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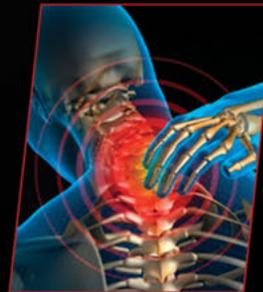
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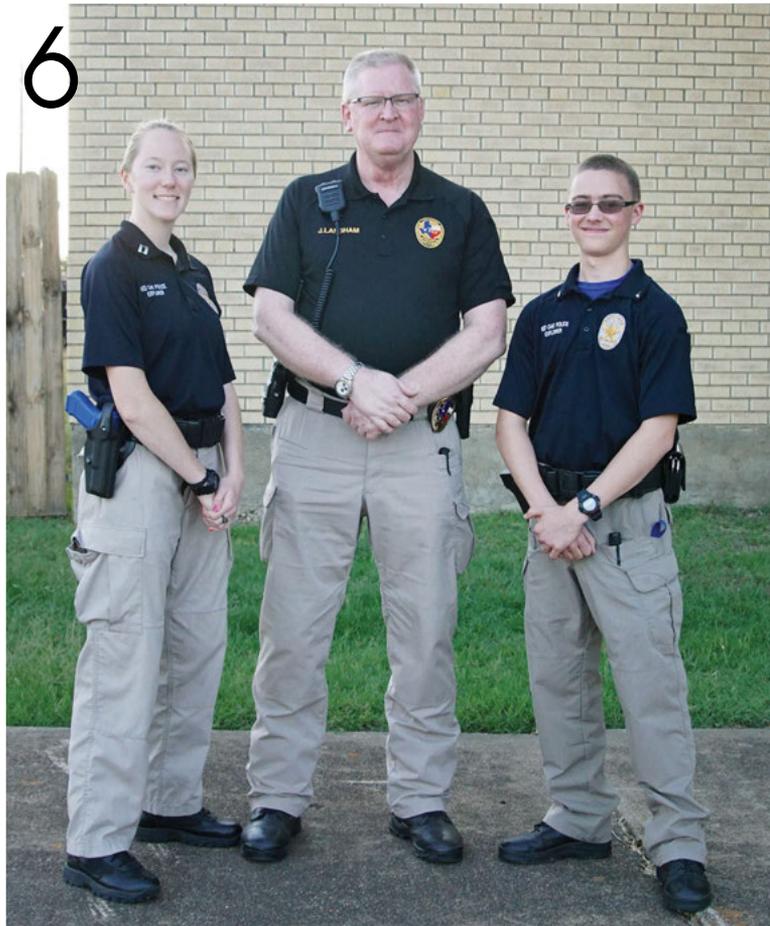
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Managing Editor, Becky Walker | North Ellis Co. Editor, Jill Martinez
Editorial Coordinator, Sandra Strong
Editorial Assistant, Rachel Smith | Writers, Lindsay L. Allen . Derek Jones
Katie Kubitskey . Virginia Riddle . Betty Tryon . Zachary R. Urquhart
Editors/Proofreaders, Pat Anthony . Shannon Randall

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla | Artists, Kristin Bato . Morgan Christensen
Martha Macias . Brande Morgan . Anthony Sarmienta

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Directors, Chris McCalla . Brande Morgan
Photographer, Shane Kirkpatrick

ADVERTISING

Advertising Representatives, Cherise Burnett . Linda Roberson
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ON THE COVER

The Explorers program helps members understand what it means to be part of law enforcement.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Jill

Jill Martinez
North Ellis Co. NOW Editor
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Seasons in life are not predictable ...

The seasons on our calendar tell us when we can expect certain weather changes, though sometimes Mother Nature likes to surprise us. Life is not always predictable either, and while that can be a little unnerving, it's what keeps things interesting.

My husband and I had an unexpected job offer that came along, and we have decided to accept it. At the end of this month, we will be taking our two children and our cat with us to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where we will take up residence and work for an international school.

Though we have lived abroad before, and we have some ideas of what we can expect from this experience, many things will be new, thrilling and maybe even a little scary. While I look forward to this, big parts of my heart remain in Texas. I appreciate the opportunity I have had to connect with this community in this editorial role, and I'll be sure to continue following through the *North Ellis Co. NOW Magazine* Facebook page and the NOW Magazines website.

Bon Voyage!

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DISCOVERING
the **POSSIBILITIES**



Gaining hands-on experience in police work is what membership in Explorers Post #1132 is all about. Established in 2006, and sponsored by the Red Oak Police Department, youth ages 14-20 are introduced to nearly all facets of a police officer's work. "We treat each explorer just like we would a police cadet," Lt. Jim Langham, ROPD officer and post advisor, stated. "We expose explorers to as many situations as we can in a safe manner."

ING

— By Virginia Riddle

ILITIES

The local post is chartered yearly through the Boy Scouts of America Exploring program under the field of law enforcement, one of 12 career fields offered. The mission of the program is to provide knowledge and opportunities for the explorers to gain leadership, problem solving and communication skills. "We are not a 'fix my problem child' organization," Lt. Langham said. "Our explorers are wonderful, self-sufficient young people and must represent our police department well.

"This program takes a lot of manpower to run overall," Lt. Langham added. Equipment, uniforms, meals, hotel and transportation to events are covered through donations made in exchange for explorers working traffic and crowd control at various events. Training is held for two hours weekly. "We make it as realistic as possible," Lt. Langham said. Sessions cover communications, firearms, traffic stops, police procedures in investigations of various crimes, hostage negotiations, active shooter situations, professionalism and ethics, laws and crash investigations.

The explorers also learn to keep confidentiality. "We don't use names and addresses when talking to maintain confidentiality," Lt. Langham explained. "Some things don't leave this training room."

The post is run just like a police department. Explorers dress the part and train in the same



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manner as officers. Explorers wear everything a commissioned officer wears, except for their training weapon. "At the shooting range, the explorers use all of the same firearms that an on-duty officer would use."

Explorers put their training to use during ride-alongs, while working events such as the annual July 4th celebration and during competitions with other city and county law enforcement agencies and even U.S. Border Patrol. Every other year, five national training academies are held. If an explorer wants to attend one of these, an essay must be written and submitted to a national governing body. Only 30 explorers per academy are selected nationwide. The Red Oak Explorers Post sent one explorer in the past.

The post owns a 15-passenger van, which is used for out-of-town competitions, training and for fun times. Gwendaline Sikes, an explorer since 2016, enjoys the social times like eating out together at local restaurants and times when Ms. Muhammad cooks chili hot dogs or macaroni and cheese for the group. "I joined, though, because I want to be the one to stop the crime. These experiences take me out of my comfort zone and shell," she shared. A sophomore, she aspires to become a police detective.

Graham Stubblefield enjoys riding out on duty. An explorer since 2015, and a 2018 Red Oak High School graduate, Graham will soon be reporting for U.S. Air Force basic training. "I signed up to train in military law enforcement," he stated. "I find it rewarding to serve the public. In explorers, we work together to solve problems, while still having fun with friends." He has found training challenging. "Not everything comes naturally, but with dedication and practice, it comes together," Graham explained.

Wanting to help people daily is Zachary Rojas' goal as he pursues a future career in police work. A Red Oak native, Zachary has been an explorer since 2016. "I was challenged,

at first, with fitting in. I'm very quiet," he admitted.

The opportunity to help people drew Joane Muhammed into police work more than five years ago. Joane, executive assistant to ROPD Chief Garland Wolf and co-advisor, enjoys working with the Red Oak Explorers program.



Lt. Langham and his brother were inspired by their dad at a young age to do whatever it took to help people. "We grew up on a farm in Navarro County. My dad didn't have to, but he became a reserve deputy with that sheriff's department," he recalled. It was 32 years ago that the sheriff at that time offered Lt. Langham a job working in law enforcement. "When ROPD discovered my history about how I became an officer, the chief at the time asked me to become the Explorer Post advisor." He has served in that capacity for 11 years now.

The Explorer Post helps young people decide what they want to become and pushes them to levels they didn't think they could reach. With the real-life experience the explorers gain, some may decide law enforcement isn't for them. That's OK, too. No matter which career path explorers take in life, they have gained meaningful knowledge and skills that are useful in any vocation and will provide a unique insight into the world of law enforcement. **NOW**

Editor's Note: For more information, contact Lt. Langham at info@redoakpoliceexplorers.org.

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Life's an *Amazing*

It's been a fast-paced couple of years since Craig and Heather Bjerke moved their family from Columbus, Ohio, to the rolling Texas countryside south of Dallas. Ohio natives and city folks, they didn't know if their adventure, necessitated by Craig's new position as senior vice president of finance for the Dallas Methodist Health System, would have a happy result for them, the couple's five children and their menagerie of animals. "God had a plan for us before we knew it," Craig said. "We knew the move had turned out well when our oldest two kids said they didn't want to go back to Ohio."

"We spent 45 years of our lives in Ohio and loved Columbus, but we feel more at home here now in this short time than we did there," Heather agreed.

The family searched for a home both north and south of Dallas and found just what they were looking for in their former showcase home with



At Home With
Craig & Heather Bjerke



Journey

— By Virginia Riddle

its six bedrooms and five bathrooms resting on four acres. “We also found land and a great school, Ovilla Christian School,” Heather added.

The move started with Heather and a friend driving down from Ohio to Texas in her truck with a horse trailer filled with her equine family of three and a goat. “I was able to board the horses nearby for three months,” Heather said. They flew back to Ohio, movers transported their goods and the family “mini-vanned” with their cats and dogs to Texas. They were without their furnishings for a week, since the large moving van had to return to Dallas after it couldn’t cross



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the bridge into their neighborhood. Everything had to be unloaded into smaller vans for delivery.

“That is my first memory made here,” daughter Audrey, an 11th-grader, remarked. “We were all sleeping on the floor.”

With furnishings settled, the family set to work building the barn and installing horse fencing so Apollo, the palomino; Paxton, the Appaloosa; Spunky, the pony; and Lucy, the goat, could move into quarters. Dogs Shep, Romeo and Grandma Molly keep an eye on everything, along with Dewey and Danny, the family cats.

Craig and Heather had the same



high school in common, but they hadn't met there, since Craig was two years ahead of Heather. They connected after college through mutual friends. He graduated from

Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, and became a CPA, while Heather was earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Otterbein University and a master's degree from the New England Conservatory of Music. “There was a lot of commuting from Columbus to Boston during the two years we dated,” Craig recalled.

Once married, they wanted to have children right away. Twenty years later, the couple's home is filled with the activity that five children bring. Audrey, Connor and Caleb



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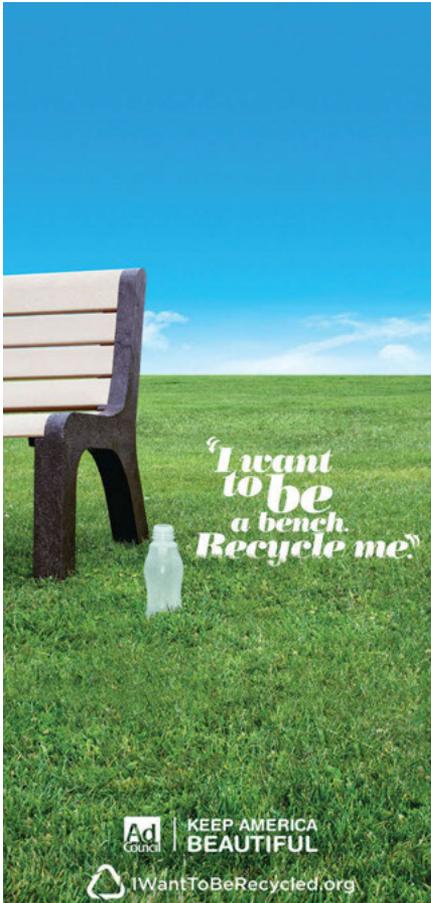
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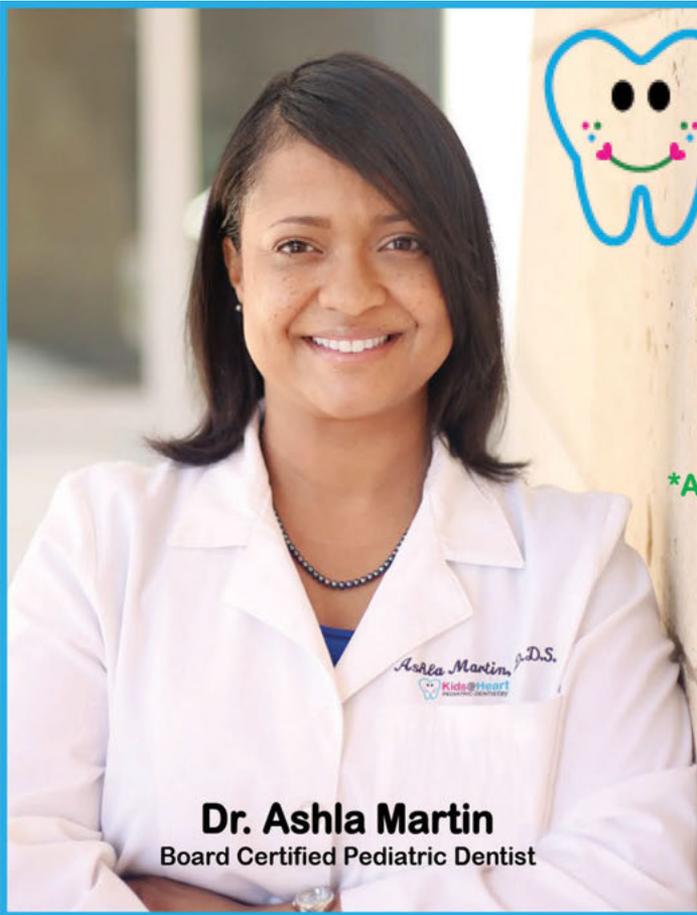


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attend OCS. Heather will continue homeschooling Julianne (9) and Colton (6) this coming year. "I've been a stay-at-home homeschool teacher for the past 12 years," Heather said.

She used her musical talent and training in musical theater productions as founder and director of a K-12 homeschool choir in Ohio. "The choir grew to 120 members," Heather added proudly.

Connor and Audrey got the experience of a lifetime when they traveled with their parents to China for Colton's adoption. "It was a huge life change to adopt a little brother," Heather remembered. "He was adopted at age 2."

"And he's the best," Audrey added.

The family worships at The Oaks church. Sunday nights, they host a church youth small group. "It's wonderful to have 30 teenagers at our house for fellowship, food and fun," Heather said.

A downstairs bedroom suite is reserved for visits from the grandparents, and the master suite, complete with an exercise/sunroom, makes for relaxing moments. The family enjoys entertaining and relaxing in the two outdoor living/kitchen areas with fireplaces that overlook the barn and pasture. "Our patio is my favorite room," Heather said. Raised garden beds built by Craig allow for homegrown veggies.

Family movie times are spent in the living room, with Heather's grand piano standing ready to help her entertain the youth group and other guests. "It was a gift from my dad and mom when I received my master's degree," Heather remembered.

Family meals and school lessons happen around the informal dining table that once belonged to Heather's grandmother. The large kitchen with its island can easily adapt to entertaining crowds. Heather created the tin planters hanging from the island's pot rack.

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Upstairs is kid central. “They love having their own space and individual bedrooms,” Heather said. A media/ping pong/playroom with a mini-kitchen overlooks the pasture and serves as another gathering space. It’s surrounded by bedrooms. Connor’s room reflects his love of baseball, basketball and golf, as well as the Ohio State Buckeyes.



Audrey is a calligraphy artist who paints sayings and Bible verses on boards that decorate her bedroom and other walls. A corner window seat and hung mementos provide for reflective moments. She plans to attend Southwestern Assemblies of God University and study to become a worship pastor.

Caleb’s bunk beds work well for sleepovers. He loves baseball and football. Julianne’s space is pink and white with doll and book collections. A panda bedspread and stuffed pandas show where Colton’s interests lie.

Having no extended family close by has been a change for this family. “It’s been a journey, and we have to make new traditions,” Craig concluded. Holidays take the family on the road to see and learn about Texas. “There’s so much to do, and this state has such a unique history,” Heather, ever the teacher, stated. “I’ve met horse people, and we’ve made friendships with other couples. People are so friendly. We’ve done crazy things here that have blown our parents away.” Life anywhere else, for this family, just wouldn’t be the same. **NOW**

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Keeping His Cool

— By Derek Jones

Like many young adults, Tighe Philbin found himself graduating high school without knowing what he wanted to do with his life. He floated around taking classes at a junior college and working odd jobs. Tighe then happened upon the field of heating, ventilation and air conditioning. “I started working for a friend and his dad who work in HVAC,” he explained, “and I discovered an industry I am really passionate about.”

Normally, an associate degree in the field of HVAC takes two years to complete, but with Tighe’s dedication to the program, he is set to graduate from Texas State Technical College after only a year-and-a-half. Tighe stated, “I really had to stay committed to getting as much summer credit as possible, which can be difficult at times while trying to work a day job. It has all been worth it to pursue a career I love.”

When Tighe graduates this summer, he will have the degree and experience necessary to be successful. He also acknowledged the value of attending TSTC. “The program there has been instrumental in helping me become successful in this industry. The instructors really care about your success and work hard to provide students with necessary hands-on experience.” Tighe was, however, quick to point out what he most appreciated about the HVAC program at TSTC. “The instructors left no question unanswered, and that really makes all the difference.”

There are other benefits to pursuing a career in HVAC other than just loving the job. “This is an ever-expanding industry,” he stated. “HVAC is not just about residential comfort cooling, but includes the commercial sector as well, such as the food and medical industry.” Having lived in Red Oak his entire life, Tighe is looking forward to continuing his career in the area. He laughed, “You know, in the South where it’s so hot, there’s always going to be a need for good HVAC technicians.”

Tighe feels the HVAC industry is a perfect match

for him. "I can't sit still, and I like to work with my hands," he stated. "Besides, when you go out to do a job, you're left to your own knowledge and skill to figure out the problem and then fix it." Freedom and independence are important to Tighe. "I like not having someone looking over my shoulder all the time. HVAC lends itself to the independent thinker, and I love that."

Freedom and independence are not the only things Tighe finds enticing about the HVAC industry. "I also love solving technical issues," he said. One of the things he is most passionate about is understanding the science behind HVAC. "I don't just want to be a parts changer. I want to be a technician who understands the engineering which makes up the systems," he stated. "My classes from TSTC have been instrumental in helping me gain this understanding."

Through his current job, Tighe has been able to spend more than a month working at a nuclear power plant. "I have been working on the chillers at the nuclear power plant, and it is amazing to be able to work on something so complex and massive. The opportunities offered through a career in HVAC are endless," he stated. "You will never be bored," he stated, summing up his experience.

Currently, Tighe is achieving another dream. "I am in the process of buying a house for me and my son, Maxton, which would not have been possible without discovering this awesome career." He currently desires to stay in the Red Oak or Waxahachie area in which he grew up and continue to invest in his community with his skills and knowledge. Tighe is optimistic about the possibilities the future holds. "The field of HVAC is continuing to grow, and I am excited to be a part of it," he shared. "Because of the great career I have found in HVAC, the world is my oyster." **NOW**

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CookingNOW

In the Kitchen With

BRENDA NICHOLSON

— By Lindsay L. Allen



A truly creative person, Brenda Nicholson loves to be in the kitchen cooking, decorating her home or crafting. “Cooking is relaxing and comfortable to me,” she said. “Southern food, Mexican dishes and grilling are my comfort foods, but desserts will also be welcome in my home.”

To be more specific, cake balls are the dessert of choice at the Nicholson home. Ten years ago, a friend shared a recipe for cake balls with Brenda, and the rest is history. “Besides the decadent flavors, I love the creative process of decorating them and the presentation involved,” she said. “I started making them for every occasion and began to have requests for orders. Before I knew it, I started Fabulous Cake Balls and have been making them for years.” **NOW**

Fabulous Cake Balls

1 box cake mix, flavor of choice
16 oz. ready-made frosting, or frosting of your choice
Melting chocolate or almond bark, to taste
Sprinkles (optional)

1. Prepare your favorite cake mix according to package directions.
2. After baking, cool and finely crumble. Stir in ready-made frosting or your favorite frosting recipe.
3. Refrigerate for at least an hour, or until well chilled. Using a small melon ball scooper, scoop and quickly roll into smooth balls. Freeze for at least 15 minutes.

4. Slowly melt your favorite melting chocolate or almond bark in the microwave or in a double boiler. Using a dipping fork or skewer, carefully dip the chilled cake ball in the chocolate; put on parchment paper to dry.
5. Decorate as desired. If using sprinkles, be sure you add them before the chocolate dries.

Chili

1 lb. ground turkey
1 lb. lean ground beef
1/4 cup onion, chopped
1/4 cup green bell pepper, chopped
1 Tbsp. garlic powder
1 Tbsp. crushed red pepper
1 1/2 Tbsp. chili powder

1 tsp. cumin
1 tsp. oregano
1 15-oz. can black beans
1 can mild Ro-Tel tomatoes
16 oz. tomato sauce
1 10.75-oz. can tomato soup
1/4 cup water
Frito chips, to taste (optional)

1. Brown turkey and beef until done. In a large pot, combine turkey, beef, onion, bell pepper, garlic powder, crushed red pepper, chili powder, cumin and oregano.
2. Cook until tender. Add beans, Ro-Tel, tomato sauce, soup and water; simmer for 45 minutes. Serve with Fritos.

Brenda's Chicken Salad

5 lbs. chicken breast
1 cup light Miracle Whip
1/4 cup mayonnaise
1/2 cup sour cream
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. onion powder
Ground black pepper, to taste
2 Tbsp. dried parsley
1 cup celery, chopped

1 cup walnuts, chopped
3/4 cup dried cranberries

1. Shred chicken. Mix the Miracle Whip, mayonnaise, sour cream, salt, garlic powder, onion powder, pepper and parsley together.
2. Stir chicken into the dressing mix; add celery, walnuts and dried cranberries.
3. Serve on a croissant or on its own.

Black Bean Salad

2 15-oz. cans black beans, drained and rinsed
1 15-oz. can garbanzo beans, drained
1 15.25-oz. can yellow corn, drained
1 15.25-oz. can white corn, drained
1 large jar pimentos, diced and drained
Red onion, diced, to taste
Green bell pepper, to taste
2 Tbsp. water
3/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup vegetable oil
Salt, to taste
Pepper, to taste

1. Combine beans, corn, pimentos, red onion and bell pepper.
2. Heat water, sugar, vegetable oil, salt and pepper. Cook until sugar is dissolved; let cool. Pour over the salad; refrigerate.

Cranberry Salsa

12 oz. fresh, uncooked cranberries
1/4 cup green onion
1 fresh jalapeño pepper
2 Tbsp. cilantro (optional)
1 cup sugar
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
1/8 tsp. salt

1. Chop the cranberries, onion, jalapeño and cilantro; combine in a bowl.
2. Add sugar, lemon juice and salt; stir gently until blended.
3. Cover with plastic wrap; place in the refrigerator overnight.
4. Take mixture out of the refrigerator; stir. Strain out all liquid and serve.

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— By Virginia Riddle

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The Texas star may shine brightly over all that is Texas, but it's the bright sun that helps overheat this state's abodes and businesses, causing high energy bills during the summer months. Solar screens are exterior, full-length screens, which cover the entire surface of windows and doors. The direct sunlight is diffused by the screens before it reaches the glass surfaces. "We have the most effective window treatments that can be applied to homes for

lowering energy bills and reducing glare and fading, while adding daytime privacy," Jim Berner, president and CEO of Lone Star Solar Screens, L.L.C., said.

Successful in business in the Metroplex since 1991, Jim expanded his fleet of yellow trucks with the familiar blue letters into the Houston area in 1997. "We measure, custom build and install solar and insect screens for homes, apartments and businesses," Jim explained. The company provides free estimates and carries all brands of screens for all properties, no matter the age. Seven different colors are available. The company's window-washing service is available between October and January. Payment can be made by cash, check or through most major credit cards. In-house financing is also available.

A native of Aberdeen, South Dakota, Jim moved to Irving the same year he started his business. "I loved the Texas weather, the Metroplex and its people," he recalled.

“The economy was good, and I was looking for the opportunity to succeed in self-employment.” Joining Jim is Terri Berner, executive vice president, who takes care of all aspects of the business. Jorge Cruz is the sales manager for both locations. Paul Windmiller is the installations manager, and Claudia Cruz is the office/customer service manager. “We have fantastic employees and co-workers who live in and throughout the Metroplex,” Jim added. “It has been an honor to get to know them and their families. Some employees have been with us 10-20 years. We currently have over 50 employees working in multiple locations.

“We’ve been lucky to always be surrounded with honest and hardworking people who care about each other and our customers,” Jim continued. “Our great employees have made the everyday and yearly challenges in running a business less difficult.”

Another of Jim’s joys of having been in business for 27 years has been the opportunity to see how much home developments have expanded and transformed. “I can remember solar screening some of the first model homes for builders and watching the communities sprout up incredibly fast,” he recalled. “It’s been a privilege and an honor to have so many repeat customers call us to install screens at their new homes, since many have relocated around the DFW area over the years. The many great customers we’ve had throughout these years have made doing business easier and rewarding.”

Lone Star Solar Screens’ mission is to always provide the consumer with the highest quality product on the market at a reasonable price with the best service available anywhere. Jim concluded, “Work ethic, integrity and honesty have been the cornerstone on which we’ve built this business from the beginning. We owe our business success to following our mission statement and to our great customers and employees.” **NOW**

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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 *Savueur'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. **NOW**

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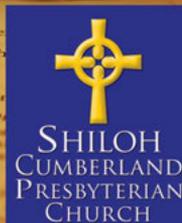
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Let's Get Physical

— 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. **NOW**

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Zoomed In: Benny Gonzales

By Sandra Strong

Benny Gonzales was born and raised in Ferris. He graduated from Ferris High School in 1984 and married Rebecca, his high school sweetheart. Benny and Rebecca have two sons, Christopher and Steven. Not long after graduating, Benny went to work for Atmos Energy where he, along with many other Atmos Energy employees, service not only Ferris, but Bristol, Palmer, Waxahachie and a large area of Maypearl.

Thirty years later, he is still going to work each day at the job he enjoys. As the temperature was close to 100 degrees, Benny, wiping sweat from his brow, was out walking the streets of Ferris locating underground gas lines. "As a field supervisor, I could spend my days in the office," he said, "but I find that being out in the field is rewarding. I'm a hands-on kind of guy."



Dr. M. Shaw and Dr. M. Sheibley, along with their staff at Ovilla Family Dentistry, cut the Chamber ribbon along with Ovilla city leaders.



Alexis Joaquin, 16-year-old, soon-to-be sophomore at Ferris High School, waits for her order of Chinese food at Pho's Kitchen.



JoAnn Brewer, Prosperity Bank President, cuts the ribbon at the Red Oak Chamber ribbon cutting event.



Sharon Poldrack, of Ovilla, finds the perfect card at Dollar General.



Red Oak High School hosts a soccer camp where students can learn and have fun.



Derrick Manning walks to his home in Ferris after getting a cold drink on a hot summer day from the local convenience store.



Jack Odom, of Red Oak, works at the Ovilla Christian School installing lights so the kids can play basketball on Wednesday nights.



Donna Reiszner, Kellie Bodle and Olivia Bodle, all from Red Oak, enjoy a late lunch at the Metro Grill in Ferris.

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Calendar

July

3

Midlothian's Independence Day Fireworks Display: 9:15-10:15 p.m., MISD Multi-Purpose Stadium. Parking lot gates will open at 6:00 p.m. Stadium seating will not be available to the public, so bring your lawn chairs. Visit www.midlothian.tx.us or call (972) 775-7177 for more details.



3, 4

Crape Myrtle Festival & Parade: **July 3**, concert and fireworks, Waxahachie Sports Complex; **July 4**, parade, downtown. For more details, visit www.waxahachiecvb.com.

5, 10, 11, 12

Red Oak Library's Summer Reading Club: 2:00 p.m. or 7:00 p.m., 200 Lakeview Pkwy., Red Oak. Enjoy a variety of free events and activities going on this summer. For more information on specific guests and activities, call (469) 218-1230.

6, 13, 20

Ferris Library Teen Time: 2:00 p.m., 301 E. 10th St., Ferris. Teens can beat the summer heat and enjoy lots of games with friends during the summer reading program. For more

information on Teen Time and other library events, call (972) 544-3696.

7, 8

Ferris Police Department's Gazebo-a-thon: 7:00 a.m., **July 7**; 7:00 a.m., **July 8**, Ferris Town Square Plaza. Come help raise funds for the Ferris I.S.D. school supplies for next school year. Early donations accepted at the Ferris PD office. The goal is to raise \$2,000 this year.

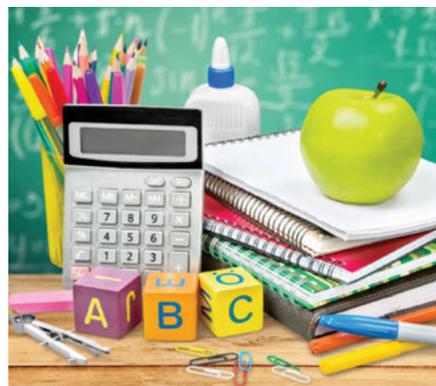
13

Ovilla Road Baptist Church's Kids Fest: 5:00-8:00 p.m., Les Zeigler Park, Desoto. A free event for the community. Come and enjoy carnival games, free food, live music, slip-n-slides, bounce houses and so much more!

August

4

The Back to School Fair and Car show: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Ferris High School. There will be food trucks, live entertainment, and retail booths set up outdoors and indoors, \$10 immunizations, free haircuts, free school supply giveaway, silent auction and more! To pre-register as a vendor or car show entry, please follow this link: <https://bit.ly/2HIHGwH>.



Ongoing:

Third Mondays

Red Oak Book Club: 6:30-8:00 p.m., Red Oak Public Library. Open to all adults 21+ living in the Red Oak area. For more information, call (469) 218-1230 or email redoakbookclub@gmail.com.

Tuesdays

Lariat Bridge Club: 6:30 p.m., Boy Scout Cabin, 1139 Brown St., Waxahachie. For more information or to confirm the meeting, email Shari at weatherscf@yahoo.com or call (505) 270-4017.



Second Tuesdays

342 Network Group: 7:30 a.m., Denny's, I-35E Service Rd., Red Oak. The group includes business owners who would like to network and is open to all businesses in any county. RSVP to Melton McKown at (214) 244-2829.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

North Ellis Co. Outreach assistance: 9:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m., 205 S. Main St., Ferris. Assistance is for Red Oak and Ferris residents. For more information, call Denise Butler at (972) 617-7261.

Ferris Public Library Story Time: 11:00 a.m., 301 E. 10th St., Ferris. Pre-school children and their caregivers are invited for stories. For more information, call (972) 544-3699.

Wednesdays

Red Oak Library Toddler Story Time: 10:00-11:00 a.m., Free Crafts, story time and learning games for children 18 mo.-5 yrs. and their parents. Call the library at (469) 218-1230 for more information on all library events.



Wednesdays and Thursdays

The Red Oak Senior Citizens Group: 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd., Red Oak. Join for games and activities. Light breakfast provided both days. Lunch provided on

Thursdays. \$2 per week membership fee. Call (972) 571-0632 for more information.

Thursdays

SYNERGY: 11:30 a.m., Sparacello's Deli, 600 Methodist St., Suite 3120, Red Oak. A time for business owners to network. Everyone welcome.

Third Thursdays

Ferris Lions Club meeting: 6:30 p.m., Scout House in Mutz Park, 514 S. Mabel St. Call (972) 842-2136 for more information.

Second Saturdays

Texas Civil Defense monthly drill: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 101 Live Oak St., Red Oak. For more information, call LTC Tim O'Connor at (214) 868-0082.

Red Oak Opry: 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m., Lone Star Cowboy Church, 1011 E.

Ovilla Rd., Red Oak. Tickets sold at the door. \$12 for adults; \$5 for children. For more information, visit www.redoakopry.com.

Third Saturdays

Ferris Trades Day: 101 S. Main St., Ferris, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. For more information, call Tina Miller at (817) 992-9204.

Ferris Police Department's Coffee with a Cop: 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m., 145 Donuts, 502 E. 8th St., Ferris. Spend time visiting with your local police officers. Get to know them and express your concerns. For more information, call (972) 544-2233.

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



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Do Not Drink the Water

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Those happy days of summer spent splashing in the pool without a care in the world may not be so carefree. The closing of public pools because of contamination brought Recreational Water Illnesses to the forefront. RWIs occur when swallowing or having some contact with water that is contaminated with pathogens (germs). These pathogens may be bacteria such as shigella and E. coli, or parasites such as Cryptosporidium, Giardia or even some viruses. The most frequent symptom is diarrhea, along with fever, vomiting and stomach cramps. After exposure to polluted water, skin, eye, ear and respiratory symptoms are all indicative of a possible infection.

One of the most common ways these germs are spread is from humans suffering with diarrhea entering the water. Even barring the occasional “accident,” anyone with recent diarrhea will have enough germs on their bottom to easily contaminate the water supply. To lessen the probability of becoming ill from RWIs, do not swallow the water! Even a small amount can be devastating. Many people think pool water is safe because it has been treated. On the contrary, some of these pathogens can live for several days in chlorinated water. Even with a perfectly maintained pool,

it is impossible to prevent all RWIs, because you cannot control every circumstance of what gets into the water.

Therefore, if swimming in a public pool, please remember that it is a communal venue. If someone is ill or careless, you may not know it. It is not always evident when fecal material gets in the water. Water that is treated with chlorine is not a substitution for good personal hygiene. The Centers for Disease Control recommends showering with soap and water before swimming. Wash your hands after using the bathroom. Please consider others, and do not swim if you are ill with diarrhea. Parents of small children need to be especially vigilant and offer frequent potty breaks to avoid accidents in the water. Clean the bottom with soap and water before entering the pool.

Swimming pools are not the only water venues susceptible to this problem. Hot tubs and Jacuzzis are particularly vulnerable to the spread of waterborne diseases, because the high temperature of the water causes the chlorine to evaporate more quickly. Lakes, rivers, springs or ponds carry an even higher risk. Any number of pollutants can foul the water, such as sewage, animal waste or even a heavy runoff from a recent rain. It may be inconvenient to practice due diligence when the water and good times beckon. However, being careful may not only keep others from becoming ill, it will keep you safer, too. **NOW**

This article is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult with your physician if you have questions regarding this topic.

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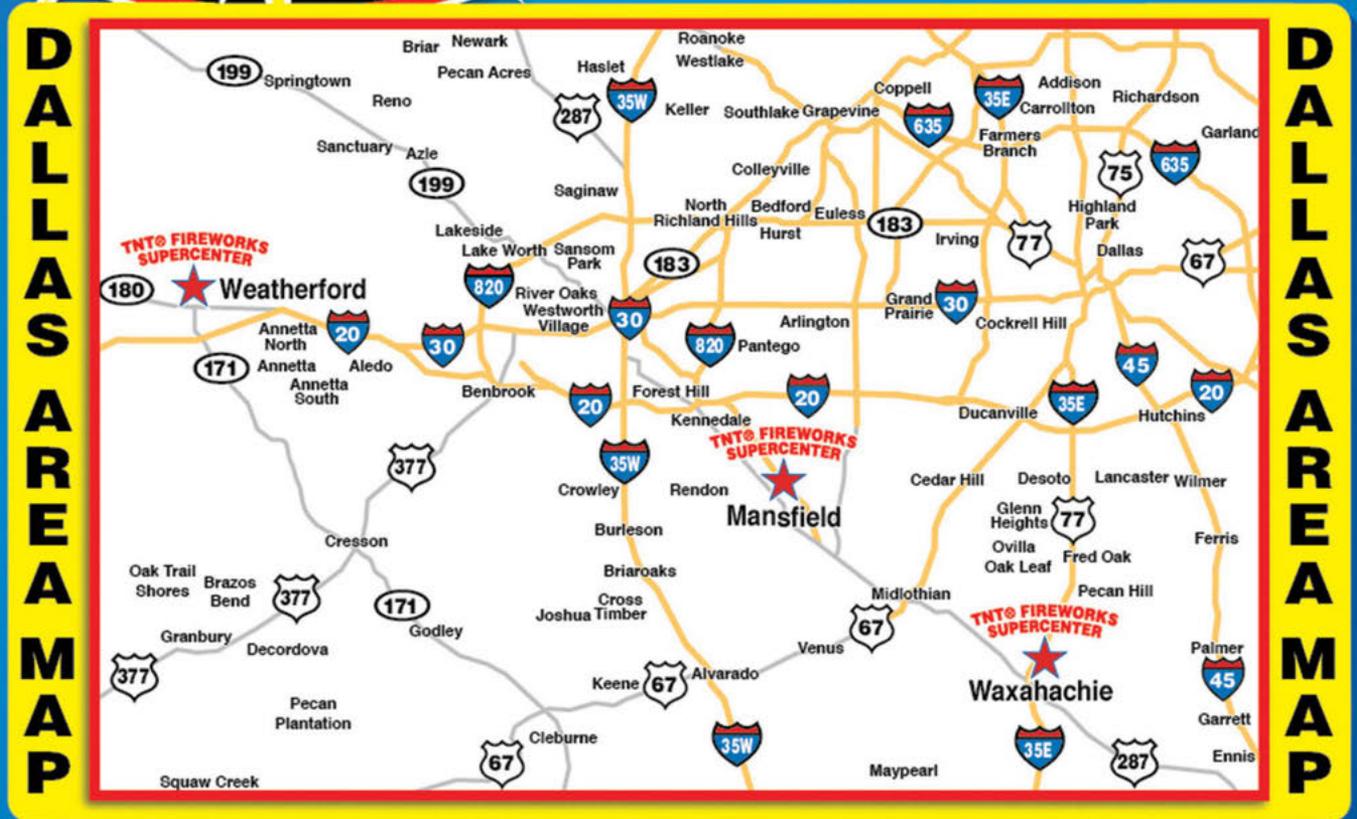


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