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Scott Meek owns a pretty amazing pirate ship on wheels

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This 14-foot-tall, 40-foot-long ship may one day ride through New Orleans for Mardi Gras.

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Joy Elmore.
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Tea even plays a role in America’s history. As you’ll read in the pages that follow, Scott Meek created a scaled-down version of The Boston Tea Party to remind people of that cold night in 1773, at Griffin’s Wharf in Boston, Massachusetts, when American colonists, who were frustrated with Britain for imposing “taxation without representation,” dumped 342 chests of British tea into the harbor.

We are free to celebrate our independence again this year. Thoughtful business and civic leaders in Mansfield have planned festivities for July 3, from 7:00-10:00 p.m., at Big League Dreams. I hope you’ll bring your lawn chair to The Rockin’ 4th of July. Sharing the spirit of freedom, gratitude and watchfulness adds to the strength of our community.

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Melissa Rawlins
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If you happen to be driving down the road and suddenly come upon a giant pirate ship in the lane ahead of you, don’t be alarmed. It’s just Scott Meek and his crew out for a cruise. Seriously, Scott owns a pirate ship that travels on the road. In reality, it’s a bus that’s undergone some major renovations, but for all intents and purposes, with the exception of it not being on the water, it is a pirate ship.

“There was a guy, Buc Avanzini, who appeared on Pawn Stars trying to sell a pirate ship to Chumlee, one of the show’s stars. Buc’s actually one of my customers,” said Scott, who owns a couple companies, including Mansfield Sand and Select and Twisted S Services. “I liked the idea, so I bought a school bus and chopped the top off, and here it is.”
The bus, er, ship, stands nearly 14 feet tall and is 40 feet long. The main deck resembles what someone might have come across a few centuries ago. There's even a bag of bones — plastic, of course. Another upper deck has a steering wheel that is for show only, since the vessel is steered from inside the main cabin of the bus, where there is also seating for about eight people.

On the back of the major deck is a room where Scott hides and speaks to visitors through an animated parrot. The ship even includes flames that light at night and fog machines to make a grand entrance.

The panels on the outside came from a friend's backyard fence. “We made a whole lot of ribs. We had to get the bend just right,” Scott said. “None of it would have been possible, though, without Josh Smith, Richard Haggard and our talented employees at Mansfield Sand.”
A LED lighting system creates a skull on the side of the ship at night. It even sings along with a song that plays. “I hear it in my sleep,” Scott said, chuckling.

“People will stop and take pictures. They’ll almost run off the road even sometimes,” Scott laughed. “I thought we were in trouble one day. The police pulled in behind us. But, they just wanted to come onboard and see the ship.”

Lots of people want to see the ship, and Scott and his fiancee, Tammie Harvey, make that happen as often as possible. They’ve entered it in as many parades and festivals as they’ve been able to find since its creation in 2014.

“We were rushing to finish this in time for the Fourth of July Parade in Arlington,” Scott said. “We named the ship The Eleanor, after one of the ships in the Boston Tea Party.” They won a trophy about waist high. “I was hooked. I said let’s see how many we can do in a year,” Scott remembered.

They were in a dozen parades and festivals that first year. They’ve gone everywhere from Mansfield to Galveston for Mardi Gras. They’ve had it in parades for a variety of holidays, including Christmas and Thanksgiving, the latter in which Tammie even played a pilgrim.

Their numerous awards include the Grand Prize Award in the Arlington Fourth of July Parade, the Mayor’s Choice Award in the Garland Labor Day Parade and the
Most Creative Award in the Mansfield Hometown Holidays Parade.

“And it will go 70 down the highway — faster with a tail wind,” Tammie said with a laugh. “You should see the looks on people’s faces in the cars.”

The crew is made up of family members and friends. This includes Scott’s dad and stepmom, his two brothers and Tammie’s two children and three grandchildren. Also, they will select a different family to participate each time the ship goes out. “It’s just something fun we can offer them, and they get a blast out of it,” Scott said. “In the Pickle Parade we took our new neighbors.”

They also take the ship to activities such as Bible schools and Mansfield Toys for Tots, where the crew will distribute toys. “Kids line up. They can’t wait to get their pictures taken,” Scott said.

One goal is to enter the ship in the New Orleans Mardi Gras. “That’s the one you want to go to,” he said. “I can’t wait.” The ship will also be in the Mansfield Veteran’s Day Parade this year, portraying the Boston Tea Party.

In addition to playing pirates, Scott, Tammie and the crew will play an assortment of characters. They’ve added Colonial Revolutionary figures to their repertoire, and have also played the Easter bunny, pilgrims,
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characters from the Industrial Revolution (they turn the pirate ship into a steam engine), and there’s Captain Claus, a Christmas Pirate.

“Scott loves history. He really gets into the Revolution,” Tammie said, adding with a smile, “but, he looks good in a pirate uniform.”

Tammie said the ship has also been popular with a variety of celebrities. Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders and politicians, for example, have been onboard. “The response to it has been overwhelmingly positive. I guess you don’t see a pirate ship every day, especially one going down the road,” she said.

The ship took almost three months to build. Tammie admits she was skeptical at first but loved it when she finally saw it. “He kept trying to get me to come see the pirate ship, and I kept delaying. I didn’t think it would look like a ship. I was stunned,” she said.

While the pirate ship is the main attraction, Scott and Tammie have other projects. They turned a lawnmower into a dinghy in which the George Washington character sometimes stands as they replicate the crossing of the Delaware. They are also creating a giant pickle for the next Pickle Parade, and they even have a portable old-timey Western jail. “But yes, the ship is the main thing,” Tammie said. “That is what everyone wants to see more than anything, and who can blame them? It’s pretty amazing.”
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The neighborhood kids’ grand central station — that describes Nick and Kiersten Lavallee’s home. With five children of their own, ranging from ages 2 to 5, their home must be ready for a variety of age-appropriate activities. “Our house is being constantly used,” Kiersten said. “We’re the magnet for all the kids, no matter where we’ve lived. We enjoy spending a lot of time at home. From the moment we moved in, we’ve opened up the house to everyone.”
The family purchased their home two years ago, and with its six bedrooms and four-and-a-half baths, there’s plenty of room for everyone. California natives, Nick and Kiersten first saw their future home in 2008, when moving to Texas. “We didn’t have the money then to purchase, but we were looking at model homes,” Kiersten recalled. “We walked through this model, and I was instantly in love with it.”
Nick and Kiersten met through their mutual employment at a Kmart store. He was the store’s loss prevention officer, and Kiersten was in customer service. “Her blue eyes and really long hair caught my attention,” Nick remembered.

“We were best friends for three years, then dated for three years, and were engaged for a year. I really knew what I was getting into,” Kiersten quipped. They’ve been married for 15 years this month.

Construction, Nick’s endeavor, brought the couple to Texas. He’s an estimator with a company that’s building apartment buildings in North Texas. “I’ve worked hard succeeding in the school of hard knocks,” Nick explained. Having just received a promotion, he describes himself as a common-sense kind of guy.

Kiersten has 20 years’ experience as a licensed aesthetician and earned her associate degree from Moorpark College. After losing 170 pounds combined, the couple became certified health coaches through Villanova University’s MacDonald Center for Obesity Prevention and Education program. They have formed a home-based business for helping others get healthy.

“Nearly everyone in our family has followed us from California to Texas now,” Kiersten said. Her parents live across the street and have a backyard pool the grandkids all enjoy. Kiersten with the kitchen. I thought, *This house is our dream house.* When the couple was financially able, they returned to this home, which was again on the market. “A pastor and his wife were downsizing and moving to California. The house already had an offer on it, so it was a miracle when we got it,” Kiersten added. A near perfect abode for this active family, they’ve only had to make a few cosmetic changes during their residency.
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used to homeschool, an activity that her mother, a retired teacher, aided. Kiersten volunteers as a spiritual mentor at the Metroplex Women's Clinic and Nick serves as a drummer in Creekwood Church's worship team.

With grandparents close by to pitch in, Nick and Kiersten enjoy weekly date nights together, but weekends are family time. “We travel separate from the kids a lot, too, since we don’t need to travel to see grandparents,” Nick said. Their goal is to get a fifth-wheel travel trailer and visit family-friendly spots like Florida’s Disney World.

“With our size family, we need our own travel equipment,” Kiersten agreed.

Jewel, the family’s dog, greets all visitors enthusiastically. Often, guests are treated to a game night in the formal dining room, where a large family photo taken by Kiersten’s dad is displayed. “We entertain our Life Group from church around this table and have family game nights here,” Nick explained. “No matter what the game is, the real game is ‘beat the parents.’”

French doors open to the couple’s home office. Known as the Makeup Mom, Kiersten records live videos in her spa-like master bath and posts on Facebook. The master suite bay window overlooks the backyard. Wedding photos of the couple line a wall. One is signed by all the guests, which included Kiersten’s oldest son, Matt, whom she had very young and placed for an open adoption. He was the ring bearer at their wedding and is now part of their household while attending college.

“The magic happens in the kitchen,” Kiersten revealed. “We eat daily as a family.” Cooking duties are shared by all with plenty of work space provided by a Butler’s pantry and island. A window seat and oversized dining table with a bench provides ample seating.

The living room looks out onto a kid-friendly backyard with a trampoline and playscape. “Somehow at Christmas,
I’m always doing something big in the backyard,” Nick said.

An alcove over the winding stairs provides a study space for all the children. Family photos of fun times decorate the hallway. The two youngest daughters, Makayla (5) and Jaelyn (8) share a dream of a bedroom complete with butterflies and a sign on the door, stating, “No boys allowed. Please knock.” Cross-stitched and framed birth announcements were sewn for all the kids by Kiersten’s grandmother.

Sixth-grade daughter, Kayleen, enjoys her privacy in a lavender and purple bedroom, decorated with hearts and treasures she inherited from Kiersten’s grandmother. “She was an amazing person who called and sang to the kids and sent cards to them,” Kiersten recalled.

Thirteen-year-old Alijah’s bedroom is tucked by the attic. He enjoys sports, especially track and football.

A pool table the family inherited from the previous owners occupies the upstairs living area which overlooks the main living room below. A step up through sliding double French doors brings the family into their media room, which is also the play area for the family’s two cats, Oreo and Cookies. Matt’s “Collegian Bedroom” is just beyond. “Movie times are fun and celebrated with homemade popcorn,” Nick said.

He concluded, “We’re a faith-based family. We enjoy simple, but special things like Daddy’s Saturday morning pancakes and Matt’s dinner offerings every Sunday night. That’s the CliffNotes version of us.”
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Over the Net
— By Rick Mauch

Giada Magill hits the tennis ball back across the net using her favorite stroke — the two-handed backhand. Though she’s only 9 years old, she’s come a long way in three years of learning the game. She’s also come a long way in life. When she was only 4, she was diagnosed with Wilms Tumor, a kidney cancer found in children. “It was scary. We caught it early,” said her mother, Karina. “We were at Disney World, and she said her stomach hurt. Well, a lot of kids’ stomachs hurt at Disney World with all the different things they eat, but when we came home, it continued. It was immediate surgery. It was a different side of life she had to see early.”

Now, Giada, an only child, is loving life. She’s healthy, and every day is a new experience. She loves trying new things, which is how she got involved in the tennis classes she takes through the Mansfield Area Tennis Association. It started out as camps, but now she and several friends participate each Tuesday at Chandler Park. “This is our first year of the structured courses,” said Roger Greenwood, MATA president. “We have three classes currently all doing age-related tennis activities, and they’re based on USTA (United States Tennis Association) guidelines.”

Giada admits she wasn’t all that interested in tennis at first. But then, she realized she actually likes it — a lot. “At first, I thought, Whatever, but I looked closer and saw what cool things tennis players can do,” she said.

A third-grader at Martha Reid Leadership Academy, Giada was introduced to tennis through a three-day Mansfield Activities Center Spring Camp in 2016 run by MATA. Karina said that it was offered free at Giada’s school last year, so, “Bingo. It was a no-brainer.”

Karina; her husband, Richard; and Giada also participated in the MATA family Play Day tennis sessions twice a month on Saturday mornings last year. They’ve
taken a break for now, according to Karina, but Giada is still going strong. Along with playing, Giada likes the camaraderie that goes with participating in the program. “I like tennis, but I also like meeting new kids,” she said. “Plus, it helps playing different people.”

Along with tennis, Giada swims. Both sports help her leg muscles, which weakened due to the chemo she received. She also does horseback riding. And when she’s not participating in sports or doing school work, Giada can be found playing piano. She’s been taking lessons each week for three years, and she just got a new piano for Christmas.

She also likes to color. She and a friend at school, who likes to draw, love sharing their art. “My friend draws, and I color pictures of Pusheen the Cat,” she said. “We actually give them away for free. We just do it for fun, and so our friends can enjoy them.”

Karina can tell the difference in Giada from the time she first picked up a racquet three years ago. “We’re no Serena Williams (Giada’s favorite player), but she’s a lot better,” Karina said. “In the first classes, it was focusing on basics, but now they’re doing things like focusing on resistance.

“Also, for me as a mom, it’s good exercise that doesn’t look like exercise. I don’t have to force her to get exercise. As long as they keep having these classes, we will keep her in them.”

Besides tennis, Giada also has big plans for her own future. “When I grow up, I want to be an inventor,” she said. “The world needs help, and I want to help keep kids from getting diseases.”

For more information about MATA and their tennis programs, visit their website, www.matatx.com, Facebook page at Mansfield Area Tennis Association, or contact Roger Greenwood at rgreenwood@matatx.com.
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Currently, this 150-year-old structure hosts the offices of Excel Oil & Gas and is owned by Bob Neal and David Brown. Until they resurrected the place in 1992, it served as a residence. Originally, the building was the home of the Murray family, who farmsteaded the area that would become Mansfield. Five years ago, a historic Mansfield walking tour included the story that the Murrays had 16 children, each of whom lived in this tiny house with their parents. Only a few memories of the Murrays can be found in the Mansfield Historical Museum and Heritage Center's records. In the 1980s or 1990s, a Mrs. Murray contributed information about the house along with Frances Crisman Jones, a descendant of James Hunter Alexander, who purchased The Murray House in 1889.
Irish-born J.H. Alexander, a plantation owner in Georgia, was also major, assistant adjutant general of the 11th Georgia Infantry of the Confederate Army. After the Civil War, he and his wife, Lavinia, and their children camped briefly at a French settlement in Dallas County called La Réunion Colony, while J.H. scouted for a permanent homestead. They settled on a farm east of Mansfield and south of Calvary Cemetery. In today’s terminology, his land was a little south of Kroger, north of Lowe’s Farm and southeast of Newsom Stadium. His neighbor, a farmer named E.F. Crisman, became his son-in-law.

Lavinia and J.H. reared nine children before retiring to town in 1889. He served as the first justice of the peace in Mansfield. “Many Mansfield couples were married at this house,” wrote Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Crisman Jones. “It is a very old and interesting one-and-one-half story house, and very typical of very early Texas architecture.” Lavinia passed away in 1898, followed by J.H. in 1909. He was buried in Mansfield Cemetery. MHMHC records say little is known of the ownership of the property after J.H.’s death, and that the house has been altered many times over the years.

This is the story Bob Neal will tell you, too. He and David Brown, a geologist who lived in Midlothian, met at Walnut Creek Country Club when they first formed Excel Oil and Gas in 1986. “Then we found an office in the old ice house that used to be across the street. We looked across the street at a home for sale, made a crazy lowball offer and the estate took it,” Bob recalled from his desk against the upstairs northern wall of 103 Van Worth St. “The family who sold it to us had grown up in this house, and their parents died here.

“It’s hard to believe someone actually lived here. It was an old
farmhouse that was falling apart. We bared the whole place out, and then restarted,” Bob said. “We redid the railing outside and porches. We tried to do it like the picture showed that it was,” he explained, pointing to a photo available in the MHMHC. The pre-1909 photo shows a tree where now there is an additional 6 feet of structure on the north side, an animal pen no longer there and a white-bearded J.H. Alexander with four younger people.

“Look how small the people are! I’m convinced the original inhabitants were really short people, because even now when I walk in the den, I have to be careful not to hit my head on the downstairs ceiling,” said Bob, who also has to climb extremely steep stairs to get to his office.

Since the upstairs was a one-room loft before Bob and David purchased it, and since they intended for three or more geologists and land men to work together in the former house, they hired a contractor from Waxahachie to cut off the loft and rebuild the top of the house. They added a wall and created flat, 10-foot-high ceilings under which grown men can comfortably walk.
The original pine walls are still there. “However, it had no studs. We studded it and insulated it, added a bathroom and made four offices,” Bob said. “My wife, Debbie, and I spent three times more redoing it than we paid for it.”

Debbie’s expertise in Victorian design came in handy during the process. She picked out the wallpaper and the wood floors. “The floors are 30 years old, not 130. The 100-year-old tin on our ceilings actually came from a hotel. Debbie found the tin in a warehouse. We burned the lead paint off and put auto paint on it to keep it old and antique. It’s kind of junky because it’s just boys in here,” Bob said, grinning.
They added all the upstairs windows and removed the fireplace on the southern wall. Outdoors there had been an added extension, probably serving as the family kitchen, which Bob and David also removed. The sheds, however, have been preserved.

"Back in 1872, there was just horse and buggy. Mansfield was only a little old stopping place, I think," Bob said. "When we got out here to Main St. 27 years ago, Mansfield had 7,000 people. Even five or 10 years ago, there was less traffic than now."

The city is growing by leaps and bounds all around this quiet downtown spot. And the history surrounding buildings like 103 Van Worth St. are reminders of what we already know — Mansfield is a good place to be.

Editor’s Note: For more information, see “Mansfield Roots (1827-1909),” an article available for viewing in the research room of the Mansfield Historical Museum and Heritage Center.
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Warm Potato Salad

5 large red potatoes
2 Tbsp. mayonnaise
1/2 tsp. kosher salt
1/4 tsp. black pepper
2 hard-boiled eggs
4 slices bacon, cooked crisp

1. Clean and cut potatoes into bite-size pieces. Boil until a fork can be easily inserted; drain and put in a mixing bowl.
2. Mix mayonnaise, salt and pepper into the potatoes; coat well. Add more mayonnaise if you like more of a dressing.
3. Dice eggs; sprinkle into potato mixture. Fold in until well incorporated.
4. Crumble bacon over the mixture and serve.

Strawberry Shortcake

Pound Cake:
1 lb. butter

Topping:
1 pt. heavy whipping cream
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. almond extract

1. For pound cake: Allow butter to come to room temperature. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Cream butter. Add sugar; cream until fluffy.
3. Add in the eggs, one at a time, beating 1 minute between eggs to incorporate properly.
4. Lower mixer speed; slowly add flour until well incorporated. Add vanilla and almond extracts.

American Flag Cake

Cake:
4 large eggs, separated
1 cup flour
1 box butter or yellow cake mix
1 cup oil
1 Tbsp. butter extract
1 6-oz. carton vanilla yogurt

Topping:
1 16-oz. tub Cool Whip
1 large container strawberries, cleaned and sliced longwise
1 small container blueberries, cleaned

1. For cake: Whip all of the egg whites in a mixing bowl, which has first been chilled
in the freezer, on high for 5 minutes, until a nice meringue forms. Set aside in a separate bowl.
2. In a large mixing bowl, add egg yolks, flour, cake mix, oil, butter extract and yogurt. Mix on medium speed until a thick batter forms. Gently fold already-whipped egg whites into the batter.
3. Grease and flour a 9x13-inch baking dish; add mixture. Bake approximately 25 minutes at 350 F until cooked.
4. For topping: Once cake is cooled, spread Cool Whip over the cake as frosting. On top, lay blueberries and strawberries in a flag pattern.

Peach Ice cream

3 eggs lightly beaten
1 1/4 cups sugar
1 Tbsp. flour
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. almond extract
1/4 tsp. kosher salt
2 cups half-and-half
1 1/2 cups heavy whipping cream
3 cups Parker County peaches, cleaned and diced

1. Whisk eggs, sugar, flour, extracts and salt until blended.
2. Over low heat, in a large pan, heat the half-and-half and cream until it steams, stirring frequently.
3. Slowly temper the egg mixture by adding it no more than 2 Tbsp. at a time to the cream and stirring, being careful not to scramble the eggs.
4. Once fully combined, increase heat to medium; stir constantly for approximately 15 minutes. Mixture will thicken.
5. Remove from heat; refrigerate 2-3 hours, until fully chilled.
6. Puree 1 1/2 cups of the peaches until smooth. Mash 1 cup of the peaches gently with a potato masher.
7. Add pureed, mashed and diced peaches to the cream mixture. Fold until well incorporated. Pour into an ice cream maker and freeze until ready. Time will vary by machine.
Parents, as well as students, benefit from the intentional focus on creating a mutually supportive culture. “We are happy we can provide a level of stability for families in a crazy world,” Mr. Shull said. “When children come here, they become my responsibility. I do my best to recognize gifts and talents, as well as exercise tough love in situations that require it. Parents truly appreciate the interaction created by this approach.”

Newman International Academy draws students from every socio-economic background because of its strong emphasis on character development. “Our particular approach is intentional,” Mr. Shull said. “We embrace time-honored family values such as respect, integrity, honesty and kindness, which are taught to children at home.”

From Mr. Shull to the teachers and staff, the professional educators at Newman International Academy are partnering with families. And mothers who volunteer as Parent Student Collaborators become Mr. Shull’s partners in supporting the
teachers as well as the children. “This is about us becoming part of the fabric of each other’s life,” Mr. Shull said.

Having grown up in a small South Texas town, where the same elementary teachers taught all seven Shull siblings, the principal of Newman International Academy believes deep, intimate relationships with students promote consistency in education. The school’s computer lab, art room, music room, engineering and science and mathematics rooms are designed to accommodate and even enhance the state’s emphasis on math and reading beginning in third grade.

“When students come to us, we evaluate academic performance through historical records, such as report cards and state accountability testing,” Mr. Shull said. “Because of the size of our school, we have greater flexibility and the ability to identify children’s particular needs and then support them through differentiated instruction.”

The passion and compassion exercised here are extensions of Newman International Academy’s founder, Dr. Sheba George, who started the first school in Arlington seven years ago. “Her mother had founded 30 different schools in India, and Dr. George and her husband had come to the United States essentially as missionaries to minister to children here,” Newman Marketing Director Randall Hudson said. “Dr. George presented the charter to the state and received one of the highest scores in the state on her application.”

Dr. George put together a leadership team and 29 teachers in Mansfield alone, who have a combined 152 years’ experience and follow accountability measures and textbooks identical to public schools. At this charter school, in Mr. Hudson’s words, “We are doing our best to build the whole person for the whole world by raising warriors of wisdom, stature and favor.”

Call today for an appointment with Mr. Shull. He is happy to take time to understand your needs. Then, ask him to show you how Newman International Academy will nurture your child’s gifts, talents and interests and provide the venue to express them.
TravelNOW
A Charming Delight
— By Katie Kubitskey

Louisville, Kentucky, has steadily become one of the hottest travel destinations in the U.S. From its booming bourbon renaissance to its culinary jewels and one-of-a-kind attractions, the city offers a menu of things to see and do all wrapped within its hallmark Southern charm. Urban distilleries, culinary artisans, burgeoning neighborhoods, classic cocktail bars, great places to eat and iconic attractions and events make Louisville a top destination.

With more than 120 attractions, Louisville has something for everyone to see and do. The iconic Churchill Downs and Kentucky Derby Museum pay homage to the thoroughbred horse — a symbol of what makes Kentucky so special. The bat of choice used by most major league baseball teams is made at Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory. The Belle of Louisville is the oldest operating steamboat still in existence. And, Louisville’s native son, Muhammad Ali, is now remembered with a self-guided tour of “Ali’s Footsteps of Greatness,” which includes his boyhood home, the Muhammad Ali Center and his final resting place in Cave Hill Cemetery.

Museum Row on Main Street is a must on your first visit to the city. Make sure to notice the original cast-iron building facades that have been preserved since the late 19th century. On this brief walk, you will see the Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory, the Frazier History Museum, the Kentucky Science Center, KMAC Museum, a few bourbon distilleries and tons of restaurants.

Another hallmark of Kentucky — bourbon — has taken center stage as a “must-do” when visiting the city. The Urban Bourbon Experience is comprised of 10 distilleries within the city limits that are open for public tours and tastings. The Urban Bourbon Trail boasts more than 35 bars and restaurants with more than 50 bourbons and bourbon-inspired culinary delights — so grab a passport,
collect your stamps and enjoy a special prize at the end.

If the arts are more to your liking, Louisville is one of only a handful of U.S. cities with a professional full-time orchestra, opera, ballet, children’s theater, dinner theater and Broadway Series. The Speed Art Museum and the Kentucky Museum of Art & Craft both recently underwent renovations. These, plus a zoo, amusement park, breweries, historic homes, confectionaries, parks and music festivals comprise the fabric of Louisville's cultural scene.

Speaking of festivals, visitors are likely to run into one of many of the city’s festivals during their visit, from the world-renowned Forecastle Music Festival, Bourbon & Beyond Festival and Kentucky Derby Festival to the neighborhood gems like Old Louisville Springfest, St. James Court Art Show and Downtown’s WorldFest. And Louisville’s growing food reputation is putting the city on the national culinary map.

It’s not just the city’s eclectic, innovative and award-winning restaurant scene, but also locally made products that are setting the city apart — with and beyond the bourbon! The accolades continue to grow, from Saveur’s recognition as a Notable City in its Culinary Travel Awards to Southern Living magazine’s “Top 10 tastiest towns in the South,” to Zagat naming Louisville “one of the top eight ‘awesome foodie getaways in the world.’”

Louisville’s also easy to get to. It is within a day’s drive of nearly half the U.S. population, and the Louisville International Airport is serviced by nearly every major airline, with nonstop service to 23 destinations and convenient connections to cities worldwide. Help planning your getaway to this Southern star is one click away at gotolouisville.com.

Photos courtesy of Louisville CVB.
Let’s Get Physical
— By Zachary R. Urquhart

There are more ways to get fit than ever before, and now that we have hit the calendar’s halfway point, the time is right to renew any resolutions that have come and gone from the new year. If you want to improve your fitness but pounding the pavement in your neighborhood is not your thing, here are some ideas to help you get into the best shape of your life.

Stretch It Out

• Yoga is for everyone. Yoga is nothing new, but it has grown in popularity over the last few decades. While the uninitiated sometimes see it as nothing more than stretching, yoga is a tried-and-true exercise option that people have been using for thousands of years. You can find a nearby yoga studio, look for a group in the park or even follow videos online for a workout you will not believe until you try it.

• Yoga is not created equal. There are many unique styles of yoga, some that are more about weight loss and others that are about stress reduction and relaxation. So, before you just start a workout, you will get better
results if you know what you want to accomplish and have a plan. And in the last few decades, hot yoga studios have appeared, offering a good sweat while stretching your muscles and your mind.

Spin It Out

• Turn for the burn. Stationary spin and recumbent bicycles have long been a staple of fitness clubs and home gyms. Spin class, though, is something else completely. With dozens of cyclists riding in place, energetic music and an instructor yelling encouragement to help the room fight through their collective pain, spin classes offer a high-octane, calorie- and fat-burning experience. Spin classes are generally available at any large fitness club, so you can probably get started today.

• Burn without leaving. While classes are easy to find, you do not necessarily have to go anywhere to feel the spin class burn. You can find online spin classes, and some modern bikes come with a screen where you can link up with live instructors and people across the country for the spin class atmosphere without leaving your home. Whether you are in your living room or a gym full of strangers, do not be intimidated by
people who are pedaling faster and harder than you. Remember, every expert started out as a beginner.

Cross It Out

- **It is more than just a fad.** Over the last decade or so, new workout methods and styles have become all the rage. Things like CrossFit and Camp Gladiator are great for getting a high-energy workout where you can work at your own pace, while being pushed by the people that can do just a little more than you. These high-intensity, body-weight or resistance-based workouts have proven results for people just trying to lose weight and those trying to get into the best shape of their lives.

Whatever workout you plan on starting, you will likely have greater success if you do not go it alone. Whether you find a regular spin or yoga class to join, or you just find a friend or two to help keep you accountable, having someone to help you along will go a long way toward your success. With all the options available, there is no better time than now to start on the road to fitness.
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Zoomed In:
Matt Thomas

By Melissa Rawlins

A Mansfield firefighter for 12 years, Matt Thomas decided two years ago to restore a beautiful convertible. “I like Firebirds,” Matt said of this rare, Imperial Red road-hugger. “You don’t see them much.” There were only 16,400 of these manufactured in 1968. After doing some work on the engine, Matt decided working on the motor is more fun than paint-and-body work. “I like trying to make sure the working parts work together.”

Often, Matt takes his eye-catcher to car shows here and in Burleson. “Top down is when it’s most fun,” he said. “This will go pretty fast. I’ve found good country roads on the other side of Cleburne, toward Rio Vista and the Hill Country.”

Matt Bryant and Felix Wong enjoy Third Thursday in historic downtown Mansfield.

Sherry Ponce and her children, Sati and Tre, take their English Merle bulldog puppy home after he got his shots.

Jay Lenoir of Family Mattress and HomeStore shares mattress facts with Judy Corbeille.
Scholarship award winner Sidney Givens enjoys lunch with Cathy Hudgins, principal of Frontier's Ben Barber Career Tech, and Mansfield Rotary Club member Tony Touchon.

Devan Allen (right) joins Warren and Carol Landrum at their Wine and Culture event introducing their series of travel books.

The Community at Lake Ridge student ministry raises money to send youth to summer camps.

Mansfield’s iconic band, Scott & Steve, with their new horn section, play a stirring version of “Ring of Fire” at Steven’s Garden Grill.

Scholarship award winner Sidney Givens enjoys lunch with Cathy Hudgins, principal of Frontier’s Ben Barber Career Tech, and Mansfield Rotary Club member Tony Touchon.
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Rockin’ 4th of July: 7:00-10:00 p.m., Big League Dreams, 500 Heritage Pkwy. Free to attend, and free parking with shuttle from Newsom Stadium. Food and drinks available for purchase inside the festival, where local band, The Night Shift, sets the mood for fireworks. (817) 804-5795.

6, 13, 20, 27
Kiwanis Club of Mansfield meeting: 6:45-8:00 a.m., Mansfield Methodist Hospital Conference Rooms A&B, First Floor. Kiwanis is an International Service Club. The local group has been performing service projects benefiting local children for more than 35 years and sponsors Key Clubs at every local high school. Contact Sharon Baker, (817) 994-2497.

Fitness in The Park Boot Camp: 8:45-9:45 a.m., Large Pavilion, Katherine Rose Memorial Park, 303 N. Walnut Creek Dr. No preregistration required to work out. Free. Hosted by Mansfield Activities Center, (817) 728-3680.

12
Movies on Main: 9:00-11:45 a.m., Farr Best Theater, 109 N. Main St. Enjoy the movie Coco for only $1 per person. Visit farrbesttheater.com.

Business Unplugged: 5:00-7:00 p.m., sponsored and hosted by Benjamin Franklin Plumbing/Minuteman Heating & Air, 7501 Hwy. 287, Ste B1&2, Arlington. Learn all about your Mansfield Area Chamber of Commerce.

19
Quilting With Heart: 1:00-3:00 p.m., First Methodist Church Mansfield, 777 N. Walnut Creek. Open membership with no dues. Join us if you are interested in making charity quilts and would like to learn more about and share the art of quilting. qwhinfo@gmail.com.

Third Thursday: 5:00-10:00 p.m., Historic Downtown. Enjoy the Braden Daniels Magic and Mystery Show at Farr Best Theater as part of the evening, when downtown retailers stay open late and food trucks open their windows. Participate in Mansfield’s revitalization. downtownmansfield.org.

20, 21
The Music Man: Friday, 7:00 p.m.; Saturday, 2:00 p.m., Mansfield Center for Performing Arts. www.mainstageclassictheatre.org.

26
Chamber Quarterly Luncheon: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Walnut Creek Country Club, 1151 Country Club Dr. Meet three staffing professionals, as they discuss The State of Talent in our workforce. Call (817) 473-0507.
Ongoing:

Mondays — Fridays
Mission Market: By Appointment, 777 N. Walnut Creek Dr. To meet dietary needs, families may choose their own grocery and toiletry items. Call to make an appointment to shop: (817) 473-6650.

Mondays — Saturdays
Wesley Mission Center Thrift Store:
Monday–Friday: 9:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m.,
Saturday: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., 703 E. Broad St. (817) 225-4868.

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays
The Fit Club: 9:30-11:00 a.m., Walnut Ridge Baptist Church. Ages 55+ relieve stress and maintain balance, focusing on cardiovascular endurance, strength, balance and flexibility (yoga). Kelly Myers, (512) 963-3440.

Thursdays
Rotary Club of Mansfield Sunrise: 7:00-8:00 a.m., Methodist Mansfield Medical Center, 2700 E. Broad St. Meet with others living by the motto Service Above Self. www.mansfieldrotarysunrise.org.

First Fridays
Mansfield Connects: 11:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m., Mansfield Chamber. Educational program relevant to any business, followed by lessons in how to make connections vs. old-school networking. $5. Contact Mansfield Area Chamber of Commerce, info@mansfieldchamber.org or (817) 473-0507.

Saturdays through October
Farmers Market: 8:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., 206 Smith St. For more information about the cheeses, crafts, baked and canned goods, flowers, herbs, vegetables and meats available, visit www.mansfieldfarmersmarket.net.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to melissa.rawlins@nowmagazines.com.

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Partnering with the Mansfield Fire Department, the Mansfield Historical Museum & Heritage Center is hosting a special exhibit marking the 50th Anniversary of the ‘Red Ball Gas Explosion of 1968.’

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We’re getting close to the Fourth of July, our national Independence Day. This celebration may get you thinking of the many freedoms you enjoy. But have you thought of what you might need to do to attain financial freedom?

Your first step is to define what financial independence signifies to you. For many people, it means being able to retire when they want to, and to enjoy a comfortable retirement lifestyle. So, if this is your vision as well, consider taking these steps:

**Pay yourself first.** If you wait until you have some extra money “lying around” before you invest for retirement, you may never get around to doing it. Instead, pay yourself first. This actually is not that hard to do, especially if you have a 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan, because your contributions are taken directly from your paycheck, before you even have the chance to spend the money. You can set up a similar arrangement with an IRA by having automatic contributions taken directly from your checking or savings account.

**Invest appropriately.** Your investment decisions should be guided by your time horizon, risk tolerance and retirement goals. If you deviate from these guideposts — for instance, by taking on either too much or too little risk — you may end up making decisions that aren’t right for you and may set you back as you pursue your financial independence.

**Avoid financial “potholes.”** The road to financial liberty will always be marked with potholes you should avoid. One such pothole is debt — the higher your debt burden, the less you can invest for your retirement. It’s not always easy to lower your debt load, but do the best you can to live within your means. A second pothole comes in the form of large, unexpected short-term costs, such as a major home or auto repair or a medical bill not fully covered by insurance. To avoid dipping into your long-term investments to pay for these short-term costs, try to build an emergency fund containing six months’ to a year’s worth of living expenses, with the money kept in a liquid, low-risk account.

**Give yourself some wiggle room.** If you decide that to achieve financial independence, you must retire at 62 or you must buy a vacation home by the beach, you may feel disappointed if you fall short of these goals. But if you’re prepared to accept some flexibility in your plans — perhaps you can work until 65 or just rent a vacation home for the summer — you may be able to earn a different, but still acceptable, financial freedom. And by working a couple of extra years or paying less for your vacation home expenses, you may also improve your overall financial picture.

Putting these and other moves to work can help you keep moving toward your important goals. When you eventually reach your own “Financial Independence Day,” it may not warrant a fireworks display, but it should certainly add some sparkle to your life.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Jeff Trentham is an Edward Jones representative based in Arlington.
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