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Managing Editor, Becky Walker

Ennis Editor, Sandra Strong

Editorial Assistant, Rachel Smith

Writers, Debbie Durling . Jeff Irish

Melissa Rawlins. Virginia Riddle

Betty Tryon . Carolyn Wills

Editors/Proofreaders, Pat Anthony

Shannon Pfaff

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla

Artists, Kristin Bato . Morgan Christensen

Martha Macias . Brande Morgan

Anthony Sarmienta

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Director, Jill Rose

Photographer, Amy Ramirez

ADVERTISING

Advertising Representatives,

Linda Roberson . Cherise Burnett

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ON THE COVER



It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas at the Howell home.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$35 per year or \$3.50 per issue. Subscriptions should be sent to: NOW Magazines, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates or editorial correspondence, call (972) 875-3299 or visit www.nowmagazines.com.



Editor's Note

The stockings are hung ...

Some of my favorite moments during the month of December are enjoyed long after everyone else has turned in for the night. The only lights illuminating the darkness are the twinkling ones on the tree in the living room. I find peace in the tranquility of these quiet moments before the excitement of Christmas morning begins. I cherish these peaceful evenings, as I think back on the blessings of the past year — blessings that include family, friends, workmates and all those I've met in my position here at the magazine.

I gaze at the lights as they showcase the ornaments, some bought and just as many homemade, and remember the people who have added so much significance to my life. Of course, the first peeps who come to mind are my grandchildren. Without a doubt, they bring out the very best in me with their witty comebacks, vivid imaginations, never-ending energy and unconditional love. As I think about the past, I begin to look forward to the future.

... and Saint Nicholas soon will be here!

Sandra

Sandra Strong

EnnisNOW Editor

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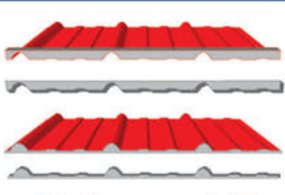
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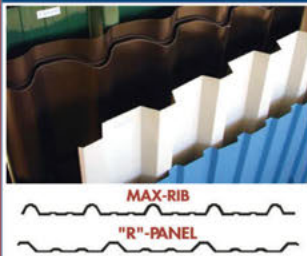
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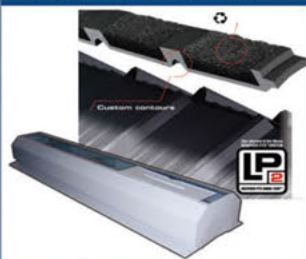
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NG MUSICAL TRADITION

— By Sandra Strong




Melanie Mitschke grew up in a family of musically inclined individuals. Her love for the arts began at a very young age, thanks in large part to those same family members. “My maternal grandfather and his brother were both Juilliard graduates. They performed duo piano concerts all over the world,” Melanie shared. “My mom was also a piano teacher.”

Her German heritage took her to many places when she was young. She vividly remembers the many times her family’s band played at the annual Wurstfest event in New Braunfels, Texas. “The band needed a trumpet player,” Melanie said with a laugh. “I was in the fourth grade when I became a member of the family band — as the trumpet player.”

With an upbringing rooted so deep in the arts, it made sense for Melanie to pursue a career that has allowed her to share her love of music with others. She began her profession as an educator of music in Austin, Texas, where she spent 10 years. After moving to Ennis, she spent three years at Ennis Junior High School, before taking 10 years off “to just be a mom” to her two sons. “This is my second year at Austin Elementary, and I’m loving every minute of it,” she admitted.

While in college, Melanie took classes that allowed her to learn “a little about the violin and a little more about the clarinet.” Upon graduation, she was educated to teach instruction on all instruments, from elementary up to the high school level. When she first entered the classroom at EJH, she went in on the fallacy that seventh- and eighth-graders would be set in their ways. “I was wrong in my assumptions,” she admitted. “They were still open to seeing themselves able to achieve greater things.”

Returning to the classroom after being home for so many years may have given Melanie cause to be just a bit anxious, but that anxiety was soon put to rest. “I do believe teaching band at the junior high level prepared me for the elementary-level students I teach today,” she stated. “I have found that both age groups thrive on structure and routines.” Once the younger students were comfortable



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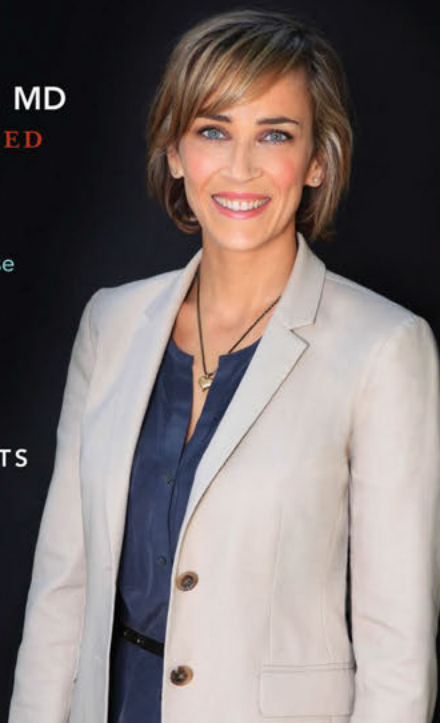
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“Every grade level performs two songs each, as they bring the Christmas spirit alive in music.”

in the classroom, their creativity grew. Teamwork and self-expression became the norm. “Coming into elementary, I was able to gain some trust,” Melanie explained. “I’ve been able to see them flourish, as they continue to grow from one level of instruction to the next.”

Challenges are expected no matter what subject is being taught. The work of a music teacher is difficult at times, but it is also equally rewarding. Keeping her young charges engaged and involved is key to the overall success garnered in the classroom. Later this month, students will perform in the annual Christmas program — the Austin Elementary Christmas Revue — to a lunchroom filled to overflowing with faculty, parents and grandparents. “Every grade level performs two songs each, as they bring the Christmas spirit alive in music,” Melanie said. “We also have students who dress up as Frosty the Snowman and as a dancing Christmas tree. Teachers love the program because it gives them time to relax and just enjoy the show.”

Students learn so much about life as they perform. It teaches them about dedication and commitment, as they see actual rewards from their hard effort and increased attentiveness. “Music, performance and the arts enhances their overall quality of life,” Melanie said, as she referred to the NAMM Foundation’s How Children Benefit from Music Education website. “They are more well-rounded individuals who gain confidence in the world around them.”

While making final preparations for the upcoming Christmas Revue, Melanie



also travels to the David Crockett Early Childhood Center daily to instruct her youngest students at the kindergarten level. Her classes rotate to participate in music twice a week for 30 minutes each time. "The program at Austin is fantastic, too," she added. "I see each student no fewer than two times per week. I'm able to teach, and they are able to learn so much more in the extra time provided for music education."

As if this doesn't keep her busy enough, Melanie also works with students who are involved with the Chime Choir and Drum Club, in an afterschool setting. "There are so many choices available in music arts," she stated, "and I want students to have as many choices as

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possible. I want them to interact in the choices that best fit them.”

Chimes are similar to hand bells, except they aren't as heavy to play, while plastic buckets from Home Depot are used in the Drum Club. “They decorate their bucket drums for the seasons, or in ways that reflect their personal tastes,” Melanie shared. “Last year, during the annual Spring Musical, they came out to a fog machine.”

As soon as classes resume from the winter holiday, Melanie will dive into preparation for the spring musical, scheduled for Thursday, April 19, 2018. Several students will vie for solo parts, while many others will play a featured part or dress in specific costumes. “The musical allows them to show their personalities,” she confessed. “Once they find their niche, they also find success.”

The future looks bright for the EISD music program. Melanie hopes to bring ukuleles to the Austin campus in the future, thanks to Donors Choose, a U.S.-based nonprofit that allows individuals to donate directly to public school classroom projects. “Ukuleles are affordable, at \$30 each, and they're the right size for their little hands,” she explained. “Once they learn just three chords, they are able to accompany themselves on thousands of songs.” **NOW**

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Dylan and BriAnn Howell's home, on any day, is bright and charming, but, at Christmastime, well, let's just say it glows. "I'm a Christmas fanatic," BriAnn grinned.

Like that special hand-picked, hand-wrapped gift, the one hidden in the closet for weeks and, then, slipped lovingly under the tree on Christmas Eve, Dylan and BriAnn's home speaks from the heart, inside and out. With a giant-sized stocking on the front door that says *Merry Christmas from the Howells* and a wooden reindeer proudly perched on the porch, there's no mistaking which house in this neighborhood of well-kept brick homes is that of this young couple who simply make the world a happier place.

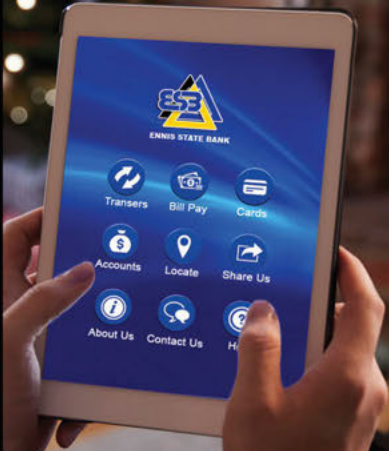


hing!

— By
Carolyn Wills


Both Dylan and BriAnn were born and raised in Ennis. Dylan works in law enforcement, and BriAnn is a receptionist at a pediatrician's office. Their fathers were once firefighters on the same shift and at the same station. On occasion, BriAnn's aunt babysat Dylan when he was young. The two dated for five years, completed educations at different Navarro College campuses, married on May 21, 2016, and settled into a 1,250-square-foot duplex. Soon, and with great anticipation, they will be welcoming the birth of their first child — their daughter, Eleanor Mae (Mae is BriAnn's

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great-grandmother's middle name). Together, Dylan and BriAnn fill their home with special things and celebrate life. They share a passion for big band music and vinyl records, all-things-family (past, present and future) and a gorgeous, albeit elusive with strangers, orange Persian-mix cat named Max. "We adopted him almost three years ago and think he's maybe 5 years old now," Dylan said.

"My family loves to decorate, especially at Christmas," BriAnn smiled. "When

Dylan and I moved into our house, pretty much everyone in the family, including my mother, sister, aunts, cousins, grandparents and great-grands, showed up to help." One very special gift was given to them by BriAnn's grandmother. She created a lovely flower garden in the front yard. "She still comes five days a week to water the flowers," BriAnn shared.

The Howells' three-bedroom, two-bath home features a relatively open-concept floorplan, with a large living room,



kitchen and adjoining dining room. Their spacious living room is a happy mixture of mission-style leather chairs gifted from BriAnn's grandparents, a large flat-screen TV, additional media-style seating, one terrific mid-century console stereo record phonograph player and a very special quilt tree handcrafted by BriAnn's grandfather. It displays quilts made by her grand and great-grandmothers. "We entertain a lot," Dylan said. "The living room is great, especially for BriAnn's family gatherings,

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which usually involve at least 25 people.”

“I really like the master bedroom,” BriAnn added. “It’s at the back of the house and has two closets and a large master bath.” It’s also the place where she and Dylan enjoy listening to old vinyl albums on a portable turntable. “People say we were born in the wrong era,” she smiled. “It’s our great-grandparents’ music, and we love it. Swing and jazz, artists like Frank Sinatra and, especially, Christmas music from that era is just the best.”

While Dylan’s favorite may be the living room and BriAnn’s the master bedroom, their small dining room is truly one for the picture book. A bright yellow 1950s-era table, once belonging to BriAnn’s great-grandparents, centers the room, while her great-grandmother’s black cabinet and her mother’s side table display heartfelt items like bridal portraits, family photos and a grandmother’s strawberry-illustrated canister set. Above



the table is a tray ceiling with can lights. Along the ceiling, crown molding mimics the wainscoting, which is repeated throughout the house. The dining room simply and beautifully captures the spirit of a family connected across generations. “Just about all our things are heirlooms, right down to the furniture,” BriAnn said.

Understandably, the couple’s home is especially festive this year and, as always, reflective of what matters most. “I take after my mother, who loves decorating for the holidays, so we started the decorating process before Thanksgiving,” BriAnn grinned.

The result is a home filled with Christmas trees, handmade ornaments, wood-crafted decorations, an occasional

meow and some of the greatest music ever recorded. "We have four Christmas trees," Dylan said. The biggest, with its red, green and brown woodsy theme, is in the living room and, this year, a smaller tree in the soon-to-be baby's room is sharing that same theme. Most dramatic



is a black tree in the master bedroom, with silver, blue and black decorations, and the guest room/office tree features a mix of nostalgia, with homemade and vintage ornaments.

Juggling schedules is something Dylan and BriAnn are well-accustomed to. "For the holidays, we plan around Dylan's schedule as a police officer," she shared. "With his family, my dad's and mom's sides and my great-grandparents, we are part of a lot of different celebrations, which can mean as many as six Christmases between December 21 and 27!"

When not at work or busy decorating for the holidays, Dylan also loves to cook. "I grew up watching my mom cook and also watching the cooking channels," he said. "I always knew I would be a public servant, but at home, I really enjoy cooking and grilling."

Whether it is with four Christmas trees, six gatherings, perfect music, wood-crafted ornaments and/or a precious new baby, it's safe to say this young couple will find ways and times to honor and celebrate family connections. For Dylan and BriAnn, being connected across generations is a part of who they are, and in a wonderful way, it's also their gift of never-ending love. **NOW**

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She started her therapy confined to a wheelchair, and after great improvement, graduated to a walker and began walking independently from her room to the therapy gym, sometimes twice a day. Mrs. Fritz stated she always enjoyed her therapy sessions and could always feel the benefits after each session.

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Reinvented Masterpieces

— By Debbie Durling

Julia Schloss is a local artist who sees beauty even in discarded items. She is a salvage artist who creates useful, whimsical objects from recycled materials. "I am the wife of the sweetest guy in the world, mom of three, mimi of five and an artist for life," she shared. She and her husband, Lee, who is a professional wind instrument musician and music teacher, live in Palmer in the cozy home that took them eight years to build. Julia's artistic talents served them well, as they used the salvaged materials of a beautiful home being torn down in Fort Worth to build their dream home.



Since moving to Palmer, Julia has worked on mosaics, murals and landscaping for their home. She continues to work with galleries in Dallas and around the country and stays busy with private commissions, as well as volunteering. Julia was taught by her grandmother to be gracious and to share her gifts with those who need help. She learned many creative and resourceful skills from her grandmother's example. She honors her grandmother's memory by donating art and workshops to several organizations throughout the year.

Her talents have become an influence in the county in which she now resides. She worked with the Ennis Public Theater and Farmers Market to create the Ennis Little Library Train. This train was built from a vintage cabinet. The cab is a recycled coffee table and the smoke stack is a vent. "It took three months to complete," Julia stated. "It is now owned and maintained by the Ennis Public Library."

She curated a three-month art show inside the gorgeous Emporium building at Ennis Avenue and Dallas Street, showing over a dozen local artists inside. She has maintained local and Dallas artists' creations on the art wall at Pop Top Coffee Shop on the historic square in Downtown Ennis across the street from the new Minnie McDowal Park owned by Mandie and Dominique Tartaglia. She takes the art from the coffee shop to Ennis State Bank, where it is on display for another two months. She is currently custom-painting a dining room suite and preparing for multiple city art projects in Dallas and Waxahachie.



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Recently, Julia signed up with Yoga 4 Love of Ovilla to learn to become a yoga teacher. She dreams of using salvage art and yoga to help people who live with autism. Another recent endeavor is an inspirational mural for the Ferris Intermediate School Gifted and Talented Program. She and the director, Michelle Beard, are planning further creative endeavors for the students participating in the program. Just as her grandmother taught her, she is sharing her talents and loves it, especially passing on her creative recycling ideas to a new generation. "I believe in using all the things we have at our disposal, rather than disposing of all our things," Julia added.

Sculptures are a specialty of Julia's. She built a 20-foot walking puppet, from recycled material, to cross the Margaret Hunt Hill Bridge a few years ago. "I often use mannequins for my art, installing lights for their heads and turning them into what I call 'mandeliers,'" she said. "They hang from the ceiling or stand independently. I mosaic, collage and paint them. I have a kind of fascination with angels, so you will see a lot of winged things in my art." These are her current works in progress for an upcoming art show in the spring. Julia is being assisted by local educator Lisa Day Schriener, who is using this experience to accrue hours to further her degrees. Together, they will curate the spring art show.

Until it closed, Julia taught a Styrofoam art class at The Women's Museum in Dallas' Fair Park. She created

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many samples for the young ladies to use as inspiration, and those samples ended up showing in the Women's Building at the State Fair. "Big Tex's Blue Jeans were a big hit," she added.

In her own home, Julia has created a shower mosaic. Each wall represents nature's elements. A tree represents earth, a sunflower represents fire and water is represented by waves and shells. The open door of the shower represents air, and she has sewn feathers to a sheer blue shower curtain to catch the breeze as it moves through the house.





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About seven years ago, *The Morning Show* on Channel 8 invited her to bring her talents to a segment of the show. She showed the viewers how to make last minute valentines from things they found lying around.

One of her most unique and useful items is the Romance Fire Starter. She takes old romance novels and triple dips them in recycled candle butts and wicks them with hemp to light. When they are thrown on the fire to get it started, the beautiful aroma of the recycled candles fills the room. "I feel so fortunate to have been able to make a living working with folks, helping them get organized and keep their homes in order. For these clients, I've accumulated piles of stuff that I've been able to use, recycle, sell and pay it forward. It is crucial in this life to be resourceful. I'm just lucky to be creative, too," Julia shared with passion and gratitude.

Because of the encouragement from her father to be herself and create the things she envisioned and the constant love of her grandmother who believed she was talented, Julia has been able to teach others the knowledge of salvaging materials into gifts for their loved ones and friends. She sees this as serious, full-circle love. **NOW**



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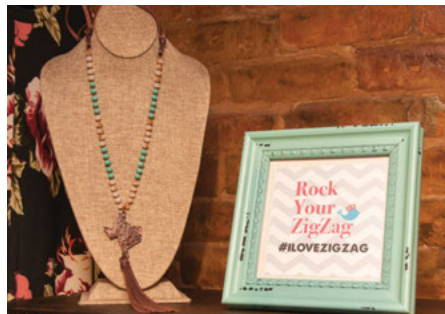


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The ZigZag Stripe offers so much more than the perfect outfit.

Beautifully Comfortable

Women of every size find affordable, boutique clothing at The ZigZag Stripe. — By Melissa Rawlins and Sandra Strong

Imagine acting on your dreams every day. Leslie Hall does. She did it four years ago, when her stay-at-home-mom habit of shopping online triggered a vision. Her desire was to design and sell apparel for the curvaceous busy woman.

In 2013, The ZigZag Stripe was launched, and the online store began selling cute, comfortable and affordable apparel out of a 10-foot-by-10-foot room in Leslie's home. Sales exploded, possibly because Leslie chose models who are everyday people like stay-at-home moms and school teachers. With the growth, the move from the space at her house to the first warehouse became real.

Realizing women wanted to touch, feel and try on the clothes, the decision was made to utilize a small space at the warehouse.

This allowed for a small store front. Not guessing that ladies would be willing to stand in line to get in, it soon became obvious that a real store front was needed.

It was not long before the first brick-and-mortar store opened in historical downtown Mansfield. Waxahachie was next, but this was not the original planned location. They had just visited another city to look at property and were headed home. The Waxahachie location came after an evening of just "passing through town," just in case there might be something available. "We literally parked and walked the square and surrounding streets. With just one peek in the windows, we knew it was the place for our second store," Leslie's mother, Susan Lindsey, said. "The hometown atmosphere, beautiful exposed brick and an

amazing staircase said this is where we had to be.”

“Our boutique makes the everyday woman feel confident and comfortable in her own skin,” Leslie said. “Everyone is fighting a battle in their life, one way or another. Having clothes that fit your body and give you a little extra confidence is one less thing you have to worry about in the world we live in today.”

Each store is also equipped with a “man chair,” or “red couch,” where husbands can relax while their wives try on clothes. “I’ve had husbands tell me, ‘I like shopping with my wife here, because she has such a good time, loves her clothes and feels so good about herself,’” Susan shared. There have even been a few naps taken by hubbies while wives shopped.

Women identify with the cheerful staff in The ZigZag Stripe, where customers get personalized help from ladies who know what looks good and feels comfortable. Next came the Denton store, which opened later that same year, in October, also in the historical downtown area.

Leslie and her husband, Joel, founded the company, but today it is truly family-operated. Johnny Lindsey, Leslie’s dad and better known as Boss Daddy, works side-by-side with Leslie on design, purchase and production. Susan, aka Boss Mama, is over the development and operation of all the brick-and-mortar stores, as well as the wholesale division, which currently sells to over 30 stores nationwide, which enjoy carrying The ZigZag Stripe brand in their stores. Jake Lindsey, Leslie’s brother, heads up the daily operations of the corporate location. Sister-in-law, Kalie Lindsey, runs the return and exchange department. And Mr. ZigZag Joel is a full-time firefighter but, in his spare time, works as the company’s chief financial officer.

“We are different because we’re family run,” Leslie said. “There isn’t another boutique out there with the amount of family, or almost family, working under one roof.” As the old saying goes, the family that works together stays together. **NOW**

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Local Santa George McCauley receives an adjustment from Dr. William Davis in preparation for the holidays.



VIP Healthcare holds a ribbon cutting and open house.



Heather Biggs and her daughter, Marley Lou Wenseson, enjoy a warm fall day at Minnie McDowal Park.



Emma R. enjoys reading a good book.



Interior Ideas host their annual Christmas open house.



Dee-Dee Gryder, principal at Crockett ECC, extends congratulations to students who were honored at the recent awards assembly.



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One of the biggest benefits provided by bonds is their ability to help you diversify a stock portfolio. Stocks and bonds often move in different directions — in fact, the same economic or political forces that can be bad for stocks might be good for bonds, and vice versa. Consequently, if you own a reasonable percentage of bonds, you may not be as vulnerable to the impact of those inevitable downturns in the stock market. Keep in mind, though, that diversification can't guarantee profits or protect you against losses.

Of course, the other major attribute of bonds is the regular income they provide through interest payments. Unless the issuer defaults — an event that's generally unlikely, assuming you purchase quality, "investment-grade" bonds — you can count on receiving the same payments for the life of your bond. Then, once your bond matures, you'll get back the original principal, again assuming the issuer doesn't default. The ability to receive regular payments may help improve your cash flow and possibly help you avoid selling stocks to meet unexpected costs, such as an expensive car repair. And holding your bond until maturity can help you plan to meet specific goals. For example, if your child will be starting college in five years, you can buy a bond scheduled

to mature at the same time, providing you with an influx of cash you can use for tuition and other school expenses.

Still, despite the benefits of diversification, steady income and the repayment of principal, you may find it hard to ignore the relatively low interest rates you're seeing on your bonds. This is especially true if market rates rise, causing the value of your bonds to fall. (Investors won't pay you the full price — that is, the face value — of your bonds when they can buy new ones issued at higher rates. So, if rates have risen and you want to sell your bonds before they mature, you'd have to offer them at a discount.)

One way of coping with interest-rate movements is to build a "ladder" of bonds of varying maturities. When your short-term bonds mature, you can reinvest the proceeds in newly issued bonds that may offer higher rates, while your longer-term bonds continue to pay you greater income. (Generally — but not always — longer-term bonds carry higher interest rates than short-term bonds.)

Even within this type of bond ladder, though, you will want to diversify your holdings among different types of bonds from different issuers. In any case, be sure to evaluate whether a bond ladder and the securities held within it are consistent with your investment objectives, risk tolerance and financial circumstances.

Don't ignore bonds when constructing and maintaining your investment portfolio. No matter what interest rates are doing, you'll find that bonds can play an important role in your portfolio. **NOW**

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Jeff Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.

Merry Christmas

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The Amazing Liver

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

The largest organ inside the body reveals remarkable regenerative properties. You can lose a majority portion of your liver, and the remaining tissue can grow into a whole organ once again. Amazing! This vital organ performs numerous functions, and without it, the body would perish.

It is located in the upper right side of the abdomen and below the diaphragm. One of its more important jobs is to remove waste products from the bloodstream by performing as a filter. Drugs, alcohol and environmental substances are just a few of the substances removed or neutralized by the liver. The liver produces and regulates cholesterol and manufactures clotting factors for the blood and other proteins. It helps to maintain the balance of hormones. Making and secreting bile and storing some vitamins and minerals are among the more well-known functions. The liver also helps to regulate blood sugar levels by storing glycogen.

There are many things you can do to keep your liver healthy. Excessive intake of alcohol is the leading cause of liver disease, so drink in moderation. Use over-the-counter medications and herbal or natural remedies with caution. Your liver still has to process these, whether they are man-made or “natural.” Even high doses of certain vitamins can be harmful. Follow your physician’s instructions on any prescribed medication. Limit or avoid any exposure to environmental hazards and toxins, such as certain cleaners and insecticides. If you

can breathe it, consume it or have it penetrate your skin, it will eventually reach your liver. So, use gloves and a mask in a well-ventilated area when handling hazardous chemicals. Try to avoid foods that are high in unhealthy fats. Hepatitis A, B and C can cause significant damage to the liver, but there are vaccines available for Hepatitis A and B. Since the virus is spread by contact with another’s bodily fluids or blood, try to avoid contact with these substances.

Although it can regenerate itself, the liver is not indestructible. Some of the signs and symptoms that your liver could be headed for trouble may, at first, be too vague for a diagnosis. Nausea, weakness, lack of energy and a change in appetite can be attributed to a host of diseases. The more specific indications that are cause for alarm are yellowing of the skin, eyes and urine (jaundice). Advanced cases would present with symptoms such as unexplained itching of the skin, abdominal pain and swelling, in addition to the previous presenting symptoms.

These symptoms are cause for concern and warrant monitoring by your physician. Many liver ailments can be treated. The best course of action is to protect yourself and keep you and your liver safe. **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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Relish the Region

— By *Melissa Rawlins*

Fond memories are easily created in Copenhagen, Denmark. The bronze-and-granite Little Mermaid, inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale, perches on a boulder in the harbor and can never be cliché. One of the most beautiful and enjoyable ways to see this old, maritime city is from a boat sailing down its charming canals, but even if you choose to visit in the winter, ice cannot stop your investigations of its history and beauty.

Holiday lovers might want to start by booking themselves into the Nimb Hotel, which offers 17 unique and individually decorated rooms — 12 of which are suites. Almost all the rooms have open fireplaces with birch wood, large bathrooms with luxury bath products and views of the charming Tivoli Gardens, where the Christmas spirit abounds.

Tivoli Gardens amusement park is a must-see for all visitors. Located just a few minutes' walk from City Hall, with the Copenhagen Central Station as its nearest neighbor, Tivoli Gardens was founded in 1843

and has become a national treasure and an international attraction. The scenery is beautiful with exotic architecture, historic buildings and lush gardens. At night, thousands of colored lights create a fairy tale atmosphere amidst the charmingly themed villages and shops full of tasty treats and dazzling decorations. Add to that wonderful restaurants and thrilling rides, and you are set for a day's adventure.

Danish weather can be tricky. But there are plenty of things to do in Copenhagen even on a rainy day. For the price of a normal bus ticket, you can get from the Royal Library at one end of the harbor to The Little Mermaid at the other end, passing the idyllic district: Christianshavn, Nyhavn and the Royal Opera House. If you purchase a Copenhagen Card online, you — and two children under 10 — can use public transportation and visit more than 70 museums and attractions for free.

The best way to get a realistic perspective of Copenhagen is a trip



Photo by Copenhagen Media Center.



Photo by Ty Strange.



Photo by Anders Bøggild.



Photo by Anders Bøggild.

to its highest tower. The property of the Danish Parliament, whose members took the initiative to open it to the public at no charge every day except Mondays, the tower of Christiansborg Palace offers views unique and magnificent.

If you wish, you can take an early morning, 6-K jog on the paths surrounding the lakes, or head for one of the fine cafés: Kaffesalonen at 6, Peblinge Dossering; Café Front Page at 21, Sortedam Dossering; and Den Franske Café, 101, Sortedam Dossering. If you prefer enjoying the view from the tower, you can also give yourself a culinary experience in Restaurant Tårnet, run by the recognized restaurateur Rasmus Bo Bojesen. And foodies always make a trip to eat Danish *smørrebrød* (open-faced sandwiches) and traditional Christmas food at the cozy restaurant Kronborg, in the center of Copenhagen. Visitors relish their classic Danish Christmas lunch, following the traditional four “rounds” of fish, meat, cheese and traditional Danish rice pudding with almonds.

The Botanical Gardens, located in the center of Copenhagen, are open to the public October through March. Of its 27 historical glasshouses, the most notable is the old Palm House, circa 1874, which is 16 meters tall and has narrow, cast-iron spiral stairs leading to a passageway at the top.

If you stay through the New Year, watch the Queen’s New Year’s speech on television before going out for a great New Year’s feast. At midnight, listen to the City Hall clock strike 12, then sing along to the national anthem and have a piece of the traditional marzipan cake, *kransekage*, along with a glass of champagne. While the fireworks roar, you’ll celebrate New Year’s like a true Dane and give yourself memories to last a lifetime. **NOW**

To help you plan your trip to Copenhagen, visit www.copenhagencard.com and www.visitcopenhagen.com.

December 1, 2

Christmas Market & Gift Show: 6:00-9:00 p.m., **Friday**, preview party; 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., **Saturday**, main event, Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Ln. The event is sponsored by the Waxahachie Junior Service League. Tickets for the VIP Shopping Party on **Friday** are \$25. They may be purchased online at www.waxahachiejls.org. Tickets at the door **Saturday** will be \$8, and children under 10 are free.

December 1 — 17

It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play. Ennis Public Theatre, 113 N. Dallas St. For full details, pricing and curtain times, visit www.ennispublictheatre.com or call (972) 878-7529.

A Christmas Carol: Theatre Rocks! For more information, visit www.theatrerocks.com.

December 1 — 3, 8 — 10

Bethlehem Revisited: 6:00-9:00 p.m., 402 N. College St., behind Central Presbyterian Church. Free admission, but donations are also welcome.

December 2

Lucky's CC Car Show and Toy Drive: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., downtown Ennis.

December 2, 9

Christmas Hayride & Photos With Santa: 4:00-8:00 p.m., photos with Santa; 6:00-8:00 p.m., hayride down Main Street, downtown Waxahachie.

December 2, 9, 16

Lights of Ennis Free Movie Nights: 7:00-9:00 p.m., 213 W. Knox St. Films that are scheduled to be shown are *The Grinch*, *The Christmas Story* and *Polar Express*.

December 8 — 10

A Charlie Brown Christmas: Chautauqua Auditorium in Getzender Park. Show times and ticket purchases are available online at www.waxahachiecommunitytheatre.com.

December 10

Native American Arts & Crafts Show: 5:00-11:00 p.m., Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th St., Midlothian. Attendees will enjoy music, jewelry, books and a market of Native American arts and crafts. For more information, call Toni Bowers at (903) 744-0305 or Alicia Alvarado at (214) 926-3995.

Ongoing:

Mondays

Sign Language Class: 4:00-5:30 p.m., Ennis

Public Library, 501 W. Ennis Ave. Classes are free and available for all ages. No sign up required.

Second Mondays

Parkinson's Support Group: Ennis Regional Medical Center.

Third Mondays

Ellis County Veterans Networking Group: 6:00 p.m., Ryan's Steakhouse, Waxahachie. Come join the group for dinner and listen to what the guest speaker for the evening has to share. For more information, call Mike Lamb at (214) 763-0378.

Ellis County Aggie Moms meeting: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin, Waxahachie. For more information, visit www.elliscountyaggie moms.org.

Fourth Mondays

Texas Master Naturalists Indian Trails Chapter: 6:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, Waxahachie. The program begins at 7:00 p.m. For more information about the group, visit www.txmn.org/indiantrail.

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting: 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave.

Second Tuesdays

Ennis Masonic Lodge No. 369 meeting: dinner at 6:30 p.m., meeting to follow at 7:30 p.m., Masonic Lodge, 209 N. Dallas St. For more information, contact Cecil Curry at c Curry_98@yahoo.com.

Wednesdays

DivorceCare: 6:30-8:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church of Midlothian, Family Life Center, 800 S. 9th St., Midlothian. DivorceCare for Kids ages 5-12 meet at the same time, as well as childcare for younger children. For more information, call the church office at (972) 775-3993.

First Wednesdays

Bluebonnet Patches Quilt Guild meeting: 9:30 a.m., First Presbyterian Church, 210 N. McKinney. Contact Judy Wensowitch at (972) 921-8800 or Diana Buckley at SeldomSeenQuilting@gmail.com for more information.

Third Wednesdays

The Ellis County Christian Women's Connection meeting: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club. Cost is \$13. For more information, contact Barb at (214) 463-5064 or email

barb.jacobs19@yahoo.com. Reservations are due Sunday before the meeting.

Thursdays

Chess: 5:30-7:30 p.m., Ennis Public Library, 501 W. Ennis Ave., Ennis. Elementary age and above. No sign up required.

Ellis County Bible Study Fellowship Satellite Class: 6:30 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 N. Grand Ave., Waxahachie. This is a nondenominational Bible study class. For more information, call Lou Archibald at (214) 850-5303.

Fourth Thursdays

MACS: 6:00 p.m., Tabernacle Baptist Church Life Center. Evening includes a covered dish meal and a program of singing or informational message.

Second Thursdays

Mom's Connected meeting: 9:30-11:30 a.m., Tabernacle Baptist Church, 1200 Country Club Rd. Call the church office at (972) 875-3861 for more information.

First and Third Fridays

MOPS meeting: 9:30-11:30 a.m. during regular school semester, Tabernacle Baptist Church, 1200 County Club Rd. A ministry for mothers of preschoolers in the Ennis community. Visit www.tabernaclefamily.org/mops/.

Second Fridays

Alzheimer's Family Caregiver Support Group: 9:30-10:30 a.m., Ennis Regional Medical Center.

Fourth Saturdays

Bristol Opry: 7:00 p.m., featuring local singers and musicians. Sponsored by Bristol Cemetery Association and Caring Hands of Bristol. For more information, contact Jim Gatlin at (972) 846-2211.

Sundays

GriefShare meeting: 2:30-4:00 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County in the sanctuary Youth Inc. room. For more information, call (972) 935-9801 or visit www.cowboychurchofelliscounty.org.

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 Heather McDonald

— *By Virginia Riddle*

Heather McDonald honed her cooking and baking skills at an early age under tutelage given by her mother and Great Gran. “I fell in love with being in the kitchen,” Heather added. “Every year, I’m in charge of pecan pie baking for my family during the holidays.”

Those early lessons and practice come in handy. This Palmer Elementary School kindergarten teacher owns her own cupcake business, Sweets by Heather. “Teaching is my first passion,” Heather explained. “I love to have my kids helping me out in the kitchen, and I bring cooking into the classroom for my students with activities such as the letter-of-the-week recipes.”

Cooking, specifically baking, is Heather McDonald’s creative outlet and “happy place.” “I love creating delicious and beautiful treats for people,” she said. **NOW**

Rum Cake

Cake:

Nonstick cooking spray

1 yellow cake mix

1 3.4-oz. box instant vanilla pudding

1/2 cup light rum

1/2 cup oil

1/2 cup water

4 eggs

1/2 cup nuts, chopped (optional)

Glaze:

1 cup sugar

1/4 cup sugar

1 stick butter

2 Tbsp. rum

1. For cake: Preheat oven to 350 F; spray a Bundt pan with cooking spray.

2. Blend cake mix, pudding, rum, oil, water and eggs for approximately 2 minutes, or until the mixture is moist and smooth.

3. If desired, sprinkle nuts into bottom of the pan; pour the cake batter over the nuts.

4. For glaze: While cake is baking, prepare the glaze. In a saucepan, combine all the ingredients, except the rum; boil for 3 minutes.

5. Remove the cake from the oven, but while still in the pan, punch holes in the cake with a wooden spoon handle.

6. Carefully, add the rum to the glaze mixture just before pouring the glaze over the cake, since the rum will cause the glaze to foam and rise. Pour the glaze over the cake; let it cool 1 hour before removing the cake from the pan.

7. Store in the refrigerator for best results.

Christmas Eve Creamy Crock-Pot Hot Chocolate

1 1/2 cups heavy cream

1 14-oz. can Eagle Brand Sweetened Condensed Milk

2 cups milk chocolate chips

6 cups milk

1 tsp. vanilla

Marshmallows or whipped cream, optional

1. In a Crock-Pot, whisk together all ingredients except the optional marshmallows or whipped cream.

2. Cover; cook on low for 2 hours, stirring occasionally until mixture is hot and chocolate chips are melted.

3. Whisk well before serving; garnish, if desired, with marshmallows or whipped cream.

Best-ever Chocolate Fudge Layer Cake

8 squares BAKER’S Semi-Sweet Baking Chocolate (divided use)

1 box Duncan Hines Dark Chocolate Cake Mix

1 3.4-oz. pkg. JELL-O Chocolate Instant Pudding & Pie Mix

4 eggs

1 cup sour cream

1/2 cup oil

1/2 cup water

1 8-oz. tub Cool Whip Whipped Topping, frozen

2 Tbsp. almonds, sliced

1. Preheat oven to 350 F; grease 2 9-inch round baking pans. Chop two chocolate squares; set aside.

2. In a large bowl, beat the cake mix, dry pudding mix, eggs, sour cream, oil and water with an electric mixer on low speed until moist. Beat on medium speed 2 additional minutes; stir in chopped chocolate. Pour mixture evenly into prepared pans.

3. Bake 30–35 minutes until a wooden toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean; cool on wire racks 10 minutes. Loosen cakes from pan sides. Invert cakes onto racks; gently remove pans. Cool cakes completely.

4. Place the frozen whipped topping and remaining chocolate squares in a microwavable bowl; microwave on high 90 seconds (stirring after the first minute) or until chocolate is completely melted and the mixture is smooth.

5. Let the mixture stand 15 minutes to thicken. Place one cake layer on a serving plate; top with 1/4 of the chocolate mixture; add second cake layer.

6. Spread the top layer and cake sides with the remaining chocolate mixture. Store in the refrigerator overnight; serve cold after garnishing with almond slices.

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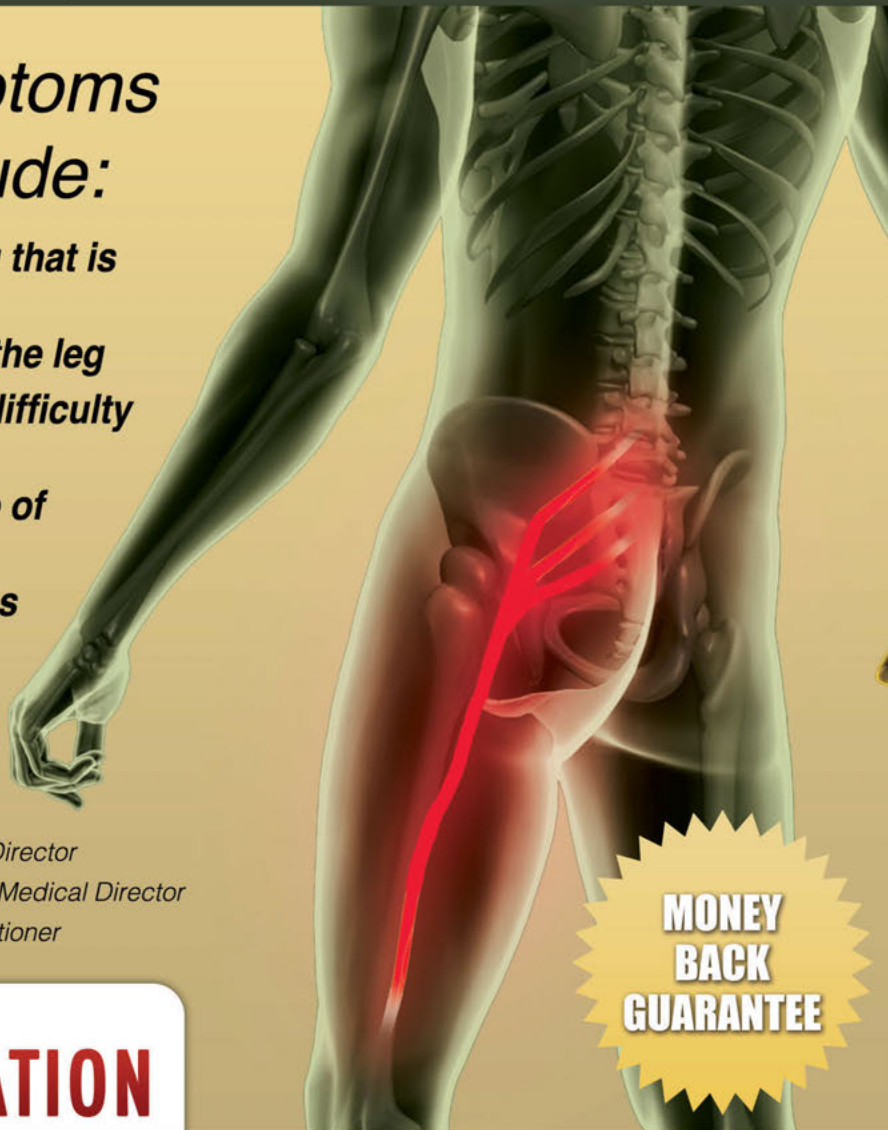
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