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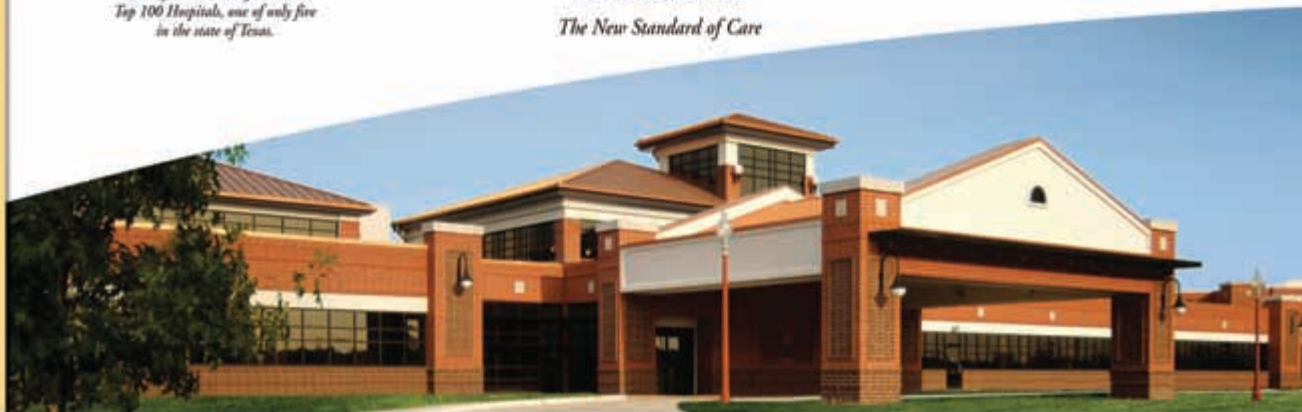
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Contents

February 2008, Volume 5, Issue 2

6



Still Spoiling One Another

12



Feng Shui Design

At Home With John and Laurie Mah

20

ArtsNOW
The Ennis Czech Boys

22

SportsNOW
Shall We Dance

24

BusinessNOW
Sharing the Caring

26

EducationNOW
Getting a Head Start
With Kay Lynn Kovar



On the Cover: Chinese decorations grace the Mah home.

Photo by Rod Cordsen.

28 **Around TownNOW**

32 **FinanceNOW**

30 **Who's CookingNOW**

34 **HealthNOW**

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Ennis NOW

Editor's Note

Happy Valentine's Day, Ennis!

Come in to our main feature and say hello to some deserving sweethearts, Kenneth and Royann Farmer. You may recognize Royann from her post answering the phone at Ennis High School, but did you know she has enjoyed true love with her husband Kenneth since they got married when she was just 15 years old?



Are you ready for the Second Annual Ennis Czech Music Fest on February 9? Last year's event was a success, and this year promises to be even more exciting. "Czech" out our art feature on the Ennis Czech Boys and get in the mood for some toe-tapping polka music.

If Chinese New Year's strikes your fancy, you will really enjoy reading about the celebration in our home feature on John and Laurie Mah. They have some fun planned for February 7, which kicks off this year's Chinese New Year's festivity.

Kelly Kovar

EnnisNOW Editor

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Still *Spoiling* One Another

— By Sandra McIntosh

Life for Kenneth and Royann Farmer has been a journey not marked by years, but with lots of love, mutual respect and open communication. "It's been one, long, happy journey," Kenneth said, referring to his 56-year union with Royann. "We would do it all over again, and we'd do it just the same." Royann smiled and shook her head in agreement. "I'm not saying it's been perfect, but it's been good, really good."

The couple began "courting" when Kenneth was a senior at Bardwell High School and Royann was just starting her freshman year at Ennis High. "A good friend of hers told me Royann was going to be in a play at the First Baptist Church in Ennis," Kenneth remembered. "The friend invited me to come see the play. A week later, I asked her on a date." Their first date was at the local movie theater, but neither Kenneth nor Royann can recall what they saw. They remembered many dates at the roller rink; eating burgers at the old Wagon Wheel Restaurant owned by the late Jake Lahaun; and sitting at the counter of Thompson's Café, located back in 1950 where Marsala Italian Restaurant is located today. "The Cokes at Thompson's were just a nickel," Royann said, laughing at how inexpensive that sounds today. "A bag of Fritos was also a nickel and burgers were just a quarter."

Kenneth and Royann both looked at one another and

smiled when asked if it was love at first sight. "He may have fallen first," Royann said, "but we both fell." Kenneth laughed while adding, "I tell the grandkids that she's the prettiest woman I've ever seen. I really think they believe it!" After dating nearly one full year, Kenneth asked Royann to marry him in April 1951, just one month prior to his graduation. They eloped on July 26. "I

dropped out after my freshman year to get married," Royann said, making sure to add that later on she did return to the classroom where she earned her General Education Diploma (GED). "He was 17 and I was 15. We had \$50 when we said, 'I do,' and we paid \$2,500 for our first home." They literally built their second home in Bardwell where they lived for one year before buying the farm they still call home today. "We moved here in 1963, just two weeks before President John F. Kennedy was assassinated,"

Kenneth said. "I'm not sure what year the house was built, but I do know the barn was built in 1911."

Royann was blessed by being able to stay at home to





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rear their four children — Gary, Becky, Kennette and Dionne — while Kenneth made the family's living at Ennis Business Forms (EBF), where he worked until 1965. While working at EBF, Kenneth also farmed the land. "The profits from



"I think putting spirituality first gives a marriage staying power."


farming went directly back into the farm," he said, "while the wages earned at EBF made the living. It took 15 years of this way of life before I could quit EBF and begin farming on a full-time basis."


At one time, the Farmers owned five farms, working nearly 1,500 acres of land. The children all grew up on the farm, knowing full-well the meaning of hard work — not from hearing about it, but from actually doing it. "We are a hardworking family, always have been," Kenneth said. "I always hoped the kids would never have to chop cotton for a living, but I made sure they knew how, just in case." Kenneth remembers the silly antics his little namesake, Kennette, performed while he taught them the way of the cotton fields. "The two older children would be in the field," he explained. "Kennette's job was to bring them water, but by the time she got to them, she had drunk most of it. It was too funny!"

Once the youngest child began her freshman year, Royann made the decision to go to work. She began

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her tenor with the Ennis Independent School District in the special education department at Travis Elementary, transferring to set up the library when Bowie Elementary opened its doors. "During my third year at Bowie, Superintendent Don Walker wanted me to go to the high school," Royann said. That was in 1987 and she has been the attendance clerk ever since, best noted for her greeting



The Farmers live for their family — complete with four children, 13 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

when she answers the phone, "Good morning. Ennis High School."

Kenneth's passion has always been farming, so once he was able to farm full time, it was like a dream come true. "We've had our ups and downs," he said. "Farming is so unpredictable, but we've been blessed." The unpredictability of it all has not always meant hard work, sweat and tears. They have so many



wonderful memories that not only make them smile, but actually allow them to laugh aloud. "We learned early on that we could not work cows together," Royann said. "The last time I tried, it had rained and the fields were solid mud." Her only instruction from Kenneth was to not let the cows get by her as he wrangled them up. "I kept walking out of my rubber boots," Royann added, "until I landed in the mud." Kenneth just

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smiled. "She probably washed her feet three times that day," he said.

A second story involving another of Royann's mishaps was the time she helped haul grain. "I backed into a ditch and broke the tailgate," she said. "Grain poured out all over the ground. I don't think Kenneth was real happy." Kenneth had to bring in a second truck so the grain could be shoveled into it. He said that was the only way they were able to get the truck out of the ditch.

When asked about the longevity of their own marriage, Royann wasted no time in answering. "We have spoiled one another," she said. "Him probably more than me." They have never had what they would consider a serious argument in all these years due in large part to communication,

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love and respect. "I've always treated him the way I want to be treated," Royann said, adding that she thinks God played a big part in their union. "I think putting spirituality first gives a marriage staying power."

They both agree they are not sure where all the years have gone. They may have started with very little, but over time they have successfully been able to create the big, happy family they were hoping for when they fell in love, eloped and began planning a life together. Nowadays, the Farmers live for their 13 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. "They may run us ragged," Royann said, "but we love spending time with them. It's what we live for." **NOW**

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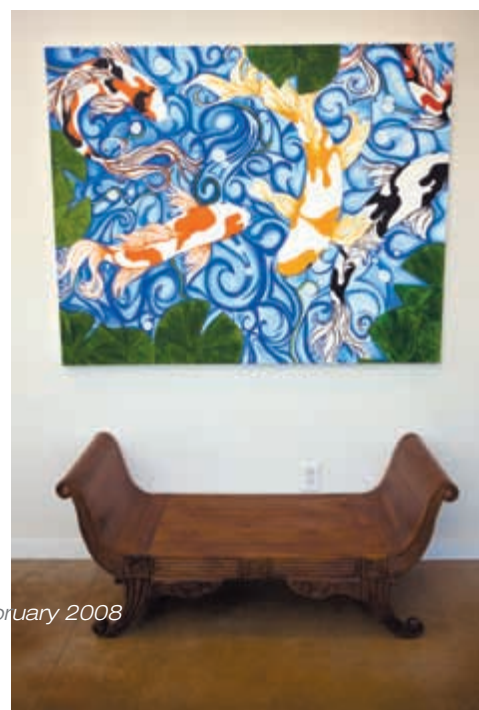
At Home With

John and Laurie Mah

John and Laurie Mah, and their beautiful daughters, Brynja and Audra, have made a home for themselves in Ennis, after living around the globe in some extraordinary locales. Whereas some folks sit at home and think about someday traveling to Singapore, or about sampling the cosmopolitan lifestyle in New York City, the Mahs have lived in those places already, and are now happily settled in an attractive, contemporary house in Ennis. It was custom-designed by John's architect uncle, Harry Som of California. "Laurie and I admired his home in the Bay Area, and we were so happy when he said he would design our home. I love being in our house; it has great *feng shui*."



www.nowmagazines.com 12 EnnisNOW February 2008





John came to Texas to manage the Belo Mansion in Dallas, and then was food and beverage director at the Melrose Hotel, also in Dallas. He is now the food service director at CC Young Memorial in Dallas and Laurie is a Realtor with ReMax in Ennis. The girls work hard in school, but also have time to pursue successful modeling careers. In that regard they are following in their mother's footsteps.

However, it was John's culinary skills that led them around the world. "John and I have always been in the food and beverage aspect of hotels — catering, banquets. John and I met at the Grand Hyatt New York," Laurie recounted. "He had worked for the Hyatt in Phoenix, and I had worked at the Hyatt in Kansas City. We got married on a yacht that went around Manhattan." They crafted a multicultural home life,



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since John is Chinese and Laurie is of Irish descent. Together, they have embraced both of their heritages, and passed on the beauty of their cultures to their daughters.

"We lived in New York for 12 years, including in a Manhattan loft in the Chelsea area, and then moved to

the suburbs where Brynja was born. John relocated to New York's Waldorf Astoria, and then he had the opportunity to go to work for Shangri-La Company in Singapore." They spent five years in the island city-state of Singapore, with John working at the flagship hotel of the Shangri-La chain. "We loved it. It



had been a British Colony and the people spoke Mandarin Chinese and English. I made a lot of friends there from England and Europe, and I found a niche there to teach Western style food service classes in my home to the Filipino maids, who were unfamiliar with the serving style." The Mahs'

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daughter, Audra, was born in Singapore, and they remained until John relocated for a job in Orlando.

The entryway of the Mahs' current home is furnished with items they bought in Singapore, including an antique wedding dowry basket. The entry features a painting of their Singaporean home. "The house was built when Singapore was a British colony, and this type of house was called a black-and-white," Laurie said. "It was very unique and interesting. The ceilings were 20 or 30 feet high. It was about 3,200 square feet and had an open-air kitchen."

"Singapore was so close to the equator, that it didn't need heat," John added. "It was 89 - 91 degrees year-round. Our air-conditioning bill was very high. It was very humid." A banyan tree was by their house, and the hotel's plant nursery was next door, with abundant bougainvilleas.

"When we wanted to change out our plants in the house, we just walked next door."

"Throughout our home in Ennis, we have decorated with peasant paintings that we bought in Hong Kong. The



peasants in mainland China paint these," Laurie explained. The floor of their current home is stained, polished and scored concrete, with carpet in the bedrooms. "We planned this home with our three bedrooms upstairs. We designed this to have a guest suite that could be a master, downstairs. The antique 1920s era furniture in

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our guest suite and our dining room came from the first house we purchased, in Peekskill, New York. The home and furniture had belonged to a French seamstress."

From the upstairs balcony, there is a view into the high-ceilinged living room, with its contemporary furnishings and expansive window wall. "In the winter, the sun comes in here slowly, and really warms up the house nicely," John pointed out. "That morning light, when it comes across the trees, and hits the koi painting opposite the windows, is beautiful."



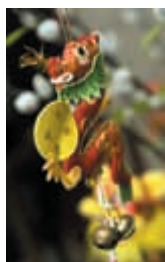
John, a serious cook, enjoys preparing dinner when he gets home from work. He really influenced the design of the kitchen. "The counters are black granite tile," he said. They contrast dramatically with the natural modern-fronted maple cabinetry. "There is no ethnic cuisine that is foreign at our dinner table. On a weekly basis we may have American, Italian, Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, French or Spanish. We are fortunate that the girls' palates are very diverse and open to a great variety of foods."

In addition to the diversity of ethnic cuisine they enjoy, the girls have enjoyed learning the Chinese New Year (CHNY) traditions. CHNY celebrations begin on February 7 this year. "The first night and day of CHNY is a day of reunion and thanksgiving," John said.



"We have dinner at home. It is also our tradition for our girls to call the Chinese grandparents, aunts and uncles to wish them *Gong Hay Fat Choy!* In return for wishing them a Happy Chinese New Year's, usually the relatives will send them a *hong bao*, a lucky red envelope with money inside."

The Mahs have decorated their home for this holiday. "Our decorations must have the color red which symbolizes good luck, and the color gold that symbolizes



good fortune. So, with a little luck you will have good fortune," John explained. "We always set up our lucky CHNY tree with Chinese ornaments that we have collected from living in Asia.

It is placed at the foyer as you enter the house. It is the most auspicious location to display this, so that every person that enters your house will be blessed with a happy and propitious new year."

The Mahs have started a tradition in Ennis of having a CHNY celebration at a local Chinese restaurant with their friends. "The numbers have grown from 20 to 60 this last year," John said. "The places we have lived have been great, but Ennis is wonderful, too. I love being able to know more people and have an impact in the community; to be able to relate to and see people we know. In a city, we could go anywhere, but never see anyone we knew. Here, it is wonderful to know everybody." **NOW**

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ARTS NOW



The Ennis Czech Boys

— By Kelly Kovar

Jared Prachyl, who is just 20 years old, already has several years under his belt of leading a band that is making news, not just in Ennis, but around Texas. When Jared, and his two fellow St. John School buddies, Jon Marek and Corey Mikula, were still in high school, they decided a great way to both keep busy, and further the Czech music with which they had grown up, would be to form a polka band.

"My grandfather and grandmother sang in the Texas Czech Folk Singers, which was neat," Jared remembered. "I had never remotely thought of myself as being in a band before, but I was familiar with Czech music because when I was a little kid, I always woke up to *The Sunday Morning Polka Show*." Jared realized that most polka bands are made up of mature musicians. "I hadn't heard of any polka bands with young people." The boys had the idea of introducing their peers and friends to Czech music through a youth band.

Jared, Corey and Jon wasted no time in getting advice from David

Slovak, who had already been giving Jon lessons on the button accordion. "We went to David Slovak's house in January or February 2005 and asked him how to get started," Jared recalled. "After that, we met with David every Wednesday until Polka Fest."

Corey's dad, Andy Mikula, drums for the Jodie Mikula Orchestra. "Drums are second nature to Corey, so he became our drummer. Jon Marek knew how to play accordion, and his dad, Kevin, was a friend of David's. Jon and Corey knew what they were doing," Jared said.

With an accordion player and a drummer chosen, they needed a bass player. "With me, it was just, 'Here, you try the bass guitar,' Jared recalled with amusement. "I looked at it; I was like, *You got to be kidding me. What does this thing do?*" To the rescue came Zeke Martinez. "Zeke is an excellent teacher; very patient. He helps me, and if I don't know something, he will darn sure make me learn it. He will say, 'We're not leaving until you learn it.'"



Jared is quick to credit David with helping him get started on the bass guitar. "We always went to David. He was the person who created it [the band]." The band was ready to play in public by Polka Fest 2005. They followed up with appearances at the 2006 and 2007 Polka Fests.

"We struggled through names, and for a while people called us The Three Hanaks, but eventually we became The Ennis Czech Boys." Since they began, the band has added several new players. "We have eight members, now," Jared said. "We added some experienced musicians from the Ennis High School band. Michael Trojacek plays tenor and alto saxophone, and both rhythm and lead guitar; he is the work horse. Michael's brother, T.J., does trombone and he can do trumpet, too." Jared said T.J. and Michael have been great additions to the Ennis Czech Boys. "Those Trojacek boys are really musically inclined. They get it from their very talented dad who is a really excellent tenor and alto saxophone player,

ARTS NOW

trumpet, accordion and bass player — a multitasking guy.”

“Clay Gillispie is the rhythm guitar player, and plays second button accordion. Ben Sylvester plays trumpet and Trey Sylvester does keyboard.”

Trey, Michael, T. J. and Jared do vocals. All the band members share connections based on family ties or school ties — some going as far back as elementary school. They have all graduated from high school now, and several have gone on to college.

David Slovak is proud of all of them. “The Ennis Czech Boys have come a long way in such a short time,” David said. “I am very proud of them and the fact that they want to keep the Czech music alive and well. It is a relief to know that the music will remain.”

It is amazing how three young teenagers made such a difference in bringing a love for Czech music to a new generation of people. “Our music is what we call Texas Czech,” Jared explained. “We put our own spin on Czech with a Spanish influence, as far as the beat. It is just its own thing. Our music is more ‘wild and party-oriented’ than traditional Czech.”

“People of Czech descent hear us and think it is really cool that we are trying to bring it back, and we are trying to bring the young crowd back,” Jared mentioned. “Older people are big fans of keeping the music going. And, we’ve noticed a lot more of our friends and their friends coming out and listening to us.”

Jared, Jon and Corey, along with friends Michael, Clay, T.J., Ben and Sylvester have introduced their special brand of polka music at many venues. “We have played at the Czech Convention for three years. We have a lot of fun together.” The Ennis Czech Boys will next be playing February 9 at the Ennis Czech Music Festival, which celebrates Czech music and dance in Ennis. **ARTS NOW**

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Shall We Dance?

— By Kelly Kovar



When Henrietta Novotny says she likes to dance, she is not kidding. She goes ballroom dancing three times a week. "It is wonderful exercise. I dance a lot with a doctor friend, and he swears that it is the best exercise for people our age because it keeps you going mentally and physically," Henrietta said. "I usually dance Monday, Thursday and Saturday. I have my own hoof schedule. I've always enjoyed dancing. When I hear music, my body just starts moving."

If you think Henrietta has all this spare time because she is retired, guess again. She works full time at the boutique shops in The Anatole Hotel in Dallas. She also has several part-time jobs. As a certified cruise counselor, she has taken groups to Alaska, Acapulco, Key West and Nassau. She is also an outside agent for a travel agency. One weekend a month she is the receptionist at Prestonwood Country Club in Dallas. She leases five apartments and a storefront in Ennis. She also organizes tour groups for retirement homes during the bluebonnet

season. All this activity keeps Henrietta happy. "It is a healthy thing for me. Work is my medicine. Idle time is not good for me." Working in Dallas makes it easy for Henrietta to reach her dance destinations, since she is already close by. "I've made a lot of friends. Ballroom dancing has been a big part of my life. I dance all night long."

Dancing made its way into Henrietta's life when she was still a child, dancing with her parents, Mary Novak and Henry Jurica, at the local halls. "We would slide on the dance floor during intermission, then we would fall asleep on the benches by open windows. Back in my high school days, we would just gather at somebody's house or the Tay Barn, put on records and dance."

When Henrietta began dating Frank Novotny, he didn't know how to dance. "We shoved the furniture back in our living room, and I taught him how to polka and waltz," she recalled. After they married and two children, Brenda and Mike, came along, they kept right

on dancing. During the day, they operated their department store, Frank's Town, which sold appliances, fine jewelry, clothing, gifts, china, silver, furs, cosmetics and Christmas items. "Frank and I would wait until the store closed for the night, and then we would go dancing. He always made a big to-do about our date nights on Friday and Saturday." They did polka dancing, waltzes and country western dances, and then went to Arthur Murray's dance classes. "We learned the cha-cha and the rumba and all the fun dances. So, we ventured off into what they classify as ballroom dancing."

"After Frank passed away, in 1998, dancing was one of the things that I really missed," Henrietta said. Then, her daughter, Brenda, introduced her to one of her good friends in Dallas, named Shirley, who was into ballroom dancing. Henrietta went to a dance club with Shirley, and found out about some dance lessons that were available. "At the Saturday afternoon classes, I began getting involved with people

Sports NOW

my age. At a class, partners rotate and it teaches you how to dance better. If you keep dancing with one person, you know their pattern, so it makes you a better dancer if you dance with more people."

From Darlene, a new friend at dance class, Henrietta learned about the dance opportunities that are available at Dallas-area senior centers. "I went into the Farmer's Branch Senior Center, and they had the best dance floor in the metroplex, and a live band. I probably haven't missed many Monday nights since. If you don't sit down, but keep moving, and be friendly, more people will ask you to dance," Henrietta explained. "Usually, they will have a class for an hour and then a ballroom dance for a couple of hours." Henrietta discovered that she could go to the Plano Senior Center on Tuesday nights, Carrollton on Thursday nights and Richardson on Saturday nights. She joined the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex Dance Club and attends their twice-a-month dance at the Sokol Hall on Greenville Avenue. Another dance club has the First Sunday Dance at the Sterling Hotel on Regal Row.

"I enjoy doing what I am doing, and I have some great friends. Dancing keeps me involved and keeps me busy. I've been taking a lot of west coast swing lessons, and I really love west coast. The steps are different, it is a challenge for me. It is like the jitterbug, except it is a straight pattern. Dancing is a good, healthy exercise. You can take it the rest of your life. Some of my best dancing partners, whom I enjoy dancing the most with, are in their 80s and 90s. They are smooth and really do the steps well. Age is not a problem. I enjoy the dancing, and I enjoy being around other dancers. And, it is positive. We all have our burdens to bear, but when we get together, we are just a happy group. Energy builds energy — creative energy." **NOW**

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Business NOW



Sharing the Caring

— By Dia Catalani

Debbie Strunc, Troy Washburn and Sharon Wolfe directly oversee all patient care.

The decision to place a loved one in a private care facility is seldom an easy one to reach. The lifestyle changes, unknown factors and even the financial aspect can be daunting questions for any family to consider. If this is a decision your family is facing, consider that at Ennis Care Center, the name really does encompass the peace of mind you will be assured.

Troy Washburn is the administrator, and works with several doctors in the community and the 17 men and women who oversee specific divisions at Ennis Care Center. Another 140 people take care of residents and maintain the property. Together, their teamwork, professionalism and compassion has garnered Ennis Care Center a Deficiency-Free State Survey rating by the State of Texas, a compliance commendation rarely seen within the nursing home industry. Aside from nuclear facilities, nursing homes are the most highly regulated industry by the U.S. government. "I am extremely proud of

our staff. I have 20 years of experience in this industry and the level of care shown by our nurses, aides and support staff is incredible," Troy said. "We are very family-oriented and the families of Ennis are a large part of why we do what we do. We

have one of the best-maintained buildings and we take care to respect the fact that we're just guests here — this is the home of the people who live here, and we are here to take care of them and their home."

Troy attributes Ennis Care Center's quality to the oversight of its owners, Preferred Care Partners Management Group LLC, which never cuts corners at the expense of patient care or property management. The center specializes in wound care,

which requires the enlistment of highly qualified nursing staff and the best medical provisions available. Sharon Wolfe, RN, is director of nursing and supervises about 45 on-staff nurses. Another 60 men and women help residents and



Residents participate in lots of planned activities.

Business NOW

patients with daily care, keeping them company day and night and tending to their immediate needs. The staff also cares for people who are often not considered of nursing home age: People of all ages who have chronic illnesses or



injuries and cannot be cared for at home. "This can be a difficult job to do, but the

people who work here really do feel a calling for this type of care, and consider it a privilege that they get to touch so many lives," Sharon said. "Our staff really does care about their performance and has a compassion and desire to make a difference in someone's life. Anyone can be a nurse, but it takes someone special to work in a nursing home."

Debbie Strunc is Ennis Care Center's admissions coordinator, and is usually the first person to greet your family. Debbie will provide a tour of the home, introduce you to staff members and administration, and answer your questions about long-term care and short-term rehabilitation. Debbie also works with men and women who volunteer their time for residents by providing personal items, gifts and helping with activities. "So many people don't have family here, and when they don't, that's hard for them. We make sure that their birthdays are celebrated and do anything else we can to make sure their days here are enjoyable," Debbie said. "One of the things I really enjoy about working here is the tremendous teamwork that you'll see. We are the eyes and ears for the families, and we take that very seriously. Every single person will do whatever it takes to help out." To schedule an appointment with Debbie, call Ennis Care Center weekdays at (972) 878-9054. The center is located at 1200 South Hall Street. **NOW**

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Education **NOW**

Getting a Head Start With Kay Lynn Kovar

— By Kelly Kovar

Kay Lynn Kovar is an experienced Head Start teacher for the Ennis Independent School District. The four Head Start classes for the district are held at Austin Elementary. Each class, with its own 17 students, teacher and bilingual aide, meets from 7:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. Children who are 4 years old and qualified for the Head Start program are provided with breakfast, lunch, snack time and school supplies.

As a typical Head Start day begins, Kay puts a cassette tape on, and the students know to come and sit in a circle, after they sign in. "Everybody gets a book to look at that goes with the tape; they learn how to hold the book, turn the pages, and follow along," Kay said. Head Start teachers help students move through the day, with the use of a long chart, positioned at eye level, which details each unit of the day. In Kay's class, a yellow, toy school bus rolls along a track under the chart as each activity progresses. Every week, a student is chosen as time keeper to move the school bus throughout the day. In fact, every student is chosen for a special job which helps the classroom operate smoothly, and teaches the children responsibility and caring.

"They are real big about looking at my 'Helper Board' to see who is the door holder, the line leader or the book

guide," Kay said. "There is a calendar helper, lunch helper, plant keeper and a chair helper. A nap helper helps fold the mats. The weather reporter goes and looks out the window and comes and tells what today's weather is. The weather reporter has to make a judgment and use the vocabulary."

Each room is filled with seven learning-oriented centers. "Nothing that I have in here is just art; it has some kind of ulterior motive." The centers include the very popular play-kitchen, the block area, a math and science table, an ABC center, a writing area and a fun table that has art and painting supplies. "They love coming and sitting in the beanbag chair in the library area."

Whether Kay is teaching practical tips like how to peel and eat a banana, or helping the children with their writing journals, she emphasizes hands-on learning. "It is very important to me that they have an alphabet, and they can see how the letter is made. On Mondays, I will introduce a new letter.

On the white board, I show them how to make the letter. There are several different ways to work on a letter." Kay has a box for each letter. Different items in the box, including a mystery bag, go with that letter. "When we did 'S' we had seven silly string snakes and they glued a string 'S'."

Kay helps each child make an alphabet book with something to represent each letter of the alphabet. On the "F" page is a photo of the child's family, which Kay takes at one of the two home visits which she does. "They really remember the 'L' because they picked a leaf outside. By the end of the year, they have made a page for every letter of the alphabet, and they have a book to take home."

A Head Start day always includes time for reading stories to the children, helping them learn to print their name, studying manners, tooth brushing, working with shapes, and music and movement. On nice days, the children have a Sunshine Break where they play



"When I began teaching, for the first time, I didn't feel like I was punching a clock, because it's not a job to me. I just fell in love with teaching. I guess that is where the Lord wanted me all along."

Education NOW

outside. During inclement weather, there is still plenty of fun in store as Kay puts on an exercise CD such as *Health Songs* or *Kiss Your Brain*. "There is one CD where they pretend they are a rocket and we decide where we are going."



Kay is well-supplied with resources; this is her 12th year of teaching. "I've loved every year that I have taught," she mused. Teaching is Kay's second career change. She began working as a legal secretary, then after marrying Air Force Veteran Ray Kovar, she worked for the city of Ennis in Planning and Zoning for 12 years. "After Ray was killed, [in 1982, in the line of duty as a Dallas sheriff's deputy] I put myself through school getting a bachelor's degree in applied business, a master's degree in public administration, and three teaching certifications — for early childhood, grades one through eight, and a reading specialization. When I began teaching, for the first time, I didn't feel like I was punching a clock, because it's not a job to me. I just fell in love with teaching. I guess that is where the Lord wanted me all along.

"By the end of the year, it really is amazing how the Head Start students have progressed," Kay said. "Sometimes you see that little light come on, and it is exciting." Several parents have told Kay that their children really miss the Head Start program on nonschool days. "That is what makes it all worthwhile. Ray was killed before we had children, but now, I feel like I have hundreds of children." **NOW**

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Around Town NOW



Ennis Public Theatre entertained holiday audiences, top left, with the third production of Bill Rhoten's *My Favorite Christmas*. The Ennis Sew Know Square quilting group, bottom left, gathered for a Christmas party. Fran Anderson presented *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, top right, at the Ennis Public Library. Susan Valek, middle center, is just one of the many great helpers at The Medicine Chest. ACROSS (A Christian Response of Shelter & Service) board members, middle right, gathered at their annual New Year's Eve appreciation celebration. EHS Theatre, bottom right, presented *Nunsense - The Mega Musical* at the San Jacinto Auditorium.



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Around Town NOW



Cousins Krista Vasquez and Jake Saenz, top left, rode on the GO Academy float during the annual Christmas parade. James and Jennifer Robinson, top center, hosted the ACROSS benefit celebration in their lovely home. Marion Reynolds, Robin Guy and Marilyn Howell, top right, traveled from Waxahachie to Ennis where they enjoyed shopping at Sweet 'n Sassy's. Ennis Lions Club members, middle left, gathered at the Ennis Country Club to enjoy lunch before their weekly scheduled meeting. Sisters Julia and Mary Martinez, bottom left, donned party hats to watch the ball drop on New Year's Eve. Alysha Law, middle center, joined the cast of *Charlie Brown* as Woodstock. ECVB tourism director Gina Rokas and secretary Paula Campos, bottom right, are always eager to help visitors who come to Ennis.



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Look Who's Cooking

— By Stephanie Brewer

IN THE KITCHEN WITH RAEANN WILSON

MOM'S SOUP

1 lb. pork stew meat
1 Tbsp. olive oil
1/2 small onion, chopped
water to 1/2 full in cooking pot
salt and pepper, to taste
6 carrots, sliced
3 potatoes, cubed
1 cup cooked macaroni
1 15.25-oz. can corn
1 12-oz. can tomato sauce
Brown stew meat with oil and add the onion. Once browned, add water until pot is half full, then add salt and pepper to taste. Let simmer at a slow boil for 2 - 3 hours until meat is tender. Add carrots, wait 15 minutes, and then add the potatoes. Wait 10 more minutes and add the cooked macaroni and corn. Add the tomato sauce last and let simmer for another 20 - 25 minutes. Enjoy!

SOUTHERN BAKED BEANS

4 slices of bacon
2 cans of pork and beans
2 heaping Tbsp. brown sugar

1/2 Tbsp. ketchup
3/4 Tbsp. mustard
1/2 Tbsp. pancake syrup
1/2 onion, chopped
Preheat oven to 350 F. Cut bacon into small pieces and fry. Put beans in large glass baking dish and fold in brown sugar, ketchup, mustard and syrup. Once bacon is about half cooked, add onions to frying pan and cook until bacon is cooked. Add onions and bacon to pork and beans and put in the oven for about 30 minutes, stirring about halfway through.

MUSTARD POTATO SALAD

4 boiled eggs
10 potatoes
1/2 onion
8 dill pickle spears
1/4 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup Miracle Whip
1/3 cup mustard
salt and pepper, to taste
Boil eggs and potatoes until soft. Drain and then put in a large mixing bowl. Finely chop onions and pickles. Mash potatoes well, then

grate eggs onto potatoes and add onions and pickles. Add mayonnaise, Miracle Whip, mustard and salt and pepper to taste. If needed, add extra Miracle Whip or mustard to your desired taste. Mix well until blended.

CHEESECAKE

CRUST:

1 stick softened butter
1 cup graham cracker crumbs
1/2 cup finely chopped pecans

FILLING:

2 8-oz. cream cheese squares
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 pint sour cream
1 tsp. vanilla

CRUST: Preheat oven to 350 F. Knead softened butter, graham cracker crumbs and pecans. Spread crust out into medium cheesecake pan on bottom and about halfway up the sides of pan. **FILLING:** Soften cream cheese, and then blend with sugar and eggs. Fold in sour cream and vanilla. Bake at 350 F for 35 minutes. (Do not

open oven while cooking; it will crack the cheesecake.) Once done, open oven door halfway and let cake cool in the oven for 1 hour. Chill and add desired toppings.

CHICKEN AND DUMPLINGS

whole chicken, skinned and cleaned
salt and pepper
1 12-oz. can evaporated milk
1/2 stick butter
2 cans Pillsbury biscuits
flour, as needed
Boil chicken, salt and pepper. Cook for 1 to 1-1/2 hours until fully cooked. Remove chicken. Add evaporated milk and butter, bringing broth to a gradual boil. Roll out biscuits with flour and stack rolled biscuits on top of each other. Cut stack into four sections. Then gradually add separate pieces into boiling broth, stirring occasionally. Once all biscuits have been added, turn temperature to low heat and cook for another 15 - 20 minutes. Then take off burner and allow dumplings to cool for another 15 - 20 minutes to thicken. Shred up chicken and add to dumplings if desired.



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Changing Jobs or Retiring? Consider IRA Rollover

— By Bob Irish

In the near future, are you going to change jobs or retire? If so, then you will have a lot of things to think about. One of the most important considerations is what to do with the money you have accumulated in your employer's 401(k) plan. While you have a few options, your best choice may be to roll over your 401(k) money into an IRA — so you will want to know, in advance, what is involved in this move.

By rolling over the taxable portion of your 401(k) — your pre-tax contributions, employer contributions and all earnings — into a new or existing IRA, you will gain some key advantages. First, you will

avoid all immediate taxes and penalties. Second, you will continue to benefit from tax deferral. Third, IRAs offer you a wide variety of investment options.

Eventually, though, you will have to decide what to do with your IRA. You can start taking withdrawals at age 59 1/2 without having to pay a 10 percent penalty tax. But suppose you have built up a considerable balance in your traditional IRA, and you do not think you will need to use it all to help pay for your retirement. Can you pass on your IRA's tax deferral to your children?

Yes, you can — through the concept of the “stretch” or “multigenerational” IRA. To understand how the stretch

IRA works, you need to know one of the rules governing traditional IRAs — specifically, you have to start taking “required minimum distributions” at age 70 1/2. In recent years, the IRS changed the life expectancy factors used to determine your required minimum distribution calculations. Consequently, you can now take out smaller amounts of money from your IRA, which allows you to extend the number of years your IRA money has the potential to grow tax-deferred.

Obviously, the revised life expectancy rules will positively affect how much of your IRA money you can leave to your children. But the rule changes

IF YOU'RE NOT AT YOUR LAST JOB, YOUR 401(k) SHOULDN'T BE EITHER.

Leaving a 401(k) behind could mean leaving it with no one to watch over it.

We can explain your options, and if you'd like to roll your 401(k) over into an Edward Jones IRA, we can help you do it with no taxes or penalties. We'll look out for you.

To find out about 401(k) options that makes sense, call or visit your local financial advisor today.

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also permit your children, once they inherit your IRA, to base their minimum required distributions on their life expectancies. So, if they are in their early middle-aged years when they receive your IRA, they can take out relatively small amounts, thereby avoiding big tax hits. If their situation allows, they can then leave the IRA to their children, who can continue to enjoy the benefits of tax deferral.

“IRAs offer you a wide variety of investment options.”

Rollover to Roth IRA

Until recently, you could not roll over a 401(k) directly to a Roth IRA. First, you had to roll over the 401(k) to a traditional IRA and then convert the traditional IRA to a Roth and pay tax on the conversion.

But new tax laws allow you to make direct rollovers to a Roth IRA, starting in 2008. You will still have to pay taxes on the converted amount, but you — and your children or grandchildren — might come out ahead in the long run, because Roth IRA earnings have the potential to grow tax-free, provided certain requirements are met. You will need to consult with your tax advisor to make sure you are eligible to open a Roth IRA.

Keep Your 401(k) Working for You

Before you change jobs or retire, consult with your financial advisor and tax professional on whether an IRA rollover makes sense for you. You worked hard for your 401(k) funds; so keep them working for you. **NOW**

Bob Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.

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Angie Wingo-Juenemann
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Health
NOW

Love Yourself Wash Your Hands

— By Joyce Hagens

In recent months, it has been impossible to open a newspaper or listen to a news broadcast that you do not hear about “a new superbug” causing illness or death or a school being closed for cleaning due to an infectious outbreak among the students. Many people have wanted to know how to protect themselves from infection.

The most effective means of preventing the spread of infection is to wash your hands! Most of us do not think about what germs might be “lurking” on a doorknob, but in public places hundreds or thousands of people may have touched that door since the last time it was cleaned. All of us have bacteria that live on our skin at all times, and each time we touch something, we transfer bacteria from our hands to that surface. At the same time, bacteria and viruses that are living on a surface are picked up by hands. We then might scratch our nose, or rub our eyes and transfer

those bacteria or viruses to those areas.

It is important that you wash your hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based sanitizer before eating, after using the rest room, after coughing or sneezing, before preparing food, after being around someone that has been coughing or sneezing, or after emptying the trash. Proper handwashing involves brisk rubbing of the hands with soap for 15 seconds, making sure to clean well around the fingernails. An easy way to remember how long 15 seconds is by singing two choruses of “Happy Birthday” or one verse of “Old McDonald” with one animal. By washing your hands more frequently, you will stay healthier, prevent colds and flu and prevent the spread of illness. So love yourself, and those around you — wash your hands. **NOW**

Joyce Hagens, BSN, RN
Assistant Director of Quality Management
Navarro Regional Hospital



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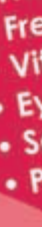
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February 2008

Community Calendar

All month

The Ennis Lions Baseball Team fundraiser. They are selling tickets for the 2008 Texas Rangers season. Get your tickets today at below face value for 4 select games that will be played April 12, May 17 and 31, or August 2, before they go on sale to the public. For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Rosemary Montgomery at (972) 921-9809 or Suzie Betik at (972) 965-0270.

Every Monday

Ladies' Bible Study, "Redeeming the Tears"; Men's "Round Table Bible Study and Topical Discussion"; Arena Barrel Practice (weather permitting), 7:00 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ennis.

Every Tuesday

Golden Circle Senior Citizen Center, morning singing and devotional. Call (972) 875-6101.

Every Wednesday

Golden Circle Senior Citizen Center, morning Bible Study. Call (972) 875-6101.

Every Thursday

Ennis Public Library, chess for kids. Call (972) 875-5360.

Team roping practice, 7:00 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ennis outdoor arena, weather permitting. Call (972) 872-9942 to confirm event in case of inclement weather.

Golden Circle Senior Citizen Center, exercise and pot luck lunch. Call (972) 875-6101.

Every Friday and Saturday

Live Bands at Red Moon Cafe. For upcoming events go to www.theredmooncafe.com.

Every Saturday

Men's Saturday morning breakfast, hosted by the Cowboy Church of Ennis, 7:00 a.m., The Ranch House Cafe, I-45 at Exit 242 in Rice.

Tuesday – Saturdays

Ennis Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, 8:00 p.m., 1301 S. Kaufman.

Daily

Grace Recovery Group, 8:00 p.m., 107 S.W. Main Street. This is a support group for recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. (972) 921-3275.

February 1 - 2

Always, Patsy Cline, 7:30 p.m. each evening, Palace Theatre in Corsicana. For tickets, call the Warehouse Box Office at (903) 872-5421. Ticket prices: \$30 for orchestra, \$20 for lower balcony and \$15 for upper balcony.

February 1 - 3

CASI-sanctioned chili cook-off benefiting the Ellis County Children's Advocacy Center and Gingerbread House. Ellis County Expo Center in Waxahachie. Lots of activities and fun. Contact Kay Lefler (972) 646-5159 or Theresa Haskovec (972) 938-0075.

February 1 - 24

The Ennis Public Theatre presents *Proposals*, by Neil Simon. 2705-C N. Kaufman Street. Performances on Friday and Saturday nights at 8:00 p.m., Sunday matinee on February 24. Call (972) 878-7529.

February 5

Ennis Garden Club meeting, 9:30 a.m., First Presbyterian Church, 201 N. McKinney.

February 7

Monthly meeting of the Circle of Friends women's group, 7:00 p.m. New members enthusiastically welcomed. To confirm date and location, call (972) 878-0740.

February 8

Pre-party and jam session for Ennis Czech Music Festival, 7:00 - 11:00 p.m., Sokol Clubroom. No admission fee.

February 9

Ennis Czech Music Festival, 2:00 - 11:00 p.m., Sokol Activity Center, 2622 E. Hwy. 34. Five bands, dancing, kitchen open. \$5 per person; free for 14 and under.

February 10

United Christian Brotherhood, 7:00 a.m., Baylor Baptist Church. All men of the community are welcome.

February 13

Curbside Recycling. Obtain free yellow recycling bags at City Hall. (972) 875-1234.

February 23

Ennis Idol, noon to 9:00 p.m., San Jacinto Auditorium.


March 1

10K Giveaway, Sokol Activity Center. For more information contact Larry Laznovsky at (972) 878-5987.

March 29

Master Gardeners of Ellis County's annual Ellis County Lawn and Garden Expo, Waxahachie Civic Center, 1950 N. I-35 E from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. This comprehensive educational extravaganza will include over 100 lawn and garden-related exhibitor booths, keynote speakers, gardening workshops for children from 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. and a variety of adult workshops. Gaye Hammond will introduce children to the joys of growing roses at 1:00 p.m. Neil Sperry will speak on growing green at 2:00 p.m., and Dotty Woodson will share the art of landscape planting that will flower all summer at 3:30 p.m. The Master Gardener plant sale will feature butterfly-attracting plants, natives, heirloom tomatoes and hard to find plants. For sponsorship and exhibitor information, please send an e-mail to expo.ecmga@yahoo.com or call James at (972) 814-0699.

To have your events posted on the community calendar, e-mail us at: kkovar@nowmagazines.com.



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