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January 2009

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Contents

January 2009 Volume 4, Issue 1

6



A Renaissance Angel

10



Dreams Do Come True

At Home With Andy and Marsha Stirrat

16

ArtsNOW

Chick With a Chain Saw

18

SportsNOW

Dynamic Duo

20

BusinessNOW

Getting Aligned

22

EducationNOW

A Recipe for Learning



*On the Cover:
Giselle Rutledge sees great works
of art in each piece of wood.*

Photo by Terri Ozymy.

24 Around TownNOW

27 FinanceNOW

26 Who's CookingNOW

28 Community Calendar

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Happy New Year!

Thank you for letting us be a part of your New Year. This month, we are excited to speak with residents who will be sharing their New Year's hopes, dreams and even family traditions. We hope that not only this issue, but all of this year's *Red OakNOW* issues, will give you inspiration and hope. We strive to share your stories and by so doing, let everyone know the good things that are happening throughout our communities and neighborhoods. So sit back with a warm cup of coffee or hot chocolate and enjoy some positive and uplifting hometown stories!

May this New Year be full of hope,

Diana Merrill Claussen

Red OakNOW Editor

P.S. If you have a story idea, please feel free to contact me at dclaussen.nowmag@sbcglobal.net.



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A Renaissance *Angel*

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

The Joines family in Red Oak believes it is important to be very involved in the community and with people in need. They not only dedicate their lives to helping others outside of their home, they support each other within their own household as well.

The strength and ideals of the Joines family are reflected through their children. When you see 9-year-old Elizabeth interact with her 20-month-old sibling, Catherine, one cannot help but notice how much love there is between them. Even in the eyes of Catherine, the love for her big sis shines extremely bright from behind her mask of Down Syndrome.

Bonnie, recalling her pregnancy with Catherine, said, "As far as we knew during the pregnancy, everything was healthy." Upon reflection, Bonnie admitted there was one thing she would have done differently. "During the pregnancy, we didn't run any tests for anything like Down Syndrome," she remembered.

Even if they had tested Catherine, it would not have made a difference in Bonnie and Wesley's choice to keep her. Testing would have, however, given the Joineses more time to prepare. "Sometimes, prenatal testing is not accurate," Bonnie, a former pediatric nurse, said. She added "[Prenatal testing] would have made a difference in which hospital, pediatrician and specialists we would have had regarding the delivery." Bonnie now makes sure to share the importance of testing during pregnancy with all expecting parents, sharing what

they have learned from their experience.

To look at Catherine, one cannot help but to describe her as a cherubic angel with blonde tendrils of curls. Like all children her age, she loves to play with her toys and sibling and eat at her high chair. Catherine not only understands many words, she interacts, giggles and laughs, especially when tickled by her dad.

"The general public usually only sees the physical features of a Down child," Bonnie shared. Although the physical facial traits are only slightly noticeable, "We didn't know to expect the health problems that come along with Down Syndrome, such as heart, digestive and intestinal defects and low muscle tone," Bonnie said. As the family has learned about Catherine's condition, walking with her through every step along the way, she has faced and overcome many of those health issues.

Big sis, Elizabeth, surprised her parents by the amount of time she spent learning and researching Catherine's condition and health-related issues. "When I was pregnant, Elizabeth became really involved to prepare for the baby," Bonnie said. "She would even read pregnancy books from cover to cover." Since Catherine's birth, "Elizabeth is doing great because she takes the time to learn and understand Catherine and her condition," Wesley said. "She also modifies what she does to accommodate having a sister with Down Syndrome," Bonnie added.

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From holding Catherine's bottles for her to entertaining her, Elizabeth shows an extreme amount of love for her toddler sister, who still has many infant-like characteristics. In an effort to help her sister and other infants to be comfortable and sit up, Elizabeth makes baby pillows. The pillows are padded and horseshoe shaped to give little ones the extra support they need. The pillows especially help children like Catherine with muscular problems. "I have made about 12 pillows for a Girl Scout project and have donated most of them to hospitals for children with and without special needs," Elizabeth said.

Because of her low muscle tone, Catherine "can only sit up for three or four minutes at a time," Bonnie explained. She also cannot crawl, but instead rolls across the floor to get to where she wants to go. In order to help her in all developmental aspects, "Catherine works with developmental, physical, occupational and speech therapists to make sure she meets milestones," Bonnie added.

The Joines family's biggest hope is for Catherine to gain life skills that will assist her in becoming a successful person. "Although Catherine is developmentally delayed, she is not as delayed as she could be, because children with Down Syndrome are all affected differently," Wesley shared. "She has shown signs that she is not going to be as affected by the Syndrome as others."

Wesley and Bonnie are thankful Catherine's disorder is not as severe as it could have been. They also reflect on why we as a society are under the impression that people with Down Syndrome cannot be functional human beings. "A lot of our Down stereotypes are based on what we [as a society] have experienced," Bonnie said. Back in the day, "People with Down were never taught life skills, so we are used to seeing [the aftereffects]," Bonnie shared. "Now, [society] needs to just keep teaching children, even if they have learning challenges. As we change our ability to teach them, we will be amazed at how talented people with Down

usually are. We can give them the same skills that everyone else in society has, like reading, writing and even balancing a check book."

The Joineses offer a few tips in interacting with a special needs person. "Because they have Down Syndrome, don't assume that they lack feelings or that they can't hear you talking about them," Bonnie shared. Wesley added, "Don't talk down to them, just talk to them like they're a normal person, that's how they want to be treated. They are just people who have a condition."

Wesley also advises why it is best to let special needs children simply be children. "If you start out sheltering them, then you will do that all of their life," he said. "If you treat them as a regular baby, you will treat them as a regular person for the rest of their lives."

When it comes to living and interacting with society, Catherine is a very joyful girl. "Catherine is a people

"Catherine works with developmental, physical, occupational and speech therapists to make sure she meets milestones."

person," Bonnie shared. "She engages people and is quick to smile." When the Joineses are out with Catherine, they not only welcome interaction with others, they encourage it. "Parents of Down Syndrome kids and even the kids are always open for discussions," Bonnie said. "I'm not offended if people ask me if Catherine has Down Syndrome. People are curious and they want to know. I think it is a whole lot better for people to ask instead of stare and wonder." Wesley continued, "When you learn about something, it's enlightening. Learning about it has definitely changed the way I view other people with Down. It's also given me a broader understanding of people who have it."

The Joineses are thankful for the support of family, friends and community. "We haven't [experienced] any negativity from people," Wesley said of Catherine's condition. "I think it's because she is just so darn cute," he smiled. **XXX**

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Dreams^{Do} Come True

— By Jaime Ruark



At Home With Andy and Marsha Stirrat



Sitting on a corner in the Magnolia Farms housing division, Andy and Marsha Stirrat's home is a welcome refuge for many in the Ovilla area. Steps lead up through lovely landscaping to the bright red door, over which hangs a sign stating, "Dreams Do Come True." Even from the outside it is easy to see the Stirrats' house is an inviting and cheerful place, with inviting and cheerful owners. "The kids weren't too sure about the red door, but Marsha and I like it," Andy smiled.

That bright door opens to a spacious two-story, 3,000-square-foot home, with four bedrooms and two-and-a-half baths; the blended family finds that spaciousness useful as guest bedrooms are often occupied with friends and family. "We have seven kids together. I have four and she has three," Andy explained, sharing that the two youngest, Teresa and Spencer, still live at home. "The first time Marsha and I went on a date with the whole family, we went to the rodeo. The girls took one car and the boys rode in another. Spencer was only about 6 years of age at the time, and he was very bubbly and excited. He called us the Brady Bunch."

The Stirrats chose their lot and style of house because they liked the layout of the floor plan, with its open living and kitchen area, high ceilings and many windows which provide natural lighting. "I don't have any curtains," Marsha pointed out, "because why shut out all this beautiful light?" The airy living room, with its cream-colored leather couches and boat-and-beach decor, is where these self-proclaimed "beach people" spend most of their time. The front room, however, with its canary yellow furniture, is Marsha's favorite — where she keeps a growing collection of delicate glass heart and gift box ornaments.

Married now for nine years, the couple's anniversary happens to be on New Year's Eve. The walls in the master bedroom, painted the light blue of a sky on a cloudless day, were Andy's gift to his bride. "The house was finished in December of 2005, and we occupied it the very last day of that year," Andy recalled. "On New Year's Eve, I was painting our bedroom." The space offers a little alcove for Marsha's make-up table before opening up to the large bathroom and even larger closet. "This is my side — the clean and tidy side," Marsha said humorously, "and that messy side is Andy's. I can never get him to throw anything away!"

The house truly has a friendly vibe; Marsha's positive and effervescent personality reflects throughout the home. Splashed through many rooms, such as the front sitting room and

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kitchen, are bright accents of yellows, greens and reds, giving off a vivacious and energetic glow. Other spaces, like the living room and master bedroom, are decorated in cool and calming colors, the blue tones recalling oceans and waves. These colors reflect Andy and Marsha's optimistic outlook on life, an outlook that was recently buoyed by a difficult time which the family pulled through together. Marsha developed a severe condition called trigeminal neuralgia, a neuropathic disorder which causes episodes of intense facial pain. Doctors were able to treat her with medication, but a magnetic



resonance imaging (MRI) scan brought about another, even scarier discovery. "They found a brain tumor, called a meningioma, in 2006," she shared. "It's a tumor found on the lining of the brain. They usually don't grow; lots of people have them and never even know." Marsha, however, began having headaches, and it was determined that she needed surgery. "The thought of having brain surgery was terrifying. It was hard on the whole family," she shared.

Marsha courageously came through the surgery, performed this past July, recovering rapidly, though, she admitted

with a smile, "I still have to take naps." The couple credits God and the prayers of family, friends and even strangers. "God's really taken care of us," Marsha expressed. "We've had so many blessings in our lives."

Andy, retired from General Motors, works from home as a deejay, videographer and computer technician. Marsha, an independent sales director for Mary Kay, also works from the house, so their office is a shared space. "It was supposed to be my office," Marsha said with amusement. "I painted the walls yellow because I wanted it cheery. I just really like color."

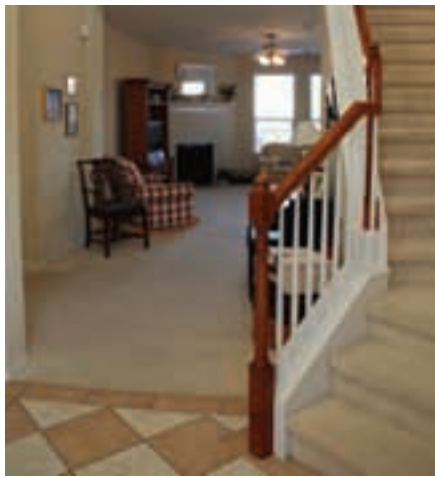
The kitchen is yet another obvious example of the Stirrats' attitude, with bright yellows accenting the white tile backsplash and stainless steel appliances. "I love our kitchen. I want to repaint the walls someday. It's a work in progress," Marsha said. The room was also a work in compromise. "I chose the granite countertops," Andy shared. "I liked the color, but she wanted white."

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I think it turned out good.” Then with a laugh he added, “I have to keep reminding her of that.”

To the right of the stairway leading to the bedrooms above, Marsha has set up a table for her makeup consultations. Because they work from home, are active in their church and have seven children and six grandchildren to spend time with, many feet trample through that welcoming red front door. “Our daughter decided to count how many people came through our door one time. She started on Sunday and by Tuesday she gave up counting because she couldn’t keep track. She



was up to 74,” Andy noted.

The backyard pool area receives a lot of that traffic, as well. With its palm trees, verdant rose bushes, blowing breezes and rock facade complete with waterfall, the space is a favorite. “For our family and friends, our rule is: Our pool is your pool. Sometimes, it drives my kids crazy, because they’ll get ready to go swim and one of my customers or one of our church friends are already there swimming,” Marsha chuckled. They had a pump installed, which creates a rapid current that turns the pool into a swimming treadmill of sorts. “There’s also bubblers and a

heater, so it’s like a giant hot tub,” Andy added.

Andy, who moved to Ovilla in 1990, came to get away from the city life. “One of the things I like best about this community is that I always see people I know. We have so many personal relationships with people here,” he said. Marsha, who calls herself a city girl, has come to love life in her new home. “I love the friends we have here and I enjoy this house. I don’t know where else I would want to be, unless it was the beach,” she enthused. Having brought the beach as close as possible in her decor, the Stirrats are at home. **NOW**

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**ARTS
NOW**

Chick With a Chain Saw

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

For single mother Giselle Rutledge, working and taking care of her children is definitely a full-time job. Luckily for Giselle, her “official” job allows her to overcome stresses with both creative destruction and construction ... using a chain saw.

Giselle first became involved in this exciting and stress-relieving art in 1985. “I learned chain saw sculpting from my ex-husband,” she said. “At the time, we were in Colorado and first started selling our art on the side of the road.” Initially, Giselle would help with the detail work and put finishing touches onto the carvings. “At first, I thought I could never do it,” Giselle admitted, but as her skills grew, her confidence grew as well.

Giselle soon found she could do a lot more than she thought possible. “I knew I had some kind of talent,” she said. Once Giselle decided to try creating her own pieces, she found out just how talented she really was. “The first thing I carved was a perched eagle,” she shared. “I was pretty impressed when I finished it. I didn’t think I could do it, especially with a big chain saw.”

Giselle’s favorite saw is a Stihl 180, and her preferred timber and woods to use are red cedar, white wood and cottonwood. “I like the cottonwood [when I sculpt] the eagles’ white heads and white tails,” she said. Giselle creates her pieces

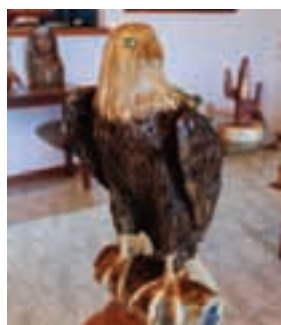


from her head and her heart, and it is her attention to detail that makes her highly skilled at her craft. “I can usually picture what someone wants in my mind,” she said, explaining that the ideas, “pretty much come out of my imagination.” Those creations can be made into the form of just about anything.

There are many techniques Giselle uses during the sculpting process. She starts by choosing the correct type and size of wood needed for the job. “The piece of wood depends on the position of the animal,” she said. “An eagle with its wings spread out would require a much bigger piece of wood than one with its wings down. I get the wood from within a 75 mile radius of the area. Usually though, people will give us the cedar for free because they want it off of their property.” Cedar is a good wood to work with and great to have in a home. It not only smells good but, “it keeps bugs away,” Giselle shared. “Cedar is a durable wood and it’s nice and soft to work with.”

Next, Giselle might study pictures of the proposed carving to make sure she captures the essence of each sculpture she creates. “I then start sculpting the piece with the chain saw from the top of the wood down,” she said. “As I work my way down, carving the ears, face, neck and arms, I really look at keeping the proportion.”

When the chain saw work is complete, Giselle cures the sculpture with a special solution and leaves it to dry. Once dry, she uses hand tools to create even more intricate details.



ARTS NOW

From carving eagles and full-size grizzly bears to little bunnies with tufted fur, Giselle's eye for detail, texture and color can be seen in each magnificent piece. She has even been known to use real elk antlers in her elk sculptures.

Giselle uses multiple colored stains, but the different shades of skin, texture, feathers and fur are often due to the colors of the woods and her intricate carving. With smooth and contoured lines and creative accents, Giselle's pieces are not just original carvings, they are creative masterpieces. "I take my time to learn as I go so I can make a quality piece," she said.

As a professional chain saw sculptor, Giselle has practiced and learned her craft for over 23 years. She has taught her art to a few of her admirers and has received various compliments throughout the years. "Women come in here [to her shop] all the time, saying, 'Good for you.' They don't expect to see a woman doing this," she laughed. "All of my sculptures are just one continual piece of lumber," she said, a fact that amazes many.

Guys sometimes have a different perspective about Giselle and her profession. "They have told me they are intimidated and sometimes make remarks about not wanting to make me mad," she smiled. The thing about being a woman of her own design is that, "It's nice to be able to do everything yourself," she said. "I'm very grateful, and I enjoy it a lot."

She is also glad to be able to be a good example and provide for her two sons, Don, 11, and Matthew, 6. "My oldest son tells his teachers and classmates about his mom," Giselle beamed, adding that the talent is being passed along. "Don makes little wooden card holders and sells them." All in all, Giselle enjoys her art and appreciates that she can have such a rewarding trade. "It makes me very happy that I can do this," she shared. **ARTS NOW**

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Sports
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Dynamic Duo

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Red Oak High School seniors Colin and Garrett Willard are more than just twins, they are a duo of talent! Upon meeting these well-mannered young men, one cannot help but notice their love of golf, for the brothers are usually seen decked out in wicking sports shirts, and hats with logos of their favorite sport. They can also be seen working hard, both on the course and in their classes.

The Garrett brothers have many of the same interests and learned the sport of golf from their dad and grandpa. "Our grandpa lives in Kansas and we would visit him twice a year," Colin, the oldest twin by 26 minutes, said. From the time they were 11, those visits would consist of putting with grandpa. "He had clubs for us," Colin recalled. "He would set up obstacles for us, and if we hit the obstacles and made the shot, he would give us money."

Sometimes, when the boys attempted to make a shot, there would be casualties. "Grandpa would get mad because we would [accidentally] hit one of his cows with a golf ball," Garrett, the more outgoing twin, chuckled. These days, the guys can be seen with more refined golf skills — and etiquette. "When they were first starting out, they were hitting a lot of balls in the water," their mom, Deanna, said with a smile. "You don't start out like Tiger Woods, so you gotta stay dedicated to it," Garrett added. "If you're not dedicated, then your scores won't be as good." When they first started putting around, the twins' scores were in the hundreds. Now their best score is 72. "I shot it at the Mansfield National course," Garrett said.

Besides playing on their high school team and the youth team at Jeremy's Golf Center, the boys also play golf with their dad, Doug. "When they got into golf, I started playing it with them," Doug said. "I don't play as much now, though, because they beat me," he laughed. Doug would always take his boys to golf courses and ranges, and both boys agree their family's support has helped them to become more successful with the sport they love. "Dad kept us dedicated to golf," Garrett said. There is a lot of fun and



"He would set up obstacles for us, and if we hit the obstacles and made the shot, he would give us money."

teasing when it comes to taking on the duo. "The boys like to give Doug heck on which clubs to use," Deanna added.

The Willard boys are currently on two teams and are taught under the guidance of senior Professional Golfers' Association (PGA) golfer Levy Adger, whose experience is helping them to become tough competitors. "We take lessons from Mr. Levy three times a week," Colin said. "We also practice with our high school team three times a week, too."

The boys like Mr. Levy and the three tease each other a lot. "He always tells us he's scrawny like us," Garrett laughed. However, there is no laughing at Levy's record. "He plays a lot of senior PGA tournaments and is so patient and kind with the kids," Deanna shared. "He really takes his time to explain things." Levy has patented a signature golf swing method called the pendulum swing and has taught the Willards many lessons in golf and in life. "We'll give our friends some pointers," Garrett said. "It's always more fun when we play sports with our friends. We have always been interested in the same sports, but we have now converted them all to golf," he laughed.

Sports NOW

The boys love the outdoors and like to help everywhere they go — from doing odd jobs at a local golf course to spending time with their family. “I like to help out; I especially like to help my dad outside anyway that I can,” Garrett said. “We play kickball with our friends,” Colin said. “We also like the fresh air and playing football with our cousins,” Garrett added, finishing his twin’s sentence. “We also take our



Labrador retriever and go dove hunting with our dad,” Garrett continued. Their dogs are an integral part of the two brothers’ lives. When the guys are not outdoors, they focus their talents on schoolwork, excelling in math, which is Garrett’s favorite subject.

This talented golf duo has won awards across the state, in the Junior PGA and North Texas Open. With their amazing golf score averages, it is no surprise both Colin and Garrett have won first place titles and recognition. The key to success, they say, is to be dedicated. “If you’re not, then your scores won’t be as good. Make sure you practice a lot,” Garrett advised. Golf should be, “Something to do to calm yourself down over the weekend, and it’s something we can all do.” **NOW**

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THE JOINT

Getting Aligned

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Headed by Dr. Nancy MacDonald and Dr. Jack Nunn, The Joint at Red Oak, a chiropractic clinic located at 278 E. Ovilla Road, specializes in making their customers and their customers' pocketbooks happy. Both doctors treat many aspects of chiropractic alignment. "Our Joint location is the second to open within the state of Texas, and we only charge \$20 for adjustments. The Joint does not believe in start-up costs and sees patients with or without appointments," Dr. Nancy said.

Before becoming a chiropractor, Dr. Nancy was a professional hot air balloonist. "I had always been a holistic person and believed in getting rid of pain without surgery or medication," she said. After experiencing a chronic neck problem, "a chiropractic friend gave me a spinal adjustment," she recalled. That is when she decided to change careers and became a chiropractor.

"Chiropractic adjustments allow the nervous system to function at a more optimal level," Dr. Nunn said. "We treat bone misalignments that affect the nerves and cause pain," Dr. MacDonald added. When a patient visits the practice, they are first evaluated. "We determine what bones are out of place and if there are pinched nerves. Our nerves

are like computers in the body and if they short circuit, [it can affect your total well-being]," Dr. Nancy explained. "The nerves supply every cell tissue and organ in the body," Dr. Jack continued. "Therefore, a misalignment can cause symptoms other than pain."

A few indicators of the possible need for an alignment are: headaches; neck, mid-back and low-back pain; and sciatic nerve



pain. When it comes to finding and diagnosing these symptoms, "I'm like the CSI of healthcare," Dr. Nancy smiled.

Dr. Jack has been a chiropractor for 23 years, while Dr. Nancy brings 22 years of chiropractic experience to the practice. "I love health and treating patients, and I love people

Business NOW

because I'm a people person," Dr. Nancy expressed. "Not everyone has a chiropractic problem. When we find non-chiropractic problems, we will refer accordingly," she added.

She and Dr. Jack, who also teaches at Parker College of Chiropractic in Dallas, understand the importance of a positive mental attitude. "Dr. Jack has a great sense of humor," Dr. Nancy said. Both doctors have a zest for life that bubbles into their artistically decorated practice. "We are currently in the process of finding local artists to exhibit, display and sell their work, [at the practice]," she shared. "I am hoping to have events like artists' nights and spinal care classes here at our location."

The doctors are planning for their future and enjoying meeting residents of all ages. "We treat families. When you come in, bring your kids with you because they are welcome here. How many women can go to the doctor and bring their kids?" Dr. Nancy asked.

"Insurance deductibles are so high that someone will usually stay home and suffer instead of going to a chiropractor," Dr. Nancy said. "Most peoples' insurance deductibles are a lot more than what we charge." In most cases, the \$20 fee is more cost effective than an insurance co-payment for specialist visits. Being affordable and convenient is part of showing how much they care about the well-being of others. "Plus, you don't need an appointment, you can just walk-in," Dr. Nancy said.

"A lot of times people aren't sure what chiropractors do," Dr. Nancy said. "It's a way of getting better by a more natural approach to healthcare, and that is a wonderful thing."

To start your New Year in alignment, visit The Joint Monday - Friday from 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. - noon. You may visit their Web site at www.thejoint.com or call the office at (972) 617-7700. **NOW**

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Education NOW



A Recipe for Learning

— By Katrina D. McNair

To say Red Oak High School teacher Dawn Thomas always has something good cooking in her classroom is an understatement. As the Family and Consumer Sciences teacher, Dawn spends her days showing her students basic and necessary skills that will stay with them for a lifetime and are sometimes taken for granted.

A Copperas Cove native and recent graduate of Tarleton State University, Dawn is a first-year teacher. Through a friend of a friend, she learned of the position and quickly contacted the high school principal. “I called him up one day, interviewed the next and had the job the next week,” she said proudly.

Dawn’s desire to educate comes from her heart. “I love helping people. That’s my God-given talent. And what better way to help society than to teach?” she said. “I love cooking, sewing, cleaning and all the house chores,” she laughed. “I want to teach those that may not have that opportunity at home to learn, because of culture or time.”

Although the skills she teaches can seem second-nature to some, in the fast-paced and time-crunched society that we live in, it is not surprising that some students have not yet mastered, or in some cases, even attempted them. To determine her lesson plans, Dawn has found it best to really talk with her students to have an understanding of the things they want and need to learn. “There’s a lot of hands-on once you get in the classroom. The first week of school, I tried to see what they wanted to learn and tried to implement that,” she said. Her college curriculum included classes on child

development and nutrition sciences.

In her short time as a teacher, Dawn has found that many of her students want to learn basic cooking and domestic skills. She has found ways to incorporate that desire with the lifestyles of her students and their families. “They want to learn how to cook mashed potatoes from scratch and not just pour it out of the box. We just did microwave cooking and some had never made homemade pudding, homemade applesauce and homemade muffins — all in the microwave. So, that was kinda cool; they can still do homemade stuff, but it’s quick,” she added.

Tradition normally calls for young ladies to be the most enthusiastic and eager students, but Dawn has found that their male counterparts sometimes buck that trend. “My male students are actually more eager than my females,” she said. “This day and age, you can’t rely solely on the females to do the cooking, so the males have to know how to do it, so they can survive and eat. It’s all about the food,” she laughed.

Although cooking is a huge part of her class, Dawn teaches her students much more. Utilizing and understanding the food pyramid and touching on eating disorders are also explored. “High schoolers don’t like to be told what to do, especially when it comes to food,” she chuckled. “So, I try to show them examples — if you eat this way and your metabolism is this way, then that determines things.”

Like any teacher, Dawn has met certain challenges. One of the biggest is keeping students motivated. When asked what her greatest challenge was, Dawn quickly answered, “Getting

Education **NOW**

the ones that don't care about school, to care. If I can just get them to care about themselves, I consider that an accomplishment."

However, in specific lessons, there is another challenge that could be seen as a positive one. "Waiting for instructions," she said. "They want to jump in and start cooking without reading the directions. It shows enthusiasm, which is fine," she laughed. "They want to experiment with some recipes, but you can't experiment with every recipe!"

Dawn also stresses that her students watch their measurements and shows them how to adjust recipes for their families' lifestyles — making enough food to have leftovers, for example. As she related a tale of salty chocolate chip cookies, it is easy to see why she stresses it so. Her development of a good teacher-student relationship is not without its rewards in what can sometimes be a thankless profession. "When I run into the parents talking about the mashed potatoes that their child made — honestly, that's like, yea! They're taking something home they can actually use. And those who were afraid to be in the kitchen, now have parents who can't get them outta there!"

Overall, Dawn wants her students to walk away with critical thinking skills and for them to let go of any fears they may have about being in a kitchen. In the future, she would like to further her love of cooking and teaching by opening a combination restaurant and cooking school for the everyday person. "I try to take every opportunity to teach life skills," she said.

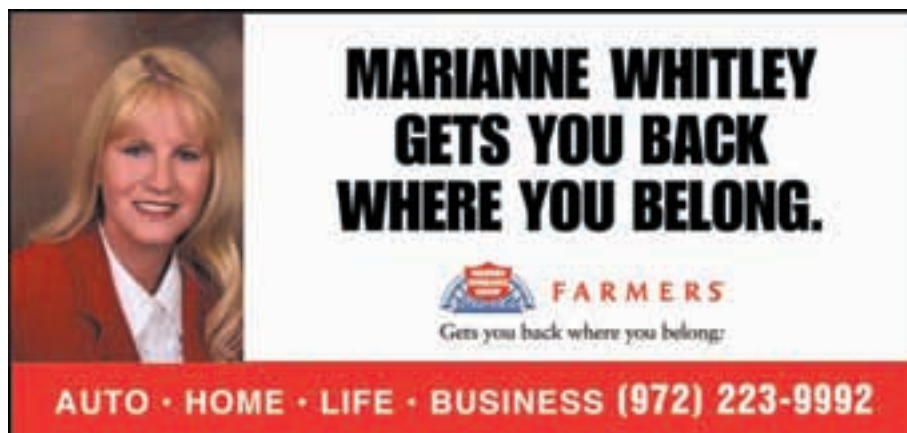
Dawn credits her mother, grandmother and an influential teacher with her desire to impart knowledge and her love of all things domestic. "My home economics teacher in high school was wonderful," she remembered. "They were always so eager for whoever wanted to learn. I just want my students to be eager about learning, too." **NOW**




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Around Town NOW



A mother and her daughter, top left, created festive holiday crafts. Members of the Vote Yes For Our Teachers PAC Team, top center, were recognized at a recent ROISD School Board meeting for their hard work with the Tax Rollback Evaluation. Amanda and Morgan Byars, top right, enjoyed a day in the sunshine before the winter weather arrived in Red Oak. The weather warmed up and Kay Kitzman, bottom left, volunteered at a local car wash. Lynn Grandstaff, second row center, got her truck washed during a community fundraiser. The Methodist Men, third row center, cooked up some scrumptious barbecue. Mara Bailey, bottom center, enjoyed working at a local festival. Renee Chase with Edward Jones in Red Oak, bottom right, invited customers and friends to join together for a holiday open house.

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IN THE KITCHEN WITH LISA STEWART

MOM'S TACO FRITO PIE

1 lb. ground sirloin
1/2 cup onion, chopped
salt and pepper to taste
1/2 pkg. taco seasoning
1/4 cup green olives, sliced (optional)
1 pkg. crescent rolls
1 cup Frito brand corn chips, crushed
8 oz. sour cream
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Preheat oven to 350 F. Crumble and cook meat with onion until well done, about 15 minutes and drain the grease. Season with salt, pepper and taco seasoning. If you are including the olives, add them to your cooked meat; stir thoroughly. Roll out crescents; place in a 9-inch glass pie plate, covering the bottom and sides. Sprinkle 1/4 cup Fritos over uncooked dough; top with meat, sour cream, remainder of chips and cheese. Bake 35 to 40 minutes or until cheese is melted and crust has browned around the top edge of the pie.

DEVILED EGGS

6 eggs, hard boiled, peeled, halved
1 tsp. yellow mustard
1 Tbsp. real mayonnaise
3/4 tsp. dill pickle relish

pepper to taste
dash paprika, divided

Remove cooked yolks from egg whites; mash yolks until crumbly. Add remaining ingredients; mix well. Fill hollowed egg whites with mixture; sprinkle with paprika for garnish.

GRANNY'S TRASH

2 cups Wheat Chex cereal
2 cups Rice Chex cereal
2 cups Corn Chex cereal
1 cup mixed nuts
4 Tbsp. butter
4 - 5 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
3/8 tsp. salt
3/4 tsp. garlic powder (adjust to your liking)

Mix cereal and nuts together; spread evenly on a jelly roll pan. Melt butter; mix in remaining seasonings. Drizzle butter mixture over cereal, evenly stirring to coat. Bake for 45 minutes at 250 F, stirring every 15 minutes. After cooling, store in airtight container.

POTATO SALAD

This is always a special request of my family and friends. I think the celery seed gives this salad such great flavor.

2 lbs. russet potatoes, peeled, cubed
1/4 cup onion, finely chopped
1/4 cup dill pickle relish
5 Tbsp. yellow mustard
1/2 cup real mayonnaise
salt and pepper to taste
1 tsp. celery seed
3 Tbsp. dill pickle juice

Cook potatoes in 2 quarts water; boil until soft, but not too mushy (you don't want mashed potatoes). Drain water from potatoes; add remaining ingredients; mix well. Serve warm.

DADDY'S AWESOME CHEESE LOGS

8 oz. cream cheese
1 lb. cheddar cheese, grated
1 cup pecans, finely chopped
1 - 2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 small jar chili powder

Mix together all ingredients except the chili powder. This process is best done with your hands. Roll into logs; roll in chili powder to completely coat. Wrap in wax paper; refrigerate. The longer it sets the better it gets. This also freezes well. Makes 5 to 6 logs. Serve with Sociable crackers.

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Here's a "Checklist" for Surviving a Financial Crisis — By Renee Chase

Over the past few weeks, the news has been almost incomprehensible. It's hard for many of us to make sense of the failure of major Wall Street firms and large banks and the \$700 billion bailout of the financial sector. And it's hard for investors to be calm when stocks have fallen almost 30 percent from their all-time high a year ago. What can you do to cope? Consider the following "checklist" for surviving a financial crisis:

- **Close your ears** — but open your eyes. These days, you may hear some so-called "experts" talking about end-of-capitalism scenarios. Try not to listen to these doomsayers. We still have the most powerful economy in the history of the world and we will recover from these setbacks. However, even if you close your ears, you should keep your eyes wide open. Specifically, look for opportunities. Stock prices are down now, but they won't always be — and, all else being equal, investors who buy into the stock market at lower prices are likely to earn higher returns than those who buy stocks when prices are higher.

- **Focus on things you can control.** During a financial crisis,

your success at weathering the storm depends on your ability to stay calm and concentrate on the things you can control. For example, you can control your emotions so that you aren't panicked into making unwise, short-term decisions, such as putting all your money under your mattress. And, to a certain extent, you can even control your portfolio's ability to withstand volatility. How? By diversifying your holdings as broadly as possible. The wider your range of investments, the less you'll be hurt by downturns that primarily affect one asset class. (Keep in mind, though, that diversification, by itself, cannot guarantee profits or protect against loss.)

- **Review and rebalance your portfolio.** During this market decline, some of your holdings have probably fallen more than others. As a result, you may now own a lower percentage of a specific asset class than you had originally intended when you built your portfolio. Consequently, you may want to meet with your financial advisor to determine if you should rebalance your portfolio by adding more money to those asset classes that have fallen the most. You may also want to rebalance

if your risk tolerance or long-term goals have changed.

- **Look for quality investments.**

In this economic environment, it's more important than ever to focus on quality investments. If you buy stocks, look for those companies with strong balance sheets. If you're purchasing bonds, stick with those that receive high credit ratings. If we are entering a prolonged economic downturn, these types of investments will, in all likelihood, fare better than lower-quality stocks and bonds.

- **Be patient.** No one can predict when a bear market will end, but history has shown that turnarounds can happen quickly and unexpectedly. So be patient. The most successful investors have the courage to stay the course and take advantage of opportunities while others are "bailing out" of the financial markets.

We may still have some rough roads ahead of us. But if you can check off every item on this list, you may be able to smooth out some of the bumps you'll encounter on your journey toward achieving your long-term goals. **NOW**

Renee Chase is an Edward Jones representative based in Red Oak.

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January 2009

Community Calendar

Every Monday

Celebrate Recovery meeting: First Baptist Church, 103 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-3591. www.redoakcelebraterecovery.com.

Second and Fourth Mondays

Texas Ladies Networking meeting: 11:45 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Ryan's Grill, Waxahachie. (214) 587-1221.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

Alcoholics Anonymous meeting: 7:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 Red Oak Rd. Nonsmoking. (972) 617-9100.

First and Third Tuesdays

Red Oak Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., 207 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-2777.

Every Wednesday

Family Story Time: 10:30 - 11:30 a.m., Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. All ages welcome. (469) 218-1230. www.redoakpubliclibrary.org.

Wednesdays and Thursdays

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

Thursdays

Gamblers Anonymous meeting: 8:30 p.m., First United

Methodist Church, 600 Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-9100.

First and Third Thursday

Senior Citizens' lunch. Must pre-register no later than the Tuesday before the luncheon. Free for all senior citizen residents, \$5 for non-resident seniors. Register by calling Jennifer at (972) 576-3414.

Second Thursday

American Cancer Society Support group meeting: 7:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-9100.

Third Thursday

American Business Women's Association meeting. www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org.

Last Thursday

DeSoto Art League meeting. www.desotoartleague.com.

First Friday

Worship Jam: 6:30 p.m., Bubba Que BBQ's front porch.

First Saturday

Red Oak Fire Rescue CPR classes: 9:00 a.m. Call early to register. (469) 218-7713. www.redoaktx.org.

January 1

Happy New Year!

January 4

Meet the new principal at Wooden Elementary from

3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. (972) 617-2977.

January 15

2nd Annual Taste of Red Oak family event and silent auction, benefiting the North Ellis County Outreach: 5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Red Oak Municipal Building. Entry fee: \$5 per person, \$3 for seniors. Price includes food and beverage samplings from many local restaurants. Children 12 and under eat free. (469) 218-1202.

January 20

Waxahachie Senior Citizens Center Fundraising trip to Choctaw Casino in Durant, Oklahoma. (972) 937-8271.

January 24

Bristol Opry: 7:00 p.m., Old Bristol School, 100 Church St., Bristol. Featuring the Bristol Opry Band and several local singers. Contact Jim Gatlin at (972) 846-2211.

February 1

DeSoto Art League exhibit honoring Black History Month. www.desotoartleague.com.

February 21

Mr. and Mrs. Red Oak pageant: 7:00 - 10:30 p.m., Red Oak High School cafeteria, 154 Louise Ritter Blvd. (972) 617-3535.

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

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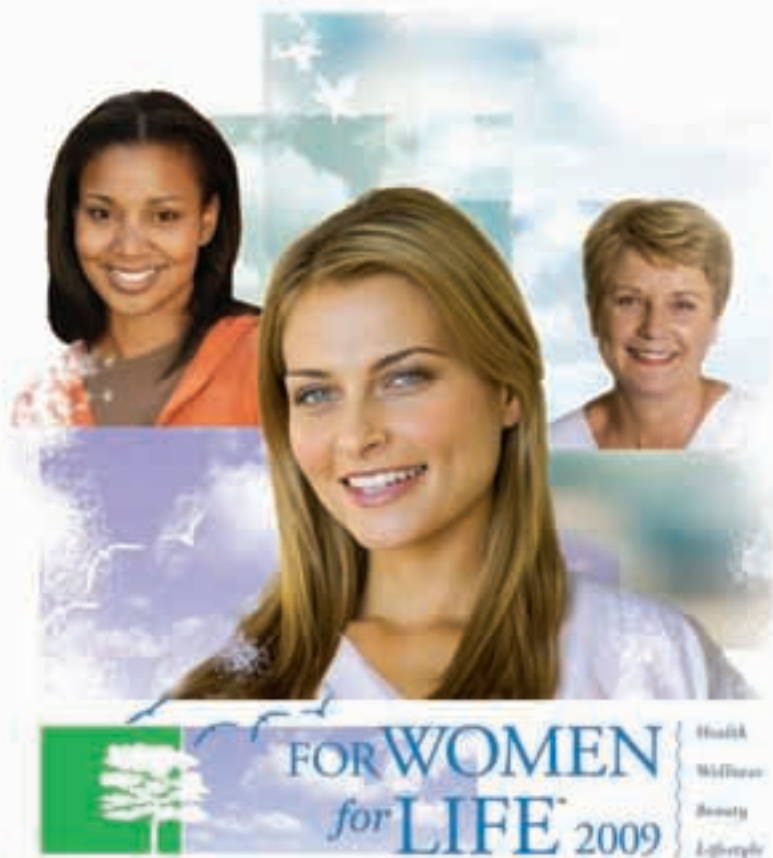
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THE ONE DAY THAT IS ALL ABOUT
YOU... **SATURDAY, JAN. 31, 2009.**

For Women, For Life™ offers women time to focus on their health. So plan on inviting other women you would like to share a day with – your mother, daughter, or friends – and come enjoy this special day at Baylor. Attendees will receive free screenings, assessments, and first come, first served free 5-minute chair massages, as well as an opportunity to attend health education presentations. A professional chef will provide complimentary tastings of delicious and healthy foods. There is no charge for admission, but registration is required. To register for this popular event for women, contact **1.800.4BAYLOR** or register online at **www.BaylorHealth.com**. Limited seating available, so please respond as soon as possible.



FOR WOMEN, FOR LIFE
SATURDAY, JAN. 31, 2009
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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