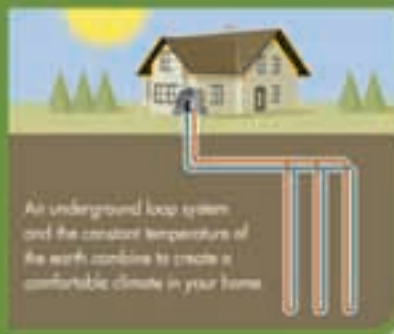


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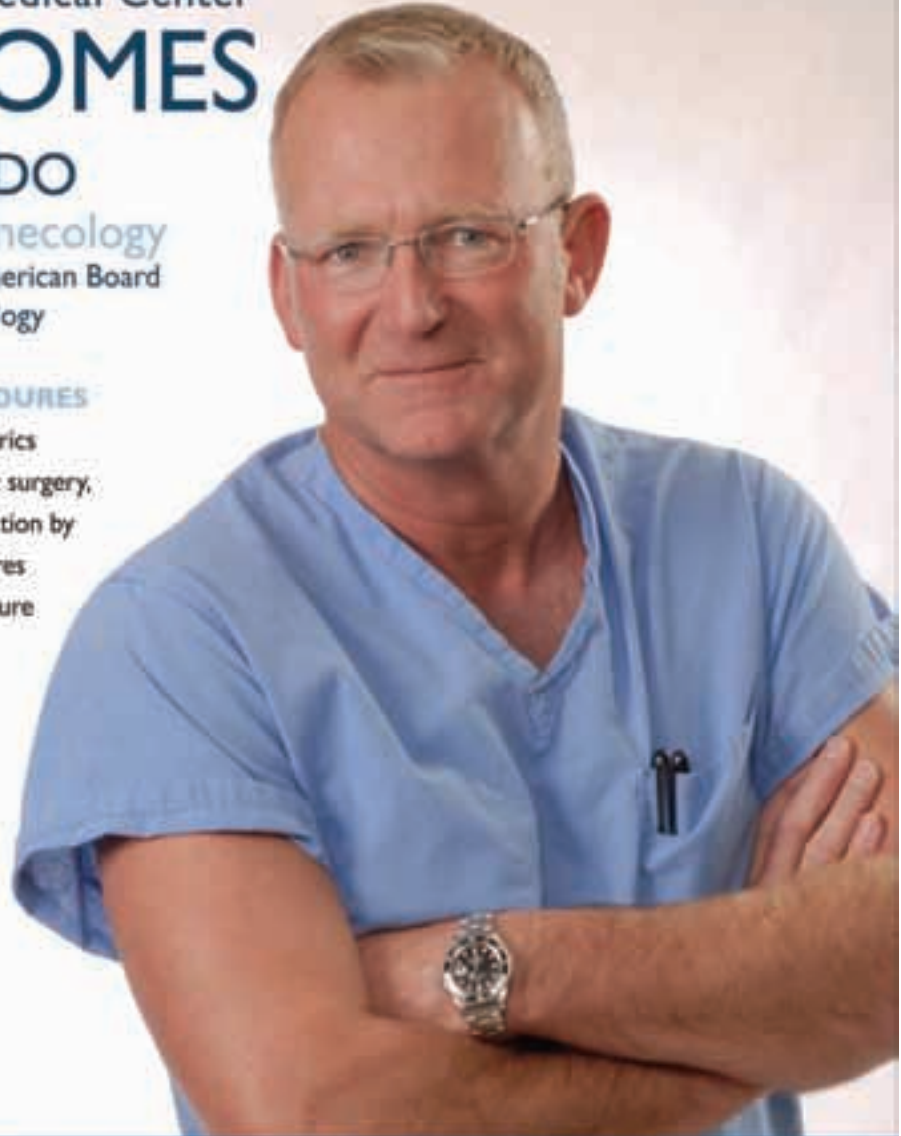
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Cowboy Santa is on
his way to our town!

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Merry Christmas!

It is beginning to look like Christmas in every corner of Navarro County. Many of our homes, streets, businesses and parks are beautifully sparkling with lights and cheer. Downtown Corsicana, with its lit oil derrick celebrating the city's heritage, is the place to be as we enjoy the annual parade and shopping. I hope to see many of you "Around Town" enjoying all the activities, lights, sounds and foods of the holiday.

My life has been greatly enriched this past year by family, friends, medical professionals, my pets and all of you, dear readers. I am very blessed!

May your days be merry, whether you are welcoming family home, planning a travel adventure or enjoying a quiet time with a good book or *CorsicanaNOW Magazine* while sipping a warm cup of tea by the hearth.



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TRUE BLUE

— By Randy Bigham



Booze, brawls and roadway rowdiness may comprise the stereotype for a motorcycle gang, but these things don't define the philosophy of the international motorcycle club known as the Blue Knights. A local chapter has been proving its worth as a positive force in the community. "We're the good guys," said Jimmie Hensley, vice president of Chapter 43 of the Texas division of the Blue Knights, a nonprofit fraternity comprised of active and retired law enforcement officers. "A small percentage of outlaw riders have given the public a distorted view. The truth is, most motorcycle riders are safe, law-abiding citizens. I want people to know that the Blue Knights are God-fearing, family-oriented people who promote safe motorcycle riding," Jimmie added.

The Blue Knights is also a charitable entity, raising funds primarily for medically-challenged children through such organizations as the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Make-A-Wish and D.A.R.E. But, Hensley pointed out that Chapter 43 also concentrates on local charities like the Child Advocacy Center of Navarro County and Corsicana's House of Refuge. "Helping kids is dear to our hearts," Jimmie explained. "Most of the causes we support are related to aiding kids in need."

Founded in Maine in 1974, the Blue Knights now maintain more than 600 chapters throughout the United States and in 29 other countries, with a total membership of over 20,000. Originally from Brady, Texas, Jimmie has been with the

Corsicana Police Department for 26 years and has been a member of the Blue Knights since the '80s, initially joining Chapter 26 in Big Springs and, later, Chapter 21 in Waxahachie. He transferred his membership to Chapter 43 when it was established in Corsicana two years ago. "Chapter 43 of the Texas Blue Knights Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club was created in the fall of 2009," Jimmie said. "Corsicana Police Sergeant Kenneth Kirkwood, currently president of Chapter 43, and other officers spearheaded the effort. I was elected vice president of the chapter, a position I hold at this time."

Active in municipal law enforcement for 37 years, Jimmie spent two years as a military policeman in the United States Army, served a tour in Vietnam and a year in private security

Jimmie Hensley, Jason York and Robert Gray promote goodwill through the Blue Knights Motorcycle Club.



in Vallejo, California. When he joined the Corsicana Police Department in 1986, Jimmie worked in undercover narcotics. He has since served as detective corporal, field training officer, SWAT sniper, hostage negotiator and, for the past 15 years, patrol sergeant.

Jimmie was motivated to join the Blue Knights mainly because of his love of bike riding. "I ride my motorcycle on cross-country trips," he said, "but also just to the store and back. Every day, if it's not raining or icy, I ride it to work and back home."

The organization's family focus also appealed to him. "It's a great way to meet and socialize with other officers, but just about every motorcycle ride or event is also open to members' families." Besides the social aspect, Jimmie is proud of the work the Blue Knights accomplish to aid public safety and promote a greater understanding between police officers and the larger community. "Texas 43 strives to advance the sport and the safety of motorcycling," he pointed out. "And we hope to develop a fraternal spirit between law enforcement personnel and the general public. The majority of people only get to interact with law enforcement officers when they are suffering duress. Through contact with members of the Blue Knights the public can see the human side of officers."

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dimension of the Blue Knights that grounds the organization as a valuable contributor to the betterment of life in Corsicana and Navarro County. "Each year, the members of Texas 43 decide on an organization or function to help support for that year," Jimmie outlined. "For the past two years Texas 43 has sponsored a motorcycle run to raise money for our chosen charities. We also participate in the local Toys for Tots motorcycle run and the Corsicana High School Calicos' fundraising motorcycle run." In addition to benefits like these, the Blue Knights serve as escorts at events for wounded veterans and at funerals for vets killed in action.

Membership in the Blue Knights is a fulfilling experience, Jimmie maintained. He especially enjoys overnight cross-country group rides with other officers and their families, visiting places like Three Sisters in the Texas Hill Country and the mountains around Little Rock, Arkansas. He recalled an inspiring group



trip he took a few years ago to Big Bend National Park. "At a little town called Terlingua, we stopped at a local store to have a cool drink and stretch our legs," he said. "We sat on the porch watching the dirt devils play across the parking lot and between our motorcycles. Soon some locals came by, asking about our bikes and our club. Somebody took out a banjo and began to pick and sing. The next thing we knew, the porch was filled. These people just opened their arms and treated us like family. I hope to go back there someday."

Another experience that made a deep impression on Jimmie was being part of a Blue Knights escort for World War II veterans on their way to Love Field to fly to Washington, D.C. "They were headed for a guided tour of the World War II Monument," Jimmie said. "Because of their age and finances, it would be the only time some of them would be able to visit the memorial. When we arrived at the terminal, the Blue Knights

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formed two lines and the veterans walked between them, shaking our hands and thanking us. It was one of the most humbling and moving experiences I've ever been a part of."

Knowing that the group's efforts on behalf of children is making a difference in the community Jimmie loves is the most gratifying part of being a member of Texas 43. "Every fundraiser we have conducted or assisted with has been rewarding," he said. "The knowledge that, while having fun, we are able to help others in need is satisfying. As for the kids, they are the soft spot in every officer's heart."

Going forward, Jimmie hopes the public's continued interaction with the Blue Knights will encourage people to become more supportive, trustful and friendly toward law enforcement officers. "We want to give the community our friendship, our time and our efforts to assist anyone in need," Jimmie stated. As the organization plans for next year's events, Jimmie insists his and fellow members' dedication to aid local children will continue unabated. "The reward is the excitement in the kids' eyes and their smiles from ear to ear. God bless the kids!" **NOW**



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United We Stand

— By Virginia Riddle

The first year on any job is challenging, but Marianne Mitchell, has drawn on her extensive experience as a lifelong volunteer, a human relations professional and team organizer for United Way, in her new position as executive director of the United Way of Navarro County. “I absolutely love what I am doing,” she said.

That love for volunteering and giving, which were so much a part of Marianne’s childhood, has been shared with her children and the community. As a stay-at-home mom while her children were growing up, Marianne gave them opportunities to volunteer in Corsicana. “When they would tell me, ‘I’m bored. I don’t have anything to do,’ that’s when I would take them to the IOOF to volunteer awhile,” Marianne remembered.

As a member of the Junior Service Guild, one of Marianne’s interests was the boys at the IOOF Widows’ and Orphans’ Home. She would go to the shopping mall’s office and purchase gift certificates for birthday presents for the boys. She and her daughters were always so impressed by how much the gifts meant to the boys. “It’s amazing how little must be donated in order to fill a need. I use this experience in campaigns,” Marianne said.

Experience with United Way campaigns began in earnest for Marianne while she served in the human services department for Kohl’s Corsicana warehouse and was in charge of Kohl’s Cares for Kids program. “We had 78 percent participation in United Way at Kohl’s,” Marianne remembered. “We gave out gift cards to employees in return for their contributions. Everyone learned that you get more back when you give something,” she added.

While at Kohl’s, Marianne and other employees through the Kohl’s Cares for Kids Program went beyond monetary donations by donating time to some of the United Way agencies. With area businesses donating materials, more than 40 volunteers worked



at Mary Peterson Child Care Center and used their landscaping and building skills. Other agencies, Boys & Girls Club of Navarro County and Child Advocates of Navarro County, benefited from landscaping, designing and building skills of corporate volunteers. "Businesses are great at donating, I felt like we were on the *Extreme Makeover* show," Marianne said.

"We were building a stronger community. When a stronger community is built, businesses thrive," Marianne said. "The economy is just making it much harder for companies to participate in the United Way campaign. Companies have been hesitant to ask employees to contribute when they can't offer raises. In some cases, there have been cuts in employees' pay and lay-offs."

Last year, United Way met its goal, but this year the group is extending its

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time for the campaign into the spring in order to meet the additional needs of so many agencies that are also feeling the pinch of these economic times. "We have just kept on knocking on doors. Every board member I have is just wonderful," Marianne said.

The 27-member board of United Way is comprised of community members from every segment of society in Navarro County — business people, professionals, educators and

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Mark Luera of Family Service Association with Marianne Mitchell.

retirees. “Over half of the board has to work since they are unpaid volunteers themselves,” Marianne said. Their once-a-month meeting includes a tour of one of the “Live United” agencies. “It helps them to meet with and become more knowledgeable about the agencies,” Marianne said. “The interaction with each other makes a stronger community.”

Marianne and the United Way board members have used resources within the community to update this year’s campaign. The informational brochure photos were changed to feature the agencies and what they do for the community. A new video was produced by the Multimedia Department of Navarro College. “The college students interviewed folks at the service agencies for the video,” Marianne said. “I can’t say enough wonderful things about these guys. Now one of the students is working on a new Web site for us,” she added.

The range of agencies is far reaching throughout Navarro County. From children-related agencies such as the Camp of the Rising Sun, to family organizations such as the YMCA Corsicana, to business-related organizations such as the Corsicana Area Chamber Foundation (STAR), to services for the elderly such as the Navarro County Meals on Wheels, United Way funds help every resident in some way. The American Red Cross and Corsicana

Emergency Corps are there when needed. “Lots of people use these United Way Partner Agencies,” Marianne said. Other than federal aid, United Way agencies are the largest provider of human service needs in Navarro County.

The current list of 16 Partner Agencies can also use help from volunteers who donate even one hour of their time. Help is always appreciated in sorting clothes, delivering meals, mentoring a child or undergoing emergency assistance training. To volunteer, contact any one of the Partner Agencies listed on United Way’s Web site, <http://unitedwayofnavarrocounty.com>.



L to R: Marianne Mitchell with Stephenie Gruver and Amanda Parten of Meals on Wheels.



"It's a team effort. It takes the whole community," Marianne said.

On a more personal level, whenever or wherever Marianne sees a need she works with a Partner Agency to fill that need. "We had an 80ish-year-old lady call us. She needed her garage torn down and a handicapped-approved ramp built. One call to Alvis Reeves, with Christmas in Action, was all it took to get the job done." Marianne, as an advocate with Court Appointed Special Advocates of Navarro County (CASA), still stays in touch with a Corsicana High School (CHS) student and foster child who chose to invite Marianne as her "special person" guest to the Corsicana Education Foundation's annual dinner for the Top 10 percent graduates. Now serving in the U.S. Army, this CHS graduate told Marianne, "I felt like you really cared." While most CASA volunteers enjoy helping younger children, Marianne likes the challenges of helping high school-aged children.

Marianne and her family have called Corsicana home since 1980 when this native from Michigan migrated southward. The family left briefly but returned again, for good, in 1985. Her two daughters, one son and two grandchildren (with another one on the way) continue to live, work and volunteer in the area, bettering the lives of Navarro County residents. It's simply their way ... and the United Way. **NOW**

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David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."**
Luke 2:11 KJV



Smooth Sailing into Christmas

— By Virginia Riddle

The strong lines of English Tudor in Ronny and Judy Willis' home are softened with English antiques, collectables, oil paintings and a fountain that graces the pond on the grounds of the estate. An oil painting done by Ronny's grandfather depicts a sailing vessel

of old as it plies through the rising and falling of the ocean's waves. Married for 45 years, Ronny and Judy are enjoying plying life's ups and downs together, along with lifelong friends in Corsicana. "We love it here. It's a great environment," Ronny said.



At Home With Ronny

Separated by one year at Corsicana High School, these high school sweethearts dated for five years, while Ronny went to Southern Methodist University, and Judy attended neighboring Texas Christian University. Two daughters, Ellen and Susan, and two grandsons later, this couple enjoys working as well as relaxing together.

At first, Ronny was set on following his love for horses by becoming a veterinarian, but he decided instead to earn a degree in real estate and finance.





Ronny and Judy Willis

Following his mother, Virginia, into the business, Ronny is the principal broker for Willis & Co. Realtors, and Judy works at his side. "Judy takes care of me. I sell them [properties], and she makes them pretty," Ronny remarked. Judy has owned an antique business, and the couple owns Wicklow Inn, a local bed and breakfast and events center.

Christmas, as with all the holidays, fills Ronny and Judy's home with family and friends. "Everyone comes home. They love to be here," Judy said. There

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is plenty for the grandsons to do, with a handy playscape and a fishing boat that they love to row on the pond. Nearby, at the ranch, Ronny's arena is set for team roping lessons. "The kids love being outside. We all have a great time when they are here," Judy said.

A snowman made of three grapevine wreaths hangs on the brick beside the front door to greet family and friends to the Willises' home. The door is graced with a white and silver wreath, framed by miniature trees and guarded by Annie, the resident canine. "She's so sweet. She just greets everyone with a lick and a sniff," Judy said.

Judy loves decorating for Christmas and blends family heirloom and newer decorations with her English antiques. "Every surface has something on it. Sometimes, I think we need a little more negative space," Judy, the designer and

artist, added. But there is no room for negativity in her joyful domain.

Santa Claus, heavily laden with packages, greets friends and family alike in the foyer. He's just about to add more gifts to the nearby Christmas tree, which is decorated with ornaments of every hue and size that reflect Ronny and Judy's eclectic life — cowboy boots, Santa with candy cane pistols and balls with roses. A toy train runs on its track which encircles the tree. Judy most treasures the traditional little handprints of her daughters, hung every year with care. A mercury glass pickle, handed down through the family, is hidden deep within the tree each year for children to find. The lucky sleuth is awarded a prize.

The living room fireplace is decorated with garlands, bows, berries and flowers, as are many of the furnishings throughout the home. In nearly every room, paintings

by Judy or Ronny's grandfather decorate the walls.

Judy uses her collection of Staffordshire pottery pieces to decorate many of the rooms. English potters from the 18th and 19th centuries crafted the pieces mostly for commoners who couldn't read. It was their way of telling a story that commemorated a battle or other newsworthy events of the day. Toby Jugs



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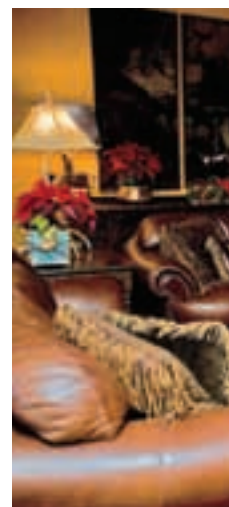
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are another very British item collected by Judy. The bright little jugs were first made in the early 18th century and were named for a character in a song. They were used in pubs and taverns and as prizes at fairs. Jugs made today depict historical figures and storybook characters.

The den is a favorite family gathering place. Decorated in warm red and golden tones, it is the perfect background for poinsettias and garlands. Christmas-themed snow globes and a gumball tree, which has been in Judy's family, decorate the wet bar. A bronze of an American Indian family is surrounded by garlands on the coffee table. St. Nick pauses for a cup of tea by the hearth.



A collection of belt buckles in the den, along with hallway photographs, honor Ronny's team roping passion. A two-time reserve national champion, he has also competed in reining. "I've trained and ridden horses all my life," he said.

"It's such a blessing that Ronny is able to do something that he really loves," Judy added.

The kitchen, with its soaring beamed ceilings and wood floors that were hand scraped, opens onto beautiful views of the grounds. The bright red ceiling and breakfast bar seating bring Christmas joy into the home every day of the year. A Santa cookie jar awaits eager hands.

The blue and white theme of the informal dining room is enhanced by blue, white and silver balls, bows and garland draped over Judy's kitchen desk. In a kitchen nook, Judy has created her art studio. More paintings by Ronny's

grandfather inspire Judy's work.

The formal dining room's chandelier boasts a garland with white bows woven throughout the lights. Crystal candlesticks centered in glittering snow and Judy's formal table setting host the family's Christmas dinner.

A home office provides workspace for this busy couple whose chosen professions never really close for nights or weekends. Ronny travels statewide, as a self-described "educational junkie for real estate," and promotes continuing education for agents. The Willises have been active community volunteers serving on several boards, and Judy is the associate teaching director for the Community Bible Study group.



Judy's other work area, the utility room, provides space for Christmas wrapping and craft projects.

The master bedroom suite includes a sitting area and large bath. A painting of magnolia blossoms done by Ronny's grandfather is special since he normally did not paint flowers.

Two guest bedrooms, plus a Murphy foldout bed in the study, enable children of all ages to get restful sleep before enjoying Christmas Day. Judy has decorated an easy chair's cushion with a Happy Trails chenille bedspread motif.

Whether this family is sailing, riding horses, antiquing, decorating, wrapping presents, feasting, painting, traveling, working or volunteering, the Willises will set their sails for smooth sailing during Christmas. They might even be able to make time to have a nice, warm cup of English tea with Santa by the fire. **NOW**

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From left to right: Joan Thompson and Ida Pearl Reynolds.

Her Mission *Remains*

— By Rick Herron

In 1996, then-First Lady Hillary Clinton's popular book, It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us, expressed her concerns for the children of today's world. One of the primary messages the book contained was the long-lasting impact individuals and groups outside the family have, for better or worse, on a child's

well-being, and it advocates any society which meets all of a child's needs. The book's title, attributed to the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," could just as easily come from Mary Peterson's Child Care Center Director Joan Thompson and Board President Ida Pearl Reynolds, the guiding forces behind Corsicana's oldest existing child day care center.

A Corsicana mainstay, the center began "on a wing and prayer" over 60 years ago as the dream of the late Mary Peterson (1911-1992) to provide the community with a place to care for children of low-income, working families. "This center



is a landmark of our heritage," Joan said during a recent tour of the facility. She acknowledged her background in home health nursing and with Head Start more than prepared her for the challenges of operating a child care center. "I've always loved children" she admitted. "There were 18 in my mother's family, so I grew up taking care of kids. When they asked me to help run the center 10 years ago, it was on the verge of closing, so I had a goal of saving Mary Peterson's. With the help of many others, we were able to rescue it."

According to the IRS, the center is a nonprofit organization classified as a public charity under the Internal Revenue code, which means no one owns the center. If it ceases to exist, the code states, its assets will go to another

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Mary Peterson, founder of Mary Peterson's Daycare Center

nonprofit organization. In 2002, Joan was named director of the center, a position she has held ever since. She was determined the center would continue. At that time, the center cared for nine children and was experiencing severe financial difficulties. "I decided I wanted to do something, not for financial rewards, but to give back to the world that has given me so much," she said. "I knew the best way to do that would be through children."

Through her stewardship, the center has grown to care for approximately 52 children today, all of whom receive two meals a day and snacks, and fosters an educational environment to prepare them for public or private school. "More important," Joan added, "is the love the kids receive on a daily basis from the staff."



Pearl, whose own children attended the center almost 40 years ago, admitted that running the center and making sure it complies with state requirements is harder now than ever before. A certified

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pediatric nurse practitioner with Pedia Child Health Clinic, Pearl doesn't hesitate to give credit where credit is due. "We have much more competition now, and if it wasn't for our wonderful board members and supporters, I'm not sure how we'd make it," she said.

In addition to Pearl, the current board lists 10 local civic and business leaders, including Corsicana City Councilwomen Ruby Williams and Faith Holt. "The children we care for range from babies, less than a month old, to prekindergarten and special needs children," Pearl explained. "Child Protective Services brings children here, too." She added that the number of children the center cares for varies by season and keeps all 18 staff members busy from sunup to sundown.



Pearl credits her background in nursing as playing an integral role in her effectiveness on the Mary Peterson's board of directors. She was the recipient of the 2010 Gloria Keeney Service to Children Award, where she was cited as a community member who has made meaningful contributions in the lives of children either through their work or as a community volunteer.

Mary Peterson was the lady behind the center. When several house fires broke out in the summer of 1949, Mary, the wife of a local Corsicana businessman, worried about children who were being left alone at home for long periods of time. Determination to keep children safer was born out of her concern. She started by purchasing a house for \$7,000 and opening a daycare for the children of working families. Mary changed the name of the center three times before settling on Mary Peterson's Child Care Center.

A recommendation letter from Paulette Hines, executive director of Corsicana's

Merry Christmas!

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Community Services, Inc., reflected on Mary Peterson's legacy. "Mary Peterson, the founder and longtime director, had a mission in life of services to families" the letter stated. "She assured parents that children left in her care would be safe, fed, taught and, most importantly, loved. Her mission remains as profound today as it was then."

What began in 1949 as a dream with an uncertain future is still moving forward, albeit with very modern worries. Although the Corsicana community has remained steadfast in its support, both Joan and Pearl stay in a continual state of concern about where the funds needed to maintain the facility will come from. "We hope and pray that through community support and the support of local businesses," Pearl admitted, "the center will soon be able to move to a newer, more modern facility."

"In addition to the front office, we have a kitchen where we prepare two meals and a snack for each child every day, and next to it is a laundry room with a washer and dryer," Pearl said. "We have separate sections for babies, another section for kids who are 16 months to 2 years old, and a third section for ages 3 to 12."

Outside the clean, orderly structure — one that's been a second home to hundreds, perhaps thousands of children over the years — there is a small, secure backyard with playground equipment donated by a local business. Inside, computers, teaching equipment and school supplies line the neat shelves and bookcases. In the corner of several rooms are many sleeping and playing spaces.

But such amenities are not easy for the center to obtain. "We rely so much on donations and community support to keep Mary Peterson's standard of operation at the highest level possible," Pearl reiterated.

The reason behind the center's survival and longevity according to both ladies, who smiled at each other, is "love and perseverance," Pearl said, as Joan nodded in agreement.

"Dedication to the well-being of the community's children was and is always uppermost in our minds," Joan added. "We continually strive to make children's lives better in every way possible. You know, love is not love until you give it away." **NOW**



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The War in Iraq may be winding down, but with 40,000 American troops still engaged in conflict, a Corsicana woman hopes fellow residents won't forget the sacrifices this nation's heroes continue to make in the name of freedom. For more than eight years, Jean O'Connor has

been front and center in a local campaign to bring a little taste of home to U.S. soldiers serving overseas through an organization that sends them monthly care packages. Her nonprofit group, Angels of Corsicana Troop Support, has dispatched snacks and hygiene items to thousands





— By Randy Biggam

of men and women in uniform stationed everywhere from Baghdad to the U.S.S. Carl Vinson, and the response from them has been overwhelming.

“Our troops really appreciate being remembered, and you have no idea how important small luxuries are to them,” Jean explained. “The letters and e-mails and cards we get are touching. One of the first that came in was from a Marine who said, ‘You are truly angels,’ so that’s where our name comes from.”



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For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.



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Nedra House prays for the volunteers and the soldiers who will receive care packages.

The soldiers also send tokens of their gratitude to Angels of Corsicana in the form of unit patches, coins and even a prayer rug from the 101st Infantry. One of the most treasured gifts Jean received was the last American flag that flew over the hospital at Mosul, Iraq, presented personally by local hero Roosevelt Geeslin Jr., now stationed at Fort Hood and soon to see his third deployment.

Corsicana and Navarro County citizens have chipped in to help Jean on a mission that quickly outgrew her home to occupy its own office. They meet once a month to pack and mail the goodies, which warm the hearts of service personnel halfway across the world. "People seem to want to be involved," Jean observed. "And we are grateful for the donations and the volunteer help."

She singles out for praise the local American Legion Post 22 affiliate, which adopted Angels of Corsicana as one of its auxiliary projects. "Working with the American Legion has been great," she said. "They have really been there for us." The national institution's leaders feel the same way about Jean, acknowledging her activism as Member of the Year in 2008 at a convention in Louisville, Kentucky, where President Barack Obama conferred on her the coveted community service award.

Recognition means nothing to Jean in the work she does on behalf of the troops, but she admitted her journey has been a personal one from the start. "I was motivated to take action when I heard from my youngest daughter, Janna, who was in the Air Force, how serious the need was," she said. Now medically retired due to injuries sustained during a C-130 accident, Tech Sergeant Janna

Cronk was flying with the 89th Airlift out of Dayton, Ohio, when she witnessed firsthand the craving her comrades stationed in Iraq had for any semblance of home and family.

"Janna was a flight engineer, flying between the war zone and Germany, transporting wounded and the deceased," Jean recalled, "and since there were no exchanges or commissaries then, the troops would give her and her crew money to bring back items they wanted on their next rotation."

When Janna came home on leave in September 2003, she told her mother about the situation, confessing she lacked the manpower to continue to fulfill the mounting number of troop requests. Jean's response was immediate. "I said, 'Just tell us what they need.' We made a list, and my eldest daughter, Holly, and my grandkids went shopping."



With the help of friends, family and employees of the trucking company that Jean then owned with her second husband, Marvin, Janna left with five boxes full of toiletries, candy and other surprises for the troops. On landing in Baghdad on her next mission, she watched with pride as soldiers swarmed onto the plane to retrieve the little things that civilians take for granted, but to them were like manna.

Since that small beginning, Angels of Corsicana Troop Support has metamorphosed into a large clearinghouse operation, networking with the American Legion's 6th District and shipping hundreds of care packages annually. "We take names and addresses of local troops, and we try to find out how many others are in that soldier's unit so nobody's left out," Jean said. "People come in all the time with names to be included, and we also get names sent to

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– Jason Angelo Palos

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us through the American Legion and other groups.”

Angels of Corsicana Troop Support is able to operate due to monetary and material donations from caring citizens. Jean urges people not to forget the U.S. military personnel whose simple wants should remain a priority for civilians who owe their freedom and security to these men and women in harm’s way.

Jean recommends that those wishing to donate for the Christmas stockings concentrate on travel-size hygiene articles and snacks. Edible products most requested by soldiers include individually wrapped candy, crackers, cookies, energy bars, cereal bars, gum, peanuts, trail mix, coffee, hot chocolate, tea, flavored water and apple cider. But she warns donors to be mindful that aerosols and pork are not allowable for insertion in care packages. In addition to food and personal items, troops appreciate the inclusion of pillows and hand and foot warmers. “The pillows are special things,” Jean said. “We found out through my daughter that soldiers didn’t have them, so we have a whole separate drive going to make sure they do now.” The 14 x 14 pillows are handmade by local women (and by some as far away as Maryland and West Virginia); they come crocheted, silken, in thematic patterns and in seasonal colors. Some commanding officers have asked Jean’s group to make pillows for their entire units.

As the packing frenzy begins for Christmas, Jean is already thinking of next season’s shipments. “Everybody remembers the holidays, but we need help year-round,” she admitted. As for Janna, the daughter who inspired Jean’s crusade, she’s proud of the 24 years she served the Air Force. She had the honor of flying former Vice President Dick Cheney and serving on the flight of the last decommissioned C-141, but she considers initiating the outreach spearheaded by her mother the most rewarding work of her career. “Janna gave us the incentive to do something that would make a real difference,” Jean said. “And with the help of the community, we can keep making a difference in the lives of our soldiers.” **NOW**

For more information on Angels of Corsicana Troop Support, contact Jean O’Connor at (903) 851-2560 or at jeanie359pete@yahoo.com.



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From left:

Leticia Medina, Stu Lamb, Badie and Paula Stewart are dedicated to meeting their customers' insurance needs.

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Finding the insurance product that fits each customer's needs just right is Badie and Paula Stewart's priority. — By Virginia Riddle

As independent insurance agents, Badie and Paula Stewart offer customized service to customers in order to meet their needs. Many different factors enter into the equation of choices — needs, competitive prices, strength of the company and, most importantly, service reputation. “We pride ourselves on good customer service. We are available at anytime. Just call us,” Paula said.

Paula and her husband, Badie, fellow agents, draw on their extensive experience in the business and insurance worlds. The couple married in 1997 and eventually made the decision to work together. After earning a bachelor's degree in accounting, Paula first worked in banking and later as an accountant at the former Mexia State School. She left that position to sell insurance for Badie, who at that time was an agent for a major insurance

company. “I was advised by some people to not work with my husband. But the few years we weren't together, I really missed him. It has worked out, and I can't imagine doing anything else now,” Paula remarked. Now in their sixth year as Stewart Insurance Company, Badie and Paula work together, and the arrangement offers the best of more than 20 years of business and insurance experience to customers.

A member of the Independent Insurance Agents of Texas, the agency carries auto, home, commercial, life and health lines of insurance from several companies: The Hartford, Travelers, Germania, Progressive, MetLife, Safeco and Unitrin Specialty. “We always do what is best for our customers,” Paula said.

The agency employs two other agents: Stu Lamb and Leticia Medina. Leticia, as the receptionist, greets customers with a

Business **NOW**

smile. "We put the pretty face up front," Paula said. The agents moved into their new office location in July 2011, in the middle of the extreme summer heat. The new office provides ample parking and a pleasant atmosphere in which to conduct business.

"We are about always making our customers happy. Between all of us, there is nothing we can't handle," Paula said.

"We are about always making our customers happy."

Experience helps, but the agents' training is ongoing, with 30 classroom hours of updated training required every two years until they have acquired 20 years' experience in the business.

Changes in the work world of today have brought the Internet into the office with the agency's Web site, www.stewartinsure.com. However, Paula does not like to rely on the Internet to take the place of personalized face-to-face service to customers. "We like to help people understand what they have [in insurance] and what they don't have," she said.



That distinction becomes very important when customers suffer a loss and need to file a claim. "It's often a very traumatic time for people. When we make sure that claim is paid, the customer is happier, and so are we," Badie said.

Work and home sometimes intertwine, as Paula and Badie take care of both the business and a multigenerational family. Badie's mom lives with them, along with their 7- and 12-year-old children. Two grown children and the Stewart's two grandchildren live nearby. Badie volunteers as a coach with youth sports, and Paula works with Awana at Corsicana's First Baptist Church. Both are members of The Gideons International.

"We are able to meet and get to know many different people," Paula said. "We've been very fortunate to have great employees. We all take our customers seriously and are very dedicated. I feel truly blessed." **NOW**




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Hearing loss can be congenital (present from birth); acquired (through noise, illness or injury); and age-related (a natural loss of nerve endings in the ear, over time). Congenital hearing loss is linked to genetics; prenatal infections, illness or exposure to toxins; or premature birth. Acquired hearing loss, which can occur anytime in life, has many causes:

- **Ear infections** — Infection of the middle ear can occur with a cold, allergy or infection. Fluid build-up behind the eardrum can cause earaches and swelling. Untreated, chronic ear infections may lead to permanent hearing loss. Ear infections are the most common cause of hearing loss in children, but can occur in adults, as well.

- **Illness** — Diseases or illnesses that cause a high fever (i.e., meningitis, measles, chicken pox, influenza or mumps) can damage the structure of the inner ear and cause permanent hearing loss. Chronic conditions such as stroke, heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure are also linked to hearing loss.

- **Traumatic head injury** — Trauma to the ear or head can cause temporary or permanent hearing loss.

- **Excessive noise exposure** — Prolonged exposure to loud noise is one of the leading causes of hearing loss, affecting people of all ages. Studies show that 21 percent of Americans ages 48 to 59 have varying degrees of hearing loss, rising to 40 percent of people

over age 65 — and it is largely preventable.

- **Abnormal bone growths or tumors** — Hearing impairment is also linked to benign growths or tumors in the middle or inner ear, which typically develop between ages 30 and 60. The condition is treatable with surgery.

- **Certain medications or allergies** — Some antibiotics, chemotherapy drugs and very high doses of aspirin or other pain relievers can cause hearing loss. Allergies can also cause temporary hearing problems, which can be diagnosed and relieved through allergy testing and treatment.

Hearing loss happens painlessly and gradually, over a period of several years. The primary symptoms include ear noises such as a ringing, buzzing or muffled sound (known as tinnitus), ear fullness or pressure and dizziness. According to the Mayo Clinic, people with hearing loss generally wait five to seven years between experiencing the first symptoms of hearing trouble and seeking medical help. However, prompt medical attention is important to resolve temporary problems that could lead to permanent hearing loss.

If you believe you have hearing loss, talk with your primary care doctor. You may be referred to a physician with special training in ear care and hearing disorders, such as an otolaryngologist (an ear, nose and throat doctor).

*Remember that this information is not intended to replace the advice of your doctor, but rather to increase awareness and help equip patients with information and facilitate conversations with your physician that will benefit your health. **NOW***

Sources:

The American Academy of Otolaryngology/Head and Neck Surgery, www.entnet.org.
American Speech/Language/Hearing Association, www.asha.org.
Mayo Clinic, www.mayoclinic.com.

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Give Your Grandchildren the Gift of Life

— By Lynda Housley

When you are trying to choose just the right gift for your grandchildren, you can have a tough time sifting through the newest trends and fads. Last week it was this pop star, next week it may be a new cartoon character. On top of that, you don't want to get something that won't last 10 minutes out of the package. One gift that will last for many years is a life insurance policy. There are many reasons why it can be an excellent gift for your grandchild.

- **Affordability** — The younger the child's age, the lower the premiums.
- **Protection** — Illness or injury may affect a child's ability to purchase life insurance coverage later in life. Coverage purchased now will continue to provide protection, even if a child's health changes, provided premiums are paid as required by the policy.
- **Financial Security** — Life insurance can be the foundation for a strong financial plan. The child may be able to borrow against the accumulated cash value (with interest charged) to pay for future expenses. While loans decrease death benefits and cash surrender values, the proceeds can be used for important expenses such as a college education or the purchase of a home.



Giving a gift of life insurance to your grandchild can be one of the most significant things you do during your lifetime. He or she may not understand at the time how important the gift is, but should grow to appreciate it in the future. Take the guesswork out of your gift shopping. Life insurance is a gift that will last a lifetime. **NOW**

Lynda Housley is a State Farm agent based in Corsicana.

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From all of us... May you have the gladness of Christmas. —Paula Jones, Owner

Calendar

DECEMBER 2011

December 1

Ebenezer Scrooge, the Musical: 5:00 p.m. departure from the Cook Center to the Pocket Sandwich Theater, Dallas. Sponsored by the Navarro College PAL (People for Active Living) group. \$20 includes bus ride and admission. Contact Misty Holloway at (903) 875-7448.

Christmas Concert: 6:00 p.m., Dawson Auditorium, Navarro College. Call (903) 875-7381.

December 2

Annual Christmas holiday trip to historic Jefferson, Texas: 8:00 a.m., Pearce Museum. Have a fun, festive day of sightseeing, holiday shopping and enjoy local culture. Cost is \$11 for museum members and active volunteers, \$14 for nonmembers. Contact Christi Driskell at (903) 875-7420.

December 2-3

Reindeer Tails: 7:30 p.m., Downstairs Common Area, Building 2, Navarro College-Midlothian Campus. Free admission. Bring the kids for a fun family evening presented by the Navarro College Players. Contact Cynthia Seskes at (903) 972-7242.

December 3

19th Annual Jingle Bell Jog: Registration: 8:00 a.m. Race: 9:00 a.m., Corsicana YMCA, 400 Oaklawn.

5K/1 mile fun run/walk. Call (903) 872-2412.

The Grinch, The Movie: 10:00 a.m., Palace Theatre. Come watch Dr. Seuss' *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* on the big screen. Call (903) 874-7792, or e-mail corpaplace@sbcglobal.net.

The Angels of Corsicana Troop Support Annual Christmas Packing: American Legion Post 22, 632 N. Beaton Street. Volunteers are needed to help pack Christmas stockings for state-side and overseas troops. Contact Jean O'Connor at (903) 851-2560.

Progressive Holiday Party: 5:00 p.m., VOICE, INC. Sample gourmet holiday treats, enjoy Christmas spirits, tour classic Corsicana homes, shop with local merchants and attend the finale at the home of Mrs. Fran Townes. Contact Gina Dieterichs at (903) 872-0180 or e-mail dietetics@voiceinc.org.

Corsicana Christmas Parade: 6:00 p.m., downtown. Tree lighting in Community Park will take place immediately following the parade. Contact Dennis Thornberg at (903) 872-2133.

December 4

Navarro College Collegiate Singers: 6:00 p.m., Northside Baptist Church. Call (903) 875-7381.

December 9

Senior Circle Pot Luck Luncheon: 11:30-1:00 p.m., Navarro Regional Hospital. Bring a salad, vegetable, casserole or dessert for lunch. Bingo to follow. Call (903) 872-5411.

December 9-11

8th Annual Live Nativity: 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., Second Avenue Baptist Church, 3045 W. 2nd Ave. Drive-through event. Open to the public.

December 10

"Simply Sinatra Christmas": 7:30 p.m., Palace Theatre. Entertainer Steve Lippia offers Christmas tunes and some of Frank Sinatra's biggest hits. Call (903) 874-7782, or visit www.corsicanapalace.com.

December 18

2012 Navarro County Relay for Life "Kickoff": 6:30 p.m., Cook Center. E-mail navarrocountyrelay@yahoo.com.

December 25

Merry Christmas!

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to virginia.riddle@nowmagazines.com.



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In The Kitchen With Susan McMath

— By Virginia Riddle

Old-fashioned cooking is Susan McMath's specialty. Navarro County residents may remember eating her cooking at Scotty's, a restaurant she once owned, which was named for her dad. Along with her grandmother, he taught Susan to cook when she was young.

Susan and her husband, Jack, have three sons: Justin, Jason and Bankston and three grandchildren with one more on the way. Fried chicken is one of her family's favorite dishes. "I still know how to cut up a whole chicken," Susan said.

Susan's work at Cason's doesn't prevent her from enjoying friends and family. "My life is my family and cooking for them is what I do. When they are having problems, cooking is my therapy and their medicine," Susan said. **NOW**

Hot Ham Sandwiches

Sandwiches:

- 2 pkgs. potato rolls
- 1 1/4 lbs. Black Forest ham, thinly sliced but not shaved
- 1 lb. baby Swiss cheese slices

Hot Topping Mixture:

- 2 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 sticks butter
- 2 Tbsp. poppy seeds
- 2 Tbsp. prepared mustard
- 1/4 cup brown sugar

1. Assemble sandwiches. Set aside in ovenproof dish.
2. Mix hot topping mixture ingredients in saucepan.
3. Heat mixture until it boils. Lower heat to simmer for 10-15 minutes until syrupy.
4. Pour hot mixture over sandwiches. Set out at room temperature for 2 hours.
5. Package in freezer-proof bags for later use,

or bake immediately in preheated oven at 350 F for 15-20 minutes until lightly browned.

Fancy Chicken Log

- 2 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 Tbsp. A.I. Steak Sauce
- 1/2 tsp. curry powder
- 1 1/2 cups chicken breasts, cooked and finely shredded
- 1/3 cup celery, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup parsley, finely chopped (divided use)
- 1/4 cup almond slivers
- Ritz crackers

1. Mix first three ingredients.
2. Add chicken, celery and 2 Tbsp. of parsley.
3. On a cutting board, form mixture into a log roll 9 inches long.
4. Mix a coating of the remaining parsley and almond slivers.
5. Spread the coating mix onto the cutting board and roll log over coating mix until

completely covered.

6. Wrap log in Saran Wrap or waxed paper. Chill. Serve with Ritz crackers.

Potato Loaf

- 5-6 potatoes, boiled and diced
- 1/2 cup green onions, chopped
- 1 small jar sliced mushrooms
- 1 small jar pimento
- 3 Tbsp. butter
- 3 Tbsp. flour
- 1 cup milk
- 1 cup Longhorn cheese, grated

1. Boil potatoes and dice.
2. Mix all ingredients, except cheese together and form into a loaf.
3. Line a loaf pan with foil and butter the lining.
4. Pack formed loaf into pan. Chill 1 hour.
5. Turn pan upside down. Remove foil. Press cheese completely around loaf.
6. Return loaf to pan and bake in preheated oven at 350 F for 40 minutes.

Oatmeal Cake

Cake:

- 1 1/4 cups boiling water
- 1 cup 3-Minute Oats (or Quaker 1-Minute Oats)
- 1 stick butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/3 cups flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. cinnamon

Frosting:

- 1 stick butter
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup canned milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup pecans, chopped
- 1 cup coconut, shredded

1. Pour boiling water over oats. Add butter and mix and let stand for 30 minutes.
2. Add remainder of cake ingredients. Mix well.
3. Bake in sheath cake pan at 350 F for 30 minutes.
4. For frosting, melt butter and mix all ingredients. Spread frosting over hot cake.
5. Place under broiler until frosting bubbles and is lightly browned.