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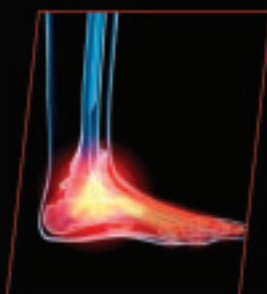
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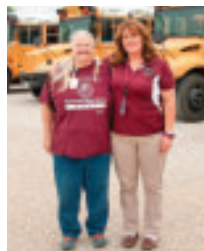
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*Photo by Amy Ramirez.*

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## Editor's Note

*Hello, North Ellis County!*

I just cannot believe that spring is here already, and the flowers are in full bloom. Nature has a great way of teaching us what we naturally should know. It is time for a fresh start.

My January resolution, to eat healthy, gave way to jelly beans this past March. So, I am making a new resolution, especially after my diet plan fizzled out, the time for going to the gym was rescheduled and that wonderful "green stuff" was no longer fun or interesting. I have decided to allow myself the option to make a new plan every few months. This has given me new hope to succeed by taking kickboxing training. The next plan may include bicycling. No matter, I will not give up my original resolution to be healthier and exercise. Whatever your plan is to be healthier, I encourage you — don't stop exercising!

From my heart and pen,

*Jo*

Jo Monroe

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“I am very proud  
of our team here  
at Red Oak ISD.”

# It Takes

*At the Red Oak ISD Senior Appreciation Luncheon, Tammy Pickett moved through the tables to greet the seniors and make sure everyone was seated and served. To observers, it was clear that Tammy is a moving part of the ROISD administration team. As the ROISD transportation supervisor, Tammy is used to serving the community. She is dedicated to daily overseeing the massive responsibility of keeping ROISD students safe, while transporting them to school and back home again.*

Generally, any school's transportation department will consist of a line-up of buses, a fleet of drivers, a few clipboards and a garage full of mechanics. Taking a closer look, however, you will find a school transportation department is made up of far more than the basics. Tammy's team at ROISD is as unique and dedicated as its leader.

Remember back to the nursery rhyme song about the wheels on the bus going 'round and 'round. Sounds simple, right? But in today's world, the responsibilities and liabilities to the moving of school buses loaded with students is far more complex. Tammy not only makes sure the wheels go 'round and 'round, but that they go on the right route, with the right students, at the right time. "It is my main concern to deliver





# a Team

— By Jo Monroe

students to school and back home safely,” Tammy stated.

Growing up in Missouri, Tammy learned to drive in the winter weather. Her experience with driving in snow and ice, prepared her for handling the abnormal and unexpected Texas weather, which sometimes changes from rain and hail to ice and snow all in the same day. She stays ready to meet the many challenges that come with the changing weather and road conditions.

Tammy’s duties include overseeing the hiring and training of bus drivers, implementing federal and state laws, administering the transportation budget and ensuring that programs are cost effective and funds are managed wisely. In addition, she compiles, maintains and files records and other state and federal

documents required in transportation. She is also responsible for the scheduling of the fleet of 47 buses, two charter buses and a loyal team of bus drivers and monitors. She is meticulous as to the demographic and logistic concerns of parents, teachers, students and the bus drivers, as well as the ROISD team of mechanics that maintains all 49 buses, 45 district white fleet, tractors and lawn mowers. “Some of our training includes role play. One bus driver will play the student, and another will play the driver. I think it’s best for the drivers to understand what the students are going through,” Tammy added.

Transporting students on an event trip takes extra preparation. Recently in one week alone, they had 75 extracurricular trips scheduled. “Traveling to a distant football game, anything can



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Tammy Pickett poses with Rodney Pickard and Keith Long.

happen. We want everyone to return safely," Tammy stated.

"Communication is key. I depend on our team lead and shop foreman, Rodney Pickard," Tammy said. Rodney has been with ROISD since 2011. "He keeps me informed. If something happens, such as a breakdown, they will call me. I have been up here at 1:00 a.m. if a driver couldn't get in the gate. It happens. I am here to help them," she added.

At the first sign of inclement weather, it is not unusual for Tammy to step into a bus, sit behind the wheel and head out, to help bring students safely home. "If a route changes, we will call each and every parent to inform them of the change," Tammy said. "And if a parent can't find their child, we will be on alert until the parent confirms that the child is safe and at home."

Tammy started driving a school bus in 2006. She eventually moved into the office and later advanced to the position of ROISD transportation supervisor. She doesn't talk much about herself, but she does like to discuss her team and the



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dedication and commitment they have to keeping the buses rolling and students safe. "I am very proud of our team here at ROISD," she emphasized.

Tammy believes it takes a very special person to drive a bus. Red Oak has seen such growth in the number of families and students. "There is one person who knows all about this, better than anyone. That is Marjorie Adams. She has been with ROISD driving a school bus since the 1986-1987 school year." Marjorie shared with Tammy, that when she started, there were only nine buses. There seemed to be a boom of families moving to Red Oak in 2003, and it has continued ever since. The current number of students riding the buses is 2,703-3,051 on any given day.

"We always try to keep the numbers on each bus to 50 students — two students to a seat. The bus capacity is 71-77, but that count is for the elementary students," Tammy stated.


"In addition, we have 89 special needs students to transport every day," Tammy shared. "The number of special needs students has grown in this district. They are very dear to my heart. I love our special needs department. They are great. We do our very best to make sure our special needs students are familiar with their bus driver and/or the monitor on their bus. It's important to have them feel safe and comfortable."

Tutorial buses require special scheduling. When a student participates in the tutorial program, they stay after school to receive the tutoring. To accommodate this schedule, the bus drivers make two trips. They deliver the first group of students home right after



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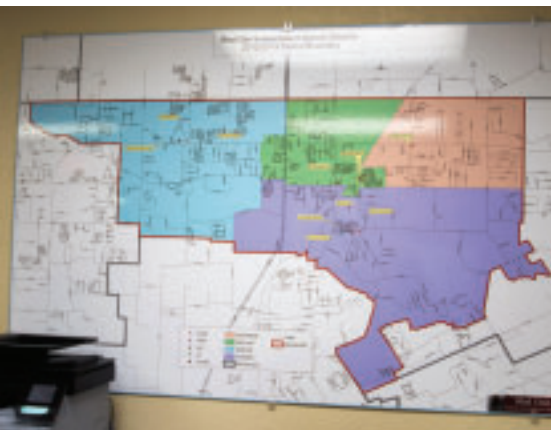


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school is dismissed, then they return to the school, pick up the tutored students and take them home.

"The community is really great here. They inform us if they see things going wrong, which is great, because we aren't out there all the time," Tammy said. "When the recent tornado came through, I couldn't believe the outpouring of help from the community and all the people who showed up with trucks and trailers. It was wonderful."

Tammy's task is to keep the students and the transportation staff safe. "I just want to say thank you. Thank you for calling in regarding concerns or issues," she said. "We want to know about them, so we can address them."

There is one thing about people who are recognized for doing well — they are humble and always give credit to the team. "I couldn't do it without our "Transportation Family," Tammy shared. "It takes a team to ensure your child's safety!" **NOW**





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# ASIAN JOURNEY

— By Jo Monroe



At Home With  
Bob and Joy Cullen

*Many a Realtor will talk about the curb appeal of a home. Bob and Joy Cullen's home trumpets curb appeal, with clusters of red berries cradled in the branches of the evergreen bushes that veil the front porch. The eyes are drawn upward to an open door and an invitation to step through the doorway. Before you have stepped into the foyer, you know you are entering into a place most wonderful. There is a warm greeting, a welcome feeling and a Sawasdee statue (young Thai girl) directing your attention farther into the home.*

To the right there is a wall carving of teak wood that launches a journey of Asian art and culture. To the left is an inviting sitting room with warm, rich tones of red and gold. The table topped with glass displays another carving so detailed one is tempted to spend hours letting their eyes







wander through the etchings. At the end of the room is a curio cabinet filled with fans, dolls and little trinkets treasured by Joy. Many are her mother's keepsakes from places where she once traveled.

The dining room awaits guests and family with a backdrop of pearl-inlaid panels. Above the panels is a miniature trail of elephants carved in ebony wood. They suggest a past journey of their own, as they seem mysteriously lost on the shelf. Adjacent to the wall where the elephants rest is a regal china hutch, which holds the blue and white dishware from Thailand designed by Bob and Joy for their personal plating. Every piece is absolutely joyful.

Bob's office is a majestic closet of books, a collection of words of wisdom and passages from people and places offering their own life experiences. After transporting his library and teak bookcases from Asia to the states, he and Joy's brother reconstructed the



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shelves that now reach from floor to ceiling. Even with the new design, there are books lined up and waiting their station on the shelves. On the wall directly behind Bob's desk is a grouping of bestowed gifts that includes a framed collection of Indonesian/Malaysian ritual knives, which are presented to young men upon their being hurled into tribal manhood. The knives' presence in the room might make even the most stalwart of men consider sitting in the



chair that awaits in the corner. Known as a burgomaster chair, its mere appearance is worthy of a king's court. One can only imagine the wisdom that comes from sitting in such a fine chair for an extended amount of time!

Leaving the office and wandering intentionally past the adjoining grand family room is a journey into Bob's culinary dream. Bob enjoys cooking for family and friends. When he enters the kitchen, there is an invitation to embrace

the fragrance and flavors of the spices he has selected for a meal. More than likely, there is curry or a Bird's Eye chili in a Crock-Pot. Most people are somewhat familiar with the unique flavor of curry. However, Bird's Eye chilies, sometimes called Thai chilies, are somewhat unique. They are small, pungent chili peppers found in rural areas of Thailand, where they are used as a substitute for green chilies. Bird's Eye chilies are not as hot as habanero chilies, but they definitely turn up the heat and flavor higher than a jalapeño.

A special event will soon be in the planning at this house. Bob and Joy's son, John, has a birthday on August 9.





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"He has made a special request for me to prepare a Thai feast for his birthday," Bob shared. This request was made well in advance to allow Bob enough time to compose the menu and the list of ingredients necessary for creating the nine-course culinary feast for his son's birthday celebration. Bob mentions the Hong Kong Market in Dallas as his destination for the essential seasoning ingredients to create his dishes.

Bob and Joy have four adult children — Jane, John, Julie and Catherine. The couple spent most of their children's lives as missionaries in Asia, living in Bangkok, Thailand; Colombo, Sri Lanka; and Penang, Malaysia. Their memories include many special events when Bob would cook. Considered to be semi-retired, Bob's full-time passion is planning and preparing meals. "It was absolutely in the plan to have a large kitchen," he affirmed.

The home includes three bedrooms downstairs. One is the master bedroom, and one is referred to as the bride's room. This room is decorated with wedding photos of Joy, her children and married grandchildren. Bob and Joy were married in Bob's home church in Abilene, Texas, on September 2, 1961. They will celebrate 55 years of marriage this year. The two made a lifelong commitment to each other that year, and in 1969, they made a second commitment by stepping out on faith and into missionary work in Asia. From that point forward, they worked together to raise their children and teach in each community where they lived. Joy has written over 20 educational books including Bible Commentaries of Old and New Testament books. She made excellent use of her degrees — the Master of Religious Education she received from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the Ph.D. in



Educational Foundations and Childhood Education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Bob also carried his advantageous credentials from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary — Master of Religious Education, Master of Theology and a Doctor of Ministry in Educational Foundations and Church Administration.



In 2003, Bob and Joy came home and brought back a cornucopia of cultural appreciation from their travels. Treasured friends shadowed them in their hearts as they returned to the states. In a less-enamored manner, their keepsakes traveled back in a shipping container.

Today, the children are grown and have found their places in the world. Jane is a missionary, and John is a pastor. Julie is a Christian counselor and therapist in private practice, and Catherine is a pastor's wife. Bob and Joy have 11 grandchildren and almost three great-grandchildren (the third was due April 24). Bob beamed and added, "Joy saw this spot and said this was where we would build our home, so, this is where we settled. It is where we all come together, the kids and the grandchildren — we all consider this home." **NOW**



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*The Browns have bonded and made many friends through socialization with other residents, rehabilitation and being active in events and activities. They exhibit a very strong spiritual background and take advantage of Bible studies, gospel singing, sharing God's word and uplifting others. They share a wife at the nursing and rehabilitation center and state "they wouldn't ask for any better."*

*At a church function, a lady told Mr. Brown that "this is where God wants you." They feel they have received excellent care, a lot of assistance and through therapy sessions each feel they are getting stronger. They take regular strolls each day, which enhances their daily therapy sessions.*

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# Always a *Model*

— By Virginia Riddle

*A familiar face in Ferris, Officer Angela Barnes is a commissioned officer, the public information officer, a certified field training officer, mental training officer and patrol and background investigator with the Ferris Police Department. “In a smaller department, everyone has to wear many hats and be well-rounded because we pretty much have to be able to do everything,” Officer Barnes explained. “I love the citizens of Ferris, the department and the culture of a small city.”*

This native of Chicago, Illinois, has traveled farther than just the miles between the two cities during her lifetime. “My mother lived a Christian life, and I grew up in the church, but also in urban Chicago, so I’m very street smart,” she said. She experienced child abuse firsthand from a family member who was never prosecuted. “A person can get mentally damaged from that experience, but I believe in prayer and God, and that’s what got me through,” she stated.

Officer Barnes met her husband, Tommy, when he was 15 and she was 13 years old. “He was my first love, but we lost touch while he was in the military,” she recalled.

She wanted to ensure a better life for her kids, so she attended Northwestern College and Barbizon Modeling and Acting School, worked for the Chicago Park District and reconnected with Tommy after his military service had ended. “He had always been one of my best friends. We dated for three years, and he proposed to me at the top of the Sears Tower,” she remembered. “That was 21 years ago, and we are still together.

“From the very beginning, Tommy has been my cheerleader,” Officer Barnes said. “He told me, ‘Angie, you are smart. You can do anything.’







That's when I became a bank manager of one of largest banks in Chicago, and we moved to the Chicago suburbs in Joliet, Illinois. I found out that I'd always been independent, strong, with drive and ambition," she smiled. "Our children had a home where they could feel safe."

After the family moved to Texas, Officer Barnes did some ad modeling and worked for the Texas Youth Commission and Dallas County. "It was very challenging to work in a jail, and I'd always been interested in being a parole officer or going into police work. I believe my upbringing in life prepared me for that type of environment." Tommy is a neighborhood police officer with the Garland Police Department. Officer Barnes was influenced by her husband, so she did ride-a-longs and decided she could do the job.

Police work is the best career path she has chosen. "It's a 24/7 job 365 days a year even when we're off duty," Officer Barnes stated. "I wanted to become an officer, so I could make a difference, use my life experiences to

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help my community and be a positive role model. It's all about seeing and meeting needs, so we work together to bring the crime rate down. I've learned verbal judo which deescalates situations. I want to learn more about my new assignments — public information officer and background investigator," she said. Officer Barnes has worked hard to gain trust from fellow officers; Chief Eddie Salazar; city manager, Carl Sherman; the city council and Ferris citizens. She's now highly respected and admired and is a member of the Texas Municipal Police Association.

Officer Barnes works with young women and has volunteered at a women's shelter. She and her sisters-in-law, Latasha, Janeen and Quita, started the King's Daughter in which they advise young women about different things — drugs, peer pressure and having sex before marriage. "Their bodies are God's temple, and they need to know







that as young women, they have value and worth," Officer Barnes said. "If you don't respect yourself, no one else will."

Considering herself a strict parent, Officer Barnes believes kids need to learn that actions have consequences. Today, she and Tommy are empty nesters and grandparents to a 4-year-old grandson. "I'm proud to be a wife, mother of three sons, grandmother and police officer," she beamed. "Our grandson is the joy of my life. There's a special difference between being a mom and grandmother. I'm happy in my life and my job, and love the direction the department is going. The new chief is a great leader."

Officer Barnes has an agent and still models occasionally, though admittedly, more as a hobby than a job. She keeps fit for both police work and modeling. "My husband is a fitness guru. I have to try to keep up with him, so I get up at 4:00 a.m. every day. I do 50 push-ups, 50 sit-ups and workout on the elliptical. Later in the day, I do 50 more of each. Being healthy is most important. Five minutes fighting with a perp on the roadway feels like an eternity," Officer Barnes said. With practice, she has become prepared for every situation she faces.

Injuries have occurred, however. "I had back surgery after a car accident in 2013, and Tommy broke his femur during a foot chase last year. Tommy's fellow officers came to the hospital and sat with him there and when he came home. That's what brotherhood is all about."

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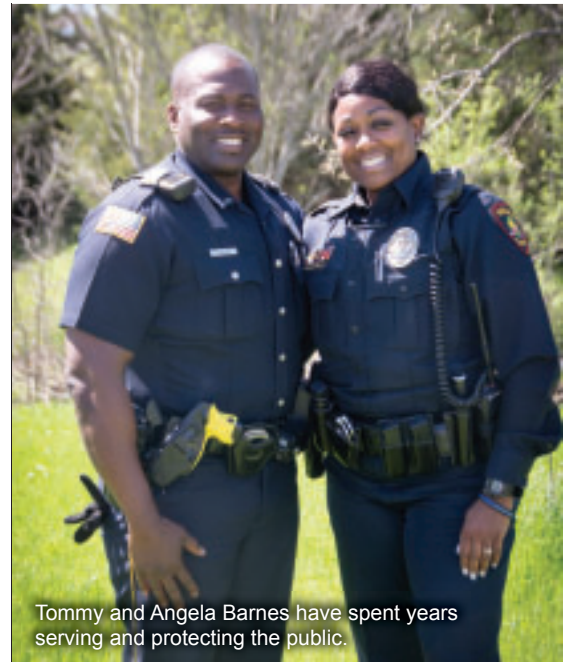
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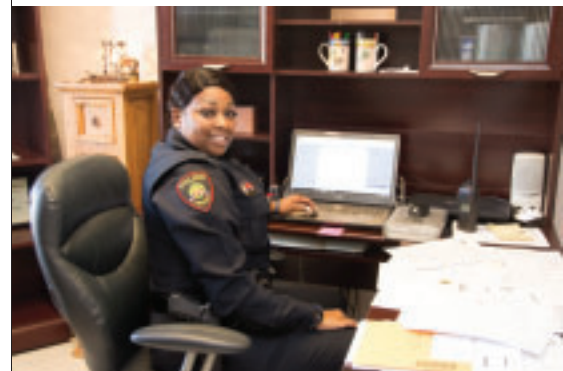
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Tommy and Angela Barnes have spent years serving and protecting the public.



During her off-duty time, Officer Barnes operates a home cleaning service with mostly police officers as clients. She and Tommy enjoy traveling and often visit family members who still live in Chicago. “We love to bowl, spend time with family and keep busy,” she said. “My in-laws live nearby, and I love spending time with my grandson.”

She also enjoys “girl time” with friends and singing at church when time allows. Officer Barnes, who loves all types of music, admits to being “an old soul” and has been described as a woman of faith. She said, “I believe God is real. I don’t try to offend people, but I can tell them what God has done for me. I know it’s Him who’s brought me this far. I’m living proof it doesn’t matter where you come from, but where you end up. So many people told me that I would never amount to anything, but by His grace I’ve proven that when I set my mind to do something, if it’s God’s will, I’ve been able to do it by prayer.” **NOW**



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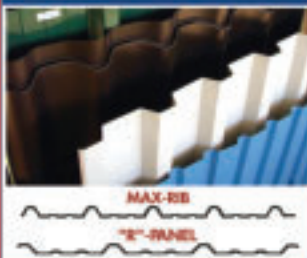
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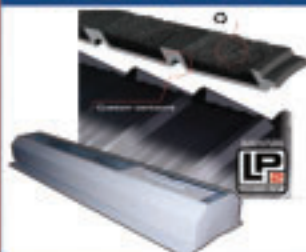
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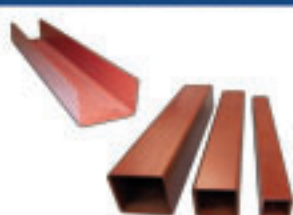


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## Business **NOW**

comes in,” Cole said, “we provide personal service by helping them select the right product in the right size. Since we wear scrubs ourselves, we can tell the customer that one line may be better for their build than another.”

*“Our job is to help people be more independent in their own homes.”*

The CSE showroom is well organized by department and related items. “Many nurses wear compression hosiery. They see patients who wear them and know the features and benefits of the product. That’s why the compression socks are shown next to the scrubs,” Cole explained. To help with tired, achy legs, they stock fun, printed, light-compression socks for nurses or people who are on their feet all day. There is also an area for medical compression stockings. These items are great for people who have swelling in their legs or knee pain. “One of our employees has had knee pain for years and actually had a knee replacement. She took prescription pain pills daily. Now that she wears the compression socks, she almost never has to take the pain pills,” Cole shared. To complement the socks, CSE offers a full line of high-end supports, braces, sleeves and pain management products. All of these products are grouped by what they do. In one area, you can get a brace for your knee with metal hinges, an ice pack sleeve to keep it iced down after a workout and TENS devices that provide electric stimulation to help rebuild the joint and block pain.

“Our job is to help people be more independent in their own homes. It is a great feeling to know we have helped a customer be more independent while being safer in their home in the process,” Cole reflected.

CSE’s website is always there to browse, but Cole recommends a visit to the store and talking with a mobility representative, so they can recommend the best product to fit your personal needs. Come check out all they have to offer at their new location in Red Oak. They are right off of I-35 next to Mamacita’s Mexican Restaurant. **NOW**



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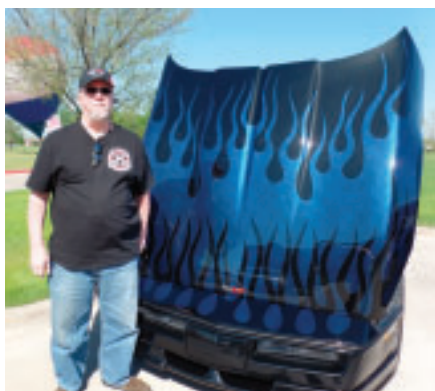
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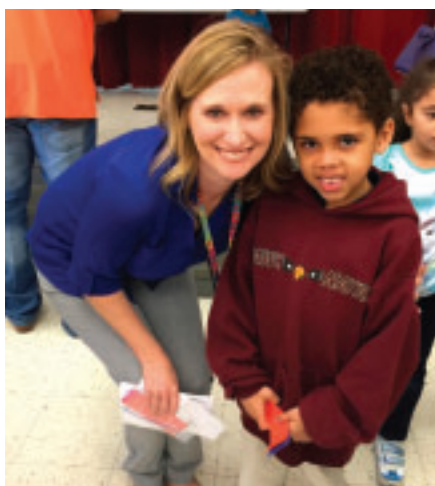




Mark Hartin shows off his 87 Corvette with blue ghost flames.



Tammy Hughes, owner of T-N-A, strikes a pose.



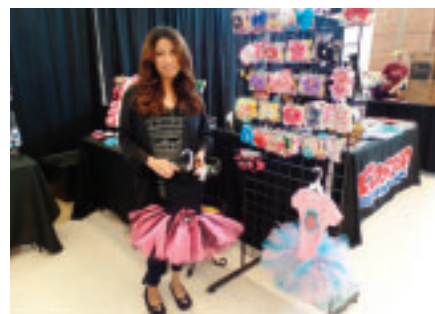
Atticus Morris proudly holds his honor roll award ribbons at Red Oak Elementary with his teacher, Mrs. Kelly Knott.



Officer Barnes looks for clues as Investigator Gator Weiss talks on the phone. Chief Salazar looks on with a smile.



Sue Lafollett enjoys a painting class at 1796's Vintage Touch & Photography with her daughter, Stephanie Bebout.



Angel Diane, owner of Lil Dolls Boutique, is all dolled up at the Red Oak Business Expo.



Several Ovilla Service league members stand ready to assist with the silent auction and dinner benefit for the Ovilla Fire Department.



Sarah Warren, client care specialist at Animal Hospital of Ovilla, is happily assisting Sherry Herndon and Allen Pritchford with their very special dog, Sophia.



Christian and Alisha Mitchel and the Rev. Willie R. Johnson smile for the camera.



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## Beauty Beckons

*Through glass art, collector cars and one beautiful mountain, Tacoma stimulates the senses.*

Perched on a hill along the waters of Washington State's Puget Sound, nestled between the shoreline and Mt. Rainier, sits Tacoma, Washington. Less than 30 minutes from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, this town has a serious art scene — from tattooed glass artists in the hot shop, to the growling engines of classic muscle cars.

Tacoma is the hometown of world-famous glass artist Dale Chihuly, who grew up in a humble, middle-class home in Tacoma's Proctor District. Chihuly's glass sculptures are seen at the Tacoma Art Museum and at the internationally recognized Museum of Glass, where glass art is made and displayed. Visiting artists are found in the hot shop making stunning pieces found at museums, in private collections and shining outdoors.

The Tacoma Art Museum has a permanent exhibit on the art of the American West. This internationally recognized collection

includes more than 300 rotating works of art that dive into the mythology of the Old West, giving a fresh perspective on well-known cowboys-and-Indians folklore.

If there is anything that matches Tacoma's artistry, it's the city's love of chrome. The passion for collector cars is palpable from the scenic byways to the museum district. Tacoma is home to the world's largest privately owned car collections, housed in two museums.

America's Car Museum sits in shining metal next to the iconic Tacoma Dome. It houses pieces of America's golden era of automobiles. The LeMay Family Collection at Marymount offers a charming counterpoint to the polished America's Car Museum. Here you'll peek into the lives of the LeMay family. On the grounds of what was formerly a Catholic boys' school campus, see icons of the past and pop culture like the DeSoto from *Happy Days* and a two-stone wheeler from the live-action *Flintstones* films.





Don't leave Tacoma without visiting Point Defiance Park, a 756-acre urban park that jets out at the north peak of the city. The park is home to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, which offers unique immersive experiences. Up-close sightings of tigers, elephants and monkeys are almost guaranteed in the five-acre Asian habitat.

No matter where you are in Pierce County, the view of Mt. Rainier is stunning. At over 14,400 feet, it is the highest point in Washington State. For the hiker, backpacker and snowshoer, amazing views await. But there is plenty to see from your car with winding roads that pass waterfalls, glacial views and scenic stopping points.

On the other side of the mountain awaits a paradise for skiers in the winter and hikers in the summer. A 10-minute ride up the Mt. Rainier gondola at Crystal Mountain — which climbs 2,500 vertical feet — leads to lunch at Washington's highest restaurant with unparalleled views of Mt. Rainier and the Cascades.

A 15-minute drive from Tacoma, in the small city of University Place, you will find Chambers Bay Golf Course. This course was rated the country's No. 1 municipal golf course by *Links Magazine*. Once an abandoned lot, it was transformed in the early 2000s to become the site of the 2015 U.S. Open. The golf course gained international attention as the site of the 115th U.S. Open Championship. This links-style golf course has become known as the St. Andrews of America with its rolling hills, stunning views and community-minded design.

For assistance planning your trip to Tacoma, as well as to purchase Tacoma Museum District Passes for steep-discount access into six premier downtown museums, visit [www.TravelTacoma.com](http://www.TravelTacoma.com). **NOW**

*By Jaime Vogt. Photos courtesy of Travel Tacoma & Pierce County.*



# Fibromyalgia Help

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Fibromyalgia was a perplexing illness. Those afflicted complained of chronic fatigue and debilitating pain deep inside their bodies. There was no lab test to point to a specific illness, so sometimes, it was all chalked up to one of two things — either the patient was faking, or it was all in their head. Although the symptoms of fibromyalgia syndrome were identified as early as the 1820s, it was not until the late 1970s that the term *fibromyalgia* was given to the condition.

The most common symptom of fibromyalgia is pain in muscle tissue. According to the Arthritis Foundation, “Fibromyalgia pain has been described in a variety of ways, such as burning, aching, stiffness or soreness. It often varies according to the time of day, activity level, weather, sleep patterns and stress. Many people with fibromyalgia say that some degree of pain is always present, although the pain can come and go. For some people, the pain may be quite severe.” Distinctive to fibromyalgia are specific tender pressure points located all over the body. Having at least 11 of these pressure points usually points to fibromyalgia.

Along with pain, sleep problems, fatigue, anxiety and depression are familiar complaints. The fatigue experienced with fibromyalgia is different. It can be overwhelming, limiting and chronic. A night’s rest doesn’t help. Sleep problems could include difficulty in falling asleep and a disruption in the sleep phase called deep sleep, where the body’s restorative operations take place. Anxiety

and depression are common bedfellows with illnesses that can be debilitating in activity and pain.

There is no definitive laboratory test or X-ray one can take to diagnose this syndrome. Diagnosis is made from your presenting symptoms, medical history and ruling out other diseases that could cause the same symptoms you experience. There is no cure for fibromyalgia. A person will always have this, and there will be good days and bad days. To enjoy life is to maximize the good days.

On those days when life is too difficult, it is beneficial to already have a plan in place. Mobilize your support system for meals and chores. These can be family members, volunteers or paid help — even after-school help from a teen. Take the time to indulge yourself with a comedy or a book you’ve been meaning to read. Avoid online chat groups that focus on the pain and suffering of your condition. Utilize those who have a positive bent and encourage coping techniques. Try yoga’s deep breathing and stretching practices. People of faith may find comfort in prayer. If you have fibromyalgia, difficult days are unavoidable, so master your coping strategies to get through the day. **NOW**

Source: <http://www.arthritis.org/about-arthritis/types/fibromyalgia/symptoms.php>.

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

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### May 7

ROHS Choir Youth in Harmony Barbershop Workshop and Concert: 7:30 a.m.-9:00 p.m., Red Oak High School Band Hall.

ROHS Solo and Ensemble Band Contest: 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Red Oak High School Band Hall.

### May 13

Red Oak 27th Golf Tournament: 7:00 a.m., Country View Golf Course, 240 W. Beltline Rd., Lancaster. Call Red Oak Area Chamber of Commerce at (972) 617-0906.

### May 22, 23

Big Red Smokin' Blues & BBQ Festival: **Friday**, 5:00-10:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 9:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m., Armstrong Park, 100 James Collins Blvd., Duncanville. Visit [www.smokinbluesbbqfest.com](http://www.smokinbluesbbqfest.com) for more information and to pre-purchase tickets online.

### May 28

18th Annual Polkafest Run: For more information or to register, visit [www.polkafestrun.com](http://www.polkafestrun.com) or on Facebook at Ennis Polka Fest Run.

polkafestrun.com or on Facebook at Ennis Polka Fest Run.

### May 29

Old Fashioned Decoration Day: 12:30-2:30 p.m., Ovilla Methodist Cemetery, Ovilla. Decorate the graves of loved ones. Old Chisholm Trail Chapter NSDAR will act as docents.

### Ongoing:

#### Monthly

Matthew 7:7 Riders Motorcycle Ministry. For the next meeting and ride visit: [www.facebook.com/Matthew77RidersMotorcycleMinistry](http://www.facebook.com/Matthew77RidersMotorcycleMinistry) or contact Mark Rose at (972) 748-4076.

#### Tuesdays

Vets Net Group: 5:00 p.m., Ryan's Steak House, Hwy. 77 N of Hwy. 287, Waxahachie. For more information, call Mike Lamb at (214) 763-0378 or email [vetsnetgrp@att.net](mailto:vetsnetgrp@att.net).

#### Third Wednesdays

The Ellis County Christian Women's Connection: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club. Cost is \$13. For reservations, women contact Margaret at (972) 825-3559.

Country Club. Cost is \$13. For reservations, women contact Margaret at (972) 825-3559.

#### Wednesdays and Thursdays

Red Oak Senior Citizens Group: 8:30 a.m.-noon, Lions Club Building, 207 W. Red Oak Rd. For more information, contact Becky Ives at (214) 502-9747.

#### Thursdays

GriefShare meeting: 7:00 p.m., The Oaks Fellowship in Red Oak, Room E-104. This is a recovery group for those who have lost loved ones. For more information, call (214) 376-8208.

#### Third Thursdays

Ellis County Amateur Radio Club: 7:30 p.m., Ellis County Sheriff's Office Training Center (County Farm), 2272 FM 878, Waxahachie. For more information, visit [www.wd5ddh.org](http://www.wd5ddh.org) or contact Sharon Wrobel at (972) 978-8256.

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [joanne.monroe@nowmagazines.com](mailto:joanne.monroe@nowmagazines.com).*

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## In the Kitchen With Melba Beam

— *By Rachel Smith*

A native of Oak Cliff, Melba Beam gained her skills for delicious cooking on a budget from her mother, who survived the Great Depression. “Nothing was wasted,” she explained. After passing down unique recipes from her mother to her children, she learned how to create great tastes using various spices, such as five spice, nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger, hot peppers and chili powder.

Melba is a “down-home cook from Texas” with a passion for cooking for her friends and family. “I love to experiment with recipes combining ingredients from one recipe with ingredients from another,” she said, providing the quality taste everyone would like. Sweets are her specialty, and sharing them is a great pleasure for her. “To me, no recipe is written in stone,” she admitted. **NOW**

### Bread Pudding

- 4 cups bread, stale (can substitute hamburger or hotdog buns)**
- 2 cups granulated sugar**
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed**
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract**
- 1 tsp. cinnamon**
- 2 cups whole milk**
- 5 large eggs, beaten**
- 1 cup walnuts or pecans, finely chopped**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 F and grease a 13x9x2-inch pan. Place bread in oven and toast until brown and dry. Remove and let cool. Tear into pieces.
- 2.** Mix remaining ingredients, except walnuts or pecans, in a bowl. Mix on high until well blended; add cooled bread pieces. Let stand 5-10 minutes, making sure all bread is covered. When

bread is completely saturated, add nuts and mix on high until smooth.

- 3.** Pour mixture into pan and place in oven for 35-45 minutes. Check with a knife; if knife comes out clean, it's done. Best served with coffee or ice cream.

### Susie's Cream Pecan Pie

- 10 cups milk**
- 3 cups pecans, finely chopped**
- 6 pkgs. cook and serve vanilla pudding mix (not instant)**
- 3 Tbsp. vanilla**
- 2 9-inch graham cracker pie crusts**
- 2 cartons whipped cream**

- 1.** Fill a large pan or boiler with water; place medium pan inside and heat milk and pecans on medium heat, whisking constantly.
- 2.** Add pudding mixes separately; then add vanilla and

stir 10-15 minutes until mixture bubbles, shines and thickens. Pecans will turn mixture a light mocha color.

- 3.** Remove from heat and pour into pie crusts. Let cool and refrigerate. Top pies with whipped cream and serve. Can be frozen for later use.

### Tamale Stew

- 1 lb. ground beef, cooked and drained**
- 4 cups water**
- 2 large potatoes, cut**
- 1 can diced Ro-Tel tomatoes**
- 1 can corn, drained and rinsed**
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce**
- 1/2 medium onion, chopped**
- 1 bell pepper any color (can substitute 3 to 4 mini peppers, chopped)**
- 2 tsp. garlic powder**
- 1-2 tsp. chili powder**
- 1-2 tsp. cumin**
- 2 cans tamales**
- 1 cup shredded cheese**
- Combread, tortilla chips or crackers (optional)**

- 1.** In a skillet, brown ground beef; drain and set aside for later.
- 2.** In a large pot, add water with potatoes, tomatoes, corn, Worcestershire sauce, onion, peppers and spices. Cook on medium heat; add meat, stirring frequently.
- 3.** When potatoes are tender, add tamales to hot stew and stir.
- 4.** Top with shredded cheese. Serve with combread, tortilla chips or crackers, if desired.

### Hominy and Poblano Peppers

- 1 tsp. olive oil or coconut oil**
- 2 medium Poblano peppers**
- 1/2 medium onion, chopped**
- 2 tsp. minced garlic**
- 1/2 tsp. cumin**
- 1/2 tsp. salt**
- 2 15-oz. cans hominy, rinsed and drained**
- 2 cups water**
- 1/3 cup cilantro, chopped**
- 1 Tbsp. lime juice**

- 1.** Heat oil in a large skillet; cut peppers into small strips. Sauté peppers and onions for 5 minutes until tender. Stir in garlic, cumin and salt; reduce heat and simmer, stirring until fragrant.
- 2.** Add hominy to water and increase to medium heat; cook 10-15 minutes, stirring until water is evaporated.
- 3.** Remove from heat; add cilantro and lime juice.





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