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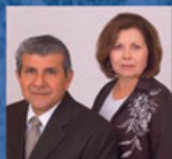
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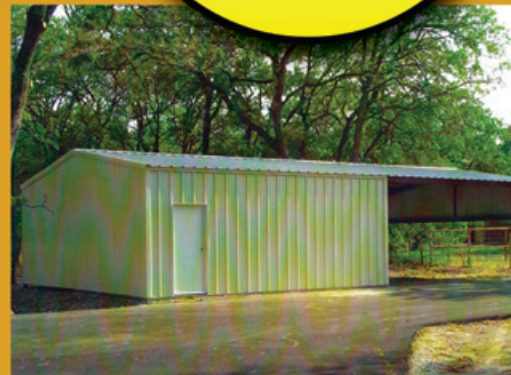
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ON THE COVER



Matthew and Heidi Perkins
dress their table with a bit of
traditional charm.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Merry Christmas, Everyone!

Golly, where has 2013 gone? Although the time has passed in a blur, I realize it's been 12 months of immeasurable blessings. Just a few days ago, Easton celebrated his second birthday, and nowadays he lets himself be heard in sentences consisting of at least three words. Zane, who will soon be 3 months old, finds his thumb to be quite yummy in-between feedings. Thus far, being their granny has been the highlight of my life, let alone my year.

So much so, that I'm already looking forward to the memories we're going to make in 2014. We'll share trips to the pond to continue feeding the resident ducks. We'll paint pictures and mold things with Play-Doh. We'll plant flowers and step on spiders. We'll bake cookies and eat lots of candy. We'll do all those things that little boys do when visiting their granny!

Sandra

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ELVES IN ACTION

— By Sandra Strong

Some people are just born with it — that heartfelt desire to give back to those in need. Members of the Gold Wing Road Riders Association, a motorcycle club with a mission, are some of those people who see a need and work diligently all year long to make holiday dreams come true for the children and teens in the community. Lee and Linda Gravley and Bob and Sue Tompkins are two couples within the group who have found their calling on the second Saturday of December. “There’s a great need for what we do,” Lee

said, referring to the association’s annual toy drive held on the Citizens National Bank parking lot directly across the street from Waxahachie High School. “If we didn’t do this, CASA wouldn’t get the quantity of items they need to make Christmas a happier time for so many children in Ellis County. We see a need, and we enjoy helping fill that need.”

“We’ve found a great majority of people want to give back,” Linda added, “but they aren’t sure how. The toy drive gives them an option.”



N



"The spirit of giving, is huge."



Under the leadership of Rhodie Rawls, Court Appointed Special Advocates is a nonprofit organization focusing on improving the lives of children in the county who have been neglected or abused. The group depends on the giving spirits of those in the motorcycle association. Without them, it would be nearly impossible to bring holiday



cheer to the ever-growing number of children in need within the community. "Everything we do all year long is filtered through Rhodie," Sue said. "She knows best how to disburse the toys and cash donations we receive, not only on that Saturday, but throughout the entire year leading up to the annual toy drive."

Lee and Linda have been giving back

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in one way or another for 21 years, while Bob and Sue have only been in the motorcycle club for a couple years. As for CASA, this will be the seventh consecutive year the GWRRA has banded together to help the local nonprofit organization. "Donations come in all year long," Bob explained. "The toy drive is for children birth to age 18. We don't want to forget the teens, so a good bit of the cash donations we receive goes toward gift cards for the older children."

No doubt, both couples enjoy the wind in their faces and the scenery along the way as they travel on their trikes (three-wheeled motorcycles). "Riding gets in the blood," Lee stated. "You either love it or you don't. If you love it, you can't get enough of it. It all depends on the person."

"Until Bob bought the trike, I wouldn't ride," Sue admitted. "Now, we ride everywhere together."

And ride they do — every chance they get. Bob and Sue's longest trip has been to Kerrville, Texas, while Lee and Linda have travelled as far as Fox River, Illinois. "Our first long trip took six weeks from start to finish," Lee remembered.

But, both couples absolutely love what they see and hear during the toy drive. Volunteering for the event is something neither couple plans on missing, as long as they are able to ride and brave the sometimes inclement weather. The



Lee and Linda Grayley and Bob and Sue Tompkins wouldn't miss a toy drive for anything.



passion for what they do is apparent in the excitement they exude as they retell stories from last year's event.

Linda doesn't recall a drop in giving, even when the recession hit several years ago. "People seemed to give more during what some would consider a tough time," Linda said. "It's also heartwarming to see kids come with toy donations. One little boy brought a soccer ball because soccer was his favorite sport. Several little girls donated Barbie dolls and makeup. They give what they themselves love most."

"The spirit of giving is huge," Bob added. "People do give all year long, but it seems as if they give so much more during the annual toy drive."

People driving by grab what change they have, while children show up for

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**“People
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come with toy
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the event with piggy banks under their arms. “They donate money they have saved all year,” Sue said with emotion. “Some families are giving back what they received. They are paying it forward.”

“Last year, a pizza delivery guy stopped by several times during the day to donate the tips he made,” Linda shared.

“We also bought bicycles last year,” Sue recalled. “That was one of the big items needed to fill the wishes. We receive whatever the need is, because those giving make it happen.”

“People must feel sorry for us,” Lee said with a laugh. “We stand out in any kind of weather — sleet, rain, wind, freezing temperatures and even pretty weather.”

Lee, Linda, Bob and Sue may be givers with big hearts, but they are also on the receiving end of the Christmas season and the wonderful spirit the toy drive brings out in others. Bob can hardly contain his emotions as he remembered several people who made donations last year. “I had my Army hat on my head,” Bob said. “As people dropped off their donations, I would tell them, ‘Thank you.’ At least five people extended their thanks to me because of my past military service. Their comments made me feel good.”

Anyone can help during the toy drive. Rhodie usually brings her family and



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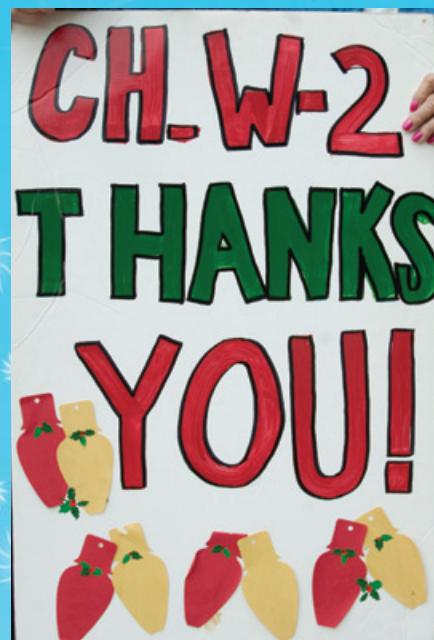
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several of her friends and staff members. "Some help out for about an hour," Lee stated, "while others stay all day."

When the day of the annual event begins, the trailers are empty. But, it doesn't take long for them to be packed to overflowing with toys and items for the older children. And they can be packed to overflowing many times throughout the day. "Events the size of the toy drive happen so much easier when a group is involved," Sue stated. "You do it one time, and you're hooked."

What inspires couples like Lee and Linda and Bob and Sue to get involved in such a worthwhile undertaking? "Back in the days when we were young, we took care of ourselves, with nothing extra to give back to others," Sue explained, as the other three nodded in agreement. "We know what it's like not to have a lot, so giving to others now because we are able to is why we do what we do."

They realize the toy drive would not happen without the continued dedication of club members, Rhodie and her staff from CASA and most importantly, the overall public. Everybody involved with the event has an integral part to play, and it takes everyone doing their part for the drive to be a success year-after-year. "Ellis County is filled with so many caring, giving individuals who aren't aware of a need until they are made aware of a need," Linda said.

"Sometimes," Lee added, "the giving is as simple as a hot cup of coffee on a cold Saturday in December." **NOW**



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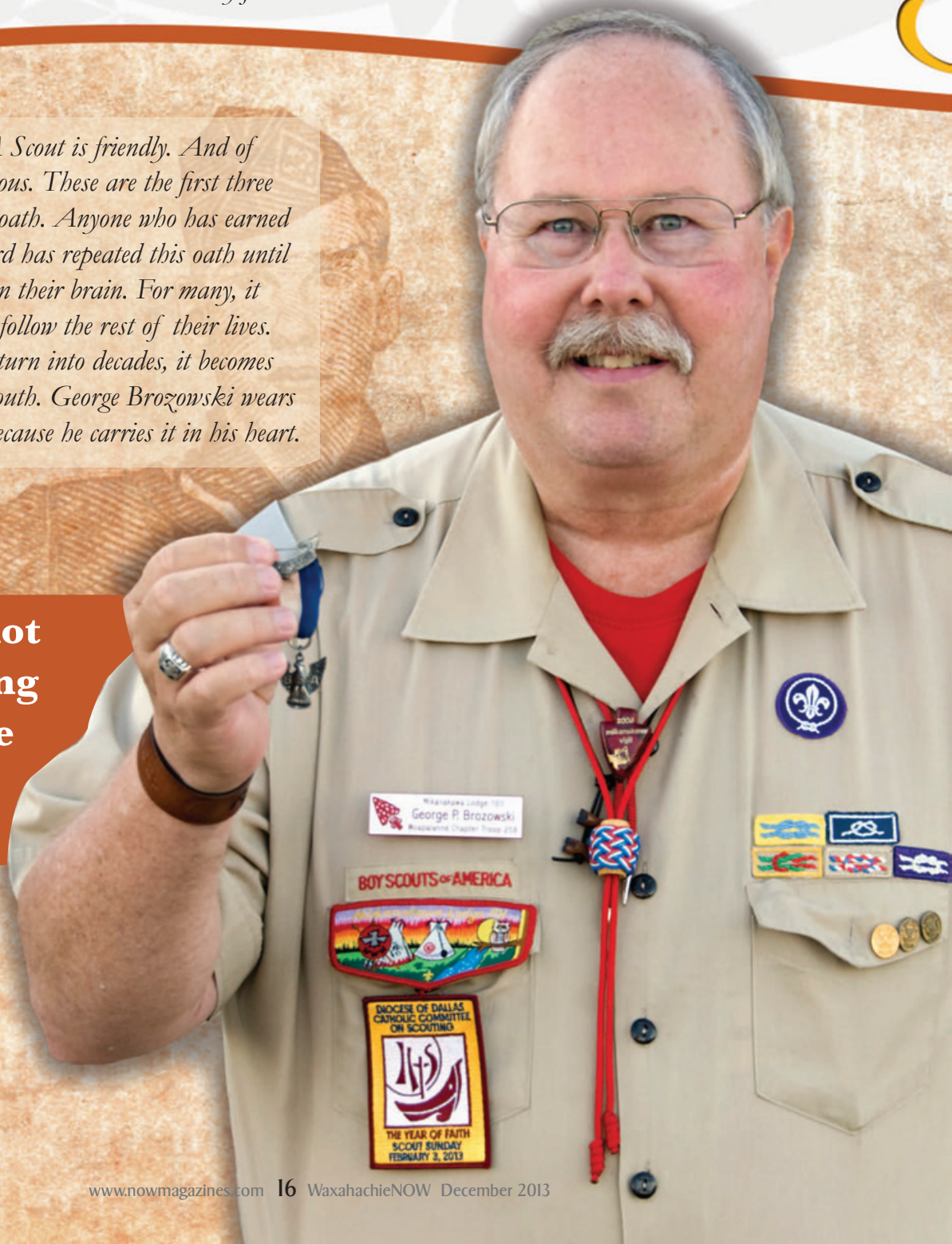


Once an Always an Eagle

— By Jon Peeler

A Scout is helpful. A Scout is friendly. And of course, a Scout is courteous. These are the first three points to the Boy Scout oath. Anyone who has earned their Eagle Scout Award has repeated this oath until it's etched permanently in their brain. For many, it becomes a compass they follow the rest of their lives. For others, as the years turn into decades, it becomes just a voice from their youth. George Brozowski wears the oath on his sleeve, because he carries it in his heart.

“We’re not just making men. We’re making leaders.”



gle

George's experience with scouting began like most. "My dad was the leader of Pack 29 in upstate New York," George said. "My brother was in Cub Scouts. It looked like a lot of fun, and I didn't want to miss out."

And so began what would become a lifelong passion for George. "We had a great scoutmaster. His name was Stanley Mikrut," George shared. "I don't think he ever knew the affect or influence he had on all of us boys." With Mr. Mikrut, George and the rest of Troop 29 grew into men while hiking the Appalachian Trail and learning leadership skills from the great leaders around them.

Sadly, Mr. Mikrut passed away shortly before George received his Eagle Scout Award, but he was never forgotten. "I remember looking up and saying, 'This is for you,'"

George said, clearly emotional about the man who had been such an example.

For most Scouts, earning the rank of Eagle Scout is a well-deserved end to a long and sometimes hard trail. George didn't know it at the time, but for him it was just the beginning.

"I guess I was about 20 years old at college when I heard that my old troop didn't have any adult



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leaders who could get off work to take the boys to Scout camp. That just wasn't acceptable, and I couldn't let it happen," George remembered.

So George became involved in spreading the program that had given him so much. "I was dating my future wife at the time, and I remember sitting in my tent reading the love letters she would send during that first leadership experience."



As George started a family, his bond with scouting seemed to grow along with his children. Over the years, he performed tasks ranging from troop committee chair to den leader to Cub Master. His job with the government working for the EPA also grew. This responsibility eventually moved George to a new position at the Dallas office and a new home in Waxahachie.



But Scouts across the country are all the same. They all need willing adults to make the program possible, and George just wouldn't be George if he wasn't involved. "I went through Wood Badge, the most intense adult leader training Scouts offers not long after I moved to Waxahachie," George said. And there was never any lack of opportunities to put that training to use.

A common thought indicates that in most organizations, 80 percent of the work is done by 20 percent of the people. Scouting is no different. The more George became involved, the more was asked of him. But a Scout is helpful. A Scout is cheerful. George gladly worked at each task with the attention and enthusiasm it deserved.



"People who aren't involved in scouting don't get it. But people who are see it right away. We're not just making men. We're making leaders," George explained. "Leadership

comes easy for our boys, because we've made them do it. The adult leaders don't really lead. We design a quality program. We make sure it's safe, and then it's the older boys' job to lead and get the younger boys ready for when their time comes."

This strategy has paid off for scouting time and again for many years. "Part of what made men like Neil Armstrong

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such good leaders," George said, "is that they started working at it when they were 14-year-old first-class Scouts."

Not long after George came to Waxahachie, he helped area troops by sitting on Eagle Scout review boards. The review is the final step and hurdle for boys hoping to achieve scouting's highest award. That board is usually made up of volunteers from across Ellis County. Most members are scoutmasters, and a qualified Eagle Scout is always a welcome addition. "When I first started sitting in on Eagle boards, Larry Candy over in Ennis was our district advancement chairman. I learned a lot from Larry about the purpose of the process I hadn't ever noticed as a youth," George admitted.

Anyone who has ever met Larry knows how giving he is with his time and energy to his community and the people in it. But sadly, failing health forced Larry not necessarily to stop his activity, but at least pace himself a little better. So the district calling Ellis County home found itself in need of a new advancement chair. Luckily, they had the perfect man in their midst. "I took over as the advancement chair from Larry in 2005," George remarked.

Part of that responsibility includes helping Scouts form a plan for their Eagle Scout project — a community service project every Scout plans and executes under his own direction. Just about everyone who has earned their Eagle Scout Award in Ellis County in the last 10 years has met George.

Some people may have difficulty understanding why George spends so much time working with these kids. But George knows exactly why. According



to government reports, 181 of the men who have traveled to space were Eagle Scouts, 16.3 percent of West Point cadets are Eagle Scouts and 18 current state governors and 189 sitting members of Congress are Eagle Scouts. A Baylor University study found that Eagle Scouts were 56 percent less likely to drink on a regular basis, and 58 percent were more likely to exercise at least 30 minutes a day.



The same study showed that Eagle Scouts were 56 percent more likely to work on community improvement projects, and 92 percent were more likely to become involved in environmental projects.

Will any of the over 400 boys George has helped on their path to Eagle Scout become a congressman or a governor? Who knows? But George, who firmly believes that once you're an Eagle Scout you're always an Eagle Scout, has helped prepare them for whatever path they will walk as adults. **NOW**

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Whimsy

By Carolyn Wills



Matthew and Heidi Perkins' home, a treat on any day, is especially delightful during the holidays. The historic, prairie-style dwelling was built in 1902 and, oh my, what a life it's had. Before Matthew and Heidi purchased it almost 17 years ago, it had known prestige and prominence, servitude and abandonment, rescue and renovation. It had been loved, treasured, neglected and nearly demolished. Today, wrapped in Heidi's holiday finery, the two-story, single-family home stands tall and bold, like the beautiful gift it is.

"It has a life of its own," Heidi smiled. "The home lives and breathes, and it is our honor to be tending to it." During their tenure, Matthew and Heidi have transformed the nearly 4,000-square-foot home into a work of art reflective of its heritage and of this family's warmth, joy and humor.

"Originally, it was built as a four-square with four rooms off of a central hallway on both floors," Matthew explained. "Sometime later, it became a modified L with an addition to



AT HOME WITH Matthew and Heidi Perkins

the back, and then, in the 1930s, it was a boarding house.” By the mid-1950s, the house had fallen on hard times. In 1960, after standing vacant for five years, it was mercifully saved from the wrecking ball and reconverted to a single-family dwelling. “We purchased it in 1997,” Matthew said. “By then, previous owners had done a lot of physical reconstruction over the years, and it had great bones. But, as is often the case with older homes, it needed work. Heidi and I were young and poor and thought we could ‘do it ourselves,’ until we quickly realized the need and expense for the right tools, plus the skills to use them!”

Matthew and Heidi met in Denver, Colorado, in 1990 at their first post-college jobs. “I have a degree in food nutrition, and Matthew’s degree is in history,” Heidi said. “We were hired by the same restaurant. Within six weeks, we were engaged.” They married in 1991,



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and by 1997, Matthew had built his true career path in the oil business. "That's when we moved to Texas," she said.

Matthew, the fifth generation in his family from New Orleans, but the fourth generation to be born there, first moved to Dallas when he was in the fifth grade. Heidi grew up on a farm in the panhandle of western Nebraska. As they prepared to head for Texas, Heidi was done with life in the big city. Waxahachie proved to be a perfect solution, close enough for Matthew to commute and small enough for Heidi to love. Discovering their prairie-style home was the icing on the cake.



"When we moved to Waxahachie, our oldest son, JJ, was 3 years old and our youngest son, Hank, was still a baby," Heidi said. "Our daughter, Katie Belle, was born in 1999." Their first 12 years in the home were largely devoted to the children and to Matthew's career. "We made a lot of decorative changes by painting, wallpapering and with the furnishings," she added. "We both wanted a red dining room." Their first investment in furniture was the dining

room buffet. "I love colored ceilings and shades of plum, red and gold," Heidi said. She also enjoys transforming bargains from estate sales and antique shops. "I like mixing period materials with new." Her designer's taste and bent for whimsy can be seen in the stately period pieces in the dining room shared with the occasional ceramic flying pig, Snow White's dwarfs and an umbrella stand turned into a bar cart.

"The major changes didn't happen



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until about five years ago," Matthew explained. "Our policy is no new debt. We pay cash, so we waited until we could afford the big projects." When that day arrived, Matthew christened it as the five-year continuous renovation project. "First, we completely gutted the kitchen," he said.



Heidi designed the new look and found just the right tradesmen to gloriously fulfill her vision. "The kitchen is my favorite room," she said. "It took 18 months to complete, and each piece is custom-made. Eric Davis, of Palmer, renovated the kitchen, while Matt Rigeway, of Waxahachie, handled all the other interior and exterior renovations."

"In 2010, we converted the attic into a media space. It became the amalgamation of silliness that I call the Humpus Bumpus Rumpus Room or HBRR for short," Matthew grinned. That project involved the addition of a staircase. "Then, in the summer of 2011, we took a big step and added a 50-by-25 pool and carport."

Today, Matthew is regional land manager for the Exxon Mobil Corp. subsidiary, XTO Energy, in Fort Worth. JJ is a sophomore at Texas Christian University where he is studying film, TV, digital media and journalism. Hank is a senior at Waxahachie High School, and Katie Belle is a freshman at Waxahachie Ninth Grade. Heidi is in demand as a baker, decorator and craft-maker. "I do all kinds of odd jobs," she smiled. "One week I'll have three cake jobs, and the next I'll be baking, icing and delivering 550 cookies to the Fort Worth Zoo for a charity event."

Among the connections that first brought Matthew and Heidi together is their passion for Christmas. "We love the season," Matthew said. "Heidi starts decorating on November 1 and is done

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by December 1 and, each year, we add more tubs of decorations. When we moved in, I think we had 36 tubs and, at last count, we were at 50."

"It's a joy for me to open the tubs every year," she smiled. As they are emptied, trees and themes fill every room. The already dramatic foyer becomes more striking in black, white and gold, and the living room is filled with Santa Clauses and Grinches. The HBRR room is a Candy Land of lollipops and choo-choos, and somewhere, there is a *Wizard of Oz* tree. JJ has a *Star Trek* tree; Hank's is trains; and Katie Belle's is "all girl." The kitchen is stocked with holiday dishes, cookbooks, canisters above the French doors and a giant ceramic gingerbread house on the center island with kitchen ornaments hanging from the chandelier.

"The home lives and breathes, and it is our honor to be tending to it."

"For our annual Christmas party, I cook and cook, and people come and go from 6:00 p.m. until midnight," Heidi said. "The house fills with people, food and Christmas." Also attending are the Perkins' cats, Annie and Jingle Belle, and the dogs, Gracie, a Blue Heeler, and Max, an Aussie mix, who may be dressed as Santa and Mrs. Claus.

Whimsy, beauty, art, history and love are reflected in every room and every inch of the Perkins' home. The once prairie-style house is now this family's forever home and, without a doubt, 50 tubs of Christmas will soon not hold it all. **NOW**

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Jon birthed the idea for the fun run after hearing about a similar 5K held in Las Vegas where about 10,000 people participate each year. He was inspired to start a tradition that could be just as big and just as momentous, but for *his* community. Jon, who is a Waxahachie native, worked for the Greater Flint YMCA in Michigan where he helped organize the YMCA Santa Fun Run. Over a span of three years, he played an integral role in guiding the event from humble beginnings to wonderful things. Jon watched in amazement as the event grew from about 400 participants in 2010 to over 2,500 in 2012. The

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run has become an annual event in Flint, Michigan, and has grown in such magnitude that it now receives press coverage from the local TV networks. "After we moved here, I thought, *Why not bring the Santa run here, too? Why not offer something festive and gratifying, so families can be together and enjoy the holiday in a fun way?*"

With the collaborative assistance of Jessica Chambliss, the organization's event chairperson, the duo hopes for the same results here in Texas. The communitywide holiday event is for all ages and all areas of Ellis and surrounding counties. Their shared vision for the event is only the beginning of these co-workers' commonalities. Family and tradition are two of the most important things in life for them both.

Jessica is married to James, and they have two children, Davin and Christopher. "Our family traditions actually start on Thanksgiving day when all of the Christmas sale ads are out," Jessica admitted. "The kids gather at the table and cut out what they want to make their Christmas wish lists. We also bake and decorate cookies for Santa on Christmas Eve. It's fun and meaningful for us because we do it every year."

Jon is married to Rachel, and they have three children, Baylee, Payton and Royce. "Our annual family traditions include serving meals at a local soup kitchen, attending a Christmas Eve Candlelight Service and reading about the birth of Christ in Luke 2 before opening presents on Christmas morning," Jon shared.



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So, it is only expected for the pair to bring the 5K Santa Run to Waxahachie. They want to share their love of family and tradition with their community. They want to give something back that people can adopt as a memorable and enjoyable holiday ritual. Not a runner? Concerned about the distance? No worries! "This fun, family event will feature participants running or walking in full Santa costumes in either the 5K or 1-mile format," Jon explained. "The 5K Santa Run is designed to be a fun-filled event for community members of all sizes, ages and fitness levels."

Through dedication and collaboration, Jessica and Jon have reached out to

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community leaders and businesses to get the first event off and running. They were amazed by the amount of positive support they received from those contacted. "The city's convention bureau, especially Laurie Mosley, has been fantastic," Jessica stated. "We could not have done this without their support and her help. The city has really opened up resources to us, and that has been so amazing."

What makes this 5K unique? Well, each participant will receive a five-piece Santa suit consisting of a hat, beard, coat, pants and belt to wear during the race. Participants are encouraged to decorate and accessorize their suits to add to the cheerfulness of the day. Those bringing small children in strollers are also encouraged to decorate and accessorize the children and their strollers. The more the merrier!

Even though the event will be chip timed, the emphasis is on family, friends and festive fun. Participants will receive a chip to track their progress. "It is a great opportunity to get out and do something you will never forget," Jon said. "Practice your ho-ho-ho and come enjoy the camaraderie of the event."

The hustle and bustle of the event will feature much more than the 5K run/walk. A contest will be held for those with the best decorated Santa suits and strollers, so bust out the tinsel and trimmings. Medals will be awarded to those who place at the top of their running category. City Mayor John Wray will also be involved, acting as the honorary Santa overseeing and



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participating in the occasion. Santa's workshop will also be recreated on-site for the joy and delight of all in attendance.

Before the actual race, the local businesses that have helped sponsor the event will participate in a mascot race. Mrs. Claus will be hosting a Zumba-thon, allowing everyone the chance to shake their jingle bells, while doing the Jingle Bell Rock. Additionally, kids of all ages will have the chance to make their very own bag of reindeer food. There will also be a station where they can write a letter to Santa Claus divulging all their Christmas wishes, bounce houses, jovial photo opportunities and much, much more. And at the end of the race, everyone will be served milk and cookies.

"This event isn't about fundraising or charity, it's about us giving something back to the community," Jessica explained. "It's about creating a time for families to celebrate and spend time together. It's about having fun and making memories." So whether you are on the naughty or the nice list, come out and enjoy the tons of jolly-good fun perfect for all ages. **NOW**

For preregistration and event details, visit www.ymcadallas.org/locations/waxahachie/5k_santa_run/.

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Yuletide CHEER

— By Sandra Strong

Do you need activities to fill the long, cold winter evenings and weekends leading up to Christmas day? We may have the answer in the Christmas crafts featured in this month's edition. We hope they fill your home with lots of holiday warmth and cheer.



TWEET TREE

This holiday craft idea is a bit messy, but children will love watching neighborhood birds devour the three ornaments they have created. And who knows? They may even see a squirrel or two.



Finished example of popcorn garland.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY

- 2 small pkgs. microwave popcorn
- Heavy thread
- Scissors
- Needle
- 3-5 medium oranges, refrigerated
- Paring knife
- Twisted jute twine
- Peanut butter
- Kitchen knife
- Bird seed
- 3-5 pine cones



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4

HOW TO DO IT. ▼

1. Make popcorn garland

by popping the corn per package instructions. Allow to cool. Using double thread cut at a length of your choosing, string popcorn.

2. Make orange swirls

by cutting a swirl pattern in oranges with a paring knife starting from the navel. Make sure to cut deep enough to reach the pulp. For safety, parents of younger crafters will need to do the cutting. If the swirls break, don't worry. You will just have more swirls for your tree.

3. Carefully pull or cut pulp from peel. Remove navel to make hole.

4. Thread twine through hole to complete hanger. If the peel breaks, a hole will need to be made with the paring knife in the pieces without a navel. Make sure loop in twine is large enough for the swirl to hang freely from the tree limb.



Step 5

5. **Smear peanut butter** on white side of peeled swirl. Sprinkle heavily with bird seed.



6. **Make Peanut butter pine cone** by tying twine to the top of the pine cone to make hanger.

7. **Generously dot** the tips of the pine cone with peanut butter. Sprinkle heavily with bird seed.



Steps 6-7

8. **Decorate** an outdoor tree with your bird-friendly ornaments and then watch the birds enjoy eating what you've created.





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Thinning and Lifting your tree is important because it:

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MANGER ORNAMENT

Children learn the reason for the season using a few items that can easily be found around the house. The completed ornament will be a Christmas keepsake for years to come, or several can be crafted at one time to give as gifts.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: EASY TO MEDIUM

- 38 toothpicks
- 1 piece tag board (2 5/8x2 1/8 inches in size)
- Craft glue
- Scissors
- 2 dry butter beans
- 3 dry black-eyed peas
- Cool melt hot glue
- 1 yellow button shaped like a star
- 3-inch length twisted jute twine

HOW TO DO IT. ▼

1. Attach 32 toothpicks to the tag board using craft glue. The tag board may need to be trimmed on one side depending on size of toothpicks. Let dry.



Step 2

2. Create manger by attaching the remaining toothpicks in a triangle, two picks to each side, using craft glue. Let dry.

3. Create Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus by attaching beans using cool melt hot glue as shown in photo for steps 3-4. Hot glue button in place. Let dry.

4. Glue looped twine to back to complete ornament. Hang on the family tree or use as a package decoration.

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Steps 3-4

FRAMED WREATH

This can be an alternative to the traditional holiday wreath. When complete, it will make a unique piece you may choose to keep for yourself or share with someone special. There are so many ways to embellish your frame. Your imagination is your only limitation.

DIFFICULTY LEVEL: MEDIUM

- Wood picture frame, size optional
- Spray paint, color of your choice, (optional)
- 3-5 yds. wired holiday ribbon
- Scissors
- Floral wire
- Wire cutters
- Cool melt hot glue
- Ornamental embellishments, (size and number used, optional)
- Twisted jute twine

HOW TO DO IT. ▼

1. Create foundation for wreath by painting frame. It's best to spray two light coats to keep paint from running. You can also use a decorative frame that doesn't need to be painted. Both examples are pictured.



Step 1

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Step 2



Step 4

2. Make bow by folding ribbon end-over-end into layers. The length of the layers will depend on the size of bow desired. More layers will make a fuller bow. Longer lengths will make a larger bow. Leave a longer length on the first and last fold to make the tails of the bow.

3. Create the center of the bow with floral wire. Twist the wire tightly around the center of the layers several times to secure. To form center knot, take the longest tail and wrap it around the center. Tie to the shorter tail in back of bow. Make sure wire is still accessible. Fluff ribbon. Cut tails evenly to complete.

4. Attach bow to frame using the wire, making sure to cut any excess wire with wire cutters. Reinforce with hot glue if desired.

5. Add finishing touches to wreath using ornaments, photos, Christmas cards and/or holiday embellishments.



Step 5

6. Make hanger from twine and attach to the back of frame with hot glue. Hang completed wreath on your front door or display on a wall or mantel in your home. **NOW**





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FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Investing in the patient experience is paramount for Ellis County Family Dentistry.

— By Sandra Strong

Seth Atkins, DDS, owner of Ellis County Family Dentistry, can't pinpoint a single downside to being a dentist. "There's *not* a downside," he stated. "I love coming to work. Each day is exciting and fun. When I first decided on dentistry, did I really understand the big picture? No, probably not, but looking back I know it's all been worth it. I'm blessed."

Born and reared in Lubbock, Texas, Dr. Atkins is the first in his family to pursue a career in a medical field. Knowing early on that he didn't want to sit behind a desk, he followed his younger brother's prompting to do something different. "I researched and decided to go into dentistry," Dr. Atkins shared. "What appealed to me was the ability to enhance not only oral health, but a patient's self-esteem as well."

Dr. Atkins attended and played tennis for Texas Tech University. He was then accepted into dental school at the prestigious University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, where he was awarded a Doctor of Dental Surgery degree. He spent the next five years practicing in Azle, Texas. His education and prior experience more than prepared him to take the helm at Ellis County Family Dentistry in March of this year. "I love the small-town atmosphere Waxahachie offers," he admitted. "The practice was well-established at the time I came in, and nine months later, it's thriving."

Continuing education is mandated by the state, but Dr. Atkins goes above and beyond the hours required. "The requirement is 12 hours of continuing education, but I average over 100 hours

per year. It's important to me to know the latest techniques and provide the most up-to-date materials available to my patients. The capabilities we have now, in comparison to 15 to 20 years ago, are drastically improved." For Dr. Atkins, modern science makes the process of learning fun, and staying on top of the latest technology is very important to a successful practice.

Having the ability to make functional changes that also enhance overall self-esteem for patients brings a smile to Dr. Atkins' face. "Your teeth and smile are one of the first things people notice," he explained. "Ellis County Family Dentistry offers options that weren't available 20

"What appealed to me was the ability to enhance not only oral health, but a patient's self-esteem as well."

years ago." Sedation dentistry is one of the choices patients can request to make the visit less intimidating. "Patient comfort is my first concern," he continued. "A visit to the dentist doesn't have to be a bad experience. Trust plays a huge role in making patients feel comfortable and at ease."

As the only dentist on-site, Seth welcomes the expertise of his staff members, all of whom remained after he came into the practice. Two hygienists, two dental assistants and three front office personnel complete the group with the passion for the patients they serve. "Seeing people's dreams come to fruition is the most fulfilling aspect of what we do here at Ellis County Family Dentistry," Dr. Atkins admitted. "We are honored with the opportunity we've been given to help patients enhance their health, appearance and self-esteem through their smiles." **NOW**



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Merry Christmas



Lions Club members Kent McGuire, Clint Almand, Julissa Martinez and Kathy Rodrigue provide refreshments during the Mini Grand Prix event.



Jeb Stokes and Kenneth Sheffield take advantage of a day off to play Frisbee golf.



Jennifer Pope is all smiles after completing the NYC Marathon.



Maypearl Junior Cheerleaders Tabitha Talley and Aubree Carpenter wait to be seated at the Pie Peddlers shop in Glen Rose.



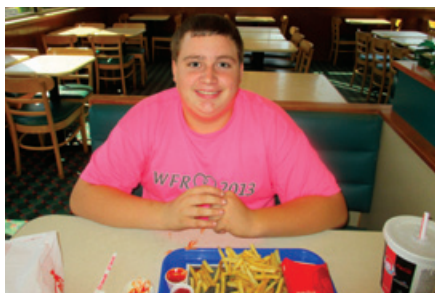
Members of Maypearl Cub Scout Pack 449 and Maypearl Girl Scout Troop 2343 are enthralled by the Air Evac Lifeteam helicopter.



The Athletics are well represented at Twin Day at Felty Elementary.



Ray Bates shares his craft of wooden rocking horses with customer Jeremy Robinson during the Bob Phillips weekend event.



While eating lunch at Wendy's, WHS senior Cameron Dawson supports cancer awareness by wearing his pink Waxahachie Fire Department shirt.



The weather is perfect for racers during the Lions Club Mini Grand Prix.



Helen Skoda ziplines into her 80th year as she marks one more daring thing off her bucket list.

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End-of-year Car Buying Secrets Revealed

When it comes to car shopping, timing is everything. Many car buyers try to time their purchases in order to get the best deal. If you need to buy a car in the near future, you're in luck. November and December are the best months of the year to buy. Why?

The new models are here.

New year models have usually hit the lots by October. Any time new models are announced the dealers are anxious to clear the showroom of older models, so they may be very willing to sell at a discount. Right now, you can get a brand new 2013 car for a steal, just because that 2014 model is on the lot right next to it. Expect even more of a discount if the car you've been eyeing was redesigned for 2014.

Dealers and manufacturers need to move cars now.

Most dealers are trying to hit end-of-year goals and quotas, and many manufacturers are offering dealerships incentives to move this year's models or slower-selling models off the lot. Because dealerships are trying to make room for the new inventory, this often creates a great deal of price flexibility. Since outgoing models may be in short supply — and dwindling as the year ends — your selection may be limited. But manufacturers quite frequently offer their highest rebates on lingering models, bringing their prices down even further. If you can wait until the end of December, you may really give yourself a great holiday present.

People are shopping for sales.

Black Friday, Cyber Monday and the day after Christmas open the floodgates for shoppers all over the United States. People are



off work and ready to spend money. Dealerships know this and will typically offer some great deals on these holiday weekends.

Bottom line, shopping for a car can be tedious, but remember to take your time through this process. Timing your big purchase can save you hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars on your next car. **NOW**

Aaron Penny is the branch manager at the Neighborhood Credit Union in Waxahachie.

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Gifts for Christmas or Any Other Time!

It's Christmas again and time to think about something special for your gardening friends. Through the years, I have suggested lots of common and not-so-common items. Some of these have been on the lists before, but those of us who garden wear out some things quite often — like gloves and tarps. Tool sharpeners, like an All-in-1 sharpener, rubber boots and tool belts have a longer life, if I don't leave them on a project site! I've had to replace my rain gauges this year, since they have yellowed and cracked with age. I received two new ones for Christmas last year, and I love them! They are shaped so they magnify the numbers making them easier to read. Great for my older eyes!


A great gift is a rain barrel or two. Many cities give classes several times a year that include instruction, barrel and nozzles for a very reasonable fee. (Waxahachie does. Call the Waxahachie Parks Department for a schedule.) If you make a rain barrel for your friend, it takes less than a couple of hours and makes a great gift! Of course, gift certificates are always great, especially if they are for your time — to be working with them on gardening chores! One of my favorite gifts this year was a set of long handled tools. When I say long, I mean almost 3 feet! They have eliminated some of the bending which helps my staying

power. My handy-dandy carpenter's belt with all those pockets has been another much used item. I didn't realize how often I put my clippers, diggers and other items down and then bent over to pick them back up until I started using the apron.

Last, but not least, is a basket specifically for gardeners. You can buy one from a catalog or make your own with seeds, gloves and diggers. Add mosquito repellant, fertilizer for flowering plants, as well as for vegetables, rain gauges, plus maybe a deep-pocketed apron, and you will have a great gift for any gardener, new or old!

My gift from myself to me this year is a new task for Master Gardeners. I will be starting some new responsibilities at the beginning of 2014, so I am going to limit my obligations other places. This means I will be giving up my space in NOW Magazines for a while. I hope to continue to write a few longer articles now and then. Don't forget the Ellis County Master Gardeners. We will be having classes in February 2014. Call the Texas AgriLife office at (972) 825-5175 to get on the mailing list for class enrollment. Have a great holiday! **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.




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A Coughing Nuisance

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Coughing, the hallmark of many respiratory diseases, can be a necessary aggravation. This is particularly true when it is a productive cough — meaning when you cough, it helps your body expel sputum or phlegm. This is beneficial, because your respiratory system needs to be cleared of any substance that hinders its performance. One of the diseases that falls into this category is bronchitis. Bronchitis is a disease that affects the mucus membranes lining the airways or bronchial tubes to the lungs. In the disease state, the tubes become inflamed or irritated and swollen. As the lining swells, the airways will narrow, making breathing more difficult. The mucus-producing cells are there to protect the bronchial tubes. But when irritated, the amount of mucus produced will increase.

Bronchitis has two forms — acute and chronic. Acute bronchitis may last for a few weeks. Chronic bronchitis may last for months or years with repeated incidences. Both forms may produce these symptoms:

Cough

Thick mucus which could be clear, white, yellow or green

Fatigue

Chest pain

Mild fever

Shortness of breath

Acute bronchitis is most often activated by viruses that affect the respiratory system. The primary culprit that causes chronic bronchitis is cigarette smoke. Second-hand smoke, industrial pollutants, air pollution, dust and toxic gases are a few of the other triggers that can cause chronic bronchitis.

Since cigarette smoke is a huge contributor to this disease, you increase your chances of becoming ill with bronchitis if you smoke. Others in your environment are also exposed to the same risk. The chemicals in the cigarette smoke will harm the cilia, hair-like structures that help move excess mucus and other irritants out of the bronchial tubes. If the exposure is frequent, over a period of time the cilia can become permanently damaged. Other risk factors include your general health, such as whether your immune system is weakened from fighting another illness. Your place of employment could put you at risk if you are exposed to irritants, pollutants or toxic substances. The elderly and infants have an increased risk, because they are more vulnerable.

Treatment will depend upon whether the bronchitis is acute or chronic. Acute bronchitis without complications can usually be treated at home. Rest, increasing your liquid intake, cough medications, expectorants and avoiding lung irritants can usually get you through an infection. Check with your physician for the best course of treatment. Chronic bronchitis will definitely require the attention of your physician. You can help yourself avoid bronchitis by washing your hands frequently — and if you smoke, please stop. That will greatly increase your chances of a good outcome. **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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December 6, 7

Waxahachie Junior Service League Christmas Market and Preview Party: **Friday**, 6:00-9:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. Friday's Preview Party will feature an exclusive shopping experience and will include cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and entry into the market on Saturday. For more information, visit www.waxahachiejls.org

December 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15

Bethlehem Revisited: 6:00-9:00 p.m., Central Presbyterian Church, 402 N. College St. Admission is free, but donations are welcome.

December 7

Christmas Parade: 10:00 a.m., downtown Waxahachie.

Tinsel & Treats: 3:00-8:00 p.m., Waxahachie Global High. Festival of trees, bake sale and much more!

December 7, 8

Trade Days of Waxahachie: Ellis County Expo Center.

December 7, 8, 14, 15

2013 Candlelight Christmas Home Tour: 2:00-8:00 p.m. Tickets: \$15, children under 12 free. For more information and a list of the featured homes, contact the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce, 102 YMCA Dr. at (972) 937-2390.

December 13 — 15

Waxahachie Community Theatre presents *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. Friday and Saturday, 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, 2:30 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium, Getzender Park. Tickets: \$10 age 5 and above. For complete information, visit www.waxahachiecommunitytheatre.com, contact the box office at (972) 646-1050 or email wct.texas@gmail.com.

December 14

YMCA 5K Santa Run: 10:00 a.m., event begins at the corner of College and Franklin streets in downtown. Activities

will be ongoing from 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. For more details and information, contact Jon McLaughlin at (972) 937-9622 or at jmclaughlin@ymcadallas.org.

Sip N Stroll: 4:00-8:00 p.m., historic downtown Waxahachie. Shop for the holidays while you sample wine provided at 12 participating merchant locations. Tickets: \$10, includes a souvenir wine glass. Space is limited. Must be 21 and have a valid driver's license.

December 21

Ryan Wilt Memorial Event: Ryan's Run and Teezy's Tourney: 8:00 a.m., Lakeview Camp and Conference Center, 5128 FM 66. Ryan's Run consists of a 5K all-terrain course or a 1-mile fun run/walk on a paved pathway. Teezy's Tourney consists of friendly games of three-on-three basketball. Proceeds for the event will go to a deserving WHS senior each year, as well as toward the building expansion at Rockett Baptist Church. Visit www.ryanwiltmemorial.weebly.com for more info.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to sandra.strong@nowmagazines.com.



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In The Kitchen With Jessy Fredrickson

— *By Sandra Strong*

Jessy Fredrickson started cooking and baking at the age of 11. As she recalls her childhood, she remembers the kitchen. “My mom always had a home-cooked meal on the table,” Jessy said. “Some of our best times happened in the kitchen with messy hands and flour in our hair.” As the appointed “cake baker,” Jessy enjoys collecting recipes from family and friends. “And I’m addicted to Pinterest!”

Her high school cooking class teacher also inspired her, which in turn developed her love for baking. Cooking has never been a chore for Jessy. She views cooking as a fun thing to do with delicious results. “I love preparing a meal or dessert and seeing others enjoy it,” she shared. “Baking relaxes me after a long day.” **NOW**

Halupki (Cabbage Rolls)

1 head cabbage
1 to 1 1/2 lbs. ground beef
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 egg
1/2 tsp. parsley
1 clove chopped garlic
1/2 dried chopped onion
1/2 cup rice, cooked
2 cans tomato soup, optional
1 Tbsp. sugar, optional
1 Tbsp. vinegar, optional
1 3/4 cups water, optional

1. Boil cabbage 10-15 minutes. Carefully remove the leaves from the head.
2. Mix the next 6 ingredients together. You can also add seasonings of choice. Form

individual balls of meat mixture. Roll them up in cabbage leaves.

3. Add some leaves of cabbage on bottom of 9x13-inch glass baking dish. Add cabbage rolls. If needed, an additional 8x8-inch glass baking dish can be used.

4. Mix remaining ingredients together. Pour over cabbage rolls. Cover; bake at 350 F for 1 hour.

Sugar Cookies

2 cups sugar
1 cup shortening
2 eggs
1 cup sour milk (add 1 tsp. white vinegar to whole milk)
2 tsp. baking soda
2 tsp. baking powder

1/4 tsp. salt
4 1/2 cups flour
1 tsp. vanilla extract
Mix-ins: chocolate chips, coconut, peanut butter chips, nuts, etc.
Food coloring of your choice

1. Mix sugar and shortening until fluffy. Stir in next 7 ingredients.
2. Divide the dough into 2-4 equal parts. Add mix-ins of your choice to make each portion a different flavor. Add food coloring to each part.
3. Drop on greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375F for 8-10 minutes.

Jalapeño and Bell Pepper Chicken

3-4 jalapeños
1 each red, yellow, green and yellow bell peppers
Cajun seasoning, to taste
Salt and pepper, to taste
2-4 chicken breasts
1/2 cup cilantro

1. Slice jalapeños. Cut bell peppers into bite-size chunks.
2. Season and butterfly chicken breasts. Place 4-5 slices of jalapeños in each piece of chicken. Sprinkle with cilantro. Close the chicken.
3. Place chicken in 9x13- or 8x8-inch baking dish. Add bell pepper chunks around the chicken. Place remaining jalapeños and cilantro on top of chicken.
4. Cover with foil. Bake at 350 F for 30 minutes until juices run clear.

Coconut Chicken

2-4 chicken breasts
2 15-oz. cans of Goya cream of coconut
1 cup coconut flakes, divided use

1. Poke holes in chicken breasts. Marinate in cream of coconut and 1/2 cup coconut flakes for at least 4 hours.
2. Sprinkle rest of coconut flakes on chicken before baking uncovered at 350 F for 30 minutes.

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit www.nowmagazines.com.



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