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February 2008

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and **War**

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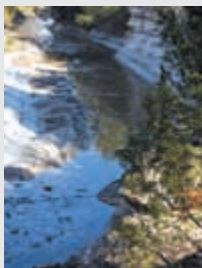
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Photo by Rod Cordsen.

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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

Did you know the month of February has been given many national designations regarding love? These are important celebrations to observe and honor. Besides Valentine's Day, February is designated as Black History month, American Heart Health month, Random Acts of Kindness month and Library Lovers month. In honor of February's emphasis on sharing the many facets of love, please enjoy reading this issue as we focus on locals who show tremendous amounts of heartfelt devotion to others. Red Oak resident, Mary Leggitt, enjoys teaching children how to read and motivating them to use the local libraries. The Nance family helps local families come together through soccer while ensuring their own family has fun. Be renewed by Brandon and Crystal Lafleur's ceaseless devotion to each other and their country while serving for us in the Iraq War.

In the wise words of Maya Angelou, *"Love recognizes no barriers. It jumps hurdles, leaps fences, penetrates walls to arrive at its destination full of hope."*

May your February be full of hope and love!

Your neighbor,

Diana Merrill Claussen, Red OakNOW Editor dclaussen.nowmag@sbcglobal.net



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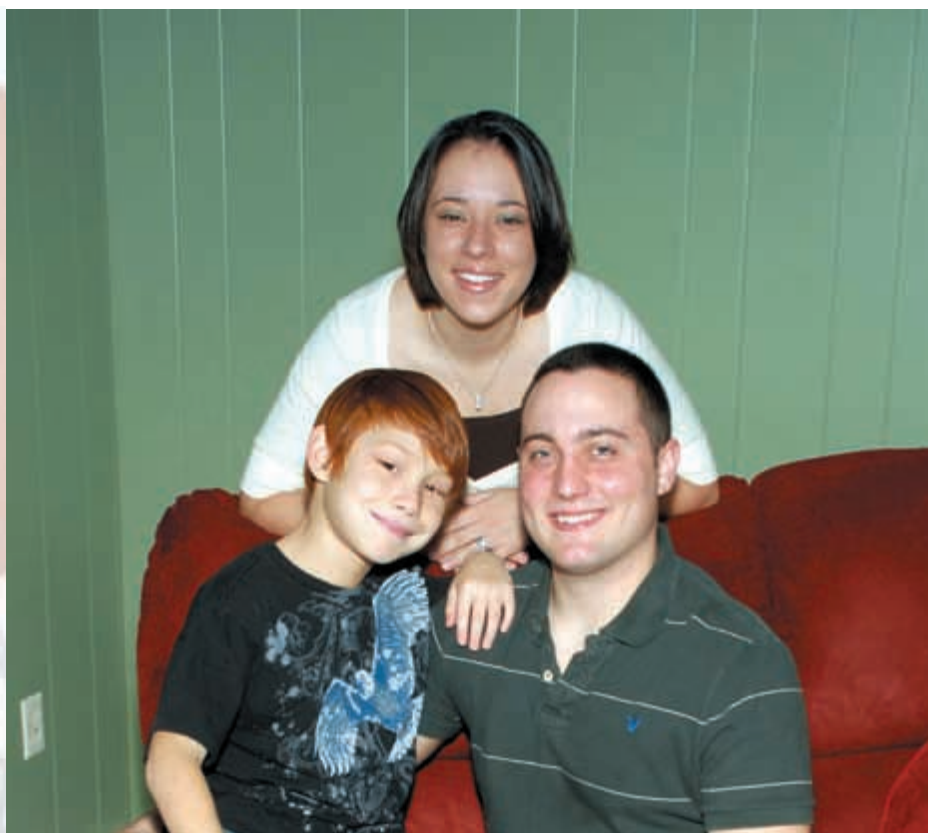
In Love and War

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Many couples have quite a story about when they met their significant other. For Brandon and Crystal Lafleur, theirs is a newly begun story that has grown immensely. Their life together has not only seen love; it has also seen war — the Iraq War.

Born and reared in Dallas, Crystal has lived in the Red Oak area most of her life. “I went to DeSoto High School, earned some college credits and later joined the Air Force through their Family-care program when I was 23,” she said. This program ensured her son, Jesse, would be taken care of in the event of her death.

After attending boot camp at Lackland Air Force Base, Crystal went to technical school in Wichita Falls, Texas, in April 2005. “After my first month of training to be an A.G.E. (Aerospace Ground Equipment) mechanic, I met Brandon at the school and we started dating,” she shared. “We continued dating for the duration of our training and Brandon graduated



The Lafleur family — Brandon, Crystal and son, Jesse.

a month before I did. It was perfect because we trained and worked in the same field and did the same job.”

Following his graduation, Brandon went back to his home state of Massachusetts and was stationed in Westover. “I was only at the base in Massachusetts for three months,” he said. “As soon as I arrived there, I asked them to start working on transfer papers to send me to Lackland [where Crystal was stationed].” Almost a year after his arrival in Texas, Crystal and Brandon were married.

Along with exchanging wedding rings, they also decided to show their commitment in another way. “In our job, wearing jewelry while working is a safety hazard, since you can get shocked wearing metal,” Brandon said.

So after the wedding, the Lafleurs opted for an additional symbol to honor their love and Irish heritage.

“We decided to get matching ‘marriage knot’ tattoos,” Crystal said, as both showed off their wrists. “One day while looking for a tattoo design, I came across a Celtic wedding ring that had an engraved marriage knot design,” Brandon shared. Crystal added, “It is a symbol of eternal love, and since all of the lines in the tattoo are connected, there is no beginning and no end.” They decided the tattoos would be safer than jewelry and perfect symbols of their matrimony.

Soon after the wedding, the couple transferred to the Navy’s Joint Reserve Base in Fort Worth during the spring of 2007. This move allowed them to be closer to Crystal’s family, until they





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received their orders to serve in Iraq. "When we enlisted, and while we were in boot camp, we had always been told we would eventually go to the desert," Crystal explained. "A lot of units go to Iraq, so we were not only expecting to get deployed, we were ready for it. So, I left for Iraq in May and Brandon was deployed in June," Crystal said.

The Lafleurs were shipped to Balad, Iraq, otherwise known as "Mortar-ritaville" to the troops, a nickname that was well-deserved. "There were several adverse situations that impeded on a good night's rest," Crystal shared. "So, you usually only got about four or five hours of sleep a night." The lack of sleep was tough, especially when the 12-hour work shifts would often become 15-hour shifts.

The couple was able to spend a lot of time together during the day, allowing them to grow in the friendship facet of their marriage. "When you are forwardly deployed, or in the "combat zone," the military does not want you to be distracted. So, married couples who are stationed at the same base are not allowed to treat each other as a couple," Crystal disclosed. "When you are there, you are basically just friends: no visits, no physical contact and you bunk in different quarters." The Lafleurs say that instead of putting a strain on their marriage, this rule helped to strengthen their relationship.

"This aspect was actually easy for us because we met in the military and were familiar with the rules and regulation," Crystal said. "Since we did the same job working on F-16s, we were able to see each other a lot and got to become good friends." Both Crystal and Brandon agree the rules and their work during the war have helped them professionally and personally.

"Our relationship is different because we talk through everything," Crystal shared. "There really were no strains for us while we were overseas." Other military couples, however, are not always so lucky. "We know a lot of people who met and married while in tech school," Crystal continued. "Most

of them got divorced within six months to a year. We saw many relationships fail. We got married while in Dallas, so we had time to make sure it was going to be a lifelong thing where we could focus on honesty and communication. That is what really helped to make our marriage work in the military and as a couple."

Since their return to the U.S. last August, the Lafleurs have been able to help each other through their post-war experience. "We didn't have a lot of adjusting to do since we came back," Brandon said. Crystal agreed. "I think being with someone else who was in the same situation helped because we not only talk to each other, we have a lot of friends in the desert we still talk with," she said.

Being in a war zone allowed the couple to develop many deep bonds and friendships. "We have quite an extensive family with our military friends," Brandon shared. Many of their close friends regularly serve on the frontlines. "Everyone serving is important, but we really remember and thank the guys who go outside of the base to serve," Crystal said. "They see things that most people could never see or could ever imagine seeing."

Crystal then shared how imperative it is for those who are stateside to make sure the troops know how much they are valued. "It is important to keep reassuring the troops, reminding them why they are there doing what they are doing," Crystal declared, as Brandon added, "They especially need people to tell them we honor and respect them, because there are a lot of people nowadays who do just the opposite."

For now, the Lafleurs do their best to offer hope to their comrades in Iraq. Although the couple has received unofficial word of their re-deployment later this year, instead of dwelling on the past, they choose to unabashedly embrace their future together. "We don't think about what we have been through," Crystal shared. "Instead, we plan for the future and live for the day." **NOW**



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In 1873, Dr. Brewster Higley published his poem, “My Western Home,” better known as the song, “Home on the Range.” It was his anthem for the American West, paying tribute to the growing number of settlers moving westward and to his home in the flat plains of Smith County, Kansas. Had he seen the location of the Stone Canyon Ranch in Glenn Heights, Texas, that classic country song would have surely become a symphony! Dr. Higley would have observed a medley of a limestone canyon, natural springs and creeks set among rolling hills and vast, open pastures.

Instead, more than a century later, it was Dr. David McFadden, a Pennsylvanian transplant, who would make the discovery of his lifetime. Initially, he moved to Dallas to escape the harsh Northeastern winters, eventually settling into a private practice

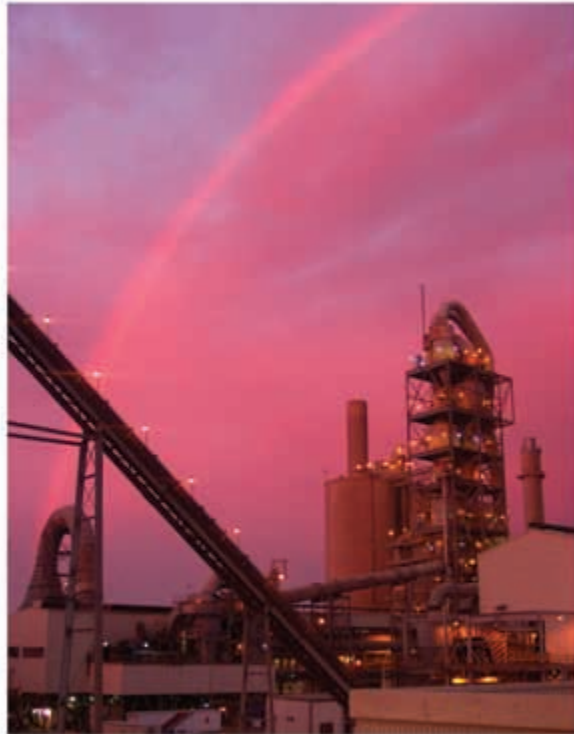
in the dental specialty called Prosthodontics, the branch of dentistry that replaces damaged or missing teeth. “I have to pinch myself,” David said, as he looked around his 100-acre ranch. “I can’t believe I just happened to be the right guy at the right time.” Reflecting on his humble family roots, he is awestruck at his good fortune. “My dad was a steelworker, my mom a cashier. Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined this!”

The ranch house, he admitted, “was inconsequential.”

When David told a client (and real estate agent) he was in search of more land than his three acres in Southlake, he was thinking of 20 or 30 acres. Instead, she showed him “paradise, 20-miles outside the metropolis.”

Nonetheless, the house, built in 1961, was a pleasant surprise with open floor space and the rustic appeal David was looking for. Though renovations were needed, the house became the perfect





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setting for his ranch. By renovating an outdated bathroom and removing the dividing wall between the living room and kitchen, he created a welcoming, open effect for friends and visitors. After pulling up ancient blue carpeting in the living room, he found the original wood flooring and expanded it into the kitchen. The original oak cabinets in the kitchen and dining area complement the Western theme David hopes to create throughout the entire house. Today, the original wallpaper remains the only "unimprovement" in the kitchen.



"The cats and I hate the wallpaper," David mused, "so they mutually agreed to rip it off." Remnants of the torn paper remain in the corner of the kitchen, which satisfies both man and cats.

Sharing the home with David are Leo and Ben, two domestic Cat Fanciers show breed cats known for both their beauty and expressive vocals. They coexist quite happily with David's simple, but elegant, style. There is, however, one area that is off-limits to the cats.

David's pride and joy is the guest

room. It is a beautifully decorated room with a Western motif. Texas decals, horseshoes and branding iron trinkets can be found around the room. Old Texas style dressers, complete with the Western theme, surround the one-of-a-kind bed. Its design is called "Three Door Bed" because of the three-antiqued doors that are fitted together to create a massive bed frame. The quilt gracing the bed, however, tells the real story of the homeowner.

Soon after he settled into the Stone Canyon Ranch, Dr. McFadden learned one of his patients, an oral throat cancer survivor, was having difficulties with his insurance. David mounted a phone call and letter-writing campaign to help the patient and his wife with their insurance woes. As a thank you, the woman created the gorgeous quilt, carefully choosing masculine colors to highlight David's taste and style, and also included a rawhide dressing for the window. David is not fully satisfied,

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however, noting there is much more work to be done in the four-bedroom home. "My problem is I love the outdoors so much more," he said, "I can't stay inside to finish things in here."

Outside — that is David's Western home. It was his love of the outdoors that brought him to what he calls his little slice of paradise. In 2000, he bought his first horse, a Tennessee Walker named Sunny, but he quickly realized it was more fun to have a riding buddy. A second Tennessee Walker named Cisco soon joined the ranch family, followed by Sport, another majestic Tennessee Walker, born on April 14, 2004. "When he hit the ground," David smiled, "that was it! When Sport was born, I found my life hobby."

Today, he houses 20 horses on his ranch, complete with three barns, round

pens, a training arena with lights and sound system, farm equipment, trailers and a second house where his full-time ranch manager resides. Even with his ranch hand and weekend help, there

are simply not enough hours in the day for all the work to be done at Stone Canyon Ranch.

Most of David's week is dedicated to his patients and the office in downtown Dallas, making his time on the ranch all the more precious. Whether he is baling hay, training horses, or has a chainsaw in his hands, David is most happy working the

land and animals. "Everything I want," he declared, "is right here."

Then, just three months after David acquired the ranch, he learned that Loop 9 was designated to run right through his dream property. "It was either stop doing everything, or just keep on with the plans," David said of his intention

to create a state-of-the-art training facility for his champion horses, as well as guest cabins. Already, he has laid plans for where he wants to build the main ranch house.

David treats his lucky visitors to a tour by four-wheeler, parking at the crest of the canyon wall. "This," he said, "is where you need to stand — right here." The breathtaking view almost seems inconceivable nestled right here in the Red Oak/Glenn Heights area.

Standing 30 or 40 feet above the mouth of the limestone canyon, first time visitors may be stunned to view the way it winds around the ranch, supporting a lush tree line and ample wildlife. To David, the wonder is no less impressive, yet there is much work to be done. Despite the threat of eminent domain and the uncertainty of his guest cabins, there is always his desire to do more with his horses. Taking in the view in his cowboy hat, worn jeans and boots, David is content with his home on the range. **NOW**



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ARTS
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Sweethearts in Art

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Ken Reese met the future love of his life, Sandy, back in 1954, in Eastland, Texas. “I met Sandy at church in the early summer,” he shared. “At the time, she was 15 and I was 17.” From the beginning, there were a few obstacles Ken would have to overcome in order to win Sandy’s heart.

“At that time, I was dating the sheriff’s daughter,” Ken said. Sandy thought Ken was actually older than he was, and because of this, they remained acquaintances only. Later, when Ken was unattached, he thought of Sandy and decided to look her up. “When Sandy asked her mom if she could go out with me, her mother said, ‘No,’” he recalled. “So I kept calling every week until her mom said, ‘Yes.’”

The couple married in 1957, and Ken went on to join the armed forces. It was not long before Ken noticed his wife had a penchant for the arts. “Even when she was little, Sandra was always drawing,” Ken said. “So, when I was stationed in Heidelberg, Germany, I bought Sandy her first set of oil paints. That was over 40 years ago.”

Although the Reeses lived overseas for a time, they eventually returned to



Texas so Ken could obtain his degree at Texas A&M University. “Sandra and I worked, and that put me through school,” Ken reminisced. “We had two kids, so she didn’t really get back into painting regularly until 30 years later.”

When Sandy was finally able to pursue her creative interests, she started taking watercolor lessons. “I first took classes from Lynn McClain who was a local resident here,” Sandy stated. When she brought home her paintings from class, Ken was inspired to try his hand at this pastime his wife so enjoyed. “One night Sandra came in with a painting she had made in her art class,” Ken said. “So I then decided to attend one of the workshops with her and by the next week, I had bought



my first watercolor kit. I had never held a brush in my hand before then.”

The artistic duo often found many opportunities to work and train with some of the world’s best international artists. “If you are going to study art, study with the best teachers you can afford,” Ken advised.

Since their retirement, the Reeses have “taken up” and immersed themselves in the arts. “We used to own a studio in the area and would have artists come in so we could all paint together,” Sandy shared. “Now we get together with our close friends on Tuesdays to paint and have lunch.”

Ken and Sandra also attend art-related classes at local colleges, and are members of the Ellis County Arts Association,

ARTS NOW

Southwest Watercolor Society, and the Cedar Hill, Rockport and DeSoto Art Leagues. Ken is also the webmaster for the DeSoto club's Web site. The passion of this couple with many memberships extends far beyond their local area — especially when it comes to finding inspiring moments, people and places to create their beautiful pieces of art.

"Ken and I travel across the world to go on art retreats, take classes from the masters, and to attend shows," Sandy said. "I also travel with my art girlfriends." For the Reeses, traveling is part of their pursuit of art, allowing them to experience many inspiring moments in which to conceive and create their masterpieces.

Through their years of working together in both life and in art, the Reeses acknowledge how their bond has not only evolved, but how their craft and craftsmanship have also grown. Ken is now an avid potter while Sandy finds herself mainly painting landscapes, flowers and just about anything that strikes her fancy. Ken calls his work "representational" and enjoys creating raku, horse hair and sagar pottery. "I like Southwestern art and art that looks real," he said. "I also like watercolors with a lot of color," he added, proudly pointing to one of Sandra's rose pictures. Many of their pieces are sold all over the U.S. and Sandra's work can be seen gracing the walls of several galleries including The Artists' Showplace in Dallas.

Although the Reeses love to travel the world in pursuit of their art, they say their favorite place to experience the arts is here in our community. "There are some very talented, yet unknown artists in our area," Ken said. "Everyone needs a place in their community where they can retreat to and art helps you to do that." Ken and Sandy agree there is no better place than your backyard to paint away the stressors of life. **NOW**

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Sports
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A Fun-loving Family

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

These days, it is rare for people to keep in touch with childhood friends. Perhaps there are a lucky few who still send an occasional card or two to those acquaintances of the past, but lifelong friends, Randy Nance and Liz Firebaugh, decided to do more than simply keep in touch.

Randy and Liz first met each other in The Colony while they were in the eighth grade. Both were very active in school and sports, with Liz having a special love for playing soccer. Their first meeting was, for Randy, a perfect example of the old adage “love at first sight.” Liz, however, was more involved in playing the sport she loved. At the time, she was friends with Randy and could never imagine having more than a perfectly good friendship.

“Back then, Randy would ask me to go out with him every year,” Liz smiled. “He was my best friend.” Because Liz did not want to mess with a good friendship, she concentrated on school and soccer. Randy also kept busy by playing football



The Nance family enjoys a day at the soccer field.

and baseball, all the while keeping his crush on Liz. “We went to the prom together in our junior year,” Liz said. “It actually took about eight years, though, for me to say, “Yes,” and officially go out with him.”

Randy’s long-awaited day came when Liz called, asking him to go out on a date. Randy declined, saying he had already made plans for the evening. This not only motivated Liz, it led to her change of heart and encouraged Randy to ask Liz out again. “I was scared when we first started dating because we had been friends for so long,” Liz said. “I wanted to make sure it was all real.” When the night of their first date arrived, Liz’s butterflies were knocking around her stomach like an overfilled soccer ball. “Later, when the date was over and he finally kissed me, well, that changed my mind about him,” Liz smiled.

Now, Liz not only had her man, she was also able to continue playing the sport she loved. Soccer took her all the way through college and is still part of their lives today. “When we got married, we were in our early 20s,” Liz shared. The Nances have recently celebrated their 10th anniversary, and their two children complete their little family. They are very happy to see their love of sports shared by both Ian, 8, and Emma, 5.

Liz and Randy said team sports have given them the opportunity to spend time with their children and to be a part of activities the whole family can enjoy together. “We try to spend a lot of time together,” Randy said. “Even though I am sometimes gone a day, I get to be home for



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Sports NOW

two." Working as a local paramedic, Randy is thankful for the opportunity to be able to spend a great amount of time with his children. "The schedule I have is really good for the family during the summertime," he added. "Working in Red Oak helps, too."

The short commute around the town

"Being involved in soccer not only gives me a great feeling of accomplishment, but it also allows for great family time."

is convenient for the Nances, especially when it comes to school, family time and sports. Although Randy quit playing soccer as a child, he and Liz are considering joining a local co-ed team next year. "We have to make sure first, though, that we have time for the kids and their activities," Liz pointed out. "We also make time for the family," Randy said as he flashed his wife a grin.

The couple is thankful that the sports they love — especially soccer — give them opportunities to be more involved in their children's lives. "We were both the Under 6 youth commissioners for soccer during the fall and will be the U-6 commissioners for the spring season, too," Liz explained. Randy and Liz not only enjoy being the Red Oak/Glenn Heights Soccer Association commissioners, they also enjoy being coaches.

"I love all of it," Liz exclaimed. "Randy and I really enjoy getting to work with great commissioners, coaches and families together. Being involved in soccer not only gives me a great feeling of accomplishment, but it also allows for great family time, too — especially on Saturdays when we get to spend the day at the fields, have the day together and play soccer."

From friendship to love, Liz and Randy believe they are blessed to have known each other for so long, and they are thankful to have their fun-loving family. **NOW**

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Kind, Caring and Committed

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Back in the day, doctors were known to make home visits. They were also known for treating ailments and performing procedures using very crude methods. Thankfully, modern medical practices have far surpassed the unsophisticated and oftentimes painful procedures of the past.

This progression can especially be seen in the realm of dentistry. Here in Red Oak, the goal of pain-free procedures is the heart and soul of Dr. Carol Randolph Wald and her dental practice, Fearless Dentistry. Dr. Wald is a firm believer that dental procedures should no longer be painful or scary. Beginning her dental practice in the '80s, Dr. Wald has maintained Fearless Dentistry in Red Oak since 1998. The practice centers around restorative, cosmetic and sedation dentistry, and the staff at Fearless Dentistry specializes in ensuring peace of mind to their clients



Dr. Wald and the Fearless Dentistry team work hard to ensure peace of mind during dental procedures.

and providing a comfortable experience.

Dr. Wald and her staff, consider the relationships with their clients to be the most valuable component of any dentistry procedure. "Our primary purpose at Fearless Dentistry is to get to know a patient, their past experiences and to help them overcome their fear," Office Manager Michelle Decker explained. "It is rare for most practices to be able to take the opportunity to understand a patient. That is why we dedicate a lot of time

with each patient. We do this so that we can better understand their special situations, dental experiences and needs. At Fearless Dentistry, we do everything we can to relate to our patients and to ensure their comfort."

"If a person does not take care of their teeth and practice good oral hygiene, it can affect their body and could lead to poor health."

Once Dr. Wald assesses the patient, their needs and history, she works to calm any apprehensions they may have. "Before we do any procedure, we get to know our patients very well," Michelle continued. "Plus, Dr. Wald is a really great person to talk to." The doctor and her staff have a certain way of

Business NOW

calming uneasiness, particularly with patients who may have had a traumatic medical experience, especially during childhood. Dr. Wald uses a variety of dental sedation techniques tailored to each patient's individual needs.

"There really are people who have gone through very traumatic medical experiences as a child. Because of that, they will not visit a doctor or dentist as an adult," Michelle said. "Some people will not even go to get their teeth cleaned because they are so terrified." Maintaining a schedule

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of regular check-ups and cleanings is crucial when it comes to taking care of oral health. This careful maintenance is not only imperative for teeth and gums, it is also extremely necessary when it comes to maintaining complete well-being.

"If a person does not take care of their teeth and practice good oral hygiene, it can affect their body and could lead to poor health," Michelle stated. "By the use of sedation dentistry, we help make those who feel anxious to feel comfortable again. By using this method, there really is no longer a reason for anyone to be afraid of going to the dentist anymore. Many clients just come to see us because they like to visit with Dr. Wald and the Fearless Dentistry team."

Fearless Dentistry is conveniently located at 101 Austin Boulevard #100 in Red Oak. For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact their office at (972) 617-3322 or visit www.fearlessdentistry.net. Office hours are by appointment only. **NOW**

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Education **NOW**

Eager Reader

— By Faith Browning

Mary Leggitt is an exceptional volunteer. Every Tuesday and Thursday, she freely gives her time to teach third-grade children to read at Wooden Elementary School. She feels the greatest need for literacy can be found in those children in the third grade. “If you can’t read by the time you’re in the third grade, you’re in trouble,” Mary said. “I feel that if you can read well, you can educate yourself.”

Her volunteer work started in Indiana over 15 years ago after retiring early from Fort Wayne Community School Administration. Mary participated in her church’s project to aid the inner-city schools, signing up to help children read. This project, called the Reading Readiness Program, entailed working with prekindergarten children. “Many children who are read to consistently can read before they go to kindergarten,” she said. Mary strongly suggested not just reading to a child, but allowing them to sit down beside the reader so they can see each word as it is being read to them. “Little children who cannot write, will see the word ‘cat’ and [hear] you say the word ‘cat,’ and after awhile, it will register in their heads,” she explained.

Wanting to be near her daughter’s family and her granddaughter, Mary moved to Red Oak five years ago.



After settling into her new home, and following a thorough background check by Red Oak Independent School District, she began volunteering again. The groups she started working with consisted of three to four students, but have continued to grow. Now there may be as many as seven to eight students in a group. Mary believes undetected learning disabilities like dyslexia, or vision and hearing problems, are often important factors contributing to a child’s slow progress with reading. “I find the kids I am working with have a real hunger to do well, so they pay attention,” she expressed. “These kids want to learn.”

The students’ third-grade reader is the main tool Mary uses in her classes. Her students read ahead so they are better prepared to participate during their regular class time. The readers have intriguing and educational stories about such things as: Artic puffins, carnivorous plants, Chinese New Year and tornadoes. Mary also includes a personal touch with her own motivating props and books relating to the stories

in the readers. For instance, a story on tornadoes prompted her to bring a newspaper article of a large tornado with a photo of its devastating path. “The kids just loved that,” she said. A true story of a blind woman impelled her to bring examples of braille. “When the kids first saw them they thought they were dominoes,” Mary laughed. “They could all touch the braille to see how this woman communicated.”

Mary’s greatest reward is seeing her students pass their Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test and receive medals and recognition for reading. “That, to me, is just fabulous,” she beamed. Being remembered by the children year after year before entering intermediate school confirms she is leaving a lasting impression on many young minds and hearts.

With both of her parents being English teachers, how could Mary not love to read? Amused, she remembered her father reading to her mother while she darned socks. She also recalled childhood memories of her twin sister. “My father would put one of us on

Education **NOW**

each side of him and read to us every single night," she reminisced. "We read impressive stories that weren't short stories, but chapter books that went on and on."

Her enthusiasm for reading was naturally passed on to her son, daughter and grandchildren, all of whom are overachievers. "My son was drawn to words like a magnet. He was reading the back of cereal boxes at four," she recalled. "I will never forget my son coming home from kindergarten saying, 'I don't need to go back there, because I can read really good.'"

Helping children read is not her only volunteer calling. She also volunteers on the Library Board, and after being on the Fort Wayne Parks Board for seven years, she wasted no time volunteering for Red Oak Parks Board after moving here. "We need more parks," she emphasized. "We have all these kids, our schools are full. The kids have nowhere to go." She would like to see more parks and ball fields for Red Oak children. Her participation on the Parks Board included scouting prospective land for parks and designing park layouts. Mary also feels Red Oak could greatly benefit from an outdoor amphitheater and senior center.

Mary is an ardent fan of local and school libraries. "Texas has a wonderful library system," she pointed out. "You can get a book from anywhere in the state." In her opinion, the schools have well-stocked libraries as well as qualified librarians who work to help the students. Mary would like to ensure each and every child is introduced to the library at a young age, and she would also like to see those same children secure their very own library card.

Mary encourages everyone to get involved in reading with a child, even if it is just to help a student with homework. "People need to understand that reading is the key to education," she added. As the old saying goes, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste." **NOW**



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Around Town

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A father and son, top left, enjoyed the warm weather before winter temps and the new year arrived. Delores Moore, Pat Rogers, and Geraldine Rogers, top center, passed out Christmas gifts on behalf of the North Ellis County Outreach. Students from Brea Aitken's second grade class at Red Oak Elementary, top right, ended a unit on spiders with a lesson in creating fun spider snacks. Ovilla United Methodist Church, middle center, hosted a very successful craft fair. The Onadele and Udegbe families, second row on the right, helped hand out Christmas presents to local children. Red Oak Hawk flags soared high across the field at Texas Stadium, third row on the right, during the recent football playoffs. Red Oak ISD school board member Dr. Mark Stanfill, bottom left, posed with his daughter, Ellen, after a busy day as a Watchdog Dad at Red Oak Intermediate School. A local teenager, bottom center, enjoyed a clear day riding his skateboard. Skateboarders, bottom right, spent a fun-filled day taking advantage of local parks.



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Look Who's Cooking

— By Stephanie Brewer

IN THE KITCHEN WITH JULIE TRAUSCH

Julie Trausch is the oldest girl of seven siblings. Helping with meals and learning from her mom's example of family time and cooking great tasting food, Julie is not short on inspiration. "I have always really liked the homemade taste derived from home-cooked meals," Julie said. "When you tell somebody that your cooking was made from scratch, it's almost as if it takes on a whole new meaning. I think people appreciate homemade food more, because they recognize the extra time and effort exerted into the final product."

Baking is Julie's joy in the kitchen, and it shows. Her most famous among friends is her banana bread. Julie won first place at the 2007 Oktoberfest Bake-off sponsored by Burleson's Honey which benefited St. Joseph's Catholic School. **NOW**

BANANA BREAD

3 mashed bananas, preferably with slightly brown peels
1/2 cup margarine
3 eggs
1 cup sugar
2 cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda in 3 Tbsp. water

Mix together bananas, margarine, eggs and sugar. Add flour and baking soda to mixture. Grease one loaf pan. Bake at 350 F for about 1 hour, or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

UNBAKED CHOCOLATE COOKIES

1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup butter
2 cups sugar
6 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa
3 1/2 cups instant oatmeal
1 cup chopped nuts (optional)

Boil the milk, butter, sugar and cocoa in a pan for three minutes, stirring continuously. Remove from heat and add the oatmeal and nuts (if desired) to the mixture in the pan. Mix well. Use a spoon to shape dough into balls approximately the size of walnuts

directly on waxed paper. Allow to cool and harden. Makes about three dozen.

APPLESAUCE CORN BREAD

1 1/2 cups corn meal
3/4 cup flour
1/3 cup sugar
1 Tbsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
1/4 tsp. ground cloves
1 egg
3/4 cup milk
3/4 cup applesauce
1/4 cup margarine, melted

Sift together corn meal, flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves. Add egg, milk, applesauce and margarine. Beat until smooth. Pour in greased 8- or 9-inch square pan. Bake at 425 F for 20 – 25 minutes. Serve hot.

SOUR CREAM COFFEE CAKE

CAKE:
3/4 cup butter
1 1/2 cups sugar
3 eggs
1 1/2 tsp. baking soda

3/4 tsp. salt
3 cups sifted flour
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 cup sour cream
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla

TOPPING:

1 cup brown sugar
1 Tbsp. cinnamon
1/2 cup sugar
1 cup finely chopped pecans (optional)

Cream butter and sugar; add eggs one at a time, beating well. Sift dry ingredients together. Add dry ingredients to creamed mixture alternating with sour cream, beginning with flour and ending with flour. Stir in vanilla. Pour half of batter into a greased 9 x 13 inch pan. Do not spread. Combine all the ingredients for the topping and sprinkle half of it over the batter. Add remaining batter and sprinkle with remaining topping. Bake at 325 F for 40 minutes or until toothpick comes out clean. (Bake in 9 x 13-inch pan because it "spreads out" instead of "up" when baked.)

PEANUT BUTTER COOKIES

1/2 cup margarine or butter
1/2 cup peanut butter

Who's Cooking **NOW**

1 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup packed brown sugar or 1/4
cup honey
1 egg
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. vanilla
sugar for rolling

Beat margarine and peanut butter. Add 1/2 cup of the flour, both sugars, egg, baking soda, baking powder and vanilla. Beat until thoroughly combined. Beat in remaining flour. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. If desired, roll in sugar prior to placing on baking sheet. Place 2 inches apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Flatten by crisscrossing with the tines of a fork. Bake in a 375 F oven for 7 - 9 minutes or until bottoms are lightly browned. Makes about 3 dozen.

BASIC CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

1/2 cup shortening
1/2 cup margarine
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1 12-oz. pkg. (2 cups) semisweet chocolate pieces

In a mixing bowl, beat the shortening and margarine. Add about half the flour, both sugars, eggs, vanilla and baking soda. Beat until thoroughly combined. Beat in the remaining flour. Fold in chocolate chips. Drop dough by rounded teaspoons 2 inches apart onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in a 375 F oven for 8 - 10 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Makes about 60.

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Take Advantage of Higher IRA Contribution Limits

— By Renee Chase

If one of your New Year's resolutions is to boost your retirement savings, you can count on some extra help from your Uncle Sam. That is because you will be able to contribute more to your IRA in 2008. This is a great opportunity for you — so you will want to make the most of it.

Here are the details: The contribution limit for both Traditional and Roth IRAs will increase from \$4,000 per year in 2007 to \$5,000 per year in 2008. If you are 50 or over, the annual limit will rise from \$5,000 to \$6,000. (Keep in mind, though, that your ability to contribute to a Roth IRA may be limited by your income; see your tax advisor for more details.)

Of course, if you were not putting in the maximum amount to your IRA in 2007, you might think there is even less of a chance that you will fully fund your IRA in 2008. It is certainly true that \$5,000 or \$6,000 is a considerable sum — especially if you try to pay it all at once, but you do not have to do that. While it might be to your advantage to fully fund your IRA early

every year — you would be giving your money more time to potentially grow — you can make smaller contributions throughout the year. In fact, you actually have until the tax filing deadline of each year to fund your IRA for that year. So, if you chose, you could spread your 2008 IRA payments over 15 months — 12 months in 2008, and the first three months of 2009. That means you could put in \$333.33 per month, if you are under 50, or \$400 per month, if you are 50 or older.

Even those amounts might pose a challenge to your cash flow, but you need to consider just how important it is to save for retirement. Many financial experts say that you will need between 80 percent and 100 percent of your preretirement income just to maintain your lifestyle. If you plan on traveling extensively, purchasing a vacation home or incurring other significant expenses during your retirement years, you may need even more money. That means you will have to rely on all your available resources — your Social Security, your 401(k) or pension and your other savings and investments, of

which an IRA can be a significant part.

An IRA is one of the best retirement savings vehicles around. A traditional IRA has the potential to grow on a tax-deferred basis, which means your earnings can potentially grow faster than they would on an investment on which you paid taxes every year. A Roth IRA's earnings have the potential to grow totally tax-free, provided you do not take withdrawals until you are 59 1/2 and you have had your account for at least five years. Furthermore, you can fund either type of IRA with virtually any security you choose — stocks, bonds, Certificates of Deposit (CD), Treasury bills, etc. Depending on your income level, you might even be able to deduct some, or all, of your Traditional IRA contributions from your taxes. (Roth IRA contributions are never tax deductible.)

As you can see, you will be helping yourself greatly if you contribute the maximum amount to your IRA in 2008, and all the years beyond. **NOW**

Renee Chase is an Edward Jones representative based in Red Oak.

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Edward Jones, its employees and financial advisors are not estate planners and cannot provide tax or legal advice. This presentation is informational only, and you should consult with a competent tax specialist or attorney for professional advice on your specific situation.

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Renée Chase
Financial Advisor

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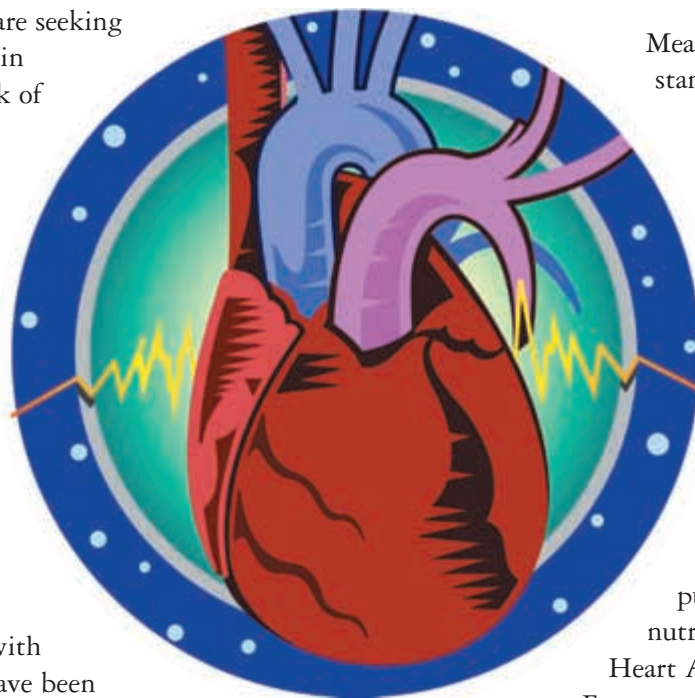
Made Simpler

(NAPS) - If you're like the average shopper, you spend nearly three-quarters of an hour on each trip to the grocery. Many shoppers spend even more time scrutinizing food labels and packages, studying ingredient lists and labels for low fat, low cholesterol items. In fact, eight out of ten Americans say they are seeking out these types of foods in order to reduce their risk of heart attack and stroke.

Fortunately, heart-healthy shopping can be simpler than many people realize. According to dieticians, it helps to look for foods carrying the American Heart Association Food Certification Program's heart-check mark. The foods bearing the Association's red heart with the white check mark have been evaluated to ensure they meet the American Heart Association's nutritional criteria and can be part of a heart-healthy diet for healthy people over the age of two. In order to carry the heart-check mark, a single serving of a food product must:

- be low fat (less than or equal to 3 grams);
- have low saturated fat (less than or equal to 1 gram);
- have low cholesterol (less than or equal to 20 milligrams);

- have a sodium value of less than or equal to 480 milligrams for individual foods; and
- contain at least 10 percent of the Daily Value of one or more of these nutrients: protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, iron or dietary fiber.



Meats must meet the USDA's standards for extra lean.

The heart-check mark is a convenient grocery shopping tool because you can see the information on food products when you're making your purchasing decision. Amid the dizzying array of food healthy claims, you can rely on the American Heart Association's heart-check mark. Shoppers can be confident because the information comes from what many consider the public's most reliable source of nutrition information, the American Heart Association.

For more information on diet and nutrition, visit www.americanheart.org or call toll free (800) AHA-USA1 and ask for a free copy of the *Shop Smart With Heart* brochure.

For a complete list of certified products, visit www.heartcheckmark.org.

Source:
American Heart Association Food Certification Program.

February 2008

Community Calendar

Every Monday

Celebrate Recovery, a Christ-centered recovery ministry meets at First Baptist Church of Red Oak. 103 West Red Oak Road (972) 617-3591. www.redoakcelebraterecovery.com.

Second and Fourth Mondays

Texas Ladies Networking meets from 11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. at Ryan's Grill in Waxahachie. (214) 587-1221.

Third Mondays

Oaks Church leadership forum: 7:30 a.m. at the Waxahachie Civic Center. (214) 376-8208.

First and Third Tuesdays

Training Academy for Dental Assistants' free sessions begin at 5:30 p.m. (972) 842-2999.

Red Oak Public Library preschool story time: 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Red Oak Library (469) 218-1230 or visit redoakpubliclibrary.org.

Red Oak Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m. at 207 West Red Oak Road. (972) 617-3577.

Every Tuesday

Jeremy's Golf Center Youth Monthly Golf Classes: 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. (972) 351-9223.

Second Tuesday

Wagon Wheel Saddle Club meeting at 7:30 p.m. (972) 223-8118. www.freewebs.com/wagonwheelsaddleclub.

Second Thursday

American Cancer Society Support group meets at 7:00 p.m. First United Methodist Church, 600 West Red Oak Road.

Last Thursday

DeSoto Art League meeting. www.desotoartleague.com.

February 1 – 3

Chili cook-off to be held at the Ellis County Expo Center in Waxahachie, benefiting the Ellis County Children's Advocacy Center and Gingerbread House. Fun activities. Contact: (972) 646-5159 or (972) 938-0075.

February 2

Jeremy's Golf Center Ladies League Golf Clinic: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. (972) 351-9223.

Red Oak/ Glenn Heights Soccer Association sign-ups. Call (214) 536-2006 or visit www.redoaksoccer.com.

Mardi Gras Parade to be held in downtown Waxahachie: 3:00 p.m. (972) 938-2062.

February 3

Jeremy's Golf Center Superbowl Golf Blast begins at 2:00 p.m. (972) 351-9223.

February 9

Waxahachie Civic Center Jazz Orchestra and special guest artists present an evening of fine food and dancing to the sounds of big band and jazz music. A silent auction will be held presenting packages designed especially for this event. 6:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. (972) 923-4627.

Daddy/Daughter Dance at the Cedar Hill Rec. Center, 310 E. Parkerville Road, Cedar Hill. \$20 per couple and \$10 for each additional child. Ages 4 – 8, 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Ages 9 – 12, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Registration deadline: Feb. 2. Call (972) 293-5288.

February 16

Jeremy's Golf Center Ladies League Golf Clinic: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. (972) 351-9223.



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