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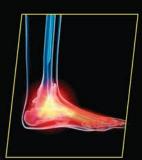




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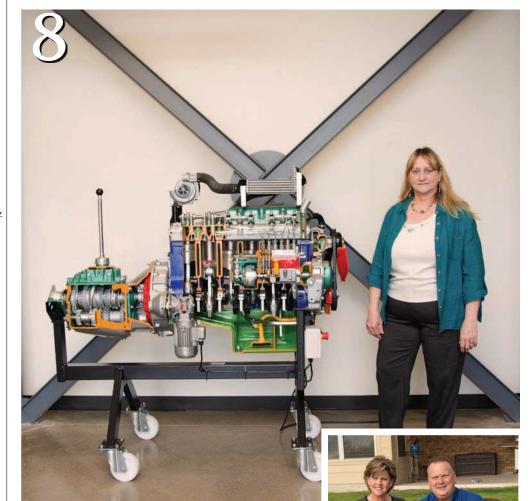
ON THE COVER



Obstacles didn't prevent Jan Bailey from achieving her educational goals.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Hola North Ellis County residents!

This month we celebrate Cinco de Mayo, the victory of the Mexican militia over the French army at the battle of Puebla in 1862. There will be celebrations with great Mexican food and music — terrific ways to celebrate any holiday!

We'll also celebrate Mother's Day, and admittedly, there is something extraordinary about mothers. Many first-time moms, who have no formal training or experience in raising children, bring home little

bundles that have no instructions. Yet after a few weeks, with no sleep, they can discern the difference between sleepy, hungry and wet cries. They worry, kiss boo boos, set expectations and limits — all while grounding us with roots to steady us and giving us wings to one day fly. It's nice that we have a special day, but we really deserve a whole month.

Happy Mother's Day!

Dianne

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l New Start

someone with good communication, organization, management, leadership skills and a solid work ethic!" Jan knew she had skills employers would value, but she also knew her years out of the paid workforce would most likely work against her.

Jan is a devout woman — strong in her Christian faith. "I knew I had to come up with a plan," she shared. "And I started by praying some of my deepest, heartfelt and most earnest prayers. "I had lots of experience working and volunteering with different church ministries, and I also had a few college credits, but I didn't have a college degree. Something inside kept telling me I needed some stability and a sense of accomplishment to build my self-confidence," Jan recalled. "And I also wanted to set an example for my children. I wanted them to see their mom was OK, and we would be OK as a family. So, I decided to lean on my faith and pursue something I'd always wanted — my college education."

At the time, the family's finances were Jan's primary concern. There wasn't a lot of money, so she looked for the most affordable classes available to her, and that was Navarro College. The cost was much less than a four-year university, and it was close to home. So, in the fall of 2006, Jan gathered up her courage, visited with an admissions counselor and enrolled in classes.

Jan believes that big step was one of the best decisions she ever made. "I looked for a major that would make the most of my transfer credits," Jan explained, "and I chose a course of study I thought would best help me land a job — business information technology."

Once enrolled in school, Jan found she had embarked on one of the most challenging phases in her life. "I knew it wasn't

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going to be easy," she shared. "I'd been out of school for a long time. And then I found myself back in the classroom, studying, writing papers and raising four children." During this time, Jan also received a scholarship from



her church to pursue her certificate in ministry.

"Even though it wasn't easy, I had so many people supporting and encouraging





me. It's important to surround yourself with people who believe in you and who will encourage you when things seem overwhelming. My support system included my parents, my church family and my instructors. And before I knew it, in 2009 I was graduating magna cum laude from Navarro, with all of my children present," Jan shared proudly. "During graduation, I had such a sense of pride and accomplishment. And then it dawned on me that I was the first person in my family to graduate from college."

Encouraged, Jan didn't stop taking classes. "The counselors at Navarro were very supportive, and they encouraged me to continue my studies. I applied to attend Texas A&M University-Commerce, and in May 2012, I received my Bachelor of Science in business administration. After finishing my bachelor's degree, I applied and was accepted into graduate school." In December 2013, Jan graduated with a master's degree in applied criminology,



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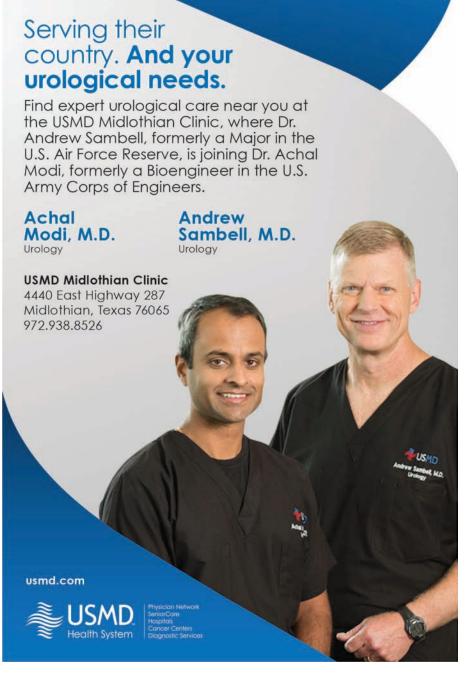




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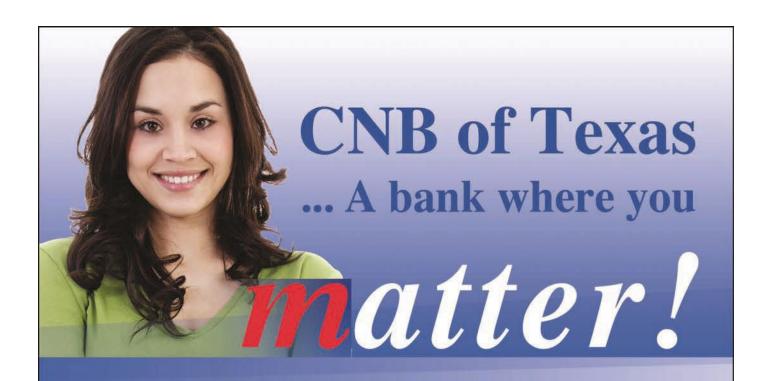




with an emphasis on policy development.

"I've always had a passion for helping and mentoring people, and I plan to continue my work in the ministry," Jan shared. "I see value in everyone and try to share my passion by encouraging and motivating others. I know life can be difficult, and it certainly hasn't been an easy journey for me. But everything I've been through has prepared and led me to where I am today."

Jan's educational pursuits have come full circle, and she now enjoys a new career as an educator. "I work as an adjunct instructor teaching Computer Applications I and Reading and Writing I at Texas State Technical College in Red Oak," Jan shared proudly. "It's such a wonderful opportunity, because a big part of my job is encouraging and supporting students the same way my instructors encouraged and supported me. It can be very intimidating returning to the classroom when you've been out of school for a while, and that's the case for many of my students. But it's definitely something that I can identify with, because it's where my story started." NOW



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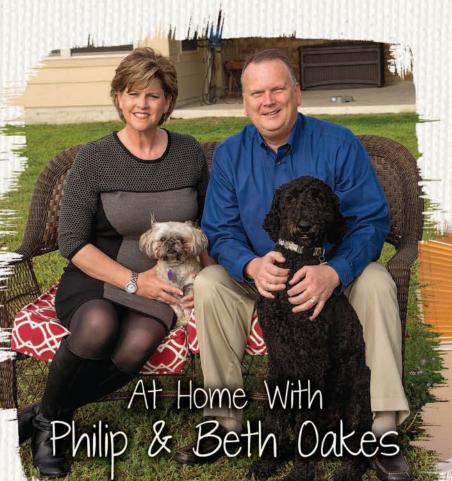


When Beth Oakes met her husband, Philip, she was working as a flight attendant for American Airlines, and Philip was a pilot. Traveling the world was a daily adventure for them, and home meant whichever time zone was next on the flight itinerary. In December 2014, Beth retired from her job as a flight attendant, although Philip continues to fly.

They have been married for 26 years, and their two children, Caleb and Hannah, are in college. The home they've made together has evolved over the years into a place where they are happy to settle down with their two dogs, Bo and Bella.

Although they have lived in Ovilla for 23 years, they moved into their current home in 2012. Their former house had 4,200-square-feet and 16 acres, but when their children left for college, Philip and Beth decided to downsize. Now, they are content on 2 acres with half the square footage. "I like having a smaller house," Beth said. "I also like having neighbors now, especially in this older neighborhood. Some people on this street have lived here a long time."

Their current house was built in the early 1970s, and required major renovations and updates. "Our old house was great, and we enjoyed it. This house has





house, birthed by their mutual love for traveling. The extra work was worth it for Philip. When he first saw the home, he knew it had great potential. "It's just a simple home, nothing special," he said. "But it was open and years ahead of its time." Although the house had outdated finishes, Philip knew he could turn it into something special.

Beth wasn't so sure. "I wanted to build a new house. My husband is a jack-ofall-trades, so he wanted to remodel," she said. Beth heard about the listing and decided to peek through the windows. "My first thought was, I don't like it. Please don't let this be our house." But Philip called the Realtor and convinced Beth to tour the inside. "He can look at something and





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get a vision for it," Beth explained. "He said the house was in really good shape, and we should consider it. He convinced me. When I closed my eyes and tried to visualize what it could be instead of what it was, I thought it might work."

Remodeling took six months. "The house had great bones, so we stripped it down," Beth said. "The only things we kept are some of the kitchen cabinets." The couple started with a blank canvas and made several big changes. They





removed all of the '70s touches, including gold fixtures and wood paneling. They built up the existing sunroom to make it sturdier and extended the front foyer to cover up an old overgrown atrium. The front of the house was originally flat, but they decided to build a scenic front porch to add interest. The differences in the before and after pictures are extraordinary. "It's like night and day — thank goodness!" Beth laughed.

They also repurposed many of the rooms to better suit their needs. Their office is where the dining room once was. The old master bedroom became their daughter's bedroom, allowing her to have a beautifully remodeled private bathroom. They transformed the garage into their master bedroom and turned the half

bathroom in the garage into a full master bathroom. After all the changes, they have turned their three-bedroom, two-anda-half bath house into a four-bedroom, three-bath home.

Philip and Beth's personal style make their home unique and fun to visit. They use their son's room as a music room when he's not home, complete with guitars hanging on the wall and a piano. Their guest room is travel-themed and includes framed prints Beth bought on a trip to the Vatican. In the living room, one wall is dedicated to photographs and trinkets from the family's beach house in Port O'Connor. "When I'm out of the country, I try to pick up things here or there that inspire me," Beth said. "Throughout my house, I have things I've











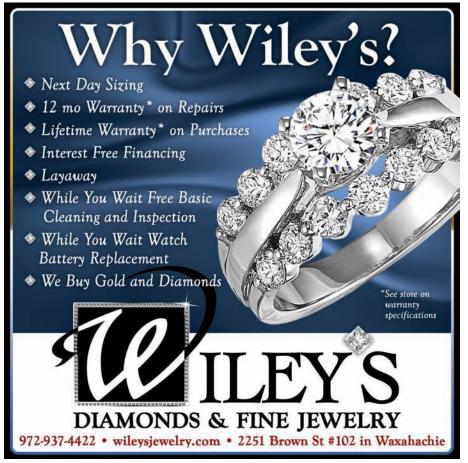
"For me, my home is about pleasure above work. This is sanctuary. This is where I come just to be me."















chosen to bring back those memories and help me connect to those things."

Of all the rooms, the master bedroom best represents the couple's ties to the flight industry. One wall features clocks set to the time in several cities around the world. A giant propeller hangs above the bed, and travel trunks serve as nightstands. On the last wall by the door, a collage of pictures shows their journey through the aviation industry, including old pictures of them in their uniforms and awards they've earned. One special picture for Beth features the crew she traveled with on September 11, 2001. That was a difficult day for everyone, especially for those in the aviation industry, and Beth will never forget the crew that flew with her on 9/11.

As a former flight attendant, Beth has toured cities all over the world. "My travel is what planted the seed for my love of





art," Beth said. After being inspired by artists sketching the Eiffel Tower, she decided to take art lessons. "I'm nowhere near 'arrived," she laughed. "I think I'll still be taking art lessons when I'm 90." She recently took a trip to Paris with her daughter. "We dreamed we would tour Monet's house and then do on-site sketching there," Beth said. "It was one of the best trips I've ever had."

Beth's travels also sparked an interest in art history. When the aviation industry experienced insecurity in the early 2000s, Beth decided to pursue teaching on the side. "The elementary art position at Ovilla Christian School was opening the following year," Beth remembered. "They were gracious enough to take me on. I have a real vision for teaching art history to elementary kids. I was only going to do it for a year or two, but it's been 13 years now." Naturally, Beth's favorite place in





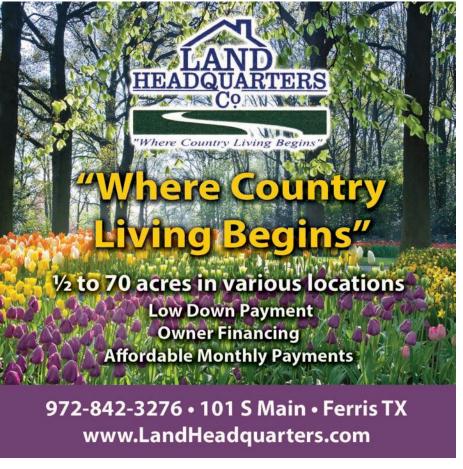
her home is her art studio, which houses her art supplies and features her own artwork on the walls. "This is the place where I like to paint, think and create," she said. "My art room is *my* space."

Philip and Beth's home is a place where they can escape the stresses of the world. "For me, my home is about pleasure above work," Beth said. "I have things in my house that bring me pleasure: playing the piano, sitting quietly reading and doing my art. This is sanctuary. This is where I come just to be me."



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Summer is just around the corner! Parents will be searching for activities to keep their children busy, other than playing the newest video game or watching their favorite television shows. Choices for summer camps are abundant in the local area. Full-day or overnight Camp Fire programs can be reserved, and many school districts sponsor sports and cheerleading are some fun in the sun for the weeklong camps for kids are offered through various are available locally. You can visit state and local parks, historic sites and zoos for hours of

related groups.

Nature Activities

provide for many fun-filled afternoons.

With all the hustle and bustle of today's world, technological distractions and busy schedules of adults and children, sometimes we forget to enjoy the outdoors. This summer, why not make time to get back to nature? Multiple state parks are within driving distance

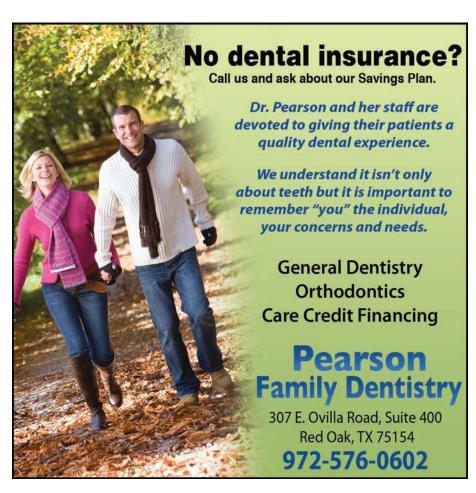
fun. Water parks, lakes and community pools

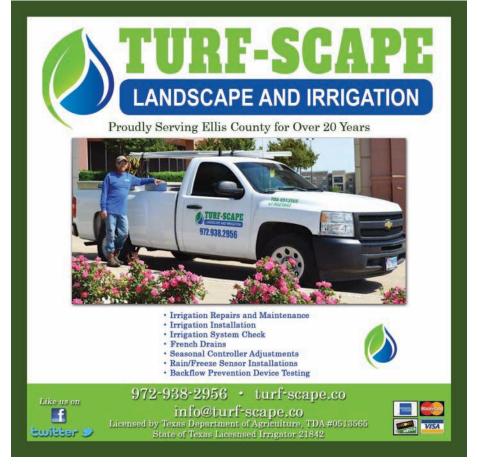


and offer a variety of activities to enjoy. From hiking trails and bird watching adventures to star gazing and overnight camping, families can soak up what Mother Nature has to offer. You can visit www.tpwd.texas.gov for state park locations and a calendar of events.

If you want to stay close to home, city parks provide a great place to picnic and enjoy the outdoors. Many include playgrounds for children to exert that extra energy. Your own backyard can provide an afternoon of fun. Why not have the children search for rocks and then paint them for family members and friends? Parents can put together a









simple scavenger hunt for the children. Draw a map that includes the number of steps to a landmark in the yard where the kids will find a hidden clue. The final clue should identify the location of a hidden treat or picnic basket of goodies for lunch.

Nature Safety Tips

If you and your children plan to spend time outdoors either at overnight camps or hiking the nature trails, please keep in mind the following safety tips. Keep an eye out for poison oak and poison ivy. Both of these plants can cause an itchy rash that will stick around for up to three weeks. Calamine lotion can help relieve the itchiness. Remind children not to eat wild berries they may come across on the trails. If you're out in the sun, don't forget to slather on the sunscreen!



Water Activities

The State of Texas is full of beautiful waterways that provide ample opportunities for some fun in the sun.



Families can enjoy canoeing or tubing down winding rivers and boating in refreshing lakes. Fishing is also a favorite pastime for many. According to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department website, residents who fish in the state's public waters are required to have a fishing license. However, there are several exceptions to this rule. No fishing license is required if the resident is under 17 years of age.

Taking a dip in a community or backyard swimming pool is always a good choice for some fun in the sun. With swirly slides, wave pools and more, water parks bring out the kid in all of us. Swimming lessons are available at the YMCA, at some city pools or even at a community member's private pool.

Boat enthusiasts are out enjoying the warmer temperatures. Local lakes offer open water to ski, wake board, tube or just relax on the boat deck. Many lake businesses offer rentals for jet skis and other personal watercrafts. Read all instructions before getting onboard watercraft and keep safety in mind.

Water Safety Tips

The week of May 16-22 is designated as National Safe Boating Week. When boating, life jackets are a must. According to the TPWD, children under 13 years old must wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device in a boat under 26-feet in length. Every occupant on a personal watercraft is required to wear a

Sunscreen is also a necessity when out on the water. The American Academy





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More Family Fun

Warmer weather entices people to get outdoors and soak up the rays. For those rainy days or if you prefer a few hours of indoor entertainment, the local area has plenty of places to share the day together. Children can learn while having fun at the Dallas World Aquarium, Dallas Zoo, Dallas Arboretum and Botanical Gardens and Perot Museum of Nature and Science. Fort Worth is home to numerous museums, the Fort Worth Zoo and the Fort Worth Botanic Gardens, Families can learn about wildlife at the Heard Natural Science Museum and Wildlife Sanctuary in McKinney, hand over a few treats to exotic animals at Fossil Rim Wildlife Center or spend the afternoon checking out prehistoric creatures at Dinosaur World in Glen Rose.

Do you want to check out the latest blockbuster? Many movie theaters now serve a variety of food and drink items on their menus. Drive-in movie theaters are an option for a night out under the stars. Most theaters offer convenient online ticket reservations. Or if live entertainment is more to your liking, you might consider attending a performance at Winspear Opera House in Dallas or the Bass Performance Hall in Fort Worth.

With nearly three months of summer ahead of us, parents and children can take advantage of many of the options available to them. Whatever you and your family choose to do this summer, keep safety in mind and don't forget to have fun!

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Jerry Pirkle is an expert in the field of repurposing worn surfaces.

— By Dianne Reaux

The word *concrete* doesn't usually convey thoughts of updating the look or creative design of a home. But Jerry Pirkle, owner of Concrete and More, is poised to transform the conventional ideas of remodeling. The term "decorative resurfacing" is a more accurate reflection of the beautiful work done by Jerry and his company. "We do some new concrete work, but our specialty is repurposing old, worn, and, in some cases, outdated surfaces," Jerry stated. "We can resurface existing countertops, patios, pool surface areas, shower stalls, your front porch — basically most residential and commercial surfaces — by covering the area with decorative overlays and stains."

Decorative resurfacing isn't a new concept. In fact, the technique has been around for years. Jerry has over 25 years of experience in the resurfacing industry. "I first learned about staining and concrete overlays while working as a manager for a nationwide commercial company that worked with textured overlays," Jerry explained. "When I started Concrete and More in 2008, it was more of a hobby," Jerry admitted. "But then it started to grow and grow to where I got too busy to work my full-time job, and eventually, I had to quit," he shared.

"In 2009, Concrete and More became a full-time operation, and it worked out really well," Jerry shared. His part-time

Business NOW

resurfacing work provided him with the financial flexibility to purchase the equipment he needed. "So when the company went full time, we didn't have any debt. All of the equipment was paid for, and we've kept the company pretty much debt-free by not extending ourselves too much."

Concrete and More is a family business. Jerry manages each job that he and his crew work, and Sandy handles everything else. "I help Jerry with local home and trade shows," Sandy explained. "I work the booths and help follow-up on leads." Her professional background is in business and accounting, and she also handles most of the company's administrative and legal responsibilities. Sandy, fondly named, "boss No. 1," by Jerry's crew members, wears a lot of different hats to ensure Concrete and More operations run smoothly.

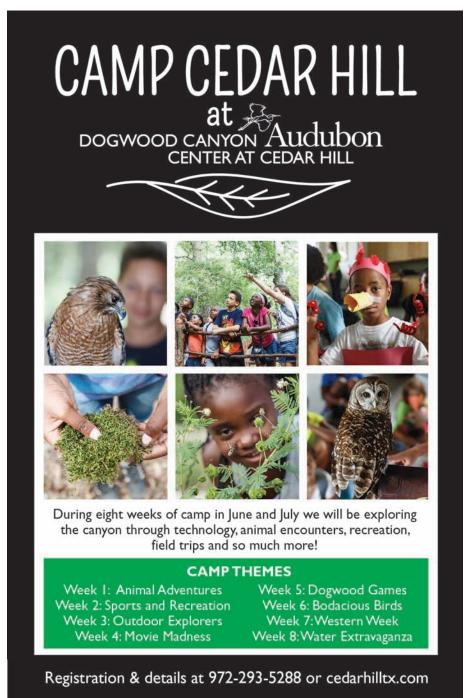
Jerry has a very hands-on approach. "I'm always a part of each job," he stated. "I'm always available when a job starts, because there are usually specific details I have discussed with the customer, and I want to make sure the crew is clear about what the customer wants." Jerry also inspects each job when it has been completed.

Concrete and More has its own website and Facebook page, which show a decorative array of creative patterns, colors, textures and designs on work that Jerry and his crew have completed. And Jerry's business philosophy is simple. "I like talking to clients to understand what they are looking for, and I want them to know we are going to provide them with a quality product installed by professionals."

When Concrete and More first started, the plan was to build the business and then move into the Dallas market. "At that time, we didn't realize there was such a large opportunity in Ellis County," Jerry admitted. "So, we changed our business model, and when you take out the extra costs like time and traveling, it makes our business much more efficient — and these are real savings we can pass on to our customers."







Around Town NOW



All aboard! These little riders are ready for their adventure on the Spectacular Train Ride Express during the Easter egg hunt festivities held at Mutz Park in Ferris.



Local area golfers ham it up for the camera after competing in the Bonanza Golf Tournament in Ferris.



Oliver gets lots of love from Kristen and Ella Simpson while out walking on a beautiful day in Glenn Heights.



Austin and Joshua Clark enjoy a sunny spring day at their grandparents home in Red Oak.



Michelle Herron and Drake Reaux have no idea his mom, Tisha Reaux, totally photobombed their cute couple pic!



The winners of the 3rd Annual Bonanza Golf Tournament, held at the Old Brickyard Golf Course in Ferris, are Greg McFadin, Rusty Williams, Evan Adams and Trenton Cooper.



The Seber family and their foster rescue pup enjoy a family outing at their local park in Ferris.



Jasmin, Vanessa, Kenly and Alizah enjoy snow cones after volunteering with the Red Oak Special Olympics.



The Perkins-Viers family have a great time at the Easter egg hunt in Ferris.



Ronny Awtry makes sure that his patriotic flags are blowing proudly in the brisk winds of the spring season.



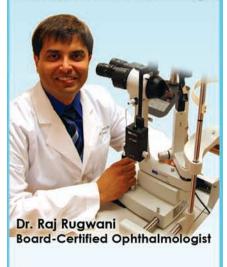
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Hope for Clearer Skin

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Some things cannot be changed, but acne doesn't have to be one of them. Getting rid of it may be a challenge, but it is possible. Acne is a skin condition that is very common in the U.S. and usually occurs during adolescence. When the sebaceous glands (oil glands) over-excrete sebum (oil), the pores can become clogged with sebum and dead skin cells. When bacteria get in and find a favorable place to multiply, you have the beginning of acne.

Acne can become quite severe and leave the face scarred. The best option is to begin to treat it early and lessen the chance of any lasting physical damage. It can appear on face, neck, shoulders, chest and back. Acne is not just pimples but can be a combination of blackheads, whiteheads, papules, pustules, painful clogged pores beneath the skin called nodules or cysts, which are pus-filled lumps larger than pimples.

Zealous efforts to get rid of acne can actually make it worse. Scrubbing can aggravate the condition by irritating the skin. If washed too frequently, the skin can dry out and trigger the glands to make even more oil, which could lead to increased acne. If you use a washcloth to clean your skin, use a clean one every day to avoid a buildup of dirt and bacteria being rubbed back onto your skin. Scrubbing pads, sugar scrubs or

cleansing products that promote exfoliation should only be used once or twice a week. Clean skin gently with mild soap or cleanser and water.

Pay attention to things that touch your face, such as hair or your cell phone. Try to keep hair as clean as possible, particularly if you have oily hair. Clean your cell phone according to the manufacturer's instructions. Keep your hands away from your face. Avoid popping, pinching or manipulating pimples. Be aware that hormones, such as changes seen in adolescents or during pregnancy, can trigger an outbreak of acne or exacerbate an existing one.

Mild cases of acne usually can be treated with over-the-counter products that contain the ingredients benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid. If the acne is severe, then it's time for a dermatologist. There are many treatments available that offer hope of clearer skin, such as stronger medications, chemical peels, laser treatment and extraction of troublesome cysts. It is important to note acne will not clear up overnight. Consistent attention to detail will quite possibly win the day.

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





Calendar

May 2

Fourth Annual Race for the King: 8:00 a.m., Yellow Jacket Stadium, 1025 E. 8th St., Ferris. Race will benefit the Kyle King Scholarship Fund for Ferris ISD graduating students. For additional information, contact Traci Rodriguez at (972) 544-2279 or tdrodrig@ferrisisd.org. Registration and contact information can also be found at www.ferrisisd.org.

Inaugural Red Oak ISD Education Foundation DASH & DINE 5K: 4:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Red Oak High School, 220 S. State Hwy 342. The annual Gerry Ann North Fun Walk and 5K is being enhanced by changing to a DASH & DINE. There will also be food trucks and entertainment. For more information, visit the events calendar at www.redoakisd.org, or call (972) 617-4320.

11th Annual Mother & Son Dance: Mardi Gras in May: 7:00-9:00 p.m., DeSoto Civic Center. \$30/couple; \$15/additional child and includes food, door prizes and professional photo. For more information, call (972) 230-9651.

5th Kids Fishing Derby: 8:30 a.m., Ashgrove's Gifford-Hill Lake, 900 Gifco Rd., Midlothian. Compete for prizes and trophies. Free registration, hot dogs and raffle giveaways. Fun for the entire family. For more information visit www.midlothian.ts.us, or call (972) 775-7777.

Cinco de Mayo Celebration: downtown Waxahachie. For more information, call (972) 937-2392, or visit www.waxahachiechamber.com.

May 8

26th Annual Texas Scramble Golf Tournament: 7:00 a.m., sign in; 8:00 a.m., shotgun start, Country View Golf Course, 240 W. Beltline Rd., Lancaster. Proceeds benefit the ROACC Scholarship Fund. Rain date is **May 11**. For more information, visit www.redoakareachamber.org, or call Shelley Martinez at (972) 617-0906.

May 16

Spring Garden Tour: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., The Kinsloe House, 618 W. Third Ave., Corsicana. Enjoy touring six beautiful gardens and a historic Corsicana home. Special events include an art demonstration and sale, musical ensembles, cooking demonstrations and seminars on beekeeping and organic gardening. For ticket information, call (903) 874-5791, or visit www.thekinsloehouse.com.

May 22 — 24

The National Polka Festival: Ennis invites everyone to come help celebrate fourty-nine years of Czech heritage festivities. Event is held annually on Memorial Day weekend, and offers an abundance of activities to be enjoyed by the entire family. For more information, visit www.nationalpolkafestival. com, or call (972) 878-2625.

May 30

Bowling for Badges: 2:30 p.m., team check in; 3:00 p.m., bowling begins, Hilltop Super Bowl, 2010 W. Business 287, Waxahachie. To register for a team, or for more information, contact Melanie Peterson (214) 864-8014, or Melanie. peterson75154@gmail.com.

City of Glenn Heights Family Festival: 9:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Heritage Park, 400 E. Bear Creek Rd., Glenn Heights. The festival will highlight local entertainment, artists, vendors, games, rides and more. For more information, visit www.glennheights.com/Family_Festival, or call (972) 223-1690.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to dianne.reaux@nowmagazines.com.

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116 CAMBRIDGE, WAXAHACHIE - \$179,900

This one has all the desirable features of a new construction but without the high price! A beautiful 3-bedroom, 2-bath home with an office, located on a corner lot in Windchase. Some of the features include tile flooring throughout the main areas, a stonewood burning fireplace, open floor plan with breakfast bar and much more. Within walking distance to Shackelford Elementary School and located in a great established neighborhood. Don't miss out on this one!

7051 MONTGOMERY, MIDLOTHIAN - \$269,000



You've found it... the large lot, the mature trees, the privacy, the serene setting and the beautiful home all on the sought-after Montgomery Road. This custom Jim Johnson home features an open living design with split bedrooms, oversized 3-car garage with 1-car attached carport, screened in back porch and so much more! You will love the kitchen, dining and living areas that all have views of the backyard, birds and koi pond! Don't miss out!

1657 PLUM CREEK, MIDLOTHIAN - \$299,900



Rare opportunity!!! This beautiful 4-bedroom, 3.5-bath home in the sought-after Plum Creek is ideal for a family that wants a great neighborhood and large room sizes! The 4 bedrooms are all oversized and feature en-suite bathrooms. The formal dining room has french doors and could be an office or playroom. The living room features built-ins and great views of the backyard and large deck.

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Cooking NOW



In the Kitchen With Valerie Hall

— By Dianne Reaux

Valerie Hall knows her way around the kitchen, and with good reason. "Growing up, I had 17 brothers and sisters," Valerie shared, "and I enjoyed helping in the kitchen with my mother when she cooked Sunday dinners." At the time, Valerie didn't realize it, but she was already a budding sous chef. "My mother's home cooking was my biggest influence, and now my goal is to become a professionally trained chef." She is currently enrolled in culinary school where she is learning from professionals in the industry.

Valerie especially enjoys cooking on special occasions. "On holidays, I try to make everyone's favorite dish or dessert," she admitted. "The excitement and smiles on people's faces are priceless!" And now, the presentation of her dishes is just as important to Valerie as the taste. "I believe that presentation really is key — I'm convinced dinner tastes best when it's served on real china!"

Chicken Tetrazzini

- 1 stick butter
- I cup celery, chopped
- I cup onion, chopped
- 8 oz. Velveeta, cut into chunks
- 1 10.5-oz. can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 8-oz. pkg. spaghetti, cooked in chicken broth and drained
- 4 chicken breasts, cooked and cut into bite-sized pieces
- **I.** Melt butter in a medium-size pot and sauté the celery and onion.
- **2.** Add cheese and stir until melted; stir in mushroom soup. Mix with spaghetti and chicken.
- **3.** Spray a 13x9-inch casserole dish Place all ingredients in dish. Bake at 350 F for 45 minutes.

Chicken Tater Tot Casserole

2 cups frozen mixed vegetables

1 10.5-oz. can cream of mushroom soup

1/2 can water

16 oz. sour cream

- 1 32-oz. bag frozen tater tots
- 3 boneless chicken breasts, cooked and cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
- **1.** Prepare frozen vegetables according to package directions.
- **2.** Add mushroom soup, water and sour cream to vegetables; heat thoroughly; set aside.
- **3.** Layer bottom of a lightly greased casserole dish with tater tots. Spread chicken evenly over the tater tots. Pour vegetable mixture over the chicken.

- **4.** Cover with foil and bake at 350 F for 60 minutes, or until bubbly.
- **5.** Remove foil, top with cheese and bake for 5-10 minutes more.

Southwestern Style Tilapia

2 tsp. garlic powder

1 1/2 tsp. chili powder

 $1 \frac{1}{2}$ tsp. fine sea salt

1/2 tsp. ground black pepper

1/4 tsp. cayenne pepper

6 tilapia fillets

2 Tbsp. olive oil (divided use)

- 1. Preheat oven to 450 F.
- **2.** In a small bowl, combine spices. Sprinkle evenly over both sides of tilapia.
- **3.** Coat a baking sheet with 1 Tbsp. of olive oil and place tilapia in a single layer on the baking sheet; drizzle the remaining oil over tilapia.
- **4.** Bake 7-9 minutes, until golden brown, or until tilapia flakes easily with a fork.

Twice-baked Potatoes

4 medium baking potatoes Olive oil, to taste

6 Tbsp. butter

1 cup warm milk

I tsp. salt

1/2 tsp. black pepper

1 I.1-oz. pkg. Concord Food's Potato Topping

I cup cheese, shredded

Sour cream, to taste (optional)

- **I.** Preheat oven to 400 F.
- **2.** Scrub potatoes under warm water. Pat dry. Brush lightly with olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pierce potatoes with a fork. Place potatoes directly on rack of oven. Place cooking sheet directly under potatoes to catch drippings.
- **3.** Bake 45 minutes, or until tender when you squeeze with an oven mitt.
- **4.** Remove potatoes from oven and halve lengthwise. Scoop out inside of potatoes, leaving 1/4-inch around the edge of each potato.
- **5.** Place scooped potato into a bowl; add butter, milk, salt and pepper and blend until mixture is smooth. Spoon mixture back into potato skins; sprinkle with potato topping and cheese.
- **6.** Place potatoes on a cooking sheet in oven; cook for 15 minutes, or until cheese is melted. Serve with sour cream.



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