

A close-up photograph of a person's hands knitting with a circular loom. The loom is white with blue pegs, and the knitted fabric is a mix of purple and teal. The person is wearing a blue shirt and glasses. The background is blurred, showing other people and a wooden table.

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Managing Editor, Becky Walker

Midlothian Editor, Betty Tryon

Editorial Coordinator, Sandra Strong

Editorial Assistant, Rachel Smith

Writers, Debbie Durling

Zachary R. Urquhart

Editors/Proofreaders, Pat Anthony

Shannon Pfaff

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla

Artists, Kristin Bato . Morgan Christensen

Martha Macias . Brande Morgan

Anthony Sarmienta

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Director, Jill Rose

Photography Coordinator, Amy Ramirez

Photographer, Hannah Chartrand

Dorothy Timmerman

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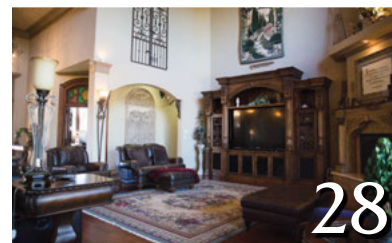
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A Longbranch student incorporates African culture during Wonder Workshop.

Photo by Dorothy Timmerman.

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Editor's Note

Hello, Neighbor!

This year, I'll give my garden another chance to not let me down like it did four summers ago. It was the year of the squash bugs. Usually I have a bumper crop of healthy yellow squash, but that year, I watched the leaves turn anemic looking then brown. After investigation, I noticed the ugly gray bugs underneath the leaves. Not wanting to use pesticides, I tolerated them that year.

In 2014, the squash bug apocalypse hit my garden. They bred in the thousands, maybe millions! I threw everything organic and nonorganic at those bugs but absolutely nothing stopped them. They wouldn't even take cover when I watered the garden. That's when they came out and took a shower! I'd bury the plant in pesticide powder, but they loved that. After crawling through it, they'd go underground for a love fest and produce another batch of the scoundrels. In frustration, I destroyed the rest of the garden, so they could never eat anything of mine again! Squash bugs - 2, Betty - 0. Sure hope this year is different.

Happy gardening folks!

Betty

Betty Tryon
MidlothianNOW Editor
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Gifts for Togo

— By Betty Tryon

In Togo, West Africa, the children walked or rode their bikes down a long, dusty dirt road to the table loaded with something precious — an opportunity to go to school. In that country, the parents of school-age children must be able to afford school supplies in order for their child to receive an education. Typically, the average family can send children to school for only five years. That is where the students of Longbranch Elementary School reached across the ocean to help fellow students.

With the assistance of Karena Blackwell, principal of Longbranch Elementary School, and a host of others, the school raised \$12,000 to help provide school supplies for 1,650 Togo rural school children. Mrs. Blackwell's career in education spans 27 years with eight of them in administration. This is her fourth year at Longbranch. She graduated from Dallas Baptist University with a bachelor's degree in elementary education, and she earned her Master of Education in educational administration from University of North Texas.

Mrs. Blackwell has known since fourth grade that she wanted to be a teacher. Education is in her blood, with generations of her family being educators. "My grandmother taught in a one-room schoolhouse," she



"It's good for them to understand that their lives can be so different from that of others across the globe."

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informed. "My mom was a teacher and principal. Dad was a teacher and vocational director, and my husband, Brian Blackwell, is the principal at Walnut Grove Middle School. We have one daughter, Kylie, who is a Midlothian graduate."

Longbranch has been involved with many altruistic projects, such as Jump for Heart, Manna House, Angel Tree and MidTowne Assisted Living and Memory Care. Knowing this, Brenda Holland, mother of a Longbranch student, approached Mrs. Blackwell with the idea of helping in Togo. "I thought it would be great for our kids to do something for kids in another part of the world," Mrs. Blackwell said. "Brenda lived in Africa and became involved with ILAD, International Literacy and Development, which is a nonprofit organization based in Dallas. ILAD helps provide students with school supplies, and we wanted to send money to give kids the opportunity to go to school."

Longbranch is the only public school in America to partner with this international organization. "We were in awe of the impact we had in children's lives," Mrs. Blackwell shared. "Our vision is igniting the spark to change the world, thinking globally and big picture. We felt this fundraiser was a good opportunity for our kids to change the world." The kids raised the money by soliciting donations from parents and the community. After the funds were raised, the school sent ILAD the money, and that organization purchased the school supplies for the kids. The




Students eagerly listen to Assistant Principal Cari Nix read about African culture.




Holland family produced a video to show the children in the Longbranch community how different life is in Togo. They were able to see that, while they might not be wealthy by American standards, they were far more blessed in material possessions than the children in West Africa. "It's good for them to understand that their lives can be so different from that of others across the globe," Mrs. Blackwell stated. "It helps them be more compassionate and understanding and, hopefully, more grateful for what they have."

To keep the students motivated toward their goal for the fundraiser, the kids in Togo sent key chains with little carvings in them for the top-earning students at Longbranch. Another video they were able to see after ILAD distributed the supplies was of the children from Togo saying thank you. "It's important for kids to become involved in projects like this," the principal explained. "It is said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' It



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feels good to help others and be good stewards. For kids to give to others is really important, which is why we partner with local organizations. It's important to teach character traits and to grow responsible citizens who care and can think globally."

Another treat the Longbranch students received for their hard work was a visit from the field director of the program in Togo, Laté Lawson. He came and spoke to the students, and they decided they wanted to be partners with him again. He gave them three choices for possible fundraising: collecting school supplies, purchasing a tractor because of the importance of agriculture in their economy or building a well because fresh water is so critical there. The students chose a well. The school's kick-off for this round of helping the tiny country of Togo, was held this past February.

When teaching their students about different cultures and experiences, Togo is not the only example used at Longbranch. They have Wonder Workshop and Genius Hour. "Our Wonder Workshop is twofold. It provides enrichment opportunities where students can create, discover and explore STEM activities and to also provide intervention for kids who are behind academically," Mrs. Blackwell said. Students in grades three through six are also offered clubs during Wonder Workshop taught by art, music and PE teachers, as well as the library media specialist. Clubs offered during that time are digital art, sculpture, coding, maker space challenge, ukulele, composing, track and dance. Wonder Workshop also provides time for classroom teachers to work with

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students who are behind academically. Genius Hour allows students to follow their interests to learn and collaborate together on how to use their passions to better their school, community and world. All students, K through 5, experience Wonder Workshop Monday through Thursday and Genius Hour every Friday. "Parents have shared with me that prior to Wonder Workshop and Genius Hour their kids did not have much to share about their school experiences. One parent said that when she asks her son what he did in school, he now tells her! I've also heard other things about kids loving school and feeling more confident. They get to go to school and learn about something that's interesting to them."

To help students understand more about Togo, the school offers opportunities during Wonder Workshop and Genius Hour for students to learn more about the Togolese culture. "The crochet club learns about weaving cloth called Kente," Mrs. Blackwell explained. "Togo weaving is done by hand using dried grass. Through literature, It Takes a Village, students will learn what it's like to live in Africa. Batik-inspired art and jewelry making, toys made from recycled items, such as plastic bottles and tire rims are more things students learn about from Togo." Incorporating the African culture into their Wonder Workshop and Genius Hour allows the Longbranch students to continue learning about another country in a very hands-on way, as well as learn the good things another culture has to offer. **NOW**

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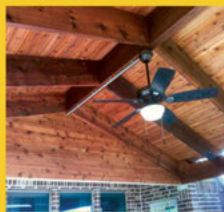
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— By Debbie Durling

"I read once that you should do something that makes you lose time. Art is the place where I lose time," Erica Stephens said as she spoke of the love of her life — art.

Born to a family of crafters, Erica had the desire to learn more about crafting and sewing, but these skills were not passed down to her. Her desire to learn more remained as she grew into her teenage years. Out of curiosity, she took an art class in high school. Although she loved art, she was also quite fond of her band classes, yearbook class and poetry and creative writing classes.

She didn't get serious about her art until venturing off to college, where she



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tried an art class, again, as an elective. Suddenly, she felt challenged and more excited than ever before. "I ended up taking every art class they had," she said with a glow on her face. She also decided to change her major to art.

While completing her undergrad work, she went to the Dallas Museum of Art with one of her classes. They came upon *Somewhere Else - La Chambre des certitudes*, a creation of Wolfgang Laib. It was a large sculpted piece that consisted of a hallway made out of beeswax, which he had personally collected by hand. At the end of the hallway, a single light hung down creating a feeling of moving from the dark of the tunnel to light. "I was standing there wondering what it was that





I was supposed to get from this. All of a sudden, I became aware that I could smell the beeswax. I could smell nature. Then, an awareness that I exist in the world overwhelmed me," Erica remembered.

She was hooked. She knew that art would have to be a big part of her life from that moment on. "I realized that art was bigger than me, and that made me want to know more," she admitted.

At the end of her degree, a professor asked her what she wanted to do with her life. After explaining that she would like to teach others to enjoy art the way she did, the professor encouraged her to earn her master's. She took the advice and enrolled in a theory-based art school.

After school was completed, Erica taught at the college level for 10 years. She also continued to create her own art, which has been sold around the country to international owners. Her art has been featured in art shows in Los Angeles, where she went to grad school; Houston; and Dallas, to name a few. She is represented by Ro2 Art Gallery in the Cedars neighborhood in Dallas. Her next solo show is scheduled to open April 22 at Ro2.

Over the years, Erica has traveled to shows outside the Dallas area where her work was being showcased. One show in Houston comes to mind. Thousands of people had been in and out of the gallery that particular day. She was able to hear so many different interpretations of her work, which of course, people offered freely. Some of the comments were comical, but Erica enjoyed hearing and seeing how her expressions in art affected others.

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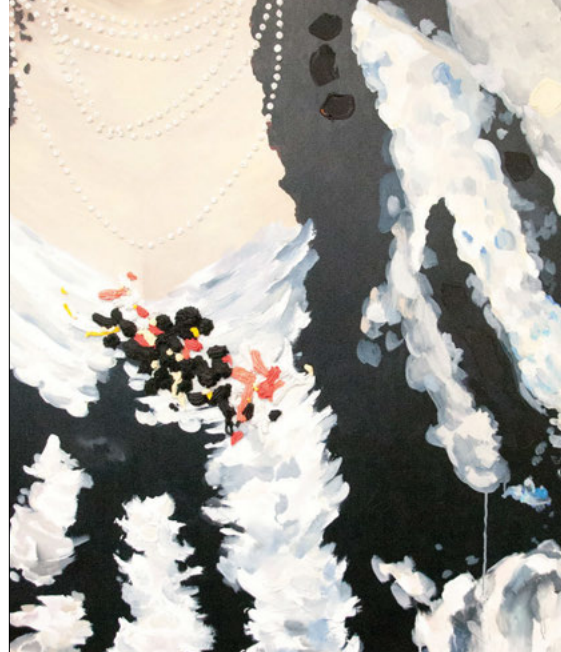
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Most recently, she created her own recipe of paint and sculptural material, which yields a frosting-like textured paint. After completing a 2-D painting, the frosting material is placed over it to create more texture. Beautiful flowers in the painting seem to rise out of the canvas as they are accented with the frosting-like medium.

Erica found great rewards in teaching at the college level but decided to go out on her own. "I loved teaching," she stated, "but the classes were not guaranteed to make from semester to semester." Erica became the business manager for her father's orthodontist business — Family First Orthodontics in Midlothian. He, in turn, invited her to relocate her studio to the back half of his building. This is where she thrives as she creates her own art.

"It is scary when you first make a piece of art," she revealed. "It never comes automatically for me. It's a challenge." Erica appreciates that creating art also involves critical thinking skills, problem-solving and making decisions with purpose. It is strategic. "If you can get over the idea that everything you make has to be a masterpiece and, instead, focus on the process or act of making it, then there is always a sense of reward," Erica said with passion that runs deep. She believes it is important for new artists to learn to make decisions for themselves, from picking the next color, to deciding the tone of the picture and many other things.

When she taught art, she saw the impact the subject had on her students. "When I saw a shy or scared student



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come out of their shell because of the confidence built by creating something of their very own, I loved it," Erica beamed. She observed kids' personalities open up because they gained self-esteem through art. "Their excitement for art and the act of creating superseded their shyness," she added.

Out of a desire to use art to build connections in the community, Erica became a founding member of the Midlothian Arts Council. The first event sponsored by the council was during the 2015 Christmas parade. Erica created an outline drawing of the buildings in downtown Midlothian. Attendees of the parade were encouraged to pick up a brush, dip it in some paint and add color to the 4-foot-by-12-foot canvas. It was mostly children who stepped up to the plate and a masterpiece was created by the community. It was donated to the parks department and is not only a work of art but a reminder of the rich legacy of Midlothian's children, which will carry on.

While Erica's art comes from an emotional place, it is not merely cathartic for her. It is analytical. She paints with purpose and freedom. Whether enlarging a small portion of a Renoir masterpiece into a totally new, unrecognizable work or developing a love for art in a child, she is inspiring beauty, culture and bringing the community together through her love and deep understanding of art for generations to come. **NOW**

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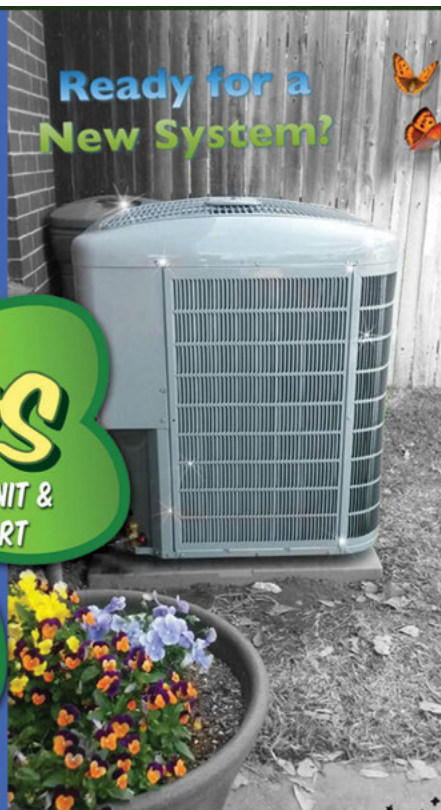
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They Just Knew

— By Zachary R. Urquhart



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Sometimes in life, you just know. Whether coming up with a lyric that sounds just right or creating a great new recipe, sometimes you just know. From a decades-long marriage that started after mere months of dating, to finding the perfect spot to build their ideal home, Craig and Toni Burnett have known it was right time after time.

Craig and his family moved to the north side of Midlothian when he was in middle school. After graduating from Midlothian High School four decades ago, he went straight into the workforce. “I was at Vought Aerospace for a couple of years, but I’ve been self-employed almost my whole life,” he explained.



Toni Burnett

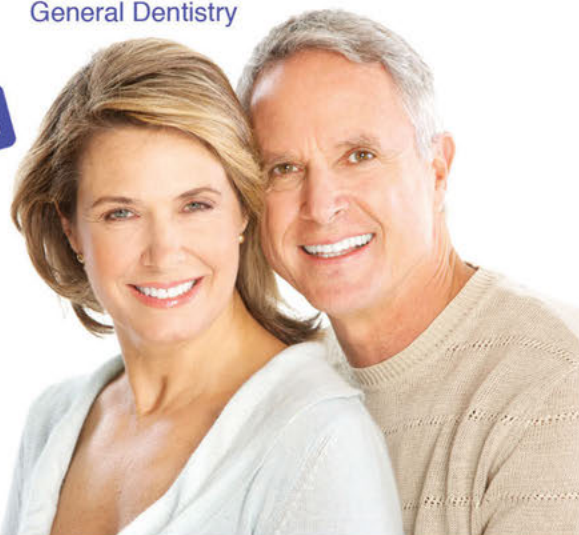
Toni grew up in Cyril, Oklahoma, coming to Texas to attend Southwestern Assemblies of God University. She moved to Duncanville after school and attended Crossroads of Life Assembly of God Church. "I was at the church one day, and saw this cute boy," she smiled. "I sat next to his parents. After the service, all of us young singles and youth would hang out, so I got to spend a little time with him."

"The next day, we had our first date," he said. "We were engaged that September, and got married in February 1981." Craig and Toni moved to Cedar

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Hill, where they lived for almost 23 years. He and Toni have had several business ventures through the decades. In January 1997, Craig started Horizon Roofing, which he still operates.

Toni was in cosmetology until they welcomed their daughter. "Once we had Kristen, I stayed home for the most part," she said. Kristen is married now, and she and her husband, Brady, live outside Colorado Springs. They have three children and one on the way. That is a big part of Toni's life now. "I go out there a

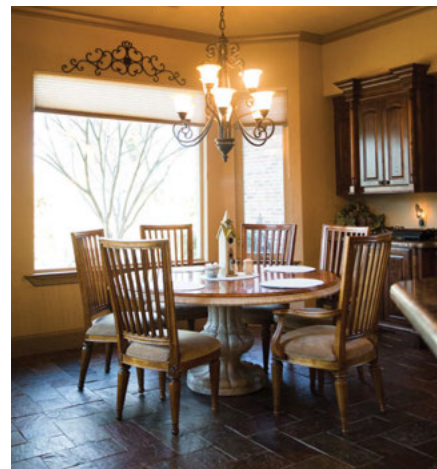
few times a year to see the grands, Davin, Ethan and Kate," she beamed. Shortly after Kristen was married, Craig and Toni decided they were ready to move, as well.

"We chose to move back to Midlothian," he said. After seeing lots all over the city, they finally found the spot they knew was perfect. "We looked everywhere for about six

months," he said. "We found this place, and loved the neighborhood. We just knew it worked." Craig and Toni started building in September 2007 and, with the help of subcontractors and a building superintendent, they finished their perfect house in March of the following year.

The home has a sprawling layout on one end of the Stone Wood Ranch subdivision, with a circle drive and separate garage building for their cars and lawn equipment. The porch is surrounded by decorative arches with oversized dark-

stained wood trim. Just inside, there are views of the dining room, living room, kitchen and rear windows from the entry foyer. The front room is adorned with Roman scone pieces, decorative iron trimmings and a beautiful piano in lieu of a traditional formal table. "I have played forever, so he bought me that for my birthday years ago," Toni explained. "Kristen started learning when she was 3, so she spent many hours practicing on that thing."




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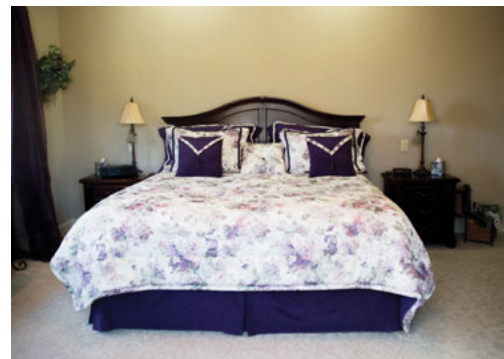
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On the other side of the entrance sits Craig's office, highlighted by the most unique piece in the house. "We had a lady who helped with the decorating, and she found this old door unit," he said. "We were told it was originally from a bank in the 1800s, and then it was the penthouse door for one of the tallest buildings in downtown Dallas before it was torn down and rebuilt." Each door has two thick pieces of solid wood sandwiched around a sheet of lead, originally meant to ensure no one could break through when it was closed.

The living room has plush seating, a gorgeous entertainment console and ample views of their back acreage. "I love the outdoors, so I wanted to make sure we could see out there," Toni stated. Splitting the two rows of large windows, they added a shelf cutting across the entire living room just to hold decorative pieces. "We added a second story to our last house, so we had two sets of windows," she said. "We learned that we really needed stuff to cover those large walls, so we have the shelf along the wall and in the corners for decoration."

Next to the living room, an amazing stone stairway is as beautiful as it is functional. It is that staircase, in fact, that has led to several people asking Craig and Toni to hold their weddings. "It started when we had a friend of a friend that needed somewhere for their small ceremony," she recalled. "Twenty people turned into 80, but we did it. We've had three weddings inside, and the bride always wants to walk down those stairs." They made unique use of the space under the staircase. "Craig's dad had tons of books and commentaries from his years of teaching at church, so we added bookshelves and made a little library area," she detailed.

Up the stairs, a beautiful stone-laid bathroom divides a gray-walled,



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wood-trimmed billiards room from a modest guest bedroom. There is a doorway in the game room leading to a large upstairs patio overlooking Craig and Toni's land on one side, and a view back into the home through the large windows on the other. "We really wanted to have an open floor plan," he commented. From the patio, you can see the home's common spaces, including the kitchen. Red hues in the granite and wood cabinets are accented with a copper range hood that brings an Old World feel complementing the feel in the other living areas.



The guest rooms downstairs each have their own unique style. One is decked out in red, cream and brown, with a bay window looking at the front drive. The other, though, is painted a soft green and is trimmed with stuffed animals in a way that makes it clear it is the kids' room without being too much of a kids' room. The guest bathroom is again marked by stone and granite, a common aspect throughout the home.

The master bath is no exception, with its stonework featuring elegant marble split sinks, a partially open walk-in shower and a Roman tub offset from the rest of the space. The bedroom is highlighted by two more windows giving Toni the view she loves. "The land behind us usually has livestock, so we can look out and see cows, horses or even goats," she said. On the side of their land, there is a little culvert, but when a good rain comes, it is enough for the grandkids to play as if they have their own private creek. It is the perfect bow on the perfect gift for a couple that found the right place after they had found the right person in each other. Because sometimes in life, you just know. **NOW**



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Time Is Ripe

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

The winter is thawing, the sun is shining and the birds are starting to chirp again. Though the cold season in North Texas is not severe compared to places farther north, March still welcomes warmer temperatures, as well as the perfect time to start working on projects in your lawn and garden. Use these guidelines to make your landscaping the talk of the neighborhood this year.

What to Prune¹

- *Get rid of problem areas.* On any trees, ornamental plants and other shrubs, you should cut off dead limbs and any other areas that show damage from the cold. Taking off dead or dying areas will lead to better long-term health for your plants.
- *Trim growth to promote growth.* When it comes to ground cover like ivy and jasmine, you should cut down to your desired height before spring growth starts. The same is true for ornamental grasses, but this is not the case for flowering shrubs, vines or bulbs.



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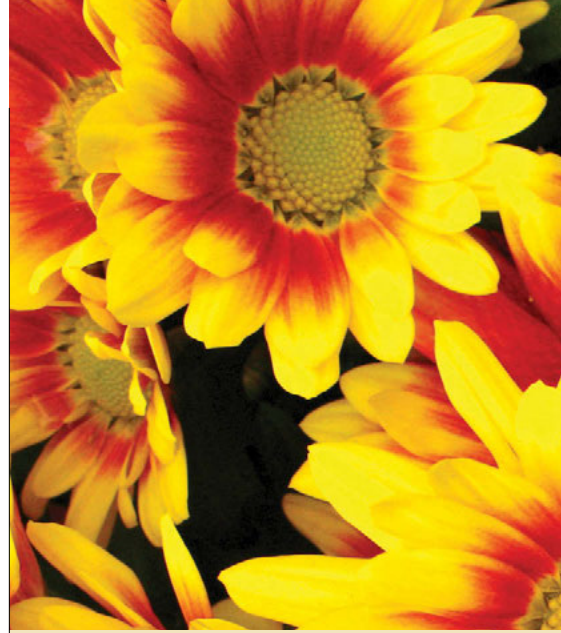
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• *Some plants need more time.* As for flowering shrubs and vines, wait until the flowers have bloomed to start cutting. You also need to let foliage on your spring bulbs die before removing them, as this will help feed those bulbs for the following year.

What to Plant²

• *It is time for ornamentals.* There are several things that are ideally planted in the first weeks of March. Ornamental trees and shrubs should be planted while temperatures are still cool. Also, this is the time to replant fall blooms like chrysanthemums.

• *Some things need to wait.* You will want to wait until the end of the month, or later, to plant flowers and vegetables meant for the warm season. Though the danger of late season freezes is not great, warm weather annuals and perennials need to be planted past the last freeze. The same goes for popular Texas grasses, like Bermuda and St. Augustine.

• *Do not miss the "ripe" time.* The first few weeks of April are the time for tomatoes, snap beans and squash, while you should wait until the end of April for



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melons, okra and pumpkins. And if you are trying to transplant trees or woody plants, make sure to complete the process before buds begin breaking, which will happen sometime in March or April.

What to Put on the Ground³

- *Know what you need, if anything.* Before you go to the store to grab the first fertilizer you see, you may want to test your soil to make sure you know exactly what you need. Some people use household items like vinegar for testing, but simple and inexpensive pH kits are available at most big box stores. Fertilizers typically offer some combination of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, but lawns often only need the nitrogen. After a quick test, you will know exactly what nutrients your soil needs, and you can apply correctly.

- *Know how much you need.* Another common mistake is using the wrong

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amount of the right product. Most fertilizers are sold based on how many square feet they will cover when properly distributed, so you need to measure before you head to the store. While a smaller lot might only need one large bag, people who live on an acre or more will almost certainly need multiple bags of fertilizer. Remember: spreading the fertilizer too thin might save you money in your original purchase, but you are probably not getting nearly the nutrients you need.

- *Know when to apply it.* You want to lay your fertilizer when the lawn is in an active growing period. That means applying it soon after the last frost, which is typically mid-March in this part of the state. Be sure to apply evenly and all at once. If it takes several weeks to cover your lot, you will end up with various growth and different colors as the fertilizer takes hold. In addition to the early spring application, it is recommended to add nitrogen again shortly before the first frost. If your soil test showed a lawn particularly lacking in nutrients, you may add a third application in the middle of summer, and in that case, slow-release will be best.

What to Put Under the Ground⁴

- *Think about your water.* Whether you just need to water your flowers, or you decide to commit to keeping your lawn green, this is the time to add a watering system. There are several options, ranging in complexity, cost and efficiency. For flower beds and landscaping near your house, one simple choice is soaker hoses.



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These allow water to trickle slowly and can be buried under beds to remain out of sight.

- *Think about sprinklers.* When it comes to keeping a whole yard wet, sprinklers are your best bet. Traditional spray systems are the most common, but they also tend to waste water. Rotor sprayers are great for large areas. While they will lose water to evaporation, they are less wasteful when it comes to oversaturating an area, as compared to spray sprinklers. For a permanent system, you will either have to dig into your yard or hire someone to lay the pipes for you. Consider getting a few estimates, and weigh the cost of your time, as well as any tools you will have to buy if you decide to tackle the project yourself.

With these projects, as with anything else you do in the yard, make sure you have a solid plan that you can accomplish within your timetable. With this guidance, you can make this the year your yard becomes the best on the block. **NOW**

Sources:

1. <http://www.dallascountymastergardeners.org/index.php/gardening-in-north-texas/215-tab4-mb3-by-the-month#mar>
2. <http://www.dallascountymastergardeners.org/index.php/gardening-in-north-texas/215-tab4-mb3-by-the-month#mar>
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4. <http://residential.goulds.com/types-of-irrigation-systems-for-your-lawn-and-garden/>

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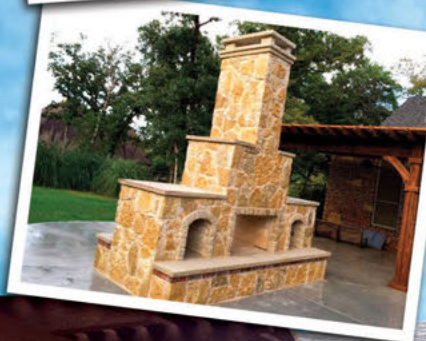


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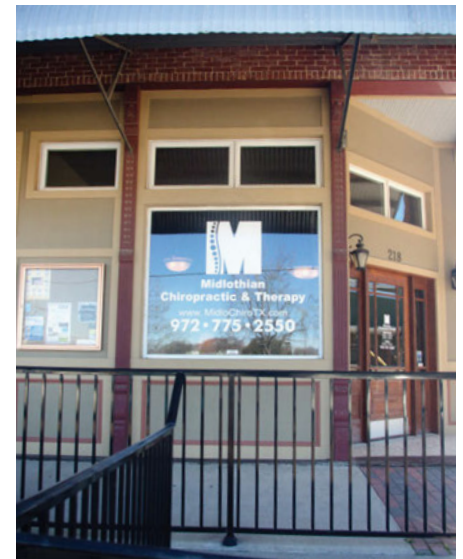


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Dr. Jeff Wagon and staff work to improve the function of the body.

Adjustment to Health

Midlothian Chiropractic & Therapy helps their patients achieve optimal health. — By Betty Tryon

A patient of Midlothian Chiropractic & Therapy made an astounding discovery after a visit to the office. Prior to her visit, she was able to turn her neck, but with difficulty. After an adjustment, she reached for an object, and to her surprise, she could actually turn around. She had not realized her neck was affecting so many areas and impeding her movements to such an extent. Those are the kinds of stories that Midlothian Chiropractic & Therapy generates.

Drs. Brenda Ross and Jeff Wagon, known as Dr. Brenda and Dr. Jeff to their patients, are the chiropractors, and Dr. Brenda is the owner. "People don't realize how much pain they are in until it's gone," Dr. Brenda stated. She has chiropractic clinics in Red Oak and Waxahachie. In her Red Oak practice, she had so many patients driving from Midlothian to Red Oak that she decided to

inquire about opening an office here. Midlothian Chiropractic & Therapy opened the office in one month on June 15, 2015. "It was amazing," she smiled. "God was like, 'Yeah, this is where I want you to be.' The community in Midlothian has been very friendly to us. People are spreading the word, and we are getting a lot of referrals."

Dr. Jeff is a native of Midlothian and joined the practice a year after its opening. He functions as the primary chiropractor in the Midlothian office. In addition to his practice of chiropractic adjustments, he also became certified in Active Release Technique, or ART. "ART is a patented, state-of-the-art, soft tissue mobilization technique that treats muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia and nerves," he explained. "The treatment is effective for chronic and acute pain issues and athletes who are


trying to get back to peak performance. I am trained in over 300 protocols that allow me to identify and correct specific problems affecting each person. It is not a cookie cutter approach but very problem-focused.”

Midlothian Chiropractic & Therapy practices functional chiropractic medicine, where they work to improve the function of the body. “When the communication between the brain and the body is interfered with because of an injury, we help the body recuperate, heal and return the communication to the brain and body for a better quality of life,” Dr. Brenda stated. Education is a priority at Midlothian Chiropractic & Therapy. During your exam, the doctor will explain what’s going on, so you understand why the treatment may be necessary whether it’s chiropractic adjustments, ART and/or massage.

“People are spreading the word, and we are getting a lot of referrals.”


Midlothian Chiropractic & Therapy offers many services to its patients and to the community. They promote goodwill by transporting their massage chair to businesses and giving free massages. “We want to give back to the community,” Dr. Brenda emphasized. “With a massage, work production goes up because people are feeling better.”

Caring about the patients includes the office staff, as well as the chiropractors. “We really get to know our patients,” Pam Thomson, the office manager, shared. When they come in, they join our family. We enjoy hearing about their vacations. “When they’re sick, we check to find out if they are better.” With the services that Midlothian Chiropractic & Therapy provides, along with its therapeutic treatments and friendly atmosphere, the business lives up to its mission of “Elevating the health of our community.” **NOW**



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Hayden Brunson spearheaded a donation drive for the Tri-City Animal Shelter.



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4 L Marketplace family, friends and employees celebrate their Midlothian Chamber ribbon cutting ceremony.



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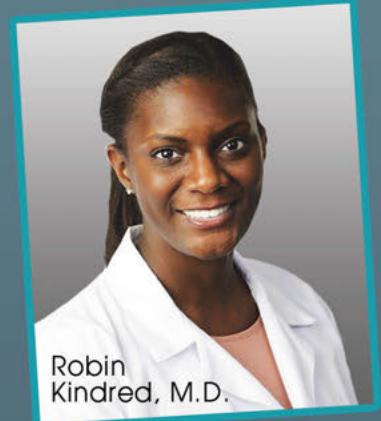
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March 3, 4

Midlothian's Got Talent & Art Show: 7:00 p.m., Midlothian High School Auditorium. Middle School Performance Night, **Friday**; Elementary and High School Performances, **Saturday**; art show both nights. Tickets \$5. Performances by students with special featured performer Trevor Douglas from American Idol and guest performances from MHS football team, Pantherettes, WGMS Wildcat Dancers and FSMS Cub Dancers.

March 7, 14, 21, 28

City Council meeting: 6:00 p.m., 104 W. Ave. E. Call (972) 775-3481 for more information.

March 13, 27

Rag-Tag Readers Book Club: 10:00 a.m., A.H. Meadows Public Library, 923 S. 9th St., Midlothian. Join lively discussions of books chosen by the club members. For more information call Sandy at (972) 775-3417.

March 18

2017 Ranch Riders Horse Show: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Paws for Reflection Ranch, 5431 Montgomery Rd. Riders in therapeutic horsemanship program will show off their horsemanship skills in the new enclosed arena. Other activities include guest appearances by author Rachael Ridge and Flash the Donkey, stock show parade featuring our ranch animals, games and refreshments. Call (972) 775-8966 for more information.

March 20

The Writers' Circle: 6:00 p.m., A.H. Meadows Public Library, 923 S. 9th St., Midlothian. Group is open to the public to provide support, motivation and writing tips. For more information, contact Ashley at meadoswriterscircle@gmail.com.

March 24, 25

Waxahachie Old Fashioned Singing: **Friday**, 7:00 p.m., **Saturday**, 3:00 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium, Waxahachie. Visit www.WaxaOFS.com for further details.

March 25

Midlothian Marketplace: 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center

1 Community Circle Dr. A community event that includes vendors, crafts, giveaways and featuring a Taste of Midlothian. This event connects businesses to the community. For more information, call (972) 723-8600.

March 27

The Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 624 N. Grand Ave., Waxahachie. Visit www.elliscountyquilters.com for more information.

April 1

Bark For Life Family Festival 2017: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Civic Center Field, Midlothian. Demonstrations, pet adoptions, activities, vendors, contests, 3K Family Fun Run/Walker. For more information, go to www.RelayForLife.org/BarkEllisCountyTX contact Laurie Reynolds Llreynolds@rocketmail.com or at (972) 765-1072.

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In the Kitchen With Kenzie Mills

— *By Betty Tryon*

At the age of 11, Kenzie Mills is a cooking wonder. For her 3rd birthday, she received an apron, measuring cups and a whisk and has happily been in the kitchen ever since. “My parents have always been supportive and taught me all the basics,” she stated. “I started watching TV and web cooking shows around 7 years old, which inspired me to learn more techniques and dishes.”

Influencing Kenzie’s cooking is Tex-Mex, barbecue and traditional Southern comfort food favorites. “I like to add my own flair: extra vanilla in any dessert, cayenne pepper in my flour for fried foods. I like bold flavors,” said this bold young lady, who just happens to be a world-ranked, 2nd degree black belt in Taekwondo. **NOW**

Shepherd’s Pie

2 frozen deep dish pie crusts

1 lb. ground lamb

1 lb. ground sage sausage

2 Tbsp. butter

1 small onion, diced

3 cloves garlic, minced

5 carrots, diced

3 celery stalks, diced

1/2 tsp. kosher salt

1/2 tsp. cracked pepper

1 12-oz. jar Heinz HomeStyle Brown with Onions Gravy

2 cups mashed potatoes (See Parmesan Truffle Mash recipe or use your own mashed potato recipe.)

1 cup mild cheddar cheese

1. Preheat oven to 375 F. Score pie crusts with a fork several times; bake for 12-15 minutes until golden. Remove from oven.

2. Brown ground lamb and sausage. Remove meat from skillet and set aside.

3. Melt butter in the skillet with meat grease. Sauté onion and garlic for 4 minutes; add carrots and celery. Sauté for 4 additional minutes.

4. Add meat to sautéed vegetables. Add salt and pepper; mix in brown onion gravy.

5. Fill pie crusts with meat and veggie mixture. Top with mashed potatoes.

6. Roast for 25 minutes. Sprinkle cheese on each pie and roast for 5 additional minutes.

Parmesan Truffle Mash

6 cups water

5 tsp. kosher salt (divided use)

4-6 medium to large russet potatoes, peeled, rinsed and cut into medium-size cubes

1/2 cup heavy whipping cream (divided use)

1/2 cup butter

2 Tbsp. garlic, minced

1 tsp. cracked pepper

2 Tbsp. white truffle oil

1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

1. Put water in a large pot on high to boil and add 2 tsp. salt.

2. Put potatoes carefully into boiling water. Boil potatoes until they easily cut with a fork. Drain in sink using a colander.

3. Return potatoes to the large pot; replace on stovetop on medium-low heat. Add 1/4 cup cream, butter and garlic. Blend and whip with a hand mixer on low until potatoes are creamy and free of lumps. Add additional cream, until desired texture is achieved. Add remaining salt, pepper and additional butter to taste.

4. After potatoes are warmed, mix in truffle oil and Parmesan cheese.

Country Pork Chops

3 Tbsp. olive oil

4-5 pork chops

2 Tbsp. Lawry’s Seasoned Salt

1/4 cup red wine vinegar

2 10.75-oz. cans Campbell’s Cream of Celery Soup

1. Preheat oven to 350 F, and heat olive oil in a large skillet at a medium-high heat. Liberally season both sides of each pork chop with Lawry’s Seasoned Salt. Sear the pork chops in the preheated skillet for 2 minutes on each side. Place chops in an oven-safe casserole dish.

2. Deglaze the pan with red wine vinegar and pour over the chops. Cover the pork chops with the soup.

3. Roast the pork chops in the oven for 10-30 minutes (depending on thickness of the chops) until they reach an internal temperature of 165 F.

Cannoli Dip

1 cup ricotta cheese

1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese (room temperature)

1 cup powdered sugar

2 tsp. vanilla extract

1 cup mini chocolate chips

1. Using a stand mixer or a hand-mixer and a large bowl, whisk together the ricotta, cream cheese and powdered sugar on medium-high speed until smooth (about 3-5 minutes).

2. Add vanilla and whip for another 30 seconds; fold in mini chocolate chips.

3. Serve with waffle cone chips, sugar cones, graham crackers or pipe cannoli shells.

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