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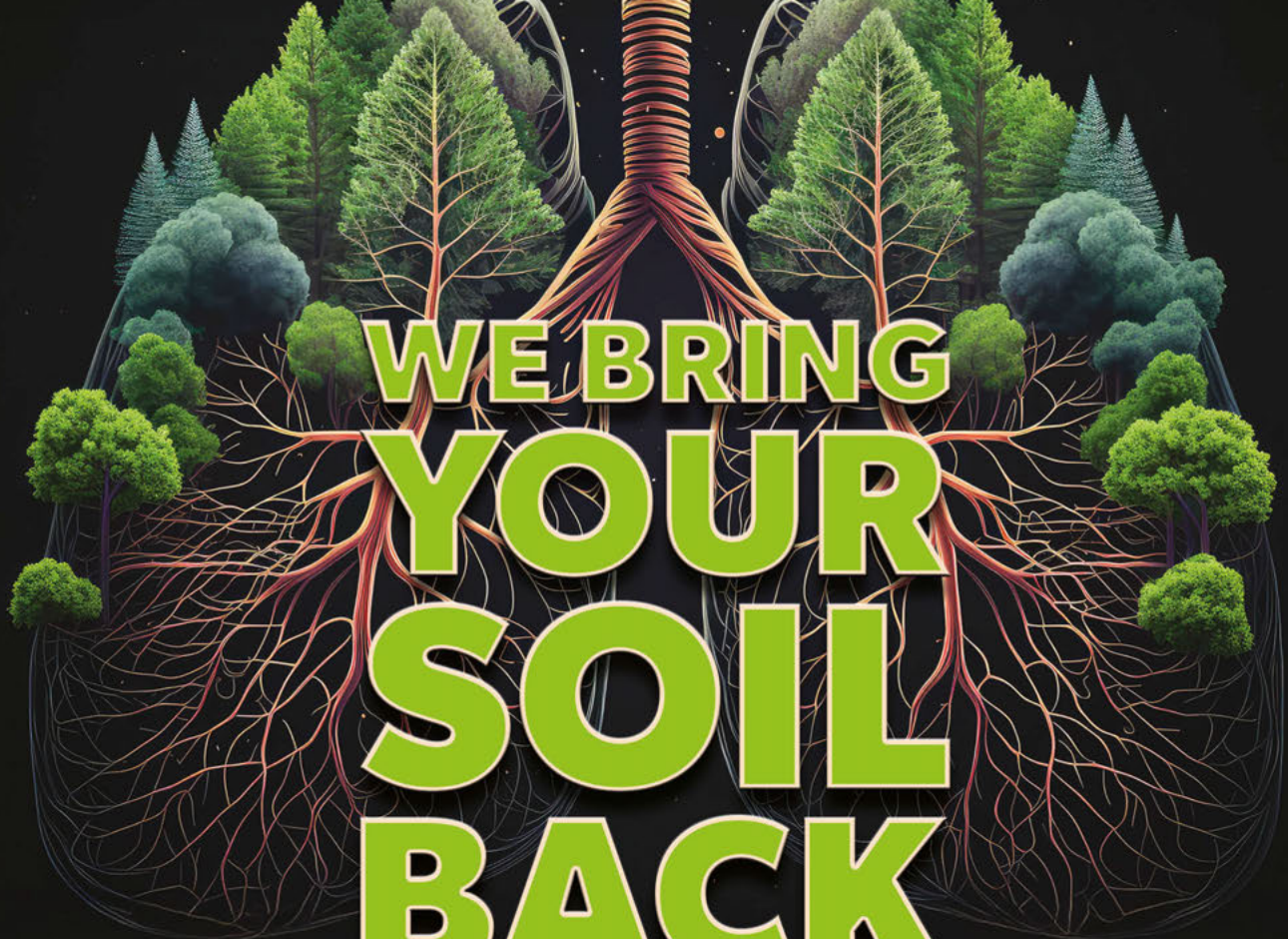


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Angel Morris
MidlothianNOW Editor
angel.morris@nowmagazines.com
(972) 533-7216

ON THE COVER

A fire that cost
the Forbes
family their
home, built
community
bonds.



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

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla
Artists, Kristin Bato . Martha Macias
Anthony Sarmienta . Jennifer Spence

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Director, Chris McCalla
Photographer, Anthony Sarmienta

ADVERTISING

Advertising Representatives,
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THE BEST BAD EXPERIENCE

— By Angel Morris

For Emily and Jake Forbes, the road to Midlothian was paved with the transient nature of military life. Jake, a retired U.S. Navy veteran, and Emily, a dedicated nurse practitioner of 17 years, were no strangers to starting over. But when a government relocation brought them to Midlothian in February 2014, they didn't just find a new ZIP code. They found a community.

By 2024, the family had settled into the rhythm of local life. Their sons — Hayden, Nolen and Lincoln — were active in local sports. Weekends involved trips to the lake, camping and the smell of sawdust wafting from Jake's woodworking shop. They tended to a small hobby farm, a labor of love that tethered them to their land. They were, by all accounts, a typical family. Then came the day that changed everything.

It began as a normal Saturday. Emily was in town, wrapping up a morning of local league basketball with two of her boys. Jake was an hour away, driving home from East Texas.

The first sign of trouble was a smudge of gray on the horizon. As Emily approached the outskirts of town, she could see smoke rising from the direction of their property.

"Neighbors called to say the house was on fire, just as she turned onto the main road toward home," Jake recalled.

Upon arrival, Emily found a retired fireman neighbor and another off-duty firefighter, attempting to troubleshoot the blaze. "Neighbors were pulling our animals away, and even an Amazon driver was pounding on the door to ensure no one was home," Emily shared.

Within minutes, there were signs of flashover, and the area was cleared just as the house burst into a roar of orange and black. For hours, the family watched 10 years of memories dissolve into ash as several fire engines battled the heat.

The family spent that first night huddled together in the shop that had been miraculously spared. "Then the community started showing up to offer support. Our community — friends, family, military near and far, both our



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workplaces, our church family — is really what we remember most of all,” Jake noted.

The kids were invited over to friends’ houses. Meals, labor, necessities, poured in. “The number of people that showed up at our home the day after the fire to pick through ashes and rubble to salvage anything possible, was staggering,” Emily said.

Donations poured in for weeks, so much so that the family donated the excess to Manna House. “We just needed enough to get by and were happy to share the remaining for others. Several local businesses expedited our needs to help us get our shop converted for temporary living,” Jake credited, noting the family lived in that space for more than 18 months following the catastrophe.

Just two days after the fire, the boys stood at the end of the driveway to catch the school bus,



one is donated to schools, with proceeds funding care packages for fire departments and victims.

The boys' reflections offer a look at the resilience of childhood. "It was sad to lose what we had," Hayden admitted, "but my friends and teachers asked me how I was all the time. That was pretty neat."

Nolen, a LEGOs enthusiast, added a pragmatic attitude: "Going through my toys, I knew we could replace them. We still don't need everything anymore."

And young Lincoln summed up the experience: "I just remember how many people showed up to help. We are OK now. I'm not sad anymore."

While the family relies on its faith, they also advocate for practical preparation, urging homeowners to take an inventory of their belongings, keep serial numbers and invest in a high-quality fireproof safe for essential documents like passports, social security cards and car titles. "None of these things are irreplaceable,"

Emily said, "but you don't want to be figuring out how to replace a birth certificate when you're trying to figure out where your family is going to sleep."

Today, the scars on the land are fading, but the bonds between the Forbes and their neighbors are stronger than ever. They've learned that a home isn't made of lumber and shingles but of the people who show up when the smoke clears. And in Midlothian, people always show up.

"Jake has always said, 'We had the very best bad experience that you could have,'" Emily reflected. "We didn't lose anything that couldn't be replaced. Our children were safe. Our animals were safe."

And, Jake praised, "I don't think that there are many communities like ours, with people who care so selflessly for their neighbors." **NOW**

Editor's Note: Learn more at www.forbesbrothersbooks.com.

the charred remains of their home behind them. "It's easy to get depressed after an event like that," Jake admitted. "But the next day will still be there when you open your eyes. Your life has to resume."

The journey inspired the Forbes brothers to author a book titled *It's Just Stuff*, set for presale this month. The book allows young readers to illustrate and write their own adventures at the end.

The brothers have set a "100/100 vision: to get 100,000 books into the hands of 100,000 kids." For every copy purchased,

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After shadowing different careers in college, Dr. Cristina Allala discovered her calling in dentistry. Ten years later, she brings specialized expertise and a spa-like atmosphere to Cedar Hill through Serenity Advanced Dentistry, a solo, minority, woman-owned private practice.

Dr. Allala graduated from Baylor College of Dentistry in 2016 and completed her Bachelor of Science from The University of Texas at San Antonio in 2012. Since opening her practice, she has built a loyal following of patients who have followed her from her previous office, drawn by her gentle approach and commitment to patient care.

What sets her practice apart is her advanced certification in Level 2 moderate sedation — a qualification most dentists do not have. This certification requires at least 60 hours of specialized instruction and successfully administering sedation to at least 20 patients under supervision. For patients who experience dental anxiety, this option can transform their experience, making procedures like extractions comfortable and stress-free.

"Another thing that sets our practice apart is our skill with dental surgeries," Dr. Allala said. "Here are some of my favorite quotes from patients:

"Regarding implants: 'My implant surgery went smoothly. They explained everything, kept me relaxed, and I had very little discomfort afterward.'

"Regarding tooth extractions: 'I had oral surgery done and was extremely nervous, but the doctor and team made me feel comfortable the entire time. The procedure was painless, and recovery was easy.'

"Regarding tooth fixed dentures: 'My experience with fixed dentures was great. Dr. Allala planned everything digitally, the surgery went smoothly, and I had no complications. I can eat comfortably now, and they feel like my own natural teeth.'"

Serenity Advanced Dentistry offers most dental procedures under one roof, including sedation dentistry, dental crowns, dentures, emergency treatment, oral surgery, dental implants, root canals, teeth whitening, extractions, clear aligners, gum grafts and periodontal therapy. The practice emphasizes privacy and comfort. The office features private treatment rooms that allow honest conversations between doctor and patient without worry of being overheard. The modern facility incorporates the latest dental technology while maintaining a calming, spa-like environment.

"We are not a corporation," Dr. Allala said. Unlike larger corporate dental practices, Serenity Advanced Dentistry remains independent, allowing Dr. Allala to focus on building genuine relationships with patients. All assistants are bilingual, ensuring Spanish-speaking patients feel comfortable and fully understand their treatment options.

Dr. Allala lives in DeSoto, just 10 minutes away from her office, keeping her deeply connected to the community she serves. She gives back by supporting the Friends of Tri-City Animal Shelter through monthly contributions, a cause close to her heart as a devoted pet lover. For families seeking personalized dental care in a welcoming, professional environment, Serenity Advanced Dentistry offers an alternative to corporate dental chains.



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MISD has earned the OCME distinction for the 7th consecutive year.

ATHLETICS

- 33 Students Sign University Letters of Intent
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- 1 Football Area Finalist
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- 1 Volleyball Regional Finalist
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- 1 Legacy All-Star Cross Country
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- 1 Cross Country District Champion and 1 District Runner-Up
- 9 Wrestling District Qualifiers
- 4 Boys and Girls Soccer teams Regional Semi-Finalist
- 1 Girls Basketball team Regional Semi-Finalist
- 5 Powerlifting State Qualifiers
- 1 Golf State Qualifier
- 2 Softball teams Regional Semi-Finalist



In the classroom, MISD students consistently demonstrate high levels of achievement, earning national recognition, scholarships, and industry certifications that reflect a strong academic foundation and future readiness.

Beyond academics, MISD's fine arts programs provide students with opportunities to explore creativity, build confidence, and perform at the highest levels. From visual arts and theatre to band, dance, and choir, students engage in experiences that support both artistic expression and personal growth beginning in the earliest grades and continuing through high school.

Athletics in Midlothian ISD play a vital role in developing the whole student. Through competition, teamwork, and leadership, student-athletes are challenged to grow both on and off the field while demonstrating integrity, discipline, and school pride.

Across academics, fine arts, and athletics, MISD students continue to earn recognition at the regional, state, and national levels. This happens when a district is focused on excellence in every experience. Together, these programs reflect a shared commitment to helping every student belong, grow, and succeed as part of the MISD family.





Congratulations!

CLASS OF 2026



Photos Courtesy of MISD, MHHS and MHS Student Publications.

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Zoomed In: Freya Miller

By Angel Morris

Freya Miller experienced Texas bluebonnets earlier this year. "Yearly pics have been a family tradition, but this was Freya's first year to pose in the bluebonnets," her mom, Xandra Miller, shared.

Pictures were taken in two locations, near Freya's grandparents' and great-grandparents' homes. "She enjoys getting her picture taken and especially liked the way the bluebonnet petals felt and smelled," Great-grandmother Jeannie Middleton said.

The 16-month-old is very independent for her young age, the family noted. "Her dad was killed in a vehicle accident when Xandra was five months pregnant, but she has been raised in a strong and loving family where traditions continue," Jeannie noted. "Her father would be so proud of her."



Maggie Lundberg rides to school with MPD Assistant Chief Scott Brown as part of a prize auctioned at a First Methodist Church fundraiser.



Nate Serrano shows off his catch from a local pond.



Heaven's Attic Director of Sales Kim Mitchell and Manna House Executive Director Norma Belcher announce the official name change of Heaven's Attic to Manna House Resale.



Madison Payne, Jamie McNulty and Kaitlin Mattos represent Texas Health Neighborhood Care & Wellness as sponsors of MidloFest.



Justin Gardner of Troop 512B and Daniel Clickard discuss campsite planning during a recent Scouting event.

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Zoomed In: Gabby Barber

By Angel Morris

Twelve-year-old Gabby Barber is a seventh-grader with a unique interest. "I started learning how to bake when I was 11 years old. I discovered my interest while making cupcakes out of a box but adding my own twist," she shared.

Then, Gabby began to bake from scratch. "I also take a baking class at my homeschool co-op, where I learn how to substitute ingredients for healthier ones or just a different flavor."

Outside the kitchen, Gabby can be found crocheting, sewing, making jewelry with resin and beads or playing volleyball. Baking, however, is still a top hobby. "My favorite thing to make is a red velvet cake with cream cheese icing," she noted. "I make it special by using white chocolate and pecans."



Gary Vineyard, Lions Club Governor of District 2-X1 for 2026-27; Amy Vineyard, Grassroots Lion of the Year; and Nia McKay, incoming First Vice District Governor represent the Midlothian Lions Club.



Former Dallas Cowboys Cheerleader and new Methodist Family Health Center primary care physician Cersten Bradley visits with Midlothian High School cheerleaders.



Chamber of Commerce staffers Alec Martinez, Kenna Standridge, Chloe Roberts and Victoria Roberts pose at MidloFest.



Danielle Nichols, Michelle Veeder and Dantia Tate attend a Kentucky Derby-themed fashion show benefiting The Ashford Rise School of Dallas.



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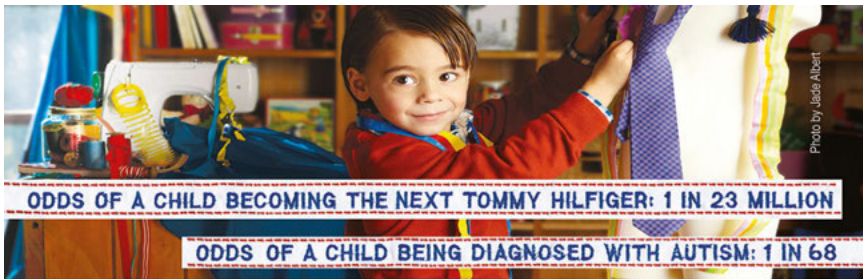
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Grilled Jalapeño Poppers

- 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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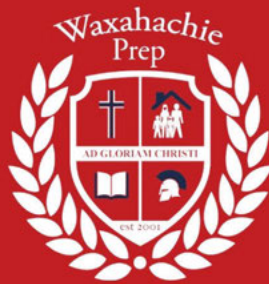
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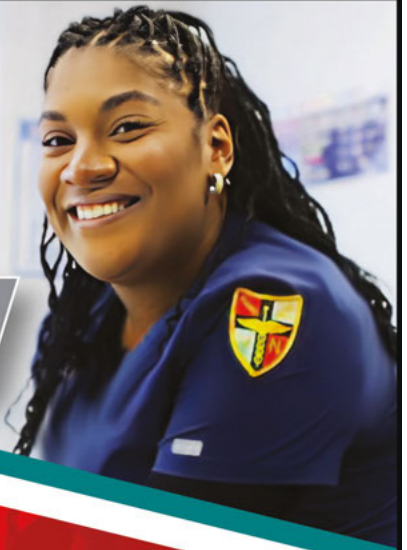
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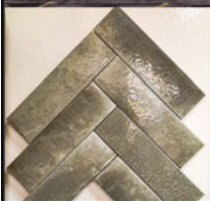
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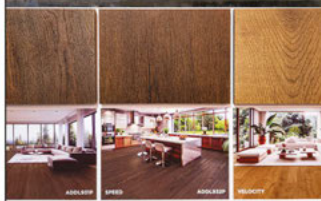
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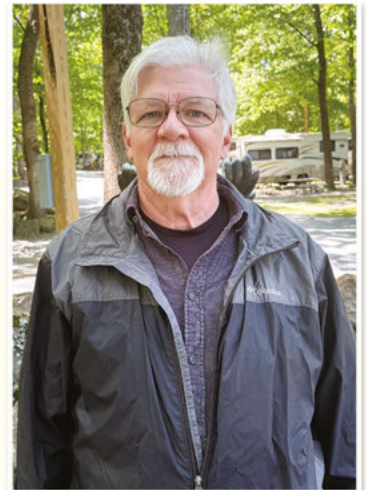
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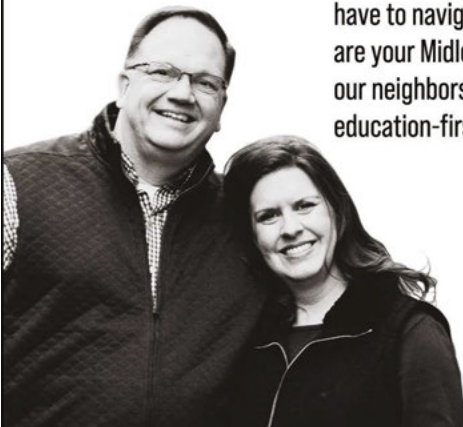
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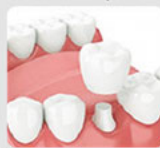
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