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his Russian and Texan roots

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ON THE COVER



Mike and Jill Varrichio's collected memories became signatures of their stunning home.

Photo by Joy Elmore.

CONTENTS

December 2017 • Volume 12, Issue 12



8

8 Cute Brilliance

Daniel Baev Clark is much older than his 4 years.

18 Dancin' in the Rain

When going through grief, talking begins the journey.

30 For All Seasons

At Home With Mike and Jill Varrichio.

36 Cheer With Us

Developing playful atmospheres, Steve Long supports parents in raising healthy kids.



18



30

42 BusinessNOW

44 Around TownNOW

48 FinanceNOW

52 CookingNOW

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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 (817) 477-0990 or visit www.nowmagazines.com.



Editor's Note

Hello, Friends!

It's that time of year, when I celebrate my accomplishments. I learned during the '90s of a really wonderful custom within the Australian Aborigines' culture. They take stock of their contributions whenever the anniversaries of their births approach. If they can honestly say they've positively impacted the community, they host a party for the community and give thanks for their joint blessings.

For this issue, I had the pleasure of writing about Steve Long, a man on a mission to promote positive culture. That's also the mission of NOW Magazines. By focusing on the lovely aspects of life in Mansfield, we hope to lift your spirits.

When you think about your circle of friends and family, who inspires you? Would you consider recommending them to me as a possible story in the pages of *MansfieldNOW*? I love hearing about your good neighbors and welcome your nominations for more good stories.

Melissa

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P.S. The publisher and staff of NOW Magazines wish you and your family a very merry Christmas and the happiest of holiday seasons!

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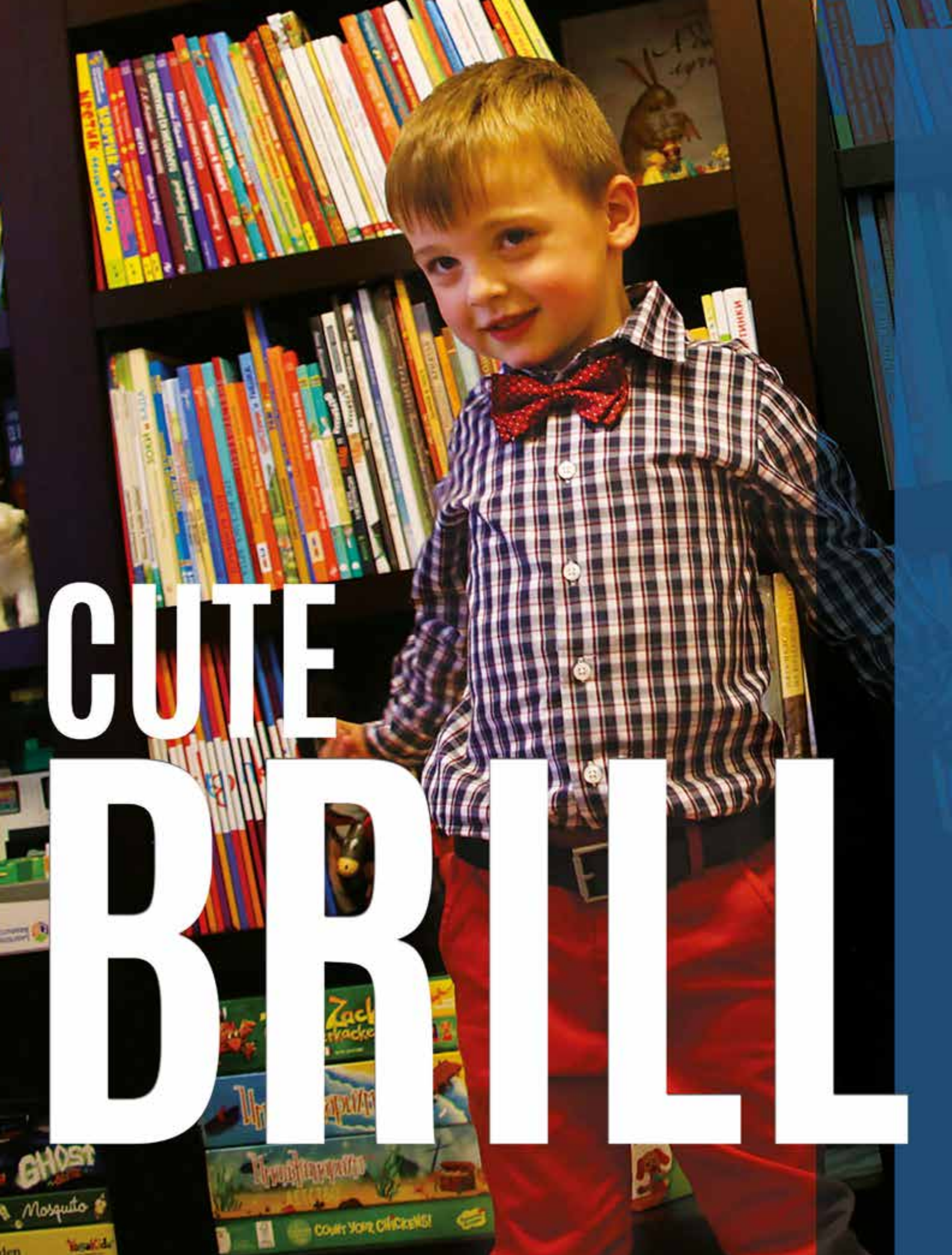
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CUTE
BRILL

At Christmastime, bilingual 4-year-old Daniel Baev Clark uses the family's freezer to mail letters to Santa Claus and to Ded Moroz, otherwise known as Grandfather Frost. In Slavic folklore, as taught to Daniel by his mother, Dr. Tatiana Baeva, Ded Moroz is a powerful, smart, stern but charming Russian hero and the main character of New Year's celebrations, not Christmas. Accompanied by his granddaughter, Snegurochka, the Snow Maiden, he delivers presents from a sleigh pulled by three horses. Daniel once asked Grandfather Frost to give him a sled, and now the family takes it where the snow is — in the mountains of New Mexico.

At other times of the year, long lines of toy cars in various sizes and colors wind like a large snake across the living room floor. With all the exuberance and enthusiasm of a child at play, Daniel pointed to one side of the cars and offered an explanation. "This is a traffic jam!" he proclaimed. He continued, "Over there are the construction trucks, and they are causing the traffic." Daniel smiled with satisfaction at his explanation. The layout of the cars in relation to the construction vehicles made perfect sense. Living close to the DFW area, it is easy to understand why Daniel's imaginary world involved construction and traffic.

Tatiana told a story involving Daniel when he was younger. Daniel asked, "Mommy, what was life like before I came?"

With all the care a mother can muster, she explained, "Well, life was not near as much fun when you were not here."

She asked him the same question in return, "Daniel, what was life like before you were born?"

Daniel responded, "I was knocking on your heart, Mommy, and I wanted to get here as fast as I could to be with you."

A warm smile spread across Tatiana's face as she recalled the memory. Daniel was a little distracted playing with his cars, but his head was cocked to the side as he listened to his mom's story. "Do you remember that?" Tatiana asked him.

"Yes!" Daniel exclaimed and then added, "I just wanted to see you."

It is hard to miss the connection between Daniel and his mom, who serves in her professional life as director of international operations for a Mansfield nonprofit called Allies in Youth Development, and it

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— By Derek Jones

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only takes a few moments with her son to realize Daniel is astoundingly creative and possesses an active imagination. Daniel's mom cites several key components she feels contribute to a child's ability to create. She is from Russia and his dad, Jonathon Clark, is from Texas. This has allowed Daniel exposure to Russian and American cultures.



Tatiana explained, "I only speak to Daniel in Russian, and his father only speaks to him in English." She offered up an example. "When I read to Daniel, I read to him books written in Russian, and his dad reads books written in English." Because of this dual-language exposure, Daniel is fluent in both languages. "Actually, his Russian is stronger than his English, and he is able to rhyme better in Russian." She feels this contributes to his ability to be creative because his mind is continually processing information in two languages.

However, Tatiana was quick to point out, it is not just the dual language environment that contributes to his powerful imagination. Exposure to other cultures through travel is also key. Daniel's family may spend up to three months out of the year traveling. "It's usually from middle of May till the end of summer, when I go on the mission trips or university study abroad programs, that Daniel travels with me. We travel as a family to many different countries," Tatiana explained, "and many times, I try and travel to places where Russian is spoken." Tatiana named some of the places they have been, including Greece, Malta, France, Great Britain, United Arab Emirates,

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the Caucasus mountains, Siberia, Switzerland, Germany and Turkey.

As she named some of these foreign places, Daniel quickly added, "and Italy!" Tatiana smiled and nodded in affirmation.

During Christmas, Daniel and his mom explore the richness of culture by examining the differences between Santa Claus and the Russian alternative, Grandfather Frost. Dressing up and role-playing is an important part of observing cultural differences. Not everyone has the means to travel the world as Daniel's family does, but Tatiana encouraged, "Engage children in discussions of cultural differences and read to them about other cultures." Any child will love dressing up and role-playing with family.

It is hard to miss the amount of books available to Daniel, which Tatiana also acknowledged as important in the development of his creativity. Daniel has a library in one of the upstairs rooms of their home. The large bookshelves are filled with books. Daniel pointed to one shelf to show which was the Russian section and then pointed to the English section. Amazingly, the Russian section was much larger than the English section. "It is so hard to find children's books written in Russian," she said. "Most of these books are the result of what we are able to find



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and bring home when we travel.” She also cautioned, “Many of the Russian books are translations, so you have to be careful because some translations are really good, but others are not.”

She spread two large picture books on the floor and Daniel joined her to look at them. The books were identical. “This is one of my favorite things to find,” Tatiana stated while she pointed to the two books. “These are identical in every way, but one tells the story in English and the other in Russian. These are very difficult to find.” At home in his library, it is clear Daniel spends a great deal of time reading and listening to stories that capture his imagination.

One book piqued Daniel’s interest more than the others, and he was eager to pull it off the shelf. Sitting on the little couch in the upstairs library, he sat and opened the book. On the page were jets flying in formation.

With all the charm and excitement of a 4-year-old who has found something he is proud to show off, Daniel pointed to the jets and exclaimed, “The Thunderbirds!” He then turned to the back of the book where all the Thunderbird pilots, current and past, were listed. He explained, “These are the pilots of the Thunderbirds, and they fly really fast.” Daniel explained this, not just because he has read about the Thunderbirds, but because he has seen them fly. Reading with Daniel and watching him play serves as a beautiful reminder to Tatiana of the power of imagination and the wonder of childhood. **NOW**



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1725 N. US 287, Mansfield on Dec. 27 - Jan. 20



Education Options in Mansfield

-R J Koland

What are the choices for students in and around Mansfield?

Every parent and grandparent wants their children and grandchildren to embrace and champion their family values. They passionately desire their offspring to hold noble ideals and achieve fulfilling personal and career goals. Early educational decisions may either launch them into a successful trajectory or contrarily toward disappointment and uncertainty.

Your Local ISD:

They have wonderful facilities, a professional administrative team, some of the greatest teachers in the Metroplex, superior sports programs and more. However, the atmosphere in many ISD schools sometimes lacks the discipline found in other educational options.

Home Schools:

There is an amazing group of parents and educators who have formed a network of outstanding opportunities for their children to be shielded from philosophies contrary to their family values, very well educated, and set on private higher education paths. On the other hand, as many parents and home school students will attest, they are challenged to provide pace-keeping fine arts opportunities and quality instruction in advanced sciences and math.

Private Schools:

Most are either unique educational models or related to specific spiritual centers throughout our communities. The distinctive offerings of these schools offset the tuition costs in the minds of the parents who are paying twice for their students – taxes plus tuition.

Charter Schools:

Over the past 20 years, Texas lawmakers have seen the value of providing for tuition-free public charter schools – schools of choice – which receive state funding but no local tax revenues. They are held to high academic standards, maintain a rigorous atmosphere of discipline, strong values of patriotism, and in Mansfield, focus on STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts/Athletics, and Math.

Newman International Academy:

Is the only Charter school in Mansfield, and leases space from Walnut Ridge Baptist Church. The 53-acre campus is located at SH 360 and E. Broad St. The school has nearly 300 students in Kindergarten through 6th grade and is adding a grade per year all the way through 12th grade. In 2018, athletics will be added to the school's programs. Newman International Academy is one of the fastest growing charter school systems in our region. They currently have more than 2,700 students on campuses in Arlington, Cedar Hill, Ft. Worth and Mansfield.



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Dancin' in the Rain



Take a walk down memory lane back to Gene Kelly's classic movie, Singin' in the Rain, co-starring Kelly, Donald O'Connor and Debbie Reynolds as performers challenged to make a transition from silent to sound movies. The journey was hard but made better by singing and dancing. Very similarly, the members of Widowed Persons Service of Tarrant County are dancing while transitioning through one of the most challenging times of life — the loss of a spouse. "Grieving isn't easy. We're there to uplift each other," Eula Plumber, a WPS board member and hostess, said. Her glad-to-see-you hugs are partly why people make a point to attend the twice-weekly breakfast meetings.

WPSTC was originally part of the nationwide organization of over 300 WPS groups. Founded during the 1970s by the American Association of Retired Persons, the only requirement for membership is to have become a widower or widow. "We have members who live from Grand Prairie to Cleburne," Phyllis Weisheit, another board member and grief facilitator, said.

Dancing is one activity both Eula and Phyllis enjoy, but the group's motto includes "meeting, greeting and eating" at other prime happenings. Each week, members meet twice for breakfast — on Wednesdays at a restaurant in Grand Prairie and on Saturdays in Mansfield at Joe's Family Restaurant. Additionally, the group hosts a dinner on the third Monday and a lunch get-together on the first Wednesday of each month in various locations. "All our gatherings are open to everyone, and people come from all over the area," Eula explained. "Spring Creek Barbeque and Applebee's are big supporters of WPSTC."

Monthly meetings for grief support sessions are held five consecutive Sunday afternoons in area churches, including Eula and Phyllis' church, St. John Lutheran, where a youth group volunteers to set up everything for their meetings. On the second and fourth Tuesday, group members meet and play games. "This is my favorite event," Eula said. "I like playing Mexican Train and 84." All meetings and special activities are announced through the group's website, Facebook page and a monthly newsletter.





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"We have about 1,500 members now," Phyllis added. "Ages range from widowed men and women in their 30s to a lady who's 97 years old. We keep our membership lists current since, in June each year, we purge names of people who haven't attended a function in the past year. They can always contact our office and ask to be put back on the list."

Special activities are planned throughout the year: dances, cruises sailing out of Galveston to different destinations, casino trips and going to area theater and concert productions. One dance and banquet that's always well attended is the annual Christmas party held at Fort Worth's Mira Vista Country Club on the first Sunday in December. "I love planning this event because I love making people happy. My kids serve as



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valets and park members' cars. It's just fun being with people," Phyllis said.

Preceding this event, experienced members host a one-day event called Getting Through the Holidays, on the second Sunday of November. "We do this to show newer members that some of us have been able to go on," Phyllis said. "We share how we continue to celebrate."

An important service each November memorializes deceased spouses. "We hold a beautiful memorial service," Phyllis said. Members and families usually fill University Christian Church's chapel, and finger foods are served afterward." Phyllis is a trained grief counselor and helps others through the grieving process. "A lot of people will tell everyone they are fine, but ... new members have so many decisions to make and can be very indecisive during the grieving process. We give out literature that covers legal and financial matters, share stories,



Eula, Phyllis and Arlene, who serves as a greeter, make all members feel welcome.



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listen and emphasize that their children are grieving, too, during the five-week support group sessions," she said. Phyllis and other group facilitators train through the Center for Loss & Life Transition, in courses taught by Dr. Alan Wolfelt, which are utilized by doctors, nurses and clergy to help them help others.

All WPS activities are Dutch treat, since the chapter is nonprofit governed by a board currently comprised of 20 members who meet once a month. Fundraisers, such as the selling of raffle tickets, help keep the volunteer staff office open. Drawings and door prizes also add to the event fun. "Our members can bring guests, and even though we're not a dating service, members meeting one another sometimes start dating," Eula said.

Eula joined the WPSTC in 2003, after being widowed in 2001, at the age of 62. "It was a way for me to meet people," she remembered. Having been a military wife who worked outside her home in the corporate world and at the Dallas VA Medical Center doing payroll work/computer work, Eula also volunteers. She is a greeter at her church, and she volunteers at the Arlington Elks Lodge, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion. A native of Vernon, Texas, she moved to the Metroplex when she was 14. In her spare time, she enjoys quilting, sewing and dancing. She lives



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in her home in Grand Prairie, which she shares with her daughter. "I enjoy eating out with friends at the large variety of Mansfield restaurants, visiting the DFW National Cemetery with others who have spouses buried there and visiting friends in Mansfield," she said. "This city still has a small-town feeling."

A native of Indiana, Phyllis became a WPSTC member in 2010, after being widowed in 2009. "I got to be friends with a WPSTC member at church who invited me to attend a group meeting. I was hooked after that," she recalled. "We're all on the same journey and are gathered together in a safe place." Phyllis retired from her career as director of food services for Mansfield ISD, having served from 1983-2002. "Everything's so conveniently located in Mansfield," she said. She has a son who lives with her, another son and a daughter living in Texas and a fourth son who lives in Indiana. Phyllis' spare time activities include traveling, dancing and volunteering at church. "About 97 percent of my friends are new and have been made through my membership in WPSTC," Phyllis said. "We're making a lot of fun memories together."



Phyllis and Eula recognize that group members may need an extra hug around the holidays. "Each person and family is unique in their celebration of holidays, especially when going through the grieving process," Phyllis said.

"My family still has great family get-togethers and chooses to be happy," Eula added.

"WPSTC is the best-kept secret in town," Phyllis said. Those who join talk, make friends and enjoy happy hugs. **NOW**

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Mike and Jill Varrichio met on the eighth day of the eighth month in 2008 and married on the 11th day of the 11th month in 2011. As it happened, in early 2011, the same friend who initially introduced them also proved to be the link to their future home. "We were looking for a house with a pool when he suggested we view a favorite of his in his neighborhood," Jill said.

At first, they were reluctant. The 4,500-square-foot Country French house was custom-built in 2001. It didn't have a pool and the interior was not quite their style. Still, the location and views were amazing. "Mike and I love golf, and I also play tennis," Jill smiled. A veteran Realtor, she was ultimately persuaded by the home's quality and details like a rare and gorgeous floating staircase, eyebrow entrances, tall ceilings and tea-stained cabinetry. "I love, love, love the floating staircase," she grinned.

They bought the house in February 2011, and by May, it had been transformed. "Remodeling was extensive," Mike shared.



— By Carolyn Wills

ns

“We gutted nearly everything, and Jill did all of the designing.”

Their vision was to create a home for all seasons, one where family and friends would instantly be comfortable. “I wanted it to feel open, yet warm, not stuffy or overwhelmed by color,” she shared.

Today, the Varrichios’ home is positively stunning. The commanding Austin-stone, two-story sits high on a lot overlooking a section of the Walnut

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Creek golf course. Inside, an enormous living room exudes a sense of welcome with dark-stained red oak floors, "Divine White" walls, custom drapes, crown molding, an Austin-stone fireplace and soft burgundy-red sectional sofas. "It's my favorite room," Jill shared. "We've entertained as many as 100 people in it, and yet, it's also perfect for the two of us."

Beyond exquisite bones, quality and style, there are particular signature elements of their home that honor moments shared. Among the most outstanding is the grand chandelier, the centerpiece of the formal dining room.

Made with a thousand amber crystals, Mike and Jill discovered the amazing piece while on a trip to New Orleans. "As we travel, we look for gifts," Mike said. "It's our way of collecting memories."

The signature look is also revealed in Jill's "candy store." "Luckily, I don't have a sweet-tooth, so I always have lots of containers of candies out," she smiled. "It's something fun and colorful to have in the house."

She also treasures a special piece of furniture. "The breakfast table is a converted desk from a church in Old Mexico," she said. "I've had it since I was 25." The table seats eight and, in addition to being heavy and solid, held together with wooden nails and the place of many stories, meals and homework through the years, etched into its center is the figure of an angel. "It's our angel table," she smiled.

In their home for all seasons, Mike and Jill converted one of the upstairs bedrooms into a media and exercise room and, then, combined two additional bedrooms into a huge game room, aka "Mike's man cave." "I don't get to spend

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a lot of time in it, but the game room is my favorite,” he smiled.

The upstairs rooms are favorites of the couple’s five grandchildren, ages 2 to 8. “They visit from Phoenix and Tulsa, so it’s important to have lots for them to do,” Mike said. “That’s another great thing about this community. The grandkids love to ride in the golf cart, feed the ducks, swim and play Putt-Putt at the club.”

Room to entertain was also high on the remodeling list. Whether it’s watching football and enjoying snacks at the pool, hosting a wine and tapas evening in the formal dining room, enjoying a holiday meal or hosting a Bible study group, Mike and Jill want their home to be shared.

Several years ago, after beginning the Bible study group and also being part of the golfing community, Mike was led to start a local chapter of the First Tee, a youth initiative that teaches core values and life skills through the game of golf. “We have two eight-week, after-school courses in a year, with 70-80 kids in a session, from ages 6 to 15,” he said. “It’s a big undertaking with many volunteers and donors. To see its effects is truly inspiring.”

Between the floating staircase and amber crystal chandelier, it’s tough to say which is most spectacular. Quite possibly, though, the winner is the backyard pool. “We interviewed a lot of pool builders,” Jill said. “There was nothing but yard

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when we moved in, so it was a long process.” The result is truly a work of art. The pool, 5 feet 6 inches deep in the center, has its own grotto, stand-up bar, waterfall, fountains, lights and fire features. With custom landscaping, including sweet potato vines, plus a patio and surround made of rich-hued Oklahoma stone, it’s a world designed for relaxing and entertaining. “It’s our hang out,” she smiled.

Hanging out in this luxurious retreat, the place for sharing and honoring moments, it’s clear that Mike and Jill are home. Since moving to Mansfield in 2011, they’ve opened their own real estate brokerage firm. “Mansfield is a great city,” Mike said. “We’re excited about the future and thankful to be part of such a thriving community.”

They moved in as newlyweds, the holidays already underway. That year and each year since, before the garlands, wreaths and ornaments appear, before little Santas make it to the mantel and rows of stockings are hung below, before 13 exquisite Nativity figurines are once again unveiled and that single grand Christmas tree stands by the floating staircase surrounded by gifts, Mike and Jill are already sharing their home. Their vision was a home for all seasons, one where family and friends instantly feel comfortable, and like a trip to Jill’s candy store, that’s exactly what they’ve created. **NOW**

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— By Melissa Rawlins

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Steve grew in his C's early in life, in Africa with his missionary parents, Paul and Merry. Speaking an African tribal language, Tchaluba, until he was 3, Steve and his parents moved when the Presbyterian mission sent his father to the northern region of Brazil.

Upon arrival, Steve entered a Brazilian day care and played with the children without hesitation. After a year in the language school close to São Paulo, the family moved to the north interior region. During his childhood years in a town called Ceres, Goiás, Steve mimicked the other kids and became very Brazilian in everything he did.

On the banks of the first tributary of the Amazon, the Xingu River, Steve joined the Brazilian children in their favorite form of play: soccer. "What makes a kid really good is competition, so you play a lot and get really good," Steve said. "The Brazilian's No. 1 religion is soccer, and I'm very religious," he added with a grin.



He learned by playing barefoot like the other kids, always trying to outdo each other. "There were players who were really good. Some did the bicycle kicks. I decided, *I'm going to be twice as good as them. If I use my left foot to do what they're doing with their right, I'll be twice as good.*"

He also started seeing opportunities to help, just as his father and mother modeled. "We ran out of balls all the time because we just popped them," he said. "I'd wake up at 5:00 a.m. and sell fruits and vegetables from my garden to buy soccer balls."

Steve and his father created a field inside their yard where the youth could play, and where his father could have more control over the children's behavior. Here, at an early age, Steve began practicing how to influence people who were, for instance, cussing or otherwise misbehaving.

His dad gave Steve a horse, which he rode around Ceres, offering kids a ride to school or to other neighborhoods to play soccer. "I already was looking for competition," he said. "I was just one of them and spoke like them, and they adopted me because I was so Brazilian."

During high school, Steve got permission to leave his boarding school to play soccer with older students and to join the city team. Steve offered other children popsicles in exchange for help cleaning the trash-littered streets. "The mayor found out about it and started doing favors for us," Steve said. "Then schools in town started inviting us to their tournament dates. That was so special to me, [for us] to be a little mission school playing in soccer, volleyball and other tournaments."

"By knowing a lot of people, I started getting our teachers to help us fill giant trash bags with popcorn," Steve said. "At



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tournaments, we'd say, 'If you cheer with us, you can eat our popcorn.' We still got beat all the time, but everyone was happy with us. We created a happy environment and impacted our city."

Ten years later, Steve played soccer and studied for his undergraduate degree in education and physical education. Eventually, he studied for a Masters of Divinity at his parents' alma mater, Wheaton College in Illinois and Reformed Theological Seminary in Mississippi. Then he played for the U.S. Olympic team and, later, for the Chicago Sting in the North American Soccer League before becoming a professional soccer coach. His heart was for coaching youth, though, and he didn't let his professional duties stop him.

Along the way, Steve met and married Eva Dekker, also a child of missionaries. "Her father is Dutch, and her mother is a Montana farm girl. Both were called to





a tribe in Indonesia,” Steve said. “Their story is an example of mission work influencing a culture.” Eva and their growing family helped Steve wherever his soccer career took him, including four years doing mission work in Portugal. While he traveled for soccer outreach and speaking engagements, he and Eva realized that Mansfield, Texas, was conveniently situated very near an airport and between both sets of parents. The Longs have reared their five children here for the last 15 years.

To serve his city and give himself the chance to build his three C’s in children’s hearts, Steve founded and runs Steve Long’s Samba Soccer. Working with Tim McCann, head of Mansfield Soccer Association, and Andy Binz, at the Mansfield Activities Center, he has achieved his goal to play with kids as much as possible. As he says to his homeschool PE students at the MAC, “Everyone of all ages must exercise. Learning to play and enjoy exercise seems to be lost as we grow older and as we struggle in a tech TV/Internet world. Fine motor skills, developing in agility, balance and strength all help the brain, too.”

In his recent partnership with Newman International School, Steve is supporting a whole new set of parents in raising healthy kids who develop their abilities and appreciate their unique talents and gifts. During recess, he plays kickball with kindergarteners. Chasing the ball in the midst of the two teams, Steve is careful not to cause tears by getting anyone “out.” His students love to see him playfully run after a ball, chase the kids and miss his target. And Steve revels in their laughter. **NOW**

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ON CALL AND ON THE BALL

For exceptional service, call Toby Powell when you need to buy or sell real estate. — By Melissa Rawlins

During this sellers' market, people thinking of making a real estate transaction need a real estate agent who is honest, available and calm. These are three of the top attributes Realtor Toby Powell prides herself on giving each of her clients.

She's also savvy and feels as though her forte is representing those who are buying and selling. "I know how to time everything, negotiate leasebacks and try to make it work for both parties," she said.

"I don't just tell my clients what they want to hear. I want to provide exceptional service," said Toby, who holds her client's hand throughout the process. "It's an emotional time for people who are buying a home. I've played the part of therapist, Realtor, friend and whatever else I need to be. It's a life-changing decision for people, and they need someone by

their side who's going on the journey with them and will not be stressed out the entire time."

One of her methods for keeping everyone calm is to always answer her phone. Toby's brokerage, eXp Realty, promises their customers expedience. That fits right in with what Toby expects of herself. "I always figure out a way to make myself available for appointments," she said. "Real estate is an on-call job. I can get a call from a buyer who's inquiring about one of my listings from the Internet or someone who was referred to me, and because homes are selling so fast, I've been asked to show a house within an hour, and I've done that."

After six years as a loan officer in Phoenix, Arizona, and five years as a DFW Metroplex Realtor, Toby's continually learning how to better represent buyers and sellers in residential real

estate. She draws on her professional experience in showing homes to provide customers outstanding exposure.

When buyers and sellers plan ahead, for instance, they can use holiday time to de-clutter. "My advice to sellers who feel they have a lot of things out is to put them away — in closets or even the garage. People want to envision where their own stuff goes in that house they're looking at, and if you have too much stuff in it, they can't focus. Keep it simple and neat," Toby said.

"Those with a goal to move by the first of the year need to be looking in early December or even late November," said Toby, who focuses on helping people with leases that are expiring during this time of year. "Many of them are going to be my first-time homebuyers."


"I know how to time everything, negotiate leasebacks and try to make it work for both parties."

Toby moved to Mansfield with her husband and two daughters seven years ago, after residing in Arlington for two years. "Before that, I lived in Phoenix for 22 years. Since moving to this area, I caught on quickly to what cities were where, what's popular, what areas have good schools and the high demand for the area," she said. She describes Mansfield to her out-of-state clients as an up-and-coming suburb of DFW. "The schools are great, it's safe, diverse, and there is still more and more to be built. I am so happy that my husband told me this is where he thought I would want to be." Give Toby a call and let her help *you* find the place where you *want* to be. **NOW**




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As part of Mansfield's National Fire Prevention Week, firefighters brave the heat to make learning about fire safety fun during Fire Safety Palooza.



After singing for the Stonecroft luncheon, Clay Black greets another member of his church, Cristalyn Fitzgerald.



Marcelo Irizarry delivers "just because" flowers to his girlfriend, Danielle Felipe.



Briana Dominguez and her client enjoy a quiet afternoon in the lash and brow room at the Vintage Pair.



To prepare drivers for traveling Texas roads this winter, Garrett Price gives free air pressure checks at Discount Tires.



Just a few of the funsters at Rosa's on All Hallon's Eve practice smiling for all the tricksters to whom they'll give treats.



Char Thomas sets up a defensive driving class with Trevor Cable at Mama's Pizze.



Before Melissa Rawlins buys for her Chocolate Whiskey Cake, Raymond's Liquor store associate Megan McKee explains how Yukon Jack is both a liquer and a whiskey.



Mela and Marcus Moore get supplies to help nurture their thbird child due February 5.



At the first Blue Banquet Outreach Luncheon to support area police officers, some attendees take a moment to pose for a picture.

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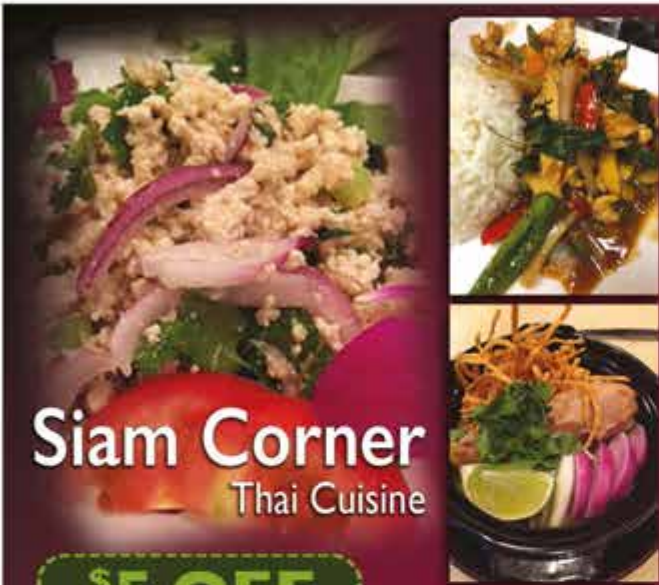
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Can You Afford to Retire Early?

Some people dream of retiring early. Are you one of them? If so, you'll need to plan ahead — because a successful early retirement can't be achieved through last-minute moves.

So, if you're determined to retire early, consider taking the following steps:

- **Pick a date.** Early retirement means different things to different people. But it's important to pick an exact age, whether it is 60, 62, 64 or whatever, so you can build an appropriate retirement income strategy.
- **Think about your retirement lifestyle.** You may know that you want to retire early, but have you thought about what you want to do with your newfound time? Will you simply stay close to home and pursue your hobbies? Do you dream of spending two months each winter on a tropical island? Or are you thinking of opening your own small business or doing some consulting? Different retirement lifestyles can have vastly different price tags. Once you've envisioned your future, you can develop a saving and investment plan to help you get there.
- **Boost contributions to your retirement plans.** If you want to retire early, you may well need to accelerate your contributions to your retirement accounts, such as your IRA and your 401(k) or other employer-sponsored plan. You may need to cut back in other areas of your life to maximize the amounts you put into your retirement plans, but this sacrifice may be worth it to you.
- **Invest for growth.** Your investment strategy essentially should be based on three key factors: your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon. When you change any one of these variables, it will affect the others. So, if you shorten your time horizon by retiring early, you may well need to reconsider your risk tolerance.

Specifically, you may need to accept a somewhat higher level of investment risk, so you can invest for greater growth potential.

• **Keep a lid on your debt load.** It's easier said than done, but try to manage your debt load as tightly as possible. The lower your monthly debt payments, the more you can contribute to your retirement plans.

Life is unpredictable. Even if you take all the steps described above, you may still fall short of your goal of retiring early. While this may be somewhat disappointing, you might find that adding just a few more years of work can be beneficial to building resources for your chosen retirement lifestyle. For one thing, you can continue contributing to your IRA and your 401(k) or similar employer-sponsored plan.

Plus, if you're still working, you may be able to afford delaying your Social Security payments until you're closer to your "normal" retirement age, which, as defined by the Social Security Administration, likely will be 66 or 67. The longer you put off taking these benefits, the bigger your monthly checks, although they will max out once you reach 70.

And even if you are not able to retire early, some of the moves you took to reach that goal, such as contributing as much as you could afford to your IRA and 401(k), controlling your debts and so on, may pay off for you during your retirement — whenever it begins. **NOW**

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



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December 1, 2, 3, 9

Annie Jr.: **Sunday**, 2:00 p.m.; **Friday** and **Saturday**, 8:00 p.m., Farr Best Theater, Downtown Mansfield. Presented by Music Place Mansfield. On **December 2**, preceding the Hometown Holidays Parade, enjoy a free performance at noon, in the middle of Main St. (817) 473-2822.

December 2

Kiwanis Fa La La 5K: 9:00-11:00 a.m., Katherine Rose Memorial Park, 303 N. Walnut Creek Dr. \$30 registration for a fun walk or run with others helps Kiwanis of Mansfield improve the lives of children in Mansfield and around the World. For more information, visit www.kiwanis76063.org.

Hometown Holidays Parade: 2:00-4:00 p.m., Historic Downtown Mansfield. The parade is free, but bring cash because food vendors will be on site. Contact Angie Henley (817) 804-5795.

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December 3

Holiday Home Tour: 1:00-5:00 p.m., five different beautifully decorated homes throughout Mansfield. Visit www.mansfieldwomensclub.com.

December 4, 11, 18, 25

Sunrise Toastmasters Club: 7:00-8:00 a.m., Methodist Mansfield Hospital, Canedy Community Room, 2700 E. Broad St. kevinorsak@mhd.com

December 8

Sensory Santa: 4:00-6:00 p.m., First Methodist Mansfield, 777 N. Walnut Creek Dr. All ages and disabilities are welcome. amandaf@fmcmm.org.

December 12

Senior Holiday Breakfast: 9:00-10:30 a.m., Mansfield Activities Center, 106 S. Wisteria. If you're age 55 or older, enjoy pancakes, sausage, fruit, Danishes, coffee, juice and joy. \$7. (817) 728-3680.

December 13, 27

Mansfield Lions Club meeting: Noon-1:00 p.m., Mansfield Methodist Hospital, 2nd Floor Conference Room, 2700 E. Broad St. (817) 453-1170.

December 14

Family Holiday Program: 6:00-7:30 p.m., Mansfield Public Library, 104 S. Wisteria St. Make holiday cards. faria.matin@mansfield-tx.gov.

December 16

Holiday on Strings Puppet Show: 1:00-2:00 p.m., Farr Best Theater, 109 N. Main St. Free. Call (817) 728-3692.

December 21

Thirsty Thursdays 5K: 6:15-9:00 p.m., Steven's Garden and Grill, 223 Depot St. A free fun run for all ages and skill levels. (817) 475-7210.

December 28

Painting in the Park: 1:00-2:30 p.m., Elmer W. Oliver Nature Park 1650 Matlock Rd. Children 5 or older will paint a winter wonderland with an artist guiding. All materials will be supplied, and parents may help younger children paint their canvas at no charge. \$27. (817) 728-3680.

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In the Kitchen With Veronica Lane

— *By Melissa Rawlins*

Veronica Lane teaches healthy and speedy food preparation during Saladmaster cooking classes. “My passion,” she said, “is to bring people back to their dinner tables, while they save money and spend quality time with their family.”

She always helped her mother and grandmother in the kitchen, and at 5 years old concocted an original potato frittata. But Veronica really began cooking when she started her own family. “My mother taught us kids that the best foods are always the ones you prepare at home. As an adult, I finally ‘got it,’ and I’m teaching the same to my kids,” she said. She mainly cooks for her family, and since Veronica prefers healthy meals, her family enjoys proteins and vegetables — even in desserts — as well as large portions conducive to leftovers. **NOW**

Quinoa Black Bean Salad

1 cup uncooked quinoa, rinsed
1 15-oz. can black beans, rinsed
12 small cherry tomatoes, halved
1 red bell pepper, diced
1 yellow bell pepper, diced
1/2 cucumber, diced
1 avocado, diced
1/4 red onion, finely diced
1 small bunch fresh cilantro, chopped

Dressing:

2 limes, juiced
2 Tbsp. olive oil
1 tsp. ground cumin
1 tsp. sea salt (optional)
1/2 tsp. black pepper (optional)

1. Cook quinoa according to package directions. Set aside and let cool, or refrigerate for 15 minutes.
2. Whisk together dressing ingredients.
3. In a large bowl, gently mix cooled quinoa with remaining vegetables and dressing.

Overnight Oats

1 banana, sliced
1 cup steel cut oats, uncooked
1 1/2 cups almond milk
1-2 Tbsp. agave nectar
1 dash cinnamon
1 dash nutmeg
1 Tbsp. chia seeds
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

1. Place banana slices in a 16-oz. mason jar and press down, creating first layer.
2. In a separate bowl, combine remaining ingredients and mix well.
3. Pour mixture into the mason jar and seal. The oats will soften overnight.
4. Enjoy the following day or the day after.

Low-cal Quiche

Nonstick cooking spray
(can substitute with a dab of butter)
1/2 sweet potato, thinly sliced

2 cups spinach, chopped
1 1/2 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded (divided use)
1/2 onion, diced
1 red pepper, diced
4 eggs
1 cup milk
1 avocado, sliced

1. Spray a 9-inch pie pan with nonstick spray or butter.
2. Place sliced sweet potato in pie pan and press down to create a bed for the quiche.
3. Add spinach, half of the mozzarella cheese, onion and red peppers to pan.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk eggs and milk together. Pour into pan. Top with remaining cheese.
5. Bake at 375 F for 30 to 40 minutes until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Let sit for 5 minutes at room temperature; cut into wedges and serve with avocado slices.

Vegan Burrito

1 onion, diced
1 red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
4 oz. mushrooms, sliced
3/4 cup whole-kernel corn
8 oz. hummus, made with red bell pepper
2 large whole grain or spinach tortillas
3/4 cup black beans, cooked, rinsed and drained
1 poblano pepper, roasted and cut into strips
3 oz. spinach, chopped
1/2 cup guacamole (optional)
1/4 cup salsa (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. Sauté onion on preheated pan until translucent, about 4-5 minutes. Add bell pepper and continue to sauté for another 2-3 minutes. Add mushrooms and corn; continue to sauté for another 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.
3. Spread a layer of hummus on the 2 tortillas.
4. Place sautéed vegetables, beans, poblano strips and spinach onto tortillas, dividing evenly. Roll into a burrito.
5. Place rolled burrito on cookie sheet and bake for 5-7 minutes, seam-side down until warm.
6. Slice wraps in half and serve warm. Top with guacamole and salsa, if desired.

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