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Ties That Bind



Family is the Most Important Thing

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Photo by Rod Cordsen.

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Mansfield Editor, Alex Allred Contributing Writers, Nancy Fenton . Melinda Hines Mary Pritchard Photography, Rod Cordsen . Ivey Photography Sandra McIntosh . Terri Ozymy

Contributing Editors/Proofreaders, Pamela Parisi Jamie Ruark . Beverly Shay

Advertising Representatives, Steve Randle Will Epps . Amy Farrar . Lacy Hightower Carolyn Mixon . Linda Moffett . Terri Ozymy Terri Yates

Graphic Designers, Allee Brand . Dale Frie Marshall Hinsley . Arlene Honza Steve Koldjeski . Brande Morgan

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Mansfield NOW

Editor's Note

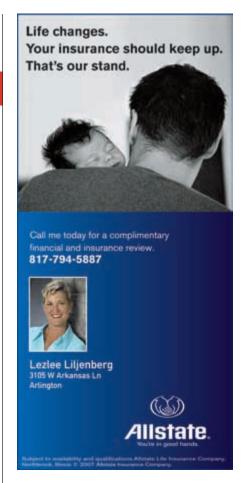
Happy Holidays!

This is a season of joyous celebration. It is about friends, family and faith. It is about giving and, some would say, receiving. For the Mansfield families who have appeared in this issue, it is about all of the above. But the wonderful thing about these neighbors is that they practice this celebration year-round. The Scanlons, Vahrenkamps and Rojas families, along with Dan Peters, are neighbors both literally and figuratively.

As you read their stories, perhaps you will be inspired to meet your own neighbors. Get into the act of giving and receiving friendship and love. Have a safe and happy holiday. See you next year!

Alex Allred
Mansfield Editor









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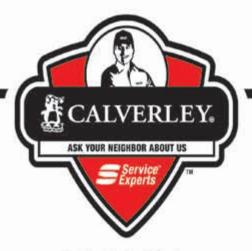
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Shawn Scanlon was once asked if he thought he could love his adopted son as much as he loved his biological son. The question caused great puzzlement for a man who was also adopted, grew up with adopted siblings and married a woman who has an adopted brother. To question love based upon birthright "doesn't even register," Shawn said.

At first glance, Shawn and Maurnee look like the typical couple raising two young boys. He is a regional sales manager for a conveyer belt company; she is a manager for training and communications. Independently, they are strong, intelligent, creative people focused on family, friends and career — in that order. Together, they exude the kind of romance and genuine fondness for each other that is a rarity today. After nine years of marriage, it is their friendship that carries them through all life's little challenges — emphasis on little.

Today, Shawn and Maurnee are rearing 3-year-old Aiden, and 2-year-old Jake, but it was not supposed to be this way. In fact, much of who and where the Scanlons are as a family was not supposed to be. After years of trying to get pregnant, the couple turned to adoption,



but found the process "disheartening," according to Maurnee. They were sent price lists for children, with varying ranges dependant upon skin color.

"It felt like we were buying something," Shawn said. They found the process very impersonal and far too political. So, they did something that came very naturally to them. They informed friends and family that should someone they know ever choose

to turn to adoption, they were interested. They believed that if it were truly meant to be, it would happen. In the meantime, "We tried in vitro [fertilization]," Shawn said.

Admittedly, it was expensive and risky. "There were no guarantees," Maurnee said, but she maintained it was important for her to try. When her own mother was a young woman, she was told

she would never be able to have children. So, her parents adopted a little boy. However, 11 months later, a little girl was born. "Two years later," Maurnee

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600 Strada Circle, Ste. A • Mansfield, Texas ADBroseh@yahoo.com laughed, "there I was."

Believing nothing was impossible, Maurnee wanted to explore all the possibilities. However, it was not easy. Between work, the financial costs of the in vitro process and the constant stress of worrying about if she could or would get pregnant, it was hard to remain positive.

"Then, when we were halfway through the cycle [of in vitro], we got a phone call," Shawn recalled. It was from his sister, Danica, who was at college. A friend of a friend was pregnant and was interested in Shawn and Maurnee as prospective parents. They flew to Chicago as soon as possible to meet the young woman and undergo personal



interviews. While Maurnee was nervous, Shawn felt remarkably comfortable with the process. From the start, the birth mother had expressed an interest in Shawn and Maurnee because both were already a part of adoptive families.

During this time, the couple's friendship was put to the test; yet, it was the friendship that helped them through what was arguably the most stressful time of their lives — the summer of 2004.

After the birth mother approved the Scanlons, Maurnee stayed in constant contact with her, always nervous that she might change her mind. It was nerve-racking. Also during this time, Shawn found his own birth mother. While he was completely devoted to, and happy with, his adoptive family, he still had questions.

"I just always wanted to know the circumstances," he said referring to his adoption. "I needed some answers." Once he connected with his mother, he likened the emotions to that of falling in love in high school. He was overwhelmed and completely enraptured with meeting his birth mother. As he sees it, the mother who reared him is his true mother, so the new relationship with his birth mother developed into what he described as a beautiful friendship.

In the middle of all of this, they were also preparing the proper paperwork for adoption, going through background checks and conducting home visits with family health counselors. Then, Maurnee discovered she was pregnant! "There was just so much going on," Shawn laughed.

While they were elated over the news, they were also fearful. They did not want this to change any plans to adopt their son, Aiden. Though not yet born, he had already won their hearts. They felt an indescribable connection with Aiden even as their fear of losing him grew.

At 4 a.m., the day after Thanksgiving, they received another life-altering phone call. Aiden's birth mother had gone into labor. Frantically, Shawn scoured the airlines for tickets. By 7:30 a.m., they were on a plane to Chicago and in the waiting room of the hospital just after 10 a.m. Once again, there was new fear that the birth mother might have changed her mind when they were told she did not want to see anyone. As the hour of delivery approached, however, Maurnee was invited in and was the first person to hold her new baby boy. "There I was coaching her with the baby," Maurnee laughed.

Soon after they returned home with Aiden, Maurnee went into premature labor. They had only begun to get comfortable with the routine of caring for one baby, when Jake entered the world at just 4 pounds, 8 ounces and with the special needs of a premature baby.









"At that point, it was either laugh or cry," Maurnee recalled. For almost a year, they had been living with the old adage: Be careful what you wish for; you just might get it. Suddenly, they had not one, but two babies. Unlike twins, however, the boys were in two very different stages. There were, as



"When you love someone, all your saved-up wishes start coming out."

Shawn called it, very unnatural dynamics. While one was learning to sit up, the other was crawling, and while one was crawling, the other was experimenting with the thrill of knocking things over. "Right now," Maurnee said, "Aiden is potty training, and Jake just laughs at the potty."

Quite unwittingly, the Scanlons have become role models for many Mansfield families who wonder about adoption. Theirs is a blended family with a father, son, aunts and uncles who were all adopted, yet they could never be more whole or have a more deeply rooted family tree. As the boys grow, there will be no question their parents cannot answer.

The beautiful sentiment, written by turn-of-the-century author Elizabeth Bowen, will forever remind them of the summer of 2004: "When you love someone, all your saved-up wishes start coming out." Or, as Maurnee put it, "We're just getting started!" WIN





- By Sandra McIntosh

Life for Dennis and Connie Livingston began with a chase. "Dennis chased after me for three months, following me everywhere," Connie laughed, remembering those days in the late '80s when they both worked at LTV. His persistence paid off. "When we finally went on our first date," Dennis said, "we both came home with food poisoning." Connie said it was "love at first sight" for Dennis, but that it took a little longer for her to make a lifetime commitment. Once she did, they shared what many would consider a short engagement, marrying on April 25, 1987.

Dennis and Connie have four children, Cortne, Andrew, Darren and Emilee. Cortne, the oldest, graduated from Mansfield High School in 1999 and has since moved out to start a life of his own. Andrew and Darren both graduated from

Home Dennis and Connie Livingston



Summit High School, while Emilee is midway through her junior year, also at Summit. The family moved to their new four-bedroom, two-and-one-half-bath home by way of Arlington. In fact, this month marks their one-year anniversary in the two-story, modern



"The crystal ornaments catch and reflect the light. I have to polish them with glass cleaner every year before I hang them on the tree."



Victorian-style home. It also marks their second Christmas celebration there.

It has been said that no one does Christmas quite like Connie. Her decorating style is so elaborate, both inside and out, that she begins the





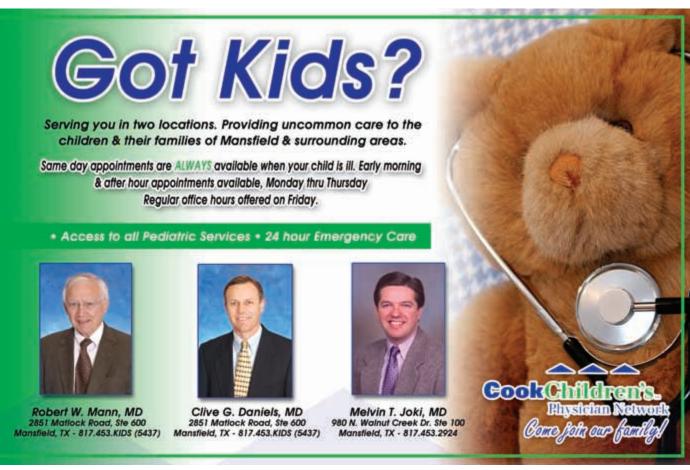


process the first week of October, hoping to have everything in its place by Thanksgiving. The banister leading upstairs to the combo game room/study and the children's rooms is trimmed with a lighted garland. The wooden snowmen, snowflakes, stars, birds and stockings create a whimsical feel.

While most homes boast of one large tree, the Livingston home has no fewer than three — each one holding very special meaning for the

> entire family. The Disney tree is found placed to one side of the fireplace, meant for the enjoyment of the children. The ornaments displayed on this tree, which stands at seven feet, have been collected over a span of many years. "Most of them came from the Hallmark store,"

Connie said. "They are animated keepsake ornaments. I told the kids that if anything ever happened to me, they better take special care with the Disney ornaments." Tinkerbell flutters about in her glass case atop the mantle. Three-dimensional, child-specific Christmas stockings, handmade by Connie's Aunt Charlotte Nelson, hang from



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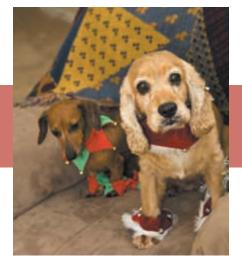


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the mantle just waiting to be filled.

Moving back down the hallway toward the front entryway, visitors are left breathless by the magnificent beauty seen in the formal living area. Connie's ideas for the tree she calls her own originated five years ago on a shopping spree to Dillard's. "I saw the trees in Dillard's and thought to myself, 'Self, you can do that,'" Connie explained, adding that the decorations at Dillard's just happened to be her favorite color — pink. "I took their idea and made it my own."

Connie considers the nine-foot tree

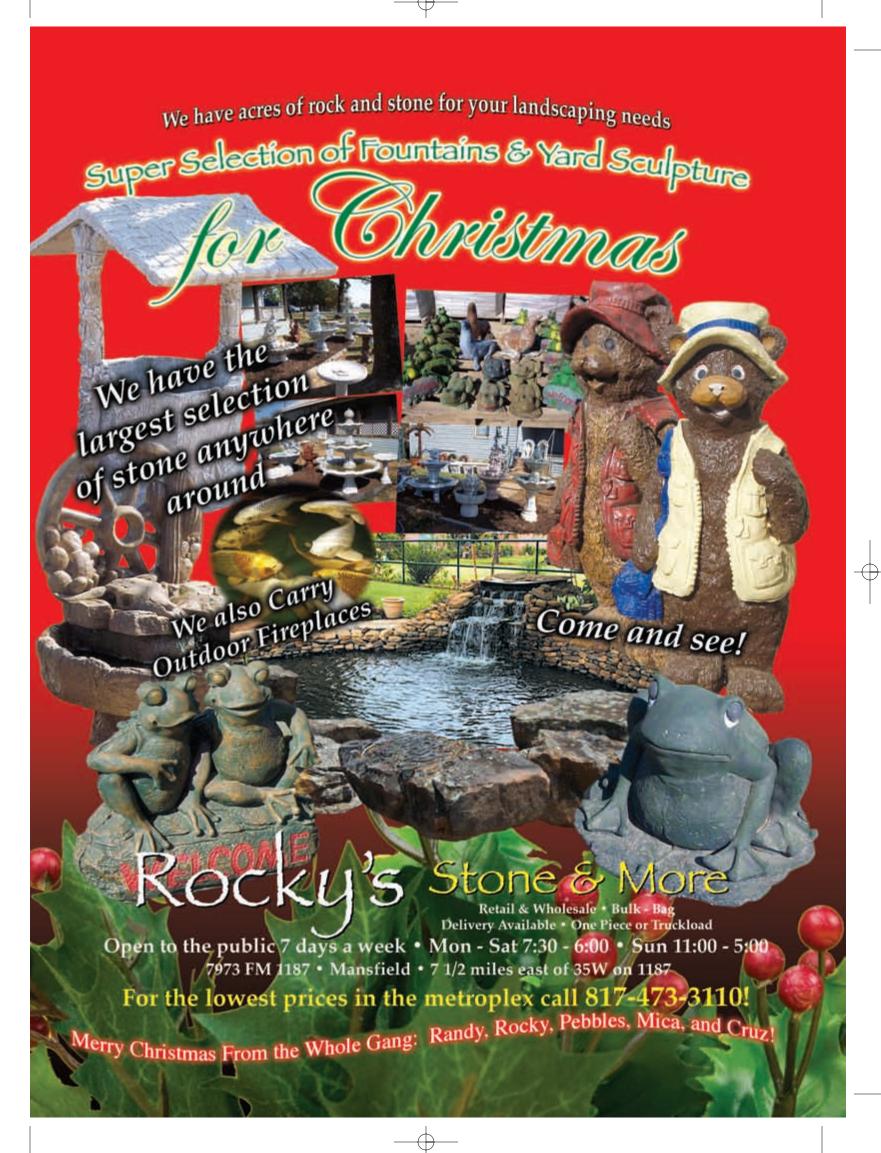
to be a labor of love, while those who admire it see it as a work of art with its 3,850 twinkling lights and ornaments in pink, silver and white. "The crystal ornaments catch and reflect the light," Connie said, pointing to the antique decorations resembling mini chandeliers. "I have to polish them with glass cleaner every year before I hang them on the tree." Other decorations, adornments and accessories include, but are definitely not limited to, silk roses and poinsettias, Victorian Santa heads, peacock-like birds with single, white tail feathers, silk rosebud garland, a tapestry lace

tree skirt and a Santa Claus topper. Needless to say, all the ornaments are predominately pink. "The silver glitter pipe cleaners look a lot like snowflakes," Connie added. "My nieces and nephews love to come over, stand back and throw them at the tree. Where they land is where they stay." Dennis has a single ornament that Connie places in the center of the tree close to its base. "It was expensive years ago at \$20," Dennis said, proud to play a part, no matter how small, in the overall beauty of the pink tree.

The third and final tree, located







downstairs, has been placed between the kitchen and the breakfast room. This one means the most to the family for a multitude of reasons. "Everything about the tree holds sentimental value," Connie said, as her voice cracked and

fresh tears began to well up in her eyes. "My dad, Harold Bishop, passed away on October 10, 2003. This tree is decorated in his memory. It makes us feel like he's right here with us."

Every item on and around the tree is a reflection of the things Connie's father loved about life. His favorite things include sunflowers,

gingerbread cookies, peppermints, old-fashioned ribbon candy and a rhinestone guitar similar to the one he owned; the same one that is displayed in Darren's bedroom upstairs. The ribbons from the funeral spray representing love from

Dennis, Connie and the children now serve as the tree's topper, while stuffed kittens and cows are subtle reminders of the love he had for the farm. Cowboy boots that once had a place only on the back porch are now resting peacefully at the foot

> of the tree. The last hat he ever wore is the main ornament placed in the center, or heart, of the tree. "I gave him that Stetson hat Christmas of 2002," Connie said. "I remember the night I decorated this tree. Dennis was in the family room watching me. After I placed the hat in its perfect spot, he came over to me with big tears in his eyes," Connie

explained. "All he could say was, 'I miss him."

The family continues to miss Harold, but as the years go by they are learning to cope with his absence. The tree helps them remember, as does the memorabilia found throughout







"The memories are bittersweet and Christmas without Dad isn't easy."

the home. "There's something of dad's in each and every room," Connie said, adding that she has been able to

successfully mix and mingle her father's memory with her large collection of roosters and white Willow Tree angels from Demdaco. "Dad whittled incredible things," she said. "I still have the monkey he carved from a

peach seed, as well as the quarters that are inlaid in walnut seeds with the years the kids were born." Keeping them visible in the china cabinet makes it easy for Connie to share his stories with others.



Connie may have borrowed some ideas from Dillard's when it came to decorating her pink tree, but her main inspiration is found in the love she has for her family. "The memories are bittersweet and Christmas without Dad isn't easy," Connie said, as Dennis agreed, "but the goodness in remembering comes when the family gets together, because the most important thing is family." NOW

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ARTS

Getting Daniti

— By Mary Pritchard

Happy hour with Dan Peters and John Coniglio in the Lowe's Farm neighborhood of Mansfield started out with wine and cheese for four to six people 15 months ago. This group has now grown to 30 or 40 regulars. "Almost all our neighbors are from somewhere else," Dan said. "Through our happy hour, we've introduced everybody to everybody else."

Dan and John did this every Friday night for nearly five months, but it got so popular that another neighbor put a calendar on the Internet so people could sign up for a Friday. Doing it this way meant it would not be too expensive for any one person. "Neighbors invite their friends who don't live in this area," Dan added. "That led to a happy hour in a downtown Dallas loft. That way, we met all their friends and they met ours."

What makes it nice is that the group is made up of individuals from every background, lifestyle, ethnicity and age group. "Last December's happy hours were way over the top because they were also Christmas parties," Dan explained. "Just another good reason



to decorate for the holidays."

Besides spreading good will with happy hour, Dan is well-known among friends for making them curtains and helping them decorate their homes.

"Hiring someone to make curtains is very expensive," he said. "I may sew eight or nine hours at one time. I have a relatively stressful job, but the sewing and creating takes me away from all that." Dan also added that he enjoys seeing the finished product go up. "I'm thinking about the person when I am making the

curtains," he explained. "I really get a sense of reward when someone says I was able to pick up on something they really love."

Before getting started on his "curtain projects," Dan asks questions about what his neighbors like and do not like; what makes them tick. It is his way to get closer to his friends and



neighbors. "I won't be paid, but I tell them, 'I get bragging rights." he smiled. According to Dan, many people buy the furniture they want, which is good,



but they may not know how to arrange it. "Sometimes," he said, "all it takes is a little paint to make everything 'pop."

Dan recalled one couple who wanted to learn to sew their own curtains. Their house had not yet been furnished upstairs, so they went up there and Dan showed them how to measure the window and cut the fabric. Then he gave them detailed instructions on the proper way to operate a sewing machine. "Everyone I've done something

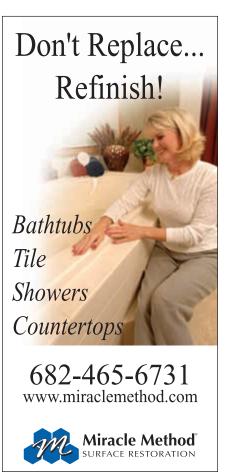


"You can't put a dollar amount on the rewards of friendship."

for says, 'I've been Danitized,'" he laughed. "For he who serves his fellows is above all his fellows greatest.' That's from the Boy Scouts Order of the Arrow. As a child, this principle of being of service to others was instilled in me. You can't put a dollar amount on the rewards of friendship."

It seems as if the spirit of giving is in Dan's genes. His mother crochets blankets for her grandchildren, as well as her friends' and neighbors' children. She puts something special into each one. "My grandparents helped people during the Depression. 'If you had and













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didn't give, what were you?' was my grandfather's question," Dan said. "My father started a community center where they lived, and got businesses to teach the skills of living to those who desperately needed them in order to bring themselves up in life."

Dan himself built a library at the same community center 26 years ago as his Eagle Scout project, and it still stands today. His three brothers are

"What you put into a community, you get back."



also Eagle Scouts. "Goodness is out there," Dan said. "You just have to recognize it." When a Persian couple moved across the street, Dan helped them with their house. "They had never celebrated Christmas, but the wife wanted to have Christmas for her children," Dan said. "I suggested we do a holiday tree with birds and that the children themselves pick out a new ornament for the tree each year." This meant that some day, the children



would have their own set of ornaments that would have years of sentimental value attached to them.

Dan began working in advertising while he was still in high school and continued in that field after graduation. "I worked my way up to junior account





executive in seven years," he said, "and they paid for what college I had. Then I became a flight attendant for Trans World Airlines, which opened up the world for me. I learned a simple act of kindness can come back to you multiplied." Dan is now in management at American Airlines.

The motto Dan lives by can be summed up in his own words: "What you put into a community, you get back." MOW





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Sports



Texas Ranger fans may recognize the voice of Victor Rojas as one of KRLD News Radio's sports announcers, but few realize how deeply baseball runs in his blood. His father was a National League All-Star. His family operated under the baseball schedule where spring training and doubleheaders dictated vacations and bedtime. As a child, he knew more about the nuances of a baseball locker room and umpire lineups than most avid baseball fans could ever dream of. But rather than ride the glory of his father's successes, Victor created his own niche in the sport he loves so well.

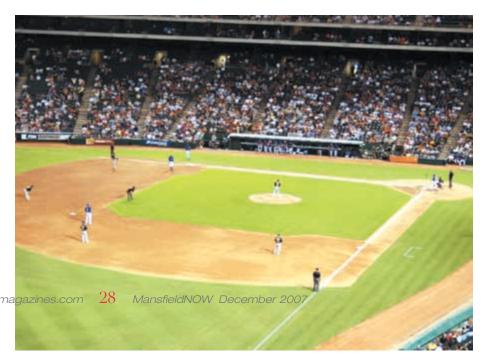
Octavio Victor Rojas Rivas, a.k.a. Cookie Rojas, made his debut with the National League in 1962 when he signed with the Cincinnati Reds. From there, the native Cuban was traded to the Philadelphia Phillies. It has been footnoted in the sports pages that Cookie

was one of the few baseball players to have played all nine positions on the field, including pitcher and catcher.

In 1970, Cookie was traded to the St. Louis Cardinals and then on to the Kansas City Royals, where he went on to appear in back-to-back All-Star

"I was 31-years-old and had to ask myself,

'What do I really want to do?'



Sports

games from 1971-1974. It was also there, growing up in Overland Park, Kansas, that young Victor nurtured his love of baseball.

While his father made the big leagues, Victor went on to play baseball at the College of the Desert in Palm Springs, California, and later at Lewis-Clark State University in Lewiston, Idaho, as a catcher and pitcher. As Victor explained, "I grew up with four brothers, so we



played all the time. I grew up kind of a baseball guy," he laughed. While he was an all-around athlete, baseball was his passion.

But after a few years playing in the minors, Victor wanted to branch out in the sports world.

"My aspirations were to be in the front office of a sports team. Of course, I have always loved baseball, but I started working in all different facets of sports." For Victor, any sport was a good sport, so he worked such disciplines as hockey and arena-football. But in 2000, he reached what he called his mid-life crisis. "I was 31-years-old and had to ask myself, 'What do I really want to do?' I was young enough to play in an independent league and also get into broadcast to do play-by-play. I had gone to broadcast school in the late '80s and had the experience for a [sports] front office."

With some well-placed phone calls, Victor learned of an opening with the Newark Bears of the independent Atlantic League. "I was told they didn't



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Sports

need me as a player, but they did want me in the front office." Rather than jump at the first offer, however, Victor bartered for a better deal. He asked to be given the opportunity to broadcast a few games. A few months later, the "regular play-by-play guy quit," and the rest was history.

By May of 2001, the general manager of the franchise was fired, and Victor stepped in. History repeated itself for



Victor, as baseball led him to different geographic locations and new adventures. He and his beautiful new bride, Kim, moved to Arizona, where he did radio play-by-play and analysis with the Diamondbacks. But when he signed on with the Texas Rangers, it was a move that brought him "home." With an extended contract with the Rangers until 2010, Kim and Victor are ready to build a home and settle down in Mansfield with their three children.

As for the sport itself, Victor believes honesty is what the fans want. "I like to think I bring a sense of honesty. I'm responsible for analyzing the play and being honest with the listeners. If that means ruffling some feathers, then I ruffle some feathers. I'm not going to check my values at the door because of egos on the field." The Rangers would not have it any other way. "I really respect that about the organization," he said.

"I'm confident in my abilities and feel very comfortable with our broadcasts because of my past experience. It's very









easy to feel that way when you've done just about everything imaginable in professional sports." Truly, from selling tickets to pulling the tarp, to putting together the team as general manager, Victor knows the sport inside and out.

In fact, it is because of his vast experience and background, Victor has a different kind of relationship with the athletes from most mainstream media.

"Having grown up in the game," he



"The bottom line is this. I get paid to go watch baseball. I have fun at what I do."

said, "I don't hang out in the clubhouse. That should be their domain. I'll check the lineups and leave." While many other reporters use the clubhouse as a way to meet athletes, Victor has a very different perspective. "I respect that area. There is nothing I need there and really, no reason to be in that clubhouse."

As always, Victor does things his own way. Ironically, after years of growing up as Cookie Rojas' son, it is Cookie who followed in his son's footsteps to become a Spanish language baseball announcer for the Florida Marlins."

Most of all and best of all, "the bottom line is this; I get paid to go watch baseball. I have fun at what I do," said Victor. WOW





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Business

Success



There are two remarkable Texas women in the world of business who, while they have never met, began their careers in similarly equal fashion. One became world famous, the other remains a great matriarch in Mansfield history.

In 1963, Mary Kay Ash created the best-selling brand of facial, skin and color cosmetics, becoming the largest direct seller of skin care products in the United States. Taking \$5,000 from her personal savings, Mary Kay and her 20-year-old son launched Mary Kay Cosmetics from her home in Dallas, Texas.

Less than 20 miles away and exactly 20 years later, Alma Pressley accepted a \$5,000 loan from a friend to open her own jewelry business in Mansfield alongside her son, John. Today, Mansfield Fine Jewelry is celebrating its 25th anniversary as Mansfield's first jewelry business.

Mary Kay Ash, upon retiring from a successful career in business decided to write a book to help women get ahead in the male-dominated business world. But when she reviewed her notes, she realized she had created the perfect

marketing plan for her own business. Alma's background was quite different. She had worked as a substitute teacher and a medical assistant.

"I really had no idea what I was

doing. I just had a passion for jewelry."

After the death of her husband, JT "Red" Pressley, in 1980, Alma decided she wanted to recreate jewelry pieces for their two sons out of JT's old jewelry.

"He had several pieces of jewelry, and I wanted each child to have something

of his. But in order to do that, I had to melt it down. I didn't know anyone who did that and really, I didn't trust anyone with his stuff." So, she found a class at the Museum of Arts and Sciences at Texas Christian University.

> As she began creating and designing her own jewelry, word quickly traveled. She began taking

orders, dazzling neighbors and friends with both her skill and passion. Reconstructing a storage facility into their first store on the family's one-acre lot on Main Street in the historic district, Mansfield Fine Jewelry opened its doors in October.

Two months later, "It was standing

room only," John Pressley said.



Business

Like his mother, John had no business or jewelry background that would indicate his natural talent as a jeweler. In fact, at the time Alma decided to open her own business, John had been working as a butcher in Lee's Grocery. "One day," recalled John, "she told me I was going to be



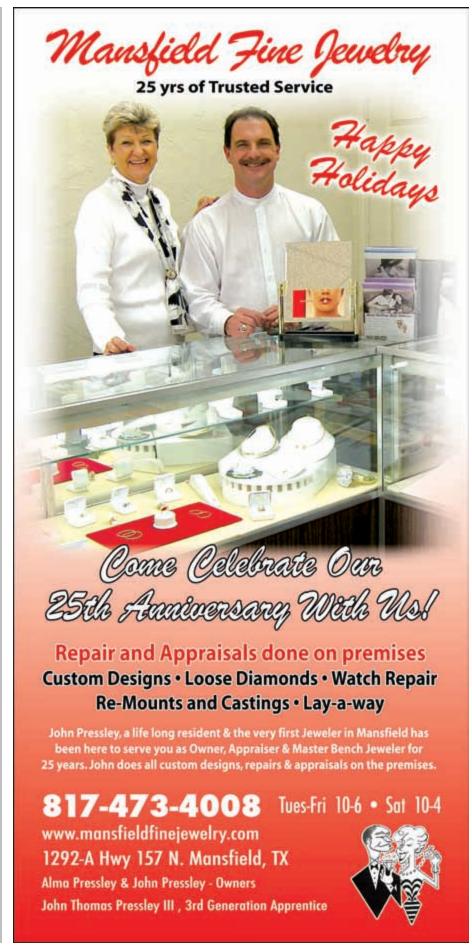


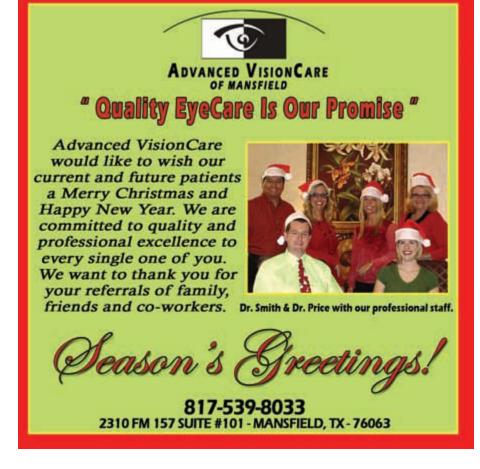
a jeweler." Initially, he laughed at the idea. But four years later, after working as an apprentice for professional jewelers in the DFW area, John realized his own potential.

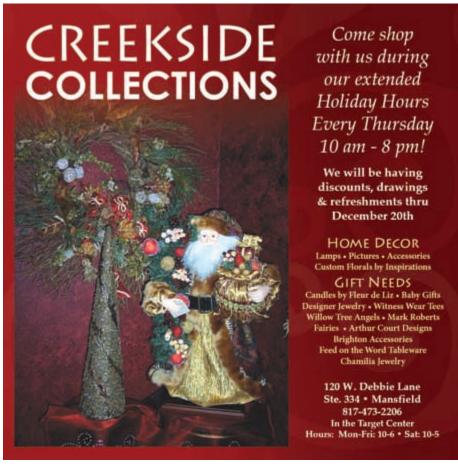
"After the jewelers would leave,"
John said, "I would check their work
and fix their mistakes." His work as a
jeweler transcended that of an artist.
He, too, felt a passion for both fine
jewelry design and the needs of his
clients. "That's when I fired everyone,"
he said. "My customers deserved better."

Alma's son, Skeeter, never acquired the patience needed to become a jeweler. "He had too much energy," Alma said. "But we do pull him in for the holiday sales."

In 2000, John took over the business, although Alma continues with her jewelry design and intimate customer service. Both John and Alma are consummate perfectionists when it comes to their business, which, at times, can cause artistic differences between the two.







Business

"The going joke around here is [that] I fire Mom about once a month but she continues to come back,"

John said.

Neither can stay away. In fact, one of John's four children has also joined the business. Thomas, 16, is a third-generation apprentice, sharing the same passion as his father and grandmother.



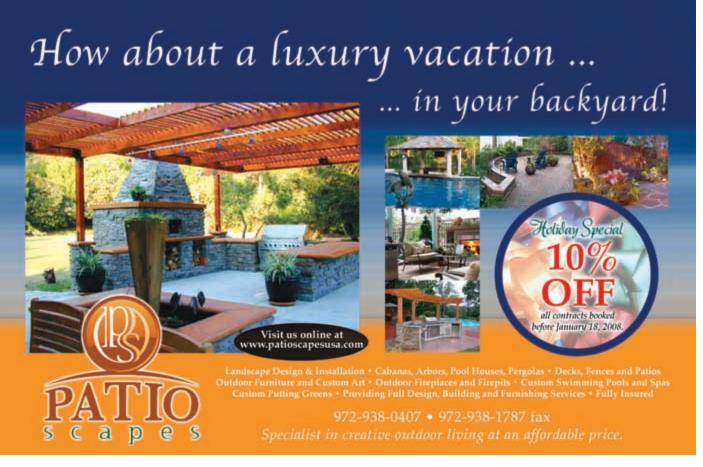
"I want [customers]
to know they can
trust their family
heirlooms with us,
that we will always
take care of them
and their jewelry."

"I want [customers] to know they can trust their family heirlooms with us, that we will always take care of them and their jewelry," John said.

For Alma, who began with little more than the idea of giving something special to her children, the business is so much more than a business.

Customers have become friends and she feels "connected" to her community.

Neither she nor John can imagine doing anything else in or for their community. As John so succinctly put it, "This is who we are."







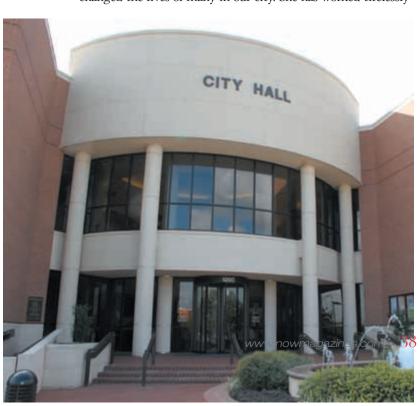
Modern Day Angel

- By Alex Allred

One year ago, Eddie walked into City Hall in Mansfield, clutching a brown paper bag, wearing an ominous sweatshirt jacket with the hood up over his head. His hair and beard were long, his hair was straggly and he appeared to be agitated and nervous. For the City Hall receptionist, Janet Green, it was a bit unnerving.

"He looked kind of scary," Janet said. But she knew he had to see the code enforcement officer, Priscilla Sanchez.

Since coming to Mansfield three years ago, Priscilla has changed the lives of many in our city. She has worked tirelessly





to educate and inform the public about city ordinances, but for her, the job does not stop there. "I just want people to know if they need help," she smiled, "I'm here."

On the official Web site for Mansfield, terms such a "friendly atmosphere" and "small-town feel" are used to remind residents and newcomers alike this is a city that cares. But to maintain its high standards, code enforcement is a must. Often, the very people who are most in need of help are the very same who are in violation of city code ordinances, such as tall grass, a poor roof or too many residents in one structure. Despite the growing perception, city officials do not want to hand out tickets.

"That's what I love about the city of Mansfield," said Priscilla. "It's geared for the people and their needs." For a woman who truly loves helping people, this is her dream job.

Her greatest challenge has not been writing tickets, but gaining the trust of and educating residents. Mostly, she said, "it's a cultural issue," as there are no code enforcement

MansfieldNOW December 2007

regulations in Mexico.

"A lot of times, they just don't know," Priscilla said of the growing Latino community. "They're just trying to survive and don't think about how the house looks." In one case, Priscilla worked with a single mother of three young children. "I told her to just drive around the neighborhood and find a

"I just want people to know if they need help, I'm here."

house that had the same structure as hers and to imagine that her house could look like that." Little by little, the woman began to save money. First, she bought a new door. She repainted her house and did some gardening. "Every time she gets something new," Priscilla said with pride, "she lets me know."

But often, families in need have been fearful to talk to her, thinking she might be from immigration or protective services. Rather than forget them, Priscilla has learned to speak Spanish. Rather than write them tickets, she has pulled them from their homes and made them stand on the curb, facing their house. "Tell me what you see," she would say to them, "and I'll tell you what I see."

Since she graduated from high school, Priscilla has always helped people. While most graduates were devising ways to go to the beach, Priscilla was already working as a job coach for the handicapped and elderly.









The very groups most people do not want to deal with, Priscilla craves. "I love to sit and talk to them and hear their stories. I love to see the smile on their face when they see me."

"She is a modern day angel," said Janet. "She really is an amazing person."

Linda Johnson, administrative assistant with code compliance, initially



took the call from a man named Eddie. He had been living in a mobile home without electricity for several months after his mother passed away. His living conditions were deplorable.

"I asked him if Priscilla could stop by and talk to him about getting some help, but he was very hesitant," said Linda. Worried Adult Protective Services would "put him in a home," he refused to speak with her. But he needed help, and he eventually agreed to meet the code enforcement officer. He was depressed, disabled and without proper food and medication. He was becoming increasingly paranoid.

From the day he met Priscilla, his life changed. Without judgment, she simply rolled up her sleeves and began cleaning out his house. She taught him how to care for himself and made arrangements for him to get food from Angel Ministries in Mansfield. She took him to doctor appointments and reconnected him with the world again.



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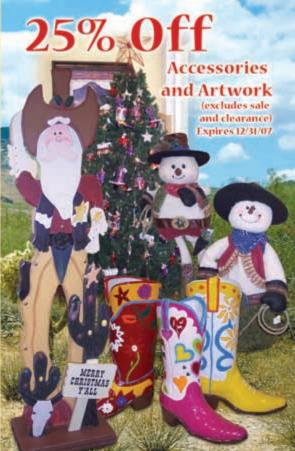
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"He has a whole new attitude now," said Linda. "He even went to the barber shop on Main Street and got a haircut!"

There are others. When a man named Lynnie lost his home, had no job, no money and nowhere to live, Priscilla stepped in once again, finding

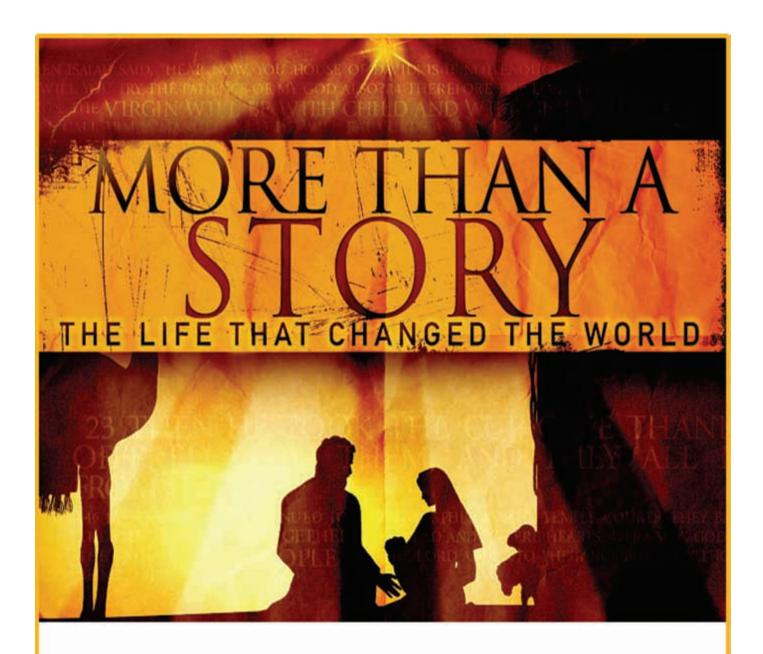


"That's what I love about the city of Mansfield. It'S geared for the people and their needs."

and driving him to the job interview, as well as providing him with clothing and a reference.

"Lynnie had the brightest smile on his face," Linda said, "and a hope for a better future in his heart." Not long ago, Priscilla spied Lynnie in a store. He had become a self-sufficient man, buying his own groceries.

"She's never off the clock," Janet said of Priscilla's devotion to the public. After a long day at work, Priscilla checks on those in need whom she has taken under her wing, often paying out of pocket for food and clothes. But when asked how she finds the time and energy for such huge sacrifices, she simply shrugged, "I wish I had more to give." WOW



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Around Town

















A fun time was had by all, top left, at the recent Mansfield Pecan Festival. First grade teachers at Martha Reid Elementary, top center, enjoyed wearing jeans to school in honor of a charity drive for the Education Foundation. The activities offered at the Pecan Festical included a petting zoo. The baby zebra, top right, was a hit. Several ribbon cuttings were held at far left, from top to bottom: Vintage Place, g.d. Scrubs and Stage Door Cafe. The Mansfield Police Department, two photos directly above, did their part to ensure the Pecan Festival was safe for everyone.



Around Town

















The Chamber held ribbon cuttings, at left from top to bottom: Westlake ACE Hardware, Bistros Gourmet, Dr. Douglas Sinn, HearJoy Hearing Center and Kenneth Hartless, as well as at Skip Butler, top right. Those individuals who chose to be adventurous at the Mansfield Pecan Festival, directly above at left, decided to climb the wall, while others, directly above at right, decided to pet the animals in the petting zoo.





In the Kitchen with Bill & Tanya Vahrenkamp

anya and Bill learned the basics of cooking from their moms, whom they consider to be fantastic cooks. Bill learned how to smoke turkeys and deep fry meat from his uncle and his brother-in-law. "Bill's family does wonderful Southern-style, cooking like chicken fried steak. I am Ukrainian-Canadian and grew up with very basic, yet hearty, Ukrainian food. Lots of roast beef, homemade soup, perogies and cabbage rolls," Tanya said.

Bill's specialty is any meat that can be cooked outside, smoked, grilled or deep-fried. "I attended spring and summer sessions in Italy for two years while I was in University, so I love to cook Italian food," Tanya said. The pecan pie is the first recipe Bill's mom gave Tanya and the whipped potatoes are from Tanya's mom. WOW

BILL'S DEEP FRIED TURKEY

12 - 16 lb. turkey

1 14-oz. can reduced sodium chicken broth

15 drops Tabasco

1 1/2 tsp. onion powder

1 1/2 tsp. garlic powder

1 1/2 tsp. Lawry's Season Salt

1 1/2 tsp. pepper

5 gallons of vegetable oil

1/2 - 1 cup Cajun Seasoning

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

turkey deep fryer

turkey injector (available at most stores)

fire extinguisher (safety first)

DAY BEFORE: Wash turkey inside and out, making sure to remove neck and gizzards from cavity. Pat dry. Mix chicken broth, Tabasco, onion powder, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Using a turkey injector, inject chicken broth marinade into turkey. There will probably be leftover marinade; just throw it away. Cover and refrigerate overnight. DAY OF: Following instructions that came with your deep fryer, pour oil into fryer and heat to 375 F, allowing extra time to heat if it is colder outside. Never overfill your deep fryer. It usually takes around 3.5 gallons of oil and must be used outside. Coat outside of turkey

well with Cajun seasoning, sprinkling remaining seasoning inside cavity; place turkey on turkey holder that came with your deep fryer. When oil is heated to 375 F, slowly lower turkey in, being careful to not splatter or displace too much oil. Cook turkey for 4 minutes per pound (48 minutes for a 12 lb. turkey). When skin is very crispy and dark brown (not burned) and the leg pulls away easily from the turkey, it is ready. One other indicator is the temperature will rise back to 375 F. Carefully remove turkey from deep fryer and place on a large cookie tray. Tent turkey with tin foil and allow it to rest for 15 - 20 minutes before cutting and serving

MOM'S PECAN PIE

3 eggs

1/3 cup white sugar

1/3 cup packed brown sugar

1/4 tsp. salt

1/3 cup butter, melted

1 cup dark corn syrup (we use Karo brand) pastry for 9-inch pie (use a deep shell)

1 - 1 1/2 cups pecan halves

Preheat oven to 375 F. Beat eggs, sugars, salt, butter and syrup by hand. Pour into the crust. Arrange pecan halves on top in a circular pattern, starting around the outside and working your way back in. Bake until set, about 40 to

50 minutes. To test doneness, insert a knife in the center after about 40 minutes; when the knife comes out clean it will be done. Cool slightly before serving (can be made a

MESCLUN GREENS WITH TANGY ORANGE DRESSING (Serves 12)

DRESSING

1/4 cup fresh basil leaves (or 2 tsp. dried basil)

1/2 cup orange juice

1/4 cup red wine vinegar

1/4 cup olive oil

pinch of salt

1/2 tsp. black pepper

1/2 tsp. sugar

SALAD

12 cups mesclun greens

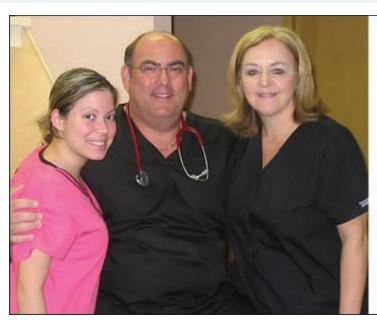
4 oz. crumbled goat cheese, divided in half

1/2 red onion, cut in half then sliced very thin

1/2 cup dried cranberries

1/4 cup toasted pine nuts

DRESSING: Chiffonade basil leaves (see directions below). Combine next 6 dressing ingredients and blend with hand mixer (can be mixed the day before). Stir in basil leaves right before serving. SALAD: Toss greens,



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Who's Cooking

dressing and half of crumbled goat cheese. Top salad with remaining goat cheese, red onions, cranberries and pine nuts

CHIFFONADE TECHNIQUE (great with large leafed heads, such as basil or mint): Wash and dry herbs. Stack 4 - 5 leaves together and roll tightly lengthwise. Hold roll with one hand and using fingers as a guide, cut thin slices across the vein of the leaves.

WHIPPED POTATOES

(Serves 12)

- 5 lbs. russet potatoes (8 10 large), peeled, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese (regular, not light or fat free)
- 1 cup sour cream (regular, not light or fat free)
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder

salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350 F. Place potatoes in a large pot cover potatoes with water and bring to a boil. Cook potatoes until they are soft and are easily pierced with a fork. Drain potatoes then place back in pot. Add cream cheese, sour cream, butter, garlic powder, salt and pepper. Mash until smooth, and then whip potato mixture with a hand beater for 1 to 2 minutes until fluffy. Place potatoes into a large buttered casserole dish. If making ahead of time, cover potatoes and refrigerate or freeze potatoes at this point. Be sure to defrost potatoes completely before cooking. Bake covered for 45 minutes, then uncover for last 15 minutes. Potatoes are ready when they are puffy and the top is lightly browned. No gravy is necessary with these potatoes, so they are the ideal accompaniment for the deep-fried turkey.

HERBED SAUSAGE STUFFING

(Serves 12. Can be prepared up to 4 hours ahead and refrigerated until ready to bake.)

8 slices whole wheat or rye bead, toasted until crispy

- 2 lb. maple sausage
- 4 Tbsp. butter
- 4 fresh sage leaves
- 1 1/2 cups chopped celery
- 1 onion, diced
- 3 tsp. ground sage
- 1 14.5-oz. can reduced sodium chicken broth
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 1/2 cup chopped parsley

Preheat oven to 350 F. Cut toasted bread into 1/2-inch cubes, place in large mixing bowl. Heat large skillet over medium heat; add crumbled sausage. Brown well, continuing to break up sausage with the back of a wooden spoon. Drain off fat and place sausage in a separate bowl to cool slightly. Wipe out pan; melt 4 Tbsp. butter over medium heat. Add 4 sage leaves and cook in butter until butter browns slightly and is very fragrant (1 to 2 minutes). Remove sage leaves, add celery and onion and cook until vegetables are softened and transparent, about 5 minutes; stir in dried sage and cook for 2 more minutes. Add chicken broth and mix well. Pour vegetable mixture over bread crumbs and toss gently. Add sausage, beaten eggs and parsley, mixing to combine. Stuffing should be quite moist, add extra chicken stock if necessary. Place mixture in a buttered casserole dish. If making ahead, cover and refrigerate at this point. Bake uncovered for 45 minutes (will need longer if refrigerated). Cook until onions are clear, peppers are tender and the meat is no longer pink. Add the garlic, raisins, olives, capers and tomato sauce. Salt and pepper to taste. Simmer for about 15 minutes and let sit a few minutes before serving.







Annuities 101:

Some Basics About a Misunderstood Product: Part 3

Below is an overview of variable annuities. For more specific information about how annuities are structured and how they can fit into your investment portfolio, please talk to a financial professional.

Variable Annuities Little Known Benefits

If you are willing to take on more risk, then variable annuities may be right for you. While benefits and security are not nearly as straight forward as those for fixed annuities, variable annuities still offer several benefits to investors that traditional equity products may not.

You can allocate funds between several investment options called sub-accounts, and reallocate funds periodically among sub-accounts without tax penalties. You may even be able to allocate a portion of your investment to a fixed account option. Also, like fixed annuities, earnings are tax-deferred.

Another advantage of this annuity product is there are no initial sales charges. However, there are surrender and contract charges. Generally, annuities are no-load investments. This allows more of your money to be invested rather than paying sales charges. Moreover, deferred variable annuity contracts







(fund now, payout later) usually include a death benefit if the account holder should die during the annuitization phase of the contract. Variable annuities can also offer minimum accumulation benefits, depending on the product's features. However, there is a cost associated with this feature.

A prospectus is the most important source of information about a variable annuity's investment options. It is important to keep in mind that variable annuities are designed to be long-term investments and substantial charges may apply if you withdraw your money early.

Considering Annuities

Is an annuity right for you? The answer may depend on your individual financial situation and savings goals. In any event, do your homework before you invest and ask for the assistance of a financial professional, who can help you match the right product to your needs. Variable annuities are long-term investments designed for retirement purposes. You should carefully consider the investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses of the investment alternatives before purchasing a contract or investing money. These contracts have limitations and are sold by prospectus only. The prospectus contains details on the investment alternatives, contract features, underlying portfolios, fees, charges, expense and other pertinent information. Contact your financial professional to obtain a prospectus. Read the prospectus carefully before purchasing a contract or spending money. WOW

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The Picture of Health:

Advanced Imaging Technologies Women Should be Aware Of

In their busy lives, women can sometimes neglect their health, but waiting until symptoms develop can be dangerous — especially when it comes to serious illnesses, such as heart disease, cancer or even osteoporosis. It is important to know what tools are available to "take a peek inside" before a serious problem develops.

Here are six common imaging procedures — available at the Baylor Imaging and Diagnostics Center at Red Oak — of which you should be aware:

Mammography: Annual

mammograms are recommended for women over the age of 40 to check for breast abnormalities that could potentially be cancerous. Women in Ellis County now have access to digital mammography.

"With digital mammography, the image is ready in seconds. Physicians can adjust the brightness and contrast to help detect small calcifications, masses and other changes that may be early signals of breast cancer," said Ronny Rose, director of radiology services at Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie.

CT or Computerized Tomography:

A CT scan is a more advanced version of a traditional X-ray. CT scans use a large X-ray camera that circles the body piecing together images, known as "slices," to create a three-dimensional view of the inside of the body.

"The images produced by our 16-slice CT scanner are phenomenal. It's almost like having an internal camera that shows us exactly what's going on in your body," Rose said.

Calcium Scoring: Calcium is vital for good bone health and aids in many cellular functions throughout your

body, but a significant calcium buildup in the heart and coronary arteries can be an early sign of cardiovascular disease (CVD). A diagnostic test known as a computerized tomography (CT) heart screening can detect the amount of calcium buildup in your arteries by computing a "score" to help determine your risk of CVD.

"Patients with a high score should see their internist or cardiologist for a stress test," said Mark Fulmer, radiologist on the medical staff at Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie.

Chest CT Scans: We all know that significant exposure to tobacco smoke puts us at risk for lung cancer. Once a smoker quits, their risk for lung cancer is lowered significantly, but unfortunately, the damage has already been done to their lungs.

"CT scans of the lungs can detect



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Health

pea-size cancerous growths before any symptoms develop. Studies have shown that CT scans are beneficial for detecting lung cancer at its earliest stages," Dr. Fulmer said.

Ultrasound: Ultrasound imaging has been around for many years and continues to become more advanced. Using high-frequency sound waves, ultrasound can produce images of the organs and blood vessels and can be used to identify the source of pain, swelling or infection, or provide the first pictures of a growing baby during pregnancy. Physicians may recommend ultrasound scans to check for thyroid problems, and it is often used in addition to mammograms or to view the inside of the pelvis to check for cervical or ovarian cancer.

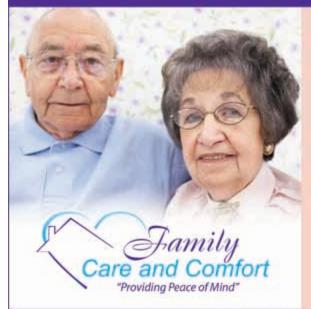
Bone Densitometry Scans: Of the 40 million Americans who suffer from osteoporosis, 80 percent of them are women according to the National Osteoporosis Foundation. A simple bone density scan can detect osteoporosis early on and determine your rate of bone loss long before any fractures or breaks occur.

"A bone density test is recommended for all women over age 65, those considered at high risk for osteoporosis and women who suffer from frequent fractures," Rose added.

For more information about any of these imaging procedures and those available at the Baylor Imaging and Diagnostics Center at Red Oak, consult with your physician. TOW

* Physicians are members of the medical staff at one of Baylor Health Care System's subsidiary, community or affiliated medical centers and are neither employees nor agents of those medical centers, Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie or Baylor Health Care System.

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Great Outdoors

Christmas for Your Gardener

- By Nancy Fenton

The holidays are here, and the old question of what to get for your favorite gardener is with us again. I've seen some fun and interesting things this year and thought I would share them with you.

There are lots of "rubber like" shoes out there this year, which really do well in the garden. Most of the discount stores are carrying them, and you can get some high-end ones through the catalogs. Look for ones with a back to them since the ones that just slide on tend to let the mud

and dirt slide in the back. They are great to kick off at the door when the phone rings and do not take much more than a rinse off with the hose when you are finished!

Broad-brimmed hats are literally lifesavers for some of us. The more frequent appearance of suspicious sores on the face, which might be cancerous, is reason enough to shield that skin as much as we can. There are several kinds of hats around, but my favorite is straw with an attached sweatband inside to catch the product of hot, hard work. It also makes the hat fit better. Do not omit the string that holds the hat on in the wind. It cannot do your gardener much good if they are off chasing it! There are also some collapsible ones that fold up into a disc and can be carried easily in a pocket or bag.

If you want to go big this Christmas,

look at a small cultivator. There are electric models, which only weigh about 11 pounds. That is about right for those of us in urban areas without acres to plow. The collapsing sacks with wire in them, which stay open when you are filling them and then smash down for storage when empty, are great for easy pick up of stray branches and other yard trash.

When in doubt, go for a gift certificate to your gardener's favorite garden store or online catalogue. Young people can go for a "gift certificate" of several hours of complaint-less yard work of the gardener's choice. Be it shoes, hats, gloves or plants-to-be, your gardener will appreciate you knowing just where their interest lies. Have a great holiday! NOW

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener in Ellis County.





December 2007 community Calendar

First and Third Tuesdays
Training Academy for Dental Assistants' holds free informational sessions at 5:30 p.m. For details, call (972) 842-2999.

Second and Fourth Mondays

Texas Ladies Networking meets from 11:45 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Ryan's Grill in Waxahachie. For more information, call (214) 587-1221.

Kiwanis Afternoon Club meets at Ryan's Grill on Hwy. 287 in Mansfield. Visitors welcome. (817) 453-0872.

Mansfield City Council meeting begins at 7 p.m. at Mansfield City Hall, 1200 East Broad Street.

Every Tuesday

Small business counseling provided by SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives). Learn about business start-up, cash flow management, marketing, and the development of advisors or board directors. 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. at Mansfield Chamber offices, 114 North Main Street. To set an appointment, call (817) 473-0507.

Mansfield Public Library hosts Bouncing Babies Story Time for infants up to 2 year olds from 10:30 - 11 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. - noon.

Every Wednesday

Mansfield Public Library hosts On My Own Story Time for 3 to 5 year olds from 10:30 - 11 a.m.

Every ThursdayMansfield Public Library hosts Special Kids' Story Time from 10 - 10:30 a.m. Please register for this special-needs program in advance by contacting Annette at the library at (817) 473-4391.

Mansfield Public Library hosts Toddler Story Time for 2 year olds from 11 - 11:30 a.m.

Kiwanis Club of Mansfield meets at 7 a.m. at Ryan's Grill. Membership and other information can be obtained by calling (817) 473-9886.

Hometown Holidays Parade, 2 p.m. The parade begins at St. Jude Catholic Church, goes west on Dallas Street, north on Main Street, east on Oak Street and ends on Smith Street.

28th Annual Christmas Tour of Homes, 2 - 8 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Women's Division of the Mansfield Area Chamber of Commerce.

December 7

Chamber New Member Orientation Breakfast, 7:30 - 9 a.m. at the Chamber Front Meeting Room, 114 N. Main Street.

December 7 and 8

Step back in time and walk the streets of ancient Bethlehem as Mary and Joseph did the night of Christ's birth at Bethlehem Revisited. The re-enactment is free, but donations are welcome. Performances, repeated every 30 minutes, will be held from 6 - 9 p.m. behind Central Presbyterian Church located at 402 N. College Street, Waxahachie. Call (972) 937-2390 for details.

December 8 and 9

The Candlelight Home Tour will be open for visitors from 2 - 8 p.m. Four dazzling homes will be featured for your viewing pleasure. Call the Waxahachie Chamber office at (972) 937-2390 for details.

Come to the Courthouse Square in downtown Waxahachie and enjoy a Victorian Christmas Celebration. December 8 from 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. December 9 from 11 a.m. - 5 p.m. Activities include holiday market vendors, choirs, carolers, costumed characters, carriage rides, photos with Santa and so much more.

December 20 - January 2

Mansfield ISD Winter Holiday Break.



