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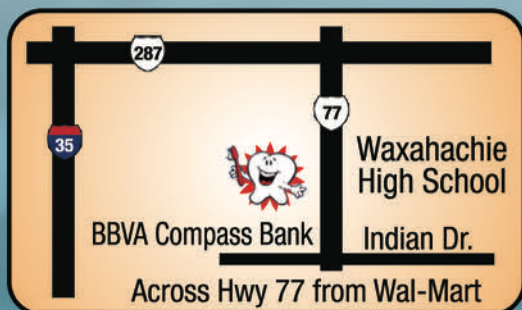
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ON THE COVER



*DEAR Day
celebrates 20 years
of literacy.*

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Happy New Year!

As I sit on the couch adding 2016 holiday photos to the grandchildren's photo albums, I find it hard to believe that another year has come and gone so quickly. I flip back several pages and see the photos taken this past year. Each birthday party shows a smiling face smeared with yummy cake icing. The last 12 months have brought laughter, for sure, as Easton quickly learned to color within the lines using Granny's glitter markers, Zane gave each of his dinosaurs a name and roar to match and Karleigh chased the dog around the house soon after she learned to crawl. Remembering these moments quickly warms my heart.

These memories add to the anticipated excitement of the coming new year, as I look forward to more of the same. I thank God daily for the matchless gift of grandchildren. I remember rolling my eyes at the people who gushed over their grandkids. Now, people are surely rolling their eyes at me. Honestly, I don't know what I did all those years without them!

Enjoy each happy moment of the coming year!

Sandra

Sandra Strong
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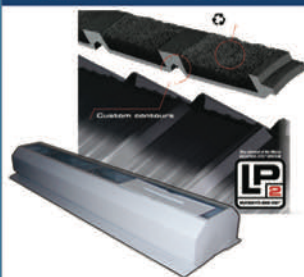
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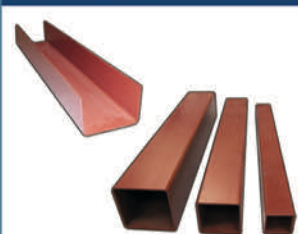


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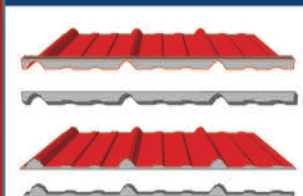


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Twenty years ago, there was a statewide emphasis on the importance of literacy. At this same time, a Waxahachie ISD board member returned from a trip out-of-state with an idea that has only grown over time. That idea is a day, once a year, when campuses across the district Drop Everything and Read. "The board member saw this concept firsthand in another district," Melissa Cobb, longtime Partner in Education coordinator, said. "It was perfect timing and has proven to be a very good fit."

At the program's inception, Candace Ahlfinger was serving as the public relations director for the school district. She and Melissa took the original concept and revised it to work for WISD. "Our main goal from the beginning was to include the community as a whole," Melissa explained. "That meant bringing businesses, churches, parents and community-minded individuals together for a time of interaction with the younger students in the district."

For 19 years, coordinators, teachers and volunteers have put their hearts and souls into DEAR Day. The impact to all those involved has been tremendous in so many ways. Longtime readers Stuart Stephenson, Cindy Hess and Doug Barnes can attest to the joy DEAR Day has brought to them on a personal level, as they look forward to reading on DEAR Day's 20th anniversary next month.



Reading Role Models

— By Sandra Strong





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Stuart was a new member of the community when the reading program first began. Out of the 19 years, he's missed only one, but that wasn't until he had 17 consecutive years under his belt. "I had volunteered in other districts prior to moving here," he remembered. "I loved the idea, so I jumped right in."

Cindy was also new to the area. Her daughter was in kindergarten at the time, so getting involved came natural to her. She, too, has only missed one year out of 19, and it's all about the "feels" for her. "I love the way the kids immediately settle down. They become engaged in the story being told," Cindy said, "and they're disappointed to see us go."

Doug moved to Waxahachie in 1990. He went to work for the city of Waxahachie in 2001. He learned of the program early on but didn't get involved until his fourth year as a city employee. He will be reading for his 13th consecutive year, and he is just as excited to read this year as he's been in all the years prior. "The program reminds me of a family setting with my own family," Doug shared. "It's amazing how the students want to grasp onto what you're reading about. They want to understand."

All three agree that reading leads to questions, questions lead to answers and answers lead to knowledge. The enjoyment and rewards come in helping

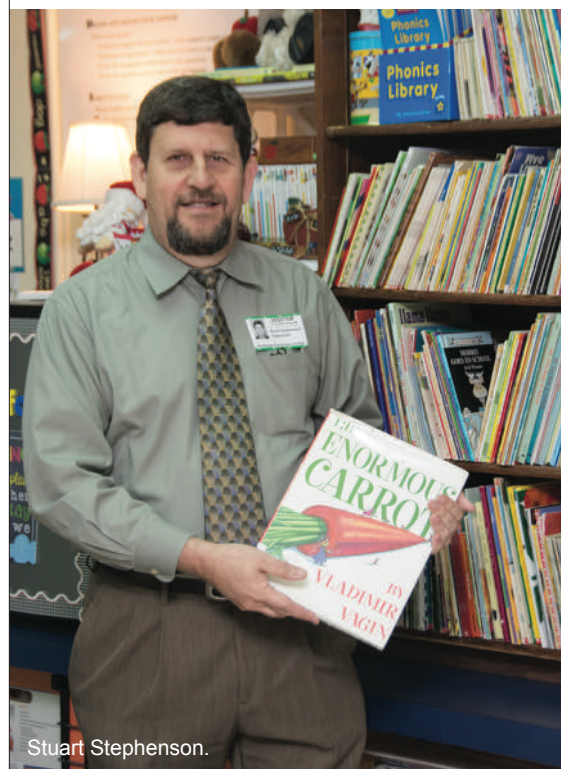


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Stuart Stephenson.



Cindy Hess.

to create a young mind. Helping that young mind grow with newly obtained knowledge is important to all those who volunteer in any capacity for DEAR Day. "We have so many readers who faithfully return to read year after year," Melissa stated. "After all the planning for the event, I'm still overcome by the level of commitment the district has received from the Waxahachie community."

Readers receive cherished thank-you cards from the class, while Melissa receives thank-you notes from students and volunteers alike. "Volunteers share how much they look forward to DEAR Day," Melissa admitted, "and one student expressed how much she appreciated the day. Her thank-you note is framed and displayed in my office."

Many memories come to mind as Stuart, Cindy and Doug look back over the past 19 years. The program started with books, and hopefully, it will continue with books, even in this modern day of technology. "I'm excited that we don't have to read from a device," Cindy added. "Books are great!"

Stuart, Cindy and Doug all have their "favorite book memories." Stuart has always loved a tale with a twist, while Doug is focused on setting a good example, no matter what he reads. Cindy remembers a book she once read about a girl and her dollhouse. "I didn't realize

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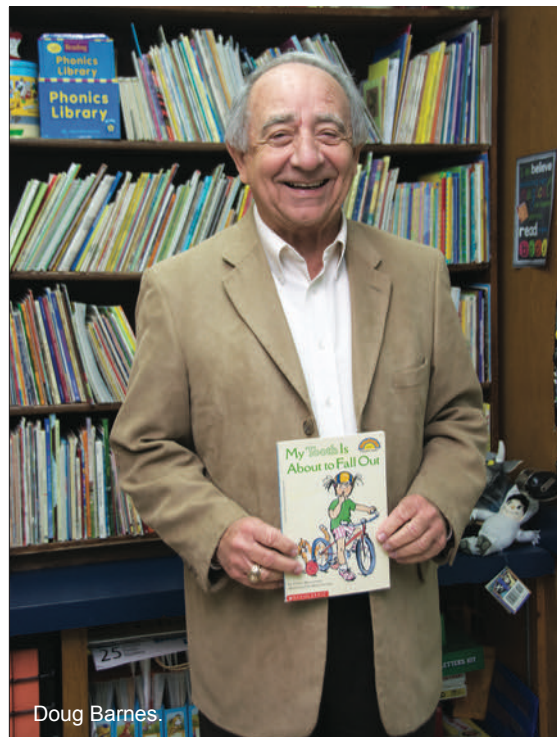
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Doug Barnes

until the end that the dolls in the story were Ken and Barbie,” she laughed.

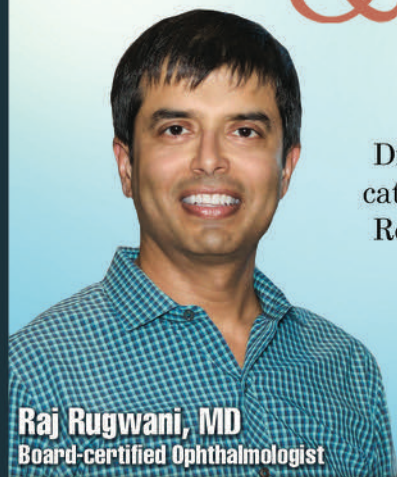
The classroom relationships haven’t changed either. “I take a moment to share about me,” Stuart said, “and then they take a minute or two to tell me about them. We are bringing books to life in that 15-minute reading time. My hope is that DEAR Day will influence them to read more.”

Doug strongly believes that knowledge is power, and that knowledge is gained by reading. “I’m hoping to set an example for our future leaders,” Doug explained. “These children represent precious resources, so it’s up to me to set a good example — an example they will want to follow. Sitting in the chair in front of a class of young minds with a book in hand is an honor to me.”

When the pilot program first began on elementary campuses across the district, it was expected to do well. DEAR Day has grown each year, and nothing less is expected this year. “Everyone involved rallied around the program that first year,” Stuart said. “My youngest son took part in every DEAR Day from kindergarten through the ninth grade. He’s now an English literature teacher in Coppell, and I do feel DEAR Day had an impact on his choice as an adult.”

“DEAR Day came full circle for me personally as my daughter grew up,”

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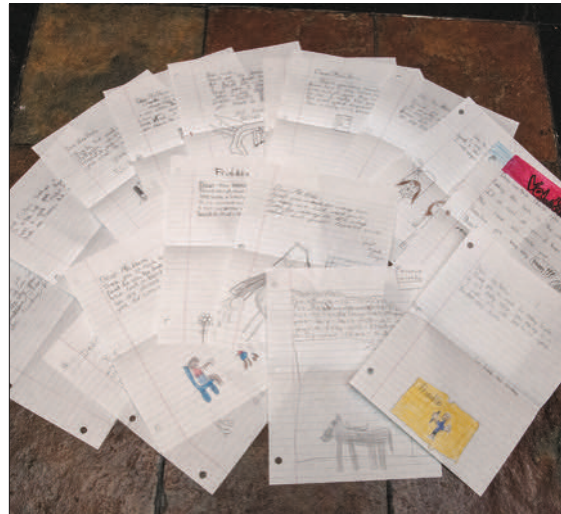
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Melissa said. "Volunteers would read to her classroom, and then many years after, she became a teacher herself. My mother and I were guest readers in *her* classroom."

Reading times have changed over the years. They are now broken down into two 15-minute sessions, both in the morning hours on the designated day in February. In the lower grades, volunteers will generally read from one of the books the class is already reading, while 15 minutes of printed material is given to readers for the older students. All readers polled over the years say the same thing. "We'd love more time in the classroom," Cindy said. "Fifteen minutes goes by so fast!"

Through DEAR Day, WISD has taken a good educational reputation and made it even better. "We, as a district, are excited that the reading program grew to such proportions," Melissa said. "We couldn't have done it without the continued support of the community."

Volunteer readers come from all professions and all walks of life. Stuart, Cindy and Doug are grateful the district took an idea and made it their own, while the district is thankful for all the community support. "We cannot thank the Waxahachie community enough for 19 years of faithful DEAR Day support as reading role models and book contributors," Melissa said. "We hope you're making plans to join us on our 20th DEAR Day anniversary." **NOW**

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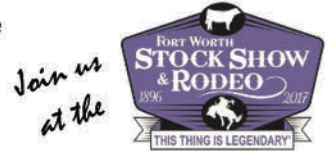
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TEN YEARS AND GROWING

— By Debbie Durling



The Ellis County Children's Theater celebrates its 10-year anniversary this month — that's 10 years of enriching the lives of children from Waxahachie and surrounding areas. "Everything that is important starts with an idea, especially in theater arts," Gail Stutts Harrell said. This idea started when she moved to Waxahachie in 1995. Each day, she drove past the Waxahachie High School, as she made the commute to DeSoto. Before long, the choir director at WISD left for another position. Gail seized the opportunity to get on board. Working at the high school level, she saw the plight of some of the students who seemed to have too much time on their hands. She wanted to create an avenue by which both hidden and obvious talents could be developed and children could be propelled into the future with confidence.



Emily Hamm as Dorothy and Kenley Farris as Toto.

“It’s our desire to provide a positive, safe and creative environment in which to guide children to greater self-confidence and help them develop the courage to make positive life choices.”

The idea of a children’s theater began to take form in her thoughts, and in the fall of 2007, around her dining room table, she and other investors wrote personal checks to bring the Missoula Children’s Theatre to Waxahachie. This was a traveling company that produced children’s musicals worldwide. Auditions were held, and Gail remembers many children being turned away for a lack of parts. “I did not want to do that,” she said. Creating a venue where all children



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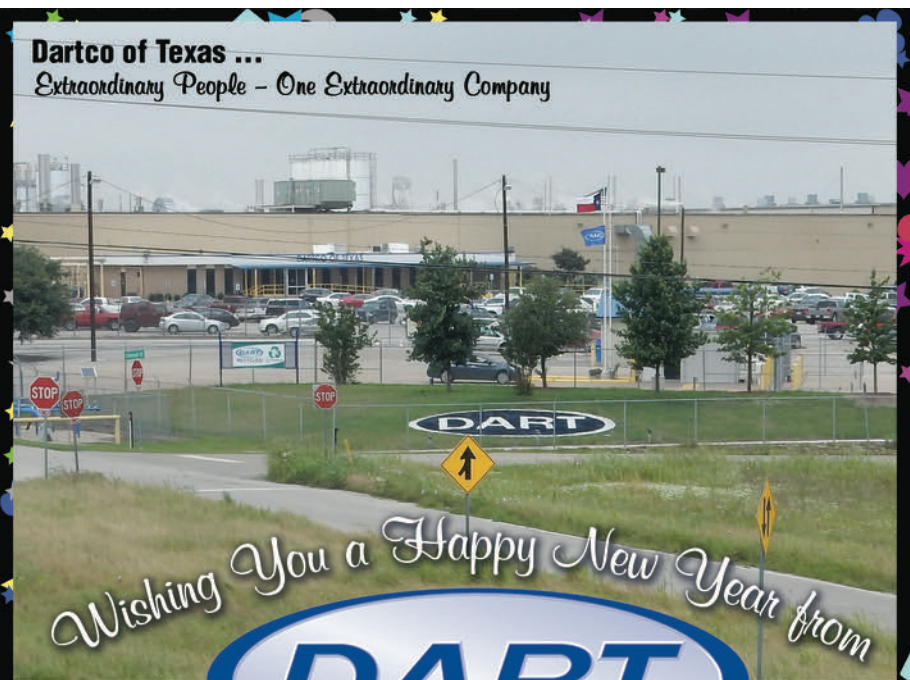
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Ian Fehler, Connor Moss and Daniel Huffstetler as the Lollipop Guild.

who wanted to participate were included was the desire of her heart. Soon thereafter, the Ellis County Children's Theater was born.

Mark Singleton generously helped fund the first endeavor. The WISD offered the Fine Arts Center as a place to perform their first shows. "We are very grateful for the support of Dr. Glenn, WISD Superintendent," Gail said with a smile. Then, Farley Street Baptist Church opened their building to be used. They performed *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* at the church last fall and just finished *Elf, Jr.*

With great zeal and passion, Gail feels very blessed to have been able to lead this endeavor for the children of Ellis County and its surrounding areas. Through theater, children learn problem solving and how to work together. Theater also builds confidence as children become comfortable on stage. "Kids in fine arts typically score higher on tests," Gail added. She is committed to the idea that every child, with guidance, deserves the opportunity to develop his or her gifts and talents in the performing arts.

The Bowdoin family serves as an example of giving every child an opportunity. Their daughter, Olivia, began performing with the theater in

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first grade, and she is now in the fifth grade. Doc and Amanda Bowdoin have watched their daughter gain confidence, self-esteem and self-determination. They have also noticed how the theater has had a positive effect on her academics.

Seeing that the theater has been such a positive part of Olivia's life caused her parents to explore the possibilities of Olivia's twin brother participating. JD, who is deaf and visually impaired with CHARGE syndrome, joined her in the production of *Elf, Jr.* ECCT worked with JD on using an output device to give him a speaking part. He also participated with the groups in music and dances. "I am very proud to be a part of ECCT and how they open their hearts to all students of Ellis County," Amanda shared.

Michelle Griffith has three children, a daughter and twin boys, who are involved in the theater's programs. She was so happy when her daughter began to flourish in the productions, classes and camps of the Children's Theater. Then one of her twins decided to join his sister in the Kamp for Kids and enrolled in the Movie Camp. She watched as both of them "found their voices" and had fun doing it. This sparked the interest of the twin who has Autism. While she said that he has always been treated

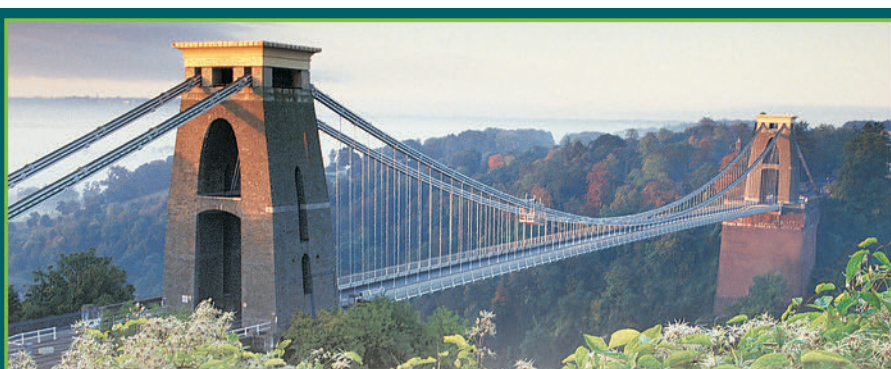
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Julia Hauke played the Mayor of Munchkin City.

like part of the group and allowed to watch rehearsals, it was in the fall that he decided he wanted to take an active role in *Elf, Jr.* "I am so thankful that ECCT is here and growing," Michelle said. "My daughter has found her thing, and my boys have been given the opportunity to expand their interests and be part of something different."

Blake Saucedo, a former participant in ECCT, said, "Being part of ECCT has inspired me to be the performer that I am today." Blake is a current student at Oklahoma City University, one of the top performing arts colleges in the nation. Without a doubt, he pays homage directly to this program. His horizons were broadened, and his love for the stage only grew as he performed. "This program not only teaches the importance of theater and performance but instills the ideas of patience, integrity and respect, while maintaining a positive and exciting environment," he said.

Taylor Wright, currently pursuing theater arts in New York City, began assisting with ECCT summer camps while he was in high school. He enjoyed engaging young people in collaboration, teamwork, creation and all parts of the theater process. "I saw kids' faces light up, turn off and everything in between," Taylor wrote in an email. "The beauty of the summer camps, to me, was watching how everyone came together and held

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Cameron Shields, Corey Gilbreath, Samantha Shields and Makayla Riza enjoy an ECCT practice.

each other up in creating these pieces, even with young children.”

Terri Gilbreath’s son, Corey, has been involved with the theater, as a participant and now as a counselor, since it was founded. Each year when the summer schedule was posted, they would put the dates on their calendar, and then plan other events and vacations around those dates. He never missed a camp, class, workshop or a single musical production. “It was a positive and enriching environment for Corey,” Terri said.

Since its inception, the Ellis County Children’s Theater has served hundreds of children in creative, interactive classes led by professional teachers and directors. “It’s our desire to provide a positive, safe and creative environment in which to guide children to greater self-confidence and help them develop the courage to make positive life choices,” Gail said.

The theater exists to provide unique learning opportunities, allowing children to explore ideas and imagery that reflect their own experiences and challenge them to understand the world in which they live. In order to do this, ECCT aspires to engage, instruct and inspire children to produce theater that reaches beyond the stage. Gail’s hope is that the Ellis County community would embrace the children’s theater as its own. **NOW**

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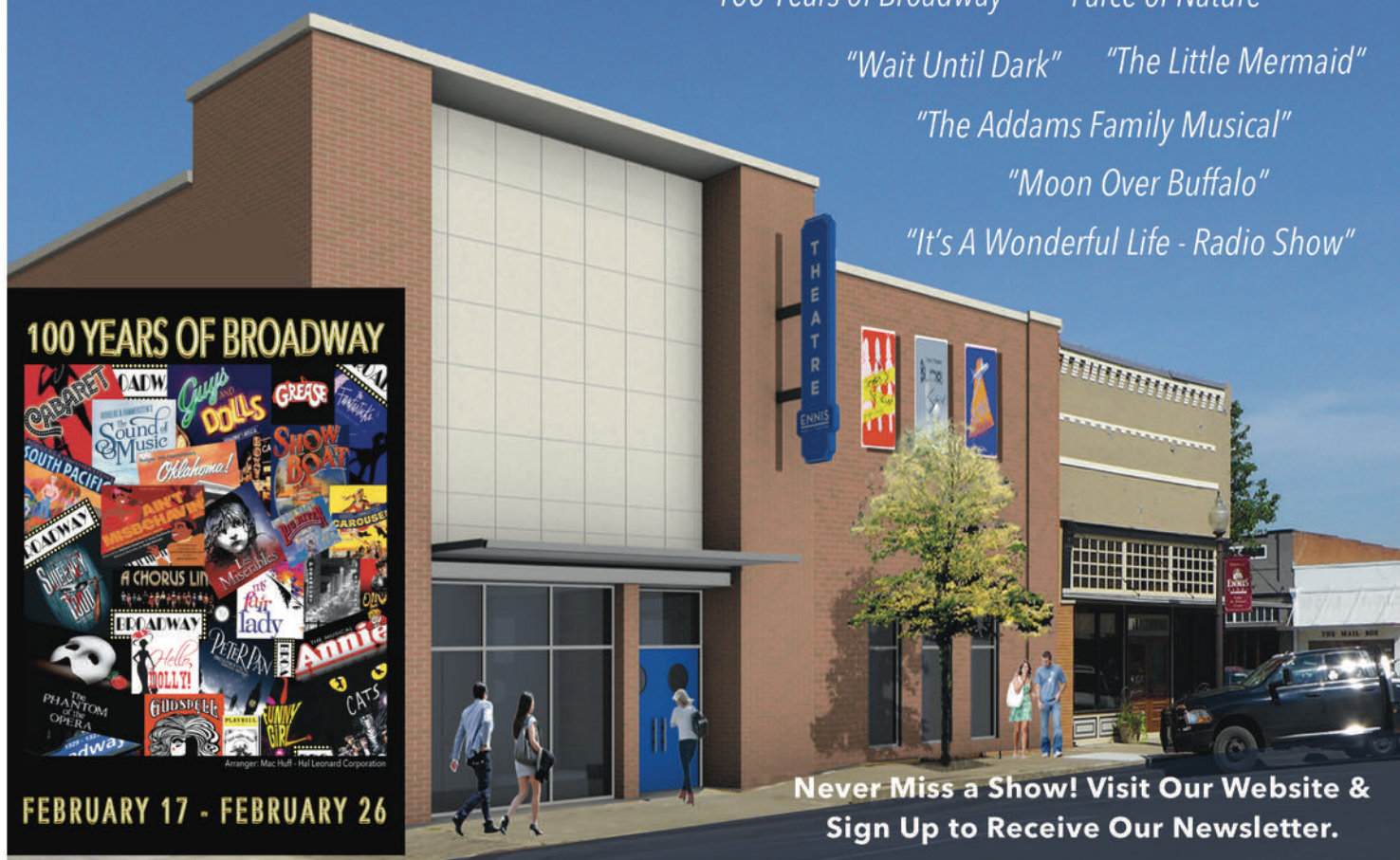
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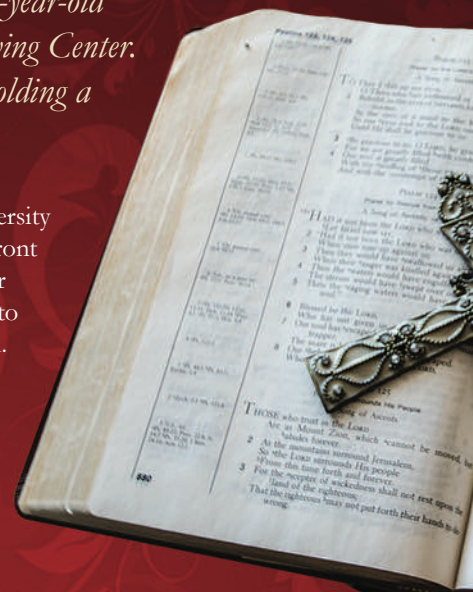


After traveling to all 50 states and at least 30 countries, Marietta Parker, a 91-year-old retired school teacher, takes pleasure in a quieter life now at the Buffalo Creek Living Center. Her living quarters are reminiscent of a life lived to the fullest, with many items holding a memory or a story from her past.

From the hallway outside of her one-bedroom, one-bathroom apartment, her love for the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor is apparent. A large wreath of purple tulle and gold ribbon hangs on her front door, allowing other residents to see her enthusiasm for the institution that captured her heart. Her late husband of 53 years, Bobby Parker Sr., was president of the university for 20 years. "I moved to Waxahachie about four years ago to be closer to my son, Bobby Jr., and his family," Marietta stated.

Marietta keeps her small, luxury apartment in immaculate condition. Though she receives some assistance with a few tasks, keeping her apartment clean is largely her own doing. "A staff member comes in once a week and gives the apartment a good, overall cleaning," she admitted.

Upon entering her apartment, guests step into the efficiency kitchen. Marietta's decor of maroon-colored apples, bottles and plates line the top of the cabinetry, along with a weaving



remembering Vietta Parker

— By Jill Martinez



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trail of green ivy. A natural landscape in an ornate golden frame hangs on the wall. These personal touches complement the maple wood cabinets and white appliances.

"I am not a morning person. I get up at 9:30 a.m. and enjoy a bowl of Cheerios and a cup of coffee," she said. She sits at a wooden, fold-out table just outside the kitchen to savor her breakfast. A few family pictures are housed on the table, and a large portrait of her late husband hangs on the wall above it. Marietta

treasures her tranquil morning mealtime there. She learned from her mother to start each day by saying, "Thank you, Lord, that I can walk another day."

Her morning meal is the only one she takes in her apartment. She joins the other residents in the dining hall for lunch and dinner. "I'm happy to leave the dishes to someone else," she said smiling.

Marietta's living room is filled with nostalgic things, as well as new acquisitions. When she moved from Belton to Waxahachie, she downsized her

possessions significantly and only kept the things that held sentimental value to her. One of those items is a dark, wooden roll-top desk with brass drawer pulls. She calls this her "office." It was, at one time, her husband's desk. She keeps the top rolled down to maintain a tidy appearance, but even the interior is very organized. Atop the desk rest photos of her eight great-grandchildren. Her eyes light up when she speaks of her family. "I pray for each of my family members every day," she commented.

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Next to this desk is a small black table where she keeps her laptop. "I taught at Waco High School for 10 years, while Bobby was at Baylor University, teaching and working on his doctorate," Marietta remembered. "That situation sent me out to Waco to learn more about computers." Technology sure has come a long way since then, and she has kept up with it. In between visits, she uses her laptop and smartphone to keep in touch, via



email and Facebook, with family who live in other locations. The purple folding chair used for this office area represents none other than the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. The abbreviation UMHB is printed in large, gold letters across the back rest. This chair helps Marietta to recall joyous times spent at sporting events. She can still recall several years of team records.

The next item of note in the living room is Marietta's curio cabinet. Inside the glass doors are crystal glasses, silver serving trays and a large collection of Royal Albert china dishes. It's no wonder these items are dear to her. While serving beside her husband at UMHB, she stayed busy hosting luncheons, teas and receptions. At home, she gathered around the table with her family and friends, and these dishes adorned the table at those events. She now has the pleasure of passing some of these dishes down to a granddaughter who is about to celebrate her nuptials. All across the top of this cabinet are more family photos.

The seating area of the living room is cozy and classic. Her favorite place to be is in the tan, high-backed arm chair comfortably positioned near the window. From this seat, Marietta partakes in several different activities. "My mother taught me how to crochet, embroider and

sew. She thought idle hands were sinful," Marietta added. She uses crocheting as a hobby to pass the time now, often making little baby blankets that she gifts to others. When she isn't crocheting, she enjoys working crossword puzzles. Though she doesn't claim to be a master, it does entertain her. Watching television is another form of entertainment for her. After watching an episode of a crime scene drama, starring the son of the Bell County district attorney, she got hooked. She likes learning scientific things from these episodes. She also likes game shows and the news.

Rounding out the living room is a maroon sofa, a wooden coffee table and a tufted maroon chair. Live potted plants and images of the sun setting over the ocean bring a peaceful feeling to the room where Marietta is surrounded by more framed pictures of the family members she loves so much.

Her spacious bedroom features a full-size bed covered with a magnolia print on a maroon background. Marietta keeps some precious items on her dresser. A Japanese jewelry box holds her cultured pearl collection that she acquired over the years from friends she made during trips to a sister school in Japan. An elephant figurine is the last remaining piece of a collection of over 300 elephants that her husband had at one time.

A short distance from the foot of the bed, Marietta has a reading area that contains an antique rocking chair, a lamp and a wooden magazine table. In the morning after breakfast, Marietta comes here to read her Bible and have her morning devotions. Her faith is at the center of her life, and she delights in starting her days with God.

Her bathroom, which is wheelchair-accessible, boasts a walk-in shower and the same maple cabinetry seen in the kitchen. She tied the apartment together by continuing with her maroon and gold decor seen in the other rooms.

When Marietta is ready to step out of her apartment, she hops in her car and drives herself around town to conduct her errands or visit her grandchildren. Marietta feels very blessed to be a resident at the Buffalo Creek Living Center. She appreciates having just the right amount of support to help her continue living independently. **NOW**

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RESOLVE TO YOUR RESOLUTIONS

A new year means new goals for people all over the world. With each new calendar, though, many find it difficult to maintain their resolve and hit their goals. If your resolutions typically fizzle out before the winter has lost its cold, here are some simple tips to do better as you try to live healthier in 2017.

SMALL CHANGES MEAN BIGGER RESULTS

- *Make incremental goals.* Instead of trying to lose 15 percent of your body weight, make a real, attainable goal that you can meet in four to six weeks. Losing five pounds in a month should be motivation to lose five more. But if you are thinking 30 pounds or bust, that five-pound loss might become a disappointment. And when making those goals, be sure to increase and extend them as you start hitting your desired marks.

ADD OLIVE YOUR ONS

— By Zachary R. Urquhart



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OLD HABITS

• *Take one step at a time.* If your current fitness level has you struggling to walk 1 mile without stopping, avoid resolving to run a marathon. Start with walking a length or time without stopping, and then add jogging or auxiliary exercises like pushups or jumping jacks. A good one-month goal for beginning runners is to complete a 5K run within six weeks of starting your training. The same principle applies for those who are already in better shape. If you can walk three miles without a problem, add incline runs or increase the distance to push your limits and increase your results, and try for a half or full marathon.

• *You do not have to overhaul your diet overnight.* Rather than cutting all sugar, fat and bread completely, start simpler. Substitute unsweet tea and black coffee for soda and a latte. Eat one less fast-food meal a week and opt for a homemade salad with a healthy dressing. If you cannot cut out dessert completely, make it a biweekly treat, and limit yourself to one helping. Instead of forcing yourself to eat nothing but kale and water, start with a smaller plate for portion control. As you get healthier, you can increase and adjust your goals accordingly.

MOTIVATION IS KEY

• *Have a partner.* Losing weight, eating right and exercising can all be difficult to do, especially when you go it alone. Whether it's your spouse, a sibling or

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just a friend in a similar life stage, have a partner as you start your journey. It is best to have someone who wants to lose around the same amount of weight or hit the same mile time. That way you can push each other, instead of one person being the model for the other.

- *Set up rewards.* In addition to setting incremental goals, you should treat yourself when you hit those goals. You can give yourself a cheat day, a day of rest from running or even something like



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going to a movie or buying a new belt for your smaller waist. You do not have to break the bank, and you can write yourself notes or send yourself cards to encourage yourself along the way.

- *Include healthy competition.* Having someone you are competing against might make you more likely to reach your marks, but do not get upset if you lose a weekly weigh-in. Be sure to give yourself a fair game though. Women typically lose weight at a slower rate than men, and age often slows metabolism. So a 50-year-old woman probably should not compare herself to a young man just out of college.

- *Make it fun.* Find a local group of runners to make your exercise social as well as functional. If you hate running, try lifting weights, cardio-rich workout videos or alternate exercise like CrossFit training. Change up your routine times and locations, so you are not looking at the same scenery every time you work out. Most cities offer recreational sports leagues, so you can get the work in playing soccer, flag football or basketball. If you enjoy what you are doing, you will be much more likely to keep it up throughout the year.

THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR THE JOB

- *Take out the guesswork.* People often think running is running, but when it comes to weight loss, there is a science involved.



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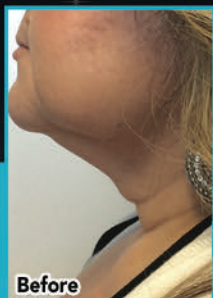
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- *Work to scale.* If your plan hinges on losing a specific amount of weight, you will need to make sure you have a good scale. On the other hand, if you are simply trying to improve your strength and endurance, a scale may hinder progress. When your maximum lifts increase and your running times decrease, stepping on the scale and finding out you have not lost any weight can kill the momentum of your exercise success.

- *Have a plan and write it down.* When it comes to exercise, do not just throw weights around or run without purpose. There are varying ideas as to what the perfect workout regimen is, but you should use a workout journal no matter what plan you try. Have your workouts written down ahead of time, so you stay focused. Jot notes as you go to adjust intensity, as needed. The same goes for your food intake. You probably do not need a note to remind you how unhealthy donuts are, but keeping a record of calories, noting healthy recipes you want to attempt and listing what times you should eat each meal and snack will drastically improve your overall success. With these tips, you can make this the year you remain resolute. **NOW**



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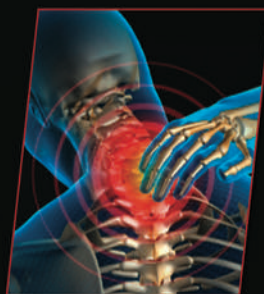
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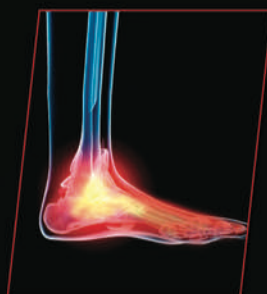
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The owners and staff at Catfish Plantation & Laughing Fish Pub offer an inviting place with a unique atmosphere for their patrons.

Internationally Known, Locally Owned

The Landis family welcomes you to their community mainstay that serves souls and spirits. — By Sandra Strong

Catfish Plantation & The Laughing Fish Pub haven't always been a nationally recognized hot spot. The Victorian-style home was built in 1895 and served as a private residence until 1970. At that time, it was converted into a doctor's office. In 1984, Catfish Plantation opened to the public. The Landis family purchased the restaurant, along with the ghostly inhabitants, in 2007. The ghosts are said to be friendly and positive, just like the current owners. "We have owned Catfish Plantation for 10 consecutive years," said Shawn Landis Sparks, co-owner. "We will celebrate our 10th anniversary this month."

The Landis family credits their longevity in a very competitive business to their strong work ethic and their love for people, in general. "We are hard workers," said Ann Landis, co-owner

and Shawn's mother. "Catfish Plantation is part of Waxahachie's history and its rich heritage."

"It's a local place where locals can come to enjoy good food and a pleasant atmosphere," Shawn added.

As with any eatery, inspections play a role in whether the business withstands the test of time or not. Shawn, Ann and Shawn's daughter, Amelia Landis Sparks, have never looked at these twice-yearly inspections as threats. "They keep us abreast of all the new laws," Shawn admitted. "We've always scored high. In fact, the last time the inspector was here, we scored 97 out of 100 percent."

To entice patrons back to the downtown area, the Landis family knew they needed to expand their offerings, so on

October 1, 2016, The Laughing Fish Pub opened its doors to the public. "The pub is a place where the average person can come to relax and enjoy a glass of wine or an Irish coffee," Shawn said as Ann nodded in agreement. "We also offer a limited pub menu and Happy Hour on the weekdays." The pub menu includes a fish and chips (French fries) basket, meat pies, fried pickles and gator bites, to name some of the most popular items ordered to date.

"Catfish Plantation is part of Waxahachie's history and it's rich heritage."

As a family-owned and -operated business, Shawn, Ann and Amelia know all too well what it means to miss church services on Wednesdays and Sundays. "As a small business, we can't afford to take off," Ann said, "but we've learned that we can have church and be the church right here." One way they show their Christian love is by giving back to the community that has given so much to them over the years. "We hire local students to teach them usable skills that will help to further them on into adulthood," Shawn explained.

"We also feel it's a calling to help others," Ann said. "We help by sharing with those who need something to eat. It may be as simple as a bowl of soup and some crackers, but we don't believe that anyone should go away from here hungry. We have church by giving back."

Catfish Plantation's specialties are Cajun-style cuisine and catfish with all the trimmings. Kids 10 and under eat free from 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. on Sundays with the purchase of an adult meal. Wednesday and Thursday nights are "bottomless fish and sides" nights. "We offer special deals for budget-conscious consumers," Shawn said. "You'll find some of the best food and the warmest ambience around at Catfish Plantation & The Laughing Fish Pub." **NOW**

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Delaney Kate Johnson, Miss Northeast Texas Teen, looks beautiful at the Bob Phillips Country Reporter Festival.



Jordan Ibrahim, soon-to-be 2, and his precious sister, Neena, 3, smile for the camera while shopping with their mom in Wal-Mart.



Heidi Hood's portrayal of Mary Poppins was a hit during the Festival of Trees.



Wanda Porter, with White Buffalo Trading Co., proudly displays her Chamber plaque after her ribbon cutting.



Steven Storie with Latitude 64 Dynamic Discs sets up his offerings and is ready for the Professional Disc Golf Association's Dirty Dozen Tour.



Heather Lee, Lyn Davis and Daphne Cazares oversee the Nicholas P. Sims Library Book Fair.



Cedar Valley College Technical Program representatives meet and greet at the NHRA Fall Nationals.



Sandy Shiroma stands in front of several of her uniquely painted feathers during the Texas Country Reporter Festival.



Featherston Media celebrates their grand opening with a Chamber ribbon cutting.



Those attending the Habitat for Humanity Festival of Trees were entertained by Bonnie Ramsey at the piano.

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Will Your Retirement Savings Last?

Increasing life expectancies mean you're likely looking at a longer retirement than the previous generation of workers. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the average person spends 20 years in retirement — while others put the figure at 30 years or longer. And financial advisors generally suggest you'll need 70 to 80 percent of your annual preretirement income to maintain your standard of living.

Will your retirement savings be up to the test? Here's what to consider.

1. Picture your retirement.

Whether you're planning to travel extensively or kick back by a lake, your income will need to support your desired lifestyle. Once you decide how you'd prefer to spend your retirement days, you can map out a strategy that could help get you there.

2. Assess your finances.

Take a realistic look at your current financial position. Note such things as how much you've saved, the debt level you're carrying, the amount of life and disability insurance you carry and what you have available in emergency funds. Talk with a financial professional about your options.

3. Increase savings.

It's never too early — or too late — to add to your savings. If you've got plenty of time before retirement, save as much as you can to take advantage of interest compounding. If retirement is near, look into catch-up contributions, which can help improve your financial picture. Even small gains matter: Increasing your retirement contribution by 1 to 2 percent each year adds up over time. Evaluate your savings progress with a retirement calculator.

4. Knock out debt.

Most financial professionals recommend keeping debt level manageable — no more than 35 percent of your income. Getting rid of high-interest debt, such as credit card balances, is always a good idea. And before you retire, you'll want to eliminate as much debt as possible, so you aren't servicing it with your savings. Consider paying off your home before you stop working, too.

5. Monitor your plans.

Review your retirement plans with a financial professional at least annually to see that they still work for you. (It's also a good idea to review your insurance coverage periodically, and any time your life changes, such as when you marry or have a baby.) As you near retirement, you might decide to shift some of your savings to income-producing investments, such as annuities. Or, to keep your nest egg intact, your plan may be to continue working a few years more into retirement.

To review your insurance coverage as part of your retirement and financial strategy, contact your insurance provider. **NOW**

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Insight on managing pain after surgery

With any surgery comes reasonable concerns. Depending on the person, your mind could start racing anywhere from the seriousness of your condition, to the procedure itself, to out-of-pocket costs or the required downtime. However, when it comes to foot and ankle surgery, there is the inevitable question: How bad will it hurt afterward?

Even if you have a high tolerance for pain, the unfortunate truth is that pain can accompany the healing process following any surgery. But, with the proper care, healing after foot and ankle surgery can be more comfortable than people might expect.

With the availability of such a large variety of highly effective pain medications, fear of pain should be the last deterrent keeping patients from having foot or ankle surgery. Patients can take comfort in knowing that their surgeons have an equally vested interest in keeping them comfortable, so their surgical experience is positive and they have a speedy recovery.

Patients can receive a local, long-lasting anesthetic immediately following surgery, which significantly decreases pain. Also, in today's health care climate

where efforts to reduce prescription drug addiction are at an all-time high, there are stronger anti-inflammatory medications available, which can eliminate the need for pain relievers containing narcotics.

Ultimately, if a patient needs to undergo surgery, it clearly means something is wrong and requires medical correction or extraction. That in mind, we want to help patients feel good about their surgery and think about how much better they will feel afterward, versus the pain during healing.

In addition to medication, a tried and true method in controlling pain following foot or ankle surgery is to apply rest, ice, compression and elevation (RICE). Using the RICE method reduces swelling in the surgical area. By reducing the swelling, inflammation is minimized, which in large part lowers pain. Talk to your foot and ankle surgeon before having a procedure to determine how much pain you can expect and the plan of action for managing that pain after surgery. **NOW**

*Christopher Schmitt, DPM
Associate of the American College of
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January 9

Friends of Sims Library meeting: 10:00-11:00 a.m., Sims Library, 515 Main St. If you are interested in volunteering to support the efforts of the library, this is the meeting for you. Call (972) 937-2681 for more information.

January 12

2nd Thursday Ladies Night Out: 5:00-8:00 p.m. Every month in downtown Waxahachie with participating merchants.

January 14

Go Texan Banquet: 6:00 p.m., I.O.O.F. Event Center, Corsicana. For more information, call (903) 641-6607

January 16

Martin Luther King Day Parade: 3:00 p.m. Parade route begins in downtown Waxahachie.

January 23

The Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 624 N. Grand Ave. Visit www.elliscountyquilters.com for more information.

January 27

Brown Bag & History: Noon, Ellis County Museum, downtown Waxahachie. For more information call (972) 937-0681.

January 28

Corsicana Ducks Unlimited Banquet and Auction: 6:00 p.m., I.O.O.F. Event Center, Corsicana. For more information, contact Ross Reamy at (903) 654-7704.

Historic Waxahachie, Inc. Free Speaker Series: Renovation vs. Restoration: 3:00-4:30 p.m., Sims Library. Featured speaker will be certified historic house specialist Robert Wedding from the Ft. Worth area. Free to the public. For more information, call (713) 557-6871.

February 2

6th Annual Daddy Daughter Dance "Be Our Guest": 6:00-9:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. Food, fun and dancing. Tickets are \$15 per person and they can be purchased at the Civic Center during regular business hours. Tickets will go on sale **January 3**. Tickets will NOT be available the night of the dance.

February 2 — April 12

AARP Tax Assistance: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Thursdays only, Sims Library, 515 Main St. Call (972) 937-2671 for additional information on what documents to bring

February 3

FirstLook's Pregnancy Medical Clinic Texas Life Investors' Celebration banquet: 6:00 p.m., check in; 7:00 p.m. elegant dinner, Waxahachie Civic Center. \$50 per person or \$400 per table of 8. Register to attend by **January 13** at txlifeinvestors.org or call (972) 938-7900 for more details.

February 4

Jazz Cafe 2017: 6:30-10:30 p.m. Admission includes an elegant dinner, dancing and live entertainment featuring the award-winning Waxahachie Jazz Orchestra and special guest artists. The live music features charts from the days of big bands, swing and jazz. For more information, email jazzcafe@spiritofwaxahachie.com.

February 17 — 19

Annual Gingerbread House Chili Cook-Off: For more information call (972) 937-1870 or visit www.elliscountycac.org.

Ongoing:

First Mondays

Friends of Sims Library meeting: 10:00-11:00 a.m., library meeting room, 515 W. Main St. Newcomers are always welcome.

First and Fourth Mondays

Avenue Moms: 10:00 a.m.-noon, The Avenue Church, 1761 N. Hwy. 77. Register online at www.events.theavenuechurch.com or call the church office at (972) 937-5301 for more information.

Second Mondays

Ellis County Veterans Networking Group: 6:00 p.m., Ryan's Steakhouse, Waxahachie. Come join the group for dinner and listen to what the guest speaker for the evening has to share. For more information, call Mike Lamb at (214) 763-0378.

Third Mondays

Ellis County Aggie Moms meeting: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin. For more information, visit www.elliscountyyaggiemoms.org.

Fourth Mondays

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave.

Mondays and Thursdays

Fitness Revolution: 6:30 p.m., Salvation Army, 620 Farley St. Work out to fun aerobics choreographed to upbeat Christian

and wholesome music. \$15 per month. Call (214) 477-1164 for more information.

Tuesdays

Story Time at Sims Library: 10:00-10:40 a.m., children 3 and older. Program features themed book readings, songs, puppets and crafts that teach children early literacy skills in preparation for kindergarten. E-mail children@simslib.org for more information.

Waxahachie Toastmasters meeting: 6:30 p.m., Lyceum at Sims Library. For more information, call (469) 245-8681.

GriefShare meetings: 4:00 and 6:30 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County in the Youth Center Kindergarten Room. For more information, call (972) 935-9801 or visit www.cowboyfaith.org.

Fourth Tuesdays

Ellis County Technology (ECT) meeting: 6:30 p.m., LaQuinta. For more information, call Wendy Merritt at (469) 256-8989.

Thursdays

Genealogy Research Assistance: 2:00-4:00 p.m., Sims Library. The Genealogy and Reference Department will be offering the tools needed to search for your ancestors. Attendees will be able to exchange information, share creative solutions, generate resources and solve these mysteries.

Junior Master Gardeners Club: 3:45-4:45 p.m., Sims Library. Club is for children ages 5-12. If you have an interest in gardening, come for gardening related activities and help maintain the Sims Library garden.

Buckout Arena Ministry: 7:00 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County, 2374 W. Hwy. 287 Bypass. For more information, call (972) 935-9801.

First Saturdays

Books and Brew: Author Talk Series: Noon, Sims Library, 515 W. Main St. Hear authors read from their books, have a book signed and learn about the creative process. The local Starbucks will provide free coffee and attendees are encouraged to bring their lunch. Event is free and open to the public.

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



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In the Kitchen With Elizabeth Stripland

— *By Virginia Riddle*

Four generations, from Elizabeth Stripland's grandparents to her daughter, have carried on the tradition of Sunday dinners prepared for family and friends. "I enjoy cooking a large meal and having everyone come to visit and eat," Elizabeth said. "From birthdays to weddings, all family celebrations involve cooking or eating!"

Elizabeth began cooking at around 9 years old, having been taught by her mom, who cooked at home and, also, at a local gun club. An employee at Waxahachie's H-E-B, Elizabeth enjoys volunteering, crafting, traveling, reading, woodworking and bowling. She loves trying new Pinterest recipes, especially those involving baked or grilled foods, and adds "my own twist to them." Born and raised in Texas, Elizabeth said, "There's a little bit of Texas in everything I cook." **NOW**

Yummy Asian Pork Chops

1/4 cup soy sauce
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
2 Tbsp. brown sugar
1 garlic clove, minced
1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1 tsp. sesame oil
4-5 pork chops
Steamed broccoli

1. In a large bowl, mix the soy sauce, vegetable oil, brown sugar, garlic, ginger and sesame oil into a marinade.
2. Add the pork chops; cover; refrigerate overnight.
3. Remove pork chops from marinade; grill pork chops 6-7 minutes per side.
4. Serve with steamed broccoli.

Quick and Easy Fried Rice

2 Tbsp. sesame oil
1 small white onion, chopped
1 cup frozen peas and carrots, thawed
2 eggs, slightly beaten
3 cups cooked rice
Soy sauce, to taste
Grilled chicken breast

1. Heat a large skillet over medium heat; when hot, add sesame oil, white onion, peas and carrots; cook until vegetables are soft.
2. Move vegetables to one side of the skillet; add eggs.
3. Scramble the eggs keeping them separate from the cooked vegetables.
4. When eggs are cooked, mix them with the vegetables.

5. Add the rice to the skillet; mix with the eggs and vegetables.
6. Pour soy sauce on rice; serve with a grilled chicken breast.

Simple Salmon

1 2-lb. salmon fillet
Salt, pepper and onion powder, to taste
2 garlic cloves, minced
4 Tbsp. butter or margarine
Roasted asparagus

1. Preheat oven to 375 F; line a shallow baking sheet with heavy duty foil.
2. Place the salmon fillet on a baking sheet; season with salt, pepper, onion powder, minced garlic and butter/margarine.
3. Wrap salmon with foil, creating a pouch; bake for 15-20 minutes.
4. Open the pouch; broil for 2-3 minutes to crisp the top of the fillet.
5. Serve with asparagus.

Campfire Surprise

1 14-oz. pkg. smoked sausage, sliced
2 yellow squash, diced
2 zucchini, diced
1 8-oz. pkg. mushrooms, chopped
5-6 red potatoes, diced
2-3 tsp. butter or margarine
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 tsp. garlic powder
1 Tbsp. onion powder

1. Preheat oven to 350 F; line a shallow baking pan with heavy duty foil.
2. Mix sausage, squash, zucchini, mushrooms and potatoes; pour into the baking pan.
3. Top mixture with butter/margarine, salt, pepper, garlic powder and onion powder; wrap mixture with foil creating a foil pouch.
4. Bake for 30 minutes, or until potatoes are tender.

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



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 Jan. 14 - BOGO Saturday Downtown
 Jan. 16 - Martin Luther King Day Parade
 Jan. 27 - Brown Bag "Waxahachie Remembers", Ellis Co. Museum

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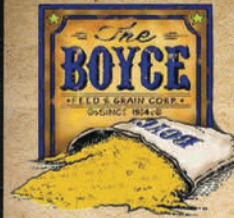
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