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ON THE COVER



Teri Alexander admires the image of her hero, Davy Crockett, as played by John Wayne.

Photo by SRC Photography.

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Editor's Note

Dear Friends,

As I thought about Texans' battle for independence from Mexico, I wondered what our forefathers and mothers placed on the table for their children to eat. So I visited www.pickyourown.org to double-check my past experiences, and I found I was right on target for what fresh harvests Texans have been getting during this transitional month when it's still winter, yet turning into spring. I, too, have grown and

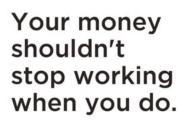
enjoyed asparagus, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, celery and spinach during years when I've had the time to truly garden. People with the right touch can also grow strawberries in March.

I did succeed with Swiss chard, however. One hardy plant survived through three winters and nearly four summers until the high heat of 2014 killed not only the plant, but my desire to fight the elements anymore. Yet as I consider how courageous, pioneering Texans survived, I realize I've become downright lazy. I believe I'll start working, again, for the absolute lusciousness of dining on my own hard-earned rewards.

Have a wonderful month!

Melissa

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Using humor, suspense and peculiar phraseology only a Texan could know, Teri Alexander brings alive our state's history for seventh-graders at Danny Jones Middle School. Her storytelling connects with facts this month, when she and two other history teachers take 150 of the school's best-behaved students on three buses to visit the Alamo and Battle for Texas: The Experience, a 22,000-square-foot interactive museum recently installed in the old Foley's basement just across the plaza from the iconic memorial in San Antonio. This is Teri's second year to teach Texas history and her second year to organize the experiential field trip.

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Her interest in history was sparked in eighth grade. "Mr. Richard Wilbanks, my teacher, was so passionate about history," she remembered. "He'd start telling the story, and then he would have us play different parts. He made it so exciting that we became passionate about it, too.

"I grew up right down the street, in Duncanville, way back when the Dead Sea was only sick," Teri said, crediting the idiom to her stepfather, Kelton Prather. "He was one of the most patriotic people I've ever known, and he taught me to respect the freedom we have today." After an exciting life as a daughter, first, and then a sales professional, wife, mother and dance teacher, Teri went back to school for her teaching certificate.

Ten years ago, when Teri ran her own dance studio, while also conducting a career in outside sales, she made a choice. "All the money in the world doesn't compare to seeing the kids' faces," she



said, "like when my dance students went to competition and won for the first time, or when my history students make connections and learn to love history. That's what I'm meant to do work with kids." She keeps their focus on people who make a difference and promotes the value of a good reputation, character and integrity.

"I encourage them to be proud of their school and take responsibility for their learning," Teri said. She tells her students, "You don't have to like history, and you can get through this class by just memorizing. But, I'm here to help you *love* history."

Living her passion, Teri and her seventh-graders dig into the past and put their present reality in context with the history of this nation. "Kids ask me every year why we teach Texas history," she said, explaining with her answer: "We were once our own country!"

Marketing skills have become Teri's key for inspiring her students' curiosity. "I love to tell stories to the kids. I even tell them ones about me, true stories about my life, my kids, my brain surgery," she said. "I get all the way up to the point when there was a chance of me dying because it was such a high-risk surgery. The bell rings, and they come back for more the next morning!" Simply telling her students an exciting, ongoing story about Texas, Teri makes it intriguing, so they'll want to hear the rest of the story when they return to class and even hunt for facts, as they read on their own.

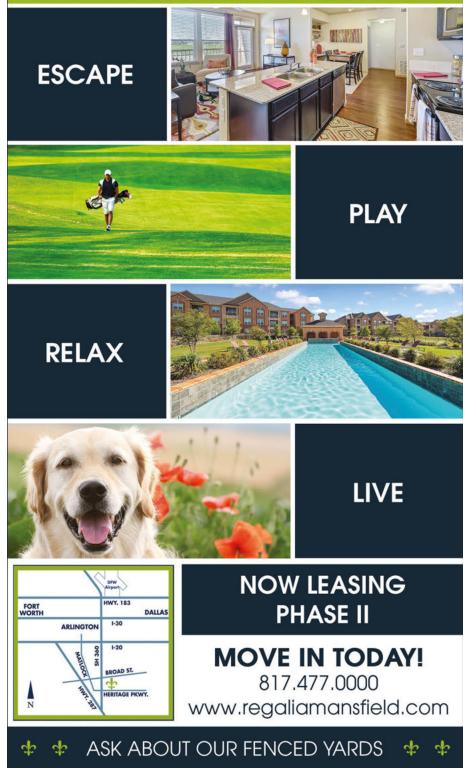
Recognizing the many influences on students' understanding, Teri doesn't use the classroom's overhead fluorescent lights. "They're over-stimulating," she explained. She lights the room gently, yet





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brightly, with LED lights strung around the perimeter of the room, in corners and where the walls and ceiling meet. Then she makes sure to inject humor into her stories. "Otherwise, their minds drift off onto who they're going to the football game with on Friday."

They talk with Teri about hero after hero. "They have to make guesses why Cortez is my hero of all the Spanish conquistadors. When they figure it out, they get a Jolly Rancher," she said. "He's my hero because he made his crew sink the ships," she explained. "That was very bold to say, 'It is do or die. We're not retreating. We're either going to win or die trying.' That's just like the spirit behind the battle for Texas, the Revolution." Using mnemonic tricks to help her students remember who they read about, she teaches them that Travis, Crockett and Bowie fought at the Alamo to Take Care of Business.

Her first visit to the actual Alamo happened, at her request, when she was 12 years old. "I cried like a baby when I saw it," Teri recalled. "Back then, *The Alamo* movie had John Wayne as Davy Crockett, my hero because he was just so cool. There was no sand, dust or tumbleweed rolling by, and definitely, John Wayne wasn't there. I was so upset because the Alamo was so small and surrounded by buildings. I just felt like it had been forgotten about."

Last winter, inspired to help her students remember the Alamo and all it represents, Teri made a recommendation to her principal, Travis Moore, that 50 of her students take a one-day museum excursion. The Battle for Texas wasn't even open to the public yet, but she'd been reading about how investors had worked over 18 months to create a virtual Alamo containing over 250 artifacts, including Santa Anna's bed, as well as revealing re-enactments and interactive displays.



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Planning for a chartered bus to leave Mansfield at 6:00 a.m. and return at 8:00 p.m., the trip would cost each student \$70, including lunch and any extra for souvenirs at Buc-ee's on the way back. While investigating the historical site, the students' assignment was to locate specific historical landmarks at the Alamo and the Battle for Texas, and then take selfies with their school-supplied iPads in front of each landmark. They would be required to catalog their discoveries when they returned.

On that first trip, Teri did not know how her students would react to the artifacts, pictures, maps, swords and knives. As she had hoped, the trip was a success. "Everyone was totally engaged, taking pictures and reading the information. They weren't playing around or rushing through, because the experience was hands-on," she said. "The principal's secretary went with us, and she was on the phone on the way back saying, 'We're going back and taking three times as many!""

In Teri's classroom, the students still talk about the 2016 trip to the Alamo and the Battle for Texas. The pictures she hung from last year gave this year's seventh-graders incentive to write essays, hoping they would be selected to join one of the three teams taking a bus to San Antonio this month. Teri didn't show the original movie, The Alamo, until the students returned from winter break in January. By the end of the trip to San Antonio, they will have figured out who her favorite Texas hero is. The well-earned Jolly Ranchers won't taste near as good as the success they'll enjoy in eighth grade, thanks to Teri's teaching techniques. NOW





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> Eradicating Poverty – By Debie During

Carmin MacMillan is the executive director of the Wesley Mission Center of Mansfield. She holds a master's degree in organizational leadership from Eastern University in St. Davids, Pennsylvania; a bachelor's degree in religious education from Tyndale University; and a certificate in developing healthy communities from Tufts University. Before coming to the center, she served with World Vision Canada. She now leads a team that serves to "empower people on their journey toward self-sufficiency and wholeness."



Her experience growing up contributed to her vocational choice. Her school had a food drive each year. She would search through the cabinets of her home to find something to give. One Thanksgiving as her family was packing up to leave to go be with other relatives for the holidays, they found a large box on the porch. On the box was a "Happy Thanksgiving" note. She called her mother out to have a look and help get the box. Her mom removed the lid and inside were nonperishable items like the items they had just taken to the school to donate for others. As a child, she was confused as to why people had



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2111 ROOSEVELT DR., ARLINGTON, TX 76013 (817) 277-0620 | www.FlintAcademy.com Carmin MacMillan and her team helped Alvaro Aristizabal, who learned about financial coaching at Wesley Mission Center, and it changed his future.

given them to her family. But, her mother was not confused.

Her mom knew that some well-meaning family or individual in their town probably thought they saw a single mom with three kids living in a small trailer who could probably use a little extra help, since it was the holidays. Her mother's response to the act did not indicate that. Carmin realized that if the charitable community members had taken time to have a conversation with her mom, they would have known she was not interested in charity and did not feel she needed it.



The

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An impression was made on Carmin from that point on, causing her to realize that many well-meaning people come up with solutions to problems they may perceive to exist, but really do not. "Without talking to our community or neighbors and listening for the needs, we sometimes come up with ways to 'do charity' to people," Carmin said.

Carmin learned a lot from her single parent mom about being frugal with what she had and making life work. She comes to the Wesley Mission Center with this outlook on life. She wants to help others find the way out of their situation by looking at what they have with fresh eyes and by giving aid where it is needed.

As she leads the Wesley Mission Center, she finds great satisfaction in serving the Mansfield Independent School District population. The center



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houses a food pantry and a thrift store. But it offers much more. They give job skills training, provide ESL courses and run a women's empowerment program. One of the most unique features of the center is the innovative financial health programming. Through research, she and her colleagues found that 30-40 percent of people the center had helped previously had borrowed from Pay Day or Auto Title Loan companies. These loans have high interest rates and are almost impossible to pay back. To give clients an alternative to the highinterest, predatory lending products, they created Unity Lending. Unity Lending is an interest-free lending program for MISD residents, which is underwritten by donors. While repaying the loan, clients receive coaching and work toward such goals as: overcoming bad debt,





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One client had lived on child support and food stamps and was out of work for four years. She managed the little she had pretty well, so she and one of the job coaches began to talk about careers. She had been on a sporadic search for work. They came up with a schedule each week where the client would come into the center and get assistance with looking for a job. She wanted to be a pharmacy tech. The center helped her get a job and work toward her pharmacy certification. Now, she is off food stamps, out of government-subsidized housing and living in her own apartment.

Alvaro Aristizabal, another client, moved to Mansfield from Ecuador nearly seven years ago. He had worked in the banking industry while there. When he moved to Mansfield, he found a job at the Walnut Creek Country Club and served in various maintenance roles. As a single dad, he was finding it a challenge to make ends meet. He learned about the financial coaching at the center and gave it a try. After identifying ways to save with a few changes to his spending habits, he found more than \$100 a month extra. He opened up a matched savings plan with EARN, one of the center's partners. He plans to realize his dream of going back to college to complete his degree. Alvaro recommends the coaching program to anyone having difficulty understanding how to avoid debt and plan for their family's future.

Carmin is clear that the center is "not a bank," but an entity that is attempting to help fill a niche in the community with

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new financial health programs. Clients are coached on how to access healthy banking products from local banks and credit unions, which is essential for long-term success.

Carmin finds her work extremely fulfilling. "It is an awesome privilege to see the weight of financial stress lifted off families. When clients leave and you can see the shift in their posture — face and shoulders are more relaxed; they are smiling; and they have light in their eyes again — it is simply amazing because it immediately has an impact on their children. The children are more relaxed, and they are more hopeful about what lies ahead for them," she shared.

Families in Mansfield have greater hope for their future because of the generosity the community expresses by pouring into the Wesley Mission Center. Carmin and her colleagues continue to help the center grow and give because as the community grows, so does the need. NOW

Editor's Note: Wesley Mission Center offers a multitude of programs, services and classes, such as: Robin's Wings; Faith & Finances; and Jobs for Life. For more information, visit www.wesleymissioncenter.org.



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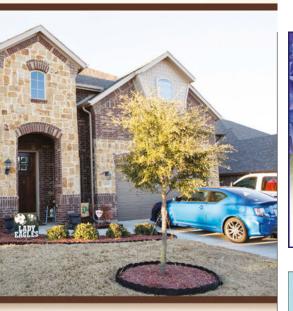
— By Virginia Riddle

At Home With Paul & Angela Thompson





A soaring rock fireplace to warm the chill of winter and early spring nights was just one of the many new home features Paul and Angela Thompson had on their wish list, as they started seeking more space in which their family and friends could enjoy wonderful times together. The couple had lived for 14 years in an older home near downtown Mansfield when they started their search in the growing suburbs of





newly constructed homes. "Our son, Tate Perry, was grown and had moved away, but we decided to move up in size, so my parents and other family members could stay here. We talked and looked a long time, and God kept bringing us back to this neighborhood and home," Angela recalled.

The family, which includes their daughter, Megan, a junior at Lake Ridge High School, has lived in their new home for two years. They customized it to their tastes with upgrades as it was being built. "We sold our old home quickly and had





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to live in an apartment for six months while this home was being completed," Angela said.

Megan recalled the move from the third floor apartment with no elevator to their home. "We moved all day right before I had a soccer game that night." Paul and Angela reported faithfully to their duties in the concession stand while Megan played. "I had the best game of my life that night, and then we came home to sleep on mattresses [on the floor]. I even had a friend stay over that night!" The move has been a good one for this family. "We really like our neighbors, who are a very well-rounded group in ages. We have been very blessed," Paul said.

"This is a very peaceful, quiet area, which is convenient to downtown Mansfield, and it's between Dallas and Fort Worth," Angela added.

Both Paul and Angela are graduates of Mansfield High School, but with four years between their ages, they didn't meet until Angela's senior year at a football game. But they didn't begin dating at that time. Following his graduation, Paul was



serving in the U.S. Army and, later, the National Guard. Angela took a different route in life. She married, had Tate and studied medical coding. It was after her divorce that the couple, then friends, saw each other at a local gas station and made a date. Coincidentally, it was Valentine's Day. They married when Tate was a 5-year-old, and the family has been together for 19 years.

Paul attended Dallas Baptist University and taught at his alma mater, MHS, before becoming a lease operator for Total Global, a French energy company.



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682-400-4010 • 1201 SH 360 • Mansfield, TX 76063 www.newmanacademy.org Angela is part of Arlington Orthopedic Associates' billing department, and Megan already has work experience at the Apex Sports Center and for her uncle who owns horses and lives in Mansfield.

Their Tudor-style home of brown hued stone and brick, with its inviting front porch, has been beautifully landscaped by the couple. Upon entering the home, family members and visitors are welcomed into a wide, elegant entryway framed by the graceful staircase, plant shelf and window inserted just below the soaring two-story ceiling. French doors on one side of the entry lead into the couple's office where Paul's military mementos and Tate's high school graduation photos are displayed.

The focal points of the open living room and kitchen/dining area are the two-story rock fireplace with its welcoming hearth and the large kitchen island. Chloe, one of the family's dogs, resides in her bed on one side of the fireplace, while an antique student desk that holds Paul's collection of antique irons is displayed proudly to the fireplace's right. "I'm into antiques. I love old stuff and am an old soul," Paul revealed.



The living room's ceiling opens to a bridge on the second floor, as does the entryway. Lady, the family's other furry companion, occupies the bridge while guarding her household. One living room wall of windows provides views to the fenced backyard. Higher windows provide views of stars at night.

Comfortable couches and island seating create plenty of space for meals, homework or conversations. "The kitchen was my main priority when building this home," Angela said. "This is our gathering place." The beautiful cabinetry matches the fireplace mantel, and Angela's mother's drapes complete the picture-perfect atmosphere. When entertaining, family and friends can spill out to the all-weather covered patio or the backyard gazebo that the couple built.

The master bedroom and bath are decorated in browns and greens, and Angela's mother's handiwork can be seen in the matching spread and window coverings. "My grandmother reupholstered that corner chair," Angela stated proudly. The master bath is lit by one of Paul's flea market antique chandelier finds. It is made of cut glass and bronze. "We like to shop flea markets and incorporate our 'finds' into the house," Angela explained.

"It's what I do to relax my mind," Paul added.

Megan's living room, where she entertains teammates after a soccer game, doubles as the family's upstairs movie and game room. Paul is building a popcorn/drinks bar for the space and incorporating a lamp that was also found at a flea market. Megan's private bedroom suite has a wall of lights and is lit by her big "M" on a side table. Paul and Angela redid Megan's bedroom furniture. Not only did Megan, a talented athlete, make the Lake Ridge High School soccer team as a freshman, but she has inherited her family's hunting and fishing passion. A photo of her with her first buck is on the dresser beside her window seat. Two guest bedrooms and a Jack-and-Jill bath occupy the other second-story wing.

Angela's parents have downsized to their dream home in Streetman, and the couple inherited several items from them. Her family is small, compared to Paul's "large and loving" family in the Mansfield area. Tate lives in College Station, so family gatherings are frequent, whether the family is hunting, fishing, gathering in the family's kitchen or going out for a night of country western dancing.

"It's great having kids," Paul said. "Our parents instilled in us the value of working hard, and we are passing that on. Raising our kids in Mansfield was important. It's a small town with lots of love, and people are involved. The school district has knowledgeable teachers and administrators." Paul concluded with Angela's concurrence: "I appreciate our kids getting to grow up where we did, and this home is our safe haven and domain."



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– By Rick Mauch

Brandon Vierra has

a lot to cheer about in life, and the Mansfield High School freshman is doing that in winning style. Brandon is a competitive cheerleader. He's been cheering for the past four years, two years with Cheer Texas and the last two years for Liberty Cheer All-Stars in Midlothian, helping them win a national championship this past year at the Senior 5 Restricted Coed Level. "All of the other sports I wasn't really good at, but cheer is more of a passion," he said.

Actually, Brandon was a pretty good gymnast. That has helped him be good at cheer. "When I was younger, I wanted to do cool flips," he said. "I liked the trampoline. It was fun to be up high and flip my body around." 11

Brandon has done plenty of flipping in competitive cheer. While he is now one of the cheerleaders on the bottom of the stunt group, he was once one who was thrown about 15 feet or so in the air and caught — a flyer as they are known in cheerleading circles. "I don't like heights, but I had to do it for the team," Brandon said referring to his time as a flyer.



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"It was scary. There are major things that can happen," said his mother, Jill Vierra. "I would say, 'Do not drop him. I don't care what it takes.""

And, for the most part, Jill got her wish. There was one time, however, when the team was warming up for a meet and Brandon was dropped on a thin mat with concrete beneath. "It hurt, but I had to get back up and go compete," he said. "We did pretty good at that meet, too. We won first."

Brandon's chosen sport requires much discipline. Competitions are every other weekend, from December through April. He and his family travel throughout Texas with the team in hopes of qualifying for nationals, also known as The One, in Orlando, Florida.

Practices are rigorous with scheduled workouts of two hours a couple times each week. But Brandon must also attend additional tumbling classes throughout the week. This makes for some busy days when you add school and homework to the list of daily activities.

In short, it's a lot more than just jumping and tumbling. If he's not in shape, he doesn't perform. Simple as that. And when he does perform, he'd better be on his game. "If you don't do everything correct, it can all go wrong in a matter of seconds," he said. "And you have to have a little bit of rhythm."

Every count, each movement must be precise. There are no re-dos, and the team has about two-and-a-half minutes to persuade judges they are the best. "They put in all that work, and it comes down to two-and-a-half minutes," Jill said. "It's very much a team sport."

Brandon was encouraged into cheerleading by several friends and



neighbors. With them being cheerleaders and him a gymnast, they would regularly do flips playing in the yard. Then, one day they asked him to join them on a trip to their practice at Cheer Texas. Brandon took part in the workout. The coaches, Jill and Brent Horton, noticed his ability and asked him to join their team. "They played a huge part in getting him involved. They took a special interest in

him, and we are so grateful," said his father, Keith Vierra.

"I had no idea what competitive cheer was," Brandon said with a chuckle.

Before long, Brandon was competing in his first meet. It just happened to be at AT&T Stadium, home of the Dallas Cowboys. "I thought I was going to have a panic attack," he said. "It was the scariest feeling ever!"







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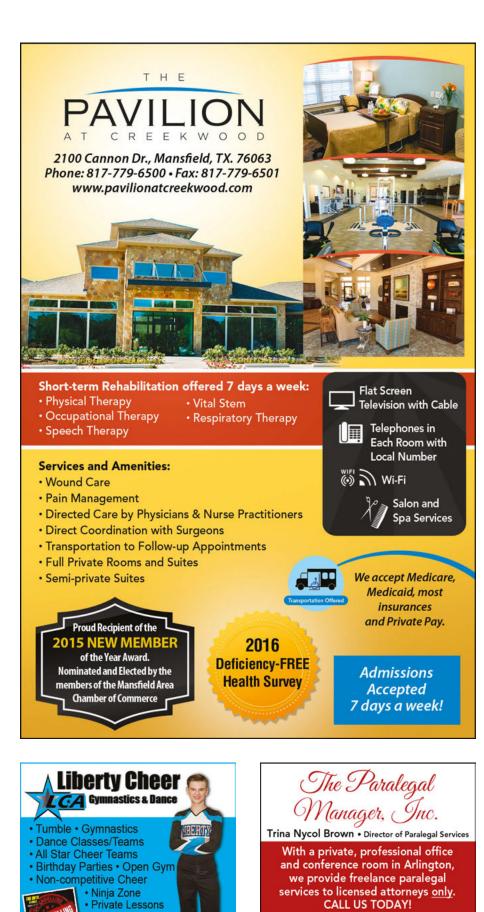
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Regardless of the obstacles, Brandon's parents, Keith and Jill Vierra, and his younger brother, Reece, are proud he pursues his dreams.

Now, Brandon is the one putting fear into the hearts of his opponents. He's won many individual medals and awards and even has college coaches showing interest in him. He's attended cheer clinics at prestigious programs, such as Navarro College and Texas Tech University. "Brandon was blessed with a gift. Having the ability to do this is a unique talent," Keith shared. "As a parent, I'm excited. It takes a lot of commitment and hard work."

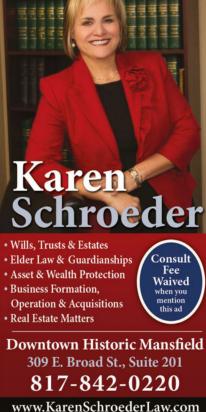
Brandon admits being a male in a female-dominated sport has its challenges, especially in this social media age. Only about 2 percent of the athletes on his current team are males. He's developed a thick skin, and he's quieted many critics simply with his skills. "I remember in biology class a friend said, 'Brandon can do a standing back tuck,"" he recalled. "I was like, 'Well, OK,' so I did it, and they all thought it was so cool." That, by the way, is standing still, flipping over backwards in the air and landing on his feet in the same spot. Brandon said workouts include 20 of those.

And no, they don't lift weights. "We lift people," he said.

The negative stigma from others who don't understand male cheerleaders can get vicious. In fact, Brandon, his family and Liberty have joined forces to create the Empowerment Program

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Toni Engram DDS, pictured at right with her family.

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designed to better inform people of the damage bullying and harassment can cause. It offers advice to parents for understanding damaging situations, along with helping build self-confidence among the athletes.

The program deals with stigma, social media, gossip and being different. They offer a gym drop box for anonymous messages concerning help and guidance, small group conversation corners, communication to parents and a parent forum. "Just be supportive of your athlete," Keith said. "Be supportive of your kid."

Brandon said it all comes down to knowing the truth about yourself. As long as you believe in yourself and you have a strong support group, strength will follow. "People are going to say things, but I know who I am and what I can do," he said.

"While his skills are great and getting better by the day, it is his role as a teammate that may be his biggest attribute," said Dan Benjamin, his current team coach, who began coaching Brandon a couple years ago. "Every athlete that has been on a team with him will tell you how easy he is to work with. He is a leader by example who will never give up. That is something that has a calming effect on the other athletes on the floor."

Brandon has also won the admiration of his younger brother, Reece. The sixthgrader is a soccer player, but he admits he wishes he could do some of the things Brandon can. "I'm kind of jealous, sometimes, when he's able to do backflips and such," Reece said. "I can do it on a trampoline, but not just standing still on a mat like him. It's pretty cool what he does." NOW



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When you need excellence in dentistry, seek the expertise of Irving & Stephenson, D.D.S. — By Melissa Rawlins

The dental office of Irving & Stephenson, D.D.S. feels modern, thanks to metallic tones accenting neutral colors. Its sophistication runs deep, rooted in the partnership between Drs. Eddie Irving and Lewis Stephenson. Each earned degrees at Baylor College of Dentistry and were licensed by the state of Texas in 1981 and 1986, respectively. Upon moving to Mansfield, they have been partners for the last 30 years. Their positive attitude has kept their practice growing strong.

Devoted to excellence in dentistry, their focus over time has become cosmetic restorative. Current studies showing the correlation between heart disease and periodontal disease means oral health contributes significantly to overall health. "In fact, it plays a lot bigger role than I thought when I was first in practice," said Dr. Irving, who recalls that in 1981, he was the third dentist to establish a practice in Mansfield. Dr. Stephenson was the ninth, when he partnered with Dr. Irving in 1986. "Then, we were very tooth centered. Now, we're much more health centered."

Dr. Stephenson agrees. "We're a lot more whole-body focused now. Instead of looking just at the tooth, we're able to look in someone's mouth and start the dialogue about issues like sleep apnea and TMD," he said, explaining that every new technology in use at Irving & Stephenson, D.D.S. allows them to better evaluate each patient's condition. Then, they can discuss how their primarily restorative dentistry, including cosmetic and computer-guided implants, will affect the patient's whole body.

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"We treat our patients the way we treat our own families," Dr. Irving said, "and we are thankful our patients trust us enough to consistently see us for 30 and 34 years."

THEIR POSITIVE ATTITUDE HAS KEPT THEIR PRACTICE **GROWING STRONG.**

Caring for people has been the doctors' mutual goal all along. "We've seen Mansfield change," Dr. Stephenson said, "and it's been an opportunity to build relationships and be a part of the community as it's grown." They often see three generations of patients in their practice. Many patients who were teens in the '80s have brought their children and grandchildren to Irving & Stephenson, D.D.S.

"We have the blessing of being an established practice," Dr. Irving said. They help people referred to them through their network with churches. "I have said from the very first, 'Lord, I want this to be your practice," Dr. Irving said. "I feel like God's given me the gift to do dentistry and, hopefully, do it well."

Irving & Stephenson, D.D.S. sets high standards for the treatment of adolescents and adults. "Sometimes, we feel it is in the patient's best interest to refer to a specialist in order to serve their needs," Dr. Stephenson said. "Excellence can be knowing when that is necessary." When they refer someone to an oral surgeon, a pedodontist or a different specialist, they maintain high expectations for those specialists, as well.

Out of the office, the dentists excel in other fields. Both are active in their churches. Dr. Irving sings with Eddie Irving and the Classic Swing Band. They perform regularly in Mansfield and surrounding cities. Dr. Stephenson plays competitive golf, and travels the country playing tournaments. He's found playing golf helps him be a better dentist by challenging him to assess situations in the moment and make the best out of unexpected changes.

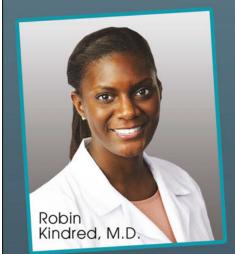
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Around Town NOW



Mansfield resident Nicholas Gibbs, 6, eats yummy ice cream while waiting for the Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration in downtown Waxahachie to begin.



Jennifer Lites brings her children, Cayson and Adley, along for the ride at the grocery store.



Timberview senior Jasmine Smith wows guests with her rendition of The National Anthem before Mayor Cook gives the State of the City Address at Walnut Creek Country Club.



At Mansfield Public Library, Sarbjit K. Rai studies nursing with her friend, Dorathy Igwe-Nweke, who is already a nurse.



Mike and Betsy Backman start the morning right with their friend Malia Amjad at Einstein Bros. Bagels.



Suzanne Ray warms up in her favorite wrap at her boutique inside Ray's Pharmacy Gift Shop.



Randy Wallace demonstrates cutting techniques at the first spring meeting of Quilting With Heart.



Members of her extended family gather at Olive Garden to enjoy lunch with their little princess, Brinkley Montoya.



Tonya Davis, from B&M Auto, and Lori Williams and Kathleen D'Agostino, from Mansfield Chamber of Commerce, make time for lunch at Saki Hibachi in Mansfield.



Brew Crew are Coed Softball Season Champs at Big League Dreams.

Tax Season Check List

We all know April 15 is looming, and that means income taxes are due for most Americans. As we meet with our tax preparers or begin inputting information into our tax software, we think about items that we might need to review. Here is a list of items you might want to check as you are thinking about taxes.

1. Review your retirement accounts. Many people have Traditional IRAs, Roth IRAs, 401(k) plans and other employer-sponsored retirement accounts. If you have a financial advisor, schedule a time to review your investments and make changes if needed. Consider increasing your contributions if you can.

2. Check you beneficiaries. Has your family experienced any adoptions, births, deaths, marriages or divorces? If so, you may need to change the beneficiaries on your retirement accounts, life insurance policies or transfer on death accounts. Keeping beneficiary information up-to-date can prevent headaches in the future.

3. Take a close look at your 1099. Spend some time looking at your 1099, the document that reports investment distributions to the Internal Revenue Service. There may be ways to reduce the taxable distributions, which could lower your tax liability for next year.

4. Review your investment plan. Every year, American workers get closer to retirement. Make sure you are saving enough and that your investment portfolio is properly allocated for your risk tolerance. The closer we get to retirement, the more important it is to make sure your retirement nest egg is safe. Proper investment selection and diversification may help. Always consult a tax advisor or investment professional before making changes that may have an impact on taxes or performance.
5. Know the deadlines. If you are eligible, the deadline for making a 2016

contribution to a Traditional or Roth IRA is April 15, 2017. Work with your IRA custodian to make sure your deposit is made before the deadline. Also, double check the amount you have deposited for the year, as there may be contribution limits based on age and income.

6. Confirm your Required Minimum Distribution. Some IRA holders are required by the IRS to take money out of their account each year. There are many rules and calculations that are required to determine if you fall into that category and the amount you must take. Consult your tax advisor or investment professional to determine when you are required to take a distribution, how much must be taken out and the deadline for the distribution.

This is certainly not a comprehensive check list, but some items you may not have considered as you prepare your taxes. If you do not have the time, ability or desire to prepare your own tax return or manage your own investments, consult a professional for guidance. Remember, April 15 is right around the corner, and it is never too early to prepare for next year.

Content in this material is for general information only and not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Todd Simmons is a registered representative with, and securities offered through, LPL Financial, Member FINRA/SIPC. Investment advice offered through 360 Wealth Management, a registered investment advisor. 360 Wealth Management and Simmons Wealth Management are separate entities from LPL Financial.













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Calendar

March 4

Raven Fecunda Basketball Tournament: 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Fieldhouse USA, 650 N. Hwy. 287. Support sarcoma cancer patients and their families. Entry at the door up to \$10 each. To register your team for only \$100, visit www. rafsunflowersofdestiny.com, or call Frank at (682) 553-8732.

Texas SmartScape Plant Fair: 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Home Depot Garden Center, 1725 U.S. 287 Frontage Rd. Contact David Macias, (817) 276-4239.

MISD Multi-Cultural Festival: 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., The MISD Center for the Performing Arts, 1110 W. Debbie Ln. Free to the public, this 5th annual event showcases the diversity in our community. (817) 299-1252.

An Evening of Pure Elegance: 6:00-9:00 p.m., 1188 W. Broad. All proceeds from the Prom 2017 Fashion Show benefit the Dr. Michael A. Evans Sr. Scholarship Foundation, which helps college hopefuls continue their missions of enhancing the lives of people on the local, state, national and global levels. Call Bethlehem Baptist Church, (817) 473-1236. Mardi Gras Gala: 6:00 p.m.-midnight, Walnut Creek Country Club, Mansfield. In the true New Orleans tradition, breakfast is served at 11:00 p.m. after a VIP reception, casino play, silent and live auctions. Details on sponsoring this event, hosted annually by the ATHENAs to support their charitable programs, are at www.athenasocietyofburleson.org/athena-gala/.

March 4, 18

Mulch Madness: 8:30-11:30 a.m., 24 N. Mitchell Rd. Mansfield residents can pick up free mulch when they bring their own containers, trucks or trailers. Contact David Macias, (817) 276-4239.

March 6

Home School Nature Class: 10:00-11:00 a.m., Elmer W. Oliver Nature Park, 1650 Matlock Rd. Families with children 5 years old and above are welcome to join a naturalist for a nature walk with the cottontail as the theme of the lesson. \$5 early registration. tiffany.gorrell@mansfieldtexas.gov.

March 11

Kayaking on Joe Pool Lake: 10:00-11:30 a.m., Britton Park, 591 Seeton Rd. Tour the creek on Joe Pool Lake in dual-seated kayaks for a guideled scenic paddle. Life jackets are provided. No

MARCH 2017

experience necessary. Children 7 to 18 must have adult accompaniment. \$22 early registration. (817) 728-3680.

Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off: 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Mansfield Environmental Collection Center, 616 S. Wisteria. (817) 276-4239.

March 13 — April 28

Mansfield Reads!: times vary, Mansfield Public Library Community Room, 104 S. Wisteria St. Beginning Spring Break week, enjoy all-ages opportunities to learn about life through programs that tie in with this year's city-wide book selection, Chitra Divakaruni's *Oleander Girl*. All programs are free. Learn more and register at www.morelibrary.org.

March 25

Family Secrets: Noon-3:00 p.m., Springcreek Barbeque, 1724 Hwy. 287 N. Michelle Willis, writer of a book on missions, discusses and signs her only fictional book, *Family Secrets*. willismew@hotmail.com.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to melissa.rawlins@nowmagazines.com.









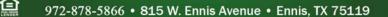
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Cooking NOW



In the Kitchen With Jamie Norwood

— By Melissa Rawlins

Joyful Jamie Norwood finds kitchen time very therapeutic. Here, amongst family recipes hailing from Louisiana and Arkansas, she sneakily shares one handed down through many generations — normally only when the person who knows the secret recipe is about to die. But Jamie's departure from this world is far in the future. Maybe it's because she tries cooking healthfully, or because 16 years of serving children in MISD has kept her young. Through six years as principal at Tarver-Rendon Elementary School, she has enjoyed bringing yummy baked goods to share with staff. The everpopular zucchini bread was the first goodie she prepared. "I was about 8 years old," she said. "My mom wanted to get me interested in baking, and it was so much fun!" NOW

Fruit/Vegetable Bread

2 cups raw brown sugar
1/2 cup coconut oil
2 eggs
3 cups whole grain wheat flour
Pinch salt
1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 cup sour milk
3 bananas, mashed well (or 1 zucchini, finely diced; or 1 15-oz. can pumpkin)
1/2 cup walnuts or pecans, chopped
1 Tbsp. cinnamon

I. In a large bowl, add ingredients in the order given and mix together.

2. Bake in 2 well-greased loaf pans at 350 F for about 1 hour. (You can sprinkle more sugar and cinnamon at the bottom of the loaf pans for crunchy top, if desired.)

3. Insert toothpick into the middle of loaf. If the toothpick comes out clean, the loaf is ready.

4. Immediately wrap loaves in foil; freeze for 20 minutes to lock in moisture. Remove from freezer and wrap in plastic.

Bird's Nest Dessert

1 12-oz. bag butterscotch mini chips
 1 Tbsp. butter
 1 12- to 14-oz. bag Chinese noodles

Assorted jelly beans, colored coconut, malted Easter egg candy

I. In a 2-quart saucepan, melt butterscotch and butter.

 Prepare a layer of waxed paper on a flat surface for the melted butterscotch mixture.
 Mix noodles into hot mixture until the butterscotch and noodles are malleable. **4.** You can use mini muffin pans or regular muffin pans to mold the "bird's nests." Press warm noodle and butterscotch mixture against the insides of the muffin pans to form nests.

5. Let the nests cool, and then place on waxed paper.

6. You may store the nests in the refrigerator and fill them later, or fill them immediately with jelly beans or small, malted egg-shaped candies while they are still warm.

7 Store in a cool place in well-sealed plasticware, so you may pull them out and use them during the next month. For example, green-colored coconut inside the nests make great Easter treats. Also, if your family has a spring wedding planned, these nests make for great table placements or favors for guest to take home. Small placards with guests' names inserted inside the nests add an additional personalized touch. Another added detail would be to include Peeps colored chickens or rabbits. Have fun with these and personalize for each special occasion.

Aunt Lizzie's Carrot Cake

- 3 cups raw dark brown sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- I tsp. cinnamon
- 3 cups flour
- 3 eggs
- 1 cup coconut oil
- 1 cup walnuts, chopped
- 2 cups grated carrots
- I cup crushed pineapple
- Whipped cream, to taste

I. In a large bowl, mix all ingredients, except whipped cream, adding carrots and pineapple last.

2. For best results, bake in a tube pan at 325 F for 1 hour and 15 minutes.

3. Top with whipped cream.

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