side dish, appetizers or healthy dessert. They have 40 minutes to use the secret ingredient given to each team. The team makes a game plan based on the name and creativity of the plate. Each girl assumes a role. Georgia cooks, Dakota chops all the vegetables and Jocie plates the food in an aesthetically pleasing way. They receive four to five tokens to shop in the provided pantry after deciding what other ingredients will be needed to make the complete meal. "The objective is to create something unique and give a five-minute informational speech over how the meal covers the Texas Department of Agriculture My Plate Nutrition guidelines," Adelaide explained. "Each girl has a subject to study and speak on. Georgia speaks on the nutritional value of each ingredient and the steps of food prep. Dakota speaks about My Plate guidelines and how their meal fits and doesn't fit within those guidelines. Jocie speaks on food safety and what steps they used in food safety during their prep."

The girls agree their best competition memories so far have been cooking with Adelaide, hanging out together and winning first place at the San Angelo Stock Show and Rodeo. "We get to learn new things, spend time with friends and away from school, eat in new restaurants and compete against other skilled teams," Jocie said. In addition to their San Angelo win, the team took third place in the junior third-eighth grade division at both the San Antonio Livestock Show and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo this past spring. In 2025, they placed second in area and advanced to district 4-H competition where they placed first.

Weekly training sessions occur at one of their homes. Adelaide picks out the meals, which often include recipes the girls have never tasted or heard about. Their favorite dish to date: breaded Italian tilapia because of the flavor and breading.

Nervousness during early competitions has changed into confidence with the weekly practices. However, the team is still working on developing better speeches. "We compete against older teams and don't know what our secret ingredient



Northside Baptist Church, where they enjoy singing and had solos in the Christmas show.

Now a private chef in Corsicana and the Metroplex, Adelaide learned to teach cooking while training new employees at the restaurant, Lady Diana's Zen Café, which she co-owned with her mother, Diana Castillo. "This is my first time coaching a 4-H team," Adelaide remarked. "I find joy when I watch the children's eyes light up when they realize they created something tasty and delightful."

Adelaide advises future coaches to get a "baseline" of their culinary teams' abilities and build from there. Study the handbook to understand the rules and have patience. "Kids benefit from 4-H by learning skills that are applicable to all areas of life, time management and how to have eye contact when speaking," she concluded.

These cooking cowgirls offer advice to future competitors: Keep trying your best. Practice makes perfect. Don't be afraid of the oven's heat. Speak slowly and confidently, and believe in yourself! **NOW**

is going to be," Jocie stated. "Also, we have to wake up early to head to competitions, and sometimes we aren't allowed to use heat in competitions, so we have to think what cold meals can be made."

Natives of Navarro County, these cowgirls have the support of their parents, Stuart and Celestina Hillock and Jody and Lindsey Judson. Celestina and Lindsey book competitions and provide the practice groceries, while their personal

assistants, Rosie Martinez and Emma Crow, organize the traveling food competition boxes and drive the girls to practices.

The girls, individually, compete in 4-H with their goats. Georgia also shows rabbits and needlepoint and crocheted items. "We like competing in 4-H with our animals because we love animals. We enjoy taking care of them and seeing them grow," Dakota said. "Rain or shine, our animals come first." Jocie and Dakota are homeschooled while Georgia attends James L. Collins Catholic School. As a team they collected 17 pounds of food and raised \$445 for the Navarro County Food Bank. They all attend



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Warehouse Living Arts Center

This year, the Warehouse Living Arts Center celebrates its “Emerald Anniversary” — 55 years of bringing arts and culture to Corsicana and beyond. What began in 1971 when a group of arts-minded community members pooled their talents, efforts and resources to establish this more than 50-year-old organization has grown into a vital community treasure.

Executive Director Aimee Kasprzyk



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runs the charitable nonprofit organization, which operates primarily as a live entertainment venue, producing plays and musicals. “We also provide educational opportunities through arts-related classes, summer day camps and training,” Aimee said. WLAC is also home to the WLAC Gallery, which features artists’ works through a partnership with Navarro Council of the Arts.

The Warehouse Living Arts Center depends primarily on community backing and voluntary amateur, but high quality, performers and directors to produce a full season of productions each year. The organization may be smaller than some professional theaters, but it prides itself on maintaining high production quality throughout each season. A board of directors of 13 people make policy decisions. Former attorney, Kerri Stampes, is the operations manager.

The theater’s location in historic downtown Corsicana and its volunteer-driven model create an intimate

connection with the audience. "Not many smaller communities can boast the consistently high level of talent we have here," Aimee offered.

This month, the WLAC presents *The Drowning Girls* as its featured production on the Fator Studio Stage, showcasing the versatility of the venue's multiple performance spaces. According to the center's website, this production is "a watery retelling of the infamous *Brides in the Bath* murders — from the bride's point of view."

When the WLAC was founded in 1971, there were many people with classical acting, dance and vocal training to get things up and running. Today, Aimee brings impressive credentials to her role as executive director. She holds a master's degree in educational theater from the University of Houston, plus more than 35 years of teaching and directing in public schools. Aimee believes in the true purpose and aim of arts organizations like WLAC. "Creativity is what drives everything in life on a fundamental level. If creativity dies, art dies with it, and then, a little bit of humanity goes with it, too."

The WLAC donates tickets, time and resources, such as costumes, props and set pieces, to groups needing those resources. Aimee is a member of various service and civic organizations including the Alpha Rho Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma, the Corsicana Education Foundation board, and she serves as chair of the Corsicana Public Arts Committee. Aimee is a member of First Baptist Church. Her husband, David, and their youngest daughter, Anna, both teach at Corsicana High School, while their oldest daughter, Sarah, is a successful advertising and design executive in Dallas. The WLAC provides services and entertainment to the community as a whole and encourages participation from every age, ethnicity and gender throughout the community and beyond.

The organization's core values are clear: Entertain, Educate, Enhance and Evolve. Its mission statement captures its purpose perfectly: "To use the arts to entertain, to educate and to enhance the lives of people of our community and beyond." Their vision statement looks to the future: "To continue to produce vibrant and exciting avenues for artistic expression, expanding our outreach for years to come." **NOW**

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


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Zoomed In: Courtney Peters

By Virginia Riddle

A Corsicana native, Courtney Peters graduated from Corsicana High School and then furthered her studies at Navarro College and the University of North Texas. Before becoming a real estate agent with The Bonner Group, Courtney worked at the Navarro County Courthouse. "The judges were my bosses," she explained.

"I love the closeness of this community and all the events Corsicana does right," Courtney said. She runs the sound and is church secretary at Purdon Community Church and was the Operation Christmas Child project leader. Courtney also is a Corsicana & Navarro County Chamber of Commerce Ambassador.

"Tons of family in the area," including her husband, Clayton, and their 12-year-old son, keep Courtney on the go. She enjoys competitive shooting and the family's Bahama cruise.



Jasmine Lozano welcomes customers to Double J Western Boutique.



It's tee up time for Isla Updegraff and the rest of her CHS golf team members.



Mayor Joe Hill congratulates Sam Houston Elementary artists on their accomplished pieces.



CORS-I-CAN Writers Group welcomes area writers ages 16+ in all genres to meetings at the Corsicana Public Library.



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Zoomed In: Mary White and Debbie Pickett

By Virginia Riddle

Mary White and Debbie Pickett are the card making gurus/teachers at the Senior Activity Center. "I've been making cards and things all my life," Debbie, a Navarro College retiree, explained. An Ennis native, she moved to Maine and California but returned to Corsicana. "I missed my friends," she added.

A Kerens native, Mary is a retired nurse. She's lived in Corsicana most of her adult life and has six grown children living nearby. "I like making the cards since it's cheaper than buying a card," she explained.

Mary, also a quilter, and Debbie both enjoy scrapbooking and traveling and invite folks of all ages to join their class on the first and third Thursdays of each month at 10:00 a.m. Debbie concluded, "We make cards for every major holiday and event and the Corsicana Troop Support Angels."



The Single Believers Ministries Gospel Extravagaza is enjoyed by many attendees.



Better Garden Club members sponsor the planting of a tree in the park in celebration of Arbor Day.



The Mildred High School OAP cast moves onward in competition to regionals.



Newly retired CPD Chief Johnson is roasted by peers and honored by the CFD at his retirement ceremony.

FIVE NONPROFITS We Are Loving Right NOW

1 Better Gardens Club

Area gardeners and want-to-be gardeners meet monthly to network and learn from the experts. (903) 874-5924, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/525132298334822/Facebook>.

2 Boys & Girls Club of Navarro County

Whether it's after school or summertime fun or tutoring, this club is where the action is for kids. The goal of all programs provided is to shape future leaders. (903) 641-0828, www.bgca.org.

3 Compassion Corsicana

Consisting of Family Services, Navarro County Food Pantry and the House of Refuge, Compassion Corsicana is a ministry serving neighbors' basic needs. (903) 874-4971, <https://www.compassioncorsicana.org>.

4 Navarro County Historical Commission

Navarro County Historical Commission strives to protect and preserve the county's historic resources for the use, education, enjoyment and economic benefit of present and future generations. (505) 480-4356, <https://www.facebook.com/NavarroCountyHistoricalCommission/>.

5 Salvation Army Corsicana

The Salvation Army's ministry is motivated by the love of God. Its mission is to meet human needs in His name without discrimination. Shop at the store, pick up needed food or get help with utility bills. 212 E. 1st Ave., Corsicana, TX 75110, (903) 874-7131.



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Grilled Jalapeño Poppers

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
12 jalapeño peppers, halved and seeded
12 bacon strips, halved

1. Mix together the cream cheese, cheddar and garlic powder.
2. Fill each jalapeño half with the cheese mixture.
3. Wrap each pepper with a half strip of bacon; secure with a toothpick.
4. Grill over medium heat for 15-20 minutes until the bacon is crispy.

Grilled Shrimp Skewers

3 Tbsp. olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp. paprika
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. black pepper
2 lbs. large shrimp, peeled and deveined
2 Tbsp. lemon juice
2 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped

1. Soak wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes to prevent burning.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together

the olive oil, garlic, paprika, salt and pepper.

3. Add the shrimp to the bowl; toss to coat evenly.
4. Thread the shrimp onto the skewers, about 5-6 shrimp per skewer.
5. Preheat the grill to medium-high heat; oil the grates.
6. Grill the shrimp skewers for 2-3 minutes per side until pink and opaque.
7. Remove from the grill; drizzle with lemon juice. Garnish with parsley; serve immediately.

Grilled Steak With Herb Butter

4 1-inch ribeye steaks
2 Tbsp. olive oil
2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. black pepper
1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened
2 Tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped
1 Tbsp. fresh rosemary, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp. lemon zest

1. Remove the steaks from the refrigerator; let them come to room temperature for 30 minutes.
2. Brush both sides of each steak with olive oil; season generously with salt and pepper.

3. In a small bowl, mix together the butter, parsley, rosemary, garlic and lemon zest until well combined.
4. Preheat the grill to high heat (450-500 F). Place the steaks on the grill; cook for 4-5 minutes without moving them.
5. Flip the steaks; cook for another 4-5 minutes for medium-rare.
6. Remove the steaks from the grill; let them rest for 5 minutes.
7. Top each steak with a generous dollop of herb butter; serve immediately.

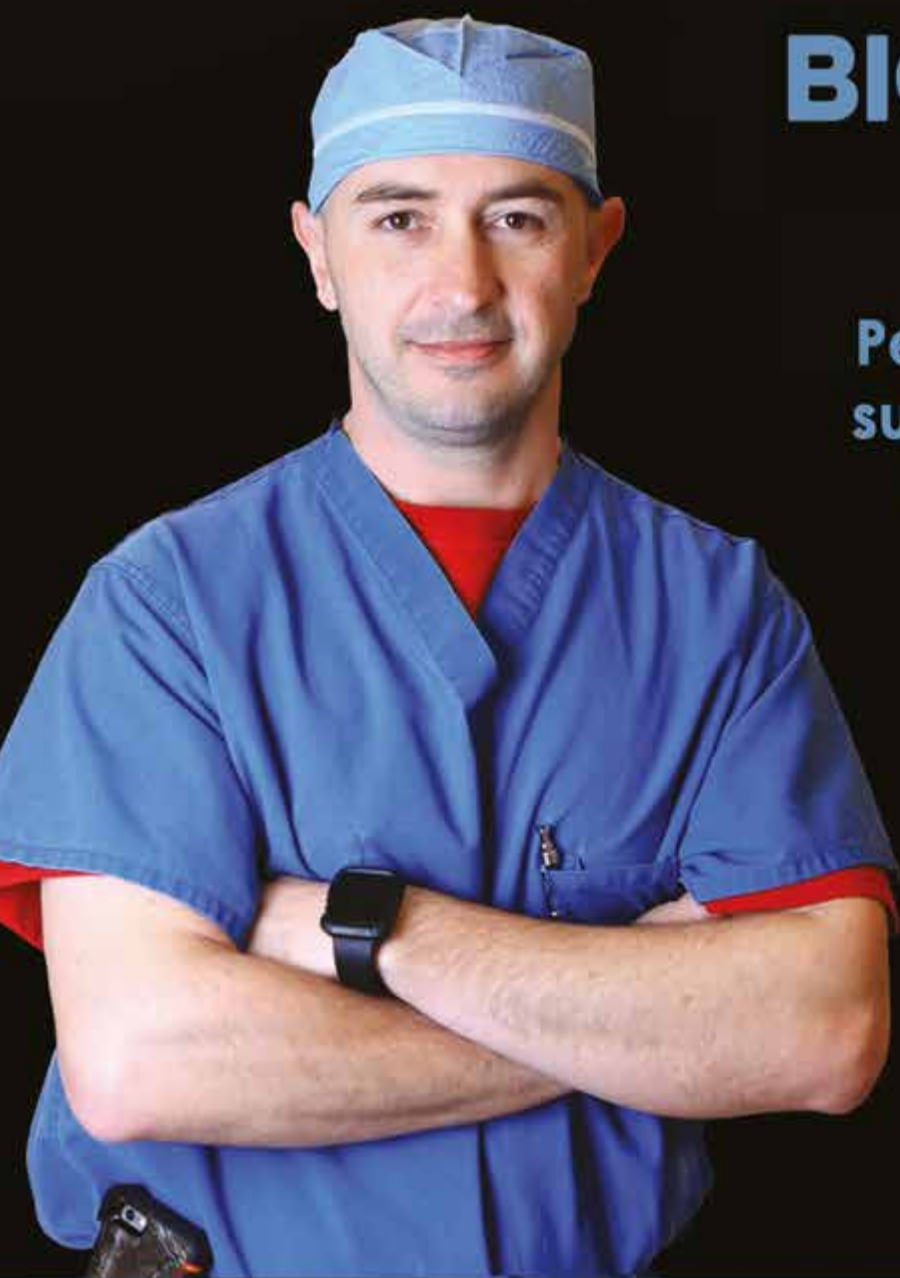
Grilled Pineapple With Cinnamon Sugar

1 fresh pineapple, peeled and cored
2 Tbsp. melted butter
3 Tbsp. brown sugar
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
Vanilla ice cream, for serving

1. Cut the pineapple into 1/2-inch thick rings. Brush both sides of each ring with melted butter.
2. In a small bowl, mix together the brown sugar and cinnamon. Sprinkle the cinnamon sugar mixture over both sides of the pineapple rings.
3. Grill over medium heat for 3-4 minutes per side until caramelized with grill marks.
4. Serve warm with vanilla ice cream.

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