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Spacious two-story home built in 2005 boasts 2310 sq.ft. 3 bd/2.1 bath, 2 car garage. Loads of upgrades including bonus room upstairs for kids, solar screens, oversized outdoor patio, privacy fence make this ideal for growing family. This home is within walking distance to high school and new junior high. Call Laurie @ RE/MAX 469-831-6946 to see this home.



Attention to detail was paid when this Ranch style home was designed and built in 1963. This 2518 sq.ft. home sits on 1.7 acres on Country Club Rd. near the golf course. It has 3 bdrm, 2.1 bath, 2 car garage and carport, 2 wbp & fenced yard. This stylish & elegant home is in need of some TLC to resurrect it to its original beauty. Call Laurie @ RE/MAX to see the possibilities.

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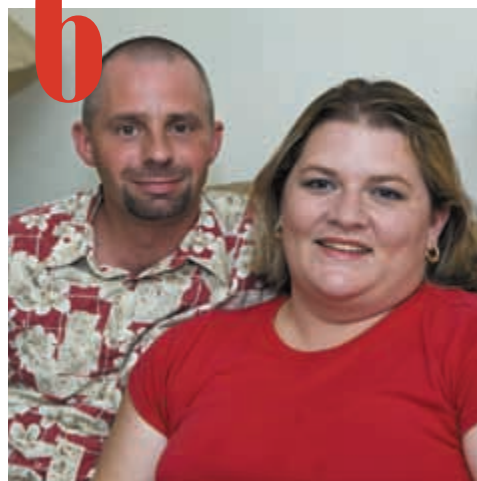
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On the Cover: When decorating her home, Sondra Bennett used a red rooster motif to help create the Country French feel.

Photo by Rod Cordsen.

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Ennis NOW

Editor's Note

Friends and Neighbors,

I hope you have the most blessed Thanksgiving season ever. As you gather with your loved ones, say a prayer for our military troops who continue to give us the opportunity to say, "Thanks," for the freedoms we enjoy.

Do you have a favorite teacher or coach? Are you just itching to share some special recipes? Do you like to try your hand at a unique art or sport, or would you be "tickled pink" to share your home decorating with us? Send me an e-mail. Please do not be bashful! Some of the coolest features are in these pages because someone shared their very own story with me. Do not wait for your friends or neighbors to recommend you. They may not know what fun you have been getting into, and will be just as surprised as the rest of Ennis to hear your story — like the sports feature that appeared in the October issue on Rusty Hilliard, who introduced me to the fascinating feat of barefoot water skiing. Way to go, Rusty! Who knew what was happening on Saturday mornings on Lake Bardwell? The couple in this month's main feature, Randy and Kristy Stephens, stepped forward to share the precious project they are working on — collecting teddy bears for children needing comforting.

This is *your* magazine, Ennis. Jump into its pages!

Kelly Kovar, Ennis Editor

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Comfort Comes in a Hug

— By Sandra McIntosh

Teddy Bears for Troopers is a volunteer project spearheaded by Jessica Boudria, an 11-year-old who is related to Randy and Kristy Stephens, a caring young couple in Ennis with three small boys of their own. "Jessica is my stepsister," Kristy explained. "Teddy Bears for Troopers is her baby!"

Jessica has been actively competing in Today's Girl pageants for several years. This past year, the contest rules stated that each contestant must come up with a charitable community service project. Jessica's brainchild — Teddy Bears for Troopers — is giving back to the youngest citizens of Texas in a big way. The idea behind the project is simple. Teddy bears are collected and


then delivered to the Texas Department of Public Safety's main office in Garland. "Once they get to the Garland office," Kristy said, "they are distributed among the Texas State Troopers. The troopers

keep the bears in their trunks, giving them out whenever there is a need."

Teddy bears are warm, fuzzy and very lovable. Over the years, you have probably given, as well as received them. The teddy bears found in this project do so much more than bring a smile to an unhappy face. These special stuffed creatures bring comfort, while also drying tears and calming fears. "They give a scared child," Kristy said, "something tangible to hug and hold on to."

Children who receive the teddy bears have generally been involved in a traffic accident where one parent or both parents have been injured. Other times, the children have been removed from their homes following a domestic





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disturbance call. Can you imagine how scared and alone they feel? How confused and lost they are after experiencing such ordeals? The main idea behind Jessica's project was to simply provide comfort to these children who are confused and hurting. "The donated teddy bears do that," Randy added, "and so much more."

"It's so easy, but so rewarding."

Jessica had been collecting and delivering bears for six months before Randy and Kristy heard about it in April. "Jessica told me that they had run out of teddy bears; that the shelves in Garland were empty," Kristy said, with fresh emotion welling up in her voice. "I went through a traumatic experience when I was 15, so I don't automatically assume what kids are going through. The thought of only one child going without a teddy bear because the shelves were empty hit my heart good. Randy and I wasted no time getting on board."

They also wasted no time getting their children, Caleb, Cameron and Christian, ages 6, 5 and 2 respectively, involved. Kristy has been able to teach her boys about giving back and understanding that "it is not all about them." "It's rewarding to see the joy my kids get in helping with the teddy bears. Growing up, they learned to say, 'I want; I want; I want.' Teddy Bears for Troopers is teaching them to say, 'I give; I give; I give,'" Kristy said. "All three of them love making the deliveries to Jessica."

Donated teddy bears can be brand new or slightly loved on. The color and shape does not matter, but it is requested by TXDPS that bears are at least 12 inches tall and are not embroidered with commemorative dates. The main criteria is that they are neither torn nor dirty. In fact, Randy said Caleb's favorite part is inspecting the bears. Trips to Jessica's to deliver another "batch of bears" are made only when the trunk of Kristy's car is full. Currently, the Stephens family

is actively working on their fifth batch. "It's so easy, but so rewarding," Kristy said. "It just seems like an easy way to give back to the community. The bears provide comfort, while empowering the children who receive them."

Kristy also stated that it would be no problem for her to deliver the bears directly to the Garland office. It is solely on Jessica's request that they come to her first. "Jessica wants to hug each one of them before they go to the main office," Randy explained further. "She wants them all to be 'pre-loved.'"

For Randy and Kristy, participating in what they consider to be a worthy cause has brought them full circle. They were both employed at the Department of Public Safety in Austin when Kristy first laid eyes on Randy. "I was in customer service and he was in the building maintenance department," she said.

Kristy found herself constantly talking to her sister-in-law about the "guy at work." She began styling her hair differently, wearing makeup and became actively interested in sprucing up her wardrobe. "I tried for a full year to get his attention," she added, openly laughing at the memory.

On Halloween 1999, Kristy went to work with her sister-in-law. Lo and behold, who would she meet at the place of business? None other than Randy — the guy from work. "He came in dressed like Bobby, the cartoon character from Bobby's World," she explained. "Wow! I learned that night that he was a roommate to a cousin of mine." It definitely was not love at first sight for the pair. They did not go on their first date until the weekend following that year's Super Bowl. "My brother and sister-in-law tagged along on the date with us," Kristy said. "We went out to eat and spent some time at the Malibu Grand Prix. He chased me around the track, but he never caught me!"

The next weekend they shared their second date. "From that second date on, we saw each other every day until we married on August 5, 2000,"

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Randy remembered, adding that it took two months of proposals before Kristy finally agreed to be his wife. "And like they say," he added, "the rest is history."

Growing up, Kristy had seen the benefits of a program similar to Teddy Bears for Troopers. Working at the DPS office in Austin, both she and Randy knew firsthand the need for something like the program Jessica proposed, so getting involved just



seemed like the most natural choice they could make. "It's an easy thing for us to do," Kristy said, as she referred to her bear-collecting duties. "It's not hard to ask friends, area businesses and members of my Sunday school class to make bear donations, because I know what an impact the bears have for the children in need."

Sometimes, Randy said, the boys get attached to one bear or another. On those rare occasions, letting go becomes somewhat difficult. Once the boys understand the bears are providing comfort to other little children, they relinquish the bears, but not before giving them one last hug. "Giving a gift a child can hold on to and hug may be a small thing to some," Kristy said, "but it can be the most important thing to the child, whether they are doing the giving, or the receiving." **TODAY**

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Cozy Country French



"We all have troubles, but in the grand scheme of things, we are so blessed."

— By Kelly Kovar



Sondra Bennett lives in a sunny, Ennis home with Gary, her husband of 20 years, and her two sons, 10-year-old Matthew and Jake, age 8. "They are each one involved in different activities, so we just kind of meet each other coming and going," Sondra exclaimed. Gary is an

At Home With
**Sondra
and
Gary
Bennett**





attorney, a partner in a firm based out of Austin and San Antonio.

"Officing at home is convenient for Gary," Sondra said. Rustic doors, from a church in Mexico, lead off the entry into Gary's study. In this room, Gary, an avid hunter, displays some of his trophies, including a bobcat, a turkey and a deer head. An authentic zebra rug graces the floor. "Gary loves hunting prints and has been collecting western artwork since before we were married," Sondra pointed out. The light fixture is formed of shed antlers and a leather chair cozies up to the fireplace.



Sondra, a talented decorator, used to own an Ennis shop called Trimmings and Such. "I had antiques and gifts, and did some interior design." More recently, she and friend, Gena Solomon, operated Kit and Kaboodle, a Waxahachie home accessories store, in the Rogers Hotel. Gary and Sondra moved from Waxahachie to Ennis about a year ago. They have also lived in DeSoto, Italy, Georgetown and several other places because, Sondra admitted, she really enjoys decorating different houses.

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"I'm kind of an antique collector myself. I have tons of tole trays." All of her various collectibles are blended beautifully. Off-white walls with a yellow undertone bring a restful background to the attractive collage of antiques and color accents that Sondra favors. "I'm a red person," she emphasized. Indeed, red accents appear in every room. In the dining room, a pine farm table is crowned on either end by red-slipcovered chairs.



"This table is made out of planks that were taken out of an old church in London." A heavy, metal mirror above

the buffet is painted with a delicate rooster design, with just a touch of red that makes the other red accents in the room "pop." Sondra loves the pair of black-and-white covered chairs she found at Canton Trade Days. Johnson Brothers transferware in brown and white adds sophistication to the buffet.

The Bennetts' entryway leads to the living area, where a soft green couch with red-patterned pillows provides comfortable seating for television viewing. Red-and-white checked shades adorn the ornate, ironwork chandelier. Hand-scraped wood floors unite the downstairs living areas.

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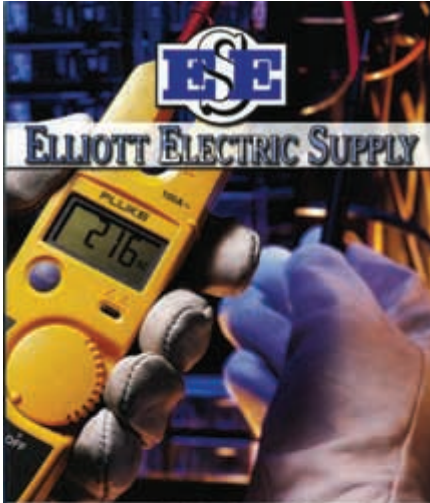
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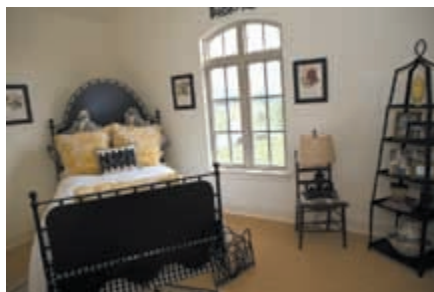
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Double french doors lead out to the loggia, with its wrought-iron dining set, and offer a view of Lake Bardwell. Oversized pots, in brown and moss green, spill over with plants. "There is nothing nicer than sitting out by the pool and watching the sun go down behind the trees. It is pretty, and we bought this piece of land for that view," Sondra mentioned.

Triple arches, each rimmed with genuine limestone, lead into the gourmet kitchen and the breakfast area. The focal point of the living room is the bench, centered below the central arch, which contains a bar. The tableau on the bar, itself, draws the eye with its colorful arrangement of decorative



pieces, including a pair of large hand-painted, ceramic roosters. "I like Country French and the rooster plays such an important part in the Country French design." In the kitchen, granite tops the counters. "I like the granite around the perimeter, and it is easy to keep clean, but I wanted the rougher texture of the Jerusalem stone on the island and bar. When it is just the four of us, we always eat here on the bar," Sondra explained. The glass-fronted cabinets are painted cream and glazed in umber. The breakfast room's twin oil paintings of roosters, a birthday gift from Gary, complement Sondra's rooster motif, and play off the red decorative display on the table. The



light fixture in the breakfast room is made of iron and also has a rooster design. "This mid-1800s chandelier is from France; I found it at an antique dealer and had it rewired." Spacious windows offer a view of the beautiful yard and trees. "We cook out on our outdoor grill, and we have a fireplace out on the patio." Beyond the patio, a spa with a waterfall flows over into the pool.

Sondra has a useful suite off the kitchen, with a butler's pantry, laundry room, mudroom and pool bath. Slate in a warm mix of colors makes a hardy, yet attractive floor throughout the area. These rooms are utilitarian in purpose, but every space is delightfully decorated and flooded with sunlight.

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Arrangements of faux apples and pears in large glass urns bring soft color to the laundry area. "We have a side courtyard here with lime trees and a fountain. In the morning we have coffee out here."

Three bedrooms and baths complete the downstairs. The powder bath, with its brick floor, has a distinctly Country French feel. "I found the sink cabinet through an antique dealer, and had it fitted for the copper sink," Sondra explained. The master bedroom's metal bed is hand-forged with a cabbage rose

pattern. The tall headboard plays well off the high windows. A stone wall behind the bed, faux-zebra rug and claret-red pillows on the bed, balance the white walls and bedding, bringing a dramatic flair to the space.

The boys' rooms share a bath. Jake is all about sports and cars, and his sports-themed quilt reflects his interest. "He plays in the Ennis PeeWee Football league," Sondra mentioned. "Matthew plays hockey and is totally into animals." His room is decorated with animal

pictures and stuffed animals.

Upstairs, a large game room with a pool table, television, chess table and comfy seating makes a great place for the boys, or Gary, to entertain the guys. A pretty guest room, with touches of yellow toile, is ready for company, and Sondra has her own study. "This is my room to do my Bible study, and I'm pretty busy with the Circle of Friends." She co-founded Circle of Friends, an Ellis County women's group, with her friend, Gena Solomon. "The group is all about women finding ways to give back to our local community and beyond." On November 17, Sondra's home, along with two of her neighbors, will be featured on the Circle of Friends Magical Christmas Tour of Homes, which benefits the Make-A-Wish Foundation. "We all have troubles, but in the grand scheme of things, we are so blessed. Through the group, we help and support one another, and find community needs that we can help with."

**See the community calendar for home tour details.*



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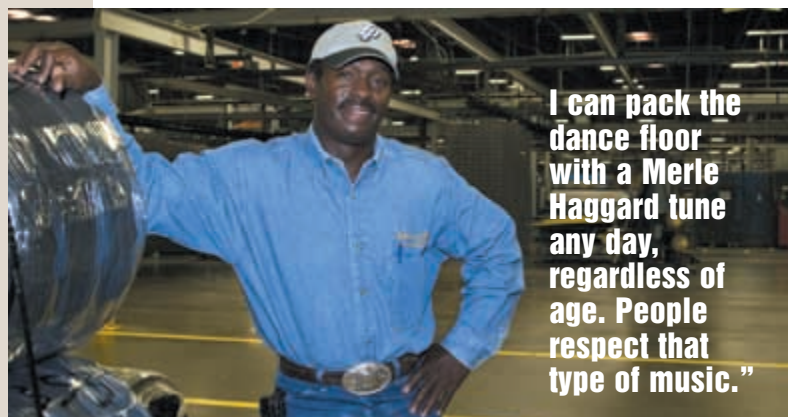
— By Kelly Kovar

Ira Bradford Jr., a 17-year employee with Leggett & Platt in Ennis, divides his time between his challenging position as quality manager for the world's largest mattress manufacturer, and his passion, which is singing country western music on the weekends. "This job is very demanding. I'm responsible for the management systems here," he said. Ira, who learned his management skills in his previous position with Guardian, is currently in charge of implementing International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards at satellite branches.

Ira's fame comes from his fantastic singing voice. He is known especially for singing country ballads, and his voice has been likened to the style of George Strait and Alan Jackson. "Every once in a while we throw in some southern rock. We will do a Lynard Skynard or Eric Clapton song. I might throw in some Commodores. Our fan base is pretty young. I can pack the dance floor with a Merle Haggard tune any day, regardless of age. People respect that type of music."

Along the way, Ira has met many notable country singers,

including Reba McEntyre, whom Ira said "is the most awesome human being." Meeting Charlie Pride was a special treat for him. "That is my main man. I met him in Grapevine [when] Charlie Pride and Cody Morrow were singing." One memorable



I can pack the dance floor with a Merle Haggard tune any day, regardless of age. People respect that type of music."

time, when Ira was getting ready for a performance, he got a phone call from Merle Haggard's son. "He was scheduled to be

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where I was playing, and we did some duets of some of his dad's songs together."

Ira's popularity is not limited to Ennis. "People hear us and they will call and ask us to play their event. Everywhere we go, even the Dallas clubs, we always get a fan base." One thing that makes Ira popular with the fans is his willingness to come down



off the stage and dance with the audience. "I will take my guitar off,

switch over to my headset, and dance with them while I sing." Ira keeps in shape for all this dancing because he does natural bodybuilding. "I love lifting weights; I do it before work about 6 every morning."

"If I'm on stage, they say I am pretty energetic, depending on the song. The easiest part of performing is to just be myself." Being himself leads to busting loose with some dance moves, and no doubt led to the name of his band, "Ira Bradford & Bustin' Loose." It is a five-, and sometimes six-piece band. Ira is the lead vocalist, and he also strums a Takamine acoustic guitar. The nucleus of the band has remained the same over the years. "Gary Cooper doesn't play full time now, but he has been with me from day one as my keyboard player. Jeff Valek of Ennis has been with me for nine of our 12 years. He is the lead guitarist, and he also works at Leggett & Platt with me." The second lead on electric guitar is Mark Bowling. "Both my lead guitar players are awesome guitar players," Ira said. Jim Stovall is the bass player and Mike O'Conner is on drums.

Whether playing at Coal Miner's in Malakoff, Country Roads in Whitney, private venues like parties or benefit concerts, or the State Fair of Texas in Dallas, they play pretty much every

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weekend, year-round. Once a month, they play at The Red Moon, in Ennis.

Ira developed his interest in country music during high school when he went to work for a rancher. "Every time I would drive his truck, it would have country music on it. The rancher even put a radio on the tractor, so I continued to listen to country music even on the tractor — Merle Haggard and Jerry Lee Lewis. I started singing while I was baling hay. I got to loving the music more and more."

Ira's friends did not know that he was beginning to sing. "I kept it from everybody, until I established myself in the Dallas area singing solos and winning singing contests. I met an awesome singer, Leah McCullough, from Seagoville, and for three years we started doing a lot of track singing." Then he began looking into forming a band. "I found a band that was already somewhat together and we merged together as Ira Bradford & Bustin' Loose. His band manager, former Mildred High School classmate, Bonnie Estes, and Ira's wife, Marvis, run sound. "Marvis and my daughter, LaKresha, come out to support me when I play. They are both just awesome people."

Ira Bradford & Bustin' Loose was nominated by the Terry Awards, which recognizes the top musicians and bands in the DFW area. They were nominated for Dallas Band of the Year in 2002 and 2006. In 2003, Ira was invited to be a guest performer during the awards ceremony. In 2006, Ira was one of four finalists nominated for Entertainer of the Year. His bass player was also nominated for Bass Player of the Year.

Ira said he performs because he loves the music. "If you do it well enough, people appreciate it. The main thing is doing your work, and doing your work well. Music is like anything else. You get out of it what you put into it. I perform because I like it; I love the music." **ENNOW**



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More Than a Coach

— By Renetta Novak



Football season in Texas is exciting. It is something coaches, players and fans look forward to with great excitement. As the season began with the contest against the Waco University Trojans and moves forward toward the playoffs, Coach Samuel Bailey, Ennis' new running back coach, has already experienced a wonderful first season as an Ennis Lion.

Coach Bailey is not new to football. As a matter of fact, he was a four-year-letterman football star for Corsicana High School where he also played basketball and baseball. He graduated from Corsicana in 1998 with an athletic scholarship. He went to West Texas A&M University and was planning to major in criminal justice. However, after some soul searching, he decided to pursue a degree in a field where he could help others — the field of secondary education. "I realized that teaching was a gift," Coach Bailey said, "and I wanted to make a difference."

"The principles that I learned on the field are still with me today — principles like teamwork and leadership."

After several concussions and other injuries, he decided to step down from football and concentrate strictly on his education. He left West Texas A&M after a year, transferring to Southwest Christian University (SWCU). After spending two years at SWCU, he transferred to Abilene Christian University where he graduated in 2002.

Coach Bailey met Lori at a conference in South Carolina, and they were married not long afterward. They lived in California for a while, and just recently moved back to Texas. The couple has experienced other changes as well. They have recently had a new addition to their family, a beautiful 9-month-old daughter named Madison.

Even though they loved living in a big city, Coach Bailey chose Ennis for his place of work. He was attracted to the

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Ennis Independent School District because Ennis strives for excellence in education. He not only teaches students on the field, he also teaches in the classroom. United States history is Coach Bailey's favorite subject, and he



likes to start the class off with a "quote of the day." The quote is taken from someone who demonstrates courage and discipline. Coach Bailey likes using the same methods both in the classroom and on the field. "Lessons that are taken from the game and in the classroom can be applied to everyday life," he said. "The principles that I learned on the field are still with me today — principles like teamwork and leadership."

When asked what brought him to Ennis, he stated that he was very impressed with the coaching staff and wanted to work with head coach Sam Harrell, as well as the other coaches. "The Ennis Lions' track record speaks for itself," he said, with a knowing smile. "I'm excited to be a part of it!"

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cause a person to succeed or fail. While growing up, young Sam Bailey had the best role models. He did not have to think twice when asked who they were. “My mom and dad were who I looked [up] to when I was growing up,” he said. “My dad taught me about hard work and my mom was always there for me and my brother and two sisters. My mom stayed at home with us and taught us lessons on how to stay focused.” Coach Bailey stated that his coaches in high school also had a profound impact on his life. “They really cared about the students,” he said, “and didn’t just care about how many points they could score in the game.”

As a coach, part of the job is to review plays by other teams, as well as those made by your own team, to determine where improvement is needed. There are a lot of younger players coming on the field this year, but they have a lot of potential and he is very impressed with the receiving. “Our receivers look great this year,”

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he explained. "They are explosive on their plays."

In every young player's life there is that one special game — that one special moment which is always



remembered. When asked about his own favorite memory, Coach Bailey said, "It was my senior year, and we were in the playoffs. It was the last quarter and we were down by 28 points. The team rallied together, and we came back with a minute left in the game. Even though we didn't win, it was a life-changing moment for me. It didn't matter as much that we didn't win; it mattered that we came together as a team and almost won."

Coach Bailey is enjoying his year with the Ennis Lions, and would like to leave a lasting impression on his players. He would like them to remember him with respect, not only as their coach, but also as their mentor. "If they could say one thing about me," he said, "I'd like them to say I taught them to think, to really think things through, and that they are better people for having met me." **NOW**

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— By Kelly Kovar



Ellis County Insurance, part of the Lipscomb Insurance Group, opened its Ennis office in 2005. Bill Smith and his wife, Rhonda, are both licensed agents there who offer friendly and personal service for customers seeking insurance. "Ellis County Insurance has been in business since 1897," Bill said. "The Lipscombs acquired the Ellis County agencies in 1992. The stability of our markets is one of our strongest assets here."

Bill and Rhonda offer commercial property insurance, general liability insurance and commercial auto insurance. "We did business last year with over 40 different companies. One of our largest accounts has 20 locations," Bill mentioned. "Most of our commercial insurance is done by us going out to the place of our customer's business. We will go in and review someone's policies." Bill is quick to point out that he has a good relationship with other area insurance agents. "If we review someone's coverage and they have a good price and a good relationship with their current agent, we recommend they maintain their current coverage. I say, 'You have a good horse; you need to keep riding it.'"

Ellis County Insurance also offers individual property,

liability and auto insurance, as well as life and health insurance. Rhonda writes most of the life and health insurance policies, and the aspect she likes best about her job is working with the people. "People come in and really enjoy talking to me," she said.

Building rapport with customers is also important to Bill. "A great number of our customers come from referrals," he pointed out. "That is the most important source of business for us." Building good will in the Ennis community comes naturally for Bill. He is active in the Ennis Host Lions Club, and is a past president and current member of the board. "I like Lions Club because we have fun, and we do a lot of good in the community," he said. "Sight conservation is one of Lions Club's primary objectives. We provide hundreds of pairs of eyeglasses a year to Ennis students."

According to Bill, Rhonda has 'never met a stranger,' and having reared three children in Ennis, she has had plenty of opportunity to meet people here. "She was chairman of the Chamber of Commerce two terms ago," he mentioned. "I was born and raised in Ennis," he added. "Rhonda got here as soon as she could. She moved here with her family before

Business NOW

first grade." Rhonda enjoys making jewelry and Bill likes to golf. Together, they like to go bike riding several times a week. "We have ridden in bike rallies in Italy, Texas, and in Paris, Texas," Bill said.

Ellis County Insurance benefits from Bill and Rhonda's community involvement and also from their devotion to continuing education. "We are both actively involved in insurance education,"

"The main thing we have to sell is service."

he said. With his experience in the industry, it is no longer a requirement for him. "But, we don't stop. I am a certified risk manager and a certified insurance counselor. Both of those require five courses and an exam." Rhonda is a certified insurance service representative. "Continuing my insurance education helps me do a better job when I go out and assess people's risk," Bill said. "We are able to point out exposures that people don't even know they have."

"The main thing we have to sell is service," Bill said. "We want people to call us when they move or change cars. I like to keep up with what is happening with my clients. I really like the interaction with customers. We hope that everyone we have sold to has become a friend. We would love for all our customers to become friends and for all of our friends to become customers."

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Education **NOW**



Chris Rebeck, principal of St. John Catholic School (SJCS), is an educator with a heart for teaching students and a determination to provide families with the option of a value-based education. “My passion is helping students,” Chris said. “That is why I have chosen this as a career.” He has been in the community for five years, two as an athletic director/teacher, and three as a principal. “This is a great community, and I love this position. There are a lot of wonderful challenges that I have been faced with.” One of the greatest challenges he has faced this year has been to communicate SJCS’ situation to the larger community.

Some students did not re-enroll this year because of a perception of instability. “Closing the school has never been an option,” Chris asserted. “A lot of Catholic and private schools have to deal with the fact that we cannot burden the local families with the total cost of education. So, it is our responsibility to find a way to make up that difference.” SJCS’ community came together to begin to look at how

“My passion is helping students.”

they planned to move the parochial school, which is a ministry of the church, forward this year without incurring debt.

“That conversation sparked a false perception that the school, or a portion of the school, would close,” Chris explained.

“That was never the plan. SJCS has a plan to be financially healthy, and their goals are to increase their enrollment.

They do not want the school, or any part of the school, to close.”

One part of insuring financial health has been the establishment of a revitalization committee, which invites community members to partner with SJCS. “People are impacted by the fact that we have a school in this community; we want them to have a part in our success. We hope to partner with the community financially and establish sponsors for fundraising events. We are getting ready to kick off a naming campaign, which will give contributors the opportunity to name different parts of the school. Our goal is to build community, not only within the walls of the school. The best lessons that we are able to teach here at the school

Education NOW

are for our students to get out and practice what it means to build community. Scholarship and service are hallmarks of our mission statement," Chris commented.

Involving students is one of Chris' special goals. "We are going to invite



the whole eighth-grade class from St. Joseph's Catholic School in Waxahachie and Collins Catholic in Corsicana (both only offer K - eighth) to come for a tour day. [The] Student Council and National Honor Society students will work on planning those days and helping us to show those eighth-grade students what opportunities are available in the hopes that they will choose us for their high school." On November 10 and 11, Chris is planning to have open houses where the parents of prospective students can come and tour the school. "We want to invite more people to come and see what a values-based education can provide. There are a lot of opportunities for students that are not the same opportunities that they would receive at a public school. Participation is one of them, as we offer students the chance to grow through the events and community service that we do outside of the normal school day. One of the



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great advantages that we have is that learning happens 24/7 here because when families partner with the school, we become an extension of their home."

Chris believes that education begins in the home with parents. "We are here to partner with them to make sure that education happens in a positive and a safe way. We have a small community where people don't slip through the cracks." The average class size for all grades is 12 to 15 per class. While SJCS does not want to lose the feel of individual attention, they are poised for growth. They offer an extensive athletic program with soccer, volleyball, basketball, baseball, softball, tennis, golf and cross-country. "We are adding a six-man football program next year. We are hoping that will add a draw," Chris explained.

At age 31, Chris is the youngest administrator in the Dallas diocese. He lives in Ennis with his wife, Melony, who teaches kindergarten in Oak Cliff. They married two years ago, after meeting at SJCS and have a baby named Megan. "The biggest challenge I face, being a new administrator, is to be out in the school, where the action is happening. I sit in on classes; I observe and, sometimes, participate. I love seeing the kids when they are doing hands-on learning because it just comes alive for them. Students will invite me to sit in and work with them on a science experiment. I have a pretty good rapport with the students."

"We are appealing to families of all faiths that want to partner with us in providing a quality education for students," Chris said. "We want people to know that we have a valid mission here. We have had some financial difficulties and we are making plans to address that. We have been here for nearly 100 years; the school was started in 1911. We want to get to our 100th birthday, and many, many more." **NOW**

Great Outdoors

NOW

Time to Plan Ahead

— By Nancy Fenton

November is here, and we can look forward to some cooler weather for a while. It is time to look at the yard and make some decisions as to what we want it to look like next year. Have you split up those perennials yet? Have you planted those spring blooming bulbs? There is still time to get to it. I like the ones that naturalize, like the narcissi, crocuses and jonquils. I have just enlisted my grandsons' help to put in another 300 bulbs in our natural area across the creek. The boys are a lot closer to the ground than I am!

It is too late to trim back those shrubs and trees, but not too late to

plant new ones. Try some that might be new ones to you, like the possum hall holly or vitex which will survive our hot and dry summers.

The *Farmers' Almanac* is predicting another hot, dry summer for northern Texas. With our changing climate at the poles, it could happen. Bed preparation with shale and compost, plus the selection of plants that can tolerate the heat, will help your landscape maintain the look you want. The trees that shade us absorb 2,250,000 tons of CO₂ per tree each year and produce oxygen for us. Think about planting a tree for every member of your family. Just remember to plant it high, mulch it heavily and give it a weekly watering even through the winter.

Christmas is coming, and if you are already thinking about your gardener friends, order magazines like *Birds and Bloom* (birdsandblooms.com) or *Texas*

Gardener (texasgardener.com). It takes six weeks or longer for the magazines to get it together, so you need to start working on it this month if you plan on giving them as Christmas presents.

It is also the time to take a look at your tools to see if any of them need repair, replacement or general cleanup. As the shorter days approach, a brief swipe with sandpaper and a little oil will make those tools shine and last for another season! The mower can stand a cleanup, blade sharpening and oil and air filter change before it turns cold. Let's pass up the frustration of a mower that does not want to start next spring by spending a little time with it this month!

Have a great Thanksgiving, and plan ahead for a glorious spring! **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener in Ellis County.



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Around Town NOW



The cast of Ennis Public Theatre's "*Little Shop of Horrors*," top left, performed throughout the month of October. Debbie Aguilar and Anne Farren, top right, came to Ennis from Waxahachie and enjoyed shopping at Bygones, one of their favorite stores. Rickey and Cindy Crenshaw, bottom left, enjoyed the festivities at the Lights of Ennis fundraiser. Kristi and Erik Colvin, bottom center, shared a break together in the middle of the workday. Joan Gura, bottom right, enjoyed a reunion with two longtime friends, Elizabeth Languell and Kathy Kinsella.

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Around Town NOW



John Navarro, top left, watched an Ennis Junior High football game with his great-grandchildren. Jeanette Patak and Nancy Swindell, top right, teamed up for a high seas adventure during the Lights of Ennis gala. Several couples also came decked out in their pirate best for the event including: Charles and Donna Davis, middle left; Gus and Kathryn Jones, middle center; Joey and Brenda Jeter, bottom left; and Billy and Leslie Snow, bottom center. Dr. John and Frances Arkusinski and Dr. Raymond and Courtney Blair, middle right, boarded the "Black Pearl," while Harriett Adams and Dennis and Angie Juenemann, bottom right, greeted pirates and their ladies as they arrived at the event.



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IN THE KITCHEN WITH EMMA TROJACEK

SWEET THANKSGIVING DRESSING

2 6-oz. pkgs. corn bread mix
 1 8-count pkg. hamburger buns or homemade bread
 6 cloves garlic
 1 large onion
 2 stalks celery
 turkey neck, gizzards and any other skin pieces cut off from turkey
 2 sticks margarine
 2 14.5-oz. cans chicken broth
 8 eggs
 1 cup milk
 1 tsp. sage
 1 Tbsp. salt
 1 Tbsp. pepper
 Bake corn bread the day before and dry out bread/buns and corn bread in a large pan. Crumble once dried out. Cook garlic, onion, celery, turkey neck, gizzards and any other skin pieces cut off from turkey. Once cooked, grind all together and add to bread and corn bread mixture. Mix well. Melt margarine and add chicken broth. Pour this mixture over the bread mixture and blend. Add eggs, milk and remaining seasonings to mixture. Mix well to blend. Add more broth if too thick; you should have a medium consistency. Pour mixture into greased 9x12-inch pan. Cook for one hour at 350 F, mixing every 30 minutes to allow for even cooking and browning. Allow more time if mixture has not thickened. *Chicken can be substituted for turkey.

QUASENAK (CZECH PICKLES)

6 medium-sized cucumbers
 large stalk of dill
 5 garlic cloves (cut in half)
 1 cup white vinegar
 1/2 cup water
 1 Tbsp. sugar
 4 Tbsp. salt
 Cut cucumbers in half lengthwise and place in a plastic, ceramic or glass flat square container, mixing in dill and garlic among cucumber halves. Combine vinegar, water, sugar and salt and bring to a boil. Pour mixture over cucumbers and dill. Place a plate over cucumbers in order to weigh them down in container. Let mixture sit unrefrigerated for 7 - 10 days. Afterwards, refrigerate.

COLD-DAY SOUP

1 3-lb. chuck roast, cut into small pieces
 1lb. beef on bone, cut up
 1 8-oz. can chopped tomatoes
 1 medium onion
 1 Tbsp. salt
 1/2 Tbsp. pepper
 1 tsp. celery salt
 1 tsp. chili powder
 1 tsp. garlic salt (optional)

5 medium potatoes, cut into pieces
 1 cup barley
 10 small carrots
 1 small cabbage, chopped
 4 small ears of corn or 1 can of corn
 In large pot, add meat, tomatoes, onion, salt, pepper, celery salt, chili powder and garlic salt if desired. Cover with water and cook 30 minutes. Add potatoes, barley and carrots. Cook another 10 minutes. Add cabbage and corn. Cook for final 15 minutes.

GRANNY'S DUMPLINGS

2 cups flour
 1 tsp. baking powder
 1 tsp. sugar
 1 tsp. salt
 1/3 cup milk to thicken
 1 egg
 2 Tbsp. butter, melted
 Mix flour, baking powder, sugar and salt. Add milk, egg and melted butter to thicken (a little at a time). When thick enough to roll, mixture can be cut into strips and put on top of chicken or made into small balls and dropped into boiling water. Cook for about 10 minutes. Break in half to check if done.

These balls, shaped and boiled, are good with sauerkraut. Also, leftovers are good for breakfast when cut into small pieces and browned in shortening. Whip eggs and pour them



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Who's Cooking **NOW**

over dumplings in a pan and cook until done.

FOR FRUIT DUMPLINGS: Use the same recipe as above except cut strips wide and in a square shape. Place fruit filling (prunes, apples, apricots, cherries, etc.) in the square dough and seal well. Drop in boiling water and cook 8 - 10 minutes. Remove from water. Butter and sprinkle with sugar.

STRUDEL

STRUDEL DOUGH:

1 1/2 sticks margarine (Imperial works best)
1 cup warm milk
2 egg yolks, beaten
3 cups flour

STRUDEL FILLING:

1/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup white sugar
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
2 sticks margarine, melted
2 cups thinly sliced apples
1/2 cup crushed vanilla wafers
1/4 cup coconut
1/4 cup white raisins
1/2 cup pecans

STRUDEL DOUGH: Melt margarine. Warm milk. Beat egg yolks and add together. Add flour and beat until a smooth ball is formed, and it does not stick to the sides of the bowl. Divide into four to six portions. Wrap separately in baggies. Chill. Dough can be made the day before making strudels.

STRUDEL FILLING: Mix the two sugars and cinnamon together. You will need a 30-inch square, four-ply pastry cloth. Form a ball out of the dough to get the chill out. Roll out dough. Butter with melted margarine. Spread apple slices, sugar mixture, vanilla wafers, coconut, pecans and raisins in layers on dough, leaving one inch around the edges for turning inward and rolling. Sprinkle with melted margarine. Turn sides in and roll from top to bottom. Pack tightly as you roll. Place roll, flap side on bottom, on buttered foil that is boat shaped. Place on cookie sheet and bake at 350 F for 45 minutes. Butter before and after baking. Sprinkle sugar on top.

KOLACHES

1 1/2 cakes fresh yeast
1/3 cup lukewarm milk
pinch of sugar
1 stick butter, melted
1 tsp. sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. grated lemon rind
3 eggs, beaten
2 cups flour
3 Tbsp. butter, melted for brushing

Dissolve yeast in the lukewarm milk with pinch of sugar. As soon as yeast rises to the top of the milk, it is ready for use. In a separate mixing bowl, combine the melted butter, sugar, salt, lemon rind and eggs. The moist ingredients are then stirred into the flour. Beat the dough vigorously. Let it rest in a warm place for about 1/2 hour, covering it so that it will not dry out. Cut dough into small pieces, making them into round shapes with your hands. Put them about 2 inches apart on a greased baking sheet. Let them stand in a warm place for about 20 minutes and when they have risen, press them down in the center with the first two fingers of both hands. The pressure of your forefingers makes a round hollow which you can fill with your favorite filling (apple, apricot, prune, cream cheese, cherry, etc.). Top with Posipka. Preheat oven to 350 F. Brush filled kolaches with butter. Bake in oven for 20 minutes. Makes about 30 kolaches.

POSIPIKA

1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup flour
2 Tbsp. butter
Mix all ingredients together until crumbly. Top kolaches with the crumbles.



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Health **NOW**

Think Twice Before Cashing Out 401(k)

— By Jeff Irish

If you leave your job, what should you do with the money you have accumulated in your 401(k)? Many of your fellow 401(k) owners are making hasty decisions which are proving to be quite costly. Consider this statistic: 45 percent of departing workers cash out their 401(k) plans, according to a recent study by Hewitt Associates, a consulting firm that administers companies' 401(k) plans.

Why shouldn't you "cash out" your 401(k) when you leave your job? Here are two reasons:

- **You will face a tax hit.**

You will pay income tax on the money you receive. Your employer is required to withhold 20 percent of your 401(k) balance when you cash out your plan. The amount of tax you actually pay may be more or less, based on your marginal tax rate when you file

your tax return. Plus, you may have to pay an additional 10 percent penalty tax if you are not 59 1/2 years of age and qualify for one of the limited exceptions.

- **You will lose opportunities for future growth.**

If you cash out your 401(k), you may lose out on the biggest benefit of the plan — tax deferral. Suppose, for example, that you are 35 years old and your 401(k) is worth \$50,000. If you cashed out your plan, you would have to pay the taxes right away on this amount, plus a 10 percent penalty tax, and you may be tempted to spend the rest. However, if you moved the \$50,000 to a tax-deferred vehicle that earned 7 percent annually, your money would grow to more than \$380,000 after 30 years — even if you never added another cent to the account.

Alternatives to "cashing out":

- **Move your money directly into an IRA.**

If you move your 401(k) into a "Rollover IRA," your investment continues to grow on a tax-deferred basis, and if you rollover the amount directly to your IRA, you will avoid the 20 percent federal withholding. You can withdraw money as you need it, subject to IRA minimum distribution rules, which apply at age 70 1/2. You will pay income tax only on the amount you withdraw. (If you make withdrawals before you reach 59 1/2, you may be subject to a 10 percent penalty.) Plus, you can fund your IRA with many types of investments — mutual funds, stocks, bonds, government securities, etc.

- **Convert your 401(k) into a qualified annuity.**

Your 401(k) plan may allow you to use your assets to purchase a qualified annuity. Your investments continue to grow on a tax-deferred basis, and you can eventually take payments in the form of a lifetime income stream.

- **Move your money to a new employer's plan.**

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If you are changing jobs, and your new employer offers a 401(k), you may be able to transfer the funds from your old plan to the new one. You will still benefit from tax deferral, and you may like the investment choices available in the new plan.

• Leave the money in your plan.

Not all 401(k) plans offer this option. You will have to start making withdrawals by age 70 1/2.

Which of these choices is right for you? It all depends on your individual situation, but as a general rule, all of them would probably be preferable to cashing out your plan. So consult with your tax adviser, take with your financial adviser and consider your options carefully. **ADVIS**

Jeff Irish is an Edward Jones agent based in Ennis.

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Health
NOW

Women's Health,

Part 1

— By Michelle Confer

As you may be aware, October was National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM), and you may have seen campaigns to promote breast cancer awareness, screening, treatment and research. As the daughter of a breast cancer survivor and an OB/GYN, I applaud effort made to provide awareness about cancer and its prevention.

However, I would like to take the opportunity to focus on women's health in general, not just the prevention of breast cancer. You may not know that women are at far more risk from cardiovascular disease for instance, than all cancers combined. In the U.S., approximately 350,000 women a year die from cardiovascular disease and, listen up ladies, more women than men die from these diseases each year! That means that we are more likely to die from a heart attack than breast cancer or ovarian cancer or cervical

cancer, and we are more likely to get that heart attack than our husbands! I am sure you all have heard about this in some form or another, but maybe it has not yet hit home for you. So, here is a list of the top five causes of death for women in the U.S.:

1. Cardiovascular disease

2. Cancer

According to the American Cancer Society, more than 70,000 women in the United States die of lung cancer each year, with the majority of these deaths linked to cigarette smoking, exceeding breast cancer which is responsible for about 40,000 deaths each year.

- a. Lung cancer
- b. Breast cancer
- c. Colorectal cancer

3. Stroke

4. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

5. Alzheimer's disease

Does this list surprise you? As a healthcare provider for women I know this list, but, as a woman like you, it still surprises me that these diseases we long thought were more common in men, such as heart attacks and colon cancer, are actually more common in women. I, therefore, understand why my average patient looks at me in shock when she comes to see me for her "yearly PAP smear" and I pull out my stethoscope to listen to her heart or ask about her cholesterol level.

As you see the pink reminders of the risk of breast cancer and the intense research into its prevention and treatment, let that remind you that the rest of your body needs comprehensive attention, too. Visit your local OB/GYN to let him or her help you to be as healthy as you can be. Next month, I will further discuss the role your OB/GYN plays in keeping you healthy. **NOW**

*Contributed by Michelle Confer, MD
Obstetrics & Gynecology
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Faith Slusher joined Trinity Missions of Italy in June 2007. She's a newcomer to nursing facilities. Prior to moving to Italy, she was a college admissions officer and recruiter for a mid-size university. She has stepped into Trinity Missions as Director of Social Services and enjoys serving a population that is sometimes overlooked.



Faith Slusher and Ava Oates, LP

Dr. Ava Oates is a Licensed Psychologist with more than seven years working with Senior Citizens. She is currently employed by Deer Oaks Behavioral Health Organization. Dr. Oates raises horses with her husband on a small ranch in Gatesville.

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November 2007 Community Calendar

Every Monday

Men's Round Table Bible Study and Topical Discussion at The Cowboy Church of Ennis, 7 p.m.

Arena Barrel Practice, 7 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ennis.

Every Wednesday

Youth group (grades 7 - 12) and pre-teens (grades 3 - 6), 7 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ennis.

Every Thursday

Men's Breakfast of the Cowboy Church of Ennis, 7 a.m., Ranch House Café, I-45 exit 242 in Rice.

Team Roping Practice, 7 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ennis. Come with or without a horse!

Every Sunday

Ladies Bible Study featuring Spiritual Minds and Healthy Bodies, 6 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ennis.

Second Tuesday

Ennis Masonic Lodge # 369 monthly stated meeting. Dinner: 6:30 p.m. Meeting: 7:30 p.m., 209 N. Dallas Street.

Fourth Thursday

Ennis York Rite Bodies. Dinner: 6:30 p.m. Meeting: 7:30 p.m., 209 N. Dallas Street.

November 1

Brown Street Cafe hosts Circle of Friends. 7 p.m. Call (972) 878-0740 for more information or the location of next month's meeting. Circle of Friends is an Ellis County Women's Group that meets the first Thursday of every month. New

members enthusiastically welcomed.

November 3

The National Team, Celebrate Moms One Day Women's Conference, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Ferris Avenue Baptist Church, Waxahachie. Visit CelebrateMoms.org or call Melissa Howell at (866) 324-2893, ext. 4414 for information.

November 9

WGMS annual Veteran's Day Celebration, 10:30 a.m. at Walnut Grove Middle School, Midlothian. All armed forces veterans are encouraged to attend. Lunch will be provided for veterans and their spouses after the event. Contact Walnut Grove Middle School at (972) 775-5355 if you plan to attend.

November 10

Cowboy Church of Ennis Trail Ride.

November 13

"Look Good Feel Better Program," sponsored by the American Cancer Society from 6:30 - 7:45 p.m. at the Midlothian Wellness Center (Methodist Imaging Center), 2210 Bryan Place, Midlothian. Free admission. Program for women undergoing cancer treatments. A licensed cosmetologist provides a free workshop on makeup application and skin care. A complimentary makeup kit is provided to each participant. Contact Vicki Hallum at (972) 775-7410 for more information.

November 17

Magical Christmas Home Tour and silent auction of decorated Christmas trees and holiday arrangements. Presented by Circle of Friends, noon - 5 p.m. Purchase tickets in advance for \$10 at The Farmhouse, 105 N.W. Main, (972) 875-3855

(closed Sundays and Mondays). Tickets may also be purchased for \$12 when you pick up your map at the first stop on the tour: 3500 Ennis Parkway. Second house: 2301 Laneview. Final house: 2401 Laneview. Stay for the silent auction at 5 p.m. Proceeds from tour and silent auction benefit an Ellis County Make-A-Wish boy who hopes to go to Epcot Center and Disney World. Call (972) 878-0740 for more information about the tour or Circle of Friends.

Cowboy Church of Ennis Ladies Holiday Dinner. For further information please contact Pastor Michael Howard at (972) 322-2242.

November 22

Free Thanksgiving lunch, First United Methodist Church of Ennis, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. Everyone welcome.

November 26

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting, 7 p.m., St. Paul Episcopal Church, Hwy. 287 at Ovilla Road in Waxahachie. Visit CQGuild.org for more information.

November 30

Good Friends Now & Forever quarterly meeting, 7 p.m. at the Ennis High School Commons area. All ladies over 18 are invited. RSVP by November 23 to Connie Lewis at (972) 627-3640, Wilma Easley at (972) 878-8801 or Carmen Nelson at (972) 875-9960.

November 30 - December 17

My Favorite Christmas by Bill Rhoten presented by the Ennis Public Theater. Visit ennispublictheatre.com for more information.

We are thankful for our excellent staff and the care they give!



Virgie Rogers is nominated for the Certified Nurses Aide Award



Hattie Solomon is nominated for the Nurse of the Year Award



Sharon Wolfe is nominated for the Director of Nursing Award

These ladies have been nominated by our facility to the Texas Healthcare Association for Annual Recognition Awards because they are top in their fields. They have excellent character references. The positions are confirmed by the Department of Aging and Disability Services, according to Nursing Deficiency Free Survey's for the last 12 years. Nurses aide and CNA's of the year are honored per ten regions. The Director of Nursing award is for the entire state.



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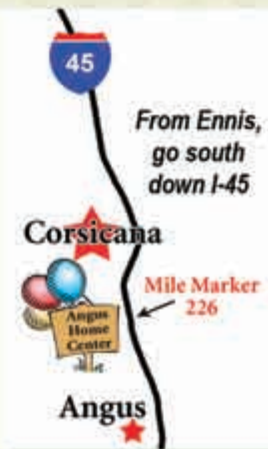


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