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Rosemary Velasquez
helps Waxahachie Girl
Scouts celebrate 100 years.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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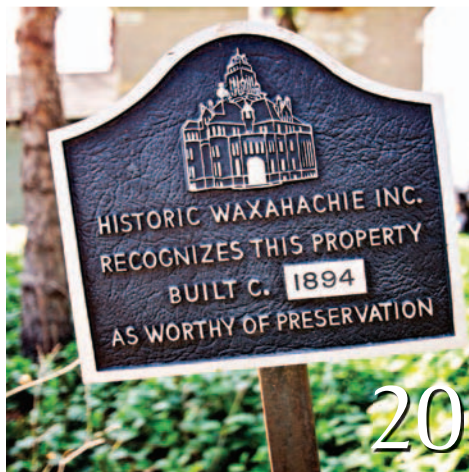
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Editor's Note

Hello Waxahachie,

I spent a couple days on the Internet researching the month of March. I came upon Incredible Kid Day on March 15. Campfire USA created this day to show all kids they are loved and cared for. It's the one day during the year reserved for celebrating our sons and daughters. I don't know about you, but I'm also going to honor my grandson with hugs and kisses so he knows how "awesomely incredible" he is to me.

I also learned some new things about St. Patrick's Day, celebrated on March 17. I learned over 34 million Americans are of Irish descent, even though we all claim to have a "little bit of the Irish" in us when it comes to everything green. As the Irish say, "May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain and may God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you!"

Sandra

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The YEAR of the girl

— By Sydni Thomas

Tagalongs, Do-si-dos, Trefoils, Samoas and Thin Mints need no explanation. They are some of the most popular cookies in the country, and it is easy to spot the group of smiling girls selling them at store fronts across the country. The cookie program is one of the most recognized parts of Girl Scouts, but there is much more to a Girl Scout than just cookies. One hundred years ago, one woman set out to change the lives of 18 girls. Instead of just impacting that small group, she created a program that revolutionized leadership development, community service and entrepreneurship for girls across the world — and here in Waxahachie.

Juliette Gordon Low created the first Girl Scout Troop on March 12, 1912, in Savannah, Georgia. She wanted to challenge the typical activities of girls and give them the opportunity to develop physically, mentally and spiritually. The girls began spending their time doing community service, hiking, playing basketball, camping and studying first aid. The goal was to get them into the fresh air and out of their isolated home environments. Since that first Girl Scout Troop of 18 led by Juliette, membership has grown to over 3.2 million girls and leaders, and the program boasts over 50 million alumnae.

“I think the organization has continued to develop programs that push the envelope of what is considered a girl activity,” Waxahachie Girl Scout Troop Leader Michele Ostendorf said. “Girl Scouts is a leadership development organization, but it has also focused on programs involving community awareness and truly allowing the girls to develop what they believe is valuable to themselves.”

In celebration of their Golden Anniversary, the Girl Scouts



Michele Ostendorf, Rosemary Velasquez (Membership Specialist over Waxahachie) and Brandi Deere (Public Relations Specialist & Girl Scout Troop Leader)

of the USA named 2012 Year of the Girl and launched their anniversary Take Action Project, Girl Scouts Forever Green. This national effort focuses on girls leading their families, friends, schools and communities in waste reduction, energy conservation and rain gardens.

"We are committed to supporting the Forever Green project through our Ellis County Girl Scout Green Out where they will learn how they can help, whatever their age level, in reducing waste and making a difference in our environment," Waxahachie Girl Scout Troop Leader Brandi Deere said. "Additionally, they will be presented with the opportunity to learn about the lifecycle of waste put into landfills that could have otherwise been recycled. The Girl Scouts will be able to make crafts from recycled materials to teach them they can reuse materials in new ways."

The average girl spends three years in Girl Scouts, but the program is available for those in kindergarten through 12th grade. Girls can participate as part of a troop or as an individual

"Our community has given us so much, and we are here to give back to them. We're always looking for projects for the girls."

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member. As participants get older they are able to take part in many more service activities, as well as traveling programs, but that is around the time that many girls begin leaving the organization. "Girls start dropping out in middle school," Michele admitted. "At that age, other things begin competing for their time. They have more school work and extracurricular activities. Plus, many leaders step down and they aren't replaced."

As well as troop leaders, adult volunteers are needed to help with campouts, community service projects and cookie sales. Michele started volunteering when her oldest daughter joined Girl Scouts. She began as a Girl Scout troop leader (for five years) and also volunteers as service unit manager, overseeing all Waxahachie troops. When her youngest daughter joined, Michele began volunteering for her troop, too, but not as a Girl Scout troop leader.

Brandi's story is similar. She began volunteering last year as a Girl Scout troop leader for her daughter's troop. She also volunteers as public relations specialist for all Waxahachie troops. Brandi participated in Girl Scouts as a young girl and was happy to return to

lead girls in their journey through the program. "One of the biggest needs for Girl Scouts is financial support from individuals and community partners to help girls who might not otherwise be able to participate in the Girl Scout program," Brandi said. "The other challenge is finding a place to meet. Girl Scouts believe in leaving a place cleaner than they found it and as such, take good care of their meeting space."

One of the largest areas of the Girl Scout program is teaching girls how to give back to their community. The youngest members learn how to participate as a group in community service projects. As they get older, they branch out into serving on their own. They help with the SPCA, Hope Clinic



Maddie Shappard, Brownie, age 9.

and even create summer programs for daycare centers. "We want to get the word out that we do community projects," Michele said. "Our community has given us so much, and we are here to give back to them. We're always looking for projects for the girls."

As the girls do more Take Action projects as a troop and on their own, they are eligible to receive scholarships. Each year, girls across the country are awarded for the amount of time they give back to their community or project of their choice. The highest award a Girl Scout can earn is the Gold Award, available for

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girls in ninth through 12th grades. This is accomplished through 80 hours or more in Take Action, a project that makes a sustainable and measurable impact. Younger Girl Scouts are eligible to pursue the Bronze and Silver Awards. "Girl Scouts offers so many scholarships," Rosemary Velasquez, membership specialist for Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas, said. "One Girl Scout alone earned \$400,000 in scholarships by writing about her Gold Award project that brought light to a Middle Eastern village that had no electricity. This girl didn't join Girl Scouts until seventh grade. It's never too late for a girl to join."

Girl Scouts and Girl Guide troops are located in 145 countries across the world. The destination travel program established for the older Girl Scouts allows them to travel to 92 different countries. Each girl participating in the travel program raises all of their travel expenses from selling cookies. "In sixth grade, the girls are able to begin participating in our destination program," Rosemary said. "We come up with a list of places like London and New Zealand that have Girl Guide programs where the girls can travel. The point is to connect them with other girls across the world and let them see the diversity. Some girls may never have had the opportunity to get on a plane. We want to provide that for them." **NOW**



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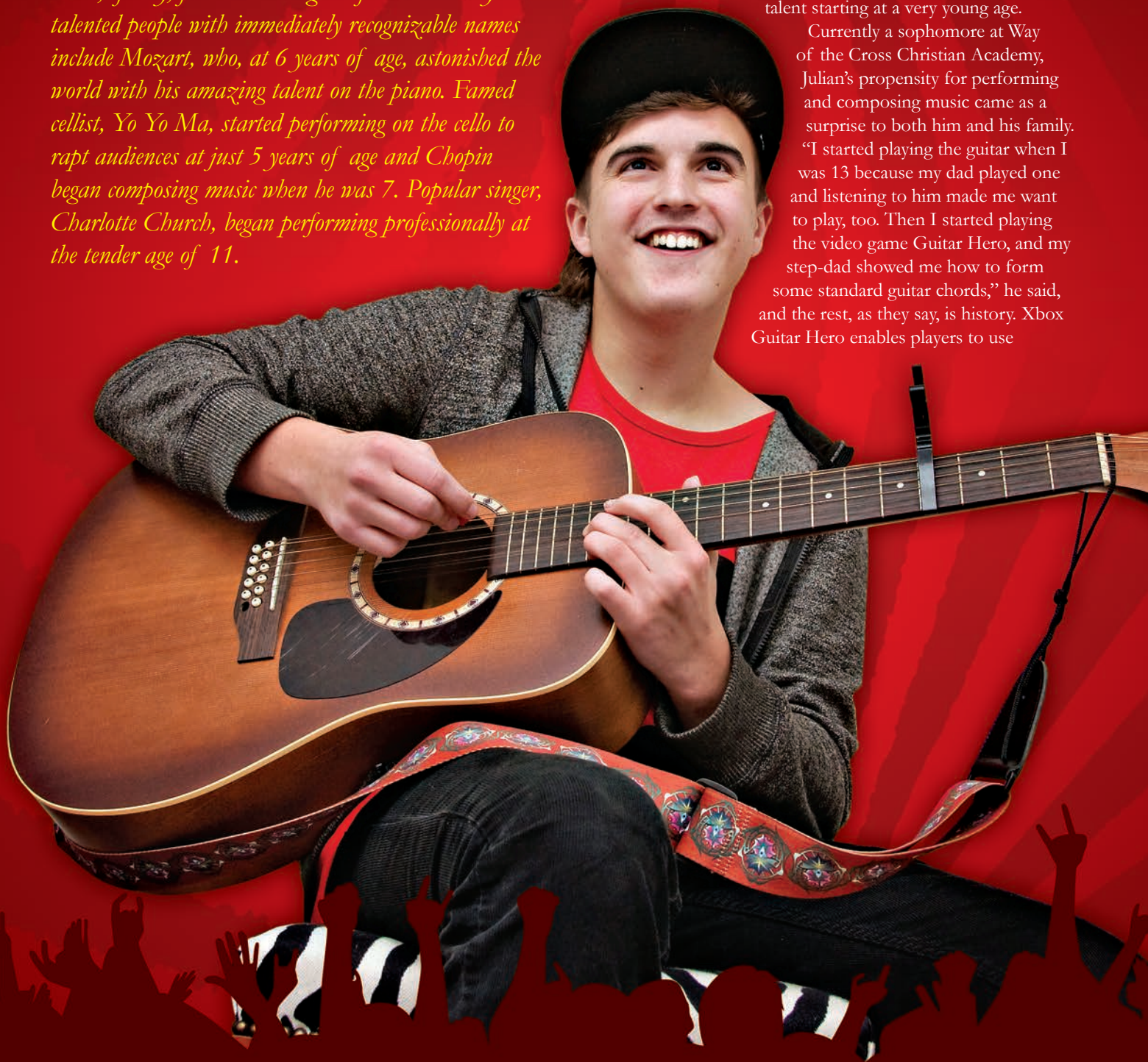
GUITAR VIRTU

— By Rick Herron

For some people, there are things in life that just come naturally, God-given talents that often emerge practically intact at an early age without the need for much, if any, formal training. A few enormously talented people with immediately recognizable names include Mozart, who, at 6 years of age, astonished the world with his amazing talent on the piano. Famed cellist, Yo Yo Ma, started performing on the cello to rapt audiences at just 5 years of age and Chopin began composing music when he was 7. Popular singer, Charlotte Church, began performing professionally at the tender age of 11.

All of them were born with undeniable musical gifts and exceptional talents and were quickly heralded as child prodigies. Anyone who listens to 15-year-old Julian Quinn play the guitar would not hesitate to include him on that impressive list of incredibly talented musicians who astounded the world with their talent starting at a very young age.

Currently a sophomore at Way of the Cross Christian Academy, Julian's propensity for performing and composing music came as a surprise to both him and his family. "I started playing the guitar when I was 13 because my dad played one and listening to him made me want to play, too. Then I started playing the video game Guitar Hero, and my step-dad showed me how to form some standard guitar chords," he said, and the rest, as they say, is history. Xbox Guitar Hero enables players to use



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a guitar-shaped game controller to simulate playing lead, bass guitar and/or rhythm guitar across a wide range of rock music songs.

As his love of playing the guitar grew, so did his collection of stringed instruments. "I have an Epiphone Les Paul and a Schecter, both of which are electric guitars; a Godin 12-string acoustic guitar that my mom got me for Christmas; a Dean Acoustic 6-string, a banjo and a dobro," he said. A dobro is an acoustic guitar with a metal resonator built into its body.

His mom, Julie Campbell, says it all started when she was looking for something she hoped he could really get interested in. She "went out on a wing" and decided to buy him a guitar. "I gave him his first guitar two years ago," she said. "I knew he was creative, and I hoped I could find a way to channel that creativity. I also knew

he was curious about the guitar, having heard his dad play, so I bit the bullet and bought him one



"I could not have accomplished what I have done so far without my mom's support, and I would not have the talent I have without God."



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for Christmas. I didn't know what he would do with it, but I was thrilled when he picked it up and started practicing every day when he came home from school. I also bought him a keyboard, which he taught himself to play, and he was playing both for a while until he pretty much started focusing on the guitar."

Before long, the family made the startling discovery that Julian could play by ear. "Shortly after I got him the guitar, he heard a Van Halen song, picked up his guitar and, after a few tries, was able to play the whole song without any sheet music," she said. "That's when we knew he was definitely gifted musically."

For a time after Julian starting playing,

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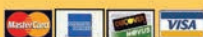
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he was a member of the band, Found in the Fallen, which practiced twice a week in Red Oak. "There were five of us in the band: a drummer, two guitarists, a base player and a vocalist," he said, describing Found in the Fallen as a sub-genre of metal called deathcore, which is a metal fusion genre combining death metal with elements of metalcore or hardcore punk and is characterized by use of "death metal riffs, blast beats and hardcore punk breakdowns."

Julian gets his inspiration for composing and playing guitar from several well-known artists including John Butler, Earl Scruggs, John Lennon, Misha Manssor and Tommy Emmanuel. "John Butler is probably my favorite artist of all time. He's from Australia and has a style I'd describe as 'folksy.'"

His natural proficiency with stringed instruments has steadily grown over the past year to include several genres. According to his Facebook page, Julian Quinn Music, he has also started playing the mandolin, banjo and ukulele and hopes to eventually learn to play the sitar, a plucked stringed instrument predominantly used in Hindustani classical music.

In the next five years, the young prodigy would love nothing better than to find himself touring the world with band. "Eventually I think I'd like to make a transition to performing purely acoustical music at some point," he mused.

In the meantime, Julian plays at church gatherings in the Dallas area and for the public in downtown Fort Worth and Dallas. "I've played lots

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of places, including Fort Worth and Sundance Square last summer," Julian said. He began performing in front of live audiences two years ago shortly after getting his first guitar.

When it comes to performing in front of audiences, Julian likes being on stage and doesn't seem to suffer much stage fright. "I was kind of scared to perform at first because I didn't know if audiences would like me, but I got confident after I realized I could play anything after hearing it once. One thing is for sure, I always say a prayer before I go onstage," he said, and added he knows "God has a big role" in his burgeoning performing career.

He now writes most of the songs the band plays and finds composing to be something he really loves. "Lately I've been composing more than playing. I'd love to do that professionally but at this point, I don't have any idea how to break into the composing business," he admitted.

Julian is looking forward to recording his first CD, which he envisions will be an "extended play" with two songs which he wrote, of course. "We'll probably take the band to Tonal Recordings in Fort Worth to cut the CD pretty soon," he said.

With a natural talent and love for composing and playing guitar, and as a real audience-pleaser who regularly gets standing ovations, Julian's future in music looks bright. The 15-year-old musical genius, though, is quick to give credit where he knows credit is due. "I could not have accomplished what I have done so far without my mom's support and I would not have the talent I have without God." **NOW**

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Caretakers of History

— By Randy Bigham



At home with:
Robert and Linda
Alvarez

Proud of the unique Victorian house they own, a Waxahachie couple is even more gratified by its intriguing history. Built in 1889, the John Solon House, home to Robert and Linda Alvarez since 2005, endures as a tribute to an Ellis County pioneer, while serving as a reminder of a more elegant era. "We have always loved old houses and collecting antiques," Linda said. "But this place is more than an old house to us."





Made of Texas limestone with a distinctive horseshoe motif encircling a second story window, the house and grounds were once known as Caledon, named for the Irish village where the original owners, businessman John Solon and his wife, Mary Agnes, were born. For many years, Caledon was comprised of 100 acres and, until recent decades, was located on the outskirts of the city. Now the two-acre estate stands sentinel over a busy thoroughfare and thriving residential district, the result of John Solon's own efforts toward expansion over a century ago.

Despite its modern surroundings, the 123-year-old house's period flair is carefully maintained by the Alvarezes, who consider themselves not just owners of the property, but caretakers of its history. "We've tried to remain true to the spirit of the house," Robert said. "We've kept in mind the decorating style of the late 19th century, as well as what we think John Solon himself would have liked."

He would most likely be pleased. Although restoration of the structure (now entered in the National Register of Historic Places) was essential when Robert and Linda bought the place, the pair hasn't altered any significant original features. The grounds have also been kept

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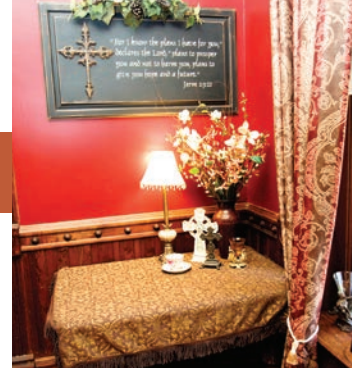
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much as they once were, right down to the irises planted by the mistress of the house in the 1920s. Even the former carriage house has been preserved and stands a stone's throw from the rear entrance. The 3,100-square-foot house contains three bedrooms and five other spaces: two sitting rooms, a formal dining room, a kitchen and a chamber over the kitchen that once served as servants' quarters.

"We're glad to live in a house with a



link to Waxahachie history," Robert said, but qualified that it hadn't been a goal for either he or his wife. "It just happened!" he laughed. Originally from El Paso, Robert moved to Waxahachie with his family at a young age. Born in Houston, Linda was also a child when she relocated to this city with her parents. They were in their teens when they met at a football game and began dating soon after. The high school sweethearts have been married for 28 years, have four children and are also proud grandparents.

Contemplating a move to land they owned in the countryside near Waxahachie a few years ago, the Alvarezes' decision to buy the Solon house instead came about by chance. "I attended an estate sale held here," Linda said. "I told my husband I wasn't going to

buy anything. I just wanted to see the inside of the house."

"Famous last words," Robert interjected.

Impressed with the house and its price tag, Linda urged Robert to make an offer. "There was no convincing necessary," he confessed. "I fell in love with it on first sight." They moved into the home in October 2005 and were almost immediately invited to enter the house in the following year's Christmas Tour of Homes. "That served as an incentive to get the place in order," Linda said. "But it was a lot of work." The couple was inspired in the refurbishment by the interest locals showed in the property's heritage. "People shared information with us about the house," Robert said. "And bit by bit we learned about the Solons and the relatives who took over after they died."

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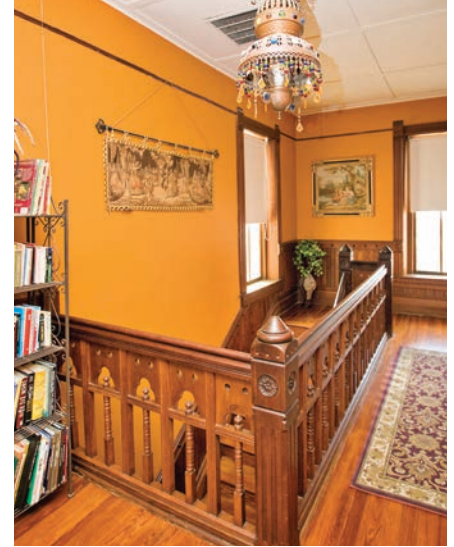
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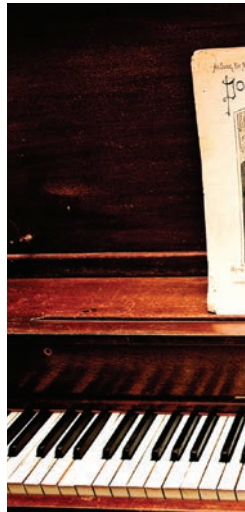
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For a mere \$6,000 in 1889, Caledon was built by John Solon, a stone mason who settled in Ellis County in the 1860s. Opening the first brickyard in Waxahachie, Solon supplied hand-cut stone for a number of downtown structures, including the Navarro County Courthouse in 1872. Specially shipped from Millsap Quarry by the Houston & Texas Central Railroad, the same type of limestone that would eventually build his own home was used by Solon to construct commercial establishments in Weatherford and Decatur, as well as the courthouses in those cities. Solon's regional fame as a builder was soon matched by his success as a cotton planter and rancher, and at the height of his career in the 1880s, he owned over a 1,000 acres of land in Ellis County. "We were lucky that scrapbooks, letters and old photos were left in the attic," Robert said. "It's been fun reading about the family and their descendants."

The Solons were childless, Robert and Linda learned, and although wealthy, they seldom participated in social events, instead devoting their time to religious charities. Charter members of Waxahachie's St. Joseph Catholic Church, the Solons adopted an orphaned boy whom they raised as their own. Sometime in the early 1900s, after the old couple passed away, their house passed to a relative named Mary Teresa Coates (nicknamed Tess or Tessie), a young woman believed to be their great niece.



A 1912 graduate of The University of Texas, Tess became an accomplished musician and traveled the world. She was escorted to parties in Paris by such eligible gentlemen as the heir to the Luden's Cough Drop fortune. The blonde beauty preferred Texas to Europe and returned home to marry a local boy, Lewis Dallas Johnston, with whom she had a son in 1926, the late Dr. Louis C. Johnston.

"There are rumors the house is haunted," Robert said. "But we've had no scary experiences." For the Alvarezes, their time in the house has been marked by happiness, so if there are spooks they must be happy, too. "The house is always full of family," Robert said. "There have been two weddings here and countless birthday parties." If the ghosts of John or Tess do roam the house, they would approve of the work the current owners



have put into retaining its Victorian character. From bulls-eye molding and pine paneling to pocket doors and coal-burning fireplaces, Caledon is very much intact. Other fixtures are also original: a chandelier that hangs in the upstairs hallway, a built-in china cabinet and all mantle pieces in the downstairs rooms, including one with its Italian tile still bright and undamaged.

"Our own taste is eclectic," Linda admitted. "We like to be comfortable, so there are modern pieces mixed in with antiques." Most of all Robert and Linda like preserving their home's fascinating heritage. "We feel protective of it," Robert said. "We want to keep its history alive." **NOW**

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Cultivating a New Approach

— By Dianne Reaux



For some, obsolescence can evoke feelings of giddiness when thinking of buying the hottest, newest gizmo that has just hit the market. But for others, it's a major annoyance when the old gizmo (that many are perfectly content with) is on life support because replacement parts aren't available, or product updates are no longer being developed and maintained. And for those folks, two options remain. They can either ditch the gizmo or replace it.

Technology has evolved and permeated society in ways we could never have imagined 20 years ago. Over the past decade, many consumers, along with their wallets, have had trouble keeping up. Many people couldn't function on their jobs without computers. Cell phones have become a necessity. Social media has taken interactive communication to an entirely new level.

A great day of recreation or leisure doesn't necessarily mean a hot, sweaty day on the basketball court or golf course. Not when so many people can turn to their trusty Wii remotes, computers, home theater systems and PlayStations. With the remarkable technological advancements that have been made in the sciences,



medicine, business, transportation and everything in between, American educators realized they could no longer afford to marginalize the driving impact technology was having on what students were learning — and how it was being taught in their classrooms.

During the mid 1980s in one of Waxahachie's own classrooms, a young April Moon was cultivating her passion for math and science. She and her parents,

“I loved math. It was my first love.”

Pat and Nancy Edwards, and her brother, Ryan, had moved to Waxahachie when she was in second grade. Even as a child her passion for math was apparent. “I loved math,” April said. “It was my first love.”

She also had a natural curiosity about how things fit together. “I would analyze and breakdown anything and everything; even my food,” April said, smiling broadly.

While in junior high, her math teacher,



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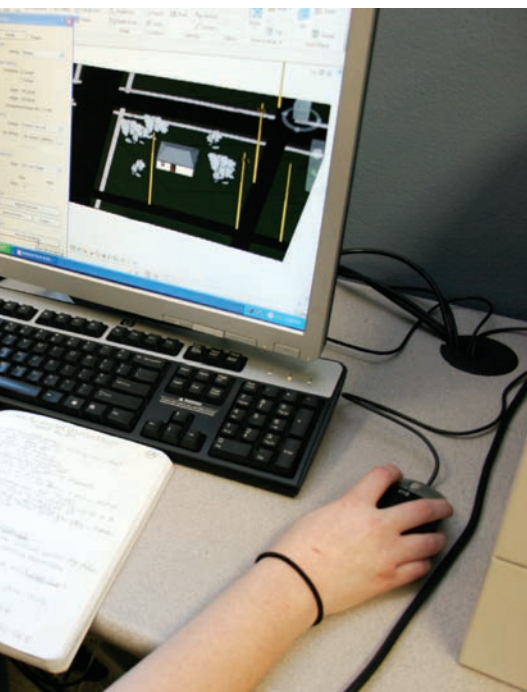


Ms. Carrie White, was particularly influential on April. "I was crazy about Ms. White. She was wonderful," April admitted. "She truly set the foundation for who I am professionally. My love for mathematics and my desire to be a positive influence in the lives of others through teaching came from her. My mother, principal of Shackelford Elementary, is also a professional inspiration for me."

When April graduated from the Waxahachie High School in 1995 and decided to attend Texas A&M University, she didn't have her career path charted out. With no grand plan in place, someone suggested she should major in engineering. "I didn't know much about engineering at the time other than it involved mathematics," April confessed.

On the heels of that casual suggestion, April had her major. Although the decision to major in engineering was casually made, there was nothing casual about the way she pursued her studies. She was a serious student and graduated *magna cum laude* from Texas A&M in 1999 with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering, specializing in structural engineering.

While at A&M, she interned with Garrett Engineering, and after graduation landed a position as a senior consultant with Accenture, a business consulting firm. While there, she worked in the telecommunications environment. "I



worked in program management, process development, circuit cost recovery and contracting," she stated.

April had several opportunities to travel internationally to Singapore, Australia and Germany, to give presentations and train her global audiences. April enjoyed her work while with Accenture, but it didn't necessarily bring her the fulfillment she was looking for. "I designed processes and programs, but I really missed the math and engineering aspect of my field," she confessed.

As the Waxahachie ISD began to formulate a strategy to begin closing the gap between the existing science and math educational structure and the future needs of a technologically diverse workforce, they decided to try a new approach. They assembled a planning team consisting of educational professionals who would work hand-in-hand with business professionals to create and develop an educational environment focused on science, technology, engineering and math, also known as STEM. Someone they believed would be an ideal fit on their team was Waxahachie native, April Moon.

When April was approached to serve on the planning committee for Waxahachie Global High in 2006, she believed it would be an opportunity to fill a personal void her current career could not, so she accepted the offer. In May of 2008, she began graduate studies in mathematics at Texas A&M University.

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In December of 2009, April earned a master's degree in mathematics education, completing the degree requirements with an impressive overall GPA of 3.91.

The planning of Waxahachie Global High was completed in 2007, and the school welcomed its first students during the 2007-2008 school year. Today, this innovative school has a student population of around 350 and is not only a STEM academy, but is also classified as an early college high school. Last year, the school earned Texas Education Agency's Gold Performance recognition in seven areas and approximately 40 percent of the students completed their associate's degree one week shy of their high school degree.

At Waxahachie Global High, they take a project-based learning approach — one that reflects today's business environment. "These students will one day compete for the hot, 'competitive' jobs that don't yet exist in today's job market," April explained, "so we can't train them for specific positions. What we strive to do is prepare them to be good problem solvers, regardless of the type of problem. We teach our students how to use their knowledge and creativity to design unique solutions, how to communicate and how to work with others as a team. I believe that project-based learning will eventually become the new model for classroom learning. But change in the classroom doesn't come quickly, it takes time."

Her teaching at Waxahachie Global High includes Project Lead the Way courses in engineering and design, aerospace engineering, civil engineering and architecture. She serves as co-sponsor of the school's Technology Student Association chapter and is also an associate with the Texas A&M "Aggie" STEM Center and a master teacher with Project Lead the Way. She has co-authored a chapter in a college textbook on the engineering design process, helped write national high school assessments and periodically works as a consultant to school districts and educational service centers across Texas.

Although her plate seems to be overflowing, April still finds time to spend with her high school sweetheart and husband, Trey, and their 10-year-old twin sons, Brady and Braxton. April also enjoys horseback riding, photography, going to church and traveling. **NOW**



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Building on a Firm FOUNDATION

— By Sandra Strong

Sarah Farmer isn't scared to get her hands dirty, especially when it comes to creating things in the kitchen. "I've always mashed up the bread with my hands," Sarah said, remembering all the dressing she's helped her mom prepare for Thanksgiving dinners. "Mom didn't believe in cleaning as you go, so we always ended up with a mess. Dishes were from one end of the kitchen to another," she laughed.



This early introduction to the kitchen may very well be the first stepping stone to the art Sarah creates with a professional-grade, heavy duty mixer, bags filled with homemade icing and a large variety of tips. As an adult, these have become the tools of her trade — cake art. “I will try to create anything,” she stated. “I challenge myself to always go at least one step further than expected. The art is the challenge, and the cake is my canvas.”

As a young wife and mother, you would think that Sarah’s plate was filled to overflowing, but fortunately she wanted more. “I never had a real vision for my life until lately,” she confessed. “God allows me the talent and gifting to do what I do. I can unplug from the world around me and allow Him to move freely through me. His ideas become my ideas.”

What prompted Sarah to go from mashing the bread to creating edible works of art started back in junior high and extended well into her days in high school. Sarah didn’t realize she was rehearsing what would one day be her calling. A trip down memory lane jogged those memories. “When my friends and I got together, they always came up with reasons to bake a cake,” she explained. “It was always so much fun. But who does this? Well, my friends and I did.”

The cakes she baked and decorated in high school would definitely be considered “plain and somewhat mild” compared to the creations coming from Sarah’s kitchen today. Sarah takes great pride in making everything that is edible on the cake from scratch. You won’t find a box mix or canned icing anywhere in her kitchen.

One of her favorites to date is the ’57 Chevy Bel Air she created for Charles and Margaret Kozlovsky’s 50th wedding anniversary. “Mrs. Kozlovsky wanted to surprise him with a replica of his own ’57 he has spent so many years rebuilding and polishing,” she admitted. “They inspired me. You could still see the love and tenderness between them after 50 years.” This cake alone took three separate chocolate cake recipes, but the final outcome was one that the Kozlovskys found difficult to cut into.

Another favorite is the mounted deer head she baked and presented to



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her pastor and his wife on their 30th wedding anniversary. The 8-point rack was molded from wire and overlaid with white chocolate, but what makes this one so unique is the foundation. It didn't lie down on the table. It stood up just as though it had been mounted. "I used PVC pipe and a 'special' filling to make the cake not so heavy. Stabilization is the most important thing. The cake has to be built on a firm foundation," Sarah shared. She did confess to ordering the ears and eyes online from a taxidermy company, but quickly added, "They were non-edible, of course." The way in which this



particular cake was cut and served was also very important. "We cut it very, very carefully," Sarah smiled.

Over the past two years, Sarah has created many cakes. They've gone from simplistic to outlandish, but always delicious. They may feature fresh flowers, a personal timeline in icing or detailed hand painting and airbrushing. Other



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one-of-a-kind creations include an Xbox 360, a golf bag with clubs, a hockey puck, a camera and a guitar, to name only a few. One of the most detailed ones to date was a Toyota FJ Cruiser, completely



tricked out with working headlights. A five-tiered wedding cake has been her largest so far.

After having her daughter, Sarah had no real desire to return to the workforce. Opening her own business, I Do Cakes, and working from the comfort of her home seemed the logical choice. She finds great satisfaction in creating what a customer wants to the best of her ability. Making people happy with her art makes her happy, too.

Baking for Sarah is so much more than putting her God-given talent to use in the kitchen. "Baking is my therapy," she confessed without hesitation. "I get in the zone when I hear the whir of the mixer. I'm able to turn the outside world off and just bake. There's something very therapeutic about baking, and it's satisfying to see people enjoy what I've created. There's great joy in that."



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Sarah prides herself in being different. She gets her thinking-outside-the-box personality from her dad. "He's technical," she explained. "He has an engineer's mind, and he's super creative." While the natural talent she possesses came from her dad, experience in the kitchen at an early age was a gift from her mom. Over the years, she admitted she has learned a lot from tuning into KERA. "Sometimes I feel like Bob Ross, Julia Childs and Jacques Pèpin all rolled into one. I need some happy little trees on here," she said, laughing as she continued to hand paint a peacock feather atop a two-layered cake.

She believes in the barter system. She will bake a cake in exchange for a housecleaning or a night of babysitting. Sometimes she's able to kill two birds with one stone, so to speak. "I realized a special friend was having a birthday the following day," Sarah said. "My peacock cake became the birthday cake for a friend who loves peacocks. How cool is that?"

Recently, Sarah decided to venture out into the world of gluten-free recipes of her own making and vegan baking. "Some children are on special diets due to allergies," she explained, "but they still want to enjoy a cake or some cupcakes on their birthday, too."

When her daughter, Elise, turned 1, Sarah knew she had to come up with something very special. She knew she wanted to create a castle, but had no clear vision in mind. As things began to progress, her husband and biggest fan, Justin, began to voice his doubts. "He kept saying he didn't think it was going to work," she stated. "I made him look at it the morning after I'd worked all night long to finish it. He said, 'Okay, okay, you were right. It worked out. That's why you're the cake person and I'm not!'" **NOW**

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Changing the Game

— By Cindy Malone

A graduate of Texas A&M University in College Station, Kate Authier is very accustomed to standing up. Now she is standing up for her cheerleaders —Lexi Clendenen, Michelle Fotheringham, Megan Gaither, Destin Lott, Kaiden Maines, Ali Mong, Alyssa Post, Laurel Rominger and Kaylee Scott — and in doing so, is making a huge change in her community and her girls.



Kate teaches U.S. history and is the cheerleading sponsor at Howard Junior High School. Reared in Corsicana, she married her high school sweetheart after she graduated from college in 2008. "I was a cheerleader in high school," Kate said, "but A&M doesn't have cheerleaders, so when I began sponsoring cheer, I kind of had to start over." The concept of starting over is perfect for the program that Kate runs, since it is her goal to create athletic girls, with school spirit and leadership abilities. But before all of that, she wants them to be charitable and giving members of society.

In April 2011, several girls crowded in the gym to try out to be a cheerleader for either Finley Junior High or Howard Junior High. Kate had to pick both teams. The tryouts produced two great teams of nine. "I like having small



teams," Kate explained. "They are a super close group of girls who work great together." In July, that small team of girls attended the SMU (Southern Methodist University) NCA (National Cheerleaders Association) camp for cheerleaders. This camp not only solidified them as a team, but also gave them the team spirit it takes to be successful in the kind of program Kate runs.

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period, the school has a positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS) pep rally. The students who have met certain criteria for doing the right thing are rewarded with an all-day incentive and prizes. They go to the movies, have free gym time and a pep rally is given in their honor. Each of these pep rallies has a theme. "The last one was Hachie Idol," Kate smiled. "We had singers and dancers. Even the teachers got out there and did the wobble."

The cheerleaders especially love cheering at these events. "A lot of times my girls are some of the kids getting the incentives so they have extra fun, participating and cheering at the pep rally," Kate proudly explained. Having and encouraging school spirit is only one of the many things at which these special cheerleaders excel.





Unlike high school cheerleading, Kate's girls only practice once a week, on Mondays. That doesn't mean the girls aren't busy. Between cheering at football, basketball and volleyball games, the girls work in their multiple hours of volunteer work. Cheering for football is their favorite because of the stunts. "The girls are so smart and fun.

They even design some of their own stunts, so they love showing off on the field," Kate bragged. "Some stunts are even on the high school level."

One cheerleader, Ali, is an aspiring choreographer and also choreographs some of their dances, and she does it really well. "In a small program, the girls can really experiment with their talents. It's really a blast," Kate shared.

Another cheerleader, Kaiden, participates in beauty pageants and one-act play. "She's a natural actress," Kate admitted, "so a lot of the showy parts of cheerleading come easy to her."


Most of Kate's cheerleaders also play sports like volleyball, basketball and run cross-country. And at least for a portion of the school year, each girl will get to experience being the captain of the squad, including leading cheers and practices.

The responsibilities of being a cheerleader are not simply looking cute and chanting for the Howard girls. Each month, they go to Broadhead Road, from 287 to Garden Valley, to clean up as a part of the Adopt-A-Block program. "At first they were squeamish about touching the trash," Kate confessed, "but then they started making it a contest. They started having fun cleaning up."

During the weeks before Thanksgiving, the girls volunteered at Waxahachie Care, a food pantry that supplies food to families in need. They went to the center and assembled 300 Thanksgiving meal bags, complete with turkeys, macaroni and cheese and stuffing. The girls went back the Saturday before Thanksgiving and passed out those same meals to the

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Charles Lee, M.D.

families who needed them. They played with the kids, helped the elderly carry things to their cars and generally made it a happy occasion for all involved. "Even some of the girls' parents came to help out," Kate beamed. "We had a great time."

Probably their favorite volunteering event is when the girls, as cheerleaders, go to the Boys & Girls Club to hang out with the kids once a month. They help with homework, play games and generally serve as role models and encouragers. "Once, they were teaching all of the little girls some chants. A month later, when we came back, the girls were still doing the chants they had been taught," Kate explained. "Some of the kids we see all the time. The girls really bond with them. They are building some lasting

They are a super close group of girls who work great together.

relationships." The cheerleaders also completed a fundraiser selling lanyards to help raise money so they can donate some much needed new gym equipment to the Boys & Girls Club at the end of the year.

So far, the goals Kate has set for her team have been more than a little successful. The community leaders have noticed, and Jim Kaufman even provided a float for them at the Christmas Parade to honor all of their hard work. Of course, Kate and her girls don't do it for the recognition. "I want to help others," she explained. "I want to give my girls the joy found in giving to others. I want them to embrace being a positive role model."

Next year, the goals will continue through the programs they are working with now. Kate is also going to include the community service aspect of the program as one of the requirements in being a cheerleader. She would like to also enter her girls in a few cheering competitions, so they can experience the thrill of competitive cheerleading. Kate's main objective, one she is reaching, is to use her program to create well-rounded, academically successful, giving, competitive and kind girls. Based on her results so far, it's the cheerleaders of Howard Junior High who are the real winners. **NOW**



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Tom Brown still finds fulfillment taking photographs of people, places and things.

Fascinated With Photography

"Imagination comes to life when Tom Brown gets behind the camera." — By Sandra Strong

Tom Brown has always been fascinated with photography. It all began in the seventh grade with a 110 point and shoot. As a teenager, Tom found himself working for a professional photographer in his hometown of Montezuma, Kansas. "I was a sophomore in high school when I landed my first professional job," he remembered. "It was a wedding."

As the story goes, his boss at the time had double-booked two engagements on the same day, at exactly the same time. Instead of canceling one, he sent Tom to do the job. "I had only worked as his assistant, neither one of us knew what I could really do," Tom confessed. "He went one way that day, and I went the other."

That day, Tom proved to himself, as well as to others, that he had a natural gift when it came to standing behind the camera. What began in high school snowballed into a career that has

definitely had its share of ups and downs.

Tom and his wife, Angela, also from Kansas, made their way to Texas on a dare. "I was working as a photographer taking ad print jobs," he explained. "I told her that if she could find a job, we'd move to a warmer climate. Angela came to Dallas one weekend. She came home with a house and at least two job offers."

At the time, Tom was working his craft, taking ad print jobs. Two weeks following Angela's trip to Dallas, he gave his two-week notice. He moved to Texas and started over at the bottom of the ladder. Once again, he started the upward climb working for others.

The couple resided in Dallas for nearly five years before deciding to move to the comfort of country living offered in Waxahachie. In May 2011, the opportunity for Angela to

help with the business provided a way to move Tom Brown Photography to Waxahachie. "In Dallas, I'd been focused on commercial clientele," he admitted. "I wanted my photography to have a more personal feel."

A lifetime of photography means a great deal of experience. Tom comes to each photo session with experience that has taken a lifetime to acquire. What began with a 110 point and shoot took Tom to the Colorado Institute of Art. "You have to be selected into the Institute," Angela said with pride in her voice. "Tom graduated at the top of his class."



Even though the experience at Tom Brown Photography is vast, it still has its challenges today. "I'm passionate about photography, and I'm a perfectionist," Tom stated. "I want to produce the perfect memory in every photograph, but sometimes it's so difficult."

"My biggest challenge is keeping him in line," Angela said with a laugh.

Black and white photographs are his favorite. "You see the character," he said. "The distractions that come with color photographs aren't present when shooting black and white."

The studio offers some wonderful in-house shots, but the farm where Tom and Angela live with their son, Dakota, offers so many more possibilities. "The farm allows for natural beauty," Tom explained. "We photograph young people, old people and everyone in between. At the end of the day, I just want clients to be happy." Tom is hoping to one day retire doing what he's always loved to do — taking photographs. "It's never really been a career," he said. "It's always been my passion." **NOW**

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Drs. David and Natasha Marcial

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Though every whiplash case is as unique as the patients who suffer them, chiropractic care to treat whiplash is a proven way to restore mobility, reduce pain and help you move on with your life.

What symptoms of whiplash appear within 24 hours of the injury? Every whiplash case is different, but usually the symptoms are as follows: headache at the base of the skull, painful bending or moving of the neck and/or spasms of the neck muscles.

How does a chiropractor treat whiplash? Diagnostic X-rays to pinpoint the cause of the pain and identify any other damage to the cervical area and the joints, nerves and muscles around it. Specialized spinal adjustments can realign the vertebrae and restore mobility. Targeted massage will soothe strained muscles around the injured area.

Whiplash usually takes us by surprise, but don't let a sudden, unexpected injury like whiplash derail your life. Seek qualified medical care and diagnosis by a professional, and remember chiropractic care is the safe, effective way to treat whiplash and not just mask the pain it causes.

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Ready to Start Again

— By Nancy Fenton

March is here, and with it comes our last freeze for this year. Of course, the weather experts don't tell you when in March, just that it will be around March 15. You take a chance if you plant tomatoes, peppers and eggplant much before the end of March. The soil and air temperatures have to warm up for these plants to thrive, so I plan to play it safe and wait until the end of the month. That is not to say you can't go ahead and buy the little plants and protect them in their pots for a few weeks. This is what I usually do, and I go one step further by treating them with liquid organic fertilizer at least once a week until I get them in the ground. My gardening friends grew beautiful tomatoes last year by getting a load of mushroom compost and tilling it into the soil a few weeks before they planted their tomatoes. My soil needs some of that this year.

I've had to hire out my digging this year while I recover from back surgery, and I have been amazed at how many digging styles there are. I've come to the conclusion that no one does it like I do, but at least it's getting done! I still have the 4-by-4 plots where I put the vegetables that need to be tilled with

compost, as well as all my patio pots to get ready. The pots all need to be washed and run through a Clorox rinse to sterilize them after last year's use. Fresh, amended soil will complete the process and get them ready for a beautiful display on the porches — and I really prefer to use plastic on my hanging baskets in hopes that they will not dry out so quickly.

I've been helping down at the greenhouse with the Master Gardeners (no digging required), and we've put together a number of lovely hanging baskets that will be full, colorful and lovely by the time the EXPO rolls around. Come to the Waxahachie Civic Center on Saturday, March 31, and check them out. I'll be sitting this year at the information booth trying to answer questions — more concessions to my back. Come say hello! For more information, call the Ellis County Master Gardeners at (972) 825-5175. **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.



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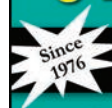
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Help Your Vehicle Last Longer and Maintain Value

— By Aaron Penny

Statistics show that almost half of drivers have deliberately skipped repair work in the past year, even though they knew it was needed. We've all been there. Auto repairs can be pricey, and most people don't have the extra disposable income to drop excessive funds on repairs. However, breaking down along the side of the road is never convenient and often costly.

Statistics also show that, on average, consumers are keeping their vehicles longer. This may be attributed to several things:

- **Quality vehicles are being made to last longer than their predecessors.**
- **The tight economy and weak job market has people more skeptical about taking on debt.**
- **More financial institutions and dealers are offering automobile service coverage that extends the life of vehicles.**

Make sure you do the research on your next auto purchase to help improve your vehicle's reliability and save money in the process. There are a full range of added products and services, available through select financial institutions, that will help extend the life on your next auto purchase, as well as help increase value. It's important to understand the following when viewing your next automobile service coverage contract:

- **Your investment is protected** – For most consumers, their vehicle is the most important asset they own. It meets all of the transportation needs of the family, and the last thing they need is a large, unexpected repair bill. A service contract alleviates this worry.

• **Repairs to fit into your tight budget** – By having a service contract that helps with major repairs, you are able to make payments over time versus the typical one-time large payment due when the repair is completed.

• **Vehicle value increases** – A vehicle that has been serviced on a regularly scheduled basis usually has a higher resell value than one that has not. An automobile service contract encourages consumers to regularly schedule service appointments, which in turn, increase the value of the vehicle.

• **Vehicles last longer** – The average automobile service contract covers many different parts of a vehicle and often goes beyond the manufacturer's warranty. Continued coverage on vital components means that they are serviced as needed, which will increase the lifespan of the vehicle and lead to a more reliable performance. This enables you to keep your vehicles longer and pass them on to the next generation.

So help your next vehicle last longer and protect yourself against unexpected, costly repairs in the process. Empower yourself and research which financial institutions are offering automobile service coverage in your area. **NOW**

Aaron Penny is the branch manager at the Neighborhood Credit Union in Waxahachie.

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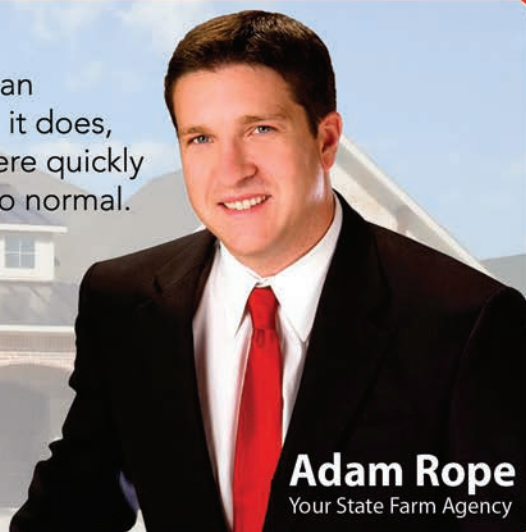
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Peanut Battle

— 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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March 3

Bowl For Kids' Sake: 11:00 a.m. or 1:30 p.m., Hilltop Super Bowl, 2010 W. Business 287, Waxahachie. Proceeds benefit the children served in Ellis County by Big Brothers Big Sisters. For a team packet or more information, visit www.bowlforkidssake.org or contact Diana Phillips at (972) 573-2420 or dphillips@bbbstx.org.

March 7

Teen Inc: 4:00-5:00 p.m., Sims Library meeting room, ages 11-18. Teens will be making "spring cleaning crafts." Snacks provided.

March 12

Girl Scouts' 100th Anniversary: 6:30-7:30 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Lane. Free outdoor ceremony at the Ellis County Memorial in front of the Civic Center, including a flag ceremony and Girl Scout

Friendship Circle. For more information, visit www.gssu251.org/Waxahachie.html or e-mail 100th@gssu251.org.

March 28

Teen Book Club: 4:00-5:00 p.m., Sims Library Loft located next to the upstairs Lyceum, ages 11-18.

March 31

12th Annual Lawn and Garden Expo: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Lane. Cost: adults/\$5, children under 12/free. Event includes plant sales by the Ellis County Master Gardeners Association, over 100 exhibit booths, workshops for children and adults, guest speakers, door prizes and more. For more information, visit www.ecmga.com or call (972) 825-5175.

Healing Hearts Center gala dinner: 7:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church banquet hall, 505 West Marvin. Tickets: \$5/person. Attire: evening wear. Call (972) 388-4777 for reservations or e-mail healingheartscenter@yahoo.com.

Easter Egg Hunt: 10:00 a.m., front lawn at Sims Library. Children 0-10 years old are invited to

participate. For more information contact the library at (972) 937-2671.

April 21

CureSearch Walk for Children's Cancer: registration: 8:30 a.m.; walk: 9:30 a.m., Texas Motor Speedway, Fort Worth. For more information, contact Elena at (469) 693-5156 or visit www.curesearchwalk.org/dfw/teamreagan2012.

Ongoing:

Wednesdays

Toddler Time at Sims Library: 10:00-10:20 a.m., 2 years old and younger. Program features age-appropriate books, finger plays and songs. For more information, call (972) 937-2671.

Fridays

Story Time at Sims Library: 10:00-11:00 a.m., presented by the Jr. Service League, children 3 and older. In addition to reading books, children will participate in a craft and receive a snack. Call the library at (972) 937-2671 for more information.

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

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In The Kitchen With Heidi Perkins

— *By Sandra Strong*

Heidi Perkins' recipes, especially the ones she keeps in her head, are connected to family, friends and people she's met along the way. "My love of cooking is directly linked to my love for my mom and grandmothers," Heidi admitted. "They're the ones who taught me how to cook. Much of the learning came from just watching."

As a self-proclaimed baker at heart, Heidi challenges herself with gourmet cooking. Heidi's maternal grandmother was also an amazing baker when it came to cakes, cookies and pies. "My mother learned from her mother," Heidi shared, "and I just held onto the apron strings." Heidi admits it's the creative process she loves. "I love that you can start with some ingredients, and the finished product is something beautiful." **NOW**

Cabbage Burgers

Sweet roll dough:

- 1 pkg. dry yeast
- 4-5 cups flour
- 1 cup lukewarm milk
- 1/3 cup butter
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. salt

Filling:

- 1 head of green cabbage
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 large yellow or white onion
- 2 lbs. ground chuck, browned and set aside
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 stick butter, melted

1. For dough: In a large mixing bowl, combine yeast and 2 cups of flour. In a

saucepan, heat milk, butter and sugar until warm.

2. Add the liquid mixture to the flour mix, also adding eggs and salt.
3. Add remaining flour as needed. Turn out onto a floured surface, kneading until smooth.
4. Place into a greased bowl, cover and let rise until it doubles in size.
5. For filling: Cut cabbage in half, removing core. Slice into coarse chunks.
6. Dice onions and add to cabbage into a large stock pot with vegetable oil, begin cooking on low.
7. Allow cabbage to cool until tender. Add cooked meat and salt and pepper to taste.
8. Should produce about 8 cups of filling. Drain into a strainer.
9. Split dough in half. Roll out one half on a floured surface into a huge rectangle, about 1/8-inch thick. Cut into squares of any size.
10. Put about 1/4 cup filling into center. Take opposite corners of the square and draw them up to meet in center, pinch.

Repeat with the last 2 corners.

11. Flip over onto greased cookie sheet. Repeat until all the dough has been used. Bake at 350 F for 15 minutes or until golden brown. The dough is thin so it will not take long to cook.

12. Brush with butter when they come out of the oven.

Chocolate Chip Cookies

- 1 lb. butter (not margarine)
- 1 1/2 cups white sugar
- 2 cups brown sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
- 1 Tbsp. almond extract
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 6 cups flour
- 1 10-oz. bag Ghiradelli 60% Cacao Bittersweet Chocolate Chips
- 1 10-oz. bag Ghiradelli Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chips
- 2 cups walnuts or pecans, optional

1. Cream butter and sugars together until smooth. Beat in eggs. Add extracts, soda and salt until combined.

2. Add flour one cup at time. Dough should be soft, but not sticky. Stir the chips and nuts in by hand. Drop onto cookie sheet using a 3-oz. scoop, pressing down slightly with your hand.

3. Bake at 350 F for 10-12 minutes, making sure not to overcook.

Egg Salad Sandwich

- 6 eggs, hard boiled and peeled
- Mayonnaise, to taste
- 1 Tbsp. mustard
- Garlic powder, to taste
- Salt and black pepper, to taste
- 2 Tbsp. onion, finely diced
- 6 slices white bread
- 6 slices wheat bread

1. Smash warm eggs with a fork. Mix in the amount of mayonnaise you like.

2. Add mustard and onion. Add salt, pepper and garlic powder to taste. Refrigerate until cold.

3. After laying white bread out, divide the egg salad mixture evenly on all 6 pieces of bread. Top with wheat bread to complete the sandwich. Remove the crust; cut into four triangles.

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