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A G A Z I N E

AUGUST 2023

Lifelong Hawk

Tiffany Munoz
teaches at her
childhood school

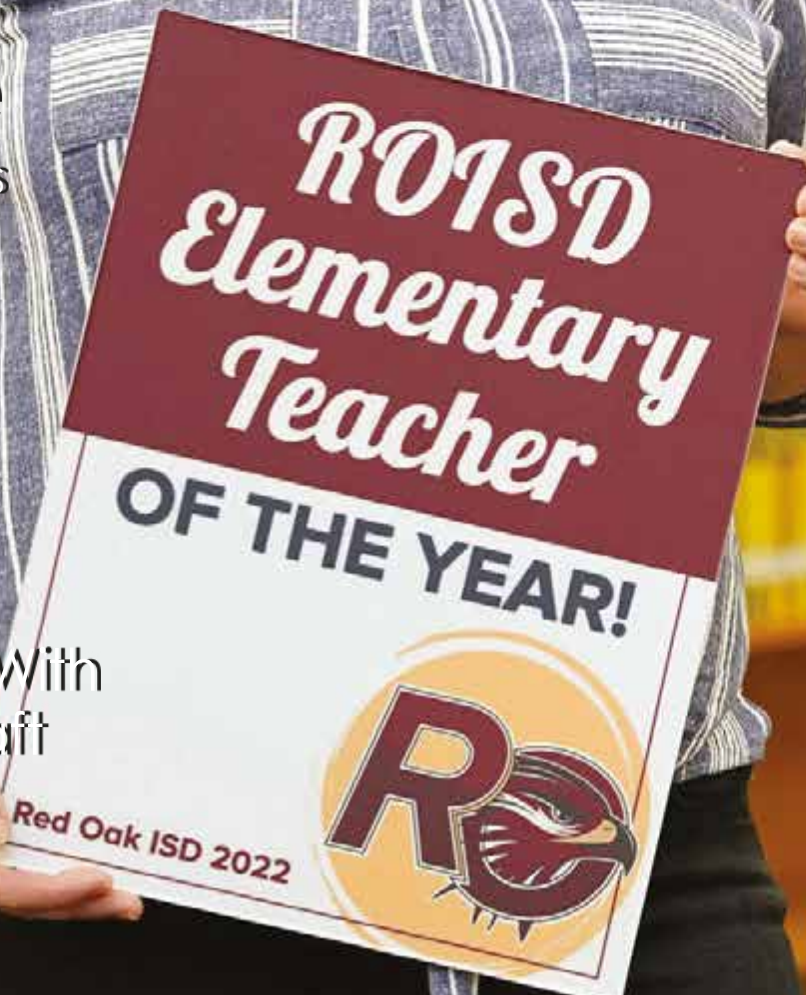
The Road to College

Early prep smooths
the path to higher
education

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

In the Kitchen With
Melody Cracraft



Red Oak ISD 2022



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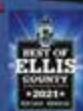
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WHERE: WAXAHACHIE CIVIC CENTER,
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This symposium is designed to equip and empower individuals to respond to the wellness needs of the community. The three main objectives are wellness at home, in the workplace, and in the community.

The remainder of the day will include breakout sessions in smaller, more intimate settings. Topics will relate to self care, stress management, preventative mental health, and relational health. You'll also have time to browse exhibitor tables and talk with wellness professionals.

Keynotes: **Dr. Nekeshia Hammond**, is a best-selling author and an authority in mental health. She will be speaking on community empowerment and self-care. **Dr. Tara Powell** is a renowned researcher and advocate for behavioral health interventions in disaster affected communities.



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Saturday, August 5
8:30 AM – 11:30 AM
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† Qualify for free- or reduced-price meals

REGISTRATION

Visit RedOakISD.org/Registration to get started. On-site registration will be available for new and returning students. Both new and returning students must provide two proofs of residency for registration.

Students must be registered for school to receive services.

[REDOAKISD.org](https://RedOakISD.org)

**BACK TO
SCHOOL!**

Dates to Remember:

ROMS Schedule Pickups:

6th: Aug. 7 7th: Aug. 8 8th: Aug. 10

ROHS Schedule Pickups:

10th: Aug. 7 11th: Aug. 10 12th: Aug. 11

ROHS 9th Grade Camp / Schedule Pickup:

Tuesday, Aug. 8

Elementary Meet the Teacher:

Monday, Aug. 14

First Day of School: Wednesday, Aug. 16

Meet the Hawks: Wednesday, Aug. 23

ROMS 101:

8th: Aug. 28 7th: Aug. 29 6th: Aug. 31



DRESS CODE 2023-24

**VISIBLE
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REQUIRED!**

The Red Oak ISD Board approved some changes to the Student Dress Code for the 2023-2024 school year.

- No hoodies/hoods allowed at all
- No rips or tears that expose skin or sleeveless, halter, tank, tube, crop tops
- No PJs, coveralls, overalls (okay at elementary); sliding / bike / compression shorts
- No sagging or visible undergarments
- No house shoes, slippers, wheels, or cleats



The full dress code can be found at
RedOakISD.org/DressCode

Dress code requirements will be enforced beginning on the first day of school.

ON THE COVER



This former Teacher of the Year considers Shields Elementary her home away from home.

Photo by
Shane Kirkpatrick.

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Angel

Angel Morris
North Ellis Co. NOW Editor
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Coming full circle ...

Uniquely, on both the first and almost last day of this month, sky watchers will be able to see a full moon. Tuesday, August 1, the Sturgeon Moon peaks at 1:31 p.m., and looking southeast after sunset may offer a glimpse of this supermoon rising. Then, on Wednesday, August 30, a second full moon will peak at 8:35 p.m. This one will be a Blue Moon, which is what it's called when there are two full moons in one month. This Blue Sturgeon Moon will be the biggest moon of the year.

The term "sturgeon" came from the large quantity of sturgeon-breed fish that were found in the Great Lakes this time of year. The full moon represents the peak time to gather both fish and fruit, when most are fully grown, and it's time for harvest to begin. The phrase "blue moon" originated to indicate the fourth full moon occurring in a season instead of the usual three. In 1946, an amateur astronomer mistakenly called the second full moon in a month a blue moon, and the misinterpretation stuck.

A complete phase cycle of the moon — its time to travel around the earth — takes 29.53 days, or about one month. Then, every 2.7 years, two full moons end up in the same month. As you may have also surmised, our phrase, "Once in a blue moon" — signifying something that happens rarely — was born from this astronomical timeline. Folklore suggests that full moons cause an increase in earthly madness (erratic behavior, more chaos, more crime), with "lunacy" and "lunatic" nodding to the word "lunar," which means "resembling the moon." I prefer to think August starting and ending with a full moon is just a good reminder to keep looking up.

Shoot for the moon!



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WHEN: Thursday, August 24
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LIFELONG HAWK

— By Angel Morris



Tiffany Munoz is proof that “Once a Hawk, Always a Hawk.” Inspired by her teachers at Shields Elementary decades ago, she is starting her 14th year of teaching at the same school. “My elementary teachers are the reason I wanted to become a teacher. My fourth grade teacher in particular, Donna Davis Little, created an engaging environment that I thrived in,” Tiffany recalled.

As a result, Tiffany pursued the only career she’s ever wanted, graduating from Southwestern Assemblies of God University with a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education. “I wanted to show kindness and help kids become lifelong learners like my teachers ingrained in me at a young age,” she noted.

Applying at Shields directly after college, Tiffany was hired by a principal who had been her own fifth grade teacher. “I also had the privilege of teaching with some of my former teachers, which was very nostalgic,” she remembered.

That first year in the classroom is one of Tiffany’s most memorable. “I had a student who was going through a hard time, and he would get very upset. I remember telling his mom I would love him through it,” Tiffany explained. “We worked together to come up with a plan to help him. This student just graduated and is on the path to go play basketball at a top school. We built a bond that will last forever!”

Experiencing struggles of her own made Tiffany a sympathetic teacher. “Having a child at a young age was something that could have held me back, but with the support of my family, I was able to get my degree and pursue

my career to make a better life for myself and my daughter,” she noted.

Tiffany’s daughter, Chloe, started kindergarten at Shields during Tiffany’s first year of teaching and graduated from Red Oak High School this year. Tiffany’s son, Malakai, is an ROISD student, and her parents, Jill and John Pearson, are also Red Oak alumni. Her grandparents, Jimmie and Linda Lamb, and Ann Pearson, round out Tiffany’s support system — all living in Red Oak. “This is one of the biggest reasons I wanted to teach in the same town I grew up in. I hope to keep the tradition going and inspire students to work hard, love others and give back to their community,” Tiffany promised.

Having taught first, second and third grades, Tiffany recently became the English Language Arts and Reading instructional coach and the campus testing coordinator. She was the 2021-2022 Teacher of the Year for her campus and Elementary Teacher of the Year for the district. She also twice received the Heart of a Teacher Award from the district.

While she makes it look easy, Tiffany experiences challenges like all educators. “We have to meet students where they are after gaps were created during COVID and still provide them rigorous and engaging lessons on their level. That involves ever-changing technology for us all to learn. Also, Ellis County growth has resulted in more students in our classrooms than ever before,” Tiffany outlined. “Ultimately, kids are still the same. They need love, direction and education to help them grow.”

Shields, itself, has grown since Tiffany’s days as a student there. “The building is different because I went to school at the old Shields building that is now Little Hawks. The teachers have changed, and the school looks different, but Shields has maintained its family and fun atmosphere that makes this school special. I loved having both of my kids go through Shields.”

Tiffany also enjoys special activities outside of school. “I’m the nursery and kids’ coordinator at my church, and I



love sports — especially if my kids are playing them. Most weekends and weeknights, you can find me at a game or practice,” she said. “I also own a small business that creates T-shirts for special occasions. This is my creative outlet.”

As a mom, Tiffany said she is her children’s biggest fan. “My goal is to help my children pursue their dreams and become successful. I pray they continue to follow the plans that God has for them,” she said.

Personally, Tiffany plans to pursue another degree to further broaden her impact in education. “I love my students like my own children and hold them to high standards because I want them to be successful beyond my classroom,” she stated. “I believe that when a child knows they are loved, they learn better and will also treat others with respect. Speaking life over them and teaching them that they are amazing is one of the most important and best parts of my job.”

Saying goodbye to students each year is Tiffany’s least favorite part of the job. “But seeing my former students be successful after they leave Shields and after they graduate is so rewarding. ‘Once a Munoz, always a Munoz’ is a quote that former students will say when I see them in the hall or around town,” Tiffany said. “It’s a reminder that I’m part of the community that helped raise me. Red Oak is home and always will be.” **NOW**

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THE ROAD TO COLLEGE

— By Sandra Walters

During the first year of high school, start your child's college preparation. Why? The high school grades determine where he or she will attend, so focus on excelling academically. In addition, get your child mentally prepared by purchasing a binder, or use an electronic option to keep all college documents in an accessible location. Before you know it, the senior year will arrive, and this prior hard work will be appreciated.

If you haven't already, take your son or daughter on a college road trip to find schools that best fit him or her. Many students think they want to attend a certain school, but they have no real experience with the institution. For instance, a conversation with a young man and an older lady took place at a local snow cone shop recently. "What grade are you in?" she asked as he made her snow cone.

He replied, "I am a sophomore."

She then inquired, "Do you know what college you want to attend?"

"I want to go to Oregon State in Washington, D.C.," he answered.

The woman remarked, "Oh, OK," and abruptly ended the conversation with the young man. He had obviously never been to Oregon or Oregon State before. Sadly, he didn't even appear to understand that Oregon State couldn't be in Washington, D.C.

It is crucial for students to discover if a school is a good

fit before applying, getting accepted and then realizing the college isn't suitable. It is advisable to do your homework prior to scheduling a campus visit. Research the schools of choice online. Then, plan a tour while school is in session. Evaluate the campus environment, and talk with students to receive more insight. Investigate the academic programs, and see if you may attend a class to witness class size, teaching styles and the academic atmosphere. Check the student residence halls and dining facilities. Identify career planning services for undergraduates. Investigate transportation options. Find out how students use their out-of-classroom time. Become aware of student activities (clubs, organizations, intramurals, etc.) After the visit, brainstorm reasons for selecting a school, and rank them according to your criteria. Create a list of things that are very important, somewhat important and unimportant. Have your student rate their top three schools according to their needs.

Next, a student should begin registering for college standardized tests during their freshman year to practice. However, since the pandemic, some schools no longer require these tests, but this could still be a determining factor for highly competitive schools. Make sure your student learns the requirements for their top schools and works toward that GPA, those testing scores and attempts to stand out among the crowd. Universities are looking for people who add to their school's community, which includes extracurricular activities. This entails volunteer work, sports, clubs and more. As your student journeys through their high school years, build a high school résumé. This lists all their school activities with brief descriptions. Look online for examples.

Create an ApplyTexas account during the summer of their senior year, and if your child desires to attend an out-of-state institution, use the Common App to submit the application. The writing prompts for ApplyTexas often don't change. Write the essays in advance, so you will be prepared for the busy times



13

ahead. Of course, revisit the documents to edit, revise and proofread the essays to make any necessary updates. Because the senior year can be a really difficult time, the hard work over the years will begin to make sense.

Finally, research scholarships and grants early. It's easier to get local scholarships and grants than national ones. Begin with the scholarships that are offered to students in your ISD. Many organizations offer specifically to particular high schools, so look for scholarships given to individuals at your school or in the DFW area. As you try to identify more savings, fill out your FASFA form on October 1st when it opens during your senior year. Try to avoid having college debt when paying for college. The cost — including books, supplies, room and board, etc. — is about \$100,000 for a Texas public university. Attending an out-of-state school or private school increases the price. Parents and students shouldn't wait until senior year to consider these things, because it can be overwhelming. **NOW**

Source:

1. <http://www.collegeforalltexas.com/apps/collegecosts.cfm?Type=1&Level=1>.



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Linetta Long and John Heim enjoy a Dallas Polo Club monthly match in Red Oak.

Zoomed In: Doris Brown

By Angel Morris

A 21-year law enforcement veteran, Doris Brown recently took the Oath of Office with Red Oak ISD Police Department. “I served with Lancaster Police Department as detective, detective sergeant and detective lieutenant specializing in crimes against children and persons. In joining ROISD, my desire is to build rapport with our youth, as well as their parents, and all internal and external stakeholders in our community,” Investigator Brown noted.

Changing any negative perceptions of law enforcement is important to Investigator Brown. “My main goal is to show that the vast majority of officers are good people who genuinely have a desire to serve and protect,” she said. “I want to mentor, counsel and help our youth as much as possible to become productive individuals in society.”



Ovilla's Carrie Zebreski shows off her medal from First Baptist Dallas Summer Kids Camp.



Triple J Insurance is welcomed to the Red Oak community with a Chamber ribbon cutting.



Brooke Bailey, of Beauty by Brooke, volunteers to offer back-to-school haircuts for Red Oak children in need.



Red Oak's Noah Fitch marks Independence Day while serving on a mission trip to San Antonio with Hillcrest Baptist Church.



Janice Kendrick shows off her handiwork at The Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County annual quilt show.



Colby Word cuddles with Hearts and Tails of Hope foster pup, Calypso, who is available for adoption.

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CookingNOW

In the Kitchen With MELODY CRACRAFT

— By Angel Morris

Melody Cracraft is a stay-at-home mother of five, whose obsession with chocolate-covered Oreos changed her life. “I would stock up on the seasonal flavor but still run out during the year, so I started making them myself,” Melody recalled. “That’s how Melody’s Treats and Custom Cakes began.”

With a passion for food since a young age, Melody has long been the go-to person for family birthday cakes. “My grandmother and mother taught me to love cooking and baking. I like old-fashioned recipes from my grandmother and new ideas my mom introduces me to,” Melody noted. “I enjoy showing artistic skills through baking, and the support of family and friends allows me to keep doing that. As a busy mom, I’m often baking in the wee hours of the morning, but it’s always worth it to see the reaction from people who receive my treats. And, yes, that still includes chocolate-covered Oreos!” **NOW**

Jumbo Chewy Chocolate Chip Cookies

4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
1 1/2 cups butter, softened
1 1/4 cups granulated sugar
1/4 cup brown sugar, packed

2 large eggs
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
2 cups chocolate chips

1. Preheat the oven to 375 F Mix the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt well in a mixing bowl; set aside. In another mixing bowl, cream together the butter, granulated sugar and brown sugar; beat in the eggs and vanilla until well combined, smooth and creamy.

2. Start adding the flour mixture, 1 cup at a time, until combined well and there are no more dry patches. Stir in the chocolate chips.
3. Roll balls the size of your preference, flattening slightly between your hands. Place them on a greased baking sheet; bake for 10-12 minutes, or until lightly golden brown on the top. Cool somewhat before serving.

Cake Balls

1 box cake mix, any flavor
6 oz. frosting, any flavor
20 oz. almond bark, dark or white chocolate
Cake ball sticks
Sprinkles of your choice (optional)
Waxed paper

1. Prepare the cake mix according to the package directions. Let the cake cool, then break it/smash it up in a bowl. Add the frosting to the cake until well mixed.
2. Make golf-ball size balls of the mixture; set aside.
3. Melt the chocolate in 30-second increments, until smooth. Dip the sticks into the chocolate; then insert them into

the cake balls. Let the chocolate harden in the freezer for a few seconds or in the refrigerator for a few minutes.

4. Allow them to warm to room temperature. Hold the cake balls by the stick; dip them into chocolate, coating the entire cake ball. Allow the excess to drip off.

5. Add the sprinkles; place on waxed paper or into a Styrofoam ball, so that it can stand up and cool completely.

Chocolate-covered Oreos

Oreos, to taste
1/2 pkg. almond bark or melting wafers
Sprinkles or toppings of your choice (optional)

- 1.** In a microwave-safe bowl, microwave the almond bark at 30-second increments until melted, roughly 1 to 1 1/2 minutes. (You don't want to burn the chocolate. If needed, let it sit and continue to melt, then mix it.)
- 2.** Using a fork, completely submerge the Oreos, one at a time, into the melted chocolate, allowing the excess chocolate to drain off. Place on parchment paper; add sprinkles or toppings of your choice. Cool for 10 minutes.

Old-fashioned Lunchroom Ladies' Iced Brownies

Brownies:
1 cup butter
2 cups flour
2 cups sugar
1/2 cup cocoa
4 eggs
4 tsp. vanilla
1 cup nuts, chopped (optional)

Icing:
1/4 cup softened butter
1/4 cup milk
3 cups powdered sugar
Dash of salt
1/4 cup cocoa

- 1.** *For brownies:* Preheat the oven to 350 F. Combine all ingredients; mix well. Add to a greased baking pan. Bake for 20-25 minutes.
- 2.** *For icing:* Mix all the icing ingredients together until well mixed and smooth. Once the brownies have cooled, frost, slice and enjoy.

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WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL

AUGUST

Some events may have been cancelled or rescheduled while we were at press. Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

8/5

Back to School Bash:

Games, spirit wear vendors and free immunizations, plus services/supplies for eligible students. 8:30-11:30 a.m., Red Oak High School, 220 S. SH 342. Call Angela Fitzgerald at (972) 617-2941 for more details.

Second Annual

Birdie Blast:

Shooting clay event benefiting Cherished Impressions Child Placing Agency. 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Old Bison Ranch, 1924 Lumkins Rd., Forrester. Call (972) 213-8212 for more details.

8/18

Wellness Symposium:

Free registration. Refreshments, lunch and exhibitor booths to peruse. 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Ln., Waxahachie.

8/24

Tipping the Pain Scale:

Free documentary screening. 1:00-4:00 p.m., Texas Theater, 110 W. Main St., Waxahachie.

Monthly

Dallas Polo Club:

Offering polo lessons and monthly sporting events. 730 Bent Trail, Red Oak. Learn more at

<https://www.dallaspoloclub.org/>.

First Mondays

Red Oak Lions

Club Meeting:

Joining Lions Club is a way to network with other businesses, community leaders and civic-minded people while helping your community. 6:30-7:30 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd.

To learn more, call (469) 571-7265.

Wednesdays and Thursdays

Senior Citizen Center of Red Oak:

Enjoy coffee, juice and donuts each morning, as well as a sponsored lunch on first-third Thursdays and a potluck on

fourth Thursdays. Also, games, puzzles, bingo and informative guest speakers. 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd.

Call (469) 218-1217 for more information.

Last Fridays

Young at Heart:

Join us for a potluck, fellowship and games. For anyone 55-plus. 5:30-7:30 p.m., Ovilla Road Baptist Church, 3251 Ovilla Rd.

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



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