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M A G A Z I N E

August 2010

Numbers *Have Faces*

Life as **They See It**

ALSO INSIDE:

Jones Family Court

We Are Family

Passing **the Baton**

At Home With
**Jimmie and Nancy
Simmons**





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On the Cover

Nicole Mansell is helping move Waxahachie Independent School District into the future.

Photo by Terri Ozymy.

Editor's Note



Welcome Back to School!

Summer has gone by in a flash. School supplies have been purchased and lesson plans have been completed. Afternoons at the movie theater will be traded for extracurricular time in athletics. Ice cream cones in the evenings will be replaced with homework in reading, writing and arithmetic. As school resumes on August 23, let us be ever mindful of the speed limit in the school zones. Please slow down now and maybe you will avoid a speeding ticket later.

“Going Green” in Waxahachie takes on a whole new meaning when school starts. It means taking pride in the football team that works hard on and off the field to bring home a victory. So, wear those green and white spirit shirts with the same pride the team has as they make their way onto the field every Friday night. You can even cheer, “Go, Indians, Go!” if you want to.

Sandra Strong
WaxahachieNOW Editor

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Approved Home Health Care is Awarded CHAP Accreditation

Midlothian, Texas — July 7, 2010 — Community Health Accreditation Program, Inc., (CHAP) announced today that Approved Home Health Care has been awarded CHAP accreditation under the CHAP Core & Home Health Standards of Excellence. This is the beginning of the fourth year CHAP accreditation has been awarded to Approved Home Health Care.

CHAP accreditation demonstrates that Approved Home Health Care meets the industry's highest nationally recognized standards. Rigorous evaluation by CHAP focuses on structure and function, quality of services and products, human and financial resources and long term viability. Through CHAP accreditation, Approved Home Health Care is also certified as a Medicare provider.

“We are very pleased that Approved Home Health Care chose to continue CHAP accreditation,” said Terry A. Duncombe, CHAP President and CEO. “Voluntarily selecting to achieve CHAP accreditation and meeting our high standards of excellence demonstrates Approved Home Health Care’s commitment to quality. CHAP is delighted to work with their entire team through the ongoing process of quality improvement.”

Approved Home Health Care provides a variety of nursing and therapy services to patients and their families in Ellis, Johnson, Tarrant, Dallas counties and surrounding areas. They are locally owned and operated by hometown folks with over 50 years combined home health experience.

“We are extremely proud of our entire staff for making this possible. They are, after all, our greatest asset,” says Louis Ponder, owner of Approved Home Health Care. “We are excited that we are able to provide high quality, compassionate health care services with a home town feel for our community,” chimes in co-owner Kelly Kavanaugh.

CHAP is an independent, not-for-profit, accrediting body for community-based health care organizations. Created in 1965, CHAP was the first to recognize the need and value for accreditation in community-based care. CHAP is the oldest national, community-based accrediting body with more than 5,000 agencies currently accredited nationwide. Through “deeming authority” granted by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), CHAP has the regulatory authority to survey agencies providing home health, hospice and home medical equipment services, to determine if they meet the Medicare Conditions of Participation.



For additional agency information, contact Kelly Kavanaugh, RN, HCS-D, COS-C, Owner/Administrator at (972) 723-2933.

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Numbers Have **FACES**

— By Sandra Strong

Nicole Mansell, director of public relations for Waxahachie Independent School District (WISD), is a product of both her parents. She gained her “drive to succeed” from her mother, while her “strong work ethic” was a gift she received from her dad. “My mom always told me to work hard and pursue my goals,” Nicole said. “And my dad would always say, ‘There’s no excuse for

laziness and sorriness.’ It was his favorite quote.”

With parents like this, it is no wonder that Nicole excels and succeeds at most everything she puts her mind to, as devoted PR director, loving wife to Daniel and proud mother of Madison. “You can be whatever you want to be,” she stated, “but the strong desire must be part of the overall goal. You really can make something from nothing.”

When it comes to WISD students, Nicole will be the first to admit that some of her ideas are “crazy, spastic and off-the-wall.” “But the district backs

every idea with pride and help,” she added. One such intention is the Second Annual Operation First Day of School event that will be held later this month on Tuesday, August 10, at the Turner Learning Center gymnasium. There will be two times for parents and their children to attend, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and again from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. “It’s important that we accommodate all parents,” Nicole explained. “That’s why we have the two times. We don’t want anyone to be left out because they have to work during the day.”

Operation First Day of School was designed to meet the needs of the district’s economically disadvantaged

students. The idea came in the fall of 2008. “Our current enrollment right now is at 7,000,” Nicole said. “Of that number, 50.2 percent fall into the economically disadvantaged category. That’s half of the school district’s population.” Finally able to put faces with the numbers, Nicole knew she had to do something to somehow make a difference. “I didn’t see this part of the community,” she sadly admitted. “The numbers opened my eyes and my heart to the need.”



The heavy burden began to lessen during the annual Texas School Public Relations Association conference Nicole attends each summer with her state of Texas colleagues. “We brainstorm about school PR and how it relates to the bigger picture,” she explained. “When I mentioned our numbers, my colleagues offered so many great ideas. I put some of their suggestions together, then put the Nicole spin on it and came up with Operation First Day of School.”

Operation First Day of School is so much more than school supplies and backpacks. It also encompasses new clothing, immunizations, haircuts and dentistry. “One of the main goals of the program is to increase self-esteem from the moment they [the children and their parents] pass through the gymnasium doors,” she said. Nicole’s hope, as well as the hope of the 200-plus volunteers, is one of breaking the inferiority complex. “We help the students now,” she said, “so they can help themselves later as adults.”



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Every one of us needs somebody at least once in our lives.”

Last year, Dallas dentists came in a mobile unit to clean teeth and provide fluoride treatments. This year, Nicole is looking to a local organization. “For our dentistry needs, we are hoping to partner with Hope Clinic,” she stated. “Our relationship with them has grown and our target market is the same as theirs.” Honorary co-chairs for the first year were Joe Jenkins and Sam Gagliano. “I really could not have done it without them,” Nicole gushed. “They went with me everywhere as I introduced the program to the community.” This year’s honorary co-chairs are Mike and Bonney

“We want them to see that we are there to serve them; that we are happy to serve them.”

Ramsey and WHS senior, Justin Fox. “Two generations are perfect,” Nicole said, explaining her philosophy. “Mike and Bonney will bring credibility to the program, while Justin can relate and tell the stories of his peers.”

As an organization, those who volunteer for Operation First Day of School along with Nicole are present to serve the students and their parents. “We want them to feel comfortable,” Nicole said, referring to the family as a whole. “We want them to see that we are there to serve them; that we are *happy* to serve them.”

A full week before the first event was spent on preparation. Preparation this year will be a carbon copy of last year, with only a few minor adjustments thrown in for good measure. More than likely, the Cherokee Charmers, WHS Cheerleaders and members of the Student Council will work alongside adult volunteers to make sure clothes are hung on hangers and organized by season, gender and size. “I wanted the gym to offer a department store setting,” she smiled, “where everything they needed could be found under one roof. It was truly controlled chaos in the rarest form. It was overwhelming in an amazing way.”

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families do to receive assistance is get in line to fill out a form. These forms are kept in the order in which they are received until the families are introduced to their personal shopper. The volunteer personal shoppers are there to aid the families as they shop. Granted, it took lots of sweat and manual labor, but two days following the first event, Nicole already had a firm date on the calendar for this year. "It also spoke volumes to see my superintendent, Mr. Tom Collins, sweating, too, to make this project happen," she said proudly. "I didn't even have to ask; he just said, 'Nicole, where do you need me?'"

The first year also served Nicole well in her own personal life as two close family members passed away tragically and unexpectedly. To keep herself away from the doors of depression, Nicole began to focus on the issue of helping



Last year's honorary co-chairs, Joe Jenkins and Sam Gagliano.

others, instead of dwelling on her losses. "Operation First Day of School healed the pain of losing my Nanny," she confided. "It allowed me to focus all my energies on the children in need, instead of on myself. The project is still healing the wounds. I've always worked hard to make my Nanny proud."

Nicole smiled as she remembered her first mention of the back-to-school event. "People told me I'd never be able to pull this off," she said. "Those thoughts are what pushed me forward. Last year, 617 families and 1,535 children gained more than a handout." No doubt, it is those numbers with faces that will keep Nicole moving forward into the future with crazy, spastic and, sometimes, off-the-wall ideas that seem to just come natural for her. **NOW**

Editor's Note: For more information, call Nicole Mansell at (972) 923-4631 or e-mail her at nmansell@nowd.org.

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AT HOME WITH JIMMIE
AND NANCY SIMMONS



LIVING HISTORY

— By *Cari LaCroix*

Located down a windy road, Jimmie and Nancy Simmons' property resembles the beautiful Hill Country. Rolling pastures covered in trees create perfect shade spots anywhere you turn. Fragrant wildflowers decorate the 10 acres with color in what Jimmie calls "the Good Lord's garden."

Comparable to a treasure chest, their home is filled with items of rich memories and deep significance. This stately two-story constructed from red brick and siding sits behind a circular driveway. A three-car garage with an apartment overhead sits off to the side. A redbrick walkway leads up the steps to a generous-sized front porch, armed with strong white columns. Though the home is less than 20 years old, it is reminiscent of homes from the 1860s, built and



furnished to bring honor and appreciation to the Confederate period.

The Simmons did not originally intend to build a home. One Friday, Nancy and their Realtor met to make an offer on an old historical home located in downtown Waxahachie. Because the Realtor forgot the papers, the meeting was rescheduled for Monday. While driving with a friend the next day, Nancy discovered their property. "It met all of Jim's criteria, including trees, a creek, hill and hard-top road," Nancy remembered.

A country boy, Jimmie grew up in Texas working over 30 years for GM. Now a writer, he enjoys the opportunity to voice his strong passion for history. He is an active member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, in honor of his great-great-grandfather's service in the War for Southern Independence. Nancy supports his involvement by participating in the Confederate Rose. She was born in Canada and reared in Michigan. She moved to Waxahachie to start a family with her late husband. Years later, she met Jimmie while attending a Bible-study class. They also found themselves on the same walking path, exercising at Getzender Park! They are proud to have been married for 18 years now.

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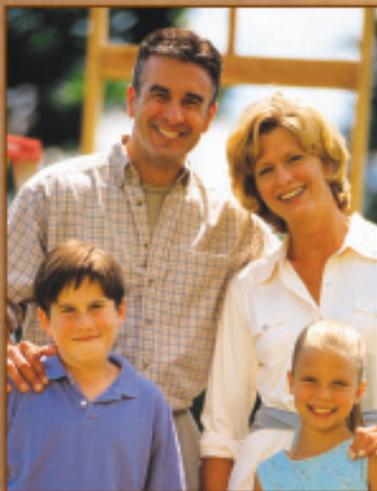


Jimmie and Nancy are both thankful for their roots, which are reflected in their hobbies. These include participating in historical reenactments, tea parties and helping build a strong platform for the Republican Party. Their deep appreciation of the Confederate time period served as inspiration in the building and furnishing of their home. "I like to surround myself with history," Nancy explained. Everything in their home was carefully

picked. Some items are antiques, others are reproductions, but all are accurate representations, whether in colors, patterns, wood type, fabric or hardware. "We're Southerners now, Nancy too, so we have a Southern home!" Jim exclaimed.

Entering the home feels like a step back in time. Hardwood flooring and beautiful stained woodwork decorate most rooms displayed in columns, shelves, crown molding, gingerbread

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trim and baseboards. Lace curtains adorn almost every window. The downstairs features a foyer, formal dining, study, living area, kitchen, utility room, half bath and master bedroom and bathroom. Upstairs includes a sitting room, four bedrooms and two bathrooms. Reproduction brass doorknobs lead the way into each room.

The foyer opens to the living room, which has a welcoming arrangement of furniture set just right to enjoy the fireplace ahead. It is the first of five fireplaces, some wood burning, some gas, each with an antique mantel. It is centered between French doors leading to the back deck.

The kitchen to the left is lit by an oversized skylight, positioned over the

island. Dainty, floral wallpaper and built-in shelves holding a set of antique tins add to the innocent charm. Another collection near the kitchen table features “friendship” cups, antique teacups with random, mismatched patterns. “That way friends can just pick their favorite one to drink from,” Nancy explained. Even the utility room off the kitchen is inviting, with windows overlooking the front yard. Reproduction tin soap advertisements are displayed on the walls.

The formal dining room is abundant with beautiful, stained-wood columns, crown molding and gingerbread trim. “We laid out the gingerbread trim and assembled it,” Nancy recalled. The room also has a second fireplace and antique mantel. Wood floors sit below a painted

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ceiling, framed in with corner accents. An old sewing machine adds another nostalgic touch.

In the study, blue military wallpaper sets the scene. A roll-top desk invites someone to sit and write a letter. Brass eagles and framed art featuring Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson decorate the room. A framed quilt block hand-stitched by Jimmie's mother hangs in the corner.

In the master bedroom and bathroom, finishing touches include fashion plates from dated ladies magazines, old tins, hats, canteens and baskets. Some of these items are used in reenactments. In front of a window, a maple square from an old gym floor in Forrestone has been inserted in the red oak flooring. The bathroom has a claw foot tub Nancy bought at a garage sale in Red Oak; a lucky find!

The historic theme continues upstairs in the guest bedrooms. Each has specially picked colors for family members, to make them feel at home when they visit. Marble-topped dressers, four-poster beds, side tables, antique sewing machines and even an antique card table furnish the rooms. Sloped ceilings provide intimacy, and paintings by Nancy's daughter give a personal touch.

Between two upstairs bedrooms an alcove is the perfect spot for the cat, which catches a sunbeam through the stained-glass window. Directly across is the appropriately named "Hearth Room." A tiled fireplace sits between a

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wide window and a half-French door that leads to the balcony outside. The Hearth Room also contains Nancy's antique doll collection, many given to her by family and friends. "It started when my Great Aunt from France sent me a doll when I was a child. My mother did not let me play with it, so my Aunt sent two more. Mom didn't let me play with those either!" Nancy



laughed. Her collection has grown to include an eclectic assortment of porcelain, nesting and Native American dolls.

Another room honorably hosts Jimmie and Nancy's period costumes, worn in reenactments attended in Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida and Oklahoma. Although a few pieces were purchased, Nancy makes the majority by hand. A closet full of dresses, hats and purses are testament to her skill.

The home truly brings you to another time. Even the outdoors provides an escape, with a stone walkway leading to a hidden bench and rose arbor. Fragrant



rosemary fills the air, with wild flowers growing wherever they may. The rain off the roof of the cow barn helps fill a water reservoir used to water the fruit trees. Every aspect has been carefully planned to create a home that is truly a piece of art. **NOW**

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The Crape Myrtle Festival provides a variety of entertainment for guests. From left: Crowds gather to watch the Ranch 106.9 Battle of the Bands; Paul Stevens, Waxahachie city manager, volunteers for the dunk tank to raise money for the Susan G. Komen breast cancer 3-day event.



Families watch Cloudy With A Chance of Meatballs in downtown Waxahachie during Summer Moonlight Movies. From top left: Karen Scott with her sons Jonathan and Ian; Madeleine Dunn and Caitlin Drennan; Autumn and Jackson Wells with their grandmother, Patty Smith.

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Passing the Baton

— By Janice C. Johnson

Theresa Davis still has a close relationship with her first piano teacher. She started out with her mother, Adeline Ostermann, now a Waxahachie resident. “Mom had played from childhood,” she said. “She learned piano and organ from the nuns at her parochial school.” As Theresa and her 14 siblings were growing up, the Ostermann family placed a priority on music. “After I was gone to college, I heard there were times when the piano teacher stayed all afternoon at our house, and my mother would wonder if she should invite her for dinner!”

But Theresa’s musical roots go back even farther. She recalled, “My

grandmother, Mom’s mother, played the violin. I remember when my grandparents were in their latter years, my grandfather sent for mail-order lessons and taught himself to play the saxophone. Then my grandmother took accordion lessons. When we were little, on Sunday afternoons we would come to their house. They’d sit us down on their couch and give us concerts.” Theresa laughed, “They just had about three songs they could do together, but they valued music very much.”

The family lived in Windthorst, Texas,

a small German farming community near Wichita Falls. “I got to take lessons because we had a parochial school, and if any of the nuns could teach piano, then you had a piano teacher. Otherwise, there wasn’t anyone else, because it was such a small town.” In the past, some of the priests there, many from Germany, had musical training. They would form community bands and choirs and thus promote music in the town. “I think it was just that the opportunity was there,” Theresa said. “People weren’t so bogged down with other things. If you were a farmer — yes, you were busy — but in the winter you didn’t have that much to do.”

Theresa has instilled her love of music in her four children, all born and reared in Waxahachie. She was their first piano teacher and still teaches others locally. As her children entered middle and high



school, each one played in the school bands. There they found more incentive to progress. “It was a daily thing with the whole group that they really enjoyed. So I lost them as piano students, at that point,” Theresa smiled without regret.

The two oldest Davis sons hold music degrees. The eldest, Keith, received



Theresa's son, Keith, and daughter-in-law, Minerva, are both music teachers.

degrees from UT Arlington and TCU and now lives in Midlothian. He teaches band in Cleburne for the school district, which means a wildly busy schedule every fall. "His wife, Minerva, is also a musician — a trumpet teacher," Theresa said. "It's a good thing, too! Otherwise, it would be very difficult to understand." Keith started out playing clarinet and later picked up saxophone. During college, he participated in a string ensemble, to meet a course requirement, and chose string bass. He immediately took to the instrument, which he often plays in jazz ensembles.

James' interest lies in jazz, as well. A trumpet player studying at the University of North Texas, he had the honor of being chosen for the university's renowned "One O'Clock Lab Band." The highlight of his college years was the band's trip to Thailand. There they were favored with a unique experience: playing at the Royal Palace in a jam session with the king of Thailand, who is himself an amateur jazz musician. James, also a graduate from UTA, and his saxophonist wife, Caroline, live in Chicago, where Caroline has earned her Ph.D. in music cognition. James performs with several bands and also teaches. He has recently toured Canada where he held summer jazz camps with a group called Chicago Goes West.

Third-born Rebecca also reaped

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benefits from her music skill: she earned an oboe scholarship for college, even though she was not a music major. She and her husband, Billy, have settled in Waxahachie. They have one daughter, Marissa, age 2.

Will, the youngest, is a senior business major at UNT. He was chosen for and is now working in a coveted summer internship with Frito-Lay. He still has his trombone and plays from time to time as a substitute or for a church occasion.

Theresa expressed no surprise at her children's success in music or any other field. "Studies show that studying any kind of music improves your IQ," she said.



Keith, Minerva, Adeline, Theresa, Marissa, Rebecca and Will are all part of one very musical family.

"You have to have a passion for music or there is no way that you're going to make that your career."

"I'm always telling kids, 'Music makes you smarter!'" Nor is she disappointed that "only" half of her children developed music-related professions. "You have to have a passion for music or there is no way that you're going to make that your career," she pointed out.

Meanwhile, Theresa has embarked on something new: last summer she put together a Music and Movement class for toddlers, which utterly captivated granddaughter, Marissa. "She just loves music!" Theresa said. "Each activity is only two or three minutes long, but after 45 minutes of that, you're exhausted!" She thinks of Marissa as one of the next generation of musicians. And Theresa, as you might expect, stands ready to encourage her granddaughter's love for music. She admitted that when the time is right, in five or six years, "I would like to be her first piano teacher." **NOW**



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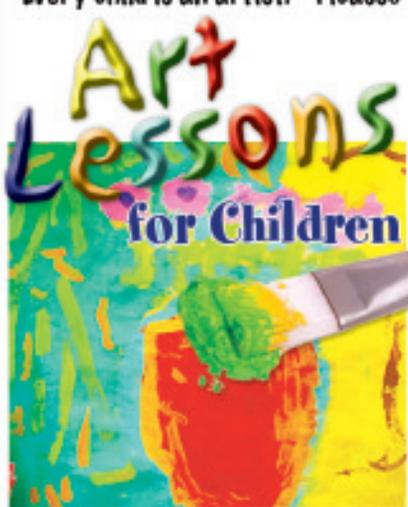
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JONES

Family Court

— By Alana Williamson

Monday and Thursday nights are family nights in the Jones family. While other families play board games or meet for dinner, Cliff Jones and his family have a more physical confrontation. They bond over friendly games of racquetball at the Waxahachie Family YMCA. Cliff began playing more than 35 years ago with friends at the Irving Family YMCA. He said he likes racquetball because of the health benefits it provides. “It’s a great workout,” he said. “It keeps me alive.”

Cliff moved to Waxahachie with his family almost 20 years ago. He taught his daughter, Vanessa, to play when she was in high school. She started out playing singles, or one-on-one, but soon moved on to playing doubles, two-against-two. As members of the National Racquetball Association, the pair competed at the state level in mixed doubles, pairs with one female and one male player, an experience they both enjoyed. The tournaments are divided into age brackets and skill levels for fair competition.

Vanessa met her husband, Robby Kinsala, at Waxahachie High School, and she taught him how to play racquetball. The couple played mixed doubles in the intramural league while they were both students at the University of North Texas and moved back to their hometown after college.

Vanessa often accompanied her father to his racquetball games as a young girl, so it was only natural to begin bringing her son, 4-year-old Case, to games when he was a baby. When he



was just 1 year old, Case began practicing with his racquet. Since then, Case has improved and can be seen practicing hitting balls on the court next to his parents and grandfather each week. "He is learning how to take turns," Cliff said, "and the lessons of good sportsmanship."

Cliff's younger twin siblings, Abigail and Benjamin, are the rookies of the family. The 2-year-olds practice their swings with their own racquets in between snacks. Vanessa teaches them how to hold their racquets and swing safely. They also take turns resting in the lap of their grandmother, Marilyn, who is always on hand during games to sit outside the courts to take care of the children. Cliff finds time to give them a few tips between games as well. "I love having my family with me," he said. "And it's a special treat to play with my daughter."

The family has played faithfully, at least twice a week, for more than 10 years. It provides them with good family time and exercise. They are a part of a group of about a dozen players who play several games of doubles in rotation each evening. Vanessa and Robby usually play together, often against Cliff and a partner. Cliff admitted that Robby has excelled

"We will let anybody play that wants to play."

significantly in the sport, surpassing both him and Vanessa.

The family's racquetball group is very diverse and has changed a lot over the years, with players coming and going. A few are veterans and have been playing almost as long as Cliff. Others are young and still mastering their techniques. Each game offers an opportunity for the players to learn from one another and give each other tips and encouragement. Because everyone is welcome to play at their own comfort level, they are not embarrassed to join in. In fact, Cliff enjoys meeting new players and watching them develop. "We will let anybody play that wants to play," Cliff said. "We play at

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all levels of competition.”

Cliff admitted that while racquetball is fun at all levels, a lot of time must be invested to be good. With help from their association and his cousin, Mike Jones, of Ovilla, Cliff invited state-ranked players to visit the Waxahachie YMCA. Local players had the opportunity to play, watch and learn from these guests. “Racquetball is a wonderful recreational sport,” Cliff said. “If you’re athletic, it’s not hard. It’s just a matter of learning the basic techniques.”

These techniques include learning the proper way to hold a racquet and position your body. Keeping your eye on the ball, hitting the ball and following through are



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also important skills to master. And Cliff points out the opportunity racquetball gives to improve other skills, such as hand-eye coordination and goal setting. “It can provide a good personal challenge to be the best that you can be,” he added. Cliff, a homebuilder, has also used racquetball for networking purposes. He occasionally invites business associates to play with him.

Racquetball originated in the United States more than 50 years ago. It can be played both indoors and outdoors with two, three or four players. The sport builds physical endurance, exercises all major muscle groups, provides a cardiovascular workout and, as the Jones family has discovered, is also a lot of fun.

In addition to racquetball, the family enjoys other sporting interests. They play tennis together at the Waxahachie High School courts and enjoy horseback riding and boating at Lake Waxahachie. The Jones family now includes three generations of racquetball players, continuing a legacy that promotes not only strong family ties, but also healthy living. **NOW**



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From left:

Standing: Rebeca Armbrust
Seated, left to right: Veshia Bowen and Michelle Mahone; a group shot of all team members.

We Are Family

ECI of North Central Texas is helping parents connect the dots.

— By Sandra Strong

The first three years of a child's life are the most important. It is during these first 36 months that children grow and learn skills that are crucial to the years after the age of 3. All families have a desire to see their children reach their full potential, but some children face unique challenges and just need extra help. These are the families within Tarrant, Parker, Palo Pinto, Erath, Hood, Somervell, Johnson, Navarro and Ellis counties that Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) of North Central Texas serves.

Michelle Mahone, occupational therapist, and Veshia Bowen, senior early intervention specialist, could not say enough about the company in which they work as they spoke for all the staff members. "After a referral has been made," Michelle said, "we all sit down as a team to decide a plan of action. We look at the whole child, beginning with what the parent has to say. We help the parents connect the dots to success in the area of concern.

We all work together."

"We reassure the parents that they are a large part of the solution," Veshia added, as she also referred to her own personal experience working her way up the "proverbial" ECI ladder. "We build a bridge with the parent by opening the doors to a relationship. We meet them at their point of need."

Point of need could be as simple as teaching the parents which questions to ask in all situations, or as difficult as what therapies are needed to help catch the child up to where they need to be per age level. Services for families may include: education and counseling, help finding social and health services, support groups and activities designed for both the child and the parent together. Services for the children may include, but are not limited to: screenings and assessments to identify the child's strengths and developmental needs; physical, occupational,

speech and language therapies and activities related to motor and language development; activities to develop learning and eating skills; and nutritional services. "The child is evaluated for eligibility into the program during this meeting," Michelle added.

The team is made up of several individuals who all play specific roles in the success the program offers. Team members include an early childhood intervention specialist, the family and a team member who specializes in the area of concern. Once a plan of action is decided upon, other tests may be administered to assist the specialists in identifying specific actions that will be taken. "If the team decides an OTR is needed," Michelle stated, "then I'll



conduct my own specific tests to decide exactly what the child needs. Delayed areas could be eating, sensitivities, behavioral or motor skills."

"We rely heavily on what the parent and the family tells us," Veshia added. "That's why a relationship with them is so important to the child's success. We teach them how to incorporate what they learn at ECI into their daily routines. We want it embedded into their daily life."

Michelle, a mother who had her own experience with a premature child, and Veshia, a mom who was first introduced to ECI as a parent, are passionate about children, as are all the staff members at ECI. "Our relationships are very personal," Michelle said. "We become part of their family, and they become part of ours." **NOW**

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LIFE as THEY SEE IT

— By *Sandra Strong*

Faith Family Academy (FFA) is a charter school that specializes in the fine arts for students in grades one through 12. Art teacher Tom Kramer cannot wait for the new school year to begin later this month. “Last year, I shared a room with the Spanish teacher, but this year, I’m happy to say, the part-time position as the art teacher turned into a full-time job,” Tom said. “I even got my own classroom!” As anyone can see upon entering “his room,” Tom’s love for all forms of art is displayed proudly.

Working on a limited budget, “going green” and saving money is very important to Tom. He believes in recycling as much as he can, and his finest example of this is found in his “art closet.” “Every art teacher needs an art closet,” he laughed. “They need a place where supplies can be organized; a place where artwork in progress can be stored until completion. Almost everything in my art closet has been recycled.” One example is old magazine shelves that had been discarded in a dumpster.

They are now used to organize colored construction paper.

Luckily for Tom, a man with a vivid imagination, there is no set curriculum for him to follow in the art room. “Administration allows me to come up with lesson plans I write myself,” he explained. “All throughout my first year here, I compiled my lesson plans into large binders, so I was ready to ‘rock ‘n’ roll’ my second year.”

The binders are neatly separated into categories ranging from pen and ink portraits to sculptures designed solely from manmade items. The tree displayed in the art room is a perfect example of the thought and imagination upper-level students need to complete this assignment. “The student brought an old computer from home,” Tom remembered. “I allowed her to take it outside and obliterate it. Now it stands in the classroom as a reminder of the art lesson.” Another similar lesson for Tom’s eighth-grade students includes narrative sculptures. “They each have to pick a

fairytale, read it, summarize it and then bring one scene in their fairytale to life using papier-mâché.”

Multi-teaching in the art room is also a unique quality Tom possesses. “I pride myself in using other areas of education in almost all my art projects,” he stated. “I take great pride in striving to include what the other teachers are teaching into my art lessons. I use them all — English, language, history and science, as well as what they are learning in their computer classes.”

Tom’s first year was one of many firsts for the campus, too. Under his supervision, FFA, after years of absence, entered the Ellis County Art Show in April 2010. “Five kids came home with ribbons,” he beamed. “It was a tremendous accomplishment.” Another “really big” first was “Life as We See It,” FFA’s first ever student art show. The hallways served as the gallery that displayed a collection of all the assignments Tom had offered in class up until the time of the show. It was an outstanding collection of all mixed mediums from watercolor landscapes and pencil self-portraits to pen and ink surrealist drawings and a large selection of sculptures in range and variety. “I love for the kids to use their imaginations,” Tom said. “I offer simple criteria when

Education **NOW**

making the lesson, allowing them to build on it. I want them to 'go to town' using their imaginations."

Tom would be sorely mistaken to take credit for the success the art show received. First and foremost, he gives a huge thanks to the students who participated. "Without their talent," he said, "there would not have been a show." He is also grateful to the FFA staff and administration for allowing his dream to take wings. He also gives a round of applause to three local artists — Tina Bohlman, Jerral Derryberry and David Wharton — who took time out of their own schedules to see firsthand what the younger generation was capable of creating. "These three judged the artwork," he said. "I wanted the show to



be as professional as possible. They did so much more than hand out ribbons. These professionals took it to a whole new level." Tina, Jerral and Donald took all entrants and broke them into seven separate categories within three overall categories. "They said there was so much good artwork, they couldn't just give out only a handful of ribbons in the three categories," Tom added.

Because of its huge success, Tom finds himself already in the planning stages for the second annual event to be held in early 2011. As a student, he had art teachers who were amazing, so his goal is to be an amazing example to the students, too. "I want to emulate the same sense of caring for my students that my teachers had for me," he said. "I want to give them some insight on life after graduation, but I also want them to know they're never too young or old to pick up a drawing pad." **NOW**

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In The Kitchen With Christine Block

— By Faith Browning

Christine Block grew up helping her mother in the garden and in the kitchen. “I loved cooking with my mother. She allowed me to participate in cooking by measuring, cutting and stirring. I especially loved looking forward to eating the batter!” she said. “I continue to enjoy cooking with her over the holidays or during our annual family beach vacation to the East Coast.”

Christine enjoys spending time outdoors kayaking on the Brazos River with her teacher friends, visiting family and friends and Cedar Creek Lake and, for over 10 years, playing Pokeno® with 12 of her friends. “My favorite time to cook is for family/friend get-togethers,” Christine explained. “It’s just more fun to get in the kitchen with people you love while sharing a glass of wine!” **NOW**



ANTIPASTO KABOBS

Great with a simple salad!

- 1 9-oz. pkg. refrigerated cheese-filled tortellini
- 1 4-oz. can quartered artichoke hearts, drained
- 1 6-oz. jar pitted ripe olives, drained
- 1/2 pound, 2-inch-round pepperoni slices
(You can substitute turkey pepperoni.)
- 1 8-oz. bottle reduced-fat Parmesan Italian dressing

1. Cook tortellini according to package directions, omitting salt; drain and cool.
2. Thread tortellini and next 3 ingredients onto 25 6-inch skewers. Place in a 13 x 9 x 2-inch dish; drizzle with salad dressing, turning to coat.
3. Cover and chill at least 4 hours. Drain before serving. Yield: 10-12 servings.

FRESH TOMATOES WITH BASIL AND MOZZARELLA

So easy and delicious!

- Wooden skewers
- Cherry tomatoes
- Medium mozzarella balls
- Basil herb blend with olive oil tube (in the fresh vegetable area)
- Fresh basil sprigs

1. On wooden skewers, alternate tomatoes and mozzarella balls.
2. Squeeze basil herb over the kabobs. Refrigerate for 2 or more hours. Remove and garnish with fresh basil.

PESTO SAUCE

Great on pizza, pastas, tomatoes with mozzarella and bruschetta bread!

- 2 cloves garlic
- 1/2 cup pine nuts or toasted walnuts

- 2 cups loosely packed fresh basil leaves
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 3/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. lemon juice (keeps the basil from turning too dark and brightens the flavor)
- 1 tsp. hot water

1. In a food processor bowl or a blender, add the first 3 ingredients. Process until smooth, stopping to scrape down the sides.
2. Pour oil through food chute with processor running. Add remaining ingredients; process until smooth, stopping to scrape down the sides. Yield: 1 cup.

COLORFUL, FRESH PASTA SALAD

You can use several variations of vegetables and pastas for this recipe.

SALAD:

- 2 lbs. bow-tie pasta, cooked
- 2 lbs. chicken, cooked and cubed
- 1 lb. provolone cheese, cubed
- 1 lb. Monterrey Jack cheese, cubed
- 1 head broccoli, cut into florets, blanched
- 1 lb. carrots, cut into julienne strips, blanched
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into julienne strips
- 1 yellow bell pepper, cut into julienne strips

DRESSING:

- 1 egg yolk
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- Zest of 1 orange
- Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Combine the pasta, chicken, cheese and vegetables in a large salad bowl.
2. To prepare dressing, process or beat egg yolk until frothy. Add lemon juice, mustard and vinegar. Add the oils in a fine stream, processing or beating until thickened; add the spices.
3. Pour the dressing over the salad. Toss gently and chill for 24 hours to enhance the flavor. Toss again before serving. Yield: 12 or more servings.

HEALTHY BANANA HONEY BREAD

- 2 cups unbleached white flour
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 1/2 cups ripe bananas, mashed
- 1 1/2 cups wheat bran cereal
- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 2/3 cup honey
- 2 eggs
- 1/2 cup coarsely chopped nuts (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Spray or oil a 5-inch loaf pan.
2. Stir together the flour, baking powder, soda and salt; set aside.
3. In a small mixing bowl, stir together the mashed bananas and cereal. Let stand 2-3 minutes or until the cereal is softened.
4. Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl beat the margarine and honey until well-blended. Add eggs; mix well. Stir in the cereal mixture, dry ingredients and nuts.
5. Spread the batter in a prepared pan and bake 1 hour or until a wooden pick inserted near the center comes out clean. Let cool 10 minutes before removing from the pan. Cool completely before slicing. *I've used this recipe for over 25 years.*

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Are Your Records Organized for an Emergency?

— By Adam Rope

If you were incapacitated, would anyone be able to find your important records and take care of your family's financial or business matters? Having important papers organized and accessible in advance can be very important in an emergency or crisis situation. Consider the following for organizing your important records.

Location:

Options for storage might include a home safe, fire-security box or off-site location such as a safety deposit box. The storage container should be securable and fire resistant. Shoe boxes or cardboard boxes in the closet or under the bed are not appropriate.

Who knows?

Does someone in addition to your spouse know where these papers are kept? Consider making a list of such papers and records, and on the list state where these documents can be found. Then advise a trusted third party — an attorney, CPA, relative, or family friend — where this list



is kept. The general idea is that someone not living in your residence knows about this list and how to access it. This decision requires a certain comfort level, and you alone are able to make that determination.

Which papers?

Regardless of who knows what, organized records are always a plus. The following items might be part of your “important documents” list:

- Safety deposit box key
- Life insurance policies
- Deeds, contracts, leases, titles, mortgage(s), loan notes
- Banking, savings, investment and

retirement account(s) records

- Will
- Burial arrangements
- All other insurance policies (health, auto, home, etc.)
- Birth certificates

Beyond however you decide to store your personal records, and whatever you decide to include, one fact is clear. If important legal, business and personal documents are organized and accessible, the handling of a crisis situation is made much easier. **NOW**

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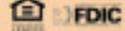
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When it comes to your health care, you want the best there is. Sure, it helps to have an excellent physician and superb specialists, but they are not the key to your health care — you are.

Here's how to get the care you need:

1. Find Dr. Right.

Choose a primary care physician whom you're comfortable with and have confidence in. Before committing, ask him or her questions such as what their office hours are, what the



physician's treatment philosophy is and who will care for you if he or she is unavailable. Ask yourself if this is someone you'd want caring for you if you were critically ill. You have to have someone you trust.

2. Go prepared.

Even the best physicians are not mind readers. So tell them everything about your health. When asked about your personal and family medical history, be honest and disclose as much information as possible.

If you are experiencing symptoms, tell your physician what they are, how severe they are and when you experience them. Report even small changes in your health; they may indicate an underlying problem.

3. Ask lots of questions.

When your physician tells you something you don't understand — whether it's about heart disease or a hangnail — ask questions. Quality health care is dependent on good physicians partnering with the patient and their family. This is accomplished by questions being asked between all of the participants. This dialogue will ensure that the physician, patient and family understand the disease and care plan to be followed.

Start by repeating back in your own words what your physician tells you. This will ensure that you understand what he said and will open up a dialogue if you didn't.

4. Seek a second opinion.

If you are uncomfortable with a diagnosis or treatment plan your physician gives you, get a second opinion. And don't worry about offending your physician. A good physician will want you to be comfortable with your diagnosis. If he or she is offended, then he or she is not the physician for you. **NOW**

Contributed by Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie. For more information regarding this topic, visit www.BaylorHealth.com/Waxahachie.

An advertisement for Laura Morgan, D.D.S. Orthodontics for Children and Adults. The background is green with a large sunflower on the right. On the left, a young girl and a young boy are smiling. The text includes the name and specialty, a list of services, office hours, and contact information.

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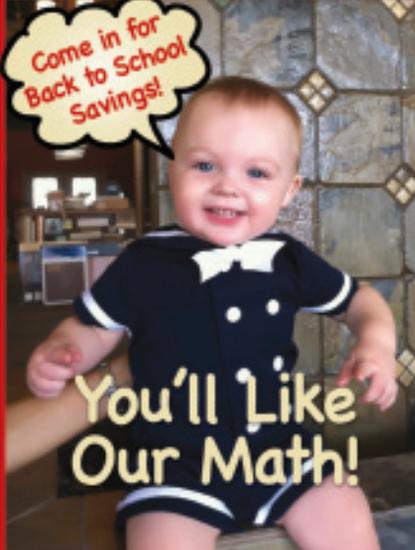
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GETTING YOUR TREES READY FOR WINTER

— By Nancy Fenton

Did you notice how many limbs some of the trees lost this year? Let's talk about what happens when trees are not pruned on a regular basis. The worst case scenario would be for a rather large branch to drop through your roof or on your car! The second worst incident would be for the falling limbs to take out electricity or close bridges and roads. We may not like it, but our local utility companies and counties have to pick up the slack when safety becomes an issue. Let's face the reality; tree trimming can be a costly procedure, and if we do not do it ourselves, someone has to.

The county and the utility companies do not cut the limbs over your roof, but they do protect the lines that power our homes as well as the roads on which we drive. They have a lot of territory to cover, and it is an economic reality that they will move through as quickly as possible. Each one of us could pick up the cost of having our trees trimmed the way we want it done — as long as the safety issues were addressed. All it takes is a plan and a phone call to the utility or the county. Hey, it

saves them time and money, so they would be delighted to see the homeowner/landowner take care of it.

Most of the trees around our homes are the slow growing, beautiful ones like live oaks, maples, burr oaks and pecans. Hackberry trees, poplars and cedars are fast-growing and short-lived. Even though they may look awful when the utility or county workers are forced to cut them back, they will cover the road again in two years if not "whacked back" again. Of course, any landowner has the option to trim back any trees on their property. The county and utility companies only do it to keep us safe on our public roads. The pictures taken on our public county roads may look bad right after the trees are trimmed in the spring, but drive back by in the summer months, and you will see lush growth everywhere.

This is the month to start scheduling your own tree trimming if you do not do it yourself. The first freeze is usually around Thanksgiving, and you do not want to be cutting on your trees anytime after October 1. The trimming stimulates growth, and you do not want the freeze to really damage your trees.

Call a licensed and insured tree service now to get on their schedule, and get ready to sit back and smile as others scurry to repair roofs, get electricity turned back on and even to get out of their driveways when the big storms come! **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.



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Every Thursday

Celebrate Recovery meeting: 7:00 p.m., 408 Water Street, Waxahachie. The purpose is to help people live free from addiction, compulsive or dysfunctional behavior. For more information, contact Brandon Jones at (214) 949-5725 or Brandon@thefrontiercommunity.org.

Third Monday

Ellis County Aggie Moms: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin, Waxahachie. For more information, visit www.elliscountyyaggiemoms.org.

Third Tuesday

Skyblazers of Waxahachie R/C Club meeting: 7:30 p.m., Parks and Recreation Building, downtown Waxahachie.

Third Wednesday

The Ellis County Christian Women's Connection, affiliated with Stonecroft Ministries, monthly luncheon: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Waxahachie Country Club, located at 1920 W. Hwy. 287 at I-35 East (Exit 401B). The cost is \$13, inclusive. Contact Kay at (972) 937-2807 or windchime423@yahoo.com, or Margaret at (972) 937-1016 or pmestep@yahoo.com no later than Friday, August 13.

Fourth Monday

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Avenue. The guest speaker will be Jane Cook with her presentation of "Machine Embroidery Quilts."

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August 7-8

Trade Days of Waxahachie: Saturday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. and Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Ellis County Expo Center, 2300 W. U.S. Hwy. 287, Waxahachie. Free parking and admission. For more information, visit www.tradedaysofwaxahachie.com or call Les Clemons at (972) 617-8156, James Scott at (214) 202-1788 or Jean Davis at (972) 816-3644.

August 13

After Hours Improv Theater presents Dance Hall Night: 7:30-10:30 p.m., 100 N. College St., Waxahachie. All types of dance music will be featured. \$10 cover charge. B.Y.O.B. For more information, call (972) 937-9839 or visit www.afterhoursimprov.com.

August 20

After Hours Improv Theater presents "Murder at the Four Deuces" Murder Mystery Dinner. \$35 per person includes three-course dinner. For more information, call (972) 937-9839 or visit www.afterhoursimprov.com.

August 23

First Day of School.

August 27

After Hours Improv Theater, located at 100 N. College St. at the historic Rogers Hotel, will host a night of improv comedy. All proceeds will benefit Porcelain Dolls Ministry. Adults \$10. Seniors 65-plus and students \$8. Children \$5, unless otherwise noted. For more information, call (972) 937-9839 or visit www.AfterHoursImprov.com.

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From left to right: Dr. Cecile Thomas, OB/GYN; Dr. Cecily Jones, OB/GYN; Dr. Gayle Smith-Blair, Psychiatrist (behind); Dr. Catherine Thomas, OB/GYN; Dr. Donald Blair, OB/GYN (behind); Sharon Roberts WHNP; & Gina Vincent WHNP

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