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December 2008

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Own Hero**

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Pearl Epps**

**Working on a
Master's Plan**

**A Fancy
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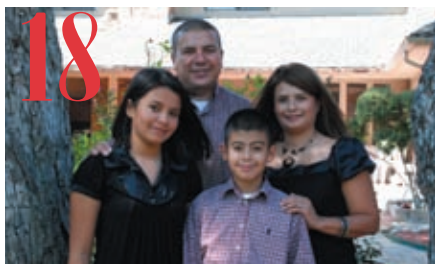
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Working on a Master's Plan

— By Katrina D. McNair



Many of golf's most recognized names — Lee Trevino, Ben Hogan, Byron Nelson and Ben Crenshaw — all have connections with the Lone Star State. Their accomplishments are legendary, and if he has anything to do with it, Cedar Hill student Lucas Bogdan will soon be just as famous.

Lucas, a 20-year-old Vancouver, British Columbia native, is a student at Northwood University in Cedar Hill. Lucas, who is majoring in advertising and marketing, only began playing golf seven years ago after being introduced to the game by his father. "My dad first played golf ... and he bought me a set of golf clubs — a beginner's set. He took me out a couple of times, and I really got into it. I quit soccer to start playing golf," he laughed.

His first set of clubs, received as a birthday gift, seemed to awaken a

competitive spirit in him, and Lucas began to dedicate more and more time to his golf game. A typical teenager, his dedication sometimes got in the way of teen life, such as girlfriends and going out with friends, but in hindsight, Lucas does not mind. "It was kinda ... good because a lot of my friends made bad choices. That [golf] kinda took me

just because the weather is good all year-round, and I get to practice all the time." Through the services of a college scholarship search, Lucas was put in touch with several schools, but ultimately decided on Northwood after talking with golf coach, Gary Belt.

Though he acknowledges he was "pretty bad" when he first picked up a

"It's just like anything — you practice hard at it and you get good."

away from negative choices in my own life and surrounded me with more positive people and got me on the right track, I think," he said.

So, what brings a Canadian golfer all the way to Texas and Cedar Hill? "A love of the game — and sunny skies," according to Lucas. "Basically, as I was going through high school, I decided I wanted to play college golf," he said. "Also, I wanted to come down south

set of clubs, Lucas credits the game with infusing a discipline and a focus within him. "It's just like anything — you practice hard at it and you get good," he said. And get good he did.

This summer, Lucas traveled to the U.S. Amateur Championship, in Pinehurst, North Carolina. According to its Web site, the Amateur Championship is the oldest golf championship in the United States — just one day older

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than the popular U.S. Open. Many of golf's most famous names — Arnold Palmer, Jack Nicklaus, and Tiger Woods — have won the event.

Preparing for the event was no small feat for Lucas. Driving from British Columbia down to Oregon, Lucas played two rounds of golf in one day during the qualifying round — over 10 hours of golf. Placing third allowed him to travel to Pinehurst a couple of weeks later.

Though it is an amateur competition, the talents of the players were of an almost professional level. Many of the players at the U.S. Amateur come from Division I athletic programs and are ranked as the best amateur players in the country. Each state has over 200 athletes competing just in the qualifying rounds to advance to the U.S. Amateur. From this massive number, only 314 are selected. For this year's competition, there were over 8,000 entrants. “It was really good experience,” Lucas said. “Those kind of guys, they're the best in the United States. Stanford, UCLA — they came from all over and from good programs.”

Although he did not walk away with the first place trophy, seeing all of his hard work pay off by earning a spot in the competition is enough for Lucas — for now. “I finished 129th, which wasn't my best. I really felt like I could have done better. Considering it was my first U.S. Amateur, I was obviously a little nervous, but I wasn't very disappointed. The whole experience itself was just amazing. It was fun for me; I was just happy to be there and compete against those guys,” he said, a little awe evident in his voice.

Though playing golf on a daily basis may seem like a dream for some, the sport calls for just as much athletic preparation as any other. “A lot of our tournaments, we play 36 holes the first day and then we play 18 holes the second day,” he explained. “It's physically draining to play 10 hours of golf in one

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day, in 90-degree heat. So, we have to stay fit, we have to stay energized the whole day." Lucas also runs several times a week to keep himself in shape.

As a full-time student athlete, Lucas' schedule can tire you out just listening to it. "Basically, we have a fall season, which consists of three tournaments. We have practice every day. Every day is different, because some days I have classes that go all day and other days I may just have one class. After my classes are over, I go out to the golf course with the whole team, and we play either nine holes or 18 holes," he said. Between practices with the Northwood golf team, hitting balls at the driving range, his class work and exams, Lucas can be up until 2:00 a.m. studying.

Though the work is hard, the schedule is demanding and his personal time seems almost nonexistent, it is all part of a master plan for Lucas, who would love to turn pro one day. Lucas admitted his answer would not have had anything to do with golf had he been asked what he wanted to do with his life just a few short years ago — but that has changed based on his experiences this summer. "A couple of years back, I'd have given you a different answer. I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I just wanted to come to school and figure out everything," he said. "Over the past two years, I've been working really hard on my golf game. I've had a new coach that's been teaching me, and he's really helped me out." Lucas also won two pro tournaments in Vancouver over the summer, which boosted his belief in his game and talents.

Lucas knows that playing golf has changed his life and believes a person's pure love of the sport is what should keep them on the putting green. "Golf is not supposed to be something you go out and do because you're supposed to," he stated. "It's supposed to be fun — a place where you can go to be stress-free." **NOW**



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Meet Pearl

Miss Epps

— By Beverly Shay

Miss Pearl Epps is the kind of person everyone would like to be or least be known as. Her official title at Community Missionary Baptist Church, where her son, Oscar D. Epps Sr. is the pastor, is receptionist, but that does not begin to describe the extent of her service there. “I do a whole lot of everything around here,” she uttered with total aplomb and contentment. “I like serving people *period*,” she stated confidently. “I like doing for others and being a servant and being kind to people. That’s all I know to do.”

Apparently, she is quite adept at “all she knows to do”; after all, she is in pretty high demand. “I don’t really like to brag on myself. That just doesn’t seem right. I just see what is needed and do it. I enjoy doing it,” she remarked. Miss Pearl, as she is fondly called, is usually the first person people

come in contact with at the church. She answers phones, greets newcomers to the church, calls them to welcome them, lets them know what is available to them and their families and arranges an orientation for them. She keeps in touch with shut-ins, those who are ill and takes care of whatever bereavement needs arise in the congregation. Ministry leaders count on her to make copies of material they use with the youth, women’s, choir and usher ministries.

As if those things do not keep her occupied enough, she oversees both

the church’s food pantry and handles orders for the Angel Food ministry in which approximately 50 families a

month participate.

This involves working with an outside food source that can procure large numbers of food items at a substantially reduced cost. “I love to cook, so of course I fix the repast for funerals and, well, whatever else needs to be done. Cooking has always been a good way to gather family around,” stated the woman

who sees the church as her extended family. “I also enjoy going to the nursing homes to read and do things for those

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That’s all I
know to do.”**



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who can't do for themselves."

Miss Pearl has not always had the time to indulge in such service. She retired from 33 years of teaching special needs children in the Dallas area, so it was not until late August of 2006 that she came on board at the church. "I credit the upbringing of my grandparents; they instilled in us that we should be kind to everyone, even if we considered them less [fortunate] than ourselves. I can remember my grandmother telling me you can't put people into categories on the basis of their jobs or life. She would say, 'You never know who you will need to help you out if you are down, so when you get up, you pull others up with you.'

"My mom passed at the age of 28. My father was determined to decide what each of us would do with our lives. As his oldest daughter, he wanted me to be a nurse, but I knew I wasn't going to be able to give anyone shots; I just wasn't cut out to be a nurse. He told me if I wouldn't be a nurse, he wouldn't send me to college," she recalled. "In 1952, I graduated from high school at the age of 16 and went to college where I started my studies in elementary education. At that time colleges sent your progress report to your parents. I tell you, my dad was none too pleased to find out what I was studying, even though my grades were good. He came to see why I was not studying nursing."

Miss Pearl decided that she would just come home if she could not study what she wanted. "Fortunately, my father had remarried, and my stepmom went to bat for me and got Dad to agree I could study elementary education," she said, remembering her relief. She managed to finish two years, before she decided to come home and marry her junior high sweetheart. The next 12 years were spent working for the Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospital, but in 1970 she returned to college. She also reared seven girls and one son.

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"I hadn't intended to go into teaching special needs children, but the need was there and I realized I wanted to. For 10 years, I taught in special needs and then for seven years I taught at-risk kids. Those are children who are hyperactive or challenged at disciplining themselves or they just don't fit into a regular classroom. So many of them came from disadvantaged, unstable home backgrounds; I wanted to impact them. I let them know I cared, and that they could come to me with anything. I think I was more like a parent to them than a teacher," she reminisced.

She continued working with special needs students until her retirement, having worked at D. A. Hulcy Middle School for 30 years, and Brashear and J. L. Patton in the Nolan Estes Plaza until it was closed. "My son then asked me to come in since the church was growing," she said of the 2,100-member congregation.

Just when it seemed her résumé had run its course, Miss Pearl mentioned she would be speaking at a church in Ft. Worth for their annual Women's Day. Apparently, she is frequently invited to speak at women's functions at churches and other places. "I usually speak on whatever theme they give me. One of my favorite things to speak on is God's favor and helping women learn to do things God's way. This is one of my callings," Miss Pearl admitted.

"We gave my son a big party for his 40th birthday and I spoke there. Then-Mayor Hurtt really enjoyed my speech and asked if I would speak whenever he was ready to retire. Sure enough, when he left office, he asked me to speak. Everyone laughed a lot, so I guess it went over pretty well," she grinned.

"We are who we are and blessed as we are because of those who have gone before us. I tell that to my son all the time," she stated. Blessings are given to be shared with others, something at which Miss Pearl is very proficient. **NOW**



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Our Very Own Hero



— By Beverly Shay

Duncanville resident Jason Bradford promised his brother, Josh, he would join the Marines with him. They ended up graduating from Marine boot camp two weeks apart, making their mother, April, one very proud Marine mom. Boot camp in San Diego, California, had been tough, but by the time

Josh graduated, he really did not want to leave. “I liked the order and the camaraderie — the way each of us looked out for the others,” Josh confided. Following boot camp, he went to Camp Pendleton, north of San Diego, for infantry school. He learned the techniques of house-to-house patrol and raids, as well as helo-raids; each essential to his lifestyle and survival when deployed to Iraq for a nine-month stint that was extended three months. Further time was spent in Australia, followed by eight more months of training — including jungle prep. His second tour of duty was in Okinawa, Japan, for six months. “I have one more year before I am finished. Then I will start school; I plan to minor in teaching and get my bachelor’s in history. I’ll be teaching what I have lived through,” Josh modestly understated.

It took a little more prodding to get him to relate the story his mother wanted others to hear, but, gradually, he began to share. “Initially the hardest thing was leaving my mom, at least until I saw my buddy get shot [in Iraq]. We lost two of our guys in one maneuver. We were supposed to head back toward base, but we were interrupted

by a firefight. The scariest part was the first shots that landed between me and Sgt. Espinosa [his squad leader] and the house we were preparing to clear. I had gone up on a roof to gain a view of the way out as we tried to get our squad back in, but then a sniper hit Sgt. Espinosa in the chest,” Josh recalled.

Jason, who serves in legal administration for the Marines, shared the actual Summary of Action describing the action Josh and his fellow Marines saw in Iraq. “During combat operations in Ar Ramadi, Iraq on 30 November, 2006 ...” the summary begins, “Lcpl. Bradford displayed noteworthy leadership, initiative and common sense under intense fire which greatly contributed to the success of the overall unit mission.” The summary goes on to explain in detail how “his relentless dedication to the Marines engaged under heavy enemy fire served to motivate the Marines in the platoon to exceed all standards. ...” Josh “succeeded to breach a gate in order to allow the squad to move to cover” while receiving fire from above. In his efforts to make contact with the base, Josh

had to move to a rooftop, a place of great exposure, which Josh underplays when he tells his version of the story. His bravery on the rooftop got them in touch with their company COC (Command Outpost Center).

When Josh’s squad leader, Sgt. Espinosa, was shot in the





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ANDRE D. GRAHAM, M.D. is board certified by the American Board of Surgery. He earned his medical degree at the University of Kansas School Medical School, Kansas. He went on to complete his residency in General Surgery at Staten Island University Hospital, New York.

Prior to joining Waxahachie Surgical Specialists, Dr. Graham practiced as a General Surgeon in the United States Air Force. He served in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, during which time he was awarded the Air Force Achievement medal. He also received the Bronze Star medal for both his service in Iraq and for establishing a field hospital in Kyrgyzstan.

Dr. Graham believes strongly in patient education and takes pride in providing quality patient care. He enjoys treating a broad range of general surgical conditions, with a particular interest in minimally invasive surgery, endoscopies, bariatrics, advanced laparoscopy, breast surgery, hernia and gastrointestinal surgery.

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chest, the summary says, "SNM [Said Named Marine] immediately took action. Without guidance, he recorded the injured Marine's battle number, plotted the squads on his map, acquired an accurate building number, and began the call for a CASEVAC." Complications with communications followed, and once the evacuation was completed, communication was completely lost. "Exposing himself to enemy gunfire, the SNM ran 100 meters



down the street his squad [had] just been ambushed on in order to flag down the nearest Abrams tank. ... As a result of SNM's actions ... help arrived. The summary then detailed the vehicles that "allowed the squad to maneuver out of the battle space." The summary succinctly concluded, "The Combat Distinguishing Device is authorized."

Josh simply summed it up in this manner: "We were trained. We did exactly what we were trained for. It was second nature to us. I did my job. I regret that he got shot, but he survived and we completed our mission." As he spoke, there was a lot that went unsaid, as though Josh had learned to contain something that those who have not been there will most likely never understand.

The young man seemed at ease with himself, definitely enjoying the R&R of time off. "We are over there for a reason. That reason seems to change frequently, but as long as I am there, I will serve," Josh remarked with simple, yet dedicated conviction. "When we weren't on patrol, we watched four

seasons of the *O. C.*, *Smallville* and *Everybody Loves Raymond*. We enjoyed the Ramen noodles sent from home and thought about what we would eat when we got home," he confessed.

While Josh commented that he learned to improvise, adapt and overcome, his mom told a bit of her own ordeal with three sons in the Marines; two overseas at the same time. "It was hard enough when they left for boot camp, but we got through that. If it hadn't been for the VFW Post 7843, we wouldn't have made it to both boys' graduations from boot camp. They actually gave us enough to cover all three plane fares even though they didn't really know us," April enthused.

"You listen to a lot of country [music]. You cry until you get to hear their voices again, and sometimes you think about their funeral service, but you always stay strong and make sure you convey your love to them. You pray every day. All day.

"Taylor joined the Marines also; he lost 70 pounds in boot camp, so now he is skinnier than the rest of the boys," she laughed. Taylor, the third brother, will serve one tour in Iraq and then another in Afghanistan. Taylor wants to re-enlist and become a trainer or instructor at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. All three boys will have served four years of active duty and four inactive.

In regard to the Iraqis, Josh commented, "They're good people; they gave us information that helped with the raids." Josh added, "The Marines offer the best training. It has been," he paused, "the best time of my life. But I wouldn't recommend someone going in for the wrong reasons. I wanted the blues [dress blues], but I really needed the discipline and duty."

Editor's Note: Since our interview, Lcpl. Josh Bradford has returned to California for his final tour of duty. **NOW**

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At Home With

Joe and Elena Rodriguez



Every Day is a Holiday

— By Amanda Madden Pitt

Joe and Elena Rodriguez consider their home an oasis for relaxation and entertainment. They have two children, Meagan and Joey, ages 14 and 10 respectively. All four in the Rodriguez family — five if you count their 3-year-old Chihuahua, Simba — agree their home is a true hiatus, a gathering place for family, as well as a collection of all the things they love.

The home sits on a half-acre lot in Duncanville with a circle drive in front and a pool, hot tub and volleyball net in back. The yard is spacious, with mature trees bordering a quiet creek. Inside the two-story abode, visitors will find five bedrooms, four-and-a-half bathrooms, a media room, an eat-in kitchen and formal dining and living areas, but a closer look reveals unique collections of their life together. “Each piece is anything but typical, and each is intentionally and meticulously placed in its spot for display and use,” Elena said. The plethora of collectibles and meaningful keepsakes unfolds like a story would, room by room throughout the house.

Elena picked a shade of red to liven up the walls found in the entryway, up the stairwell and in the formal dining room — a distinct signature of Elena’s personality. “When we first moved in, the walls looked sad,” Elena said. “They needed color.” An antique silver chandelier with a few large crystals hangs above the formal dining room table. “I like



simple things," Elena said. Her style lends itself to statement-making simplicity.

In the formal living area, picture-frame crown molding stretches from floor to ceiling, enclosing sage green panels bordered with antique white. The rock fireplace, also floor to ceiling and guarded by two large ceramic lions, is the focal point of the room. "They were a gift from my father," Elena said, referring to the two big cats which make whimsical conversation pieces, as well as a regal entrance into the room.

Elena gets most of her inspiration from looking at home décor magazines. "When I find something I love, I try to recreate it in my house," she said. The living room furniture is massive, yet inviting. Leather and wood with an antique finish offer elegant comfort. In the entry of the living area sits a table that is a tribute to the family's Catholic faith, a faith through which they have seen miracles in their own family.

The most memorable miracle was when Meagan was 9. She was diagnosed with a condition that caused gradual blindness. "Doctors said she would not recover from the loss of sight," Elena said. However, the family prayed and Meagan's condition disappeared. "The doctors said it was a miracle," Elena explained. "God is big." He is definitely big enough for a place in the hearts and home of the Rodriguez family. Elena's job is also one which requires

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healing hands. She is a massage therapist and works in her father's business, Señor Jesus, in Dallas.

Although the family has given the inside of the house a facelift, the front and back yards have been their largest and most ominous projects in the three years they have lived here. "Joe cut down 19 trees that were overrunning the yard," she said. In fact, before the Rodriguez family moved in, the entire yard areas were overgrown. They have made such drastic improvements to the outside that neighbors compliment their work on a regular basis. "They tell us the yard looks so much better than before, and the changes have improved the entire block," Elena said.

Both perfectionists by nature, Joe and Elena admit the house has been a lot of work, but neither regrets the effort.

Their most famous enhancements include annual holiday decorations. When Joe strings the lights on the house, the neighborhood takes notice and once again, compliments abound. Decorating for the holidays is a hobby that not only the neighbors enjoy, but one Joe and Elena share together. "My life is all about my family," Elena said. She works hard to create a warm and inviting atmosphere year-round.

As most parents would agree, "We make sacrifices," Elena said, so the children can have the best. Both Meagan and Joey attend St. Luke Catholic School, where Meagan was voted most valuable player on her volleyball team, probably due in part to long hours of practice in her backyard. Despite an active school life, the children love to be at home at the hub of family activities. "Everyone gathers at our house,"

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Elena said. Family and friends get together to cook meals, swim, play volleyball, talk and just have a great time.

The media room houses collectibles and art commemorating family hobbies and entertainment interests. Favorite entertainers are displayed in pictures of Marilyn Monroe, James Dean and Madonna, as well as in scenes from *The Godfather*. However, none of the memorabilia compares to the picture of Elena's musical idol, Vicente Fernandez, known worldwide as the king of ranchera music. His picture in the media room also represents the

family's travels, particularly one special trip to Mexico in which the couple were invited to tour Vicente's ranch and home. To Elena, Vicente Fernandez is a symbol of culture and the pioneering spirit which overcomes opposition to reach greatness. "I also love his voice," she said, "and the deep expression that emanates through his songs."

More special than their favorite stars are their favorite cars. Joey and his dad collect small model cars. They are members of the National Motor Museum Mint, a club for collectors. The hearth of the fireplace in the media room also

displays baseball collectibles, another shared hobby between father and son.

Although most rooms in the Rodriguez family's house showcase original hardwood floors, immaculately finished, Elena's future renovation plans include installing ceramic tile in the couple's master bedroom. In an effort to literally instill her future project in her husband's mind, Elena, on occasion, jokingly asks her husband, "Do you know any good flooring people?" She knows full well he does, since Joe is the owner of Joe's Flooring, a company well-known for high-quality work.

Further plans for their home include expansion of the eat-in kitchen to open into the formal living area, creating a seamless space between the kitchen and living areas which can be used for congregating while amazing home-cooked meals are in the making. There is a feeling of warmth and togetherness, thanks to the family, friends, food and seasonal decorations. At the Rodriguezes' home, every day is a holiday. **NOV**

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Fancy for Purses

— By Beverly Shay

"My great-grandmother, Mama Dee, fostered my desire to sew. She had an old sewing machine I liked to play with. I thought the wheel on it was a steering wheel and I would pretend I was driving it like a tractor or something," Kayla Swann admitted. "One day, around the time I was 8, she tried to teach me to sew, but I just wanted to drive. She was quite a seamstress. She lived to be 100 years old. Now 20 years later, here I am, sewing. I wish she could see me."

"It started as a dream," Kayla recited. "I wanted to sew jeans, but I didn't even know how to sew. When I told a friend I wanted to create my own line of jeans, she suggested I take some sewing lessons. So, I enrolled in a beginner class at a JoAnn Fabric and Craft Store. Our first project was to make a tote bag. When we were finished, everyone liked mine and said it looked so professional," Kayla recalled with obvious pleasure at the response she had received.

"I decided to keep making totes," she remarked, showing off several of her creations. "At first, I followed the pattern we used in class, but then I began experimenting with some of my

own ideas and sketching out my own patterns." Kayla has a nice selection of totes and purses made from various fabrics and old jeans. She has made good use of the Husqvarna Viking Scandinavia 955 sewing machine with embroidery capacities she purchased for sewing her purses. Each of her bags has TNC embroidered on the outside and the lining. "I decided to call my line of purses and totes Top Notch Chic Handbags," said the aspiring designer.

She is very excited about the trade shows she entered back in October at the Market Center in Dallas and the opportunity to show her handbags at two churches, one in DeSoto and one in Louisiana, which allow entrepreneurs to showcase their products. She has also

procured a permit to show her bags at Trader's Village. Between shows, she designs and sews additional totes. "It takes three to four hours to make the basic tote. I spend most of the time designing and cutting them out. Then I embroider on the letters and sew them together," Kayla explained.

Kayla's favorite fabric so far is called Leopard Ducco, a leopard print with circular gold sparkles in varying sizes, lined with black satin and closed with a stone toggle. Her basic small tote is 12" x 14" and takes about one yard of fabric. The larger ones are 14" x 14" and she plans to add pockets inside and out for use as a shoe bag for dance or gymnastic wear.

While some of Kayla's creations have



a boxed bottom and may or may not have Velcro or magnetic closures, others are gathered onto a round bamboo-like hoop with more of a "poochie" look. Her jean creations are made from actual jeans seamed closed below the zipper and lined with satin or a leopard print. "The possibilities are endless when it comes to fabrics. This one is made of swimsuit fabric," she said as she held up a vivid, stretchy, hot pink bag, glittering with metallic sequins. "This would make a great gym bag," she remarked.

Other bags feature canvas straps, while her rounded bags with their v-shaped opening have wide 3 1/2" straps of cloth-covered canvas that will sit snugly on the shoulder. Colors range from a bright lime oriental print to shiny bronze snakeskin lamé to black linen and even some sturdier embroidered denims, all with a distinctive TNC embroidered or quilted on the side.

"Marcus Parker, a local rap artist and motivational speaker has said, 'Stay driven with the talents you are given.' That's what I am endeavoring to do," Kayla commented. "I always wondered what my talent was. My pastor, Bishop T. D. Jakes, tells us, 'If you work in your gifts, you can't help but prosper.' I hope to develop in more areas, but I am glad I have discovered that I have this niche for fashion." She paused, considering, "I always wanted to be a model, but this is a nice creative outlet. And all my friends have been so supportive."

Kayla's enthusiasm seems boundless as she considers the possibilities in design and marketing. She plans to develop a mother/daughter line, make matching bags for cheerleaders or other teams and anything else she can dream up. "It's important to look for, discover and accomplish your dream. I'm on my way by having invested time and money. Besides, it's fun!" enthused this young mother of three. **NOW**



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0 Taste *and* See

— By Beverly Shay

"I wanted to create a wine shop that I was comfortable with, a place that is inviting, not intimidating, with an upscale atmosphere," revealed Linda De Los Santos, owner of WineAlicious. Sitting at the wraparound bar counter in the airy, deep red shop, you find your eye drawn all over the place. Nicely spaced racks of wine bottles lend plenty of room for perusal. Window light from both the front and back of the shop contributes to the studio feel created by art displays from local artists. This month's featured artist is photographer Kevin Falk, some of whose photos look more like paintings.

It is no wonder the Friday and Saturday wine tastings draw people in; the shop's ambiance promotes lingering, meeting and greeting neighbors while expanding familiarity with various wines and the culture of wine making. "We have found

that our customers mostly gravitate toward sweet wines, so we wanted to give them an opportunity to try something new before they purchase a bottle. Now our customers are branching out into merlots and darker reds, which are perfect as the weather cools," Linda remarked.

Linda and her husband, Michael, have always been interested in wines, having visited many wineries in California and Bordeaux, France. "We thought maybe someday we'd own a vineyard or a winery, but we had never really considered the retail end of the business until my husband saw an ad for the shop in the paper. We met with the owner the next day. We've already been here five months," Linda stated with obvious pleasure. "We made some changes. We don't carry beer; we have expanded the variety of Texas wines, and by showcasing local artists who have not yet had a debut, we are contributing to the burgeoning sense of culture in Duncanville."

If you are not certain what type of wine you should buy to go with a

certain meal or occasion, Linda and Michael are more than happy to make suggestions. For example, if you are looking for that gift bottle for the hostess of your Christmas celebration, a sparkling rosé, such as Cuvée di Gabry, which is a drier wine, compliments turkey. For roast, a redder wine, such as a pinot noir or a Vouvray,



would be a good choice. Michael suggested a bold red blend of Gamache/Tempranillo from Spain or a sparkling rosé when serving ham.

"Probably our most popular wine, with both newcomers and veteran connoisseurs is Pinky Tuscandero. Touched with cherry and orange zest, it's another perfect wine to go with turkey," Michael enthused. "We'll be bringing in even more variety of sparkling wines for the coming holidays," Linda mentioned. "They're less expensive than champagnes

"I wanted to create a wine shop that I was comfortable with, a place that is inviting, not intimidating, with an upscale atmosphere."

with just as much flavor, can be dry or sweet and come in red, rosé or white. The only difference in champagne is it is made from grapes from the Champagne region of France. Sparkling wines are great with appetizers, soups, salads, desserts and spicy Asian foods."

Whether you are looking for a wine for a special occasion, to go with a certain menu or a picnic in the park or just wondering what wines are available, stop by WineAlicious (where everything's delicious), located in the shops behind Toshio's at 100 South Main, Suite 112 in Duncanville; (972) 709-2100. Hours are 11:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. Tuesdays - Thursdays and 11:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Most wines are under \$20; if you do not find exactly what you are looking for, they may be able to order it for you. Join your neighbors at a WineAlicious complimentary wine tasting any Friday or Saturday; you might even meet a featured artist or one of the vendors from a local winery. **NOW**

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A Chamber of Commerce new member basket was presented to Roger Mangum, owner of Pizza Hut, top left, by Kathy Draxler. Cedar Hill Chamber Night Out, top center, was held at P&W Quality Machine, Inc. A ribbon cutting, top right, was held at Dairy Queen. CNO attendees were fed by Longhorn BBQ, second row left, with Carolyn James, Matthew Rowell and Whitney James serving. Northwood University's annual Crossing Over ceremony, second row right, saw many in attendance. Sydra Aaron, third row left, made waffle cones at Dairy Queen. Ribbon cuttings were held at: Ranch Steakhouse, third row right; and Deconomics, bottom left. The Student Leadership Institute breakfast, bottom right, was hosted by the Leadership Southwest Alumni Association at Dallas Baptist University.



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Michael Forbes, top left, loves playing the tuba. The Blessing of the Animals held at Canterbury Episcopal School, top center, saw Christopher Hudson, a proud second-grader, show off his cocker spaniel. Deidre Hannible and Amy Aris, top right, joined other selected teachers from the Metroplex at the Texas Rangers Teacher Recognition Night. Homecoming festivities, second row left, were filled with lots of team spirit. The Moates Elementary School food drive, second row right, was coordinated by Justine Hein and the fifth grade EAGLE class. A ribbon cutting, third row right, was held at Vision Travel. Bishop Stanton, bottom left, gave a "high-five" to a Canterbury student following a chapel service. DeSoto ISD Superintendent Lloyd Treadwell, bottom center, congratulated Beth Trimble, director of communications, on her National School Public Relations Association Award. Leon and Curtistene McCowan, bottom right, posed for the camera during the 3rd Annual Roast and Toast where Curtistene was the honoree.

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Brent Rozell, top left, had the ladies of the Duncanville Women's Club tapping their toes to some lively tunes. The Rivera family and friends, top right, enjoyed a wonderful Rotarian fish dinner. Vernon King, second row center, was recognized as the Duncanville Chamber of Commerce student of the month. A ribbon cutting, bottom left, was held at My Glamorous Gift Baskets. Another ribbon cutting, third row center, was held at WineAlicious. DISD celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month, second row right, by learning about the culture through food, music, literature and dance. Rotarians Ray Dorton and Bill Jackson, third row right, served up lots of fish. Rotarian Bob Talbot, bottom center, served as the "fish fry" chairman. Glenda Kay Tankersly and Allen Conley, bottom right, at the September Fun After Five event.



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Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning



IN THE KITCHEN WITH DELORES HARDEN

CHRISTMAS BRUNCH CASSEROLE

1 lb. bulk pork sausage, cooked and drained
1/2 cup onion, chopped
1/3 cup sweet red pepper, chopped
1/3 cup green pepper, chopped
1 8-oz. can refrigerated crescent dinner rolls
2 cups (8 ounces) mozzarella cheese, shredded
5 eggs, lightly beaten
3/4 cup milk
1/4 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. white pepper

Crumble sausage in a medium skillet; cook over medium heat until brown. Drain well. Sauté chopped onions and peppers approximately 5 minutes. Line bottom of a buttered 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking dish with crescent rolls, firmly pressing perforations to seal. Sprinkle with sausage, onion and peppers; top with mozzarella cheese. Combine remaining ingredients; beat lightly and pour over sausage. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until set at 425 F. Let stand 5 minutes; cut into squares and serve immediately. Yield: 8 - 10 servings.

PECAN CHEESE BALL

2 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese, softened
1 8-oz. can crushed pineapple, drained
1/4 cup green bell pepper, chopped
2 Tbsp. onion, finely chopped
1 tsp. seasoned salt
2 cups pecans, chopped, toasted and divided

Combine first 5 ingredients; stir in 1 cup pecans. Cover and chill until firm. Shape mixture into a ball; roll ball in remaining chopped pecans. Place cheese ball on a serving platter; serve with assorted crackers and strips of green and red bell peppers.

COCONUT CREAM PIE

4 cups milk
1/2 cup cornstarch
1 1/2 cups sugar
1/2 tsp. salt
3 eggs, separated
1 1/2 Tbsp. butter
1 tsp. vanilla
1 1/2 cups coconut
9-inch piecrust, baked

Preheat oven to 350 F. In a heavy saucepan, heat 3 cups of milk over medium low heat. While milk is heating, combine cornstarch, sugar and salt in a bowl;

gradually add the remaining cup of milk. Beat egg yolks; gradually add to the mixture; mix well. When the other milk is hot, slowly add egg yolk mixture to it, stirring constantly until very thick. Remove from heat; add butter, vanilla and coconut. Pour into pie crust; top with meringue and sprinkle with coconut. Bake until golden brown.

POUND CAKE

1 cup butter, softened
1/2 cup shortening
1 3-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened
2 1/2 cups sugar
5 large eggs
3 cups cake flour
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1 cup buttermilk
1 tsp. lemon extract
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. butter flavoring

In a large mixing bowl: cream butter, shortening and cream cheese. Gradually add sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Combine dry ingredients; add to creamed mixture alternately with buttermilk. Stir in flavorings. Pour into a greased and floured 10-inch tube pan. Bake at 325 F for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes; remove from pan to a wire rack to cool completely. Optional: Glaze with 1 cup powdered sugar and 2 tablespoons lemon juice or milk. Drizzle on cooled cake.

RED VELVET CAKE

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. cocoa powder
1 1/2 cups vegetable oil
1 cup buttermilk, room temperature
2 large eggs, room temperature
2 Tbsp. red food coloring (1 oz.)
1 tsp. white distilled vinegar
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING:

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 stick unsalted butter, softened
4 - 5 cups sifted confectioners' sugar

The holidays bring families together, like Delores Harden and her family, to share good company and good food. "Holiday meals are now usually at our home. Most family members request something special, and that adds up to too much food being prepared," she said. "We usually have to send food home with family and friends, and we share with our neighbors."

Delores loves collecting cookbooks and experimenting with changing up new recipes. She enjoys baking desserts, like her favorites: coconut cream pie and red velvet cake. After retiring four years ago, she began entering her cooking creations in cook-offs. "I've won or placed in every competition I've entered," she stated. "I look forward to entering other contests, and someday soon hope to publish a dessert cookbook." **NOW**

1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/2 cup pecans, chopped
1/2 cup shredded coconut

Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly oil and flour 3 9 x 1 1/2-inch round cake pans. In a large bowl, sift flour, sugar, baking soda, salt and cocoa powder. In another large bowl, whisk together oil, buttermilk, eggs, food coloring, vinegar and vanilla. Using a standing mixer, mix dry ingredients into wet ingredients until combined into a smooth batter. Divide the cake batter evenly among prepared cake pans. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until cake pulls away from the sides of the pans and a toothpick inserted in the center of the cakes comes out clean. Invert cakes onto cooling rack; let cool completely. Prepare frosting by beating cream cheese and butter until fluffy. On low speed, add sugar and vanilla, mixing until incorporated; add nuts and coconut. Frost cake layers.

APPLE-NUT MUFFINS

2 cups sugar
3 eggs
1 1/2 cups vegetable oil
1/4 cup orange juice
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking soda
1/4 tsp. salt
1 Tbsp. cinnamon
1 Tbsp. vanilla
3 cups apples, peeled and finely chopped (Granny Smith works fine)
1 cup shredded coconut
1 cup pecans, chopped

SAUCE:

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup buttermilk
1/2 teaspoon baking soda

Preheat oven to 325 F. Generously grease a 12-cup muffin tin. In a large bowl, combine sugar, eggs, oil, orange juice, flour, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and vanilla extract; mix well. Fold apples, coconut and pecans into batter. Pour batter into prepared muffin tins and bake until a toothpick comes out clean, about 35 to 40 minutes. Shortly before muffins are done, prepare sauce. Melt butter in a small saucepan, stir in sugar, buttermilk and baking soda; bring to a rolling boil, stirring constantly. Boil for 1 minute. Brush sauce over hot muffins in pan as soon as you remove them from the oven. Let stand for 15 to 20 minutes then remove to a rack to cool completely.

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Embrace Life No Matter What

— By Tom Castleberry, Judy Howell and Gary Rope

Have you ever heard, "If I had only had more time ..."?

As people grow older, some may have regrets about all the things they did not do. Not taking an exotic trip or missing visits to family members might top the list. Your list might even include not running a marathon. One of the biggest regrets may be not telling a loved one how much you care. One thing is for sure: The more you

enjoy life and prepare for the unexpected, the fewer regrets you may have.

While no one can possibly do everything on a lifetime to-do list, there are plenty of ways to show people you care. One way is to make sure your family has the financial means to continue living their current lifestyle if you are no longer around.

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Knowing you have provided for your loved ones will give you peace of mind so you can enjoy doing the things you've always wanted to do. It may not mean training for a marathon — but, then again, it might. **NOW**

Tom Castleberry, Judy Howell and Gary Rope are State Farm agents based in the Southwest area.

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Fever Phobia

— By Leah Pittmon, B.S., D.C.

Anyone with a TV may have seen the commercial where Big Sister is upset that Mom gave Little Brother a fever reducer, and now he is bugging her. Mom said she “had to.” Many parents believe this to be true. Because children are sent home from day care or school with a fever over 99 F, parents believe that this is something to be avoided. The use of fever reducers in children is largely unnecessary and works against their natural immune responses.

Parents and advertising are not the only ones to blame for this sabotage of the body’s innate intelligence. A Massachusetts study of pediatricians showed that 89 percent of the doctors surveyed recommended fever reducers

for fevers between 101 and 102 F. However, a microbiologist will tell you that 102 F is the perfect temperature for killing bacteria, as most germs cannot tolerate this temperature, but humans can easily tolerate it. It makes us cranky, but 102 F for a child over 3 months is not life threatening. As a matter of fact, it is not even classified as high-grade, only moderate fever.

What good can possibly come from a fever? Why should we let a child “suffer” with a 101 F or 102 F temperature? Fever is the body’s way of making the environment less favorable for viruses and bacteria. It is a sure sign that immune cells such as macrophages and immune chemicals such as cytokines are

at work. The more practice the immune system has at fighting off invaders, the healthier the immune system will be.

However, not all fevers are good. High-grade fevers (104 F or more, usually over 107 F) can quickly cause dehydration, febrile seizures and brain damage. Infants under 3 months of age have poor body heat regulation and have not developed a very strong immune system, so any fever warrants medical attention. Neck stiffness, listlessness, vomiting, inconsolable crying and headache are signs of possible meningitis, and require immediate medical help.

Most of us can benefit from a little fever when our body sees fit. Mother Nature knows best. Chiropractic care, lukewarm cloths and plenty of rest and fluids are good natural alternatives to suppression of fever with medication. **NOW**

Leah Pittmon, B.S., D.C.


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A Gardener's *Christmas List*

— By Nancy Fenton

It is the holiday season again, and a good time to talk about some of those items most wanted by your favorite gardener. This year, I purchased a Unifork for myself. The chief advantage to this tool is not the bright pink color, although it is easy to find even in a dark closet, but the weight. It weighs only three pounds! This is an easy-to-lift fork that is sturdy enough to turn wet compost or shovel heavy mulch. It does not dig very well in our hard clay, but neither will my other turning forks! It is not available in the stores, but can be ordered from Unionjackstable.com.

I have worn out my pop-up garden bag and would love to have another one or two. I saw one at Sherwin Williams lately and the larger plant and lumber stores have had them. Gloves and small, sharp scissors are always good as are sweatbands and big brimmed hats. The catalogues have finally recognized that there are those of us who garden who are not six foot tall and 180 pounds and are now offering several light carts that look like they would carry a lot. I love my wheelbarrow, but it is getting increasingly harder to maneuver it around.

Gift cards to places that sell plants are good as are coupons redeemable for help in the yard and garden. Cleaning out that old garden area would be a great gift since many diseases winter over in the old stems and vines (especially tomato problems)! If your gardener is also a cook, Master Gardeners are putting together a new cookbook as we speak. It will have some great recipes. We have been trying them out all year!

Speaking of Master Gardeners, now is the time to sign up for the February training. Our County Extension Office has the applications and you can call (972) 825-5175 to have one sent to you. Here is hoping for a great holiday season for you and yours with love, laughter and lots of garden items under your tree! **NOW**



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December 2008

Community Calendar

Readers: In order to accommodate our communities' holiday calendar items, we have eliminated most of the regularly scheduled monthly events for this month only. Make sure you check the schedule for the holiday events you enjoy.

Every Tuesday and Wednesday

Cedar Hill Recreation Center presents Caliente Salsa. Tuesdays: 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. Wednesdays: 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. Monthly Fee: \$50 for ages 12 and older. Instructors Michael Garland and Rick Flores will teach the Salsa, Cha Cha, Rumba, West Coast and Fast Step Swing, Lindy Hop, Latin Hustle and the newest and most popular club scene line dances!

November 18 - December 9

Get into the holiday spirit by donating "gently used" adult and children's coats to the Coats for Folks coat drive sponsored by the Dry Clean Super Center and Duncanville Rotary Club, benefiting Duncanville Outreach and the Austin Street Shelter. Bring your gently used coat to Dry Clean Super Center at 510 W. Wheatland or the Duncanville Chamber. All the coats will be cleaned at no cost before being distributed to a person in need.

December 4

Bring joy to a Duncanville child in need this holiday season by choosing an angel from the Duncanville Outreach Ministry's Angel Tree at the Chamber. Purchase one, two or three gifts not to exceed \$40 and return them by December 4. Duncanville Outreach will distribute them.

Old Town Holiday on the Hill, 6:30 p.m. Enjoy live music, dance performances, caroling around the square and have your picture taken with Santa, free! Bring a new, unwrapped gift or toy for ELF & Friends, a nonprofit organization operated by the Cedar Hill Fire and Police Associations, and help provide Christmas for approximately 200 children and senior citizens of Cedar Hill.

December 4, 11 and 18

Evening Advent worship: 7:30 p.m. at St. Mark Lutheran Church, 610 N. Cedar Ridge

Rd., Duncanville. Vespers services will focus on the pre-Christmas story from Luke 1 with meditation upon the Song of Mary, the Magnificat. (972) 298-0891.

December 5

City of Duncanville's Christmas Parade, 7:00 p.m. The theme this year is "Carousel Christmas." Parade route begins on Freeman at Reed Middle School, continues down Wheatland Rd. to Main Street and back to Freeman.

December 6

DeSoto's 36th Annual Home Town Holiday begins with Breakfast with Santa: 8:00 a.m. - noon (Cost: \$5. Photos with Santa: \$5); Princess Galleria Christmas Party: 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. in the Pecan Rooms. Activities include: free holiday arts and crafts for children to make tree ornaments and Christmas cards or decorate and stuff a stocking for \$10; bounce house; entertainment; food and fun. Parade of Lights: 6:00 p.m. This year's theme is "Candyland." The parade route starts behind the DeSoto ISD administration building and continues from 200 E. Belt Line Rd., west on Belt Line Rd., east on Hampton Rd., east on Pleasant Run Rd., ending at the DeSoto Town Center.

Blood Drive: 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. at St. Mark Lutheran Church, 610 N. Cedar Ridge Rd., Duncanville. Call (972) 298-0891 to make an appointment or walk in.

Zula B. Wylie Library in Cedar Hill hosts their annual Holiday Open House: 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Crafts, music, face painting, refreshments and more. Photos with Santa: \$1.

December 8 and 22

Methodist Health System Mobile Mammography is offering mammograms at Methodist Charlton Midlothian, 2210 Bryan Place, at the intersection of 287 and Plainview Rd. Most insurances accepted or \$122 due at time. Appointments required. (972) 775-7410.

December 11

African Children's Choir performance: 7:00 p.m., The Lighthouse, 1400 N. 9th St.,

Midlothian. The African Children's Choir's goal is to change Africa's future by providing education and hope for today's children. (972) 723-6197.

December 13

Santa's Pajama and Pancake Party: 8:00 - 10:30 a.m. at Cedar Hill Recreation Center, 310 E. Parkerville Rd. Cost: \$15 per person for all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast, photo with Santa, holiday crafts and more. All ages welcome. Register by December 8 online at cchrec.com or at CH Rec. Center.

December 18

Young At Heart Adults (YAHA), senior group of Holy Spirit Catholic Church in Duncanville monthly meeting: 11:00 a.m. in the Holy Spirit Community Center, 1111 Danieldale. Enjoy Harpist Carol West play Christmas pieces, as well as classical, pop, jazz and church concert music. Free, but bring your favorite potluck dish to share. (972) 298-4971.

December 20

Taylor School of Music students, ages 5 - 75, Christmas Recital: 3:00 p.m. at Jubilee United Methodist Church in Duncanville. Open to the public and free of charge.

December 24

Christmas Eve Candlelight Service: 7:30 p.m. at St. Mark Lutheran Church, 610 N. Cedar Ridge Rd., Duncanville. (972) 298-0891.

December 25

Christmas Day Celebration: 10:30 a.m. at St. Mark Lutheran Church, 610 N. Cedar Ridge Rd., Duncanville. (972) 298-0891.

December 31

New Year's Eve Worship: 7:30 p.m. at St. Mark Lutheran Church, 610 N. Cedar Ridge Rd., Duncanville. (972) 298-0891.

For more community events,
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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

In the times we find ourselves in, it seems that the future is bleak. **Despair** and possible **depression** appear to be on the horizon as the stock market stumbles, tsunamis, hurricanes and wildfires of the century seem to occur every year.

Now **Christmas** is here and instead of feeling joy we feel **helpless** and **discouraged**. Priorities are forfeited and responsibilities overwhelm us. We are forced to either put gas in our vehicles or have electricity to keep us warm. All these things that need to get done and the finances to accomplish those things are limited.

For this very reason God gave us **Christmas**, a **gift** intended to repair our spirits no matter how much **despair** or strife surrounds us—there is always hope. For God Himself gave us His most treasured **gift** to identify with us: a vulnerable baby born in very humble surroundings, in the midst of horrible opposition. This was the very picture of **despair** and strife, yet all His **promises** of peace, contentment, love and joy were wrapped up in this baby, no matter what the circumstance. **Christmas** represents a **new beginning** and a time of **hope** despite your circumstances. It is our prayer that you accept the **gift** of **Christmas** and receive His peace.

From our family here at Trinity Women's Center to yours.
May you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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