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M A G A Z I N E

NOVEMBER 2012

HOUSING HEROES

At Home With Danny & Kellie Roland

TURNING TRAGEDY INTO SERVICE

Being in a wheelchair doesn't stop Mike Alford from helping people

Plus:

Making a Difference
Golden Beginnings
In the Kitchen With
Jo Ann Graham



Your Votes Counted! Red Oak ISD has been awarded a \$100,000 grant from State Farm for casting thousands of votes in their Celebrate My Drive Teen Safe Driving Competition. Red Oak ISD is one of only 14 districts in the United States and Canada, and the only district in the State of Texas, to be awarded the grant!

On behalf of Red Oak ISD, I want to thank State Farm for this generous grant. This would not be possible without the hard work of those who campaigned for votes and those who took the time to vote for us in State Farm's Celebrate My Drive Teen Safe Driving Competition. Thank you for your support of our schools, our students and our Proud Hawks!

Scott Niven

Red Oak ISD Superintendent

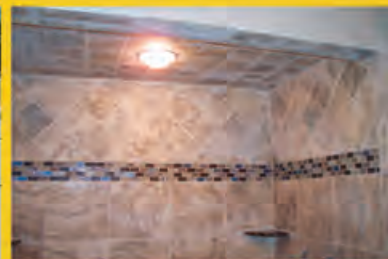


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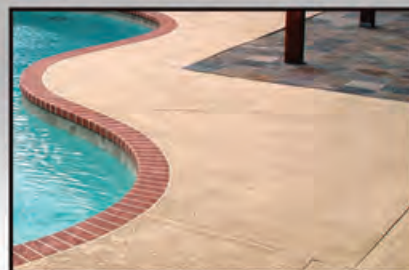
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ON THE COVER



Veterans Day, Fourth of July or any day of the year, the Rolands honor those who have served.

Photo by Opaque Visuals.

CONTENTS

November 2012 • Volume 7, Issue 11



6 Turning Tragedy Into Service

Mike Alford works to assist students in finding employment.



10 Making a Difference

Tracy VanHove cherishes each day, because there are no guarantees for tomorrow.



16 Housing Heroes

At Home With Danny and Kellie Roland.

22 BusinessNOW

24 Around TownNOW

28 CookingNOW

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Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$35 per year or \$3.50 per issue. Subscriptions should be sent to: NOW Magazines, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates or editorial correspondence, call (972) 937-8447 or visit www.nowmagazines.com.



Editor's Note

Embrace November!

My "baby" brother was born in November, and I remember his tiny hand wrapping around my finger shortly after his birth. Although 10 years in age difference made us not particularly close growing up, I always carry the image of that wee embrace.

Tight-knit or loosely linked, we're all bound by unforgettable familial instances. The really blessed also have friends with whom we share such ties.

And no matter the months that have passed, when together with these folks, time simply melts away.

Time has also flown for NOW Magazines, which opened in 2004. With the launch of *GranburyNOW Magazine* last month, our company has grown to 10 markets, distributing more than 240,000 magazines monthly and building a readership of more than 600,000 across these markets. Whether professional or personal family, friends old or new, may you embrace memories this November that warm your heart all year through.

Angel

Angel Morris
Red OakNOW Editor
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TURNING TRAGEDY

INTO SERVICE

By Mikaela Mathews



College was never on Mike Alford's radar. His father was a welder, and he was to follow in his footsteps. It was a tragic accident, and a few chance encounters, that changed everything.

Before he could drive, Mike had traveled to 48 states. He and his dad would pack into their car and drive all over the country. Since his dad owned his own welding business, closing up shop for two months was never a problem. They would camp and visit family around the country. Mike's favorite hobbies were riding his dune buggy and motorcycle. That all changed after a diving accident when he was 16.

"I broke my neck diving down at some creek in Rockett close to the Red Oak High School," Mike recalled. "There were two guys there that had just learned CPR. The ambulance drivers didn't think that I had broken my neck, so they pulled me up out of the creek with an inner tube."

Mike was rushed to the Waxahachie Hospital where it was determined that he had, indeed, broken his neck. He was referred to Parkland Hospital in Dallas where he remained for six weeks. He was then transferred to Houston for further treatment. Mike's accident occurred June 23, 1975, and he was released from the hospital nearly six months later, only a few days before Christmas.

Though now confined to a wheelchair, Mike never allowed that to get in his way. College had not previously been a goal, but following the accident, he decided to pursue a degree in sociology. The inspiration for his choice of degree came from his time in rehab. "[The rehab center] had two people who looked like my age — one was an art major, the other was an English major," Mike explained. "When they said, 'I know what you're going through,' they didn't *really* know what I was going through. How could they?" Mike's time in rehab set him on the road to social work. "Now when I say, 'I understand,'" he added, "I really do understand."

Paying for a degree, however, is no easy feat. Shortly after Mike's accident, a representative from the Texas Rehabilitation Commission (TRC), now the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), approached him about a five-year scholarship for his education. "Even though I was a senior in high school, they would pay for five years of college," Mike remembered. Mike used the money to enroll at Eastfield College for a year and then transferred to The University of Texas at Arlington. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in sociology, and shortly after, three weeks before he turned 23, he earned his master's degree in social work.

The scholarship program, however, never included a master's degree. The scholarship assumed most people would take five years to earn their bachelor's degree. Mike blew through his bachelor's at a faster rate than the scholarship anticipated and



**"Now when I say,
'I understand,'
I REALLY
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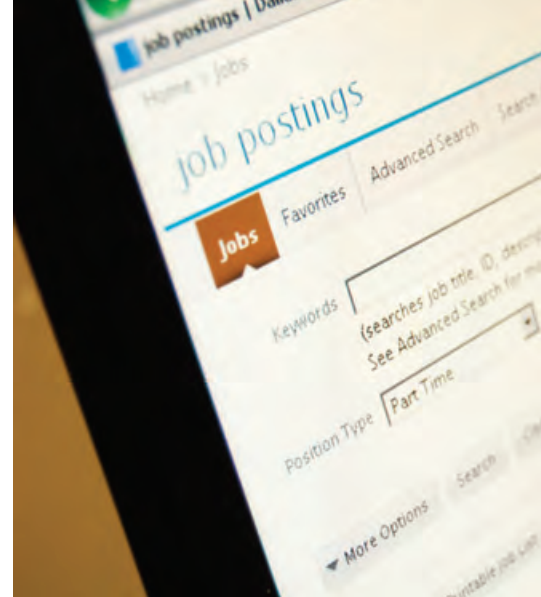
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used the remaining money to earn his master's. "At the end of five years, I met with [TRC], and they asked me, 'How long ago did you get your bachelor's?'" I said, 'Nine months ago. I'm almost finished with my master's.' So I took advantage of them paying for my education," Mike explained.

It didn't take Mike long to find a place with his degree. In his senior year of his undergraduate program, he enrolled at Cedar Valley College for a few extra course hours and ended up being hired as an employee. "I was hired as a tutor and tutored through my master's," Mike recalled. "The tutor coordinator was on a nine-month contract, so I was their tutor [during the summer], and during the rest of the year I worked with students with disabilities because that was before ADA [Americans with Disabilities Act]." Mike's role with disabled students was to hire sign language interpreters and students to take notes for other students who couldn't write, as well as assist in any other personalized way for students with disabilities.

Throughout his tenure, Mike was promoted several times, leading to his current position as coordinator of career services. In this capacity, Mike connects students with jobs, purchases software to assist students with interviews and résumés, and gives class presentations on dressing for success and résumé writing. In this role, Mike has integrated new programs to increase students' chances at getting jobs. One of these is Perfect Interview, where students can videotape themselves doing an interview, then later receive a critique. Another is MyPlan, which helps students who know what



they want to major in but are not sure what type of a job they could get with the degree they are interested in pursuing.

One of the biggest challenges in his job is finding work for ex-offenders. "Getting the ex-offenders into positions they want [is difficult]," Mike explained. "You can find jobs for ex-offenders, but it's the jobs that nobody wants to do." Even still, Mike works to help them get back in the workforce.

In his nearly 32 years at Cedar Valley College, Mike has seen a fair share of unique students. "I was at a Sting concert in 1990, and someone about two stories above me kept yelling at me," Mike recalled. "I looked up, and it was a student running sound for Sting. After the concert, he took me backstage. He said that he traveled the world, and he was the only guy who did the mixing and recording for Sting."

Another student walked into Mike's office one day wanting to earn a degree in musical performance. "One student came in and never had played an instrument before," Mike laughed. "He left here and won all kinds of awards for piano and keyboard. He moved to Vegas and was booked solid for eight years straight."

One of Mike's favorite hobbies remains traveling, despite his wheelchair. "I go on a cruise to the Caribbean in the winter every year," he said. After his accident, he visited Alaska on his honeymoon to go on a cruise. All he has left is Hawaii and he will have visited all of the states. The only problem is his distaste for flying. "I hate flying," Mike explained. "I have flown twice, and each time someone has messed up my wheelchair."

While college was not part of his original plan, life's intervention led Mike to a rewarding career. "When people come jumping into my office yelling, 'I got a job! I got a job!' especially when it's in the field they wanted," Mike said, "that's the most rewarding thing." **NOW**

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

— By Dianne Reaux

Many working parents know how difficult it is to juggle a career and manage the myriad responsibilities that come along with rearing children: working a full-time job and then heading home to put in another five to six hours of work — dinner, laundry, housekeeping, homework, school projects and ferrying kids back and forth to various afterschool

activities. After a while, the typical week starts to fuse into a blur of nonstop activity. But somehow, in the midst of all that has to be done, there are some parents who manage to do more. They make the decision to dedicate a few extra hours each week to volunteer and help support their children's schools.



Left to right:
Melanie McGinley, Tracy VanHove, Tom
Bugg and Angela McDade lead the Red Oak
Quarterback Club in support of ROHS athletics.

Tracy VanHove is one of those parents, and if the Red Oak Quarterback Club actually had a quarterback, it would certainly be Tracy wearing that particular jersey. Tracy seems reserved when she first meets someone. "I don't like being in the spotlight," she shared. After the initial meeting is complete, what emerges is her warm, engaging personality that includes a dry wit that will keep those listening in stitches. When referring to her day job, she just laughed. "What day job?" she asked. "I thought this was it!"

Actually, Tracy spends her days working as an education coordinator at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical School. "I work with first- and fourth-year medical students who are taking their human anatomy and embryology courses. In these classes," she added, "the medical students study their first patient."

Some people view this aspect of her job as morbid and wonder how she can work in that environment. Tracy sees it differently. "These students have been given the opportunity to learn by those who have decided to donate their bodies to the school's Willd Body Program," Tracy said. "Their gift gives future doctors the opportunity to learn." Tracy is reflective as she speaks. "My job has taught me to cherish each day, because no one is guaranteed tomorrow." But her quick wit is always on standby. "The job does have its perks. No one complains. There's no backstabbing and no drama, and no one tells on you when you're running a little late to work!"

Tracy's sense of humor is infectious, and she needs it because her schedule of activities is dizzying. This is her second year serving as president of the Quarterback Club, but her commitment to being an active booster member goes beyond the past four years. She served as a booster member when her daughter, Taylor, was a Red Oak High School volleyball player. Taylor is now a senior at the University of North Texas majoring in criminal justice. When her son, Austin, played pee-wee football, Tracy always found time to pitch in. Austin, a senior now, is still playing football, and she is still helping.

The vice president of the Quarterback Club is Angela McDade. Melani McGinley serves as secretary, and Tom

NOVEMBER IS American Diabetes Month

There are a few myths associated with this deadly disease and we would like to help raise awareness about prevention and control with a few facts.

Myth: Diabetes is not as serious as physicians and healthcare professionals make it out to be.

Fact: When left unmonitored and uncontrolled, diabetes can cause serious health problems or even contribute to death.

Myth: Eating candy causes diabetes.

Fact: Type 1 is caused by genetics and some unknown factors that contribute to diabetes. Type 2 is caused by genetics and lifestyle habits. In a healthy diet, people should always limit their sugar intake.

Myth: You can catch diabetes from someone.

Fact: No, you can not catch this from another person like a cold or the flu.

Myth: People with diabetes should eat special food.

Fact: Eating a healthy meal is the best meal plan, especially if a dietician has a meal plan catered to your likes and dislikes. Diabetic labeled foods or food products are typically expensive and offer no real benefit.



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Bugg is the acting treasurer. They are a loyal and dedicated group. Their common goal has been to step in and cover items that their school's budget cannot. As a team, they have become a fundraising powerhouse. Since this group took over, their fundraising efforts have seen double-digit growth. Last year, they raised more than \$20,000. "The response from business leaders within our community has been amazing," Tracy said.

What sets this organization apart from others? "We have a tight bond," Tracy said. "We work really well together." And indeed, they really do work. "We sell hoodies and T-shirts during games," she explained. "We hold garage sales, car washes and pancake breakfasts." They, along with their small band of parent volunteers, operate tirelessly throughout the year. And while the football players, track team and power lifters all have an "off-season," these fundraising giants don't know the meaning of off-season, agreeing they raise funds year-round. "We purchased the recruiting software Hudl, a high-tech coaching and recruiting software that records video of players during the games. We were able to subscribe to Sportsgram, which provides the audio feed of games for the Internet," Tom said, listing some of their accomplishments. "We also produce the athletic program that is sold at home games. The program features individual and team pictures of the players, along with the cheerleaders and drill team."

Another accomplishment the group is especially proud of is the addition of MobiApp. The Red Oak Hawks now have redoakfootball.mobi, a site that allows fans to follow game-night action in real time. The app can be loaded onto



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mobile devices and players' stats can be viewed while watching the game. The site is mutually beneficial, because it allows local merchants the opportunity to advertise, while helping to support their favorite team.

Despite all they have already achieved, Tracy's biggest wish in relation to the Quarterback Club is that more parent volunteers would join their efforts. "The parents we have are fantastic, but one issue we constantly face is volunteer burnout," she said. "There are a dedicated few who help us consistently all year. But we have such a large school, and with so many students and activities, our volunteers are stretched thin."

The community support from businesses helps the volunteers' cause. Doctors, dentists, restaurants and other local business owners are always willing to purchase ads and make donations. "Just think of what we could accomplish with more parent volunteers who are willing to take advantage of the support that the community has been enthusiastic about providing," Tracy stated. "That would be something wonderful."

With the end of her son's high school years rapidly approaching, Tracy is understandably nostalgic. "I'm having a really hard time," she said. "The other day, I saw a lady with her little son in a stroller at Walmart, and I just started bawling." In that moment, Tracy realized just how fast time flies. For today, she is reassured by the fact that she has made a difference in her community, modeling what a hardworking, devoted parent looks like, and Red Oak High School has been the fortunate recipient of her dedication. **NOW**



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Housing HEROES

— By Angel Morris



Veterans Day is officially marked November 11, but Danny and Kellie Roland give thanks every day for the freedom veterans provide. An annual party at their home, in fact, honors a family member who served in Iraq. "As long as I can remember, my family has celebrated Independence Day with a big party at home. The family home eventually became ours, and we started hosting the party to honor Kellie's cousin who was in the U.S. Army," Danny explained.

Having dubbed it Freedom Fest, the Rolands dedicated their annual party to beloved friend and cousin, Sgt. Ryan Green. "During his service, we hosted a number of deployment and welcome home parties for him here at our house," Kellie noted. "Unfortunately, Ryan was killed in March 2007 while he was serving his second foreign tour in Iraq."

Ryan enlisted in the Army the day after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the U.S., and was killed by an explosive device that

At Home With
**Danny &
Kellie Roland**





detonated near his unit while on combat patrol in Baghdad. Freedom Fest and the formation of Patriot 29 Troop Support Fund, a nonprofit corporation, continue to honor Ryan today. "We always have had Freedom Fest in the backyard running 150-200 people on the day of the event. Over the years, we have had more than 20 members of Ryan's unit come to the event from all over the United States," Danny said.

While the event is a major undertaking, the Rolands do it with love. It has become as much of a family tradition as maintaining the 30-year-old home where it takes place. Although they have been at this residence for decades, Danny and Kellie are not originally from Red Oak. "My family moved from our hometown of Menomonie, Wisconsin, to Dallas in 1977, so my parents could attend Bible school at Christ For The Nations Institute. We landed in Red Oak in 1983

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and moved into the house Kellie and I live in now,” Danny said.

Kellie’s family moved from Buffalo, New York, to Texas for work in 1978 and settled in the Fort Worth area in 1990. Meeting through mutual friends, the Rolands recall that four weddings resulted from the merging of their two groups of pals. “Kellie and I were married in 1998 and bought a home here



in Red Oak on Canary Street. We then bought another one on Prairie View in 2000, which was only six houses down from my parents’ house,” Danny said.

After Danny’s dad passed away in 2002, the couple bought his parents’ home from his mom. “We always wanted to be near both our families, and we wanted to be in a good school district,” Kellie explained. Red Oak Independent School District has served the family well with Danny, a 10-year teacher of seventh-grade history at Red Oak Junior High, and Kellie, a kindergarten teacher at Kid’s University. Their son, Andrew, is

a fifth-grader at Red Oak Intermediate, while their son, Cody, is attending nursing school at West Coast University in Dallas.

The family’s home is surrounded by many large pine trees planted by Danny’s father years ago. “Although my dad planted many trees and bushes, as a bricklayer working all the time in Texas heat, he didn’t feel it was necessary to keep them trimmed up. I do,” Danny said. Also outside, landscape timbers have been replaced by landscape blocks and metal edging, and the dreary gray cedar patio cover is now a beautiful cream and khaki that matches the house.

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Over time, the Rolands have added personal touches inside, as well, to make the ranch-style house their own. Family photos and collages are showcased throughout, along with custom artwork from a special family member. An antique hutch, desk and dresser intermingle the family's past with its present.

"I've used wrought iron frames and artwork; old window frames, which are my favorite; painted plates; and dried flowers to give the place my touch. And Danny even showed off his carpentry skills by custom building our entertainment center to fit in our small living room," Kellie said.

As all homeowners know, there is always something to be done when it comes to maintaining a house. Danny admits their aging home is not without challenges. "It is small but homey. However, on a do-it-yourself budget, keeping everything updated and working on a 30-year-old house is tough," he said. Still, Danny and Kellie have managed to paint a new color on the brick home's exterior trim, laid new flooring and painted the dated ceiling.

"When we moved in, we went to work — new wood floors replaced all the carpet and new counters replaced butcher block," Danny said. "My wife's biggest challenge was to brighten the house a little. All the paneling was painted. My dad and I had laid terra-cotta tile in the kitchen and dining room many years before and that would have been too difficult to tear up. So Kellie worked with a darker color floor and transformed our house."

The Rolands enjoy the home's galley kitchen but especially appreciate their outdoor cooking area. The backyard, with its pool and basketball court, is welcoming to extended family and friends. "We love to be outside on our patio and enjoy our pool," Kellie said. Danny and Kellie's sons also enjoy their bedrooms, which reflect their own interests. Cody's room showcases anything related to transportation — license plates, oil cans, street signs and a parking meter. Andrew's room is decorated with half Texas Rangers and half Dallas Cowboys decor.

Some four-legged children are also part of the Roland home. "Happy is a 14-year-old Jack Russell Terrier we have had for 13 years. We adopted two beagles: Chuck, a 13-year-old we've had for eight years, and Gracie, the only girl of the family, just turned 6," Danny noted. "The dogs were a good reason for us to replace the carpet with wood flooring!"



When not settled in at home, Kellie loves camping, working out and bargain shopping. "Without Danny," she joked. Danny also enjoys camping, plus fishing and "long walks on any beach," he said. "I also like deejaying and coaching Andrew's baseball team. But teaching, keeping the house in shape and being president of Patriot 29 Troop Support Fund doesn't leave a lot of time for the beach!"

The Rolands, however, are most content at home, particularly when it is the host site of Freedom Fest, honoring those currently in the military, veterans and a gone-but-not-forgotten family hero. "As Ryan would have wanted," Danny said, "we continue to celebrate the freedom which he and others in the military have fought for and continue to fight for." **NOW**

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Top left, left to right:

A Bright Beginning Day Care employees:
Carmen Quinones, Linsey Shockley, Jan
DeMoney, Natasha Borneau, Rachel McDonel.



Golden Beginnings

Ginger Shaw and Brandi Byers set a loving and educational foundation for children at A Bright Beginning Day Care.

— *By Angel Morris*

The Golden Rule will take you far, and it's the foundation of learning at A Bright Beginning Day Care, where two longtime friends emphasize fundamental lessons. Owners, Ginger Shaw and Brandi Byers, lay a foundation for students, setting the tone for success. "Manners, respect and responsibility are at the root of what we do. Like the Golden Rule, which is to treat others as you wish to be treated, we believe in instilling these ideas at young ages," Ginger said.

Beyond fundamentals, Ginger and Brandi use a Montessori-based program. "We teach A Beka curriculum and incorporate a program similar to a Montessori kids day out school," Brandi said. "Montessori emphasizes individuals' unique, natural learning abilities. We believe it

encourages children to reach their highest potential."

"Some children learn with their hands, nonverbally, like learning numbers cut from sandpaper. Tracing and feeling the roughness helps them remember," Ginger added.

They believe small-group learning is best, maintaining low student-teacher ratios to facilitate one-on-one relationships. They also rely on a parental board for advice on services and care. "Who better to help us meet a child's needs than parents? Open lines of communication are the best way for us to nurture children," Brandi said.

With almost 60 years of combined experience, Ginger and Brandi still seek 30 hours of continuing education annually to

study education breakthroughs. Brandi is ECMI (early childhood management institute) accredited, and she, Ginger, and staffers are trained in CPR for infants and children. "We provide a safe, caring atmosphere. And we stay on top of what is happening in education to offer the best in early learning," Ginger said.

But it's not all work at A Bright Beginning Day Care, where Brandi and Ginger have implemented athletics and cheerleading programs. "Each day is a special day of learning," Brandi said. "In front of the day care, we have a fenced area for ages that are able to ride, so they can bring bikes, and we use signs such as yield, stop, merge, etc., to teach them physically what this means. We have Traffic Safety Day, Spa Day, Gardening Day, Sports Day and Tea Party Day, too. This lets them participate one-on-one with teachers and have fun! After all, isn't that what A Bright Beginning is all about?"

"We have been blessed to have Dee Alamo agree to offer learning programs as time allows. She is a wonderful teacher with lots of patience," Ginger added.

Fun activities inspire students, while unique scheduling pleases parents. A Bright Beginning Day Care is approved to provide 24-hour care and offers "drop-in" care as needed. Even care on 12-hour rotations is possible, as Brandi and Ginger have had parents working non-traditional hours. "We are excited to be one of the few day care centers in Ellis County with 24-hour care," Brandi said.

Additionally, the center is part of a government food program, allowing for more nutritious meals, including breakfast, lunch, afternoon snack and supper starting at 5:00 p.m., and offers afterschool pick up for students in Red Oak or Waxahachie ISDs and Life Schools.

"We want to be like centers of the past where children learned fundamentals, but we also recognize modern-day changes like parents working unique shifts. Our evening teachers are the same ones, so children are familiar with them," Ginger said. "And, of course, we ensure all our children are getting the nutrition they need to learn the best they possibly can!" **NOW**

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Glen Spielman and Marley Dickert are chosen Red Oak High Homecoming King and Queen in October.



Red Oak Police Department hosts National Night Out, a community crime awareness event, that took place in local neighborhoods.



Melissa Amlong gives her car a much needed wash at Total Care Auto Bath.



Residents of the Fox Hollow addition, North Star, join police in National Night Out activities that promote community involvement in deterring crime.



Red Oak ISD employees honor Isabella Day for her courageous battle against cancer. Isabella's parents both work in ROISD.



Red Oak ISD receives a \$100,000 grant for collecting the second highest number of online votes in the nation through the State Farm Celebrate My Drive Teen Safety Program Contest.



Red Oak Elementary second graders Lauren Starling, Ariana Mena, Moriah Perry, Christopher Hobbs and Kemondre Yancy study liquids, solids and cooking after reading "Mice and Beans" with teacher Wendy Newcomer.



Red Oak's Kensen Vaughan chisels a metal plate design for print making in ninth grade art at Canterbury Episcopal School.



Abryah Solis wears her crown hat crafted during Red Oak Public Library Story Time.



Red Oak High School seniors Jaron Arismendez, Kasaandra Ibanez and Edwin Delasierra receive the National Hispanic Recognition Award.

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November 2-4

Lord's Acre: Future site of Ovilla United Methodist Church at Ovilla and Westmoreland roads.

November 2, dinner and music the evening;

November 3, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., fall festival with auctions, bake sale, children's area and vendors;

November 4, 10:30 a.m., tent service. Call (972) 617-8840 or visit ovillaumc@sbcglobal.net.

November 4

Open House: 2:00-4:00 p.m., Canterbury Episcopal School, 1708 N. Westmoreland Rd., DeSoto. Open to residents of Dallas and Ellis counties, CES provides tours for families interested in learning more about the school. Light refreshments served. Contact (972) 572-7200, ext. 106, or ConderL@TheCanterburySchool.org for more details.

November 10

Mobile Heart Screenings: 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Canterbury Episcopal School, 1708 N. Westmoreland Rd., DeSoto. Ages 12-22 are encouraged to take 20 minutes for a low-cost screening to help prevent sudden cardiac arrest in youth. Cost \$125. Parents call 1-855-849-TEST (8378) for appointments. Visit www.living4zachary.org for more information.

Ellis County SPCA Volunteer Training: 11:00 a.m., 2570 FM 878, Waxahachie. Meeting for new volunteers with the ECSPCA or current volunteers wanting to be more involved. Dog adoption events are set for November 10-11 and 24-25 and volunteers are needed to assist. Visit www.elliscountyspca.org.

November 18

Community Thanksgiving Service: 6:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church of Red Oak, 600 Daubitz Dr. Call (972) 617-9100 or visit www.redoakmethodistchurch.org/.

November 29-December 1

Festival of Trees: First United Methodist Church Red Oak, 600 Daubitz Dr., **November 29**, 7:00 p.m.; **November 30-December 1**, all day. Red Oak Education Foundation, with Red Oak Lions Club and donations from local businesses, presents a

display of decorated trees and holiday décor up for auction. Proceeds benefit local schools.

November 30

Waxahachie Junior Service League Annual Christmas Market Preview Party: 6:00-9:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. The service league serves all of Ellis County. For more information, visit www.waxahachiejssl.org.

December 1

Waxahachie Junior Service League Annual Christmas Market and Gift Show: 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. Find information regarding the league's Ellis County charities at www.waxahachiejssl.org.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to angel.morris@nowmagazines.com.

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In the Kitchen With Jo Ann Graham

— *By Angel Morris*

Jo Ann Graham's creations are famous at Ovilla Methodist Church and Ovilla Service League benefits. "They sell at auctions for \$300 or more ... a bargain considering ingredient costs. Winners receive 12 pies or soups over a year," Jo Ann explained.

Jo Ann cooks for two or three auction winners monthly, rarely making pies to keep. "My husband has a healthy homemade meal every night, but complains that my best foods go to someone else!"

Benefiting charity by doing something she loves pleases Jo Ann. She also loves that her grown son is a foodie. "He's an incredible gourmet cook. I like to think I inspired a passion that led him to make foods I would never even attempt!" **NOW**

Dallas Cowboy Bean Soup

1 lb. dried white pea beans
1/4 lb. bacon
1 large onion
1 carrot
2 cups celery
1/2 green bell pepper
1 1/2 cloves garlic
1 Tbsp. fresh parsley
3 quarts water
1/2 lb. ham, diced
1/2 tsp. Tabasco sauce
1 tsp. Lawry's Seasoned Salt
1/2 cup ketchup
1 Tbsp. sugar
1 1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. paprika

1. Rinse beans well and pick them over carefully to remove rocks, stems, etc. Cover with water and soak overnight; drain and rinse again.
2. Dice bacon and sauté in large Dutch oven

or soup pot for 5 minutes over low heat.

3. Peel and chop onion and carrot; finely chop celery, green pepper, garlic and parsley.
4. Add vegetables to bacon; cook over low heat, until soft.

5. Add 3 qts. water and remaining ingredients; mix well.

6. Bring to a boil, cover and reduce heat to low. Simmer for 3 hours, or until beans are tender.

7. Add water, if needed, and stir occasionally to keep beans from sticking to pot. If they stick, reduce heat further and continue cooking.

8. Using a potato masher and/or an immersion blender, mash some of the beans to thicken the soup. Correct seasonings, if desired. Serve immediately or refrigerate overnight.

Libby's Famous Pumpkin Pie

3/4 cup sugar
1/2 tsp. salt

1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. ginger
1/4 tsp. cloves
2 large eggs
1 15-oz. can Libby's canned pumpkin (not pumpkin pie filling)
1 12-oz. can Carnation Evaporated Milk
1 unbaked 9-inch pie crust

1. Mix sugar, salt, cinnamon, ginger and cloves in a small bowl.
2. Beat eggs in a large bowl; stir in pumpkin and sugar-spice mixture.
3. Gradually stir in milk; mix until smooth. Pour into pie shell.
4. Bake in a preheated 425 F oven for 15 minutes. Reduce oven to 350 F and bake for 40-50 minutes, or until knife inserted in center comes out clean.
5. Cool on wire rack for at least 2 hours. Serve with sweetened whipped cream; refrigerate any unused portion.

Jo Ann's Original Pecan Pie

1 cup Karo white corn syrup
1 cup dark brown sugar, packed
1/4 tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla
3 eggs, beaten
1/3 cup melted butter (not margarine)
Unbaked pie crust
1 1/2 to 2 cups pecan halves or pieces

1. Mix first six ingredients until foamy; pour into unbaked pie crust; top with pecans.

2. Bake at 350 F for 45 minutes. Check to see if set. If not, continue baking, checking every three to five minutes.

Variation 1: For Chocolate Pecan Pie, add 1 8-oz. pkg. chocolate chips to pie crust before adding filling and pecans; bake as above.

Variation 2: For German Chocolate Pecan Pie, add 2/3 cup flaked coconut and 6 oz. chocolate chips to piecrust before adding filling and pecans; bake as above.

Variation 3: For Cashew Pie, substitute canned cashew halves or pieces for pecans. Don't worry about the salt on the cashews, it adds to the flavor of this variation!

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