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DECEMBER 2011

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To Chaplain

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Melba Simmons

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STORY

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## On The Cover



Master Gunnery Sergeant Tracy (Tray) Traylor and his wife, Susie, celebrate Christmas with a special tree in every room.

*Photo by  
Jill Rasco Photography.*

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## Editor's Note

*Aloha, Mansfield!*

I'm using the Hawaiian term for both "Hello" and "Goodbye" because this is my final message to your community. And what a lovely group of people you are! Each conversation you shared with me, each story shared with your neighbors, each home you invited me into, have provided me with memories I'll treasure.

I'm off now to delve deeper into NOW Magazines' mission. We publish good stories about good people in eight other markets, and I'll be focusing on two of them: Weatherford and Burleson. I'm going to miss you all, yet I know you're in good hands. Many of you have already had the pleasure of meeting the new *MansfieldNOW* community editor. Jeremy Agor has written many of the stories you have read and enjoyed for the past year. He is looking forward to meeting you and telling more great stories about Mansfield. Send your story ideas to Jeremy at [jeremy.agor@nowmagazines.com](mailto:jeremy.agor@nowmagazines.com).

Have a beautiful December!

*Melissa*

Melissa Rawlins  
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# Seasoned Serving

— By Jeremy Agor

*Bert and Merie Skinner have been married for more than 51 years, yet they interact like youngsters, playfully teasing each other with the familiarity that all those years together bring. While they enjoy their time together, they also relish the time they spend at Bethlehem Baptist Church with the Seasoned Saints, a group of church members aged 55 and older who participate in Bible study, community outreach and travel together, making the most of life.*





The most important activity to Merie is the group's choir, of which she is the director. "The choir began after I went with a friend to a senior citizens' home in Fort Worth. They had a small choir, and we invited them to come to our church and sing," Merie said. "They couldn't, so we decided to start

one! At first we had about 15 members and now we're up to about 50. We have a lot of people who love to sing, but thought they were too old. We don't have any trouble recruiting. People come up to me and say 'Mrs. Skinner, I'll be 55 next month!'"

The choir is a ministry under the church's music ministry. The group sings old-time gospel music, performing at the 7:45 a.m. service on the fifth Sunday of the month. Each member dresses according to a strict dress code, which goes as far as prohibiting dangling earrings. Often, the church's pastor, the Reverend Dr. Michael Evans, takes the choir to a church where he's been invited to preach because he says they "sing with praise in their hearts." According to Bert, Pastor Evans is very fond of the Seasoned Saints and has been known to tell the group's members that he is a young man with an old soul.

"Merie is good at choosing songs with help from the pastor and other choir members. She says they're 'age-appropriate,'" said Seasoned Saints president Floyd L. Robinson.

Mostly, the Seasoned Saints sing at churches, although they have previously performed at the YMCA Gospel Fest in Arlington – the only nonchurch venue in which they've performed. "We don't think of ourselves as a performing group, but we share praise through music. This choir truly sings with the spirit in our hearts, and people see that," Merie explained.

The Seasoned Saints' reach extends beyond the choir room. Their outreach to other senior citizens is widespread as well. They adopted Tandy Village in Fort Worth after a church member's mother, who was a resident there, complained that there were never any visitors. In August 2006, the Seasoned Saints set out to change that. They arrived at a small chapel at

*"Being seasoned, we've come through all the levels of life. We're being watched, and people see us setting an example."*

Tandy Village and found people waiting for them. Since then, numbers have grown so much that they have had to move to an auditorium. They visit the community twice a month for Bible study and fellowship, followed by lunch at a local restaurant, something Bert says the group enjoys as much as visiting Tandy Village. They have also visited Mansfield Nursing Home and Emmanuel Nursing Home for Bible studies.

Because of the group's connection with Tandy Village, the Seasoned Saints had purple t-shirts made with two hands shaking on them to symbolize the relationship between the two, the "Tandy Connection," as Bert calls it. The shirts also have a verse from the Book of Hebrews, "We must





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run to the finish,” which was the verse chosen for the first Bible study they did together.

At Christmas, the Seasoned Saints create 100-110 gift bags for residents at Tandy Village, as well as some for senior citizens who are no longer able to attend church. The home’s director tells them the items that people need, and the Seasoned Saints provide them. The bags contain things such as blanket warmers and socks, which provide comfort to the recipients. They also spearhead the gift ministry for needy children in the community and feed the homeless.

“We do all our outreach on our own. All the money comes from the Seasoned







Saints. We voted a long time ago to be self-sufficient. We use the church vans, but we try not to take more. The church was willing to help us, but we didn't want to add to its expenses," Bert said.

"We try to meet the needs of as many people as we can," Merie added. "It's a joy. We visit hospitals, nursing homes and church members in need. We're like-minded and looking for ways to serve, and we do it as well as any other ministry of the church." In addition to its in-person efforts, the group also sends sympathy cards, get-well cards and coordinates a prayer team to keep in touch with church members who are ill or unable to attend church.



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## Seasoned Saints Ministry

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The Seasoned Saints are committed to service, but they manage to find time for fun as well. They find things to do locally, but they often travel throughout the state or out of the country, too. "Being of the age group we are, we've done a lot and seen a lot. If someone says, 'We should do this,' and we have enough people, we do it," Merie said. "It's a joy spending time with others your age who want to stay active rather than sit around lonely. Together we can broaden our experiences."

The group has done several barbecue runs, traveling throughout the state to places such as Lockhart and Luling, as well as San Antonio and Austin. Beyond the Texas border, the Seasoned Saints have taken Caribbean cruises. "Some members of the group had never been out of Texas," Bert said, "and then they went on a cruise and suddenly were much more aware of what is out in the world." Bert does all the research and books all the cruises, and each time the group travels, he tries to improve the process so it is as easy as possible for everyone.

In an effort to prevent some of the dangers associated with getting older, many Seasoned Saints members are registered with the Mansfield Police Department, so if they get confused and wander off, the police have all their information so they can find them and return them to their homes.

"We're the mother church. Others see us and get involved in what we're doing. This year, a Seasoned Saints conference is being planned through the Baptist General Convention of Texas," Floyd said. "We're sincere about what we say or do. Being seasoned, we've come through all the levels of life. We're being watched, and people see us setting an example. Seasoned Saints is the best thing that ever happened to me." **NOW**





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# Takes One to Teach

*Life keeps getting better and better for Jessica Dodson. She is a full-fledged Texan after 11 years of marriage to Ryan, the Arlington native whom she met at the University of Oklahoma. The small-town atmosphere and big-city amenities that Mansfield offers afford Jessica the perfect place to rear the Dodsons' three children: Jayne, 7; Claire, 6; and Sam, 4.*

*"I love how you can drive to our house and pass by a horse farm. In Mansfield, you can expose your children to all sorts of good stuff," Jessica said.*

Everyday life circumstances have become Jessica's curriculum and classroom. "I don't have a teaching background, but motherhood includes teaching in its definition. Spiritually, I want to teach my children about God, and witnessing to them and giving them faith education is [my] No. 1 priority,"

Jessica said. "I grew up in a wonderful family with parents who are about to celebrate their 40th anniversary. I'm very thankful I'm their child, and that they taught me how to be a good person." It takes a good person to teach another, and Jessica tries to model her parents' ways to her children.

Learning opportunities abound in the Dodson home. For instance, the entire process of feeding the family becomes an educational laboratory. Ryan likes to grill outside, while Jessica preps vegetables and side dishes inside with foods stocked by Jessica after shopping trips with





— By Melissa Rawlins

the children. In the produce section, Jessica has them show her a vegetable and then play a game — identifying whether a tomato, for instance, is a fruit or a vegetable. “This helps them understand which category things go in,” Jessica explained. During the family dinner, which Jessica ensures is a healthy, balanced meal providing vegetables and fruits, the children try everything on the plate — at least one bite. “They learn from experiencing what is on their plate then by eating, shopping, and playing games, I guess you can say.”

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Deeper lessons are taught during the holidays. Jessica prepares her children to be community servants later in their lives during volunteer events organized by the Mansfield Early Childhood Parent Teacher Association (MECPTA). "This year, we're adopting families from the Mansfield Head Start Child Development Center," Jessica said. "They'll give us a list of what they need, and we will take a trip to the grocery store to buy food for their family. We involve our kids in those activities to show them some people not as fortunate as we are, and that we need to consider other people's feelings and to be good citizens."

During the preparations for helping the Head Start family adopted by the Dodsons, Jessica will talk with her children about the fact that holiday meals still require vegetables and fruits. "We'll also talk about how fortunate they are their mom and dad can cook for them, and that their efforts can make someone else's holiday as special as the one they experience," Jessica said. "In everyday life there is every opportunity to teach your children to be of good character. The best way as a parent is to demonstrate that behavior myself. The early childhood PTA provides the avenue to reach out farther than our own lifestyle. They provide the road to the Head Start program for example, then we walk down that road and can teach our children during the journey."

Last year, Jessica and her children prepared Christmas cards the MECPTA



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sent to our troops overseas. "That opened up the opportunity to tell the children what our armed forces do for us, what it is to live in a land that is free. It prepared my children to stop and think when they see somebody dressed in uniform, 'Oh, that person is protecting me.' Something as small as decorating a card for one of those soldiers opens up conversation so you can talk about somebody's father they know and to be gracious and thankful for those they know who are protecting us."

This year the parents in early childhood PTA, in which Jessica participates, have chosen to take their children Christmas caroling at the Alterra Sterling House of Mansfield Assisted Living Facility. "When we go there, the joy that children bring to others is something magical to me," Jessica said. "Bringing the kids to their place of residence teaches them to have respect for your elderly and to help those who need assistance. The small acts of kindness for those who are alone, in need or have no one to celebrate the holidays with teaches the children to love others." While at the facility, Jessica will help her children observe whether a resident needs assistance with a wheelchair or a walker, and show her children how to care for those who are different than their own family.

Before the visit to the Sterling House, Jessica will have talked with her children about how to be a nice person, explaining who the residents are and describing

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wheelchairs and walkers. "I advise my kids not to be afraid, to go up and talk to the residents, that they're sweet people who may not have a grandchild. They might want to give you a big hug and tell you how cute you are, and this is okay because you're with mom, and you can love on them and tell them your name and tell them what you like to do," Jessica said. "I'll also talk to them about the importance of thanking them for letting us come visit them."

Just as importantly, Jessica and Ryan will have enjoyed many fun hours with their children practicing the Christmas carols. Standing around a microphone with their guitars and a harmonica, the family has been singing "Jingle Bells," "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer" and other songs that are easy for children. Once at the Sterling House, each parent will sing together with the children, helping them remember the words. "My children are getting older, but we have babies in the group," said Jessica, who joined the early childhood PTA because it supports parents who want to learn to be better parents.

"I think you can always learn every day. By talking to other parents you learn a lot," Jessica said with a grin. "I don't claim to be a teacher, but I do love being a mother. I am so thankful for my children and am blessed to have them, and want to raise them in the best way possible." The three Dodson children are learning first and foremost from Jessica and Ryan — and they're turning out pretty good, so far. **NOW**

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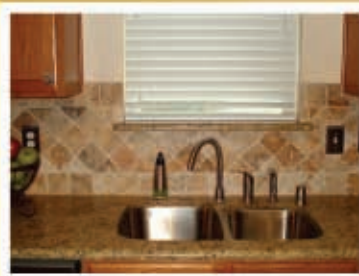
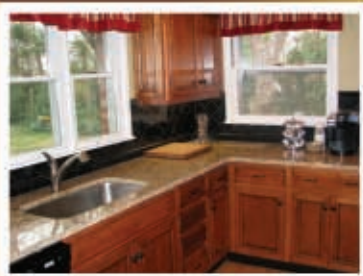




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# Christmas Spirit

With

# Texas Flair

— By Jeremy Agor



*Tray and Susie Traylor met in Virginia while he was training to deploy to Iraq with the United States Marine Corps. Several years later, they have finally settled into their home in Mansfield, which reflects his Texas roots and service to his country.*

Tray, who recently retired from the Marine Corps as a Master Gunnery Sergeant after 30 years of service, was deployed for nine months. He and Susie maintained a long-distance relationship between Mansfield and Virginia once he returned, while they waited for her to get a job transfer. "We had a few challenges. The first four years we were married, we didn't get to live with one another because by the time Susie got here with our daughter, Jordan, I was stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma," Tray said. "We like Mansfield. I moved here in 2004 and had a house built in the next neighborhood over. We needed more space, and this home was available. We got married on Tuesday, bought this house on Wednesday and left for our honeymoon on Thursday. We were the first ones to buy in this neighborhood, and we've been lucky to get the best neighbors ever."

"We looked at several houses, and this one was the first one we saw. We fell in love with it. The space lets us escape," Susie added.



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**Susie Traylor**





Tray and Susie's home opens to a large, airy living room with high ceilings. It's decorated in a noticeable Texas style, with stars and art which reflect Tray's heritage. "Tray's a Texas boy," Susie said. "He loves Texas music and all the Texas sports teams, so I tried to decorate the house in a theme he'd like."

The kitchen has plenty of work space, including a central island, but with 4-year-old Jordan and infant twins, Susie says she never has time to cook. A short passageway connects the kitchen to a tastefully decorated dining room.

Also on the first floor, the couple's large master suite is a study in simplicity. Susie decided to keep the room simple and plain and focus on decorating the rest of the home.

One hallmark of Susie's decorating is that she makes her own flower arrangements. She also purchases furniture on eBay and Craig's List, which she can refinish, reupholster and call her own. "Why spend a lot of money on things when I can be more frugal and apply my vision to something and improve it? I'll put on some paint or new fabric, and it's like a new piece of furniture," she said.

Susie's success in finding beautiful

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furniture is evident in the couple's upstairs exercise room and spare bedrooms. She likes carved furniture, and the exercise room has a large two-drawer dresser with ornate carvings. The guest bedrooms feature heavy, carved wood furniture with a dark finish, lending an air of sophistication to the spaces. She also has a pair of antique cabinets which she bought off eBay. "They were in New York City, and I drove up from Virginia



to pick them up," she recalled.


Also upstairs are Jordan's room, which is the only "girly" room in the house, and Tray's "man cave" and office. Jordan's room is decorated in soft colors and is pretty, but Susie intentionally stayed away from decorations which would make it too "princessy," choosing instead to decorate in a way that allows Jordan to grow into the room. One pink item stands out, however – a Marine Corps


football jersey which was a gift from Tray's friend in Quantico, Virginia.

Tray's man cave is a perfect hideout or cozy space for entertaining friends. Set up on multiple levels, it is decorated with sports memorabilia (Tray is a Dallas Cowboys' season ticket holder), Marine Corps memorabilia and Texas-themed items, like his metal Lone Star beer sign with a Texas-flag-painted armadillo.

A Cowboys pub table graces the back wall, and a comfortable couch offers a great view of the large-screen television in the front of the room. He also has a fully stocked, full-size refrigerator and a microwave and sink for preparing snacks during big games.

A focal point of the space is a beautiful wooden case with etched glass sides, which he received as a retirement gift. The etchings have his name and rank, as well as images of the howitzers he worked with in the Marine Corps as the director of the Corps' Cannoneer School at Fort Sill. Enclosed in the case are dozens of challenge coins, including his favorite, which he helped design, from the school at Fort Sill.





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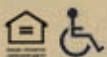
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Tray's office also showcases dozens of Marine Corps-related items, including a wood and glass shadowbox containing medals, posters of the artillery he used and taught others to use during his career, the school director nameplate from Fort Sill and dozens of awards.

Two items stand out in this room: his Bronze Star commendation, awarded for "heroic or meritorious achievement or service," and a World War II-era Marine Corps uniform jacket. "The jacket was part of a World II uniform. It belonged to a close friend of the family, and when he died, his family gave it to me," Tray explained.

In the garage, Tray and Susie keep three Harley-Davidson motorcycles. One is Susie's and the others are Tray's. His motorcycles both have his Sergeant's

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stripes on the front forks. The newer of those he bought over the phone while standing on top of a Humvee in the Iraqi desert at midnight, arranging financing with the credit union. "When I got back in the country, I talked to a rep at the Base Exchange and I decided that if I survived I was going to buy a Harley as a gift to myself. Five days after I got back to the states, I went to pick it up," Tray recalled.



Susie's favorite part of her home is seasonal. At Christmas time, she decorates trees in every room and has greenery festooned on the banister leading upstairs. Each tree has a theme, and she takes great pride in finding the decorations for them.

"I usually have three or four big trees and several other trees. Jordan has a tree, Tray has a Cowboys tree outside his man cave, there is a snowman tree and we have a Texas-themed tree in the living room. We had all the Christmas stuff – including a 10-foot tree – in a shed in the backyard, but when the twins came we needed storage space so we donated the big tree to the Marines at Fort Sill," Susie admitted. "There's still a lot, and I usually try to decorate before Thanksgiving so I can enjoy it all." **NOW**

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Amy Preston, Kyle Preston, Carrie Johnson, Kevin Johnson, Bianca Griffin, Pam Wahery and Karen Brewer work the registration table at the Olive 5K Rock and Walk.



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Bride Shelly Cook poses happily with her new husband, friends and family. From left to right: Scott McMahan, Shelly Cook, Steven Cook, Tonya Cook, Mayor David Cook and Mary Cook.

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*A quick look at gift items and  
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❄️ A quick look at the gift items and discounts available locally. ❄️



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# Izzy's: Story

— By Carolyn Wills



*In her pixie haircut and colorful outfit, 4-year-old Isabella “Izzy” Violet McMasters is the spritely image of a little princess. Even as her parents, Jim and Delilah, assure her that her hair is growing and will be long again, Izzy’s biggest complaint these days is the loss of her “big” hair. She tosses her small stuffed monkey into the air, giggling with delight as she watches him fly, and it seems unfathomable that this is the little girl whose pain so recently captured hearts and prayers and whose courage and resilience united a community.*

What happened to Izzy was an accident. “As Delilah says, we are no longer fond of fireworks,” Jim said. “They will never again be part of a celebration at our home.” Regardless of his and Delilah’s supervision and attention to safety, the McMasters were horribly awakened to the dangers of a long-standing tradition and have made it their mission to encourage others to beware, especially as the New Year’s Eve festivities approach.

The accident happened on the Fourth of July 2011. Of the McMasters’ seven children, the three youngest, including 11-year-old Nicholas, 7-year-old Lila and then-3-year-old Izzy, were home. Jim had taken them earlier on the traditional trip to the fireworks stand, and they had passed the day in eager anticipation. “It was slightly past 9:00 p.m. when we went outside





to set off the fireworks," Delilah said. "Jim was holding Izzy in his arms about 30 feet from where the final rocket was ignited."

As it shot upward, the rocket suddenly veered sideways and instantly struck Izzy in the chest and exploded. "Jim immediately rolled her on the ground," Delilah said. "I pulled her clothes off to

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be sure no fibers were next to her skin. While Jim stayed with Nicholas and Lila, I rushed her to Mansfield Methodist Hospital." Fortunately, the hospital was close to their home, and Izzy's arrival at the emergency room took less than 15 minutes. "The decision was quickly made to airlift her to the burn unit at Parkland Hospital in Dallas," Delilah explained. "Thankfully, and only because I weighed less than their limit, I was allowed to fly with her. We arrived at Parkland within the hour."

A tough journey for little Izzy began on that fateful day. The defective rocket hit her square in the chest and had it not been for flame-retardant pajamas, her whole outfit would likely have gone up in flames. "The hospital staff said her torso would have been burned," Delilah explained. "It's made me a big believer in flame-retardant clothing." As it was, the injuries on her chest, neck, ear, mouth and left hand were second- and third-degree burns. She remained at Parkland Hospital for a week while the medical staff treated her wounds and taught Delilah how to care for her when she returned home. "The staff was amazing," Delilah shared. "Even though Izzy is so young, they explained everything to her. She kept telling them her name was Izzy Bell Violet and that 'a firecracker burned me.'"

The McMasters moved to Mansfield in 2001. In 2010, after 19 years as a stay-at-home mom, Delilah opened a retail children's shop, Ruffled Rebelles, filled with unique, fun styles for little girls, in the historic downtown area. "When our older girls were growing up, they





wore beautiful handmade clothes," she said. "Jim's mother was extremely creative and she sewed for them. When she passed, I looked for women to dress our younger daughters and, over time, I discovered a group of very talented women." Meanwhile, Jim had started his own computer consulting business and, in the midst of supporting and building both, health insurance became a temporary sacrifice.



News of Izzy's accident traveled at light speed by way of the Ruffled Rebelles Facebook page. "We are indebted to our community and to Facebook," Jim said. "It's a tool that was used for a good cause." In fact, Izzy's story spread so quickly and with such outpouring that it took a group of friends to organize efforts on behalf of the family. "Taking care of Izzy was equivalent to two full-time jobs," Jim said. "We're grateful to everyone who sent prayers, helped in the shop, brought gifts, provided meals and contributed toward her medical bills."

"By the time Izzy came home, our house looked like Christmas on steroids," Delilah smiled. "People had brought so many gifts."

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home care was exacting and painful and involved changing bandages and applying lotion to delicate skin twice a day. "It was like the gifts were divine," Delilah explained. "Everything from dolls, stickers, Play-Doh, crayons and blankets became Izzy's rewards for enduring the process. Amazingly, the very last gift was opened on the day the bandaging finally ended." In addition to the gifts, a food calendar was filled with commitments. A savings account was established as donations arrived and as friends organized an online auction. "We were overwhelmed by everyone's support," Delilah said. "Walnut Creek Country Club and the Battle of the Nines committee presented Izzy with a generous check from their annual Charity Golf Classic Tournament."

Izzy's healing has been nothing less than remarkable. Initial concerns that her mouth would be scarred have disappeared, and her beautiful grin has returned. Skin grafts on her chest were successful, as was the cast and splint on her left hand. The tiny nail on her little finger is returning, and her hand no longer wants to curl inward. The focus now is on reducing the scarring on her neck.

"Izzy has bounced back," her mother smiled. "She isn't fearful and with enough time, she'll be fine physically. She knows to avoid the sun and to always wear a hat when she's outside."

In addition to their three youngest children, the McMasters have two married daughters, Amy and Libby. Another daughter, Jasmine, is 19 and away at her first year of college, and their other son, James, is 18. "Izzy is the epitome of the baby in the family," Delilah said. "All the kids dote on her. Meanwhile Izzy adores our other princess: her sister, Lila."

People in the community continue to ask about Izzy. "She's been adopted," Delilah smiled. "Often, it's the fathers who will cry. I think it's because fireworks are generally a big 'daddy thing,' and it's especially alarming to become aware of the danger. People tell us they know we watch our children and if this could happen to Izzy, it can happen to anyone." Clearly, the McMasters, including little Izzy, pray it will never happen again, especially with the coming holiday season. **NOW**



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# No Time for Down Time

— By Jeremy Agor

People who know Chris Clark often tease him about his lack of free time. After all, he's the starting center on Timberview High School's football team, a member of the student council, maintains excellent grades in Advanced Placement classes and holds down a part-time job. Chris, though, shrugs off the good-natured jibes. "People joke about how I don't have any free time, but that's not accurate. I have it, but I choose to fill it, so I don't have down time," he explained. "It's not easy, and it's definitely hard to balance everything and keep my commitments. Having so many activities is

hard, because eventually I have to make a concession. That can't be school — that's a mandate from my parents — so once in a while I'm late for football practice because of student council. It's a balancing act, but it's doable."

In the fall, football is one of his main priorities. He started playing flag football as a youngster, but quickly figured out that a boy his size would have more success playing tackle, and in fifth grade, he started doing so, working his way onto the varsity team as a sophomore and into the starting lineup each of the past two seasons. "My dad was all for it, but my mom wasn't as sure," Chris





laughed. "I wasn't very good when I started, but that came. Once I realized I had potential, I started having fun. Football is where I choose to spend my time. Being in the locker room with coaches and teammates is like being with family, and there's nothing like a Friday night football game in Texas!"

After his football family was shaken by the death of popular Coach Cody McCarty in October, Chris found



**"I feel like He has a plan for the students and wants them to put their faith in Him."**

inspiration in his former coach's actions. "He was a great guy, and it was very emotional. I have a sense of urgency now. Tomorrow isn't guaranteed, and it's almost a validation of all the things I'm involved in. There's not a lot of time, so you have to be passionate about what you're involved in, and pursuing your passion is urgent," he said.

Off the field, Chris chairs the school's HOG (Helping Others Thru Giving) Week charity event through student council. HOG Week is held in April each year and strives to grant the wish of a Make-A-Wish child. Planning for the next year's event begins as soon as the current one ends, so Chris's position comes with a great deal of responsibility. Each year, the committee picks a theme and chooses dates which will not interrupt Advanced Placement tests and TAKS testing. The

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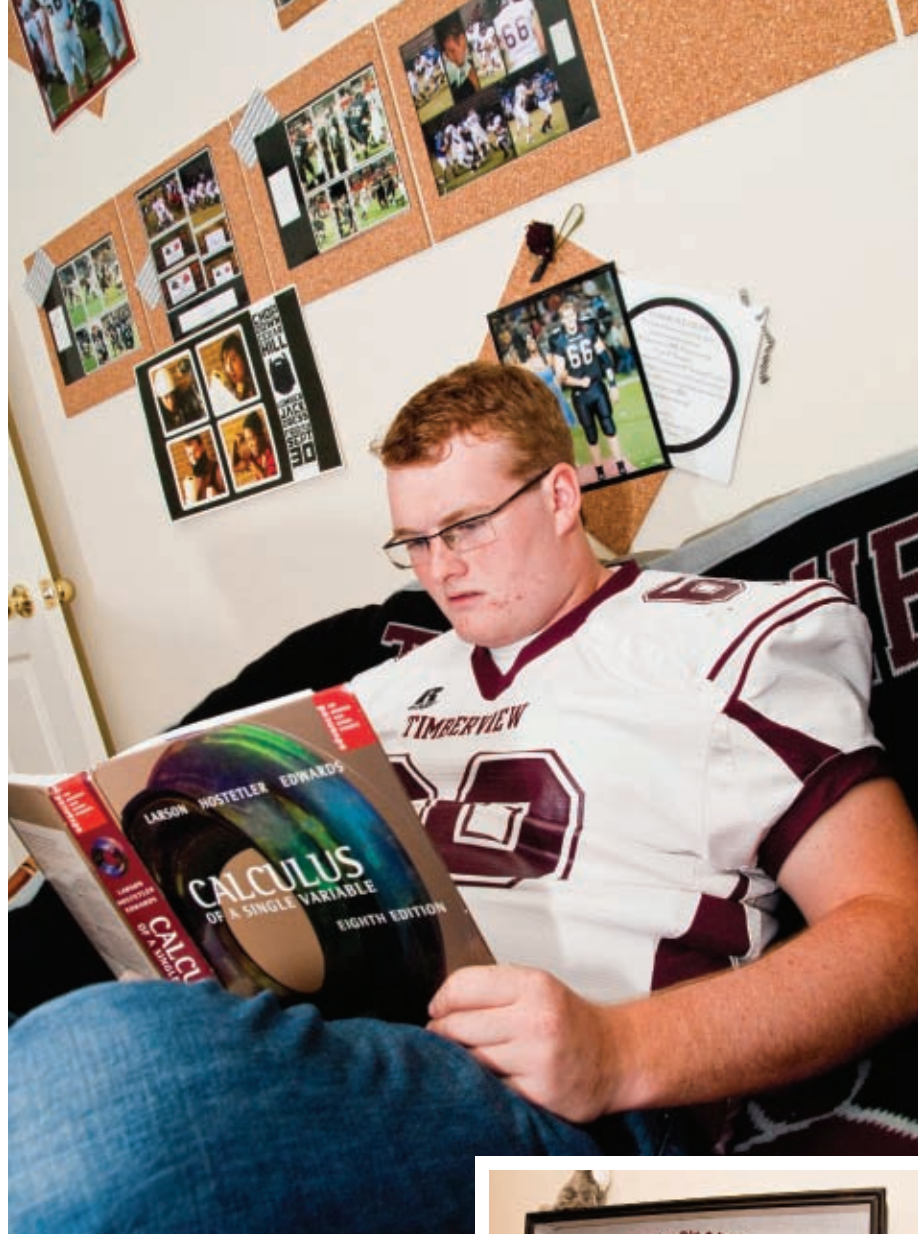
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committee also decides which activities, such as pep rallies, contests and benefit concerts, it will feature. Past events have included powderpuff football and dodgeball tournaments, “Messy Peps,” where kids compete in a squid toss or see who can down a blended Happy Meal the fastest, and a school favorite, the Cinderella male beauty pageant, in which Chris won the “Crowd Favorite” title last year.

“It’s good fundraising using good business principles. Kids have a lot of things competing for their money, so we have to get them to want to support HOG Week. For instance, the pep rallies cost \$1.00 to get in. If you tell a high school kid he can get out of class for that price, he’s there,” Chris said.

Last year’s Make-A-Wish child, Haley, wanted to go with her family to Disney World. To do so would cost \$8,000.



Timberview students raised \$20,000, the balance of which was donated to local food pantries and the American Red Cross for relief efforts after the tornado in Joplin, Missouri.

According to Chris, the best parts of HOG Week are seeing the student body get really invested in Make-A-Wish and the end of the week when the fundraising total is announced. “Students give from their hearts, and it’s nice to see a generation with a reputation for selfishness give to the common good. HOG Week has become a tradition, and



if you ask a senior what their favorite memory is, they'll say 'HOG Week' and the year," Chris said. "Last year, at the end of the week, everyone was in the gym waiting to hear the final total, and Haley was at center court with her family. When the total was announced she was crying because she got her wish, and her mom was just astonished at what a group of 14- to 18-year-olds could do.

"We get really invested," he continued. "Haley is the sweetest girl I've ever met. As a student council it's very important to us. At the beginning of the week when things are slow, and we're not making as much as we want to be, our attitude is, 'We're going to make our goal and grant this wish!'"

Away from school, Chris is a cook at Rudy's BBQ restaurant. He started last summer as a cashier, and soon after he started his manager thought he was doing a good job and started training him to be a cook. It was an unusual step, because most cooks at the restaurant are older than 17 years of age. Chris is a fan of Rudy's brisket, but he feels that the turkey he cooks comes out the best. "It's a cool job to be a cook at 17. I work hard, and they work with my schedule and give me hours on the weekends. I'm building job experience for the future. It's my parents' influence to have some job experience before I go to college and then graduate and have to work," he explained.

Chris also leads a small group at his church for eighth- and ninth-grade boys, an activity which is important to him because he didn't have the same opportunity. He considers it a personal challenge to provide those students with the opportunity he wishes he'd had.

As Chris, a senior, finishes his high school career, he has three goals in mind. "I'd like to raise \$30,000 for HOG Week. I'd like to play in a football playoff game. And I'd like to see God do something really big at Timberview. I feel like He has a plan for the students and wants them to put their faith in Him," Chris said.

He will attend Baylor University in the fall. He will not play football, and the activities at the university are foreign to him, for now. He expects to be true to himself and will likely gravitate toward activities that appeal to him to fill his free time and keep him from having the down time he does his best to avoid. **NOW**

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# *From Offensive Lineman* **TO CHAPLAIN**

— By Rick Hope

*He walks into a patient's room and the first sight of him might be rather intimidating. He looks more like a pro football offensive lineman than the manager of pastoral care at a local hospital. But once a patient at Mansfield Medical Center begins visiting with Caesar Rentie, they can't help but be drawn to his winning smile and compassionate attitude. He immediately puts people at ease, and they feel like they're talking to an old friend.*

Caesar was born in 1964 in Kansas City, Kansas. Although raised in a devout Baptist home, it was football that captured Caesar's attention. After graduating from Hartshorne High School in Oklahoma, he was offered scholarships to a "bunch of schools." In reality, every college in the Southwest Conference, except The University of Texas at Austin (UT) and the University of Houston, offered Caesar a chance to come and play for them. "Houston and UT were afraid I wouldn't leave Oklahoma," Caesar said. They may have well understood the situation, since Caesar ended up playing football for The University of Oklahoma with none other than Barry Switzer as his coach.

When Barry later became coach of the Dallas Cowboys, Caesar tried several times to contact him, but could never get past his secretary. One day, he finally gave up in exasperation and drove to Valley Ranch, leaving a note on the windshield of Barry's car. That night, Barry called







him and offered him a tryout. Caesar didn't make the team, but he had already enjoyed time in professional football long before that point, including stints with the Chicago Bears, the Indianapolis Colts and the Buffalo Bills.

After his football career ended, Caesar made his way to Dallas, since his wife at the time was a Dallas native and wanted to be closer to her family. After this move, Caesar found out his life's calling was much bigger than football. He started attending St. Luke's Community United Methodist Church in Dallas. One day, he realized what the tugging at his heart really was. "Pastor Zan Holmes approached me about a calling to the ministry," Caesar admitted.

As a result of that conversation, Caesar made his way to Brite Divinity School on the campus of Texas Christian University. While there, he assisted football coach at that time, Pat Sullivan. After graduation from Brite, Caesar



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found his way to a newly opened hospital in Mansfield, Texas. With that new job came a new town to call home. "I love Mansfield," Caesar said. "It's like Hartshorne on steroids. I love the area, I love the people. I love my neighbors, and I love the way this town is growing. I especially love that it's an 8-mile round trip to work every day."

At the hospital, Caesar is manager of pastoral care and with that title comes many duties. He works with and ministers not only to hospital patients and their families, but also to the staff. He manages two resident chaplains who assist him in his duties. Twice a year, Caesar conducts a memorial service for families that have lost a loved one at the hospital. "These services are designed to help families take another step toward closure and aid in the grieving process," he explained. "It also allows us an opportunity to reconnect with the families and to open the door to continued ministry."

Caesar also considers it part of his job to assist pastors in the area who visit members of their congregation while they are patients at the hospital. "One area pastor called me one day and said it would be much easier for him if there were a parking spot he could always count on closer to the door," Caesar remembered, "so we put in a parking space specifically reserved for clergy. These guys need to know that we're on the same team."

Clearly Caesar doesn't consider his position at the hospital as just a vocation, but rather a calling. He loves getting to be with people in their happiest moments (birth of a child) and their saddest (loss of a loved one). He considers his position as a grand opportunity to "live out the



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gifts that God gave me.” He especially loves it when he runs into people around town who tell him “you probably don’t remember me, but you were there for me during a really tough time.”

And, as mentioned earlier, it’s not just the patients he serves. “Caesar is invaluable to us. He is a blessing not only to the patients, but to the entire staff. There are very few people that have come through here that have not benefited from Caesar,” said Angel Biasatti, director of community relations and marketing for Mansfield Medical Center.

To know Caesar is to know that his calling to serve others is not limited to a 40-hour-a-week job at a local hospital. In addition to his responsibilities at the hospital, Caesar serves as an associate pastor at the First United Methodist Church of Mansfield. “It’s a great change



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of pace," he said. "This is not just a church, but a vibrant community of faith grounded to a higher hope."


Caesar also loves the fact that the church provides seven different ways to worship, including a Spanish-speaking service for the Hispanic community. The services can also be viewed online. Occasionally, Caesar gets to preach. "I think people would rather hear Caesar than me," Senior Pastor Mike Ramsdell said with a smile.

At the church, Caesar is in charge of the Celebrate Recovery program. According to the church's Web site, Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered program based on the Bible for those who have been hurt or who have hurt others as a result of addictions. Caesar teaches a lesson or brings a message each week. As the pensive, dedicated chaplain leaned back in his chair, he imagined where he might be 10 years from now. With a smile, he remarked, "Well, I will have been married for 10 years (Caesar is currently engaged to be married to Cynthia Blake in March) and still serving in the ministry. I want to serve God until I die. I don't know how I'll be serving Him in 10 years, and I won't pretend I do. I'll just let Him order my feet." **NOW**


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*Tessa Pierce is a Certified Public Accountant with over 14 years of experience in accounting and finance. She has worked for small and large publicly-held companies, as an auditor at Deloitte & Touche and as a VP of a multi-billion dollar private investment fund doing both capital management and financial reporting. Tessa has a BBA in accounting from the University of Oklahoma and an MBA in finance from Dallas Baptist University.*





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Owners, John and Elizabeth Donnelly, help kids find joy in math.



## MAKING **MATH** MAKE SENSE

*Mathnasium helps kids catch up, keep up and get ahead.*

— By Melissa Rawlins

Parents want their child to have a good experience with math, and Elizabeth Donnelly has figured out how. “Teach children math in a way that makes sense to them,” Elizabeth said. “Kids don’t hate math, they hate being frustrated.”

At Mathnasium, kids are proud of the work they do — so proud, they have decorated and put their names on their own binders. Under Elizabeth’s leadership, students at Mathnasium are exercising their brains for competition in the Trimathlon next May. Their excitement can be attributed to Elizabeth’s vision.

A mother and former certified public accountant, she decided to get her alternative certification in math in order to teach children before they reached eighth grade — before the challenging high school years. Not long thereafter, Elizabeth found the Mathnasium franchise and with help from her husband, John, opened the doors almost one year ago. The two

put stickers up on the wall, saying things like: “When aliens come to earth they’ll speak math not English.”

The overall feeling, from the black, white and red color scheme to the kids’ doodling on the wall, helps instructors communicate different math concepts effectively. By teaching math in a language children can understand, vocabulary does not get in the way. “We like to break down words into their root meanings sometimes,” said Elizabeth, who has gone through extensive training to teach in a way that makes sense to kids, based on the Mathnasium method. “For example, take the word *percent*. What does *per* mean? It means *for each*. *Cent* represents 100. So, *percent* really means *for each hundred*. So, if I want seven percent of 200 I have two hundreds. Seven percent of the first is seven, seven percent of the second is seven, so seven percent of 200 is 14. The concept, then, is not completely new and foreign.”



Elizabeth and her eight trained instructors are here to help with every level of math through calculus, mainly serving children from second through 12th grade. On occasion, they might take a first grader who can read well and has the maturity to sit for an hour and work. They offer a First Steps Program for pre-K through first graders to learn in a group setting once a week.

Children come to Mathnasium for hour-long sessions, joining a group of about three students to one instructor. They each work at their own level, so the instructor works with them until that student has grasped the concept and started on their own independent practice. Thanks to their unlimited drop-in attendance policy, students can come as many days and as many times during the month as they prefer.

**“When aliens come to earth they’ll speak math not English.”**

“We want to first fix any gaps they have, so we want to concentrate on the Mathnasium curriculum,” Elizabeth explained. “We can go through their problem areas from their class work, so that homework is not a challenge for mom and dad. We want to take some of that burden from their parents.”

This month is the perfect time to evaluate whether or not your child is struggling with math — before they embark on a new semester. Mathnasium offers a no-cost, risk-free, hour-long assessment. Students can start any time and pay an up-front monthly fee ranging from \$179.00 to \$279.00 for six- to 12-month memberships.

“Students who train their brains at Mathnasium at least two to three times a week consistently are going to do better,” Elizabeth said. “We’re here to help kids see that math is not a big scary monster and to find joy in the math. I love being able to teach the kids one-on-one and see them when they say, ‘Oh! I get that! Nobody’s ever explained it to me that way before!’” **NOW**

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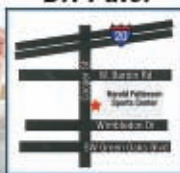


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ME 1652



## Blue for Christmas

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Elvis Presley's rendition of "Blue Christmas" touches many people in December. It may seem to be an anomaly to think of being blue or depressed when everything external overflows with color, lights and good cheer, but some people look at the red and green lights and still feel blue. They suffer from a very real disorder called seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

SAD is a depression disorder that is sometimes called the winter blues. It makes its appearance usually in the fall and lasts through the winter. A rare form of SAD can occur in the summer. This discussion is for the winter version. People who have this are miserable and exhibit many symptoms that interfere with the quality of their lives. SAD may be affected by geographical location according to the availability of light in that region. For example, it is estimated that 1 percent of Floridians are affected whereas 10 percent of residents in Alaska are affected.

Some of the symptoms are a feeling of depression, hopelessness, a tendency to eat too much that results in weight gain, lethargy, a decreased interest in doing activities previously enjoyed and increasing isolation from others. It is important that a physician diagnose this disorder because the symptoms may point to a different psychiatric problem. However, if SAD is the disorder, appropriate treatment is available. The cause is unknown but the

correlation between the availability of sunlight and timing of the season cannot be ignored.

Since lack of sunlight may trigger this, it makes sense to utilize light therapy to increase exposure to light. Light therapy, sometimes called phototherapy or bright light therapy is the exposure of affected persons to a special lamp under controlled situations to mimic sunlight. During treatment, you merely sit under a lamp for a time period determined by your health care professional once or twice a day. Eyes are open with the body turned toward the light. Common thought supports the belief that light triggers chemicals in the brain that affect a person's mood and makes them feel better by lessening the symptoms of SAD. In some cases, antidepressants are prescribed.

If you think you are susceptible to seasonal depression and are having thoughts of suicide, please seek help immediately. Even if thoughts of suicide are not an issue with you, do not sit alone in a darkened room feeling blue. There is light and help a phone call away. **NOW**

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

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# Insurance Myths

— By *Luis Gondola*

Don't get caught short and underinsured by popular myths regarding insurance coverage. By understanding gaps in your coverage you can protect yourself from unnecessary expenses in the event of an accident.

**Myth No. 1:**

My insurance company will pay for a rental car if my car is stolen or damaged in an accident.

**Fact:**

Even if you have comprehensive and collision coverage, it may not include a rental car. Rental car reimbursement is not automatically included in most insurance policies, but you can add it at an affordable cost. According to the Insurance Information Institute, rental reimbursement coverage is available for \$1 to \$2 a month with most insurers.

**Myth No. 2:**

If my car is totaled, my insurance will pay off what I owe on my loan or lease.

**Fact:**

When your car is totaled, your policy will pay you the actual cash value of your car, minus your deductible. Actual cash value is the amount your car was worth before the accident, factoring in depreciation. You are still responsible for any amount outstanding on

the loan or car lease.

The only way to cover the difference between the car's cash value and the amount you owe on a loan is to purchase gap insurance. Available to cover both auto leases and loans, gap insurance covers you if your car is totaled before you've paid your loan or before your lease term expires.

**Myth No. 3:**

My insurance will cover me if my car is stolen, vandalized or damaged by hail or fire.

**Fact:**

Unless you have comprehensive coverage, you are not covered for any of these things. A bare-bones policy in most states requires only that you buy liability coverage. This pays only for damage you cause to others. You need to purchase both collision and comprehensive coverage in order to fully protect your vehicle from all types of damage.

Contact your insurance agent and review your policy to ensure you are fully protected. A small investment may eliminate a greater financial burden in the event of an accident. **NOW**

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### December 1-15

Note to Self: Adam Werner and Danny Haslett: 8:00 a.m.-9:00 p.m., TCC Southeast Campus, 2100 Southeast Pkwy., Arlington, ESEC Building. This exhibit features the work of two artists who create self-referential paintings, sculptures and drawings using their daily lives and experiences as sources for their art. Please contact Christopher Blay at (817) 515-3406 for more information.

### December 2

Methodist Mansfield Auxiliary Annual Holly Days fundraiser: 8:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m., 2700 E. Broad Street. This gift fair boasts dozens of vendors and a country store stocked with gifts and goodies made by Methodist Mansfield's very own auxiliary. Call (682) 622-2000 for more information.

Hometown Holidays at City Hall: 5:00-9:00 p.m. Food, children's activities and *The Muppets Christmas Carol* showing at the MAC, plus the lighting of the city's Christmas tree, a snow hill, fireworks, the Ft. Worth Zoo penguins, a visit from Santa and more. To learn more, visit [www.mansfield-tx.gov](http://www.mansfield-tx.gov) or call (817) 453-5420.

### December 3

Kiwanis Falalala 5K: 8:00 a.m., Katherine Rose Park. For details contact [www.falalala5k.com](http://www.falalala5k.com) or (817) 313-4363.

Hometown Holidays Parade through historic downtown Mansfield: 2:30 p.m. For information, contact Andrew Binz at [andrew.binz@mansfield-tx.gov](mailto:andrew.binz@mansfield-tx.gov) or (817) 804-5797.

Burleson Rotary Club Christmas Parade: 4:30-6:00 p.m., 117 S.W. Johnson Ave., Burleson. For more information, call (817) 447-7300.

Southern Rains in concert: 7:30 p.m., Farr Best Theater, 109 N. Main Street. For more information, contact Rhonda Meadows at (817) 453-1107 or [Rhonda@Farrbest.com](mailto:Rhonda@Farrbest.com).

### December 6

MISD Attendance Zone Public Hearing: 7:00 p.m., Mansfield High School PAC, 3001 E. Broad St., Mansfield.

### December 11

*First Family Christmas: The Gift of Christmas*: 3:00 or 6:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 777 N. Walnut Creek Drive. A family-friendly musical extravaganza with

familiar songs, including "It's Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas," "Happy Holidays," "I'll Be Home for Christmas" and more. For information, call (817) 477-2287.

### December 13

Mansfield ISD School Board meeting: 7:00 p.m., 605 E. Broad Street. See agendas at <http://mansfieldpublic.novusagenda.com>. Call Julie Moye at (817) 299-6382 for more information.

### December 19-30

Mansfield ISD winter break: Classes resume **January 2**. Call Julie Moye at (817) 299-6382 for more information.

### December 24

Mansfield Bible Church invites the community to a heartwarming celebration of Christmas on Christmas Eve. Service times are 4:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. MBC is located at 2351 Country Club Drive. For more information about MBC, call (817) 473-8980 or go to [www.MBCchurch.com](http://www.MBCchurch.com).

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to [jeremy.agor@nowmagazines.com](mailto:jeremy.agor@nowmagazines.com).*



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## In The Kitchen With Melba Simmons

— *By Melissa Rawlins*

Working at Tom Thumb and serving the people of Mansfield gives Melba Simmons all types of inspiration for cooking great meals. Her favorite chef is Rachel Ray, since Ms. Ray's recipes are good and quick to prepare. Melba first began baking when she was about 6 years old under the tutelage of her own mother. "I remember being at my childhood home in Texarkana, Arkansas. Around Christmas time, we were baking cookies for the family," Melba said. "I had fun cooking with my mother." Still, she did not realize she was a good cook until she was about 20. After 24 years in Mansfield, Melba cooks all the time for family. All her kids live here, and during the holidays they always ask for Melba's signature Banana Nut Bread. **NOW**

### Corn Casserole

- 1/2 red bell pepper
- 1/2 green bell pepper
- 1 red onion
- 1 pack of Ritz crackers
- 1 15-oz. can whole-kernel corn
- 1 15-oz. can creamed corn
- 1 cup Cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 stick of butter, melted

1. Chop bell peppers and onion, crush the crackers and drain the whole corn.
2. Mix together all ingredients.
3. Put in a bread pan and bake at 350 F for 35-40 minutes.

### Mexican Casserole

- 4 boneless chicken breasts
- 1 green bell pepper

- 1 red bell pepper
- 1 red onion
- 1 26-oz. can cream of chicken soup
- 1 16-oz. bag tortilla chips, crushed and crumbled
- 1 cup salsa picante
- 8 oz. Mozzarella cheese, shredded

1. Chop the chicken.
2. Chop the bell peppers and onion.
3. Mix together all ingredients.
4. Put in a bread pan and bake at 350 F for 35-40 minutes.

### Banana Nut Bread

*makes 6 small or 4 large loaves*

- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 2 cups sugar
- 3 eggs
- 3/4 cup buttermilk
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 3 cups flour

- 3/4 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 1/2 cups pecans, chopped
- 3 cups ripe bananas, mashed
- 2 tsp. vanilla

1. Mix oil, sugar and eggs together. Set aside.
2. Mix butter and baking soda together and set aside.
3. Mix all dry ingredients together.
4. Mix all wet ingredients together.
5. Mix all ingredients together. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour.

### Orange Slice Cookies

- 1 lb. orange slice candy
- 2 cups flour
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 4 eggs, slightly beaten
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 1/2 cup pecans, chopped

Icing:

- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 1 Tbsp. milk
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

1. For cookies: Cut up the orange slice candy; coat the candy in flour.
2. Mix all ingredients together. Put in a baking pan to cook at 350 F for 45 minutes or until lightly brown.
3. For icing: Beat butter, milk, powdered sugar and vanilla together until smooth.
4. While the cookies are hot, spread on the icing and cut into squares.

### Candy Balls

- 2 lbs. powdered sugar
- 1 12-oz. can condensed milk
- 1-2 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 cup pecans, finely chopped
- 1/2 lb. coconut (optional) or chunky peanut butter (optional)
- 1 to 2 16-oz. bags chocolate or peanut butter morsels

1. Mix first 4 ingredients.
2. Add pecans, coconut or peanut butter.
3. Form into balls and put in the freezer for an hour.
4. While they are freezing, melt the morsels. When the hour is up, drizzle balls with melted morsels. Put balls back in the freezer until serving time.



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