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M A G A Z I N E

October 2010

An Everyday Hero

Super Twins

ALSO INSIDE:

‘Insuring’ Lifelong
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A Heart for Art

At Home With
Tony and Christi
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Publisher, *Connie Poirier*

General Manager, *Rick Hensley*

Editorial

Managing Editor, *Becky Walker*

Editorial Coordinator, *Sandra Strong*

Copy Editor, *Melissa Rawlins*

Red Oak Editor, *Angel Morris*

Contributing Writers, *Janice C. Johnson*

Sydni Thomas . *Adam Walker*

Nickie Werauch

Contributing Editors/Proofreaders,

Pat Anthony . *Teresa Maddison*

Beverly Shay

Advertising Art

Art Director, *Chris McCalla*

Ad Artists, *Julie Carpenter*

Allee Brand . *Cherie Chapman*

Marshall Hinsley . *Arlene Honza*

Editorial Art

Creative Director, *Jami Navarro*

Production Artists, *Brande Morgan*

Pamela Parisi

Photography

Photography Director, *Jill Odle*

Photographers, *Natalie Busch*

Maria Monreal . *Amy Ramirez*

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On The Cover

Lucio Gonzalez Jr.'s dedication and skill earned him Firefighter of the Year and the respect of his peers.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

Editor's Note

Hello, Red Oak Folk!

For my family, October means watching our trees rain autumnal leaves. My son is still young enough to enjoy jumping in them and not too old to hunt them for our collection. Now is when we catch "our" squirrel, Scooter, secreting away acorns in the yard.

Our minds also turn to costumes and candy as local churches do their best — offering Halloween "trunk or treats" — to fill the door-to-door tradition of the past. Watch marquees for safe alternatives planned in Red Oak.

While October brings cooler temperatures, it also heats up as National Fire Prevention Awareness Month. The National Fire Protection Association offers tips to keep your family safe at www.nfpa.org.

Whether collecting leaves, carving pumpkins or making your home safer, may October inspire you to prepare for the season's changes. And you can help me share inspiring stories by sending suggestions to angel.morris@nowmagazines.com.

The best-read stories are in *Red OakNOW*!

Angel Morris

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An Everyday HERO

— By Janice C. Johnson

“An, man, I wanted ribs,” a firefighter grumbled. Lucio Gonzalez Jr. stopped stirring his chicken enchilada filling and pointed the spoon at his colleague. “If you don’t like it, you cook,” he retorted. It was just another day at Dallas Fire Station No. 25. The crews had arrived for their 24-hour shift at 7:00 that morning and spent the first hour making sure everything was ready for the next emergency run. They inspected all their gear, tested the equipment and cleaned the station. The engine crew cooked breakfast, then everyone did maintenance jobs between runs. Now it was Rescue’s turn to cook, so they had chipped in for groceries and gone shopping. A few complaints are normal — “Just like at the house,” Lucio shrugged.




Station No. 25 is one of Dallas’ busiest, having achieved “Hot House of the Year” several times. Lucio explained the dubious honor: “We’re real busy. We average 15 to 25 calls in a 24-hour shift.” Each crew member thoroughly knows his own specific task in a building fire; Lucio carries a short ladder and a “pike pole” in case some ceiling needs pulling down. Not only does each one know just what to do, but after years of working together, “each of us knows exactly what the guy next to him is doing.”


Apart from meals and emergency runs, shift life is busier than people might think. “We maintain the station and equipment, training is ongoing and we take turns working out. There’s a wellness program where they test our fitness. We also go inspect businesses or install smoke detectors for people,” Lucio said. Except for one 90-minute lunch and leisure break, “We don’t sit around and read magazines.”

Hectic schedule aside, there always seems to be time for playing pranks. Experience has made Lucio adroit at sidestepping others’ practical jokes. “It’s hard to pull a prank on me!” he said, then admitted, “I’m usually the one pulling them on everyone else.” The crew has favorite practical jokes for a new guy.






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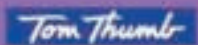
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"Someone will go in and sprinkle flour on his sheets; he doesn't turn a light on when he goes to bed because it might wake someone else up. Then when we get a call in the night, there he is with flour all over his face."

Make no mistake, the work is dangerous, and the banter and pranks help relieve stress. Crews have often been called to burning big-rig trucks, which catch fire when a "tied-down" mattress that flies off a car gets run over and pulled into the engine, and to major accidents where they must cut people out of cars — including, sometimes, police officers. But what kind of run is the scariest? "House fires," Lucio said promptly. "Even with helmet lights, you can't see six inches in front of your face through the smoke. You can't see whether anyone is inside. You bump into walls and have to feel your way through." Ironically, fire calls to the largest buildings are often the least dangerous. Lucio explained, "Those big office buildings are sprinklered, so the fire is usually already out before we get there."

Lucio got his start during high school, when he did odd jobs for the Grand Prairie Fire Department under a youth jobs program. "I got an up-close look, got to know the guys and got interested in firefighting," he said. "I started in dispatch while I attended Fire Academy." Through the years, both equipment and safety have greatly improved. Firefighters now wear radios to call for help as well as "motionless-sensors" that alert their colleagues if they go down. The trucks themselves are safer and more comfortable, with large enclosed cabs for the whole crew. "On the ladder truck we had at one time, you rode up on the turntable, where the ladders are. You were out in the weather."

The one-day-on, two-days-off schedule allows other pursuits. In his off time at home in Red Oak, Lucio works with his brothers in Gonzalez Customz upholstery business. But from dramatic rescues to horseplay, he observed, "Firefighting is a whole other world. Not every woman can be a firefighter's wife." His own wife, Rosie, captured her mixed pride, affection and concern in a poem titled "Every Third Day." The framed poem hangs on the living room wall and reads in part:

“The dangers that face you while you’re gone
 Could frighten the toughest of men.
 Yet you go along so casually
 Facing them time and time again. ...
 You can bet your bottom dollar
 I’ll be here waiting after every third day.”
 Saving a life touches something deep
 in people’s hearts. For most of us,
 that moment would shine on, never to
 be forgotten. We would tell the story
 to our grandchildren. But Lucio has
 experienced those moments every week
 for 36 years. After so many triumphs, and
 the inevitable tragedies along the way,
 he has trouble recalling any one rescue
 that stands out more than another. “The
 details run together over time,” he said.

Even so, his work has never become
 routine. As he described it, “I’ve never
 done this just for the paycheck. It’s
 more than a job.” Each victorious
 outcome and every tragic loss packs an
 emotional punch. Yet, Lucio can find
 consolation even after the losses, such
 as the residence fire where he helped
 save three children with CPR, but their
 mother did not survive. “We have a
 team that counsels firefighters after a
 situation like that. The only way to get
 over [the trauma] is to talk about it,” he
 said. And tragedy does not equal failure.
 “Regardless of the outcome, you know
 you still did your job as you were trained;
 you did everything in your power.”

That passion to do everything possible
 carries over from the rescue scene to
 station life. Already past the typical
 retirement age of 50-55, Lucio is not sure
 when he will retire. He does not want to
 outstay his ability to do the job well but,
 he said, “I’ve got young guys to mentor.
 I’ve gained a lot of knowledge over the
 years, and until I pass on all I know, I
 can’t leave.” Among that next generation
 is his own son, Michael, following in
 Dad’s footsteps as an eight-year veteran
 with the Dallas Fire Department.

In April 2007, Dallas Fire-Rescue
 presented Lucio with the citywide “John
 Clark Firefighter of the Year” award for
 outstanding service. One of the festivities
 was the honor of throwing out the
 first pitch at a Texas Rangers game that
 spring. Lucio recognizes a greater honor,
 as he said, “I’m one of the fortunate
 souls that has had the opportunity to do
 the job I love.” **XXX**

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MARKING MILESTONES

— By Angel Morris



AT HOME WITH TONY AND CHRISTI LANE

It is always an Oktoberfest of sorts at the home of Tony and Christi Lane, who mark their 20th wedding anniversary this month after paths through Germany led them to one another. October-appropriate decor leads you inside the four-bedroom, two-bath home where the couple shares their story.



“My mom is German, and I grew up in Germany. I lived in Athens, Greece, for one year before moving to the states,” Christi said. Reared in Arkansas, Tony enlisted in the Army upon high school graduation and found himself stationed overseas.

“After the Army, I came to Dallas looking for job prospects. I was a manager at a bowling center where Christi was working, and we got to talking about our pasts in Germany,” Tony said. “We discovered I had been in a lot of the same places where Christi lived but, of course, we didn’t meet until we both ended up working in DeSoto.”

The couple married after dating for two years. When their first child, Dustin, was born, they focused on finding a home to grow their family. “We wanted something rural where we could raise our kids; where they could go to school from kindergarten all the way through,” Christi said. “I had visited a friend, who I originally knew in Germany, a number of times at her Red Oak home, and when we started thinking of moving, that’s how I knew this community would be perfect,” Christi said. “[When] we added our daughter, Courtney, to the family, we began to outgrow the house we were in, and we started keeping an eye out for developing neighborhoods.”

“We even looked into some neighboring cities, but I just didn’t want anything but Red Oak in our address,” Tony added.

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takes pride in their 2,700-square-foot home. An open floor plan — blending the kitchen, breakfast nook and living room — fits the family's lifestyle well. "I love the entryway because it's such a welcoming space to meet and greet guests. But the family room is my favorite room in the house. It really is all about family for us," Tony said.

In spite of increasingly hectic schedules — with Dustin a sophomore at Navarro College, Courtney a freshman at Red Oak High, Tony working as district manager for Dr Pepper in Irving and Christi organizing their home — the Lanes still make a point to sit down to dinner together as often as possible. "That is something you can always count on here. Even if I get in later than dinner time, Mom or Dad will always sit down at the table with me," said Dustin. "It's a good feeling knowing you never have to eat alone."

Christi loves to cook, and her Italian chef collection gives the kitchen a lighthearted feel ... from a rotund cookie jar chef, to vibrant chef bowls and platters right down to paper chef napkins. "I'm not even sure how it started — maybe in Canton where we love to go each month — but I saw one of these chefs, and it just grew from there," Christi said. Finer dining means crystal and China collected in Christi's hope chest through the years, used in a formal dining room decorated with ceramic and pewter wall plates of German origin.

With its vaulted ceilings and arched doorways, earthy and neutral tones spread throughout the home, as well as ironworks and wood decor. Christi, who loves crafts, collects crosses she constructs herself from various items found at flea markets. Sports paraphernalia has

its place in the game room, including some antique electronic football and baseball game boards, as well as framed mementos from Nolan Ryan's 5,000th strikeout game.

The Pittsburgh Steelers are prominent in Dustin's "man cave," along with his pride and joy — a 52-inch flat screen and surround sound stereo system. Fourteen-year-old Courtney recently remodeled her room, where a purple-and-black color scheme surrounds softball, movie and music decor — including her own pink guitar. "I love music. I love softball. I hope to play for the high school team this year," Courtney said.

While Courtney once dreamed of moving to Northern states to enjoy the snow, last winter's storms changed her mind. "Now she says she never wants to leave Texas," Christi said, and Dustin agreed: "I love it here in Red Oak."

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Relaxing on the back patio is a favorite pastime for the family. A giant clock with dangling wind chimes adds music to the covered patio, where the Lanes enjoy cups of coffee under the ceiling fan breeze. "We enlarged the patio a bit, added a larger slab and my dad built its roof. It's just a fabulous extension of the home," Christi said.

But it is what is across the street that made this 3/4-acre lot their dream home site. "Looking across the street you see the wooded creek. It's peaceful and beautiful," Christi said. "There will never be any homes there, just the great trees and the flowing creek," Tony added, "and the neighborhood backs up to our church [Red Oak's First United Methodist



Church]. So we have something great in front of us and something great behind us."

The Lanes find Red Oak to be supportive community, and that helped Dustin earn the rank of Eagle Scout in an unprecedented three years after he joined the organization later than most at the age of 15. "I just had support from so many people outside of the family. I think that shows what Red Oak is about," he said. Dustin has his sights on a transfer to Texas A&M next year, but he still refuses to let Courtney have his just-perfected room. "That's OK. She has worn us down on other things, like agreeing to paint her walls purple," Christi said. Another change to the home also came at Courtney's persistence.

Macy, the family's 8-month-old Yorkshire

Terrier, already throws around her 4-pound weight in the home. "She gets her own space right in the entryway. That's where she loves to be," Christi noted of the paw print dog bed and silver-gated "pet room." Macy gets the most prestigious art, as well, with a Thomas Kinkadee piece showcased in the foyer. Macy also has her own doorbell, a wall set of bells on strings she nudges when she needs to go outside.

"We wanted to live in a home where the whole family could interact — someplace open and inviting. We definitely found that here," Christi said. While they do not really celebrate Oktoberfest, the family does take another October tradition to heart. "We always decorate for Halloween and the Harvest," Tony noted, and Christi added, "And we always make sure someone's home to hand out candy!" **XXX**



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The Red Oak Fire Department waits tables at the Waxahachie Chili's to raise money for St. Jude's Hospital.



Volunteers make the annual Back to School Uniform Exchange hosted by the school district and Council of PTAs a huge success.



Logan Finch and Ashlee Patterson pose after being voted 2010 ROHS Homecoming King and Queen.



Red Oak Police Officer Nathan Bickerstaff teams up with Tiger Mart Exxon representatives and other businesses to stop underage drinking.



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a Heart for aRt

— By *Angel Morris*

A school teacher by day, Megan Dacy is inspired not only by children, but by immortalizing young and old in photos. As a result, her hobby and her Web identity — “meganheartphoto” — was born.

“One of my good friends got me interested in photography. I’d go over to her house and we’d dress up and take pictures. I thought, *Hey, I could do this*,” Megan said, explaining that from that day forward she began self-training in the art. “Everything I’ve learned is self-taught. I have no formal training in photography. I’ve never taken any classes, and it’s not what I went to school for.”

By day, Megan teaches prekindergarten special education at Red Oak’s Wooden Elementary. “My kiddos are ages 3-5. I love what I do and my kids more than anything and wouldn’t trade it for the world,” she said. “I love everything about



the school — the kids, the staff, the environment. I could not have asked for a more fabulous place to work and to be a part of.”

In the summer, however, Megan shifts into artist mode. “I invest much more time over the summer than during the school year. When school is in session, I can only do things after school and on the weekends. During the summer, it could be all day, everyday!” Even just part-time, Megan has accumulated countless images depicting her unique photographic style.

“My style is fun, fresh, bright, bold and modern. I don’t own a studio, so all my work is done on location and in natural light. I don’t like to pose. I’m not going to tell you to tilt your chin, turn your shoulders, fix your hands like this, etc., unless of course I see something that will make for an amazing picture,” Megan said. “I love to capture moments as they happen, and catch personality in the shot.”

Through the years, Megan has determined what equipment best suits her freestyle photography. “My style has definitely changed since I first started. I started out with a Sony Cybershot DSCT100 doing macros just for fun,” she recalled. “Someone asked me if I ever considered shooting people. I knew I’d need a better camera for that, so I bought a Panasonic Lumix FZ50. It was an amazing camera and did everything I needed. As my style matured,

I needed equipment that would help me accomplish what I wanted, so I purchased the Canon 7D, and I love it.”

Something else Megan loves about photography is the opportunity it brings to meet new people. “I love the relationships I form. Becoming friends with someone you’ve never met before is a wonderful thing,” Megan said. Not to mention the way a good review makes her feel. “My subjects strongly support my work. They’ve had nothing but incredible, heart-warming things to say. It’s so uplifting,” Megan said.

Although Megan’s work is typically well-received, she has learned that criticism still hurts. “Of course when you’re doing something that reflects your personality, who you are as an artist, and something you work so hard on, it’s very easy to take negative comments to heart,” Megan said. “I have to remember that if I’m ultimately happy with the work I’ve produced and

my subjects love what I've given them, that's all that matters."

Megan denotes other artists whose work she most admires. "I love to look at Stacy Reeves, Inara Studios, Alex M Photography and Jasmine Star's work. They are very inspirational and, I'd like to think, similar to my style," she said. While she can't pinpoint one favorite photo of her own, at least one type of photo has earned her special honors. "When I entered the Midlothian Photo Expo Photo Contest, I placed first in the People Category in the professional photographer division. I was very excited about that!"

While continuing to grow in the photography field, Megan is also busy planning next summer's wedding to her fiancé, Mitch. In down time, she enjoys watching movies and spending time with friends and her two brothers, Dylan and Colin. Megan is proud to be a Christian, as well as a Red Oak Hawk. She calls her quirkiest traits "a need for chips and hot sauce daily and an unhealthy obsession with chocolate."

Quirky seems to work for Megan, an example of someone whose personality blends perfectly with their art. She encourages others to follow their heart when it comes to art. "You are your toughest critic. You will always find



something wrong with your work and will end up convincing yourself that no one will appreciate it as much as you do," she said. "But you'll never know until you try. You have to have confidence

in what you produce. If you love it and you're happy with it, who cares if someone else doesn't like it? My advice to budding artists is, *Go for it!*" **NOW**

Editor's Note: To view samples of Megan's work, visit www.meganheartphoto.com.

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Do not let their size fool you. Madison Humphrey and Taylor Tufts may look small, but these 9-year-olds have advanced athletic abilities, which led them to gain coveted spots on Solar Red, an academy team based out of Southlake. Their parents signed them up for the Red Oak/Glenn Heights Soccer Association when they were 4 years old. When they began exhibiting advanced abilities at the age of 6, their parents started looking at getting them involved in club teams. Madison and Taylor were a part of a Fort Worth academy team called Sting until Solar Red coach, Jason Bates, spotted them at a camp.

Best friends on and off the field, the girls became a package deal. When they first started with Solar Red they were referred to as “The Twins.” Madison and Taylor are the only girls from Red Oak on the team.

To join a team like Solar Red a player must be invited to try out. The process includes practicing with the team to see if they are a good fit. After trying out, the girls were welcomed onto the team and have been working ever since to keep their spots. Once a player makes the team, her spot is not guaranteed. She must work hard and develop her technique to remain. “Their team is so advanced for their age that they have to play the boys teams,” Madison’s dad, Jesus Humphrey, said. “A number of people who know soccer, teach soccer and play soccer have seen their team and can’t believe it. They wonder where they will be in a few years.”

Since joining the Solar Red program, the girls have been under the direction of Jason, who also coaches the Keller High School boy’s team, has an A License from the United States Soccer

Super Twins

— By Sydni Thomas

Federation that would allow him to coach professional teams and has been named the All District Coach of the Year. His daughter, Kara, is also on the Solar Red team. “It’s rare to get a coach as good as Jason at this age level,” Taylor’s dad, Jeff Tufts, said. “He’s really helped the girls advance and become great players.”

Playing club soccer requires a lot of commitment from the entire family, not just the players. On average, the girls practice five hours a week and spend their weekends playing games or at tournaments. Soccer is not seasonal for Madison and Taylor. They commit year-round with traditional outdoor soccer, indoor soccer and a form of soccer called 3v3.

In January, the girls will participate in the Disney Cup World Championship with their 3v3 team. In 3v3 there are five girls to a team and only three playing on each side at a time. Each half is played for 12 minutes without a break in the middle. “Every player who plays on a 3v3 team is starter material,” Jesus said. “You’re sitting there cringing because when they all get out there you know they are playing top material.”

Madison plays the forward and striker positions. She is one of the tallest girls in their league and only one other girl on the team has reached her height. At 9, her feet are already a size eight and give her a great source of power when driving the ball into the net. “When Madison walks on the field everyone knows who she is,” Jeff said. “Other teams would die to have her.”

Being small and fast gives Taylor an edge at central midfielder. At home, she runs on the family treadmill to improve her conditioning skills and can run a six-minute mile. When she first started playing her right foot was her dominant. Taylor dedicated her spare time to strengthening her left foot by only using it when she kicked the ball around the house.

Taylor and Madison use their strengths to teach each other since they are together most of the time. At least once a week

Sports **NOW**

they stay at each other's homes. Madison goes to Shields Elementary and Taylor goes to Ovilla Christian School, but they see each other more than any of their school friends.

Twice a week, Madison and Taylor travel together for an hour-and-a-half to attend practice play for two hours and



drive back home another hour-and-a-half. They do their homework while traveling. "Both girls are highly competitive on and off the field," Taylor's mom, Tami Tufts, said. "They want to win on the field and in the classroom they strive to have the best grades; straight A's always."

Ideas of collegiate careers at The University of Texas and North Carolina are already being tossed around. The girls talk about being roommates and decorating their dorm room. "We've been together forever, and we plan to stay together and go to college," Madison said.

"Yeah, and when we get out of college we are going to play professionally," Taylor said. "We love soccer. It's hard work. We're always practicing, but we have a lot of fun, and we'll get to travel doing it." **NOW**





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From left: Kelsey Craig, Cassie Handlin, Andrea Walton, Laurie Jones and Valerie McCray; the State Farm Good Neighbor; auto, fire, life and bank emblems; Andrea's Red Oak office.

'Insuring' Lifelong Relationships

A little bit of planning with Andrea Walton State Farm helps make terrible situations bearable. — *By Angel Morris*

Andrea Walton's enthusiasm for serving community through her business is as obvious as her presence in Red Oak. With billboards around the city and neighboring towns, Andrea is well-known for her curly red hair and vibrant smile ... not to mention her support of all things Red Oak.

"I have my business here because it is a growing community, [with] excellent schools, great people and hometown spirit. My husband and I met in college and graduated from Texas A&M, so naturally we love the maroon school color of Red Oak, too," Andrea explained.

A 20-year State Farm employee, Andrea said the company's motto falls in line with her own. "State Farm is all about family. Our goal is to create lifelong customers," she said. "I consider each client an extension of my own family. I work hard to make

each person see they are important to us and important to the community."

Andrea goes beyond what one might expect from an insurance agent. "We provide basic insurance needs but find our greatest gift is helping a family plan with life insurance. Each day is a gift from God, and when something tragic or unexpected occurs, we want to be there. Nothing makes the situation good, but we can offer some comfort during a difficult time. A little bit of planning can go a long way to making a terrible situation bearable," Andrea said.

Andrea noted the company focuses on clients' day-to-day needs, as well. "It is nice to know that you can reach someone 24/7, make payments online, review your portfolio, transfer money from one State Farm Bank account to another or do

Business **NOW**

check by phone. At State Farm it is about your convenience,” Andrea said. “It is more important than ever to do business with someone you trust and has your best interest at heart. Today’s fast-paced world naturally makes it hard to focus on details. We keep it simple and explain how your policies should work for you and how we will work for you.”

The local business also assists the community. “We actively support Red Oak Independent School District (ROISD) and the Education Foundation. ROISD offers dynamic programs that give everyone a chance to succeed,” Andrea said. “We sponsor the Stars Banquet each May, an opportunity to honor students and teachers. We are huge fans of the Gerry Ann North Walk — but our favorite is the Festival of Trees! It is a great time to bring the community together for celebration and peace. The Chamber is a great networking tool, and we enjoy supporting other local businesses as well.”

Andrea said her staff is largely responsible for her business success and is proud that her associates are local women from Red Oak and neighboring cities. The ladies enjoy providing a hometown atmosphere for clients. “Our office is a little different because we have a dancing bear out front during cool weather — our very own State Farm Good Neighbor. Drivers honk and it just lifts our day,” Andrea said. “On a serious note, each team member is licensed. I speak Spanish and have several clients teaching me more Spanish. We offer free, no-obligation quotes and always take time to review your current insurance and make recommendations. Our bank rates are very competitive on auto and mortgage loans. We are here Saturday mornings and late Mondays to make it easier for you. If you can’t come to us, we’ll come to you.”

Putting God and family first — including husband, Nick, and their three children — Andrea’s philosophy is simple: Making a difference in someone’s life. “I plan to be doing this another 30 years. I want to see my clients’ dreams become reality — whether it is achieving the retirement goals we worked on together or helping them refinance their mortgage loan for savings. This is about making a difference for families.” **NOW**

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CLASSROOM SWEET CLASSROOM

— By *Angel Morris*

Whoever said, “You can’t go home again,” never met Brea Aitken. A 1995 graduate of Red Oak High School now employed with Red Oak Independent School District (ROISD), Brea spent a short time away from the city before deciding to call it home again.

“My family moved here in 1977, and now I live with my own family in the house I grew up in,” Brea said. “It brings back a lot of memories I can share with my own children.” And when Brea speaks of children, she not only means her own, but the students she teaches at Red Oak Elementary, as well.

“I want students to know that my classroom is their home away from home. When they come in, I ask for a hug and a smile to start the day,” Brea explained. This nurturing nature made education a natural career choice. “Growing up I had a passion for teaching my stuffed animals. As I got older and got summer jobs, I always wanted to work with kids, whether through swimming lessons or a summer playground program.”

After earning her degree in elementary education with a minor in English from Sam Houston State University, Brea taught first grade in Huntsville, Texas. She married her college sweetheart, Kenne, and the two moved to Red Oak. Brea began teaching at Red Oak Junior High in 2001. “I taught seventh grade math and coached eighth grade volleyball and track. I taught four years at the junior high and decided I wanted to go back to lower grade levels,” Brea said. She moved to Red Oak Elementary in August 2005.

Entering her fifth year of teaching second grade, Brea calls her classroom style, “no nonsense.” “I’m lovable and love what I am doing, but I am very organized. I tend to be a little OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) when it comes to my classroom;



Brea Aitken makes her classroom a home away from home for students.

but I feel teaching kids to become organized at an early age helps them in the future,” she said.

Brea also believes stressing individuality is a key aspect of educating children. “I try to teach my students they are individuals and should beat their own drum. It doesn’t matter if the student next to them can do something faster or has better handwriting. It’s about what they can do and being proud of the effort they give day in, day out,” Brea said.

To that end, Brea’s teaching style has changed over time. “I’ve moved from teaching a classroom full of students to teaching individuals. I love having small groups so students can really get to know me.” And, as Brea stated, she wants her students to consider school their second home. “I tell students the first day they walk in that we are family and will be until the last day of school.”

Like biological families, classroom families face challenges and share success. “I have learned in life nothing is going to be perfect, no matter how hard you try. But the students have taught me that I can make mistakes and laugh when they happen,” Brea said. “Every student has their own learning style, and for students that struggle, I let them know that in their own time they will gain their wings and take off into the sky. It’s an amazing feeling to see their faces light up when they finally get it!”

Education **NOW**

Her fellow teachers are also extended family to Brea. "From the day I walked into the building, I was family. The staff is amazing to work with and one I am honored to be part of," Brea said. "When times are tough or we are stressed, we stand together and lift each other up."

Such support was welcome when Brea's grandmother died in June. "She was my best friend. She told me no matter what I wanted to do in life, I could do it if I tried. She was an amazing woman who taught me how to be who I am today. I hope I can teach the values and beliefs to my children that she taught me."



Brea said the increase in parental awareness she has witnessed through the years translates to students with stronger values and greater enthusiasm. "Parents are so much more involved and are excited about the materials our students are learning," she said. This is positive reinforcement to educators such as Brea. "We put in many hours a day, many hours a week, but we love our jobs, the children that we teach and the community that supports us each day."

Aside from teaching, Brea also serves on the District Site-Base Committee and has been the school's representative for the Gerry Ann North Walk. After hours, she loves being outdoors and spending time with daughter, Kendall, and son, Harrison. "I love my life and feel very blessed. God has been good to me, and I continue to thank Him each day," Brea said. "Becoming a teacher has taught me so much about myself, the person I want to be, and the person I am becoming. I am the root of the tree and the students are my branches. ... By the end of the year, I want them to be blooming with success." **NOW**



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In The Kitchen With Peggy Callier

— By Adam Walker

A Red Oak resident for 34 years, Peggy Callier enjoys down-home cooking, but is so passionate about baking that she is known as “The Cake Lady.” She has made unusual cakes shaped like everything from skateboards, deer heads and longhorns to Buzz Lightyear. Baking allowed her to stay at home with her children and still earn money. She now enjoys cooking for her husband, children and grandchildren at family gatherings.

She is still awaiting great-grandchildren!

Even though Peggy has made many cakes, disaster struck one day. “I was delivering a wedding cake in a Texas summer,” she remembered. “When I opened the door of my SUV, the cream cheese icing had melted and run off the cakes. I had to redecorate the whole cake.” Fortunately, no one ever suspected because The Cake Lady’s new work was as beautiful as ever. **NOW**



BROWNIES WITH FUDGE ICING

1 cup butter
2 cups sugar
2 tsp. vanilla
4 eggs
1/2 cup cocoa

FUDGE ICING

1 cup flour
1/2 cup sugar
2 Tbsp. butter
2 Tbsp. cocoa
1 Tbsp. corn syrup
1/4 cup milk
Dash of salt
1/2 to 3/4 cup powdered sugar
1 tsp. vanilla

1. Mix all brownie ingredients together by hand. Pour batter into a 9 x 13-inch greased pan and bake at 350 F for 20-25 minutes.
2. For the icing, boil sugar, butter, cocoa, corn syrup, milk and salt.
3. Add powdered sugar and 1 tsp. vanilla. Bring to a boil and cook about 1 minute. Allow brownies to cool before icing.

MIMI'S CAKE

1 box cake mix or the ingredients for your favorite homemade cake
1 jar caramel ice cream topping
1 can icing, homemade icing or cream cheese
Heath bar

GANACHE

1/2 cup heavy whipping cream
14 oz. chocolate, chopped

1. Bake cake according to directions or make your favorite cake from scratch.
2. Punch holes in cake and pour caramel topping over it. Let it sit.
3. Spread icing over top.
4. For ganache, heat whipping cream just to boiling point.
5. Remove from heat and add in chopped chocolate and stir until smooth and glossy.
6. Spread ganache over cake.

7. While still warm, top with crumbled Heath bar.

TEXAS GLOP

1 large onion, diced
Margarine
2 lbs. ground beef
2 cans tomato sauce
2 cups Mexicorn
Salt and chili powder, to taste
3/4 box fine noodles, cooked
Grated cheese

1. Sauté onion in small amount of margarine.
2. Add meat and cook until brown. Drain the grease.
3. Add the tomato sauce and corn.
4. Add salt and chili powder and cook slowly for about 10 minutes.
5. Add cooked, well-drained noodles. Pour in casserole and top with cheese.
6. Bake at 350 F until the cheese melts.

TEXAS HASH

2 large onions, diced
2 green peppers, cut finely
2 Tbsp. shortening
1 lb. hamburger
2 cans whole stewed tomatoes, crushed
1/2 cup uncooked rice
1/4 tsp. pepper
1 tsp. chili powder
1 tsp. salt

1. Sauté onions and peppers and slowly add in shortening until yellow.
2. Add the hamburger and sauté until mixture falls apart.
3. Add the tomatoes and rice to the mixture.
4. Season.
5. Put into casserole dish and bake at 350 F for 1 hour.

PINEAPPLE DELIGHT

1/4 lb. butter
1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
2 eggs

1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 lb. vanilla wafers, crushed
1 cup crushed pineapple, drained
1/2 cup whipping cream

1. Cream butter with powdered sugar.
2. Add 2 eggs and 1 tsp. of vanilla.
3. Put half of the vanilla wafer crumbs in bottom of a glass dish.
4. Spread butter and sugar mixture on top of the crumbs.
5. Take the cup of drained pineapple and spread over butter mixture.
6. Whip cream; spread over the pineapple.
7. Put remaining crumbs over the cream.
8. Let stand about 12 hours in refrigerator before serving.

INFALLIBLE POUND CAKE

1 1/2 cups of vegetable shortening
2 1/2 cups of sugar
8 eggs
3 cups flour
1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 tsp. almond flavoring

1. Cream shortening and sugar.
2. Add eggs, one at a time. Beat well after each addition.
3. Add flour and stir well, then add flavoring.
4. Bake in greased tube pan at 325 F, about 1 1/2 hours.

POLISH MISTAKE

1 lb. hot sausage
1 lb. hamburger
1 tsp. oregano
1 tsp. garlic
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 lb. Velveeta

Party rye bread

1. Fry sausage and hamburger. Drain grease.
2. Add remaining ingredients.
3. Spread on party rye.
4. Bake at 350 F for 10-12 minutes. Can be frozen — just reheat.

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The Business Aspects of Life Insurance

— By *Nickie Weyrauch*

Your life insurance policy can do much more than provide peace of mind for your loved ones; it may also save and support your business in the event of sudden or drastic changes which may include the death of a business owner, partner or the departure of key employees.

Business Uses of Life Insurance

Business transfer

A business can execute a buy-sell agreement and fund it with life insurance. A buy-sell agreement is an arrangement for a business to continue in the event of the owner's death, disability, retirement or early withdrawal from the business.

Debt coverage

Life insurance proceeds can provide a business with funds to help pay off business debts in the event of the owner's premature death.

Key employee protection

The loss of a key employee can severely impact the financial health of a business in several ways: lost sales, costs of recruiting and training a replacement, costs to continue the salary to the employee or the family or loss of credit.

Non-qualified deferred compensation (NQDC) plans

Such plans are contracts between employers and key employees to pay future compensation for work performed now. The employee is not taxed on the money until it is received. The policy's death benefit can provide the funds to pay the

employee's estate any amounts remaining due under the deferred compensation plan.

Executive bonus plans

With this plan, the employer gives a bonus to a key employee who then pays taxes on the money and uses the remainder to purchase a life insurance policy. The employee has all ownership rights in the policy, such as access to the cash value and the power to designate beneficiaries, while the employer receives a tax deduction for the bonus.

Supplemental executive retirement plans (SERPs)

SERPs provide key employees with supplemental retirement income generated by the cash value of a life insurance policy.

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Note: Partial withdrawals and surrenders from life insurance policies are generally taxed as ordinary income to the extent the withdrawal exceeds the investment in the contract, which is also called the "basis." In some situations, partial withdrawals during the first 15 policy years may result in taxable income prior to recovery of the investment in the contract. Loans

are generally not taxable if taken from a life insurance policy that is not a modified endowment contract. However, when cash values are used to repay a loan, the transaction is treated like a withdrawal and taxed accordingly. If a policy is a modified endowment contract, loans are also taxable, and loans, withdrawals and surrenders are treated first as distributions of the policy gain subject to ordinary income taxation, and may be subject to an additional 10-percent federal tax penalty if made prior to age 59 1/2. Loans, if not repaid, and withdrawals reduce the contract's death benefit and cash value.

Nickie Weyrauch is an Allstate agent based in Red Oak.

Call me today for a complimentary financial and insurance review.



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(972) 617-5433
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Insurance subject to availability and qualifications. Allstate County Mutual Insurance Company, Irving, Texas. © 2009 Allstate Insurance Company.



Air Scrubbers for the Home

— By Nancy Fenton

October is a great time to open doors and windows, at least for a while. When the weather does not permit open windows, try a few houseplants to freshen things up. In addition to adding beauty, they can even out humidity and add oxygen to a home. Recent studies by NASA have shown that houseplants not only produce oxygen, but they are effective in removing harmful chemicals from the air.

In the 1970s when our construction changed to make homes more energy efficient, there began to be a problem called "sick building." All the synthetic materials, which are known to emit various organic compounds, were linked to numerous health complaints. Man, himself, adds to the problems in closed, poorly ventilated areas. Think about

people in an airplane for an extended amount of time!

It is no secret that plants take in carbon dioxide and use it to make food by separating the carbon and the oxygen through photosynthesis in the daylight. They use the carbon for growth, seed production, etc. and emit the oxygen in the dark wee hours of the morning. The larger the leaf surface, the more effective the process.

According to recent studies there are many good plants to have in the house. The top ones are as follows:

1. Mother-in-law's Tongue
2. Dracaena
3. Philodendron
4. Areca Palm
5. Money Plant
6. Airplane Plant
7. English Ivy
8. Chinese Evergreen
9. Gerbera Daisy
10. Ficus
11. Christmas Cactus

12. Golden Pothos
13. Rubber Plant

If you choose to have plants in the house, get started now! Buy plants, saucers and rolling stands for them before they all disappear in the Halloween rush! I consider saucers and rolling stands a must since it seems important to protect the floor and to be able to clean under the stands. As for which plants to choose, make your selection based on how much light you have available. I have almost no direct sun, so I have to go with Chinese Evergreen, Mother-in-law's Tongue, Golden Pothos and Corn Plant. I also like the fact that they tell me when to water by wilting. Water in the saucer can evaporate out and help the humidity when our central heat comes on. Studies show that as few as 15 houseplants will significantly reduce the quantity of indoor contaminants. Try them. You may like the look, and your lungs will love the extra oxygen! **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.

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First and Third Mondays

Glenn Heights City Council meetings: 7:30 p.m., city council chambers, 1938 Hampton Rd., Glenn Heights. Call (972) 223-1690 or write citysecretary@glennheights.com.

Second Monday

Red Oak City Council meeting: 7:00 p.m., Red Oak Municipal Center, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. Contact Cynthia Olguin at (972) 617-3638 or colguin@redoaktx.org.

Second and Fourth Mondays

Ovilla City Council meeting: 7:00 p.m., City Hall, 105 S. Cockrell Hill Rd. Contact Pamela Higgins at (972) 617-2489 or phiggins@cityofovilla.org.

Third Monday

Red Oak ISD School Board meeting: 7:00 p.m., Red Oak Elementary cafeteria, 200 Valley Ridge Dr. Call (972) 617-2941 or visit <http://www.redoakisd.org/>.

Fourth Monday

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting: 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave.

First Tuesday

PrimeTimers Senior Group meeting: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Oaks Fellowship, 777 S. I-35 East, Red Oak. Open to all seniors. Fun, food and fellowship. RSVP (214) 376-8208.

Second Tuesday

Oak Leaf City Council meeting: 7:00 p.m., Oak Leaf Municipal Center, 301 Locust Dr. Call (972) 617-2660 or visit <http://www.oakleaftexas.org/city-council> for details.

First and Third Tuesdays

Red Oak Lions Club meetings: 7:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd. Call (214) 864-8014.

Every Wednesday

Family Story Time: 10:00-11:00 a.m.,

Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. All ages welcome. Call (469) 218-1230 or visit www.redoakpubliclibrary.org.

Wednesdays and Thursdays

Red Oak Senior Citizens Club meetings: 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 207 West Red Oak Rd. Games, exercise and activities. Call (972) 576-2777 for details.

Every Thursday

GriefShare recovery support group for those who have lost a loved one: 7:00 p.m. The Oaks Fellowship in Red Oak, room E-104. (214) 376-8208.

First and Third Thursdays

Glenn Heights Lions Club meetings: 7:00 p.m., Bienvenidos Restaurant, 920 N. I-35 E., Lancaster.

Red Oak seniors' luncheon for all citizens 55 and over: Pre-register Tuesday prior to the event you wish to attend. No cost to senior residents; \$5 for senior non-residents. Call Jennifer at (972) 576-3414.

October 4

Red Oak ISD Education Foundation Partnership Challenge: Golf tournament benefiting ROISD teachers and students, Thorntree Country Club. To register, contact Karen Anderson at (972) 345-4021 or karen.anderson@redoakisd.org.

October 4 and 18

New Morning Networker: 7:30 a.m.-8:45 a.m., Access Storage, 561 E. Ovilla Road. Call Tom Rogers at (972) 571-9299.

October 19

WRC Pregnancy Center of Ellis County's 15th Anniversary Dinner: 6:30 p.m., Creekside Church on Highway 287 between Waxahachie and Midlothian. Guest speaker: Laurie Westlake. Tickets are complimentary, but reservations are required. Call (972) 938-7900 or (972) 878-0784.

October 23

Red Oak Area Chamber Auction: 6:00 p.m. \$50/person. Red Oak Municipal Center, 200 Lakeview Parkway. Contact Shelley Oglesby at (972) 617-0906 or admin@redoakareachamber.org.

October 27

Red Oak Area Chamber Luncheon: Noon, Red Oak Municipal Center, 200 Lakeview Parkway. Cost is \$12 with reservations or \$15 at the door. Contact Shelley Oglesby at admin@redoakareachamber.org.

October 30

City of Glenn Heights Second Annual Family Festival: 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m., Heritage Park, 400 E. Bear Creek Rd., Glenn Heights. Arts, crafts, entertainment, health screenings, food vendors and a grand finale fireworks display. Visit www.GlennHeights.com, call (972) 223-1690 or e-mail FamilyFestival@GlennHeights.com.

Ellis County SPCA 8th Annual Bow Wow Howl-O-Ween Hustle: 9:00 a.m.-noon, Getzendaner Park, 299 S. Grand Ave., Waxahachie. Visit www.elliscountyspca.org for more details.

Ovilla United Methodist Church's Lord's Acre inaugural 5K and 1 Mile Fun Run: Fun Run begins at 8:00 a.m. (stroller friendly, but no pets), 5K (timed) Run begins at 8:30 a.m., OUMC, 1403 Red Oak Creek Rd., Ovilla. Kids (and kids at heart) wear Halloween costumes and stay for Trunk-or-Treat and carnival games immediately following the awards ceremony at 10:00 a.m. Registration forms available online at www.ovillaumc.org.

Red Oak Parks & Recreation Fall Festival: 4:00-8:00 p.m., Red Oak City Park. Carnival games, haunted hayride, Trunk-or-Treat, bounce houses, costume contests by age and more. Call Lauren Findley at (469) 218-1202.

For more community events, visit our online calendar at www.nowmagazines.com.

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October is National Infertility Awareness Month

Join North Texas Fertility and North Texas Cryobank for their new Reproductive Health Seminar Series

Dr. Sunday Pirkle, Ph.D., a reproductive biologist, and her colleagues from various medical fields will present different monthly topics related to all aspects of reproductive health, including infertility and sexual health. Refreshments will be provided. Seminars are limited to a minimum of 5, maximum of 20 participants. \$5 donation per person requested, but not required.

Friday October 8, 6:00-7:30 - "Birds and Bees (Part 1) - What's Happening?" Appropriate for girls (and their moms) ages 10 - 12. Dr. Pirkle will discuss puberty and what happens to a girl's body during this time.

Friday October 8, 7:30PM - 9:00PM - "Birds and Bees (Part 2) — Abstinent, but Educated" Appropriate for girls age 12+. Dr. Pirkle will present the biology behind sex, the importance of abstinence, and answer questions that teen girls may have, but might be afraid to ask.

Saturday October 9, 10:00 AM - 11:30 - "BABYMAKING 101" For women interested in becoming pregnant. This talk will cover identifying fertile times, optimizing fertility, and knowing when to seek help.

Seminars will be held at North Texas Fertility - 950 Scotland Drive, Desoto

Upcoming topics include: Using donor eggs and sperm
Infertility 101, Erectile Dysfunction, Female Sexual Dysfunction,
The Emotions of Infertility

For more information:
rsvp@northtexasfertility.com
1-877-976-9483






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For a physician referral or for more information about cancer care services, call **1.800.4BAYLOR** or visit us online at BaylorHealth.com/WaxCancer.

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