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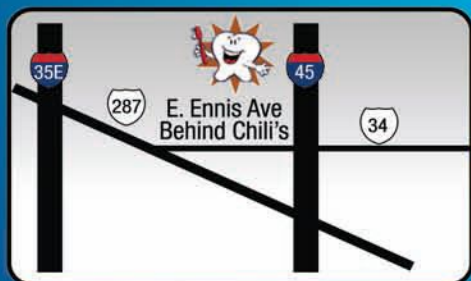
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ON THE COVER



A chance to win a new car has created excitement on the EHS campus.

Photography by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Hello, Ennis!

Some people dread the beginning of Daylight Saving Time, but I look forward to it with great anticipation each year. Why? Because I love having sunlight at the end of my work day. After March 8, there will be time to work in my yard or take a long walk before the sun goes down, and that makes me smile.

Winter's dead browns are giving way to the greens of spring. How appropriate that St. Patrick's Day falls in this month! Growing up with three brothers in a family of Irish descent, I learned to wear green to bed on the night of March 16. Otherwise, I was awakened early on the 17th with a hard pinch! Some traditions last a lifetime, and I still love to wear green on St. Patrick's Day in honor of my heritage.

Bring on the green!

Becky

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REVVING UP

— By Callie Revell

They say the best things in life are free. At the end of this school year, one lucky Ennis High School student will know for sure. The school's administration has partnered with Ennis Ford to offer a student with perfect attendance the chance to win a brand new car, no strings attached.

The principal of EHS, David Averett, was inspired by other districts to offer the contest. "We've always had attendance incentives at Ennis High School, but never something at this scale," David said. Attendance is one area David feels needs improvement at the high school. "We want to be at 95-percent attendance or above," David said. "We got very close a couple of years ago. That's why I was looking for something to put us over the hump."

"Everyone thinks it's a gimmick, but the only gimmick is trying to get kids to come to school."



David's friend, Thomas Bartee, is a salesman at Ennis Ford. The dealership has supported the school in the past and agreed to help with the program. "I was excited when David approached me with the idea," Thomas said. "We decided it would be fun for one lucky high school student to win a new car. It created a buzz around the community and with many of my customers." Within a week, the program was set into motion just in time for school to start.

The premise of the Perfect Drive Giveaway is quite simple: any EHS student who is 16 years or older and has a valid Texas driver license is eligible to compete for the car. To be entered in the drawing, a student must have perfect attendance for the entire year, only excepting absences related to school activities. The drawing will take place at the end of the year, most likely at the graduation ceremonies. "I want there to be a big crowd," David said. "It should be a big deal. Graduation is an event where we





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celebrate academic achievement, and part of that is your attendance.”

This year, the car being given away is a 2015 Ford Fiesta. According to the dealers at Ennis Ford, this car is fun and great for young drivers. It has an excellent safety rating and is very fuel efficient. Thomas makes sure the car is parked in front of the school on Fridays and at football games to provide tangible motivation. Students have enjoyed peeking in through the windows and posing with the car. “It’s been very popular,” Thomas said.

Brent Gunter, president and general manager of Ennis Ford, thinks the giveaway is a great idea. “Ennis is very close-knit and very interested in the schools,” he said. “Everyone wants to help in their own way, and this is our way to help.” Brent also wants to help recognize students who might not otherwise be recognized for their achievement. “It might only be standing up for a drawing for a car at the end of the year, but it’s an acknowledgement for that effort. If that helps them, it’s worth it,” Brent said.

The initial benefit of the program is obvious. “Some kid is going to end up with a brand new car,” Brent said. However, there are many other benefits to the program, too, including serving as an incentive for students to get more involved in school. “The focus is on the students,” Brent continued. “It’s about making school as interesting as possible.” The higher the school’s attendance rates, the more funding it will receive from the state. “A better-funded school system allows for a better-educated student body.

That helps the community,” Brent said. Well-educated students can eventually become a well-educated workforce in Ennis. How the high school performs also affects the community’s reputation, which can bring in new residents and businesses. The car giveaway has the potential to create a domino effect of positive results. “Getting kids to come to school isn’t any different from getting anyone to do anything,” Brent said. “They just need an incentive.”

David agrees with Brent about the need for more funding. However, that is not the main focus of the program. “It’s really all about the students,” David explained. “We try to instill in students that good attendance is important. It’s important here at school, and it’s going to be important one day when they have jobs. Being in attendance and on time is an important character trait and habit.” To encourage better attendance rates, the school staff and administration focus on making school a place students want to be. “We have to work hard to make sure what we’re providing to students in the classroom is something they need and want,” David said. “We want to make the material engaging for kids. When kids get disengaged, they’re going to start missing school.” The school encourages participation in sports, music groups and clubs, because students involved in activities are much more motivated to come to school.

So far, the response to the program has been fantastic. At the end of the first grading period, 300 students at the high school had perfect attendance. “That’s a lot of kids,” David said. “We feel like we’re getting there.” Many parents have become more enthusiastic about their children’s attendance habits now that a



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car is being offered. "There's definitely a buzz among the students, too," David said. "I think the giveaway will encourage a senior who might think, 'Everything's going great. I'm a senior. I can miss a day.' There's a car on the line here."

In fact, the only obstacle faced so far is that many people think the giveaway is too good to be true. "People keep asking me, 'What's the catch?'" Brent said. "They can't believe it's a new car, and we're completely giving it away." Brent believes next year will have an even bigger impact, because students will remember the student who won the car the year before. "Then, the parents, teachers and students will be more fully convinced that this will really happen," Brent said. "Everyone thinks it's a gimmick, but the only gimmick is trying to get kids to come to school." The future of the program looks bright, and it looks like it will quickly become a tradition at Ennis High School. "The plan is to continue the program and make it better," Brent said.

Although only one student will win a new car, no student entered in the drawing can be considered a loser. Those with perfect attendance will have taken full advantage of the education offered them and will have a higher chance of achievement. "There is definitely a correlation between good attendance and good grades," David stated. "You don't have a valedictorian or salutatorian or even students in the top 10 percent who miss much school. They're going to be here, involved and engaged." If the Perfect Drive Giveaway can get more students in their desks ready to learn, it will be a huge success. **NOW**

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Merle holds a Master's degree in nursing from Texas Woman's University and has practiced in Ennis since 2006. Prior to her experience here, she was an accomplished cardiac and emergency nurse in Houston, Texas where she was recognized with numerous specialty certifications. She is very well-trained to provide the full spectrum of family care from infants to older adults.



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Paths of Love

At Home With Judie Goodwin

— By Virginia Riddle



Judie Goodwin's love of teaching, traveling, music, sports, photography and Ennis are displayed throughout her home, in which she and her husband, Ivan, reared their family. "This is home. I love the historical background of Ennis, and seeing former students around town is wonderful," Judie, now widowed, said.





Teaching is in Judie's blood. Her dad and mom were both teachers. "I was born in Amarillo, Texas, during the Dust Bowl Days, or black blizzards as the dust storms were called. I was a 'pneumonia baby,' so my parents moved to Alvin, Texas, looking for a healthier climate," Judie remembered. It was a fortuitous move, not only for health reasons, but because her dad's industrial arts building was next to the Alvin High School's band hall. "I became totally enamored with the AHS band when I was 6 years old," she added. By the time she was 11 years old, Judie had become a junior twirler and, later, played the coronet. "I started riding band buses back then and am still doing it," Judie said proudly.

Meantime, Ivan was growing up in Ennis with an equal love of music. In 1946, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Corps and was assigned to the U.S. Army Corps 604th Air Force Band, in which he served at Maxwell Field in Alabama until 1949. Ivan came home to attend the University of North Texas, majoring in music. It was there that he met Judie, who was also majoring in music. "Our paths were coming together, but my dad insisted that I would graduate before getting married. I got my B.S. two weeks before I got my Mrs.," Judie quipped.

The couple moved to an upstairs apartment in a Preston Street historic home in Ennis, so Ivan could begin his career as band director at Ennis High School. Judie started her teaching career

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in nearby Palmer ISD. She was able to teach in Ennis the following year and spent her EISD career teaching elementary grades and music before becoming an EHS assistant band director for 17 years. "I definitely knew what I was getting into," she said. After serving as EHS band director, Ivan moved into administration as assistant superintendent and, after retirement, became a school



board member serving as board president. With a total of 36 years of teaching experience, Judie said, "I know nearly everyone in Ennis. I quit counting at 10,000 the number of students I have taught. So many of today's band boosters are my kids, and their kids who are in band now are my grandkids."

Ivan and Judie's own children and grandchildren are continuing the family's band-directing traditions. One son, Gary Goodwin, is the current EHS band director and a granddaughter, Meredith, and her husband are band directors in Klein ISD. Another granddaughter,

Taylor, is getting her master's degree in music before pursuing a music career. "We have a lot of band legacy. At one time, we were the only father, mother and son band-directing family who were inducted into an international band directors' fraternity," Judie revealed. Judie's family has grown to four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

It was Gary and his brother, Tollie, who convinced their parents in 1963 to buy the home that Judie loves. "The boys loved the backyard and the upstairs," Judie recalled. The neighborhood was

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filled with mostly boys. "It was constant playtime. Several of those original families still live on this street," Judie said.

A grand piano handsomely occupies the formal living room where Judie displays her collection of treasures, photographs and scrapbooks from her travels with family members or fellow teachers. She has toured throughout the U.S., and to Canada, Turkey, North Africa and 13 countries in Europe, including four visits to Ennis, Ireland.

The music to *Cats* graces the piano. "My obsession with the musical, *Cats*, started when I saw it the first time in London," Judie recalled. Judie used the room as a private piano studio and practice area for her work as a church accompanist at Tabernacle Baptist Church for 46 years. She still substitutes at the First Christian Church piano when needed. "Those years in church have helped build my strong faith that helps me make tough decisions," Judie stated.

The den also displays Judie's love of travel, with beautiful photography, flags and hats with pins from visited countries. The fireplace provides Judie's dogs, Poco and Pugsly, along with the resident cats, Serena, Pumpkin and Grizabella, a warm hearth on chilly nights.

While their kids were in high school, the couple closed in the garage. "We were die-hard Cowboys fans and loved watching the games with friends. This became the Cowboys Room," Judie said. The resulting room plays host to plaques and awards and sports memorabilia ranging from her sons' golfing days to Nolan Ryan to the Cowboys and Texas Rangers. Ivan and Judie's professional membership certificates and awards hang on the wall.

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When nearing their school retirements, Ivan became a professional photographer, with Judie as his assistant. He added a fully equipped studio and darkroom to the home in 1981, as well as a sunroom and porch. "Both of us were interested in photography. Ivan went to classes, and we had a blast doing portraits, weddings and graduation photos," Judie recalled. "I still love photography as a hobby."

The backyard was developed into a place of beauty and serenity, in part, to be used as a backdrop for the couple's photography business. Falling gently down to a creek which flows into a nearby lake, the landscape is "40 shades of green." A deck with seating and a hot tub overlook tree-shaded steps leading downward to a wishing well, bird baths and the "Bashful Betty" statue. Lights in the trees create beautiful nights. "This is like going on vacation without leaving town!" Judie, who loves to sit in her deck's serenity chair, exclaimed.

Judie loves her adopted Ennis hometown. "Ivan was so proud of Ennis, his buttons would pop off his shirt," she remembered. Once a member of the Heritage Society, Judie designed calendars and a throw as fundraisers for the group. The couple was nominated to appear in the Helping Hands of Ennis calendar, and Ivan, a dedicated walker, envisioned the Ivan Goodwin Walking Trail across the dam at Jaycee Park with its benches and turn-of-the-century lights that today provides a welcoming atmosphere for walkers and their families. Judie is hoping to erect a plaque dedicated to the legacy Ivan left to Ennis. "Living my life in Ennis with my husband couldn't have been any greater," Judie said. **NOW**

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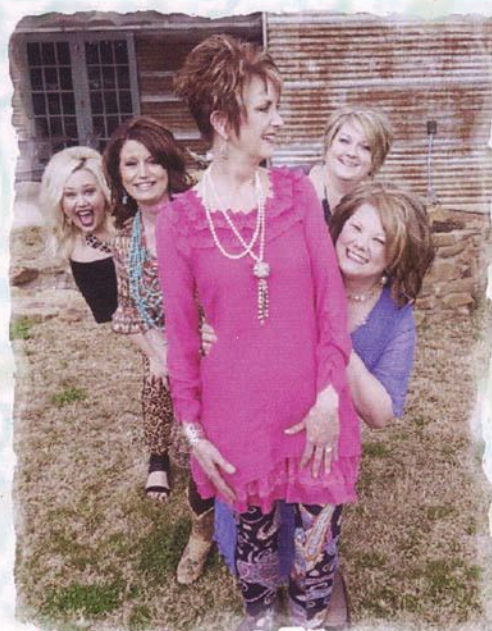
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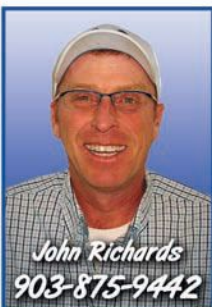
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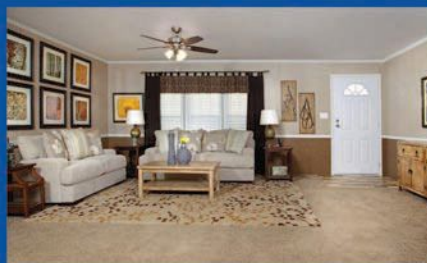
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RUN TO WIN

— By Virginia Riddle



Rick Sparkman may have grown up in the small town of Bristol, Texas, but his legacy goes way beyond the ZIP code of 75119. At a very young age, Rick began loving and caring for animals. He raised and took in every animal imaginable, from a skunk to a black squirrel. He found a niche in showing pigeons and went on to win the World Class Best of Breed award. With his continued love for animals, Rick decided to start a cattle business.

He was always up for a challenge. Rick wanted to learn how to fly a plane, so he became a pilot. He loved the restaurant industry, so he became a franchisee for two different concepts and opened several restaurants. Folks around Bristol were used to seeing Rick running every day. He loved life, his family and his work. He



was easy to talk to. Maybe that was why people sought him out for friendship and business, and was one of the reasons his family loved him. Chats with Rick were always upbeat and revealed his personality, a lucky inheritance from his parents, Peggy and Eldon. The same friendliness, honesty and gratitude found in them could also be seen in Rick.

December 21, 2011, was a normal day for Rick. He woke up, ran his usual four miles, went to work, spent time with his family and went to bed that night not knowing he would wake up the next morning to a new challenge. On December 22, Rick had to be CareFlighted to the hospital. His heart stopped for four-and-a-half minutes, but with his sheer inner strength, he beat this obstacle. The doctors informed the family that less than 5 percent of people would have survived. The news he and his family received next was the last thing they could have imagined. He was diagnosed with a Glioblastoma Multiforme stage 4 inoperable brain tumor at age 55. Staying true to his character, Ashley remembered him saying, "I will beat this. I can do it."



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So began the Sparkman family's 11-month race against cancer. Monica, Rick's wife, and their children, Ashley and her two brothers, Chad and Daniel, took care of Rick. The family made a point of enjoying weekend trips together. "Having someone in the family going through this puts everything into perspective," Ashley recalled. "It puts a time frame on life, which is so precious."

While undergoing radiation and chemotherapy, Rick participated in two different clinical trials, one at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and the other at MD Anderson, in the hopes of finding a cure and helping others who were running the same race. As this disease began to take its toll, Rick was confined to a wheelchair. He was determined to participate in the DFW Brain Tumor Walk. Family and friends joined Rick on September 29, 2012, to participate in the walk, which was two miles long. Family and friends took turns pushing Rick in the wheelchair. Ashley remembers her dad wanting to get out of the wheelchair as they were approaching the finish line and saying, "I want to run across," and so with the help of his brother, Tim, and son, Daniel, to steady him, Rick ran across the finish line. He said, "I think I won."

"For us he did," Ashley said, "and that was his last good day."

forrick

Friends stood by the family through the tough times. "We have such a great community. I don't think we had to cook dinner once during the whole 11 months!" Ashley exclaimed. "There are so many people to thank, and I'm truly grateful for each one of them. My dad called them his angels."

Ashley's concerns prompted her to learn more about brain tumors. She reached out to online forums. "It helped to read about other people's experiences," Ashley said. She became active in a search for a cure through the National Brain Tumor Society, which sponsors annual events in the Metroplex. She participated in several but wanted to do even more in memory of her father. She wanted to not only find a cure but to help raise awareness about this horrible disease. Toward these goals, with her dad's love of music in mind, Ashley organized the first Rockin' For Rick event in 2013, followed again in April 2014. Together, the events have raised over \$20,000 for research. Rockin' For Rick is a dinner, live auction, silent auction and concert designed to raise awareness and funds for research through the NBTS.

With experience in organizing events but none in charitable fundraising, Ashley has successfully navigated through the



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challenge. She begins preparing for each event a year ahead. Organizing volunteers, collecting items for auction, securing a band and coordinating the food is just the beginning. For Ashley, "It's a lot of time, energy and coffee. My dad always told us, 'There is always one more thing you can do in any situation.' Very little is known about this disease, and Rockin' For Rick is just one more way I can help educate the public



about it and raise money for research to find a cure." According to the NBTS, nearly 700,000 Americans live today with a primary brain tumor, and approximately 69,000 more will be diagnosed within the next year, yet this is just the tip of the iceberg since cancer affects patients and their families worldwide. Pediatric brain tumors are second only to leukemia in children's cancers, so these tumors can affect people at any age. "We need public awareness along with answers that can help other patients and their families. A lot of work goes into putting Rockin' For Rick together. I'm so thankful for the donations, volunteers and support I've received over the last two years," Ashley said.

Rick Sparkman's legacy lives on in hundreds of people whose lives he touched and changed through his generosity, motivation and kindhearted deeds. His legacy also lives on within the Sparkman family through the daily decisions they make. "My dad always said, 'Possibilities in life are endless,'" Ashley said. That credo, shared through Rockin' For Rick, helps bring the possibility of a cure for brain cancers a little closer to reality. **NOW**

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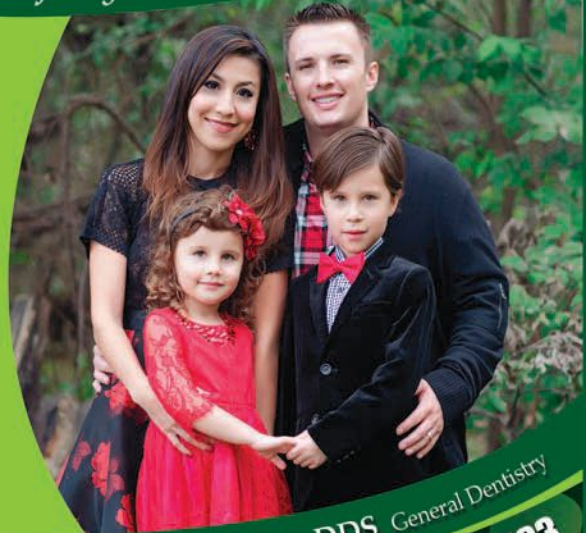
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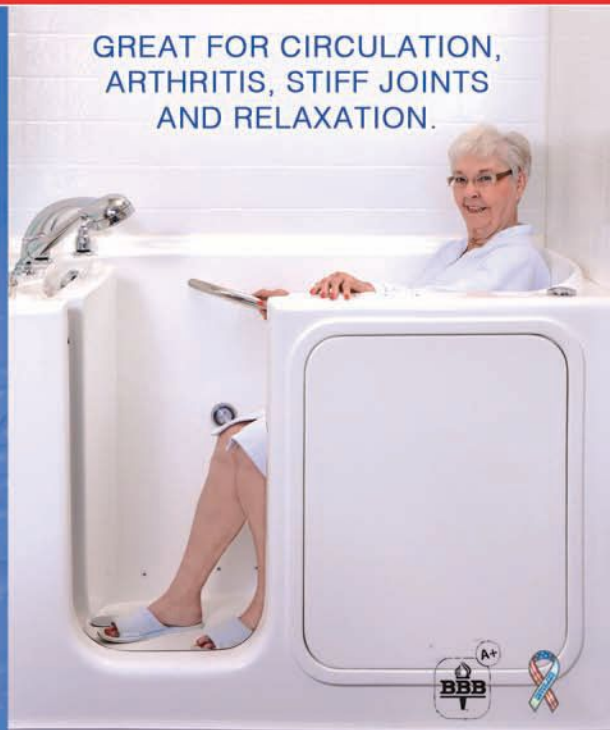
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Growing Your Own Veggies

— By Virginia Riddle

Fresh takes on a new meaning when vegetables are homegrown and harvested. No matter where you live, you can enjoy the epicurean and nutritional benefits with even a small investment of time, effort and money. March is the perfect month to begin planning your gardening project that will produce veggies well into the fall. Let's get started by answering a few easy, but important questions!

Who?

Gardening can be beneficial exercise for all ages and abilities. Because it's family- and neighborhood-friendly, everyone can get involved. Children who are picky veggie eaters may be willing to try new choices they have grown themselves.

Older gardeners, who have valuable gardening knowledge, may appreciate raised beds that eliminate stooping and kneeling.

Opportunities abound for all ages to enjoy this pastime. Consider coordinating gardens with neighbors to enlarge your vegetable choices and share the harvest.

What?

Endless vegetables are easy to grow depending on the season of the year. If you are a first-time veggie gardener, keep things simple. Plant easy-to-grow vegetables or your favorites that have been recommended by neighbors or nurseries in the area. Spring and summer plant choices include all varieties of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, summer



squash, peas, beans, okra and nearly all herbs. Swiss chard is a green that will survive the Texas summer heat.

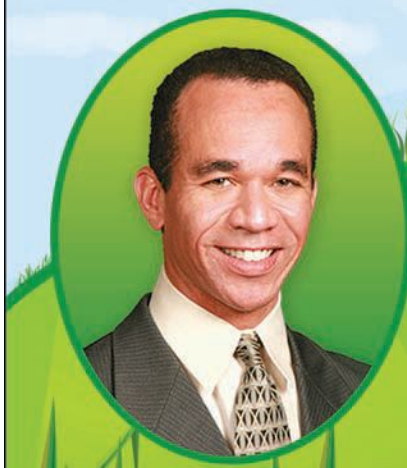
Where?

Most veggies require a sunny, well-drained area, but if that's not possible, try a potted garden or a hydroponic system in a sunny patio or balcony area. One patio tomato plant can produce a plentiful and continuous supply when planted in a pot. Local garden centers have a large range of pots. You can also create your own pot by cutting drainage holes into the bottom of a potted soil bag, splitting open the top of the bag, removing about half the soil, rolling the bag's sides down, and finally, planting a vegetable inside. Hydroponic systems are pricier but can yield produce for years to come. And since most vegetable

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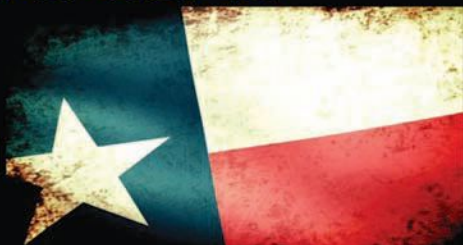
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plants blossom, they are attractive when incorporated into favorite sunny flower beds.


If you are carving a vegetable plot out of your backyard, have your soil tested. Use either a commercial kit or ask your county extension agent for advice. Almost any type of soil can be amended to give good plant growth. Your choice of mulch and fertilizer depends on soil type and available supplies.

What kind of watering system is available for your location? For small gardens or potted veggies, a watering can or diffused sprayer may work well. However, for larger plots, you may wish to lay soaker hoses on timers.

Invest in great time-saving gardening tools and keep them sharpened, cleaned and organized throughout the years to come. Simple hand tools are available, as well as powered tools.

When?

Planning begins now. However, planting out-of-doors needs to wait until the danger of a late frost or freeze is over. One of the best indicators of that date is when you notice buds on native-to-Texas pecan or mesquite trees. Vegetables, even tomatoes, can be started from seeds planted in starter trays purchased, along with quality potting soil, at your local nursery. Just follow the directions on the seed packet. The trays



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are easy to set outside during warm days and nights but move them to a heated location when temperatures dip down below 40 F.

How?

Now is the time to choose between organic or nonorganic vegetable gardens. Start a compost pile and investigate appropriate choices for fertilizer and pesticides that work best in your area. Your local garden nurseries, county extension agents and Master Gardeners are great resources for information that will help you whether you decide to go organic or not.

If your veggie garden is going to encompass more than a few square feet, rent or purchase a tiller from an area garden center or hardware store. Break the soil and turn the subsoil at a depth of about 6 inches. Remove rocks, make furrows for proper drainage, plant seeds or seedlings and lay down a 3-inch layer of mulch for weed control and water retention.

Plan your plantings so mature, larger plants will not shade smaller ones. Larger plants, like tomatoes, may need to be staked as they grow. To save space, beans, peas, melons and squash can be grown on easy-to-construct trellises, cages or A-frames.

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and pull weeds that crowd your plants, taking water and nutrients from the soil. Water when moisture cannot be felt 1-inch deep into the soil and fertilize on recommended cycles. Harvest veggies when they are at their ripest point or before damaging weather, such as hail is predicted.

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Pick, wash, eat and enjoy your produce each day, but if your bounty exceeds your gastronomic limits, here are some easy tips:

- **Most veggies can be frozen, canned or dehydrated for future use.** Research methods online or with your county extension agents. Follow food-handling safety tips exactly.
- **Donate produce to a local food bank.** Their clients love to see fresh vegetable offerings. Your charitable donations may be tax deductible — check with your income tax specialist.
- **Share with friends and family.** They will know it is a gift from your heart!

Growing your own vegetables can be a fun, educational experience for family, friends and neighbors, and the physical exercise and healthy eating can elevate your spirits after our cold winter days. Welcome spring by enjoying watching your new veggie garden thrive! **NOW**

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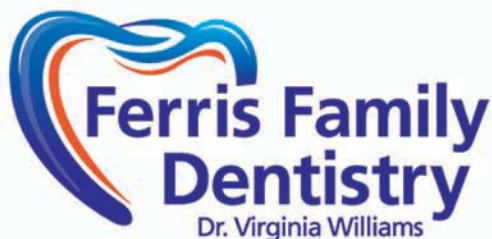
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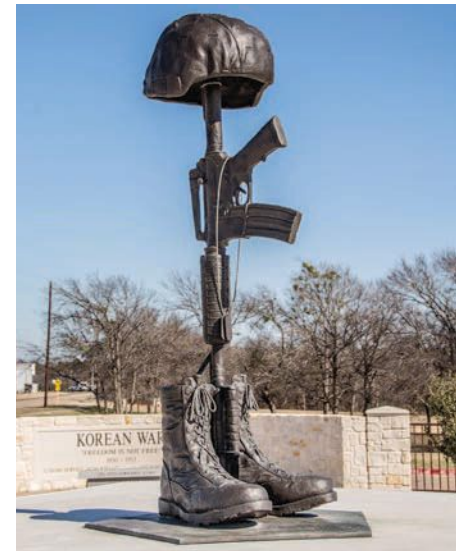


The American Legion, Chism-Landers Post 361

706 Rumbo Road
Ennis, TX 75119
(972) 875-6436
www.chismlanders361.org
Facebook: American Legion Post 361

Hours:

Monday: 3:00 p.m.-midnight
Tuesday-Friday: 10:00 a.m.-midnight
Saturday: 10:00 a.m.-1:00 a.m.
Sunday: Noon-10:00 p.m.



Steve Hauk, Dudley Fox and Larry Fincher are proud to serve other veterans and their community through Post 361.

VETERANS SERVING VETERANS

The American Legion — for the veteran, the veteran's family and the community.

— By Virginia Riddle

“No man left behind” is a military tradition that is still practiced by the men and women of The American Legion, Chism-Landers Post 361 of Ennis. Founded by a temporary charter in 1922, the post is named for and pays homage to the first two men from the county who died in WWI. “Matt Chism and Herman Landers had gone to school together and were serving in separate units when they were killed in action,” stated Dan Cook, a Navy veteran who is the service officer at the post.

The largest wartime veterans’ organization in America, The American Legion is a home-away-from home for veterans from any of the U.S. military branches. It is a place where veterans returning from war can find understanding and support. “We are trying to create an atmosphere for the younger veterans who are coming out of Iraq and Afghanistan. We want the younger vets to know this is a place they can go to mingle with others who have lived through similar experiences,” Steve Hauk, the post’s

finance officer, said. “We are veterans serving veterans. We are family here. We help each other out in any way we can. That’s what we are here for.”

The post, permanently chartered since 1934 and in its current location since 1971, gives free membership to active duty military personnel. To become a legion member, an individual must be a veteran, and currently Post 361 has 372 legion members. The auxiliary, which is for spouses of military and children, has 211 members. There are 163 Sons of American Legion and 28 Legion Riders. The Legion Riders provide motorcycle escorts for military funerals and other events. Jayson St. Clair, squadron commander of the Sons of American Legion and 6th District adjutant said, “I am so proud of my grandfather who served in the Air Force in Korea. There is so much knowledge among the members, and many of them are dual members, meaning they are vets themselves and sons of veterans as well.”

Members can enjoy entertainment including music on Friday nights, weekly dart tournaments and an APA pool league. Many events, such as charitable bingo, which is played on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. and on Sundays at 2:30 p.m., are open to the public and serve as fundraisers for the post's various projects.

One such project is the Home for the Brave. The HFTB committee, which is working under Post 361, is endeavoring to build a mortgage-free custom home for a disabled veteran who was wounded in action. Marine Corporal Cody Jones, who was injured by an IED explosion that resulted in the loss of his left leg below the knee and a mid-foot



**“WE HELP
EACH OTHER
OUT IN ANY
WAY WE CAN.”**

amputation on his right foot, was selected as the recipient. The HFTB hopes to have a new home ready for Cody and his wife and newborn son by July 4, 2015. Anyone interested in making a contribution to this worthy project may do so at www.homeforthebrave.net.

Additional special events for post members include serving as an honor guard in parades and other occasions, New Year's Eve dances, Halloween costume parties and fishing with older vets. Funds raised are put back into the community through the group's sponsorship of baseball teams, scholarships, Boy's Scouts and delivering food to shut-ins. The post has built wheelchair ramps, gives rides to the Dallas VA hospital and also contributed to the building of the Ennis Veterans Memorial. The list of community involvement seems endless and addresses so many needs. “We *are* veterans serving veterans,” Dan said. **NOW**

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Ennis High School band starts off the victory parade.



James Lockhart greets the crowd in E-town during the parade.



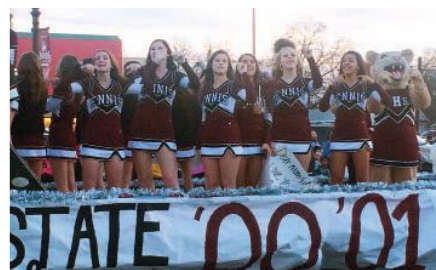
Aidan Ramirez proudly shows off his board-breaking skills.



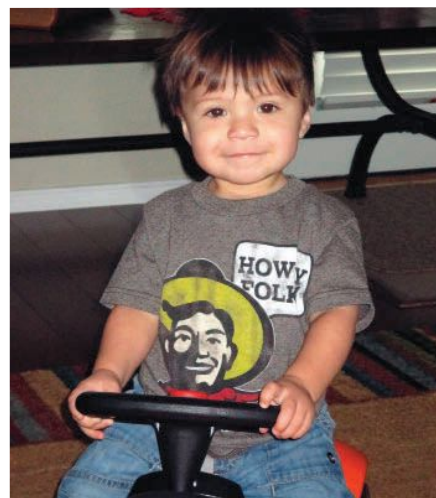
Lummus fifth graders line up for a fire drill.



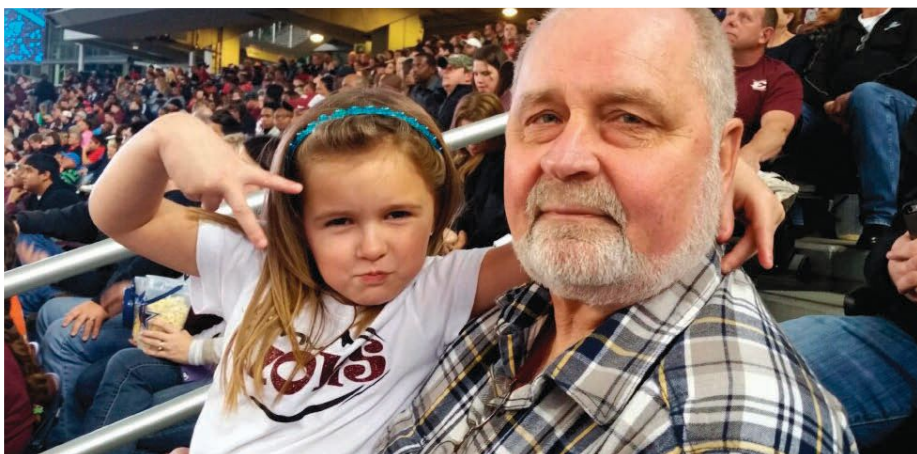
Shaelynn and Nichole Greer cheer for the Ennis Lions at the championship game.



EHS cheerleaders lead the crowd in a cheer during the parade.



Zane Robinson rides his new BMW.



Peyton Dickerson and her Papa, Robert Pryor, show some Ennis Lions love at the state championship game.



Mari and Terry Hillger and Terri and Terry Moore enjoy an early morning breakfast with the Hillger's granddaughter, Aspyr Newman.

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New Contribution Limits Make 401(k) Plans Even More Attractive

If you are interested in saving for retirement, here's some good news: For 2015, the IRS has raised the maximum contribution limits for 401(k) plans from \$17,500 to \$18,000. And if you're 50 or older, you can put in an extra \$6,000, up from \$5,500 in 2014. These same limits also apply to 403(b) plans, for employees of public schools and nonprofit organizations, and to 457(b) plans, for employees of state and local governments and other governmental agencies, such as park boards and water districts. So, in other words, a lot of workers have gotten a "raise" in their ability to contribute to tax-advantaged retirement plans.

Although you may not think you will ever contribute the maximum amount to your retirement plan, you may still benefit from making small increases each year. Unfortunately, many people don't do this. In fact, approximately 30 percent of eligible workers don't even participate in their employer's 401(k)-type plan, according to the Employee Benefits Security Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Labor. And the median savings rate for these plans is just 6 percent of eligible income, with only 22 percent of employees contributing more than 10 percent of their pay, according to a recent report by Vanguard, an investment management company.

In any case, you do have some pretty strong motivations to put in as much as you can possibly afford. First of all, your 401(k) earnings grow on a tax-deferred basis, which means your money has more growth potential than it would if it were placed in an account on which you paid taxes every year. Eventually, though, you will be taxed on your withdrawals, but by the time you start taking out money, presumably in retirement, you might be in a lower tax bracket.

But you can also get a more immediate tax-related benefit from contributing as much as you can to your 401(k). Consider this hypothetical example. Suppose that you are in the 28-percent tax bracket. For every dollar you earn, you must pay 28 cents in taxes (excluding state and other taxes), leaving you 72 cents to spend as you choose. But if you put that same dollar into your 401(k), which is typically funded with pre-tax dollars, you will reduce your taxable income by one dollar — which means that if you did contribute the full \$18,000, you'd save \$5,040 in federal income taxes. Your particular tax situation will likely be impacted by other factors, but you'd have that \$18,000 working for you in whatever investments you have chosen within your 401(k) plan. If you kept contributing the maximum each year, you will be giving yourself more potential for a sizable fund for your retirement years.

Even if you couldn't afford to max out on your 401(k), you should, at the very least, contribute enough to earn your employer's match, if one is offered. (A common match is 50 cents per dollar, up to 6 percent of your pay.) Your Human Resources department can tell you how much you need to contribute to get the greatest match, so if you haven't had that conversation yet, don't put it off.

As we've seen, investing in your 401(k) is a good retirement strategy — you get tax benefits and the chance to build retirement savings. And with the contribution limit increasing, you've got the chance for more savings in the future. **NOW**

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Jeff Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.

Tax-free Income for Your Retirement

Tax-free income is the best gift you can give yourself at retirement. Converting to a Roth Individual Retirement Account (IRA) from a traditional IRA allows for tax-free accumulation as well as tax-free withdrawals in retirement - which means you don't have to worry as much about what income tax rates will be in the future.

There are tax considerations and other factors that determine whether converting to a Roth IRA is right for you.

Edward Jones, its employees and financial advisors cannot provide tax or legal advice. Please consult your attorney or qualified tax advisor regarding your situation.

Call today to schedule an appointment to learn more. We'll discuss your retirement goals to help determine if a Roth IRA makes sense for you.



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Time to Get Off the Couch!

Ah, yes, spring has arrived! Gone is Old Man Winter and in comes warmer weather, longer days and more sunshine. But what will we do about it? Will we merely watch the pretty weather from the couch? I think not, and maybe after reading this piece, you will think the same.

We all know the cardiovascular benefits of regular, moderate-intensity exercise. However, not all of us are motivated or able to don the jogging shorts and hammer out a couple of miles at a world-class pace. And, truth be told, no one can really tell you with any certainty that such a level of activity will add a day to your life, make you more attractive or even skinny. Excessive amounts of high-intensity and high-impact activities may create orthopedic problems that will diminish your mobility with aging.

So, does that mean we go back to the couch? Hardly. There is an exciting body of research that is looking at the benefits of a relatively low-level of activity in reducing the risk of death from virtually all causes. Although legitimate studies are still in their infancy, the data is compelling that you can prolong your life with relatively low-intensity activity. The opposite, however, is also true. Adoption of a sedentary life increases all-cause mortality.

In order to understand this information, it is helpful to understand the concept of MET. MET is an acronym that stands for Metabolic Equivalent of Task. A MET of 1 is the rate of energy used by an average individual seated at rest. Sleeping has a MET of 0.9. Walking

at a slow stroll of 1.7 mph increases the MET to 2.3. Step it up to 3 mph and you move up to 3.3 MET. These are all activities well within the reach of the average individual.

The available studies suggest that if one spends more than eight hours per day at a MET level less than 1.5, there is a measurable increase in hospitalization rate that may be as high as 14 percent. The more time one spends at a MET level less than 1.5, the greater the risk for all-cause mortality, mortality due to heart disease and cancer mortality. Further, the occurrence of heart disease, cancer (at least breast, colon, endometrial and ovarian) and diabetes is increased with the sedentary lifestyle.

So, what must one do? The first and most important step is to get off the couch. Really! The amount of needed activity to make a difference is really not much. Secondly, one must develop a plan. Try buying a pedometer and attempting to walk 10,000 steps each day. There are even apps for that! Clean the house, plant a garden, mow the grass, walk the dog. Do something every day. Many desk workers are now opting for stand-up desks that have been associated with increased productivity and increased MET consumption. Everyone can do this. Let's start now! **NOW**

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March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

AARP tax assistance: 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Ennis Public Library, 501 W. Ennis Ave. Free services include electronic filing. For more information, visit www.ennistx.gov/Tax-Help/.

March 5

EHS Choir African: 7:00-8:30 p.m., EHS Auditorium. The EHS Choir will host an evening of American music as influenced by African-American history: spirituals, gospel, blues, jazz, rock 'n' roll, soul, R&B, hip-hop and rap.

March 5 — 7

Ovilla Christian School presents its 2015 spring musical, *The Wizard of Oz*: 7:00 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium at Getzendaner Park, 400 S. Grand Ave., Waxahachie. Tickets are \$12 and can be purchased at the door on the night of the performance as long as seats are available. For more information, email OCS Fine Arts Director Dana Sosebee at dsosebee@ovillachristianschool.org.

March 7

Deeper Journeys with Nichole Nordeman, Lisa Harper and Tammy Trent: 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., The Avenue Church, 210 YMCA Dr., Waxahachie. Tickets are \$35. To purchase tickets, visit theavenuechurch.com/events. For more details, call (972) 937-5301.

March 14, 15

Greatest Generation Gun Aircraft Gun Show: Sokol, 2622 E. Hwy. 34. For more information, call (972) 875-7959 or visit www.sokolennis.com.

March 19 — 21

PDRA Pro Mod National Season Kickoff: Texas Motorplex, 7500 U.S. Hwy. 287. For more information, visit www.texasmotorplex.com.

March 20 — 22, 27 — 29, April 3 — 5

The Murder Room: Fridays and Saturdays: 7:30 p.m. **Sunday matinees:** 2:30 p.m., Ennis Public Theatre, 2705-C N. Kaufman St. A spoof of all

crime thrillers. For more information, call (972) 878-7529 or email info@ennispublictheatre.org.

March 21

Auditions for *The Glass Menagerie*: 3:00-5:00 p.m., Ennis Public Theatre, 2705-C N. Kaufman St. Roles available for two men (age 30ish) and two women (one age 20ish and one mature woman). Auditions consist of cold readings from the script. For more information, email shelley@ennispublictheatre.com.

March 28

Lionettes 3rd Annual Spring Dance Show Clinic: 8:30-11:30 a.m. With the theme "Let's Go to the Movies," this clinic is open to children ages 3-15. Visit www.ennisk12.tx.us for more details.

Ellis County Master Gardener Lawn & Garden Expo: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Ln., Waxahachie.

April 1 — 30

Ennis Bluebonnet Trails: Come drive over 40 miles of bluebonnet trails, sponsored by the Ennis Garden Club. For more information, visit www.visitennis.org.

Dallas YMCA at Ennis Little League registration: Register now for T-Ball, baseball and softball. Season start date is **May 5**. For more information, visit www.ymcadallas.org/locations/waxahachie/programs/sports/ennis/.

April 3

Garrett Rural Volunteer Fire Department's 13th Annual Good Friday Fish Fry: 5:00-8:00 p.m., Knights of Columbus Hall, 850 S. I-45. Live and silent auctions. Cost is \$10 for an adult to-go plate; \$6 for kids.

April 4

Citywide Easter Egg Hunt: 9:30 a.m.-noon, Ennis Veterans Memorial Park, 2301 Ennis Pkwy. For more information, call (214) 549-5878.

April 4 — October 31

Ennis Farmers Market.

Ongoing:

Mondays

Sign Language Class: 4:00-5:30 p.m., Ennis Public Library, 501 W. Ennis Ave. Classes are free and available for all ages. No sign up required.

Third Mondays

Ellis County Aggie Moms meetings:

7:00 p.m., Waxahachie First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin, Waxahachie. For more information, visit www.elliscountyyaggiemoms.org.

Second Tuesdays

Ennis Masonic Lodge No. 369 meetings: dinner at 6:30 p.m., meeting to follow at 7:30 p.m., Masonic Lodge, 209 N. Dallas St. For more information, contact Cecil Curry at ccurry_98@yahoo.com.

Third Tuesdays

Veterans Networking Group meetings: 5:00 p.m., Ryan's Steak House, Hwy. 287 Bypass and 77, Waxahachie. Call Mike Lamb at (214) 763-0378 for details.

Third Wednesdays

The Ellis County Christian Women's Connection meetings: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club. Cost is \$13. For more information, contact Kay at (972) 935-2054 or Margaret at (972) 937-1016 for reservations.

Second Thursdays

Mom's Connected meetings: 9:30-11:30 a.m., Tabernacle Baptist Church, 1200 Country Club Rd. Call the church office at (972) 875-3861 for more information.

Fourth Thursdays

MACs (Mature Adult Christians) covered dish dinner and entertainment at Tabernacle Baptist Church Family Life Center. Visit <http://tabernaclefamily.org> for more information.

Second Saturdays

Cheesy Striders Multiple Sclerosis & Parkinson's Self Help meeting: 10:00 a.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 N. Grand St., Waxahachie. For more information, contact Linda DeFrank at (214) 514-5236.

Fourth Saturdays

Bristol Opry: 7:00 p.m., featuring local singers and musicians. For more information, contact Jim Gatlin at (972) 846-2211.

Sundays

GriefShare meetings: 2:30-4:00 p.m., Cowboy Church of Ellis County in the sanctuary Youth Inc. room. For more information, call (972) 935-9801 or visit www.cowboychurchofelliscounty.org.

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



In the Kitchen With So-Kool Cooking Class

— By *Sandra Strong*

Amber Perez, instructor for the So-Kool Cooking Class at Sokol, has always enjoyed spending time in the kitchen. “My mom hated cooking, so she passed the baton to me,” Amber remembered. “Over the years, cooking has grown into a passion I love sharing with my students.” Teaching others to cook is something Amber has done for years. “The cooking class seemed natural to me,” she shared. “Each student has the same desire I saw in myself so long ago.”

Many of the recipes made in class are modified. The lasagna the group created has been an instant hit. “I take great pride in knowing my students go home to prepare meals for their families, because they want to,” Amber said, “not because they have to.” **NOW**

Alfredo Sauce

1/4 cup salted butter
1 Tbsp. minced garlic
4 cups heavy whipping cream
12 oz. Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Melt butter in a large saucepan. Add garlic and continue to cook over medium heat. Stir until garlic is soft, about 1 minute.
2. Add cream and cheese, stirring constantly until sauce reaches a simmer. Reduce heat and simmer on low, stirring to keep from sticking until cheese is completely melted and sauce has been reduced to desired consistency. (Sauce should be thick.)
3. Add salt and pepper. Set aside and let cool.

Marinara Sauce

2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes

1 28-oz. can crushed tomatoes
1 cup water
3-4 sprigs fresh basil
1/2 tsp. kosher salt

1. Heat olive oil in a deep skillet over medium heat. Add garlic, red pepper and cook, stirring until garlic softens; about 1 minute.
2. Add tomatoes, water, basil and salt. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low. Simmer until thick; about 30 minutes.

So-Kool Lasagna

1 green bell pepper
1 red bell pepper
1 large yellow onion
1 Tbsp. olive oil
1 1/2 lbs. lean ground beef
1 tsp. garlic
1 tsp. Italian seasoning
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 1-lb. box lasagna noodles
Marinara Sauce, (double above recipe)
3-4 cups whole milk ricotta, add more or less if desired

1 8.1-oz. jar Classico Basil Pesto
1/4 cup sun dried tomatoes, chopped and in oil

Alfredo Sauce, (see recipe above)
12 oz. Italian cheese
6 cups mozzarella cheese

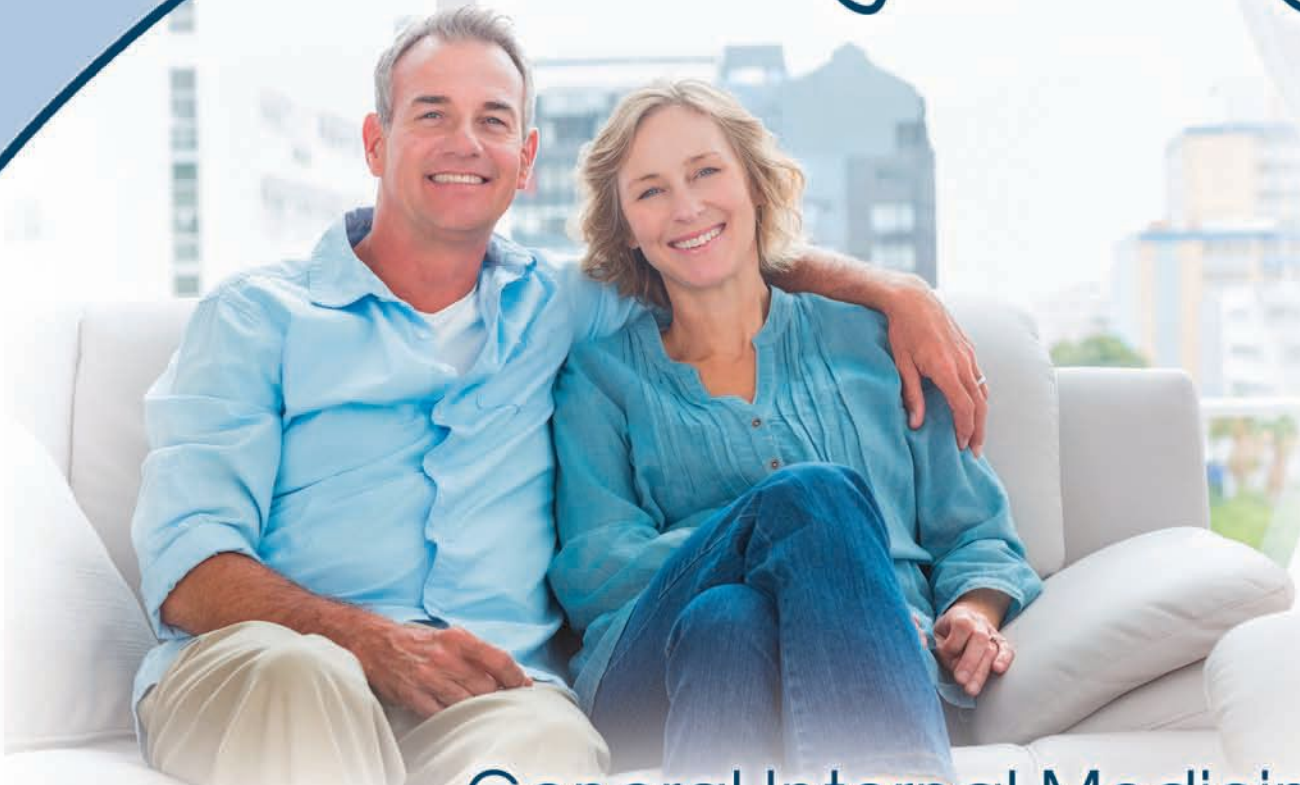
1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Dice peppers and onion. Heat pan with oil; add diced vegetables; cook until onion looks translucent.
2. Add beef, garlic, seasoning, salt and pepper. Brown and drain excess liquid.
3. In a large pot, boil lasagna until cooked, about 10 minutes. Drain and rinse in cool water, set aside.
4. In a large 14x9-inch deep-dish pan, add a thin layer of meat and marinara sauce to bottom of pan, making sure to evenly spread so noodles, when added, won't stick to the bottom of pan. Add a layer of noodles.
5. Spread ricotta cheese evenly over noodles. Add half of the jar of pesto and dried tomatoes.
6. Add a thin layer of Alfredo sauce, Italian cheese and mozzarella, making sure to layer each thinly. Repeat the steps a second time.
7. Top with a little more marinara sauce and any remaining mozzarella. Bake covered for 30 minutes. Bake uncovered for 15-20 minutes more until cheese is brown and bubbly. Allow lasagna to sit uncovered for 30 minutes prior to serving.

Italian Meatballs With Marinara Sauce

1 lb. ground beef, 80/20
1/4 cup milk
1 egg
1/2 cup Italian breadcrumbs
1/2 tsp. salt
1 tsp. oregano
1 Tbsp. fresh parsley
1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1/2 tsp. pepper
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese
Marinara Sauce (see above recipe)
Ricotta cheese, to taste
Basil, to taste

1. Mix first 10 ingredients together to form meatball mixture. Roll meat into golf ball-sized balls. Bake at 400 F for 15-20 minutes.
2. Prepare marinara sauce as directed in previous recipe. Remove meatballs from oven and add to sauce. Continue to cook for 10 minutes, occasionally stirring. Serve with cheese and basil.

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