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M A G A Z I N E

MARCH 2012

NOW

Going With the Grain

At Home With Peter
& Cheryl Sandoval

Also Inside:

Man on a Mission

Beginning With a Bounce

Dewey Decimals to Dot-Coms

General Dentistry, Southern Hospitality

In the Kitchen With Vanessa Larsen

one hundred
years of
scouting

Midlothian Girl Scouts
join the organization's
100th anniversary.



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DEADLINE APRIL 2, 2012*

**For inclusion in May 2012 advertising and recognition.*

Questions? Contact Kristin Zastoupil, MEF Executive Director, at kristin@misdef.org or 972-775-8296.

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On The Cover



Aurora White, Darcey Smith and Crista Harver are three happy Girl Scouts.

Photo by Natalie Busch.

Contents

March 2012 • Volume 8, Issue 3



8 One Hundred Years of Scouting

Midlothian Girl Scouts participate in a 100-item quest each month this year.

14 Man on a Mission

Kyle Chambers is helping young children reach their potential.

20 Going With the Grain

At Home With Peter and Cheryl Sandoval.



28 Beginning With a Bounce

Kelley Winkles readies a new generation for basketball play.

36 Dewey Decimals to Dot-Coms

Melissa Bolgiano helped open LaRue Miller Elementary and continues to open the minds of the children who attend there.



42 BusinessNOW

46 Around TownNOW

48 HealthNOW

52 CookingNOW

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Editor's Note

Dear Friends,

Throughout my life, I have watched *Gone with the Wind* 15 times. I have read the book 13 times. Every single time Melanie dies and Rhett walks out the door, I cry. I don't know why. It's not like it is a surprise to me. But what draws me back to the story is the irrepressible spirit of Scarlett O'Hara as she rises with steel in her heart and hope in her eyes and declares, "Tomorrow is another day!" and we know it will be better.

We all have that spirit inside us. When the world attacks, we respond. Win or lose, we find the strength to go on. There is growth and courage within the struggle of life, and it makes us strong. In the bleakness of winter, we know spring is coming. Always believe the best and face the future with optimism and hope.



Betty

Betty Tryon
MidlothianNOW Editor
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100 YEARS of Scouting

— By Betty Tryon

Calcified into the memory of most Americans is that Girl Scouts are all about cookies. After all, they are most prominent when selling boxes of delicious Girl Scout cookies. However, they are much more than that, and this year, the 100th anniversary of Girl Scouts of the USA, many branches are out to change that perception. “So many people see it as girls being cute selling cookies,” troop leader Antionette White said, “but it is a program where they are learning sales techniques and how to deal with people. We’re teaching

them to deal with occasional grumpy people and how to deal with them in an appropriate way. So, it’s more than selling a cookie. They are learning to be businesswomen and how to have better sales techniques, skills and confidence. For some of them, just to ask, ‘Do you want to buy my cookies?’ is huge.”





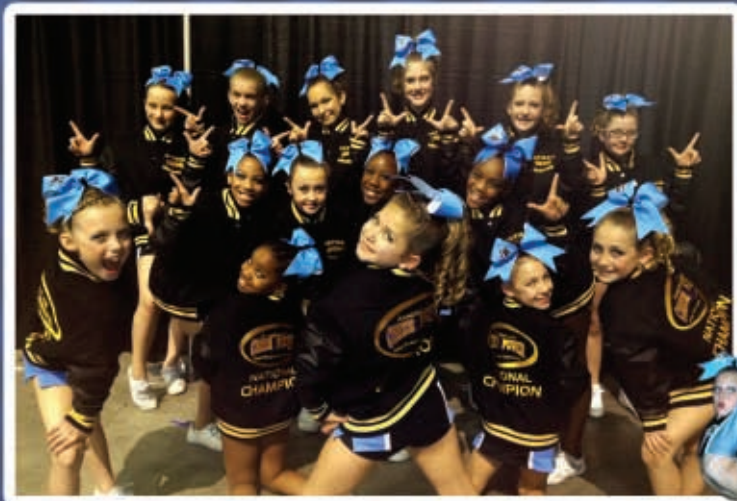
“When the girls sell cookies, part of the money is for fun, and the other part is geared toward helping someone.”

Antionette has logged in many hours being a Girl Scouts volunteer. For the last eight years, she has served here in Texas as troop leader for each of her daughters — ages 18, 11, 9 and 7. It is not just her daughters, but all the girls in Girl Scouts that bring much joy and fulfillment to her life. Smiling, she exclaimed, “The Midlothian area Girl Scouts Service Unit that I have the privilege of managing includes 15 troops, around 125 registered adults and approximately 170 girls. I love the girls and watching them do things that you didn’t know they could do, even doing some things that society doesn’t really teach anymore, such as learn how to sew or cook. That’s kind of cool.”

Girl Scouts of the USA was founded in 1912, and in that era, sewing and cooking were necessary skills for girls to learn. In this modern age, the urgency to learn them no longer exists. Antionette recognizes the progressive journey the organization has taken. “With the way things are going, Girl Scouts has to change for the girls,” she said.

Inherent in all the fun girls have while participating in the organization is an opportunity for them to exercise one of Girl Scouts’ most important goals — leadership. “Girl Scouts wants the girls to be leaders,” Antionette said. “They want them to affect the world, not just their community. They really want them to go big, where the sky is the limit. They want them to know they can achieve their goals.” To focus more on leadership,

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the entire program has been changed. Girl Scouts books, patches, badges and award programs now reflect the new direction. The group leaders now let the girls lead, even the youngest ones, and the girls of each troop choose what program or project they will do. Sometimes the girls, in their inexperience, have no idea what difficulties may lie ahead when choosing a certain path. However, even if it does not turn out the way they want it to, it becomes a learning experience instead of a failure. An example of this is when Antionette's troop decided to improve the flower beds outside the Girl Scouts' room.



"Two years ago, the girls decided they wanted to fix the flower bed," Antionette stated. "We let them go all out and do what they thought they could do. We told the girls that once they started, they would have to complete it." Some of the flowers



planted that first year died in the hot Texas sun. It was a great learning experience.

Girl Scouts aim to make the world a better place. The girls are encouraged to think big. When they first start their community service, they look at their immediate surroundings — school, family, community, church, library — to see what they can do. Then they progress to larger settings, such as their city, state, country and even the international level.

“When the girls sell cookies, part of the money is for fun, and the other part is geared toward helping someone. A North Texas group decided to buy llamas for people in Peru. That’s affecting someone across the world! The Girl Scouts here in Midlothian send care packages to our troops. We have taken cookies to the airport for the military coming home. Also, my troop loves the fire station downtown. Every year we adopt them, and we take them boxes of Girl Scout cookies. Christmastime, we take them homemade cookies and sing Christmas carols,” Antionette explained.

This year, the girls have a larger objective with their community service. In keeping with the Girl Scouts’ Mission, which states, “Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence and character, who make the world a better place,” they will do service projects for the community once a month, with 100 items being their goal for each project. This is one way they will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the organization. Their efforts began even before the anniversary month of March. “In November, we did a canned-food



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drive for Manna House, and our goal was for 100 cans per troop. We came up with 800 canned food items," Antionette said.

As the Girl Scouts celebrate a phenomenal 100 years of growth and service, Antionette reflects on what it means to her. "I personally wish I could've met the founder, Juliette Gordon Low. I think very much like her, and I like the traditions. Girl Scouts is a tradition I want to pass on. She believed that girls could do what boys were doing. She didn't think girls should stay cooped up in the house. One of my proudest moments is a Juliette Low thing. We took second-graders camping and decided to let them prepare their meal from top to bottom. It was about three hours of work. They peeled and sliced their own potatoes and carrots, mixed ground beef with onion soup mix and put it all together in foil. They also made cinnamon apples for dessert and a fruit juice mixture. This was during a camping trip, and we were bundled up with mittens, because it was freezing. They did this in the wind, in the worst conditions, and they didn't complain. It was huge to know they could do that.

"At the end of the night, we were at Camp Hoblitzelle, and we took a walk around the amphitheater. One of the girls was very shy. She tugged on me and asked, 'Can we say a prayer and say what we are thankful for?' So we all sat there in the freezing cold and said what we were thankful for. They worked so well as a team." Antionette's service unit has a banner that reads, "What did you do today?" For the Girl Scouts, it is 100 years of fun activities and service. **NOW**

Editor's Note: For more information on Girl Scouts, contact Johnnie Lipsius at johnniekay@sbglobal.net



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MAN ON A MISSION

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

Going back to the late 19th century in America, the education profession has been dominated by females. Through decades where women were often unable to work outside the home, teaching has long been considered the job for a lady. Even in recent years, people generally assume male teachers are coaches outside of the classroom setting. But more and more, men are pursuing jobs in education, and even more notably, men are filling roles in elementary education. What was once rare to see, has now become commonplace. Kyle Chambers, vice principal of J.A. Vitovsky, is a man with a purpose. He is, in fact, a man on a mission.

Kyle graduated from Red Oak High School and then went to college at Cedar Valley and Tarleton State University. While studying



wildlife biology at Tarleton, Kyle had some interesting opportunities. "I had a professor with a brother in Idaho," he said, "so I volunteered to study grizzly bears during the summers."

Kyle started out working as a wildlife specialist, but had some experiences within education as well. "I also spent some time as a lab tech aide, so I got a bit of the teaching experience," he explained. "I enjoyed that, so I went ahead and got my teaching certificate." Kyle went from working in the field as a biologist to teaching science in the classroom. Once he started, he knew he was in the right place. "I realized I had a talent for teaching," he admitted. "I still have the passion today. You don't let that passion go."

As a classroom teacher, Kyle loved to tackle the challenge of helping science come alive for middle school and high school students. "I think that because of the way I understood the content, I was able to relate it with passion," he said. Kyle loved imparting his passion for science to his students, and he still hears evidence of his work from years past. "Every so often," he added, "I hear about one of my former students working or going into a science field. It's fulfilling to know they're keeping that passion."

After eight years in the classroom, Kyle felt it was time for a new challenge. "I knew I had leadership qualities," he said, "and I wanted to see them working." Kyle earned his master's degree from



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Texas A&M University-Commerce, and transitioned once again, this time going into administration in Midlothian. Kyle immediately relished the work he was doing. "I used to have a classroom of kids to lead. Now I have a school full of teachers to lead." Kyle started as a vice principal at T.E. Baxter, moving to the then-new campus, Vitovsky, when it opened in 2001.

After several years as a vice principal in Midlothian, Kyle had a promotion prospect that would take him and his

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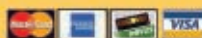
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family west. He talked about it with his wife, Leslie, and their three sons, Phillip, Mitchell and Timothy who are 17, 13 and 11, respectively. "We decided as a family this would be a great opportunity for us. We liked making the move to a smaller town, and we had a great experience out there."

After three-and-a-half years as a kindergarten through eighth-grade principal in Menard, Texas, Kyle and his family were brought back to this area through family circumstances. In describing his move back, Kyle exhibits



the faith that is vital to his family. "It's hard sometimes to find a job midyear," he confessed. "It was time for a change, though, and God once again opened doors for us. It worked out that there was an opening. I moved out of this office, and moved right back in a few years later."

Kyle enjoyed and learned from his time in Menard. "Everything I learned here, I took to Menard. I learned things being in charge of the campus there, and a lot of that has helped me now that I'm back."

Kyle enjoys his job, and he loves the various duties he performs each day. He typically starts the day greeting students as they arrive for school, which is often his favorite thing. "Where else do you get 1,000 hugs in 15 minutes?" Along with morning greetings, Kyle makes it a point to eat lunch with the students. He and Principal Cherie Wagoner eat at various times so they can see different children throughout the week.

Kyle knows that greeting and being around the students is one of the most important tasks he has. "In those times, you find out what happened last night or last weekend. You know about dogs dying and kids losing their lunch money," Kyle explained. "You are able to connect with the kids and try to help improve their day."

Kyle also has appointments with kids in more deliberate settings. He plays a big part in assessing and providing for the needs of each child at the school. He both deals with special education students and helps kids who are



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struggling. He is happy that discipline is only a small part of his schedule. "I would say four or five discipline issues would be a heavy day. I spend a lot of time in the classrooms, so I know why the kids behave," he said. "The teachers have high expectations. They don't accept anything less."

Public perception may be that Kyle is a man in a woman's world. But he sees it in a different way. "We're at a time when so many kids are raised by mom or grandma, often without a male figure. In junior high or high school, sometimes there is a coach. But for kids this age, I feel like I can be a positive male in their lives." Kyle stops short of calling himself a father-figure, but he clearly sees his opportunity to offer advice and encouragement that many of his students may be lacking.

Kyle has had success throughout his education career. In 2006, he was voted Region X Assistant Principal of the Year. When he moved to J.A. Vitovsky with Cherie in 2005, many of their teaching staff chose to come along. "Even though we were coming to a school that is classified as Title I (meaning that a high percentage of students are deemed low income), we were honored that most of the teachers wanted to come," he shared. "That showed faith in Cherie and me."

Kyle hopes to one day be the principal over a campus in Midlothian, but he knows he has to keep an open mind. He is content right now to wait for God to close one door as He opens another. In the meantime, Kyle works hard to be a man on a mission. **NOW**

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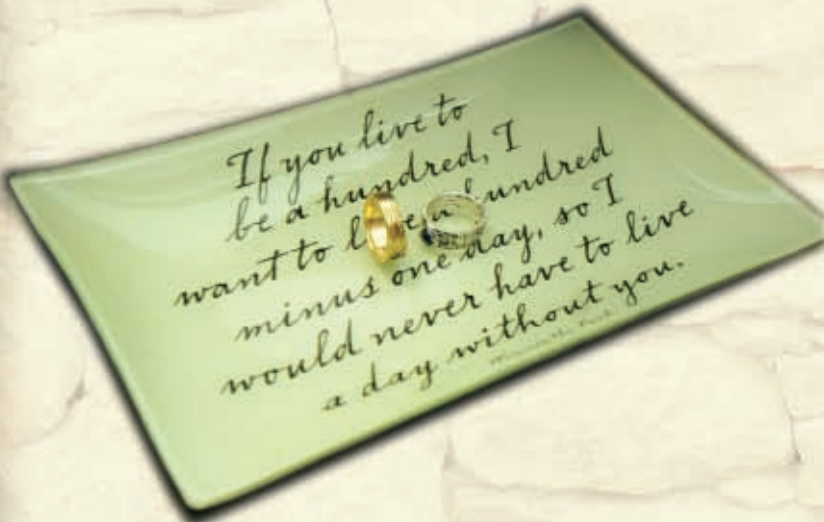


GOING WITH THE GRAIN

At Home With Peter & Cheryl Sandoval

— By Janice C. Johnson

The wooded hillside lot, situated along a quiet stretch of blacktop road, had been on the market for some time. Peter Sandoval thought it might be a great place for the house he and his wife, Cheryl, wanted to build. However, it was hard to tell because of all the trees. “We really couldn’t even see the land,” Peter said.



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The couple decided to buy the lot. They had already drawn up plans for the house they wanted – a split-level style with two bedrooms above the garage. Rather than level out any more of the hillside than necessary, Peter and Cheryl walked around the lot, turning their floor plan this way and that. Finally, they found the position that would best allow the split-level structure to follow the contours of the land.

Peter, an artisan carpenter with years of experience in exotic woods, was naturally reluctant to have a stranger create his home's trim and cabinetry. Builders are seldom willing to let clients finish out their own interiors, but the Sandovals' builder had confidence in Peter's work. "I was actually renting a shop in Cedar Hill, right behind the builder's office," he explained. "We made a deal that he would build the shell and install the drywall, and we took it from there: the [interior] trim, cabinets and floor."

The home's interior became a family project, with most of the work taking place during the summer of 1999. "At the time, we had two dogs, and our son was in high school. All five of us lost weight," Cheryl recalled with a smile. "It was well worth it, but it was a strenuous summer."

"It was a brutal summer that year," Peter agreed. "The shop had no insulation at all, and it was hotter inside the building than outside. I had my son, my nephew and Cheryl all out in the shop."

"We were doing the things that he doesn't like to do, such as sanding," Cheryl added. "He had an assembly line of all of his helpers, and we were very diligent. He'd come and inspect our work from time to time."

Not content to merely finish the structure, Peter also designed and created furniture for it. Here he unleashed his imagination, often using exotic woods, which he cut to show off the grain to its best advantage. Combining different colors, textures and finishes, he furnished the home with striking contemporary pieces that are also functional and durable. From the thoughtfully designed



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kitchen work space to the lighted display shelves highlighting the couple's art glass pieces to the master bathroom's clean lines and dark wood, the breathtaking results speak for themselves.

Cheryl enjoyed a 34-year career with the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), retiring in 2008. Since then, she has practiced gardening skills at home. Learning to cooperate with the native climate, she set up a compost bin and a rain barrel for her plants. She maintains

vegetable and herb gardens and landscape perennials, including a butterfly garden.

Some years ago, Cheryl joined the Ellis County Master Gardener Association. "I have become active in the group. This year, I am chairing the Ellis County Lawn and Garden Expo," she said. The Expo, which draws thousands of people, will take place on March 31 at the Waxahachie Civic Center. "I encourage everyone to visit one of the local sponsors to pick up free tickets," she added.

Peter, listening, smiled and shrugged. "I just work all the time."

Both Cheryl and Peter had done some work-related traveling, but their schedule did not allow for much leisure travel. The same year Cheryl retired from AAFES, Peter made a career change, as he prepared to establish his own company: Carpentry Associates. This presented a rare opportunity for even the hardworking Peter to take a long vacation. The Sandovals took advantage

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of this and spent the month of October in Europe.

Spain, France and Italy were their main destinations, but they also got to spend a week with Cheryl's brother and family in Frankfurt, Germany. "It was a wonderful trip. We had lots of fun and got to add to our art collection a little bit," Cheryl said. The extended time gave them a chance to enjoy many experiences that a fast-paced tour would have omitted.

While in Spain, Peter said, "We used every possible mode of transportation." Whether bicycling, walking or riding trains, buses or boats, they found that Spain was an easy country for foreign tourists to travel. In northern Spain, they visited the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao and stayed in a small hotel converted from a home built in the 1500s. Peter fondly recalled the fine restaurants and a visit to the Museum of Scotch Whiskey, located in northern Spain.

In Paris, they had a hotel room that boasted a view of the Eiffel Tower, but the elevator was only large enough to hold one person and one suitcase. "That isn't





really unusual for Europe,” Peter noted.

“Then we spent a week in Italy eating,” Peter went on. “Twice we drove three hours just to go to a particular restaurant for lunch. Friends of ours had discovered it and recommended it.” The group of friends had sent the owner a thank-you

note and picture, which was posted in the restaurant. Once the owner heard that Peter and Cheryl knew his previous guests, they received star treatment.

The trip ended in Rome. There the Sandovals had the adventure of using the subway system, despite its having no English-language signs. A bit of confusion about their departure date gave them an unexpected extra day, which they made the most of. “We could have just stayed on, but we had one criterion: We had to be back in time to vote,” Cheryl said.

Married nearly 30 years, Peter and Cheryl met when both lived in San Antonio. In 1990, the couple moved to Cedar Hill. It was several years later when they began looking for a quieter, more peaceful setting. They surely found what they wanted in Midlothian. “We love the area. It’s been wonderful,” Cheryl said.

Going with the grain of their own talents and dreams has given the Sandovals’ marriage an appealing luster. Their customized home, graced with art, mementos and their own handiwork, makes it all the better. The extra

bedrooms allow for their children and grandchildren to visit. The library offers comfortable seating, a few favorite art pieces and hundreds of books. “Peter comes home from work with this long “to-do” list, but ends up relaxing instead.” Cheryl smiled at her husband. “We enjoy the space we have created here.” **NOW**



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MISD



UIL District Alignment

The Texas University Interscholastic League announced its district alignments for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years. UIL governs most secondary extra-curricular activities in Texas and assigns classifications to schools based on the high school enrollment. During the October snapshot date, Midlothian High School had 2,351 students. The cut-off to be considered a 5A school district is 2,090+ students.

District 7-5A High Schools

Cedar Hill, DeSoto, Duncanville, Grand Prairie, Mansfield High, Mansfield Timberview, Midlothian and South Grand Prairie



In May 2011 Midlothian ISD voters approved the district's \$97.3 million bond package to build two new schools, high school #2 (phase 1) and elementary #7, as well as an addition to Frank Seale Middle School.

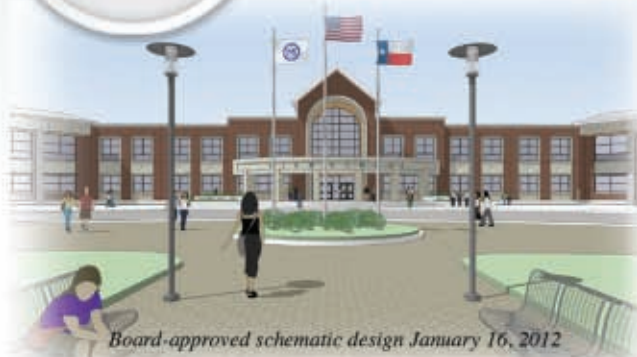
A Bond Oversight Committee was created by the MISD School Board as a testament to its commitment to financial transparency. The two objectives of the committee are to (1) monitor the use of school district funds in the 2011 bond building projects, and (2) receive information on all aspects of the 2011 bond building projects. VLK Architects and Balfour Beatty Construction (formerly Charter Builders) were hired to design and construct the bond projects.

High School #2 (Phase 1)

Located on corner of FM 1387/Walnut Grove Rd.
Projected to open August 2014

High School #2 (phase 1) will be built as a comprehensive high school. No final decision has been made on which students will attend the new high school.

Project details: Phase 1 is for 1,000 students and a core capacity of 2,500 students; Two-story with classrooms in two wings; library; fine arts area; cafeteria; competition baseball/softball fields; 2 soccer fields; football and track fields.



Board-approved schematic design January 16, 2012



Site plan High School #2

Visit the Bond 2011 webpage for more information.

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Texas Representative Jim Pitts gave congratulatory remarks to students during the School Board student recognition.



Pictured left to right is Phil Seay, Duke Burge, Rep. Jim Pitts, Jim Mentzel and Tom Moore.

Get Mobile Connected To MISD

Midlothian ISD is taking school communication, transparency and accountability to a much higher level. The District partnered with School Connect and has launched a new mobile application that allows patrons to conveniently access district information on their Android and iPhones.



MISD school officials are excited about this new avenue to enhance school-to-parent and school-to-community communications. School Connect's app development and hosting services are free to MISD and there are no download charges for mobile users.

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Kindergarten Roundup for 2012-2013



Getting ready for the first day of kindergarten is an exciting time for both students and their families! Any child who will be 5 years old on or before September 1, 2012, is eligible to attend the district's full-day kindergarten. Parents are encouraged to pre-register their child at his/her attendance zone elementary campus during the week of April 17-20 from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Additional

information on Kinder Camp, Pre-K and Head Start Roundup is available on the MISD website.

MIDLOTHIAN ISD ATHLETICS SUMMER CAMPS

Do your kids like baseball, basketball, football, soccer, softball and volleyball?

Sign them up early. Look for the Summer Camp logo on the MISD Athletic website.

Thank You Jay Roberts!

After serving a total of nine years on the MISD School Board, Jay Roberts has decided to step down and not seek re-election. Places up for re-election are Place 1, Place 2, and Place 3. The election will be held May 12, 2012.

WGMS students honored Jay Roberts during School Board Appreciation Month.



Beginning with a BOUNCE

— By Betty Tryon

After watching the Harlem Globetrotters thrill the crowd with their razzle-dazzle style of basketball play, certainly no one expected 3-, 4- and 5-year-old basketball players to be able to capture the audience's attention with their basketball skills. But, the kiddos' energetic and coordinated display of elementary basketball skills won the crowd over. The young basketball players were a collection of teams from the program, Teams of Tomorrow, called TOT. One of the coaches supporting her team at the American Airlines Center that night was Kelley Winkles. "A goal of mine is to get kids physically active at a young age and prove to them that exercise can and should be fun. I was an elementary PE teacher for seven years and saw way too many kids who didn't even like to play!" she stated.



The program focuses on basketball handling skills, hand-eye coordination and dribbling skills. "When the kids are learning, they don't think of it as exercise. They are jumping around, and I get tired before they do! It's just all fun for them. For me, that is the whole point."



Exercise is an important component in the life of anyone, but especially crucial for children. Proper exercise results in healthier children who are less likely to become overweight and have all of the physical and social difficulties associated with that. Exercise increases flexibility and balance. "I'm all for kids getting up and doing something," Kelley stated. "As a P.E. teacher, I saw so many kids — kindergartners through fifth grade — who were so overweight. We would go to play games, and they would have to stop to catch their breath or say they were tired because they don't go outside and play. I'm big on kids exercising."

According to a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, children's activity level drops sharply between the ages of 9 and 15. Kelley is on the right track with getting the kids moving at an early age. "I want them to see, especially at this young age, that moving your body is supposed to be fun," she said enthusiastically. "And, if it



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is fun, hopefully, they will stick with it as they grow older.”

Learning basketball-handling skills can be an entertaining way to exercise and learn better hand-eye coordination. Many children hone their hand-eye coordination skills by playing video



games, but getting the body moving while still sharpening those skills would be a better alternative. It all begins with a bounce. “We start with a ‘bounce and catch,’ with the kids on their knees. While on their knees, they drop the ball and catch it,” Kelley explained. With the little ones, it will take time and practice to perfect this one simple move. Laughing, she said, “It’s funny when we start practicing bouncing, because the balls are going everywhere! Every week they learn a new skill, and the next week, we go over the skill they’ve already learned. So, we are practicing each week every skill they’ve learned.”

The kids use a small, round ball to learn their skills, as, obviously, a regular-sized basketball is too big for them to control, at this point. “Some of the skills they do pretty well, where there is no bouncing involved. They sit down and roll the ball around their body and around each foot.”



Kelley calls this maneuver “criss-cross applesauce.” “I just call it that because they sit with their legs crossed. We called it Indian style when I was little.”

These maneuvers may seem simple and uncomplicated, but for a very young child, they require a great deal of practice and coordination.



“With so many of the kids, the first couple of times they roll the ball behind their back, it winds up rolling across the floor, and they have to go chase it. They are getting a feel for the ball and learning how to move it, sometimes without seeing it. They really like ‘bounce and turn,’ where they hold the ball out, drop it, the ball bounces, and they have to turn their body around one time and

pick the ball up.” This movement ups the degree of difficulty for the youngsters, but some catch on quickly.

Actual dribbling may seem like a far distant goal for some of the children, but they actually learn how to do it. “One week we learn how to dribble with the right hand. The next week we learn how



to dribble with the left hand. It’s baby steps. They learn to sit and dribble, and then to stand up and dribble. Sitting, they learn how to control the ball better. I have some 3-year-olds who must be born athletes. They are not perfect at it,



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but they understand to push the ball back down when it comes up and not just hit it with their hands,” Kelley said. This is challenging to do, and with the logistics of the kids being so close to the ground, there isn’t much space between the floor and their hand to get a good dribble going.

“I had one who was so cute. He had to sit down and dribble the ball with his right hand, and he was getting so frustrated saying, ‘I can’t do it.’ So, I told him to drop it and catch it,” Kelley explained. He followed her instructions, and with pride in his voice, he declared, “I’m doing it!” All children learn at their own pace and with their own level of capability. Kelley recognized this and stated, “Sometimes, I have to modify it, especially for the real little ones, so they can at least have some kind of success. I have one child who holds the ball and puts it on the floor holding onto it over and over again. I say, ‘Good job; there you go! That’s smart. Now let go of it and see what happens.’ One little boy could barely dribble the ball, but today he is really going at it.”

Kelley is not teaching the youngsters how to play the game of basketball, but what she teaches them will help lead up to basketball, because the better they handle the ball, the better they will be when playing the actual game. In learning these techniques, the kids are also building self-confidence. “They learn at such a young age that they are capable of doing things,” Kelley stated. “I am getting them to move and have fun.” **NOW**

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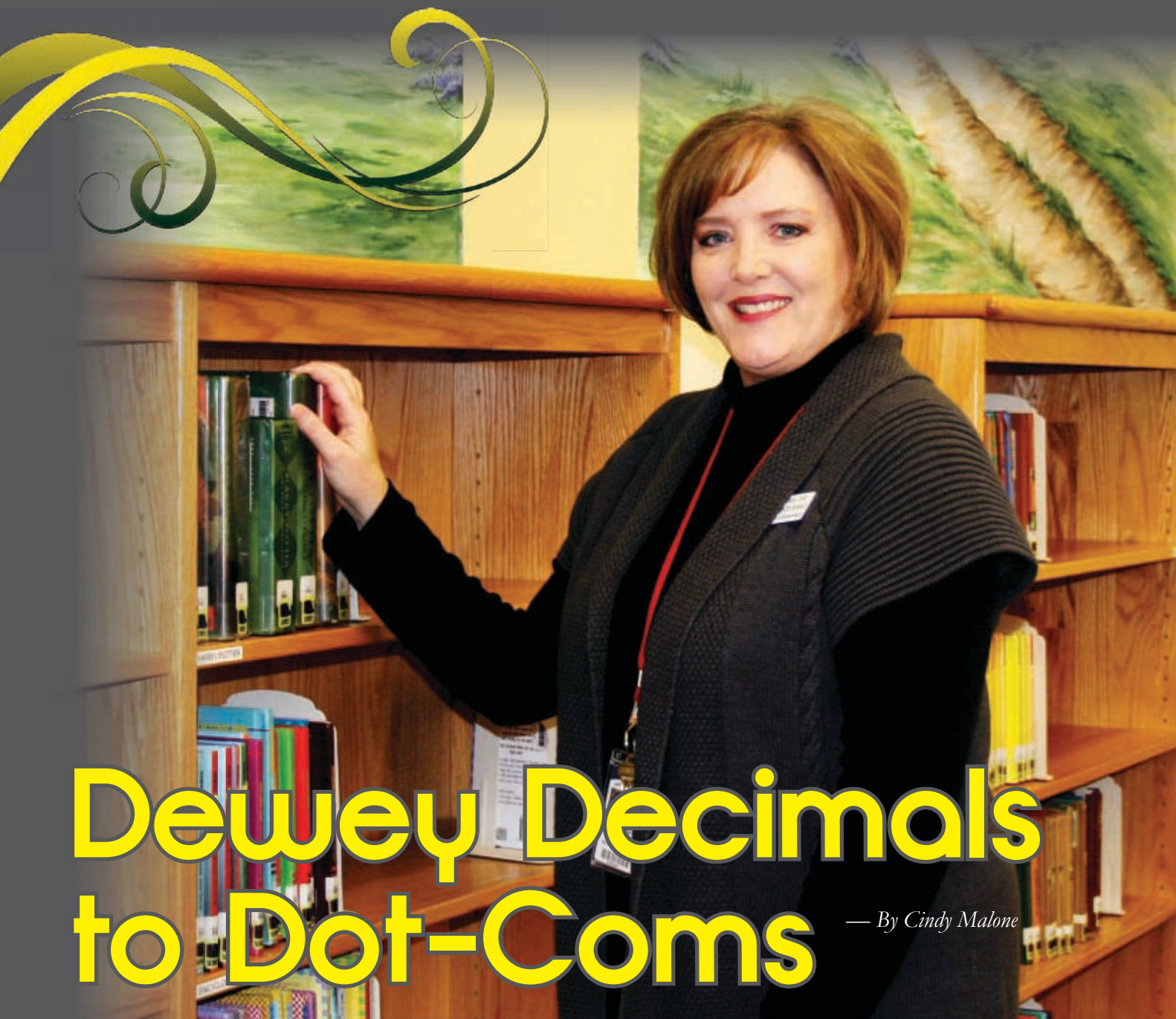
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Dewey Decimals to Dot-Coms

— By Cindy Malone

LaRue Miller, the namesake of LaRue Miller Elementary in Midlothian, is by all accounts an extraordinary woman who touched the lives of many young people. So to work with children in that school, each person must be extraordinary, as well. The library media specialist, Melissa Bolgiano, who has been at Miller since it opened, is absolutely no exception.

After graduating from Texas A&M University, Melissa worked as a classroom teacher for three years, while earning her master's degree from the University of North Texas. She taught second grade in Hurst Euless Bedford and Midway ISDs before meeting her husband, Richard, and moving back to the Metroplex. "I always knew I wanted to be a librarian, but I also knew I needed a good base in teaching," Melissa explained. Before going to work again full time, she was lucky enough to stay home for nine years with her two sons, Grant and Blake, 14 and 12, respectively.

Four years ago, an opportunity presented itself for her to help open Miller Elementary. Although the tendency is to refer to her as a librarian, Melissa explained her position as a library media specialist. "We are responsible for integrating technology into learning and also running the library. It's two very different but complementary jobs.

"Opening a new school was so much fun but very hard work," Melissa said. "It wasn't all just ordering books. I ordered absolutely everything for the library, from equipment and shelves to the colors of the chairs. I even had to order the staplers

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maintaining a family-oriented atmosphere, and Melissa helps organize some annual family events. Each November, the district librarians plan an event called "Field of Readers," where families come with blankets to the football field and read together. The librarians also get authors to visit and read to the students and their families.

"Right now, our kids are really into books like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Junie B. Jones*, and the older kids usually like the Bluebonnet Award-winning books," Melissa said.

Melissa is the first to admit that libraries today do not look how they did just 10 years ago. "Our reference section is pretty small," Melissa explained. "Now everyone uses the Internet for research. So, along with teaching kids how to find the right book and use guide words, I teach them how to find credible information online and how to interpret the information once they find it."

In the future, Melissa expects to see more eBooks become available to students. One parent of a fourth-





grader just shared with her that all her son wanted for Christmas was a Kindle. "Hearing that makes me so happy," Melissa beamed. In fact, Melissa always beams when talking about her students and her job. "I have no real administration-type goals," she said. "I love what I do. I love having hands-on time with the students, every day."



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Melissa also has no desire to leave Midlothian. Twelve years ago, Melissa and her husband built a house in Midlothian, and these are the only schools her two boys know. She has a church home at First Baptist in Midlothian. "My faith in God is what drives me and is the most important thing in my life," Melissa said. "He is the basis for all I do, and in my work, I strive to give glory and honor to God." Each day working with hundreds of students definitely gives Melissa the opportunity to be a positive role model. When she isn't at work or school, you can find her at a field or gym somewhere in the area watching her sons play one of the many sports they are involved in.

If Melissa can get a moment alone, she loves to read and cook. What she reads is surprising. "I don't really have time to read as many adult books as I would like. I like to keep up with what my students are reading, so I read what is popular with them," Melissa said. She credits her second-grade teacher, Ms. Poston from Gatesville ISD, for inspiring her love of reading through *Charlotte's Web*, which is still her favorite book. With her love of books, children, education, faith and ability to catch on to new technology quickly, Melissa has found her calling and her home in Midlothian. **NOW**

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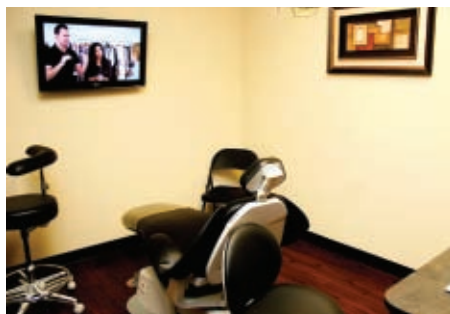


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— By Betty Tryon

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Toni obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Texas Christian University, where she graduated *magna cum laude*.

Her Doctor of Dental Surgery was received from Baylor College of Dentistry in Dallas, Texas. She worked as an associate in a Dallas office for a few years before deciding she wanted to start her own office. “Going from being an associate dentist to an owner dentist has been a lot of fun, frustrating and exciting,” she stated. “I love having my own office. The area we are located in is just amazing.” Choosing Midlothian, the office opened in March 2011, and as Toni said, “We have been going full speed ever since.”

In planning and designing the new office, Toni knew exactly how she wanted it to feel. Translating the feeling into furnishings became her husband’s job. He was able to listen, understand

her concept and tell her what it needed to look like, what colors and design to have. "My goal all along was to create a place that's like a home," Toni said. "One of the new things in dentistry is spa dentistry with spa amenities in the office. I want this office to be more than that. To me, it's not so much like a spa but Southern hospitality. I want you to come in and feel welcome. So, if that means you want pillows and blankets when you sit down, we have that. If you want to watch TV or block out everything, we have the headphones. I'm glad those amenities are there, and I love the technology, but none of that matters if you are going someplace where you don't feel comfortable. It's not just me. It's the staff, too. Michelle up front is amazing. She remembers everybody's name and face. It starts there, and the assistants Stephanie and Ashley in the back really make patients feel at ease."

"My goal all along was to create a place that's like a home."

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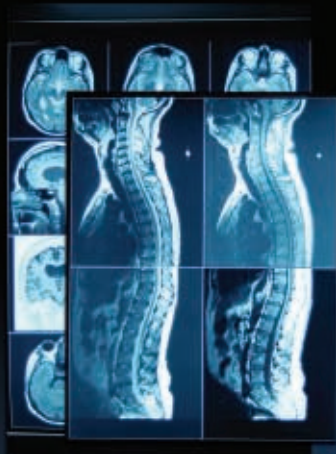
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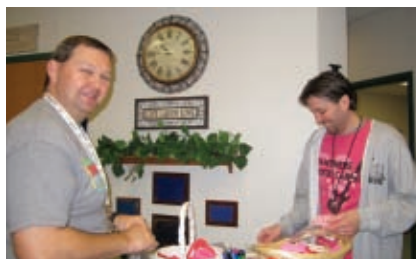
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Peanut Battle

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

What a dichotomy. What you eat to stay alive and healthy can, without warning, turn into your most dangerous enemy and kill you within minutes. Americans are allergic to many foods, but one particular food has received much attention in recent years — peanuts. One of the reasons for the amount of attention drawn to peanut allergies is the effect these allergies have on children. There could be dire consequences depending on the sensitivity of the child and the amount of peanuts they eat.

The incidence of peanut allergy in children has doubled since 1997 to 2002. The alarm grows when one considers how easily an allergic attack can be precipitated. Reports have been received of allergic reactions in peanut-sensitive individuals just from peanut dust or airborne particles in the air of airplane cabins and inside bars. True stories abound about severe reactions from the slightest contact. One well-known case is the teenager in Ohio whose boyfriend had eaten a peanut butter and jelly sandwich early in the day. Later on that day, they shared a kiss. The slight residue of peanuts from hours earlier threw her body into a severe allergic reaction.

Surprisingly, peanut sources are not always so obvious. Peanuts can be in sauces, pizza, vegetarian foods — particularly those used as protein or meat substitutes — and even in hot chocolate. Some peanut allergy sufferers also have allergies to tree nuts such as,

walnuts, almonds and Brazil nuts. In some commercial preparations of nuts, there can be cross-contamination with peanuts, so those with peanut allergies have to be especially careful and check with their doctor as to whether nuts should be eaten at all.

Allergic reactions can vary from mild to severe and be as serious as hives. Or, it could be life-threatening as in anaphylaxis, which is a severe allergic reaction. Some of the symptoms in anaphylaxis are dizziness and possible loss of consciousness from a drop in blood pressure. Breathing becomes difficult because the airways swell and tighten. There can also be swelling of the face and eyes. These symptoms can occur within seconds. Often individuals with severe allergies carry epinephrine [EpiPen or Twinject] with them. If the person has an attack, do not assume this injection is all that is needed. If they have trouble breathing, do not put anything in their mouth such as antihistamines. A dangerous situation such as anaphylaxis calls for emergency treatment. Call 9-1-1 immediately.

Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for lunch are as American as apple pie. However, with the increased occurrence of children having this allergy, some customs may have to change. **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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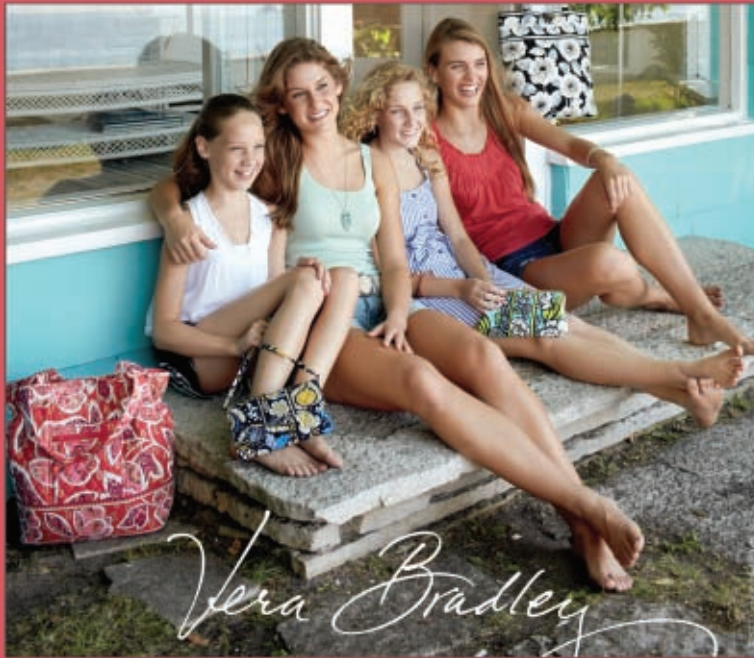
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March 3

Midlothian Chapter #234 Order of the Eastern Star, 3rd Annual Chili Cook-off, noon – 3:00 p.m., Midlothian Masonic Lodge, 1414 N. 9th St. Open to the public. Proceeds benefit Midlothian OES Scholarship Fund. Contact Brenda Tucker at (214) 534-4023 or Bill Hileman at (817) 907-5677.

Midlothian Soccer Association Blowout Celebration in honor of soccer and everything our community has to offer: 9:00 a.m. until dark, Hawkins Spring Park. All of Midlothian is invited. You can participate as a vendor or become a sponsor. (972) 692-7865.

March 8

City of Midlothian quarterly blood drives: 8:30 a.m.-noon, City Hall parking lot.

March 24

Experience Midlothian Community Expo: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center. Local businesses are showcased to the community. Contact the Chamber at (972) 723-8600 or e-mail info@midlothianchamber.org.

March 31

Easter Egg Hunt: 10:00 a.m., Kimmel Park. The Downtown Business Association is asking for donations. All candy donations must be

individually wrapped. Items can be dropped off at 411 North 8th Street or at the Chamber offices.

2012 Lawn & Garden Expo presented by Ellis County Master Gardener Association: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Ln., Waxahachie. Adults/\$5; children under 12/free. Free admission tickets available from participating sponsors. Contact ecmga.com for more information.

Healing Hearts Center's 1st Annual Gala "Facing the Giants, Breaking the Silence": 7:00 p.m., in the banquet hall of First United Methodist Church, 505 West Marvin, Waxahachie. Tickets can be purchased online at www.healing-hearts-center.org. Call (972) 388-4777.

Ongoing:

The Last House Group of Alcoholics Anonymous: **Sundays:** 11:00 a.m. **Monday-Saturday:** 7:00-8:00 p.m., 110 West Ave. F, Suite 100 in Downtown Midlothian (across the street from the log cabin and in the RE/MAX building).

Mondays

Celebrate Recovery: 7:00-9:00 p.m., Lighthouse Coffee Bar, 1404 N. 9th Street. This is a Christ-

centered support group for those recovering from hurts, habits and hang-ups.

Tuesdays

Midlothian Rotary Club: Noon, Midlothian Civic Center, 224 South 11th St. Call (972) 775-7118.

First Tuesdays

The Midlothian Area Historical Society meeting: 7:00 p.m., Community Room, Citizens National Bank, 310 N. 9th St. For information, e-mail midlothianhistory@hotmail.com.

Third Wednesdays

The Ellis County Christian Women's Connection, affiliated with Stonecroft Ministries, monthly luncheon: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Hwy. 287 and I-35 East (Exit 401B). \$13, inclusive. Reservations are preferred. Vouchers for child care are available. Contact Kay at (972) 937-2807 or windchime423@yahoo.com, or Margaret at (972) 937-1016 or pmestep@yahoo.com.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to btryon.nowmag@sbcglobal.net.



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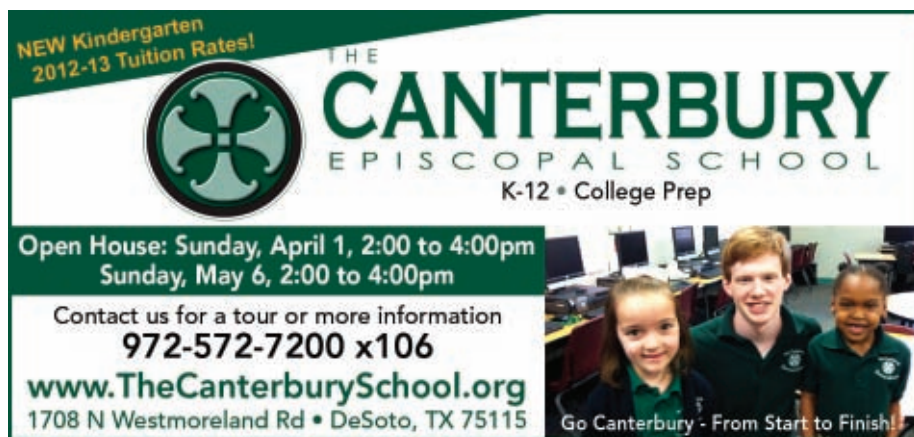
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In The Kitchen With Vanessa Larsen

— *By Betty Tryon*

For Vanessa Larsen, cooking is all in the family. At the age of 7, she began something she called kitchen-sink cooking. “I just put a little of everything we had together,” she said. “My dad, very bravely, ate everything I made for him.” At the age of 87, her dad’s favorite gift is still a new cookbook.

Vanessa also has that adventurous spirit of trying new recipes and has “a large collection of cookbooks. I usually try at least one new recipe a week.” She has passed that love of cooking to her daughter, who loves to help in the kitchen. Vanessa shares one of her favorite recipes, Blueberry Tart, with us. It is a family tradition. “Someone always brings it when we get together.” **NOW**

Blueberry Tart

1/2 cup brown sugar
2 sticks margarine, softened
2 cups flour
1 cup powdered sugar
8 oz. cream cheese, softened
2 pkgs. Dream Whip
1 cup milk
2 tsp. vanilla flavor
1 can blueberry pie filling

1. Cream the brown sugar and margarine together; add flour gradually.
2. Press evenly into the bottom of a 9 x 13-inch pan. Bake at 350 F for 15 minutes. Let cool.

3. Cream powdered sugar and cream cheese together.
4. Mix Dream Whip, according to package directions, with milk and vanilla flavoring. Fold into cream cheese mixture.
5. Pour evenly over crust. Refrigerate for 1 hour to set.
6. Top with blueberry pie filling and refrigerate overnight.

Easy Cheesy Fajita Dip

1 lb. Velveeta cheese, cut-up
1 6-oz. pkg. grilled chicken breast strips, chopped
1/4 cup green pepper, chopped
1/4 cup red pepper, chopped

1 small onion, chopped
1/2 cup sour cream
Chips of your choice
Assorted cut-up vegetables (your choice of variety)

1. Microwave first 5 ingredients in a 2-quart bowl on high 6-8 minutes, or until cheese is melted. Stir after 3 minutes.
2. Stir in sour cream until well-blended. Serve with chips and/or vegetables.

Chocolate Éclair Cake

1 box graham crackers
2 small pkgs. instant vanilla pudding
3 cups milk
1 8-oz. container Cool Whip
1 can milk chocolate frosting

1. Cover bottom of 9 x 13-inch pan with graham crackers (whole, not crushed).
2. Prepare both packages of pudding together as directed on box but with only 3 cups of milk.
3. Spoon in Cool Whip, until well-blended.
4. Pour half of the pudding mixture on top of graham crackers.
5. Top with another layer of graham crackers, then the other half of the pudding mixture. End with a layer of graham crackers.
6. Stir frosting well to soften and spread on top.
7. Refrigerate for at least 8 hours so crackers can soften.

Snickers Salad

1 8-oz. container Cool Whip
1 small pkg. white chocolate instant pudding
4-6 granny smith apples, diced
20 small Snickers bars, or 3 standard-sized Snickers bars, diced

1. Spoon the entire tub of Cool Whip into a large bowl.
2. Sprinkle the packet of pudding over the Cool Whip and use a whisk to combine the two together.
3. Stir in apples and Snickers bars.
4. Serve immediately, or refrigerate for up 8 hours.

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



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