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EnnisNOW

M A G A Z I N E

March 2010

**Bulls
Eye**

**Art Is
Everywhere**

**Luck of
The Draw**

**At Home With
Rocky and
Judy Steele**





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On The Cover

One of six collectible planters at the home of Rocky and Judy Steele.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

Editor's Note

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Last month, I hit the ground running and I have not had a chance to slow down yet. I have always felt that *EnnisNOW* is a magazine focused on a close-knit community. Its pages are filled with heartwarming stories of our friends and neighbors, and I cannot thank each of you enough for the story leads you have shared with me over the past few weeks. Please keep them coming.

I welcome the month of March for the seasonal changes it will soon provide. The flowers in bloom, the grass that will soon need mowing and the longer days, thanks to Daylight Saving Time on March 14. So, do not forget to "spring forward." I would not want you to miss a single minute of the blessings that lie ahead!

Sandra Strong
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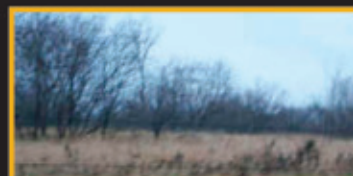
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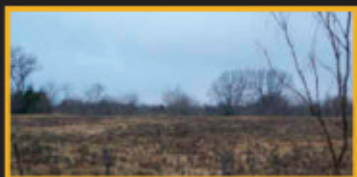
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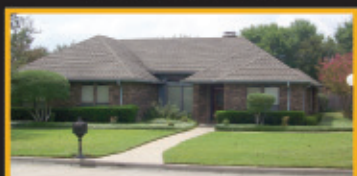
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Bull's Eye

— By Alex Allred

As a man known for his straight shooting abilities, Erik Lusk has hit the mark for the people of Ennis. Logging untold hours and working behind the scenes, Erik has created a charity extravaganza, which has generated interest and support across the United States. However, he was not always so focused. Before his philanthropic ways, “I had no direction.

“I was born and raised in Ennis,” Erik said, “until junior high.” When his parents divorced, Erik chose to live with his father. It was never, he conceded, that he loved one parent more than the other. “It was just something I thought I should do.” While his sister remained behind with his mother, Erik and his father traveled throughout Texas for various jobs while his father worked as a restaurant manager. “But I always considered Ennis to be my home.”

He was a happy child who did well in school, but as he grew, he lost interest in academics. Divorce, his father’s alcoholism, constant moves and Erik’s own guilt about his mother and sister left him restless. At the time, he felt he had too few options in life, so he decided to follow in the footsteps of all the men in his



family and joined the Army in 1993.

For Erik, it was the best of times and it was the worst of times. He traveled throughout Europe, visiting wineries, soaking up the history and lifestyle of small taverns in Germany, France, Italy and England. “I was lucky,” he said. “I never deployed. There were no conflicts, no great humanitarian efforts.” But for a young man in need of direction and discipline, life was simply too much fun overseas. When he was to return stateside, a time he hoped would help him refocus on higher education and priorities, disaster struck. Hurricane Mitch struck El Salvador “and our company was required to go over for a humanitarian effort to help clean up and rebuild.” Then came the second call. Erik’s father was diagnosed with cancer and given no more than six months to live.

Unresolved family issues swelled, and Erik suddenly found himself at a crossroads between what he wanted and needed in both his personal and professional life. “I was lost,” he said, recalling how he made it back to Ennis just two days before his father’s funeral, but never got the closure he hoped for and briefly, “I didn’t care about anything.”

As difficult as his final days were in the military, he unwittingly brought something back with him from his stint in Germany. “Darts,” Erik smiled. So while he struggled to find work, “the



Francis Nwafor,
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Nathaniel Kho
M.D., FAAP
Neurologist

Dr. Kho is Board Certified in Neurology with Special Qualifications in Child Neurology. He completed his Neurology training at Barrow Neurological Institute in Phoenix, Arizona. He earned his Fellowship in Neuromuscular Disease at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, Texas. His practice offers Ennis and the surrounding communities his expertise in the field of General Neurology. Furthermore, he also brings to our community a subspecialty in Comprehensive Balance and Dizziness Evaluation and Management including Vestibular and Balance Rehabilitation Therapy.



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first thing I wanted to do was play darts!" In Germany, he had innocently picked up a set of darts and soundly beat a local champion in five straight games. "And I instantly fell in love with the game."

As a result, Erik began working as a surveyor through a fellow dart player he met in town. By 2007, he had formed a dart league, "which I personally think is the best dart league in Texas," Erik added. After time, however, Eric wanted something bigger.

"It's my canvas, so to speak." Before he knew it, the simple idea of giving blossomed into a grand event in which the charity of Helping Hands would benefit. As Erik poured over spreadsheets, made endless phone calls and organized times, dates and people, "I felt a great release."



Amy O'Brien, Erik Lusk and Brandi Shore are excited about the charity extravaganza.

The sport of darts, in which he has been called, "a natural," had become his vehicle to give back to the community.

It began with darts. "We had a charity bull shoot," he explained. "For every bull we hit, we would raise money through an individual sponsor. For example, someone could pledge a dime or dollar for every bull's eye. This was great," Erik said, "but I wanted this to be really big. Not everyone plays darts, and I thought maybe others would want to raise their own money."

Erik branched out to include bowling, horseshoes, washers and a cook-off. Recognizing how passionately his neighbors feel about their own hobbies, Erik chuckled, "I know there aren't many people who feel about darts the way I do."

In 2009, the aptly named Charity Extravaganza had more than 60 active participants with hundreds of supporters in tow. Pledges came from both businesses and citizens, locally and from

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across the nation. Winners of each event were given the added bonus of naming the charity of their choice as a beneficiary. Helping Hands and the American Diabetes Association were two "winners" in the Extravaganza.

With the help of fellow participants, Amy O'Brien, Brandi Shore and Mark Wilson, Erik predicts even greater success this year. With such sponsors as Brighter Side Publishing, 99.5 The Wolf, Lone Star Darts, All Star Bowl, Custom Ink, American Legion 361 and Sports Authority, "everyone wins," Erik said. "Our Bull Shoot goal this year is to hit 6,000 bulls, and raise \$10,000, and the bowling goal is to score 7,000 points and raise \$8,000."

Though the darts and bowling events were held in February, what Erik calls "the main event," is March 6. "The Meet and Greet Charity Cook-off is something I'm very excited about," Erik said, urging citizens to come out to cheer on their favorite cook. The horseshoe

**"This is my community,
and I want to be a part of
it until the day I die."**

event is March 6, and the washer event is March 7, and Erik hopes this is just the beginning of greater things to come. Even as he urges people to submit more ideas for more extravaganza events, "it means more for more charities!"

In 2011, Erik intends to include wiffle ball and putt-putt golf. "This is my community, and I want to be a part of it until the day I die," he said.

Erik once remarked that he believed he failed to live to his full potential while serving in the military. The irony is that he felt as though he never reached his full potential because he spent too much time playing darts in taverns and taking in the sights. Yet, it is that same sport and his intense love of people that helps so many today. "Be All You Can Be," the mantra of the U.S. Army, beats loudly in the heart of Erik Lusk, and he has indeed hit the bull's eye. **ENOW**

Editor's note: For more information about this event, log on to www.ellis-sportscentral.net/Charity2010.html. All events are held at the American Legion Post 361 in Ennis.

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A Classic Blend

At Home With Rocky and Judy Steele

— By Janice C. Johnson

The Steele family home, built in 1920, has seen many memories made over numerous holiday gatherings. The Steele's children and grandchildren always look forward to visiting there, and two of the daughters have asked their parents to never sell the house to anyone outside the family. This attachment to a family home is nothing unusual, until you realize that Rocky and Judy Steele bought the house only 10 years ago.

Judy, the eldest of a Michigan farm family's eight children, had moved to Ennis with her husband and three daughters in 1980. Rocky had grown up in





Abbott, Hill County, Texas. Both were “single again” when they met in Ennis’ American Legion Hall: the band Rocky managed was playing for a dance there, which Judy attended. When the “tall, good-looking Southern gentleman” asked her to dance, she accepted. They hit it off, married in 1994 and spent the next six years looking for just the right place to call home. They wanted an inviting house where the step-siblings could all visit and feel like part of one family.



“We looked at some new houses, but they were too commercial-feeling,” Rocky said.

Then in 2000, a casual acquaintance mentioned he wanted to sell his house. The Steeles asked to see it. They arrived to find overgrown trees and landscaping that almost hid the house. But they were barely inside the front door when both knew they had found their home. “We just loved the floor plan, and especially the front porch,” Judy said. Originally a two-story house, its upstairs had been damaged by fire in the 1940s. Rather than rebuilding the second floor, the owner simply had it removed and a new roof built over the old first floor, resulting in a three-bedroom, two-bath house.

When the Steeles bought the 80-year-old home, its previous owner had done much of the structural work it had needed. Rocky and Judy set about improving its appearance. First they thinned out trees and cut back overgrown

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shrubs. Turning to the building itself, they found many of its charming original features intact, such as the windows, interior woodwork and four working fireplaces. They wanted to make the home more comfortable and convenient without losing its old-fashioned character. Since their daughters — Judy's three and Rocky's four — had all left home by this time, they have been able to remodel at leisure, project by small project. They simply use whichever rooms they are not working on at any given time. "It's definitely a work in progress," Judy said. "We pay as we go," Rocky added. Judy's daughters, who still live in Ennis, have often stepped in to help with wallpapering and other chores.

From fixtures and appliances to paint and furniture, the Steeles have selected items which maintain the home's classic architecture. They have

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transformed the area behind the ample kitchen into a cozy, double office and a laundry/utility room. Despite new appliances, the kitchen's matte green walls, white cabinetry and retro-style sink and faucet preserve its vintage look. "The kitchen is one room you can modernize without decreasing its value," Rocky said. Victorian style graces the dining room and carries into a compact bathroom whimsically decorated with a small chandelier — "the cute bathroom," according to one daughter. More masculine touches include the leather-furnished den and the master bedroom's blue-and-white quilt and drapes.

When it came to furnishing the house, the expertise came from Rocky, whose family had worked in the furniture industry for many years. "I've done everything with furniture," he said. "Designing it, building it,

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upholstering it — and sitting on it.” Building on his experience creating award-winning conversion interiors, he blended period pieces from antique stores, friends and relatives, with new fabrics. The look is so harmonious that every item appears to be part of the home’s original furnishings, but Judy said, “Everything comes from somewhere else.”

Meanwhile, the extended family was growing, adding sons-in-law and grandchildren. Rocky and Judy began inviting everyone to their home for Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Wanting to give their grandchildren a sense of having roots, they blended some holiday traditions from both families, and persisted in following those for each gathering. They can tell their efforts have paid off. As Judy said, “Now if we try to deviate, even a little, they come after us!” Lady, the couple’s German Shepherd-Husky mix, does her part to make each grandchild feel safe and welcome. Affectionate with family, but aggressive toward intruders, she reigns as both hostess and bouncer.

The couple also instills a sense of belonging by displaying old family photographs and memorabilia, and telling the stories to the young ones. Rocky tells them about his great-great grandfather, Alfonso Steele, who appears in an old photo hanging in the living room. Alfonso was the first Steele in Texas and the last living veteran of the Battle of San Jacinto. As the grandchildren find him in their Texas history books, each in turn has called up “Papa” to ask for more details about their great-great-great grandfather.

Attractive as it is, are there some challenges to living in a 90-year-old house. Judy, unconcerned, said, “Oh, it can be cold and drafty, but that just reminds me of the old farmhouse in Michigan. In a way, adding an extra blanket or putting on a sweater is like comfort food.”

The Steeles, with their rural backgrounds, enjoy living in Ennis. Rocky said, “Even though it’s a small town, it has the conveniences we need.” He also likes the people. “They have the education and style of city people, but they’re nice, down-home folks.” Judy, after years of working in Dallas as a legal secretary, now represents Mary Kay and works part-time with Harriett Adams. She relishes the more relaxed pace.

At last count, Rocky and Judy had seven daughters, six sons-in-law, 21 grandchildren, one great-grandchild, and another on the way. Their grandchildren, ranging in age from 4 to 21, include several talented athletes and musicians. The Steeles are proud of every one of them. The children and grandchildren love gathering at the old house, accepting each other like blood relatives. “The character of this house helped do it,” Rocky said. Judy added, “There’s nothing new here to worry about ruining. They can just be comfortable.”

In 2006, all their daughters got their children together to sit for a photo, then surprised Rocky and Judy with a large framed copy. The priceless photo, now hanging in the hallway, includes every grandchild they had at the time. Rocky may credit his classic house, but surely his and Judy’s loving example set the tone for blending their families so well. **ENNIS**

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Linette Jackson and Nedra Madkin, both with SOS Fashions, take time out of their busy day to smile for the camera.



Before their performance at the CGA nationals, Pinkies Cheer Squad from Pink Athletic Gym stops for a pose.



Carson Baker enjoys the merry-go-round at the park.



Nick McIntosh celebrates his 24th birthday with a special cake decorated with 24 pretty girls.



Cora Whitlock strikes a pose as those behind her laugh at her silliness.




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Pat Theisen and Jesse Lee from Sterling House pose with *Ennis Now* Advertising Representative Linda Roberson at the Chamber Ambassador's Business After Hours.



Kingston Bishop watches his first Super Bowl with his big brother, Jax, even though it lacked their favorite team.



Greyson, Trista, Brody and Jarod Hunter take a picture atop a bull at the world famous Ft. Worth Stock Show and Rodeo.



Karen Buckley and Brenda Haupt pose at the Century 21 Business After Hours.



Sheri Payne's 4-year-old pre-kindergarten class at First United Methodist Church gets a surprise treat during their Valentine party — snow fall!



Patrick Collier and Bob Patel of Holiday Inn Express host the Chamber Ambassador's Business Before Hours Breakfast.



Art Is Everywhere

— By Adam Walker

Daniel Smith is an art teacher — with a volunteer docent at the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) for a father and a teacher for a mother, what could be more natural? Daniel grew up surrounded by art and teachers. “Dad’s hobby is art history,” Daniel said, “and I went to the DMA at least once a week with Dad. Mom’s side of the family is all teachers.” So Daniel went to Texas A&M-Commerce, where he studied art history, photography, book making; anything else art-related that interested him. Then he went on to Stephen F. Austin State University, where he completed his master’s work in ceramics.

Eventually he took a job teaching art in the Dallas ISD and got his certification as a teacher. After five years in Dallas, he came to Ennis to rebuild the art program at the junior high school. “I have six classes with 20-30 students per class, so there are about 165 students,” Daniel teaches these students basic drawing, painting and sculpture. Daniel hopes many of these students will fall in love with art the way he has and want to continue after Art I with more advanced and specialized art classes, which he is hoping to add to the curriculum. He would like to add ceramics, since the

junior high already has a kiln; a class teaching Adobe Illustrator for graphic design projects; and art appreciation.

Daniel is disappointed many school districts are cutting art programs, but is glad Ennis is trying to build its program. “Kids who have art classes do better in school. They have better problem-solving skills. They learn to think outside the box and understand there is more than one way to solve a problem,” he explained. “Art is important for young children. It helps them recognize their numbers and letters because they learn to recognize patterns.”

Daniel is also quick to point out basic art instruction does not require expensive equipment. “With just a pencil and some paper, basic stuff, you can learn to draw,” he said. “I can teach anyone how to draw.” His classes begin with drawing birds then progress to lions and horses, slowly the students learn to draw more complex shapes.

He incorporates things his students are learning in other classes. One project on birds of the rain forest incorporated science in the art curriculum. When they did tessellation projects inspired by the work of M.C. Escher, math came into the art room. They practiced Op Art



(Optional Art) and learned about the 1960s. When the Spanish classes were learning about *Día de los Muertos*, Day of the Dead, they drew *calaveras*, baroque decorated skulls. On Veteran’s Day, his students produced posters of Rosie the Riveter and Uncle Sam to decorate the school. Daniel hopes the community will come out to the junior high for the Spring Showcase, when each of his students will have work on display,

“With just a pencil and some paper, basic stuff, you can learn to draw.”

along with displays from other elective programs.

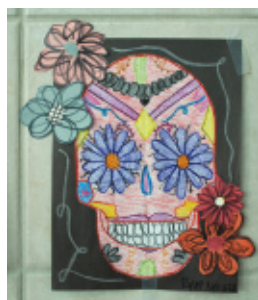
So what makes Daniel so passionate about art? “It’s just been a big part of my life forever,” he said. “It’s kind of how I process. I’m a visual learner. I focus on how things look.” Daniel believes art is “another way to communicate an idea or feeling. If you stop drawing after second grade, you lose a tool for

communicating.”

Daniel believes art is important to society. “Before we had written language, we were drawing pictures. Cave paintings and bone carvings were ways to communicate. Art is everywhere — on clothes, in advertising, on TV, car designs, pencils, cereal boxes. Everything designed by someone is a kind of art.”

Daniel admits there are very few professional gallery artists, but he sees far more possibilities for careers in art. “There are museum curators, designers, animators, graphic illustrators, art teachers, craft fairs, potters, ceramicists. I have a friend who is supporting a family of three on his ceramic pots.”

Daniel still dreams of having his art in museums, but he admits it is hard for him to part with his works. However, one kind of art he willingly parts with



is art trading cards (ATCs), which are baseball card-sized works, intended to be given away and traded with other artists. The intent is to

make a themed series of 10 cards and then give nine of them away. Daniel has done series of cards featuring sea shells, “yearbook pictures gone wrong” and cartoon characters. He is currently planning a series featuring robots and ray guns.

Another cooperative art project Daniel finds interesting is the 1,000 Journals Project started by a gentleman in San Francisco, who began leaving journals in random places around the city for people to draw, paint, write or paste photos in and then pass on to others to do the same, becoming a community art project spanning the globe. Daniel finds it so interesting he is considering starting his own version of the project here to get people more involved with art. Imagine walking into your favorite coffee shop and finding a seemingly abandoned journal, which invites you to add your artwork and pass the book along. If Daniel has his way, you just might be doing that soon. **NOW**

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Luck of the Draw

— By Alex Allred

It plays out like a great sports movie. A former-athlete-turned-coach dedicates himself to a team of baseball players and in the final games before his retirement, high drama and action unfolds, leaving fans on the edge of their seats. Throughout his coaching career, Brian Prachyl dedicated himself to teaching the finer nuances of the sport. But he also taught about dedication, work ethic, digging deep and remaining focused in the face of adversity.

The setting is the Texas state championships for Little League baseball in July 2009. “It was the farthest that Ennis has ever gone,” Brian said. In fact, the year prior, one team did make it to the quarterfinals. “But we made it to the state championship! We had the best team in the state,” Brian said. “By far, we had the best team.”

But as luck would have it, teams were selected to play each other not based on previous winning records, but a simple drawing to see which team would be placed in what bracket in the tournament seating. “It’s a blind draw,” Brian explained, where four teams were automatically given a bye. Unfortunately, the Ennis Fire Fighters — the boys’ 13-to-15 Little League team — didn’t receive a bye. “It was just the luck of the draw,” Brian conceded.

But more bad luck awaited the Fire Fighters. In addition to not drawing a bye, two chief players were sick and then the rain came. “And it never rains in Brownwood,” Brian almost laughed. But

for four days the rain never let up. “We were supposed to play a double header on Friday but the fields were washed out.”

After midnight, Brian received a phone call from the game officials. His team would have to be up by 6:00 a.m. and drive more than 100 miles before playing their first game. “They found a field north of Abilene, had the field crew and ump’s ready to go, but now it was going to be a triple header on Saturday!”

“After the first game, we were scrambling to find 13 rooms, check in and barely had time to eat before making a 20-minute drive back to the fields. We never even showered,” Brian recalled.



Arriving just 10 minutes before game time, the Ennis Fire Fighters beat an undefeated team in 100-degree weather only to play yet another game. “That was when we hit the proverbial wall.

“It was just too much to ask 14-and 15-year-olds to be on the run since 6:00 a.m. until after midnight,” he said. Still, it was the Ennis Fire Fighters who hit seven of the eight homeruns in the entire championship tournament, complete with a grand slam. Despite tremendous effort, however, Ennis did not take the championship, “but it was still some of



the best baseball I ever saw," Brian said.

This is quite a statement coming from a man who has dedicated himself to the sport of baseball. As a teenager, Brian had always played ball, but because he attended a private school, he had gone relatively unnoticed by college recruiting scouts. Select team coaches Randy Lewis and Gerald Nichols were instrumental in getting Brian noticed. They introduced him to the coaches at East Texas Baptist University, telling them, "You need to see this kid."

The "leftie" pitcher played for two years before transferring to The University of Texas at Arlington. There he earned his degree in business finance and began working when he picked up his first gig as a coach. "It was 1993 when I started," Brian laughed, "and I got really spoiled. I had a friend whose kid was playing for the YMCA there [in Arlington] and they needed coaches. He knew I played college ball and asked if I would coach." In return, the friend promised to take care of every detail, from securing and tending fields to doling out uniforms. "Well, that was the life right there!"

Eventually, Brian would return to his hometown of Ennis and began helping another friend, "work with pitchers." But when his own boys, Bronson and Boston, began playing baseball, Brian was back to coaching full time. As the boys moved up the ranks, Coach Brian moved with the boys, keeping most of his players each season.

After all the years Brian had dedicated to all the boys, the conclusion of the state championship was bittersweet. The loss was frustrating because of how the games were scheduled. Brian remains convinced his team would have won under any other circumstance. But he could not be more proud of his team's heart. "That was their last year in Little League," Brian said. "Even to the very end, they never gave up."

Just like any great sports story, it is not about the players' final score, but how they played the game. While their coach instilled the values of determination and heart, it is clear that the Ennis Fire Fighters scored big time with Coach Brian. Truly, it was the luck of the draw! **NOW**



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When balance is restored to the body, mind and soul, you gain quality of life at any age.

— *By Sandra Strong*

Massage Therapy can be a large part of healthy living and the benefits of massage can also add quality of life to those who live in daily pain. Just ask Jessica Sutton, the proprietor of Oasis Massage Therapy. “Massage is not a luxury item; it’s not an extravagant expenditure, as some may think,” she said. “Massage Therapy is a way to reduce stress, back tension, knots, soreness of the body, and it’s also a wonderful way to relax your mind to a state of peace and serenity.”

As a therapeutic Licensed Massage Therapist, who received her certification from Hands on Therapy in Mesquite, Texas, Jessica is passionate about educating people on the benefits of

massage. She would also like to put an end to the fallacy that massage is just “something for the rich and famous.”

“It’s a healthy living tool,” she said. “Massage has been stereotyped. As I build new clientele, the first thing I do is reverse their way of thinking. Each session is designed exclusively for each client and their individual needs.”

Ailments, such as back problems; sitting at a computer all day; high-stress jobs like teaching and firefighting; and daily pain from arthritis are prime examples of the importance of Massage Therapy. Some clients are in need of something to simply help them relax, while others need something a bit more



From left:

Jessica Sutton, LMT; gives a Swedish massage to a client.

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therapeutic. "You can't generalize your clientele or their needs," she added.

Although massage has been around for many years, Jessica feels it is still in its infancy. "Texas is finally catching up to the rest of the world when it comes to focusing on healthy living and the vital role Massage Therapy can have on a healthy life," she explained. "It's come a long way, but it still has a long way to go." Since deciding to go into the business of massage, Jessica's main goal is to educate people about the healthcare benefits Massage Therapy offers. "It's no longer a luxury item," she said. "I can't stress its health benefits enough."

Continued education is a must for Jessica in order for her to remain current in the overall benefits of massage. She takes great pride in stating that all her continued education has been "hands-on."

"While some may choose to read a book or watch a video," she said, "I take a great deal of time picking my continued education classes. I ask myself how it will benefit my clients. Will it enhance my skills as a therapist?" Massage school is not a course offered online. Jessica, very passionate about her chosen profession, had to use her hands to learn the trade she has mastered over the years, so using her hands to further her education is very important to her.

Many massage and relaxation options are offered at Oasis Massage Therapy. They include: chair massages, 30-minute and one-hour Swedish massages, 30-minute and one-hour Deep Tissue massage, Pregnancy massage, Hot Stone massage, Aromatherapy, Foot Sauna, Planter Fasciitis foot sauna, Cleansing Facial, Paraffin Treatments and Ear Candling, as well as several spa packages guaranteed to relax and pamper. Discounts are available for senior citizens, teachers, police officers and firefighters.

Massage Therapy is for everyday people who are living with everyday pains. "Massage Therapy allows the body to rest and gives it a 'cleansing breath,' so to speak," Jessica stated. "When balance is restored to the body, mind and soul, you gain quality of life at any age. Oasis Massage Therapy makes the overall health of the body the focus of each massage session." **NOW**

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Ryan McCabe is a principal who is very proud of his teachers, his staff and his students. He came to William B. Travis Elementary last year following four years as assistant principal at the junior high in Ennis and 10 years at Teague's high school, where he taught special education classes, coached football, baseball, track, basketball and powerlifting in addition to serving as assistant principal for two years. Ryan does not like to talk about himself, but when asked why he became a principal, he replied, "The principal at Teague was a big influence; he kept pushing me to get my principalship. I was just interested in coaching, but when Stephen F. Austin [State University] offered a program for the Teague ISD teachers, I decided to enroll. I'm really glad I did. I love being able to influence more than just one class or team. Now I get to influence every kid in this school."

Ryan is proud of his school. "All our teachers have SMART™ Boards," he stated. "We have two full computer labs, a full motor lab for special needs students [which is] equipped to deal with all five senses and cognition. We have a music department with a choir and a P.E. department. We have special teachers for dyslexia, reading recovery, speech and learning disabilities. And we have a counselor." When asked why he chose to be principal at Travis, he replied, "Well, I didn't want to leave Ennis. You can't go wrong here. Travis was probably the school I knew the least about before I came here, and I was ready for a change. Besides getting my master's degree, this is probably the best career move I ever made."

So what makes it so good at Travis? "The best thing at this level is to see the excitement the kids have when it comes to learning. They are eager to learn. At this age, they love school. I make it a point to see every kid every day. I get to affect 310 kids and 50 employees, and through the kids, I get to touch their parents. That's a lot of people that I have a chance to reach every day. That's the neat thing about this job."

Being principal takes a lot of energy. Ryan is often at school before 7:00 in the morning, and 5:00 in the afternoon frequently finds him still in his office,

Proudly Leading from the Back

— By Adam Walker



Education **NOW**


in order to accommodate parents' schedules. One way he stays energized is by watching the teachers bounce around their classrooms. Another is the students. "I get lots of hugs and high fives every morning and on walk-throughs," he admitted. "The students keep me motivated and excited, even on the days when I think I feel bad — it's like they suck sickness out of you and make you feel better."

Ryan stays upbeat. "Ninety-five percent of the time, this is a very positive job with lots of excitement." He went on to say, "I should have made this move 10 years ago!" He considers his job very rewarding. "People don't see the letters I get from students saying 'thank you.' Last week, I had a kid who came up to me wanting to help the kids in Haiti, so I started calling around and found out that the Methodist church was putting together packages for Haiti that only cost \$4 each. We started collecting. The kids motivate us with great ideas for helping folks."

Another example of the community spirit Ryan fosters at Travis Elementary is the Christmas toy drive. "We didn't offer the students any rewards for participating in the program, but they responded with four or five motorcycle trailers full of toys for Ellis County children. My office was packed with toys. Next year, I want to see if we can fill it all the way."



Ryan loves the support he gets. "The community is great to Ennis ISD. One big thing I have here is a great staff, great parents, a great administration above us and a great community," he said with pride in his voice. "With all that, things can't help but go well." He went on to say, "I like my actions to tell the story, but I like to give compliments and brag on my staff. If I didn't have the high-quality teachers and staff that I have, this job would be a lot harder. I like to lead from the back."

With the rewards his job offers and the team he has, it is easy to see why he expressed his pleasure in his work by saying, "It's exciting to get up and go to work every morning. I don't know that I have gone home a day this year that I wasn't proud to walk through my front door." **NOW**




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In The Kitchen With Holli Hubacek

— By Faith Browning

As long as Holli Hubacek can remember, she has loved to spend time in a kitchen. When it comes to cooking, she credits her good friend, Debbie Jones, as being a great inspiration. Holli does not have any particular favorite form of cooking, she enjoys it all. "I love all types of cooking and catering," she explained, "except for the clean-up!"

Currently, Holli is working full-time at the Firehouse Grill and part-time for Harriett Adams. When Holli is not busy out in the work force, she is spending her quality time with her husband, Buddy, their son, Ross, and their many friends. Like most women, she also finds pleasure in shopping and reading. "Some people read novels," she said. "I read cookbooks." **NOW**



HOMEMADE PIMENTO CHEESE

2 1/2 cups cheddar, shredded
4 oz. jar pimentos, diced and drained
1 cup Hellman's mayonnaise
Dash of garlic powder
2 tsp. celery seeds

1. Mix all ingredients.
Best if chilled overnight before serving.

GREEN CHILI STEW

2 1/2 lbs. pork stew meat
1/2 cup flour
3 Tbsp. oil
1 lg. onion, coarsely chopped
1 pkg. celery, cleaned and coarsely chopped (including leaves)
28-oz. can diced tomatoes

8 cups water
4 4-oz. cans diced green chilies, undrained
2 7-oz. cans Herdez Salsa Casera
2 Tbsp. chili powder
4 lg. potatoes, peeled and diced into bite-sized pieces

1. Lightly toss pork in flour.
2. Brown floured pork in oil.
3. Add remaining ingredients; simmer until tender.

GREEN RICE

10-oz. frozen spinach, chopped
4 servings instant rice, prepared
4 Tbsp. butter
1 1/2 cups cheddar, shredded
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Cook spinach per directions on

package; do not drain
2. Combine spinach and rice.
3. Stir in butter, cheese, salt and pepper.

CINNAMON PECANS

1 egg white
Dash of salt
2 cups pecan halves
3/4 cup sugar
1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon

1. In a 2-quart bowl with a fitted lid, beat egg white until frothy.
2. Add salt and pecans; cover and shake until pecans are coated.
3. Combine sugar and cinnamon; add to pecans.
4. Cover and shake pecans until pecans are coated

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5. On a cookie sheet, place a single layer of pecans.
6. Bake at 200 F for 1 1/2 hours.
7. Stir pecans after 45 minutes; repeat in 30 minutes.

PINEAPPLE SUPREME CAKE

2 cups flour
2 cups sugar
1 tsp. baking soda
20-oz. can crushed pineapple, undrained
1 tsp. vanilla
1/2 cup nuts, chopped

FROSTING:

1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
1 stick butter, softened
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup nuts, chopped

1. Combine flour and sugar.
2. Add baking soda, pineapple with juice, vanilla and nuts.
3. Pour batter into an ungreased 9 x 13-inch pan.
4. Bake at 350 F for approximately 35 minutes.
5. Combine all frosting ingredients.
6. Spread frosting on cake as soon as it comes out of the oven.

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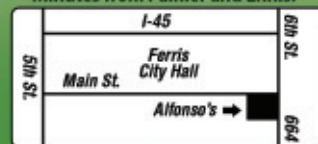


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Smart Investment Moves for 2010

— By Bob Irish

As an investor, you might wonder what the new year has in store for you. While economic and market forces are, as always, somewhat unpredictable, the overall outlook is generally favorable — and by making the right moves, you can further improve your chances of making 2010 a good year for your portfolio.

And one of the best moves you can make is to stay invested. If you had jumped out of the market during the long downturn from late 2007 through March 2009, you would have missed quite a rally. In fact, the Dow Jones Industrial Average staged a considerable comeback from its March lows, climbing 61.1 percent in 2009. The S & P 500 rose 66.7 percent off of its low.

Still, it's unlikely that we'll experience returns in this neighborhood for 2010. Although we may see reasonably strong growth in corporate earnings — a key driver of stock prices — stocks are no longer as undervalued as they were when the rally began.

However, although we still face some significant issues, such as high unemployment and tight credit, most experts predict that the economic recovery will continue in 2010, though not at a sizzling pace. And a growing economy is usually good news for investors.

Of course, despite the potentially favorable investment environment, there's always the possibility of bumps in the road.

To protect yourself, consider taking these steps:

- **Stick with “buy-and-hold.”**

Despite some claims that “buy-and-hold” is no longer a viable investment strategy given today's volatile markets, it worked pretty well for those investors who were patient enough to ride out the bear market. Continue looking for quality investments

and holding them until they no longer meet your needs or until the fundamentals of the investments themselves change.

- **Own some short-term investments.**

During the long bear market, short-term investments, particularly cash, held up better than most other assets. Yet many investors had too little cash in their portfolios. Don't make that mistake. Keep an appropriate amount of cash for your age, income level, risk tolerance and long-term goals.

- **Consider adding fixed-income investments.**

By owning some fixed-income vehicles, such as bonds, you can help reduce the effects of volatility on your portfolio. And if you hold your bonds until maturity, which is often a wise move, you can rely on them for a source of steady income. As always, make sure you understand the risks before investing.

- **Watch for changes in investment taxes.**

In the coming year, the tax rate may increase for long-term capital gains and stock dividends. If that happens, you may need to review your investment mix. However, even if the long-term capital gains rate rises, you'll still likely be better off holding quality investments for many years, thereby giving them the time to potentially overcome short-term price volatility. And even if taxes rise on dividends, dividend-paying stocks, with their ability to provide both income and growth potential, can be a valuable part of your portfolio. (Keep in mind, though, that companies may reduce or eliminate dividends at any time.)

No one can say for sure what 2010 will bring to the investment world. But by preparing your investment strategy for a range of possibilities, and by making changes as needed, you can make this a year of progress toward your important financial goals. **NOW**

Bob Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.

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Social Anxiety Disorder

— Submitted by Dr. Fredric Puckett



Social anxiety disorder, also called social phobia, is an anxiety disorder in which a person has an excessive and unreasonable fear of social situations. Anxiety (intense nervousness) and self-consciousness arise from a fear of being closely watched, judged and criticized by others.

A person with social anxiety disorder is afraid that he or she will make mistakes and be embarrassed or humiliated in front of others. The fear may be made worse by a lack of social skills or experience in social situations. The anxiety can build into a panic attack. As a result of the fear, the person endures certain social situations in extreme distress or may avoid them altogether. In addition, people with social anxiety disorder often suffer “anticipatory” anxiety — the fear of a situation before it even happens — for days or weeks before the event. In many cases, the person is aware that the fear is unreasonable, yet is unable to overcome it.

People with social anxiety disorder suffer from distorted thinking, including false beliefs about social situations and the negative opinions of others. Without treatment, social anxiety disorder can negatively interfere with the person’s normal daily routine, including school, work, social activities and relationships.

People with social anxiety disorder may be afraid of a specific situation, such as speaking in public. However, most people with social anxiety disorder fear more than one social situation. Other

situations that commonly provoke anxiety include:

- Eating or drinking in front of others.
- Writing or working in front of others.
- Being the center of attention.
- Interacting with people, including dating or going to parties.
- Asking questions or giving reports in groups.

Social anxiety disorder may be linked to other mental illnesses, such as panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and depression. In fact, many people with social anxiety disorder initially see the doctor with complaints related to these disorders, not because of social anxiety symptoms.

What Are the Symptoms of Social Anxiety Disorder?

Many people with social anxiety disorder feel that there is “something wrong,” but do not recognize their feeling as a sign of illness. Symptoms of social anxiety disorder can include:

- Intense anxiety in social situations.
- Avoidance of social situations.
- Physical symptoms of anxiety, including: confusion, pounding heart, sweating, shaking, blushing, muscle tension, upset stomach and diarrhea.

Children with this disorder may express their anxiety by crying, clinging to a parent or throwing a tantrum.

How Common Is Social Anxiety Disorder?

Social anxiety disorder is the most common anxiety disorder and the third-most common mental disorder in the U.S., after depression and alcohol dependence. An estimated 19.2 million Americans have social anxiety disorder. The disorder most often surfaces in adolescence or early adulthood, but can occur at any time, including early childhood. It is more common in women than in men.

How Is Social Anxiety Disorder Diagnosed?

If symptoms of social anxiety disorder are present, the doctor will begin an evaluation by asking questions about your medical history and performing a physical exam. Although there are no laboratory tests to specifically diagnose social anxiety disorder, the doctor may use various tests to make sure that a physical illness is not the cause of the symptoms.

If no physical illness is found, you may be referred to a psychiatrist or psychologist, mental health professionals who are specially trained to diagnose and treat mental illnesses. Psychiatrists and psychologists use specially designed interview and assessment tools to evaluate a person for an anxiety disorder. The doctor bases his or her diagnosis of social anxiety disorder on reports of the intensity and duration of symptoms, including any problems with functioning caused by the symptoms. The doctor then determines if the symptoms and degree of dysfunction indicate social anxiety disorder. **NOW**

*Dr. Fred Puckett
Ennis Regional Medical Center.*

—Happening **NOW**

Every Wednesday

GriefShare recovery seminar and support group meets at Palmer Christian Child Care and Day School, located at 510 S. Dallas St. Meeting begins at 6:15 p.m. For more information, call Vivian Saladino at (214) 802-2256 or e-mail griefshare@fbcpalmer.com.

Third Wednesday

Ellis County Christian Women's Connection, affiliated with Stonecroft Ministries, monthly luncheon from 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Waxahachie Country Club, located at 1920 W. Hwy. 287 at I-35 East, Exit 401B, Waxahachie. The cost is \$13, inclusive. Contact Kay at (972) 937-2807 or Mary at (972) 937-9984 or e-mail Kay at windchime423@yahoo.com.

First and Third Tuesday

Ennis Cancer Support Group: 7:00 p.m., Ennis Regional Medical Center classroom. Call Kathy at (972) 878-6927 or visit www.enniscancersupport.com.

First and Third Thursday

Mom's Connected: 9:30-11:30 a.m., Tabernacle Baptist Church, 1200 Country Club Rd. Free fellowship for moms of all ages. For information, contact ennismoms@sbcglobal.net.

March 6

2010 Charity Extravaganza at American Legion Post 361. For more information, visit www.ellis-sportscentral.net/Charity2010.html.

March 7

Lifestyles Home and Family Expo featuring "A Taste of Waxahachie," will be held from 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. at the Waxahachie Civic Center. Adult tickets are \$3. Children under 10 are free. For more information, call (972) 937-2390 or visit www.waxahachiechamber.com.

March 18-20

DeSoto Art League presents James Spurlock Art Workshops: 9:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m. at DeSoto Presbyterian Church, 212 W. Pleasant Run Rd. Cost: \$195/members; \$200/non-members; \$100 deposit due Mar. 5. Limit 10/class. (972) 217-1546 or sandy@sandyreese.com.

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April 1-30

Annual Ennis Bluebonnet Trails event. For more information, call (972) 878-4748.

April 3-5

NHRA Division 4 Lucas Oil Drag Racing Series. For more information, call (972) 878-2641 or visit www.texasmotorplex.com.

April 4

Harley Giveaway to be held at the Knights of Columbus Hall. For more information, call (972) 937-8417 or visit www.kofc.org.

April 17-18

Ennis Bluebonnet Trails Festival. Call the Ennis Convention and Visitors Bureau at (972) 878-4748.

April 16-May 9

Ennis Public Theatre presents *Always ... Patsy Cline* by Ted Swindley. Fridays and Saturdays, 8:00 p.m. Sunday, May 9th matinee, 2:30 p.m. For more information, call (972) 878-7529.

April 24-25

Southern Pacific Railroad "End of the Line" Reunion to be held at the fellowship hall of Baylor Baptist Church. For more information, call (972) 875-6278, (972) 875-7175 or (972) 875-5130.

April 30-May 1

Ennis Relay for Life to be held at the Texas Motorplex. For more information, call (972) 878-2641.

May 6-9

American Veterans' Traveling Tribute, sponsored by the American Legion Post 361. The "Welcome Home — Ennis Honors Her Heroes" event will take place at 2301 Ennis Pkwy. Local bands and singers will perform throughout the four-day event, beginning each day with "Reveille" at 8:00 a.m. and ending with "Taps" at 9:00 p.m. A patriotic parade will also be held on Saturday, May 8, in downtown Ennis.

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