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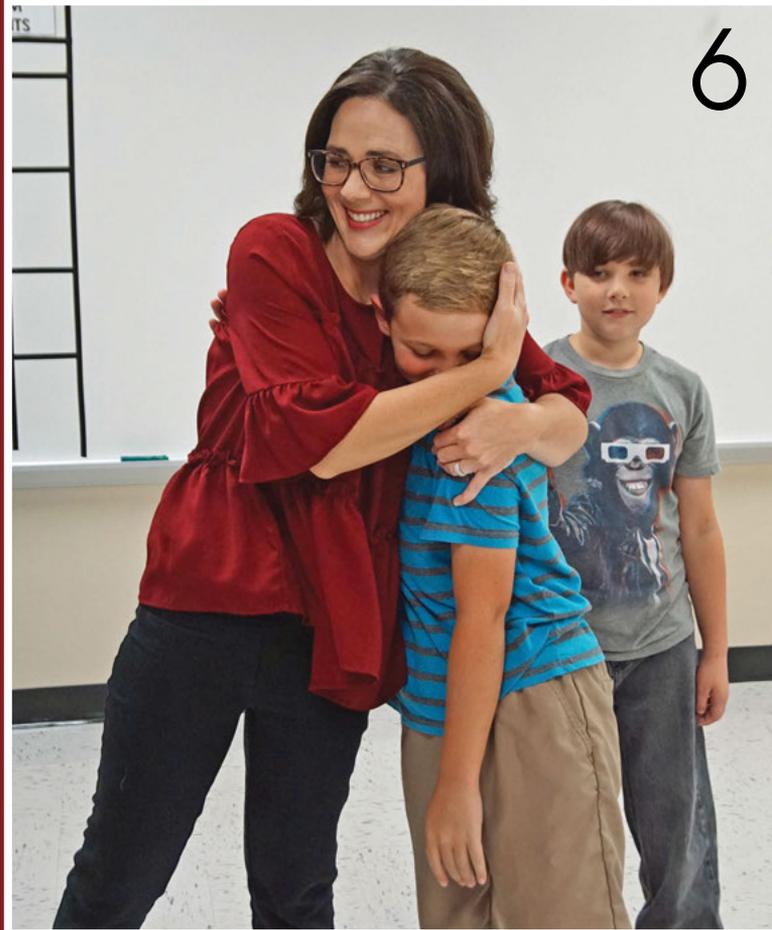
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**EDITORIAL**

*Managing Editor, Becky Walker | North Ellis Co. Editor, Sally Fuller  
Editorial Coordinator, Sandra Strong  
Editorial Assistant, Rachel Smith | Writers, Lindsay L. Allen . Sean Doerre  
Derek Jones . Rick Mauch . Virginia Riddle . Zachary R. Urquhart  
Editor/Proofreader, Angel Morris*

**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  
Dustin Dauenhauer . Bryan Frye . Jennifer Henderson . Ashlyn LeVesque  
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*The Whitakers transformed brick and mortar into a home that tells their story.*

**Photo by**  
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# EDITOR'S NOTE



*Sally*

Sally Fuller  
North Ellis Co. NOW Editor  
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*Hello, North Ellis County!*

Sitting down to write my first "Editor's Note," I admit, I'm a little nervous. New adventures, like the school year ahead, hold a sense of promise and excitement and, at the same time, can be a little unsettling. Meeting you all for the first time in this short note adds to my trepidation. Let's face it, I want to make a good first impression.

My adventures in North Ellis County began 30 years ago. Like many others, I came for the great schools and small-town feel I hoped would make a great place to raise my family. Three decades later, I'm still here, still unearthing gems in this unique part of Texas. Where else can you find a snow cone stand that lets you run a tab, a free "Touch-A-Truck" event *and* The City That Bricked the World just minutes from each other? All that, and more, waits right outside our doors!

Whether you're a new explorer or a seasoned voyager, I hope you'll join me on this adventure as we continue discovering North Ellis County's hidden treasures. Those treasures really aren't hard to find. They're pushing a cart next to yours at the local grocery store, eating in a booth at your favorite hometown café and walking their dogs at the local park. They are there, just waiting for your first, "Hello."

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**I call my students  
my Little  
World Changers.**

# CALLING OUT GREAT

*From a young age, Katie Gullett knew her destiny. Now, she's helping youngsters reach for their dreams just as she did. "I think I always knew I would be a teacher," Katie said. "I would pretend to teach stuffed animals — and my brother," she added with a laugh. "In second grade I had a teacher named Mrs. Bishop. She sealed the deal for me. I wanted to be just like her. I hope I've done her proud."*

Mrs. Bishop passed away when Katie was a sophomore in college. They stayed in touch right up to her death. Mrs.

Bishop's inspiration remains with Katie to this day, just as Katie, now 37 and in her 15th year of teaching, works to plant inspiration in her own third-grade students at Wooden Elementary in Red Oak.

Katie named her approach to education "Calling Out Greatness." While grades do ultimately determine moving on to the next grade, they do not, in her mind, determine passing and failing. "Every single child has an innate gift," she said. "We celebrate not with grades, but with effort and overcoming adversity."

For example, Katie and her students don't use the word *can't*. Instead, they say they haven't done something *yet*. "I call them mountaintop moments when they happen.



# NESS

— By Rick Mauch

They've been struggling, and they reach that moment when they've got it. I call my students my Little World Changers," Katie said.

"Mrs. Gullett has been a blessing for Trey. She definitely left an imprint on him," said Deanna Daniell, whose son Katie taught. "Trey grew far beyond what we thought possible in one year in her class. She is a great, positive, uplifting role model."

Katie's connection to her students doesn't stop in the classroom. She is in their lives after they leave the school. For example, she writes letters to them before they take the standardized tests from the state, offering encouragement. "Mail to kids is a big deal. They get these letters in their

mailboxes, and they love it," she said. "I tell them that these tests don't tell their whole story. They don't tell how you take care of your brother and sister or what a talented young artist you are."

Katie also calls each one of her students at the start of the school year. She speaks not only to the parents but also to each child. "I think it makes a difference to speak to the child," she said. "I tell them this is a new school year, a fresh year, a time to be excited. It especially helps those kids who have had challenges in the past. I tell them we're going to celebrate your victory, no matter what it is."

Katie also makes certain to greet children as they enter the classroom with a fist bump, handshake or high-five.



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She also believes that eye contact is important. "That's when I catch how their day started," she said. "They walk in with stuff, just like adults do, and they sometimes have to deal with some tough stuff. I cry with them."

This school year, Katie has set a goal to make a home visit to every student. It's just another way of letting them know they are more than seat fillers in her class. In fact, students in her class don't always sit in assigned seats. She believes in letting them sit wherever they are comfortable, as long as they participate. "It's a little unorthodox, sure, but it fits right in, and the main thing is them being comfortable in the setting."

Katie also calls her students "her babies." However, she is quick to say that parents and their understanding are important in her methods working to their fullest. "Parents get backed into grades, but I'm backed into effort," she said. "While they might be looking at a grade, I will say, 'Let me tell you where we were two weeks ago.' I also often send photos to parents, so they will feel a part of their kid's day. And I focus on calling to tell them more about the good things their kids are doing than just when there's a problem."

Katie has an open-door policy and arrives daily at 7:00 a.m. She often eats lunch with a student or two, and they read together.

"Katie is an amazing teacher with a true heart for kids. She loves building relationships with her students and really pouring herself into them,"



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said Wooden Principal Rebecca Vega. “Her students start each day with a chant that reinforces what she believes about them — that they are important and that they matter.”

Katie mentored her good friend and fellow teacher, Randa Richardson, who said, “I don’t think I would have made it through my first year without her guidance. I think every new teacher needs a person like Katie to be a shoulder to lean on.”



At home, Katie and her husband, Dustin, are orphan care ministry leaders. They have four children, two biological — 12-year-old son, Gabe, and 10-year-old daughter, Grace. They have adopted a daughter, Gabby, 5, and son, Grayson, 22 months. They are in the process of adopting 16-year-old son, Drake.

“It looks like it will be National Adoption Day (Nov. 17 this year) when Drake becomes official, which is cool because our two others were also official on that day,” she said.

Katie and Dustin have fostered a total of 17 children since they began in 2015. Katie said whether it’s at school or at home, all children fall under the same umbrella of care, and all children need love.

“Being a foster mom helps me be a better teacher,” she said. “I have that sensitivity. In both cases, you just love on them, and someday you’ll get to that day when they don’t push away. That’s the greatest feeling. And above all, never forget to tell them often you love them, and you are proud of them.” **NOW**



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# Making It Their Own

— By Zachary R. Urquhart



## At Home With Eric & Natalie Whitaker

*Every house has a story, and every new door or torn-down wall adds a new chapter. After finding a house and making big and small changes, Eric and Natalie Whitaker have a home that tells the story of their family.*

Eric grew up in Anson, a small cotton-farming community outside of Abilene. He was the first in his family to graduate from college, earning degrees in marketing and management from Texas Tech University.

After school, he made his way to the Metroplex. “I didn’t know what exactly I wanted to do, but everyone said I should move to Dallas because that’s where the money was,” he laughed. “I still haven’t found the money, but I found my wife, which is even better.”

Natalie moved to Waxahachie from Ferris in middle school, so she has lived most of her life in the area. She works in health care marketing and also teaches yoga as something that falls somewhere between a side job and a hobby. She laughed as she recounted how she and Eric met many years ago: “My friend was getting married to someone in Eric’s family, so that is how we first met, but we really started dating through MySpace, back when that was a thing.”



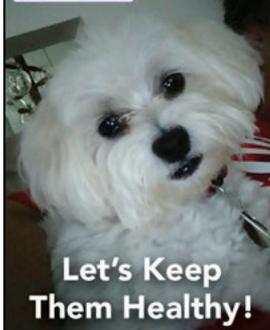


Eric and Natalie have two children. Jett is a junior who plays soccer at Midlothian Heritage High School, and Elin is a first-grader at McClatchey Elementary who loves swimming, soccer and fishing.

The family lived in Garland and then Wylie, but when they were pregnant with Elin, they were ready to make a move. "Moving this direction got us close to her family, closer to my family in Abilene, and the commute from this side of



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town was about the same as going down from Wylie,” Eric said. At the time, Eric was working for the FDIC, though he is now a private mortgage lender and works from home.

When they were looking in the area, they knew they wanted a community like Midlothian or Ovilla, and they found their way to Ovilla Parc. “We kind of fell in love with a different house in the neighborhood, but we didn’t win the bid,” Natalie

said. “Then we came to this spec home, and we saw that, with a few changes, we could make it perfect. Really, I just wanted to be here.”

They moved into the house in August 2012, and began the labor of love of making it their own. The first thing people notice when they come through the entryway is the immense fish tank in the living room. “A few years ago, we kind of put our money together from Christmas

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and started this tank,” Natalie said. More important than pretty fish of many colors, though, is the coral that grows inside.

“Basically, everything in the tank is alive,” Eric added. “I’ve actually grown and sold coral to people locally and around the country. It takes a lot of work, but you can get it to propagate itself if you know what to do.”

The big tank in the front is one of several throughout the house. Eric and Natalie have cultivated somewhat of a tropical feel throughout the home with fish, decor and views of their beautiful backyard.

Aside from fish tanks, another noticeable feature is the woodwork scattered throughout the house. While many homes include an office, few have custom, handmade desks and shelves, making them a space to envy. “My stepdad, Jeff, is a carpenter, so he has built several things for us,” Natalie explained. “He built the cabinet for the fish tank, the dining hutch, several pieces of furniture and the living room art.”



In the living room, Jeff’s artistic use of wood slats beautifully complements the fireplace and leather sofas. One of the most impressive things Jeff built is a Murphy bed for Elin’s room. “When you close it up, it looks like she just has built-ins on one whole wall,” Eric explained.

They also used Jeff’s expertise to help personalize their master bedroom. “He built a frame for our bed, and then we got a bunch of non-matching planks to cover the frame and extend onto the wall.” To offset a dark wall, Eric and Natalie

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chose light wood-look laminate for the floors, creating visual harmony and balance. Along with the beauty they've created inside, their bedroom also offers a view of their tropical cabana in the backyard.

"When we were thinking about moving here, we saw what the



backyard could be," Natalie recalled. "When we added the pool a few years ago, we poured the slab knowing we would eventually add the pergola." There is plenty of space around the pool for Natalie to host her poolside yoga classes, a hobby that has helped them take trips to tropical destinations. "I have taught in a studio before, but I love doing yoga in parks, at the pool and even on the beach," she noted.

While the pool itself is impressive, what sets the yard apart even more is the landscaping. "Other than having someone put in a few big trees, every plant and flower, we've done," Eric said.

The plants offer more than just aesthetic value. Most of them have a story. "We got the vines from the place we had our first date, and many of the flowers and plants are from places we've visited," he said.

The tropical theme that starts with a fish tank in the front carries through to the back of the property where fragrant Plumeria and colorful Vitex help tell their family's story. By seeing beyond the walls and windows of a house, Eric and Natalie have transformed brick and mortar into a home brimming with life that is truly their own. **NOW**



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# Stepping Up to the Plate

— By Virginia Riddle

Forgetful moments happen. *Where are my keys? Did I turn off the coffee pot?* Yes, everyone's been there, but what happens when those forgetful moments include a dad or mom not recognizing his or her child? A diagnosis of memory loss, dementia or Alzheimer's often follows. "The Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline provides reliable information and support to people who have been diagnosed and their caregivers, health care providers and the public," Haley Hanson, The Walk to End Alzheimer's event manager, stated.

On September 22, downtown Ennis will be the place to be. "For the second year, we are hosting the Southern Region Walk," Chairperson Gary Freeman said. "We want to raise awareness and funds for research, education and the support of families of loved ones affected by memory loss at any

level." Gary and his wife, Angela, are co-owners of Red Oak's Home Instead Senior Care franchise. In both business and his family, Gary has experienced people with memory loss. "Someone had to step up to the plate, and I needed to be that someone," he stated.

Last year's walk inspired others to volunteer and help sponsor the walk. "Our volunteers are the heart of the walk," Gary revealed. "We had around 75 day-of-the-event volunteers to help set up, work and wrap up the walk, ensuring that all who participated had a wonderful experience." A planning committee of 12-25 people works year-round. "The volunteers are phenomenal, and sponsors come from all walks of business in Ellis, Navarro, Kaufman and Dallas counties."

Teams, with a goal of at least 10 walkers led by a team captain, are formed for the walk, but individuals can participate as a team of one. "Each team can raise funds in various ways or take pledges," Gary stated. "Each person who raises at least \$100 wears a specially designed T-shirt, but all people are welcome to walk." Sixty-three teams of 600 walkers raised \$53,000 during last year's initial walk. "We were very pleased, but we're aiming even higher this year," Gary

said. The walk consists of two miles with downtown streets along the route blocked off for walkers' safety.

A serious purpose brings these folks together, but fun abounds. "Some walk teams dress in matching outfits, including one team in which both men and women wore purple tutus," Gary recalled. "It's also fun to see friendly dogs, some dressed in purple scarves, making the walk with their owners."

Emotional moments are created through the walk's Promise Garden. "Before the walk's opening, participants are asked to choose a Promise Flower with a color representing their reason for walking," Gary explained. "They then write a personal message on the flower. Some personal testimonies elicit tears of pain, empathy and hope. At the ceremony's conclusion, all Promise Flowers are raised high in the air to represent a commitment to leading the way to a world without Alzheimer's."

Gary often introduces himself as "Gary Freeman from Hillsboro ... Mississippi, that is!" He grew up on his grandfather's farm and moved to Dallas in 1975. "Having experienced life in the country and city, I feel very much at home in Ellis County."

As a church worship leader/soloist for 50 years, Gary performs hits from the 1920s-1960s in senior adult venues. "One of my best memories was of my mother in her 90s with severe dementia, singing 90 percent of the lyrics with me in perfect alto, when the night before, she didn't even recognize me."

Interacting with the teams, team captains and volunteers "energizes" Gary's efforts. "I must admit, it's quite a joy to observe the competition that arises within the teams and among the captains," he shared. "Come join us as a sponsor, volunteer, walker or team captain this year!" **NOW**

*Editor's Note: For more information, call the (800) 272-3900 Helpline or email Gary at [gary.freeman@homeinstead.com](mailto:gary.freeman@homeinstead.com).*



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CookingNOW

# In the Kitchen With CYNDY TOAL MCKENRICK

— By Lindsay L. Allen



Cyndy Toal McKenrick grew up with home-cooked meals prepared by her mother, who is an excellent cook and influenced Cyndy's love for cooking at an early age. Since 1987, she has been making many recipes from her favorite cookbook, *The Heritage Collection II Cookbook*, compiled by The Ellis County Genealogical Society. This cookbook was a gift from her mother when Cyndy and her husband moved out of state. While she collects cookbooks, this is the one she treasures and uses the most.

"I love down-home cooking and baking," she stated. When she isn't making her way around the kitchen, Cyndy can be found bowling with local and traveling leagues, something she has done for the last three decades, or working on her needlework. **NOW**

4. For the first layer of cake, mix half of the prepared vanilla pudding, cherry pie filling and half of the Cool Whip. Sprinkle with chopped pecans and coconut.
5. For the second layer of cake, mix half of the prepared vanilla pudding, crushed pineapple and half of the Cool Whip. Sprinkle with chopped pecans and coconut.

## Roasted Okra and Tomatoes

**1 lb. okra**  
**1 pt. heirloom cherry tomatoes**  
**1/2 tsp. ground cumin**  
**1/4 tsp. turmeric**  
**3 Tbsp. olive oil**  
**Salt and pepper, to taste**

1. Preheat oven to 425 F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper; set aside.
2. Wash the okra. Cut the tops off; cut the remaining okra in half lengthwise.
3. Wash tomatoes; cut in half.
4. In a large bowl, add all ingredients. Pour onto lined baking sheet. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until vegetables are slightly charred. Serve alone or over rice.

## Punch Bowl Cake

**1 box white cake mix**  
**2 3.4-oz. boxes instant vanilla pudding, prepared**  
**1 21-oz. can cherry pie filling**  
**1 large container Cool Whip**  
**Chopped pecans, to taste**  
**Shredded coconut, to taste**  
**1 28-oz. can crushed pineapple**

1. Prepare the cake mix according to package directions.
2. Pour the cake mix into two round cake pans, measuring 8 or 9 inches; bake according to package directions.
3. Once cake layers are cooled, place one in a large punch bowl; begin layering the remaining ingredients.

## Linguine With Clam Sauce

**1/4 cup olive oil**  
**1/4 cup onion, chopped**  
**3 cloves minced garlic**  
**3 6.5-oz. cans minced clams, drained (save juice)**  
**1/2 cup white wine**  
**1/2 tsp. basil**  
**1/2 tsp. thyme**  
**1/4 tsp. black pepper**  
**1/4 cup parsley, chopped (or 1 Tbsp. dried parsley)**  
**1 box linguine pasta, cooked according to package directions**

1. Combine olive oil and onion; cook until tender. Add garlic and cook for 2 more minutes.
2. Add 1/2 cup clam juice, wine, basil, thyme and pepper. Bring to a boil until the liquid is slightly reduced (about 10 minutes).

3. Add clams and parsley; heat for 4 minutes.
4. Prepare the linguine; toss with clam sauce.

### Southern-style Chicken and Dumplings

- 1 Tbsp. shortening
- 1 tsp. salt
- 3 cups flour
- 1 cup sweet milk
- 1 egg
- 3 32-oz. boxes Kitchen Basics Chicken Stock
- 2 cups shredded chicken

1. Cut the shortening and salt into the flour. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture; add milk and egg.
2. Combine until a stiff dough forms; roll out on a floured surface, about 1/4-inch thick. Cut into strips.
3. Put chicken stock into a large stockpot; bring to a slow boil.
4. Drop dumplings into the stock pot a few at a time; continue until all dumplings are in the pot. Cook over low heat until the dumplings are done, about 20 minutes.
5. Pour dumplings over the pieces of chicken and serve.

### Louisiana's Stranger Cake

- 1 18-oz. pkg. yellow or butter pecan cake mix
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup pecans, chopped
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 16-oz. tub Betty Crocker coconut pecan frosting

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease and flour a Bundt pan.
2. Mix together the cake mix, water, pecans, eggs, oil and frosting.
3. Pour into the prepared pan; bake for 40-45 minutes.

To search for more great recipes from any of the 10 NOW Magazines publications, visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).

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# BusinessNOW

## Freedom Heating & Air

— By Virginia Riddle

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Since Hector Gomez founded his company, Freedom Heating & Air, in January 2010, the motto has been, “Your comfort is our mission.” “We put our customers first,” Hector, owner and comfort specialist, stated. “Seventy-eight percent of our business last year came from satisfied customers’ referrals.”

Services include system replacements, new installations and design, maintenance and preventive maintenance on residential

and light commercial HVAC systems in existing homes and commercial properties. Home automation is another service, and bilingual English/Spanish employees ensure effective communication with customers. Payment can be made by cash, major credit cards or check. Online financing is available.

The primary brands carried in-house are Trane, Mitsubishi and Amana. While the company is a Trane Comfort Specialist and a Mitsubishi Diamond Contractor, almost any brand can be ordered or serviced by Freedom’s trained technicians. Keeping up with ever-changing technology, as well as environmental and licensing requirements is challenging, but Hector and his employees spend the necessary time to do so. “Education of all our employees is important, so we can provide the latest in technological HVAC advances to our customers,” Hector stated. “We’re EPA certified, and we want to always do the job right, so we build long-term relationships.”

Serving customers well has earned the company a 2016 Trane Pacesetter Level 3, a 2016 Mitsubishi Dealer of the Year and Mitsubishi Diamond Contractor awards.

The company serves customers in Ellis and Dallas counties and has 13 employees, four who take calls in the office and nine who work as inventory specialists, installers, technicians and warehouse delivery personnel. "We enjoy working with and helping customers by resolving their issues or designing HVAC systems around their budget while still meeting their needs," Hector explained.

Hector received his State Contract and Commercial Service licensing before opening his own company, but worked for other HVAC companies for eight years, gaining experience and knowledge. His company is a member of the DeSoto Chamber of Commerce, and Hector serves on the board of directors of the Red Oak Chamber of Commerce. He also serves on the Texas State Technical College in North Texas advisory board.

Following his graduation from Dallas' Sunset High School, Hector made some unwise choices and paid his dues. "I had mentors who took me under their wing," he said. "I started at the bottom of this business and worked my way up. The last company I worked for paid for my training through North Lake College for four years."

He now serves as a mentor to prisoners and participated as a business owner in a 2018 career day for federal prisoners awaiting release. "I believe in helping others and giving people second chances," he said.

High school sweethearts, Hector and his wife, Cindy, have five children. Son Nicholas (22) and Aaron (20) work in the business. Daughters, Samantha (20), Ashleigh (13) and Madilynn (5) attend school. "Cindy and I enjoy date nights and time with the kids," Hector said. "I play drums at Highland Meadows Church in Red Oak and read God's Word. I feel very blessed." **NOW**

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## Peach Perfect

— By Sean Doerre

It's impossible to visit Gillespie County, Texas, without getting directly to the heart of the Texas Hill Country. Its focal point is Fredericksburg, a place founded in 1846 by German settlers. This small-town Texas community continues to provide a unique blend of Texan hospitality and German tradition.

Fredericksburg is well-known for award-winning wine. In fact, the Texas Hill Country was designated one of the 10 Best Wine Travel Destinations in 2014 by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine*. With more than 40 wineries and tasting rooms in the Fredericksburg area, numerous wine tour companies and special wine events like the Fredericksburg Food & Wine Festival, Fredericksburg is at the center of Texas Wine Country.

With more than 150 shops, boutiques and art galleries lining historic Main Street, Fredericksburg is also a premier shopping

destination, offering the best of home decor, Western wear, fine art, kitchen wares, linens, antiques and more. On the weekend of the third Saturday of every month, Fredericksburg Trade Days features more than 400 vendors in seven barns and acres of shopping opportunities, along with great eats and live music in the Biergarten. Great food and wonderful dining is a fixture in Fredericksburg with more than 80 restaurants that feature everything from regional Texas Hill Country cuisine to German and Bavarian, to Tex-Mex and Italian, as well as numerous fine dining restaurants.

Gillespie County is one of the top peach-producing counties in Texas, and from mid-May through early August the town is filled with roadside stands selling peaches and other seasonal produce. Fredericksburg is also home to Wildseed Farms, the largest working

wildflower farm in the United States and a destination for any nature enthusiast.

Enchanted Rock, the second largest granite dome in the United States and a designated International Dark Sky Park, is located just outside of Fredericksburg and offers miles of hiking trails, rock climbing and a 360-degree view of the Texas Hill Country from the top of the Summit Trail.

With more than 700 historically significant structures preserved in the Fredericksburg historic district, history surrounds the city. The Pioneer Museum Complex provides a glimpse of early life in Fredericksburg through historic homes, a log cabin, an authentic Sunday House, a one-room schoolhouse and more.

The National Museum of the Pacific War, dedicated to all who served in the Pacific during World War II, also honors hometown favorite Navy Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. The 6-acre museum complex includes the George H.W. Bush Gallery, the Japanese Garden of Peace, the Memorial Courtyard and the Plaza of Presidents. Just down the street, is the Pacific Combat Zone, which recently underwent an \$8 million renovation and hosts living history demonstrations eight times each year.

In addition to historic attractions, Fredericksburg is always brimming with activity from more than 400 special events, concerts and festivals held annually. Typical Fredericksburg events and activities include Oktoberfest, live music at Luckenbach Texas, Fredericksburg's Fourth of July Parade, summer horse racing, the Hill Country Food Truck Festival, the Stonewall Peach JAMBoree, First Friday Art Walk, the Gillespie County Fair and more. Fredericksburg has more than 1,100 hotel and motel rooms, more than 1,200 bed-and-breakfasts/guesthouses, and several RV parks and campsites ready to welcome travelers with plenty of warm, Texan hospitality. **NOW**

To plan a trip to Fredericksburg and the Texas Hill Country, or request a free visitor information packet, visit [www.VisitFredericksburgTX.com](http://www.VisitFredericksburgTX.com).

Photo Credit: Fredericksburg Convention & Visitor Bureau.



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# Where Comes the Bride?

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

*In a time gone by, most weddings tended to be at one of a few locations: churches, the courthouse or the family's backyard. Today, though, almost anywhere could be a wedding venue. If you are getting ready to plan a wedding, there are some new and unique locales to consider.*

## Something Old

- *Barns are back in style.* Trending with the popularity of house remodeling shows over the last decade or so, weddings in rustic farmhouses and barns are becoming more and more common. You can look for places online or reach out to friends who live in rural areas. You might be surprised how easy it is to find a barn you can use. With some old-world style lighting, a simple large shed can become an idyllic wedding sight.
- *Church is in session.* A unique spin on the tradition of

a religious setting is to have your ceremony in an old church building. There are churches that are no longer functioning for local congregations, but that are available for special events. And if you are willing to host a destination wedding, you can find such buildings across the country.

## Something New

- *Trendy restaurants make great wedding sites.* If you live close enough to a big town with cool restaurants that are only busy in the evening, you might be able to reserve the place for an early wedding time. What is even better, you will have a place for a ceremony and reception all-in-one.
- *Find a venue near you.* People are sometimes surprised to learn how many beautiful venues are hidden just around the corner. With anything from simple buildings that have the necessary amenities to locations providing

outdoor wedding scenes, there are often myriad options within a short drive. Many wedding venues offer an all-inclusive package, with much of the planning provided with this option.

### Something Borrowed

- *Public spaces can be great for private events.* Local parks have gazebos or pavilions available to rent for private events. If you are expecting a smaller wedding party, this can be a cute, quaint way to have an inexpensive wedding. Some more recently built parks even have spaces built with events in mind, so a wedding at a park does not have to feel like a wedding at a park.

- *If you book it, they will come.* If you want the beauty of an outdoor setting, but need a bigger venue, you can sometimes reserve the sports fields in your area during their off-season. With a little decorating work, a large field can turn into the perfect wedding site.

### Something You

- *Somewhere that defines the couple.* Anything from a golf course to the outdoor chapel at a church camp from your childhood is perfect if you both think it is perfect. If you and your spouse-to-be are the adventurous types, maybe a bridge spanning the gap between two mountain peaks is the location for you. People may question your choice, but it is just that, your choice, so have fun deciding where to host the big day.

Whatever you decide, remember that the day of your nuptials should be one of the happiest days of your life. As long as you are marrying the person you love, surrounded by the friends and family you want supporting you, no place is the wrong choice to ring your wedding bells. **NOW**



## Zoomed In: Dub Child

By Sally Fuller

If you're going to beat the North Ellis County heat in the summertime, you have to get up early. Dub Child of Ovilla was up before daybreak and on the road with his son and their friend as the sun peaked over the horizon, making their way to Dub's favorite fishing hole. "Fishing on July 4th is one of my favorite activities," Dub shared, "and the private lake, owned by friends in Avalon, is brimming with bass and catfish."

Not only is Dub an avid, lifelong fisherman, at 94 he is also one of the oldest surviving World War II Veterans in Ellis County. A native Texan, Dub and his wife have called Ovilla home for the past 20 years.



*Cousins Ranger Garcia and Layla Newman of Ferris enjoy a summer day at Lake Whitney.*



*Lisa Justice, 342 Nutrition owner, did the honors at the company's recent Red Oak Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting ceremony.*



*The FHS Choir and Ensemble students perform at State.*



*Isabel Cordero of Ovilla climbed into the cab of a Gradall at the Touch-A-Truck event in Red Oak.*



*Patrick Reynolds, Zane Reynolds, Noah Ford and Avery Reynolds enjoy snow cones and cornhole at Snow Place Like Home in downtown Ovilla.*



Mia, Monica and Malia Torres enjoy activities at the Red Oak Library's summer program.



Waiting for the fireworks, Brian Young helps set up a vendor's booth at the Red Oak White and Blue Festival.



Elijah Lacey has fun playing with a water gun at First Baptist Ferris' vacation Bible school.



Deputy Mark Woody hands badge stickers to Diana and RJ Wilson as they exit the Ellis County Sheriff Department's armored personnel carrier at the Red Oak Touch-A-Truck event.

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# Calendar

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.



Red Oak Soccer Association Sign Ups: 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Schupmann Elementary. Stop by to sign up for soccer in person. For specific details, visit [www.redoaksoccer.com](http://www.redoaksoccer.com) or call (469) 677-7672.

Red Oak ISD Back to School Fair: 8:00 a.m.-noon, Red Oak High School Cafeteria. This event is open to all ROISD students. School supplies, school uniforms, immunizations and haircuts all under one roof.

9

Red Oak Police Department Coffee With the Command Staff: 8:00 a.m.-9:00 a.m., Cancun's Ameri-Mex Restaurant, 277 E. Ovilla Rd. Red Oak. Red Oak citizens are invited to meet the chief and his staff to express concerns and ask questions.

11

National S'more Day: 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m., Red Oak Library, 200 Lakeview

Dr., Red Oak. Free bookmarks and scratch-and-sniff stickers encouraging children of all ages to "Read s'more books!" will be available at the library.



19

Clear the Shelter: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Red Oak Animal Care and Control, 411 W. Red Oak Rd., Red Oak. This is a nationwide adoption event and adoption fees are waived on this day. For more information, call (469) 218-7721.

September

8

Red Oak Founder's Day: 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., 101 Live Oak, Red Oak. Enjoy a parade, good eats, games and visit with a number of local vendors. For more information, call the Red Oak Chamber of Commerce at (972) 617-0906.

15

Palmer High School Reunion Classes of 1970-1989: 7:00-11:00 p.m., Old Brickyard Golf Club. RSVP payment of \$20/person is due by **August 15**. Contact Sharon Hamm at (214) 241-2587 for more information.

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](mailto:redoakbookclub@gmail.com).

Ellis County Veterans Networking Group meeting: 6:00 p.m., Ryan's Steak House Waxahachie. Join the group for dinner and listen to the guest speaker. To RSVP or for more information, call (214) 763-0378 or email [vetsnetgrp@att.net](mailto:vetsnetgrp@att.net).

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](mailto: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-schoolers and their caregivers are invited. 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

Red Oak Senior Citizens: 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd., Red Oak. Join for games and activities, light breakfast both days, lunch 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.

### Third and Fourth Thursdays

God's Woven Hearts Ministry: 7:00 p.m., Lone Star Cowboy Church, Red Oak. We gather and create items for homeless veterans and visit the elderly for crafts and fellowship. Bring your talents! For more information, call (214) 417-1173.

### Second Saturdays

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 are \$12 adults, \$5 children.

For more detailed information, visit [www.redoakopry.com](http://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: 8:00-10:00 a.m., I45 Donuts, 502 E. 8th St., Ferris. Get to know your local police officers, express your concerns and ask questions. 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](mailto:sally.fuller@nowmagazines.com).*

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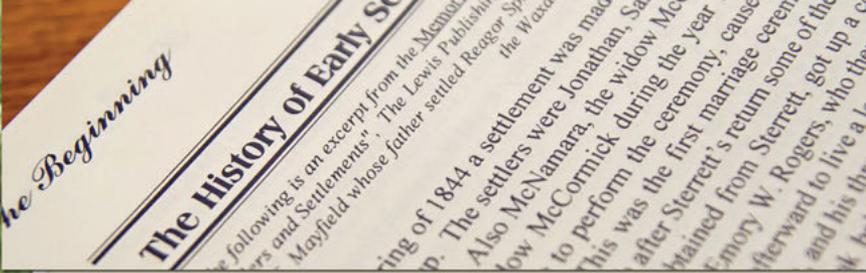
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# Sharing a Rich History

— By Derek Jones

The Rev. Vernon J. Sansom Jr., pastor at Shiloh Cumberland Presbyterian Church, has come home. After serving in Ovilla in the 1980s, Pastor Vernon pastored in Fort Worth then Tennessee. Eleven years ago, he felt God’s call to return as pastor of Shiloh. He answered.

“The community of Ovilla is made up of a bunch of neat people,” Pastor Vernon said affectionately. “This is home.”

The old white church on Shiloh Road is a fixture of the community, and both the church and the cemetery are designated historical landmarks. Pastor Vernon explained, “At one time, the wagon trains headed from Dallas to San Antonio needed to stop a day out of Dallas, so the people could get water and take care of the animals. It just so happens that what we call Ovilla today is where they stopped.” What was originally a water stop became a settlement and, eventually, the city of Ovilla.

Ovilla has a unique history as the oldest town in Ellis County. The original settlers were the Billingsley brothers who established a fortified settlement in the area in 1844. Later that year, the James E. Patton family settled near this settlement. James’ family members helped establish SCPC in 1847. Patton

and his family later relocated to the present location of Red Oak, but when he died, James left instructions to be buried in the Shiloh cemetery.

The church has a long-established history with the community. “Shiloh is said to be the oldest Protestant church west of the Trinity River and north of the Old San Antonio Road,” Pastor Vernon said.

The church, organized on July 25, 1847, originally met in a brush arbor, but in 1872, the church built its first building. That building is still in use today. Its rich history and relationship with the community explains its historical landmark designation. “There is a lot of fascinating history found in this church and the community,” Pastor Vernon said.

In 1918 and again in 1926, fires destroyed most of the downtown buildings. Both times, the townspeople rebuilt. As time went on, railroads and highways bypassed the once bustling town. Soon growth began to decline. Today, however, Ovilla is growing and thriving again with new homes and businesses showing up everywhere. It’s estimated that more than 4,000 people now live in Ovilla.

Pastor Vernon sees this growth as opportunity and a tribute to the persevering spirit of the community. “The churches, businesses, fire and police departments are all working together to do positive things for the community,” he said, “and it is really great to see the results.” Ovilla continues to honor its rich heritage while embracing its promising future. **NOW**

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# Ferris ISD New Student Registration Dates

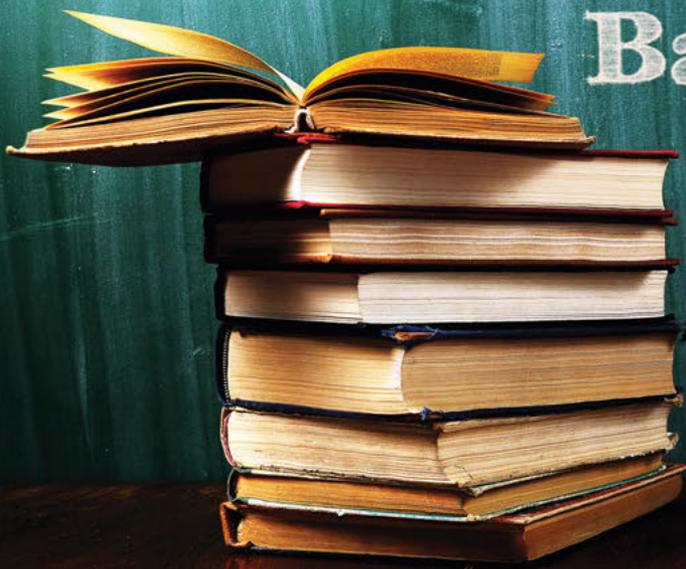
New students in grades Pre-K through 12th grade will need to register at the Central Registration Office at 301 E. 5th Street from 8:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. on the following dates by the student's last name:

Last Name A-G, Mondays, July 30th, August 6th & 20th

Last Name H-M, Tuesdays, July 31st, August 7th

Last Name N-R, Wednesdays, August 1st, 8th & 15th

Last Name S-Z, Thursdays, August 2nd, 9th & 16th



## Back to School

## Ferris ISD Meet the Teacher Nights

Please make plans to bring your child to meet their teacher before school starts. We have lots of new things happening at our campuses that we would love to show you. Be involved in your child's education. Together we can make this school year the best ever.

**Tuesday, August 14th** - Ferris Junior High (5:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.)

**Tuesday, August 14th** - Ferris High School (5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.)

**Thursday, August 16th** - McDonald (5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.)

**Monday, August 20th** - Ingram Elementary (5:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.)

**Monday, August 20th** - Intermediate (5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.)



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