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Managing Editor, Becky Walker

Waxahachie Editor, Sandra Strong

Writers, Nancy Fenton . Janice C. Johnson

Adam Rope . Betty Tryon

Editors/Proofreaders, Teresa Maddison

Pat Anthony . Angel Morris . Pamela Parisi

Beverly Shay

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla

Artists, Julie Carpenter . Martha Macias

Allee Brand . Cherie Chapman

Marshall Hinsley . Arlene Honza

Brandi Morgan

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Director, Jill Odle

Photographers, Natalie Busch

Amy Ramirez

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On The Cover



As director, Jess Krodel still enjoys time behind the camera.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Happy Easter!

Rumor has it that "April showers bring May flowers." If that is true, I say, "Bring on the rain!" After the dreary days of winter, I am ready for the brighter colors that spring has to offer. I cannot wait for the trees to bud, the flowers to bloom and the grass to once again grow thick and green.

I know the ducks that live down the road from my home are enjoying the warmer weather, too. They are no longer slipping and sliding on a frozen slab of ice. As I take my daily walk, I watch them chasing one another around the pond, trying to figure out who the leader will be for the day.

And me, I am no longer baking corn bread for my feathered friends. During the spring and summer months, they have come to prefer oyster "quackers" instead.

Sandra

Sandra Strong
WaxahachieNOW Editor
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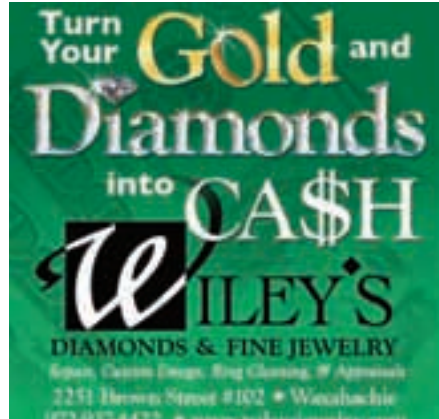
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Cody Richeson, assistant director;
James Crawford, screenwriter;
Jason Hatch, producer;
Andrew Zocrate, soundman and grip;
Jess Krodel, director.

The young woman fled so quickly along the meadow path that when she tripped, she fell down hard. Her pursuer was upon her before she could get up. He pinned the struggling woman down with one knee, raising a brutal machete in his right hand. An evil grin spread across his face.

“Cut!” Jess Krodel yelled. “The sun’s going down — we have to move again.”

The killer lowered his machete, stood and offered his victim a hand up. She brushed some loose grass off her clothing. The filming crew jogged several yards farther west, reassembling on a low rise where a few rays of sunlight still fell. Victim and killer followed, got into place and resumed their life-and-death struggle as the camera rolled.

They were shooting *God’s Country*, a short film written by James Crawford. Jess recalled the complexity and relentless pace of filming even a 30-minute project. “It takes a village,” he emphasized. “A still photographer can work alone with just a camera. But to create cinema, you need actors, sound, cameras, lighting. ...” A 2008 graduate from University of North Texas with a Bachelor of Arts in Radio, Television and Film, Jess’ precise nature and creative vision make him ideally suited to film directing.

Jason Hatch, Jess’ longtime friend, is currently studying filmmaking. He began working with Jess a few years ago. As producer, he manages each project, from acquiring equipment and auditioning actors to planning and implementing a scene-by-scene shooting schedule. And the crew stays on that schedule, thanks to Jason’s ability to keep both the “big picture” and important details in mind. “Like food,” Jason said. “It’s amazing how Lunchables can turn cranky actors into ‘good-mood’ actors!”

In 2008, James had never once thought of being a screenwriter. But then the Texas Tech pre-law student discovered a passion for filmmaking, ignited by the behind-the-scenes “bonus features” of movies. He shifted his education goals and began to write screenplays. “I didn’t even like writing in high school,” he said. *God’s Country* was his first script, inspired by a chance remark years earlier. While driving down a deserted country road, a friend had commented, “This would be a great place for a horror movie.”

Once he had the screenplay complete, James looked for others who were interested in making movies. Someone told him about Jess and Jason and gave him an e-mail address, so he sent them the script. They had received project ideas before that had not panned out, so they felt skeptical at first. After all, producing a film takes much more than a mere script.

Jason took up the story. “But James started putting things together: prospective actors, a place for auditions. He was taking it seriously, so I started taking it seriously — and told Jess to take it seriously.”

Each member of the trio respects the others’ very different strengths and skills. For instance, Jess happily leaves the writing

— By Janice C. Johnson

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to James. "My mind goes a mile a minute — I can't do the 'sit-at-the-computer-and-type' thing like James."

"And it's good," Jason added. "If I try to write dialogue, all the characters just sound like me." For his part, he expends considerable energy curbing Jess' perfectionism. Otherwise no scene would ever be "finished."

All three share a passion to create movies professionally. To succeed in the industry, according to Jess, "Experience is everything — a degree is nothing. Because of all the risk and expense of



producing a movie, companies won't work with a kid with no experience. There are so many things you can only learn out in the field."

That truth came home to Jason and Jess as each independent project taught them things that their classroom courses could not. Jason admitted their first film, a 90-minute comedy, "was too big a project. I didn't even make a shooting schedule; I thought we could just film over several weekends, whenever we



could get together. I didn't realize that meant having to rent equipment several times." It proved impossible to keep gathering cast members and props, and the film was never completed.

So they began to devote their limited resources to preparing top-quality short films, learning all aspects of filmmaking in the process. Aside from its learning value, each movie becomes part of their portfolio.

God's Country, the first project the three have completed together, consists of half daytime and half nighttime scenes.



They shot the film over two three-day weekends, doing all the day scenes the first weekend. The next weekend, they shot at night and slept during the daytime. In each case, they had to utilize every second of daylight or darkness. It may take two hours to net one minute of finished film, especially when "creative differences" crop up.

Even so, shooting is the smallest part of the filmmaking process. "Filming is just gathering ammunition to work with,"

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Jess asserted. That 30-minute product required over two months of preparation before the shoot, and three months of editing afterward.

James' uncle, Eddie Settlemyer, hosted the filming at his ranch. "He provided all the locations, a generator and even refreshments," Jason marveled. "The setting was perfect! It really gave the film its power and creepiness."

"It's a slasher film," James explained.

"Horror is not our main focus,"

Jason added.

"But it's easy to make on the cheap,"

Jess put in.

When they received James' screenplay, Jess and Jason canceled another project in favor of *God's Country*. "And I'm so glad we did," Jason said. "We ended up with the most amazing piece of art I've ever been a part of." The weekend after the shoot ended, he suffered symptoms of withdrawal. "It was the funnest thing I did all year," he said. "I'd rather be out in the woods making a movie on two hours of sleep a night, than working at a regular job and sleeping eight hours at home."

"Everything we're doing now is promotional," Jess agreed, "festivals,



private screenings and a DVD résumé for potential investors." They cannot yet pay their actors, many of whom volunteer above the call of duty, but the DVD provides a résumé piece for them, as well. Jess has posted sample videos on his Web site, www.simulacrumpictures.com.

The trio is already working on another project. "Now that we've cut our teeth on this one, we'll only keep making more flawless creations that will garner the attention we're seeking," Jess said.

James nodded. "We're chasing a dream." **NOW**

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BUILDING TOWARD *the Future*

— By Janice C. Johnson

AT HOME WITH Mitchell and Katie White

The years seem very long during childhood. But as adult life and responsibilities arise, time seems to compress until each year flies by in a matter of weeks. No one knows this better than Mitchell and Katie White, whose lives in the past two years have been characterized by change and more change.

The year 2009 saw Katie graduate from Waxahachie's Southwestern Assemblies of God University (SAGU). Since then, she and Mitchell have married and bought and renovated a house. Meanwhile, both their part-time jobs grew into full-time ones, and the couple became part-time youth pastors.



Their 1970 home originally belonged to an elderly person whose family wanted to sell it "as-is." "We always talk about how blessed we are," Mitchell said.

"When Katie [graduated] and we first got married, the house opened up for us."

"We got the house for a good price, though it needed some foundation work," Katie added.

Only after the foundation was repaired did the couple turn their attention to the wood paneling, shag carpet and dark interior typical of the period. It was time to pull the house into the 21st century, a process Katie wryly referred to as "a full overload of remodeling." With a little help from a contractor and from their families, the dated four-bedroom home has been transformed into a welcoming retreat with much contemporary charm.

The first thing to go was the solid wall that divided the dining room from the living room. A contractor replaced the wall with a wide arch, opening the space and bringing daylight into the dark living area. Short, spindle-topped divider walls between living room and kitchen gave way to another arched doorway. The contractor then removed the dark paneling and prepared the walls for painting. "We did most of the rest ourselves," Mitchell said.

Born and reared in Lawrence, Kansas, Mitchell had been a lifelong Kansas University fan. But when the time came to choose a college, he became the first in his family to enroll at SAGU, majoring in church ministry. There he enjoyed the carefree life of a single student living on campus, working at a part-time campus job and playing sports. The next year he met Katie, a business major who was in one of his classes.

Katie, an Austin native, had started out at Austin Community College and then transferred to SAGU in the spring of 2007. She became acquainted with Mitchell through studying together. Their friendship deepened as Katie volunteered to help with Student Congress activities, for which Mitchell had a leadership role. "Class Night" was our first date," Katie recalled.

Mitchell explained the formal event, which is held each April to honor "Mr. and Miss Southwestern," two seniors who exemplify the core values of the university. As a Student Congress

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member, he had been involved in planning and preparing for Class Night. He invited Katie to attend the ceremony with him and go to Dallas for an elegant dinner afterward.

At the end of the evening, Katie said, "He asked me out for breakfast the next morning, and I kind of knew it was coming — that he would ask me to date him officially." But over breakfast Mitchell just told Katie that he really liked her, and asked her to pray about

continuing to date him. She called her father, who suggested she invite him home to Austin with her for the weekend to meet the family. So on Friday afternoon, she extended the invitation to Mitchell, who was packed and ready to go in two hours.

Besides their faith, the two have large families in common: Mitchell and Katie each have four siblings. But unlike Mitchell, Katie comes from a long line of

SAGU alumni. "He's the first generation to go to Southwestern, but I'm fourth-generation. My grandparents and my parents all met at Southwestern, and I met my husband there," she said. "And I wasn't on the lookout!"

Starting as a dormitory resident-assistant, Katie worked part-time in the university's accounting office during her senior year, and is now a full-time assistant to the vice president of business



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and finance. "It was nice to have that security of both of us having jobs — and benefits — lined up before I graduated," she said.

Mitchell's original part-time job with the Assemblies of God Credit Union converted to full-time status about the same time the couple married. Several weeks later, he and Katie were invited to serve Midlothian's Gateway Church as youth pastors. He now takes all his classes online, which allows him to manage his very full schedule. This summer, Mitchell will receive his Bachelor of Arts in church ministry with a specialization in youth, plus an associate degree in both business and Bible. He plans to start graduate school immediately, in the fall semester.

For an office, Mitchell furnished one of the bedrooms with sofa and desk, adding an accent wall of University-of-Kansas blue. On a shelf beside his desk stands a model of a ship's anchor with a blue-and-crimson rope attached. The anchor, an early Christian symbol with a cross hidden in its shape, also symbolizes Mitchell's view of his ministry purpose: to give young people an anchor for their souls. As with the house, his first priority is to help students build a strong foundation.

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The rest of the rooms are painted and furnished in a warm palette featuring brick red, golden yellow and khaki. Katie especially enjoyed decorating the guest room, which she calls “The Bed & Breakfast Room.” She set off the comfortable, old-fashioned furnishings with stained-glass panels original to an old house in Europe.

One big challenge for the Whites is managing their time. “We definitely now have to say, “These nights are for school; these nights are just for us,”” Katie said.

“That was really hard at first,” Mitchell admitted.

Katie credits both their families with being a good support system, helping them with the house and other projects. Meanwhile, the couple loves life in



Waxahachie, especially living so close to their work and everything they need.

Many newlyweds start out in an apartment, but the Whites’ remodeled home has proven to be the perfect choice for their busy new life. It nicely accommodates the students who flock there for bonding, recreation and spiritual growth. An outbuilding provides extra recreational space, which became especially important when the students began congregating there. Also, they are using the fourth bedroom as temporary housing for another SAGU grad. Such hospitality builds into the future and fits their philosophy, as Mitchell put it: “We realize there’s a reason why we got this house; it wasn’t just for us.” **NOW**

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Living His *Best Life*

— By Sandra Strong



Dan Parker is living a life filled with one heartwarming story after another. Life “really began” for him back in Phoenix, Arizona. “I was a road construction worker at the time. I had not yet become a Christian,” he remembered. “I was at a night club one evening when I spotted Chavell across the room. She was a head above everybody else in the room,” he added, referring to her height which came close to matching his own. Dan wasted no time in asking her if she “would like to do a little two-step. She grabbed my arm and never let go,” he smiled.



"He has lots of corny sayings," Chavell said, admitting she loves each and every one of them.

"I knew God had a plan for my life. I realize how much He loves me by the awesome wife he gave me," he stated, as four of the couple's eight children who

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were in the room rolled their eyes and murmured under their breath.

Not long after that first two-step, Dan and Chavell married. This past December, they celebrated their 23rd anniversary. But, as they share stories from those years, they look at one another as if they just met yesterday. Although the years have had their ups and downs, the marriage has been resilient. It has remained strong throughout.

The couple has eight children: two biological and six adopted. Children have been the spice that has added much to their lives from the very beginning. "We were called to take care of the children," Dan said, referring to the many they fostered before having their first in 1990, to the many they have helped rear since. "I don't see how single parents with more than one child do it. I love working side-by-side with Chavell. We complete each other."

Ten years and several children later, the couple began fostering children with special needs. Chavell was laid off allowing her to become a stay-at-home mom, while Dan continued to work to support the family. That is until one fateful day in 2000. "I was working for Western Skyways in Montrose, Colorado. I rebuilt airplane engines and had been doing it for nearly 10 years. The engines are hoisted onto a pedestal so we were able to work on them in a vertical position." That day as the engine was being hoisted, the foot of the pedestal caught in a crack on the floor allowing just enough movement to cause the 2,000 pound engine to fall, landing on Dan's left leg. Unfortunately, Dan was never able to return to work after the accident.

The recuperation time was lengthy to say the least. He was unable to walk



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but his appetite remained good. Once the year of rehabilitation was complete, Dan had “blossomed” to more than 500 pounds. “Once I was able to physically walk again, the excess weight made it almost impossible to do so,” he confessed. “I realized I needed to lose the weight I’d gained.” He tried all the diets that were available from the Atkins diet to the grapefruit diet. None of them gave him the results he was looking for.

Results did not come until Dan and his family moved to Waxahachie. “God gives us tools. If we don’t use them properly



they malfunction,” he said, referring to his own body. “I had gastric bypass surgery in 2008. I lost 100 pounds in the first month. Food no longer controlled me. The surgery allowed me to once again be in full control of my body.”

While losing the weight, Dan also saw a vast improvement in his overall health. His entire body was in pain prior to the surgery. He suffered with several medical conditions, one of which was excessively loud snoring. “When he lost the weight, he slept quietly,” Chavell recalled. “It’s still hard for me to sleep. His snoring had become music to my ears.”

Most people who have been overweight do not spend lots of time in the kitchen, preparing mouth-watering meals for the family. Dan is not most people. He enjoyed cooking before the accident, but now he loves being the only cook in the family. “I take ingredients that are not necessarily eatable by themselves, but when mixed together they create something that’s delectable,” he said. “It’s an art, and I love it.” Dan has also found joy in baking. His “knot rolls” won an award at a recent cooking contest, and he has finally found a pie crust that is infallible.

As Dan talked about recipes and main dishes, he also began to talk about each of his children. Just like each spice adds

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something unique and special to the dishes he prepares, each child has added something unique and special to the family dynamic. "Each of our children is like a spice," he explained. "They have the potential to do great things or bad things. Shelby is our crushed red pepper. She makes the dull moments come to life with her outgoing personality. Lacey is my lemon zest."

The majority of the children Dan and Chavell have fostered or adopted came to them lacking confidence. They have never known unconditional love and safety within a home. "These children are our future. No one can love or raise our children the way Chavell and I can," he stated, referring to the decision they made years ago to homeschool. "We are able to take them and mold them in the right way. We encourage each of them to seize life and all its opportunities, to take the bull by the horns."

When asked why they have spent their life fostering and adopting children when they were able to have two of their own, Dan answered without pause. "The government takes care of the widows and the orphans, but it [the Bible] says the church is supposed to do this. Our calling was to foster these kids." Dan stopped just long enough to take a breath before sharing an unforgettable experience from his childhood that molded him into the man, husband and father he is today. "My dad was very abusive," he confessed. "The day of reckoning came when my dad was diagnosed with lung cancer. He called me to him and asked me to crawl into his lap. Daddy hugged me and kissed me and for the first time ever, he told me he loved me."

Dan went to school that day and never saw his father alive again. His father's final action was one of love and forgiveness. "Our mistakes mold us into who we are," he said. "Life certainly does have a way of bouncing around, but it always comes together." As his favorite saying goes, "It's a great day to be alive! It's all about living your best life." **NOW**

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A Place to be Real

— By Janice C. Johnson



Jonathan Bell was headed nowhere, and he really did not care. The 16-year-old dropout from Spokane, Washington, was leading a hip-hop dance crew and performing in bars, just living for the next dollar and the next buzz.

Then his friend Anthony met with him, challenging him to consider where his life was taking him. Their conversation “was a big motivator for me,” Jonathan said. Now married and living in Waxahachie, he works tirelessly alongside his wife, Sarah, to offer at-risk teens a way out of the “dead-end” life he himself once lived.

Sarah smiled at her husband. “One thing Anthony told him was, ‘Snap out of it, Jon. You’re better than this,’” she said. “He saw the potential — what Jonathan could be.”

“It was a life-changing moment,” Jonathan agreed. He became actively involved in his faith, and the focus of his dance crew began to shift. “We said, ‘Let’s change this dance program and really try to help people with it.’” They approached charitable organizations in Spokane, offering to teach dance classes.

“While I was teaching,” Jonathan said, “I noticed I was telling a few jokes and some lighthearted tips — motivational things — and more kids started coming. From there it turned into, not so much dance...”

“... But more like Big Brothers and Big Sisters,” Sarah put in.

Once just another dance crew, the Bells’ organization is now a board-led, Texas-registered nonprofit called Youth M.A.D.N.E.S.S., Inc. The acronym stands for its motto, “Motivation And Desire Never Ever Stop Striving.” At their facility, located behind BaylorWorx a few blocks south of Waxahachie High School, they currently serve anyone from age 13 to 19. Jonathan, also the youth director for Covenant Life Church, outlined the services they provide.

First, M.A.D.N.E.S.S. offers resources, giving teens the tools they need to succeed in life. From help applying for college and jobs to addiction or reconciliation assistance, Jonathan and Sarah stand ready to fill any gaps left by absent or overworked parents. The charity also partners with other organizations that offer support with life choices and crisis situations.

Second, Jonathan continues to teach dance. “I was a professional break-dance and hip-hop teacher, and we offer classes here on Saturdays.” He can teach the dance moves to anyone, even if they have



no sense of rhythm. “You’d be amazed at how learning those skills will grow a kid’s confidence,” he said.

M.A.D.N.E.S.S. also offers motivational assemblies in secondary schools. Though faith-based, the program does not urge religious faith on the students. Instead, they teach life skills, common sense and character

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education. "Everyone, whether people of faith or not, wants teens to be drug-free, [productive] members of society," Jonathan pointed out.

Fourth, they created a texting program to offer continued support to students after the assemblies. Friendly reminders and messages of encouragement now go out to more than 800 teens in eight states. A text might read, "You can do anything you set your mind to." Another example might be, "Friends don't let friends drive drunk." Students sign up to receive the texts, and they can opt out at any time.

Most recently, Sarah has been preparing curriculum to start a "charm school." She wants to teach girls how to present themselves well in educational and professional settings, increasing their opportunities for success.

The stated mission of M.A.D.N.E.S.S. is to motivate young people to strive toward positive choices, building strong character through their actions. But how does an adult, even a "20-something" like Jonathan or Sarah, get a troubled teenager to accept advice? Young people are not likely to be impressed by degrees or professional qualifications. According to Jonathan, they are looking instead for someone who is relevant. "I can spin on my head — so a kid watching me thinks, 'I want to talk to that guy,'" he explained. "It makes me 'cool.'"

In contrast to some programs, Youth M.A.D.N.E.S.S. invites teens to "come as you are" for nonjudgmental help. Jonathan carefully avoids leaving the impression that their help is only for those who accept their faith. "I don't want to neglect anyone, whether they share my faith or not." Here, the only question teens are asked is, "What are your needs?"

Sarah smiled and nodded her head. "They get confused. They come in and are shocked when we just love them and befriend them, with no strings. They don't see that very often."

Jonathan also noted that in a church setting, many people think they must pretend they have no problems. Yet all the while, family relationships are strained and depression haunts many young people. Providing guidance and the tools to attain a fulfilling, productive life is giving teens hope and confidence.

With that in mind, the charity is always looking for adults to help mentor young people. "Our slogan is 'Help Us Help Teens.' We go speak in churches, because that's one of those places where you find



people who want to give back," Jonathan said. Approved volunteers can come by the Youth M.A.D.N.E.S.S. center during a Wednesday evening faith service or a Saturday morning dance class. There they can mingle with teens and consider sponsoring one or more if a "big brother/sister" relationship develops. But the smallest positive contact can make a huge difference, too, even something as simple as telling a 19-year-old, "It's not too late — get your GED."

"Kids face lots of peer pressure; for many it's considered 'nerdy' to do what's right," Jonathan said. "We want to make

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right choices become cool again.” To do that, they have to be relevant and ‘cool’ in the teens’ eyes. His Ryte Side dance crew provides that edge, performing in venues from juvenile detention centers to Plano’s Celebrate Freedom celebration. Everywhere, they seek to encourage and empower young people to achieve their dreams.

Jonathan’s biggest reward is when someone tells him, years after encountering Youth M.A.D.N.E.S.S., that his or her life is on track. “That’s what



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we’re after: life-changing moments,” he said. Equally satisfying is having parents tell him their teen “is a new person.”

Since its beginnings nine years ago as a teenager’s desire to help others, M.A.D.N.E.S.S. has grown explosively. In fact, Jonathan has filed for the nonprofit to gain status as a national charity under IRS rules. Yet he still considers it to be in its beginning stages. “We’re very, very excited because we’ve seen what [the program] can do. And with the right people working with us, the sky’s the limit for how many kids we can help.”

For more information on the charity fundraiser slated for April 30 or for ways you may volunteer, visit www.gotmadness.com. **NOW**

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The Practice Remains the Same

Women's Health Specialists of North Texas provides comprehensive medical care for local residents. — By Sandra Strong

Women's Health Specialists of North Texas has been providing comprehensive care for women since 1998. "We're not going anywhere," Laura Garcia, RN, stated.

"We are committed to stay," Office Manager Robin Sanchez emphatically reiterated.

What started with Dr. David Morehead in 1998, later became Waxahachie Women's Health in 2002 with the addition of Dr. Paul Lansdowne and Dr. Jason Brown. Dr. Kristin Williams joined the practice in 2005. In an effort to provide an even higher level of care, the physicians, as well as 14 support staff members, have recently opened a second office in Mansfield. With this addition, the practice became Women's Health Specialists of North Texas.

Beginning in the spring of 2010,

there was no longer a birthing facility in Waxahachie. "Methodist Mansfield Medical Center warmly welcomed all our patients with open arms," Dr. Brown said. "All expectant mothers from both our offices are now giving birth in Mansfield."

Methodist Mansfield Medical Center is proving to be a great facility. Dr. Brown shared a recent example. "When babies are born prematurely, in many instances they no longer have to be whisked away via helicopter to another facility. Those same mothers and babies can often be cared for at the same facility. This erases the separation anxiety for both mother and the child. We are now able to offer a more technologically advanced level of service for both obstetrics and gynecology."

Comprehensive care includes, but is

From left:

Dr. David Morehead, Dr. Kristin Williams, Dr. Jason Brown and Dr. Paul Lansdowne.

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not limited to, sonography, pregnancy and delivery, bone densitometry, minimally invasive surgery, infertility, menopause and reconstructive pelvic surgery. For instance, Dr. Brown noted that women no longer have to deal with the accidents and embarrassment associated with "stress incontinence." "Pelvic organ prolapse is a secret many women keep, but it can be corrected," he stated. "Incontinence caused by coughing, sneezing and laughing no longer has to be an accepted part of aging thanks to the advancements that have been made in reconstructive pelvic surgery."

In-office sterilization is also available, thus making the need for hospital stays and invasive procedures a thing of the past. "We see female patients between the ages of 12 to the end of life," Ms. Sanchez said. "We treat most issues known to the female anatomy."

"Maintaining good health is vital," Dr. Brown added. "Women need to be seen by their physician at least once a year as early detection remains the key to

"Methodist Mansfield Medical Center warmly welcomed all our patients with open arms."

successful treatment of most diseases."

The hospital affiliation may have changed, but the practice has remained the same. "Women's Health Specialists of North Texas seeks to be an integral fiber in the tapestry of our community," Dr. Brown said. "We live here. We attend churches here. We have friends and family here. We have all established deep roots here in Ellis County. It would be traumatic for any of us to uproot our families. Above all, we love our community."

As the spokesperson for the four physicians, Dr. Brown re-emphasized their commitment, "Women are the heart of the family. We are strongly devoted to caring for them. Our practice remains." **NOW**



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Beckham Atkins entertains himself during lunch at College Street Pub.



Bob Mablstedt and Johnna Wallace from the SPCA bring animals to PetSmart for adoption.



Lainey Turner rides a therapeutic horse at the Waxahachie Business Expo.



Executive Director Sharon Chandler gathers for a St. Patty's day picture with The High Steppers and some of the residents of Sterling House Waxahachie.



Drew Garcia and son, Cullen, enjoy their tandem bicycle while brother, Jordan, tows his sister, Allie, in his bicycle trailer.



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Wash Your Hands

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Hepatitis A is a great example of why it is so important to wash your hands. Someone infected with the disease can transmit the virus to others via contaminated food or water or by direct contact if good hygiene is not practiced. Complicating matters is the fact the infected person will be contagious for at least a couple of weeks before they are aware they have the disease. If their personal hygiene is poor, meaning, if they get the virus on their hands after using the bathroom, neglect to wash their hands and then handle food that others will eat, they can easily infect many people before they become ill.

The hepatitis A virus (HAV), found in the stool and blood of an infected person, causes an infectious disease of the liver. Some of the symptoms of hepatitis A are jaundice (yellow skin), dark urine, pale or clay-colored stools, fatigue, nausea, stomach pain and poor appetite. A physical examination for any tenderness, a thorough investigation of symptoms, blood tests and a medical history are all usually part of any visit to the doctor for diagnosis. The doctor will also want to know if you have been exposed to hepatitis A or if you have been traveling.

There are no specific medications to treat hepatitis A. Rest and avoiding vigorous exercise is recommended. One may need to take an absence from school or work if performing those activities requires too much energy. It is important to try to eat a balanced diet during this period and to drink plenty of fluids. Because of the gastrointestinal upsets with this virus, sometimes eating several small meals a day is better than three large ones. Because the liver is where substances are broken down, it is important to avoid those things that are toxic to it, such as alcohol. Even Tylenol, which may seem benign, can cause serious damage to the liver if not taken properly. Consult with your health care provider before taking or stopping any



medication if you have hepatitis. Symptoms last an average of two to six months.

The greatest control measure in preventing the transmission and spread of this disease is for people to wash their hands. This does require vigilance on an individual's part — particularly those who work in day care centers with all of the frequent diaper changes. Speak to your physician about receiving the hepatitis A vaccine to avoid this disease. If you have been exposed, an injection of immune globulin (IG) given within two weeks may prevent you from getting hepatitis A. **NOW**

This article is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult with your physician if you have questions regarding this topic.



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Blooming Time for Bulbs

— By Nancy Fenton

All over our area, you will find blooms. Our state bluebonnets are lovely, but not too common in the urban areas. Narcissus, daffodils and tulips are much more common. They are fun bulbs, but take planning ahead since we have to plant them in the fall in North Texas. Most years, we don't have the long cold seasons a great many bulbs require. There are several varieties that do well and naturalize here (come back stronger each year). White Flower Farms has a Web site listing varieties, the zones in which they do well and if they will naturalize. Ice Follies are one variety of narcissus that is commonly available in local outlets.

As for tulips, I have been known to put them in the same boat as azaleas — plant once, enjoy and throw away — but I'm learning every day. Through a Master Gardener class on bulbs, I discovered what is called the "Species" variety of tulips. These varieties are originally from the Mediterranean, Asia Minor and the Caucasus. They are not planted quite as deep as others, and they come up year after year. They aren't as large as many tulips, but do well in our hardy clay soils. I am ordering them for planting this fall and will let you know how they do! If you order, be sure and check the zone. We are in zone 7b, but I usually look for zone 8 to be on the safe side.

Our other big bloomer is the iris. There are lots of them



around, and they are all beautiful. You can make your own iris garden any time of year. Unlike tulips and narcissus, they aren't particular about when or where they are planted. Just give them a chance, and they'll make it. They do better in a mostly sunny area and planted shallowly so the rhizome has some sun. In planning a bed, watch the amount of shade, as well as the drainage. Irises can't take wet feet happily. Put the short ones in front with the taller ones staggered back, and be ready to thin them every three to four years. These are great plants to share.

You really can't plant much on top of irises, but narcissus and daffodils are planted deeply enough to accommodate shallow rooted plants. Try some. They will cover fading foliage as the weather heats up.

Enjoy the spring blooms and spot out places to plant your bulbs next fall. For other questions, call the Master Gardeners at the Ellis County AgriLife office at (972) 825-5175. **NOW**

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Use Your Social Security Statement as a Guide

— By *Adam Rope*

Once you reach age 25, the Social Security Administration (SSA) will send an annual report on your individual account. This report will highlight potential benefits from your account and is a valuable tool for your use when considering ways to plan for your retirement and other financial needs.

Social Security should be only one of a number of sources for income during retirement. Other sources may include an employer pension and your personal retirement savings in the form of an individual retirement account (IRA).

When you receive your statement, take some time and go over its contents. Are the reported earnings correct? If not, report any errors to the SSA. It's much easier to do now than after you retire.

How do the projected benefits fit within your retirement needs? Will you have enough from other sources to fill any gaps?

These are important questions a financial professional can help you answer. A financial professional can also help you find ways to plan for a retirement that relies less on Social Security and more on options that are suitable to your needs and comfort level.

There are a number of products and services available to help you attain the retirement you desire. An early start at developing your personal plan will make your goals more attainable. **NOW**

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APRIL 2011

Weekends in April

Forever Plaid presented by Ennis Public Theatre, 2705 N. Kaufman Street. Friday and Saturday shows all month. Call (972) 878-7529 for ticket prices and curtain times.

April 1 and 2

Heart of Texas Arts and Craft Show: Friday, 2:00-8:00 p.m., Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. Admission: Adults, \$4; children 12 and under are admitted for free. Visit www.heartoftexasshow.com.

April 5

First Responders Appreciation Tuesday Happy Hour: 4:00-7:00 p.m., Bonnie & Clyde's Speakeasy, 100 North College Street. Call (469) 383-2732.

April 9

Texas Theater presents The Pop Dance Music of Falling Upstairs: 8:00-10:30 p.m., 110 West Main Street. Dance music from the '80s and '90s. Tickets: \$10. Call (972) 937-1321.

Ellis County Republican Women Spring Art Show & Sale: 5:00-7:00 p.m., Ennis National Bank Event Center, 116 West Ennis Avenue, Ennis. Call (972) 923-9208.

Navarro College Brilliance 2011, Realizing

Educational Dreams: 6:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center. Tickets: \$75. For more information or reservations, contact Lynn Pike at (972) 923-6439 or at lynn.pike@navarrocollege.edu.

April 9-May 30

Scarborough Renaissance Festival: 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., 2511 FM 66. Call (972) 938-3247.

April 14

Hope Clinic Grand Opening/Open House: 4:30-7:00 p.m., 411 East Jefferson Street, Waxahachie. Call (972) 268-1802.

April 15 and 16

The Navarro College Players present *The Ten Things I Love About You*: 7:45 p.m., Navarro College Midlothian Campus, 899 Mt. Zion Road, Midlothian. Call (972) 775-7200.

April 16

Texas Baptist Home Spring Craft Fair: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., 629 Farley Street. Call (972) 937-1321.

April 16 and 17

60th Annual Ennis Bluebonnet Trails Festival: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Call (972) 878-4748 to find out more about the event sponsored by the Ennis Garden Club.

April 29

The Music of Stevie Ray Vaughan as performed by Voodoo Blue: 8:00-10:30 p.m., Texas Theater, 110 West Main Street. For tickets prices and reservations, call (972) 937-1993.

April 30

Youth M.A.D.N.E.S.S. Inc. Car Show Fundraiser: noon-4:00 p.m., 507 North Highway 77 in the parking lot area.

Prescription Drug Take Back: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. sponsored by Ellis County Sheriff's Office in partnership with IMPACT Waxahachie and Drug Prevention Resources. Unused and expired medications will be accepted at two locations in Ellis County: The Office Depot parking lot, 1201 N. U.S. Hwy. 77, Waxahachie and Super One Food parking lot, 1205 W. Ennis Ave., Ennis. This event is part of a national effort by the DEA to reduce the availability of unmonitored medications in home medicine cabinets.

June 4

Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-in: 8:00-11:00 a.m., Mid-Way Regional Airport. Call (972) 923-0080 for details.

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In The Kitchen With Susan Brown

— *By Sandra Strong*

Growing up in Louisiana definitely impacts one's cooking style, or at least it did for Susan Brown. "I'm not Cajun, but I have mastered the art of Cajun cooking," Susan admitted. "To this day, I still prefer rice over potatoes." Her inspiration for "southern home-style cooking with a gourmet twist" comes from tuning into the Food Network.

Susan started cooking when her mother journeyed off to graduate school to further her education. "I was 13," Susan remembered. "My two sisters and I took turns preparing the evening meals. I guess one could say this is when I fell in love with the art of cooking. To this day, it is extremely important for family to sit down and enjoy the family mealtime together." **NOW**

Mrs. Loveland's Black Bean Salsa

2 cans black beans, rinse and drain
1 pkg. small frozen yellow corn
1 onion, chopped
1 red bell pepper, chopped
1 green bell pepper, chopped
1 bunch cilantro, chopped
1 Tbsp. minced garlic
1/3 cup olive oil
1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
2 lemons
1 tsp. salt
Pepper, to taste
1 tsp. oregano
3 avocados

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine beans, corn, onion, bell peppers, cilantro and garlic.

2. Add olive oil, apple cider vinegar and the juice of one lemon to the vegetable mixture.
3. Add salt, pepper and oregano. Stir until completely blended.
4. Refrigerate overnight.
5. Before serving, cut the avocados into chunks and sprinkle with the juice of the remaining lemon. Add to the other ingredients. Serve with chips.

Easy Chicken and Sausage Gumbo

4 boneless skinless chicken breasts
1 bag frozen chopped onion
1 bag frozen chopped green bell pepper
1 pkg. Louisiana Cajun Gumbo Mix (Roux can be found in H-E-B's meat department.)
1 pkg. beef sausage, in casing

2 Tbsp. gumbo filé
1 Tbsp. dried parsley
Minute Rice

1. Bring 2 quarts salted water to boil in a large stock pot, add chicken breasts and cook until no longer pink, about 20 minutes.
2. Remove chicken breasts from pot and allow to cool. Reserve chicken stock in the pot and reduce heat to low. Place chicken on a plate and allow it to cool.
3. Add frozen chopped onion and green bell pepper to chicken stock. Add gumbo mix; stir until dissolved. Add additional cold water if desired.
4. Shred cooled chicken breasts; add back to gumbo mixture. Slice sausage into thin slices; add to the gumbo mixture.
5. Add the gumbo filé and parsley. Stir until all ingredients are blended.
6. Cook on medium heat until liquid comes to a boil; reduce the heat and let simmer for around 30 minutes. Stir periodically.
7. Serve over hot rice. You may want to sprinkle a bit more of the filé on top of the gumbo and rice once served.

Mandarin Orange and Pear Salad With Vinaigrette Dressing

Dressing:

2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
1 Tbsp. honey
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 cup balsamic vinegar

Salad:

1 large container mixed baby lettuce
1 large can mandarin oranges, drained
1 can pear halves, drained and cut into slices
1 cup glazed walnuts
1 red onion, thinly sliced

1. Make the dressing by combining mustard and honey in a small bowl. Slowly add olive oil and vinegar, whisking to combine.
2. Make salad by combining lettuce, oranges, pears, walnuts and red onion slices in a large salad bowl.
3. Drizzle dressing over the salad right before serving.
4. Toss gently to coat. Serve immediately.

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