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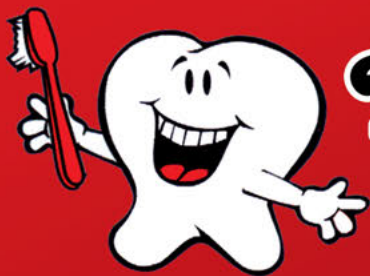


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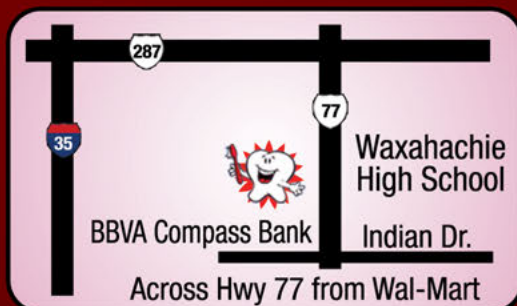
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ON THE COVER



Denny Burris may be retired, but his work is not yet complete.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Happy Valentine's Day!

February is the month celebrated with cards overflowing with sentiments of forever and always, long-stem red roses and lots of heart-shaped boxes filled with chocolate candy. I bet Cupid shoots more arrows in 28 days than he does the rest of the year combined because there's just so much love in the air!

Love begins when we are born into this world and ends when we exhale for the last time. It's that space between life's bookends that molds us into the people we become. Teenage heartaches lead to adult hardships. These hurdles in life really do make us stronger. They educate us, so we can share that knowledge with others. Sometimes in the teaching, you find you must practice tough love to see the results you've been praying for. Tough love is, by far, the most difficult love because it means letting go. Letting go of something you love is difficult, but as you see the positive changes begin to manifest, you know you're loving the right way for the right reasons.

Tell someone you love them today!

Sandra

Sandra Strong
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TRAILBLAZER

— By Rick Mauch

Denny Burris is retired, but he's far from finished working. The former chaplain of the Dallas Fire Department is still very busy and plans to stay that way. "I fight the fires of hell in a different way," he said.

At age 70, Denny officially retired from the DFD in 2003, after serving as the department's first chaplain since 1979. He was also the second chaplain ever for a major fire department, following in the footsteps of his good friend, Ed Stauffer, of Fort Worth.

Denny, who lives in Waxahachie with his wife, Nancy, still visits nursing homes, counsels retirees, comforts sick people, including cancer patients and more. He's also been a driving force behind honoring fallen firefighters. He was among a select group that started the Dallas Retired Firefighters Association in 2001. It has since grown to about 500 members. "Each of us pays \$5 a month, and that provides scholarships to children and grandchildren of firefighters," Denny said.

The group also started an honor known as the Last Alarm Bell. It pays homage to firefighters who have lost their lives in the line of duty or after retirement. "It's a way of saying they've answered the last alarm," Denny said. "The bell has played an important part in the history of



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firefighters. Today, there's still a bell in every fire station."

In an effort to display as much history as possible, the group got an old hose cart and turned it into a traveling monument. It was developed for the express purpose of honoring deceased firefighters. The Firefighters Monument is on display at the DFD Training Center. On top is a statue of John Clark, the first Dallas firefighter killed in the line of duty in 1902. Denny's uncle, Burt Burris, has his name etched, along with many others, on the monument.

Denny explained that at each funeral the signals 1-1 and 6-6 are sent out. The first means the fire is out and the second means that all firefighters may return to their quarters. "When we do this, it means all the fires of life are over, and you may return to the quarters God has prepared for you," Denny explained.

A few years ago, Denny and Nancy thought he was returning to God's quarters. He had an aortic valve replacement in May 2011, and just when he was told he could go home, he suffered two cardiac arrests and spent 56 days in the hospital. Had it not been for a nurse practitioner named Isabell Alencar running interference, Denny would likely have experienced the arrest at home. She is now and forever will be a dear friend of the family. "She was here Thanksgiving Day," Denny said. "She saved my life. She told the doctor not to let me go home."

Still, Denny suffered failure of his kidneys, liver and gall bladder. He was told less than 3 percent of people live



through such an ordeal, and that he would lose the gall bladder and be on dialysis the rest of his life. He still has the gall bladder and hasn't been to a day of dialysis.

Doctors couldn't explain it, but Denny can. "I believe in miracles," he said, "and I'm still living the miracle."

Nancy, in fact, even told friends when Denny was at his worst that if they wanted to see him one final time, they'd better hurry over. They did just that, bringing a book filled with well wishes, standing watch by his bed. "He did not know anything until he got home 56 days later, and then he could only handle small parts of the story," Nancy said. "His

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friends stayed by his side all night for several weeks.”

Denny first became a firefighter in 1968, at age 22, after listening to the stories of his grandfather, Boyd Burris, while growing up. He and his brother-in-law, Donald “Snake” Russell, went through the academy together. “It was always a close relationship up until he died in the late ’90s,” Denny shared.

After a few years, Denny left the DFD to attend Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. He painted houses for a living while working as an associate pastor at a small church. Then, he took a job at the Lancaster Fire Department in 1978.

In 1979, he was performing a funeral service for an old friend when another old friend told him the DFD was looking for a voluntary chaplain. The DFD had a rule at the time that when someone left, no matter the reason, they could not be rehired. However, a friend called in a few favors, and they brought Denny back.

In January 1982, Denny became the first full-time chaplain in DFD history. He was also the first endorsed firefighter chaplain in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention. He handled counseling, hospital visits, marital problems and more, especially funerals for around 1,500 firefighters and their families. “I was working for about 5,000 people,” he said. “I was there for their physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs.”

Denny also represented the DFD at firefighter funerals throughout the United States. This included visiting New York after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. “We went to two funerals and got to go to some places other people couldn’t,” Nancy said.



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"It was a very emotional, somber experience to walk through some of the ash — to walk into the fire station next to where the World Trade Centers used to stand," Denny said.

He recalled some close calls of his own while fighting fires. Two times, in particular, stand out. "A backdraft blew me out of my boot. I was wearing one boot when I got out," he remembered. "Another time, we were on the second floor of a building on Lancaster Road in Dallas. You could see a ball of fire coming at us. We jumped out a window and were hanging there. But you keep going back. You don't fear fire, but you respect it."

His life will forever be linked to firefighting and the DFD, it seems. Even the home he and Nancy live in used to belong to a Dallas firefighter. "We walked in that door, and it was exactly the floor plan we'd laid out in our minds," he said.

Denny's father wanted to be a firefighter but got a calling to be a policeman, just like Denny and Nancy's son, Keith, who is on the force in Trophy Club. He and Nancy also have a son named Kirk and a daughter named Kristi, along with four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Denny has numerous awards he's received, including a Lifetime Achievement Award from friends of the DFD. He's been honored by the Masonic Temple and the Muscular Dystrophy Association, among others.

"I'm just very, very blessed," he said humbly. "I'm going to continue doing what I do until the Lord returns or until I go to him." **NOW**

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MAKING AN IMPACT

— By Jill Martinez

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Shari Phillips, the Drug-Free Communities project manager, works tirelessly with a team of dedicated people to help young people and their families remain drug- and alcohol-free. They do this by partnering with city and county personnel, parents, school districts and law enforcement. "We strive to educate the community about the dangers of drug and alcohol addictions. We know that addiction is 100-percent preventable, so that is what we work toward," Shari said.

The IMPACT coalition that Shari oversees was given a \$625,000 grant from the federal government in 2016 to help them expand their efforts over the next five years. Only one other group in the entire state received this funding. "I



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think it's a testament to our reputation in the community," she said. "We've been working here a long time, and our successful track record speaks for itself."

Shari and her co-workers are based out of an office at Prosperity Bank, but they are in it only when necessary. They much prefer to be out in the community where they can make the biggest impact.

One place where this phenomenal crew takes action is in the local schools. October has been designated as National Drug Prevention Month and is, therefore, one of their busiest times of the year. One of the best-known programs that DPR runs in schools is the Red Ribbon Week campaign. Their team goes into area schools and presents students with information about how to make healthy choices and to stand up to peer pressure. Most importantly, students are challenged to make a pledge that they will remain drug-free. The IMPACT team works with principals, counselors and community liaisons to help students across a broad age group proactively develop healthy habits, which can lead to them being able to say no to drugs.

"The research tells us that kids are exposed to substances at younger ages now. If we wait until they are teenagers to reach out to them, then



we're too late," Shari commented. The programs they deliver vary, so each group is presented with age-appropriate information. Jennifer Thompson, the Tobacco Prevention and Control Coalition coordinator, works with kids from a very young age to help them learn what healthy choices are and how to make them.

Not only does DPR collaborate with schools, but they also support parents and guardians through a program called Crazy for my Kids Safe Home Network. This network is made up of people who want to help children avoid harmful substances. Anyone who wants to commit to providing a substance-free environment for kids can register their home at www.CrazyForMyKids.com. The registry is a powerful tool that helps

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families make confident choices about places they allow their kids to go and who they allow them to hang out with.

DPR also helps to keep the community safe by partnering with law enforcement. They provide training twice a year to help police officers stay on top of the latest trends in narcotics. For these events, the group brings in guest speakers who update K-9 officers and other civil servants on current drugs of abuse and slang names for them, as well as where they can be hidden. Police officers are grateful for the expertise that DPR provides.

Another wonderful program and joint effort with law enforcement is the Prescription Drug Take Back Program. One in four teens has misused prescription medication found in their own home or given to them by a family member or a friend. To help counter this problem, DPR has placed several permanent prescription drug drop boxes across Ellis County. These boxes are typically placed at a police station, but to find exact locations, visit www.DrugPrevResources.org.

In addition, the group works with police departments to sponsor drive-thru drop-offs across the county twice a year. The latest one took place in October 2016. These partners set up in prominent, convenient locations, so citizens could easily discard expired or unused medications they had lying around their homes. This program is free, anonymous and available for anyone to use. "People might not realize that by flushing medications down the toilet, those substances can make their way into our water supply. Using these drop boxes is the safest way to dispose of medication and keep it out of the hands of children," Shari stated.

DPR knows that lawmakers play a big role in setting the tone for a healthy city and county, so they are involved in



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this arena whenever necessary. Their Coalition played a big role in helping to pass an ordinance in 2014, which called for smoke-free businesses and restaurants in Waxahachie. IMPACT Waxahachie offers Smoke Free Ordinance Toolkits to businesses to help them stay aligned with the laws of the city, and, therefore, keep local citizens healthy.

Jennifer Heggland, the IMPACT Waxahachie coordinator, believes strongly in what her organization strives for. "I joined DPR because I believe in education-driven prevention and community and youth empowerment. I am excited to be a part of DPR's efforts to provide a platform for those who are concerned with the effects drugs have on their homes and communities and for those who are committed to increasing the overall well-being and resilience of their communities," Jennifer said.

Partnering with parents, schools, local government, law enforcement and other community stakeholders is how DPR succeeds. This nonprofit recognizes that it sometimes takes a village to raise a child, so they use all available means to share their drug prevention message.

The hearts of the people who work for DPR are big, and their vision for a drug-free community is even bigger. They go where the kids are, and they reach out to the adults who influence their lives. Next time you are at a local festival, look for their booth. They'll probably be there. They often attend back-to-school fairs and fall festivals, among other events. **NOW**

Editor's Note: If you'd like to learn more about this organization, you can visit their website at www.DrugPrevResources.org or their Facebook page.

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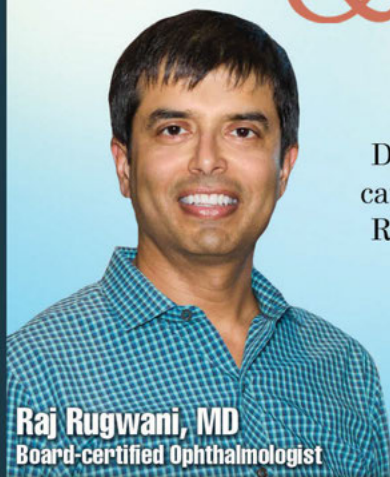


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Brett and Kristen Roberts met seven years ago, by chance, while attending a service at The Oaks Fellowship. Brett was from Waxahachie, and he was home from his job in Oklahoma that memorable weekend. Kristen, on the other hand, was living in Hillsboro. It was a friend who invited her to go that day. "I was talked into going," Kristen remembered. "It was God's plan all along." After that first meeting, Brett was less interested in working out of town as much as he had been doing prior to meeting Kristen.

As fate would have it, the two shared their first date a couple weeks later, in May 2010. During that first Friday night date, Kristen asked Brett if he wanted to attend her family's catfish dinner two days away. Sunday arrived, and so did Brett. After a great time of family fellowship, Brett had something important to tell Kristen. "I told her I wanted a monogamous relationship," he admitted. Later that same year, on December 17, they exchanged vows in the Hillsboro Central Baptist Church and celebrated their union with a reception at the old firehouse, also in Hillsboro.

That was a little over six years ago, but the time they have been together has been a wonderful whirlwind of change, growth and love. Four years ago, this past September, they moved to the home they now share with their two children,



ful Music

— By Sandra Strong

Evelyne, 3, and Luke, 1, and the family's two Great Danes, Duke and Lucy. When looking for a home in the Waxahachie area, they both agreed they wanted something older and structurally sound with some open space between them and the neighboring homes. When they first saw the house, it was the oversized, screened-in back porch that sold them. "We wanted an older home with character," Brett reiterated. "We wanted a home that we could make our own without spending a huge amount of time and money."





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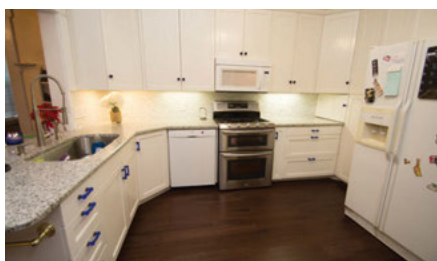
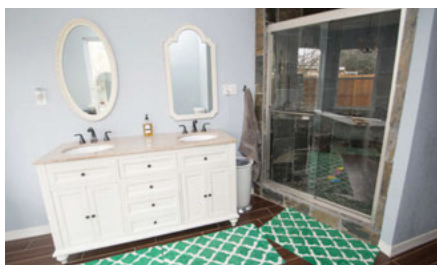
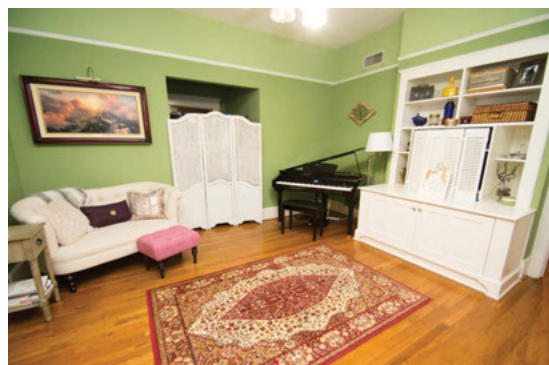
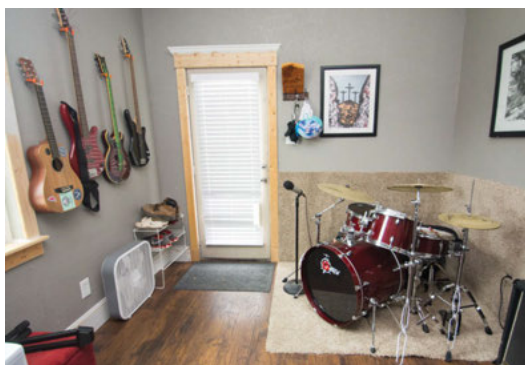


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Upon purchase, the home was listed as having 1,500 square feet. Today, after Brett and Kristen's handiwork, the home now boasts of 2,100 square feet of living space that quaintly features three bedrooms, two-and-a-half bathrooms, a family great room, a large master bathroom, a music room/home office, a playroom for the children and a formal sitting area. Thankfully, Brett, owner of MOC Roofing, comes from a family of builders, so with the help of his dad, they've been able to see the plans they had on paper come to fruition in the renovation process that has enhanced all they already loved about the home from the beginning.

One of the first projects was to add a full master bath to the home. Kristen desired a shower, while Brett wanted a bathtub. Kristen, pregnant with Evelyne at the time, took a road trip to Fredericksburg to celebrate her mom's birthday. She came home to her dream bathroom. Just recently, Brett was going to spend a weekend remodeling and upgrading the Jack-and-Jill bathroom. "That simple project turned into so much more," Kristen admitted. Brett was *not* pleasantly surprised when he came upon a "mold monster." After tearing out all the molded areas, he had to rebuild before the remodel could even begin. What they have now is a beautiful bathroom, free of mold.



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When Kristen became pregnant with Luke, they knew as a growing family they needed more room. This renovation meant adding several rooms to the home that ended up including the family great room, the playroom and the music room/home office. The fireplace in the family great room is the focal point, not just because of its size but because of all the unique details Brett added. The oversized mantel was an Antique Alley find, while the blue glass that matches the original blue glass knobs in the kitchen was purchased online. The hearth was created from wooden pallets and topped with white marble. The walls in these new rooms are gray with white trim.

Most of the house has been repainted, apart from the formal sitting area. The green paint is soothing and adds to the peaceful feeling found throughout the home. The built-in bookcase in this room was in place when they purchased the home. It's proven, over the years, to be a great place for family photos and special holiday decorations.

For the time being, Evelynne and Luke share a good-sized bedroom. The room is decorated in neutral tones with green-striped walls and white trim. Brett thought he would be able to open the original brick and tile fireplace in the guest bedroom, but when he realized that was an undertaking he didn't want to tackle, they opted for an electric fireplace instead. The kitchen is open to the dining area, but in the future, they would like to install new countertops and refurbish the concrete floors under the floorcovering currently in place. The plate rails in the dining area merge the old with the new, as Kristen displays artwork in place of plates.

The built-in china cabinet in the kitchen displays old and new items that are dear to Kristen. "I started collecting the cobalt blue glass when we moved here because I liked the hardware so much in the kitchen," she explained. "The antique green glass used to belong to my maternal great-grandmother."

The master bedroom and bathroom are a haven for the couple. The peacock blue accent wall in the bedroom is one of Kristen's creations, while the bathroom offers a hand-laid pebble stone shower floor and dark slate walls. The vanity was another special purchase on one of the family's many trips to Antique Alley.

The screened-in porch is Kristen's favorite place to be. She loves swinging in the porch swing Brett found alongside the road and fixed up, with this room in mind. She also enjoys sitting in the new furniture she received this past year for Mother's Day. "This is just one awesome room," she stated.



Brett and Kristen share a love for music. When looking back, they feel that music was the first thing that brought them together. "During our first date, we talked at length about songwriting," Brett reminisced, as Kristen nodded her head in agreement.

"We wrote a song on our second date at my parents' house," Kristen shared. "I had the verse, and together, we made it a song."

The song they composed early on in their partnership was played during their wedding ceremony as their sign of unity, in lieu of the traditional lighting of the candles. It may not have been love at first sight for the couple, but they've been making beautiful music together from the start. That beautiful music is evident in the home they've created for their growing family. **NOW**



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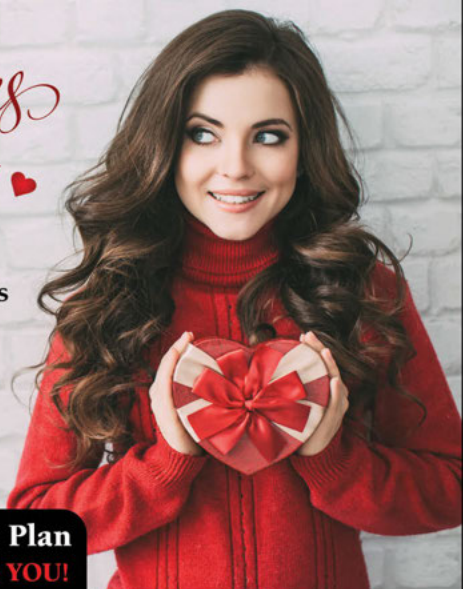
Southern Belles, Flying Geese and Embroidered Baskets made from a summer spread are just three patterns represented in Dollie Blevins' collection of quilts, which not only decorates her home but graces the walls of her quilting studio she and her husband, Ted, created out of their garage. With a country home on a hill surrounded by grazing cattle, the studio is both functional and a relaxing haven. "I can come out here and shut the world out and focus on creating my own thing," Dollie explained.

Her creativity at the sewing machine began early when she started making doll clothes. "There were nine kids in my family, so my mom made quilts out of necessity. I cut quilting squares while sitting on the floor, and made my first pair of shorts for myself when I was in the fourth grade," Dollie, this native daughter of Missouri, recalled.

During college and Ted and Dollie's early married days, Dollie put her sewing passion on a back shelf. "Ted and I met in college, married and moved to Oklahoma and then to Kansas, where we ran a group home for boys, in which Boys Town partnered with Kansas University to develop a teaching model," Dollie remembered. When KU offered a master's degree program, I enrolled. Then the Lena Pope Home

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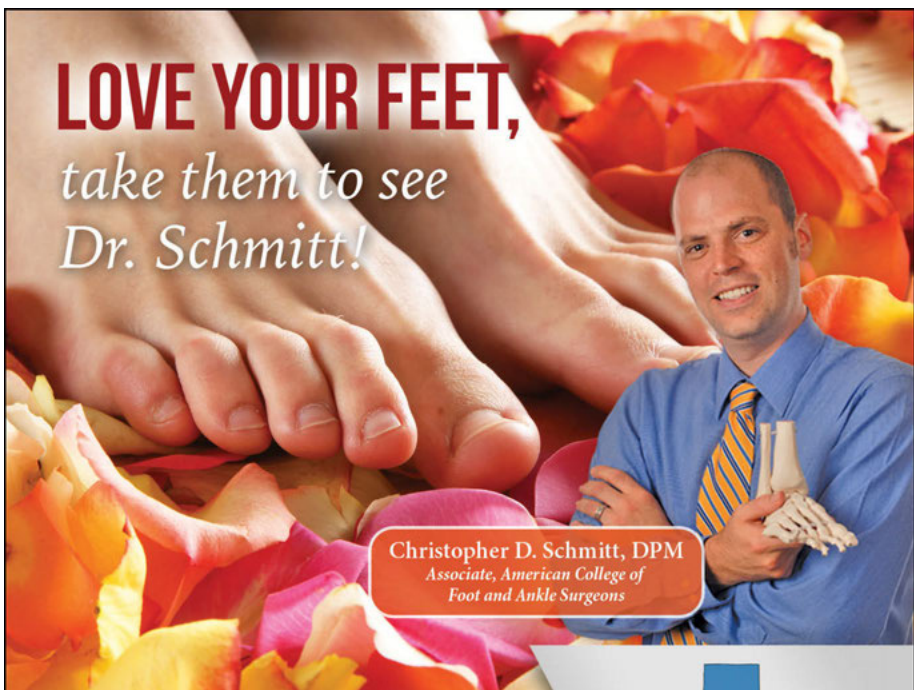
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in Fort Worth called and wanted us to move and work there, so Ted and I came to Texas. He stayed with them for 20-plus years and became the executive director. I worked for them for five years and then went back into education as an administrator for a Catholic alternative school in the Metroplex and the Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts, which included the Texas Boys Choir."

Not only were Ted and Dollie involved in careers raising boys, but they also were raising their daughter, Nikki. She's married to Pat Berry, and they live in Fort Worth with their children, Nicholas and Maddie. "My daughter made one quilt for her sister-in-law and, afterward, she told me, 'I don't know how you do this,'" Dollie said. But her granddaughter, Maddie, made a Star Spangled Banner quilt and won a blue ribbon at the State Fair of Texas. Maddie's also working on a school project that involves making a quilt square for every one of her years in school. The squares will be put together her high school senior year.

After establishing herself in her career, Dollie, in her 30s, became interested in quilting again as a fun way to fellowship with other women. "We were living in Aledo, Texas. I visited the public library, and it had a notice of a quilting group posted, so I started going to the meetings. They were a great group of women who were patient with me and shared so much information and expertise," Dollie explained.

These days, Dollie belongs to two quilting guilds: the Fort Worth Quilt Guild and the Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County, which meets on the fourth Monday each month at the



Waxahachie Bible Church at 6:00 p.m. "You can always learn something at these meetings," she stated.

Dollie has learned well. Her award ribbons are hung across one wall, just above her studio's windows and doors, which allow natural light to illuminate her projects. After retiring and having gotten settled into her home and studio, Dollie began entering her quilts in shows. From her first entry, when Dollie won a first-place ribbon and People's Choice Award with her Embroidered Basket quilt in an Azle, Texas, quilt show to a Best of Show Award at the State Fair of Texas

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and a win at the Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County Show for her Baltimore Album quilt, which hangs royally in her studio, Dollie's quilts have been judged as favorites. "I like to enter shows, but I don't make my quilts for the judges. I make them for my family, friends and me. I quilt for the creativity," she explained.

The subjectivity of judging is challenging. "Stitches, color and originality count, but some of the judging has to be what the individual judge thinks," Dollie said. She cites one experience when she entered a quilt and won nothing but then entered the same quilt in four more shows and received wins and places with it.

Other challenges occur. "I don't always purchase enough fabric," Dollie said. "I didn't have enough to complete my Baltimore Album quilt, so I had to become even more creative to make it work." Also, quilting isn't a short process. "I'm not fond of kits anyway, but there's no quilt-in-a-day easy kit," she added.

She also doesn't have a favorite design or pattern. "I like the more traditional patterns. Modern patterns don't really draw me in. I like piecework because I can work it quickly and have really gotten into appliqué. I like combining piecing and appliqué

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together," Dolle said. She pieces her quilts on her older Featherweight sewing machines and works appliqué by hand. When Dolle wants to use a zigzag or satin embroidery stitch, she uses her newer sewing machines.

Older, historic quilts and embroidery work, whether completed or left incomplete, fascinate Dolle. "I love to find old embroidery work and incorporate them into quilts. I think of all the time some lady spent working on this and love the history behind the work," she revealed. Dolle has finished several quilts families didn't want anymore after a creative relative had passed away.

Dolle has made a T-shirt quilt representing her school's musicals and incorporated a former educational colleague's original musical score into a quilt. She makes quilts for charities, a Fort Worth NICU, Breast Cancer, the VA, her granddaughter's church and for local senior citizen sales. "Our local guild gives of itself a lot," Dolle explained. Additionally, she enjoys crocheting, beading, gardening and traveling.

Her best memories of quilting are of her mom and the quilting guild friendships she's made. Dolle treasures time spent each year with her two sisters when they get together to make quilts for their grandchildren. One of her favorite quilts features photos of family members, with an Irish Chain pattern, and the Cherokee creation of the world. "This quilt is so valuable, since it represents my family. My dad was Irish and my mom was Cherokee," Dolle said. Just as with those ladies of yore, Dolle makes her quilts with love and creativity so that family and friends will be physically warmed with love for years to come. **NOW**

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Drs. Jon Ousley and Roma Gandhi spend most of their time in the Waxahachie office. They believe in offering a fun experience for all their customers.



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Super kids need super smiles! — By Sandra Strong

At Just For Kids Dental, you can expect board-certified pediatric dental specialists. Drs. Jon Ousley, Roma Gandhi and Shannon De Vera have all undergone two additional years of training with a focus on pediatrics. “We are a team of specialized dentists who are dedicated to helping your child form healthy oral hygiene habits,” Dr. Ousley stated. “We offer a kid-friendly atmosphere and a style of communication that will put your child at ease.”

Dr. Ousley has been practicing pediatric dentistry in and around the area for over 40 years. He is a graduate of Baylor Dental College and The University of Texas Dental Branch. His degrees are in biology, dental surgery, pediatric dentistry and orthodontics, and he is board-certified by the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry. “I have a passion for pediatric dentistry,”

he admitted. “I approach each child’s diagnosis and treatment as if they were my own kids.” He and his wife, Juli, have two sons, one daughter and six grandchildren.

Dr. Gandhi joined the practice in July 2016. She was born in Queens, New York, but after high school and college, she made her way to Texas with a certificate in pediatric dentistry and a Master of Science degree. She is a member of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. She and her husband, Neal, love traveling, working out and trying new foods.

Dr. De Vera came on board in August 2016. She was born in Indiana and raised in Coppell, Texas. She attended Texas A&M University, earning a bachelor’s degree in biomedical engineering. She received her specialty training in pediatric dentistry at Children’s Memorial Hermann Hospital and Texas Children’s

Hospital. She is actively involved in several dental associations and academics and lives in Dallas with her dentist husband, James, and their son, Luke. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family and cheering the Texas Aggies to victory.

The dental experience at Just For Kids Dental is designed for patients age birth to 18. The shared educational knowledge, when partnered with years of combined experience, almost guarantees patients will create good, healthy hygiene habits. Trips to the dentist's office need to be remembered as happy times. "If they are," Dr. Ousley explained, "they will be likely to carry good dental hygiene habits into adulthood."

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Healthy teeth and gums not only prevent future dental problems, they also build confidence. Just For Kids Dental offers a number of dental services including, but not limited to, digital X-rays, fluoride varnish, dental cleanings and sealants, fillings, space maintainers, crowns and caring for children with special needs. "We also offer several options to ease anxiety, such as laughing gas and I.V. sedation," Dr. Ousley added.

Just For Kids Dental is in-network with most major insurance companies, including MCNA and Chip. They will also accept all insurance and are happy to file claims on your behalf. They offer flexible monthly payment plans for those who do not have dental insurance.

The atmosphere at Just For Kids Dental is conducive to a positive, fun experience. The offices are decorated in bright colors. TVs offer movies, cartoons and/or games. Following each visit, patients are given a balloon and get to choose among age-appropriate prizes. The doctors and staff at Just For Kids Dental consider each patient to be a super kid. Their goal is to make sure they have a super smile, too. **NOW**



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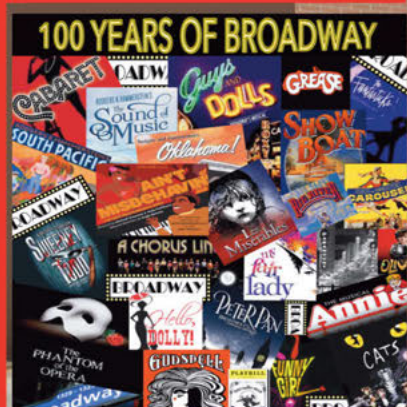
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High LDL cholesterol, high blood pressure and smoking are chief risk factors for heart disease, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that almost half of Americans have at least one of these three risk factors. Obesity, diabetes and excessive alcohol use also increase the likelihood for heart conditions, such as: heart attack, stroke, arrhythmia, peripheral artery disease and cardiac arrest.

Several drugs and foods counteract heart medications and should be avoided or consumed in lower amounts. These include the following:

Certain fruits and vegetables. Grapefruit and pomegranates are culprits in interacting with medications to lower high cholesterol (Lipitor, Zocor). Leafy, green vegetables rich in vitamin K, such as spinach and kale, pose problems for people on blood thinners. Individuals taking anticoagulant medications including Coumadin, or its generic name Warfarin, need to find a careful balance of what and how much of high-K veggies they can eat. High-sodium and high-fat foods including aged cheese, bologna, sausage and pepperoni also can raise blood pressure.

Vitamins and herbal/nutritional supplements. Many physicians and nutritionists recommend that a wholesome, varied diet is the best way to benefit from a well-rounded amount of vitamins. If you do have a heart condition and take vitamins or herbal/nutritional supplements, beware of which ones cause blood pressure to rise and can interfere with heart medications. Popping a multivitamin may cause more harm than good.

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Some common NSAID medications for arthritis and overall pain relief, including aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve), may cause the body to retain fluids and blood pressure to elevate.

Higher blood pressure and slower-working kidneys can trigger a heart attack or stroke. An anti-inflammatory option is acetaminophen (Tylenol), but ask your doctor what's best for your body. Never take more than the doctor-prescribed amount of aspirin to prevent a stroke or heart attack.

Cough and cold medications. These products may contain NSAID ingredients and decongestants that are known to raise heart rate and blood pressure or prevent some heart medications from working correctly. Check the dosage instructions for over-the-counter (OTC) drugs prior to purchasing them, because warnings are now included on some products to not take them if you have high blood pressure.

Antibiotics. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns that Zithromax, commonly called a Z-pack, may lead to abnormal — and sometimes fatal — heartbeat changes in people at risk for heart problems.

Weight-loss drugs. Appetite suppressants are stimulants that increase blood pressure and put more stress on the heart. Heart patients should always consult with their doctor about taking any weight-loss supplements.

Migraine medications. Some migraine medicines can narrow blood vessels throughout the body. Tightened vessels push blood pressure higher, even to dangerous levels.

Alcohol. For some people, consuming a low or moderate level of alcohol can protect against heart disease and stroke, but heavy drinking or binge drinking can damage the heart muscle and cause heart failure. Anyone with a history of cardiovascular disease should seek professional medical advice before using any amount of alcohol.

February is American Heart Month, a reminder to protect heart health and make small lifestyle changes to control blood pressure, eat well and exercise. These are all steps that can add up to a lifetime of good heart health. **NOW**

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February 2

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February 2 — April 12

AARP Tax Assistance: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Thursdays only, Sims Library, 515 Main St. Call (972) 937-2671 for additional information on what documents to bring.

February 3

FirstLook's Pregnancy Medical Clinic Texas Life Investors' Celebration banquet: 6:00 p.m., check in; 7:00 p.m. elegant dinner, Waxahachie Civic Center. \$50 per person or \$400 per table of 8. Visit txlifeinvestors.org or call (972) 938-7900 for more details.

February 4

Jazz Cafe 2017: 6:30-10:30 p.m. Advance tickets are \$40. For more information, email jazzcafe@spiritofwaxahachie.com.

February 10

6th Annual Share the Love Gala: 6:00 p.m. The event benefits CASA of Ellis County. www.sharethelovegala.eventbrite.com.

February 10 — 12

Waxahachie Community Theatre's Dessert Theater: *Smoke on the Mountain*. **Friday** and **Saturday**, 7:30 p.m.; **Sunday**, 2:30 p.m., Living Hope Church of the Nazarene. Tickets are \$15 each and can be purchased online through the theater's website at www.waxahachiecommunitytheatre.com. A service charge will be added to the price of each ticket purchased on line. Preschool children are free with a paid adult admission. Tickets are also available at the offices of Dr. Jerry Ellis, DDS, in Midlothian. Contact the WCT box office at (972) 646-1050 or email wct.texas@gmail.com for more information.

February 11

Cupid Shuffle 5K & 15K: 7:50 a.m., 15K begins; 8:00 a.m., 5K begins, Getzendaner Park. Wear your tutu and your Valentine's socks. Come run in the name of love. You can register online at reachcouncil.org/events. For more information, email nisa.hurd@reachcouncil.org.

February 17 — 19

Annual Gingerbread House Chili Cook-Off: For more information call (972) 937-1870 or visit www.elliscountycac.org.

February 25

Waxahachie Symphony Association features Stephen Nielson, world renowned Steinway artist: 7:00 p.m., SAGU Hagee Communication Center Performance Hall, 1200 Sycamore. Ticket prices at the door: \$20 adult, \$8 college student. SAGU students may attend performances held at SAGU for free with a student ID card. Children through high school are free, also. www.waxahachiesymphony.org.

Ongoing:

Fourth Mondays

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave. Visit www.elliscountyquilters.com for more information.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to sandra.strong@nowmagazines.com.



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In the Kitchen With Robin Southern

— By Virginia Riddle

Robin Southern was influenced greatly by her Louisiana roots and loves Cajun food. “It definitely influences me in the spices I’m willing to use and my love of seafood,” she admitted. “My mother taught me the basics of cooking. However, I learned more by experimenting. When I was younger, I wanted to become a chef. Now, I watch the cooking shows and try to make the recipes my own in simple ways.”

As a full-time student at Tarleton State University who’s employed part time at Ryan’s Steakhouse, Robin is busy but still enjoys cooking for her family. “I like to get my children interested in new foods, like I was when growing up,” Robin said. “I love down-home cooking, baking and anything that can be made in one dish.” **NOW**

Cornbread Casserole

2 lbs. ground beef, cooked and drained
2 15-oz. cans Ranch-style beans
1 15.25-oz. can corn, drained
1 10-oz. can Lime & Cilantro Ro-Tel
1 cup sour cream
2 cups sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
2 8.5-oz. pkgs. JIFFY Corn Muffin Mix
Milk, double the amount listed on the cornbread box

1. In a large bowl, mix the first six ingredients; place mixture in a baking dish.
2. Prepare the cornbread according to package directions, doubling the milk.
3. Pour the cornbread mixture over the other ingredients; bake at 350 F for 25-30 minutes.

Fried Chicken Wrapped in Biscuits

Marinade:

3 large chicken breasts, skinned and deboned

1 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup Louisiana Hot Sauce
Salt, to taste

Biscuit dough:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 tsp. salt
1 Tbsp. baking powder
2 tsp. sugar
1 cup half-and-half

Crust:

2 cups all-purpose flour
2 tsp. paprika
1 tsp. black pepper
Vegetable oil
Salt, to taste

Baste:

5 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted (divided use)
2 Tbsp. honey

1. For marinade: Cut the chicken into about 24 small pieces; soak in the buttermilk, hot sauce and salt overnight.

2. For biscuit dough: In a large bowl, whisk the flour, salt, baking powder and sugar together; slowly add the half-and-half, stirring until a rough dough forms.

3. Roll out the dough on a floured surface; cut the dough into 24 1-by-4-inch strips. Refrigerate for 30 minutes.

4. For crust: In a large bowl, mix the flour, paprika and black pepper; heat about 2 inches of oil in a deep skillet over medium heat.

5. Toss the chicken in the flour mixture; fry chicken for about 3 minutes; remove, drain and sprinkle with salt.

6. Preheat oven to 375 F; wrap a strip of dough around each piece of fried chicken, pressing lightly to seal.

7. For baste: Put the wrapped chicken pieces on a baking sheet, seam side down; brush the dough with 2 Tbsp. of butter; sprinkle with salt and paprika.

8. Bake the chicken for about 12 minutes; combine the remaining 3 Tbsp. butter with the honey; brush the butter/honey mixture onto the biscuits while they are still hot.

After-school Pizza Sticks

1 8-oz. tube PILLSBURY Crescent Dough Sheet

32 pepperoni slices

8 mozzarella cheese sticks

2 Tbsp. butter

1/2 tsp. garlic powder

1/2 tsp. parsley

Marinara sauce for dipping

1. Preheat oven to 450 F; roll out the crescent roll dough on a lightly greased baking dish; cut the dough into 8 equal rectangles.

2. Arrange 4 pepperoni slices on each rectangle; top with a cheese stick.

3. Roll up each rectangle of dough, making sure it is closed on all sides.

4. Melt the butter; add garlic powder and parsley; brush the butter mixture on the pizza sticks.

5. Bake for 10-12 minutes; serve with the marinara sauce.

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit www.nowmagazines.com.



A Place In Your Heart

Feb. 9 - Ladies Night Out

Feb. 11 - BOGO Sale

Feb. 12 - Webb Gallery Exhibit Opening, Carl Block and Billy Ray Mangham

Feb. 18 - Sidewalk Sale

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