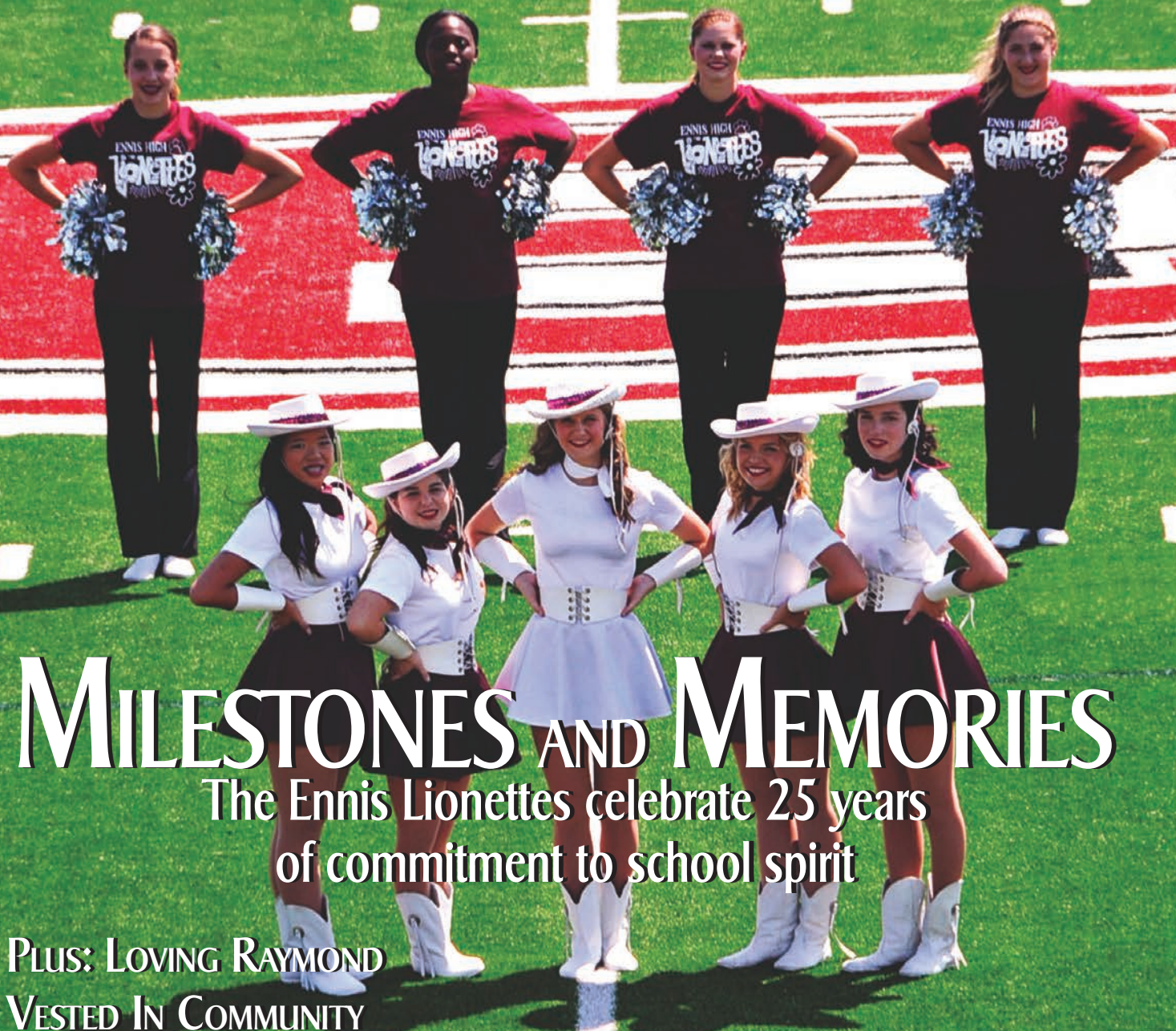


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ON THE COVER



The Ennis Lionettes are still strong — even after 25 years.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Happy Fall, Y'all!

This is my favorite time of year. The temperatures have finally cooled down enough so I can open my windows during the day and let the cool breeze freshen my home. I'm able to get outside more to do the yard work I love and the exercise I don't love, but so desperately need, to remain healthy.

I look forward to all the month of October has to offer: October Fest event with close friends on the 13th, National Bosses Day on the 16th and my mom's birthday on the 27th.

I'll be eating hotdogs and sleeping in a tent one day. I'll be showing my bosses how much I appreciate them the following week. By the end of the month, if I'm not way too tired, I'll be celebrating another year with my best friend. It looks like it's going to be another busy month, but I'm up for the challenge. How about you?

Sandra

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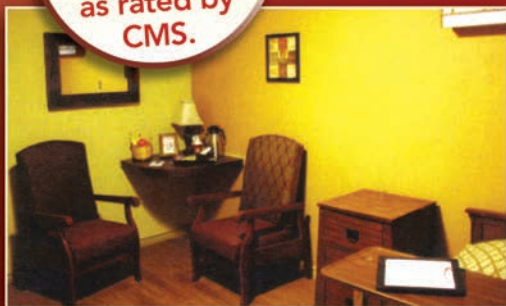
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MILESTON

Memori

— By Sandra Strong

Although Cassie Ortiz is busier than ever this year as the director of the Ennis Lionettes, she is having the time of her life. “The Lionettes are celebrating their 25th anniversary,” Cassie explained, with excitement evident in her voice. “I’ve been out of high school for 10 years, and this year’s squad has my first group of graduating senior Lionettes.”

Cassie has come full circle in the three years she has been the Lionettes’ director. She admits there have been several bittersweet moments so far with all the milestones, but Cassie loves seeing her vision come to life. “The restructuring of the squad began during my first year,” she stated. “It’s been a good thing.” Cassie loves being able to build confidence in her girls and the team. Seeing those results in her girls brings a smile of great pride to her face. “The Ennis Lionettes are my biggest priority. It’s all about the team!”

Coming to the squad as the new director at the end of the 2009-2010 school year wasn’t easy for Cassie, or for those who had already made the Ennis Lionettes squad for the following year. “She came at the end of my freshman



ES AND es



year, and she wanted us to call her Ms. Ortiz," said Melany Rejcek, senior captain for the anniversary team. "She wanted us to say, 'Yes, Ma'am' and 'No, Ma'am.'"

As Melany looks back on the past three years, she realizes all Cassie wanted was to teach, not only her, but the whole squad, the importance of respect and responsibility. "The rules and guidelines Ms. Ortiz put in place when she first started as the director have made me the person I am today," Melany admitted. "I'm a strong leader because Ms. Ortiz is a strong leader. I'm dedicated because she is dedicated. It means a lot to me to be trusted to lead the team in a positive, respectful manner."

Cassie also experienced a change in directors during her years on the Waxahachie High School Cherokee Charmers drill team. "We changed directors four or five times within three years," Cassie explained, "and when I was Captain my senior year, there were three





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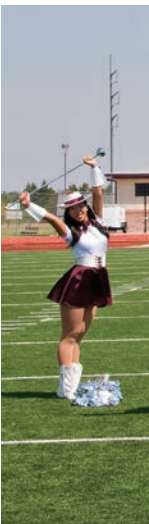


changes in one year. So when I got to Ennis High School (EHS), I knew exactly what the girls on the squad were thinking and feeling.”

In past years, to be a Lionette meant you also had to be a member of the award-winning EHS marching band. Restructuring brought this guideline to an end, opening the door for more students to be involved in dance. “The restructuring change opened up the doors for so many girls,” Cassie said. “When I got to EHS, there were 18 Lionettes. This year’s anniversary team includes 37 members, who are divided into smaller squads within the team. The girls are busier than ever.”

Change, although difficult in the beginning stages, isn’t always a bad thing. The Lionettes and EHS band have learned to work well together. “Although we have separated our groups, you are still able to be a part of both organizations,” Melany, previously a band member, said. “We have ladies who both dance and play an instrument or are part of the bands’ flag crew.”

“We all work together very well,” Cassie added. “It’s a win-win for both groups.”



Being a Lionette doesn't come easy. It takes a strong work ethic, dedication and determination. Tryout week always falls in April. The team chosen during this week is the group of girls who will perform throughout the coming year. "The girls learn splits, jumps, kicks, basic steps and kick techniques during tryout week," Melany explained. "They have to put what they learn during this week to the test as they try out for the Lionettes squad on Saturday."

By the end of the week, the girls trying out have worked harder than they dreamed, but they come to the final day with high expectations and a strong desire to represent EHS. Officers not only plan and choreograph the tryout dance routine; they also serve as the teachers for the weeklong event. "Our goal is to help those struggling to make them successful Lionettes — to lead by example," Melany emphasized. "It's all about finding their potential and building on that."

Saturday is broken into two half-days that include line tryouts and officer tryouts. Incoming freshmen, sophomores



and juniors must try out and be judged to earn a coveted spot on the line. Three-year veteran members who want to be on the line, as a senior, don't have to try out. The position of officer is offered to juniors and seniors only, and anyone who holds an officer position like Melany, has to go through the rigors of trying out and being judged by three outside judges whom Cassie secures, as well as votes from the team.

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Interscholastic League. “If they don’t pass, they don’t perform,” Cassie said. “One failing grade affects the whole team.”

Other sports offer a substitute when a team member is absent. That is definitely not the case with the Ennis Lionettes. Routines are not made for individuals. Instead, they are designed for the team. “The entire team has to know the routines from all angles, start to finish,” Melany said. “When someone is out, we are able to modify the dance routines to allow for



a missing team member. You can’t have routines that only work for one. They have to work for the team as a whole.”

The Ennis Lionettes have seen many changes in the past 25 years. Uniforms have changed several times, with the newest ones making their debut last football season. And once again, the drill team has returned to its traditional roots. The squad performs outside the football field and basketball court now more than ever before. But, the winning spirit, which began on the first Ennis Lionettes team with Melany’s aunt, the late Janet Rejcek Roach, remains the same. While at camp this past summer, the team won a total of eight awards. “We’re good,” Melany beamed, as Cassie smiled in agreement. “We’re really good!”

Although the commitment to being a successful Lionette has its long-term rewards, the success doesn’t come easy. Practices are twice a day. Grades must be kept to a certain level. About 25 dances are mastered throughout the year, as well as several small dances that are performed in the stands before and after halftime. Their time off is minimal. “The long hours and hard work have been worth it,” Melany confessed. “I’ve learned the importance of respect, responsibility and teamwork. These are all things that will benefit me in adulthood.” **NOW**

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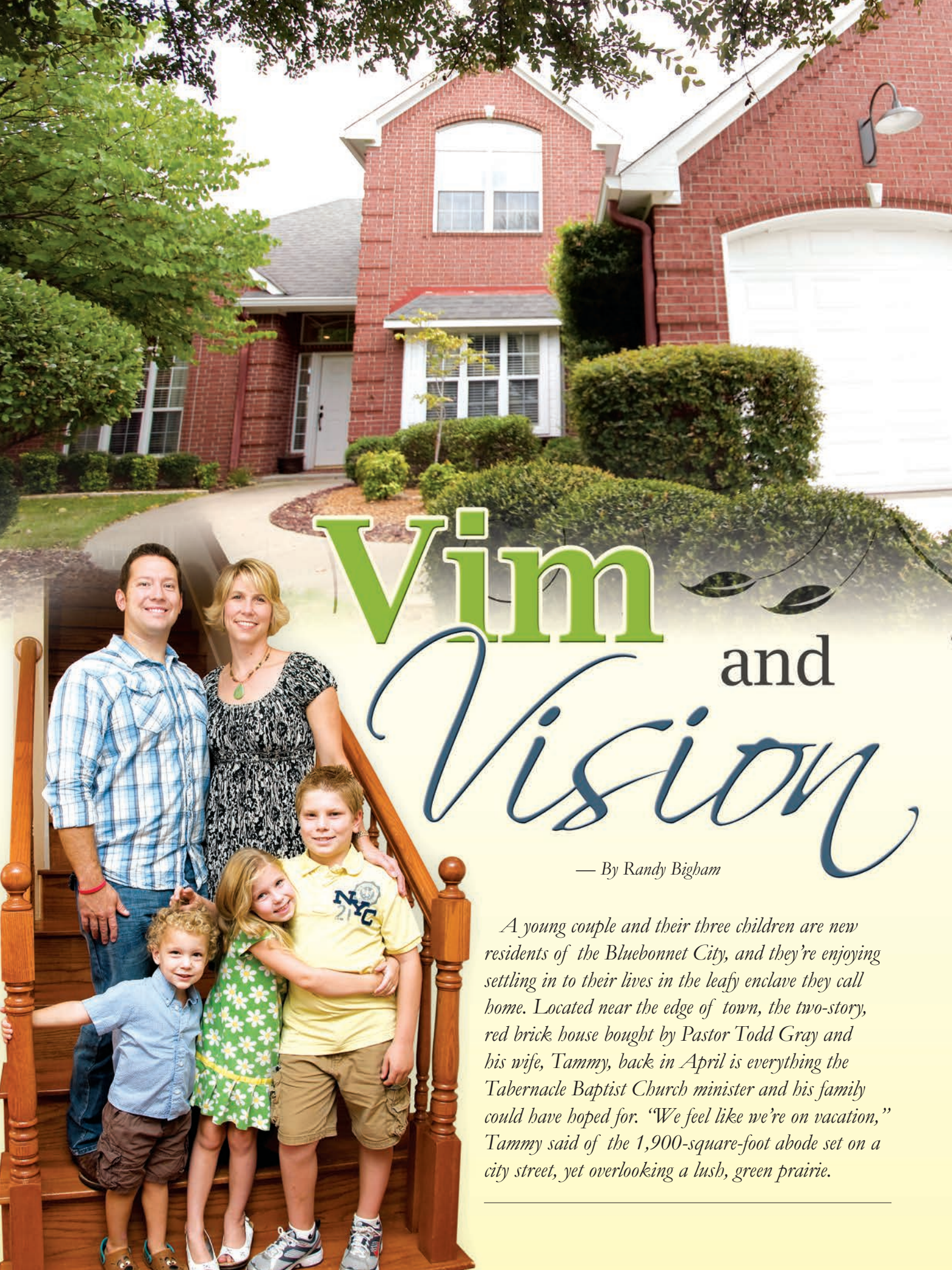
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Vim and Vision

— By Randy Bigham

A young couple and their three children are new residents of the Bluebonnet City, and they're enjoying settling in to their lives in the leafy enclave they call home. Located near the edge of town, the two-story, red brick house bought by Pastor Todd Gray and his wife, Tammy, back in April is everything the Tabernacle Baptist Church minister and his family could have hoped for. "We feel like we're on vacation," Tammy said of the 1,900-square-foot abode set on a city street, yet overlooking a lush, green prairie.



AT HOME WITH *Todd* *and* *Tammy Gray*

"There are hundreds of acres to look over from our backyard," Todd explained. "It's our favorite thing about the place." A shady front lawn, a two-car garage and a swimming pool are perks, but it's the quiet neighborhood and bucolic views that captivated the Grays when they moved into the 8-year-old house six months ago.

"You walk in the front door, and you don't feel like you're in a subdivision," Tammy said. "You get all the benefits — being close to town and having neighbors — but you feel like you're in the country."

Todd and Tammy also feel like they're



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among friends. "We really love Ennis," Tammy enthused. "The people here have been so welcoming." Originally from San Angelo, Todd served in the Air Force before pastoring churches in San Antonio and Italy. Tammy, a self-described military brat with roots in Louisiana, is also a veteran. The couple is as athletic as they are spiritual, and enjoy a fitness regimen of weight-training, running and swimming. They also get a workout as parents of Isaac, 8; Autumn, 5; and Christian, 2.

The family has been embraced by members of Tabernacle Baptist who regard their young minister as a distinct leader. For his part, Todd is touched by his congregation's outpouring of hospitality and eagerness to accept change. This fall the church has launched its Experience Family campaign, and Todd and Tammy are already heartened by the reaction to the series of family conferences and the opening of a new resource center. "Our vision, our whole purpose, in Ennis is to make our church a place where the community can come and feel loved and welcomed," Todd



outlined. The members welcomed their pastors that way and want all who come to the church to feel they have people who will invest in them and help them grow in their faith.

Sometimes resistance accompanies the arrival of a new pastor and the implementation of new programs, but Todd has experienced none of that in his installment as minister. "Usually when you're in your first year as a pastor, it's like feeling your way around a house with all the lights off," Todd laughed.

"But at Tabernacle it's been a wonderful experience of acceptance and progress, which is phenomenal, especially for a church that's over 100 years old."

Tammy also praised the congregation's positive attitude toward change. "Members aren't only ready for change, they are passionate about it," she said. "And so people are coming into a strong foundational church that's not working against itself."

Todd and Tammy are also excited about the educational environment in



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Ennis, in both the public school system and private daycare choices. Isaac has adjusted well to his new school, and little Autumn and Christian are making the most of their time in preschool programs offered through the church.

The outgoing couple's home underscores their busy lives in its charming simplicity. The open floor plan was a plus for Todd and Tammy when they selected the house, and the numerous windows, overlooking the back yard pool and the pastures beyond, were another feature they fell in love with from the start. The living area is bathed in neutral colors, comfortable leather seating and accents that reflect their world travels, such as a collection of Jordanian pottery Tammy bought during her first deployment to the Middle East. "I wanted to get some pottery from Iraq later on," she recalled, "but it was just too dangerous to get out and see the towns." Their faith is also captured in a collection of crosses mounted on a living room wall. "They're all gifts," Tammy pointed out, "and they tell the story of where we have been."

The kitchen is modern, but with the inclusion of a faux-antique dining table, a touch of vintage is incorporated into the relaxed scheme. The master bedroom is another symphony in cozy neutral shades with an oversized picture window that lets the couple look out onto a verandah, an invitingly casual element to the home. Todd and Tammy sometimes like to have their breakfast on the little porch. "This is my domain," Todd said. "Hearing the birds chirping, enjoying a cup of coffee is the best. When I first walked into the backyard, I was sold."

On the walls flanking the stairs are large portraits of the Grays' children, each taken when the boys and girl were 18 months old. The kids' second story bedrooms are bright and full of personality. Autumn's room is a feminine



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oasis of pink and yellow, with handmade butterflies flitting across the wall above her bed. "We loved putting those together, but they're very fragile," Tammy cautioned.

The room shared by Isaac and Christian is complete with bunk beds, fitted out in red and blue with a Texas Rangers



theme, and their window has the best view of the meadows that stretch as far as the eye can see. In the hall, a painting of the Louisiana Tammy remembers from her own childhood also evokes the love the pair shares for New Orleans. "We have friends and relatives there, and we love visiting the city," Todd observed. "It's a great family place, except for Bourbon Street!"

The kids are well-protected in the backyard, which is such a stunning attribute of the home. A deck with a play area and high locks on the gates provides safety. The drought-resistant plants forming the garden around the pool are beautifully spaced and trimmed. The backyard features a grape arbor, hedges of jasmine and honeysuckle, and a lighting system transforms the backyard into a glittering paradise at night. "This really is our favorite place to be," Tammy confided. "The trees and shrubs are a great sound barrier and give the illusion that you're not near town."

Their idyllic garden sums up the happy vision this young couple has for their family, church and town. "Ennis is definitely our favorite of all the places we've lived," Todd said.

And Tammy agreed. "It's a blessing to be here. I can't think of anything more we'd want." **NOW**

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Loving RAYMOND

— By Randy Bigham

Nobody needs to tell an Ennis couple to stop and smell the roses. They do it every day. Kyle and Sheryl Stuckly recognize the importance of savoring life's little rewards, an understanding they have gained through their love for Raymond, their 10-year-old son. Raymond's Down Syndrome has presented challenges, as well as opportunities for compassion, and the third grader's parents are better people because of the difficulties they have faced. "Having Raymond has helped us increase our patience and tolerance," Sheryl said. "Because for us, it's about helping him achieve those simple milestones, realizing the small stuff is actually big, as is never taking anything for granted."

Along with their daughter, Katherine, 12, Kyle and Sheryl concentrate on the positive aspects of Raymond's development. "We focus on what he can do, not what he can't," Sheryl explained. "We give him opportunities to see what he can succeed at. We don't want to put a limit on what he can do."

The boy's enthusiasm certainly has no limit — a recent event proved that. When his paternal grandmother, Evelyn Stuckly, won a silent auction prize at last year's Austin Elementary Chili Supper fundraiser, she couldn't wait to tell Raymond it included a ride on a fire engine, courtesy of the Ennis Fire Department. With his parents' consent, Evelyn took her grandson with her on a memorable tour through the city, starting from the fire house and ending up at Austin Elementary, where students and faculty turned out en masse to greet the little boy. Complete with a helmet, which the firefighters loaned him for the day, Raymond was all smiles, mugging for photos with Evelyn — McMaw — as he calls her, school administrators and classmates.





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For Raymond, who has been enamored with fire engines since he was a toddler, the occasion was so exciting he still talks about “the fire truck and me.” He hopes to visit the fire station again, and if he does, he plans to wear the same clothes he wore on the day of the big event, “my gray shirt and blue pants.” The experience was memorable for Kyle and Sheryl as well. “It’s so refreshing to hear and see him get excited about the little things in life that others take for granted,” Sheryl said. The fun-filled day also reinforced his parents’ hopes for Raymond’s development and assimilation.

The couple credits their son’s progress to early intervention. “He has been in some type of therapy since he was 6 months old,” Kyle pointed out. “And his improvement is due to that, and the help and support we have had from family, friends and Raymond’s school, Austin Elementary.”

Raymond has been in an inclusion class at Austin Elementary and will continue this at Travis, his current campus. “It was an entirely positive experience, and it continues to be,” Kyle said. “Raymond thoroughly enjoys going to school, and his inclusion has helped him blossom, as well as helping the other kids blossom right along with him.”

Kyle and Sheryl praise the efforts of all of Raymond’s teachers, past and present, in refining his education and interaction. These instructors, especially



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Judith Buchanan, have helped shape the couple's understanding that people with Down Syndrome are more like others than they are different from them. "Down Syndrome may be synonymous with mental retardation, but that's just one part of it," Kyle said. "The people with this condition are just as human as anyone else."

"They also need the same love as any other child does," Sheryl added. "And they can learn as well as other kids — it just takes them longer."

As Raymond's resource teacher, Judith worked the closest with him, encouraging him to reach academic and personal goals. "Mrs. Buchanan has taken a very sincere interest in Raymond," Kyle said, adding that his classmates have also



"taken a shine" to him and have helped him understand rules and assignments.

"The kids have really mentored Raymond," Sheryl affirmed. "They have been very accepting of him and have taken him under their wing."

Elsewhere, Raymond has received additional support. "He knows more people in the community than we do!" Sheryl laughed.

"Wherever we go, whether it's church or the grocery store," Kyle added, "kids come over to talk to him. The girls give

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him hugs, and the boys wave and say, 'Hi, Raymond!'"

He also enjoys support much closer to home. Along with the love of his parents and sister, Raymond is close with both sets of grandparents. "All four grandparents are actively involved with him," Kyle said, "and they love having him over to visit." But for all the encouragement they have received over the years, the road has been a hard one for Kyle and Sheryl. "It's been tough, but we have done our best to deal with the situation," Kyle admitted. "We have taken to heart the old saying about turning lemons into lemonade. And our pride is the same as any other parents', maybe more so because of the added difficulties Raymond faces."

The Stucklys intend to support their son whatever the odds may be. "We have worked much harder with him than we would with a typical child and our expectations are just as high," Sheryl observed. "Our attitude is: 'He can do it.'"

Teaching at school and at home is handled in increments. "When there's something we need Raymond to learn, we break it down into small pieces of information for him," Kyle explained. And when he masters a rule or instruction, Raymond's achievement is celebrated.

"He is very happy when he accomplishes something, and so are we," Sheryl added. "So we reward each step along the way."

The couple is unswerving in their implementation of education and discipline. "We have to be because we want the best future for him," Sheryl said. "A goal that we have had from the beginning and still stands true now is that we want Raymond to be independent with little to no assistance. That is our ultimate goal." With the boy's interest in the accoutrement of emergency response, it's likely he can look forward to a career in that field. His parents think it's a good possibility. "It has to be what he wants to do," Sheryl commented. "I think he can excel at something he enjoys, just as you and I can. The possibilities are limitless."

Kyle and Sheryl continue aiding Raymond's progress, but they are most grateful for a lesson he has taught them. "Raymond has shown us not to take anything for granted," Sheryl said. "The greatest thing we as a family have learned is to live life in the moment." **NOW**

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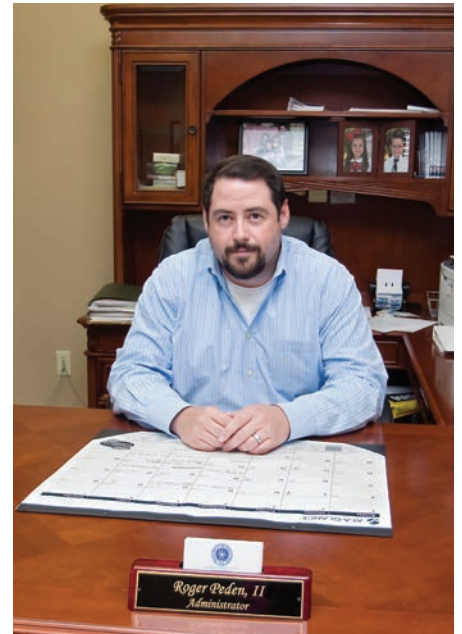


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For Roger Peden, coming home again means offering all the comforts of home as the administrator of Odd Fellow and Rebekah Nursing Home. Comforts include a large dining hall and beautiful landscaped patio.

Vested in Community

Impacting the lives of others means great rewards at the end of the day.

— By Sandra Strong

Odd Fellow and Rebekah Nursing Home administrator, Roger Peden, is different than most young men his age. To this day, his friends still question him about his career choice. “Friends ask me, ‘Why long-term care with the elderly?’ The answer for me is simple,” Roger explained. “At the end of the day, I’ve had several opportunities to impact the lives of others. It’s a very rewarding career.”

Roger is a prime example of what it means “to come home again.” He moved to Ennis with his family at the age of 1. He graduated from Ennis High School with the class of 1997. He was looking for a change when he stumbled on the job opportunity in Ennis. He talked it over with his wife, Nicky, before actually applying for the administrator’s position. “The

process took only a few weeks,” he stated. “It’s been such a good fit for all concerned.”

The vested interest the Odd Fellow and Rebekah Nursing Home has in Ennis and the surrounding communities dates back to 1905. But, Roger’s commitment to his hometown runs just as deep. “It was one of the biggest reasons to come back here,” he admitted. “I was invested in the people and the town a long time ago. I care about Ennis and the people who live here. Someone once told me that if I was patient, my reimbursement would come.”

Needless to say, Roger’s patience paid off by bringing him home again. His time away matured him as a professional. He gained valuable experience working in facilities elsewhere before

coming to the Odd Fellow and Rebekah Nursing Home in late July. His tenor with long-term care goes back seven years, with the first two years working in business development in long-term elderly care before making the transition over to administrator.

As an administrator, the first town Roger worked in had a population of 1,700 people. The 98-bed facility he managed was the second largest employer in town, with the school district holding the first spot. Roger has experience with facilities of all sizes. "I came back to Ennis from a nursing home in Austin that had 120 beds," he said. "I can easily say I've seen both sides of the spectrum in relation to bed count and facility size."

"See things you like, tell others. See things you don't like, tell me."

The patient capacity at Odd Fellow and Rebekah Nursing Home is currently 136, and the staff numbers approximately 120. Roger's transition into the flow at the facility has been smooth, thanks to Wanda Jackson, the home's assistant administrator. "Wanda has been here for 13 years," Roger said. "She has been instrumental in the speed in which I've been able to settle in. When I'm out in the community, I can rest easy knowing the facility is in Wanda's safe, capable and experienced hands."

Roger's vision for the future of Odd Fellow and Rebekah Nursing Home includes not only his staff, but the Ennis community in its entirety. "I want to spend the first year getting myself grounded and reacquainted with the community. My goal is to design a medical model that will work closely with medical partners, creating a network where everyone is communicating for the greater good of the whole." His career philosophy is quite simple: "See things you like, tell others. See things you don't like, tell me." **NOW**

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Joseph Guevera skateboards near Travis Elementary.



Three generations end the summer break at the Wildflower Cafe.



Becky Lucas and Terri Barton visit during the annual Ennis Chamber Auction.



Children line up to make a run for the slide at the Lake Clark playground.



Bill and Rhonda Smith are all smiles at the annual Chamber of Commerce Auction.



Jasmine Santollo and Divine Mendez look cute in Hello Kitty outfits.



Elizabeth Fulton, Jenny Vidrine and Tina Jones volunteer during a United Way fundraiser.



Firefighters with the Ennis Police Department help in the ongoing fight against muscular dystrophy.



The Golden Chick waves to motorists along Ennis Avenue.

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Diversify Your Investment Risk

— By Jeff Irish

All investments carry risk. But, as an investor, one of the biggest risks you face is that of not achieving your long-term goals, such as enjoying a comfortable retirement and remaining financially independent throughout your life. To help reach your objectives, you need to own a variety of investment vehicles — and each carries its own type of risk.

If you spread your investment dollars among vehicles that carry different types of risk, you may increase your chances of owning some investments that do well, even if, at the same time, you own others that aren't. As a result, you may be able to reduce the overall level of volatility in your portfolio. (Keep in mind, though, that diversification can't guarantee a profit or protect against all losses.)

To diversify your risk factors, you first need to recognize them. Here are some of the most common types of investment risk:

- **Market risk** — This is the type of risk everyone thinks about — the risk of losing principal if the value of your investment drops and does not recover before you sell it. All investments are subject to market risk. You can help lessen this risk by owning a wide variety of investments from different industries and even different countries.

- **Inflation (purchasing power) risk** — If you own a fixed-rate investment, such as a Certificate of Deposit (CD), which pays an interest rate below the current rate of inflation, you are incurring purchasing-power risk. Fixed-income investments can help provide reliable income streams, but you also need to consider investments with growth potential to help work toward your long-term goals.

- **Interest-rate risk** — Bonds and other fixed-income investments are subject to interest-rate risk. If you own a bond that pays four percent interest, and newly issued bonds pay five percent, it would be difficult to sell your bond for full price. So if you wanted to sell it prior to maturity, you might have to offer it at a discount to the original price. However, if you hold your bonds to maturity, you can expect to receive return of your principal provided the bond does not default.

- **Default risk** — Bonds, along with some more complex investments, such as options, are subject to default risk. If a company issues a bond that you've bought and that company runs into severe financial difficulties, or even goes bankrupt, it may default on its bonds, leaving you holding the bag. You can help protect against this risk by sticking with "investment-grade" bonds — those that receive high ratings from independent rating agencies such as Standard & Poor's or Moody's.

- **Liquidity risk** — Some investments, like real estate, are harder to sell than others. Thus, real estate is considered more illiquid than many common investments.

Make sure you understand what type of risk is associated with every investment you own. And try to avoid overloading your portfolio with too many investments with the same type of risks. Doing so will not result in a totally smooth journey through the investment world, but it may help eliminate some of the bumps along the way. **NOW**

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Jeff Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.

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- Going through menopause after age 55
- Use of menopausal hormone therapy
- Having dense breast tissue/abnormal breast cells

PREVENTION

- Limit or avoid alcohol.
- Control your weight.
- Exercise. Aim for 45 to 60 minutes of physical activity at least five days a week.
- Discontinue hormone therapy, if possible.
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The Joys of Middle Age and Beyond

Some extraordinary things begin happening after you enter, and exit, your 30s. You become wiser, kinder and more patient. It's a good thing too, because some of the more ordinary experiences of aging would make you pull your hair out, if it weren't already thinning anyway. Why does your waistline seem to be expanding as rapidly as your wisdom and character? Is it fair that once you attain some balance in managing family and career demands, hormone changes show up to threaten your sense of equilibrium? Are the entries on your medication list accumulating faster than the number of contacts in your cell phone? Can a physician really help with the smaller, and larger, concerns that are plaguing you more and more these days?

The answer is yes. The right doctor can be your trusted co-captain in your quest for optimum health. For example: Losing weight after age 30 is a different ballgame from your 20s. This you may know from your own experience. But burning more calories than you take in is not the whole story. There are metabolic genetic, and lifestyle factors that can accumulate with age that make the process more complex. Targeted evaluation including blood work by your physician can help you maximize your efforts. He or she can also introduce you to some effective approaches with which you may not yet be familiar.

Losing a sense of vitality is one of the biggest fears associated with growing older. Age-related hormonal changes affect both

men and women and influence a host of related issues. These changes can begin as early as your 30s and persist for decades thereafter. Lifestyle choices such as diet and exercise always play a foundational role in navigating this new territory. However, there are also multiple prescription and over-the-counter options available to improve your quality of life. Your medical doctor is eager to share his or her expertise in developing a regimen of bioidentical or synthetic hormone replacement and/or nonhormonal nutritional supplements to suit your individual needs.

Most importantly, all of us want to feel empowered on our journey through middle age and beyond. You and your doctor form a team whose task is to optimize your health even as you experience the changes of age. Communicate openly and honestly with your physician about your concerns. In addition to your prescription medicines bring any over-the-counter vitamins, herbs or other nutritional supplements to your doctor's attention. This way they can offer advice as to whether and how these may best be incorporated into your overall health maintenance plan. Remember your doctor wants to be your greatest ally as you chart your course to continued health and vitality. **NOW**

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Waxahachie SCREAMS Halloween Theme Park: 7:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m., 2511 FM 66, Waxahachie. For more information, call (972) 938-3247.

October 4-13

Ennis Public Theatre's Got Talent 2: Ennis Public Theatre. For more information, visit www.ennispublictheatre.com or call (972) 878-7529.

October 5

Annual Chili Supper Fundraiser: 5:00-7:00 p.m., Austin Elementary School, 1500 Austin Dr. Event includes games for all ages, chili, hot dogs, desserts, snow cones, popcorn, photo booth, raffles and a silent auction.

October 13

Ellis County SPCA Volunteer Training: 11:00 a.m., 2570 FM 878, Waxahachie. Meeting is for new volunteers with the ECSPCA or current volunteers wanting to be more involved with the organization. Dog adoption events are set for **October 13-14** and **27-28**, and volunteers are needed to assist. For more information, visit coordinator@elliscountysPCA.org.

4th Annual Ride of Champions: 3:00 p.m., Campfire Creek Therapeutic Riding Center, 767 Bethel Rd., Waxahachie. For more information, call (972) 937-7265.

Oct. 19-21

Charlotte's Web: **Friday**, 7:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 2:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.; **Sunday**, 2:30 p.m., Ennis Public Theatre, North Ennis Business Park, 2705-C North Kauffman. The famous children's story by E.B. White and dramatized by Joseph Robinette. For more information, visit www.ennispublictheatre.com or call (972) 878-7529.

October 20

11th Annual Autumn Days in Ennis Fall Festival: 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m., downtown. The event features arts/crafts, food, children's activities and live entertainment. For more information call (972) 878-4748 or visit www.visitennis.org.

October 27

13th Annual Lights of Ennis Gala: 6:00 p.m.-12:00 midnight. "Get Lucky" is the theme of this year's event benefiting downtown's Christmas display of lights. Guests are encouraged to wear their luckiest

outfits. Contact Harriett Adams at (972) 878-2400 for more information.

17th Annual Bob Phillips' Texas Country Reporter Festival: 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., downtown historic Waxahachie. The event will include a free concert and over 200 booths featuring food, arts, crafts and entertainment. For more information, call the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce at (972) 938-9617 or visit www.waxahachiechamber.com and www.texascountryreporter.com.

October 31

Ghosts and Goblins Bash: 6:00 p.m.-7:30 p.m., downtown.

November 8

The Baggy Bottom Boys: 6:30 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ennis, hosted by the Crackpots group. The musical event is open to all ages, and you do not need to be a member to attend. For more information, contact Vicki Bell at (469) 285-4845 or Myra Morrissey at (972) 998-5868.

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

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In The Kitchen With Darius McAdams

— *By Sandra Strong*

Being in the kitchen is not only fun for Darius McAdams, it's totally amazing. "I enjoy cooking because it's a good way to express my personality through food," Darius explained. "I cook a lot for my family because they are so supportive of the dreams I have for myself." Darius began cooking somewhere between the ages of 3 and 5. "I would help my aunt wash dishes," he said. "Then she let me stir the food for the first time. I remember saying, 'Let me help cook.'"

Darius loves teaching others how to cook, especially his family members. "My family is so much fun to be around," he admitted. "I like showing them what can be done with food instead of always microwaving." **NOW**

Bacon-wrapped Sirloin Steak

1 1/2 lbs. top sirloin steak
Paper towels
Vegetable or olive oil
6 strips bacon, thinly sliced
6 toothpicks
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Brown steak. For rare steak, cook until the internal temperature is 130 F; medium rare, 130-140 F; well done, 140-150 F. (Best when cooked to rare or medium doneness.)
2. After browning, let steak come to room temperature, 20-30 minutes. Pat dry with paper towels. Cut the steak into 6 portions. Brush with oil.
3. Wrap a strip of bacon around each steak, like a belt. Secure bacon with a toothpick. Season with salt and pepper.
4. Brush a large frying pan with oil; heat.

Using tongs, brown the bacon-wrapped sides of the meat first, turning each about 4 times for crisper bacon.

5. Cook steaks for 3-4 minutes on each side. Remove steaks to a serving platter. Cover; let rest for 5-10 minutes before serving.

Hash Brown Casserole

2 lbs. frozen hash browns
1/2 cup margarine or butter, melted
1 10 1/4-oz. can cream of mushroom soup
1 pt. sour cream
1/2 cup onion, peeled and chopped
2 cups cheddar cheese, grated
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Spray 11 x 14-inch baking dish with cooking spray.

2. Mix ingredients together. Bake in prepared pan for 45 minutes, or until golden brown on top.

3. Can be served for breakfast with eggs and bacon or at dinner with a tossed salad and your choice of meat.

Strawberry Shortcake

1 1/2 lbs. strawberries, stemmed and quartered
1/4 to 1/2 cup sugar (to taste)
Shortcake cups
1 1/2 cups Cool Whip

1. Put strawberries in a bowl. Add sugar; mix well. Set aside at room temperature to soften the strawberries and help release their juices.
2. After they have been sitting for 20 minutes or so, take a potato masher and mash them just enough to get more juice out of them.
3. Ladle strawberries over the shortcake cups. Add a dollop of Cool Whip.

Million Dollar Pie

16-oz. container frozen Cool Whip, thawed
1 1/2 cups lemon juice
1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
1/2 cup pecans, chopped
1 8-oz. can crushed pineapple
1 9-inch graham cracker pie crust

1. Mix Cool Whip and lemon juice well. Add milk, nuts and pineapple. Fold together.
2. Pour mixture into pie crust. Chill overnight before eating.

Cool Ranch-covered Pork Chops

1 pkg. Hidden Valley Ranch Salad Dressing and Seasoning Mix
Salt and freshly ground pepper (to taste)
Dash of paprika, optional
6 pork loin rib chops, approximately 1-inch thick

1. Preheat oven to 450 F. In a small bowl, mix seasoning, salt, pepper and paprika until evenly distributed. Liberally sprinkle mixture over both sides of pork chops.
2. Arrange pork chops on a baking sheet. Bake for 20 minutes, making sure to turn once until both sides are browned, or reach an internal temperature of 160 F. Serve immediately.

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