

The Community Magazine Serving Red Oak and the Surrounding Area

# Red Oak NOW

Ovilla • Glenn Heights

M A G A Z I N E

February 2009

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a Premier  
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**Dames of  
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## BASIC EXCEL

**Heather Cox**

**Tues. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

This is a hands-on introduction to spreadsheets. A beginner's course designed for persons with basic computer knowledge and that are familiar with the Windows environment. This course will enable students to create, edit and modify spreadsheets. Students will also learn how to construct complete spreadsheets that will calculate and summarize the data entered.

## BASIC POWER POINT

**Gerald Tackett**

**Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

Folder and file management, creating and managing slides which will include design, animation, insertion of pictures, sound and video for a complete Power Point presentation.

## BASIC SIGN LANGUAGE

**Nikki Parker**

**Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

Learning basic signs can help a parent communicate with a child before he or she can talk. Using basic sign language reduces frustration for both parents and children, it encourages intellectual growth, and it makes learning to talk easier. Knowing basic signs can also help a person communicate with someone deaf. In class you will learn the manual alphabet, numbers, as well as how to sign words, phrases, and sentences.

## BEGINNING GUITAR I

**Burl Sloan**

**Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

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## COMPUTER MAINTENANCE

**Melvin Hall**

**Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

This "hands on" atmosphere gives individuals the opportunity to learn basic computer maintenance. Individuals will acquire the basic skills and knowledge to service and repair their own computer.

## EVERYTHING EMAIL

**Jessica Card**

**Tues. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

Learn everything you wanted to know about setting up/using electronic mail (e-mail). Students will learn how to send and receive e-mails, add attachments, and how to add decorative stationery. You will learn how to detect and defend against computer viruses sent through e-mails. Students establish an address box, set up contacts, and put contacts into groups to make e-mailing a number of people at the same time easy.

## NEVER TOO LATE: ENGLISH 101 NUNCA ES TARDE: INGLES 101

**Mariana Ospina**

**Tues. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

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## NEW GROOVES WITH OLD SCHOOL MOVES

**Evelyn Jones**

**Thurs. 5:00pm-7:00pm**

Line dances, cupid shuffle, cotton eyed joe, electric slide (4 different versions), calypso, salsa, and more.

## PHOTO STORY

**Jane Shipp**

**Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

Learn how to crop and edit photos, create special effects and make simple movies using Windows Movie Maker and Photo Story. Participants will need a 1 GB flash drive and photos. Photos should be saved to a flash drive, CD, or digital camera.

## QUILTING

**Regina Salik**

**Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

In this class you will learn the basics of quilting. A simple to intermediate project will be completed during this course. Fabric is all you need. Please call or email for fabric list. [community@redoakisd.org](mailto:community@redoakisd.org).

## RESUME AND INTERVIEW SKILLS 101

**Sarah Watson**

**Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

Don't let a bad resume ruin your chance for a good job! Join us as we discuss how to write a resume that will get you noticed as well as tips and strategies for effective interviewing.

## UNLEASH THE POTENTIAL OF YOUR PC

**Kevin Cox**

**Tues. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

This class is for individuals who are familiar with Windows operating system and want to utilize their computer to its fullest without spending money. Students will learn how to access free programs and websites allowing them to be more productive and have more fun at no cost.

## WORD PART I

**Debbie Gervera**

**Thurs. 6:00pm-8:00pm**

This class is designed for the person with knowledge of the computer and Windows, but has limited or no word processing background. Learn the basics, such as creating a document, cutting and pasting, formatting, saving and editing, and using features provided in the toolbox.

## YOGA

**Lisa Ware**

**Thurs. 6:00pm-7:30pm**

Yoga lengthens and strengthens the muscles and promotes a calm mind. Vinyasa or "flow" yoga joins the body and mind by linking movement to breath. Come and experience an individualized practice that nurtures body, mind, and soul. This class is for beginners and advanced. Please bring yoga mat and a blanket.





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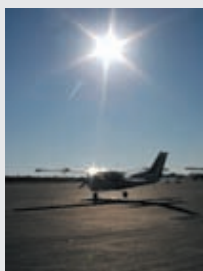
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Publisher, Connie Poirier

General Manager, Rick Hensley

Managing Editor, Becky Walker

Editorial Coordinator, Sandra McIntosh

Creative Director, Jami Navarro

Art Director, Chris McCalla

Office Manager, Lauren Poirier

Red Oak Editor, Diana Merrill Claussen

Contributing Writers, Faith Browning • Amanda

Madden Pitt • Mary Pritchard • Nickie Weyrauch

Photography, Natalie Busch • Ivey Photography

Terri Ozymy

Contributing Editors/Proofreaders, Pat Anthony

Jaime Ruark • Beverly Shay

Advertising Representatives, Terri Yates

Rick Ausmus • Linda Dean • Will Epps • Carolyn

Mixon • Linda Moffett • Steve Randle • Eddie Yates

Graphic Designers/Production, Julie Carpenter

Allee Brand • Jana Jennings • Marshall Hinsley

Arlene Honza • Brande Morgan • Pamela Parisi

Jennifer Wylie

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The Community Magazine  
Serving Red Oak and  
the Surrounding Area  
MAGAZINE

## Editor's Note

### *Heartfelt Wishes, Red Oak!*

Since February is always centered around love, we decided to theme this issue around participating in the things you love! Whether it be working at the best job, spending time helping others or being involved in your favorite hobby, there is surely something you are thankful for and enjoy doing! I really love animals and celebrate being able to horseback ride. If you love them, too, I hear the Ellis County SPCA is always in need of volunteers and adoptive loving families!

May this issue inspire you to get involved in something that you love!

*Diana Merrill Claussen*  
Red OakNOW Editor



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# Fantasy of Flight

— By Diana Merrill Claussen



Imagine being a bird floating through the clouds in a relaxing state of suspended animation. Close your eyes and feel the peace of the clouds, and then open them and enjoy the calming of the blue sky as you glide along. All is quiet as you float through your exhilarating flight.

Whether a bird or a pilot, both get to experience the relaxing and tranquil gift of flight. For local pilot, Ray Brindle, nothing compares to being one with the sky. His love of flight started when he was a young boy. "My dad was a pilot in the Air Force," Ray said. When he was 8 years old, "I got to go in my first airplane and that was it for me," he stated. Since that day, all Ray ever wanted to do is fly.

While he was in college, Ray flew for the Air Force ROTC program and later had his first solo flight on November 14, 1971, and received his pilot's license in 1972. Now a co-owner of his own planes, Ray finds there are many enjoyable and practical purposes to plane ownership. "Little airplanes have a good financial benefit (for owners who travel a lot); they also get you somewhere in a reasonable amount of time," he said.

Flying, however, is much more gratifying than its practical aspects for Ray. "You get a whole different perspective on life and the world," he said of being in the air. "You also get away from the maddening crowds. You can pretend you're a bird, and can even do rolls and loops. A vast majority of people don't care for that, but some of us just love it! It's

just you up there flying along."

The thrill of steep climbs and aerobatics makes Ray's aeronautic experiences exhilarating. "When you're flying, you don't usually pull more than three gees; most of the time, your little airplanes average about one to one-and-a-half gees. If you do it right, though, you don't notice the G-force."

Ray has enjoyed the thrill of flight both personally and professionally. "For years, I only flew for fun because I love it," he said. When Ray retired in 2000, he received his instrument rating multiengine commercial license and went to work for a unique and prestigious aviation business. "I work for a company that provides aerial surveillance and air-quality monitoring for Homeland Security," Ray stated. This monitoring occurs during major crises or large federal or public events. From covering Super Bowls, presidential inaugurations, hurricane struck areas or even train wrecks, Ray flies professionally to provide a patriotic service. "We use a one-of-a-kind aircraft which evolved from the U.S. Army," he explained. That plane is a customized Aero Commander equipped with a passive infrared system. "This allows us to fly over a site and sample the chemical composition of what is in the air around the site," he said. Whether there is smoke, fire or even plume, the technology in the crew's plane also allows them to collect digital, video and infrared photos which they are able to process on board the craft. "We also have bombay camera doors and a satellite antennae



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on the plane, too," Ray added. This allows the crew to send their collected data to a national diagnostic lab in Los Alamos for air-quality results.

Being able to fly as a form of income is what Ray has always wanted to do. "It doesn't get much better than that," he said. "In addition to flying all of the time, I get paid for it. We're just doing our job," he added. Currently, Ray flies about twice a week. When he is not in the air, he can usually be found at Mid-Way



Regional Airport working on his planes or hanging out with the guys.

There are many planes available for Ray to fly; it is up to his fancy which one he wants to take up for the day. Besides the Commander, there is a Cessna 210 that is used "for crew relief to bring supplies and water to the sites," Ray said. When pilots fly over hurricane areas, some of their missions can last up to 40 days. The mission for Hurricanes Gustav and Ike lasted 28 days, while his Katrina mission was for 38 days.

There are also a few planes in the crew's collection that come with quite a story, such as the 1939 Staggerwing Beechcraft. "We found this plane in an old barn in Nebraska," Ray said, explaining that back in the day, "these airplanes were the fastest planes in the world; they were even faster than the military planes of the time." During World War II, the military confiscated Staggerwings to use as military planes. "Howard Hughes even had one, and



they confiscated his, too," Ray added. "His was used in the Air Force." Ray's group of aviation friends have almost fully restored the craft to its original glory. They are currently working on the plane's interior and are changing the inside trim from blue to red.

Besides flying and working on the aircraft, Ray also performs many aviation volunteer duties. He is the tenant liaison at Mid-Way and also volunteers to transport patients for a wonderful organization called Angel Flight. Ray's mission with Angel Flight dramatically impacts those who are in need. He is able to use his gift of flight

**"When I was 8 years old I got to go in my first airplane and that was it for me." Since that day, all Ray ever wanted to do is fly.**

to assist those who, "are undergoing some type of medical treatment and need transportation to receive it. Most people [Angel Flight assists] cannot usually afford to pay someone to transport them to their treatment and also cannot drive," Ray said. "We provide a free service and donate everything the patient might need."

When he is not helping those who are in serious need of assistance, Ray is fully gratified to be able to share his plane and skills with others. Flight brings happiness to the Brindle family. "My wife loves it," he exclaimed. "If we're going somewhere to see family, we'll take the plane and fly there." For Ray, flying his plane for leisure trips is a very efficient way to travel. "My wife's parents live four hours away in Oklahoma, but it only takes one hour to fly us there. It saves a lot of time," he said. Ray also enjoys sharing his plane with his children and grandchildren. "The kids used to always fight over who got to fly with me and the grandkids love to taxi around the airport," he laughed.

Being a pilot, Ray expressed, is "like a lifetime dream" because amid each flight "you have the realities of life in between." **NOW**



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# Thankful Hearts

— Amanda Madden Pitt

It was early one November morning in 2007 when the phone rang in the Joneses' kitchen. Stacey joked to her in-laws from across the breakfast table about who could be calling so early, "It's either Heather," Stacey said, referring to her best friend and car pool buddy, "saying she's late, or it's Tom and he's got a heart." Sure enough, it was Heather.

For the record, Tom has a great big heart. He is a loving father and husband and a walking miracle. "I had my first surgery in 1977. I had another surgery in 1993, and I'd been in heart failure for 15 years. It had finally reached its point," Tom recounted. "I was born with a condition called transposition," he said. In non-medical terms, his condition can be described as a backwards heart. "Most kids born with that only live to be about 12 years old. It can be treated in children today, but back then, they just sent you home," Tom said, ever thankful that his heart had carried him well into adulthood. "The doctors said that I needed a 'big heart,' and for that, well, we'd just have to wait."



Criteria for Tom's donor were, "He had to be male, at least six feet four inches tall and over 300 pounds," he said. Tom spent a year in the hospital, in and out of intensive care waiting for a donor. According to Stacey, their youngest son, Tristin, thought the hospital was where his daddy lived. "Let's go to Daddy's home today," Tristin would say. Although visiting hours were monitored closely because of Tom's fragile condition, during good months the family would get together in a conference area outside of the ICU room for picnics, games and just to live life. "We had every boy's birthday there that year," Tom recalled of 2007. It was the only way they could see their dad and Stacey could see her husband for what she thought might be his final days.

"I got to the point where I thought I wasn't going to live," Tom said. "Because of the scar tissue from previous surgeries, the doctors were concerned about doing another surgery." Technology was available for a right heart pump that would operate outside of Tom's body, which would eliminate the risks associated with open heart surgery and the scar tissue aforementioned, but he would have to be flown to Houston to undergo the innovative procedure. "We are going to make arrangements to fly you down to Houston this weekend, but we're going to continue to hope and pray that you get a heart," Tom said, repeating the doctor's words.

That morning while Stacey sat at the breakfast table with Tom's parents, following Heather's call saying they would be late for their morning car pool, the phone rang again. "It was Tom, and he said he had a heart," Stacey said, recalling how ironic it was that what she had casually stated only moments before, actually happened. "Don't joke like that," Stacey said. Tom continued, "A nurse came in crying and said, 'Mr. Jones, we have a heart for you.'" The confirmation prompted screams of joy as generations





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of Joneses soaked in the miraculous news they had been praying for. On November 16, 2007, a solid year after he was admitted to Saint Paul Hospital in Dallas, Tom received a heart transplant.

Stacey is no stranger to loss. She lost both her mother and her grandfather, who was like a father to her, in the same year. Although Tom survived the surgery, the Jones family was not out of the woods yet. "I was up on cloud nine, thinking he had the heart, he is going to be fine, and he would be home by Christmas," Stacey said. "But they kept saying, 'You really expected too much; we tried to prepare you,'

which they did." The doctors told Stacey, "This is going to be a really difficult case. Tom is dependent on a higher blood flow to his lungs because of his weakened heart." The major recovery process included 16 more days in ICU as Tom's lungs struggled to function on their own. On Thanksgiving Day, 2007, Tom came off of the ventilator.

Now that her husband is well, Stacey has more time to focus on being a mom, serving on the Eastridge Elementary PTA board and on her responsibilities as director of the Red Oak Education Foundation. In April

2008, the couple purchased On Time Designs in Red Oak, a custom T-shirt design company. Stacey is in charge of the Bling line which features custom rhinestone lettering across a variety of T-shirt styles. One shirt she gets frequent compliments on proudly glistens the word that has become the family's mantra — Thankful.

The family looks back on 2006 and 2007 as years of hardship with a silver lining of God's grace and blessing. They are once again able to entertain friends and finally enjoy their new home built in 2006, which includes living quarters for Stacey's grandmother,

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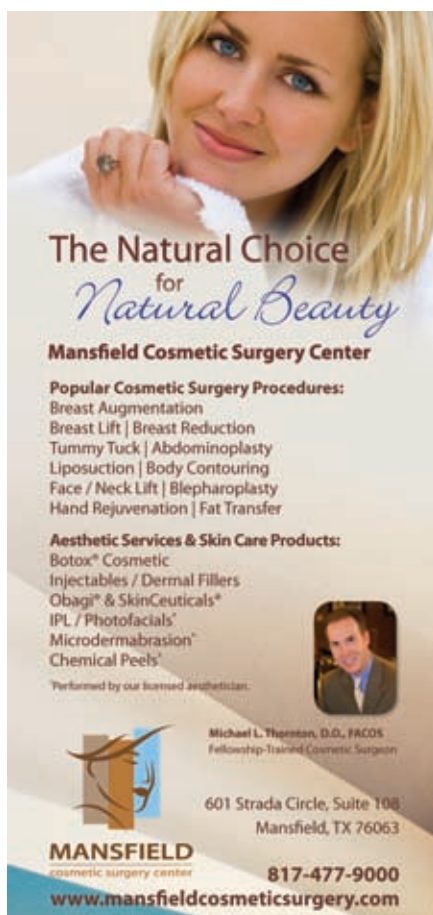
Mimi; a master bedroom suite; an upstairs game room loft with bedrooms for each of their three boys; a pool and volleyball net in the backyard; Stacey's collection of Willow Tree angels and a wall hanging that reads "Miracles Happen."

They are so very grateful for all the people who stood by them spiritually, emotionally, physically and financially; who visited Tom in the hospital with movies, prayers and for football games. "They were faithful beyond measure," he said. About their struggles, "It's all in God's hands. Whatever we face, God has a plan for us and we're facing that

for a reason. It makes you appreciate everything; every little moment in life that you have, because no one knows what tomorrow will bring," Stacey said.

Tom's health is improving every day. "My kidney function is normal, and usually after a transplant it drops. My lung pressure is normal. Everything is within normal range for an average person," he said. Tom can now push-mow his backyard, as well as run up and down the stairs. He goes to work every day. He put up Christmas lights on their house last year, and went on a cruise last summer. He also coaches a basketball team, and though

his favorite pastime used to be golf, he would much rather spend the time with his family now. "I like to say my first life was all about me and my second life is all about others," he said. What used to be a call to Tanner every night before going to bed, has now become 9:00 p.m. bedside conversations. With a new understanding, Tom cherishes every time he hears his son, Trevor's, personalized expressions of love, which prove that big hearts run in the Jones family. "I love you to Mars and back," Trevor said. To that his little brother Tristin added, "Daddy, I love you to the moon and back." **NOW**



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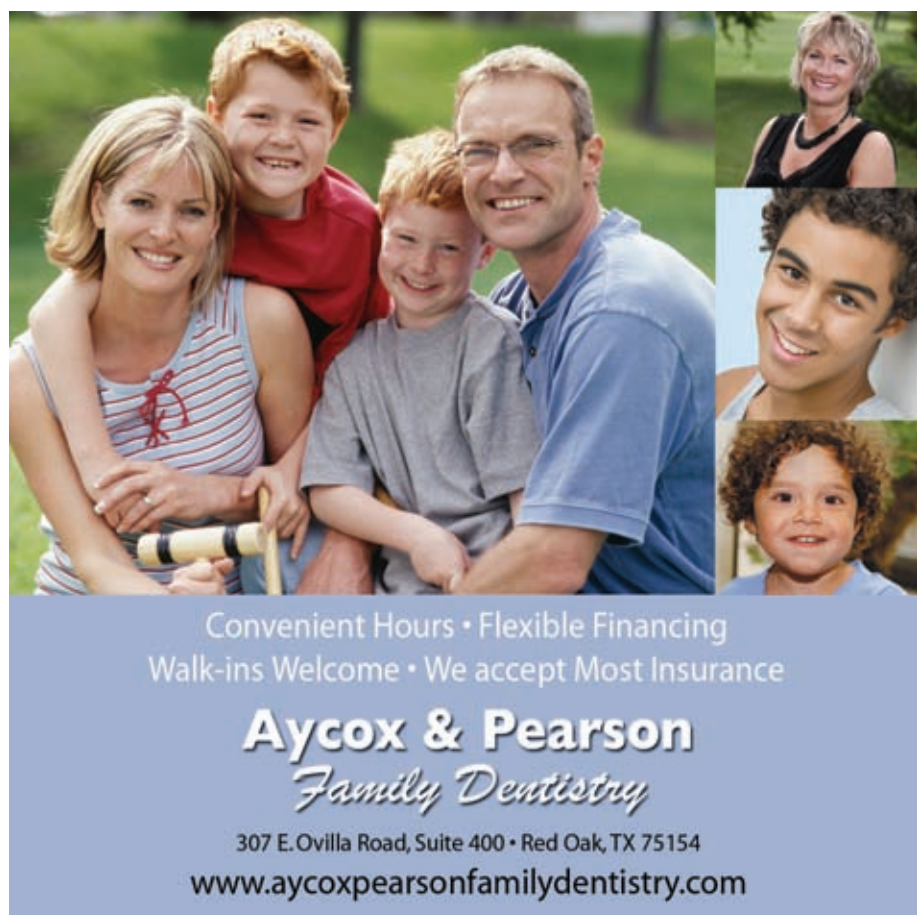
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# Dames of the Dance

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Many people do not possess the skill or grace to dance — especially when it comes to choreographed dances. The local Sassy Seniors Dance Troupe not only performs all types of dance sets, they have a ball doing it. Besides being the best of friends, Ruby Murray, Mary Favaron, Jalayn Helm and Lou Jones get together two times a week to learn new routines and practice for upcoming performances.

With an average age of 70, these dancers definitely do perform, and have been known to tango their way across the broad spectrum of dances. The Sassy Seniors group was founded four years ago, and each one of these fabulous ladies brings their own talents and pizzazz to the troupe. The ladies not only enjoy the routines, they love dressing for them! They spare no expense when it comes to putting on a

fantastic performance.

First there is Ruby who, “Designs our costumes,” Mary said. Ruby is also called the “bling lady” and definitely lives up to her name, for she is always dazzling with ruby stones on almost every finger. “We make a lot of trips to Sam Moon (a wholesale supplier of costume jewelry located in Dallas) whenever we need bling,” Mary said. She is the animal lover of the group, and enjoys horseback riding and gardening.

Next is Jalayn. “I like sewing and crafts and have a wonderful sewing room in my house,” she said. Her sewing room is where the “girls” make their costumes. Getting together with each other to dance, play or even make costumes is always a fun experience for the ladies. “We even have workdays to make them ourselves,” said former baton twirler, Ruby.

The ladies are so much fun to be around and really believe in the power of laughter and even occasional teasing. The day Lou met the ladies of the Sassy Seniors it was at a service league meeting. “We had just started talking about dance and that is when they invited me to join,” Lou said. “I guess you could say I’ve been stuck with them ever since,” she laughed.

From tap, jazz, show tune and ‘Viva Las Vegas’ style routines (with the big headdresses) to country line dancing and belly dancing, these lovely ladies enjoy step-ball-changing to just about any type of dance routine. “We’ve even done the hula, but thank goodness it wasn’t in public,” Jalayn said. “That would really cost someone some money to see us do the hula,” Mary laughed.

“We always get calls asking if we are the dancing grannies,” Ruby said. They also get asked to perform all over D/FW for events and charity functions. It all started a few years ago when, “We decided we wanted to help support the police and fire departments,” Mary said. So they began performing dance recitals in an effort to raise money for these public agencies. “Our first year helping the police department we raised \$1,000,” Mary added.

Since then, the ladies have been unstoppable. “We’ve danced at parties for garden clubs, churches, senior adult groups and private parties,” Lou said.





"We are a real surprise as dancing girls for an 'over 50' birthday party," Mary added. They dance their way into the hearts of their audiences. When watching the ladies perform, one just cannot help but be inspired by their spunk.

Their contemporary flair, however, is sometimes "spiced" with song and dance from more nostalgic eras as well. The ladies are not only loved by their community, but by their spouses. "Our husbands think we are sassy," Jalayn said. They also, "attend our performances and have been really supportive of us," Mary said. "They have even sold raffle tickets," Ruby added.

The men in their lives know that the Sassys highly benefit from the troupe and each other. "Dancing keeps all of us healthier and it's fun," Ruby said. "I know others who are as old as I am and they don't get around as much as we do." Jalayn nodded and added that she especially loves the closeness of the group. Indeed, being a part of the group has many benefits and the ladies say it has been great with improving their coordination and circulation. "Having to remember the series of steps has even helped improve my concentration," Mary said.

One of the ladies has a pacemaker while another has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Both vow not to let anything get in their way, especially when it comes to staying active. Their continual laughter is key to keeping these ladies fit and fabulous! "They are a lot of fun," dance teacher Cathy Harris said. "They are so cute with each other, and they really take care of each other, too. The crowds love them!"

"Well," Ruby interjected, "like my grandma used to say, 'I want to wear out, not rust out,' so that's what we're going to do!"

The ladies can be found practicing at Dance Expressions in Red Oak and are always accepting new members to their dance troupe. **ARTS NOW**

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# Devoted to Danger

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

When it comes to aggression, there is always an appropriate time and place. Whether in the boxing ring or on a basketball court, aggression is the edge needed when it comes to just about any form of competition. When hockey players get raucous on the ice, everyone radically jumps up and cheers. Such forms of excitement can be found in many likely places, and even unlikely places, too.

One such location is Dad's Broadway Skateland in Mesquite, where every third Saturday night, teams of champions use speed, agility and plenty of aggression to compete and rule the rink. This happens, of course, right after these vicious athletes put on their wrist and mouth guards and helmets. Then they add layers of makeup and tighten up their ponytails!

Once their skate gear is in place, laces are drawn tight and vengeance is on their mind, Brandi Danger and Kellie Edwards (aka Olive Illegal) of the Assassination City Roller Derby hit the rink with their teammates, the Deadly Kennedys (DKs). Their goal is to snuff out their competition by any means possible. With Olive as the team's captain, it is easy to see, these derby athletes are out to win. Both Olive and Brandi started with the derby under different circumstances.

"My husband is who found out about the roller derby online," Olive said. Since she joined, her three children and husband can be seen cheering Olive on against her opponents. Both Brandi and Olive are considered to be the team's "jammers." "We score the points and get through the pack," Olive said. The pack is any group of opponents, which consists of 10 players per pack. For example, the derby packs are comparable to a pack of wolves. Each member of the derby pack, "has a specific job to do," Olive said. The object



of roller derby is for the teams to pass the opposing packs on the rink using any means necessary.

Besides jammers, there are also blockers in the pack. The blockers, "are sturdier players and hit harder," Olive informed.

"But, you don't have to be big to be a blocker, you just have to know where to hit a person. If you hit them in their center of gravity, that usually knocks them off balance. So, you can hit your opponents thigh, and that will usually send them down," she smiled.

Knocking out the competition is essentially the objective of each derby pack. "You are racing the opposing team, and you get points for each person you pass," Brandi said. "We're nice, but when we get on the track, it's another story." Working at a law firm in downtown Dallas is Brandi's profession, skating for the DKs is her obsession. Brandi got started with the sport after she saw a sign at the rink for a women's roller derby team. So she decided, "to buy a pair of skates and see what I could do." As the team's co-captain she appreciates the opportunity to be involved in such an exciting activity. "It's great exercise, especially when you're pushing 40," she said. Her two children enjoy





watching their mom compete, and her 5-year-old son, Bobby, races on the Xlr8 inline speed skating team. "I used to speed skate when I was younger, too," she said.

"There are girls on our team who will literally break their legs in half and come back to skate," Olive said. They also get a form of rink rash from when they get pushed down and slide against the slick floor. Needless to say, "We are required to have primary health insurance and skating insurance," Brandi said.

Although the derby season does not start until March, Olive and Brandi practice with their team twice a week all year-round. "We are currently ranked 41st place in the country out of approximately 350 leagues," Olive said. The ladies said working together as a team is what has led to the team's success. "There is also a lot of strategy involved," Olive added. Competition however is definitely the name of the roller derby game.

The fights are no longer staged like they used to be. "Back in the old days, it was all fake," Brandi said. "Since it's a competitive sport, fights do happen." This can lead to a player being ejected from the game. "The actual skating and hitting is all real," Olive said. Maybe that is why roller derby has become one of the fastest growing sports in America.

Although roller derby has rules about where players can hit and even teaches the skaters how to fall, if the rules get broken, "You will get fouled and sent to the penalty box," Brandi informed. Both Olive and Brandi agree that derby skating is one of the most extreme and rewarding sports for women today. "Our leagues are certified by the Women's Flat Track Roller Derby Association and a percentage of our merchandise and ticket sales goes to support the Dallas Women's Foundation," Brandi said. **NOW**

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# Music *in* Their Hearts

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

When you tell a child they need to study or practice, most of the time they do the exact opposite. However, when you encourage a gift in someone's heart, the heart is what usually wins. This philosophy is what local music teacher Patrick DeZeeuw strives to impart to his students.

Patrick first became interested in music when he was 8 years old. "My mom used to drag me to concerts in California in the '70s," Patrick shared. "During the 'Jesus People Movement' I got dragged to church. That is when I saw the power of music."

Patrick first began taking piano lessons; he then became fascinated with guitar playing. "My mom then encouraged me to play the acoustic guitar," he said. Patrick can now pick up and play just about any type of instrument — from drums to banjos — and he has become a singer and songwriter as well.

When Patrick first decided to train



his students in the musical arts, he began with the personal belief that everyone has a song in their heart yearning to be expressed. The key, he felt, was to focus on expressing it through positive music as opposed to negative. "Music can express the negative stuff within our society," Patrick said. "There is a place within yourself where you can positively express your anger."

Building upon this theory, Patrick began encouraging musical expression through his music venture called Harps of God. "One day there was a lady in our church who approached me to teach her son guitar," he said. "Since then, I have gone from instructing one student to many." His students also include his own children: Zack, 13; Ariel, 10; and Zeke, 5. Ariel is the

most intense musician of the three.

"It's her passion," mother Melinda said.

Whether Patrick is teaching his own kids or his students, "He tells them not to practice, only to play," Melinda, also a former educator, said. "My wife is who taught me how to be a good teacher," Patrick smiled. "She helped me realize that each student learns differently." Patrick teaches tablature, music reading and writing, taking care to ensure each student is taught in a way that caters to them as an individual. "We simplify music so it's not complicated," he added.

Patrick feels that the primary benefit of music should be for the individual playing. This methodology encourages his students. "Music can be transcendent; it can breakdown and by-pass people's defense mechanisms," he said. "We



want the students to play the music that is inside of them. Practicing is tedious and playing an instrument is something that should be fun." Patrick tells his students their goal is simply to enjoy their music.

There is something mighty about an individual delving into the experience of positive self-expression. That is why Harps of God gives private music lessons



in the evenings, and offers performances with their students every first Friday at Bubba-Que. "We also play benefit concerts, perform at churches and play at nursing homes," Patrick said.

Regardless of where they play, "They [the students] are not playing for themselves, they are playing for an audience of one — God," Patrick added.

"We teach Christian music, but listen to everything," Patrick continued. As a parent and musician, he encourages his students and their parents to explore all types of music, as long as it has a positive message. The DeZeeuw's will sit down with their own children, listen and then analyze songs with them. "We talk about it and discuss what that song means to them," he said. He allows his students to make their own decisions about songs while imparting the belief that what goes into their ears will reach their hearts.

To learn more about Harps of God, please visit their Web site at [www.harpsogod.com](http://www.harpsogod.com) or contact them at (972) 571-0018. **NOW**



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# Building a Premier Program

— By Mary Pritchard

Mechelle Foster loves her job as choir teacher at Red Oak Junior High School. An aura of enthusiasm and acceptance surrounds her as she greets students in the hall. “I have 180 students in my choir program every day,” Mechelle said. “I’m very excited about this. When I came here five years ago, there were 64 choir students total. I had only 12 students in my men’s choir, and there were only 22 girls in the varsity treble choir. Now I have 33; it’s an auditioned group. Grades are very important, too.”

“Bel Canto,” she continued, “had 30 girls my first year. Now that choir has 50 girls.” In the men’s choir, they talk about what it is to be men of honor and integrity. These young men rise to the very high expectations on every occasion. “One of the most rewarding things for me,” Mechelle smiled, “is when boys come to my class thinking it is a sissy thing and leave thinking, *No, it’s not.*”

“I’m very proud of my students; they are wonderful,” Mechelle added. “I have a student leader in every class who is capable of leading the class if I am not here. They take great pride in presenting a polished piece of work.”

Besides regular classroom choirs that meet every day, Mechelle leads Maroon Karizma, a group of 28 singers and dancers who practice from 7:00 to 8:00 a.m. twice a week. The group has a choreographer, Michelle Loera, who has a son in the Maroon Karizma choir. She volunteers her time, as does high school student Olivia Slaughter.

Maroon Karizma is also known as the Show Choir. They perform for community and district events. “These presentations are a combination of music and dance,” Mechelle explained, “and they’re a lot of hard work. In late November of last year, they spent an entire day learning four new pieces for the Christmas show they presented at the Festival of Trees.” They also performed at the Christmas show held at their own school, as well as at two other schools within the district.

Each spring, students audition to be in Maroon Karizma the following school year. Then the fall program is learned at



a one-week camp before school starts. The audition includes singing, dancing, grades, behavior and teacher recommendation. “We use the same policies and guidelines and have the same expectations as other groups, such as the drill team,” Mechelle emphasized. “Learning the spring program begins as soon as the students return from their Christmas break,” she continued. “We will compete as a show choir in San Antonio in April.” While they are there, the students will also go to Sea World. The group is currently raising \$15,000 for that particular trip. “I will have 15 chaperones,” Mechelle laughed, “because we spend two nights in San Antonio.”

“What kids don’t understand, but are beginning to learn, is that the music comes first,” Mechelle noted. “They have to be smart kids to do show choir.” The group has also been invited to perform at the annual W.A. Wooden Elementary formal tea, a big tradition for them. The group considers this invitation to be a great honor.

“This is a grant choir this year, so it is not mandatory that they be in a UIL [University Interscholastic League] choir,” Mechelle explained, “but next year when this group is funded by the choir department, they will be required to also be in a UIL choir.” When asked what it takes to teach choir, Mechelle said, “You need a degree in music education; it’s very difficult to be a successful choir teacher without being familiar with how Texas UIL works. Texas is a premier state when it comes to choral music, because we have higher expectations than



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other states. You need to be an outstanding musician and understand choral music in your own right. I'm still learning about choral music. As educators, we are always being educated."

Mechelle also emphasized administrative skills. "To be an effective director," she said, "I must be highly organized. I keep a rigorous schedule and work hard to ensure my students and parents are well informed and that my program is kept moving. My students receive a detailed calendar and handbook at the first of the year."

Perhaps most importantly, Mechelle noted a choir director must have a love for music and for the students. "I have no favorites," she said, "not even when my own children were here. When it's time to play, we play, and when it's time to work, we work, and we do both on a regular basis."

Another priority with Mechelle is cooperation with other teachers who have their own programs. "I do everything I can to work with other groups in the school, such as athletics, to not schedule our events to conflict with theirs." She has found it is important for students not to have to choose.

"We have an outstanding choir teacher at the Red Oak High School and also at the Intermediate school," Mechelle said. "The three of us are working to build a premier choir program in this district." **NOW**

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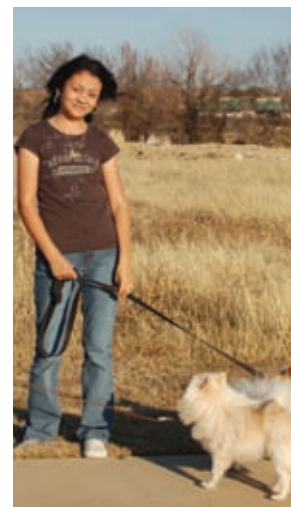
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David Cates and his granddaughter, top left, enjoyed a stroll in the park. Michael McClain, top center, played a game of catch. Students from the ROHS theater department, top right, recently performed in a play. Local children, second row left center, attended a fun-filled birthday party. Kim and Anthony Sykora, second row right center, posed for a quick photograph. Kindergarten classes at Eastridge Elementary, bottom left, recently held an end of the nine weeks Academic Champions Contest using the "Eggs-pert" voting eggs to answer questions. Gary Hamel, bottom center, fished for bass in Red Oak. Elizabeth Sierra, bottom right, took her dog out to the lake for a walk in the afternoon sunshine.

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Lorelei and her husband, David, have their hands full rearing their four boys: Harrison, Grant, Preston and Gabriel, but they take the time to make each son feel exceptional. Each week they try to have “special time” with each child. “On that night, the other kids go to bed early, and the one who is being honored gets to choose any activity and snack he wants,” she explained. “It’s during that time we remind him how special he is and how perfect he is for our family.”

When Lorelei lived in Florida, she did not find a Mexican food restaurant she liked. “I started studying cookbooks because I didn’t know how to cook, and Hamburger Helper was getting really old,” she recalled. “I discovered cooking was something I really loved doing!” **NOVA**

To view more of your neighbors' recipes, visit our archives at [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).

## IN THE KITCHEN WITH LORALEI HOGGARD

### GREEN CHILE CASSEROLE

1 small onion, diced small  
1 small green bell pepper, diced small  
1 Tbsp. butter  
1 lb. ground beef  
salt and pepper, to taste  
1 12-oz. can cream of mushroom soup  
1 8-oz. can chopped green chilies  
10 corn tortillas (approximately), cut into bite-sized pieces  
1 12-oz. can green enchilada sauce  
1-2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

In skillet, sauté onion and bell pepper in butter. When veggies are soft, add the beef. Brown completely, adding salt and pepper to taste; drain grease. Add cream of mushroom soup and chopped chilies. Spray casserole dish with cooking spray. Layer corn tortillas and half of beef mixture. Spoon a thin layer of enchilada sauce on meat. Add one layer of cheese; repeat layers. Bake for about 30 minutes at 350 F or until hot and bubbly. For an added kick, I like to add a small can of diced jalapeños when I add the green chilies.

### CHICKEN ENCHILADAS

1 small onion, diced

1 small bell pepper, diced  
1 Tbsp. butter  
1 lb. Velveeta, cubed  
1 12-oz. can Ro-Tel  
1 small can milk  
1 12-oz. can cream of chicken soup  
1 rotisserie chicken, boned or 4 chicken breasts cooked and cut into bite-sized pieces  
10-12 flour tortillas, torn into large pieces  
1-2 cups shredded cheese (I like Monterey Jack.)

In a saucepan, sauté onion and bell pepper in butter until tender. Add Velveeta, Ro-Tel, canned milk and chicken soup; stir until cheese is melted. When smooth, add diced chicken; mix well. In a 9 x 13-inch casserole dish sprayed with cooking spray, add a layer of flour tortillas. Pour 1/2 of chicken/sauce mixture (do not scrape the bottom of the pan). Repeat layers. Top with a layer of shredded cheese. Bake in a 350 F oven until hot and bubbly.

### CHARRO BEANS

1 pkg. dried pinto beans  
cumin, to taste  
salt, to taste  
pepper, to taste  
garlic powder, to taste

1 small onion, minced  
1 14-oz can chili-style tomatoes  
1 bunch cilantro, chopped

Sort through beans, getting rid of broken beans and any rocks; rinse well. Place beans in 8-quart pot; cover with at least 4 inches of water. Bring to boil. Simmer for at least 5 hours. Stir often (this is how you get a thick, brown juice) and make sure beans do not settle and scorch. Replace small amount of water as needed. When soft and brown, add seasonings. Taste until you get the flavor you want. Once seasoned, add onion, tomatoes and cilantro. Simmer for about 1 more hour.

### GUACAMOLE

avocados (roughly 1/2 per person)  
1 onion, minced  
1 fresh tomato, seeded, chopped small  
1 bunch fresh cilantro, stems removed, chopped small  
lime (1/2 to 1 per avocado)  
salt and pepper, to taste  
dash of garlic powder  
dash of hot pepper sauce (I like Cholula.)

Remove skin and pit from avocado. Roughly mash with a fork. Add all other ingredients. Mix well. Serve with chips.

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## Thirty-nine Percent of Texans Feel “Anxious or Scared” About Economic Issues

**Thirty-three Percent Feel They  
Can Never Afford to  
Completely Stop Working,  
New Survey Says**

— By Nickie Weyrauch

Thirty-nine percent of Texans feel anxious and scared about recent economic conditions, according to a recent survey. A third of those surveyed also feel they can never afford to completely stop working.

The survey, conducted nationally and in Texas during Wall Street's early turbulence, provides insight into the minds of middle-income Americans during this uncertain time. With rising food costs, rising unemployment rates

and the stock market crisis — some might be tempted to dip into retirement savings or stop saving altogether. But according to the survey, Lone Star residents are riding out the economic storm, staying the course when it comes to retirement planning. Close to 90 percent surveyed say they are still not changing the way they invest for retirement, despite their concerns.

It is encouraging that many Texans are not letting the downward economy divert them from sticking to sound long-term plans about preparing and saving for retirement. Part of this may be attributed to Texans identifying themselves in the survey as planners in their everyday lives whether they are just taking a trip to the store or going on vacation.

According to the survey, 72 percent of Texans shop for groceries with a list, compared to 62 percent nationally; 84 percent book hotels in advance, compared to 74 percent nationally, and only five percent characterize themselves as very spontaneous, compared to 11 percent nationally.

However, while the survey found Texans are typically ahead of the nation as far as retirement savings, there are still concerns. Forty-five

percent of surveyed Texans have not established a goal for when they want to retire, compared to 35 percent nationally. More than 40 percent have not tried to figure out how much money they will need to achieve retirement goals, compared to 47 percent nationally.

Many are still struggling to cover their daily expenses, so it may be tough to think realistically about the future. It is important, however, for people to remain engaged in retirement planning. People are now living 20, 30, even 40 years without a paycheck during retirement. While saving now may seem problematic with the current economic situation, there are products that allow customers to stay invested while receiving a guaranteed stream of income.

For those who have saved a little, a lot, or have not even started, there are valuable tools and resources available that are easily accessible, including tips on how to save for retirement. Your financial advisor can assist you in developing a retirement savings plan that is right for you. **NOW**

*Nickie Weyrauch is an Allstate exclusive agent based in Red Oak.*

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# February 2009

## Community Calendar

### Every Monday

Celebrate Recovery meeting, First Baptist Church, 103 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-3591.  
www.redoakcelebraterecovery.com.

### Second and Fourth Mondays

Texas Ladies Networking meeting: 11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Ryan's Grill, Waxahachie. (214) 587-1221.

### Tuesdays and Thursdays

Alcoholics Anonymous meeting: 7:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 Red Oak Rd. Non-smoking. (972) 617-9100.

### First and Third Tuesdays

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

### Every Wednesday

Family Story Time: 10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. (469) 218-1230.  
www.redoakpubliclibrary.org.

### Wednesdays and Thursdays

Senior Citizens Club meeting: 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 207 West Red Oak Rd. Games, exercise and activities. (972) 576-2777.

### First and Third Thursday

Senior Citizens' Lunch. Must pre-register no later than the Tuesday before luncheon. \$5 for non-resident

seniors. Call Jennifer to register at (972) 576-3414.

### Third Thursday

American Business Women's Association meeting.  
www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org.

### Every Thursday

Ladies Prayer meeting: Education Building Room E105, Oaks Fellowship Church, 777 S. I-35 E.

### Last Thursday

DeSoto Art League meeting. www.desotoartleague.com.

### First Saturday

Red Oak Fire Rescue CPR classes: 9:00 a.m. Call early to register. (469) 218-7713. www.redoaktx.org.

### First Friday

Worship Jam: 6:30 p.m., Bubba Que BBQ's front porch.

### February 1

Family Dancing Center Grand Opening: 588 Bluebird Ln. (469) 230-2278.

DeSoto Art League honors Black History Month. For more information regarding this exhibit, visit  
www.desotoartleague.com.

### February 5

Midlothian Classic Car Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., CNB Bank 9th St., Midlothian. Contact Joe at (214) 587-1643.

www.midlothianclassicwheels.com.

### February 6-8

The Gingerbread Annual Chili Cook-off and Barn Dance will be held at the Ellis County Expo Center. The event features three days of CASI-sanctioned chili cook-offs, celebrity mechanical bull riding, a dance and prime rib dinner Saturday evening. For sponsorship information, tickets, table reservations, donations and volunteer opportunities, call (972) 937-1870.

### February 13

Parent's Night Out: 6:00-10:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church. Parents can have a relaxing Valentine's Dinner alone while we provide child care. Children ages 6 weeks and up are welcome. Call Elizabeth at (214) 733-3009.

### February 14

Valentine's Day.

### February 21

Mr. and Mrs. Red Oak pageant: 7:00-10:00 p.m., Red Oak high school cafeteria, 154 Louise Ritter Blvd. (972) 617-3535.

### March 6

World Day of Prayer: Sanctuary open 6:00-9:00 a.m., First United Methodist, 600 W. Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-9100.

For more community events, visit our online calendar at [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).

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