## Waxahachie Waxahachie

APRIL 2012

## nature's rainbow

David and Pat Smith share their love of the iris with others.

Having a Ball At Home With Jeff & Laura Smith

Also Inside:
Winning in Every Area
Just Like Family
Grown-up Responsibility
A Love for Birds
Learning From the Fall
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## On The Cover



Just one of the many spectacular iris colors found in the Smith's backyard garden.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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## Editor's Note

Springtime is here!

April provides longer days and milder temperatures. It's the time of year we start thinking about spring cleaning. While others are rummaging through closets to prepare for their annual garage sales, I'll be on my hands and knees taking my yard back. The weeds that think they found a "forever home" in my yard are about to be plucked.

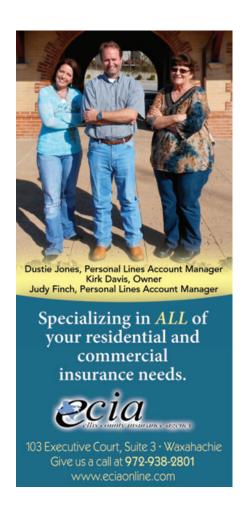


My dad has always loved working in the yard. As he continues to recuperate and gain more strength, I'm hoping he will have the desire to come sit on the front porch with me, if only to admire the beauty of the newly planted spring flowers. As he learns to compensate for what he lost when he had his stroke earlier this year, I find inner strength in helping to care for him. As difficult as it's been, I wouldn't trade a single minute.

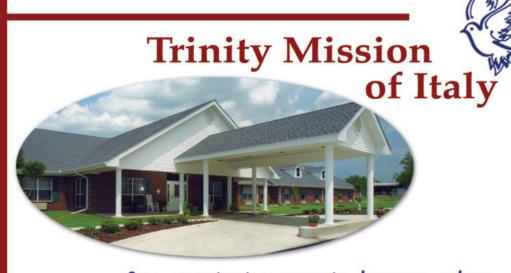
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— By Sandra Strong

When David Smith and his wife, Pat, moved to their home on Main Street in March 2003, they had a slight difference of opinion. While Pat wanted their belongings moved in first, David had a strong desire to go looking for compost. "Compost was his priority," Pat recalled with a smile. "We had no pot to eat out of and no bed to sleep in, but we had compost."

"It was really good compost," David added with a grin. Some may wonder why compost was so important. It had everything to do with David's vision, which actually began years

earlier when his mother, Jan Smith, "shared"

her irises with him. Pat's mother's neighbor, Irene Price, shared 99 rhizomes, or bulbs, with the couple. "Then F.E. Hoefer Jr.

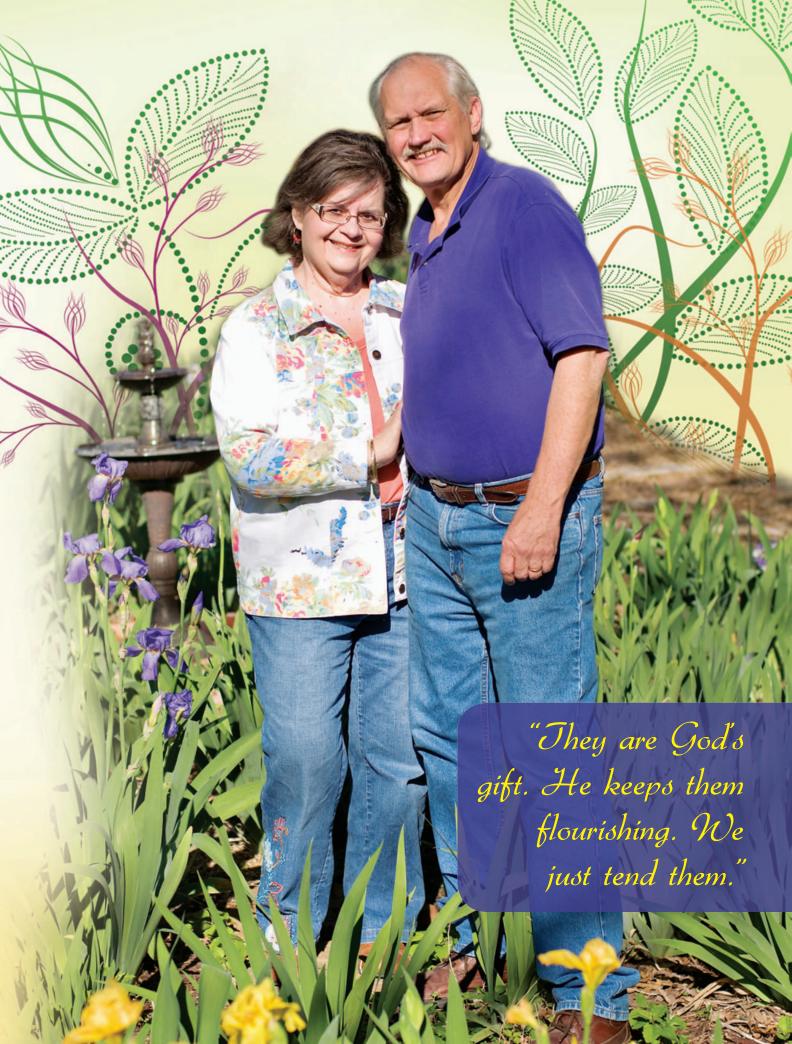
of Ennis continued to share with us," David said. "He gave us dozens of different irises, along with a lot of discussion and counsel. He taught me irises need to be thinned out and shared every four years. Sharing is what it's all about. If you aren't into sharing, you really don't need to grow irises."

As the couple settled into their new home, the iris garden came to life. The talk of the neighborhood soon became the talk of the town. "Since 2005, we have opened our yard up to family and friends during the month of April so we can share the wonder of the iris," Pat explained. "The plants know what to do. They show off for us every spring." Their yard has been visited by a bus group from the Dallas Iris Society and the Four Seasons Garden Club of Waco.

Several key individuals in the community started to take notice of the beauty and notoriety the irises were having well beyond the community. The idea to designate the iris as the city flower was discussed at length in 2006 by David, Susie Braden, the Master Gardeners, John Smith from the city's parks department and Debra Wakeland from the Chamber of Commerce. Thirty of David and Pat's friends petitioned the city with the

> request, showing up at the council meeting with a huge bouquet of freshly cut irises. In May of 2008, David and Pat were honored with a proclamation from the Waxahachie City Council. "They declared the iris the official flower of the city," David beamed.

David and Pat are not selfish when it comes to the flowers they love. They find great pleasure in passing the beauty on whenever and wherever they can. David provides vases of cut irises at each city council meeting held in April, when the flowers are at their most beautiful. He also provided iris vases for the Lenten luncheons held at the First United Methodist Church. Pat assembled a "contribution box" in the garden throughout the month of April. At the end of the month, she donates the money contributed to the Dinah Weable







Breast Cancer luncheon, which in turn provides free mammograms at Hope Clinic. In the two years the box has been available, Pat has donated \$800 to the cause.

The Smith's two granddaughters, Isabella and Titiana, along with their Girl Scout Troop 877, planted irises at Hope Clinic. David and Larry Felty planted irises in front of the two historic buildings located at Singleton Plaza. "Larry wanted the old style, known as flag irises," David shared. "They are the slim ones that are mostly found in cemeteries. The ones we planted have continued to bloom well."

Thanks to their giving spirits, irises give inviting color to Daniel's Den, as well as the historic Women's Building. The Smith's iris garden has also been the setting for some wonderful photographs for family, close friends and even people the Smiths had never met before. "My Global High seniors gather to take their prom pictures in the garden," Pat said. "We've even hosted two brides and a family reunion."

Looking back, the colors of irises today have come a long way from the simple whites, purples and yellows of earlier days. This is due to hybridization, a lengthy process that keeps the different variations of irises evolving. Today, 80,000 registered names exist of the





hybridized bearded iris alone, with not a single "true red" one in the bunch because of the flower's lack of lycopene. "The hybridizer blends two flowers, a father and a mother, together to see if it's the color, size and variation they want," David explained as best he could in layman's terms. "Once they get the results they're looking for, they start the process over again, but this time they do several at one time to see if they remain the same."

Once the hybridization of the new flower is complete, they are mass produced for sale. "The person who hybridized the flower gets to name it,"

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David said. "It's hard, tedious work, but the outcome is worth it when you look at the different variations available to iris lovers." New rhizomes can cost as much as \$75 each, but David and Pat wait until the "newness wears off." "We'll pay \$5 for each rhizome," Pat laughed, "but not much more."

David and Pat took a trip to Florence, Italy, to attend the International Competition of Hybridizers. While there, they learned so much more about the iris. They saw first hand the six acres of irises at the Florence Iris Garden where olive trees grow amongst the flowers. They not only judge size, look, bloom and color, but they also judge the flower's fragrance. "The United States has won many times," David shared, "but so have the Australians and Japanese."

"The fleur-de-lis is the symbol of Florence. It's seen everywhere," Pat stated. "Fleur-de-lis stands for flower lily. An iris is a lily, and the lily is also a symbol of the Virgin Mary."

The iris comes in all shapes, sizes and colors thanks to those who enjoy the tedious work of hybridization. David and Pat have well over 100 species, or colors, of bearded irises in their backyard alone.

The flowers can and need to be looked at in more than one way. Sometimes the beauty is seen in the profile; while other times the real beauty is found from looking downward. "The dwarf ones are meant to be seen from the top," Pat explained. "Other times, especially with the taller flowers, you want to see the detail when looking straight at the profile of the flower."

David's mom shared her irises, making it easy for him and Pat to share them with the community they love. "They are God's gift," David confessed. "He keeps them flourishing. We just tend them." NOW

## Tammy doesn't wait around in waiting rooms.

Keeping up with Tammy can be difficult. An avid runner and communications officer, she doesn't have time to be sick. So when Tammy felt the symptoms of a sinus infection coming on, she started taking over-the-counter medications. Days later with sinus pressure mounting, she ran into the Methodist Charlton QuickCare Clinic, where walk-ins are welcome and no appointment is required. Conveniently open evenings and weekends, the clinic staff and provider had her in and out quickly, and with the prescribed medication she was feeling better the next day. Even for a busy woman like Tammy, having to stop to see the doctor didn't slow her down.

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success in their classrooms, homes and in their relationships with others.

Born and reared in the Waxahachie area, Rick was a 1987 graduate of Waxahachie High School (WHS). The gift of leadership was evident early as he served as senior class vice president and president of the Spanish Youth Congress. Thanks to his natural ability to influence and lead, he attended the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor on a National Leadership Merit Scholarship. While there, he answered his personal calling into the ministry. After graduating in 1991 with a Bachelor of Arts in recreation, he set about finding ways to reach out to others by combining his passion for sports with his passion for sharing his faith.

Merging athletics and ministry had been an easy decision for Rick. While growing up, he'd watched his father, George Solis, a prominent Waxahachie educator. Mr. Solis was the first Mexican-American to teach in Ellis County. He was also a coach and Baptist minister, and in 2001 the new WHS gym was named in his honor.

In 1992, while serving as a WHS basketball team chaplain, Rick met Brian, one of his father's students at WHS. "Reared by his grandmother, he was a motivated athlete," Rick admitted. Their conversations, shared meals and fun pickup games were all just small ways Rick used to reach out and touch young lives. Rick and his father wanted Brian to realize he needed more than athletics to be successful in life. The time that the Solis family invested in Brian left a huge impression. Eventually, the world would









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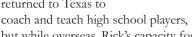


see just how profound that impression had been.

Rick, the consummate athlete, has played and coached soccer, tennis, football and basketball at varying levels throughout his athletic career. "I was a NAIA (National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics) Division I player

in both soccer and tennis. And in 1997, I helped coach Second Baptist School, a Houston-area Christian college preparatory school, to a Class 5A TAPPS State basketball championship!" he proudly stated.

Playing basketball for one season with the International Sports Federation League (ISFL) overseas, he traveled to places like Namibia, Madagascar and South Africa. He returned to Texas to





mentoring and motivating had not gone unnoticed. In 1999, he was asked to return to the ISFL, but not as a player. They wanted him to coach.

In 2002, Rick returned to North Texas and continued his ministry outreach. But instead of traditional athletic programs, he joined the rodeo ministry circuit. And although it seemed he'd digressed from his typical ministry approach, it actually

turned out to be "divine" intervention. Without roping and the rodeo ministry, he never would have met his wonderful

Kassi Solis also had a passion for ministry and reaching out to help others. After graduating from Texas Wesleyan University and Southern Methodist



University with undergraduate and graduate degrees in music, the natural

progression for her would have been to continue singing and performing in theater with dreams of performing on Broadway. "I decided to follow my calling into the ministry, moved to Amarillo and [worked] under the leadership of a worship leader," she shared.

While there, she met friends who were also in rodeo ministry. She eventually moved back to Fort Worth and when the friends she'd met in Amarillo came to visit Kassi - they saw a match made in heaven! They told her she had to meet Rick Solis.

Kassi's friends knew Rick had a heart for the ministry. With a little prodding from their mutual friends. Rick called Kassi in March of 2002 to ask if she would sing at one of his rodeo ministry services. The rest is history. "We met in March," Kassi said, "he proposed in May, and we were married in June!"

For the last nine years, Rick and Kassi have lead very full and rewarding lives in







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the ministry. They also have two beautiful daughters, 8-year-old Michaela, and 6-year-old Gabriela. Rick is founder and president of Waxahachie's God's Church, Inc. And last year they started a youth sports league, Super Champions.

Remember the young Brian that Rick reached out to? That was Brian Waters, 1995 graduate of WHS. A full athletic scholarship took him to the University of North Texas where he played football,



graduating with a degree in community service. His collegiate performance was impressive enough to catch the eye of the NFL, and in 2000 he signed as a free agent with the Kansas City Chiefs. Brian is currently a six-time Pro Bowler and the 2010 recipient of the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year award. And he was the reason Rick and Kassi were so excited about the 2012 NFL season. Brian, No. 54 offensive lineman for the New England Patriots, had made it to the Super Bowl!

The small seeds of compassion and kindness sown by Rick into the life of Brian grew, flourished and helped to redirect his young life toward unimaginable success. Brian is now sowing seeds of his own with his nonprofit organization, the Brian Waters 54 Foundation. Its mission is to reach out, encourage and inspire young people, the same way he was encouraged as a youth. That's "forward progress" everyone can be proud of.

The game of life isn't always easy with its many twists and turns, distractions and pitfalls that very often steer young lives in the wrong direction. But it's heartwarming to know there are people in Waxahachie, like Rick and Kassi Solis, who are willing to dedicate their lives to minister and help others. When the young lives in a community grow and flourish, the whole community wins.



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— By Randy Bigham

## At Home With Jeff and Laura Smith

A young family who has connected over their love of baseball has hit a home run with the house of their dreams. Jeff and Laura Smith's hands-on involvement in the building of their home near Waxahachie has resulted in domestic bliss for the couple and their 16 year old son, Nolan, named for the celebrated pitcher, Nolan Ryan. The legend's talent on the field has inspired his namesake to become the best player he can be, and through



years ago in the sprawling community of Ovilla. Jeff, a banker in North Dallas, and Laura, a local school teacher, couldn't ask for a better location for the house they always envisioned for themselves. It's not without its complications, however. "Being from Ovilla can be a funny thing," Laura confessed. "We're a hodge-podge really. We have a Waxahachie address, are in the Midlothian school district, have a Red Oak phone number, but we live in Ovilla!"



There's nothing confusing about the house itself. At 2,600 square feet, the three-bedroom, three-bath abode rests on seven-tenths of an acre, atop a picturesque hill in a prime, gated addition first scouted out by the Smiths in 2007. The locale appealed equally to Jeff, who grew up on his family's 300-acre farm in Rockett, and to Laura, an admitted city girl from DeSoto. "We knew what we wanted in a house, because we built our last home," Laura said. "And since we, luckily, have family members in

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them and were able to lay out the place as we dreamed it." The Smiths opted for Oklahoma flagstone for the facade and rattlesnake stone (similar to Austin stone) for interior features like the living room fireplace. "When you do all the building yourself," Laura pointed out, "you wear many hats. But it all came together for us, and we love it."

With her eye for design and comfy, yet cultivated taste, Laura supervised interior colors and styling, while Jeff carried out all the framing and electrical work. Neither regrets their decision to

build the house to their specifications, and they recommend that prospective home owners consider the same route. "Build what you like," Laura suggested. "Don't go with fads or with other

people's ideas. You're going to live in the house, so let your personality show."

Although Laura is partial to French country style, she amended her aesthetic to include the more rustic taste of her husband and son, both avid hunters. Throughout the house neutral tones like cream and tan predominate, providing a sense of warmth and continuity, as well

> as a clever balance between elements of masculine and feminine, traditional and sophisticated. In the living area a comfortably modern sectional blends effortlessly with a faux-antique console table on which perch twin wood-based lamps with linen shades. While dark wood and leather accents suggest the tailored elegance of an English manor, there are pops of the unexpected in an

Asian tapestry wall hanging and the framed scene of a Tuscan countryside that graces the mantel.

Laura's guiding hand is detected here,















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and she doesn't deny it. "The interior is pretty much my idea," she said. "But Jeff likes what I've done, and he's helped with putting it together. The only things he wouldn't agree to are pink or anything



flowery." The only thing she vetoed was displaying the hunting trophies Jeff and Nolan have collected around the house, but she's agreed to let the boys display them in the office. Half a dozen deer heads peer down in perpetuity. The men are proud of their mounted trophies, especially Nolan, who boasts that he shot the bigger ones.

In contrast to the machismo of the study, the master bedroom is an oasis of calm. White and tranquil blue curtains match the blue and sage striped coverlet



on a bed that's truly one of a kind. "I wanted a platform bed," Laura said. "So Jeff built it, and it's awesome." The clean lines of the piece allude to modern art, although Jeff insists that was not his

inspiration. The bedroom opens into a large, bright bathroom with what Laura calls a "tropical feel."

The open floor plan the Smiths chose combines the living and dining rooms

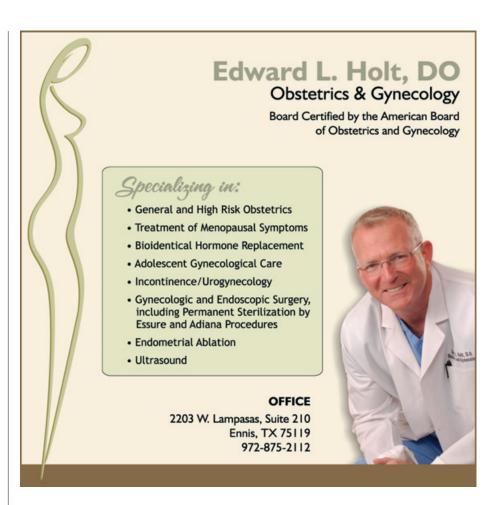
with the kitchen in a large space reminiscent of a luxury lodge. The same stone in the fireplace is used for the bar, the countertops are granite, and the appliances adhere to the black and silver industrial look. The most unusual feature of the house is the family's entertainment room, in essence a home theater, complete with a state-of-the-art motion



picture projector, stage curtains and a screen measuring nine-feet wide. Over the French doors leading into the movie room hangs a placard that reads: "Smith Family Theatre - Free Admission."

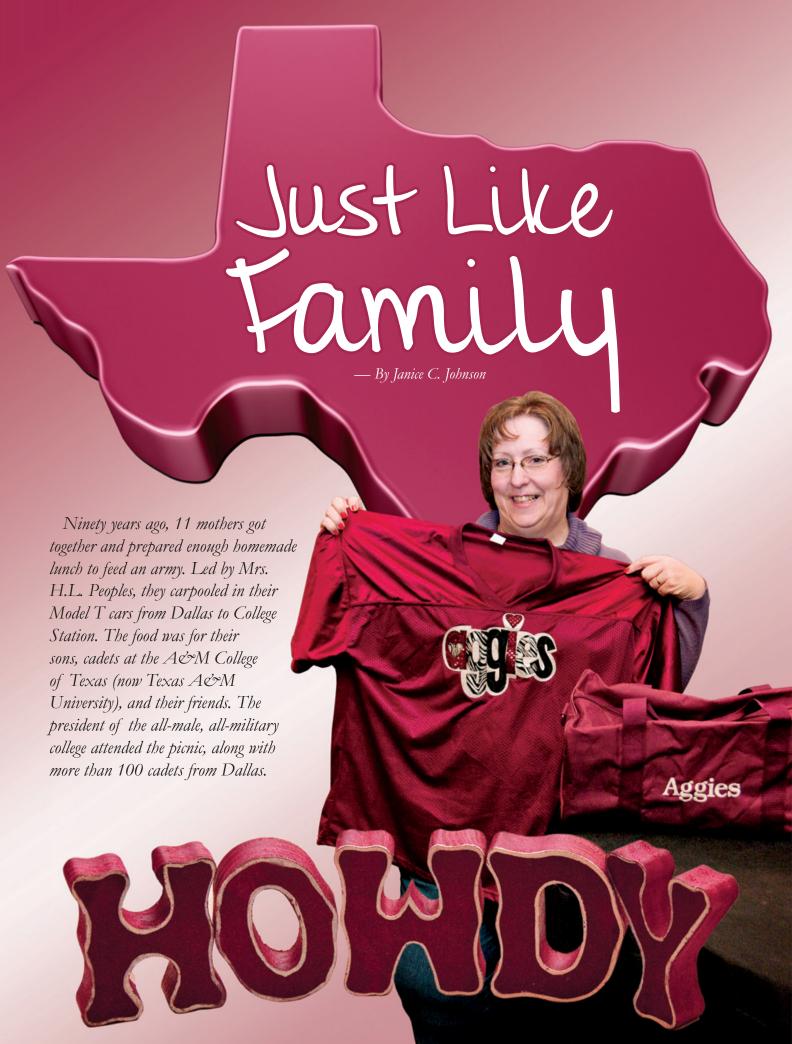
Through a small corridor opening off the kitchen are accessed two bedrooms, each with their own baths. One is Nolan's domain, the other a guest room converted into a home gym. Nolan's room is a baseball haven, filled with awards for his prowess in the sport he loves and a much-prized, personalized bat from the Louisville Slugger factory.

The Smiths' own star player's dedication to the select baseball circuit continues as does their support of his ambitions. "It's an interest that has bonded us, and we love the adventure of it as much as the competition," Laura explained. "We are so proud of Nolan and believe in him." They also believe in the American dream, and so long as that hinges on America's game for their son, they're all in. Baseball may not define the Smiths as a family, but the fun and togetherness it's brought into their lives does. NOW









These women were the founding members of the Dallas A&M Mothers' Club. They organized the club to offer motherly support and a touch of culture to the Aggie cadets. That small group has since grown into a nonprofit federation of 119 clubs. Most are in Texas, but a few clubs also exist in New Mexico, Oklahoma, Louisiana and Colorado.

A group of Waxahachie mothers chartered the Ellis County Aggie Moms Club in 1988. Darlene Odom, now in her second year as club president, first heard of the A&M Mothers' Clubs when her son-in-law was an A&M student. Darlene joined the Ellis County club as soon as her daughter, Jessie, became an Aggie. "Neither my husband nor I went to A&M. I wanted to be part of those traditions that our daughter was so excited about," she said.

Both the university and the federation have grown and changed over the decades. But the Aggie Moms' mission remains the same. They seek to foster their children's education and welfare and extend that support to the whole student body.

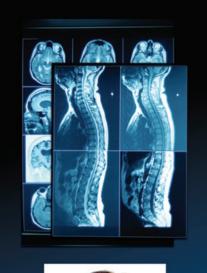
Much of the club's contribution is financial, in the form of scholarships. The Ellis County Aggie Moms offer several textbook scholarships each semester, awarded by random drawing. Any Aggie student whose family lives in the county is eligible. Parents may enter the drawing by getting in touch with a club officer or at a club meeting at Waxahachie's First United Methodist Church the third Monday of each month.

Another way the Aggie Moms help is by contributing to recognized student organizations. Each year, as funds are











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available, members vote to donate to various groups, such as service organizations, performing arts clubs or Corps of Cadets units.

The Ellis County club channels most of its fundraising effort into one annual event — the "Aggie Moms' Boutique" — held on campus during Parents' Weekend in April. The Boutique can be best described as a giant Aggie-themed craft fair. Clubs from all over the state reserve booths for the weekend.

"Our club focuses mostly on clothing items," Darlene said. Each spring, the Boutique committee works with an area vendor to choose the latest, most popular collegiate fashions. In one sales-boosting technique, daughters buy a garment and model it around, then direct interested customers to the Ellis County booth.

In February, the club launched a new fundraiser. The Singing Cadets presented a concert at Waxahachie's First Baptist Church, with profits going toward scholarships. "We had 65 boys come up from campus hosted by our members in their homes," Darlene recalled.

Members' children receive other benefits from Aggie Moms, such as an end-of-semester greeting card. Also, the club's Exam Pack committee prepares "goodies" to see the students through each final exam week. Darlene pointed out that not everyone receives one of the packages. "Exam packs don't come out of club funds; parents order and pay for them in advance." Anyone can order exam packs, but club members get a discount. Once all the orders and funds are in, the committee buys cases of snacks and a few just-for-fun items. They pack everything in some type of useful container and deliver the goods to



campus. "We've used duffel bags, storage cubes, even wastebaskets," Darlene smiled. "The challenge is finding a container both guys and girls will like."

Membership is not all work, of course. The calendar is sprinkled with social events too, such as the all-family Annual Chili Cook-off. This is held each January, before students return to campus for spring semester. The fathers traditionally cook the chili, while neutral judges choose winners in three or four categories.

Moms in the club reap as many rewards as their children do. For example, freshman mothers have a ready-made group of mentors to advise them. The experienced mothers pass along the rich traditions that Aggies hold dear. They also share such practical things as how to find hotel rooms for campus events.



When Darlene joined, she met many new friends, including several who were Aggie-parent novices, as she was. "It became a network — actually like a new extended family," she said.

Of course, anything that helps a student's parents can only help the student, too. For a few meetings each year, the club invites university













representatives, usually staff members, to come as guest speakers. Members learn what is happening on campus and about the services that are available to students. Best of all, they get to meet the staffers face-to-face and ask questions. Then they can pass the word on to their children. Sometimes students are not aware of the tutoring or career guidance that could be theirs — until the day after a meeting, when Mom sends them a message about it.

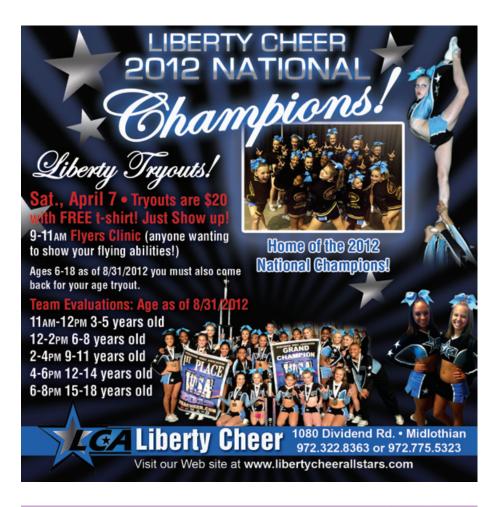
Out-of-state Aggies with no Mothers' Club in their home area can still come under the Aggie Mom wing. A few years ago the federation created an "Adopt-A-Mom" program, which connects mothers in far-flung areas with a local club. "A mother in California or Tennessee can pay membership dues and become a part of our Ellis County club," Darlene explained. "She gets all our e-mail updates, and we send her child the same cards we send all the local members' kids." The Ellis County club has volunteered to adopt a mom every year since the program began.

## "I wanted to be part of those traditions that our daughter was so excited about."

Darlene willingly stepped forward to serve as president after just her first year as a member. "That first year was a learning curve," she said. "This year we have many new freshman moms. They're excited, and they're volunteering. They want to be involved."

The A&M Mothers' Clubs form a unique organization. As far as the federation knows, Texas A&M is the only United States university with a mothers' support group of this kind.

For Darlene, the support has come full circle. Just this past winter, she found herself dealing with end-of-life care for both of her parents. In the midst of that stress and grief, everyone stepped up to help. Her fellow officers and other members volunteered to fill in. "They kept saying, 'Don't worry about anything — we'll handle it," Darlene said. "They have really been there for me. Just like family."















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Sponsibility

Responsibility

— By Adam Walker

What is the most coveted job at Dunaway
Elementary? Do the students all want to grow up
to be teachers, principals and lunch ladies? No. At
Dunaway the students can't wait until they can become
junior counselors — a special honor reserved for a
select group of fifth-graders.

What exactly is a junior counselor (JC), and why do the students all want to get in on this job, which, as it turns out, is a lot of extra work and responsibility? No one is better qualified to answer that than school counselor, Jennifer Wilson, who started the program. "Well, being junior counselors is not a popularity contest," she was quick to emphasize. "Being a JC is not based on who your family is or how much money you have or how popular you are. It's based on showing compassion and kindness to others. We look for kids who are leaders or have the potential to become leaders, but just haven't had the opportunity to develop those skills yet. Sometimes their fourth grade teachers don't even recognize them a year later because of the confidence they gain."



The JCs are a group of fifth-graders, most of whom are chosen at the end of their fourth grade year by their classroom teachers. There is an application with questions about behavior, character and leadership skills. "We usually have about 100 kids in fourth grade," Jennifer said. "Out of those we get about 60-80 applications. This year we accepted 19 students at the beginning of the year, and then added three or four more at the end of the fall."

Once accepted into the program, Jennifer begins training the students for their new responsibilities. "We start with a three-hour session after school," she explained. "Last year, it was on the day of Open House, so we had training from 3:00-6:00 p.m. and then Open House started at 6:00. We start with some teamwork games and some getting-to-know-you games. We cover expectations for academics and behavior. And then we start training them for their jobs as mentors, peer mediators, managers of the positive behavior system and guides for new student orientation."

If that sounds like a lot of responsibility for a fifth-grader, it is — but the students welcome the extra burden that comes in addition to all their regular schoolwork. The JCs give up recesses and study halls, while shortening their lunch periods to make life better for everyone at Dunaway Elementary.

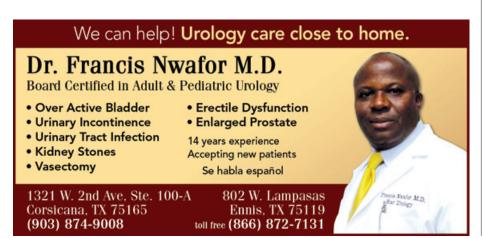














One of the most important jobs the ICs do is mentoring younger students in kindergarten through second grade. When a teacher identifies one of these younger students who is struggling in academics or behavior, one of the JCs steps in to work one-on-one with that student, to give that student the help and attention he or she may not be getting elsewhere. "I try to teach the ICs to call the younger students mentees since they are mentors," Jennifer laughed, "but they call them their little buddies." Some of these mentor relationships last after one student or the other has moved away, or the mentor has graduated to junior high. Many of the JCs maintain their relationships with their little buddies over summer break, and many times they get together to do things as one big family. "That's a part of it that I never expected," Jennifer admitted with pleasure.

Two more JC duties are managing the Positive Behavior Initiative System (PBIS) and handling orientation for new students transferring into Dunaway. The JCs manage the PBIS by handing out "big bucks" for good behavior and exchanging those for rewards for the other students, an ongoing task. More sporadic, but very important, is orienting new students to life at Dunaway. "We don't have a lot of students transferring in and out during the year," Jennifer explained. "When we do have a new student, we wait two or three days and then call them in to give them a fun handbook with pictures of important people at the school. One of the counselors will help the student fill out questions about what their new class is like and about themselves, so I know a little about them. Then a JC gives them a tour of the school. The JCs all have shirts





and silver dog tags to identify them, so we teach the new kids to look for them if they need help."

The toughest part of the JC's job is peer mediation. This part requires a lot of training before the fifth-graders are ready to take up the challenge. "I train them in counseling techniques," Jennifer said. "They work with younger students who are having conflicts."

Jennifer has an established procedure for helping students deal with their conflicts, and the JCs help the students follow the procedure. When a student is having a conflict with another student, first they talk to their teacher. But if there isn't time to deal with the problem in class or the problem continues, the student can ask for peer mediation. The student fills out a form describing the problem and giving information. Then the JC arranges a time for a meeting. "It's

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not the JC's job to solve the problem or to fix anything," Jennifer explained. "They have a script they must use to help the students work through their problem. Each kid gets to tell his or her side. There are rules like they can't interrupt each other, and they have to sit and listen. Then the JC has to restate the student's problem and put a feeling with it: 'You feel really upset that your friend \_\_\_\_\_. That's really hard for a fifth-grader. They also ask clarifying questions, and then they put the responsibility back on the students with questions like, 'What do you want to see happen?' and 'How would you fix this problem?' We don't solve the problem or even give suggestions. We let the students solve their own problems."

After the students find their solution, they make an agreement, which the JC writes up as a contract. All the students involved in the conflict sign it to make it official. "About 98 percent of our student conflicts are solved this way," Jennifer said with obvious pride in her JCs. "The remaining conflicts, which are too difficult, come to me."

This group of caring fifth-graders, who are learning vital skills that will serve them well for the rest of their lives, becomes the natural choice when Dunaway needs to be represented at community events. The school often calls on them as ambassadors to events like food drives and Random Acts of Kindness rallies.

Jennifer remembers one of her JCs who came back to visit years later telling her, "I could have gone the wrong path in junior high, but because I had been a JC, I was expected to stay on the right path."

Jennifer smiled. "The real success is seeing kids with potential succeed and change their lives." **NOW** 











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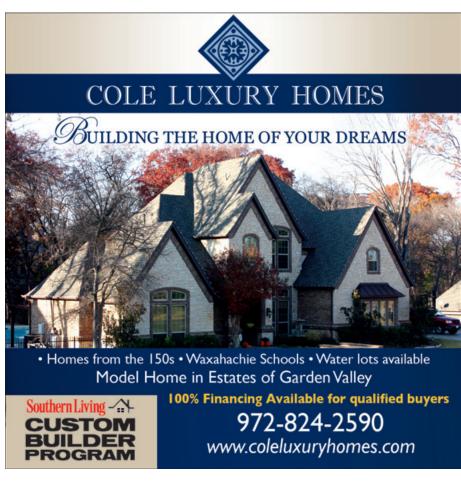






Luis Nieves, M.D. Pain Management











parents had a bird feeder hanging outside their dining room window. Lysle recalls watching the birds enjoy the feeder while she ate her own breakfast. "We always had a full breakfast and ate together as a family," she said.

Now, she and her husband, Dick, have the perfect bird-watching house. Glass living room walls overlook panoramic views toward the south and west. Just outside the house, seed feeders and a continuous-drip watering basin attract many kinds of birds. On a given day, you might see three or four pairs of cardinals sharing the feeder with the tufted titmouse, a smaller, but similarly shaped, bird. Large black vultures sometimes flap down beside the basin for a drink of water.

Bluebirds have no interest in the seed feeders, however. "They are strictly insect eaters," Lysle said. "They like areas of mowed grass because it's easier to see the insects there."

The bluebird faces a variety of predators: cats, snakes, raccoons, larger birds including owls, and even fire ants. Lysle and many of her fellow bird lovers try to protect the birds from all of them. In the wild, bluebirds make do by borrowing vacated woodpecker holes or any cavity they can find for their nests. Some people provide nesting boxes, but take no special precautions. They prefer to let nature take its course. In Lysle's opinion, if you want to provide a nesting





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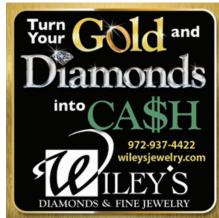
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box, it might as well give the birds their best chance for survival.

Bluebirds often raise two or sometimes three broods of babies in a season. After the first brood leaves the nest, more "custom-home" features come into play. "One side has to be hinged to open up, so you can remove the used nest. Otherwise they'll stack new nests on top of old ones until the eggs are right up by the entrance," Lysle explained.

"Habitat is so important, too," she went on. "For example, the box has to be in the open. Some people want to hang it right in the trees, but that makes it an easy mark for predators." On the other hand, a tall tree to the west of the box, if not too close, will provide welcome afternoon shade.

The opening ideally faces a direction that protects the nest from prevailing winds. "Southeast is good for our area," Lysle observed. There should also be some shrubs in front of the box, about 40 feet away. As the baby birds fledge, these will give them a safe place to land.



This sort of careful nurturing fits right in with Lysle's whole way of life. During her teaching career, she taught seventhgrade art and then elementary school children. Later, she pursued a second degree and career, this time in nursing. Over many years she has cared for both hospital and at-home patients.

Lysle's characteristic compassion and warmth led her to go beyond the call of duty into volunteer work. Before retiring, she volunteered with Hope Clinic in Waxahachie and is still actively associated with Meals on Wheels. During those years, she became active in the Bluebird Society, which seeks to educate people and support the bird population. Many people do not know that it is against the law to remove a bird nest from the wild. "Some types of birds come back to the same nest each year. They need it," Lysle explained.

Lysle and Dick extend their hospitality to the native animals that roam the land, maintaining most of their 30-plus acres as a wildlife habitat. In fact, they have created a home that welcomes everyone. Neat and attractive for the human set, it also provides food and shelter for other creatures. The Mocklers planted bird-friendly berry bushes, and all the flowering shrubs along the front of the house offer nectar to attract butterflies.

As part of her conservation effort, Lysle began recording breeding data on each of her bird houses and sending the results to Cornell University Lab of Ornithology's Nestwatch program.







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Cornell uses information from birdwatchers across the country to understand and protect bird populations.

"I'm not as active now," Lysle said, "but I still have my kit." She indicated a large tote which held gloves, a spatula for removing used nests, tools, hardware and a bag of dried grass in case she needs to replace a damaged nest. When she monitors a nesting box, she carefully avoids leaving a scent trail that leads only to the box. "That trail could attract predators. After I check a box, I walk on past it and come back another way."

Fond of all birds, Lysle likes bluebirds in particular for several reasons. They are one of the more colorful native birds, their blue wings and red breasts almost glowing. "But only sunlight brings out the color of their wings," Lysle noted. "On a very cloudy day, they just look dark." She also admires the species' tidy, round, cup-shaped nests, which the birds weave almost entirely of grass. Bluebirds are good parents, too. Both the mother and father feed their young hatchlings and carry away debris to keep the nest clean for them.

Perhaps most appealing is their call, a melodic and cheerful song. Lysle likes to play a recording of the bluebird's song. "I think their call is why people started referring to 'the bluebird of happiness."

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#### From left:

Cory, Gina, Megan and Emily Six understand gymnastics is a sport requiring mental and physical stamina. Exercise, stretching and warming up are always on the schedule.

# Learning From the Fall

Gymnastics equates to life skills learned and mastered. — By Sandra Strong

Cory Six has strong roots in Waxahachie. His wife, Gina, grew up in Midlothian, tumbling and cheering. When they saw the need, it only seemed right that they would take advantage of the opportunity to open Waxahachie Gymnastics. "We just celebrated our one-year anniversary," Gina beamed.

Gina opened the doors to Waxahachie Gymnastics with three part-time coaches and 25 children. "Now I have 13 part-time staff members and over 300 children," Gina shared. "And two of the gymnasts are my daughters, Megan and Emily."

Megan, now 13, and Emily, 9, are following in their mother's athletic footsteps. Megan took her first lesson in gymnastics at the age of 3, while Emily started much earlier — at 18 months. Currently, they are both in competitive gymnastics, setting examples for other students as they continue to make their parents proud.

Gymnastics builds a firm foundation that often extends to other sports. It's one form of exercise that is good in the fight against childhood obesity. Boys and girls, ranging in age from 3 to 18, have fun while learning balance, coordination, flexibility, strength, endurance, discipline and responsibility, with discipline being No. 1. Students learn early on how to stand in line and wait their turn. "And they learn to bring their water," Gina smiled. "Otherwise they end up being very thirsty before their class time is over."

Classes are broken up into many categories that include cheer and tumbling, as well as all-around. Age groups range from preschool, children 5 and older, all the way up to age 18. Classes are kept small so every student gets the one-on-one time they need with their instructor. Preschool ratio is six students to one instructor, while the older students work under a ratio of eight to

## **Business NOW**

one. Preschoolers begin with the basics skipping, jumping, hopping and walking. "They learn how to safely climb and safely fall. They have to learn from the bottom up. It's not all about skills. It's the fundamentals that are important," said Jennifer Malone, Waxahachie Gymnastics' head coach and USA Gymnastics certified coach. "As they progress, the skills become harder to learn and more time consuming."

"And they will fall," Gina added. "Sometimes the fall can be the most humbling experience, while also teaching them the most important lessons."

Class selections are designed for the individual or those who want to compete as a team. The team classes include instruction in competitive artistic allaround, competitive tumbling/trampoline and competitive cheer. "Student numbers vary in each category," Jennifer said, "and there are several levels of competition within each team."



"There have been times when we have to create new classes," Gina stated, "but we've never turned anyone away."

With 2012 being an Olympic year, Gina and Jennifer are gearing up to once again make a few changes. "The direction in gymnastics seems to change every four years following the Olympic Games," Jennifer explained. "It keeps everyone on the same international page." Although the building blocks generally always remain the same, changes may include a skill that has become obsolete or a safer way to complete a certain move.

The philosophy at Waxahachie Gymnastics is simple and straightforward. "We understand it's not an easy sport," Gina explained. "It takes mental and physical stamina, but we want them to know there is a place for them in the gym." NOW









# Always Greener on the Other Side

— By Nancy Fenton

Why does the grass across the street always seem to green up before mine? I realized recently upon closer inspection that I was looking at a lot of really green weeds! The St. Augustine and Bermuda that make up my front yard are still brown. They just take more heat and warmer soil than we have had yet. As soon as it starts to green up, I will put on my annual doses of molasses and corn meal. This is my organic version of quick-release, high-nitrogen fertilizer. If we don't get a good rain shortly after I apply the fertilizer, I will water the yard. This is really the only fertilizer I use all year, with the exception of mulching my grass clippings on the yard during the summer and fall.

The first few times I mow, I cut the lawn very short. The high nitrogen makes everything grow very quickly, including the weeds. They grow a great deal faster than the St. Augustine and the Bermuda in the cool early spring. The short cutting stimulates them to grow faster, and they tend to grow themselves to death. This works well in the early spring, but don't try it in the heat of the summer. That's when you want your lawn long and well protected from the heat. St Augustine does well at 2 1/2 inches and Bermuda at 1 1/2 to 2 inches in the heat.

It's hard to grow anything other than ornamental grasses in areas that are heavily shaded. Mulch is a good way to go, or you can use ground

covers or a combination of both. English ivy is a hardy choice, as is ajuga, vinca minor and liriope.

If you are just planting a new yard, take stock of where you are and what you have to work with. Is water available since St. Augustine needs more than Bermuda? Is it sunny or under the trees, and what kind of use do you expect to have? Kickball and soccer practice, running dogs or just enjoyment make a big difference in which grass you should choose. Keep in mind that Bermuda takes less water and holds up to heavy activity, whereas St. Augustine does much better in areas with partial shade, but doesn't tolerate really cold weather. Both types do much better with a good layer of mulched clippings protecting their roots.

Regular mowing and water are essential for a great looking yard. You can get away with only one fertilizing a year, if you place all the clippings back on your yard for several years. Be sure and get going on it soon before the weeds take over!

For more questions about turf grasses or ground covers, call the Ellis County Master Gardeners at (972) 825-5175.

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.















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Contact John Reagan at 214-673-7264 or Elliscountydu@earthlink.net for tickets and information. Hurry! They're going fast!



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# Around Town NOW



Bob and Nancy Way Haste pose for a photo at Texas Pain Management in Waxahachie.



Local Girl Scouts volunteer at Baylor Waxahachie.



Jack and Helen Stroope enjoy their morning coffee while they visit with the kids (Cooper, Katherine and Livi) at Chick-fil-A.



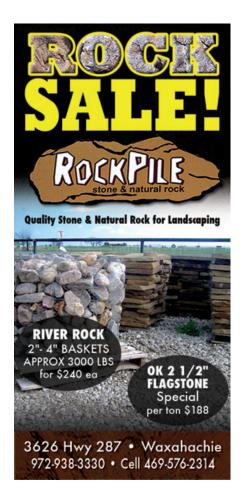
Dax Shelton takes 1st in his division in the first tournament of the year for Lone Star Martial Arts.



BNSF railroad workers replace the control signal on Hawkins Street.













# Give Your Portfolio a "Spring Cleaning"

#### — Presented by Tanisha Wilson

Springtime is almost here. If you're like many people, the arrival of spring means it's time to spruce up your home. But why stop there? This year, consider applying some of those same spring-cleaning techniques to your investment portfolio.

Here are some ideas you may want to put to work:

- Get rid of clutter. You probably don't have to look too far around your home to find things that are broken or simply no longer useful to you. If you poke around your portfolio, you might make similar discoveries: an investment that has chronically underperformed, duplicates another investment or met your needs in the past but is less relevant to your current situation and goals. Once you identify these types of investments, you may decide to sell them and use the proceeds to take advantage of opportunities that may prove more valuable to you.
- Consolidate. Over the years, you may have accumulated multiple versions of common household items brooms, mops, hammers which pop up mysteriously in various parts of your home. You might find it more efficient, and even less expensive, if you consolidated all these things in one centralized location. As an investor, you also might find that consolidation can offer you some benefits. Do you have one Individual Retirement Account (IRA) with one financial services provider and a second IRA with another? Do you have a couple of old 401(k) accounts with former employers? And have you scattered investments here, there and everywhere? By consolidating all these accounts in one place, you can cut down on paperwork, reduce fees and, most importantly, unite your investment dollars so that it's easier for you to see what you have and then follow a single, coherent investment strategy.
- Prepare for turbulent weather. As you know, springtime can bring heavy rains, hail, strong winds and other threats to your home. As part of your overall spring cleaning, you may want to check the condition of your roof, clear branches away from your house, clean your gutters and downspouts, and take other steps to protect your property from the ravages of Mother Nature. And just as you need to safeguard your home, you'll want to protect the lifestyles of those who live in that home namely, your family. You can help accomplish this by reviewing your life and disability insurance to make sure it's still sufficient for your needs.
- Get professional help. You may find that you can't do all your spring cleaning by yourself. For example, if your carpets and rugs are heavily soiled, you may need to call in a professional cleaner. Or if your tree branches have grown out of control, you might need to bring in a tree trimmer. Similarly, when you decide to "tidy up" your portfolio, you'll need some assistance from a financial professional someone who can study your current mix of investments and recommend changes, as needed, to help ensure your holdings are suitable for your risk tolerance, time horizon and short- and long-term goals.

Spring cleaning can reinvigorate your home and your overall outlook. And by tidying up your investment portfolio, you can help gain some of that same optimism — for your future.

Prepared by Edward Jones for use by Tanisha Wilson, Financial Advisor, Waxahachie, TX.













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# Understanding Parkinson's Disease

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Muhammad Ali, boxer, and Michael J. Fox, actor, are arguably the world's most famous people with Parkinson's disease. They have become the face of the disease, with all of its physical symptoms and controversial treatments. Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative disorder. Neuro, in neurodegenerative, refers to the neurological or nervous system. In Parkinson's, certain nerve cells malfunction. When functioning properly, these nerve cells produce a chemical called dopamine that transports signals to the brain regarding movement. When the level of dopamine declines because of problems in the nerve cell, movement is affected. This disease is the most common movement disorder.

Parkinson's most familiar symptoms are: tremors or shaking, bradykinesia, rigidity of muscles and instability in balance. Tremors or shaking usually begin in one finger and may progress to the hands, arms, face, legs and foot. Sometimes, this symptom is called resting tremors because when the muscle is put to use, the tremors cease. Bradykinesia means slow movement. In Parkinson's disease, there is a decline in voluntary or spontaneous movement. Walking can resemble a short shuffle. Simple tasks such as combing one's hair can become difficult if not prohibitive. Rigidity or stiffness can occur in any muscle and cause discomfort. When there is stiffness in the muscles of the face, the facial area can appear masked or unmoving. Instability in balance can be dangerous. A person with Parkinson's can very easily tilt backward and fall.

How one lives with Parkinson's will vary greatly. Not everyone will develop the same symptoms in the same order. Not everyone will experience the degree of symptoms in the same way. There is no known cure for Parkinson's, but there are medications to help alleviate the symptoms. Parkinson's patients must work closely with their physician, because the treatment is tailored to their specific



needs. Treatment is determined by factors such as: which symptoms are present, severity of symptoms, general health condition and age. As the disease progresses, increased dosages of medication or a different medical and pharmaceutical regimen may be in order.

Physical therapy aims to improve muscle strength and muscle tone. This promotes greater flexibility, better posture, balance and increased movement. Some exercises such as yoga and tai chi are used to enhance these benefits. Patients who try to remain active appear to do better over the course of the disease than those who remain or become sedentary. Parkinson's disease comes with many challenges. Counseling and group discussions with others who are coping with the same issues can provide you with tips and strategies to meet the challenges head on.

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





#### April 6

Good Friday: WISD Staff/Student Holiday.

#### April 7-May 28

Scarborough Renaissance Festival: 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Saturdays, Sundays and Memorial Day Monday, 2511 FM 66. Gate admission: Adults/\$24, children 5-12/\$9. Open rain or shine. Call (972) 938-3248.

#### April 8

Happy Easter!

#### April 14

Brilliance: 6:00-9:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Center Drive, Midlothian. Event raises scholarship money for Ellis County students and features gourmet dinner, live entertainment, live and silent auctions. Call (972) 938-3247.

#### April 21

Waxahachie Lions Club Mini Grand Prix: 9:00 a.m., Historic Downtown. Contact race director, Tim Bass at (972) 804-2237 or visit www.waxahachielionsclub.org.

CureSearch Walk for Children's Cancer: registration: 8:30 a.m.; walk: 9:30 a.m., Texas Motor Speedway, Fort Worth. Event includes prizes, music, food and fun family activities. Contact Elena at (469) 693-5156 or visit www.curesearchwalk.org/dfw/teamreagan2012.

#### April 22

Earth Day.

#### April 27-28

Southern Pacific Gone But Not Forgotten Reunion: **Friday**, 5:00 p.m.: free hobo stew furnished by Ennis folks; **Saturday**, noon: BBQ with all the trimmings, \$12/person. Paid reservations required. **RSVP by April 23**. Contact Ruby Essary at (972) 875-6278.

#### April 28

North 9th Creative Culture for Change Art and Music Festival: 11:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m., Lighthouse Coffee Bar, 1404 N. 9th Street, Midlothian. Free admission. Children's activities.

Alma Volunteer Fire Department Fundraiser: 5:00 p.m. BBQ dinner served, 7:00 p.m.: dance with performance by The Leonard Dlabaj Band, Alma Firehouse. Event includes activities for children, silent auction, raffle and door prizes.

#### May 4-6

Waxahachie Community Theatre presents *South Pacific*: **Friday**: 7:30 p.m.; **Saturday**: 2:30

and 7:30 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium in Getzendaner Park. Advance tickets available online at www.waxahachiecommunitytheatre. com. or at the Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce, The Ellis County Museum and the offices of Jerry Ellis, D.D.S. in Midlothian: \$10/seniors and students; \$12/adults. Tickets at the door: additional \$2 cost. Call (972) 646-1050 or e-mail wct.texas@gmail.com for details.

#### May 5

Ellis County Bar-B-Que Cook-off: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Getzendaner Park, Waxahachie; benefits Daniel's Den. For entry forms, rules and information, contact Maria Urias at (972) 937-4477 or Rhonnie Tompkins at (972) 935-9188.

#### June 2

Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-in: 8:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m., Mid-Way Regional Airport, off of Hwy. 287 between Waxahachie and Midlothian. Event and parking are free. Breakfast tickets: \$6 for ages 8 and up; \$3 ages 3-7; free ages 2 and under. Call Tammy at (972) 923-0080 for details.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to sskoda.nonmag@sbcglobal.net.









# In The Kitchen With Carol Bigler

— By Sandra Strong

Carol Bigler has grown to love baking, especially desserts. "My cream puff recipe won first place for 'Best Dessert' and 'Best Over All' at the taste-testing contest for our church's cookbook," she shared. "The money we made from that cookbook went to missionaries."

Her famous cream puffs have helped raise money for some worthy causes. "I've made them for dessert auctions to raise funds for youth mission trips," she explained. "They have also helped the Shackelford Elementary PTO raise money for new playground equipment." Carol has sold her cream puffs, peanut butter fudge and chocolate fudge to raise money for Relay for Life, too. "I feel my baking is a talent God has given me," she said, "to be able to give back to others."

#### Carol's Cream Puffs

#### Cream Puffs:

1 stick Parkay margarine

I cup water

1/4 tsp. salt

1 cup flour

4 large eggs

#### Filling:

I large box instant vanilla pudding

1 1/2 cups 2% milk

1 12-oz. pkg. whipped topping

1 tsp. vanilla

#### **Chocolate Glaze:**

3 Tbsp. Parkay Margarine

3 Tbsp. cocoa

3 Tbsp. water

1 1/2 cup powdered sugar

3/4 tsp. vanilla

**1.** For cream puffs: In a 3-quart saucepan, heat margarine and water over medium heat until boiling. Mix salt into flour and pour it all at once into the boiling mixture.

- **2.** Beat with wooden spoon until dough pulls away from sides and looks like buttery, creamed potatoes.
- **3.** Remove from heat; add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each one until it does not look slimy.
- **4.** Drop a scant 1/4 cup of batter for large cream puffs (10-13) or use large heaping Tbsp. for medium size (16-20) onto lightly greased air-bake cookie sheet. Bake at 450 F for 10 minutes, then lower heat to 400 F and continue baking 25 minutes. Cool on wire rack. After puffs have cooled, cut off about 1/3 of top
- **5.** For filling: whip pudding, milk, whipped topping and vanilla together with a wire whisk until mixed completely. Refrigerate until set.
- **6.** For glaze: melt margarine in medium saucepan over low heat. Add cocoa and water; mix well stirring constantly until thickened. Do not boil.
- **7.** Remove from heat. Cool slightly; add powdered sugar and vanilla.
- **8.** Fill puffs with pudding mixture; cover with puff top. Spoon glaze over filled cream puffs, or sprinkle with powdered sugar. Refrigerate or freeze.

#### **Spicy Suzanne Flowers**

1 8-oz. can refrigerator biscuits

1/2 cup sugar

1/4 tsp. nutmeg

1/2 tsp. cinnamon

4 Tbsp. margarine, melted

5 maraschino cherries, cut in half

- **I.** Cut each biscuit to make 5 petals (cut from center to outside) making sure to leave a little dough in middle.
- **2.** Mix sugar, nutmeg and cinnamon together in a bowl, set aside.
- **3.** Dip each biscuit in melted butter and then in sugar mixture. Place on ungreased cookie sheet.
- **4.** Put 1/2 cherry in middle of each biscuit. Bake at 400 F for 8-10 minutes. Serve immediately.

#### **Peanut Butter Fudge**

4 cups sugar
1 cup 2% milk
1/2 cup light corn syrup
1 stick Parkay margarine
1 cup Peter Pan creamy peanut butter
2 tsp. vanilla

- **I.** Mix first four ingredients in 3-quart saucepan. Heat over medium heat until 240 F on candy thermometer, take off heat and add peanut butter and vanilla.
- **2.** Stir well; pour into buttered 13x9-inch pan. Cool and cut into 1-inch squares.

#### Carol's Chocolate Cake Supreme

1 3-oz. pkg. vanilla pudding (not instant)2 cups milk1 box Devil's Food cake mix

1/3 cup vegetable or canola oil 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips 1/2 to 3/4 cup chopped walnuts

- **I.** Cook pudding and milk as directed on package.
- **2.** Put cake mix in a large bowl. Pour oil and cooked pudding over dry cake mix. Stir well with wooden spoon. Pour into 13x9-inch pan sprayed with cooking spray and dusted with flour.
- **3.** Sprinkle mixed chocolate chips and nuts on top of cake. Bake at 350 F for 20-25 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean.

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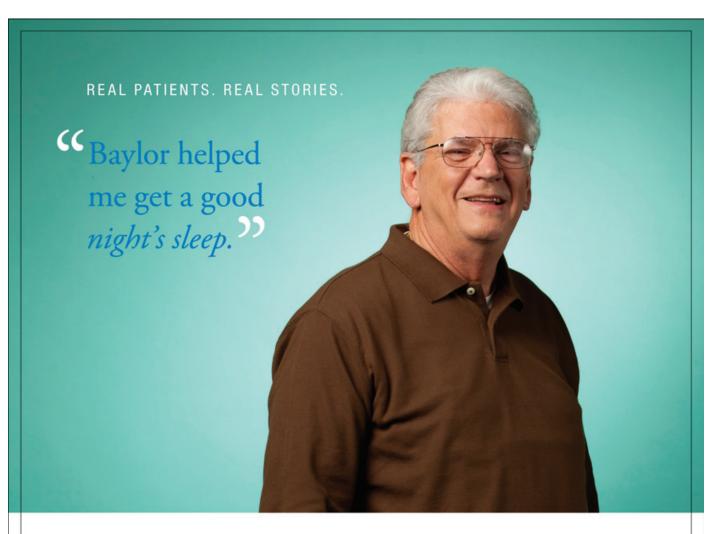
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Gene Sollberger's snoring frequently woke his wife at night. He also started to experience high blood pressure and periods of irritability. At Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie, Gene participated in a sleep study, which showed he had sleep apnea, a potentially life-threatening condition. He stopped breathing 61 times per hour. He now wears a CPAP machine that helps him breathe easier. "The doctor, nurses and staff at Baylor are the most caring people I've ever met. They were quite thorough in explaining what would happen during the study, and I felt very at ease after that." Gene now gets eight hours of sleep every night, and his doctor has been able to reduce his blood pressure medication. "I wake up refreshed. The sleep study at Baylor changed my life."

For a physician referral or for more information about sleep services, call 1.800.4BAYLOR or visit us online at BaylorHealth.com/WaxahachieSleep.

1405 West Jefferson Street, Waxahachie, TX 75165

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