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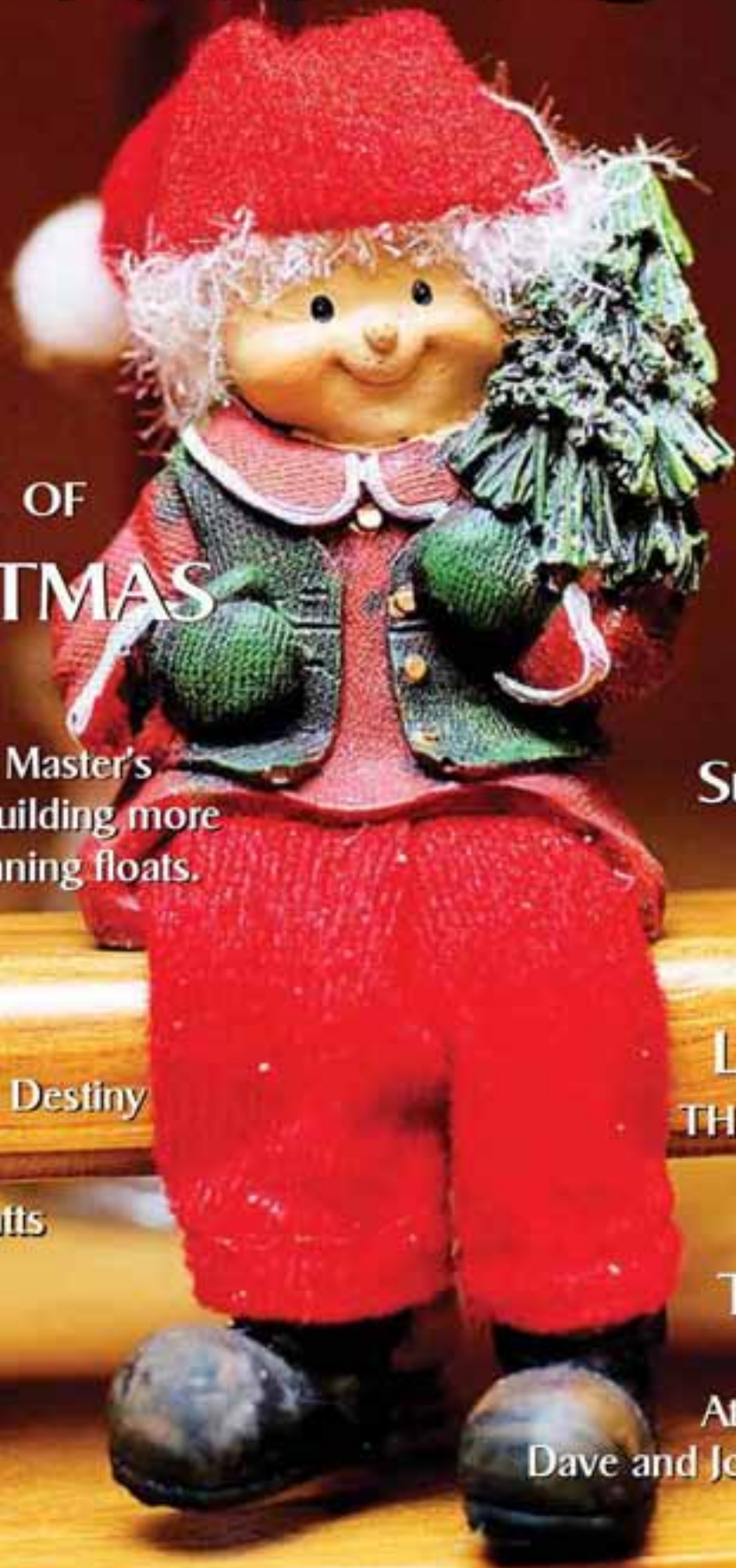
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On The Cover



Theodore comes out of
hiding once again
for Christmas with
the Gregors.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Merry Christmas!

Sometimes at this time of year, I think it would be nice to be a shepherd watching my sheep by night on a quiet, starlit hillside with no electronic devices. I think of David, the psalmist, again watching sheep and penning the literature in which I most often find solace — a writer, out on a hillside in the night — my kind of guy. I have written a few poems on Christmas Eve over the years, trying to compose a birthday gift for the One who gave me the best gift ever. For me, the best way to know my heart and thoughts and place in the universe (and the *SouthwestNOW* market) is to write. Each of us has a story yearning to be told. Let me share yours.

Hope you each find those perfect gifts to give and receive.



Beverly

Beverly Shay
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2011-12: The STAARt of something big!

New Superintendent Search announced

The DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees applauds our district staff, students, parents and administrators for staying focused on student learning during the past six months. In the past two months, DeSoto ISD has executed both an internal Climate Survey and Organizational Assessment with APQC that gathered data from over 350 internal and external participants to assess the processes within the district for effectiveness and efficiencies. Data from both of these tools will be used to continue improvement within the district and will be included in the search profile.

After months of reflection and input from many in the DeSoto community, the Board has outlined a plan to move into a new phase of the superintendent search process.

The DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees will conduct the search with a three-person committee consisting of Chair Curt Krohn and members Don Gant and Aubrey Hooper working with consultant Dr. Nolan Estes. There will be no fee paid to Dr. Estes through an agreement with the previous search firm. The only expenses will be interview process travel.

The DeSoto ISD Board Superintendent Search Committee will follow a four-step process that will include developing a Search Profile, Recruitment, Assessment of Candidates and Selection.

A Search Profile Development tool is being used to gather community input and develop applicant criteria. This is your opportunity for the community voice to be heard and help influence the type of superintendent that will ultimately be selected. The Search Profile Development form is online from November 17 - December 9. In addition to attending community and campus events and meetings, the Board will also hear from the DeSoto community at two forums (see Search Timeline at right).

District earns 20 TEA Gold Acknowledgements

The Texas Education Agency recently released the latest list of Gold Performance Acknowledgment recipients, and DeSoto ISD earned a 20 acknowledgements across 10 different campuses! Gold Acknowledgements are a special recognition of high performance for campuses rated Academically Acceptable or higher.

DeSoto ISD	Recommended High School Program (RHSP) Participation
Moates ES	Improvement in Reading; Commended in Math, Reading
Amber Terrace ES	Commended in Reading, Science
Cockrell Hill ES	Commended in Math, Reading, Science
Northside ES	Commended in Science
Ruby Young ES	Commended in Math, Reading, Science
The Meadows ES	Commended in Math, Science
Woodridge ES	Commended in Science
East Middle	Improvement in Math; Commended in Social Studies
McCowan Middle	Attendance
DeSoto High School	RHSP Participation; Commended in Science

calendar of events

- December 3 – DeSoto Hometown Holiday and Parade
- December 5, 6:30 p.m. – Search Community Input Forum, Board Room
- December 9, 9 a.m. – Search Community Input Forum, Board Room
- December 12, 6:30 p.m. – Board Meeting, Leadership Profile presented
- December 19-31 – Winter Break, No School, Offices Closed
- January 2 – School Resumes
- January 13 – Teacher Preparation Day, No School
- January 16 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday, No School, Offices Closed

Search Timeline

Now Through December 9 – Search Profile Development Input (Online and paper form)

December 5, 6:30 p.m. – Profile Community Input Forum, Board Room

December 9, 9 a.m. – Profile Community Input Forum, Board Room

December 12, 6:30 p.m. – Leadership Profile based on input presented to Board

February 3, 5 p.m. – Application Deadline

February 17 – Slate presentation to the Board

February 20-21 – First Round Interviews

February 20-21 – Board identifies finalists

February 23-25 – Final Interviews

February 29-March 1 – Home District Visits by the Committee and/or designee

March 3 – DeSoto ISD Board of Trustees announces Lone Finalist

March 26 – Board hires Superintendent



The 2011 Seniors Prom Queen Sylvia Williams and King Leroy Scott enjoyed the first dance at the 7th annual DeSoto ISD Seniors Prom.

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One Successful Woman

— By Beverly Shay

Dr. Peggy Mayfield Wilson is an easy woman to admire — attractive, poised and engaging. She paved the way for many professional women to advance and wears her Texas roots with dignity, grace and a certain element of understated charm. She speaks well and interestingly, yet knows how to listen and learn from others. Her story is nothing short of fascinating.

"I actually have three stories," Peggy began in her delightfully, well-modulated voice. "The first is my family's rich Texas history. The second is of triumph over discrimination against professional women. And the third

regards volunteering." Beginning with her family roots, Peggy told of her great-great-grandfather, Gordon C. Jennings, who was killed while defending the Alamo, and his brother, who died at Goliad. "He, along with others, rebelled against Santa Anna raising taxes. In 1834, Gordon applied for a land grant in one of Stephen F. Austin's colonies around Travis County. His wife, an Overton from the Carolinas, was working the land when she heard her husband had been killed and that Santa Anna was coming. Their young daughter, Catherine, jumped on a horse to warn the settlers," Peggy said. Apparently, Catherine's ride took about two weeks. "She rode until the horse tired, spent the night and rode out on a borrowed horse until she reached the Gulf coast, returning the horses as she went home."

Peggy inherited that "can-do" spirit from her female ancestors. Her father was a hard-working butcher. Her mom



stayed at home. Their gift to her was an education and the encouragement to excel in whatever she chose. Because girls were expected to never outshine boys, her educational success went unacknowledged by many of her teachers, yet Peggy never stopped pursuing her goals. "My high school chemistry teacher in Austin ignited such an interest in me that I majored in chemistry at The University of Texas (UT), whose only campus then was in Austin.

"My parents scrimped and saved every penny for the \$364 cost of my four



years of education. In 1948, I earned a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry with Honors, but nobody would even interview me for a job. So, I went back to school," Peggy recalled. Peggy was advised to go directly for her doctorate in chemistry, which she earned in 1952. Still no one would interview her.

Peggy learned practicality, improvisation and dedication from battle-scarred young soldiers returning from World War II who attended UT, including a new perspective on the discrimination she had encountered, which toughened her resolve. "I was pushed out of the building when I went to switch my major from chemistry to chemical engineering, and told, 'Girls aren't allowed in here,'" Peggy recalled. Even those sympathetic toward her goals were unyielding. "I registered for Theory of Complex Variables, a course specific to my degree, but the counselor wanted to change it to Arithmetic for Households."

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Frequently the only girl in her courses, she usually made the highest grades. Her exceptionally high grades prevented her dismissal from the graduate program, although discrimination dictated that.

A University of Minnesota psychology professor rebuked her for listing interest in topics not traditionally held by women on a questionnaire and even accused her of deceiving him about being female.

Shortly before graduation, she was interviewed for a faculty position at a girl's college. She declined the offered salary because it was less than she could earn working her parents' farm. Despite diligent study, her parents' sacrificial scrimping and a Ph.D., she remained unemployed with no job offers.

The university offered to let her expand her doctoral research, which included teaching freshman chemistry. "I literally ran into a young recruiter from Mobil outside my classroom. Rather than apologizing, I asked why he hadn't replied to my application the year before," Peggy recalled. "He called the next morning at 7:00 a.m. for an interview in Dallas. They offered me a job, and I accepted. I was told if I got pregnant, married or not, I would be fired. I was shocked he even used the word pregnant!"

Later, Peggy discovered she was being paid the same salary as the men — something unprecedented. Only Neiman Marcus would give her a credit card. Another store accused her of lying about her income. Despite established credit and savings, she was denied a home loan and told to get a husband and the bank would lend *him* the money — not her. "I swore I would never let that bank earn interest off my savings. I would save and pay cash for my cars and homes, something I found fairly easy to do."

Peggy loved her research work. Even though she found ways to use hydrochloric acid to enlarge pores on the limestone foundations so oil could flow into the wells more easily, she still dealt with those who wanted to hold her back by hiding her accomplishments. She married a fellow chemical engineer, Dr. Ray Dunlap, but nine months later he was diagnosed with a terminal illness. They had 13 years together. For 25 years, Peggy was not allowed on the oil fields,

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This holiday season, our hearts are grateful as we reflect on our year. In spite of a fire, which placed us out of our building for five months, we look back and realize how blessed we are. The support from our community sustained us in our time of need ...

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offered the use of their facilities for funerals and visitations, our friends at David Clayton & Sons Funeral Home graciously offered their facility, families were so patient and understanding, and even in their time of loss, they uplifted us through their faithfulness to our funeral home. So this holiday season, we humbly offer sincere thanks and appreciation to our community of friends and to God for His abundant grace.

"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward the people of God, I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." Ephesians 1:15-16

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the superstition being that a woman's presence would cause someone to die. Yet she developed technology and has patents to prove it can be done "without having been there." Those calling for Dr. Dunlap expected to speak with her husband; they could not believe their specialist was a woman. Peggy was Mobil's first woman research group manager. Seven years after her first husband's death, Peggy married Lt. Col. W.W. Wilson III.

"I loved all 36 and one-half years of my career with Mobil. When my career was somewhat stifled, I began to volunteer in civic arenas, where I gained perception and leadership skills, gutsiness, courage and confidence. This eventually led to trust among the Dallas leaders, city council and school board. Peggy held positions on community task forces at the lab. She volunteered within the political scene and was appointed by the governor as the first woman regent of East Texas State University (now

Peggy inherited her "can do" spirit from her female ancestors.

Texas A&M University-Commerce).

Peggy has been well-recognized for her involvement in community and local politics. She has served as an advisor for many precinct chairpersons, as a leading founder of the Cedar Hill economic development program, where she was president from '94 to '96, and on the Cedar Hill City Council from '96 to '98, as their first councilwoman. She was awarded the Golden Cedar Award from the Cedar Hill Chamber, listed in five *Who's Who*, received the Rotary International Jean Harris Award for the development and progress of women in society and the Outstanding Republican Woman presented by the Texas Federation of Republican Women. She and her second husband of 25 years were presented a joint Community Service Award. Hers is a success story rivaled by few. She has most definitely carried on the pioneering heritage of her Texas roots. **NOW**

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Leaders in the Making

— By Beverly Shay



and ended with a scholarship for autism research, which culminated in a doctorate with a concentration in higher education. She's also the mother of two teen sons, Criston and Christile, and recently became a licensed minister through The Potter's House Church of Dallas.

Studying education, Stallworth initially intended to pursue counseling, but her gifts for problem solving and decision making became rapidly apparent as leadership qualities. From committee member to chair to program initiator, she moved up leadership ranks to administration, assistant principal, principal and now, director for Special Programs within the DeSoto Independent School District. Further training within the Leadership Southwest (LSW) program led to her chairing that institute in 2011. "I am grateful for such a rewarding opportunity, and SLI (Student Leadership Institute) affords our area student leaders that same leadership charge — exposure, engagement and exchange," Stallworth remarked.

Ella Goode Johnson, president of Leadership Southwest Alumni and chair of last year's LSI, partnered with Dr. Stallworth in the planning and implementing of the youth institute. Ella, a retired employee of a Fortune 500 company, with extensive background in marketing, public relations, sales and service, came from a family of educators. "Education and advancement opportunities were not optional, but a family requirement," Ella stated. "I witnessed family members volunteering and helping others in the process of growth and development. So

"Education is just like blood pumping in my veins," admitted Dr. Tawana Stallworth, mistress of ceremonies at the 2011 Student Leadership Institute sponsored by Leadership Southwest in conjunction with the DeSoto Rotary Club. The youth forum took place at Dallas Baptist University for 180 students from high schools in Dallas, Oak Cliff, DeSoto, Lancaster, Duncanville and Cedar Hill. Stallworth's higher education journey began with community college



volunteering was ingrained in me at an early age." She holds a BBA in business education, with a minor in music and English and a master's in human relations and business.

Four students participating in SLI this year were forthcoming about their reasons for participation. Tia Gamble, a senior at DeSoto High School, was eager to attend for her first time. "I wanted to learn how to present myself, which was addressed in my first session. Two points I will carry home with me are: While you need to work hard, don't work harder than you have to — work smart; and don't measure greatness based on today," said this savvy young woman, who credits her parents and grandmother as her strongest motivators. She plans to be a college math professor and minor in sports management.

Jamal Hicklen, a senior at DeSoto High School, was also attending for the first time. Jamal, who wants to be an attorney and possibly a district attorney, plans to do undergraduate studies in political science and earn his MBA and JD, simultaneously. He picked up on one catch phrase from Jabari Johnson's session titled, "The Balancing Act," to summarize his SLI experience: "Eat that frog," he quoted. "That means don't procrastinate; do the hardest thing first. Our session leader told us 80 percent of the work is done by 20 percent of the workers. I will be in that 20 percent!" His parents are his motivators. "My mom is always there with her loving care, and





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my dad pushes me. He has taught me integrity and how to handle myself. I like going to leadership conferences with him," Jamal stated. "I try to follow his example by motivating others and helping them to not feel isolated." His Algebra II teacher, also an engineer, really applied math for him, so now he helps other math students. "I have learned time is valuable, so don't procrastinate. If you are facing adversity and you want to give up, well, you know — eat that frog!"

Duncanville High School senior, Roldan Rivas, attended SLI for the second time. "Last year, I learned about using your mind for spiritual and relaxation therapy. I have used that in Peer II, a peer mediation program, where I help other students with problems or conflicts.



**"If you are facing
adversity and you want
to give up, well, you
know — eat that frog!"**

Volunteering has helped me overcome shyness, as well as developing my strength of listening and hearing others. This year, I captured this thought: The past is the past. So make the best of today, so your future will be even better." Roldan has plans to work with photography and art.

Myeshia Gayfield is a junior at Franklin D. Roosevelt High School. Although she has attended other youth leadership conferences, this was her first time at SLI. "I learned about new technology used in military institutions and for black ops," she stated. "My parents are my motivators. They have taught me that nothing will be handed to you. You are the one who will have to work hard.

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Right now, my goal is to keep my GPA up. I'm implementing leadership skills by mentoring incoming middle school sixth-graders. But I know I need to learn to be more aggressive in getting people to follow my leadership," she said, in reference to being co-captain of the cheerleaders. "My cheer coach is such an inspiration. She wants us to be the best, so she makes certain we progress. She's such an elegant woman in the way she presents herself." Myeshia's take away from SLI is the concept of never thinking for one second that she cannot reach success. "If I try my hardest, it will pay off in the end."

Warren Seay, a young man in his second year studying law at SMU, yet serving as president of the DeSoto ISD board, gave the keynote address titled "Mistakes I've Made." "You are some of the smartest, most talented students in the Southwest. You don't need me to reinforce your greatness, so let me tell you what not to do," he began. His speech emphasized not getting caught up in drinking, especially underage drinking. "Don't rush to be an adult," he admonished. "Avoid dating someone who doesn't respect you. Never let any man or woman disrespect you even once. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Take a moment each day to be purposefully nice. Anticipate the needs of others. Practice radical hospitality."

Warren warned about youthful pride. "As much as you know, you don't know it all yet." His conclusion summed up the goal of the conference: "You will always be seen as a representation of where you have come from, so represent well. Work harder. Be the best. Launch yourself from the foundation of leadership you are being given. Seek the face of God more than the hand of God. And only allow those to influence you who will help you to be the best."

Building on the understanding that today's students will be tomorrow's leaders, Dr. Stallworth, along with all the SLI presenters and supporters are always looking for ways to give young people a good foundation. This program illustrates the partnership between DeSoto ISD, students and community leaders to transform students into global leaders. **NOW**



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A Parade of Christmas Spirit

— By Cindy Malone

The Masters Academy is located behind The Bread of Life Church, nestled in a residential neighborhood of Duncanville. The private school has a 23-year history of catering to the needs of children with ADD, ADHD, dyslexia and academic deficiencies. Each student lucky enough to attend school there gets a personalized curriculum fitted to his or her exact needs. But with such a small student body (approximately 25-30 right now), sports and many other extracurricular activities enjoyed by other schools are just not feasible options.

"Without football or cheerleading or the normal things kids participate in, we needed something in which we could compete," Kristi Morales, assistant administrator, explained. "We needed some way to sharpen our competitive edge, have fun as a group and give our kids a chance to win at something." Her perfect answer came in the form of making a float for the Annual Duncanville Christmas Parade. After winning the school's first trophy in 2009, the students, teachers and parents were hooked.



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Each year in October, students are told what the theme of the parade will be by the city planners. The themes can be anything from Santa's Workshop to Candyland Christmas. They then have a little less than two months to develop an idea, sketch it out, build and decorate the float and make costumes. Kristi praised the students' parents and grandparents. "We couldn't do this without them."

When Kristi first plans the idea, she sends a letter home to the parents with a list of supplies and jobs she needs done. This can be anything from painting, to sewing, to stringing lights. The parents, understanding the importance of the project to the school and their children, are usually more than happy to help and give anything they can.

Every day after school for those few months, the students saw, hammer, paint and nail the design that is sketched out and hung up all over the school. Thanks to the small student body, the teachers are familiar with each student's special gifts and talents. All the students get to contribute to the project in the way only they can. "If there is a student who shows promise in engineering, for example," Kristi explained, "he or she works on the measurements and blueprints."

The teachers also use the project, along with their normal teaching, in a way that makes normally mundane or boring lessons come alive. When building a float, physics and geometry lessons can be taught using real-world applications. The Master's Academy also focuses on preparing their students for life after high school. Some will go into the workforce and some into college. These students need the same social and organizational skills as all other students. "The Christmas float project really helps teach those fundamental skills like sharing, planning, teamwork and community," Kristi added.

Every student enrolled at the school has a part in making the float, and every student also takes an active role in the parade. In the past, students have walked alongside the float dressed like candy bars throwing out candy. The students have ridden on a carousel dressed as toys themselves. "The float building, parade and contest really bond our students

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together," Kristi shared. "Every student, no matter their ability or age, can work together. And more than that, they are having fun together. It is *our* football. It is *our* volleyball. It is *our* chess club. This is what *we* do. And every student participates in our sport. It's something they can be really proud of. Sometimes, when a student struggles academically, they need something outside of books to boost their self-esteem. For most of our kids, this is it."

Because they only have the eight-by-eight trailer, on which the float is built, for one weekend, the entire float must be assembled in the cafeteria area of the school until the parade weekend, when they can attach it to the trailer. Their very first parade was in Duncanville, in 2009. The parade was on a Friday night, and the trailer, which belongs to a local rancher, was brought to them only a few hours before the parade. Kristi remembered that first year, with a laugh. "We were literally stapling lights to the plywood while driving down the road on our way to line up."

With every student participating in the float and parade, bringing home a trophy means that every student has won. And trophies they have! In every parade they have entered since 2009, which includes Duncanville, DeSoto and Cedar Hill's annual Christmas parades, they've won. Each trophy is displayed in the main area of the school next to photos, so every



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When asked why she chose Christmas parades as the school's biggest project, Kristi answered, "To begin with, we are a Christian private school so, of course, we celebrate Christmas in a huge way every year. Also, right now, community is becoming more and more important. We not only would like the community to know who we are, but we want to be more involved in the community, as well. Most of our students live close, and without the networking of a normal public school, our students and staff



need another way to commune with our neighbors. With all three parades, thousands of people see our float, hear our name and see our amazing kids each year."

Financially, building a float complete with costumes can be hard. A small group of students make up the student council. They spend all year raising money for the float. The rest of the material is either donated by parents or grandparents or is funded by teachers, at their own expense. They borrow the trailer and generator that power the thousands of Christmas lights, which light up the float itself, and James and Janet Harris from Justin Moving allow them to park the float in their building between parades. However, giving students the sense of pride and recognition they need, makes all the sacrifices and hard work worth it.

As for this year, Kristi hopes that whatever the theme, they can use some of the supplies she already has. She loves the middle of the parade, so she hopes their float is lined up somewhere near the middle. But perhaps more important than that would be for them to be placed "somewhere in front of the horses." **NOW**



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Theodore is Here!

— By Angel Morris

You can't be at home with Dave and Joyce Gregory unless you're comfortable with Theodore. Theodore is not one of their children, although the couple does have two grown sons. Despite ties to the North Pole, Theodore was born and reared in the Gregory's home. But Theodore is mostly in hiding until Christmas. You see, Theodore is an elf.

"Theodore is the inspiration for our lawn decor, holiday ornaments and decoration collection throughout the house," Joyce explained. A retired elementary school teacher and librarian, Joyce greatly contributed to the development of a book about Theodore that would eventually take over her home at the holidays.

Her husband, Dave, professor emeritus at Mountain View College, penned the

At Home With
Dave and
Joyce
Gregory





song "Theodore Was Here!" in 1968. The lyrics were inspired by a work of the same name by poet Grace Puls, a retired speech therapist. "She wrote it to include developmental word patterns to help children in speech therapy," Dave noted.

Dave and Grace began their collaboration after a chance meeting in the teacher's lounge of the school where they worked led to a conversation over coffee. He learned she was a poet and told her that he played guitar and wrote songs. "Theodore is a mischievous elf who



can't resist playing with the toys Santa delivers on Christmas Eve, like noisy electric train sets and bubble-making machines," Dave explains. "He is always a nuisance, but in spite of himself, he ends up Santa's No. 1 elf."

Dave's music and Grace's poem grew into a 28-page children's book, illustrated by Vuthy Kuon and marketed with a CD of the song and sound effects that make children giggle and squirm. The self-published work spawned a sequel, *Theodore Was Here Again!* in 1997, which



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added to the recognition of Santa's most curious helper. Although promotion of the books was "more of a hobby" while the creators were working, now some of their retirement is devoted to marketing their elfin friend. Still, there was life before Theodore for the couple.

"We came to Duncanville in 1970 because Dave was one of the original faculty members at Mountain View College. He retired from there in 1995, but has continued to teach part time there and at the Tarrant County Community College South Campus, until this year," Joyce said. Joyce taught at Central Elementary and retired in 1995, also. Before moving here, the couple lived and taught in New Braunfels, Salado and Seguin, Texas.

Dave and Joyce were both born and reared in Temple and graduated from Temple High School and Temple Junior

College. After marrying in 1959, they both completed bachelor's degrees at Southwest Texas State College. Dave received a Master of Education degree at North Texas State University and Joyce a Master of Library Science degree at Texas Woman's University.

This educational expertise and love of all things elfin make them outstanding grandparents to their seven grandchildren, who love to visit their house at the holidays. The Christmas experience begins in front of the home, where Theodore rides in a jet sleigh and blows real bubbles (with the help of a bubble machine). "It gets some interesting reaction from people driving down the street. And we even have people come up and knock on the door to ask where the bubbles are if we don't have them on," Dave said.

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spiral Christmas trees and a candy cane lollipop trail leading to Santa's workshop. Santa himself, however, stays warm all season inside the Gregory's dining room window. "You can see him from the street, sitting at our dining room table drinking hot cocoa," Dave said.

Besides the elf collection that began 45 years ago, the holidays aren't complete

without a few other Gregory traditions. "We also have a family favorite — traditional Christmas cookies — which is central to our holiday activities," Joyce said. The cookie includes red and green candied cherries and pineapple. "The grandkids can smell them when they come in the front door, and we



can't hide them. I bake dozens and dozens at Christmastime, and that's all I bake."

A skirt sewn by Joyce's sister when the Gregorys' first son was born finishes off the tree each year, and several of Joyce's original ceramic pieces come out for the holidays. A plastic reindeer and sleigh from Joyce's childhood may be the oldest decoration, and a Christmas countdown calendar from their son's trip to Regensburg, Germany, is the newest.

While it becomes an elf haven this time of year, the Gregory home sees changes and improvements year-round. The couple created a wall of windows to enhance the view of their creek-side backyard and just finished updating their master bedroom. Antique family quilts hold places of honor, including a double wedding ring design by Joyce that was signed by guests at the couple's 50th wedding anniversary in 2009.

"We designed the home, and we have made some nice changes over time. I picked the area for the trees and, in nicer weather, there's not a lot of time when we aren't out back enjoying our deck," Joyce admitted. There an antique coke

machine depicts cola that sold for 6 cents, and a wood sign encourages guests to "sit long and talk much" on the back deck.

In retirement — after ending an eight-year run of their store in Canton — the Gregorys have time to focus on enjoying the collections that make their house a home. The marketing of Theodore has slowed, but his mark remains on the couple's home.

When not promoting Theodore at schools, Christmas markets and the like, Dave enjoys teaching Sunday school, motivational speaking, singing and songwriting. Joyce enjoys quilting, civic and educational groups and activities with



the United Methodist Women and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Quilters at their church. "We both enjoy traveling," Joyce said.

In fact, many of the elves in their collection were purchased during travels. "My favorites are some that I found in a Christmas store in Germany. Friends and family have added to our collection with elves they have found on their trips, also," Joyce said.

Perhaps the Gregory's quickest travel destination is the North Pole, which they make simply by walking through their home at the holidays — where a mischievous elf named Theodore reminds guests that when we do our best, there's a little magic in all of us, no matter how we decorate or celebrate.

"We gave up stockings years ago," Joyce said. "Now each family member gets a surprise gift from Theodore, instead. He really is part of the family." **NOW**



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Clockwise from top left: Dr. Allen Beck, founder and superintendent of Advantage Academy; Mrs. Kathryn Davidson, 5th grade science teacher, with a student; kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Nakia Hopps, with a student.

From Dream to Destiny

Advantage Academy has designed a process of learning to unleash the champion inside each student, as a means of training the leaders of tomorrow. — By Beverly Shoy

Dr. Allen Beck, founder of Advantage Academy operated by Eagle Advantage Schools, Inc., is incisively inspired by Abraham Lincoln. One of his favorite quotations of Lincoln is: "The philosophy of the schoolroom in one generation will be the philosophy of government in the next." Dr. Beck patterned his school system on seven pillars gleaned from biblical standards and the philosophies of the founding fathers and other greats, Abe Lincoln being his favorite hero. "I believe parents should have a choice in where and how their children are educated. We need to offer parents a market-driven accountability in education, while being innovative and creative in guiding their children — our students — to greatness."

Dr. Beck's seven pillars are: integrity (self-governing honesty), humility (accepting who you are with your limitations, yet

authentically able to receive help from others), authority (ability to be under authority, so can lead with authority), stability (unwilling to abandon commitments, therefore able to follow through), community (service), prosperity (financial stewardship) and victory (no half-heartedness toward becoming a winner). "We believe that society as a whole is influenced by the family, church or moral beliefs and the community. The first education a child receives is within the family, supported by the church or moral environment outside the family and within the community. My first educational vision was for students in the inner city," Dr. Beck stated.

Allen Beck never heard the concept of charter schools until 1996. Researching the idea led him to Austin. Soon, applications were submitted. He resigned his job as English teacher in the

Palmer Independent School District and began interviewing teachers. In March of '98, he was awarded a contract, but he had no building and no students and none of the \$100,000 he needed to open. But open they did — in a warehouse with 54 students of all grades in the one room. They have grown to four campuses, with a new one under construction in Grand Prairie, 200 employees and some 1,700 students.

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Believing moral character shapes integrity, Advantage Academy chooses principles like integrity, honesty and pride in work to replace hopelessness, indifference and negative environmental influences. "We emphasize good communication skills, knowledge, emotional and physical health, while opening a child's imagination to expand their ability to learn," Dr. Beck noted. The goal of their style and process of education is training leaders who will understand and implement profitability in business, both locally and globally. "We recognize seven patterns of learning: intrapersonal, interpersonal, linguistic, visual/spatial, kinesthetic, music/rhythm and logical/mathematical. We are also implementing the tutorial YouTube's available through Khanacademy.org. Bottom line is we desire to provide competitive education blending the common identity values of the past with the neuroscience of the present and the technology of the future." Not a bad dream-to-destiny story for a boy who grew up as a sharecropper in western Oklahoma, whose simple upbringing and reverence for education is similar to Lincoln's. **NOW**

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A welcome basket was given to Jill Woolly (right), marketing director for Arbor House, by Amber Hatley (left), Cedar Hill Chamber ambassador chairman.



2011 Distinguished Women Honorees hosted at Northwood University: (L-R) Stacie McDavid, Brenda Hill-Riggins, Patricia Rhodes-Prowse, Robyn Flatt, Kimberly J. McWaters, Janet Pollman Kafka, D'Andra Simmons and Pat Kerr Tigrett.



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Holiday Blues

— By Leah Pittman

Often there are many reasons people feel more stress, anxiety or depression during the winter months, especially around holidays. For some, the lack of sunlight triggers sleep alterations, overeating and depressed mood. This is known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Many who have lost a loved one in the last year or two feel their grief more acutely during the holiday season. Others who can't get home for the holidays may feel lonely, sad or guilty. For some, anxiety arises from expectations being too high. Seemingly, there is never enough time to get everything done perfectly, or enough money to buy or go and do all they wish to do.

Most of the time, depression is mild or moderate. For the last 20 years or so, the first approach has been to give a prescription antidepressant. Prescription antidepressant usage has soared 400 percent in the last 10 years. In the 10 years before that, their use had doubled. But a prescription is usually not the best place to start in managing depression, SAD or the holiday blues.

Researcher Irving Kirsch at the University of Connecticut looked at all the manufacturer-sponsored antidepressant studies submitted to the FDA, 47 studies in all, of which 40 percent had never been published. What he found was that 82 percent of the response to antidepressants had also been achieved by placebo. The real response to the drugs was not that great, either: 1.8 points improvement on a 54 point scale (about 3 percent). It also turned out that the greater the side effects, the more likely a patient was to get more benefit. This can also be explained by the placebo effect: Patients figured out they were getting the real drug, expected the real drug to help them and were then more helped by it. Another study published in January 2010 showed only the very severely depressed (13 percent) benefited from the drug and not placebo effect.

Is the improvement worth the side effects or the expensive price tag? These drugs frequently cost \$4 per pill, and side effects are common and include: nausea, anxiety,

decreased sex drive, dry mouth, sweating, headaches, diarrhea or constipation, increase in falls in the elderly and increase in suicide, especially among teens and young adults.

If symptoms of depression progress into thoughts of death or suicide, immediate medical attention should be sought. However, if depression is not life-threatening, there are many natural approaches to control or even beat it. First, counseling is a must for any depression lasting more than a few weeks. It might take several attempts to find the right counseling approach or the right counselor. Therapy that works best for depression focuses on what we do, how we see the world, how we relate to others and how to make the future better.

Seasonal suggestions include: Eliminate or reduce excessive spending, which results in money woes. Cut back overly ambitious decorating or cleaning projects to something manageable. If friends or family frequently cause disappointment or anger, that probably won't change. Be ready for it, and be ready to forgive and forget. If visiting family is not possible, spend time with friends, church members or volunteer to visit the elderly or work in a shelter. This is also helpful for grief at holiday time. Helping others gives a sense of accomplishment and connectedness and reduces depression.

Exercise! A 20-minute walk can elevate mood for two hours. It also reduces over-indulgence. Set reasonable eating and drinking limits; feeling over-full, lethargic or intoxicated makes depressive symptoms worse. Get plenty of sunlight or invest in a full-spectrum lamp. Taking a vitamin D supplement will also help manage SAD. See your chiropractor! Chiropractic can help with the physical aches and pains, which often come with the winter weather or with depression, and several published case studies suggest it may help decrease other depressive symptoms. **NOW**

Leah Pittman, B.S., D.C.
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Economic and Investment Outlook

— By Dennis Brock

Economic News:

As 2011 winds down, investors are faced with a number of issues they must consider:

1. The state of the economy

For now, it appears that the U.S. has avoided a recession. Third-quarter economic growth came in at 2.5 percent. While this is growth, it is not fast enough growth to meaningfully bring down the unemployment rate.

2. Europe

As of this writing, Greece may be near a default. The concern is that if Greece defaults on its debt, it will impact the banking systems of other European countries that have large holdings in Greek debt. Europe is already struggling economically, and a Greek default would likely push Europe into a recession. A recession in Europe would reduce overseas demand for U.S. goods. The next question is: Will a recession in Europe cause a recession in the U.S.?

3. Corporate Earnings

Here the news has been good. Most companies are matching or beating estimates. While this is good, there is some concern

that earnings growth going forward is slowing.

Investment Outlook / Strategy:

On balance, the investment outlook is positive. Since it appears that the U.S. has avoided a recession and economic growth will continue, albeit at a slow pace, we should expect positive returns for the stock market over the next 12 months. Standard & Poor's estimates that the S&P 500 index will return single digit returns for 2012. While this return is not great, it will likely beat the returns of short-to-intermediate term bonds. Long-term bonds with higher yields may not be as attractive when the risk of rising interest rates is factored in. High-yield bonds offer opportunities for bond investors willing to take on credit risk. For those investors who are not willing to invest in stocks, but would like potential returns higher than some bond funds, annuities may be the answer. Some annuities offer guaranteed returns and some allow you to participate in the returns of the stock market without the risk of losing your principal. **NOW**

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MERRY CHRISTMAS

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Calendar

DECEMBER 2011

Through December 9

Operation "Real Giving" 2011, TownePlace Suites by Marriott, DeSoto. Donate time and talents to make fleece blankets for local DFW children's hospitals.

Through December 16

Drop letters to Santa at his mailbox in Duncanville City Hall. (Get a letter back!)

December 2-4

Cornerstone Theatre presents *The Gin Game* by CrossOver Theater. **Friday/Saturday:** 7:30 p.m.; **Saturday/Sunday:** 2:30 p.m. Cost: \$12.

December 2

Join Pete Delkus of WFFA-8 in Santa's Helper's toy drive benefiting underprivileged kids: 5:00-10:00 p.m., Uptown Village, Cedar Hill. Bring new, unwrapped toys to the Village Green for Santa and his elves to unload.

Duncanville Parade of Lights "A Christmas Classic": 7:00 p.m. Tree lighting, Memorial Park: entertainment, carolers, Santa. New parade route: Duncanville.com/recreation or call (972) 780-5070.

December 3

Breakfast With Santa: 9:00 a.m.-noon, hosted by DeSoto ISD and Council of PTAs, DeSoto Civic

Center Blue Bonnet Rooms. Cost: \$3. Photos with Santa: \$5.

Find handmade gifts and strolling Dickens carolers at Holiday Market: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., DeSoto Civic Center Pecan Rooms.

The DeSoto Public Library Youth Advisory Board hosts Storytime With Mrs. Claus, crafts, carols, skits: 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., library. (972) 230-9663.

Cedar Hill Library Friends' Holiday Open House: 1:00-3:00 p.m. Bring camera for pictures with Mr. and Mrs. Claus! (972) 291-7323.

December 6

DeSoto's Tree Lighting Ceremony: 7:00 p.m., Civic Center Courtyard: DeSoto Youth Advisory, McCowan Middle School band/choir, Mayor Carl Sherman. www.ci.desoto.tx.us.

December 7

The Duncanville Women's Club Luncheon/Christmas Bazaar: 10:00 a.m., Golf Club of Dallas. Silent/live auctions, quilt raffle. Lunch: guests/\$20; members/free. Reservations: (972) 296-4601 by 6:00 p.m., **December 4.**

Meet Abe Elam (#26 Dallas Cowboys) at Holiday Fun Time Live: 7:00-11:00 p.m., DeSoto Rec. Center.

\$10. Details: www.ci.desoto.tx.us.

December 10

Penn Farm Family Holiday inaugural holiday celebration: 5:00-8:30 p.m., CH State Park, 1570 W. FM 1382: traditional, historic festivities: music, lights, traditions, Santa. Cost: \$5; 12/under: free; Texas State Park passes honored. (972) 291-5130.

December 11

Cedar Hill High School Library/Barnes & Noble Book Fair: noon-9:00 p.m., Barnes & Noble, Uptown Village. At checkout, use book fair #10569556 to support Cedar Hill High School. Desiree Alexander (225) 324-8605.

December 13

Snacks with Santa: 5:30 p.m., Duncanville Recreation Center. (972) 780-5070.

Duncanville Library's Dad's Night Out: *Holiday on Strings*: 7:00-7:45 p.m.

December 27

Cedar Hill Library celebrates Kwanzaa: 7:00-9:00 p.m. (972) 291-7323.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to bshay.nonmag@sbcglobal.net.

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In The Kitchen With Shana Watts

— By Beverly Shay

"I grew up in Mississippi, with home-cooked, Southern meals prepared daily by my mom and grandmother. My mom, who is a great cook, showed me the basics from an early age," Shana Watts recalled. Collard greens, field peas, pork and corn bread were family staples. Her passion for cooking developed as she prepared meals for residents on one of her jobs. "Often, I would call my mom for advice," she admitted. "I enjoy fixing all types of dishes for my family, but Southern food is still my first love." Later, Shana taught classes on food, nutrition and culinary arts, where together they learned new, creative ways to prepare food. Teaching and fixing special occasion food for friends led to starting her own catering company, Edible Creations. **NOW**

Mississippi Seafood Gumbo

2 Tbsp. butter
1 large onion, chopped
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 large green bell pepper, chopped
2 16-oz. cans diced tomatoes
2 10-oz. pkgs. frozen okra
1/2 cup oil
1/3 cup flour
1 cup water
Salt and pepper, to taste
2 bay leaves
1 lb. smoked sausage
Dash of Tabasco
2-3 cups chicken broth
2 lbs. peeled, raw shrimp
1 precooked rotisserie chicken, boned and shredded
2 lbs. blue crab bodies
Cooked rice

1. Heat butter in a large pot. Add onion, celery and bell pepper; sauté until tender. Add diced tomatoes and okra.
2. In a separate sauté pan, add oil and flour and brown slowly, until a dark roux has been made.

3. Add water to thin roux. Continue to brown mixture very slowly for about an hour. Add salt, pepper, bay leaves, sausage and Tabasco. Add chicken broth. Cook for 1 hour.
4. Add shrimp, chicken and blue crabs (whole); simmer for 30 minutes.
5. Serve over rice in large bowl.

Red Velvet Cake

2 1/2 cups cake flour
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
3 Tbsp. cocoa powder
1 1/2 cups vegetable oil
1 cup buttermilk
2 eggs
1 bottle of red food coloring
1 tsp. distilled vinegar
1 tsp. vanilla extract

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Spray 8- or 9-inch round cake pans with baking spray.
2. In a large bowl, sift together flour, sugar, baking soda, salt and cocoa powder.
3. In a standing mixer, whisk together oil, buttermilk, eggs, food coloring, vinegar

and vanilla.

4. Sift dry ingredients into wet ingredients. Stir until just combined and a smooth batter is formed.
5. Divide cake batter evenly among prepared cake pans. Place pans in oven evenly spaced apart. Bake about 30 minutes, rotating pans halfway through cooking time, until the cake pulls away from sides of the pans and a toothpick inserted in the center of the cakes comes out clean.
6. Frost with Cream Cheese Frosting (recipe below).

Cream Cheese Frosting

1 lb. cream cheese, softened
4 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted
2 sticks butter, softened
1 tsp. vanilla

1. With an electric mixer, combine cream cheese, sugar and butter, until incorporated. Increase speed to high and mix until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. (Scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula.)
2. Reduce speed of mixer to low. Add vanilla; raise the speed to high and mix briefly, until fluffy (scrape down bowl occasionally).
3. Before using, store in refrigerator until somewhat stiff. May be stored in refrigerator for three days.

Honey Baked Ham

1 boneless ham
1 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup honey, molasses syrup or Coke
2 tsp. dry mustard
1 can pineapple rings (optional)

Basting Sauce:

1 cup brown sugar
1 tsp. dry mustard
1 cup orange juice

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.
2. Place ham on a rack in a shallow roasting pan, fat side up. Bake ham unglazed until thermometer reads 130 F or until 1 hour before the ham is done.
3. Prepare for glazing by scoring the outside fat in a diamond pattern, cutting 1/4-inch deep slashes with a sharp knife.
4. Combine brown sugar with honey, syrup or Coke and the mustard. Mix well. If desired, add pineapple rings. Spread glaze over outside of ham. Finish baking for 1 hour, brushing, if you wish, every 15 minutes with basting sauce. Let ham rest.

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