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ON THE COVER



Officer Ray Hall becomes a resourceful friend for our students.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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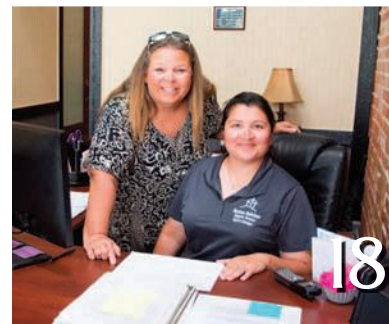


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Editor's Note

Hello, Midlothian!

As we settle into the subtle embrace of fall, we turn our hearts to home and the holidays. Many will travel near and far to enjoy the fellowship of family and friends or to welcome others to their hearth and home for a delicious Thanksgiving meal. At some point, most of us will give thanks for the blessings in our lives. For myself, I am thankful I believe in God, and He calls me His child. I'm blessed for the miracles I've been privileged to witness in my lifetime. They keep me humble. I'm blessed when I see a child spontaneously want to help someone else. It gives me hope for the future. Giving thanks is powerful, and it encourages the listener. This Thanksgiving, millions will be encouraged as a chorus of thanks resounds across the country. May we all be blessed with a happy Thanksgiving!

Betty

Betty Tryon
MidlothianNOW Editor
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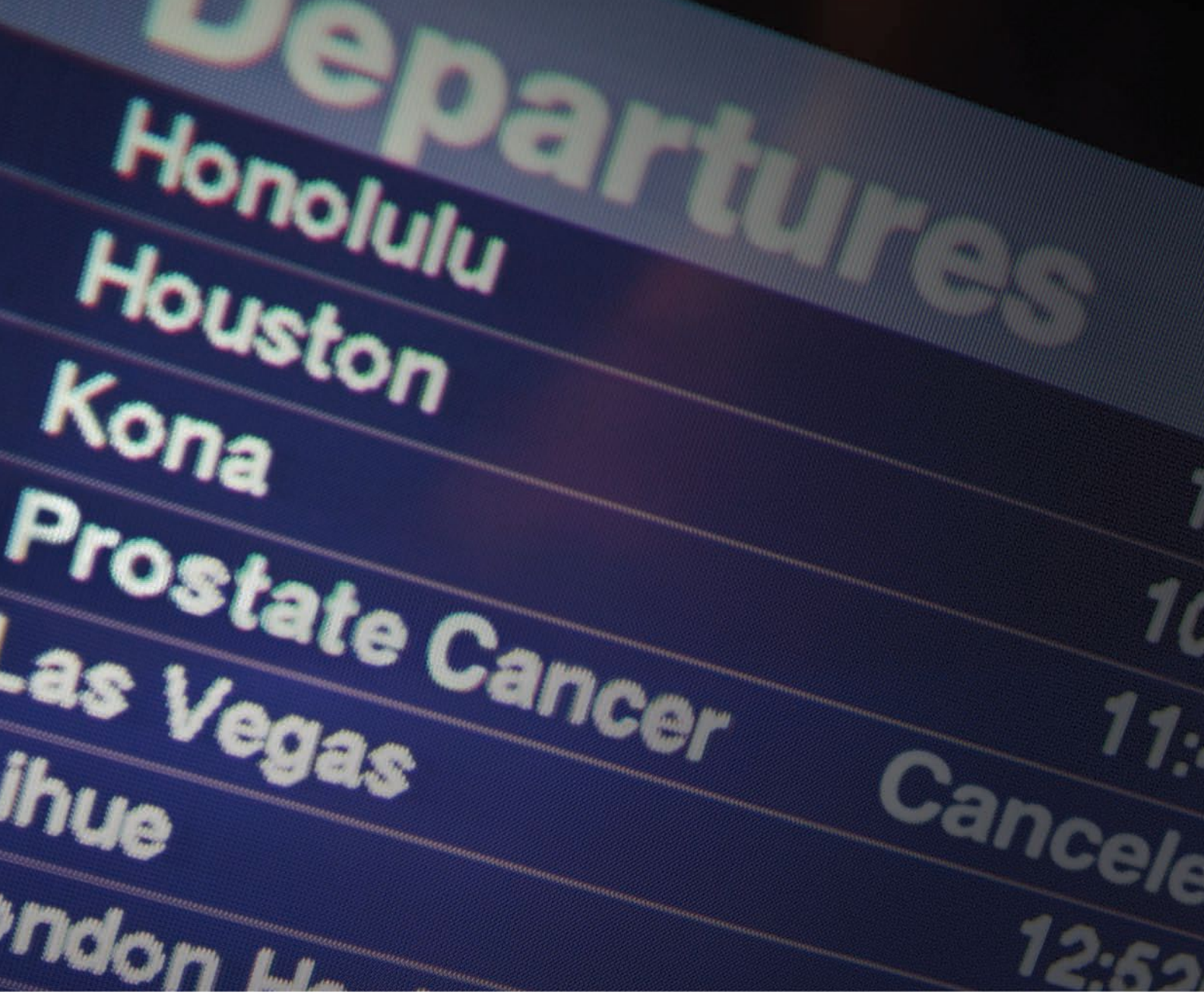
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A PUBLIC SERVANT

— By Betty Tryon



Ray Hall with freshman Lauren Woodruff.

During his younger years when acting was his first love, Officer Ray Hall, loaded with charm and charisma, dreamed of the day he would be a movie star. But, the Hollywood dream became a vapor as life landed him homeless in his car time and time again.

Ray can hardly remember a time when he did not have a job. Born in Wichita Falls, Texas, in 1978, he grew up on his grandfather's farm. "Everyone had a job," Ray stated emphatically. "If you were able-bodied, you had to work. My grandfather's rule was if you don't work, you don't eat." Ray remembers his first job was gathering eggs from the chickens. He and his twin brother, currently a news reporter in Richmond, Virginia, and his two sisters all had jobs on the farm.



“MY TITLE SAYS PUBLIC SERVANT, SO THE PUBLIC IS WHO I SERVE.”

During his junior high years, Ray’s parents divorced and he moved to upstate New York with his father. “I enrolled in Ray Jr. High in New York,” he laughed. “No kidding, that was the name of the school! I soon decided my dad wasn’t fun to live with, so I returned to Wichita Falls for high school.”

While in high school, his part-time job was to coach junior gymnastics. “Playing sports has always been a major part of my life. In high school I was on the tennis team, and after school I did gymnastics and power tumbling. When I turned 15, my gymnastics coach asked me if I wanted a job coaching the younger kids, and I accepted the offer. I discovered it was amazing to motivate the athletes and see their fantastic progression and sense of achievement when they learn a new skill.”

After graduation he went to acting school. During this time, he and his family needed a place to stay, and an uncle provided a home. Another uncle also benefited from the largesse of his brother and moved in with Ray’s family. Although unemployed, he demanded Ray earn more money and give it to him or leave. Ray, already busy with school and a part-time job coaching, could not oblige and became homeless at age 19. All was not lost, however, because he still had his car.

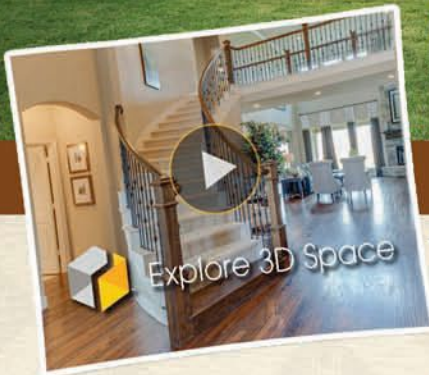
“I lived in my car for three months,” he shared, but it was a struggle to avoid homelessness. Over the years, Ray became



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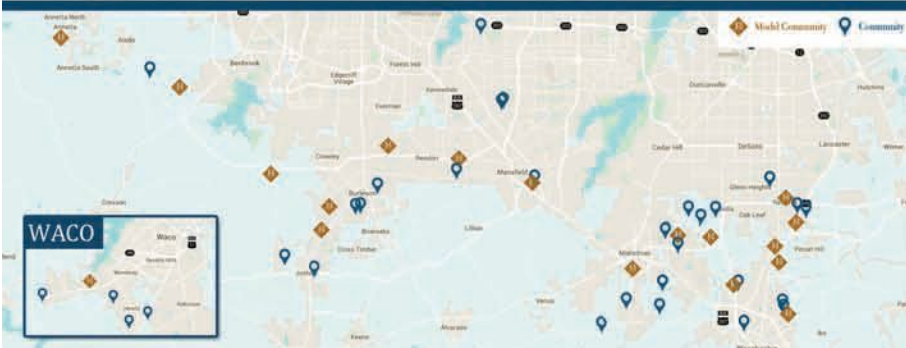
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homeless several times due to circumstances beyond his control. He supported himself coaching gymnastics and parking cars. "When I coached gymnastics, I was inspired by many of the athletes. I thought it was very unique how they were so dedicated day in and day out during each practice. Their dedication and commitment to their gymnastics motivated me to coach better."

Ray's life began to change when his saved earnings from coaching gymnastics allowed him to purchase his first home, where he lived for 10 years. It was around this time that one of his co-workers mentioned to him that he was always talking about police work — so why not apply in Coppell? Ray did and graduated from their academy in 2009 at the top of his class. However, after much deliberation, he decided to begin his career as a police officer in Midlothian on December 26, 2009. "I give Midlothian officers kudos for being so helpful to me when I was in training," he recalled. Ray eventually was promoted to SRO, a School Resource Officer.



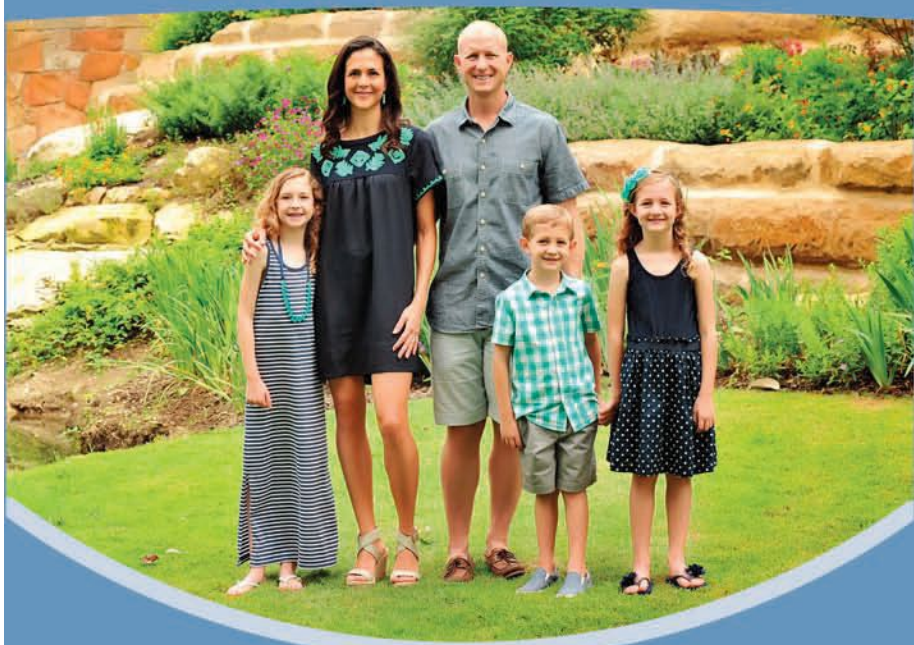
Coaching and being a law enforcement officer are two very different career paths. However, Ray sees strong similarities between the two. "I don't see it as being dramatically different from coaching gymnastics. As a coach, I had to communicate and listen to the students, parents and coaches to achieve a common goal. In law enforcement, I have to be able to communicate and listen to citizens that I am fortunate enough to come in contact with. I believe every career has certain dangers and liabilities that come with it. Both careers have their pros and cons."

Ray has been SRO for three years and, along with other SROs, he has the responsibility of four schools — Frank Seale Middle School, Mt. Peak Elementary, J.R. Irvin Elementary and LaRue Miller Elementary. "For the elementary schools, Sergeant Peña and I teach a safety program to the students called Think First Stay Safe," Ray remarked. "It's a child lures prevention program. We teach them about the different lures out there, such as the affection lure that people will use to harm them. We give them a crash course about how to protect themselves from bullying. I try to motivate and inspire them, to teach them about harassment or bullying via text or online. We do safety checks at the school and lock down drills, so the students, teachers and staff know what to do."

At FSMS, the students often approach Ray with certain problems. "I try to give them the best advice within my scope, but if I don't have the answer,



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I always point them to the counselor," he said. Many of the students ask him about relationship issues. "They may ask about the best way to get someone they like. I say, 'If you're a girl, stay away from boys!'" he laughed. "Sometimes, they come to me with serious subjects, and with the help of the counselors, principals, assistant principals and my sergeant, we find a way to help them.

"You have to be open and transparent in this profession," he remarked, "and, to be a good listener." The students occasionally want to use Ray as a confidante. "Students will come and say, 'I'll tell you something if you promise not to tell anyone,'" Ray disclosed. "I'm truthful with them and say, 'If it's criminal, then by law, I have to tell.' I'm a law enforcement officer. If it's criminal,



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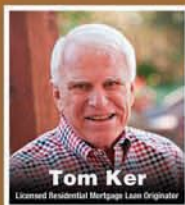
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and if their life could be in danger, or if it's something crazy, then I'm not going to promise to keep it a secret. If I lie to them, then they won't trust me again. Once they realize we care about them as a family, they'll come back."

To have this type of trust from students requires spending quality time with them to engender their trust. Ray finds that time by sitting with them at lunch, playing chess and befriending them when he can. "First of all," he considered, "I let them know I am here to help because as a cop in a uniform — it could be daunting to them. Occasionally I'll see kids in the neighborhood, and I'll stop and play basketball, throw the football around or just talk to them. I don't try to be super macho. I try to be real. I represent the city of Midlothian and the Police Department. My title says public servant, so the public is who I serve." **NOW**

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MANNA FOR MIDLOTHIAN

— By Betty Tryon

In 2005, the misery of Hurricane Katrina came to Midlothian. One of the volunteers standing with open arms to welcome the evacuees was the director of Manna House and Heaven's Attic, Sissy Franklin. She vividly remembers one gentleman in particular. "He was taking his wallet out of his pocket, and it was still wet," she recalled. "It dripped water as he opened it to get his ID. I remember thinking that his feet were horrible because he'd been walking through water and he needed some shoes." That was not going to be easy because he wore a size 14. They don't get

many shoes that size at Manna House. As Sissy was thinking she needed to leave to go buy size 14 shoes, one of the Manna House volunteers returned from lunch and handed her a box saying it was just sitting at the back door. When Sissy opened it, she literally fell to her knees. It was a box of brand new tennis shoes — size 14.

Sissy still get chills telling the story. "There was only about 30 minutes' time difference between thinking I would have to go buy those shoes to them being delivered anonymously. That was the hand of God," she declared.



*"We are all
on the same
page here,
and we love
what we do."*

That incidence pinpointed the work of Manna House — to assist anyone in need with God's help. "When we walk in here in the mornings, we can feel God's presence," Sissy revealed. "We have people telling us all the time they like the way it feels in here. I appreciate that a lot. It's a good thing."

Sissy, raised in Grand Prairie, made it to Midlothian in the early '90s and fell in love with it. Her children graduated from Midlothian's schools and were baptized in the churches and involved in Manna House. "My entire family has always been involved in Manna House," she stated. "I include them in everything. Even my grandkids help out because we fell in love with what Manna House stood for."

Sissy remembers the first time she had to ask for help. She'd had brain surgery



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and during her recovery she was unable to work. Although she had filed for disability, it was a long time coming, and meanwhile the electric company turned off the electricity for nonpayment. "I came up to Manna House with my heart in my hand. The bill was \$200. Manna paid it, and I felt I had seen God in action that day. I wanted to be a part of that."

She volunteered for 10 years and has been the director for 11 years. Sissy reminisced about the condition of Manna House when she first started. "We had only \$1,000. Now we do things we would've never had the chance to do. I've surrounded myself with the best staff: Norma Belcher, the office manager, and Justin Coffman, our chaplain. Everyone is on the exact same page that I'm on. Any time I say we, I'm referring to community. They have made so much of a difference in so many lives."

One of the things Sissy wanted to accomplish was to establish a Summer Feeding Program for kids on the free and reduced lunches at school. "During the summer, they aren't eating," she



informed. "They are very food insecure." Sissy wasn't the only person in town worried about those kids. She received many calls from churches saying they wanted to feed kids during the summer and wanted to get the food from Manna House. Concerned about liabilities and quality of food, Sissy wanted a more organized approach. She was able to secure shelf stable meals for the children with the churches supplying the volunteers to distribute the food.

"In targeting the kids, I didn't want any of them to feel poor, so we opened it up to any child in MISC as an, 'If you're hungry, come eat with us kind of thing.' We were hoping and praying we'd reach our targeted group, and we did," Sissy added. In the community, they set up five locations most likely to have kids who needed to be fed during the summer. One of the amazing things that happened was someone from a foundation, unsolicited, contacted her the next day and offered to pay one person at each site to be a site supervisor, and the feeding program turned into a summer-long facsimile of a vacation Bible school.

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"The program started the Monday after school released and ended the Friday before school started again," she informed. "We went 11 full weeks feeding kids. From 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. every day, we played with the kids with water activities, jump ropes, hula hoops, bubbles, paints and colors. The churches came in and spoke to them about God. It was amazing to watch the kids sit there and listen!"

Another way Manna House goes all out to help kids with their school supplies is with the Mayor's Back 2 School Bash. Fueled by volunteers from churches in the area, the day of the giveaway this year was a big celebration with seven water slides, a zip line, free hot dogs and booths loaded with goodies set up by churches and businesses.

With all that Manna House has done for the children in Midlothian, Sissy did not want the senior citizens to fall through the cracks. She was able to secure Dianne Lampert as a volunteer senior advocate to check on the seniors' welfare by calling them, taking them food if needed and answering their questions. "We love our seniors," Sissy exclaimed. "Dianne has even cleaned out their refrigerators. We tell them we will go through their homes and pantries looking for outdated food and replace it

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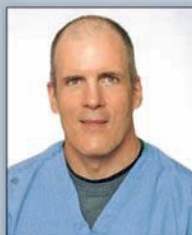


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with good food. We'll look to see if they have wrinkles in their carpet, if they have frayed cords, if they need handrails on the bathtubs and check out everything to make sure they are safe." Sissy also noted they have a certified, licensed, senior specialist whose expertise benefits the seniors in helping them write advanced directives and who helps with estate information and Medicare.

During the holidays, Manna House diligently works to make those days better for families who need help. For Thanksgiving, Manna House gives over 300 families everything to make that traditional dinner. Volunteers deliver boxes to seniors. For Christmas, they put out over 3,000 Christmas angels in different locations in Midlothian. "Anyone can come in to Manna, as well, to adopt an angel or an entire family," Sissy explained. Senior citizens need help also and are designated on the tree as Grandma and Grandpa.

"It is important to me that when people walk through the door broken, they leave with their dignity, a prayer and a smile. We are all on the same page here, and we love what we do. I've had 20-something amazing years here, and my heart is full." **NOW**

Editor's Note: Contact Manna House at (972) 775-1800 if interested in volunteering.

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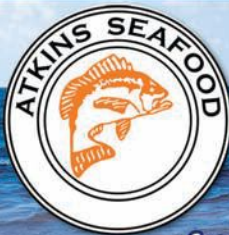
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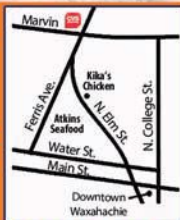
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At Home With James Gauna

The story of a home is really only as good as that of the people who live within its walls. With amazing individual stories that connect as if written by today's Hollywood screenwriters, James Gauna and Sandra Henry have created a house with a story that is almost too incredible to believe.

James was an infant when his father passed away, and his mother remarried while he was still young. His stepfather's car broke down while driving to Sweetwater one day. "We were trying to get to my mom's hometown, and we broke down in Ennis," he recalled. "A man stopped to help, and then he gave my dad a job with his lumber business and a house, so we ended up in Ennis."

Sandra was adopted by a wonderful couple, but she too had an early life marked by unbelievable tragedy. "When I was 2, my mom died from an unexpected illness," she relayed. Her dad had moved to Dallas after procuring a job with Lamar Hunt, but when he remarried a few years later, Sandra's dad and stepmother decided to live somewhere away from the city. "When I was 6, we moved to Ennis. It wasn't the city, but was close enough," she said.

James and Sandra lived in the same neighborhood, though only one of them remembered the other from the early days. "I would see her drive down the street, and she never looked my way," James laughingly said. It was not until they both worked at the local H-E-B in 1988 that the two really met. "I was in the breakroom when she walked in," he retold. "I tumbled out of my chair and said, 'Since I've already fallen for you, maybe we should go out.'"

Two Stories Become One

— By Zachary R. Urquhart



and Sandra Henry



Unfortunately for their relationship, the timing was terrible. "I really went 'away' when I left for college," Sandra explained, "so I broke up with him and moved to Plainview, Texas, where I started at Wayland Baptist University." Sandra later graduated from The University of Texas at Arlington with a degree in journalism, where a chance meeting with the advertising director for *The Dallas Morning News* landed her a job. She began selling ads in 1990 and has done so ever since.

While Sandra was going to school and starting her career, James stayed close to home. He was on the police force in Ferris, but only for a few years. "We didn't get paid much back then, so I was always doing side jobs," he stated. "I realized I was making more with my other jobs, so I left." James was married, and has three kids, Jeremy, Samantha and Jessica, as well as three grandchildren. Fifteen years ago, the kids' activities led James to a new career.

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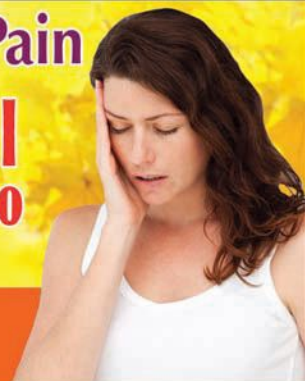
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What may be their lives' most important event started with the simple click of a mouse. "James found me on Facebook," Sandra recollected. "I think he said, 'Hey girl, what's up?'" Within a week, James and Sandra started dating again, and they have not looked back since. They are planning a wedding in Miami, Florida, next fall.



Sandra bounced around the Metroplex after college, eventually settling in Midlothian. "Coming from zero-lots, I loved the space," she explained. Their house sits on a 3-acre corner lot south of Eagle's Nest. "The builder lived here before we bought it, so there were great features," Sandra continued. Just inside the house, Sandra repurposed the office. "I insisted on a formal dining room

because I have an obsession with table settings," she admitted.

At the other end of the house, Sandra has a craft room that's much like a store. "This is my favorite place to unwind," she detailed. She was sure to point out the sign a friend made that reads: *This is My Happy Place*.

James has his own sanctuary. "I like to work out to stay in shape, so the weight room is my place,"



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he related. He originally had a man cave, but recently had to make an adjustment. "Jessica, my daughter, has moved in with her two kids, so this is now their bedroom and playroom," he explained. James is more than happy to give up his den for their sake, though it is humorous to see a huge flat-screen television in the kids' room.

The kitchen is large and open, with short counters, giving a flowing feel throughout the room. "Even with our great patio, when we have people over, everyone ends up in here," Sandra quipped. The breakfast nook has a great view of the backyard, and the final touch is a sentimental piece in the corner. "One of my three sets of glassware is in this china cabinet," she pointed out. "It was my Aunt Betty's, and even though it doesn't match, I couldn't think of getting rid of it."

Sandra's sentimental side carries on into the master bedroom, where an antique clock sits above a special chair. "My papaw was a clockmaker, so I love this clock he made," she began. "While I was in college, I was at an estate sale one



day and saw this chair that was perfect. I was broke, but the woman gave it to me for almost nothing. Her mom read to her every night in that chair, and she wanted someone who would take care of it to have it."

James also has several items of sentimental importance in the bedroom. "I have my trophies from playing in competitive softball leagues," he explained. "This one is special because it's the last one I ever got playing with my nephew." Timothy Gauna was one of the soldiers to give his life when the USS *Cole* was attacked in 2000, so that trophy holds a very special place in James' heart. He displays it, along with a flag and plaque commemorating that fateful attack.

Outside, James and Sandra have expanded their patio, making it a great hosting area. "I didn't have to do anything *in* the house when I moved here," Sandra said. "But we did pour extra concrete and added a pergola to the backyard. James is a carpenter, so he built a bar. We're going to add a full kitchen and a fire pit soon." The patio is complete with television, sound system and a heater for the colder months. In addition to hosting parties, James and Sandra enjoy watching the birds drink from their birdbaths and eat from their feeders every morning.

With individual narratives made all the more incredible by the three-decade-long tale culminating with their eventual union, James and Sandra have built a home on the foundation of their incredible story. And what a wonderful journey it's been thus far! **NOW**



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Lawns do not take care of themselves. For some people, this is an unfortunate reality of home ownership. Between watering, mowing and tending to weeds, most people think of their grass as one of their least favorite chores. For Steve Ballard, maintaining pristine landscapes has been a lifelong passion. And as director of complex grounds for the Texas Rangers, he lives his dream one game day at a time.



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CARE OF THINGS,
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CUT COSTS AND
IMPROVED THE
PARKS AT THE
SAME TIME."**

Steve grew up in Fort Worth before moving to Lubbock as a teenager. After finishing high school, Steve went to Texas Tech University, and took a few varied landscape courses. "My mom's dad was a rancher, farmer and gardener," he outlined. "He taught me a lot about growing, and I was always interested. I tried landscape architecture, but I couldn't draw, so I tried studying to be a nursery specialist."

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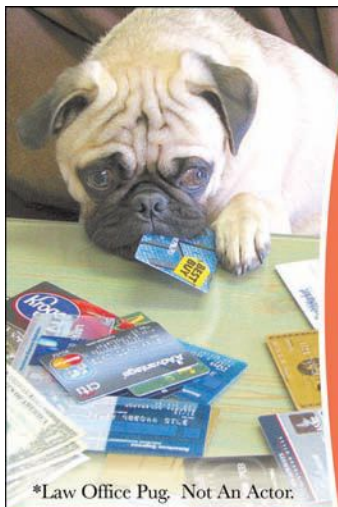


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for him. "I had always been interested in golf course management, and I learned about the Turf Grass and Golf Course Management program at Western Texas University in Snyder, Texas," he detailed. He transferred and graduated a year later with the degree he always wanted.

While at Texas Tech, in Lubbock, Steve met Amy, and they dated for several years before getting married in December 1989. They made several stops across Texas while Steve pursued his dream of becoming a golf course superintendent, and Amy has taught art in MISD for over two decades. Steve and Amy are active at Walnut Ridge Baptist Church in Mansfield, where he is a deacon, and they enjoy going antique shopping when they can. "Actually, I would say I like spending time with Amy, so I have learned to like antique shopping with her," he joked. Their son, Bradley, graduated from Midlothian High School in 2009 and the University of North Texas in 2013. He works as a sales executive for a local radio station and lives with his wife, Lauren, in North Richland Hills.



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Armed with an education to match his passion, Steve started a decades-long career in landscape management, working at several golf courses before going to work for the city of Midlothian in 2001. As the director of public works, Steve was mostly looking forward to tending to the city's parks, but his job also included maintaining the streets. "In the interview they asked me what I knew about streets, and I had to tell them I didn't know much," he laughed. "I figured they didn't want me, but I got a call and they hired me." He did so well that the city planners wondered how he managed to stay in the budget. "I just knew how to take care of things, so I actually cut costs and improved the parks at the same time," he affirmed.

Steve left after three years with the city, and while working for a landscape company, he inquired about helping with the Texas Rangers tarp crew. "I knew some guys who had done it, and it seemed neat to me," he detailed. "I worked my day job from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and then I would drive to the



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Ballpark to work tarp crew from 5:00 p.m. to midnight. It was exhausting.” On the tarp crew, Steve was one of a few dozen guys who would get the field covered on game days, and who would quickly protect it on stormy nights. A few years ago, Steve got his son to help on the crew as well. “It was cool working the crew with Brad,” he said.

After a year on the tarp crew, Steve went to work full time for the Rangers. “It was a step of faith in some ways, because I was basically taking an entry level position,” he recalled. “It was great, and I learned a lot.” Steve went from being a low-level guy with the Rangers, to being in charge of grounds for the Ft. Worth Cats, then came back to the Rangers in 2008. “I was promoted to manager after two years, and made director of complex grounds in May of 2013,” he shared.

In his position, Steve is in charge of about 10 men who take care of everything outside of the actual Globe Life Park, from parking lots to landscaping to repainting and even tending to the youth field. “We have over 100 acres to take care of, so we stay busy,” he explained. His crew is known as the “mafia,” since they are known to take care of anything that needs to be taken care of. Between October and March, Steve and his crew trim all of the trees to make their mulch, repair parking pads and fix irrigation issues. Steve’s team spends the offseason fixing, restoring and beautifying over 100 acres of the Rangers facility, and they spend all season keeping their work looking as pristine as possible.

From April to October, the job is an interesting beast to tame. “It takes a few days to get everything mowed and edged,” he said. “But we try to get it done at least once per home stand, and again while the team is away.” Though he starts each morning giving the crew their job



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duties for the day, he often gets thrown curveballs. "Every now and then, the crew that is inside the park needs help, so I have to figure out who I can take off their assignment outside the park. Stuff comes up every day, so one key to this job is being flexible," he admitted.

For the most part, Steve and his crew work outside the stadium, so he does not have a hand in the designs on the turf or keeping the pitcher's mound the appropriate height. They also do not get to see the players that often, though he does have one notable story. "Several years ago, I was out working, and I saw someone fishing in the pond," he recalled. "I went to check, and it was Josh Hamilton. This was when he joined us the first time, so I didn't know who he was yet, but he was just out there relaxing a little bit."

Steve always considered himself a sports fan, so he has had some special moments in his years with the team. "I was at every World Series game in 2010 and 2011. It was awesome, especially that first year," he said. "But the single greatest moment was when Alex Rodriguez struck out for us to win the pennant. The crowd's noise was amazing, and even Amy told me she was in the stands crying," he beamed.

Ever since he was a boy learning to garden from his grandpa, Steve knew what he wanted to do. Following his passions allowed him to achieve his dreams, even dreams of fields he never knew he had. **NOW**



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Dealing With Problem Pets

— By Melissa Rawlins

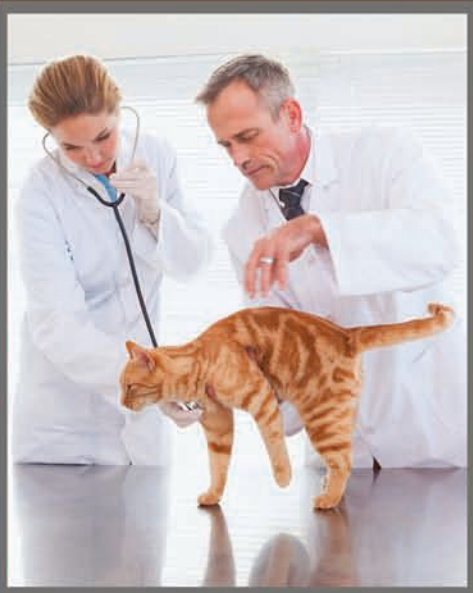
Whether dog or cat, a pet depends on its human for more than just food, water and love. They also require structure, which will prevent many problems faced by parents of four-legged children.

Even though different animals react differently to circumstances and training, common amongst both felines and canines are separation anxiety and food aggression. Both



problems inspire some very nasty behaviors that are enough to make you feel like withdrawing your love and, sometimes, your food! Instead, remember that vast resources are available to help resolve your pet problems and restore peace at home.

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Your job is to manage your cat's behavior, since you can't train this instinctive reaction out of them. First, look for environmental triggers like your own schedule or other cats. Some cats are agitated by the slightest changes in routine. Many felines feud, and urine spraying is part of their arsenal. All you can do as a steward is keep the fighters separated. Most importantly, feed them in distinctly different locations where they cannot see each other.

Similar mitigation is necessary when dogs exhibit food aggression, which the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals simply calls food guarding. Their research says that unless you fear your canine will bite you, you can employ desensitization and counter-conditioning techniques to change the way your dog feels about people approaching him when he has food. The ASPCA website warns never to punish or intimidate the dog that guards food. This could be dangerous and, possibly, derail the relationship you're building with your dog.

A variety of reasonable precautions ensure safety for people and other dogs. Simple procedures to prevent drama include:

- Leave dogs alone while they're eating.



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- Feed dogs in a separate room, in a crate or behind a barrier.
- Provide dogs with adequate amounts of food so the canines feel less motivated to guard.
- Do not attempt to take away stolen or scavenged food from dogs.
- Cause the food-aggressive dog to realize that food is provided by you by placing the food bowl at your feet or requiring the dog to eat directly from your hand.

One key to dwelling in a peaceful kingdom is empathy. According to Emily Gilliland, a young mother who has also trained her own cats and dogs for over six years, it makes all the difference when you understand how your animal is feeling about the task or behavior at hand. Commonly, cats jump up on counters and tables reserved for human use. Emily patiently uses a spray bottle of water or an air can to chase them off surfaces, and then sets it on the counter where the cat was. This teaches the cat they will not be comfortable where they once felt welcome.

Repetition is another key. "As a 2-year-old child, a dog has the ability to grasp simple commands only after many repetitions," Emily said. "They also can problem-solve simple tasks. Our communication is skewed, though.



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Animals can be misunderstood because they communicate not with words, but with subtle cues. Remembering this when training and behavior shaping can have a significant impact on the end result and reduce overall stress levels for all involved — canine and child included.”

Emily experienced the joy of a strong trust and loving bond with all her animals after investing patience and energy. “Training my pets is beneficial to both my pets and me,” she said. “They are expected to behave in a particular way, and they have learned to expect the same from me.”



Whether taking in a new dog or changing your schedule, Emily suggests watching for symptoms of separation anxiety that include, but are not limited to: excessive chewing, destruction of doors when keeping the dog inside, pacing, whining, barking and window surfing. There is a simple solution. Have the dog lie or sit in a room, and then leave, closing the door and waiting five seconds before returning. Repeat this procedure, stretching the wait time progressively to 10 seconds, then 45, then a minute-and-a-half and so on. “As you do this, the dog will start to realize you will come back,” Emily said. “Adding in a treat or a little play time on your returns will certainly make this a positive experience in the dog’s mind.”

Promoting positive experiences is part of being what the American Kennel Club calls a responsible owner. Responsible owners have well-mannered dogs and cats. If you discern that you



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Home to a chain of lakes, including Lake Harriet, Lake Calhoun, Lake of the Isles, Cedar Lake and Brownie Lake, Minneapolis natives and visitors alike never run out of ways to get outside. Joggers, walkers, dogs and families can be found traipsing around the lakes year-round. Minneapolis boasts nearly 200 miles of recreational paths and one of the only national scenic byways in the country.

Enjoy a brisk walk around Lake of the Isles in the fall, as the leaves turn from green to golden hues or jog around Lake Harriet as winter's first snowfall crunches underneath your feet. Stroll around Cedar Lake as the first signs of spring begin to

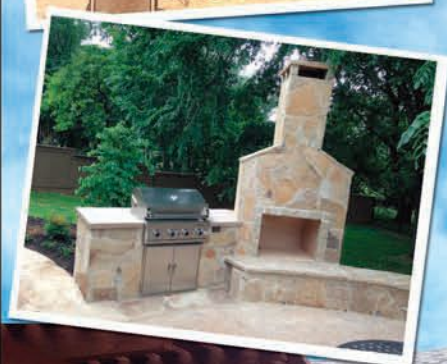


show or plan a beach barbecue at Lake Calhoun under the summer sun. Take in views of the Mississippi Riverfront on the Stone Arch Bridge in the city that has been ranked with the best park system in the United States. No matter the season, Minneapolis revels in the beauty of the outdoors.

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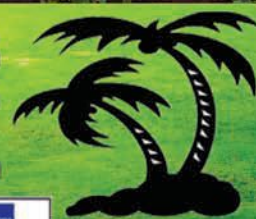
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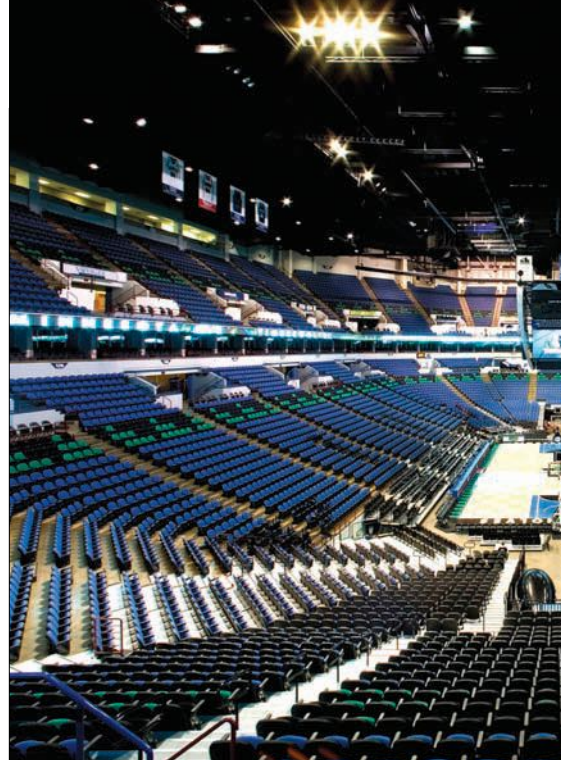
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produce and local specialties. Home to dozens of international culinary traditions and locavores, Minneapolis restaurants offer farm-to-table experiences you won't find anywhere else. Minneapolis enjoys international cuisines including German, Greek, Latin American and Irish, just to name a few. With dining hot spots like Eat Street and Midtown Global Market, it isn't hard to find a delicious meal nearby. With just the right mix of locally grown and globally inspired food, Minneapolis is sure to satisfy any craving.

There is no off-season in Minneapolis. Year-round, Minneapolis natives have something to cheer for, with five major league sports teams and popular stadiums like Target Field and TCF Bank Stadium. With professional sports teams, such as: the Vikings (NFL), Twins (MLB), Timberwolves (NBA), two-time World Champion Minnesota Lynx (WNBA)




and Wild (NHL), just over in our twin city of Saint Paul, as well as the University of Minnesota's Golden Gophers, sports fans will always have a team to watch.

The Minnesota Vikings are currently building a new \$975 million stadium, set to open in 2016, which is on track to bring events like the Super Bowl and NCAA Final Four to Minneapolis in future years. The Minnesota

Twins and Target Field played host to the MLB All-Star Game in July 2014. Fans also attended the MLB Fan Fest at the Minneapolis Convention Center during this year's Midsummer Classic.

Minneapolis' sprawling art scene is vibrant. Museums, art fairs, theaters and music venues constantly book local and nationwide favorites. Visitors can grab tickets to see an improv show at Brave New Workshop Comedy Theatre, a Shakespeare play at Guthrie Theater, a



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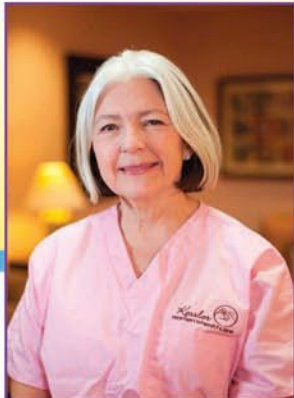
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Dr. LaRue is a celebrated educator and minimally invasive surgery expert, certified to perform both multiport and single site robotic surgery. She has served as a clinical instructor at Harvard Medical School, an educator on the academic faculty at Methodist Hospital Dallas, as well as in the role of Chair of the Department of OB/GYN and Chair of the medical staff credentials committee.

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dance troupe at Cowles Center for Dance and Performing Arts or their favorite band at First Avenue, the Fine Line Music Cafe and Mill City Nights.

World-renowned museums like Walker Art Center and Minneapolis Institute of Arts are among the 55 museums in the Minneapolis area. The city boasts the most theater seats per capita after New York City, with Broadway tours, local productions and the Minnesota Fringe Festival each August to entertain and delight visitors. Festivals like Northern Spark and the Uptown Art Fair take over the city during the summer months with art from every discipline and price point.

With no sales tax on apparel and shoes, it's hard to deny Minnesota's shopping appeal. On top of that, the country's largest shopping center, Mall of America, is nestled in the Minneapolis suburb, Bloomington, which is a short Metro Transit ride away from downtown. Packed inside its 4.8 million square feet are more than 520 stores, an indoor theme park, Nickelodeon Universe, an aquarium housing more than 10,000 sea creatures, a 14-screen movie theater and countless restaurant options. Downtown, take in the flagship Target store on

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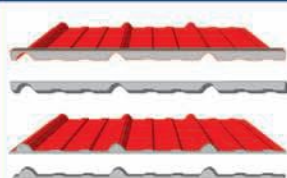
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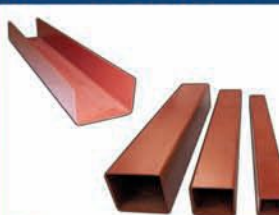


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In an effort to keep Minneapolis safe, clean and green, the Minneapolis Downtown Improvement District (DID) was implemented in early 2009. Through its many initiatives, visitors and natives can explore the city worry-free while DID Ambassadors patrol the sidewalks, aiding those in need of directions, those who have lost property and even those with medical emergencies. As one of the top-ranked cleanest cities in the world, Minneapolis is kept clean through DID's diligent help with pressure washing, litter and graffiti removal and an outdoor recycling program that stretches throughout downtown. With the goal in mind to have every block green in 20 years, the Minneapolis DID fills the 120-plus block district with more than 15,500 colorful plants to amplify the city's already beautiful downtown.

Minneapolis offers endless opportunities for fun and exploration year-round. Visit Minneapolis and relish in its changing seasons, endless bike paths, multifaceted arts scene and guilt-free shopping while indulging in the city's delectable culinary offerings. For more information about Minneapolis or to plan a trip to the City by Nature, visit www.minneapolis.org. **NOW**

By Annie Michaelson. Photos courtesy of Meet Minneapolis.



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Robin McCarty focuses on customer service and availability when interacting with clients and potential clients.

HELP FOR LIFE'S WORST MOMENTS

Robin McCarty, criminal defense attorney, brings his life experiences to his practice.

— By Betty Tryon

After a night of partying in Dallas with too much alcohol, you make the ill-fated decision to drive home to Midlothian. An alert police officer stops you, and you know you're in big trouble. You want a lawyer who can handle your case competently. Should you get a lawyer in Dallas? Fortunately, you have a choice over a big-city lawyer — one conveniently located in Midlothian with all the credentials and experience of numerous jury trials in Dallas and Fort Worth — Robin McCarty, Attorney at Law, an Ellis County criminal defense attorney.

"In the legal profession, there are split opinions about big-city lawyers versus small-town lawyers, and some people think that if you get a DWI in Dallas, then you need a city lawyer from Dallas," Robin explained. "I like providing a service for people here, so they don't have to go to Dallas or Fort Worth and hire

a lawyer they know nothing about. It is a lot easier to get to my office than going up there."

Born and raised in the Texas Panhandle in a little town called Borger, TX, Robin grew up in the oil fields and used to drill oil wells. He also worked in industrial plants and was in law enforcement as a licensed peace officer for over 20 years. He started college at age 30 and earned his law degree from Texas Tech University at age 43. After graduating, he moved to the Dallas/Ft. Worth area and went to work for the Tarrant County District Attorney's office.

During his time in the District Attorney's office, he began to look at the criminal justice system differently. "I began to realize as I worked there, the term *justice* in our criminal justice system sometimes gets set aside for politics, civil liability and various

other things,” he shared. “With some of the cases that came across my desk, I didn’t always necessarily agree what the punishment should be. I have raised four adult children, and I understand that in their younger years they do stupid stuff. You don’t want to destroy a person’s life based on a bad choice they made as a young person.”

With his background of working as a prosecutor and a sheriff’s deputy, Robin decided he preferred being a criminal defense attorney. “Midlothian is not a high crime area,” he said. “But, there are still things that come up. Ninety-five percent of my clients are just people who’ve made a bad choice. They are not bad people.” It also helps that Robin handles federal law. “The federal law system is a completely different animal,” he revealed. “I know of very few lawyers in Ellis County who will do federal cases.”

Robin brings his vast experience, knowledge and availability to Midlothian to aid its citizens during their worst moments.

Robin’s practice cleans up records for people. “If a kid pleads to something when he’s 19 or 20 years old and doesn’t get proper counsel, there are often long-term ramifications to that,” he explained. “You need someone who can look beyond the case to 20 years down the road when an employer looks at their record.”

When Robin moved his practice to Midlothian, he wanted to concentrate on customer service and availability. “I know sometimes it’s difficult to actually speak to the lawyer on your case,” he acknowledged. “You can pull up in front of my office any time, and if I’m here, I’ll meet with you. I prefer appointments, but if someone comes in off the street and needs to talk with me, I’m here for them.” Robin brings his vast experience, knowledge and availability to Midlothian to aid its citizens during their worst moments. **NOW**



ROBIN MCCARTY
— ATTORNEY AT LAW —

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Chief of Police Carl Smith and Commander Spann display goodies from the Back the Blue event.



Stephanie with 106.9 The Ranch and Reggie Underwood celebrate the Ark Country Store opening.



Mrs. Thompson, principal, and Mrs. Johnson, assistant principal, welcome all new students to J.R. Irvin Elementary at the newcomer's breakfast.



MISD Superintendent Lane Ledbetter gives a smile at Frank Seale Middle School.



Mrs. Wright's second grade students went to the library to view books during the Book Fair.



Kindergarten students at J.R. Irvin Elementary dress up as their favorite helpers and parade through the halls.



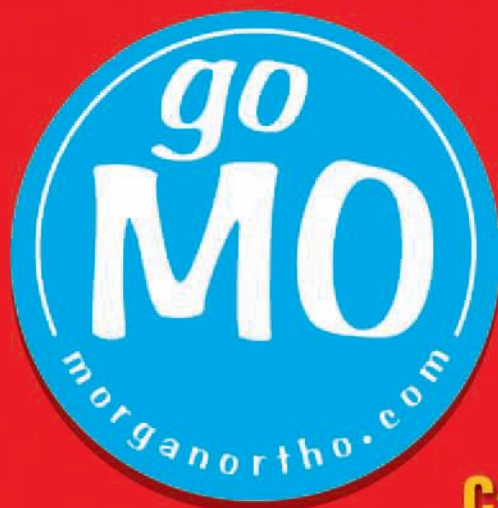
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Teaching Children to Save and Invest

Teaching children a few simple lessons about saving and investing can get them off in the right direction toward a secure financial future.

The Value of Savings

The lesson is simple — if you want something, you have to save for it. Talk to your child to find out what it is that he or she wants. Once you know what it is and how much it will cost, work with your child on how to save for it.

Give options for reaching his or her goal. If your child receives an allowance, talk about saving all of the allowance for a certain number of weeks versus saving half of it for twice as long. This teaches your child to view their options and make informed decisions about how to manage money.

The Value of Investing

Once your child has learned how to save money to achieve his or her goals, it's time to talk about how to earn money through interest accumulation. Learning about the benefits of compound interest should encourage children to invest their money in income-producing securities.

A good first step to moving from the piggy bank to the stock market is a simple savings account. As your child's savings grow with money from paper routes, babysitting or other first jobs, you may want to introduce other investment vehicles, such as mutual funds.

Consider opening a custodial account for your child under the Uniform Gift to Minors Act (UGMA) or the Uniform Transfer to

Minors Act (UTMA), or start a matching program, similar to a 401(k) plan where you match every dollar your child invests. Don't forget that it's important to educate children that there is market risk involved when investing in mutual funds, including possible loss of principal.

Stay Involved in the Process

Most children look to their parents as a primary source of financial information. This makes it important for you to stay involved with your child throughout his or her learning experience with investments.

Take the time to go over your child's bank or mutual fund statements with them. If investing in a mutual fund account, show your child how to look up the value of his or her funds in the newspaper or on the Internet.

Practice What You Preach

You can talk to your child about investing until you're blue in the face, but chances are good that he or she will not pay close attention to the subject unless you're following your own advice.

Take a moment to speak to your child about investing in their future. Then contact your financial advisor, who will help you create a financial plan that is right for you and your child. **NOW**

Tim Tobey is a State Farm agent based in Midlothian.



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A Belly Full

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Your belly bulge may carry a huge price you hadn't counted on. There are two types of fat in the abdomen — subcutaneous and visceral. Subcutaneous fat lies directly underneath your skin. Visceral fat in the abdominal area lies underneath the muscles and wraps around your organs. They both carry a risk for your health, when in excessive amounts, toward the possible development of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, cancer and other sundry illnesses. However, abdominal visceral fat can be far more dangerous.

An impressive study published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* concluded that central obesity (beer belly) carried as great a risk to your health as smoking a pack of cigarettes a day or having an extremely high cholesterol level. The results qualified as being globally applicable, since the study was conducted in five separate studies around the world. There were 16,000 participants with coronary artery disease. Those with central obesity were more likely to die from the disease than those with a different pattern of fat distribution. Men had a higher risk of dying than women. Another startling conclusion is that this discovery pertains even to those who have normal weight and a small amount of belly fat.

Why does belly fat carry such a great risk? According to Dr. Francisco Lopez-Jimenez, the study's lead investigator and director of the Mayo Clinic's Cardiometabolic Program, "Visceral (belly) fat has been found to be more metabolically active. It produces more changes in cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar. However, people who have fat mostly in other locations in the body, specifically the legs and buttocks, don't show this increased risk."

There is a way to determine your risk by looking at your waist to hip ratio or WHR. Using the WHR you can determine whether or not you are more at risk for developing serious diseases. It's

all about the distribution of fat. You can calculate your WHR by first getting your waist size by measuring with a tape measure at the smallest point. Get your hip measurement by putting the tape measure around the widest part of the hips. Divide the waist circumference by the hip circumference. Here are some of the indicators for your measurements:

Male: WHR close to 0.9 — Ideal. Very low health risk.

Female: WHR close to 0.7 — Ideal. Very low health risk.

Male: WHR 0.95 or less — Low health risk.

Female: WHR 0.90 or below — Low health risk.

Male: WHR 0.6 to 1.0 — Moderate health risk.

Female: WHR 0.81 to 0.85 — Moderate health risk.

Male: WHR 1-plus — High health risk.

Female: WHR 0.85-plus — High health risk.

The WHR is an indicator, not a certainty. However, it makes good health sense to take the WHR test. Armed with this knowledge, you can start working on being your best healthy self. **NOW**

Sources:

<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/womens-health/articles/2011/05/02/belly-fat-43-heart-disease-can-be-deadly-study>

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/223919.php>

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



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November 3

Midlothian Area Historical Society meeting: 7:00 p.m., Community Room of CNB, 310 N. 9th. For more information, contact Beverly Sink at beverlysink@sbcglobal.net or (469) 628-1907.

November 3, 10, 17, 24

City Council meeting: 6:00 p.m., 104 W. Ave. E. Call (972) 775-3481 for more information.

November 7

Wine & Arts Festival: 3:30-7:30 p.m., Downtown Midlothian. Come taste wines from various wineries while visiting art booths. Tickets: \$20, advance purchase; \$25, walk up the night of the event. For more information please email at info@midlothianchamber.org or call (972) 723-8600.

Hoop Madness (MHS & MHHS): 7:00 p.m., MHS Arena.

November 10

Field of Readers event: 6:00 - 7:30 p.m., MISD Multipurpose Stadium. The Midlothian ISD Library Media Specialists will

provide an evening of reading, creating and games. MISD students can win a free book, read on the stadium field, play games and listen to music.

November 11

Midlothian's 6th Annual Veterans Tribute Dinner: 6:30-9:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center.

LaRue Miller Elementary 5th Grade Veteran's Day Assembly: 8:00 a.m.

November 13

Longbranch PTO Fall Ball and Color Run: 6:00-9:00 p.m., Longbranch Elementary School. Event includes a silent auction, food and games.

LME PTO Denim and Diamonds event: 6:30 p.m.

November 17

Coffee Talk sessions with Dr. Lane Ledbetter, Superintendent of Schools: 8:00-9:00 a.m., Walnut Grove Middle School. This forum is for staff, parents and community members to visit with Dr. Ledbetter as he

highlights successes and shares current and future plans of the district. There will also be time for attendees to ask questions and provide input.

November 19

Ellis County Amateur Radio Club: 7:30 p.m., Ellis County Sheriff's Office Training Center (County Farm), 2272 FM 878, Waxahachie. Talk-in on the 145.410 machines. All are welcome. For more information, visit www.wd5ddh.org.

November 21

Pet Adoption Event: 9:00-11:00 a.m., Walmart Garden Center Entrance, 400 N. Hwy 67. Animal Shelter pets available for adoption will be in attendance. For more information, call (972) 775-7614.

November 23-27

MISD Thanksgiving Break.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to betty.tryon@nowmagazines.com.

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In the Kitchen With Mika Stansberry

— By Betty Tryon

"I grew up watching my mom and grandma cook big meals for my family," Mika shared. "They did everything from scratch." But for Mika, like most cooks today, life intrudes and cooking from scratch is not an option because her busy schedule doesn't permit the time. "I look for shortcuts!" she said. For Mika's husband, cooking from scratch is not all that important. He enjoys whatever she prepares, but her three daughters are a little bit pickier. They keep her busy finding food items accepted by everyone in the family. She found one happy way to solve this dilemma by allowing the girls to assist in the preparation of meals. "They are always proud of what they helped make." **NOW**

Little Micky's Oatmeal Cream Pies

Cookies:

1 cup butter, softened
3/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/2 tsp. salt
2 cups old-fashioned, uncooked oats

Filling:

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
2 Tbsp. heavy cream or milk

1 tsp. vanilla
3 cups powdered sugar

1. For cookies: Preheat oven to 350 F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. Beat together butter and both sugars until creamy; add eggs and vanilla. Beat until just combined.
3. Add flour, baking soda, cinnamon and salt. Mix until just combined. Stir in oats.
4. Drop by rounded tablespoonfuls onto the baking sheets. Make sure to space 2 inches apart. (I put 8 cookies per sheet.) Bake 10-11 minutes only. Don't overbake! Cool on a wire rack.
5. For filling: Beat the cream cheese with an electric hand mixer until creamy. Add the heavy cream or milk and vanilla. Slowly add the powdered sugar, one cup at a time, until

the filling is creamy and lump free.

6. Place filling in a large Ziploc bag and snip off one corner. Pipe filling onto the bottom of one cookie; top with another cookie.

Better Than Truck Stop Banana Brownies

Brownies:

1 1/2 cups sugar
1 cup sour cream
1/2 cup butter, softened
2 eggs
3-4 ripe bananas, mashed
2 tsp. vanilla
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
3/4 tsp. salt

Brown Butter Frosting:

1/2 cup butter
4 cups powdered sugar
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla
3 Tbsp. milk

1. For brownies: Heat oven to 375 F. Grease and flour a 15x10-inch jelly roll pan; beat together sugar, sour cream, butter and eggs until creamy.

2. Blend in bananas and vanilla; add flour, baking soda and salt; blend for 1 minute.

3. Spread batter evenly into the prepared pan. Bake for 20-25 minutes until golden brown.

4. For frosting: Heat butter in a large saucepan over medium heat until boiling. Let the butter turn a delicate brown and remove from heat immediately.

5. Add powdered sugar, vanilla and milk. Whisk together until smooth. (It should be thicker than a glaze but thinner than frosting.) Using a spatula, spread the brown butter frosting over the warm bars.

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

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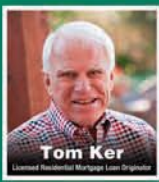
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