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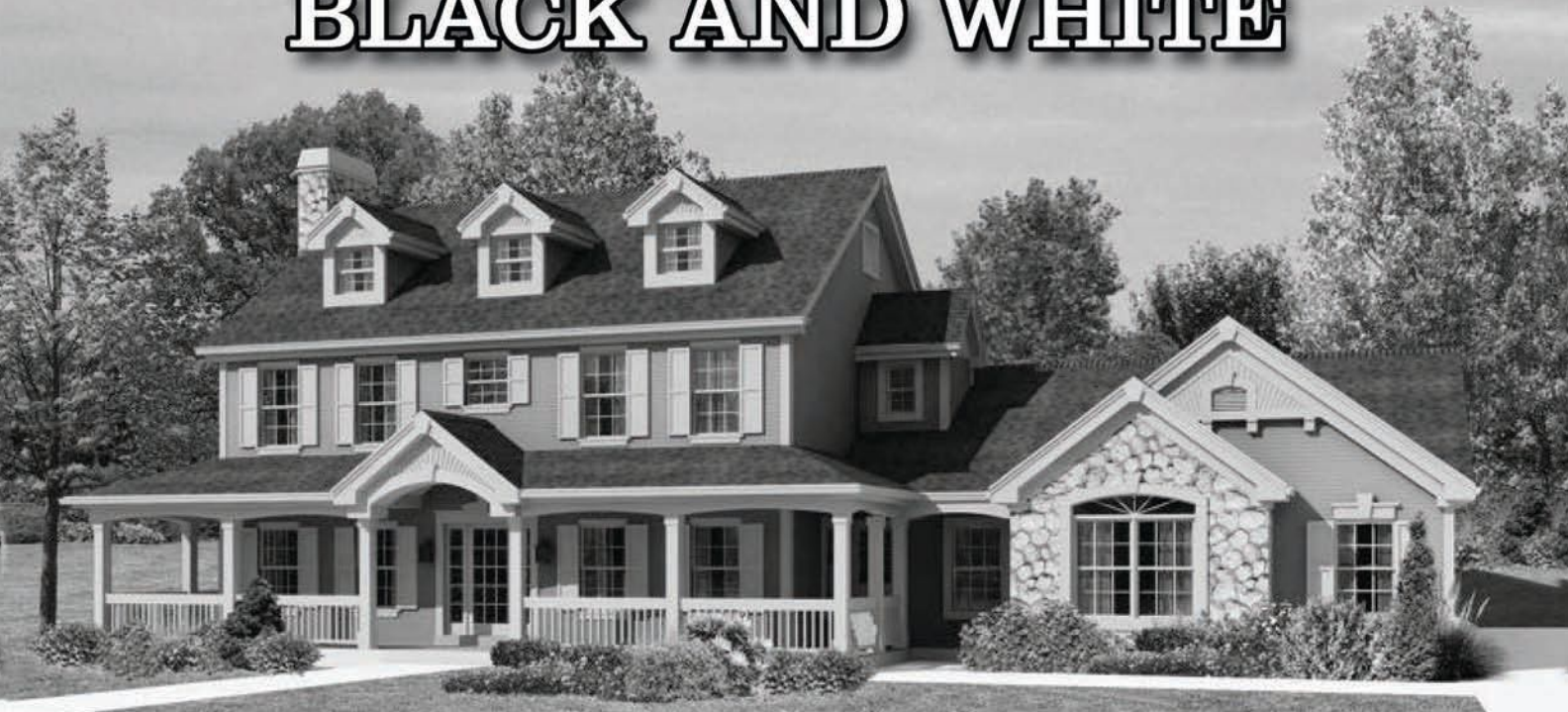
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ON THE COVER



Every fall, Frank and Betsy Jones enjoy sprucing up their yard.

Photo by Michelle Winters.

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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 (817) 613-1533 or visit www.nowmagazines.com.



Editor's Note

Hello, Friends!

The month of November includes a number of holidays and observances. Veterans Day falls on November 11, and community members will honor those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The Parker County American Legion Post #163 will host a Veterans Day Parade in Weatherford on November 8.

If you are ready to kick your smoking habit, the Great American Smokeout on November 20 may be the perfect time to do so. Visit www.cancer.org to find tips on how to quit.

Thanksgiving falls on November 27. Many residents will travel to see loved ones or prepare meals in their own kitchens. Remember to share what you're thankful for on "turkey day." On Black Friday, local retailers will slash prices and offer discounts to entice shoppers into stores. If you choose to brave the crowds, I hope you get those unbelievable deals!

Enjoy yourselves!

Amber

Amber D. Browne
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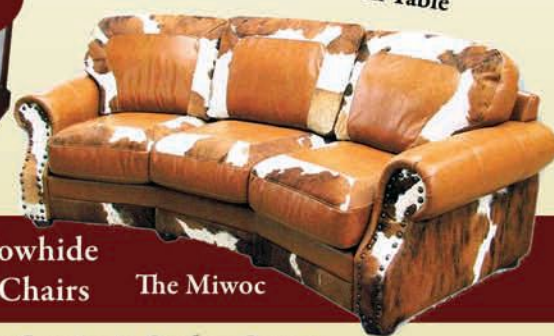
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Flight Path

— By Amber D. Browne






"I'm just
an airplane
geek."



A photograph of two young men, Dennis Akens and his son Calvin, standing in front of a biplane. They are both wearing military-style camouflage uniforms. Dennis is on the right, taller, and Calvin is on the left, shorter. They are both smiling. The background shows the tail and wing of a white biplane with red and blue stripes on the tail. The sky is cloudy.



A photograph of an airplane cockpit. The view is from the pilot's perspective, looking out through the windshield. The cockpit is filled with various instruments, gauges, and controls. The yoke is visible in the foreground. The background shows a clear sky and a portion of the wing.

Ever since he could point at an airplane flying overhead, Dennis Akens has been fascinated with anything related to aviation. "I always wanted to be a pilot," Dennis shared. He grew up in Killeen and began his college career with a major in aerospace engineering at Texas A&M University. Dennis was following his dreams.

At the age of 14, Dennis broke his neck in a gymnastics accident on a mini trampoline, leaving him paralyzed and wheelchair bound. That didn't quash his desire to fly high above the ground. He was, however, left questioning his passion after meeting a junior classmate who had a private pilot license. "Would you trust an aerospace engineer who didn't know how to fly?" asked his classmate. Dennis decided to change his major to agricultural engineering at that moment. He graduated from Texas A&M with a bachelor's and master's in the field and later moved to Mississippi to work in agricultural research for the USDA. "I left aerospace behind me.

"Fast forward to 2003, which was the 100th anniversary of powered flight," Dennis explained. Dennis and his family traveled to the Granbury Regional Airport for an event for the Experimental Aircraft Association Young Eagles, which educates youth about general aviation. "We were some of the first ones there. The kids went up to the flight coordinator and got their names on the list." Dennis' two sons, Calvin and Abraham, got strapped into an airplane and took off. Once back on the ground, they shared their excitement with their father and snuck back in line for another ride. Dennis' wife at the time told the Young Eagles' pilot about his desire to get a pilot license and his concerns that it was unattainable because of his paralysis. The



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pilot offered Dennis a ride in the airplane. “He had to pick me up and put me in the airplane, but we went flying. He let me fly the airplane,” Dennis remembered. The pilot shared with Dennis how airplane controls can be customized for disabled pilots. Dennis’ desire to fly was reignited, and he began volunteering with the Civil Air Patrol, which is a federally chartered, nonprofit benevolent corporation assigned by Congress as a permanent auxiliary to the U.S. Air Force.

Dennis is employed as an engineer for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Fort Worth. He initially became a member of the local CAP squadron. He transferred to the Mineral Wells Composite Squadron and has volunteered with the group for the



past four years. The Mineral Wells squadron was originally chartered in 1946 but deactivated in 2000 for lack of interest. Reactivated in 2010, it has been growing ever since. The squadron is now based in Weatherford and meets each Tuesday evening at the Texas National Guard Armory.

Most of the nearly 30 members are cadets. The cadets in the program learn leadership skills. “They learn how to be clear in their direction and be concise, as well as being what the Christian community would call a ‘servant leader,’” Dennis said. The cadets often volunteer at events, including Peach Pedal and local air shows.

Some cadets dream of joining the U.S. Air Force, while others wish to get their pilot license. “Some have absolutely no interest at all in ever flying an airplane. Others are there for the leadership training,” he said. The cadets can be



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promoted in rank, but to do so, they are required to take quizzes over leadership and aerospace education, among other subjects, and participate in physical training.

Cadets can join the CAP from the ages of 12-18, and at 18, they can apply to become a senior member or continue in the cadet program until the age of 21. At that point, the cadet can apply to become a senior member. Individuals age 18 and over can apply to the senior member program if they meet the minimum qualifications.

Jessica Bearden was promoted to senior member in August. She and her sister, Victoria Bearden, have been members of the squadron for the past four years. At first, Victoria was reluctant to join the program, but with her sister by her side, she jumped in with both feet. "It turned out to be one of the best decisions I've made," Victoria said. Now a cadet first lieutenant, she holds the position of cadet deputy commander. "It's an unparalleled environment for young people to be able to experience leadership. It's something you don't get in any other area. Because of the military environment, you learn respect for those above you."

The 16-year-old is homeschooled and would like to continue with the Civil Air Patrol until she begins college. "This program has helped to prepare me for



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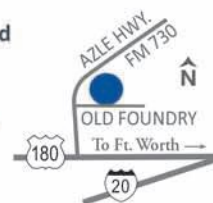
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where I want to go," Victoria said. She's learned speaking and leadership skills, how to work with others and how to work well under pressure. "CAP is one of the best programs, I think, for young people," Victoria stated. "The program holds you to a lot of moral standards and brings out a different person inside of you."

Dennis has known Victoria and her sister since they were children growing up with his sons. "They've been the biggest part of my cadet leadership over the last few years," he explained.

"Captain Akins is the glue that holds our squadron together," Victoria shared. "He really wants the squadron to succeed. His heart is for everyone in the program to succeed."

Dennis serves as a unit commander, communications officer and an aerospace education officer with the CAP squadron. "I don't do it all, but I do quite a bit." As a unit commander, Dennis handles a lot of paperwork and ensures everything in the squadron runs according to regulation. As the communications officer, Dennis is responsible for communications and related equipment. Communications is a major part of one of the CAP's main missions — emergency services. CAP operates one of the largest communication networks in the country. As part of the emergency services mission, first responders from the senior member program perform search-and-rescue missions for downed aircraft and offer assistance during natural disasters.

CAP also focuses on aerospace education. One of Dennis' responsibilities is teaching aerospace education to cadets. To gain a new level of insight into how aircraft work and, finally, realize his dream of flying, he took flight training classes at Purdue University in 2013, all thanks to a scholarship from Able Flight. He received his sport pilot license and plans to upgrade the license through additional training. He now shares his knowledge with the CAP youth, educating cadets about general aviation issues and technology at weekly meetings.

"I'm just an airplane geek," Dennis admitted. "We have some really great youth in the organization. I enjoy seeing them grow and improve their leadership skills." **NOW**

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Living in the Season

— By Erin McEndree

Fall means shorter days and cooler nights. Crisp, cool evenings replace summer's heat. The changing season begins to prepare nature for the freezing temperature that accompanies winter. Fall is the time to bring out scarves and jackets in warm hues such as orange, brown and red. Frank and Betsy Jones' home changes color with the seasons as well. Betsy changes something in their home for every season and holiday. Red, white and blue from July's celebrations

**At Home With
Frank and Betsy Jones**



are packed away. Golden hay bales and harvest scarecrows replace flags and fireworks. "I'm a seasonal person," Betsy said. "I love decorating for the seasons!" Betsy's fashionable style can be enjoyed by the neighborhood, family and friends.

When the trees begin to rest and change into their delightful array of colors, Frank and Betsy are hard at work creating a scene in their front yard as brilliant as the landscape around it. More than 20 scarecrows make up a whimsical, real-life exhibit. Scarecrows are engaging in fall activities such as sitting on hay bales in front of a campfire. A light shines on a sign that says *Friends at the Campfire*. Two are pushing wheelbarrows full of pumpkins. A smiling scarecrow

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by the well seems to be pumping water. Girls and boys sit side by side and seem to be enjoying the activities. "I would love to start having hay rides on a wagon for the kids who come to visit," Betsy said.

Betsy, who was a legal secretary for 20 years in Arlington, grew up in Rochester, New York, where the fall colors turn vibrant starting in September. She remembers walking through an apple orchard to and from school and how beautiful the leaves on the trees became each season. She and Frank enjoy



recreating those memories and bringing the colors of autumn alive.

Frank found the house before he married Betsy. "When I saw this house in 1987, I liked it so much I put my house in Benbrook on the market," Frank said. "It only took a month to sell mine and buy this one. It was a good move." In 2009, Frank transitioned into marriage after a short courtship with Betsy. They secretly planned their wedding at a family gathering at Frank's home.

"At the gathering, we invited a justice

of the peace to come and perform the ceremony. We had an impromptu wedding right in front of our fireplace," Betsy laughed. "Our family was shocked, but knew we were just crazy enough to pull off a stunt like that."

In the den, Frank's hunting trophies line the walls, which include a mule deer, several whitetail deer, a javelina and a Barbados sheep named Lucky. Frank hunts with his kids on a 300-acre family farm west of Olney, Texas. Frank also displays a model sail boat collection on



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shelves close to the ceiling. On another shelf above the kitchen door, Frank has childhood mementos like an old camera, a manual pricing gun from one of his high school jobs and an old oil funnel.

He attended Weatherford College before he joined the Army in 1966. He served as a Nike Hercules Missile technician in Korea before becoming an instructor at Fort Bliss, Texas. He came back and finished his degree at Weatherford College. He later received his Bachelor of Arts at Texas Wesleyan University. He was an aircraft avionics technician at Carswell Air Force Base in Fort Worth for 15 years. He served in and retired from the Air Force Reserve concurrent with his civilian employment for 25 years. Frank also retired from the Department of Defense in 2010 after 40 years of service. "I am proud to have served the government for so long," Frank said.

After retirement, Frank gave the kitchen and dining area a total makeover. He took out the florescent lights, and he and his son, Casey, installed pot lights and a ceiling fan. Frank recessed the ceiling and added wainscoting for a decorative touch. He changed the countertop and set tile along the back splash to create a brick pattern.

Above the cabinets are large words that say, *HOME*, *WELCOME* and *FAMILY*, indicating it's a place where family and friends are welcome to enjoy traditional Italian meals. A window frame that came from Frank's family farm depicts life long ago in black and white photos — a gift created by his daughter, Angela. Betsy has a collection of Lenox canisters in the shape of houses all over the kitchen and dining room. She also has a spice rack, where each jar is a house that matches the canisters. A large hutch houses Frank's collection of blue and white china and brass car banks. The



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collection includes a 1910 Model T, a 1928 Ford truck and a 1955 T-Bird.

One of the extra bedrooms is Betsy's space for knitting. "Knitting is my hobby," Betsy said. "I knitted afghans for all my family, hats for the homeless and baby dolls." For a baby shower gift, she will knit a baby afghan and matching hats for a baby doll, the mom and the grandmother. A 1937 Silvertone radio from Frank's uncle's farmhouse sits by the door. Frank refinished it by stripping the varnish and oiling the wood. He remembers sitting by the radio as a kid, listening to baseball games with his brother, Tom, and uncle, Wallace.

Another extra bedroom has a tall, four-poster bed that was Betsy's. "I have to use a step stool to get on it. The bed reminded me of the story of *The Princess and the Pea*," Betsy said. "It was a time in my life when I wanted to do something special for myself as a single mom. The guest bathroom has crosses on the wall and is another place that gets a makeover, depending on the season. Betsy has rugs, towels and flowers to match each time of the year.

Frank and Betsy love to travel to places like New England, Alaska and Yellowstone. But when they are in town, they enjoy being active in the Weatherford Citizens Police Academy Alumni Association. They help direct traffic at parades, Christmas on the Square and the Peach Festival and fingerprint children at special events. Frank has been a Citizens Police Academy member for over 17 years.

Whether Frank and Betsy are participating in seasonal activities in town or decorating their home for different occasions, they love bringing each time of the year alive with matching decor. They surround themselves with colors and icons representative of each season and enjoy each holiday to the fullest. **NOW**

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Reflections

— By Lisa Bell



Kathy Cunningham grew up on a farm outside of Wichita, in Schulte, Kansas. “We always had crayons and coloring books,” she said. “And when we ran out of pictures, Mom drew more. I wanted to do that.”

But Kathy didn’t want to just draw. Her godmother was also an artist and painted abstracts. Kathy thought they were great. Her father was a woodworker who was very creative. He started painting watercolors when he was 80 years old. When she discovered a stack of his work, she turned his art into cards and gave them as Christmas presents that everyone loved. Kathy’s desire to teach art resulted from her mother’s early teaching and her dad’s artistic dabbles.

Kathy’s first real art class with a real art teacher came after she entered ninth grade. “I was hooked,” she said. Although she learned how to use all types of art media in order to teach, she prefers watercolors. The artwork dries quickly, and she can easily transport her creative tools wherever she goes. As a bonus, she never worries about paints drying out — they’re supposed to be dry, activated with water.

Kathy moved to Texas in 1972 with her husband, Ron, and

young son, Jamin. A 37-year veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Ron was stationed at Carswell Air Force Base, so they lived, initially, in Fort Worth. Then, in 1978, the couple moved to Weatherford.

Both Ron and Kathy worked on their college degrees, taking turns going to night school. He finished first, and in 1985, degree in hand, Kathy began teaching for the Weatherford ISD. "We're all gifted with a talent, and our job is to find out what it is," she said. "That's the neat thing about teaching — you have a lot of 'aha' moments. When you present something that looks impossible to the kids, they do it, and then they say, 'Aha. I



did it.' Those are the teaching moments."

Kathy received the WHS Teacher of the Year award and the Texas Art Education Association Secondary Art Teacher of the Year award in 2004. She retired from teaching almost four years ago. "I really don't miss it. I had a good run, a good district and students I still keep up with," she said. "I have other interests in my life now."

On occasion, she teaches a few students, participates in Weatherford Art Association summer art camps at the Firehouse Gallery and travels with her husband. The most time-consuming endeavor she currently enjoys includes a small Kansas-based business she shares with her sisters. Seven and a Half Sisters Quilting and More, shared primarily with two of her six sisters, features quilts they make and sell. Each sister has her


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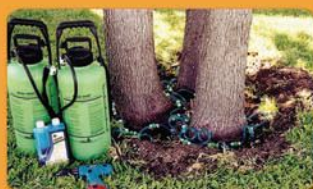
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own quilt genre from contemporary, colorful or character quilts, to Kathy's contribution of story, art and Civil War coverings.

Five years ago, Kathy created a line of puppets to draw people into their quilt booths at festivals. A couple of years ago, one of her sisters asked Kathy to make a Wheat Shocker mascot puppet as a Christmas present, and the We Wu was born, a symbol of Wichita State University. The sisters are now licensed to make the We Wu and will soon start crafting the We Bod cousin, representing the Washburn University Ichabod mascot.

Kathy devotes a couple of days each week to other creative pursuits, but painting always draws her back. At the Firehouse Gallery, she pulls out watercolor paper, her paint, palette, a brush, water and a roll of toilet tissue (new technique used for cleaning brushes).

While the special paints can be somewhat expensive, they last for a very long time and provide permanency in paintings. A beginning artist can create beautiful pictures with an inexpensive set of Prang watercolors. Using dark against light produces a certain effect Kathy wants. Mixing colors comes with practice and experimenting — a technique children learn at a young age, as they blend blue and yellow crayons to create green. However, as an artist, Kathy has multiple shades of blue and several hues of yellow. By experimenting, she creates

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different greens and can use one or all of them in a single piece of art.

The paintings begin with a photograph. She uses the grid method, dividing the picture into grids and then enlarging the grid on her paper. Working with one section at a time, she looks at the photo and then paints, tweaking what she sees. She leaves out some details and inserts others not found in the original



picture. Artistically applying colors, she creates an original work, which resembles the photography, yet remains unique in its composition. During the process, she might change colors, deepening one to tell a different story. Kathy can complete a 14x20-inch painting in about eight hours, broken down into four-hour blocks.

Currently, her art revolves around reflections and rust in vintage cars. New cars, made of plastic, sleek and slick, don't produce the images she sees in older models. The chrome, shiny surface, bumps and curves draw her in. The design pulls her closer. But Kathy's paintings aren't about the car. When she photographs an old vehicle, the reflection produces a story. Time and place become part of the picture as she focuses on who was present. In one painting, the image bouncing back from the bumper is Kathy. Her art also contains some abstract elements hidden in the fenders and shades of rust and old paint.

Earlier works also reveal this theme. Kathy didn't intend to include mirror images in those pieces. Yet, at a subconscious level, she captured

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reflections from water, mirrors or other shiny objects.

Other artists follow the same theme. Kathy can't remember whether she discovered their paintings before or after she began purposely incorporating reflective elements in her work. Someday, she wants to paint airplanes with images shining back from propellers and fuselage, an idea she gleaned from others. Access to planes doesn't come as easily as



discovering old cars in fields or driveways.

Although Kathy has sold some of her paintings, she never wants producing art to feel like a job, stealing her joy of creation. On display at the gallery, she (and every other artist) would love to sell every piece and start again. She can't keep everything, so after time, she purges her work. The paintings are a part of her, but they don't define her.

Kathy dreams of having a drawer somewhere at home to store all of her work. When she passes on, she wants someone to open the drawer and discover the paintings. In her art, the story behind every piece remains an integral part of the picture — a reflection of her artist's heart. **NOW**

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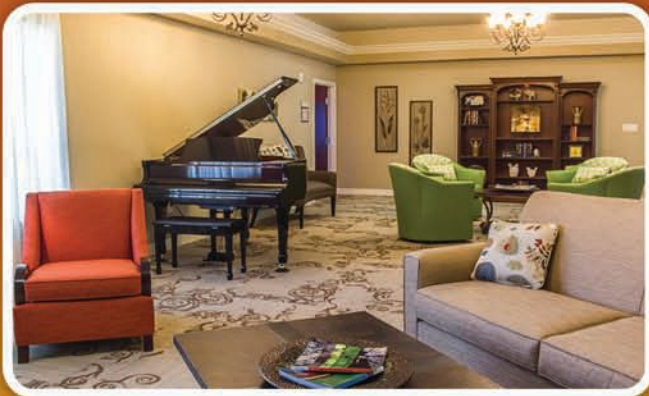
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Planning the Perfect Party

— By Amber D. Browne

The hustle and bustle of preparing for the holiday season can be quite all-consuming. Adding a dinner party or overnight guests to the equation can increase the stress. Whether you're taking on the challenge of hosting friends for dinner or family in the guest room, having a plan in place is the key to a fun-filled occasion.

When planning a holiday get-together, first decide who is on the guest list. You could choose to invite a few of your closest friends or a group of 20 or more. Or family

could stay for the extended holiday. In either scenario, plan the date and set a time for the holiday dinner.

Incorporating a theme is a key component to any event. The holiday itself can be used in planning for decorations, music and games, but if it's a dinner for friends, choosing a fun theme may be a good choice. Pinterest or event-planning blogs feature a variety of theme options.

Keep the following in mind if you choose to host a holiday dinner:

1. What is your budget?
2. Will it be a sit-down or buffet-style dinner?
3. What type of decor will you use?
4. Is the dinner adults-only or will children also attend?
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The budget should include funds for food, beverages, decor and entertainment. If you plan to hire a caterer, a printer for invitations or even a cleaning crew, include those costs in the budget as well. If you don't want to host the event at your home, a local restaurant or rental facility may be the perfect place to gather. Include any rental fees in the budget. Setting aside additional funds for last-minute costs is also a good idea.



Food & Beverage:

Planning the menu ahead of time is a priority. Cookbooks, the Internet or cherished family recipes offer delicious choices for holiday meals. If you are planning a themed meal, stick with recipes that fit the motif.

If you don't want to spend time prepping and cooking the food, hiring a caterer is an option. Many caterers provide dinnerware, serving dishes and utensils, flatware and related items. On-site caterers can help with cleanup, too. For easier cleanup or a more casual event, purchase disposable dinnerware and flatware, and make trash cans readily available to guests.

When hosting a party, you may decide to serve alcoholic beverages. You can stock the bar yourself or advise guests to bring their own alcoholic beverages. Hiring a licensed bartender to serve

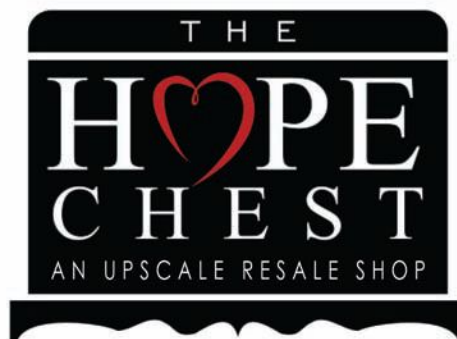


drinks during the event is another option. Don't forget to provide nonalcoholic beverages and have extra ice on hand. For guests who may overindulge, have a taxi service phone number available.

Venue, Decor & Entertainment:

Preparing your home for guests can be an undertaking, but a clean home creates a relaxed atmosphere. Stock the bathrooms with toilet paper, soap and clean or disposable hand towels. Offer guests a safe place to leave coats and purses. Lighting the fireplace or candles throughout the home creates a cozy ambience, but don't forget to extinguish the flames after the party!

Fresh flowers can brighten any table. You may choose to purchase arrangements from a local flower shop or buy seasonal flowers to create your own arrangement. Cranberries are popular this time of year and can be incorporated into the arrangement. Add one to two bags of fresh cranberries to a clear vase. Fill the vase about three-quarters full with water. "Using a sharp knife, carefully cut the ends off the fresh flowers at a 45-degree angle. Add cut flowers to vase, arranging as needed," explains a how-to page at OceanSpray.com.



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If children and teenagers are invited, set a separate table for them. Using real dinnerware will create a more formal atmosphere and adding amusing trinkets to the table will keep the younger crowd entertained. Place holiday crackers, which hold small toys, at each table setting as a fun addition.

For entertainment, themed music can play during the event. You can incorporate games, too. For a guessing game, you can purchase a nice container and add individually wrapped candies. Make sure to count the candies first! Display the candy container alongside a jar, paper and pens for guests. Guests can write down how many candies they think are in the container and place their guesses in the jar. The one closest to the actual number wins the candy-filled container!

Overnight Holiday Guests:

Find out beforehand what types of snacks and drinks your guests prefer, and stock the cupboard and refrigerator. When planning the meals, get your guests' input. Be sure to find out if they have any food allergies. Many overnight guests may want to help out in the kitchen and chip in on food.

An inviting guest room is a necessity. You want your guests to feel at home when they visit. Provide clean, comfortable bedding, a night light and a couple of bottles of water on the night stand. The guest bathroom should include everyday grooming items, including soap, shampoo, conditioner and cotton swabs. Include plenty of fresh towels, extra toilet paper and air freshener.

Keeping your guests entertained during their stay can be a challenge. Why not plan a shopping trip with your female guests and send the men off to play golf? Whatever you choose, don't stress! Your guests will be happy to spend quality time with you.

Hosting parties and overnight guests can take a lot of time before, during and after, so ask for help. Many hosts and hostesses often find themselves too busy to enjoy their hard work. Don't let that happen to you. Take time to sit back, chat with your guests and enjoy yourself! **NOW**



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Make the Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum one of your first stops. You'll learn all about Leonidas Carrington Hill, an adventurous attorney from Beeville, Texas, who set out on a long stagecoach business trip to Brownsville, Texas, in 1901, not realizing the trip would forever change his life. While in Brownsville, he explored the brush country to the north, known as the Wild Horse Desert, and soon realized it was fertile land. With the Rio Grande River just a few miles away, water could easily be accessed by fields via the intricate system of canals he envisioned. He discovered 500 acres of land on an arroyo that shed into the Gulf of Mexico (later to become



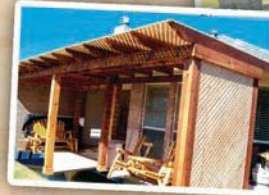
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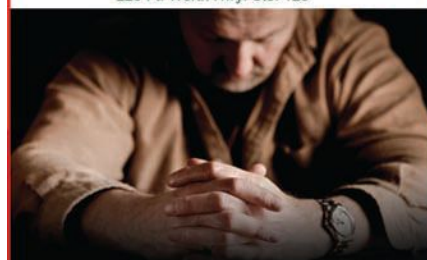
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the Port of Harlingen). The land was perfectly located in the center of a future agricultural paradise. But there was one problem: The railroad had not reached this far south yet.

Hill's relentlessness led him to railroad builder Col. Uriah Lott, who was connecting South Texas with the rest of the country via the St. Louis-Brownsville-Mexico Railway. The line stopped at Hill's town — known then as Six Shooter Junction — on July 4, 1904, with a spur extending west. Col. Lott had family roots in a harbor town in the Netherlands called Harlingen. Hill's gratitude led him to incorporate the American city of Harlingen on April 15, 1910.

The Rio Grande Valley is among the top fastest growing destinations in the country, but in Harlingen, people experience a slower pace. Nature parks and walking trails appeal to nature lovers and active seniors, while its exclusive military academy lures young, aspiring cadets from all corners of the world. The city was named as the cheapest place to live in the country, prompting retirees and birdwatchers to stay longer and enjoy authentic South Texas hospitality.

This hospitality comes in the form of plenty of smiling faces and mom-and-pop Mexican restaurants that actually serve Tex-Mex food, a cuisine with roots in the late 1700s when Spanish missionaries left behind acculturated Spanish-speaking Native Americans known as Tejanos. Cheese enchiladas, chalupas, hard-shell ground beef tacos, cumin-spiced rice and chili con carne are among the most popular dishes. Visitors

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savor generously portioned plates and love the low prices. Visits to Harlingen are not complete without sampling good Texas barbecue. Restaurants serving sweet, tomato-based sauces smothering beef cooked over hickory or mesquite wood, are easily found.

A must stop is the Iwo Jima Memorial & Museum, where you can admire Felix de Weldon's original plaster model of the famous Iwo Jima Arlington bronze monument inspired by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal's acclaimed photograph. The memorial grounds hold a special meaning to Valley folks, for it is the resting place of Corporal Harlon Block, one of the men planting the flag, who is a native of the nearby town of Weslaco. Block was killed in action during the battle. Battalion-size parades, including the only Iwo Jima parade held in the United States on the battle's anniversary, add to the experience.

The Harlingen Arts & Heritage Museum allows visitors to walk into three historic homes meticulously decorated in period style. Lon (as Leonidas was known) C. Hill's Victorian house, the city's first hospital and a stagecoach inn surround a brick-paved shaded courtyard. Both museums are located on the grounds that once housed an Air Force base.

Two cultures merge in downtown Harlingen. The *Placita* (a small public square) is ideal for leisure afternoons and for festive, traditional Mexican celebrations held in May and September.



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Harlingen's Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival is touted among the top three best birding festivals in the world by different international publications such as *Birdwatch UK*. Every November, birders from around the globe travel to Harlingen for the amazing experience of meeting world-renowned birders and authors. Participants relish the opportunity to spend a day bird watching with these A-listers and networking during afternoon cordials. The festival began 21 years ago, when even the concept of birding was unfamiliar to most. Currently, few places boast the number of species that the Valley does. There are over 900 species of birds recorded for the entire United States, and 500 of them can be found in the Rio Grande Valley from November to April.

Harlingen's Valley International Airport provides travelers easy access from any part of the country through Southwest, Sun County and United Airlines. Harlingen's lodging options revolve around popular franchise hotels. People can also wander east and west for an amazing good time, returning to enjoy the peace and quiet of nights in Harlingen. A century after his discovery, Lon Hill's vision of a centralized community has become a colorful, energizing reality. **NOW**

By Nydia Tapia-Gonzales. Photos courtesy of The Harlingen Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Editor's Note: www.visitbarlingentexas.com offers great vacation planning tools.

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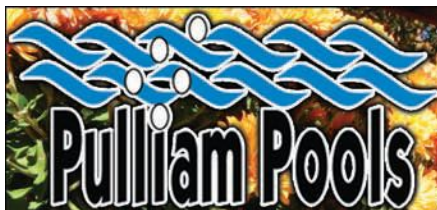
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Windy Hill Farm Bakery offers a variety of treats — from cheesecakes and cupcakes to decorative cakes and fruit carvings.

SHARING SWEETS

At Windy Hill Farm Bakery, cheesecakes are the specialty.

— By Amber D. Browne

From wedding receptions and baby showers to birthday parties and holiday gatherings, Windy Hill Farm Bakery has the perfect dessert for the occasion. Lesli Edwards opened the bakery in February 2010, but her passion for baking sweet treats stretches back to when she was 3 years old. “I was a very sick child, so I couldn’t go to the barn,” Lesli said. “I did a lot of baking with my mom.”

As a child, Lesli learned a few tricks of the trade in 4-H. She graduated from Weatherford High School and studied agriculture science, with an emphasis in horticulture at Weatherford College. She received a floriculture certification from Benz School of Floral Design at Texas A&M University. She worked in greenhouses in Holland, but a flower mold exacerbated her

asthma, and she was forced to quit. “I use that horticulture degree for the sugar flowers on my cakes and for edible flowers.”

Just over four years ago, Lesli decided to follow her passion for baking. “I’ve always wanted to do this,” she admitted. She began baking cookies for her family, and at their urging, she opened the bakery. Windy Hill Farm Bakery doesn’t have a storefront, so Lesli works out of a renovated concession stand on her family’s working farm. “I don’t charge very much, because I don’t have the overhead.”

Clients can call, text, email their orders or contact Lesli through her Facebook page for the business. “They usually know what they want,” Lesli explained. Her daughter, Sarah Beth Payne, can draw a sketch of a desired cake for the client’s

approval. Lesli's husband, Norman Edward, often helps with delivery. Norman, Sarah Beth and Lesli's son, Connor Payne, also help serve desserts to yearly attendees at the Taste of Parker County. Windy Hill Farm Bakery won Best Dessert at Taste of Parker County in 2012 and Best Dessert, Most Unique and third overall in 2014. She didn't enter the food competition in 2013, because her husband was recovering from surgery. "I wish I didn't have that gap, because people think I just didn't win, but I wasn't there," she explained.

Windy Hill Farm Bakery is known for its cheesecakes, which are Lesli's specialty. They are offered on the menu at Fish Creek. "My cheesecakes do not have the traditional graham cracker crust. I do a Scottish shortbread cookie, unless something different is requested," she said. Lesli offers just over 100 cheesecake flavors. "I can make anything into cheesecake." Lesli offers eggnog cheesecake and even a maple bacon cheesecake, which tastes like pancakes and bacon.

Lesli develops her own recipes and is precise in her baking. She rarely uses molds for her cakes. Instead, she cuts them into shapes by hand. Alcohol cakes are also offered. "My tiramisu has Kahlúa in it. It depends on what the customer wants," she said.

Customers have been known to bring in a paint sample to match their vision for colorful icing. Lesli will work to match the icing and fondant colors. With a projector, Lesli can also display designs onto cakes and cookies. She then pipes the icing onto the projected design. Flavored cupcakes are sold in batches of one dozen. Lesli can mold chocolate designs to top the cupcakes. Cake pops, chocolate strawberries and fruit carvings are also available.

Windy Hill Farm Bakery doesn't ship desserts, but delivery is free in Parker County. Only cash or checks are accepted as payment. Lesli often donates to local charities including Parker Paws, Grace House Ministries and local schools. The Weatherford area is her home, and she plans to continue sharing her award-winning treats for years to come. **NOW**

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When Is It Time to Make Portfolio Changes?

The kids are back at school, and summer vacations are now just fading memories, so it must be autumn. But the seasons don't just move on the calendar. They also change in your life. And, speaking of changes, you'll have to make many of them as you move through the years — and that includes changes to your investment portfolio. But how will you know when it's time to take action?

Just as Mother Nature sends out signals to indicate a change in seasons — blooming flowers, falling leaves, warmer or colder temperatures, longer or shorter days, etc. — your portfolio will frequently tell you when you need to make adjustments. Here are a couple of indicators you may want to heed:

• **Out-of-balance portfolio** — Even the best stocks can lose value when the overall market is down, but if you only own stocks, you could take a big hit during a downturn. And if it happens repeatedly, you may find it hard to even stay invested. After all, stocks will always fluctuate in value, and protection of your principal is not guaranteed. Yet you can at least help defend yourself against market volatility by balancing your portfolio with a mix of stocks, bonds, government securities, certificates of deposit (CDs) and other investments, with the percentage of each type of asset based on your individual goals, time horizon and risk tolerance.

• **Overweighting of individual investments** — Related to the point made above, you can also have too much money kept in a single investment, such as an individual stock or bond. Sometimes, this overweighting can happen almost on its own, as when a stock, or stock-based vehicle, has increased so much in value that it now takes on a larger percentage of your portfolio than you had intended — possibly bringing with it more risk than you had intended, too. As a general rule, no single

investment should take up more than a small percentage of your entire portfolio.

Your own life may also send you some messages regarding changes you may need to make to your investment and financial strategies. Here are just a few of the milestones that may trigger necessary moves:

• **New child** — You'll need to review your life insurance to make sure it's sufficient to help provide for a newborn or newly adopted child, should anything happen to you. You may also want to begin investing in a college savings vehicle, such as a 529 plan.

• **New job** — Assuming your new job offers you a retirement plan, such as a 401(k) or similar vehicle, you'll have some choices to make. How much can you afford to contribute? How should you allocate your dollars among the investment choices offered in the plan? How can you best integrate your 401(k) or other plan into your overall investment portfolio to avoid duplication?

• **Impending retirement** — As you enter retirement, you may want to adjust your portfolio to help reduce its short-term fluctuations and to provide more current income opportunities. At the same time, you may still need to invest for growth. You could be retired for two or three decades, and you'll need to stay ahead of inflation.

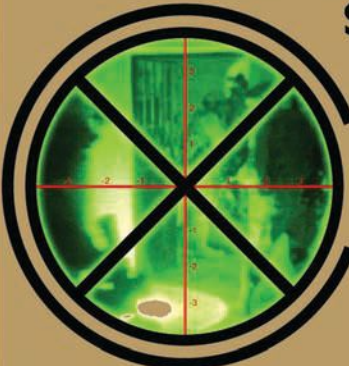
Pay close attention to the messages coming from your portfolio — and from your life. These signals will give you a good idea of when it's time to make the right investment-related moves. **NOW**


This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Gregg Davis is an Edward Jones representative based in Willow Park.

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An Indulgent Brew

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Umm, the smell of hot coffee brewing is the best wake-up call. It is even better than the smell of sizzling bacon, because with coffee you get a little extra something. Caffeine is a central nervous system stimulant, which means it can change the way you feel and behave. That little zap to your system makes you feel more awake, focused and alert. Studies now show caffeine's benefits go beyond increased energy to providing some protection from diseases such as type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's and dementia.

But as with anything affecting your brain and your heart, there is always the possibility of too much of a good thing. With caffeine, overindulgence is easy. Since the FDA identifies it as a drug and a food additive, the products in which you can find it are endless. Caffeine is in prescription and over-the-counter medications, such as headache tablets and diet pills. You can find it in certain teas, energy snacks, soft drinks and candy — particularly those with chocolate. You can also find caffeine in some ice creams and yogurts. If you need to lower your daily intake of caffeine, it is necessary to read labels to be sure how much you are taking.

Generally, caffeine does not cause difficulty if consumed in safe amounts. A moderate amount of 100-200 mg. caffeine, which is roughly two cups of coffee a day, is considered to be reasonable.

Regular sized soft drinks, such as Coke and Pepsi, contain approximately 35-55 mg. The total of what is safe for individuals may depend upon body type, size and health. Taking over 600 mg. of caffeine a day can be detrimental to your health. The amount of caffeine children consume should be greatly limited. A safe amount for adolescents is considered to be no more than 100 mg. per day. Pregnant women should check with their doctor before consuming caffeine.

Symptoms of consuming too much caffeine are increased heartbeat, feeling jittery, nervousness, increased blood pressure and headaches. Those with heart irregularities may want to check with a physician to determine a safe level of caffeine to consume. Drinking caffeinated drinks too close to bedtime can cause insomnia. Caffeine is a diuretic as well as a stimulant. A diuretic increases the output of urine — meaning you lose more fluids. That is why caffeinated drinks should not be used to quench your thirst.

There is a lot of good along with some risk in caffeine. Pay attention to your intake before you enjoy! **NOW**

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



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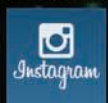
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November 1

Good Neighbor Gallery Night: 5:00-9:00 p.m., Mader Bagley State Farm Building, 1916 Martin Dr. Cost for the art show and sale is \$10 per person. Call (817) 599-3278 for more information.

November 1, 2

House Without Windows: **Saturday:** 8:00 p.m., **Sunday:** 2:00 p.m., Theatre Off The Square, 114 N. Denton St. Enjoy a performance of the murder mystery by Richard Reich. For ticket information and reservations, call (817) 341-8687.

November 7

Third Annual Western Art Show and Sale: 6:00 p.m., Doss Heritage and Culture Center, 1400 Texas Dr. You can get more information at www.dosscenter.org.

November 8

Veterans Day Parade: 9:45 a.m., parade route begins at the Ninth Grade Center. The parade is organized by the Parker County American Legion Post No. 163. For more information, call (817) 594-4101.

November 13

Gardeners' Club of Parker County: 10:00

a.m., St. Francis Church, 117 Ranch House Rd., Willow Park. Call (817) 919-6280 for more information.

November 15

Fourth Annual Just Women Ministry Holiday Brunch: 10:00a.m.-1:00p.m., Church at the Crossing, 128 Elm St., Aledo. Tickets are available for \$20 each through **November 10**. Call (817) 441-8885 for more information.

November 19

Parker Paws Spay-ghetti Dinner and Silent Auction: 4:00 p.m., Fish Creek Restaurant, 4899 I-20 Service Rd., Willow Park. A portion of the proceeds will benefit Parker Paws. Call (817) 694-5718 for more information.

November 22

Coyote Chase Race: 9:00 a.m., Weatherford College, 225 College Park Dr. Participants can compete in 5K and one-mile runs. For more information, visit www.coyotechaserace.com.

December 1

Handel's Messiah Concert: 7:30 p.m., Alkek Fine Arts Center, Weatherford College, 225

College Park Dr. Visit www.wc.edu for more information.

Ongoing:

Wednesdays

Yoga In The Garden: 5:30 p.m., Chandor Gardens, 711 W. Lee Ave. Certified yoga instructor Loretta Benham will share her popular yoga session in the garden. Call (817) 613-1700 for more information.

First and Third Thursdays

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Family Support Group: 6:00 p.m., South Main Church of Christ, 201 South Main St. Call (817) 594-3030 for more information.

Fridays

Hope: Yoga for Healing: 11:15 a.m., Indra's Grace, 131 West Church St., Ste. 200. Indra's Grace will offer cancer patients and their caregivers a free class every Friday to help ease stress and pain. For more information, visit www.indrasgrace.com.

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

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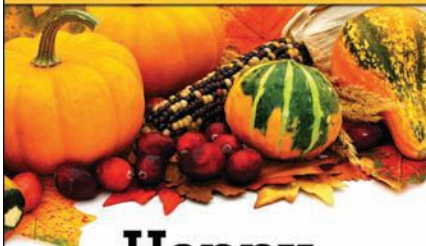
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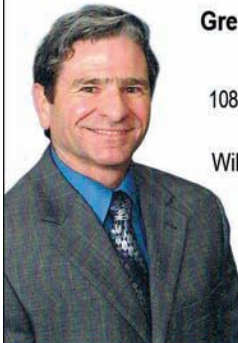
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In the Kitchen With Melinda Bradley

— By Amber D. Browne

Melinda Bradley learned to cook while standing on a high back chair at the counter in her grandmother's kitchen. She is now writing out family recipes to pass down to her daughters and nieces. "There is a lot of 'do it until it looks and tastes right,' so trying to pin down a recipe is tough."

Finding inspiration from what is in her cabinets and refrigerator, Melinda creates delicious recipes for her husband, Joe, and her two daughters, Madison and Blair. "The problem with that is the recipe is sometimes hard to recreate, because you can't remember what all you put in it," Melinda stated. "Everything in our family relates to food! Luckily, everyone pitches in when we all get together." **NOW**

Pasta Salad

12 oz. rainbow rotini pasta
1 14-oz. can artichoke hearts, drained and chopped
1 small purple onion, chopped
12 oz. cherry tomatoes
1 6-oz. jar green olives, drained
4 oz. feta cheese with tomato and basil
1 16-oz. bottle Kraft Greek Vinaigrette Dressing

1. Cook, drain and cool pasta. Mix in remaining ingredients and serve.

Brisket Tacos

Brisket:

4 lbs. beef brisket or lean roast, trimmed
1 large onion, chopped
10 black peppercorns
4 dried bay leaves

3 cloves garlic, crushed
2 serrano peppers, chopped
1 Tbsp. salt

Chipotle Dressing:

1/4 cup olive oil
1/4 cup fresh lime juice
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
2 cloves garlic, chopped
2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
1 7-oz. can chipotle peppers in adobo sauce, to taste

1. For Brisket: Put all ingredients in a Crock-Pot and cover. Cook on high for 4-6 hours, or until meat is tender.

2. Remove brisket and shred with two forks. Return shredded meat to Crock-Pot and keep warm.

3. For Chipotle Dressing: In a blender, pulse first 6 ingredients until mixed. Drain the

chipotles, pouring the adobo sauce into the blender. Add as many chipotles as desired and puree.

4. Serve brisket in fresh tortillas. Top with the chipotle dressing.

5. (You can add other toppings to the tacos, including red onion with lime juice and cilantro, shredded cabbage or guacamole.)

Mashed Potato Salad

3-5 lbs. potatoes, peeled and cubed
1 10-oz. jar Durkee Famous Sauce
1 small onion, chopped
1 10-oz. jar dill pickle relish
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Boil potatoes in salted water for about 20 minutes, or until tender. Drain potatoes and mash with a hand mixer.

2. Add remaining ingredients. Stir to combine. Serve warm or cold.

Vegetable Casserole

Vegetables:

1 16-oz. can LeSeur peas, drained
1 12-oz. can white shoepeg corn, drained
1 16-oz. can French-style green beans, drained
1 10.5-oz. can cream of celery soup
3/4 cup sour cream
1/2 medium white onion, chopped
1 cup cheddar cheese, grated
Salt and pepper, to taste

Topping:

1 stick butter, melted
1 stack Ritz crackers, crushed
1/4 cup slivered almonds

1. For vegetables: Mix first 3 ingredients in a 9x13-inch casserole dish. Mix in remaining ingredients.

2. For topping: Mix all ingredients and sprinkle onto vegetable mixture. Bake at 350 F for 30-40 minutes. (For a larger crowd, the vegetable ingredients can be doubled but the topping ingredients can remain the same.)

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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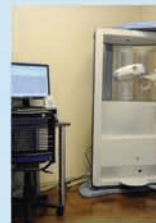
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