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January 2009

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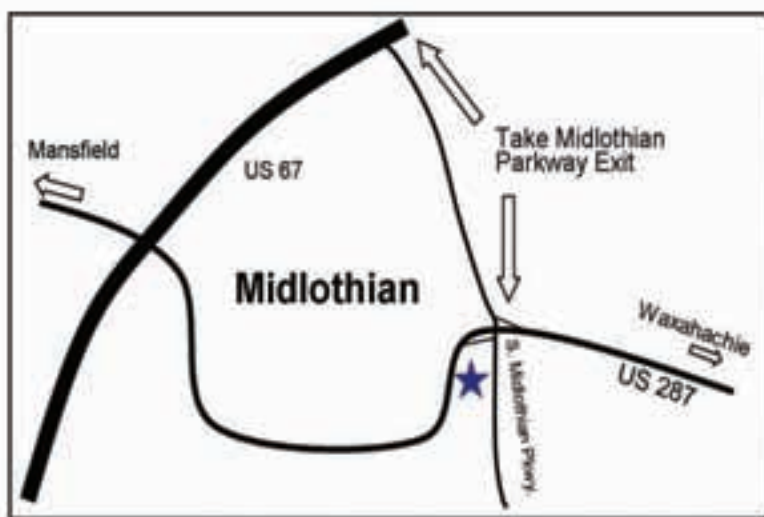
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Midlothian NOW

Editor's Note

Happy New Year, Midlothian!

This is going to be a great year. How do I know? Well, look at the awesome people we covered last year. We have more great stories coming in 2009! If you have any suggestions for articles or you know someone who deserves special recognition, I want to hear about it. Also, there are so many unique and beautiful homes here, from the simplest dwelling to the largest home in the city. Contact me if you would like to have your home featured. Do you smell something tasty and delicious from your neighbor's kitchen window? Maybe they would like to share that recipe with the rest of us. This magazine is about you, so let me hear from you! You can reach me at (972) 775-5095 or via e-mail at btryon.nowmag@sbcglobal.net.

Betty Tryon
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Gasping for breath, you cannot see where you are going. Crawling on all fours, you struggle to find your way out. The weight of the equipment weighs you down. Exhaustion starts to take over and you think you are not going to make it. You are fading fast and ... oh, never mind, it is just a game, or perhaps a more accurate description would be that it is an active demonstration of being a firefighter. Once a year, citizens from Midlothian get the rare treat to experience the inner operations of every department in the city through a class called Citizen's Academy. Lou Jameson, city secretary,

Adventure in the City

— By Betty Tryon

guides a select group through this interesting class. "I am the cruise director. I just coordinate it. The departments do all the work. They do their demonstrations, slide shows and pull together their statistics. Participants have a chance to see their local government in every aspect. They get to see everything that goes on behind the scenes: What they do, what the job is, how to accomplish that job and the training the employees in each department have."

The Citizen's Academy was started to foster better communication between the residents of Midlothian and their local government. Lou shared, "Our city council's main focus is to be able to communicate [to] citizens what their local government does and how it does it — the more people who know about their local government, the better. The council needs to hear from citizens and citizens need to hear from the council. In any town, it needs to be *we*, not *they*. I read once that the ones who show up are the ones who make the decisions. One of the things stressed is that you don't want the citizens to get their information from second-hand sources. The Citizen's Academy gives the departments a chance to tell their stories themselves. The program is free to participants. We educate the public one class at a time. It's their tax money, and they need to know how it's working."

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One of the departments the group visits is the fire department. There they have the challenge of being a fireman for a few minutes. Lou stated, "The students [from the Citizen's Academy] put on fire gear to feel the weight of the gear. They have air packs and are blindfolded so they can't see. They get on their hands and knees and crawl through a maze just like a firefighter would if he were crawling through a burning house. Breathing through something can be claustrophobic, and they get to experience that. They are blindfolded



because when a fireman is crawling through a burning house filled with smoke, they can't see. It's a way for the citizens to understand some of the things a fireman goes through."

Obviously, there is more to the Citizen's Academy than visiting the fire department. Many of the departments in the city offer up the opportunity to experience what they do. For example, at the water department, students get to tour the facility and meet people within that division. Lou explained, "The department describes what they do and the facility. They take the participant from the water intake structure at Joe Pool Lake, all the way through the process at the water treatment plant, to the point where water is sent through the pipes to the citizens. They explain how the purity of the water is maintained and what



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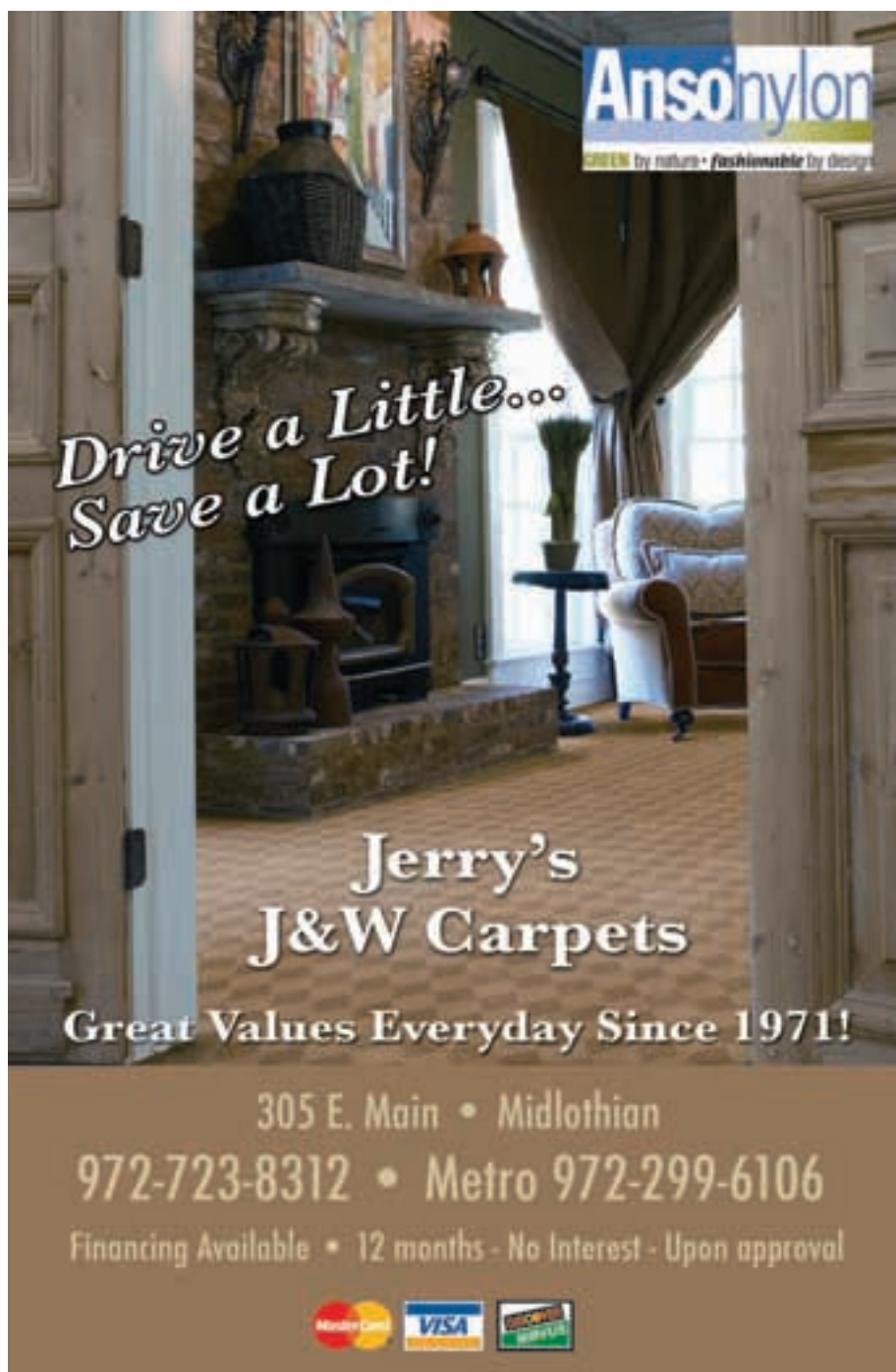
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Triwanna Fisher, M.D. is board certified in family medicine and received her medical degree from Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center School of Medicine in Lubbock. She completed her residency at John Peter Smith Hospital's family medicine residency program in Fort Worth. Dr. Fisher is interested in the management of acute and chronic disease, women's health, dermatology procedures, adult and pediatric medicine. Dr. Fisher enjoys reading, watching movies, and traveling internationally.

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chemicals are used in the water treatment process.”

At the Police Department, participants tour the jail and see how it is equipped. The different types of weapons that a police officer carries are demonstrated, and they also get to see the squad car and the equipment in it. At some point, the students go outside and use the radar gun on passing vehicles. Lou added, “The participants have the opportunity to observe the dispatchers. They see when a call comes in and the process the dispatcher goes through when they receive a call. They [the dispatchers] put all the information in the computer, dispatch to the police, fire or whoever needs to respond to the call.”

“Our city council’s main focus is to be able to communicate [to] citizens what their local government does and how it does it.”

Lou understands what it takes to help government run more smoothly. Before coming to Midlothian, she and her husband, Charlie, lived in Arlington where Lou worked in the city secretary’s office. She came to Midlothian in 1984 and in 1985 she began her work as the city secretary and, except for a four-year period, has continued to serve in that capacity until today. She stated, “Midlothian is the best place to be. Our kids graduated from MISD [Midlothian Independent School District] and we have three grandkids. We couldn’t have made a better decision when we moved here. It is a vibrant, dynamic and growing city.” Helping others in the city learn about their local government and appreciate the efforts of the workers is something she enjoys doing. “It is amazing to me, especially in the Public Works Department. And I don’t want to make one department

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sound better than the other, but I love going down there and seeing the pride they have in their job. They are so proud to be able to tell the students that they are well-trained and certified in their field and they know their job. I love that they have the opportunity to show off the equipment and their knowledge in using that equipment.



They enjoy explaining how it benefits the community. I think the students come away from the whole thing seeing the pride that their local government has in doing a good job. People come and learn about their local government and want to get involved in their local government."

Lou said, "Every department has its own story and it is worth hearing. It is so good when citizens go to other departments and they see that there is more than police and fire. That is not to diminish police and fire by any means. The police could not take care of things if there weren't streets. The fire department couldn't put out fires if the water treatment plant did not produce the water. It's all one big package." The next class starts in March. Join the fun, learn how your city operates and have a little adventure along the way! **NOW**

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Considering it all a Gift From God

— By Sandra McIntosh

At Home With Larry and Suzanne Tuttle

When thinking of a castle, most people imagine a dark, cold, musty, oversized structure of large stones held together by mortar. When Larry and Suzanne Tuttle imagined a castle, they saw open, airy spacious rooms that offer their friends and family a cozy atmosphere in which to congregate — a place where they could just be themselves. “We created the feeling we were looking for,” Suzanne said, as Larry nodded his head in agreement. The two ponds and running stream that begin at the front entry and appear to creep under and around the abode give the home an immediate castle feel outdoors, while the natural flagstone floors complete the overall effect within the home’s interior.

As the owner of Classy Creations, Suzanne had a vast amount of experience from which to draw when creating a certain feeling within her home. In fact, the four-bedroom, four-and-a-half bath eclectic castle style is one example she loves sharing with those looking to build, remodel or just

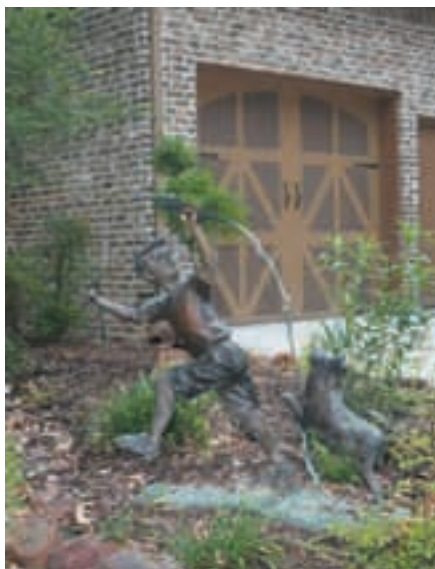


change a few things. “Sometimes, the way items in the home are displayed can cause a stressful feeling in the home,” she explained. “Many times, all it takes is rearranging a few things to go from stressful to peaceful,” and she used this same philosophy

when designing, building and decorating her own home.

Since Suzanne loves to create, the couple’s new two-story home is just one of many that bears her signature. It was not a speedy process. “Larry and I worked with the architect for nearly 18 months,” Suzanne said, also mentioning that Troy Priddy was the home’s builder. “It took that long to tweak all my notes.” Once all the notes were compiled, arranged and rearranged, Larry and





Suzanne agreed on a floor plan that consists of 5,400 square feet of living space. In June of 2006, the couple finally moved into the home perfectly positioned on the 1.16-acre lot where a beautiful view is provided from every window. "We love the trees," Larry interjected, "and the extra yard makes it feel like an estate."

The attention to every detail continues as you enter the home. The mind cannot fathom all the wonderful things you see, including hand-painted murals by local artist Marty Sanchez; large,



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oversized doors; archways constructed of a mixture of stone and brick; the breathtaking spiral staircase and 23 lighted sconces, all unique and placed strategically throughout the home. The powder room boasts a lion head faucet, which Larry said Suzanne absolutely loves to show everyone new to the home.

The kitchen, breakfast area and family room are open to one another, making the gatherings with friends

and family inviting and fun. The kitchen is a work of art in and of itself, with its hand-carved cabinetry, pounded copper sink, usable counter space and an island Suzanne antiqued herself that has been the start to many a conversation.

The windows, both upstairs and down, allow natural light to filter in during the day. Gothic-style windows are found in the front entry, as well as along the stairwell and in the formal

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living room. Larry and Suzanne, being spiritual people, wondered if they had made the right decision when going with the gothic windows. "I wondered if they carried the right connotation," she remembered with a laugh. After doing some research, Suzanne found out that gothic windows had been used years ago in churches and prayer rooms. "The points at the top of each window look up to God," she beamed.

"I realized we had chosen just the right windows for our home because we both feel our home is a gift."

Although the home is filled with antiques, Suzanne is quick to mention that none of them are family heirlooms, nor do they carry any sentimental value. "They were just things I've collected on shopping adventures," she said. Suzanne gives all the credit to God when it comes to the one-of-a-kind,

unique items she finds. One such item is the baby grand piano in the family room. In fact, it truly is a dream come true. "I had carried a photo of a piano in my wallet for several years," she said, finding enjoyment in retelling one of her favorite stories. "I met a guy at the doctor's office who refurbishes pianos. After meeting him, I never gave my dream of owning a piano a thought." That was until nearly a year

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later, when she happened upon this same gentleman. "I nonchalantly took the photo out of my wallet," she noted, "and showed it to this man. He said he had a piano exactly like it that he'd had in storage for the past eight months. I look at that piano every day and understand that it's just one more gift — a gift from God."

The three homes that she and Larry have built in their 14-year marriage have showcased the piano. Since Suzanne cannot play, Larry thought the piano would be a wasted expenditure. Suzanne justified the purchase by pointing out that the formal living room suite they had at the time was just taking up space. "No one ever went into the living room," she stated. "My thought was why not trade out the furniture for the piano." So she sold their living room suite in order to make the purchase. "And guess what," she noted, "the furniture sold for the same amount I paid for the piano, minus my tithe."



The antique piano, with its intricately carved legs, also has value to Suzanne's mother, Mary Wilson, who visits on a regular basis. "We love to have her sit down and play for us," Suzanne said. In the couple's old home in DeSoto, the piano was placed in the formal living room, away from the family room and kitchen area. On those rare times when she played, Mary felt cut off from the rest of the family. When



designing their new home, Larry and Suzanne decided to build the family room large enough to accommodate the piano, thus allowing Mary to no longer feel left out or alone. She now becomes the life of any party.

It is quite common for Suzanne's brother, John Proctor, to show up and cook his famous Johnny burgers out back on Johnny Burger Trail or fill the house to overflowing on Christian karaoke night. Whatever the occasion, you are sure to find a cozy castle atmosphere in the floral arrangements, the animal prints and the pheasant feathers, as well as the touches of red Suzanne has displayed throughout the home. When you visit, do not be surprised to hear Christian music playing in the background. It not only adds to the ambiance Larry and Suzanne have created, it also lends a balance to the fast-paced lives they both live. "We love to permeate the air with songs of God," she said. "It reminds us of our many blessings." **NOW**

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Gems, Minerals and Sandy

— By Betty Tryon

Sitting at her desk surrounded by glowing stones, sparkling crystals and gleaming silver, Sandy Koefer is like a kid in a candy store. This, however, is more fun because this “candy” pleasure will be enjoyed for years to come. An accomplished jewelry maker, Sandy remembers the first time she started, “We were living in Duncanville and belonged to a swimming pool club. I took my daughter to the pool and read a magazine while waiting. I noticed some jewelry and thought, *I don’t like the way they did this*; and thought, *I can do it better*. So, I went to Michaels [Arts and Crafts Store], bought a bunch of stuff and started making ankle bracelets. I gave a lot of them away. One day at the pool, a lady came up

to me and asked if I could do earrings. After making the earrings, my best friend told me I have a knack for this and offered to host a home party to showcase my jewelry. The party sold out.”

Sandy’s success led her to add different gemstones to her collection. Not having much initial knowledge about the stones that caught her attention, she did research to learn more. She explained, “A friend was teaching a section in her class about rocks and minerals and that got me started. I went to the rock and mineral show in Ft. Worth and learned the value of the stones. I started looking at

my rocks and buying books about rocks. It fascinated me!”

Sandy’s favorite stone is chrysoprase. It is a stunningly beautiful stone of apple green color. It can be found with varying depths of color with the darker green being more valuable. Sandy explained, “There is a lot of folklore and legend with this stone. Native American Indians believed it was a sacred stone that would glue the wearer to God. They believed it had a role during times of battle and persecution. It is my signature stone.”

With her increased knowledge of gems and minerals, local stores could



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no longer meet her growing need for more beautiful stones. During her research about stones, she also researched where to find them. Sandy stated, "I get stones from the World Trade Center (in Dallas). Some are from the Internet, but I would prefer to look at it and know the quality before I buy. I go to gem and mineral shows to purchase stones, and also to House of India and Timewell. They both have a consistent stock."

After Sandy did her exhaustive research on stones, she now needed to perfect her method of putting her creations together to produce a quality product. She stated, "I taught myself how to do it. It was practice, practice and practice. I ruined a lot of wire before I knew how to twist it in a way that would be secure and look nice. I learned how to use the tools by watching people at the gem and mineral shows make jewelry." Watching Sandy work takes either a great pair of eyes or a magnifying glass. The wiring work is very intricate. She picked up a beautiful



teardrop-shaped quartz, amber colored with golden highlights streaked through it. Within minutes, it became an eye-catching necklace with matching earrings. Another creation of Sandy's was a large silver chain necklace boasting an explosion of color of different stones such as: Swarovski crystals, coral, amethyst, citrine and lapis. As with all artists, sometimes the best inspiration comes when you least expect it. She recalled, "Sometimes, I will see a stone and lay awake at night in bed and a

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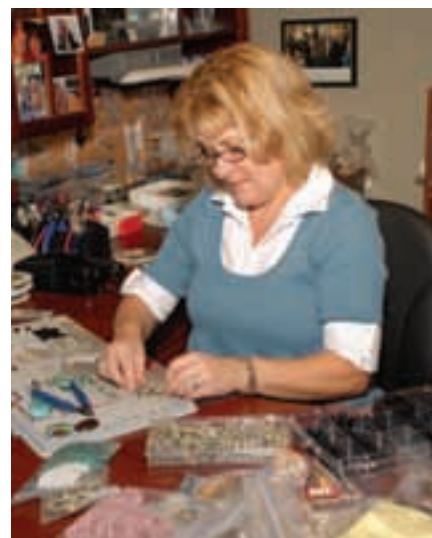
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design will pop into my head. If I wait until morning, I will forget it. So, I get up and come in my office to write it down."

When you produce quality work, people will seek you out. It is the classic "if you build it, they will come" philosophy. Sandy had some of her jewelry on eBay.com; a lady bought it and loved it. Turns out she owns a jewelry store and asked Sandy to make jewelry for her shop. Sandy's talent has



also taken to the air. She explained, "I made a lanyard (a long neck chain with a clip for an ID tag, decorated according to taste) for a teacher to put her name tag on. She was standing in line at the post office and a stewardess asked her where she got it. The stewardess worked for a private airline, and she asked me to make one for her. I made it so it would match the brass buttons on her uniform. The airline now wants me to make one for all the stewardesses. I have to make it according to their safety rules. It has to have a quick release so it doesn't become a choking hazard."

"I have been doing this for eight years now, and I love it when someone comes to pick up their jewelry. They are so happy." Taking beautiful stones and turning them into something functional and lovely is a wonderful thing. **ARTS NOW**



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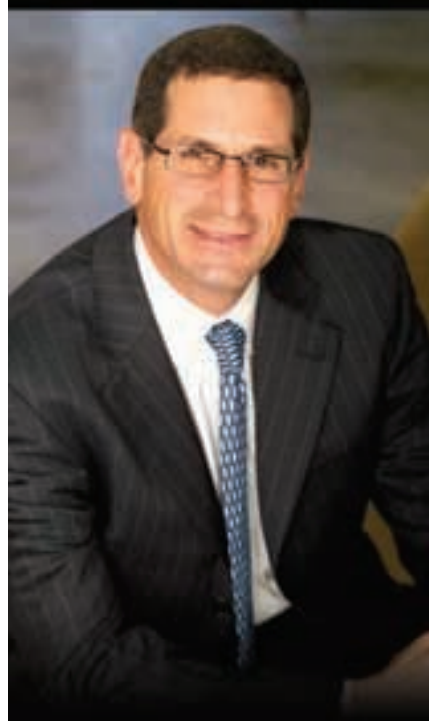
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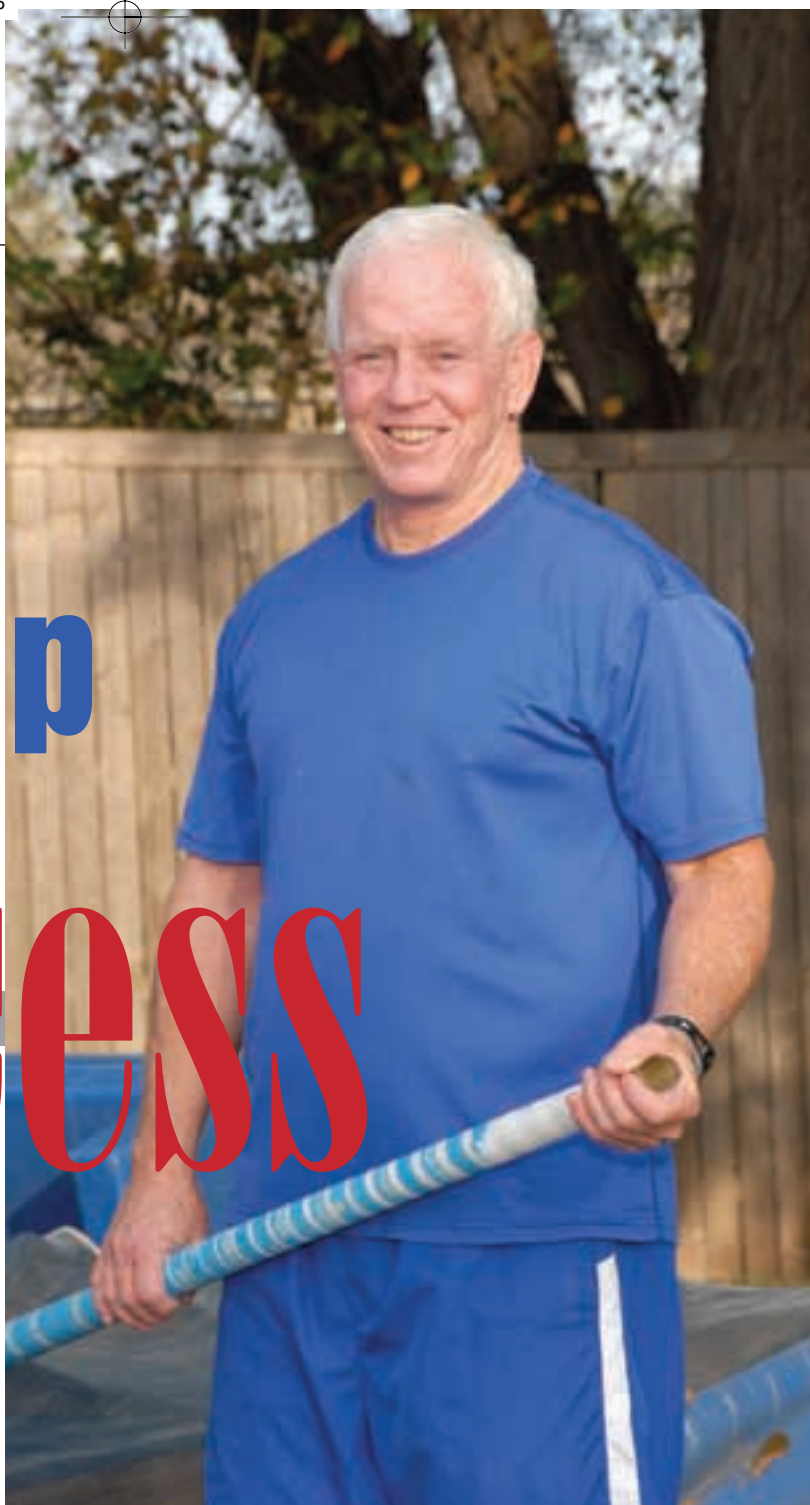
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Sports
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Step- by-step to Success

— By Betty Tryon

As a coach, Donnie Conner is somewhat of a philosopher. The Boys Athletic Coordinator for Frank Seale Middle School and the pole vault coach for the junior high and high school equates life to sports. He believes everything you do in sports, applies to life. One of the areas he stresses is to learn the fundamentals in whatever you do. He said, "I tell the students, if they learn the basic fundamentals, they will be successful in everything they do. In your job, if you know the basics you will always be good at it, and you can always get better. Because you know the basics, you can build on those things to make yourself better. For example, in football you have basic principles, such as blocking and tackling. If you are naturally good at football but you don't know all the fundamentals, you have nothing to fall back on. This is where education comes in, too. If you happen to be talented athletically, you may go to the NFL or something like that. What happens if you get cut? If you have a good basic start in education, you have something else to fall back on. The fundamentals help you be successful in everything. It is one



step at a time. When they [the students] smile and indicate that they get it, that they understand, then I'm successful."

Donnie believes motivation is important. He looks at his ability to motivate the students and their internal drive to succeed. He stated, "Those who don't perform in the classroom won't perform on the field. Students don't come to school for athletics; they come to get an education. One of the great things about education is that if they excel in the classroom, they will have the opportunity to excel on the field. Physical talent is a lot, but mental toughness or that mental edge is what can make them very successful or just OK. Kids who don't have that athletic ability, but have that edge or a great work effort to overcome, they can always go to the next level. You get both of those together, the athletic talent with the mental toughness, and you have the makings of a star."

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Donnie understands what goes into making a star. During his coaching career, he has watched 13 of his students enter professional sports. Two of them are playing in the NFL — Patrick Crayton, #84, a wide receiver with the Dallas Cowboys, and Ellis Hobbs of the New England Patriots. In the area of pole vaulting, Midlothian has seen the talented efforts of Nick Frawley and Austyn Rapp who both have achieved success. Donnie has witnessed in all of them the ability to be successful in life by knowing the fundamentals of the game, being highly motivated to achieve and the willingness to keep going when things are not going well.

**“A champion
is someone
who goes through
hardship
and becomes
successful.”**

He added, “A champion is someone who goes through hardship and becomes successful. You won’t be successful in life if you get knocked down and don’t get back up.”

Donnie had the opportunity to teach the lesson of perseverance to both of his sons, Caleb and Joshua. Caleb in particular learned the lesson during a difficult time. Donnie explained, “Caleb broke his arm when he was younger and he thought it was the end of the world. He couldn’t play ball and was very upset. So, I sat him down and told him the story of Job in the Bible about how much he suffered but didn’t give up. When Caleb’s arm healed, he was able to play the last game. In playing



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a game of touch football, he stuck his arm out and broke the same arm in the same spot. He said, 'I just don't know what's going on.' I said, 'Let's go back to Job. He lost everything, twice. He had everything he could ever want and God took it away from him. He didn't sit around, say poor me and curse God. He said, "Okay I'm still going to stay focused. It's a setback, a detour." You have to suffer through this to get to the next step.' 'Nobody ever said it would be easy.' Caleb wound up being All-District Linebacker in DeSoto on a district championship football game."



Hardships and disappointments are things Donnie understands. He motivates the students, as he did his son, to rise above the difficulty of the moment and continue to struggle to achieve positive things. He stated, "To win at anything, you have to be willing to put in the time and effort. I am willing to help the students excel. I want to win. I want the kids to learn how to compete. You have to know your kids to push them to their limit. It's like a car going down the road with all four wheels turned in different directions. It is an inefficient way to travel and you won't get very far. All the wheels need to go in the same direction for a smooth ride. Success is built one step at a time. We all have to work together to be successful." **NOW**



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You Have a Friend

— By Betty Tryon

Taking your troubles to Vernon Witherspoon, attorney and counselor at law, is a lot like sitting down with a trusted friend, only better. He can provide you with reliable, professional and accurate help to get you out of trouble and guide you to a better place. He explained, "If you come in to see me, I am capable of taking it all away, and I will be with you the whole way." Vernon's general practice of law encompasses a variety of areas. His 28 years of practice have given him the experience to comfortably handle any matter that may arise in family law. He simply stated, "I am a sole practitioner and that means a very hands-on practice. You won't come in to see me and get someone else."

Vernon handles all phases of family law. He works with people in areas that involve wills and trusts, and has a corporate practice where he sets up businesses and incorporates them. "I work with businesses and advise them. I also handle personal injury and workers compensation, mediation, real

estate and probate. It is anything that the family needs," Vernon further explained. "When someone comes in with a problem, there are a lot of different issues clouding their thoughts. It is my job to find out what the solution is or find the plan we can pursue. It is important for me to keep them focused, reduce their emotion and give them confidence that we are on the right track to pursue the goal of being successful in where they are going. That usually can involve litigation and being in the courtroom and handling it all the way. That is where my years of experience helps because I can see where they need to go and I can apply that experience in understanding what they need."

People in crisis need many things. Many times, they are unaware of what it takes to see them through the crisis.

Vernon understands this and addresses those needs. In Vernon's words, "They need to know they are going in the right direction to achieve the result that they need. They



Business NOW

need to stay focused. They need to have confidence in where they are going so that they can stay directed toward the plan. That helps in staying on path so they don't get lost along the way. Sometimes, people don't even see what their goals need to be, but when I talk to them, I can identify some things that will be helpful. The attorney is handling something for someone that they are going to have to live with. That is the personal involvement."

As an attorney at law, Vernon must be proficient in not only legal matters, but personal communication as well.

"If you come in to see me, I am capable of taking it all away, and I will be with you the whole way."

"People need more than an attorney many times," Vernon explained. "My office staff is skilled, experienced and competent with people in crisis. They are very serious about their interactions with people. They have been doing this for many years. We care for people. They are not business; they are people we care about. It allows counseling to occur to help people have a better result. We ask for the opportunity because we believe that you will see that we differ if you compare. Also, I try to give people a lot of information and to keep them well informed of all the options and all the things we are doing. That helps with their confidence about where we are going and how we are getting there."

If you need the expertise of Vernon Witherspoon, you can contact him at www.witherspoonlaw.net, and (972) 723-7550. His office is located at 717 W. Main (287) Street, Suite 3, Midlothian, Texas. **NOW**



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Teaching Tools *for* *Success*

— By Danielle Parker

It has been said, “It takes a village to raise a child,” but parents know better than anyone that a village is hard to come by. In search of such a concept, Diana Phillips decided she would create a setting for her children’s development.

Originally from San Francisco, California, Diana has dedicated more than 20 years to educating children around the country and brought her expertise in education to Midlothian through One on One Tutoring. A veteran of the United States Marine Corps and a single mom, Diana wanted her two children to be reared in an atmosphere that created a foundation for education; something she found most schools lacked. “I realized there was an element missing,” Diana said. “I wanted my kids to be learned, so I tried opening a preschool out of my home.”

It was not too long until Diana realized her desire to provide her children with quality schooling was actually a newfound passion. “I knew it was my niche,” Diana stated. “The preschool grew to about 40 kids in one-and-a-half years.” The home-based preschool developed into Children and Language, a program that served students in preschool through the fourth grade. For four years, the school grew into a well-known institution. Yet as her children grew older, Diana realized a foundation had been created, but there was no one building upon what had been established.

It was during this time that Diana rolled up her sleeves and decided, again, to meet that need. She founded High Gear Achievers, which not only tutored students, but mentored them as well. “It became a pretty renowned program as the first community-based, nonprofit tutorial program in San Francisco,” Diana said. “Within one year, it grew to 15 schools, and I had a staff of 85 people working for me. The program was honored by the city and county of San Francisco, as well



as the California legislature.”

The concept of High Gear was to accommodate youth who needed special attention, but were often overlooked. “I had to set up the foundation for cultural diversified learning,” Diana said. “The program catered to people who struggled to achieve in academics and was centered around personal growth and development. That’s what children need so desperately. It’s their foundation that pulls them through.”

As a child, Diana was familiar with the feeling of being discounted. “It was difficult for me growing up because I had this need for accomplishment,” Diana confessed. “I was always judged by what I looked like, and I felt I could never measure up.” Diana made the decision to be an informed and educated woman no matter what her status was. “If you don’t have money, there are ways to work around that aspect,” Diana said. “I lived in Section 8 housing (a federal housing program that provides assistance to low-income renters/homeowners), but I still found ways to learn, by going to the library or the museum because it was free.”

While Diana overcame odds, she did not want her own children or anyone to be forced to walk the same road she did. “I wanted them to be with children who were being trained for success,” she said. “I wanted them to be educated by curriculum, not color.” After more than a decade with High Gear Achievers, Diana was asked to come to Dallas and implement the same concept within the Dallas Independent

Education NOW

School District (DISD). As the community outreach coordinator, Diana connected students with educational and corporate institutions to create future career possibilities.

But after about two years with DISD, Diana was ready to return to what she knew best. "I needed to go back to my roots — setting up learning programs," Diana said. "I then launched One on One Tutoring in the Midlothian and Cedar Hill areas." Since 2000, Diana has made efforts to enhance learning opportunities for students, no matter what their background may be. "I want to deal with the entire child," Diana said. "Environments are important to how a child learns. Our little girls and boys have changed, and it is almost impossible to point them in the right direction when we allow other people to take the place of the role of parents."

Diana believes it is critical for parents to be involved in their child's learning process. "There has been a tremendous deterioration of family in our society," Diana explained. "It takes a family, whatever that concept may be, for a child to grow. If parents are not on the same page, then it creates an impediment for development."

Coupled with involved parents and expectant children, Diana also equips educators with the tools to continue the program's momentum. "I show teachers what it takes to effectively interact with their students," Diana said. "There are tools for success and we see the results as we create a sense of community between the student, parent and teacher." So if a "village" seems hard to find, Diana believes the key to a student's success can begin within the home. "It takes sacrifice, but a parent must express a passion for their child," she said. "There must be a strong sense of community backing them. I've had to give up a lot, but at the end of the day, it is well worth it."

Around Town NOW



J.A. Vitovsky's Student Council, top left, was inducted in by Principal Wagoner. The Midlothian campus of Navarro College hosted hot dog days, top right, which coincided with the "Meet Your Advisor" event also held on campus. Nicole G., second row left, was amazed at the chemical change she observed in her fifth-grade science class at J.A. Vitovsky Elementary. Suzy M. and Spencer C., third row left, studied changes in spheres they created in science class. A ribbon cutting, bottom left, was held at Edge Studio Salon-Nails-Spa. Mt. Peak third-grader Jonathan M., bottom center, demonstrated to his classmates how his model volcano erupted. Mrs. Beck's second-graders, bottom right, dressed up as pirates for a scavenger hunt.

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Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning

IN THE KITCHEN WITH SYLVIA MURRAY

MEXICALI SOUP

1 1/2 lbs. ground meat
1 cup onions, chopped
2 15-oz. cans black beans, drained and rinsed
1 15-oz. can whole kernel corn, undrained
1 14.5-oz. can diced tomatoes, undrained
2 4.5-oz. cans chopped green chilies, undrained
1 14.5-oz. can beef broth
1 tsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. chili powder
1 Tbsp. fresh cilantro, chopped
Combine meat and onions in large saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat until meat is cooked thoroughly; drain. Add beans, corn, tomatoes, chilies, broth, cumin, chili powder and cilantro. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer covered

for 15 minutes. Ready in approximately 30 minutes. Makes 8 servings.

SLOW-COOKER COWBOY BEANS

1 smoked ham hock
1 lb. pkg. pinto beans, rinsed
1 onion, chopped [about 1 cup]
4 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped or sliced
10 cups water
1 1/2 tsp. salt
6 strips bacon, cooked and chopped
1 14.5-oz. can diced tomatoes, drained
1 4-oz. can chopped green chilies, drained
2 Tbsp. cilantro, minced
Put ham hock, beans, onion and garlic in a slow cooker. Add water; cook on low for 8 to 9 hours or overnight. Remove and discard ham hock. Add the salt, bacon, tomatoes, green chilies and cilantro; cook on low

another 15 minutes. The beans thicken when cooled, and the flavor will improve when the beans are cooked overnight and reheated the next day.

SOUTHWEST CHICKEN

2 Tbsp. olive oil
1 clove garlic, pressed
1 tsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. chili powder
1 tsp. dried oregano leaves
1/2 tsp. salt
1 lb. skinless boneless chicken breast halves or thighs, thawed
Combine oil, garlic, cumin, chili powder, oregano and salt; brush over both sides of chicken to coat. Grill chicken over medium-hot briquets 8 to 10 minutes or until chicken is no longer pink in the center, turning

If you have lived in Midlothian long, you have most likely heard of Sylvia Murray and her husband of 53 years, Sonny. "Sonny and I were married very young (we eloped)," she said. "We didn't have much money, so I always had a big garden and canned all I could. I did all my cooking from scratch." Sylvia was born in her grandmother's home in Mountain Peak, Texas, and has only moved as far as across the creek.

While Sonny stays busy cooking on a barbeque grill he built out of odds and ends, Sylvia works in her shop creating birdhouses out of old lumber, snowmen from chenille bedspreads and Old World-style Santas from old quilts. She claimed, "I have always liked working with my hands."

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Who's Cooking **NOW**

once. Serve immediately or use in taco salad, burrito or another favorite recipe.

CHOCOLATE ANGEL PIE

FIRST LAYER:

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- 1 stick oleo, melted

SECOND LAYER:

- 1/2 large tub Cool Whip
- 1 cup powdered sugar,
- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened

THIRD LAYER:

- 3 cups milk
- 1 small box instant vanilla pudding mix
- 1 small box instant chocolate pudding mix

FOURTH LAYER:

- 1/2 tub Cool Whip
 - pecans, chopped
- Mix together first layer; put in 13 x 9-inch pan. Bake for 20 minutes at 320 F. Mix together second layer; spread on top of cooled first layer. Mix together third layer; spread on top of second layer. Spread fourth layer of Cool Whip over third layer; top with pecans.

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- **New business discount:** May offer you a discount as a new policyholder if you have been accident-free for a specific period of time.
- **Accident-free:** Policyholders who have been accident-free while being insured with the same insurance company for several years may be eligible for reduced premiums.
- **Discounts for other insurance lines:** Premiums may be reduced if you insure your home, life or health with the same company that covers your car.
- **Multiple cars:** Premiums may be reduced if there are two or more private passenger cars in the household insured by the same company.
- **Air bag/passive restraint:** Cars that are 1993 or older and are equipped with air bags or automatic seat belts may receive this discount. Certain makes and models of newer vehicles may receive the Vehicle Safety Discount because of the lower medical payments associated with them. The Vehicle Safety Discount is for autos 1994 or newer. Certain makes and models may have a decrease in their premiums because of lower medical payments associated with those

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- **Antitheft devices:** Some insurance companies offer discounts on comprehensive coverage premiums when certain antitheft devices are installed or built into a vehicle.

- **Defensive driving course:** Premium discounts sometimes are offered for the voluntary completion of specified driver improvement courses.

- **Good student:** Full-time students (high school or higher level) maintaining at least a "B" average may qualify for reduced premiums with many companies.

These are just a few of the common discounts offered by insurance companies. For more details contact your insurance company or agent. Above all, drive safely. **NOW**

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Health NOW

Going Too Fast

— By Betty Tryon, R.N.

Do you sometimes feel as if your world is moving at a frantic speed? If you looked up the word *hyper* in the dictionary, would your face be there in lieu of words? Everyone feels this way at some point in his or her life, but for those who have hyperthyroidism, their internal speed is taken to the extreme and their body pays the price. The thyroid hormones are in charge of the metabolism of the cells. They determine whether the body has too little of the hormones (hypothyroidism), too much (hyperthyroidism) or produces a normal output.

Hyperthyroidism is caused by an overactive thyroid gland secreting an overabundance of the thyroid hormone. This hormone greatly affects the metabolic rate in the body. While the promise of weight loss with an increased metabolism may be seductive, unfortunately one does not get to pick and choose all of the side effects which come with the disorder. The glut of hormone being secreted into the body manifests itself in many signs and symptoms such as: nervousness and

agitation, excessive sweating, palpitations (rapid heart beat), increased bowel movements, tremors (usually in the hands), insomnia, hair loss and of course — weight loss.

Diagnosis is an easy matter. The physician is initially clued to the possibility by clinical presentation of the person. Blood tests can confirm the diagnosis. The blood tests will test the levels of TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone), T3, T4 and T7. Once the blood tests have confirmed the diagnosis, the physician will want to examine the cause of the abnormality. A radioactive iodine uptake test measures how much of the iodine tracer the thyroid gland absorbs from the blood. Another useful tool is a thyroid scan, used to check the gland's shape, size and the presence of lumps or any other abnormalities.

Treatment for hyperthyroidism can be very effective, and there are several options. Medication aimed at relieving the symptoms is sometimes prescribed. Anti-thyroid drug therapy can be administered to block the production of hormones in the gland. Radioactive iodine proves to be very successful as part of the treatment plan. It works by stopping the function of some of the cells in the thyroid. If the cells no longer produce the thyroid hormone, the symptoms lessen and/or disappear. The most drastic treatment is surgical removal of part of the thyroid. This treatment is usually reserved for those who are not candidates for the other treatments, such as a pregnant woman or those with very large glands. Although hyperthyroidism can be disruptive to everyday life, this disease can be easily diagnosed and treated. **NOW**

This article is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult your physician for questions regarding this topic.



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Leaves and More Leaves

— By Nancy Fenton

The leaves just keep falling! If you are as allergic to raking as I am, I have some thoughts on what to do with those leaves. The easiest is to run your mower over them with the mulching blade working away. I set the height on the mower one level down from where I usually mow, so it gets all the bits and pieces. Even if you do not have a mulching mower, just block the throw vent or let it spread the chopped leaves for you. These bits and pieces will compost themselves over the winter keeping your grass roots warm and feeding them, too! The mowing part speeds up the decomposition and keeps the bigger leaves from forming a water repellant mat on your lawn and beds.

I do use my rake to pull the bigger leaves from my beds onto the yard so I can get at them with my mower. I do not catch my own leaves, but I do chop and catch my neighbor's

bagged ones to put back on my flowerbeds! I throw them out on my driveway, set my mower down as low as it will go and chop away. The chopped leaves go straight onto the flowerbeds or into an old 30-gallon trash can to end up as part of my compost pile. I have even been known to pick up a few extra bags from good looking (leaf-free) yards around town to put beside my out buildings for future use. If the leaves are bagged, they can be chopped and used any time.

If chopping is not your thing and you want to make compost, try the "bag method." Add one cup of high nitrogen fertilizer (21/0/0) and one to two gallons of water to a black bag of leaves (heavy duty sacks only). Tie up the bag, place it out of the way and let nature work wonders through the winter! The leaves will begin to compost, and can be used come spring on most new beds by digging them in or just dropping them on top. Using leaf compost is important because the leaves themselves contain most of the missing nutrient elements, providing the reasoning that local composts and mulches are the best kind for our plants. Think about the forest and how well it uses its leaves for compost! **NOW**

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January 2009

Community Calendar

Every Tuesday

Midlothian Rotary Club meeting: noon,
Midlothian Civic Center, 224 South 11th St.
(972) 775-7118.

Second and Fourth Tuesdays

Midlothian City Council meeting: 6:00 p.m., City
Hall, 104 West Ave. E.

Third Wednesday

Ellis County Christian Women's Connection
monthly luncheon: Waxahachie Country Club,
1920 W. Hwy. 287 at I-35 East Exit 401B,
Waxahachie. \$13. Nursery vouchers available.
Reservations preferred, walk-ins welcome.
Contact either Kay at (972) 937-2807 or Mary at
(972) 937-9984, or e-mail Kay at
windchime@charter.net no later than the Sunday
prior to the luncheon.

Third Thursday

ABWA Empowering Women Express Network
monthly meeting: 5:45 p.m., Midlothian
Conference Center, 1 Community Circle. Please
RSVP to Daphne Brewer at (972) 723-6551.
www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org.

First and Third Thursday

Midlothian Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m.,
Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th St.
(972) 775-7118.

January 6

Joint Airport Board meeting: 4:00 p.m., Mid-Way
Airport, 131 Airport Dr.

January 12

Midlothian Development Authority meeting: 5:30
p.m., Midlothian ISD Administrative Offices,
Room 126, 100 Walter Stephenson Rd.

Park Board meeting: 6:30 p.m., Development
Services Administrative Conference Room,
101 W. Ave. F.

ABWA Great Visions Charter Chapter monthly
meeting: 6:30 p.m., Whispers Boutique "Party
Room," 118 N. 8th St. \$15. Goal Setting
presentation will be given by Jana Hawthorne of
MISD. Heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served.
Whispers Boutique is donating 10 percent of
sales to the ABWA Scholarship Fund. Guests
welcome. Please RSVP to (972) 723-0017 or

abwainfo@ymail.com.
www.midlothianabwa.com.

Navarro College SBDC How to Start a Small
Business workshop: 10:00 a.m. – noon,
Corsicana/Navarro County Chamber of
Commerce conference room, 120 N. 12th St. To
register, call Ophelia Mendoza at (903) 875-7667
or e-mail ophelia.mendoza@navarrocollege.edu.
Additional dates: January 13 at 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
January 27 at 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

January 15

New Resident Workshop Come and Go:
5:00 - 8:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center
Ballroom. Open house forum organized to
provide information to city residents, especially
the newly annexed residents.

January 20

Planning and Zoning Commission meeting: 7:00
p.m., City Hall Council Chambers, 104 W. Ave. E.

For more community events, visit our online
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FOR WOMEN, FOR LIFE
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9:00 AM - NOON

LOCATION: BaylorWorx Rehabilitation and Fitness Center, 507 North Hwy. 77
(in Northgate Shopping Center behind Applebee's)

TIMES: 9:00 AM – NOON > Check-in, Health presentations and screenings

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