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Jim Ensina
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Cassandra Hopkins
Cell: 972.365.5743



Kim Jansonius
Ofc: 972.935.0095



Ginny Jilbert
Cell: 214.802.2023



Melissa Jones
Cell: 972.351.6270



Dan Lobb
Cell: 469.767.0930



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Leslie: 972.921.6880



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Tom Bartosh
tbartosh@primewestcorp.com
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Suzette Bartosh
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Publisher, Connie Poirier

General Manager, Rick Hensley

EDITORIAL

Managing Editor, Becky Walker

Waxahachie Editor, Sandra Strong

Editorial Assistant, Beverly Shay

Writers, Adam Rope . Sydni Thomas

Betty Tryon . Carolyn Wills

Editors/Proofreaders, Pat Anthony

Randy Bigham

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla

Artists, Kristin Bato . Casey Henson

Martha Macias . Felipe Ruiz

Arlene Honza . Brande Morgan

Shannon Pfaff

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Director, Jill Rose

Photographer, Amy Ramirez

ADVERTISING

Advertising Representatives,

Carolyn Mixon . Bryan Frye . Rick Ausmus

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ON THE COVER



One of many birdhouses created from Brenda Ivy's love of wood.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Publisher's Note

What an amazing decade!

Ten years ago a dream became a reality. On March 1, 2004, NOW Magazines' first publication, *CorsicanaNOW*, made its debut. With a concept not yet attempted outside the larger metro areas, we launched this community magazine with the mission of combining positive, uplifting articles and well-designed, full-color ads into a direct mail advertising product that really works. And really work, it did! With steady growth, our publication group has grown to include 10 community magazines: *CorsicanaNOW* – March 2004; *WaxahachieNOW* – November 2004; *EnnisNOW* – December 2004; *MidlothianNOW* – August 2005; *MansfieldNOW* – March 2006; *North Ellis Co.NOW* – April 2006; *SouthwestNOW* – November 2006; *BurlesonNOW* – August 2007; *WeatherfordNOW* – February 2011; *GranburyNOW* – October 2012.

Today we distribute our magazines to over 260,000 addresses every month free of charge, and have a readership of more than 600,000 across the 10 markets. Our readers are so kind to express their enjoyment in reading about their friends, neighbors and the good things happening in our communities. Thank you all! And to our more than 650 monthly advertisers — many who have been with us from the very beginning — thank you! We couldn't do this without you! I'd also like to thank our wonderful NOW Magazines staff, whose hard work and dedication make this all happen every month!

It's been a great 10 years, and we look forward to serving you for many more years to come!

Connie

Connie Poirier
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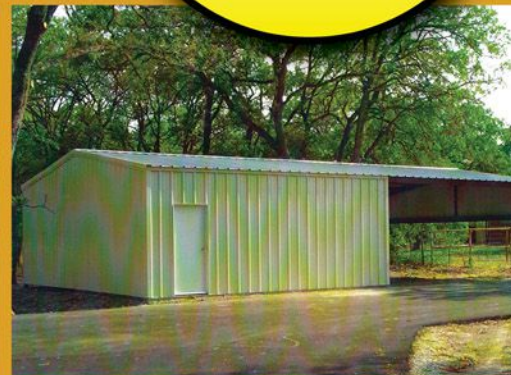
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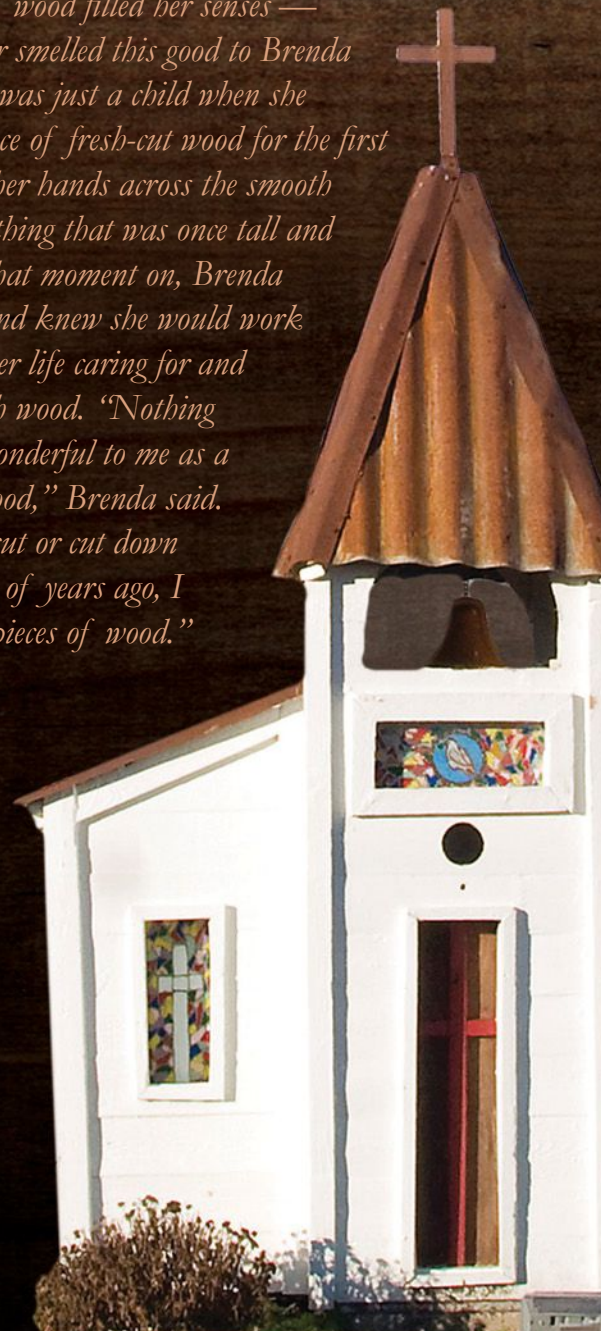
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Wood is Her Weakness

— By Sydni Thomas

The aroma of wood filled her senses — nothing had ever smelled this good to Brenda Ivy before. She was just a child when she picked up a piece of fresh-cut wood for the first time, rubbing her hands across the smooth grain of something that was once tall and alive. From that moment on, Brenda was in love and knew she would work the rest of her life caring for and creating with wood. “Nothing smells as wonderful to me as a piece of wood,” Brenda said. “Freshly cut or cut down hundreds of years ago, I love all pieces of wood.”





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WHAT YOU’RE WORKING WITH
TO BE SAFE. YOU HAVE TO
PAY ATTENTION THE WHOLE
TIME SO YOU DON’T HURT
YOURSELF OR THE PIECE YOU
ARE WORKING ON.”**

Self-taught, Brenda began her journey in woodworking. Power tools and wood stripping did not intimidate her. Whether creating a piece of new furniture or restoring an antique piece, Brenda’s goal is to preserve the wood as much as possible. Respect is shown for each piece of wood she comes across. “It’s not right for us to keep cutting down these living things that have stood for hundreds of years,” Brenda said. “Instead of rushing out to buy wood each time I want to create something, I try to recycle the wood from other things.”

Brenda’s woodworking is not a secret around town. Friends and sometimes strangers, who become new friends, will drop off wood at Brenda’s house just so they can see what she will come up with next. Wooden crates that are no longer useable often find their way to her doorstep. They are then turned into birdhouses. “I keep a big pile of scrap wood, so I can create whenever I want,” Brenda said. “The ideas just come to me when I’m around the house.”

Driving past the home Brenda shares with her husband, Larry, is like driving through her art gallery. Pieces she has created are carefully laid out around the property for the enjoyment of those passing by. Her birdhouses are the most notable. The intricate pieces are filled with clever details built on a larger than normal scale. Some of her birdhouses are so grand and large that an eagle would find the rooms comfortable. Each birdhouse is wired and lights up at night. “My favorite birdhouse right now is the dogtrot house,” Brenda said. “I painted little curtains in the windows, and the light shines through them at night. It was fun creating this one.”

On the side of the property, Brenda is building a little town of birdhouses. So far, she has a church, playground, outhouse and saloon but plans on adding a school house, bank and jail in the near future. These buildings are based on buildings from Lonesome Dove. The church was the first building in her town and features stained-glass windows that glow colorfully



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at night. On one side of the church sits the town outhouse, complete with a crescent moon. The Gin Palace Saloon resides on the other side of the church. "I wanted to put a lot of detail into the Gin Palace," Brenda said. "I wallpapered the inside, created a bar inside for customers and made little spittoons out front."

While birdhouses are the most noticeable of Brenda's creations, they aren't the only thing she creates. She routinely goes to garage sales to find old furniture to fix up. At one garage sale, she stumbled on an old, neglected cedar chest. She brought it home, put some time and care into it, and now it's good as new. Brenda breathes life back into disregarded pieces of wood. Some might see a pile of junk, but Brenda sees what it will look like when she puts her passion to work. "Some people don't realize what great pieces they have," Brenda said. "If they took the time to fix them

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up and take care of them, they would have some really nice pieces. It isn't hard for me to find a treasure at a garage sale. I'm always looking."

One thing Brenda will never do while refinishing furniture is put a piece of sandpaper to it. She believes it takes off the important layers

of the wood leaving it warped. Instead, she uses chemicals to strip it. This method was one of the biggest lessons Brenda taught herself. She even stripped all of the cabinets in her kitchen with this method and made them new again. "I quickly learned the chemicals will strip the skin right off of you if you aren't careful," Brenda said. "It's important to know what you're working with to be safe. You have to pay attention the whole



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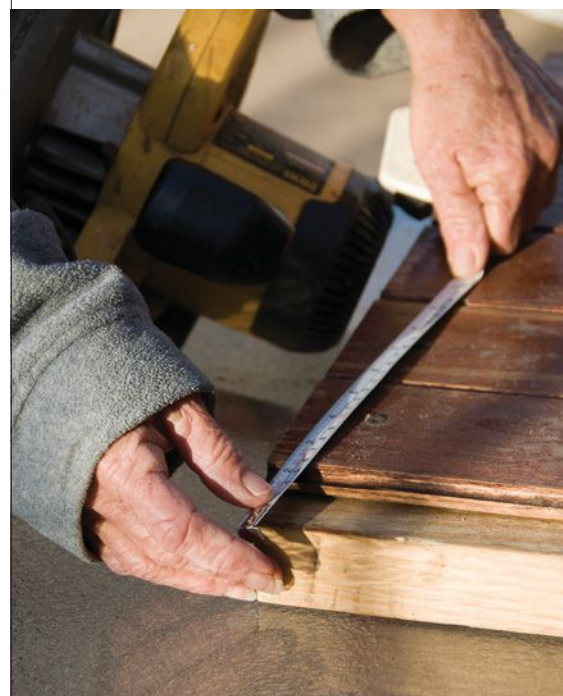
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time so you don't hurt yourself or the piece you are working on."

A day doesn't go by when Brenda isn't creating something or planning what to make next. At one time, Brenda thought she would sell her creations for a living. She pours her life into her pieces. When people see them, they want them. For a while, she did sell them and accepted clients who wanted custom pieces for their homes, but then her hobby became work, and she started to love it a little less. Seeing what was happening to her passion, Brenda jumped ship fast. She also noticed that in her business, if you weren't creating new ideas every time you



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went to market to sell there would be hundreds of the same items around.

"I would sell at Trader's Village in the beginning," Brenda said. "I took several of my original creations and sold them there. When I would go back the next month, I would see several other vendors had started selling the same things. That broke my heart."



Brenda never runs out of people to give her creations to. Her family is often the recipient of many of her pieces. While wood is one of Brenda's greatest loves in life, nothing compares to the love she has for her family. Her house is often packed with her children and grandchildren. They inspire her projects and will help her from time to time. Brenda ran a successful industrial cleaning business for years in Dallas, but when her grandson needed her, she left it all to take care of him. "I grew up in an orphanage and didn't have a family," Brenda shared. "The family Larry and I made is my greatest creation. I would drop anything to be with them."

Wood has been a part of Brenda's life for as long as she can remember. She taught herself everything she knows and isn't afraid to mess up or get her hands dirty. Every one of her pieces is clever, beautiful and full of humor, just how she lives life. "Wood is my weakness," Brenda admitted. "I don't think I could stop creating with it if I tried." **NOW**

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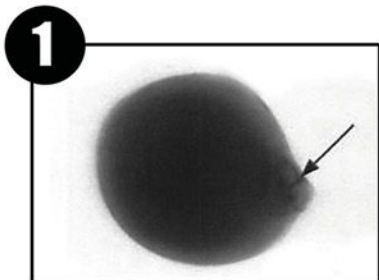


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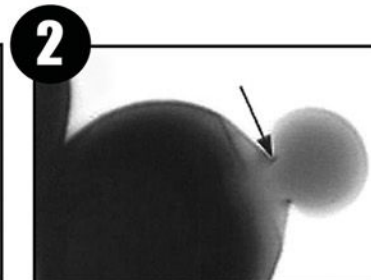
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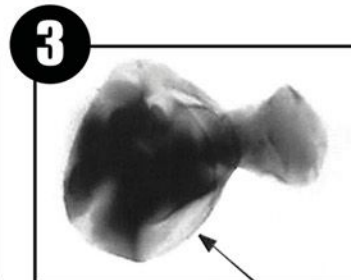
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Her Prayer

— By Carolyn Wills

Imagine a young woman with a baby in her arms and another one on the way. She has no family, no friends and no resources other than a night shelter allowing her and her infant a bed and a meal. She has escaped an abusive relationship only to spend her days on the streets. This story is not imaginary and, sadly, not isolated. However, it is a story with a dramatic and hope-filled turn, thanks to an organization known as Healing Hearts Center and volunteers like Shelli French. "Healing Hearts is serving a great need in Ellis County," Shelli



shared. The organization provides crisis intervention, education and emergency shelter for abused and endangered women.

Shelli's involvement began a little over two years ago, after a Sunday sermon at her church, The Avenue Church in Waxahachie. The message focused on the importance of serving others. Representatives from organizations like United Way, Red Cross and several others were standing by to meet with church members. "I felt like God was telling me to help others," she smiled. Shelli spotted Alecia Peters, founder and president of Healing Hearts. "I was immediately drawn to Alecia," she said. "We met. I completed volunteer training that summer and have been here ever since. The more involved I became, the more I wanted to help, so I took a bigger step and became a board member." Today, in addition to her volunteer duties, Shelli serves as the organization's treasurer.

Last October, in what truly was a milestone for the organization, as well as a much-needed resource for Ellis County and surrounding areas, Healing Hearts opened a safe haven house. The home is



Alecia Peters, founder and president of Healing Hearts Center.

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large enough to accommodate up to three women and their children under the age of 12. "We have a 24-hour hotline and are also on call for the sheriff's office, police department and child protective services," Shelli explained. "It's not unusual for a client to come to the shelter directly from the hospital, and it's amazing to see the transformation that occurs over the next 90 days. As Alecia says, 'Our goal is for clients to see themselves not as victims, but as survivors.'"

Clients are provided shelter for a period of 90 days and, in that time, they receive counseling, participate in support groups, learn how to care for themselves, search for work and create a plan for their future. "This is a very delicate and private situation," Shelli shared. "Training is required for all volunteers, and everyone's safety relies on the rules. Computer access is monitored, use of cell phones is limited, and a staff member must be at the house at all times."

The home opens to a spacious living room which, for now, is sparsely furnished with donations. The living room leads to a big center-island kitchen and separate desk area. The den next to the kitchen is where groups meet, devotionals are held and children play. Three bedrooms with bunk beds are off of a small hall from the den, and there's also an office and a laundry room. Currently, a board member volunteers to manage the home. She buys supplies, keeps things organized and occasionally stays over to coordinate with the

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full-time shelter manager, a college student working toward her degree in social work.

"We are a Christian shelter, and our clients are involved in daily devotionals and encouraged to develop faith," Shelli said. She points out that domestic abuse starts with the mind before it becomes physical. Once the mind is controlled,

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a relationship can be very difficult to leave. "As we see clients gain strength, learn life-affirming skills and begin to trust in God, we become attached, and it can be hard to see them leave," Shelli shared. "One of the important things I've learned is that I cannot fix another person. I can do my best to help and know 'help is help,' but at some point we must let go and trust God."

Funding for Healing Hearts is totally dependent on donations. "We've been blessed to receive a yearly grant from United Way, as well as the support of local businesses and partners like Waxahachie's First United Methodist Church and The Avenue Church," Shelli shared. "With the opening of the shelter, though, there is need for more funding, volunteers and donations."

A major fundraiser is the annual spring gala. "It's a wonderful event," Shelli smiled. "Businesses and individuals sponsor tables. Everyone dresses up, speakers provide awesome testimonies, the music is entertaining, and the food is great." Most importantly, the gala helps support the Healing Hearts mission.

"Alecia has a passion for everything she does," Shelli shared. "She saw a great need in our community and took action. I can't say enough about how much she's accomplished. I'm very task-oriented and can help with the business side, so the balance between us really works. I admire Alecia so much and enjoy working with her."

Shelli has lived in Ennis her whole life. She and her husband, Mike, own and operate a property management company and are proud parents of four

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children, ages 22 to 28. "Our youngest is in college," she smiled. "We have four grandchildren, ages 1 to 9." Shelli graduated from Dallas Baptist University and taught kindergarten for a few years before staying home to care for her family. Today, she helps run the family business. "I do the bookkeeping from home, so I'm also available for our grandchildren when needed." She enjoys taking long weekend trips with Mike, working out, spending time with family and playing with the family's 5-year-old German Shepherd, Sam. "We love Sam," she grinned. "She's our child now."

Since volunteering at Healing Hearts, Shelli's whole family has become involved. "Mike is a big supporter," she said. For preopening of the new shelter, the whole family showed up for a work day of clean up and repairs. Recently, Shelli's oldest daughter started volunteer training.

"I've always been fortunate to be surrounded by family and friends," Shelli said. "When I first met Alecia, it broke my heart to hear stories about those who have no one to help. I'm so thankful for this experience of opening up to others and have learned so much. I love seeing these women improve and heal. I want to continue doing what I can, knowing that everything helps."

Shelli's prayer for Healing Hearts is to see enough funding for a shelter with all of the important resources. "I would love to see a shelter with counselors, doctors, lawyers, human resource people," she shared, "and all kinds of connections and volunteers to help women and children touched by domestic violence and sexual assaults become true survivors." **NOW**

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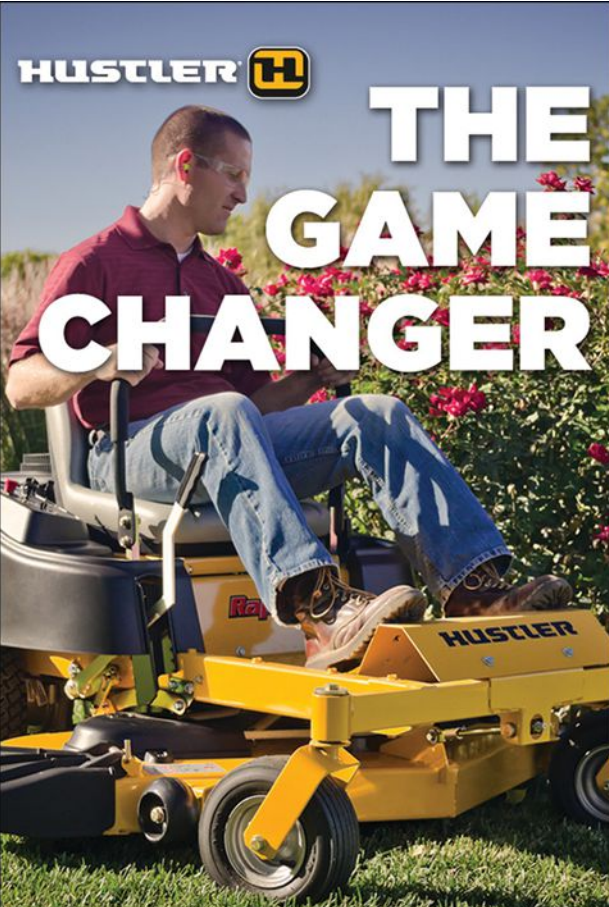
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Little Slice of Perfect

— By Sandra Strong

Family and friends thought Shane Henry had lost his mind when he told them he was moving into a small, 300-square-foot, upstairs, efficiency apartment. Shane was used to living big, so this choice in abodes made no sense to those who knew him best. “I had a three-bedroom house in college,” he explained. “Granted, I did have to downsize tremendously to move here, but I love my place. It’s my little slice of perfect — my nook on Main Street, and I absolutely love it.”

Shane admits it was “scary bad” before he moved in, but traces of those days are long gone, thanks to his natural ability to see what something could be if given the tender, loving care it deserved. In what seemed like no time at all, Shane had

At Home With
Shane Henry



transformed the apartment into the wonderfully perfect home he shares with Gatsby, the just-turned-1-year-old Airedale, and Barley, the cat who found Shane. "I've always been a huge dog-lover. I didn't really do cats," Shane said. "Gatsby is the big kid of the house, and he and Barley get along well together. We're a happy little family."

Something else took a drastic change when he made the move. Before Waxahachie, Shane's style of decor had always been modern-contemporary. The change to antiques and those one-of-a-kind finds displayed throughout his home manifested and grew following the first story he heard. "Every antique has a unique history," he explained. "Even though the stories have nothing at all to do with me or my family, I fell in love with them."



The vintage character of the space is what initially drew him in. On first inspection, he didn't see what others saw. "I saw great potential as I began to wonder what I could do with the space," he admitted. "I immediately started visualizing what would work and what I'd need to get rid of." This same character, when enhanced with his special vintage purchases, is what brings him satisfaction at the end of the day. "This place is perfect for the 'chippy, crusty, rusty' items I hunt for when I go shopping with my stepmom," he added.

The partial mantel that hangs above the flat-screen TV on the main dividing wall serves as the ideal place for Shane's modest Margaret Steiff collection of really old, stuffed animals made of mohair. "I only collect dogs," Shane said, "but the brand comes in all animals." He's found several of the small-to-medium-sized canines in his collection during his regular jaunts to flea markets and Canton's First Monday. "There's no



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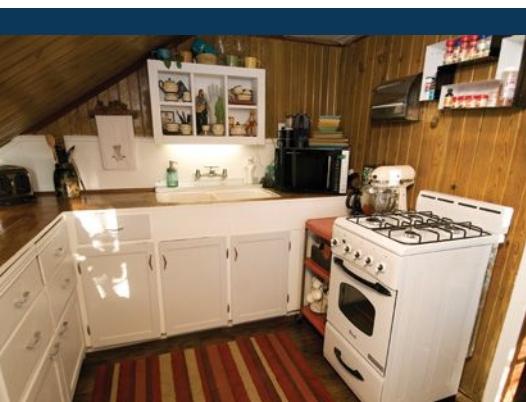
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shame in finding new items for the shop that also may work nicely in my home,” he said with a smile as he referenced Crooked Creek Farms, an antique shop he owns and operates with his stepmom, Linda Henry. “All items I buy for my home must be practical since space is an issue. I really need them, or I really, really want them.”

It’s amazing how such a small space can hold so many wonderful vintage collectibles. The nickel items plated in silver are perched here and there. The tarnished and well-worn teapots, coffee pots and creamers make the perfect candle holders, adding a cozy, relaxing

ambience to the home. The black, hand-cut silhouettes hanging above the bedroom window bring Shane joy. “There’s just something special about them,” he declared, pointing to his favorite. “Ronnie is a 4-year-old crafted in 1934. I don’t know any of them personally, but I have a certain kinship with all of them.”

Shane doesn’t just collect because he likes something. He takes the time to research and educate himself on the items he’s most passionate about. He learned the silhouettes were a quick, easy party favor for rich families living in the 1930s. Those highly detailed party favors are one of Shane’s most cherished keepsakes.



anchors, which represent an ancient symbol of hope, are another item Shane is always on the lookout for. The sock monkey atop his refrigerator is holding an old feed store advertisement with an anchor. The copyright stamp on the back is dated 1931. Hand-carved Syrocco wooden towel racks found a home in Shane’s kitchen. “These towel racks are from Syracuse, New York,” Shane explained. “They have dogs on them, and of course, the towels I display on them have hand-embroidered dogs on them, too.” While most of the towels are vintage, a few others have been handcrafted by Shane’s aunt to look vintage.

The kitchen, albeit small compared to

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other homes Shane has lived in, is also the perfect place for his antique wax paper, foil and paper towel dispenser; the Dr. MacDonald feed bin trash can and two channel letters that serve as his spice rack. Motto ware, also referred to as old man pottery in England, is found above the sink on a shelf. Sentiments like "time ripens all things" and "still waters run deep" remind Shane daily why he collects them. His biggest weakness — chalk ware twine holders — are hung on the wall above the small kitchen window. "It's all about doing it smart," Shane admitted. "Everything just seems to fit perfectly in its place."

A couple of pieces acquired through trade include the pantry made from white distressed wood with deep blue glass doors and the pedestal sink in his bathroom, the only room in the apartment that had to be redone from side-to-side and top-to-bottom. His den sofa is really a day bed. Shane made the pillows that adorn this area from material he purchased locally.

His bedroom boasts of a queen-sized bed complete with an antique crazy quilt and decorative dog pillow. "The quilt has that old, lumpy batting," he said, "but it perfectly matches the blue chair

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I found.” His night stand is an old rail cart he found at auction. He only needs one more thing to complete his bedroom area. “I’m on a lamp hunt,” he said with a laugh. “I know what I want. I just haven’t found it yet.”

Shane’s style also extends to the bathroom. He chose to keep the old, antique medicine cabinet with the original mirror instead of buying something new that looked vintage. A butter churn that’s missing its top doubles as the trash can. But the items that really cause conversation are the door handles. “Each handle is an antique, single-blade razor,” Shane said. “And no two are alike.”

Challenges do come when living in a small space, but Shane has mastered the art of transforming the small space into a lovely home that’s perfect for him. “Everything has to be practical,” he reiterated. “Yet, it also needs to be functional and stylish. And how many people do you know who can vacuum their entire house using only one outlet?” **NOW**

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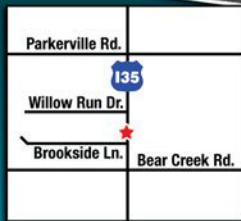
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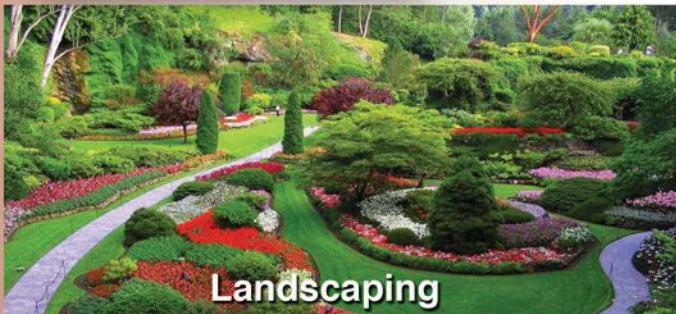
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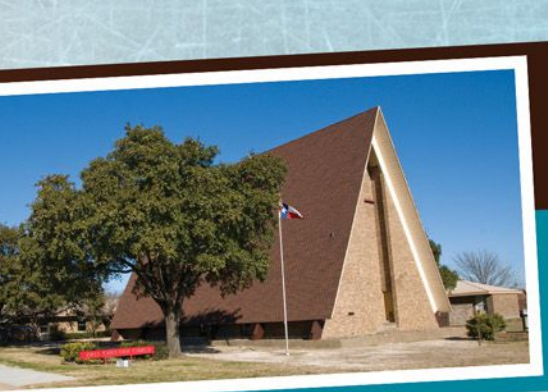
— By Carolyn Wills

Vivacious, red-headed Katie Holmes is a wife, mother and beloved third-grade teacher at First Christian Day School. Her story is one of faith, trust and a fascinating 20-year journey that brought her to Texas and, ultimately, to her home in Waxahachie.

Today, she and her husband, Richard; 10-year-old daughter, Alexandria; 8-year-old son, Garrett; a horse named Champ; a Great Pyrenees named Cory; Noodle the mini-Dachshund and Misty the cat are all firmly planted in their very own house (or barn) on 8 acres. Fifteen years of traveling with a nonprofit youth organization followed by a five-year adventure in their own travel trailer have returned Richard to his roots as cowboy, horse trainer and competitive team roper, and Katie to her passion for teaching.

"Richard and I love the Lord with all of our hearts," she smiled. "In the time we traveled professionally with Youth Opportunities Unlimited, a national Christian youth





“Truly, if my day ends and I’ve heard, ‘I got it,’ from my students, then it’s been a good day.”

organization, we lived our faith every day. Now, I’m thrilled to be teaching at First Christian Day School.”

Located in Waxahachie’s First Christian Church, First Christian Day School provides Bible-based education for children from preschool through upper grades. “Our student body is small, and that makes it possible to feel like part of a big family,” Katie smiled. “My third-grade class has six students, and I love the fact that I can focus on each child. Teaching is a responsibility and a privilege, and it’s such an honor to help guide tomorrow’s leaders.”

Katie’s enthusiasm for her students and for teaching is evident and contagious.

“We work hard and also have a lot of fun,” she said.

“Each year, we pick a theme to display on

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the classroom door. I have four boys and two girls who all love sports, so sports is our theme."

A colorful entrance is only the beginning of a classroom rich with personality. Desks are arranged in a small square so students can see each other. "Interaction and hands-on projects are very important," Katie explained. "When studying ancient Rome, we get our plaster of Paris out and make pillars and dress Barbie dolls like the Romans. When we were reading *Narnia*, one of the mothers and an older daughter helped transform the whole classroom into a scene from the book," she grinned. "They brought batting for the snow and even a stuffed beaver."

In addition to core subjects, Katie teaches the value of giving back through service. "For one of our projects, our class cleaned up dirt and leaves that had built up between the school buildings."

She quickly admits a curriculum centered on individual development and confidence-building allows for amazing

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results. "One year, a little girl arrived so shy that she wouldn't speak," Katie said. "It was her first year, and she was in the second grade. With opportunity and lots of attention, I got to see her slowly come out of her shell. That's why I can't say enough about this school. I'm blessed that both of my kids are students here, and they're having a great time."

Another vital part of class activity includes daily chapel services. "At times, my students also pray in the classroom," she said. "I love hearing their sweet voices, and I believe this environment is so good for them."

She also stresses how essential parents are as resources for the school. "All parents at the school belong to a group called Parents as Partners, and we really rely on them," she said. "Thankfully, our parents want to be involved."

These days, Katie's classroom is especially popular throughout the school. "I thought it would be fun to turn my son's old bed into a reading loft and install it in our classroom," she smiled. "Richard bought me a table saw, and I did the work myself!" Visiting students are welcome to use the loft as long as they follow the rules. "The first reading loft rule is no more than three kids are allowed on the top at any time," she said.

Katie was born in North Carolina. Her father, a Methodist pastor, was called to relocate with his family every four to five years. Early on, she learned the values of serving and adapting. As a young woman, she attended Appalachian State University in the Blue Ridge Mountains of northwestern North Carolina and

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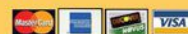
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earned her degree in special education. After college, she taught for three years.

During her first teaching job, the pastor at her church was forming a nonprofit youth organization, and that's when Katie's life took a dramatic turn. "The mission was to reach out to middle school and high school kids across the country," she said. "We couldn't talk about religion in public schools, so the message focused on making choices and the realities of gangs and drugs." When the pastor decided to headquarter the organization in his home state of California, 20 or so young enthusiasts packed their bags, and Katie was among them.

"It was a crazy lifestyle," she said. "We traveled across country to put on a major production with contemporary music, smoke, pyrotechnics, light-show and talent. Ninety percent of the expenses were provided through donations, and my job was primarily to help with fundraising." The organization grew from traveling with a small trailer to pulling a huge trailer packed with gear. "Some of us started as families," she said. "Some became families later. We all left everything behind to live in sponsored hotels with no homes or cars of our own. I learned so much, though, and will forever be grateful for the experience."

As it happened, Katie married the year before she left the group. "Richard and I met as church members in North

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Carolina," she said. "We both joined the mission and, although we weren't a couple, we knew each other as part of the bigger family. Years later, we realized that God had put us together, and now we've been married for 11 years."

Shortly after they married, Katie and Richard took a huge leap of faith. They bought a travel trailer and set out to explore their own road. "We write country music," she said. "Richard writes, sings and records." They traveled for the next five years, living in Las Vegas, Nashville, Mansfield and at last, Waxahachie. On the way, they also became parents to two beautiful children.

"I've always been passionate about children and teaching," Katie shared. "When I was young, my dad started a church for special needs children and adults, and I loved helping. Truly, if my day ends and I've heard, 'I got it,' from my students, then it's been a good day." **NOW**

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So How Does Your Garden Grow?

— By Randy Bigham

Unlike contrary Mary of the classic nursery rhyme, you probably don't have silver bells or cockleshells in your garden. But as spring escapes winter's gloom, you're no doubt as ready as she for the bounty the season brings to your little patch of Mother Earth.

Robin Smith, an Ellis County Master Gardener, is poised to start her routine

fired with the enthusiasm brought on by warm, blue skies and green leaves sprouting. "At this time of year, I find it hard to contain my excitement," Robin admitted, "and I tend to get ahead of myself a bit. If you're like me, a bit of restraint is in order."

Robin insists a checklist is a good method for prioritizing time and effort in the garden, even for experts. "It will allow you to have fun but still get great results," she explained. Items on Robin's list include pruning evergreens, summer flowering trees and shrubs early in March. "For trees and shrubs that bloom

in the spring," she cautioned, "wait until they have finished blooming, and prune fruit trees before bud break." She also advocates cutting back all groundcover early in the month, so it "looks nice and tidy when it sends out new shoots later."

Raising vegetables in small city gardens is increasingly common, and Robin has useful tips for those just starting out. "Don't be in a hurry to put out young pepper or tomato plants," she cautioned. "Wait until close to the end of the month to be sure all chance of frost is gone. And be prepared to cover them if temperatures dip low one night."





Joseph Masabni, assistant professor and extension horticulturist for the Texas A&M University System, also has words of advice for new urban gardeners. "Home gardening continues to grow in popularity," he wrote in the *Texas Home Vegetable Gardening Guide*. "One of every three families does some type of home



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gardening.” He ensures great results for vegetable and herb gardeners who observe basic, practical considerations. Joseph believes the following rules can make all the difference between a merely functioning veggie patch and one producing high-quality, delicious specimens year-round:

Choosing a Garden Site

The city offers limited space for growing herbs and vegetables, but a well-placed and tended garden can be a productive one. “The ideal garden area gets full or nearly full sunlight,” Joseph specified, “and has deep, well-drained, fertile soil. The garden should be near a water outlet but not close to competing shrubs or trees.”

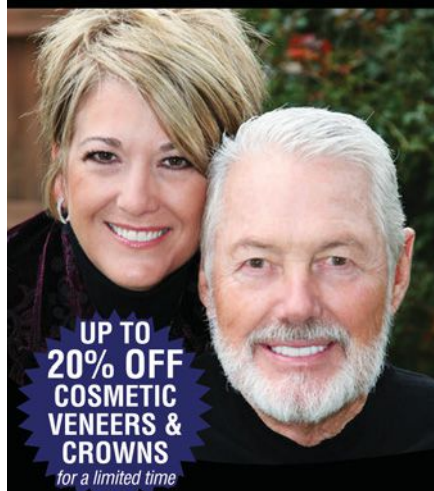
Selecting Crops

Choosing vegetables suited to the size of the garden space is an important consideration. Vine crops like watermelon or squash require more room unless situated near a fence or trellis. For the small garden, beets, broccoli, onions, spinach, carrots and eggplant are ideal. For larger spaces, cantaloupe, cauliflower, pumpkin, okra and cucumber work well.

Garden Planning

The placement of long-term crops like Brussels sprouts or sweet potatoes, which mature in 80 days or more, shouldn't interfere with caring for and harvesting short-termers like leaf lettuce or turnips. “When you plant a new crop, it should be totally unrelated to the crop

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it is replacing,” Joseph cautioned. “This is called crop rotation. Crop rotation helps prevent the buildup of diseases and insects. For example, follow early beans with beets, squash or bell peppers.”

Preparing the Soil

For top production, make sure the garden soil is aerated and drains well. Adding organic matter can improve soil that has a heavy clay or sand component. “Never work wet garden soil,” Joseph advised. “And seeds germinate better in well-prepared soil than in coarse, lumpy soil.”



Fertilizing

“Heavy clay soils can be fertilized much more heavily at planting than can sandy soils,” Joseph pointed out. “Heavy clay soils and those with lots of organic matter can safely absorb and store fertilizer at three to four times the rate of sandy soils. For most soils, two to three pounds of 21-0-0 (ammonium sulfate) per 100 linear feet of row, applied in the furrow and watered in, is adequate.”

Planting

For successful production, plant vegetables in early spring or early fall.

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“Using transplants rather than seeds, when possible, allows crops to mature earlier and extends the productive period of many vegetable crops,” Joseph shared. Beets, lettuce and cabbage are among easily transplanted crops. Carrots and pepper plants require more care while sweet corn and peas are hard to transplant without the use of containers.

Watering and Mulching

“Apply enough water to wet the soil to a depth of at least 6 inches,” Joseph recommended. “For best production, most gardens require about 1 inch of rain or irrigation per week during the growing season.” Organic mulches like straw, leaves, peat moss or compost, applied to a depth of 1 to 2 inches, are commonly used.

Weed and Pest Control

A long-handled hoe is the tool of choice for removing unwanted growth in a vegetable patch. To eradicate pests, use only approved chemicals.



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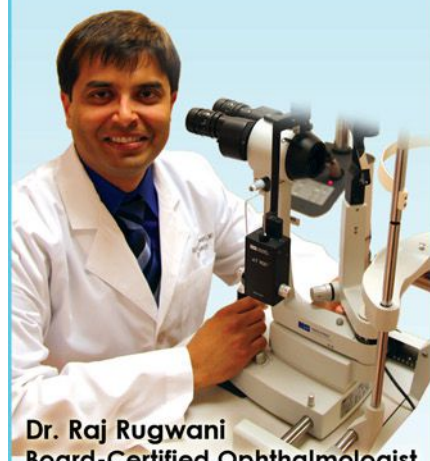
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Harvesting

"A vegetable's full flavor develops only at peak maturity," Joseph pointed out, "resulting in the excellent taste of vine-ripened tomatoes, tender green beans and crisp, flavorful lettuce. For maximum flavor and nutritional content, harvest the crop the day it is to be canned, frozen or eaten."

As home vegetable gardens continue to multiply, the influence of organic gardening methods has spread as well. That's a good thing, according to Robin. "The awareness of the environment," she concluded, "has opened up this earth-friendly approach, and it's another great way to enjoy gardening." **NOW**

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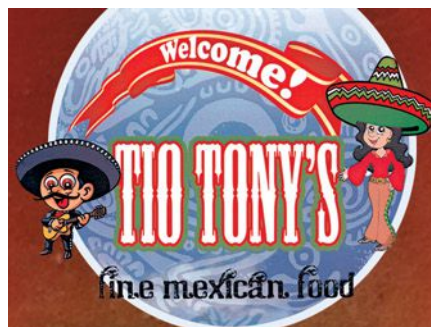
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DeWayne Walton has spent a lifetime in the car care business. He and his crew are always ready to do what it takes to make their customers happy.



Total Car Care

Customers at Walton's are treated with respect and genuine kindness. — By Sandra Strong

Time continues to march on for DeWayne Walton, owner of Walton's Muffler, Brake & Tires. "I've never had another job," DeWayne said, referring to his lifelong career in the car care business. "I've either worked in the automotive field for my dad or for myself. It's all I've ever done, so it's all I know."

DeWayne not only grew up in and around the car business, he readily admits he was "born into it." His dad, Andy Walton, opened Ken's Mufflers in Dallas in 1969 and retired in 2003. "When I was old enough, I started working for my dad," DeWayne said, "and continued to do so until I decided to branch out on my own." Andy still owns the shop in Dallas, but the day-to-day operations and management are left to DeWayne's brother-in-law. In fact, DeWayne said the Dallas location will one day belong to his brother-in-law and sister.

Walton's Muffler, Brake & Tires has been at its present location for what will be 11 years this coming August. DeWayne's wife, Gina, works diligently behind the scenes as the office manager. Four full-time mechanics and technicians, including shop manager Michael Liner, are ready to do what it takes to make customers happy. "This is a family-oriented business where the work ethic centers on customer service," DeWayne said, further explaining that his strong work ethic was learned from years of watching his dad. "I'll do just about anything to satisfy my customers. I want to do a good job. It's the most important thing."

What began as a muffler, brake and tire business quickly evolved into a business that cares for the total car. When DeWayne says they do it all, he means they do it all.

Business **NOW**

Automotive offerings include A/C, brakes, exhaust, hitches, diesel pickup exhaust, tires, shocks and struts, wheel alignments, catalytic converters and so much more. "We are your one stop to total car care," DeWayne added. "We do everything but upholstery and collision repair. We don't focus on the exterior. We focus on the inner guts of the vehicles." Walton's Muffler, Brake & Tires also offers a full line of Ranch Hand bumpers, Flow Master and a large selection of truck accessories. "We are a very busy shop," DeWayne added.

"I'll do just about anything to satisfy my customers. I want to do a good job. It's the most important thing."

These same companies from which Walton's purchases offer specialized classes that DeWayne, his mechanics and technicians take full advantage of. Continuing education classes are a must in order keep up with the newest advances in automotive technology.

There are several key things to look for and take notice of when maintaining your vehicle. "Check the tires and tread wear. Make sure the car is aligned properly and the shocks and struts are in good working order," DeWayne explained. "Don't ignore your check engine light if it should come on. If the light is on and something else breaks or malfunctions, the car owner will not know it. It's better to be safe than sorry."

DeWayne enjoys coming to work because he finds fulfillment in what he does. A good attitude breeds success, and that success is evident in the way he cares for his customers. "I appreciate the customers we have," he stated. "They have so many automotive choices, and they choose to come to Walton's. My dad taught me to always be thankful for each customer — large or small. He taught me to make sure to treat them all the same, with respect and genuine kindness." **NOW**



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Steve and Wendy Middleton share a night out at The Olive Garden.



Fourth graders in Jason Butler's class enjoy another DEAR Day event.



Matthew and Bethany Barnes have a picnic with their daughter, Tyler; family pet, Sprinkles; and son, Barrett, who's asleep in his stroller.



A large crowd gathers for the ribbon cutting for Prime West Mortgage.



A ribbon cutting is held for GoLoco Street Tacos & Burritos.



Yancy and his pet coatimundi, Cody, visit the park on a Saturday afternoon.



A crowd gathers at the Ellis County Courthouse before the MLK Day Parade.



Azra, Marcus and Cadia enjoy shopping for produce with their mom.



Dillon and Kaithlynn Strong spend time in the arcade room after filling up on pizza at CiCi's.



Chris McCalla, NOW Magazine's creative director, reads to a class of fifth graders during DEAR Day.



Jim Howerton is happy to be finished with his latest painting project.

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Three Steps Toward Financial Wellness

Are your finances healthy, or could they use a checkup? It's still early in the new year. Start it with a fresh resolve to achieve financial wellness.

Control Debt

Enhance your financial health by keeping debt manageable. Know what you owe and make a plan to control debt using these tips:

- Pay off debts with the highest interest rates first, such as credit card balances.
- Pay as much as you can on your smallest debts and pay at least the minimum on large ones — even modest accomplishments can motivate you to continue.
- Review your finances to see that you're not overextended: For example, your home typically should cost no more than 2 to 2.5 times your household income and your mortgage should be no more than 80 percent of the home's value.
- Don't use credit cards to get out of debt. You'll not only pay more in interest, but you could damage your financial health and credit score at the same time.

Learn more about debt management with these tips:

Spend Wisely

Financial wellness is based on living within your means. Spending money carefully and wisely will greatly enhance your financial health.

- Write down every expense for a month and find out exactly where your money is going. You may be able to identify "extra money" to apply to your goals.
- Make a realistic budget using convenient online tools such as Mint.com.
- Two-income families: Try to cover monthly expenses with just one income and use as much as possible from the other paycheck for savings.

• Before buying, ask yourself if the item is a *need* or a *want*. If it's the latter, wait a few weeks before you buy to make sure you have the cash in hand — or to decide if you still want it.

An income and expenses worksheet from the FDIC can help you review your finances.

Increase Savings

Saving for retirement, children's education, emergencies or other expenses can help protect you — plus it delivers peace of mind.

- Get in the habit of paying yourself first. Give savings the same importance as paying bills, and save something from each paycheck.
- Participate in your company's automatic savings program, if one is available. And always contribute enough to take advantage of matching funds, if they're offered.
- Many experts suggest putting at least 10 percent of your income into savings, and some recommend saving as much as 25 percent. If saving is hard for you, start by saving at least 1 percent of your paycheck and commit to increasing your savings level as your salary grows.

• Save enough in your emergency fund to cover at least six months' worth of expenses — enough for nine to 12 months is even better. If you do tap into these savings, rebuild the fund as soon as possible.

Need a few pointers? Visit AmericaSaves.org for a list of 54 ways to save money. Get more tips for building financial wellness with MyMoney Five from MyMoney.gov. And learn how to build an emergency fund with tips from State Farm®. **NOW**

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March 3, 24

Avenue Moms: 10:00 a.m.-noon, The Avenue Church, 1761 N. Hwy. 77. Register online at www.events.theavenuechurch.com or call the church office at (972) 937-5301 for more information.

March 7, 8

Waxahachie Old Fashioned Singing: **Friday**, 7:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 3:00 p.m., historic Chautauqua Auditorium. Contact artistic director R.G. Huff at (972) 923-2709 or visit www.WaxaOFS.com.

March 10 — 15

Spring Break Soccer Camp: times available for ages 3-16. Choose from hourly options or full day. Visit www.waxahachiesoccer.org or call (469) 383-8298 for further details.

March 21 — May 9

Friday Night Soccer Skills Clinic: There will also be specialized goal keeping training. Register for clinics by visiting www.waxahachiesoccer.org or by calling (469) 383-8298.

March 21, 22

Waxahachie Junior Service League Spring

Market Shopping Extravaganza and Preview Party: **Friday**, 6:00-9:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. Friday's Preview Party, \$15 per guest, will feature an exclusive shopping experience that includes catered refreshments, two drinks and re-entry into Saturday's market. Market tickets are \$5 each, children 10 and under are free. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.waxahachiejsl.org.

March 29

14th Annual Master Gardeners Lawn & Garden Expo: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Ln. Tickets at the door are \$5, children under 12 are free. For free ticket sponsors and more information, visit www.ecmga.com or call (972) 825-5175.

Waxahachie Symphony Association presents the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie High School Fine Arts Center, 1000 Hwy 77 N. Contact Sherry at (972) 938-1181 for further details.

April 4, 5

Cherokee Charmer's Annual Spring Show Extravaganza/We Are the World: 7:00 p.m.,

WHS Fine Arts Center. Tickets are available at the door, \$8 for adults and \$6 for students and seniors.

April 5

Healing Hearts Annual Gala Event: 6:00 p.m., The Avenue Church, 1761 Hwy 77 N. Tickets are \$50 per person and can be obtained by visiting www.healing-hearts-center.org/ or by calling (972) 388-4777.

April 12

Run 4 West: 8:00 a.m., Getzendaner Park. The Waxahachie Running Club has partnered with St. Paul Episcopal Church to host a 5K, 10K and 1-mile fun run to benefit the special education department for West ISD. Cost: 5K, \$25; 10K, \$35; 1-mile fun run, \$10. To register, visit www.runwrc.com/run4west or call Susan Turner at (972) 825-2182.

April 26

Waxahachie Symphony Association presents The Classic Swing Band: 7:00 p.m., Park Meadows Baptist Church, 3350 Hwy. 77 N. Call (972) 938-1181 for more details.

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

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Urinary Tract Infections

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

“Just drink some cranberry juice, and you’ll feel better soon.” This little piece of advice has weaved its way between family members and friends for many years for urinary tract infections (UTI). But, does it work? The answer is a resounding — maybe. Research shows that cranberry juice inhibits bacteria from sticking to the walls of the bladder. This is most helpful for frequent sufferers of UTI. However, for infrequent sufferers, the findings are not so hopeful. In addition, not enough research has been done to determine how much to drink, how frequently and at what strength to get relief or even if cranberry pills would work just as well.

A UTI is an infection, usually bacterial, of the urinary tract system. The urinary tract system consists of two kidneys, two ureters, one bladder and a urethra. This system is the body’s way of producing, storing and eliminating urine. A UTI usually begins with bacteria entering the body through the urethra and traveling into the bladder. Normally when bacteria or other harmful organisms enter the urinary system, the body quickly takes care of it by flushing it from the system. However, the invasion can take hold and overwhelm the body’s defenses. Most of these infections occur in the bladder and are called bladder infections. If it is not resolved, the infection can travel up the ureters to the kidneys and cause a kidney infection.

Since cranberry juice is not a cure-all for a UTI, most patients must rely upon antibiotics, which are the best course of treatment for the infection. The type of antibiotic will depend upon the specific organism causing the problem. It is important to take all of your medication as prescribed. Increasing your fluid intake will help to flush out your urinary tract system. UTI can be painful, so your physician may prescribe an analgesic for comfort. Often a warm heating pad over the area can bring some relief.

One preventive measure that can help females avoid a UTI is to empty their bladder immediately after sexual intercourse. Females should also wipe themselves from the front to the back to avoid dragging germs from the rectal area to the urethra. Empty your bladder frequently throughout the day. In males, an enlarged prostate will limit the ability to empty the bladder, and surgery may become necessary.

UTI can be stubborn to treat. Due diligence in following medical protocol is important to limit the infection and also to prevent one. If you think cranberry juice can help you then by all means, drink up. **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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In The Kitchen With Bryan Frye

— *By Randy Bigham*

NOW Magazines' Bryan Frye has wit and energy — and he knows his way around the kitchen. Since he was a teenager, cooking with his equally food-savvy parents, Bryan has honed his culinary gifts. Today, he enjoys plating up delicious dishes (from down-home favorites to haute cuisine delicacies) for friends and family, including his four children. “My kids have grown to expect scratch biscuits and gravy on Sunday morning,” he admitted.

Whether it's an intimate dinner for two or a meal for a crowd, Bryan loves demonstrating the craft of cooking, “art on a plate,” as he calls it. “Growing up in Texas,” Bryan laughed, “it was illegal to not love chicken fried steak, cream gravy, cornbread or Mexican food. I think it still is!” **NOW**

Tortilla Soup

4-6 chicken breasts
2 Poblano peppers
1 green pepper
1 red pepper
1 lg. onion
3 tsp. garlic
1 stick butter
1 24- to 30-oz. can diced tomatoes
3 tsp. cumin
2 tsp. chili powder
2 tsp. dried oregano
Salt, to taste
1 tsp. pepper
2 qts. chicken broth

Juice of 6 limes

1 bunch cilantro, coarsely chopped
Corn tortillas in desired number, julienned and fried
Monterrey, cheddar or blend of Mexican cheeses, in desired amount

- 1.** Boil chicken breast for 15 minutes while sautéing veggies in butter. Dice chicken.
- 2.** Add tomatoes, cumin, chili powder, oregano, salt and pepper and some broth; cook 5-10 minutes.
- 3.** Add remaining broth; bring to a soft boil.
- 4.** Reduce heat; add diced chicken; simmer 10 minutes; add more salt to taste.
- 5.** Turn off heat, add lime juice and cilantro

and stir well. Let sit 20 minutes.

6. Garnish with tortillas, cheese, sprig of cilantro and squeeze of lime.

Shrimp, Chicken and Sausage Gumbo

1 cup vegetable oil
1 cup flour
2 medium onions, diced
1 small green pepper, diced
1 small red pepper, diced
2 Tbsp. minced garlic
1 1/2 cups celery, chopped
8 cups chicken broth
2 tsp. ground thyme
1/2 tsp. ground marjoram
1/2 tsp. ground savory
1/2 tsp. celery seed
2 bay leaves
1/2 tsp. red pepper
1/2 tsp. black pepper
Salt, to taste
1 lb. smoked sausage, diced and fried
1 lb. chicken, cooked and diced
8-12 oz. okra
1 lb. large or jumbo shrimp, peeled
1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped (divided use)
2 cups white rice
Pepper sauce of choice, to taste

- 1.** Make a roux by heating oil, whisk in flour, a little at a time, stirring constantly on medium high heat for 30 minutes, or until dark chocolate brown.
- 2.** Add onions and peppers to hot roux; stir with spoon for 2 minutes. Add garlic and celery; stir for 5 minutes. Add broth, remaining herbs and spices; whisk until smooth. Bring to boil then reduce to medium/medium-low. Let boil 20 minutes.
- 3.** Add sausage, chicken and okra to gumbo; simmer another 10-15 minutes. Add raw shrimp; cook another 10 minutes. Turn off heat, stir in 1/2 the parsley and cover.
- 4.** Cook rice according to package directions. Serve gumbo over a scoop of hot rice. Add pepper sauce, garnish with parsley and enjoy.

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