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The trees have lost their leaves,
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Penning With Purpose

— By Beverly Shay

Cedar Hill resident, Michelle Stimpson, is the author of four novels, a book of short stories and a nonfiction book on overcoming destructive habits. Writing began as a safe outlet when she became “the temporary mom” for her younger brothers following their mom’s car accident when Michelle was 12 years of age. “My dad was working two jobs and, while I wanted to help out, it was a stressful time for me. Writing was my outlet; it became my best friend. Little did I know those journals were preparation for later writing fiction. I have kept journals ever since I was 12. When I am frustrated, I find I can write my way into a solution. The journals provide an opportunity for a change of mind and help me achieve closure,” Michelle candidly admitted.

Following graduation from Sam Houston High School in

Arlington, Michelle received her bachelor’s degree in science from Jarvis Christian College in 1994 and her master’s in curriculum instruction with an emphasis on literature from the University of Texas at Arlington in 2002. She has taught elementary, middle and high school students, as well as teachers. “I consider it a great pleasure and a privilege to have been able to touch lives within so many different levels of education,” Michelle remarked.

Not able to “really leave” education, although she is no longer a full-time teacher, Michelle serves as a part-time education consultant by conducting workshops for teachers on reading and writing. She gleans ideas and concepts from her days as a Montgomery Ward corporate trainer, where she taught employees new systems and office machinery, as well as writing for their corporate newsletter. “I see people as learners. In all likelihood, I have learned more from them — both within the corporate world and schools — than I have taught them,” she confessed. “At times, I miss being in the classroom full time, but I get my ‘kid fix’ by working in a charter school one day a week.”

Obviously, Michelle has never seen education as something limited to the school classrooms or corporate training seminars. She speaks and teaches in churches, tours annually with a group of women called Anointed Authors on Tour and maintains an online ministry site with useful articles and resources for women walking out their faith, called Women Growing in Christ, which has also led to further speaking engagements. “I maintain

that all writing should be purposeful. Writing is to give people hope. So I write — in the Christian arena, in the educational arena and to encourage other writers,” she explained. Michelle has also taught in writing groups, such as the Dallas Area Writers Group (DAWG) that meets in Cedar Hill and has conducted writing workshops.

High demand as a speaker does not seem to hinder her writing. “I write a lot in first person; I guess that comes from having kept journals all these years. My books address current issues common to women and young girls. I want to get out the message that good things happen, and the more you expect them, the more they happen. I really want to abolish hopelessness,” Michelle shared. Some of her material comes directly or indirectly from her journals. Her books include:

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Boaz Brown, *Divas of Damascus Road* (National Bestseller), *Breaking Bondage to Biscuits*, and her 2008 releases, *The Good Stuff* and *Trouble in My Way*.

"My writing career began during the time I taught at Sunset High School. I was going to be out of the classroom, so I wrote and recorded some short stories for the sub to play for the students. I even included commentary addressing the type of activity common in the classroom, like: 'John, sit down.' He was the student who would always stand up in class. The kids' response was, 'Ms. Stimpson, we like you, but when are you going to be out again, so we can hear another of your stories?'" Michelle relayed. "Students from all over the school were asking for my stories. They were my first 'readers.' The enthusiasm of these kids and students from Nichols Junior High

"I maintain that all writing should be purposeful."

inspired me to pursue writing and publishing novels."

All of Michelle's novels are set in the Dallas area; in particular, *Trouble in My Way* is set in the Best Southwest area. "It's kind of a coming-of-age story set in our neighborhood with young girls experiencing issues I heard my junior and senior high students constantly talking about: parents, boys, cell phones, trying to discover 'life out there' while still maintaining integrity. I feel so many young girls are being exposed to things beyond what they are ready for. So I wanted to write something racy and fun, but still age-appropriate," she explained. "My books can reach so many more than I could ever influence one-on-one. I want to make a positive impact on their lives, to encourage them to make better decisions than the ones I was making at their age — according to my journals!" Michelle admitted. "It's kind of scary to think I have 2,500

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pages recording my thoughts, decisions I made and the outcome of those."

When discussing the setting for her novels, Michelle described Dallas as "a colorful, rich area with a variety of cultures and lifestyles. There are night clubs, with open-mike nights, more Walmarts and shopping opportunities than many other parts of the country and so many churches — this is the 'Bible Belt' after all. I like to see how people juggle all of the choices proffered, especially young people. This isn't a small community where everyone watches out after you; you can become anonymous. At least that's what my main character thinks, until her inner sense of integrity kicks in."

When Michelle received her first partial advance from the publishers, she almost felt guilty. She would have been writing whether she got paid for

**"Writing is to
give people hope."**

it or not, so getting paid was an adjustment, as was having to talk about it, but "the local bookstores have been so welcoming, helpful and accommodating by setting up book signings," she gratefully acknowledged.

In addition to writing, speaking and traveling, Michelle is a wife and mother. She and her husband, Stevie, married in 1993. "He's a truck driver and a part-time deejay. His work schedule has afforded me time to write. I guess you could say we have an entrepreneurial home. I am fortunate that what I have to do is also what I want to do," Michelle said, in reference to juggling all her commitments. Michelle and Stevie have two children, Steven (14) and Kalen (13), and one crazy dog, Mimi (5). When not writing, speaking, educating, traveling or parenting, Michelle serves the Creative Tyme Ministry at her church, Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship, and is pursuing her ministerial license. **NOW**

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Carolyn Campbell posed with Don Gant, president of the school board, at a reception the city held in her honor.

Creating a Community Affair

— By Danielle Parker

Step outside your front door and you are surrounded by your neighbors. Move beyond your neighborhood and you are circled by your community. For Carolyn Campbell, DeSoto's special events coordinator, her desire is to create a community-wide family through each event she presents.

Carolyn grew up in the Southwest Dallas area, spending the last 24 years in DeSoto, so it was simple for her to take ownership of her current position. Five years ago, Carolyn would have never thought she would work for the city. "I worked 21 years at Bank of America," Carolyn said. "I thought my job at Bank of America was what I was going to do for the rest of my life, but then I got laid off."

What seemed to be a horrible moment for Carolyn actually opened up the opportunity for her involvement with the city of DeSoto. "I had been volunteering in DeSoto and served on the Parks and Recreation Board when I got hired here," she said. "I was originally hired as the civic center aquatics/theater supervisor with special

events. After working for about three years, I was offered the position as the special events coordinator. Before, I had to generate the budget in order to have an event, but now, I had a nice budget to work with."

Because of Carolyn's love for people and entertaining, the job was a perfect fit. For the last two years, Carolyn and her team have brought citywide activities and celebrations to the residents of DeSoto. "Each year, I put on 12 scheduled events, plus three to four additional events for the city, including: Christmas, Viva DeSoto, Hometown Holidays, the Summer Concert Series and Juneteenth — which is shared between the Best Southwest cities — and Fourth of July to name a few," Carolyn said. "I am in constant planning mode from January to October. I get a little time off during November. Picking up those events was a challenge, but I had help."

Along with planning and organizing DeSoto's biggest bashes, Carolyn also markets and presents the information to the public. "I have built a good

relationship with local media," she said. "My focus is whatever is going on in DeSoto, I'm going to put it out there and let people know that it's happening."

Carolyn brought her unique personality to the city. Every event reflects her personal style and flair to make it entertaining and engaging. "One of my signature events is the Daddy/Daughter Dance," she said. "This is something that has been a great event. It has been around for years, but when I got control of the event, I added a new flair to it. We created a Cinderella princess theme, where the guests would park and a horse-drawn carriage would pick them up. They would then be taken to the entrance, where a red carpet was rolled out and the fathers and daughters were interviewed. We made them feel like real celebrities."

However, something was missing from this grandiose and spectacular event. Carolyn said she realized young boys needed an evening of their own as well. "Every year, at the Daddy/Daughter Dance, we always

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catch a mom who tries to sneak in," Carolyn said. "The moms would ask, 'What are you going to do for the guys?' So two years ago, we created the Mother/Son Black and White Ball. The first year it sold out. I am really proud of this event, especially because it is something that happened after I came into this position."

Carolyn truly loves people; this inspires her to reach out and give to others within the community.

Each year, Carolyn adds her distinctive touch to make the night special for all of the attendees. "For the mother/son dance, I got in touch with Dallas Cowboys' safety Roy Williams. For the daddy/daughter event, we invited Miss Texas, who performed a lyrical dance and then took pictures and signed autographs for all the girls. We have more than 500 people that attend these events."

Carolyn truly loves people; this inspires her to reach out and give to others within the community. "A few years ago, we decided to serve Thanksgiving dinner on Thanksgiving Day. We knew it would be huge, but we were willing to give it a shot," Carolyn said. "All the food was donated. We had council members who volunteered, and everyone did a great job getting involved."

Carolyn's philanthropic passion got her selected as a board member for the DeSoto Food Pantry. "My job is to pick up food from Walmart and try to keep the food pantry full," she said. "The relationship I have with different companies from doing special events has helped me to meet the pantry's needs." Beyond the many endeavors

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included in her job description, Carolyn also enjoys spending her free time giving to her community. "Although my children have graduated, I still have nieces and nephews in DISD, so I am very active in PTA and at DeSoto High School," she said. "I am also an active member at my church, Inspiring Body of Christ in Dallas."

Carolyn's life may seem demanding, yet even in the midst of the business, she is finding joy in all she does. "Writing has become something I really enjoy doing," she said. "Photography is another thing I love. I used to think I could never do anything like this, and now it is all I do. You will never catch me without my camera." How does she find time to do it all? Carolyn confesses she does not always know how it will fall into place, but she knows by the grace of God it will get done. "It just works somehow," Carolyn said. "Everything is scheduled; I know when all of my events are taking place. Sometimes, when I do an event and I get compliments, I am just amazed that things turn out right."

One secret to Carolyn's success is her local supply of enthusiastic helpers. "I have a lot of student volunteers as well as people already involved in the city," Carolyn said. "My sisters are my top volunteers, because they do not have an option. No matter what happens, they are by my side helping."

Every event takes a group of willing, committed individuals, according to Carolyn. To produce a community-wide event, it takes a community-wide effort. Just as Carolyn creates a welcoming atmosphere in her home, she strives to do the same within the city. "Whenever my family has a barbecue, it is always at my house," Carolyn said. "I love seeing people come over and enjoy themselves. At the end of the day, we are all happy. I like to recreate that feeling of family at the events." **NOW**

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Truly No Child Left Behind

— By Beverly Shay

Difficulties overcome in our own lives often create a compassionate desire to find and share solutions with others going through similar challenges. Such has definitely been the case for Elderine Wyrick, who never dreamed she would one day found a school for children with learning difficulties.

Elderine's two sons both started out their school years great, but then began having trouble with reading, writing and math.

"Thinking the problem might be deafness, we took our son to Scottish Rite Hospital for testing," Elderine recalled. Russell was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder (a physiological, mentally hyperactive inability to focus or stay on task), severe dyslexia (a disorder where letters appear to move about or get out of order), dysgraphia (an inability to form letters or express thoughts in writing) and dyscalculia (an inability to work with math concepts). Elderine was told Russell's problems were so severe he would probably not reach high school level, even though he was very intelligent. Her other son, Rick, was later diagnosed with mild dyslexia, but he seemed to struggle even more than Russell at times.

Needless to say, it was a discouraging, frightening and overwhelming diagnosis. At the time, Elderine worked for the private school her children attended, and she could work with their teachers to implement the expert's special instruction. "I worked an additional four hours every evening with both boys, seeking to help them keep up with class work, but instead of improving, they seemed to fall farther behind, no matter how diligently I worked with them," she remarked.

As the boys approached grades eight and 10, Elderine decided to educate them with undivided attention by homeschooling. "I was shocked to discover how much they did not know. Rick couldn't read well enough to answer questions over what we had just read! He didn't know the



sounds or even how to form letters, so I started over from the beginning, identifying holes and rebuilding their foundations with the basics. By Christmas, Rick was writing beautifully and reading adequately," she remembered with obvious relief.

Of course, the problems did not simply disappear. "I studied how each of the boys learned and discovered the gaps in their understanding," Elderine explained. "I attended seminars and took courses to learn how to help them. I found not all the 'experts' instructions were helping; some of their 'help' masked the problem and pacified the child, but actually reinforced the disabilities. For example, I was told that to 'deal' with the dysgraphia, I should have Russell write on a typewriter rather than by hand. But when he learned to form letters, write legibly and convey his thoughts in handwriting, it formed a basis of success and confidence he had never experienced in school," Elderine confided. She realized success at learning was only one of the elements of re-nurturing her boys needed — as much, if not more than figuring out how to overcome learning disabilities.

Elderine met other parents and educators who felt as heartbroken, overwhelmed and ill-equipped at dealing with this incomprehensible "enemy" as she did. She heard stories of frustration and grief at the labels given to children and met children who believed they were stupid, unable to learn. "I felt God dealing with me about starting a school; other

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parents had asked me to help their kids. So we did. I got temporary permission to hold school in my home for six months while we looked for a building. Initially, we had 16 kids, seventh - 12th grade, homeschooling as a group in my living room, with parent volunteers. God sent me people to teach each time I needed someone," Elderine related.

“We teach students, not just curriculum.”

By the middle of the year, she had four full-time volunteer teachers and a place to meet. For two years, no one was paid.

"I designed the school to meet the needs of my own kids; I used what worked. We went back to the very basics and taught the kids *how to learn*. We limited none of the children to the difficulties with which they had been diagnosed. Educating these kids is not a process; it is a philosophy. We have to figure out how each child learns; then that child has to learn how he/she learns; and then, that child has to determine for himself/herself that he/she is going to do whatever it takes to learn. But before we can do that," Elderine stated emphatically, "we have to rebuild each child with extensive nurturing, so they can believe in themselves and can believe they can learn. It just breaks your heart to see how destructively these children have been spoken to by peers, relatives and even, sadly, by educators."

Today, Elderine's boys are adults: Rick has a bachelor's in English and film studies from DBU. Russell, a member of Mensa, has a bachelor's in business from Northwood University and is working on his master's degree.

The school, Master's Academy, is like no other. "We take only 35 - 40 students a year," stated Lynn Watson,

Duncanville **NOW**

current administrator, who has worked with the school for 17 years now. "Grade levels are flexible. We test to see where the kids are at and set a plan; at the end of the year, we use standardized tests to measure their progress and evaluate the efficiency of the curriculum, making adjustments as needed. Initially we start them out a bit below the level they are at, to build a basis of success. We raise the bar gradually, challenging them — hopefully without pushing them too far. That is the hardest part of what we do — finding that fine line of encouragement and success, yet challenging them to grow and learn more without discouraging them. You really have to watch their eyes, because once you start losing them, they simply shut down," Lynn explained.

"Our school does not provide special education," Lynn emphasized. "We are remedial in nature. Remedial education provides different levels of education, where individual needs are addressed and gaps in understanding are filled. Students with learning disabilities tend to be about two years behind socially and emotionally, even when they graduate, so we do a lot of teaching on how to handle themselves in social situations."

The school, settled in its present Duncanville location since 1993, is in its 21st year, having graduated well over 100 students. "We provide an umbrella covering to assist families who cannot afford our low tuition, so they can homeschool using the same curriculums and methods," Elderine stated.

They do not take in children with behavioral problems. "We're just not set up for that; but we will refer them to schools that are," Lynn remarked. "Our students, in all likelihood, will never lose their dysfunction; but they can learn how to self-learn and how to self-govern. Our motto is: We teach students, not just curriculum." **NOW**

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At Home With
John and Sue Allen



The Honeycomb House

— By Jaime Ruark



Adventures abound in the lives and home of John and Sue Allen. Their beautiful country home is full of stories, and the couple reminisces on their many experiences with laughter. The Allens believe that God has held their hands through each of life's undertakings, guiding them through 41 years of marriage and giving them a sense of humor along the way.

Their four-bedroom, three-bathroom house sits back from the street, amid a spacious, naturally landscaped yard full of trees and plants. Like the Allens, who moved here from Michigan in 1976, the home itself is a transplant. "This house was in the *Greensheet* paper. It said, 'House for sale, \$1,000,'" John recalled. The previous owners wanted the house moved off their property so they could farm the land. "The house had been built in 1834 as a post and beam, and we actually took it down completely," he continued. "When we ended up moving here, we hired a semi and brought the house with us."

Tearing down and moving the house that summer was quite a laborious adventure. John and Sue, along with their four children, April, Jamie, Ben and Sam, did all the work themselves. "We loaded all the timber onto the semi piece by piece. Yeah, that was an exciting summer," Sue laughed. "All the kids pitched in and helped. They were really good. It was a dirty job."

Ready to see the hand-hewn oak timbers resurrected in a new house in their new community, the couple's moving venture took another twist. Unaware of the city's rules against moving a house into town from outside the city limits, the Allens had to revise their plan. "We had to use new timbers and just have the old stuff for decorating," Sue said, pointing out one of the old, roughly charming beams in her kitchen.

Sue's decorating style is Country French. Currently, she favors tans and burgundies in her color scheme, and her burgundy-and-white checked kitchen wallpaper complements the dark cabinetry and tile floors in a homey way. Sue's teapot collection is found here, as well as a

red fence whimsically used as a dividing wall between the kitchen and the rest of the house. "I like a little bit of country, a home that's comfortable and welcoming. I'd rather fill my home with people than things, but I like to decorate with useful things, and I like things that have sentimental value," she expressed. "It might not always be a beautiful piece, but it has meaning to me."

Houses today are styled a bit differently than houses from the 1900s, so, of course, the Allens made a few alterations during the rebuilding process. "We fashioned this house the same as the old house, with a few changes. We added bathrooms and closets, because the old house only had one bathroom and no closets," Sue



explained. Half of the dining room was previously two tiny bedrooms, so the Allens extended and opened up the space where they spend most of their time. "I don't like heavy curtains, because I like the outside to be in," Sue said of her bright white curtains over her rocking chair in one corner. "That's one of my favorite spots. I love to sit in that window. I have the windows open as much as possible. I like the air to blow through." In another corner sits an old black and silver, Art

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Buckeye wood stove, a remnant from an old hotel in the Michigan town where Sue's parents grew up. "This stove has heated just about every house we've lived in," John said, echoing Sue's sentiment that everything has a value and a use.

The living room is also a light and open room. "We have four kids and 12 grandkids, so we wanted an open space so all 22 of us could fit in here for the holidays," Sue smiled. A gorgeous, large fireplace was made with the same type of stones used in the entryway. Brown tones set off the textured walls. Once again, the room comes with an interesting adventure story. "When we first lived here, we had no heat or air-conditioning, just our wood stove, which sat in here," John said. "We moved into the house before it was finished, so we roughed it for a while. We went without air-conditioning for five years, which is why having all the windows and a basement was nice." Sue chuckled and added, "John finally said it'd be cheaper for him to get air-



conditioning than letting me to go to the mall all the time to cool off."

Sue's scented candles fill the master bedroom with a lovely hint of lilac, one of her favorite flowers — a smell which reminds her of her mother. The walls are painted a lilac hue and a fireplace here is filled with tea light candles and greenery rather than wood. "We had three of our children and their families living with us at one time while we were in the process of building their homes, so this became my place to get away," Sue said. A

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china cabinet, passed down from her mother, resides in the corner, and on one wall hangs the couples' graduation pictures, giving Sue yet another reason to smile at the not-so-distant past.

The other three bedrooms were previously for their children who are now grown and all living nearby. One room is patriotic, with red, white and blue pillows, bedspread and curtains. Sam's Marine Corp picture hangs on one wall, showing the Allens' pride in their country. The girls' room, decorated in soft florals, is home to an antique

Singer sewing machine, and a shelf running the length of one wall shows off family pictures. The grandchildren love to spend time in the basement — or "the daycare center room," as John calls it. A pool and air hockey table, along with a little toy stove, slide and countless toys, offer hours of fun.

The Allens' adventure stories truly never stop. "We used to have bees really bad," John said. "We found a guy who came with some hives and lured them out." About a year after their bee problem, John noticed what he thought were water droplets on a plant on the dining room table. The droplets turned out to be honey. "The bees had gone between the floors. The honey was running down through the fan above the table and onto the plant," he laughed.

The Allens are always quick to laugh at what might seem like life's misfortunes; they see them as wonderful experiences through which they have grown. "Life's been fun," Sue declared, "and God's been good." **NOW**


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The Art of Teaching Music

— By Beverly Shay

"I started taking piano when I was 7 on through high school," Tamara Taylor said. "By 13, I was playing piano at church. My mother really wanted me to play organ, but I sure didn't want to. I knew if I did, I would end up giving lessons, and that just wasn't in my plans for myself," she said somewhat chagrinned, admitting that is exactly what she now does. Fourteen years ago, she took up organ.

Tamara earned a bachelor's degree in personnel from the University of North Texas and a master's in management from Amber University. "My first job was in human resources; I was aiming to become a personnel manager and work in corporate America. I worked in that field for quite a while, but felt there was something more I needed to do; something that would give back to the community," she recalled.

Having graduated from Bishop Dunne Catholic School, Tamara considers Southwest Dallas her community. She worked for eight years with the "I Have A Dream" Foundation. "Those years were very fulfilling for me," Tamara reminisced. According to their Web site, The 'I Have A Dream' Foundation "empowers children in low-income communities to achieve higher education by providing them with guaranteed tuition support and equipping them with the skills, knowledge and habits they need to gain entry to higher education and succeed in college and beyond."

"While working as a project coordinator with the foundation and later teaching in Catholic and private schools, I saw a need for teaching music on an individual level," the often

bi-vocational Tamara admitted.

"Suddenly, here I was, planning to do what my mother had always wanted me to do when she encouraged me to major in music."

Taylor's School of Music started in March 1995 at Alta Mesa Baptist Church. Needing more space, they moved to Jubilee United Methodist Church and then to their present Duncanville location in December 1996. Eight teachers offer lessons in brass, woodwind, percussion, piano, organ, acoustic and bass guitar, strings and voice. "We teach students from the age of 5 all the way up to senior citizens as a nonprofit 501c3 organization," Tamara explained.

"My life is a balancing act between being a wife, mother, music teacher and music minister at my church (Highland Hills United Methodist).



This [the school] really is a labor of love, because we offer our services at a very low cost. We don't make much money doing this. But every time I re-evaluate, I know I can't eliminate anything to do with music — it's my life, my calling really," Tamara said



with a sigh and a smile. "The Lord just placed it on my heart to start this school, and I will stick with it until I feel He leads me in another direction."

They offer classes every day but Sunday. "Our motto is 'We do music right.' To accomplish that, we believe each student needs a foundation of music fundamentals. Computers are used as a tool to enhance learning. We want to meet each student right where they're at, so we evaluate which curriculum will work best for him/her. Some people are audio learners, while others are visual learners, so there is an art to learning how to teach each individual. We adapt lessons to their learning style and pace, while making sure they are getting the concepts. Most of our teachers have taught in Dallas or Duncanville," Tamara said.

Music is the fiber of Tamara's family. Her husband of 20 years is also a

musician. Their 15-year-old son, Dadrian, plays drums and sax; Shitara, their 14-year-old daughter, plays flute and is involved in creative dance. "Some people just have a natural talent; others develop their capacity for music. Some come in already playing, while others are learning an instrument for the first time. The students have to have the instrument they wish to learn, so they can practice at home; piano students must have a keyboard. But we also offer counseling and training for new church musicians by offering workshops and assistance in learning to write and arrange music. One of our teachers provides the technical side in our small-scale, in-house recording studio, where students can record and create a CD of their own music," Tamara delineated with obvious satisfaction at the varied music options she has been able to offer. "Musicians can send in a CD, and we will score their original compositions into instrumental and voice sheet music."

Tamara seemed especially delighted at their work with senior citizens. "We have been able to offer on-site lessons in piano, voice, guitar and choir for seniors in partnership with King New Beginning Senior Citizens Center, where we have also done recitals," she shared. "Some years we also do recitals at Grace Presbyterian Center. It's fun to bring music into their lives or give them an opportunity to play."

"Once a student has had a couple of months of lessons and have memorized a piece, they can play in one of our recitals — spring or Christmas. Oh, and in June, we have a two-week camp called Summer Music & More, where we give college students a chance to learn the art of teaching music and also share about their experiences at college with children ages 6-16," Tamara enthused. Walmart, Sam's Club, Target and the Shalom Zone supported the music camp this past year. **NOW**



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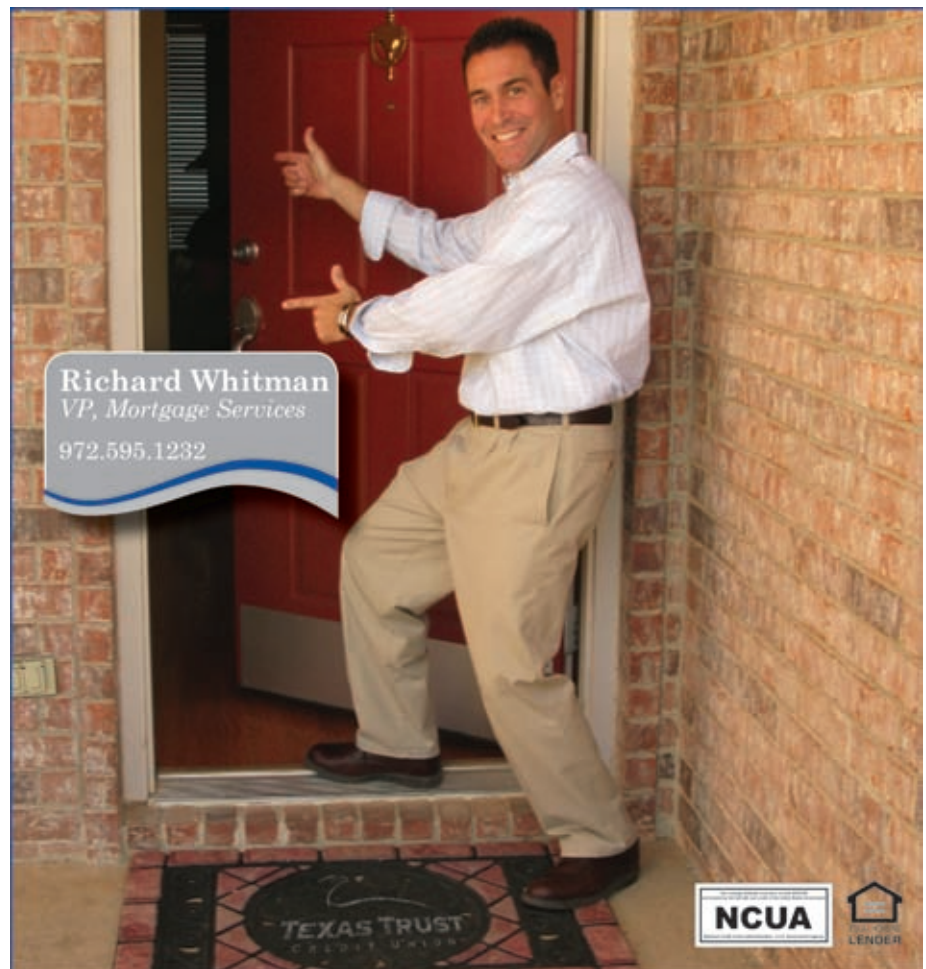
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The Secret is in the Sauce

— By Beverly Shay



Nelson Wen, Paul Tu, Tony Tu and Vi Vu take pride in serving great food made with fresh ingredients and original recipes.



King China Express provides the “cut above” families and business people alike have come to expect in this day and age. Located at 125 North Clark Road, Suite 100, just north of Belt Line in Cedar Hill, the spacious restaurant with its high ceilings, beautiful chandeliers and ceiling fans was designed by the Tu family who own and operate it. Large windows grace two sides of the dining area.

Although the restaurant has only been open for eight months, they have already garnered a following in Cedar Hill because of their quick service, fresh ingredients and original, authentic homemade sauces, which are only added at the time the food is ordered. They are willing to adjust the level of spiciness

of any dish for any customer. Whether you eat in the dining room or order take out, each meal comes with an egg roll and steamed or fried rice.

Of Chinese descent, Paul and Tony Tu were born in Vietnam but have been in the states for 30 years and have lived in Cedar Hill since 1983. “My brother and I both graduated from Cedar Hill High School,” stated Paul, whose English is still laced with a Cantonese accent.

“We would like to start other restaurants as franchises, perhaps in Grand Prairie and then in Frisco,” Paul confided with his trademark grin. “My uncle, who has been a cook for 30 years, prepares our food. Here — taste our sweet-and-sour sauce,” Paul suggested, waiting eagerly for a response. “It is

very unique, our own recipe. We use no MSG, very little sodium and only cook with Canola oil, which is low in saturated fats, and offer Tofu or vegetarian dishes, so our food is safe and delicious, even for those with health or diet concerns."

When asked which dish is his favorite, Paul quickly responded, "I like the Combo Rice, the Lomein and Hot and Spicy Chicken Wings, but ... well, I like all of them." He did concede that Pepper Steak, Mongolian Beef and Orange Chicken are consistent customer favorites, but their new Special Thai Basil, made with chicken, beef or shrimp is also popular. "The sauce has coconut and curry and is very, very good," Paul enthused. "What would you like to try?"

China King Express is a family business. Tony and his father were both mechanical engineers. Tony and his brother, Paul, opened the restaurant together and several family members work there. Paul graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a degree in computer science engineering. Although he misses that line of work, many of his friends and fellow students have informed him that his family's restaurant business is more successful than their engineering careers.

"I really do like working with the customers. We like having a family-friendly atmosphere. Most of our customers are very happy with the food," Paul stated. "They always come back and they like to try new things. We are busier in the evenings, when families come in together. And you can see our lights better at night," he said, gesturing toward the ceiling with a smile.

While they do not cater, they will host special occasions, such as corporate meetings or birthday or graduation gatherings. The restaurant's hours are 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., Sunday-Thursday and 11:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Call (972) 291-3188 to order take-out or just order ahead. **NOW**



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Ribbon cuttings were recently held at The Parkways on Prairie Creek Apartment Homes, first row left, and Clarity Optical, second row. Northwood sophomore, Helena Melin, top right in the blue and white uniform, was named the offensive player of the week by the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics. Sandy Eddy, manager of the newly expanded New 2 You, third row left, was presented with a welcome basket. First place winners from Waste Management, third row right from the left are: Tim Spires, Cliff Shaw, Steve Keller (on the ground) and Steve Charo. Amanda Skinner, fourth row right, was selected as the new Cedar Hill Chamber of Commerce president. Cedar Hill CNO door prize winners, bottom left, are: Steve Thomas, Paul Dvorak, Eddie Posas and Dennis Brock.

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The Canterbury Cougars varsity soccer team, top left, recently defeated Brownsville Living Way which advanced the Cougars to the State Final tournament. Meadows Elementary student Miquon Mayes, top right, won a new bike for his perfect attendance. The DeSoto ISD hosted the Mardi Gras Senior Prom, second row left, for residents age 55 and over. Amber Terrace Elementary dads, second row right, were treated to an old-fashioned, home-cooked breakfast. A ribbon cutting was held at Chameleon Medical Spa, third row left. West Middle School students, third row right, presented their replica Pentagon building during Ms. Carlisle's eighth-grade history class. The DeSoto High School Cross Country Team, bottom, dominated the District 11-5A meet with 14 varsity runners qualifying for the regional meet.

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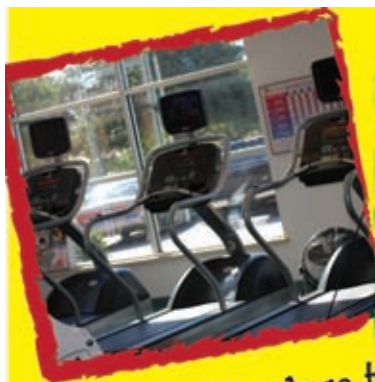
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Rotarians Tom Harmon and Glenn Repp, top left, made a donation to the Coats for Folks project. A ribbon cutting, top right, was held at Antoinette "Bags & Bling." Several new Chamber of Commerce members received new member plaques from Chairperson-elect Jamie Gatto: Kristi Jones with the Trevino Group, second row center; Leona Wenzel of Big Tex Ford, second row right; and Steve Dodge, general manager of Southwest Hyundai, bottom left. Anita Davis, executive director; Tony Davis, assistant director; Shirl Turpin, assistant director; and Ellen Sheldon, service chair for Xi Rho Beta, third row left, took time off from the recent toy drive to pose for a photo. Josselin Garibo, third row right, was named the Rotary Club of Duncanville's student of the month. Josselin is pictured with Rotarian Larry Bratton. A ribbon cutting, fourth row, was held for Liz Weaver, Realtor for Keller Williams.



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Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning



IN THE KITCHEN WITH CHUCK SKEELS

Chuck Skeels finds inspiration and recipes to please his wife, Carolyn, their family and friends from the Food Network and cookbooks.

Whether baking his giant, crisp chocolate chip cookies, frying up some southern corn fritters or preparing a big pot of shrimp gumbo, Chuck is at home with all he does in the kitchen. “I enjoy most types of cooking,” he stated, “but I enjoy Chinese and Mexican recipes the most.”

Chuck has taken pleasure in cooking for the last 30 years, but started cooking much earlier. He contributes his beginning interest in cooking to his mother, Dorothy Skeels. “My mother said early on that if we didn’t like what she was fixing, we needed to learn to cook ourselves.” **NOW**

To view more of your neighbors' recipes, visit our archives at www.nowmagazines.com.

CLASSIC GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE

- 3 9-oz. pkgs. frozen French-cut green beans, thawed, drained
- 1 8-oz. jar Cheez Whiz
- 1 10.5-oz. can cream of mushroom soup
- 1/8 tsp. pepper
- 1 2.8-oz. can French-fried onions, divided

Heat oven to 350 F. Mix together all ingredients, except 1/2 can onions; place in 1 1/2-quart casserole dish. Bake 30 minutes. Top with remaining onions; bake 5 more minutes.

SHRIMP GUMBO

Most Requested

- 2 Tbsp. oil
- 2 Tbsp. flour
- 1 cup onions, chopped
- 1 cup celery, chopped
- 1 medium green bell pepper, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 14.5-oz. can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 14.5-oz. chicken broth, ready to serve, fat-free
- 1 1/2 cups fresh okra, sliced
- 1 tsp. Cajun seasoning
- 10 oz. Chorizo, cut 1/4-inch
- 1 lb. chicken breast, cubed
- 1 lb. hot links, cut 1/4-inch
- 1 lb. medium shrimp, uncooked, shelled, deveined

Heat oil in Dutch oven or large skillet over medium-high heat until hot. With wire whisk, stir in flour; cook about 5 minutes or until mixture turns medium brown, stirring constantly. Stir in onions,

celery and bell pepper; cook about 4 to 5 minutes or until softened, stirring frequently. Add garlic; cook and stir 30 to 60 seconds or until softened. Add tomatoes, broth, okra, Cajun seasoning, Chorizo, chicken and hot links; mix well. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; partially cover and cook 25 - 30 minutes to blend flavors, stirring occasionally. Add shrimp; cook an additional 5 minutes or until shrimp turns pink. If desired, serve with red beans and rice.

SOUTHERN CORN FRITTERS

- 1 cup flour, sifted
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. dried parsley flakes
- 1/8 tsp. paprika
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 Tbsp. margarine, melted
- 16-oz. can cream style corn
- 1/8 cup confectioner's sugar

Sift together flour, baking powder, salt, parsley and paprika. In separate bowl, combine eggs and margarine; mix well. Add to dry ingredients all at once; stir until smooth. Fold in corn. Drop batter from a tablespoon into oil heated to 387 F; fry a few at a time until golden brown. Drain on absorbent paper. Roll in confectioner's sugar. Serves 6 to 8.

GIANT, CRISP CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

- 2 1/4 cups flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda

- 1 cup margarine, softened
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 12-oz. chocolate chips
- 1 cup nuts, chopped (optional)

Sift together flour and baking soda. In separate bowl, cream together margarine and sugar; add egg and vanilla, beating until light and fluffy. Stir into flour mixture, along with chocolate chips and nuts. Make small balls, placing them 3-inches apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes (depending on how crisp you want your cookies) at 350 F.

CHEESY GREEN BEANS

- 10 slices bacon
- 2 16-oz. pkgs. Birds Eye cut green beans
- 1 lb. mushrooms, sliced
- 3/4 cup onions, chopped
- 3/4 tsp. ground black pepper
- 1 16-oz. jar Cheez Whiz

Cook bacon until crisp; drain, reserving 1/4 cup drippings in skillet. Crumble bacon, reserving 2 Tbsp. Microwave beans as directed on package; drain well. Add mushrooms and onions to reserved 1/4 cup drippings in skillet. Cook and stir on medium-high heat for 10 minutes, drain. Add bacon, hot green beans and pepper; mix lightly. Spoon into 2-quart serving dish. Microwave Cheez Whiz, as directed on label; pour over green bean mixture. Sprinkle with reserved bacon.

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Dr. Reder is seeing new patients in Cedar Hill on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month at 294 Uptown Blvd., Suite 100 • Cedar Hill, Texas 75104.

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Reverse Mortgages:

A Solution for Fixed Income Seniors

— By Cliff Boyd

Life does not hold too many real guarantees anymore. Seniors work hard their whole lives and expect to receive a pension. Often those pension funds are not available or the company closes, and the individual is left looking for work late in life with no pension at all — basically having to start over. Borrowers go to their local banks and get Home Equity Lines of Credit so that they will have cash available when they need it. Then banks freeze those lines due to falling values or bank liquidity issues; if you are a senior borrower on a fixed income, you may not qualify for a new loan. The retirement income of many seniors is being eroded by the rising cost of day-to-day living.

Fortunately, there is an answer for seniors on fixed incomes. The relief comes in the form of a government-insured Home

Equity Conversion Mortgage (HECM). The HECM is also known as a Reverse Mortgage.

• What is the difference between a Reverse Mortgage and a bank Home Equity Loan?

With a traditional second mortgage, or a Home Equity Line of Credit, you must have sufficient income versus debt ratio to qualify for the loan, and you are required to make monthly mortgage payments. The Reverse Mortgage is different in that it pays you, and is available regardless of your current income. The amount you can borrow depends on your age, the current interest rate and the appraised value of your home or FHA's mortgage limits for your area, whichever is less. Generally, the more valuable your home is, the older you are, the lower the interest, the more you can borrow. You do not make payments, because the loan is not due as long as the house is your principal residence. Like all homeowners, you still are required to pay your real estate taxes and other conventional payments like utilities, but with an FHA-insured HUD Reverse Mortgage, you cannot be foreclosed or forced to vacate your house because you "missed your mortgage payment."



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Float Fat Right Out of Your Body!

— By Dr. Lesa Ansell

If you are trying to get in shape or lose weight, you may find yourself losing interest as you get into your program, typically at six - 12 weeks. If you are struggling to successfully stay with your program, read on to learn where the excitement went and how to get it back.

Most people view exercise and nutrition as a chore, but it can be exciting and empowering when you focus on your power — what you can do. The following steps are a great starting point for a healthier, happier, more energetic life!

1. Discover How to Stay Committed

Each person needs to discover what they want to change — such as: more energy, better health, pride in completing the challenge, better sleep, etc.

2. Gain Insight Into Pitfalls to Your Success

Did you know that most people quit just when they are on the verge of success? Here are some of the mistakes that lead to failure with proper nutrition and weight loss: Focusing on the scale, not the change in body composition; working too hard or

not hard enough; comparing yourself to others; choosing a diet which is too strict or too difficult to follow or giving up too soon.

3. Change That “Stinking Thinking”

Have you ever heard “perception is reality”? Unfortunately, it can be very true. The difference in success between a veteran exerciser and a struggler is often in how they think. Try changing these thinking habits:

Negative Thinking - Positive Thinking

- I do not want to work out today. - I will just do a warm up. I will stop if I still do not want to work out.
- This is boring. - I will try something new.
- I do not have time. - Something is always better than nothing. I will do what I can.
- I am too stressed to work out. - I will feel more relaxed if I work out.

4. Take the Challenge

Do you remember the excitement you felt setting a new goal and then achieving it? Accepting the challenge will create that again and be the fuel to get you going! To keep it interesting, mix it up! Try adding in activities that address cardiovascular



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training, flexibility, strength training and core stability. Work slowly and steadily to adopt new healthful nutrition habits.

5. The Final Pieces

Before beginning any new nutritional or exercise program, you should consult a doctor (M.D., D.O. or D.C.) to evaluate your physical capabilities, nutritional status and any need for supplementation. Your doctor can also discuss exercises which may be inappropriate, even damaging for your body or condition. Once cleared, think consistency and progression. Be consistent and progressively work a little harder over time. Then you will see results with time. Think in terms of months not weeks. Finally, the most important piece is to never give up on yourself! **ADVO**

Dr. Lesa Ansell is the CEO of Pro-Adjuster Chiropractic Clinic based in Cedar Hill.

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January 2009

Community Calendar

Every Monday and Tuesday

Cedar Hill Recreation Center presents Caliente Salsa: 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. Monthly Fee: \$50 for ages 12 and older. Learn the Salsa, Cha Cha, Rumba, West Coast and Fast Step Swing, Lindy Hop, Latin Hustle and the newest and most popular club scene line dances!

Every Monday and Wednesday

Cedar Hill Recreation Center presents 21st Century Media and Sports: 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. An 8-week program to educate and integrate sports athletes for those interested in journalism and communications: features group discussions, hands-on activities, exploration of a variety of media formats, examining testimonials and interviewing successful athletes/coaches/broadcast professionals, discussions of media as a communication tool and the benefits of becoming media-literate in today's society. Ages 10-17 register at Rec. Center.

Every Tuesday and Thursday

Cedar Hill Recreation Center presents an 8-week College Navigation Workshop: 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. for future college students 10th grade and above and/or parents to gain understanding of basic rules, terminology and standards colleges use. Topics include: Why college? What's in college? Public v. Private; Choosing a college; Financial Aid; Visuals; Alternatives to going directly to college; Are you a long-distance learner? Register at Rec. Center.

Every Wednesday

Rotary Club of Cedar Hill: 7:00 - 8:00 a.m. at CH Recreation Center, 310 East Parkerville Rd.

Every Wednesday and Friday

Preschool story time: 10:30 - 11:45 a.m. at CH Library. (972) 291-7323.

Every Saturday

Cedar Hill Recreation Center presents Star Force One, a dance program including tap, ballet, jazz, hip-hop, lyrical, song and dance and competition dance teams. Beginner to advanced classes: 8:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. for ages 2 - adult. Ballet and tap classes are also available for special needs children. Register at Rec. Center.

First Mondays

Readers on the Hill Book Club: 7:00 p.m. at CH Library (972) 291-7323.

First Tuesdays

Duncanville Education Committee: 11:30 a.m. at Chamber office. (972) 780-4990.

First and Third Tuesdays

Training Academy for Dental Assistants' free informational sessions: 5:30 p.m. (972) 842-2999.

First and Third Wednesdays

Duncanville Business Interchange: 7:30 a.m. at Chamber offices.

Fourth Mondays

Duncanville Board of Directors meeting: 5:30 p.m. at Chamber offices.

Fourth Tuesdays

Duncanville Chamber Champions Luncheon: 11:30 a.m. at various locations.

Second and Fourth Tuesdays

Cedar Hill Lions: noon - 1:00 p.m. at Good Shepherd Church, 915 Old Straus Rd. (972) 291-0651.

Cedar Hill City Council: 7:00 p.m. at 285 Uptown Blvd.

Second Tuesdays

Duncanville Chamber Governmental Affairs meeting: 8:30 a.m. at Chamber offices.

The Dallas Area Writers Group: 7:00 p.m. at CH Library. www.dallaswriters.org.

Second Wednesdays

Cedar Hill/Duncanville Early Childhood PTA: 10:00 a.m. at Cedar Hill Hope Lutheran Church, 917 N. Straus Rd.

Duncanville Monthly Luncheons: 11:30 a.m. at various locations.

Second and Fourth Wednesdays

Cedar Hill Business on the Hill: 7:30 a.m. at Chamber offices.

Third Mondays

Duncanville Executive Board meeting: 4:30 p.m. at Chamber offices.

Third Thursdays

Duncanville Fun After Five: 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. at various locations.

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

Visual Artists of Cedar Hill (VACH): 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. from September through May at the Z.B. Wylie Library, 225 Cedar St. VACH is open to all artists and anyone interested in learning more about the visual arts. www.thevach.org.

January 1 - February 23

The Canterbury Episcopal School is currently accepting

applications for enrollment for the 2009 - 2010 school year. The next testing date for new enrollment is Saturday February 28. All applications and test fees must be received by Canterbury by February 23. Please call Rita Billups at (972) 572-7200, ext. 108 for an enrollment packet and more information or visit our Web site at www.thecanterburyschool.org.

January 6

Cedar Hill Ambassador's Monthly Luncheon: 11:30 a.m. at Joe's Crab Shack, 735 N. Hwy. 67.

January 8

Cedar Hill Chamber Night Out: 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. at 285 Uptown Blvd. Hosted by Cedar Hill Economic Development Corporation. Catered by Cotton Patch Café.

January 10

Duncanville's State of the City dinner: 6:00 p.m. at the Hilton Garden Inn, 800 N. Main Street. Mayor's Address and Man and Woman of the Year Awards to follow. \$50 per guest. Black Tie Optional. Sponsorship opportunities available. Please make your reservations by calling (972) 780-4990 or by e-mail to info@duncanvillechamber.org.

January 12

Northwood University hosts prospective students for a day of class observations, campus tours and interaction with faculty and the campus community in a program called My Mondays. Register online at <http://www.northwood.edu/forms/admissions/tx/mymondays/>.

January 22

Young At Heart adult group meeting: 11:00 a.m. in the Community Center located at 1111 Danieldale. Duncanville's own Goldenaires present a program of oldies, popular and religious songs. Admission is free and all are welcome to attend. Bring your favorite potluck dish to share with others. (972) 298-4971.

January 27

Cedar Hill Chamber Monthly Members Luncheon: 11:30 a.m. at Northwood University, 1114 W. FM 1382.

January 30, 31

Mulan, performed by the middle school students of The Canterbury Episcopal School at the Bishops Hall in DeSoto. Friday: 1:00 and 7:00 p.m. Saturday: 3:00 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at the door. (972) 572-7200. www.thecanterburyschool.org.

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