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Will Douglas imparts his love of music.

Photo by Kenzie Luke.

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Editor's Note

Hello, Weatherford Friends!

The earth wakes up this time of year. After a mild winter, trees already have leaves. The grass turns green, starting the mowing season. Refreshing rains fall, replenishing lakes and cleaning the air — at least for a moment. And I come alive, too.

Don't you love spring? I do. Well, maybe not the allergies accompanying it. But I have to admit, after dreary days of wintry weather — even sporadic ones — I look forward to gentle breezes, sweet bird songs and warm days with cool nights. The earth changes, waking up and coming back to life. So does my spirit.

We celebrate a late Easter this month. For some, the holiday is about egg hunts, bunnies and baskets, and simply a fun day. Others embrace the resurrection that changed the world. Many combine the two. I enjoy watching my grandchildren race around, looking for bright colors among green grass, trees and bushes. But without the resurrection story, the celebration means less to me. In nature and spirit, celebrate life.

Happy Easter/Resurrection Day!

Lisa

Lisa Bell

WeatherfordNOW Editor

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Will Douglas isn't your ordinary hobby-guitar player. His early days on the instrument began as just that, but the Weatherford resident and college instructor is now making a living from playing the guitar, teaching others how to play and helping youth gain an appreciation for the instrument through his nonprofit. "My love for the guitar really started when I was 8 years old. I saw an Aerosmith music video, and Joe Perry was playing a guitar with a big dragon on it. It was just as cheesy as it sounds, and from then on, I wanted to play," Will recalled.

He was a self-described heavy metal shredder throughout his teen years. He played the electric guitar but converted over to the classical guitar in college. While at a young age, Will's grandfather helped lay the foundation for his classical focus because he required the grandchildren to listen to the music, not only for their own enrichment, but to teach them how to sit and be still for several hours, as they meditated on the music.

RPOSEFUL PLAYING

— By Lindsay L. Allen

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Will Douglas poses with his beloved guitar and guitar maker Aaron Ringo.

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"I always loved the rock 'n' roll music, but when I was 18 and studying business and economics at SMU, I saw what the classical guitar was capable of and almost immediately switched over," Will said. "I wasn't too interested in my degree plan at the time and ended up making the move to University of North Texas' performance program."

Since then, Will has completed his undergraduate and master's degree in guitar performance at UNT and is set to complete his doctorate in music appreciation at the end of this year. Additionally, he studied at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston in their graduate diploma program before returning to Weatherford, where he was raised, most of his childhood, to pursue his doctorate at UNT.

Will has successfully managed to fill his work and personal calendar with all things guitar. He teaches music appreciation and guitar ensemble classes at three local colleges — Weatherford College, Arlington Baptist College and Tarrant County College Northwest. Additionally, he teaches private lessons at each of the colleges, with students ranging from the traditional college student to local residents enrolled in a course for their own enrichment. He also runs the Collegiate Peaks Guitar Retreat in Buena Vista, Colorado.

One of the interesting courses he teaches at Arlington Baptist is an arrangement techniques and theory class. "In this class, I teach the students to take piano scores and reduce them to guitar scores. Most of these students are going overseas for missions work, and you can easily take a guitar overseas with you, but you can't carry a piano quite as easily," he said.

For Will, playing the guitar comes with an objective, and that is to make it easier for the next generation to know the career opportunities and requirements that exist for playing the guitar full time. "It's hard to know what being a professional guitarist means. If you are a pre-medicine student, you know the path in which you are headed. My goal is to help my students play the music they love and to help them understand the job market for this industry," he continued. "If you play the violin, you can find a job in an orchestra in almost any city. If you are a guitar player, you need to be very entrepreneurial. After I complete my doctorate, I will have all the requirements needed to make it in the guitar world, but I don't want every guitarist to have to face this much school and possible debt for their dream job. My hope is that through my role in the academic world, I can help change that so the next generation can pursue jobs with their undergraduate degrees. This, in turn, will also help the survival of the classical guitar in the long run."

One of the many ways Will promotes this mission and supports the next generation is through his nonprofit, Guitar Fort Worth. As a founding member and president since 2008, Will and the other members implement guitar classes in Title 1 schools in the Fort Worth area.

"When we look at schools in Austin and other larger towns, we see how guitar classes at an early age in the classroom really benefit the school's music program as a whole. The school sees a surge in band and choir members, as these same students want to expand their learning of music. I was not a member of the band or choir in high school, and I look back and realize how beneficial that would have been to my college studies had I learned how to read music at an early age," Will noted. "Plus, a school can buy 30 guitars for the price of one tuba, so when you look at it from a dollar standpoint, you



Devon Leatherman, Will Douglas and Oliver Martinez share a love for guitar music.



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Guitar Fort Worth has a partnership with the Modern Art Museum for guitar concert series. As high-profile guitarists come into town to play at the museum, they do so under the agreement that they will visit one of the schools where Guitar Fort Worth is sponsoring guitar classes, play for the students and offer a quick lesson.

“What happens every time is that these well-known guitarists, who have incredibly busy schedules, want to visit more than just one school. They love visiting with these students,” Will noted. The nonprofit then sponsors the students who met with the guitarists to attend the evening concert at the museum. Guitar Fort Worth also awards a handmade guitar each year to the hardest working student in its program.

Another avenue Will seeks to promote the guitar is through the annual Lone Star Guitar Festival, held at Weatherford College every summer. This year’s festival will be held June 8-11. This event has drawn participants and performers from all over, including: Holland, Italy, Vietnam, Canada, Algeria, many parts of the U.S. and more. The four-day festival is centered around 60 master classes, five workshops, a gallery of over \$250,000 worth of guitars for display, practice time and a competition.

“I’m so fortunate that I have an administration that trusted me when I asked if we could develop and host this event. The great thing about this festival is that there are no boundaries between the students, performers and teachers during the four days,” Will said. “We get to enjoy dinner and the cowboy culture of Weatherford together every day and evening of the festival. We get to not only study the guitar but show off our community’s well-preserved Texas culture.” **NOW**

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MYTH: Bulging DISC problems will just "go away" with some rest.

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MYTH: Pain is the only problem associated with Bulging DISC problems.

FACT: In severe cases, this problem can lead to the inability to control your bowels, bladder and sexual potency - leading to embarrassing situations.

MYTH: You must take pain medications to deal with Bulging DISCs.

FACT: Drugs like muscle relaxants, pain killers, narcotics, antidepressants, and anti-

seizure medications have serious potential side-effects and do not cure Bulging DISCs.

MYTH: "I must have done something wrong to damage my DISC."

FACT: Physical work or simply sitting at a desk for long periods can lead to Bulging DISCs. Accidents and trauma can also be the culprits. Pregnancy can cause damage. DISC Bulges can happen to anyone - including super-fit celebrities like Tiger Woods, Sylvester Stallone, and British Olympic medalist Ian Wynne.

MYTH: Stop exercising and get several weeks of bed rest to let the Bulging DISC recover...

FACT: Staying active can help to relieve the pain and prevent the pain getting worse. Staying inactive in bed could be the worst advice - based on a recent study in the Netherlands.

MYTH: DISC Bulges or herniations require surgery.

FACT: NO! There's been a huge breakthrough in the treatment of Bulging DISCs.

MYTH: "There's nothing anyone can really do. I'm just stuck with this for the rest of my life."

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MYTH: Getting a Bulging DISC properly diagnosed is expensive.

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Variety

AT HOME WITH MARSHA MCDONALD



— By Amber D. Browne

f Life

Marsha McDonald's artistic touch is visible throughout her quaint, cottage home in Weatherford. For decades, Marsha worked as a professional artist. Her own paintings, along with collected works of other artists, add color and life to most of the walls in her home. Frames in shades of gold mix with rustic browns and black to enhance the artwork and add to the eclectic decor. "I pick a frame to complement the colors in the artwork," she explained, "rather than 'match it' to the furnishings."

Many of the paintings are mountainous landscapes and wildlife in their natural habitats. One piece, however, stands out on her living room wall. The oil features her German Shepherd, Timber. Marsha originally painted it as an advertising piece for Mission K9 Rescue in Houston. She donates the use of her art to the organization, which supports Military and Contract Working Dogs sent overseas. MWDs are owned by the Department of Defense and assigned to a special unit. Deployed, they return with their handler and unit.

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unit. Mission K9 stands in the gap, as they assist in bringing these dogs home for adoption. "These dogs are warriors and heroes," she stated, referring to the contract working dogs. "They have saved countless human lives and do not deserve to be left behind when they are old or sick and can't work any longer."

Marsha enjoys helping animals in need. She previously had state and federal permits to rehabilitate injured wild birds on her two acres. Once rehabilitated, the birds were released back into their

natural habitats. Marsha's love for animals became apparent during her youth in West Texas. "My mom really had her work cut out for her. Anything that had four legs or feathers or fur, I had to have it and play with it," Marsha reminisced. "I wasn't scared of anything"

She carried her love of animals into her artwork, starting with paintings that included birds. She painted landscapes and moved into wildlife and domesticated animals, specifically dogs. She's self-taught but has studied books and

attended artist workshops over the years. "I stay very busy," she said.

Marsha often entertains her artist friends, including Canvas and Clay members, at her home. They sit and chat in her living room, sipping tea from her collection of cups, which are displayed in an antique wooden cabinet in the living room. "When they come over, we use the good china, and we party down," she laughed.



Marsha believes treasured items normally stored away for special occasions should be used on a regular basis. "What is it for other than to use? Everybody has their own thing, but why store it away and not enjoy it?"

"In all the years I have lived here and have used these things a lot, nothing bad has happened to them, and I certainly benefit," Marsha shared. She likes variety in life. "I think I'm a person who gets bored easily. I get tired of using the same old dishes over and over. Some of them aren't even fancy. They're just things I've collected over the years." Most of her teacups and dishes were passed down from family members or gifted to her by friends.



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Her flare for variety shows with her writing desk. Marsha's wooden dining table wasn't getting much use by her or her guests in the dining area of her living space, and she was in need of a desk. A transformation was in order. "I just use everything differently," she admitted. She shortened the table and tucked her new "desk" in a corner near the large window of the dining space. A stained glass lamp that Marsha purchased many years ago lights the area. The glass has an intricate design of pinecones and green foliage. "I like the lodge look."

Rustic lodge decor is found in nooks and crannies throughout her home. Plaid textiles cover chairs, and moose appear on coasters and wooden figurines in several rooms. "I like that look a lot," she said. "It goes along with the things I paint." Wooden cabinets bring the cabin theme to life in her cozy kitchen. She remodeled the kitchen about 25 years ago and expanded her home at that time. Marsha added a back porch, stained the concrete flooring and enclosed it to create the "dog room" off her studio. Windows fill exterior walls, brighten the room and bring in outdoor views.

Although Marsha doesn't spend much time keeping up with landscaping anymore, she once created picturesque scenes in her yard with lush greenery and sunflowers. The gardening phase of her life passed. "It made me just want to go sit outside constantly. That was part of my problem. I was spending too much time outdoors," she explained. "It was great fun for the longest time, but I'm not a spring chicken anymore, and I was starting to feel it."

Most of her time is spent in her art studio, which includes two rooms. One room features a large wooden worktable,




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where she teaches art to young students. A shelf near the ceiling includes her video collection. Other shelves hold her CD collection, which features classical music, movie soundtracks and songs from the '60s, '70s and '80s. "I've always liked music. I like to paint by it." The CD of the day depends on the mood she's in, whether the music soothes and calms or energizes her. "It's like my dishes. I switch a lot," she laughed.

The second room of her studio allows in natural light from the large front window. She houses her paints, brushes and several unfinished paintings there. A wooden carving of a black bear stands near her workspace. Wooden canoes, more moose and birdhouses sit on a shelf above the window. "I like birds, so I keep a lot of bird decor around," she said.

Windows throughout her home give the perfect view of the outdoors, where cardinals can be found perched on the fence. Although she doesn't get much deer traffic anymore, Marsha appreciates the wildlife that occasionally passes through her pasture. The land and rich horse and ranch traditions of Weatherford caught her eye 45 years ago. She moved from Houston to Granbury for about a year and decided to buy the Weatherford property and build her current homestead. "I've done an awful lot throughout my life — really neat things that I dabbled in for a while. Then something else came along, and I moved on," she recalled.

When she's not painting or hosting her friends from church or the local art industry, Marsha enjoys curling up in her quaint abode with Timber and her rescue, Pollyanna. "It's very homey. It's big enough for me," she shared. "Because I've been here a long time, I feel like it's home. It's a neat place to live." **NOW**

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— By Lisa Bell

Many artists point to a specific time when they entered their journey in the world of art. Gayle Ormon took her first art class as soon as she was old enough to have an elective in school — probably her freshman or sophomore year in high school. But, she was always involved in art. As a college student at University of Arizona, Gayle earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts, changing the focus to graphic design, since she'd have to pay bills.

Gayle married Micah six years ago, and now they have two children. Amelia, at 3 years old, loves coloring. But, recently, Gayle had to teach her to color inside of lines for preschool. "I never thought about that," Gayle said. "I want her to be free to do what she wants." Their 1-year-old son, Arron, has little exposure to art, but he will.

After the children came, Gayle quit working outside of the home. As a firefighter, Micah works 24 hours on and 48 off. That schedule wasn't





conducive to keeping her previous job. Although she painted and sketched before having the kids, she now has time to pursue art seriously. The kids attend "school" two days each week.

The couple built a studio/woodwork shop behind their house. Gayle's art studio takes up one side of the building, and Micah's woodworking fills the other side. Connected by a restroom, the couple enjoys working on projects separately, yet together. Micah makes the wood Gayle uses in some of her art. "It's the best part of my day — going back and forth showing each other what we're working on," she said.

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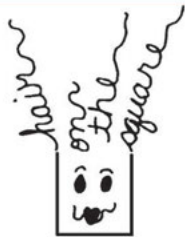
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Gayle's day begins at 5:00 a.m. She spends time with God and gets ready for her day before the kids wake up. The day of the week determines how she will spend her time. When the kids are at school, she works in her studio for five hours. When they are home, she manages to carve out time to sketch.

Typically, she spends about 10 hours a week in the studio, unless preparing for a show. She did her first vendor show at the 2016 Christmas on the Square. In March 2017, she had a booth at Art in Action. Currently, she plans to do four shows per year, but her work is available to view anytime at www.gayleormon.com.

With a background in drawing and oils, Gayle enjoyed sketches and paintings. In the process, she often chose a model, set up the shot and photographed her scene. "People do not want to sit for a portrait," she said, chuckling. She does a quick sketch of the modeled theme, and then with the picture on the computer, she can begin to paint while giving the model freedom to go on his or her way.

Usually, she has a general direction in mind when she does any painting. "I think you can't allow yourself to be too tight and controlled and have everything go just so," she said. "Sometimes, things happen that are unexpected that are just beautiful, and you kind of have to run with it." Her art becomes a mixture of planning, drawing and relaxing.

Gayle's work with metal is more recent. She dabbled with it some before she had children but, in the last year, grew more serious with the new medium. Her first interest came from watching a friend, Reece Reeves, playing with a plasma cutter at his house. When he showed her what he made, the process and finished product intrigued Gayle.

Not very many women do metalworking. But Gayle likes making something unique. Unlike the painting

process, working with metal requires a more planned approach. "You can't go willy-nilly with a plasma cutter, because you won't get what you want," she said laughingly.

First, she works with a small sketchbook and creates a pencil drawing of what she envisions. After refining her sketch, Gayle blows it up on her scanner to the size she desires and then prints a copy. Next, she traces it on a thin sheet of metal. The next step involves the actual cutting and going back with the cut piece to apply sculpting techniques, making some lines thicker and achieving the exact look she pictured. She can take freedom and ease away from the original sketch in this step.

When Gayle works with the plasma cutter, tiny flecks of metal dust fill the air, creating sparkles in the natural sunlight flooding her studio. She wears old clothes, a thick apron, boots, gloves and a mask to protect her lungs from the metal dust. Sometimes, the process involves welding pieces together. Then she also uses a welder's helmet. "Safety is important," she stated. According to Gayle, flying sparks don't hurt much, but they burn tiny holes in your clothes.

Finally, she uses an angle grinder to remove some of the surface and create amazing reflections. She can finish with a clear-coat or add dyes using a plain sponge to add color. Because Gayle likes eclectic, she adds wood, which she may or may not paint with acrylics. She also, sometimes, fuses fabric to the wood for an additional





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texture and colors or patterns that show behind the metal.

As the young mother works more with metal, she continues expanding her artistic abilities. She plans to add glass as her next medium to enhance the metalwork. Gayle pictures the glass and wood laid out with openings for glass rondels to show through. Perhaps she'll create pieces designed to hang in front of windows, capturing fractals of light, as the beams bounce off the metal and through openings. "I think it would be fun and slightly different from your traditional stained glass," she crooned.

Everything Gayle needs is located in her studio. She displays many of her pieces in the house, including a beautiful, lifelike portrait of Micah beside his bike from younger years before they married. Her studio contains work completed or in progress and one cross-stitch piece an aunt made when Gayle was a child that says simply, *Gayle's Room* — fitting for her studio. Wall words inspire and act as a reminder that God gifted her. "Everything I have comes from the Lord," she shared. "He's the one who gives me my ideas."

Going public isn't her normal comfort zone, and neither is seeking something new. Honestly, she would rather stick with what she knows. But she likes sharing her art and the uniqueness of her eclectic personality, and like many artists, she excels in other types of creativity. When Gayle isn't painting or creating artistic metalwork, she enjoys the peacefulness of her home and doing cross-stitch or embroidery. **NOW**



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DO WHAT YOU CAN, BUT KNOW YOUR LIMITS

- *Trust your instincts.* If your task is focused on changing the style of your existing backyard, you can probably find ideas online or by watching decorating shows on television. That, coupled with trips to home goods stores, flea markets and garage sales may be all you need to easily give yourself a new backyard.
- *You can do more than you know.* One popular idea these days is to add a shade area in the back with a pergola, instead of building a sunroom or extending your roof. You will want a professional to pour new concrete, but you can likely add the beams and create the roof

A wooden bench with a potted plant on a deck overlooking a swimming pool. The bench is made of light-colored wood and has a decorative, curved design. A potted plant with white flowers sits on the bench. The deck is made of dark wood. In the background, there is a swimming pool with water and a stone wall. The overall scene is a backyard patio area.

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— By Zachary R. Urquhart



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• *Seek help when needed.* While DIY projects can save money and be a fun way to spruce up your home, there are many things you simply cannot do without a professional. You have plenty of options, depending on your project, so be sure to look into both large and small companies to find the one perfect for your needs.

PICK THE RIGHT HELP

• *Interview several businesses.* Before you agree to spend a large amount of money, meet face-to-face with multiple companies. If you are adding a pool and redoing the porch, meet with some that do only one part and some that do it all. A great pool company does not necessarily build great patios, and vice versa. Make sure bids have the same language in charges, so you are comparing fairly when looking at pricing offered. And ask for proof of insurance. Otherwise, you could be liable for on-the-job accidents.

• *They will all sound good.* When talking to prospective contractors, realize that they have people whose job is to earn your business. While you should definitely rule out any company from which you get a bad feeling, do not assume the first nice guy you talk to deserves your business. Talk to people you know who have used such contractors, and ask them about their experiences.

• *Know what others say.* Before asking for references, ask for a firm number of installations or projects the company did the year before. Then, ask for

those references. If they only give you information on half of the jobs they did, that might indicate half of their recent clients were unsatisfied.¹ And check online sites like Yelp or Google reviews, but do so with doubled caution. Companies will sometimes pay people to post positive reviews, so those cannot always be trusted. On the other hand, negative reviews are written with emotional vim and vigor, so one or two bad experiences do not necessarily mean the company cannot be trusted overall.

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• *Choosing between screens and sunrooms.*

Whether you already have a patio or not, adding a covered area can be a nice addition to transition from the house to the yard. A screened porch is probably a simpler and less costly job, but weather, kids and pets may all necessitate repairing the screen every few years. A sunroom offers better protection from the elements, but it will likely increase the cost of your project. A sunroom will also increase the square footage of your house, which can be a nice selling point, but also may have tax implications.²

• *Make it legal.* Unless you are adding screen to existing framework, you will probably need a permit for your porch project, and adding a sunroom will definitely need one. Even if you are doing the work yourself, you still have to file with the city. It is a relatively simple process that starts with going to your town hall. If your plans are denied, you can either appeal or amend



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the plans to meet the code. Every city code has nuances, so be sure to swing by your municipal building beforehand. There will probably be considerations for size, building material, air conditioning and electrical. You might also have neighborhood requirements for exterior style, so be sure to take all of that into account when choosing what to build.³

• *Make a splash.* In some areas, you are only allowed to build above ground, so it is of primary importance to check with your city. Assuming you are hiring someone to install an in-ground pool, there are two main questions: How big will it be, and what will it look like? The size will be largely determined by the space you have and how much surrounding construction you want. Before you stress yourself trying to find a way to add the biggest pool you can, remember that most people just like splashing around, so bigger is not always better.⁴ And depending on your lot, building a little smaller pool might let you add diving rocks, a beach entrance or a slide. Talk through all of those options with your contractor before you settle on a design.

The Texas heat will be here soon. By getting the necessary permits, finding a contractor you trust and coming up with a plan you love, you can get the backyard you have always wanted this summer. **NOW**

1. <http://www.riverpoolsandspas.com/blog/bid/81335/The-One-Key-To-Choosing-a-Swimming-Pool-Contractor-Without-Getting-Ripped-Off>

2. https://www.trulia.com/voices/Property_QandA/Is_an_enclosed_sunroom_counted_in_total_sq_footage_-339621

3. <http://www.midlothian.tx.us/74/Building-Permits-Inspections>

4. <http://www.riverpoolsandspas.com/blog/bid/29149/How-to-Choose-the-Right-Swimming-Pool-Size-for-You-and-Your-Family>

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The reliable employees at AJR Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration help keep customers cool.

Above left: Owner James Popp with his daughter, Carly.

24-Hour Air

James Popp at AJR wants to compete with nearby heating/air conditioning businesses.

— By Lisa Bell

Long ago in Maryland, James Popp started his career in electrical work. With time, he became a service manager and earned his master license. Although he enjoyed the challenge of finding issues, he grew bored. He also learned about heating and air conditioning and then started his own company, AJR. That was 17 years ago. He eventually expanded to Virginia.

James' girlfriend, Melissa, led him to Weatherford. When her parents, also from Maryland, came to Weatherford, they all fell in love with the town. Melissa has a great love for horses, and James enjoys being outdoors, hunting and fishing. They bought what he thought was a vacation home. Then four years ago, they decided to move to Weatherford full time. He

expanded again, opening AJR Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration in his new community.

The first year, AJR received the Parker County Service of the Year Award through *The Democrat*. He continued slowly expanding as his reputation for quality work and competitive prices spread in the area.

James offers installation, repair and service on heating and air conditioning for both residential and commercial customers. Commercial customers also have the opportunity to use AJR for refrigeration. James stated, "We're truly 24/7 service and repair, with a sense of urgency."

According to him, they go to places farther out than other companies do. And AJR does their best to beat response

times, so he avoids nightmare stories of painfully slow response, especially during an emergency situation. "Treating customers right is important," James said. He strives to provide the best quality possible and inspect the completed work every time.

Between the three locations, James employs almost 20 employees. In spite of being considered a small business technically, he feels medium-sized. "We strive hard to do good work and compete with anyone around here, regardless of size," he shared. He admits they aren't always the cheapest, but the knowledge is worth it. Like any business, he has costs and wants to take good care of his employees.

He warns people to check out companies and individuals, verify prices and true capacity on equipment and look at everything when replacing a unit. Check model numbers online to make sure you really get a 16-SEER unit when paying for it. Indoor and outdoor units must match, so watch for that as well. Additionally, James reminds people to take advantage of electric co-op rebates and tax credits when purchasing a new energy-efficient system.

Although AJR adds extra charges for night and weekend calls, he hears their fees are frequently less than that of other companies. He likes knowing he's helping people, especially when they have special circumstances, such as illness or for the elderly.

James supports the East Parker County Chamber of Commerce, area Realtors and several area school districts. He advertises to support football associations, sports teams and Girl Scouts.

AJR currently has an overstock on Rheem units and can sell a 16- to 19-SEER system for the price of a 14-SEER. The business offers a two- to five-year labor warranty and most of the equipment they sell has a 10-year warranty.

As James continues growing his business, he seeks good, reliable workers to make sure AJR provides the best service possible. Out of 300-400 reviews, they have only a 1-percent negativity rating. That says a lot. **NOW**

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LeEllen Dillard frequently visits local small businesses.



Bill Stout, Boyd Coffee and David Wilson, from Sons of Confederate Camp 2255, remember and share former days of Texas.



Kaleigh Wood and Carmen Parker from The Golden Stitch brave cold weather at Stray Days and Junk in the Trunk.



Cheryl Williams and Sharon Goldberg take a short drive from Aledo for a little shopping in historic downtown.



Chelle Valone and Elizabeth Louvat with her daughter, Juniper, welcome customers to The Haps.



Lauren, Miranda and Lucas Mills with their Da brave the cold for First Monday Trade Days.



Billy Biggs transforms Makenna Quinn into a princess.



Amelia Ingram finishes well in the Cowtown Marathon.



Logan Wood sleeps soundly under a pile of soft blankets.



Reilly Wilhoit with 7-year-old Smalls takes a break at Heritage Park.



Ready for These Financial Decisions?

You may be thinking it's time to buy a home, finance a new car or purchase a life insurance policy. Here are tips to help you determine if you're ready to make these first-time financial decisions.

Are you ready to buy a house?

First thing's first: Do you have money saved for a down payment? You should aim for 20 percent or more of average housing costs in your area to avoid private mortgage insurance. If you've set that aside and have been preapproved for a mortgage loan, then you're on the right track. But before falling in love with your dream home, it's important to understand what you can — and can't — afford. In addition to a mortgage payment, your monthly expenses may include property taxes and insurance, which vary by location. These can add up to more than you might think. According to the Insurance Information Institute, home insurance premium costs average around \$800. On top of that, you'll want to factor in maintenance costs and desired upgrades.

Are you ready to buy a car?

Buying a car also requires more than being able to cover

monthly payments. If you've also saved up for additional costs, including fuel, insurance premiums, routine maintenance and repairs, you're almost ready for car ownership. Next step: Do your research. First, find a car that's financially reasonable — the monthly total of all of your household's car payments shouldn't exceed 20 percent of your household's take-home pay. Then make sure your desired car won't rapidly depreciate in value (resale value) and is well-suited to your driving needs.

Are you ready to purchase life insurance?

A life insurance policy can help support your loved ones financially when you're gone. It isn't just for married couples with children, either: If you have dependents of any kind, you may be ready to consider life insurance. Before committing to a policy, decide whether term or whole life insurance is best for you, and calculate how much coverage you may need. For more information, contact your insurance agent. **NOW**

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April 3

Screenagers – Growing up in the Digital Age: 7:00 p.m., Don Daniel Ninth Grade Cafeteria, 990 Bailey Ranch Rd., Aledo. Details at www.screenagers.com.

April 4

Parker County Extension Education annual “Spring Fling”: 10:00 a.m., Coutts United Methodist Church, 802 N. Elm St. For tickets or info call (817) 598-6168.

April 7

Parker County Women’s and Newcomer’s Club: 9:30 a.m., FUMC Family Life Center, 301 S. Main St. Parker Paws discusses pet adoptions and pet care. Lunch \$11. RSVP by **April 3** to Donna (817) 613-9078 or Beth (817) 480-3263.

April 8

Master Gardener Association Annual Plant Sale: 8:00 a.m.-noon, Texas Agrilife Extension Office, 604 N. Main St. Proceeds from the sale fund horticultural educational and community projects in Parker County.

3rd Annual Hounds for Hometown Heroes: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Heritage Park Barnyard Area. Hosted by Parker County Gold Star Families. For more information visit www.facebook.com/events/803149483174328/.

April 13

Native Plant Society of Texas, Cross Timbers Chapter: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Cherry Park Community Center, 313 W. Davis St. Program on hummingbirds and native plants they need. Visitors welcome. Details at www.npsot.org/wp/crosstimbers.

April 20

Quilters Guild Annual Comfort Quilt Sew-in: 2:00 p.m., Northside Baptist Church, 910 N. Main St. Spend the day making quilts for citizens in Parker County. Contact Pam Luke at (817) 596-5189 or visit www.quiltersguildofparkercounty.org for more information.

April 21 — 30

How the Other Half Loves: **Fridays** and **Saturdays**, 8:00 p.m.; **Sundays**, 2:00 p.m., Theatre Off The Square, 114 N. Denton St. Tots Unplugged, off season show. Call (817) 341-8687 or visit www.theatreoffthesquare.org.

April 27

National Poetry Month Western Poetry Performance: 6:00-7:30 p.m., Weatherford Public Library. Enjoy an evening of cowgirl and cowboy poetry with Teresa Bursleson and David Hansford. Details at www.weatherfordtx.gov/142/Library.

April 27, 29

Hello Dolly Production: **Thursday**, 7:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 1:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., Texas Opry Theater, 319 York Ave. Presented by Trinity Christian Academy’s Creative Arts Department. Tickets on sale at the door and at www.tcaeagles.org.

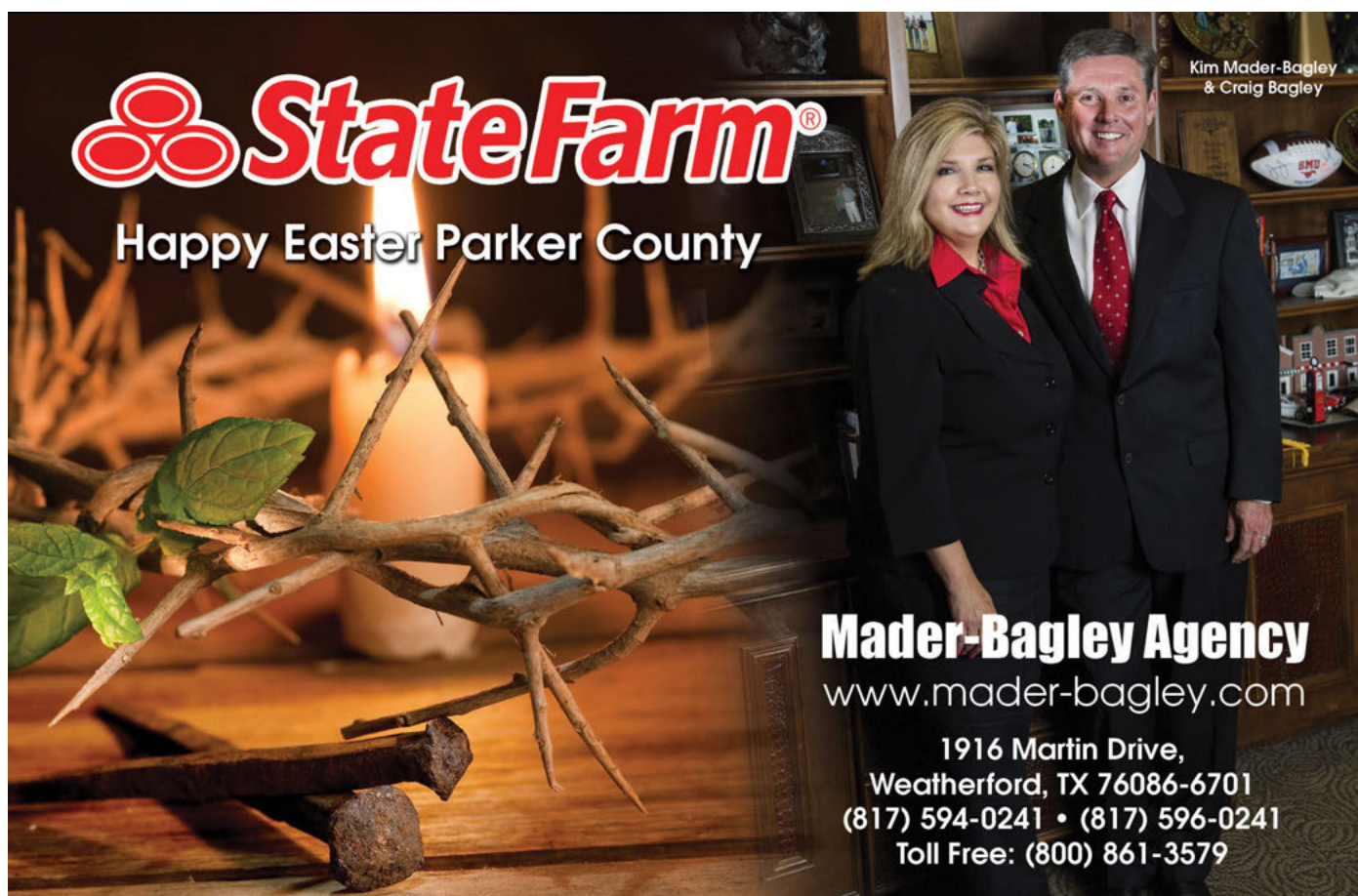
April 29

Take Meds Back Collection Event: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Ninth Grade Center Front Parking Lot, 1007 S. Main St. Safely dispose of expired, unused, or unwanted medications. Details at www.weatherfordtx.gov/1599/Take-Back-Meds-Event.

May 5

31st Annual Spring Luncheon: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Doss Heritage and Culture Center, 1400 Texas Dr. Hosted by Friends of the WFD Public Library. Cynthia Ulrich Tobias returns as the speaker. \$25, call Carole Peterson (817) 594-8033.

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



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In the Kitchen With Marci Richardson

— By Lisa Bell

Marci Richardson believes cooking brings families together. She learned from her mother, grandmothers and mother-in-law — all excellent cooks. At an early age, Marci learned to express herself in the kitchen. She prefers down-home cooking but loves baking. “When I was 12, I took four cake decorating lessons from a neighbor, and I’ve been decorating cakes ever since,” she said. “But if you ask me, pies are my favorite.”

Marci also enjoys sewing, embroidery and quilting. “Being a homemaker is the most rewarding job there is. I get the best pay ever: hugs, kisses and ‘I love yous!’” Her two sons always helped in the kitchen, and now five grandsons help or conduct taste testing. “I hope I inspired our sons and grandchildren to carry on the tradition of home cooking and sitting around a dinner table together.” **NOW**

Shanghai Beef

- 1 lb. round steak, cut into thin strips
- 2 Tbsp. oil
- 2 Tbsp. cornstarch
- 1 1/2 cups beef broth
- 1 medium red bell pepper, coarsely chopped
- 5 green onions, cut diagonally into 1-inch pieces
- 3 Tbsp. soy sauce
- 1/4 tsp. ground pepper
- 1 1/2 cups dry Minute Rice

1. Sauté beef in oil in a large skillet until browned, about 5 minutes.
2. Add cornstarch and blend well.
3. Add beef broth, pepper, onions, soy sauce and ground pepper.
4. Bring to a full boil. Stir in rice. Cover and remove from heat.
5. Let stand for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork and serve.

Corn Pudding

- 2 eggs, well beaten
- 2 14.75-oz. cans cream-style corn
- 1 Tbsp. flour
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- 1/2 cup milk
- 2 Tbsp. butter

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Mix all ingredients together in a bowl.
3. Spray a casserole dish with nonstick cooking spray and pour mixture into dish. Bake for 30 minutes.

Baked Beans

- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- Small amount of oil
- 2 15-oz. cans pork and beans
- 3 Tbsp. maple syrup

- 4 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 1 14.5-oz. can diced tomatoes

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Sauté onion and bell pepper in oil; add all remaining ingredients.
3. Pour into a baking dish and bake for 1 hour.

Pecan Divinity Cake

Sour Cream Cake Layers:

- 1 18.25-oz. pkg. white cake mix
- 2 large eggs
- 1 8-oz. container sour cream
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/3 cup oil

Divinity Frosting:

- 1 7.2-oz. pkg. Betty Crocker Homestyle Fluffy White Frosting Mix
- 1/2 cup boiling water
- 1/3 cup light corn syrup
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 16-oz. pkg. powdered sugar
- 1 1/2 cups chopped pecans, toasted
- Toasted pecan halves, to taste (optional)
- Sugared maraschino cherries, to taste (optional)

1. For cake: Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. In a large bowl, beat all ingredients at low speed for 30 seconds; beat at medium speed for two minutes.
3. Pour batter evenly into four greased and floured 8-inch round cake pans. Bake for 15 to 17 minutes.
4. Cool in pans on wire racks for 10 minutes; turn cakes out onto racks and cool completely.
5. Wrap each cake layer in plastic wrap and freeze for 2 hours.
6. For frosting: Place first 4 ingredients in a 4-qt. mixing bowl. Beat at a low speed for 1 minute.
7. Beat mixture on high for 3 to 5 minutes or until stiff peaks form.
8. Gradually add powdered sugar, beating at low speed until blended. Stir in pecans.
9. Spread between layers of cake and around sides. Refrigerate until ready to serve.
10. Garnish with toasted pecan halves and sugared maraschino cherries, if desired.

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit www.nowmagazines.com.



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