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Serving Cedar Hill, DeSoto,
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MAGAZINE

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Photo by Bloomfield Photography.*

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On The Cover

Santa checking his list on the porch of Robert and Cindy Bloomfield.

Photo by Terri Ozumy.

Editor's Note

Merry Christmas, Southwest Friends,

My family enjoys several Christmas traditions, one of which is attending the Christmas Eve service at Tyler Street Methodist Church. Christmas carols, children and bell choirs, wonderful cantatas, brass ensembles, full-throttle organ, piano and harp music soars within the beautifully decorated sanctuary, swirling around the winter greenery and ceiling-high poinsettia "trees."

I thought it would be fitting to share some of our communities' fine musicians with you this month: Jimmy Emery, an elegant classical pianist from Cedar Hill; Duncanville's Naomi D'Amato, a 15-year-old violinist with the Dallas Youth Orchestra for four years and currently in All-State Orchestra again; and First Voice, a DeSoto quartet that delights in bringing its outstanding performances to small community churches. Each of these performers gives of their wealth of talent.

In this season of giving, may each of you find unique and loving ways to share your talents and love with those you hold dear, as well as with strangers or others in need of good cheer.

Beverly Shay
SouthwestNOW Editor



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Elegant Music, Expressive Worship

— By Beverly Shay



Cedar Hill resident Jimmy Emery cannot imagine life without music. Growing up in Norristown, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia, his home overflowed with song. “My mom and dad sang together, and my mother was my first piano teacher. Holidays were resplendent with music: my grandfather played harmonica, my cousin the French horn, my aunt played a melodeon, my brother the trumpet, my dad the guitar and my mom was on the piano,” Jimmy recalled.

Grade school for Jimmy was filled with family, community, music and Boy Scouts. “By my final year of high school, music was on the short list of future career possibilities; I was looking at a chemistry major for college,” he confessed. Jimmy had, however, already met his future wife, Jill; they sat next to each other in orchestra as violinists when they were 14 years old. “Through some gentle nudging from Jill, God and others, I realized I should pursue music for my life and my career,” he said.

Although Jimmy is immensely capable and qualified on many instruments, as well as an able teacher of singing and voice, the piano is his main performance instrument. At Southern Methodist University (SMU) Meadows School of the Arts, he earned his undergraduate degree in piano

performance, piano pedagogy and music education with a concentration in choral conducting. “I thought I would immediately begin teaching music in public schools and direct competitive high school choral programs, but I was encouraged by the United Methodist College campus ministry, now called the Wesley Foundation, to spend a one-year internship in campus ministry,” Jimmy said. “It was a very growing time for me involving peer counseling, mentoring and discipling other university students. During that time, I felt myself called to full-time parish ministry, so following my internship, I ended up joining Tyler Street Methodist Church in Oak Cliff in 1999, as director of music and fine arts, while student-teaching in the choral department at Duncanville High School and teaching at Acton Elementary School. I was surprised to find I truly enjoyed working with the younger children.”

One of the highlights of Jimmy’s time at Tyler Street was a combined choral event between the church choir and students from Molina and Sunset high schools. “So much of my musical career has developed out of musical collaborations. I was very impressed with the high school choral directors and their devotion to their students,” Jimmy commented.



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"As I look back, I can see now that what I took on, as a detour from my plan for my life, has really become my life. I know I will spend the remainder of my life serving the church through music. For me," Jimmy pondered aloud, "music is both something I love personally and a public experience. Music provides personal, spiritual and relational nurture. Part of the attraction of music is it's one of the few things that washes away the boundary between us and the place where we are vulnerable to God. That vulnerability is a growth place. Music is a conduit of God."

In 2006, Jimmy moved to Lover's Lane United Methodist Church in Dallas, where he serves as director of music and worship. "Lover's Lane is a

*"Music is a
conduit of God."*

vibrant, active community in which to serve. I have three principles that make the basis for both my personal goals and my work with choirs and musicians," Jimmy said. "I believe in musical artist excellence with respect and honor to all ranges of abilities. I have a passionate commitment to the worship component of music. The focus must always be on the recipient of our praise. I also believe in authenticity of relationships. Great music making comes out of great relationships with fellow music makers.

"The amount of time and commitment that goes into making a choir work results in creating a family relationship among the choir members. There are lots of opportunities to minister, relationships are built through the music and we end up reaching into each others' families. I have found there is a richness specific to volunteer choral settings different from what you often find in professional musical/choral

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venues,” Jimmy related with sincerity.

“College performance was an anxiety-related experience, because the focus was on myself as a performer. I have had to learn, to come to realize, it is about God. When the focus is on God, not the performance, there is a sincerity of worship that enters in releasing an excellence of the heart,” Jimmy revealed.

While Jimmy is hailed as a classical pianist of immense merit, responsible for worship leadership at multiple Sunday services and coordination of the 70-voice sanctuary choir, as well as a freelance performer and accompanist for several acclaimed vocal ensembles in the Dallas area, his love of music is not merely a matter of profession. “Music is such a part of our lives,” he said, referring to his family, “that our four children are constantly exposed to it. We take the kids to concerts all the time. One of my fondest memories is of finding Zachary, my oldest, asleep against the piano where he had crept in late one night as I practiced.”

Practice is a given; it takes a lot of effort and hard work to be successful at all Jimmy sets those amazing fingers to do. He can arrange scores for various instruments to be included in some amazingly challenging music for both vocal and orchestral groups. In recent years, Jimmy has conducted orchestrated performances of *Gloria in D major* by Antonio Vivaldi, Handel’s *Messiah*, *Mass in G major* by Franz Schubert, *The Seven Last Words of Christ* by Theodore Dubois, Gabriel Fauré’s *Requiem*, and the festive Rutter’s *Gloria*.

“It is an ongoing challenge to find the balance and time for both family and musical creativity so music does not become a chore,” Jimmy remarked. “It definitely helps that Jill, who is the core of our family, is also a great music lover. She has a music minor, is strong in violin and voice and some piano.” Jimmy himself cuts a dashing figure when seated in his elegant tuxedo, eyes closed, obviously swept up in the music he is creating. He gives no appearance of tiring of his chosen profession and gifted calling. **NOW**

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Sharing Songs & Smiles

— By Adam Walker

What does a group of thirty-something guys with families and careers do for fun? Well, if you are Chris Loy and his buddies, you sing Southern Gospel quartet music.

First Voice, which takes its name from a verse in the Bible (Rev. 4:1), is made up of four young men — Chris Loy, Brian Jernigan, Chad Partain and Mike Hatfield — who are excited about singing, worshiping God and having a good time doing both. Music is a major part of their lives; some of these guys have been singing together for 10 years. Chris, the lead singer, said, “I was 10 or 11 years old when I heard the Cathedrals singing Southern Gospel. They blended humor and a Gospel message. After that, singing is all I ever wanted to do.” His story is typical of others in the group who said people often ask them why such young guys choose to sing Southern Gospel instead of something more contemporary. “Southern Gospel makes people think of better days from childhood,” Chris added.

The members of First Voice love the music and singing it together. They must. While Chris lives in DeSoto, the others live from one end of the Metroplex to the other, work full-time jobs as telecommunications techs and police officers and have families; yet they make time to practice together, travel two weekends a month and cut CDs. As Chris explained, “You have to like each other to spend 12 hours together per show.” Between travel time, set up,

performance and tear down, that is how much time these guys frequently invest in a single show; they have been known to do two or more shows in a single weekend.

So how do they manage such full plates? They credit the support from their wives and their home churches for their ability to keep up with their schedules. “This music is not for everybody,” Chris said, “but we love what we do. We will go anywhere the people want us.” And he means it. First Voice has sung in towns all across Texas, as well as in other states. They have shared the stage with many of the biggest names in Southern Gospel music, but they spend most of their time singing in small community churches that could never afford the big-name stars. They have sung at Will Rogers Coliseum, for tent revivals, in an airplane hangar, at a Luby’s Cafeteria and at one church where they shared the stage with a horse trough set up for a baptismal service. One of the guys quipped they would sing in “any town that has a Dairy Queen.”

They may have sung at some odd venues, but First Voice takes their music and their ministry very seriously. “We want to work hard, practice hard and pray harder,” Chris



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explained. "We want to preach God's Word in song." They aim to be as professional as any of the more famous groups, but they sing solely for donations or "love offerings," which allows them to take their music and offer it to the small communities that could not otherwise afford to have music of this quality.

And these guys are good. You have not heard anything until you have heard the four-part harmony in their rendition of a song like "Amazing Grace." Their rich voices filled the room without any need for microphones, blending a full base and soaring tenor with a harmonious baritone and confident lead. They are fun, but reverent; their pacing yields a result that is artful, but not fancy. First Voice can sing.

These talented guys admit their goal is ministry, not entertainment,

The quartet likes to give people an hour of relief from the stresses of life

but that does not mean they do not know how to have fun. While they like to meet the people they will be singing to before a concert so they can adjust their song lists to meet the needs of the individual congregation, once on stage they have fun. They believe they are doing what they should be doing, and the fact they can have fun doing that makes it even better. They love to joke around and laugh.

At one recent concert, the guys decided to pull a prank on Chad, the tenor, who has trouble remembering the words to a particular song. They arranged for one member to hand Chad a hymnal while Chris would whisper into the microphone feeding him the words. "I started laughing so hard my contact popped out on stage!" Chris said, smiling again as he remembered.

They enjoy seeing an audience come in tense from all the burdens of their week, and then watching them relax

and refuel themselves as they listen to a mix of old hymns and newer Southern Gospel songs. The quartet likes to give people an hour of relief from the stresses of life and let them have a laugh or two, and if they have even more fun than the audience while accomplishing that goal, all the better.

The guys in First Voice feel they have been given some special gifts in the form of their vocal talents, so they feel responsible for giving those talents back to God and the churches they visit. Some of the churches they have visited again and again because they have built solid relationships with the pastors and their congregations. Yet they are always going to new places to minister and spread some smiles. They share their gift 40 to 50 times a year — sometimes traveling from one end of Texas to the other in a single weekend. Chris estimates the group has performed between 500 and 550 concerts over the last 10 years.

First Voice members spend a lot of their time giving, but sometimes they are the ones who receive. After their first concert this year, they were the victims of a crime. Someone cut into their trailer and half emptied it, stealing \$3,000 worth of equipment and CDs. They had another concert scheduled for the next day, so they pieced equipment together however they could and gave the concert as promised. The church that received their gift of music that night “gave tremendously to help out,” and the guys were able to replace what the thieves had stolen from them.

When asked where they go from here, their first quip was, of course, “Dairy Queen.” Then on a more serious note, they said they want to “keep on doing what we have been doing until God says [do] something else.” They plan on releasing a sixth CD with more songs. Chris probably spoke for everyone in the group when he said, “I’m happy to do what I always dreamed to do and to do it with my three best friends.” **NOW**



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A Family's Heartstrings

— By Katrina D. McNair

What drew such a young child's attention to a classical instrument? For Naomi, it was a trait that to her is exclusive to the violin. "I don't exactly remember what I thought of it at 5," she laughed, "but all the way through [years of] playing it, it's different from all the other instruments in how close it is to the human voice. I think those expansive qualities are really what drew me into it." Molly admitted that at first, she did not think her daughter was serious about playing, but "the violin has taken us through life in a way we could not expect," she said.

What also was not expected was the kindness of others who saw Naomi's talent and were willing to assist the D'Amato family. Music lessons are not cheap, but somehow Naomi, Molly and her dad, Peter, were always guided to those who offered their services and expertise. Naomi recounted the story of making the All-State Orchestra in 2008 and finding herself in need of a new bow. During the accompanying convention, the owner of Robertson & Sons, a violin shop, gave Naomi a bow worth \$500. Naomi is also very grateful for her violin, which was generously given to her by Ken and Penny Embry.

To her parents, occurrences like this only prove their belief that a higher power is guiding Naomi. "I can see God's confirmation," Molly said. "We went to the fair last year and we parked next to Chris and Sasha Adkins [musicians who play in the Dallas Symphony Orchestra]. They found out they lived close to us, and Sasha kindly offered to teach Naomi at no charge. At that time, we were looking at violin lessons, which cost \$130 an hour, so we just see God's hand upon it." Currently, Naomi takes lessons with University of North Texas music professor, Julia Bushkova, and practices for a minimum of three hours a day.

As she picks up her violin and places it on her shoulder, focusing on the music in front of her, Naomi D'Amato's entire body language changes. Gliding her bow over the well-tuned strings, a mixture of calmness and determination seemingly takes over. These are the traits which have led Naomi and her family on a quest to use her talent and skills to raise awareness for a genetic disorder that affects her youngest brother, Ethan, and in turn her entire family.

Naomi, a 15-year-old Duncanville student, has been playing the violin for more than 10 years. She wanted to learn to play at a very young age, when most little girls are planning tea parties or combing their doll's hair. Riding in the car with her mother, Naomi, then 5 years old, heard a classical music piece and asked her mother what instrument she was hearing. After confirming it was a violin, Naomi's mother, Molly, assured her daughter she would allow her to learn to play. Months later, when Naomi heard another violin piece and implored her mother with a "but you promised!" exclamation, Molly realized her Naomi was serious. "After that, Mom went and looked for a music teacher," Naomi said.





2009 Gold Performance Acknowledgements District Earns a Total of 33 Acknowledgements

Texas Education Agency has released new state ratings for Texas schools, and Duncanville ISD students continue to perform at high levels. Over 80% of the district's schools (13 of 16 rated campuses) earned the state's highest ratings of Exemplary or Recognized. The district attributes this success to the commitment of designing engaging learning experiences for students and actually moving away from a TAKS focus. The district believes purposeful engagement is the most effective long-term way to learn.

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Commended Mathematics
Comparable Improvement Mathematics

Alexander Elementary

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Commended Mathematics

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Commended Mathematics
Comparable Improvement Reading/English Language Arts

Byrd Middle School

Commended Reading/English Language Arts
Commended Social Studies
Comparable Improvement Reading/English Language Arts

Central Elementary

Commended Reading/English Language Arts
Commended Mathematics
Commended Writing

Daniel Intermediate

Attendance Rate

Fairmeadows Elementary

Commended Reading/English Language Arts
Commended Mathematics
Commended Writing

Hardin Intermediate

Attendance Rate
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Hyman Elementary

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Comparable Improvement Reading/English Language Arts

Kenemer Middle School

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Comparable Improvement Mathematics
Comparable Improvement Reading/English Language Arts

Merrifield Elementary

Commended Reading/English Language Arts
Commended Writing

Reed Middle School

Commended Social Studies

Smith Elementary

Commended Reading/English Language Arts
Commended Mathematics
Commended Writing

DHS Teacher Receives Top Honor

We are proud to announce that Duncanville HS math instructor Vicki Peters has been named a state-level Finalist for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. Ms. Peters was the only high school teacher chosen by the Texas State Selection Committee to receive this honor.



As a state-level Finalist, Ms. Peters will be honored at ceremonies later this year. Her application has been submitted to a national selection committee composed of mathematics educators, teachers, and former awardees who will meet in Washington, DC to select the national level Presidential Awards. Teachers chosen to be Presidential Awardees will be notified by the White House that they will receive \$10,000 and be honored at various ceremonies in early 2010. The Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching are the nation's highest honors for K-12 teachers of mathematics and science. Congratulations, Ms. Peters!



DHS Instructor Honored for Humanitarian Efforts

Duncanville HS drafting instructor Glenn Detgen (pictured left) was honored with the President's Volunteer Service Award on Sunday, November 8 for his efforts with the Rockwall Area Habitat for Humanity program. Awards were presented by the organization's Board of Directors and US Congressman Ralph Hall (R-TX, 4th District). Glenn received the Bronze Award for 100+ hours of service over the course of one year. Recipients were each given a certificate of achievement and a flag that was flown over the US Capitol.

Read more about these
stories at:
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The family's faith in God and their ability to see a way to triumph no matter the obstacle is amazingly evident when they speak on the challenges they have encountered since the birth of their youngest son, Ethan. Ethan, 6, was born with a genetic disorder known as Neurofibromatosis or NF1. NF1 has no cure and can lead to lifelong medical problems and severe facial disfigurement. Rather than shy away from people's stares and questions, the D'Amato family has



embraced the task of educating people about NF1, seeing their son's illness as a way for them to reflect their spiritual lives. "You just never know how the Lord will work," Peter added, after telling several positive stories about how informational tracts the family carries with them have affected people. The tracts, written by Peter, include information about Ethan's disorder, drawing parallels between his life and the spiritual lives of those who view it. They are a clear testament that strong faith in God has allowed this family to turn their perceived tragedy into a triumphant testimony.

Combining her love for playing the violin and embracing the helpful spirit which has been instilled in her, Naomi and her family started Music for Your Occasion. Through Music for Your Occasion, Naomi

has played dozens of performances in local venues, and is available for private affairs like weddings and anniversaries. Not to be outdone by their older sister, Naomi's other brothers, David and Joshua, in addition to Ethan, all play the violin as well and perform with her at some events. The funds raised help the family with costs for Ethan's medical care and for Naomi's musical camps and conferences, violin maintenance and lessons.

Due to the cost of violin lessons, Naomi has also taken on the role of teaching all of her younger brothers to play the violin. As one can imagine, teaching siblings an instrument can be challenging. Because Naomi has taught younger people in the past (her family has hosted children with their missionary work), she is accustomed to removing her big sister hat and taking on the role of teacher. "If I tell them something during a lesson," Naomi said, "I'm the teacher, and they have to have a different mindset."

In addition to playing the violin, Naomi also puts her creative and talented hands to use making jewelry and creating greeting cards. She may well be the only homeschooled student who has enough dual credit hours through a local community college to have an associate's degree — without having graduated from high school. As sure as she is about her love for the violin and how it has helped her and her family, like any teenager, Naomi is not quite sure where she wants to be in the future. But, the violin is her first love and will never be far from her heart or hands. "I started to play the violin because I enjoyed the final result, which is the violin's ability to transmit emotions through its vocal qualities," she said. "Now I realize that I love the process — the doing, the feeling and the thinking. I play the violin not only for the music, which is the final result, but for the process that goes into making music." **ADAM**

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Living in a Winter Wonderland

— By Beverly Shay

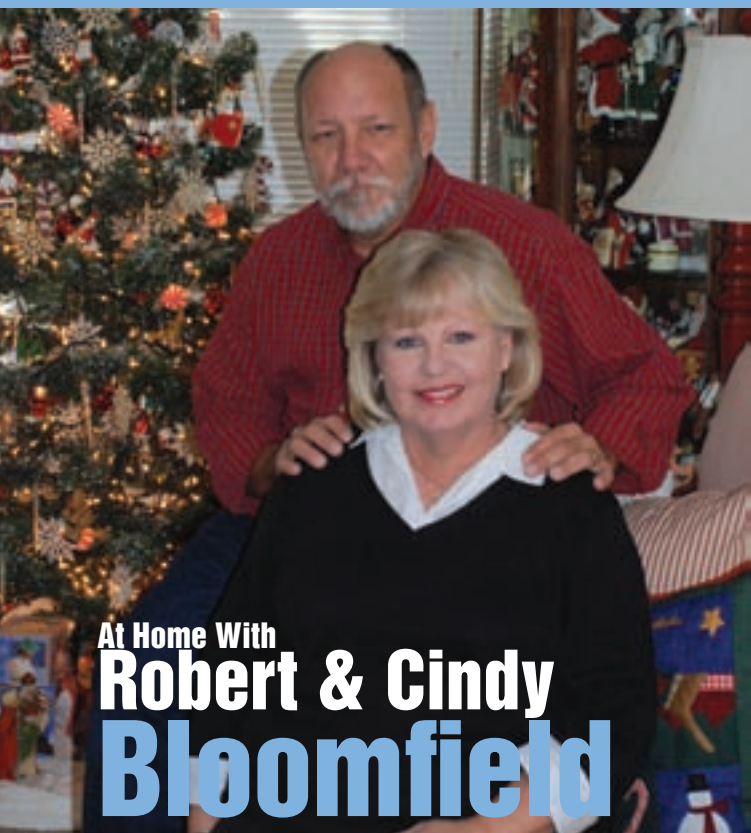
Robert and I moved here to our ‘starter house’ in February 1972, and have lived here ever since. But it feels like we are moving every year, when we pack and unpack all the Christmas things,” she said with a laugh.

Relatives on Cindy’s father’s side are among the founding families of DeSoto — descended from Dr. Samuel Nathan Parks. Her maiden name is Ragland. Robert was born in Weatherford as a first-generation native Texan. His family moved to DeSoto in 1965. “We met in marching band. I was a twirler and played clarinet. Robert played valve trombone. We were high school sweethearts. My dad said Robert marched behind me then and has been following me ever since,” Cindy remarked, casting a twinkly-eyed look in her husband’s direction. They started dating on October 17, 1967.

At the age of 5, Robert got his first camera, a Kodak Hawkeye which he still has. “I’ve been taking photos ever since,” he stated. “Photography became my full-time job about 25 years ago.” Robert and Cindy stop every few sentences to discuss their combined story line, intermingling bits of Bloomfield family trivia with tales of how they acquired their vast collection of Christmas paraphernalia.

Their home is a combination photo backdrop/collection showcase. “This home was built as a ‘practice’ home by Everett Davis in 1953. At that time, it was white wood siding with black trim and a carport,” Cindy recalled. “When we moved in, we enclosed the carport to make a living room/den and planted lots of trees and flowers.”

“There wasn’t a tree on the property,” Robert recalled. His lovely landscaping now includes white picket fences, trees, bushes, flowers and elephant ears. Flagstone paths lead



At Home With Robert & Cindy Bloomfield

Just in case you have any doubts about the veracity of Robert Bloomfield’s readily professed delight with all things Santa, all you need to do is walk through his quaint home any day of the year and you will find Santas everywhere. But at Christmas, over 3,000 Santas will greet you from every nook imaginable. “We remove everything that is not a Christmas decoration and box it up and fill the shed, after emptying it of the Christmas things we don’t display year-round,” Robert’s wife, Cindy, admitted. “I grew up in the house two doors down and never really moved away.





visitors from the picturesque front porch with gingerbread trim, added when they put up new siding, around to the backyard pool. A studio, built 10 years ago, has a front like an old-time western store.

A tornado hit their home in 1979, taking out almost all of the windows, causing glass damage, debris and some water damage. Their backyard storage building was removed, but somehow the contents remained. Today old milk crates of empty bottles from a dairy in Lancaster are stacked alongside chicken feeders and baskets from the now-absent Judah store, once a landmark in DeSoto. On their studio porch sits a buggy seat that carried Robert's family from Kentucky to Indiana.

Inside the house, the living room/den stretches from the front to the back. Cheery red and white striped upholstery and subtle green walls provide a fine counterpoint to curio cases containing Santas and a pop-up Christmas book Robert had as a child. Between stockings and garlands gracing the entrance to the hallway are two embossed watercolor prints of Moscow from Catherine of Russia. A porcelain figurine of Mary and Jesus riding a donkey on their trip into Egypt was a gift from Robert's mother for their first Christmas together. Above the couch hangs a stained-glass window "rescued" from a home in Glenn Heights. It was the Campbell family's window in the



church where he grew up, but it was leaning against his home in the weeds. "I remember how Mr. Campbell used to lead the parade in DeSoto with his ducks," Cindy said. Close by is a barber shop chair from old Mr. Lewis, the DeSoto barber, and a shoe fitter's stool.

"We only put up one Christmas tree — the same one each year since 1973 — before that we always had real trees. But in January of '73, our son, Robert Michael, was diagnosed with leukemia," Cindy recalled soberly. "He was a PAL (Project Against Leukemia) poster child for the



Jaycees. We bought the tree that year; at \$19.95, it seemed to cost a fortune. We've set it up every year since," Cindy said nostalgically.

Every corner and free space throughout the cozy home houses display cases or features displays on the antique furniture garnered from both sides of Robert's family. Their oldest piece is a small roll top desk from Germany; each piece is numbered for reassembly. Their bathroom has over 100 Santas alone. Cindy's favorite Santa is a plastic one she got at a yard sale for one dollar. They have Santas from the '20s, '30s, '40s and '50s. Some are celluloid, others wood, wax, cloth and even Styrofoam and papier-mâché that Robert made.

Robert's mom loved Christmas. "I remember my favorite

Santa as a child was a wax one that hung on the tree," he reminisced, "as well as the chalkware nativity. My grandmother served French meat pies and shepherd pies at Christmas. I called them German Shepherd pies."

One of their traditions as a couple and a family was to go to Cindy's parents' house on Christmas Eve. Afterward, they attended midnight mass with Robert's family. The Bloomfields have two daughters. Christy, an artist, is



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married to Brett, a programmer; their two sons are Zachary and Nicholas. Jennifer, a freelance photographer and graphic artist, is married to Jake, an account manager for Microsoft; their sons are Zachary, Dylan and Robert Michael, known as Mikey. With more family, Robert and Cindy's enjoyment of Christmas has grown exponentially.

The couple restored their home's original hardwood floors winding down the hallway to the master bedroom and offices which were once the girls' rooms. The master bedroom is another quaint showcase of all things Santa. Their bed, covered with

a beautiful quilt, is positioned between a faux fireplace and mantel on the left and on the right, a collector case originally part of the soda fountain at the Tiger Grill in Lancaster. They have a numbered print of the very first Santa painting Buck Taylor (of *Tombstone* fame) ever painted. Robert's original *Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer* book, purchased from Montgomery Ward in Fort Worth, holds a place of honor. A long, narrow photo frame filled with photos of Robert, dressed as Santa, with the grandkids seals his reputation as a grand, merry old saint of a fellow. **NOW**



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Dr. Lynn Brooks works on her MBA at Northwood University.



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Principal Robert Torres presents Don Gant with a Woodridge Elementary spirit jersey.



DeSoto Fire Department's Casey Pruitt, Zac Simons and Mark Martin smile for the camera.



The DHS Eagle Marching Band entertains during a halftime show.



DeSoto Mayor Bobby Waddle proclaims October 23, 2009 as Byron Hanspard Day.



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At the start of this school year, DeSoto ISD employees embraced a concept that has developed into a philosophy for the entire district – *Turn up the Heat to 212 degrees* – by giving that extra degree everyday!

Based on the motivational book by S.L. Parker, the process of simply increasing the temperature by one degree makes hot water boil and produce steam, steam that can power a locomotive! Two hundred and twelve degrees can push each of us to make the extra effort in every task, action and effort we undertake. It reminds us that seemingly small things

can make tremendous differences in the lives of our students.

There are no secrets to success. Success in anything has one fundamental aspect – effort, and to achieve exponential results, there must be additional effort.

DeSoto ISD now applies that to the daily education of students in the district. What one extra degree can I give today to make a difference in student learning?

The district has partnered with the Region X Positive Behavior Support Initiative at all twelve

schools, reinforcing proper behavior through simply campus guides. For instance, at Northside Elementary we have the *Northside WAY* – *With respect, Always responsible, Yearning to learn!* All students are expected to behave properly toward staff and each other in all areas of the school.

We are seeing outstanding changes in staff and student morale as well as testing gains as we continue to follow our *Academic Excellence by Design* plan for the district to earn Recognized and Exemplary ratings.

District doubles number of TEA Acknowledgements!

The Texas Education Agency recently released the list of Gold Performance Acknowledgment recipients for the 2008-09 school year, and DeSoto ISD earned a record 25 acknowledgements across 11 different campuses – more than doubling the 12 acknowledgements in 2007-08. TEA Gold Performance Acknowledgement is a special recognition of high performance for campuses rated Academically Acceptable or higher.

Amber Terrace ES	Commended in Math, Writing; Improvement in Reading, Math
Cockrell Hill ES	Attendance; Improvement in Math
Moates ES	Improvement in Math, Reading
Northside ES	Attendance
Ruby Young ES	Commended in Math, Writing
The Meadows ES	Improvement in Reading
Woodridge ES	Attendance
East Middle	Commended in Reading, Writing, Social Studies; Improvement in Reading, Math
McCowan Middle	Attendance; Commended in Reading; Improvement in Reading, Math
West Middle	Commended in Reading; Improvement in Reading
DeSoto High School	Improvement in Math



Newly crowned Prom Queen Catherine Wolffard and King Jesse Jackson took to the dance floor at the 5th Annual DeSoto ISD Seniors Prom, held for residents age 55 and over, on Nov. 7. Over 300 guests attended the community sponsored event this year!

calendar of events

- December 3 - DeSoto ISD Christmas Choral Concert
- December 5 - Annual DeSoto Parade of Lights
- Dec. 21-Jan. 1 - Winter Break; school resumes Jan. 4
- December 15 - Teacher Prep Day; no school
- December 18 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
- December 29 - State of Schools Chamber Luncheon

www.desotoisd.org



Jamie and Rick Gatto pose at the Duncanville Chamber of Commerce Auction.



Perin and Judy Warren cheer for their son, Nate, at the Panthers/Longhorns game.



Ambra Allen and Evelyn Rodriguez carve pumpkins at the Duncanville Recreation Center.



Rudi the Recycling Reindeer, Mother Nature and Recycle Man kick off the Toy Recycling Drive.



October Student of the Month, Tristan Robinson, smiles for the camera.



Ally Henley and Alyssa Acuna dress up for '50s day at Hastings Elementary.

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Painting With Passion

— By Beverly Shay

"If you don't paint with passion, it will show in your work," stated prolific painter, Judy Burch, as she stood surrounded by paintings verifying her passion. You might say her entire Cedar Hill home, including her yard, is her art studio. Every room has paintings, bits and pieces, traces of her artwork. "While I have done portraits and still life, landscapes are my passion. What interests me most is light and shadow — to capture that is a real challenge," Judy admitted. Her landscapes truly invite you to step into the paintings.

"I have been interested in art since I was very young. I had a minimum of art in school growing up. My first painting was a paint-by-number, but then life happened," Judy shared, proudly noting that life involves four children and seven grandchildren. As an adult, Judy's first venture into art was tile painting in the '80s. "It's a type of decorative painting done on metal, wood, glass or stone. It's a kind of cutesy, craft art. Then I wandered into oils and took some Saturday classes; that was all I had time for

while working," she remarked. "Really, it wasn't until I retired from being a legal secretary, and we moved here in 1997 that I decided to be an artist full time."

When Judy first retired, her work in oils was self-taught. She later took classes at Cedar Valley College, where she found the art program to be really good. "I have learned a lot of technique, but to be really good at landscape painting, which is supposedly the hardest to do, you have to pay the price and get out in nature and paint there. I'd rather be in my studio with my music and a cup of tea. I like a controlled atmosphere. Yet the adventure of getting out there to paint ... there is always something that happens out there ..." she trailed off.

Judy participated in the Waxahachie Plein Air art event this year for the first time. "I'm very shy, so it was hard to expose my painting to people walking by. Artists have to develop a thick skin and do what is in their heart regardless of criticism," she commented. One of her favorite painting ventures has been with five or



six other artists who travel and paint together. "We took a New England fall bus trip; my first and last bus trip. We were the only painters and the timing was too controlled, so that didn't work out as great as we planned. We also took a cruise," she remarked.

One of Judy's favorite painting events is held at the Wild Acres Retreat in North Carolina, put on by Ringling School of Art out of Sarasota, Florida. It includes workshops on watercolor, digital photography, figure drawing, printmaking, clay, collage and Asian brush painting. "I asked one of the artists there what I needed to do to bring my painting up to the next level. He said, 'Work at it seven days a week, eight hours a day,'" she recalled.

Judy tries to complete three or four paintings a month, mostly oils and pastels. "I would really love to do one a day. If I had my 'druthers' I would have been born a man, so I could have more time to paint," she joked. Judy currently has six works-in-progress.

Judy has tried various other art forms. "I quilt. I tried pottery, but my hands are not strong enough. I like

photography and mixed media. I made this little ceramic piece," she explained, offering a delightful figurine of a boy with a wheelbarrow of flowers. "Each bloom is hand-made. It was very time-consuming."

Even though Judy says she has not done much in the way of portraits, a pastel of her two granddaughters has been in the Ellis County Art Association show called "The Child in Me" in Waxahachie. Judy admitted, "I

am my own worst critic; that's why I need others to look at my work. Most good artists who have made it are very giving and helpful, so it's good to take their workshops.

You get to see their work, and I love all mediums. I like to look at paintings and figure out how they accomplished shading and light. With oils, you paint the dark areas first. With watercolors, you use light colors first and add the dark later. I think if you haven't started with watercolors, it is harder to learn watercolor later.

"When I get stuck, I like to try different things. I even have a jar where I stick ideas or words. Words move me. I love to come up with titles for my paintings," Judy stated. Sometimes she works from photos and other times from memory or simply inspiration. Judy has painted specific paintings for her family and given away many paintings. "I don't have to make my living at this, so I am not market-driven. But I do sell my art on a Web site and in a gallery called Mountain Treasures in Red River, New Mexico." **NOW**



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A Touch of Comfort

— By Beverly Shay

Joi Mairé grew up in Cedar Hill and has lived in Duncanville for 28 years. She has been a massage therapist for 16 years following nine years working in banking. “There were so many takeovers in that field that I decided to change careers,” Joi recalled. After 300 hours of training, which is supplemented by continuing education courses, Joi, who is also a personal trainer and conducts regular TNT Bootcamps, opened her own business, initially leasing a room in a salon.

“I’ve had my own spa for 12 years now. We customize each client’s care to their particular need by providing a combination of treatments and products. We offer Thai massage, a form of stretching — somewhat like doing yoga on you; LaStone® therapy with hot and cold stones to penetrate into deep tissues and muscles; foot reflexology; body wraps and other treatments; as well as facials, pedicures and manicures,” Joi explained.

Joi’s staff sees both men and women of all ages. Most fall

in the 35-60 years of age bracket. Prenatal care is common, and most clients come for some type of stress relief. “They leave totally transformed,” Joi stated. “Our motto is: If you feel like hell, we’ll make you feel well. Many people consider massage a luxury, but for most clients, it is a necessity and it keeps them out of the doctor’s office. We work on all 11 systems in the body to keep people going muscularly, physically, mentally and emotionally by providing stress relief.” Massage can provide relief for many physical issues, such as sciatic problems, shoulder and neck stress. “Some people consider massage a ‘last ditch effort,’ but it can keep stress and pain from building up to an intolerable level,” Joi advised. “Once you experience the difference massage can make in your lifestyle, you will most likely be back. My very first client from 16 years ago still comes in for massages.”

Some clients come in weekly, some monthly, some by referral from a chiropractor. Some come in ahead of their one-hour appointment to spend time in the

relaxation/rejuvenation room. Each room in the spa exudes the ambiance of relaxation and comfort through decor, aromatherapy and calm personnel. All seven aestheticians, massage therapists and cosmetologists are licensed. While Joi's Duncanville Remede Spa and Wellness Center featured five treatment rooms, her new spa in Cedar Hill's Uptown Village will have two treatment rooms and three areas in front to provide lash extensions and waxing.

The spa offers products used in the treatment rooms, such as joi de vivre, the Remede Spa product line; Spa Blends, Shea butter collections for treatments and pedicures; Aromatherapy; Dreamtime Inner Peace heat and aromatherapy products and

"Many people consider massage a luxury, but for most clients, it is a necessity and it keeps them out of the doctor's office."

relaxation tools (pillows); Ahava, a well-known international product from the Dead Sea; Essence of Vali and Oka reflexology sandals.

"We have various specials, packages and gift cards, which make great Christmas presents. Mother's Day and Valentine's Day are popular spa events. For Valentine's Day we offer a couples' massage in a suite for two with hor d'oeuvres, wine and a gift. We also go to corporations or schools and provide chair massages for worker appreciation days," Joi stated.

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In The Kitchen With Nancy Etchieson

— By Faith Browning

Nancy Etchieson started learning to cook after she married her husband, Ed, 46 years ago. “Ed laughed along with me at my many goofs,” she recalled. “My mom was an excellent cook, so I had an inspiration.”

The holidays are when Nancy loves to spend time cooking. “I love cooking for special occasions and parties,” she stated. “I only enjoy cooking when I know I am making something that other people love.”

Baking is Nancy’s favorite form of cooking. “At the holidays, I have made as many as six different kinds of pie because everyone has a different favorite,” she said. “Seeing our whole family around the table, laughing and having a good time is one of my favorite times.” **NOW**

To view more of your neighbors’ recipes, visit our archives at www.nowmagazines.com.

SOUR CREAM POUND CAKE

3 cups sugar
1 cup margarine
1 cup sour cream
1/4 tsp. baking soda
3 cups flour
6 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla

1. Cream together the sugar, margarine and sour cream.
2. Sift together soda and flour. Alternating, add eggs and flour to sour cream mixture; add vanilla.
3. Bake in a Bundt pan, 2 loaf pans or two small Bundt pans at 325 F for approximately one hour.
4. Check at 50 minutes to see if tester comes out clean.
5. Let sit for 10 minutes; turn onto a cake plate.

BUTTERMILK PIE

1 cup butter, melted
6 eggs, beaten
1/2 cup flour
3 1/2 cups sugar
1 tsp. salt
1 cup buttermilk
1 tsp. vanilla
2 9-inch unbaked pie shells

1. Combine butter and eggs.
2. Combine dry ingredients; add to egg mixture.
3. Add buttermilk and vanilla.
4. Pour into pie shells.
5. Bake for 45 minutes at 350 F.

APPLE DUMPLING

2 sticks butter
1/2 cup sugar
Cinnamon, to taste
1 tsp. vanilla
4 small Granny Smith apples, cored, peeled, quartered
2 8-ct. cans crescent rolls
12-oz. can Mountain Dew

1. In a saucepan, mix together butter, sugar and cinnamon; bring to a boil for 1 minute.
2. Turn heat off; add vanilla.
3. Microwave apples for 2 minutes.
4. Roll up apple sections in crescents, small end first.
5. Place in a 13 x 9 x 2-inch baking dish sprayed with cooking spray.
6. Pour sugar-butter mixture over rolls.
7. Pour in Mountain Dew.
8. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes at 350 F.

ORANGE-CRANBERRY-GLAZED PORK TENDERLOIN

1 16-oz. can whole-berry cranberry sauce
1 tsp. grated orange rind
2/3 cup fresh orange juice
2 tsp. balsamic vinegar
1/2 tsp. pepper
1/4 tsp. allspice
1/8 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/8 tsp. ground cloves
1 1/2 lb. pork tenderloin, trimmed
1 1/2 Tbsp. olive oil
Halved orange slices, fresh thyme sprigs

or parsley for garnish

1. Bring first nine ingredients to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 20 minutes.
2. Remove half of mixture and set aside.
3. Brown the pork in hot oil in a large, nonstick skillet over medium-high heat for 3 minutes on each side or until golden brown. Place pork in a lightly greased, shallow roasting pan.
5. Bake at 425 F for 25 minutes or until a meat thermometer inserted into thickest portion registers 155 F, basting occasionally with half of cranberry mixture.
6. Remove from oven; cover pork with aluminum foil, and let stand for 5 minutes or until thermometer registers 160 F. Slice pork, and serve with reserved cranberry mixture.

PECAN PIE MUFFINS

1 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup flour
2/3 cup butter, melted
2 eggs, beaten
1 1/4 cups pecans, chopped

1. Preheat oven 350 F.
2. Combine sugar and flour; add butter and eggs.
3. Mix well; add pecans.
4. Fill muffin pan 2/3 full.
5. Bake 20 minutes.
Makes 12 regular muffins or 24 miniature ones.



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Investments Can Make Great Holiday Gifts

Now that the holidays are here, you're probably looking around for the right gifts for your loved ones. Of course, as you know, it's not always easy to find gifts that are both meaningful and useful. This year, why not add financial gifts to your shopping list?

What types of financial gifts should you consider giving? Let's look at a few possibilities:

Contributions to Section 529 plans

If you have a child (or grandchild) that will be headed off to college in a few years, you may want to contribute to a Section 529 college savings plan. Your earnings and withdrawals will be exempt from federal taxes as long as the money goes toward paying college costs. There may be additional tax benefits to those who participate in their own state's plan. Also, you can contribute generous amounts to your savings plan. Plus, you can change beneficiaries; if you've been putting money in a Section 529 plan for your child or grandchild, and he or she decides to forego college, you can transfer the money to another family member.

Contributions to an IRA

Consider making a cash gift to a loved one, with the suggestion that the money be used for his or her IRA. Be creative — put the check in a special "IRA envelope." Many people don't fully fund their IRA each year, so any help you can give toward that goal will be important.

Stocks

Consider giving shares of a company that produces products or services that are used by your intended recipient. If you're going to give away some of your own shares, you'll

need to know what you originally paid for the stock, how long you've held it and its fair market value at the date of the gift. Recipients of your gift will need this information to determine gains or losses if they decide to sell the stock. (You'll also need to determine if you have to pay gift taxes. You can give up to \$12,000 per year, free of gift taxes, to as many people as you want; over your lifetime, you can give up to \$1,000,000 without incurring gift taxes.)

Savings Bonds

They may sound old-fashioned and stodgy, but U.S. Savings Bonds can still make nice financial gifts, especially for young people who can use the money in the future. Among the most popular savings bonds are Series EE Bonds, which can be purchased in denominations ranging from \$50 (or \$25.00 for Electronic EE Bonds) to \$10,000. Paper EE Bonds are sold at half their face amount and will increase in value until they are cashed in or reach final maturity in 30 years. Electronic EE Bonds are sold at face value and reach maturity immediately. You can learn more about Series EE Bonds and TIPS, or even purchase them directly, from the Treasury Department's Web site devoted to savings bonds:

www.savingsbonds.gov.

A financial gift may not be traditional, but it can have a big impact on the recipient's life — and it won't be forgotten after the holidays are over. **YIPPIE!**

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Help for Holiday Stress

— By Leah Pittmon, B.S., D.C.

Does the holiday season leave you stressed? You are not alone. According to the American Psychological Association, financial concerns are taking a toll on many Americans this season, many of whom admit to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as eating or alcohol.

First, what is stress, exactly? Stress is the wear and tear on the body as a result of physical or emotional conditions. One can undergo physical stress, such as too many hours at the computer or too much time spent in a smoggy city. One can also experience emotional stress, such as a difficult work situation or loss of a loved one. Whether the cause is emotional or physical, the body responds the same way: the first stage of stress is alarm. In the alarm stage, the “fight or flight” responses are activated. Heart rate increases; blood pressure rises; digestion decreases. Next is the resistance stage. Here, if the stressor is not dealt with effectively, the person becomes more irritable, more run down. Last is the exhaustion phase. Energy reserves are depleted; there is greater susceptibility to serious illness. It is in this stage that one is more likely to turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol.

Laugh! Laughing can increase the effectiveness of the immune system and help combat the effects of stress.

What are some healthier ways to deal with holiday stress? First, be realistic — realistic about your finances, realistic about your relationships and realistic in your expectations. Overspending will not only add to stress this holiday season, but over the coming months when trying to repay bills. Next, be realistic about relationships. Many other people are as stressed as you during the holidays. Contrary to popular TV shows, the holidays don’t magically resolve family or community conflict. Finally, be realistic in your expectations. In this economy, be grateful for small, handmade gifts. Don’t expect extravagance.

Next, turn to your faith. Follow teachings of what should truly matter — your beliefs, your loved ones, your friends, time spent together. Money and material things should take a back seat; this is true of most religious beliefs, across cultures.

Finally, minimize the toll stress takes on your body. Laugh! Laughing can increase the effectiveness of the immune system and help combat the effects of stress. Exercise is important for your body and your spirit. A 10-minute walk can brighten your mood for two hours. Enroll in a yoga class. Yoga works strength, flexibility, balance and focus. Eat right. Allowing small indulgences is very different from gorging on sweets and other holiday favorites. Take a massage class with your spouse or a friend. Request a gift certificate for a massage. See your chiropractor. Chiropractic minimizes irritation to nerve roots, reduces joint restriction and relieves muscle tension.

Finding healthy ways to deal with stress should be a year-round project. If you are having trouble, even after trying many self-help tips, seek the help of a trusted friend, pastor or psychologist. **NOW**

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Mondays

New Ballroom Dance: 7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m. at CH Rec. Center. Cost: \$80/couple/month. (972) 293-5288.

Tuesdays

Senior Access Tai Chai: 8:00 – 8:45 a.m. at Methodist Charlton. Cost: \$6. (214) 947-4628.

Teen game event: 4:30 – 6:00 p.m. at CH library. www.zulabwylielib.org

Sound Options Pregnancy Center "Baby and Me" class: 6:00-8:00 p.m. at 658 Big Stone Gap, Duncanville. For pregnant moms or those with babies-six months. RSVP (972) 230-8101.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

Essence Dance: Tuesdays: 5:30-8:30 p.m. & Thursdays: 5:00-6:15 p.m. at CH Rec. Center. Beginner/intermediate/advanced for teenagers/adults. Cost: \$65/month. (972) 293-5288.

Thursdays

Sound Options Pregnancy Center "Effective Parenting" class: 4:00-6:00 p.m. at 658 Big Stone Gap, Duncanville. For pregnant moms orthose with babies-six months. RSVP (972) 230-8101.

Saturdays

Star Force One at CH Rec. Ctr.: Beginner/advanced dance classes: 8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. ages 2-adult. Ballet/tap for special needs children. Register at Rec. Center.

Saturdays October 10 – December 19

DeSoto Public Library & Cedar Valley College offer GED study classes at library (211 E. Pleasant Run Rd.). GED reading & writing classes: 10:00 a.m. – Noon; GED math classes: 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Registration & info (972) 860-7800.

Second Mondays

Diabetes Support Group: 6:00 p.m. at Methodist Charlton. (214) 947-7262.

Second Saturdays (October – December)

Baby Boutique Resale: 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Sound Options Pregnancy Services 658 Big Stone Gap, Duncanville. (972) 230-8101.

December 1 – January 3

CH Recreation Center Holiday Special: 20% off annual membership or \$10 off 3-month membership (corporate memberships excluded).

December 4

Winter Wonderland in Duncanville: 7:00-9:00 p.m. at City Hall. Parade of Lights, photos with Santa, tree lighting, build a snowman, train rides and live music. (972) 780-5086.

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What's Happening **NOW**

December 5

CH Library Friends' annual Holiday Open House: 1:00-3:00 p.m., face painting, holiday crafts, Christmas music, refreshments, puppet show and a possible visit from two special guests parking their reindeer outside. (972) 672-5641.

DeSoto Eaglettes co-sponsor Breakfast with Santa: 8:00 a.m.-noon, Christmas ornament decoration at DeSoto Recreation Center. Kids' activities, video games, bounce house, photos with Santa, arts and crafts: noon-2:00 p.m. Baby King & Queen Pageant Christianland Prep School in DeSoto Bluebonnet Room. DeSoto's Winter Wonderland Parade: 6:00 p.m. tree lighting after in Town Center Courtyard.

The Lancaster Tour of Homes: 7:00-9:00 p.m. Cost: \$15.00 at Hardscrabble Antiques and Collectibles. Call (214) 537-5046 for details.

December 8

Duncanville Recreation Center's decoration party: 4:30-6:00 p.m. Make ornaments for their tree and yours; refreshments. Cost: \$5.00.

December 10

DeSoto Art League's annual Christmas pot luck dinner, auction and awards: 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the DeSoto City Hall Complex, in the Bluebonnet Room.

December 12

CH library hosts Waterford Oaks 1st grade choir: 2:00 p.m.

CH Recreation Center's Holiday Fun for children ages 4 and over: 2:00-4:00 p.m. Make/decorate cookies, holiday crafts and more. Cost: \$5/child.

December 15

Snacks with Santa at the Duncanville Recreation center: 5:00-6:30 p.m. Bake/decorate Christmas cookies and get a photo with Santa. Cost: \$8.00.

December 17

Duncanville Holiday Lights tour by bus: 6:00 p.m. starts/ends at recreation center. Cost: \$8.00/adults; \$6.00/children 12 & under.

December 28

Cedar Hill's Zula B. Wylie Library will host a Kwanzaa Celebration: 2:00 p.m. featuring African storytelling, music and the principles of Kwanzaa.

Beginning January 7

Duncanville Cliff Dwellers Square Dance Club lessons for 20 weeks at Trinity United Methodist Church: 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Sue Riewe (214) 371-7681 or Mike Clark (972) 989-3827.



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Merry Christmas
& a Happy New Year



Greater love has no one than this ,
that he lay down his life for his friends
(John 15:13 NIV).

Dear Friends,
It is hard to believe but Christmas is here again.
The frantic season of shopping, wrapping gifts,
and holiday decorating is upon us. However, for
some of us, it is a time of stress, hopelessness and
even regret.

Approximately 2,000 years ago, the birth of a
little baby changed the world and time as we know
it. A baby brings hope, joy, purity and a promise
for the future. This baby brought all of these attri-
butes, especially a promise, for this baby was
uniquely different. Unlike any other, this one
became a man and stayed pure. More important,
this baby delivered His promise to all of mankind.
What was this baby's hope and promise? Very
simply, this baby was born to die. Sounds strik-
ingly morbid, but look past the superficial and
experience a deeper, more profound truth. This
baby was born, lived and died for you and me.
What greater love is this, that perfection would
choose to die for imperfection? What hope would
choose to die for the hopeless? The only question
for you is: Are you willing to accept Jesus' ultimate
sacrifice of love?

We at Trinity Women's Center hope that you will
accept the one true gift of Christmas ... His Great
Love. Befriend not just the baby, but the man.
Believe and allow Jesus' great love to give you joy
and peace this season and always.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a season
of incredible joy.

Donald L. Blair, MD


TRINITY
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214-948-7779