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At Home With Junior
and Christa Sulak

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ON THE COVER

Mosaics help Patty Brown see the big picture for her life.

Photo by
Shane Kirkpatrick.

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Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$35 per year or \$3.50 per issue. Subscriptions should be sent to: NOW Magazines, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates or editorial correspondence, call (972) 937-8447 or visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

February holidays are a mixed bag for me ...

Most people's minds turn directly to Valentine's Day when talks of February holidays commence. I do enjoy Valentine's Day on the 14th. The chocolate cannot be ignored, and I enjoy helping my children prepare cards for their classmates. A nice meal with my sweetheart is always special, too.

My Cajun French heritage insists that Mardi Gras be celebrated on the 13th this year. I'm no French Quarter reveler, but I do enjoy a nice pot of gumbo and a King Cake before the Lenten season begins. It's always enjoyable to reach back into my cultural heritage and share traditions with my family and Louisiana friends that have relocated to Texas like I have.

I've added new cultural celebrations, too. Living in China taught me how to properly celebrate Chinese New Year — traditional food, red envelopes with money for the children, candy wrapped in gold foil, and a good house cleaning. These are just a few of the things that will be part of my February 16th this year.

So, the third week in February will be a cultural whirlwind in my home. I hope that your home will be filled with love and laughter as you embark on this new month.

Happy February!



Jill

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Beauty *of* **MOSAICS**

— By Derek Jones



With scattered shards of glass in various colors spread across the round, wooden tables, the sounds of laughter and conversation filled the air of the small art studio. These were the sounds of people having fun and enjoying one another's company. At one of the tables sat Patty Brown, a vibrant retiree and artist as she worked on her current mosaic. As for her passion for mosaics, she explained, "My mom is artistic, and I inherited her love of art." She strategically placed a small shard of glass on the board and continued, "Creating mosaics is one way I can express myself using art."

Patty retired from her job as an air traffic controller but needed something to occupy her time and serve as an outlet for her creativity. "My neighbor kept asking me to go create mosaics with her," she recalled. "I kept saying, 'No,' because it was too early in the morning, and I wanted to sleep," she laughed.

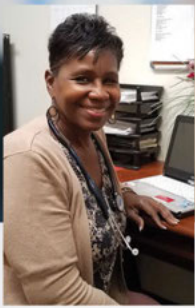
Eventually, she did try her hand at creating mosaics, and there was an instant connection between her and the art. Once the mosaic bug bit, Patty couldn't get enough. "I come here about three times a week to work on mosaics," Patty stated. Now, she works part time at Mosaic Madness in downtown Waxahachie. As to why, after retiring, she has taken a part-time job, Patty explained, "I just love helping others discover the joy of creating colorful pieces of art."

Helping others discover their inner artist is one of Patty's passions. "People always think that their mosaic is going to be terrible," she said. "The key is the grout. I tell them it will look completely different when you add the grout to the mosaic." After all the glass is laid, the mosaic looks incomplete and random. After the grout is added, the artist's vision takes shape. "I enjoy seeing the satisfaction on people's faces when their mosaic turns out better than they could have imagined."

Patty is an accomplished mosaic artist. This is easy to tell by looking around at her art pieces on display in the shop. One of her larger pieces, a full-size mosaic guitar, proudly displays a blue ribbon. "I won first place last year at the State Fair of Texas in the mosaic category," she explained. The guitar is decorated with a realistic floral print made up of tightly spaced pieces of glass. "The first guitar I did was three inches too big to fit within the fair's size category, but this one just squeezed in under the size restriction," she stated with a smile on her face. "I am very proud of winning, but I never would have entered if my friends had not encouraged me."

Friendship is important to Patty. She has enjoyed being a part of the mosaic art community, which gathers together regularly to create mosaics and talk about life. One of her friends, Sheila Kutach, laughed, "Yes, sometimes we get a lot more talking done than actual artwork."

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"We have fun, and it serves as a stress relief from the daily grind," Patty added. People from all walks of life gather to visit and enjoy using mosaics as a form of self-expression. "We have a gentleman who just turned 70 who likes to come here regularly with his wife. Children also love to create colorful mosaics." Community is a critical component to what keeps Patty creating her artwork.

When it comes to her own mosaics, Patty draws inspiration from a number of sources and strives for realism within her work. "I like to look to watercolors for inspiration because of the shading they offer," she explained. She currently has several works in progress. "Once I get the big picture, I start sifting through glass, searching for just the right colors and hues." Patty admits it takes her unusually long to complete her mosaic projects. "I would never consider myself a perfectionist," she explained, "but when it comes to mosaics, I expect perfection. I just can't help myself." Patty mostly creates pieces to give to others but, occasionally, donates mosaics to be auctioned off for good causes.



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One of the great things about this art form is anyone can do it. Patty offered her encouragement to anyone who might be thinking about giving it a try. "Mosaics are like puzzles, but everything does not have to fit." She paused for a moment before she continued. "You make your own pieces, so there is no wrong or right way to do it."

Offering her encouragement as well, Sheila said, "The key to success is keeping an open mind and a positive attitude."

"You don't have to be artistic to make a mosaic, but an artful eye does help," added another one of Patty's friends, Claire Conn. The ladies around the table nodded their heads in agreement as Claire continued. "Mosaics appeal to the artist and the non-artist." For this group of people, the key ingredient is fun.

Patty and her friends enjoy their art form, and laughter abounds when they get together. "When you are here, you leave all your troubles outside the door and focus on the joy of creating something with your own two hands." There is something truly special about the various pieces of glass coming together to form something beautiful. **NOW**

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"Our life is a love story," Junior Sulak said, as he began to recall meeting his beautiful bride. Junior and Christa have built a business and raised a family together. It is easy to see how much they care for one another and the closeness they have achieved over the years.

They ended up working at the same photography company in Houston back in their early adult lives. He was a photographer, and she was his assistant. "It was love at first sight," the couple said with a laugh.

They didn't begin dating right away but knew they were drawn to each other. "She came to work



Living Their Love

AT HOME WITH JUNIOR AND CH

one day in a pair of Lee jeans, and that was it," Junior remembered. They dated a year before taking the plunge into marriage. "Every three years after we married, we had a baby," Junior said, when sharing about bringing three beautiful girls into the world.

Walking in the door one day during their first year of marriage, Junior announced he had quit his job and asked Christa if she wanted to move to Dallas. Her reply was, "I will be in the car." They quickly made the move.

Junior had always wanted to open a restaurant, and Christa had been raised by parents who owned one. "We all worked and played at





Story

— By Debbie Durling

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Mom and Dad's restaurant," Christa remembered. "When a customer would come up to the counter, Mom would tell us to hide." Junior and Christa took out a loan and got Junior's Bar-B-Q up and running. Now, it's the oldest restaurant in Red Oak and the first barbecue restaurant established there.

Two years ago, they decided to

buy a 2,500-square-foot home in Red Oak. They chose a fixer-upper with lots of land. The 55-acre farm came complete with animals and a hay business. "We bought the house for the land," Junior said.

The two have been part of a lot of things over the years, but they admitted that farming was brand new to them. Right after moving in,

the "barn cat" had a litter of kittens. The donkey they purchased for the farm also delivered a baby one month after her arrival. "We didn't even know she was pregnant and came home one day and found the new arrival!" Christa said.

However, the biggest surprise came about 10 months later when Christa noticed one of the cows looked especially fatter than the others. She called their friend who knew more about farming. He came over and said, "Get that cow in a stall! She is about to have a calf." Junior, who didn't even go in the delivery room for his own babies, delivered the calf alone. This had become a very "productive" farm to be run by two novice farmers. What a beginning!

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shutters on every window, including the arched ones. This, along with the unique interior architecture of the home, yielded a beautiful palette on which Junior and Christa could add their own personal touches.

Rather than take away the original beauty of the home, they modified areas to fit their needs. For instance, the galley kitchen had a breakfast nook at the end that also led to the living room. Instead of putting a table in that spot, they chose to extend the cabinetry all the way to the end of the wall. The kitchen wall shared by the living room was extended into a peninsula with seating for eight. However, the gazebo ceiling that rose above the area was preserved, and a modern light fixture was hung to accent the architecture. What could look like an old-fashioned, narrow kitchen now has warmth and various points of interest. White cabinets with silver hardware crowned with granite countertops make a perfect gathering place for friends and family.

At the other end of the kitchen, a door opens to the formal dining room. Christa chose a rectangular chandelier to hang over the dining table that seats 10 people. "I had to hang each of those crystals individually," she laughed.

The brick wall that houses the fireplace in the living room was painted white and accented with beautiful, carefully placed greenery. A large television was mounted above the fireplace, and theater seating



recliners that link together provide a comfortable entertainment area when time permits. To add elegant pizzazz, Christa chose accent chairs covered in brown and white cowhide. Cedar beams, which stately cross the cathedral ceiling, add to the warmth of the room.

Junior and Christa have created a true retreat out of this three-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath home. Hand-scraped wood floors, a huge closed-in patio and a pool give opportunity for hours of entertainment for themselves, family and friends.

"We love our home and love entertaining family," Junior shared. "We have always tried to keep a wholesome atmosphere that would help our children flourish."

In their spare time, Junior likes to golf, and Christa spends time singing at the local opsy venues. She sang for years at karaoke places. "When I got to sing with a live band, I felt like a kid in a candy store," she said.

This couple enjoys life and has had fun through the years living out their own love story. They do most everything together. It's no wonder that the farm seemed to come to life when they moved in. Forty years ago, Junior and Christa found the one they could laugh with, live for, dream with and love. **NOW**

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Action Behind Words

— By Virginia Riddle

With speed and thought, Lawrence Robinson strives to carry out the Four Talons of Red Oak ISD wherever he is involved. Resisting “senioritis,” Lawrence has felt the need to step up his pace as a senior at Red Oak High School. “My peers and I want to work our hardest,” Lawrence said. “We still have so much to do. We want the Class of 2018 to raise the bar for all those coming after us.”

Working harder as a senior was advice from a church friend. Lawrence listens, and that is part of his leadership abilities. “Leadership is not just about being the boss,” he said. “It is a sacrifice of time and energy — it is having no ‘me time.’ But I am passionate and love what I do around school.” Instead of taking easier courses during his senior year, he has chosen a full load of rigorous ones. “I like challenges,” Lawrence explained. Not surprisingly, his favorite school subject is government.

Lawrence is involved. He served as the 2016-2017 student council president his junior year and was re-elected to continue serving as president for the 2017-2018 school year, an honor rarely bestowed on a student in a high school with such a large student body. Additionally, he is treasurer of the ROHS National Honor Society and president of Hawk Health Occupation Students. He founded Hawk Male Leadership, a group of young men promoting male leadership at home and in the community, and Hawk Ambassadors, a group that inclusively helps all to join discussions to improve the school’s culture. “I see my leadership roles as ways to not just better myself, but better the school and bring everyone together,” Lawrence explained.

Honors have come his way. Chosen by the school’s administration, he was named the Red Oak Lions Club Student of the Month for September 2017, and it’s no small feat that he’s achieved perfect attendance at school since first grade. Lawrence has received early acceptance to The University of Texas at Austin, but is also interested in attending The University of Texas at Tyler or Stephen F. Austin State University. He is

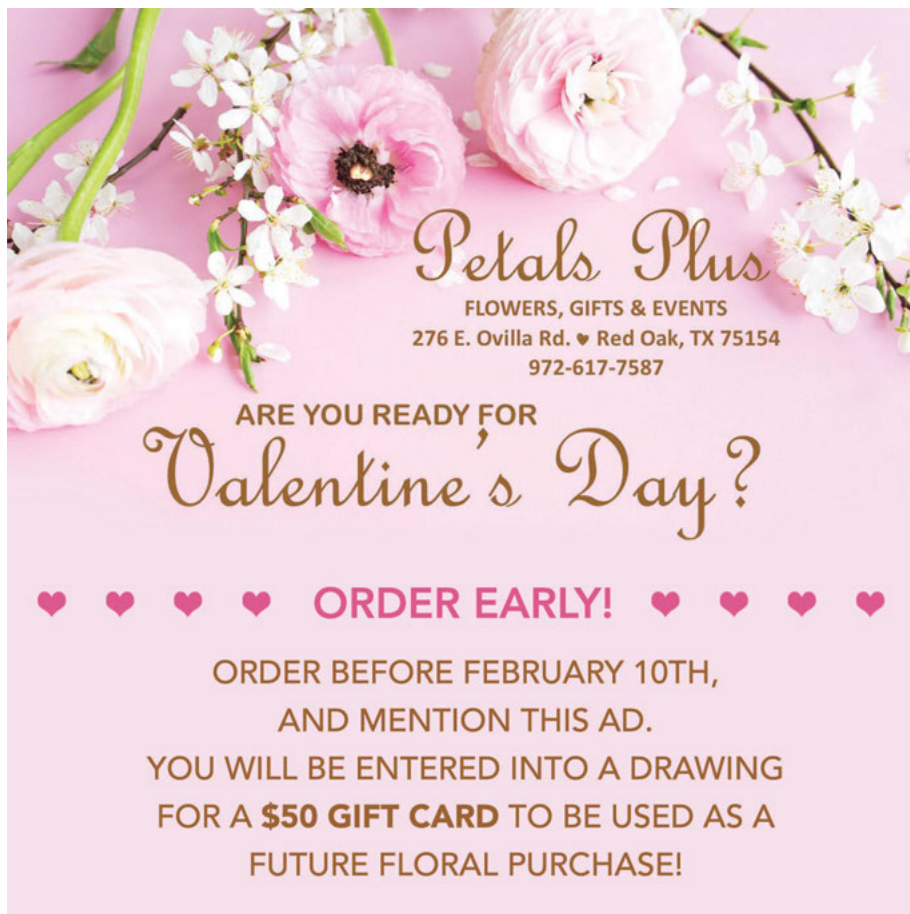
interested in majoring in pre-pharmacy studies with the goal of becoming a clinical pharmacist, but is undecided on a minor.

A move with his family in 2010 from Dallas County enabled Lawrence to meet Red Oak Middle School teacher Ruth Ryan. "She encouraged me. I would not be where I am if she hadn't talked to me," Lawrence said. He credits Red Oak High School teacher Angela Thomas as having continued the mentorship. "Ms. Thomas, a student council sponsor, encouraged me to serve as president my junior year," he stated. "I worried about the stress, since that year is a tough one academically. She's kind of one of us — she understands our passion to serve our school. She is like a second mom to me."

The ROHS student council is a member of the Texas Association of Student Councils. Lawrence and other officers attend TASC conferences, through which he connects with other student leaders across the state of Texas. Attendance also enables him to bring back ideas for future projects that help the school and the community. "For example, we sponsor an annual blood drive and helped collect donations for Hurricane Harvey relief," Lawrence said.

Lawrence's family is supportive. "My parents, Demetric and Michael, are amazing, and I have a twin brother, Royce, and four half-siblings, Shamekas, Markevin, Shona and Michelle," he stated. In what little spare time he has, Lawrence enjoys reading, babysitting family members and watching football with family and friends.

Dr. Miller Beaird, ROHS principal, stated, "Lawrence follows the Four Talons of the Hawk. He exemplifies that student, school, family partnership we want. Lawrence is a polite and respectful young man. We're going to see great things from him." **NOW**



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CookingNOW

In the Kitchen With

TERESA AMBRA

— By Amber D. Browne



Teresa Ambra's journey with food began when a neighbor brought a meal to her family following the birth of her first child. "I realized that cooking could be a ministry to others," Teresa shared. She now cooks for her church congregation and neighbors during times of joy and sadness.

As a food blogger, Teresa has posted more than 1,000 dishes on her blog, *Can't Stay Out of the Kitchen*. She's often in search of inspiration and discovers new recipes from other food bloggers on Pinterest and in cookbooks.

Teresa wasn't always so comfortable in the kitchen. She is self-taught, but learned most of her cooking techniques from her husband. Teresa now enjoys teaching others, especially how to make homemade pies and bread from scratch. "It's almost a lost art." **NOW**

Chicken and Biscuit Casserole

2 cups cooked chicken or turkey, cubed
2 Tbsp. onion, minced
1 8-oz. can golden mushroom soup
1 cup cooked peas and carrots
Dash pepper
1/4 cup red bell pepper, chopped (or 2-oz. jar pimientos)
1 cup rotini noodles, cooked in chicken broth and drained
2 cups shredded cheddar cheese (divided use)
1 8-oz. can biscuits

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Spray a 9x13-inch pan with cooking spray.
2. Combine chicken, next 6 ingredients and one cup of cheese. Pour mixture into pan; cover and bake about 30 minutes until bubbly.
3. Remove dish and place biscuits on top of casserole around the edges. Bake 15-20 minutes until biscuits are no longer doughy.

4. Sprinkle with remaining cheese; bake 5 minutes until biscuits are golden brown.

Corn Pudding

3 large eggs
3 heaping Tbsp. all-purpose flour
1/2 cup sugar
2 cups milk
2 15-oz. cans whole kernel corn, drained
1/2 tsp. sea salt
1/2 stick unsalted butter

1. Combine first 3 ingredients; beat well. Add milk, corn and salt.
2. Melt butter in a 9x13-inch baking dish at 350 F; add corn mixture. Bake for 45-60 minutes, or until firm.

Old-fashioned Green Beans

4-6 slices Applewood-smoked bacon, cut into 1-inch pieces
1/3 cup onion, diced

1/2 tsp. minced garlic
1 1/2 lbs. fresh green beans, washed and ends cut off
3 quarts water
Salt and pepper, to taste
2 Tbsp. butter (optional)

1. In a large Dutch oven, fry bacon until nearly cooked; add onion and garlic. Sauté for 1-2 minutes.
2. Add green beans and water. Bring to a boil; cook for 15-30 minutes, or until green beans are tender. Drain water and season with salt and pepper. Add butter, if desired.

Homemade Rolls or Bread

3/4 cup sugar
1 cup milk
1 stick unsalted butter
3 eggs, beaten
6 to 6 1/2 cups bread flour (divided use)
2 pkgs. dry yeast
2/3 to 3/4 cup very warm water
4 Tbsp. unsalted butter, melted (divided use)

1. Add sugar to a large bowl.
2. In a separate bowl, combine milk and butter; heat until butter melts. Add to large bowl to dissolve sugar; cool and add eggs.
3. Stir in 1 cup flour with a wooden spoon.
4. Dissolve yeast in hot water; add to mixture. Continue to add flour, 1 cup at a time. Roll and knead dough on floured

board. Rest dough in a warm place for 20 minutes on a floured board on top of bowl filled with hot water.

5. Punch and knead dough again for about 30 seconds; pull off golf ball-size piece of dough. Shape into a ball and flatten into a circle on a bread board. Fold ends under and place on a slightly greased cookie sheet. Repeat with remaining dough. Cover with a tea towel and let rise 1 hour in a warm place.

6. Brush with 2 Tbsps. melted butter; bake at 350 F for 15-20 minutes or until lightly browned. Brush rolls with remaining melted butter after removing from the oven.

Teresa's Greek Salad

Salad:

1 head romaine or red or green leaf lettuce, chopped

6-8 Roma tomatoes, sliced

1 large cucumber, sliced

1 green pepper, diced

1/2 red onion, thinly sliced and separated into rings (or 2 slices thinly diced)

1/2 to **2/3** cup ripe Kalamata olives, drained

1/2 to **1** cup pepperoncini, drained

1/2 to **1** lb. Feta cheese

Dressing:

1/2 cup olive oil

1/3 cup red wine vinegar

1/2 cup sugar

1/4 cup parsley

1 tsp. oregano

1 tsp. basil

1 tsp. salt

1/2 tsp. pepper

1. For salad: Layer ingredients in order listed.

2. For dressing: Combine all ingredients and stir well before tossing with salad.

Butterfinger Delight

1 1/4 cups graham cracker crumbs

1/4 cup sugar

1/3 cup butter, melted

1/2 gal. French vanilla ice cream

2 3.4-oz. boxes vanilla pudding

16 oz. Cool Whip

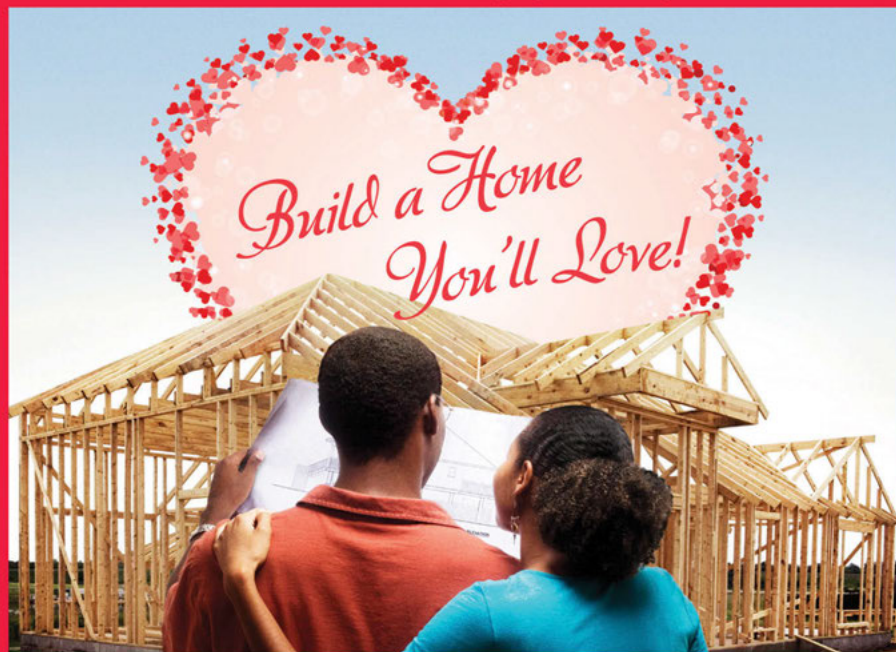
6-8 Butterfinger candy bars, crushed

1. Combine first three ingredients. Press mixture into the bottom of a 9x13-inch baking dish to make a crust; place in the freezer.

2. Soften ice cream. Using a mixer, mix dry pudding with ice cream until well blended. Pour over crust. Cover and refrigerate 1 hour.

3. Spread Cool Whip over top and sprinkle with crushed Butterfinger candy bars. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

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— By Virginia Riddle

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When injuries or ordinary wear-and-tear occur, the pain and disability can affect a person's quality of life, work and mental and emotional states. "At Vcare Health Services, our staff believes in living life pain free, so we do everything we can to enable patients' success," Vik Reddy, DNP, NP-C and clinic owner, stated.

The state-of-the-art clinic offers a relaxing, family-focused atmosphere where patients can watch TV, have a cup of

coffee or just hang out. "We offer DR panel digital X-rays, DRX9000 spinal decompression, LipoLite Laser for medical weight loss and therapeutic electrotherapy and physical therapy equipment," Dr. Reddy stated.

The clinic offers many medical specialties under one roof focusing on conservative, non-surgical pain management, family practice, physical therapy and rehabilitation, medical weight loss and diagnostic testing. "We are committed to the highest quality of service to restore our patients' health and well-being by working to correct the cause of their pain non-surgically and with FDA-approved natural medications and therapies," Dr. Reddy explained. Conditions that are treated include neck, back, knee and other joint pains with special focus on conditions like fibromyalgia, headaches and neuropathy.

Apart from Dr. Reddy, this clinical practice has three other attending consultants: James Galbraith, M.D.; Syed Jamal, M.D.; and Patricia Roberts, D.O. The administrative team

of six full-time employees is led by Mary Boggan, CMOM, the clinic's office manager.

The clinic accepts most health insurance plans, Medicaid, Medicare, cash, major credit cards and bank transfers as payment. Care Credit is available for patients who wish to finance their treatments. New patients are being accepted. "We try to get any person who is in pain into the clinic with a same-day appointment, and we offer second opinions and consultations," Dr. Reddy added.

"At Vcare Health Services, our staff believes in living life pain free, so we do everything we can to enable patients' success."

Dr. Reddy has a master's degree in nursing from the University of Miami and received his doctorate in nursing practice from Chamberlain University. He also has a master's degree in public health from Loma Linda University. Dr. Reddy has experience in pain management, emergency medicine and family practice. He left his position at Corsicana's Navarro Regional Hospital to open Vcare Health Services in Ennis and was there for three years before moving his clinic to Waxahachie five years ago. "I developed this concept of pain management doing research for my doctorate degree," Dr. Reddy said. He holds memberships in the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners and the American Academy of Healthcare.

His face lights up when he speaks of times spent with his 1-year-old son. Dr. Reddy also enjoys playing golf and has traveled to many countries. "I'm fascinated with other cultures," he admitted.

The clinic gives back to the community by sponsoring events for the area schools, the Waxahachie Family YMCA and the academic clubs of Waxahachie. "This community is growing, and we're growing. Now we have patients from other areas, too," Dr. Reddy said. "That's the direction we're heading by giving patients back their health and pain-free lives." **NOW**

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Basecamp for Adventure

— By Lisa Branner

Nestled at 9,318 feet above sea level in Colorado's San Juan Mountains, Silverton is a picturesque former mining town steeped in Old West history. Established in 1874 as Baker's Park, the town was named a National Historic Landmark in 1961. Today Silverton has a population of 600, and has become a perfect basecamp for adventurous travelers of all stripes.

The San Juans boast some of the most rugged and beautiful terrain in the lower 48, and are home to 13 of Colorado's "Fourteeners," mountains so called because their peaks rise to over 14,000 feet. The range is dotted with alpine lakes and waterfalls, fields of wildflowers and historic ghost towns that are relics of a bygone era.

Train buffs can enjoy an unforgettable adventure on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, traveling by

coal-fired, steam-powered locomotive on the same tracks that miners, cowboys and settlers took over a century ago. Climbing nearly 3,000 feet, the train winds through spectacular canyons and remote wilderness. Travelers disembark on Notorious Blair Street, whose wooden sidewalks were once lined with saloons, gambling halls and bordellos.

The Million Dollar Highway, built as a toll road in the late 1880s by railroad magnate Otto Mears, is one of the most spectacular drives in the USA. This journey weaves through the mountains, clinging to tight curves and topping out at an elevation of 11,017 feet on Red Mountain Pass before dropping into the town of Ouray. In autumn, the abundance of Aspen trees makes this ideal for leaf peepers.

For the adventurous, a jeep or OHV tour along the Alpine

Loop provides a full day of thrills. This 65-mile, four-wheel-drive byway connects Silverton, Lake City and Ouray, climbing over two 12,000-foot passes. Along the way, stop for a visit to Animas Forks, a well-preserved ghost town. In its heyday, this bustling mining hub had more than 30 structures including hotels, saloons, a post office and a general store. Today fewer than a dozen buildings remain, restored by the San Juan County Historical Society.

Silverton is a mecca for winter recreation, too, with two ski areas and boundless backcountry. Kendall Mountain offers affordable family fun, with 240 feet of vertical drop, four groomed trails and one double chair lift. Ice skating, sledding and snowshoeing are allowed any time. For fat bikes and Nordic skiers, the Town Loop offers 2.5 miles of groomed cross-country trails accessed right from town. For the advanced skier, Silverton Mountain is a challenging big mountain experience with expert-only terrain and heli-skiing. The extensive winter trails on Molas Pass can be explored on your own or with a local snowmobile outfitter like Ice Pirates. Be sure to bring a camera to capture the impressive views.

Summer visitors seeking tranquility will relish Molas Lake Campground, rated "Most Scenic Campground in Colorado" by AAA. Just six miles south of Silverton, atop Molas Pass, the well-maintained campground provides unforgettable scenery, starry skies, a stocked 25-acre lake and hiking access to the Colorado Trail.

For year-round accommodations with historic flair, the Grand Imperial Hotel provides an upscale lodging experience in the heart of downtown Silverton. Built in 1882, recent renovations have returned this 135-year-old landmark to its original grandeur.

For more information or to plan your trip to the heart of Colorado's high country, visit www.silvertoncolorado.com. **NOW**


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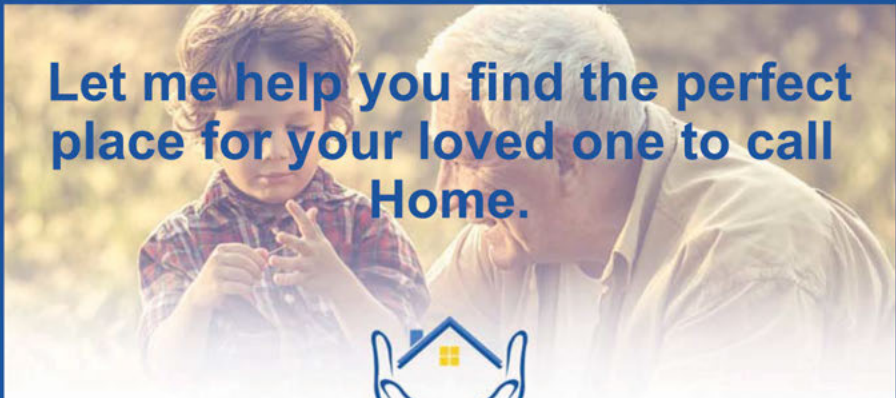
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The Sweetest Valentine

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

There is no bad time to open your heart to a new family member, but some people use Valentine's Day as the perfect reason to bring a four-legged friend into their home. If you have been thinking about adopting a pet, maybe this month is the time to make it happen. Here are some tips for selecting an animal for your family to love.

Choosing an Animal

- *Give it some thought.* There are dog people, and there are cat people. Probably the first thing you should do, if you think your family is ready to adopt a pet, is get an idea of what type animal you want to adopt. You might even decide that a bunny, bird or fish is what your family needs. There are so many animals out there that need a home. If you head into a shelter without any thought, you might be overwhelmed. Before heading out, a little research regarding animals, their personalities and needs may make your decision easier.

- *Be flexible.* Even though you should go in with a plan, do not assume the exact color or breed of dog or cat you want will be there waiting to be adopted. If you are really wanting something specific, call

the local clinics and shelters to see if they have what you are seeking. Because the size and temperament of dogs is so widely varied, if you are leaning toward a canine, there are some things you need to decide. Think about the size each breed is as an adult, how well they will interact with children and how much yard or house space you have to spare.

- *Start sooner rather than later.* If you are really set on a Valentine's Day adoption, you will want to get yourself ready within the first few days of the month. The actual adoption process at a clinic or shelter is relatively simple, but if there is any specificity in what you are looking to adopt, you should give yourself a few days to find the pet that is just what your family wants.

Choose an Organization

- *There are many options.* Probably the most well-known pet adoption agency is the SPCA. But in any given area, there are typically dozens of adoption locations. If you are specifically looking for a canine or feline, veterinary clinics and city pounds will sometimes have pets that face a short future if they are not adopted. Different agencies will have varying services, fees and requirements, so your willingness to welcome a pet with an unknown health history may be a major factor in where you adopt.

• *There are online options.* In the last decade or so, many Internet pet-finder services have begun helping people find the pet that fits their family. If you have specific needs, or if you are looking for a less common breed or type of pet, using an online search engine may be your best bet. If you do find an animal this way, though, be sure to contact the pet's current home before leaving. Some sites are third parties, so there could be a lag from animals being adopted to websites being updated.

Get Ready

• *Make living arrangements.* If you are bringing a dog or cat into your home, you will need to have a place for them. With the relative cold this time of year, plan on having them inside the house, even if that means they are sleeping in a laundry room or other extra space. Have a litter box for your cat or a piddle pad if you have chosen a puppy. While you do not need to safeguard your house the same way you would when bringing a baby into the home, you do want to put up anything a new pet could either hurt themselves with or anything that you do not want damaged. And if your pet is a more contained animal like a fish or reptile, be sure you have a safe spot for the bowl or terrarium that a young child would not easily knock over or break.

• *Buy supplies.* You should wait until you are sure of the exact breed of pet you are getting before buying food, in case the Chihuahua you think you want turns into a Golden Retriever that needs a heartier diet. Buying more neutral items — like a water bowl or chew toy — might help the rest of your family and any existing pets transition more easily.

• *Prep the paperwork.* For the most part, all you will need to complete the adoption will be a nominal fee and your ID. Before you head to the shelter, make sure there is nothing else required. While you are getting any pre-adoption paperwork in order, make sure you have identified a local veterinarian so that you have a plan for the first time your pet needs to go in.

Use Valentine's Day to make your pet adoption a big event. Bring your pet home to heart-shaped tags, or wrap your crate, kennel or carrier with a red bow. Whatever pet you are considering, February 14 is a special time to add to your family through adoption. **NOW**

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Zoomed In: Longbranch Second-graders

By Jill Martinez

Second-graders at Longbranch Elementary supported the Animeals program by delivering over 800 pounds of cat and dog food to Ovilla Animal Hospital as a means of giving back to their community this year. "During Genius Hour, we presented students with various options, and they chose this one," Assistant Principal Cari Nix said.

The second-graders spearheaded the collection of donations by Longbranch Elementary families as a whole. "This will support our clients' pets for a few months," said Lisa Deese, Director of Public Relations for the Meals on Wheels program for Johnson and Ellis counties. For several years now, the Ovilla Animal Hospital has been a driving force for the Animeals program. This year, they collected over 3,000 pounds of animal food.



Callie Green and Misty MacDonald from the city of Ferris take a moment to smile for the camera.



Oscar Morales and Alejandra Guzman at Carpet Outlets of Texas in Red Oak are excited to show their customers the new flooring and tile looks for homes and businesses.



The Red Oak Chamber of Commerce welcomes Amaya's Grill.



Pat Lacey is chopping up some good barbecue at A.D. Franks Holy Smoke Bar-B-Que in Ovilla.



Jason Crenshaw celebrates the opening of his Edward Jones business in Ferris.



Mark Cole and his children, MJ and Kennlee, along with Pastor Ron Adams and Ashley Byrd of Nazarene Child Care in Glenn Heights, are all smiles after a fun day.



Traci Hamm gets ready to do Stephanie Pooles' hair at Country Corner Treasures.



Orilla Police Chief Windham presents London Upchurch with a gift card for having her artwork selected to be on the department's Christmas card.

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Calendar

2

Ovilla Road Baptist Church Daddy Daughter Dance: 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the Worship Center. For all ages. Adults \$10, children \$8. Lots of dancing and an Italian dinner will be served. Register online at www.orbc.org/kids.

3, 10

ROBSA Sign Ups: Red Oak Brookshires, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Face-to-face signups can be done at the sign-up table in the parking lot, or sign up online **Feb. 1-10**. Log onto www.redoakbsa.com for more information.

10

Ennis Czech Music Festival: Sokol Activity Center, 2622 E. Hwy. 34. For more information, visit www.ennisczechmusicfestival.com.

12

Love Your Library Proclamation: 7:00 p.m., Council Chambers, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. The Red Oak Library will have the Love Your Library Proclamation read. All patrons are welcome to come to support and show their love for the Library.



16

Handbags for Hawks: 7:00 p.m., Red Oak Municipal Center. For adults 21 years and older only. Purchase

individual tickets for \$35 or a table for 8 for \$300. Enjoy desserts, drinks and bingo. Play for a chance to win a designer handbag. Proceeds support the Red Oak ISD Education Foundation. For questions or to purchase tickets, call (972) 617-4320.

17

Ferris Police Department's Coffee with a Cop: 8:00-10:00 a.m., I45 Donuts, 502 E. 8th St., Ferris. Spend time visiting with your local police officers. Get to know them and express your concerns. For more information, call (972) 544-2233.

24

The Uptown Singers - Best of Broadway: 7:00 p.m., SAGU Hagee Center, Waxahachie. Sing along to some of Broadway's most recognizable favorites from *Beauty and the Beast*, *My Fair Lady*, *Les Miserables*, *West Side Story*, *Wicked* and more. Visit www.waxahachiesymphony.org to purchase tickets.

Ongoing:

Second Mondays

Ellis County Veterans Networking Group meeting: 6:00 p.m., Ryan's Steak House Waxahachie. Join the group for dinner and listen to the guest speaker. To RSVP or for more information, call (214) 763-0378 or email vetsnetgrp@att.net.

Tuesdays

Writing for Enjoyment Group meeting: 12:30-1:30 p.m., First United Methodist Church of Red Oak, 600 Daubitz Dr. For more information, call (469) 383-5365 or email joanpomero@att.net.

Second Tuesdays

342 Network Group: 7:30 a.m.,

Denny's, I-35E Service Rd., Red Oak. The group includes business owners who would like to network and is open to all businesses in any county. RSVP to Melton McKown at (214) 244-2829.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

North Ellis Co. Outreach assistance: 9:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m., 205 S. Main St., Ferris. Assistance is for Red Oak and Ferris residents. For more information, call Denise Butler at (972) 617-7261.

Story Time: 11:00 a.m., Ferris Public Library. Pre-school children and their caregivers are invited for stories. For more information, call (972) 544-3699.

Wednesdays

Toddler Story Time: 10:00-11:00 a.m., Free Crafts, story time and learning games for children 18 months-5 years and their parents. Call the library at (469) 218-1230 for more information on all library events.



Third Wednesdays

The Ellis County Christian Women's Connection meeting: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club. Cost is \$13. For more information, contact Barb at (214) 463-5064 or email barb.jacobs19@yahoo.com. Reservations are due Sunday before the meeting.

Wednesdays and Thursdays
The Red Oak Senior Citizens Group:
8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak
Rd., Red Oak. Join for games and
activities. Light breakfast provided
both days. Lunch provided on
Thursdays. \$2 per week membership
fee. Call (214) 864-9014 for more
information.

Thursdays
SYNERGY: 11:30 a.m., Sparacello's
Deli, 600 Methodist St., Suite
3120, Red Oak. This is a Red Oak
Chamber of Commerce networking
opportunity.

Third Thursdays
Ferris Lions Club meeting: 6:30 p.m.,
First United Methodist Church,
101 Redbud Rd., Ferris.

Second Saturdays
Texas Civil Defense monthly drill: 9:00

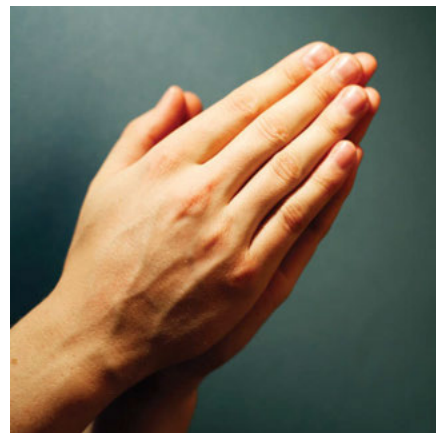
a.m.-1:00 p.m., 101 Live Oak St., Red
Oak. For more information, call LTC
Tim O'Connor at (214) 868-0082.

Red Oak Opry: 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.,
Lone Star Cowboy Church, 1011 E.
Ovilla Rd., Red Oak. Tickets sold
at the door. \$12 for adults; \$5 for
children.

Third Saturdays
Ferris Trades Day: 8:00 a.m.-4:00
p.m., 101 S. Main St., Ferris. For
more information, call Tina Miller at
(817) 992-9204.

Third Sundays
Matthew 7:7 Riders Motorcycle
Ministry: For the next meeting and
ride, visit [www.facebook.com/
Matthew77RidersMotorcycleMinistry](http://www.facebook.com/Matthew77RidersMotorcycleMinistry) or
contact Mark Rose at (972) 748-4076.

Fourth Sundays
Prayer Shawl Circle: 10:00 a.m.-noon,
First United Methodist Church of
Red Oak, 600 Daubitz Dr. Circle of
Hope and Healing ministry. For more
information, call Beth Norris at
(214) 392-0732.



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Nurturing Nutrients

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

“Eat your vegetables!” Is there a mother on this earth who hasn’t directed her reluctant child to do this? The reason for this universal plea is obvious. Vegetables are full of healthy nutrients our bodies need. Nutrients strengthen and support by providing necessary essentials for muscles and bones. Nutrients feed our cells, provide energy and help regulate bodily functions, such as digestion. They also repair and replace tissues to allow our bodies to be a powerful self-regenerating organism.

Nutrients are everything in nutrition. They come from myriad food sources regarded as proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. The more variety in your food selection, the more different types of nutrients you can ingest to benefit your body. Because of this, it pays to understand and manage your nutrition to its optimum level by eating healthy. Today, nutrition labels can give you valuable information about a food product’s contents. Checking with your health care provider is always a good idea before making a significant change in your diet. They may have some suggestions about your daily intake

of sodium and sugar. Here is a hint — most of us eat too much of both every day!

A healthy eating plan with enough nutrients for you to function at your optimum level is relatively easy to make. With fruits and vegetables, look for the brightest and deepest color. Those foods contain the greatest concentration of essential nutrients, such as vitamins A, C, E and K, with minerals like calcium, magnesium and zinc to name a few. Make an effort to eat a greater variety of fruits and vegetables. Aim for at least five portions a day. Look for different sources of protein other than red meats. Beans, seeds, nuts, tofu and fish are good examples. Protein provides structure for muscle growth and helps to maintain our tissues and cells.

Remarks about healthy nutrition would be remiss without cautioning against eating too much unhealthy fat. Some fat in your diet is actually healthy and required. Monounsaturated fats found in olive oil, nuts and avocados are good for you. Saturated fats in red meats and Trans fats in fried and snack foods may taste good, but they increase your cholesterol and your risk of cardiovascular disease. Eating foods that are good for you is the only way to ingest proper nutrients for your health, and that is good enough reason to eat your vegetables! **NOW**

This article is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult with your physician if you have questions regarding this topic.



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