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Memories of Childhood

At Home With Kenneth
and Brea Aitken

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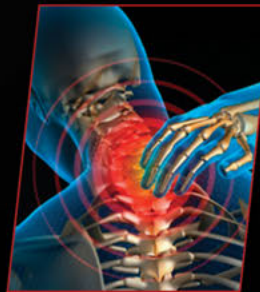
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Publisher, Connie Poirier | General Manager, Rick Hensley

EDITORIAL

*Managing Editor, Becky Walker | North Ellis Co. Editor, Jill Martinez
Editorial Coordinator, Sandra Strong
Editorial Assistant, Rachel Smith | Writers, Debbie Durling . Emily Nippes
Virginia Riddle . Betty Tryon . Zachary R. Urquhart
Editors/Proofreaders, Pat Anthony . Shannon Pfaff*

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

*Creative Director, Chris McCalla | Artists, Kristin Bato . Morgan Christensen
Martha Macias . Brande Morgan . Anthony Sarmienta*

PHOTOGRAPHY

*Photography Directors, Chris McCalla . Brande Morgan
Photographer, Shane Kirkpatrick*

ADVERTISING

*Advertising Representatives, Cherise Burnett . Linda Roberson
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Billing Manager, Angela Mixon



ON THE COVER

*Alana Dixon has brains
and beauty.*

Photo by
Shane Kirkpatrick

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Jill

Jill Martinez
North Ellis Co. NOW Editor
jill.martinez@nowmagazines.com
(214) 980-2653

Happy New Year, Readers!

Can you believe that 2018 is here already? It seems like just yesterday I was preparing for Y2K, searching the Internet with dial-up service to find what items I should stockpile just in case the world came to a screeching halt. How much our world has changed in 18 years! I wonder what new things will come in the year ahead?

Even though we have the opportunity to reflect on our lives and make changes at any time, it's very common for us to do this as a new year begins. Many of us make the usual resolutions to exercise more, lose weight or start a new hobby. Unfortunately, by February, most commitments have become null and void. Maybe it is because we try to change too much too fast.

A popular self-improvement idea is to aim for 1 percent improvement every day. Most of us feel confident making small changes. If we focus on making small, positive steps every day, we might actually end up meeting our long-term goals. Like the fable taught us in our childhood, "Slow and steady wins the race."

I wish you success and prosperity in the new year!

P.S. New year, new look and some fresh, new ideas! The NOW Magazines team has been working hard on this project, and we hope you love it. Cheers!



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A
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POSE DRIVEN DARLING

— By Virginia Riddle

Runway lights illuminate Alana Dixon when she's modeling or competing in a pageant, but her effervescent personality and smile light her face at most other times. A self-professed shy child, Alana has learned early the value of persistence and practice, two key elements of the success she's achieved as a junior model and the reigning Miss Texas Lone Star Princess. A chance glance at a magazine photo of a girl wearing a pageant's crown prompted Alana to ask her mom, Lorraine Dixon, if she could compete. "I wanted to show girls my age that if they were shy like me, they could still try something different and show their personality," Alana, now age 10 and a student at Shields Elementary School, said.

Three years ago, however, parental permission didn't come easily. "I begged and begged. Then my mom told me if I didn't quit asking, I would never do it, so I quit. Finally, she signed me up," Alana remembered.

"She was persistent," Lorraine agreed. "I researched for a natural type of pageant and told Alana I would enter her as a one-time deal. I didn't know that she was researching, too, and learning online how to compete. Alana came in third place in that first pageant! I thought, *She might be good at this*. But she must prioritize — Jesus, family and her education come first — then the pageants that are for fun."

To date, Alana has competed in seven pageants, including her most recent, National American Miss in Hollywood, California, last November. She competes in formal and casual wear, photogenic, portfolio, top model and talent categories. A Dallas modeling coach gives direction to her. "I like our coach's attitude because Alana is encouraged to still be a child," Lorraine explained. That's not only a challenge in the modeling world, but a challenge at home, too. Alana learned tracheostomy care at age 9 to assist her dad, Rickey Dixon, a former NFL football player who has ALS/Lou Gehrig's Disease. She's also been schooled on how to handle emergencies her dad might experience when Lorraine or other adult caregivers aren't present.

Fortunately, with two older brothers, one of whom attends the University of North Texas, as well as an adult sister and an aunt, both of whom live nearby, family is always ready to help Alana. Lorraine, an EPA lawyer in Dallas, travels with her to pageants. "My mom says I keep her busy," Alana said.

The biggest challenge in a pageant came in the form of a question concerning her mother's profession. "The judges asked if I became a lawyer, what kind would I become," Alana remembered. "I didn't know there were different kinds of lawyers. I just knew what my mom does."

As a result, Alana learned the importance of preparation. "Pageants are a lot of work," she explained. "I memorize my introduction, and singing is my talent. My favorite songs are 'Diamonds' and 'How Far I'll Go.'" Alana's musical talent

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extended to membership in her school's choir last year, and this year she's part of the steel band.

The payoff is worth the work. "I get to meet new girls and make them friends for life," Alana said. "The pageants boost my self-confidence." They also give her a chance to help other children in Red Oak through the Red Oak Library and Reading Partners of North Texas.

"I read books all the time at home, school and the library," Alana said. "We read online with Kindle and Audiobooks, but some people don't have access to books at home and can't use the library because they've lost a book. I wanted to start a book drive and give away books." Her plan culminated last September 24 when she hosted an event at the library along with the Chocolate Mint Foundation and the Daddies' Girls Event Planners who created decorations and arranged for face painting and book characters dressed in costumes. "My mom made flyers I passed out at school and through the library," Alana remembered. More than 50 people attended the event and 153 books changed hands.

"Reading is my platform issue in the pageants," Alana explained. "Reading takes me to different places. If I have a book, I can let my imagination run wild. I love Matilda's story," she said of author



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Roald Dahl's children's book. "If you donate books to libraries, read or give a book to a child, then you give a child a chance to succeed."

Alana has been reading since she learned to sound out words in pre-kindergarten, and today she enjoys volunteering as a reader to toddlers at Bright Beginners. "I read about 200 words per minute at school," Alana said. She has also raised and donated funds for art supplies for epileptic children since her brother, Cameron, has epilepsy, and she is active in church programs at her family church, First Christian Methodist Evangelistic Church.

While involved with outside activities, Alana knows education is her priority. "I insist that Alana has to keep her grades up, so during the school year, she mostly studies, reads and practices," Lorraine said.

Summers and school holidays, however, are fun times, as well as when most of her modeling occurs. "I'm a shopaholic and fashionista," Alana confessed. She also enjoys horseback riding. "I want to learn English riding and jumping and compete in the Olympics."

Alana's other plans include more community service, taking a break from pageant competition while she helps her younger cousin compete and become a famous movie star and singer. "I tell other girls, 'If you really want to do something, then do it,'" Alana said. "It's an awesome feeling and so much fun when I win and get crowned. I know then that I've accomplished my goals." **NOW**

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MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

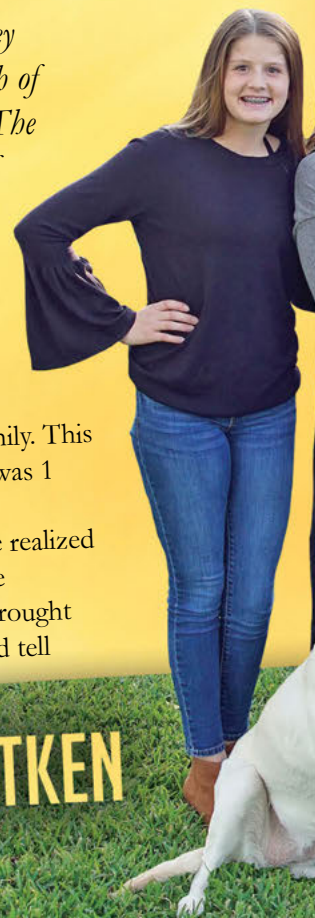


Kenneth and Brea Aitken met as freshmen while attending Sam Houston State University. They passed each other daily. Finally, Kenneth decided to speak to her. "Our first date was with a bunch of friends," they shared, "but we talked the whole evening, and it was as if no one else were there." The fountains became their place to stop and talk. When the time came, he proposed to her in front of those fountains, and they married after graduation.

After marriage, they decided to move back to the Ellis County area even though Kenneth calls Houston home. "We knew this was where we wanted to be," Brea said. He began working for an insurance company, and Brea became a teacher in Red Oak, in addition to giving swim lessons and shooting photography on the side.

In 2009, Brea's mom and stepfather retired, bought a camper and offered their house to the Aitken family. This was an offer they could not refuse. Raising her family in the same place that she'd grown up in since she was 1 year old was like a dream to Brea.

Built in 1976, this three-bedroom, three-bath, ranch-style home holds so many memories for Brea. She realized how strong the emotions were when they got down to the original wallpaper in the bathrooms during the remodeling. Her father passed away while she was still a child. Memories of him flooded her mind and brought tears to her eyes. "Each night as he would tuck me in, he would tickle me all the way down to my feet and tell



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— By Debbie Durling



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me to go to sleep," she remembered. When they got down to the studs, they found an old Coors Beer can in the plumbing area of the wall that had been left there by her dad. They didn't move it. Kenneth set his favorite drink can beside it and closed the area with the new materials.

Some areas of the home had been remodeled by Brea's parents before she moved in, including the garage conversion, the landscaping and the pool installation. In the kitchen, the medium-toned wood cabinets surround an island, which houses modern compartments for storage. A

creamy almond surface accents the tile floor that resembles stone. A pot rack with decorative, antique kitchen items hangs from the ceiling over the island as a reminder of days gone by. It is still the same as when her mother was the chief cook in the same kitchen.

"I love antiques and color," Brea said. Various earth- and jewel-tone shades are used throughout the home on accent walls, flooring and fabrics. The brick fireplace in the living room matches the exterior of the home. Brea added her own touch with spray glitter that creates a special sheen. On the mantel of the fireplace are two metal



pieces of art which were found by Brea's mother and stepfather as they completed some renovations around the house and garage. Her father loved to weld in his spare time, and these are two of the beautiful remnants of his work.

The Aitkens created a game room out of the converted garage for their two children, Kendall, 13, and Harrison, 10. "We want their friends to enjoy being here," the couple

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explained. An oak pool table, sofa for relaxation and a high boy table with stools provide a great space for tweens and teens to spend their time.

For themselves, the couple updated the master bedroom. "The master bedroom once had blonde furniture," Brea explained, "but, I decided to change it." She painted it with chalk paint and finished it off with a darker stain.

For the whole family, the backyard is a relaxing getaway without ever leaving home. A large tropical tree sits at the end of the pool, creating the illusion of a vacation destination. A treehouse is in the corner of the yard along with abundant seating, while a barn stands on the opposite side of the outdoor plaza. Behind the barn is one of the most special mementos of all the years spent living on this property. Brea's stepdad had each of the grandkids imprint their hands and feet into the cement before it dried.

The outside is Kenneth's favorite area of the home. He loves that there is lots of room to roam. "Just the other day, we were out hitting golf balls," Kenneth shared. They also love to visit with friends by the pool or fire pit area. Sometimes their friends will come over just to go in the backyard and get away from it all.

Whether it's a large gathering, riding bikes, playing baseball or playing volleyball, the property is a joy to maintain because of all the benefits it gives to the family.

Moving to the country from the city has provided many humorous



moments for Kenneth and Brea. Brea remembers a time when an animal had her little dog in its mouth. She ran outside, causing the animal to drop her dog and scurry off. She suddenly felt Kenneth blaze by her in pursuit of the animal. She went back into the house wondering why Kenneth was chasing a coyote. Soon, he returned out of breath and said, "That was the fastest dog I've ever seen." Another time he chased an armadillo around the yard with a shovel, not realizing how fast those creatures can be, too.

In addition to providing memorable moments, the Aitkens' home is welcoming. Family members come home and spend Christmas Eve at the house just like they have always done. "I want my house to have an atmosphere where people feel at home," Brea said.

To Brea, lamps are an important part of creating a relaxing setting. One of her friends comes over and hangs out sometimes until her daughter's volleyball practice is over. "I will look around the corner and there she is asleep on the couch," Brea laughed.

There is satisfaction in hearing her kids run down the same hallways she once ran down. As she yells across the house in the mornings to awaken her kids, memories of her mom come flooding back. All these childhood memories make this a one-of-a-kind home for Brea. It's rare that this kind of scenario plays out, but for Kenneth and Brea, home is about remembering the past, living in the present and anticipating the future. **NOW**

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Where Are They NOW?

Annette Witte Shortes

— By Jill Martinez



From the time Annette was young, she enjoyed being in the classroom helping her mom prepare for school. She dreamed of the day she would have her own classroom and could inspire young scholars the way so many of her teachers had done for her. “I saw firsthand by watching my mom what a challenging, yet rewarding, job teaching can be,” Annette said.

When she was in eighth grade, Annette began attending Ovilla Christian School. She participated in a wide variety of extracurricular activities, such as soccer and school musicals. It was her freshman math teacher, Jennifer Marks, who turned the smoldering interests she had in becoming a teacher into a burning flame. “Mrs. Marks taught with such enthusiasm for math. She saw potential in me and encouraged me to pursue a career in teaching math,” she fondly remembered. Annette took two more classes with Mrs. Marks, Algebra I and Pre-Calculus. Their connection had become strong through the years.

In a sudden turn of events, just months before Annette’s graduation in 2008, Mrs. Marks passed away. The stories that many of Mrs. Marks’ students told of her

illustrated the impact she had on so many lives. “She truly had taught, loved and inspired so many people.” Annette knew then she was called to do the same.

Annette attended Dallas Baptist University, where she majored in math and earned her degree in 2011. As she began looking for a teaching position, she discovered that Ovilla Christian School was in need of a math teacher. After some initial hesitation about teaching where she had once been a student, she felt sure it was the place for her. “I’ll never forget the moment I first sat behind my teacher desk in Mrs. Mark’s former classroom. At that moment, it hit me. I was a teacher! The dream that I had since I was a little girl had come true.”

Laura Stephens, also a math teacher at OCS, commented about Annette. “Annette was in my study hall her junior year. She was always very diligent with her time, and she was always willing to help her classmates with their math. A few years later, she became my son’s math teacher. She was patient and did whatever it took to help her students learn. My son just completed his degree in accounting and finance. I know that Annette was a big part of his success.”

More dreams came true when Annette met Marcus Shortes in 2014. They married in May 2015. Shortly after their marriage, they relocated to Virginia, so Marcus could begin medical school at Liberty University. "Leaving OCS was so hard, but I was happy to join Marcus as he pursued his dream of becoming a doctor." Annette was able to teach middle school math during that time. It was definitely a time of stretching and growing for her, and she is thankful for it.

"The dream that I had since I was a little girl had come true."

The Shorteses returned to Texas a couple of years later as opportunities for Marcus unfolded. "We are so glad to be back in the Lone Star State living closer to family. I am currently teaching Algebra 1 and Geometry at Westwood High School in Palestine and am thankful for the opportunity to teach, love and inspire a new batch of students." While Annette serves her students, Marcus is working on his clinical training in a local hospital. He will complete his studies in osteopathic medicine in 2019.

With several years of teaching under her belt, Annette has already impacted hundreds of students' lives. With many more years ahead of her in the teaching profession, she will no doubt leave a mark on many of her students as she hopes and dreams to do. **NOW**

Graduation photo by Christian Waits.



New Year Beginnings

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Raising Cane's CHICKEN FINGERS



CookingNOW *In the Kitchen With* TAMMIE WILSON

— By Rachel Smith

Being the principal's secretary at H.A. Wooden Elementary, Tammie Wilson has her hands full. However, she always takes time to make people happy. Using her special gift of baking, she can easily turn a frown upside down. "When family or friends need a little pick-me-up, I usually bake them a pie. It leaves a warm, sweet smile on their hearts, tongues and faces," she said.

Growing up, Tammie was blessed with wonderful food made by her grandmother. "Every Sunday meal was like Thanksgiving or Christmas," she exclaimed. She was proud to marry a man who also enjoys cooking. "He told his mom that I couldn't cook, and I didn't want to show him any different," she laughed. "I enjoy him cooking for me!" **NOW**

Crispy Onion Baked Chicken

- 1 cup breadcrumbs, plain**
- 1 pkg. Knorr French Onion Soup and Recipe Mix**
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 1 1/4 lbs.)**
- 1/3 cup Hellman's mayonnaise**

- 1.** In a large food bag, combine breadcrumbs and soup mix.
- 2.** Brush chicken on all sides with mayonnaise. Place chicken, 1 piece at a time, in the bag; shake to coat.
- 3.** Arrange chicken on rack in broiler pan. Bake at 425 F for 15-25 minutes, or until tender. Enjoy!

Pecan Pie

- 3 large eggs**
- 1/2 cup sugar**
- 1/2 tsp. salt**
- 6 Tbsp. butter or margarine**

- 1 cup corn syrup**
- 1 tsp. vanilla**
- 1 1/4 cups pecans**

- 1.** Mix all ingredients together, except pecans. Add pecans; pour mixture into an unbaked pie shell.
- 2.** Bake 40-45 minutes at 375 F.

Broccoli or Spinach Cornbread

- 2 sticks butter (divided use)**
- 2 boxes Jiffy Cornbread Mix**
- 1 10-oz. bag frozen broccoli or spinach, cooked and drained**
- 4 eggs**
- 11 oz. cottage cheese**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 F. In a 9x13-inch pan, melt one stick butter in oven.
- 2.** In a bowl, mix remaining ingredients together.
- 3.** Pour mixture into the pan and cook 40 minutes, or until brown. Enjoy!

Fried Cabbage

- 1 head cabbage**
- 6 strips bacon**
- 1 medium onion**
- 1 bell pepper**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- Garlic salt, to taste**
- Butter, to taste**

- 1.** Wash and cut up cabbage. In a skillet, cook bacon, onion and bell pepper together. Add seasonings, to taste.
- 2.** Stir in cabbage. Add butter for smooth cabbage flavor and enjoy.

Nanna's Chocolate Pie

- 1 1/2 cups sugar**
- 3 Tbsp. flour**
- 4 Tbsp. cocoa**
- 2 cups milk**
- 3 egg yolks, beaten**
- 1 1/2 tsp. vanilla**
- 1 9-inch pie shell, baked**
- 1 tub Cool Whip (optional)**

- 1.** Mix dry ingredients together.
- 2.** Add milk, egg yolks and vanilla; beat well with a whisk.
- 3.** Cook over medium heat on the stovetop, stirring constantly until thickened.
- 4.** Pour mixture into baked shell. Let cool 4 hours in refrigerator; top with Cool Whip, if desired.

Chili

- 1 lb. ground beef or turkey
- 2 cans Bush's mild chili beans
- 2 cans Hunt's tomatoes for chili

1. Brown beef or turkey; drain excess oil.
2. Mix together beans and tomatoes in a pan. Add beef or turkey to pan; heat to desired temperature and enjoy!

Peanut Butter Fudge

- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup peanut butter
- 1 tsp. vanilla

1. Butter an 8x8-inch pan.
2. In a saucepan, add sugar and milk. Bring to a boil; lower heat. To test, remove a small amount with a spoon and drop into a bowl of cold water. The fudge is done when a soft ball forms.
3. Remove from heat; add peanut butter and vanilla. Quickly pour into pan to let cool.

Broccoli Salad

- 1 head broccoli, chopped
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 lb. bacon, fried and crumbled
- 1 cup cheese, shredded

1. Mix all ingredients together; serve.

Banana Pudding

- 1 1.5-oz. pkg. sugar-free Jell-O vanilla instant pudding
- 2 cups skim milk (or 2% milk)
- 1 cup Cool Whip Lite
- 3 bananas
- 10-14 vanilla wafers

1. Prepare pudding per package directions in a cool bowl.
2. Fold in Cool Whip.
3. Layer bananas in the pudding and top with vanilla wafers. Refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving.

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

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From birth onward, life's journey comes with no guarantees for anyone. At any age, any time, great happenings bring joy, while disasters and illnesses bring sadness and loss. Marianne Whitley, an agent with Farmers Insurance, is there for her neighbors. She listens carefully to their needs. "It's very important that I make sure my clients are properly covered," she stated. "We treat every client the way we would like to be treated."

For 15 years, Marianne has officed in the same location, offering auto, home, life, renters, business, flood, umbrella, motorcycle, personal watercraft and travel trailer insurance policies. "If we can't insure it, we will help you find a place that can cover that need," Marianne explained. Farmers Insurance offers several discounts, such as multiline policy, EFT, claims free, affinity for certain professionals, new construction and new roofs.

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Clients have several payment options: debit or credit card, EFT draft, cash or check. "Folks are always welcome to come see us, but if they can't, we can take their payment over the phone," Marianne said. The office primarily serves clients in Glenn Heights, Midlothian, Ovilla, Red Oak, Waxahachie and southern Dallas County. "We cover

property all over the state of Texas. We have clients from the Panhandle all the way to the Texas coast,” Marianne explained.

For over a year, clients have been welcomed by Alicia Matthews at the office’s door. Alicia is a licensed agency producer. “We love the interaction with people. This area still has a small-town, friendly feel,” Marianne said. “When the tornado tore through here a few years ago, we had three clients whose homes were declared a total loss. One client told us that his family couldn’t have been taken care of any better. They could rebuild their home and lives.”

“We treat every client the way we would like to be treated.”

She graduated from DeSoto High School and earned a B.B.A. degree in management and entrepreneurship from the University of North Texas. “I worked in construction and insurance during my college days. My parents had a longtime Farmers agent, and he encouraged me to become an agent with this company. I’ve been very grateful I chose this company and career,” Marianne remarked.

Marianne is mom to daughters Emily and Reagan, and wife to Kyle, who grew up in nearby Lancaster. “Kyle and I have seen so many changes to our hometowns,” Marianne said. She volunteers with The Manna House, PTO at her daughter’s school and a local animal rescue group. “We enjoy family campouts in our travel trailer,” she added.

“Alicia and I evaluate other companies’ policies to see if we can help people. That’s our business — helping people,” Marianne said. “We like being a one-stop shop for everybody and being able to help our clients with all of their insurance policies.” **NOW**

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TravelNOW

Getaway to Good Times

— By Emily Nipps

Northwest Florida often gets less attention than Miami and Orlando, but it makes an ideal spot to explore and relax without the crowds. Sugar-sand beaches, emerald waters, historic landmarks and sunny outdoor adventures await families or couples designing the perfect getaway.

You don't have to venture far beyond the Alabama-Sunshine State border to find a treasure of activities, ranging from museums and mini-golf to waterfront dining and fishing. At the northwest tip of Florida sits beautiful Pensacola, known for its protected beaches and 18th century-era restored neighborhoods.

To get a real-life feel for Pensacola's past, start your trip by passing through Historic Pensacola Village. Whether you explore on your own or discover the area with a guide, don't

miss seeing the T.T. Wentworth, Jr. Florida State Museum, built in 1908.

Aviation geeks won't want to miss visiting the National Naval Aviation Museum. Located on Naval Air Station Pensacola, the museum features more than 150 aircraft on display. It's also where the Blue Angels Naval aerobatics team trains.

Pensacola owes its pivotal role in American aviation history to its famous warm climate and sunny skies. With free museum admission and free guided tours, the National Naval Aviation Museum is an affordable and fun adventure.

From Pensacola, it's about a one-hour drive along Scenic Highway 98 to the unspoiled beaches of Santa Rosa Island. Enjoy luxury beach houses, upscale dining and the unique

artist colony known as Gulf Place. Santa Rosa Beach also has several entrances to Point Washington State Forest, a 15,000-acre preserve known for rich hunting, off-road bicycling and hiking.

Santa Rosa Island is home to five fascinating all-brick forts built to defend coastal Florida after the War of 1812. Fort Pickens, finished in 1834, was active until 1947. Walk through the halls where soldiers were in the Civil War, World War I and World War II and where the great Apache leader, Geronimo, spent seven months after he was captured in 1886.

Fort Barrancas was built on the ruins of an old Spanish fort and finished in 1844. Fort McRee was built too close to the water with too much wood in its construction and was blasted to bits by artillery in the first months of the Civil War. The ruins are clearly visible near the surf at Perdido Key.

If the family is up for another three-hour drive continuing east on US-98, St. George Island is a perfect getaway along the water. Climb the 92 stairs to the top of the Cape Saint George Lighthouse, built in 1852, for a beautiful view of the island and surrounding waterways. St. George Island is also home to 17 miles of paved bike paths and numerous off-road trails for exploring. Jolly Roger Beach Shop rents bikes by the hour, day and week and is located in the center of the island.

For sunset, stop by the Blue Parrot Oceanfront Café for fresh seafood, cocktails and a great view of the water. Don't miss trying the fresh Apalachicola Bay oysters while you're there.

And if you want an even closer look at the sparkling waters, check out Journeys of St. George Island to charter boat trips for great fishing, rent kayaks or take your little ones on the guided dolphin tour or sunset cruise.

Whether you wish to relax or explore, look no farther than the sunny shoreline of northwest Florida. Its rich history combined with soft beaches and nature trails make it your getaway for good times. **NOW**



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A Brand New You

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

There's never a bad time to start exercising, dump bad habits or learn a new skill, and the beginning of the new year can be the jumpstart needed to make a change. If eating healthier is your goal this year, here are some ideas for a fresh start on becoming a new you.

Gluten-free vs. Low-carb¹

- *Know why you are changing.* Celiac disease and wheat allergies cause a small percentage of people to be unable to digest the protein from wheat properly, but many others have cut gluten and seen improvements in their health. It isn't clear if everyone would be healthier on a gluten-free diet, but if it means you avoid cookies or donuts and don't drink beer, less gluten would make you healthier. The key is understanding what you are avoiding and why, so you don't miss nutrients like fiber.

- *Eat less bread.* If you aren't actively staying away from breads and wheat-based starches, you are likely eating more bread than you need. While enjoying a roll with dinner may not be a bad thing, going for third and fourths is over-consumption.

- *There are other carbs.* The gluten-free trend stemmed from an earlier craze of reducing carbohydrates. But there are many types of carbs. Fruit is high in natural sugars, which is better than foods with added sugar, but too much fruit can still be a bad thing. The key in low-carb eating for weight loss is to avoid sugar and sugar substitutes like aspartame and sucralose as much as possible. If you need something other than water to drink, try unsweetened tea with a fruit wedge, instead of diet soda.

Diabetic Diets²

- *Control your glucose.* Diabetics should eat at regular times, with a focus on healthier foods like fruits, vegetables and healthy carbs. This helps the body produce and regulate the insulin it either makes or gets from injections.

- *Know what to avoid.* Diabetics are at a higher risk of heart problems, so limiting the amount of both saturated and trans fats is important. Fats in avocados and almonds are healthy in moderation, but animal proteins and processed foods aren't. Sodium and cholesterol should also be limited.

Heart Healthy³

• *Eat better to live longer.* If the goal is long-term health, you will want to make some long-term diet decisions. Choose whole grains over refined flour or calorie-high muffins and pastries. Add plenty of fruits and vegetables, while limiting sodium. Keeping portion sizes down to limit your caloric intake will improve your overall health.

• *Make good choices.* A heart-healthy menu includes good fats like those in healthy oils, nuts and seeds. Limit saturated fats and avoid untrimmed beef or hot dogs. Instead, choose good proteins like lean ground meat or poultry, eggs and legumes.

• *Follow a plan.* Find a variety of healthy options and buy groceries with a menu in mind to get food that meets your nutritional needs, while limiting the unhealthy options you are trying to avoid. And include a sensible “cheat” meal once in a while to curb cravings for unhealthy options.

Whatever your diet and health goals are this year, your first steps should be researching and deciding on a firm plan to follow. No matter your goal, knowing what to and what not to eat will help you become the new you that you are hoping to be. **NOW**

Sources:

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2. “Diabetes Diet: Create your healthy-eating plan” obtained from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetes/in-depth/diabetes-diet/art-20044295>

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BELLOWING HOLLERS



Zoomed In: Dez Tovar

By Jill Martinez

Dez Tovar of Ferris has released her first novel, *Bellowing Hollers*. “When I was a truck driver, I passed a cemetery in Indiana twice a week. It was my inspiration for this suspenseful and sometimes horrifying thriller,” Dez shared. “Now, I drive a bus for the Ferris Independent School District. It gives me the flexibility to write,” she said. “I love living in Ferris and having the solitude to create stories.”

She has had lots of firsts in this venture. “Publishing this book has been fun and challenging. I’m learning as I go.” This month she has a book release party in Dallas, and in the summer of 2018, she will go on a book signing tour. She has already begun writing the sequel, *Whispering Hollers*.

Around Town



Bruce Turner serves up smiles, sweets and savory food options at Creamer's in Orilla.



Ferris HS holds its annual Breakfast with Santa event. Over 750 children and parents attended.



Andrew Chepey and Phillip Dickey of Credera lead fifth-graders at Ferris Intermediate in Hour of Code event.



Arthur Pierot, Wayne Norcross and Brittany Gibbons of Guild Mortgage, City Real Estate and Cooper Insurance, and their staff, collect food for Ellis County Outreach for the holidays.



Elliott Anglin takes a photo with Santa at Ovilla's Christmas in the Park.



Mathnasium celebrates their membership in the Red Oak Area Chamber of Commerce.



Kaylee McCutcheon and Tionne Warren take orders at the new Golden Chick in Ovilla.



Larry and Daria Stevenson enjoy lunch at Red Oak's Lonestar Burger Bar & Cafe.

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1

First Day “Precious Prairie” Hike: 1:00-2:00 p.m. Cedar Hill State Park, 1570 FM 1382. Regular park admission. Leashed pets welcome on a two-mile nature hike.

5

American Legion Post 388 Raffle: win a Visa gift card: 1st prize \$250, 2nd \$150, 3rd \$100. Drawing held in Austin; need not be present to win. Purchase no later than **Jan. 26**. Funds raised support Hurricane Harvey relief and reconstruction. Call Robert Sonnier at (469) 552-6723 for tickets.

9

Paws for Fun: 6:00-7:00 p.m., Paws for Reflection Ranch, 5431 Montgomery Rd., Midlothian. Ages 7 and older are invited to interact with and learn about all sorts of animals. The group meets on alternating Tuesdays through May. Cost is \$100 for 10-week winter session. Register at PawsForReflectionRanch.org or message Tlambert.pawsranch@att.net for more details.

16

Bluegrass Jam Session: 7:00 p.m., Lighthouse Coffee Bar, 1404 N. 9th St., Midlothian. Everyone’s invited to join in — bring your instrument or simply relax and enjoy!



27

EdCamp at SAGU: 8:00 a.m.-noon, 1200 Sycamore, Waxahachie. Educators of all grade levels are welcome to join this free professional development “un-conference.” Discussions are selected by the participants. To register, visit the “EdCamp at SAGU” Facebook page.

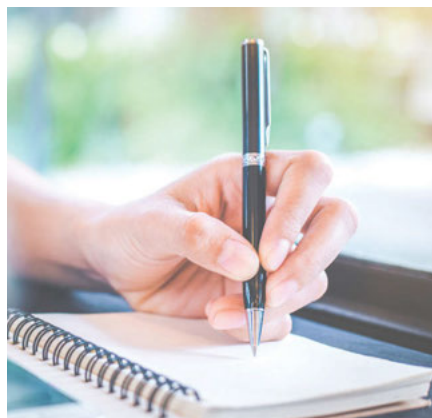
Ongoing:

Second Mondays

Ellis County Veterans Networking Group meeting: 6:00 p.m., Ryan’s Steak House, Waxahachie. Join the group for dinner and listen to the guest speaker. To RSVP or for more information, call (214) 763-0378 or email vetsnetgrp@att.net.

Tuesdays

Writing for Enjoyment Group meeting: 12:30-1:30 p.m., First United Methodist Church of Red Oak, 600 Daubitz Dr. For more information, call (469) 383-5365 or email joanpomeroy@att.net.



Second Tuesdays

342 Network Group: 7:30 a.m., Denny’s, I-35E Service Rd., Red Oak. The group includes business owners who would like to network and is open to all businesses in any county. RSVP to Melton McKown at (214) 244-2829.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

North Ellis Co. Outreach assistance: 9:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m., 205 S. Main St., Ferris. Assistance is for Red Oak and Ferris residents. For more information, call Denise Butler at (972) 617-7261.

Story Time: 11:00 a.m., Ferris Public Library. Pre-school children and their caregivers are invited for stories. For more information, call (972) 544-3699.

Wednesdays

Toddler Story Time: 10:00-11:00 a.m., free crafts, story time and learning games for children 18 months to 5 years and their parents. Call the library at (469) 218-1230 for more information on all library events.



Wednesdays and Thursdays

The Red Oak Senior Citizens Group: 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd., Red Oak. Join for games and activities. Light breakfast provided both days. Lunch provided on **Thursdays**. \$2 per week membership fee. Call (214) 864-9014 for more information.

Thursdays

SYNERGY: 11:30 a.m., Sparacello’s Deli, 600 Methodist St., Suite 3120, Red Oak. This is a Red Oak Chamber of Commerce networking opportunity.

Third Thursdays

Ferris Lions Club meeting: 6:30 p.m.,
First United Methodist Church,
101 Redbud Rd., Ferris.

Second Saturdays

Texas Civil Defense monthly drill:
9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 101 Live Oak St.,
Red Oak. For more information,
call LTC Tim O'Connor at
(214) 868-0082.

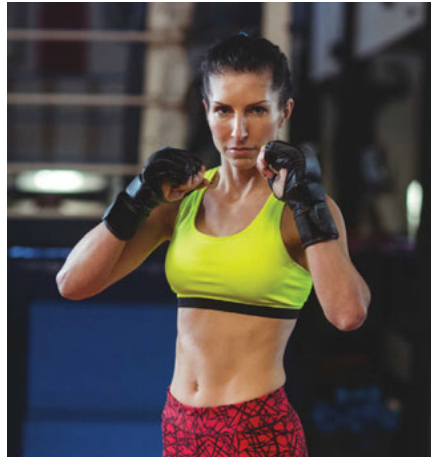
Red Oak Opry: 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.,
Lone Star Cowboy Church, 1011 E.
Ovilla Rd., Red Oak. Tickets sold
at the door. \$12 for adults; \$5
for children.

Third Saturdays

Ferris Trades Day: 101 S. Main St.,
Ferris, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. For more
information, call Tina Miller at
(817) 992-9204.

Texas Concealed Handgun class: 8:30
a.m., 208 S. Central St., Ferris. Fee is
\$75. For more information, contact
CHL instructor Charles Hatfield at
(214) 402-3689.

Self Defense Class: 9:00-11:00 a.m.,
301 Locust Dr., Oak Leaf. Must call
(972) 617-2660 to RSVP. Wear loose
fitting clothing.



Third Sundays

Matthew 7:7 Riders Motorcycle
Ministry: For the next meeting and
ride, visit [www.facebook.com/
Matthew77RidersMotorcycleMinistry](http://www.facebook.com/Matthew77RidersMotorcycleMinistry) or
contact Mark Rose at (972) 748-4076.

Fourth Sundays

Prayer Shawl Circle: 10:00 a.m.-noon,
First United Methodist Church of
Red Oak, 600 Daubitz Dr. Circle of
Hope and Healing ministry. For more
information, call Beth Norris at
(214) 392-0732.

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HealthNOW

Wash Your Hands

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Hepatitis A is a great example of why it is so important to wash your hands. Someone infected with the disease can transmit the virus to others via contaminated food or water or by direct contact if good hygiene is not practiced. Complicating matters is the fact that the infected person will be contagious for at least a couple of weeks before they are aware they have the disease. If their personal hygiene is poor, meaning if they get the virus on their hands after using the bathroom, neglect to wash their hands and then handle food that others will eat, they can easily infect many people before they become ill.

The hepatitis A virus (HAV), found in the stool and blood of an infected person, causes an infectious disease of the liver. Some of the symptoms of hepatitis A are jaundice (yellow skin), dark urine, pale or clay-colored stools, fatigue, nausea, stomach pain and poor appetite. A physical examination for any tenderness, a thorough investigation of symptoms, blood tests and a medical history are all usually part of any visit to the doctor for diagnosis. The doctor will also want to know if you have been exposed to hepatitis A or if you have been traveling.

There are no specific medications to treat hepatitis A. Rest and avoiding vigorous exercise are recommended. One may need to take an absence from school or work if performing those activities requires too much energy. It is important to try to eat a balanced diet during this period and to drink plenty of fluid. Because of the gastrointestinal upsets with this virus, sometimes eating several small meals a day is better than three large ones. Because the liver is where substances are broken down, it is important to avoid those that are toxic to it, such as alcohol. Even Tylenol, which may seem benign, can cause serious damage to the liver if not taken properly. Consult with your health care provider before taking or stopping any medication if you have hepatitis. Symptoms last an average of two to six months.

The greatest control measure in preventing the transmission and spread of this disease is for people to wash their hands. This does require vigilance on an individual's part — particularly those who work in day care centers with all of the frequent diaper changes.

Speak to your physician about receiving the hepatitis A vaccine to avoid this disease. If you have been exposed, an injection of immune globulin (IG) given within two weeks may prevent you from getting hepatitis A. **NOW**

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

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