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ON THE COVER

*Liberty Meredith takes up the
tools of her family's trade.*

Photo by
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EDITOR'S NOTE

It's not how we start, but how we finish that counts ...

It's hard to believe that in a few weeks the curtain will fall on yet another school year! It seems that it was not long ago I was purchasing uniforms and school supplies for my children.

At the beginning of a journey, excitement is high and lofty goals are set. Without careful planning and ongoing commitment, those dreams will not become reality. This school year, many goals have been met and dreams have come true. UIL competitions and athletic games were won, scholarships and college acceptances were granted and honors were bestowed. For those of us in the working world, jobs were acquired and maybe promotions granted. Those things happened because of grit and determination.

I love looking back on the journey and seeing the growth that has taken place. In the day-to-day, change is happening so gradually that it is hard to see. But after some time passes, our hindsight sees it with 20/20 vision.

It's not only the destination that matters but the daily steps we take to get there that count. Here's hoping that your steps this month set you on a path to success.

Finish strong!



Jill

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- 7 years of involvement with the Red Oak Soccer Association (coach, commissioner and member of the board of directors)
- 5 years on the Site-based Committee at Red Oak Elementary and most recently the Growth Management Committee
- 22 years at SAGU, currently the Dean of Academic Services

I'm passionate about all forms of education. The current landscape of our education system is complex and there are challenges, but exciting advances in areas like technology continue to personalize education for each student. We must continue to ensure that our teachers are equipped and empowered to operate at optimum levels.

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IN NEE OF A

— By Rick Mauch



The crack of a bat connecting with a ball. The smell of the green grass in the outfield on the first day of spring play. The chants among players at opponents: “Hey, Batter! Hey, Batter Batter! Hey, Batter Batter, swing!”

The Red Oak Baseball and Softball Association began another season of memories in March when boys and girls ages 3-15 took the field. Opening ceremonies were held on the fields at 200 Live Oak.

Stephanie Glazener, ROBSA secretary, was raised in Red Oak. “Growing up, it was a big deal to be part of extracurriculars with my peers. It built community, camaraderie and family,” she said.

D



All four of Stephanie's children have been part of ROBSA, resulting in the formation of lifelong friendships. "It's not just the kids who benefit from these relationships," she said. "Parents bond, as well, because they spend time together season after season."

Every worthwhile activity requires commitment. With each new season comes the work behind the scenes. When players and fans arrive for the first games, the fields are chalked, the concession stand is stocked and that first shout of, "Play ball!" rings out loudly.

"A lot of work has to be completed before the season starts," Stephanie said. "We have a coach/volunteer work weekend to do minor repairs that get us through the season. We do grass removal from the infields and add dirt and clay as needed. We do an extensive cleaning of everything, from trash pickup to deep cleaning bathrooms to tree trimming."

Volunteers put as much into preparing for the games as the players do. They also work hard raising necessary funds to keep the organization going, a task that has grown more challenging in recent years as costs have increased.

ROBSA is a self-sufficient, nonprofit organization. Currently, it is in need of financial support to improve its facilities. There are obstacles to applying for grants, which could be a big help. Any funding other than the season-to-season operating costs must come from the generosity of citizens, local businesses and organizations.

Some needed repairs come with a big price tag. "There have been bits and pieces changed, but the fencing has not been upgraded seriously in at least 25 years," said Steve Samuels, ROBSA president. "About \$275,000 is needed for all the necessary work."

Some repairs have been made in recent years. In 2014, they installed new bathrooms on the back of the concession stand, added 10 sets of bleachers on the five fields and, in 2015, built a new utility building with their logo emblazoned on it. But, that was back when they were hosting tournaments. Before they could make enough money to do all the necessary improvements, teams stopped hosting tournaments there, taking away the potential for earned revenue. "If we could have tournaments, we could make more improvements, but we need improvements to get the tournaments," said Karen Perricelli, team mom coordinator.

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During the past spring and fall seasons, due to hard work on the part of those involved, they brought in around \$38,000 from registration, a raffle and concession sales. "People think we raise a lot of funds from sign-ups, but that only covers the cost of the season," ROBSA Board Member Nick Glazener said. "That money goes to umpires, trophies, insurance and equipment, such as baseballs, softballs, T-ball tees and event chalk for the field."

These needs haven't dampened the excitement of the spring season. As always, the opening ceremonies brought much enthusiasm. "Our opening ceremonies are generally a big deal for everyone. We usually have a special guest throw out the first baseball and softball," Stephanie said. "All of the teams gather on the field and are individually announced. We try to have the high school baseball and softball players there to high-five the kids and cheer them on at their games. This is also when we have our raffle drawing for our fundraiser."

Once the season begins, the work doesn't slow down for the volunteers. A field maintenance manager shows up every day, for example, to prepare the fields. On Friday nights, volunteers work tirelessly into the night to prepare for Saturday games. The concession manager keeps a record of all items in stock for hungry and thirsty fans.

"We have to reschedule all rainout games, which can become quite a job in and of itself due to our wonderful Texas weather," Stephanie joked.

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And you can bet that things never go as planned. These are games that are played outdoors after all. "We must make sure that we have umpires scheduled for every game, as well. Many volunteer hours are spent getting us through a season."

ROBSA board positions include president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, team mom coordinator, concessions manager, equipment manager, field maintenance manager, softball commissioner and three baseball commissioners, along with two general board members. Currently, there is an opening for a publicist. Also, each team has a head coach, at least one assistant coach and a team mom.



Why do all of these people work so hard and volunteer their time? "ROBSA helps kids to get plugged into positive activities and keeps them from negative things. It teaches team bonding, combats obesity, promotes decision making and builds confidence. Everyone can play, no matter the skill level, and it's financially attainable for most," Stephanie said, highlighting many of the reasons that ROBSA exists.

Season to season, one constant remains — children are having fun. And one way or another, ROBSA is determined to keep this a reality for local youth. "We want to keep Red Oak kids playing at home," Karen said. "We want to keep them with their friends, growing up and playing together right here in their hometown." **NOW**

Editor's Note: Sign-ups for the fall season will open in July, and the season will begin in August. For more information, call (972) 895-4636 or email bcn060504@gmail.com.

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— By Rick Mauch



At Home With Jose and Esperanza

Before even entering the home of Jose and Esperanza Garza, visitors are greeted with a message on a handmade bench on the front porch: Sit awhile. You look beat. Take a load off your feet. It's one of many handmade items by Jose. He loves his woodwork, and there is plenty of it to see. Esperanza is a seamstress, and her handiwork can be seen not only in the home, but also throughout the community.

Together, they have created one beautiful home. It has their personal touches and heirlooms from family that make it even more comfortable. "This is my favorite. It makes me feel like a queen," Esperanza said, pointing to a large chair on the far side of the living room. The leather and swirl design crafted into the cherry wood arms, legs and frame perfectly match the two adjacent sofas, one with seating enough for four and the other comfortably seating three. The coffee table is, likewise, a perfect match. Ditto for the large entertainment center that stands 7 feet tall, 7 feet wide. "I got the table first, and then I saw the couches that go so well with it," Esperanza said. "My nephew made the entertainment center years ago. I was a single mom





Garza

with four kids, and I couldn't afford anything. But he said, 'I'm going to make you one.' It's beautiful!"

Not only does it hold the TV and music devices, but also offers large shelves to accommodate plenty of family photos. "I have a big family," Esperanza said.

On top is a guardian angel statue. There are several of these throughout the home, as Esperanza loves to collect them. Another, about 3 feet tall, stands next to the fireplace that spans from floor to ceiling, while a statue of Mary and baby Jesus is on the mantel.

It was his nephew that piqued Jose's interest in woodworking. A truck driver for most of his life, including the past 36 years at the same company in Dallas, he has always liked to dabble in woodcarving in his spare time. Now, however, he has taken it to a new level.



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A step onto the back patio reveals something akin to a museum featuring his work. The entire fence is lined with large wood carvings, many in silhouette style. They include a cowboy kneeling to pray; another taking a nap; some cowgirls; a couple of red, white and blue trucks; and his favorite of horses.

Jose points to a carving of black and white horses jumping over a

small, white picket fence. Written on the piece of art are the words *Angel de la Esperanza*. "She's my angel of hope," he said. "It gives me pleasure to work with wood. I'd rather make something than pay for it."

Esperanza also gets pleasure from creating, especially working with plants and flowers on the back patio. "When it's warm, I love working with these," she said. "It's like a

dream come true out here, to see the flowers, plants and rose bushes. I grew up in a family of 10 brothers and sisters, and we hardly had anything. My dream growing up was to have a garden."

Her sewing room houses two sewing machines, including one of industrial strength. In addition to being a pharmaceutical tech for a couple decades before retiring in 2009, she spent years working in the sewing industry and has loved doing




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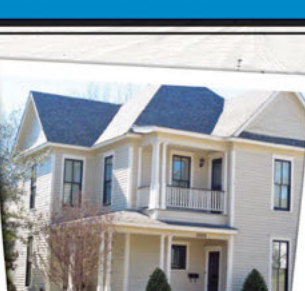
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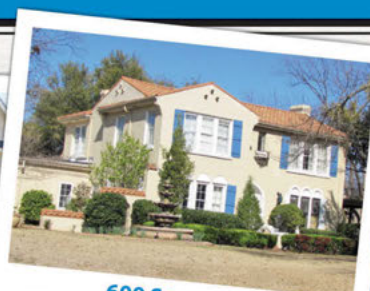
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so ever since she was a child. "I guess I'm pretty good. I haven't had anybody complain," Esperanza said with a grin. "I get a lot of requests when school starts for uniforms, alterations and such.

"When I was a little girl, I had a doll. I loved it. My father bought it for me for Christmas one year," Esperanza said. "I would make clothes for it. At age 14, I went to work at a factory, Marilyn Belts and Bags. I worked there for seven years."

Esperanza, 60, and Jose, 73, moved into their home four years ago after getting married. Between them, they have 10 children, 26 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

They'd known each other for many years, and a decade after his wife of 40 years passed, Jose proposed to Esperanza in a unique fashion. "He took me to Taco Bell," she said. "And he tossed this at me." It was a packet of hot sauce. On it he had written "Will you marry me?"

In similar fashion, their home is uniquely filled with family history. One noted example is the large dining room table, which ironically matches the cherry wood theme throughout the home, even though Esperanza has had it for a long time. "It was given to me about 25 years ago by a lady I used to work with," she said.



"We love it. We've used it with my kids and now my grandkids."

The cozy kitchen has an openness that makes it seem larger. The dining area flows comfortably into it and also opens up to the living room, so one can prepare meals and keep up with what's happening elsewhere. "Nobody gets left out. Everybody can be a part of it all," Esperanza said.

The garage is Jose's work space, where he creates his wood carvings. It's also a place of homage to his favorite animal, the wolf. A number of blankets and rugs featuring wolves hang on the walls. In the middle is a pool table with bright red felt instead of the customary green. "I still go by Lone Wolf on the CB," Jose said. "But I'm not anymore," he added with a laugh. "I've got my Esperanza." **NOW**

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A Family Affair

— By Derek Jones

For the Meredith family, automobiles are more than just a hobby — they are a lifestyle. Brad Meredith's father, Carl, has been customizing cars at his shop, Carl's Custom Cars in Red Oak, since Brad was just a child. Growing up around his dad's shop, it was inevitable that Brad would eventually be bitten by the same car bug that bit his dad in his youth.

As a child hanging around the auto shop, Brad found ways to entertain himself. "I would take Hot Wheels and place them in the vise and crush them flat, so I could pretend they were wrecked cars." As Brad grew older, however, he became more interested in building cars with his dad than crushing them.

When *North Ellis Co.NOW Magazine* first featured the Meredith family in August 2011, opportunity had presented itself in the form of a reality TV show titled

Reality Rides, which featured Carl, Brad and the rest of the crew from the shop. "It was a good experience and opened some doors for the shop," Brad stated about his time on the show. "However, we are car guys, not actors, so after a few years we really wanted to shift our focus back to solely doing what we do best, which is building some of the finest custom cars in the world."

The television show had some lasting impact on the success of the shop. "This media allowed us to display our cars at some of the bigger shows," Brad explained. However, just competing in shows is not enough for him. Placing at these shows demonstrates the skill and craftsmanship that goes into every car the Meredith men work on. The pride in their work is evident. "We have been to California to compete against much larger shops with larger budgets, and our cars are bringing home awards. The custom auto industry has acknowledged our attention to detail and the quality of our builds." It seems, for Brad and his crew of automotive craftsmen, there is no intention of slowing down any time soon.

Perhaps the thing Brad finds most rewarding in his

love of cars is that it is a family affair. Brad and his wife, Tashara, have a 4-year-old daughter, Liberty. As one might have guessed, she has developed her own love of automobiles. With a wide smile and childlike enthusiasm, Liberty exclaimed, "My favorite movie is *Cars!*" When asked who her favorite character is, she quickly cried out, "Lightning McQueen!"

Like her grandpa and dad, it seems Liberty has also been bitten by the car bug.

Tashara laughed, "She loves that movie, and for a while, she would only answer to that name."

Liberty spread white sheets of paper across the coffee table and began drawing. She explained, "I'm drawing cars." Two large circles appeared on the page as Liberty continued, "These are the wheels."

Liberty concentrated as she formed the rest of the car. "She loves hanging around the shop with her grandpa and dad, and we hope to see her take up the family business of building cars," Tashara explained. Like her grandpa and dad, it seems Liberty has also been bitten by the car bug.

Brad holds high expectations. "I want to see the shop continue to grow and our custom cars continue to compete and win honors at the highest level," he said. For the Meredith family, a love of cars has always been, and always will be, an integral part of their lives. When asked what the future holds, Brad smiled and simply stated, "More cool cars." **NOW**

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CookingNOW

In the Kitchen With LADONNA GUTIERREZ

— By Rachel Smith



LaDonna Gutierrez's way of blessing people is making homemade goodies that nourish the body and soul. "I learned to cook from many people traveling different walks of life," she said.

From her clients' Southern soul cooking to a friendly stranger's homemade Mexican recipes, LaDonna has a variety of dishes under her belt. She is always willing to learn and adjust recipes to her taste. "Recently, my husband and I took a cheese-making class. Now, I consistently have four to six 4-lb. wheels of cheese aging in our cheese refrigerator," she admitted. Also, being a beekeeper in Ellis County, she learns new authentic treats to serve those she cares for. "I do it all for the smiles," she declared. "And that, in turn, blesses me!" **NOW**

Louisiana Red Beans and Rice

Serves 4-5.

- 1 cup red beans, washed and drained**
- 3 cups water**
- Salt and pepper, to taste**
- 1 Tbsp. fresh or dried parsley, chopped**
- 3-4 Tbsp. Creole or Cajun seasoning**
- Bacon drippings, to taste**
- 1-2 cups ham, diced**
- 1-2 links Andouille sausage**
- 1 medium onion, chopped**
- 1 clove garlic, chopped (or substitute garlic powder, to taste)**
- 1 rib celery, chopped**
- 2 Tbsp. sugar (as a flavor enhancer)**
- 1 bay leaf, dried and crumbled**
- 1 1-lb. bag long-grain white rice**

- 1.** Cook beans in water. Season with salt and pepper, parsley, Creole seasoning, bacon drippings, ham and sausage. Cook for 1 1/2 to 2 hours.
- 2.** Add onion, garlic, celery, sugar and bay

- leaf. Continue to cook over low heat for 1/2 to 1 hour. If beans become too dry, add heated water.
- 3.** Cook rice per package instructions. Serve beans over mounds of rice.

Homemade Butter

- 1 pt. heavy whipping cream, cold**
- Salt, to taste**

- 1.** Pour cream into a 1-quart Mason jar, but do not fill it more than halfway. Tightly screw lid on top of the jar. Shake for about 10-15 minutes continually. (This is a great job for children!) When butter starts to form, it will feel heavy and slosh in the jar.
- 2.** When it starts to make a thud sound, open the jar and pour out the "buttermilk," which you can drink, if desired.
- 3.** Dump your butter in a strainer and rinse with cool water. Squeeze butter between two large wooden spoons to force out any hidden buttermilk. Continue until the cool

water runs clear. Place butter in a bowl and salt to taste. Keep refrigerated for up to a week, or you can freeze it.

Bacon-infused Butter

- 1 cup homemade butter**
- 1/2 lb. bacon**

- 1.** Cut bacon into 1/2-inch pieces. Fry until bacon is brown and on the crisp side. Place on a paper towel to drain.
- 2.** Place cold butter and cooled bacon into a food processor; combine thoroughly.
- 3.** This is an excellent topping for grilled steaks or seafood. It can be made into a ball or log and placed in the refrigerator to solidify, if desired. It also tastes great on cornbread.

Quick Cakelike Cornbread

- 1 box Jiffy Corn Muffin Mix**
- 1 box Jiffy Yellow Cake Mix**
- 1/2 cup water**
- 1/2 cup milk**
- 2 eggs**
- 1/4 cup oil**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350 F. Mix all ingredients together. Grease an 8x8-inch pan; bake for 30 minutes.
- 2.** Check to see if it is done by inserting a toothpick in the center. (It is done when the toothpick comes out clean.) This recipe can be doubled to make more cornbread, if desired.

Homemade Yogurt

No machine needed.

- 1 gal. milk
- 1/2 cup cultured plain yogurt (Dannon brand is preferred.)
- 1 cup dried powdered milk, for thickness (optional)
- 2-3 tsp. honey (can substitute Stevia or sugar, to taste) (optional)

1. Heat milk in a large pan until it reaches 120 F. Turn off heat; whisk in plain yogurt and powdered milk to incorporate into warm milk. If the milk is too hot, it will kill the active cultures in the yogurt, so watch the temperature. Add sweetener, if desired.
2. Ladle mixture into mason jars or containers of choice; set out on your countertop and wrap with a towel to keep warm. Let set for 4 to 6 hours or wrap up overnight.
3. Once yogurt has thickened, place in the refrigerator to chill before eating. Be sure to save 1/2 cup for your next batch.

Chocolate Granola

- 3 cups rolled oats
- 1 1/4 cups raw almonds
- 3/4 cup unsweetened, large coconut flakes
- 1/2 cup cocoa powder
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cups Turbinado sugar (divided use)
- 2/3 cup melted coconut oil
- 1/3 cup maple syrup
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 1/2 cups mini chocolate chips
- 1 tsp. coarse sea salt

1. Preheat oven to 250 F. In a large bowl, toss oats, almonds, coconut flakes, cocoa powder, salt and 1/3 cup sugar.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk coconut oil, syrup and vanilla together; set aside.
3. Pour wet ingredients over dry ingredients; stir to combine.
4. Spread granola in a jelly roll pan in an even layer. Bake 50 minutes, stirring granola about 25 minutes into cooking. Pull out of the oven. Sprinkle the chocolate chips over the granola; return to oven for another 5 to 10 minutes to slightly melt chocolate chips.
5. Sprinkle the remaining sugar and sea salt onto the semi-melted chocolate chips. At this point, the sugar and salt should stick to the chocolate.
6. Let the granola cool down until chocolate has hardened. Scoop into an air-tight container and hide it from your family — or enjoy it together!

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



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— By Virginia Riddle

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Bright colors and floral aromas greet customers when they visit Petals Plus Flowers, Gifts & Events. But it's the staff members' smiling faces and helpful, professional manner that make everyone's visit a perfect experience. "We want every customer to be happy, so we deliver caring and experienced service," Owner Cassie Fulton said.

The welcoming shop designers offer contemporary and traditional fresh floral arrangements, silk arrangements,

an extensive gift line and candles for all occasions. "We also offer full event planning and specialize in sympathy designs," Cassie added. Customers can order through the Teleflora network, online or over the phone.

Petals Plus had been part of the Red Oak area community for 25 years when Cassie bought it last year as the business opportunity opened. She had been a familiar face as part of the Red Oak ISD family for the past 15 years. "I had always wanted to do something like this. This has been a great experience!" she said.

"I have four employees, three of whom are experienced floral designers with a total of 42 years' experience. We can service all our customers' floral, gift and event planning needs," Cassie explained. "I love the people I work with."

The shop environment is a happy place, according to Cassie. "It's fun to come to work and a joy to help

people whether their floral and gift need is due to a joy or sadness,” she said. “I had been in education administration for 15 years, but when we lost my in-laws within a month of each other, I knew God wanted me to step away from full-time education to help take care of details with my husband.”

Helping others is Cassie’s nature. “I watched a first-time granddad order an arrangement. He was hanging on my designer’s every word in order to make sure it was perfect,” she recalled. “It was so rewarding to help him choose the perfect arrangement for his daughter.”

Challenges come with the job, too. “Finding people when we’re trying to deliver orders can be a problem, as well as meeting last-minute order deadlines,” she explained. But she promised they are up to the challenges that come.

Cassie is a Jacksboro, Texas, native, but she spent her summers with family in Dew, Texas. She has lived in Ellis County for the past eight years and received her education at Navarro College, Stephen F. Austin State University and Tarleton State University. Cassie stays busy as a pastor’s wife, business owner and community volunteer. She still finds time, however, to read and enjoy visits with friends, family and her two pups, Murphy and Millie.

“I love people, and owning my shop is a way to help people,” Cassie remarked. “Our designs are special — not just traditional. We’re passionate about doing new things that please customers. I like being a part of all the special events in the lives of others. Happy or sad, we’re there for our customers. That’s what this business is all about.”

A customer’s Facebook comment best sums up Cassie and her success with Petals Plus: “Flowers, faith and friends. If you’re looking for any of these, visit Cassie! She’ll treat you right.” **NOW**

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TravelNOW

Awakening in Charleston

— By Amanda Hollinger

A rich and colorful painting by acclaimed artist and South Carolina Lowcountry native Jonathan Green depicts a vibrant sunrise spreading across a tidal creek and marsh grass that is Charleston’s iconic landscape. Entitled *Awakening in Charleston*, the painting captures more than the fiery beauty of sunrise. It also evokes the spirit of awakening Charleston experiences as it tells its story to the world — not just the postcard-ready version of cobblestone streets and historic plantations, but also the realities of enslaved people whose skills and labor built Charleston. Once a sleepy coastal port, today Charleston draws visitors to discover a vibrant, modern city examining its roots and teeming with high-tech job growth, a vibrant arts and culture scene and an award-winning culinary destination.

Charleston boasts more than its share of award-winning “get-your-reservation-in-advance” dining experiences but

also entices with off-the-radar offerings. Felix, a hip and modern French café at the north end of the King Street Historic District, tempts visitors with small, savory plates of lobster deviled eggs and crab croquettes with crispy okra. For a quieter, more sophisticated dining experience, reserve your spot at the James Beard award-winning restaurant, FIG. Chef Mike Lata’s cuisine is a simple, yet innovative, approach to Lowcountry food, such as baked golden tilefish with spring shallots. For something casual, yet no less mouthwatering, venture to the diverse North Central neighborhood. Strap on your appetite for James Beard-nominated Chef Rodney Scott’s legendary whole hog BBQ or sit outside at Leon’s Oyster Shop and dine on charred oysters and spicy fried chicken.

After getting your fill, explore downtown Charleston by foot. Founded in 1670, Charleston offers unparalleled

opportunities to experience history. At the Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon, completed in 1771, walk the same floors where George Washington was received, and learn about the site's tragic role in the history of the slave trade.

While downtown, take a walk down historic Broad Street — slowly — so as not to miss the reasons why this street is ranked one of the nation's "Great Streets" by the American Planning Association. Bluestone sidewalks, gas streetlights and palmetto trees frame structures dating back to 1715. Near Broad Street, you will find The Gibbes Museum of Art, home to the foremost collection of American art that incorporates Charleston. The collection includes something for everyone, from 18th century portrait miniatures to modern sculptor Patrick Dougherty's twig and branch structure (a kid favorite).

Visitors are likely to encounter one of Charleston's many popular festivals, such as Charleston Wine + Food, Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, Charleston Fashion Week, Festival of Houses and Gardens or, if you're lucky enough to visit during the 18-day period beginning Memorial Day weekend, Spoleto Festival USA. Every year since 1977, the festival has transformed Charleston, filling its historic venues with opera, symphonic music, theater, dance, chamber music and jazz from across the globe.

No visit to downtown Charleston would be complete without a visit to the Battery, the southernmost tip of the historic district and the Charleston peninsula. This promenade provides sweeping views of Charleston Harbor, Fort Sumter, the convergence of the Ashley and Cooper Rivers and the Atlantic Ocean beyond. Awakening couldn't be more romantic. **NOW**

For more information or to plan your visit to Charleston, visit www.explorecharleston.com. Photos courtesy of ExploreCharleston.com.



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Ready, Set, Shoot

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

Whether your little ones jumped off the high dive for the first time, or you want a photo of your dog fetching a Frisbee from the water, getting the perfect picture can be harder than it seems. These simple steps will help ensure you get an image to last a lifetime.

Using Your Equipment

- Single-lens reflex (SLR) cameras are amazing, but specifics differ from one camera to another. Whether digital or manual, most SLRs have some common features, including changing shutter speeds, optional flash and the ability to take rapid-fire photos.
- Lenses have zoom capabilities for specific ranges. For closer photos, a smaller lens gives a clearer picture, but shots from far away are greatly enhanced by lenses with a range of 55-300 mm.¹ Most companies also offer a lens choice that is branded “vibration reduction” or “image stabilization,” which steadies the subject but can also slow some camera functions.

Using Smartphone Cameras

- Use space behind the subject — the sky, a field or a solid-colored wall — to make him or her stand out as much as possible. Most phones will automatically enhance the subject of the photo, but even the smartest phone may not know whether the subject is your son or the celebrity on the poster behind him.
- Use the flash and zoom sparingly. Most camera flashes overexpose the subject and wash out colors. And you will see a drastic reduction in quality if you zoom in on a subject that is far away. Instead, let the subject be distant, and fix it in the editing stage.²
- Different phones will have different best options, so find out what apps are ideal for your use.³ Getting out red-eye, touching up lighting issues and adding enhancements will turn your photos into the art you hoped for when you snapped them.

Finding the Right Light

- All photographers deal with lighting issues. One of the best ways to ensure a good photo is to take it outdoors.⁴ Too much sunlight

can be bad, but a mildly cloudy day means fewer shadows and rich colors. If you have to take a picture in the middle of a cloudless day, try to use trees with large openings to diffuse the sun, without completely putting your subjects in the dark.

- If the subject is back-lit, put the light source to the side to decrease washout and eliminate the awkward squint that happens when your subject has to look into the sun. If you see shadows, try adding a light source on each side of the subject to equalize lighting for the photo.

- Learn how and when to use your flash. Make sure not to let the flash reflect off a mirror or window. But using the flash when the sun is behind your subject can reverse the shadowing effect that ruins some pictures.

Photographing Loved Ones

- Photographing a moving target can seem impossible. Anticipate the movement, and use the shutter speed to your advantage. Aim your shot in the direction your subject is moving. It is better to get your child's face and the grass in front of him than the back of his or her feet.

- Be careful how you bribe. Offer kids a treat for doing a good job, but don't hold it in front of them, or you could get a child with a frown and outstretched arms.

- Use their energy and spunk. It may be messy, but getting a candid photo of your daughter eating an ice cream cone may be better than struggling to get her to sit just right. And try taking action shots of your pets playing instead of getting them to sit still for a photo.

This list can help you get great photos this summer. But the most important tip is to focus on having fun. Don't let the stress of taking the perfect picture take away from making great memories. **NOW**

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Zoomed In: Charleen Johnson

By Jill Martinez

Charleen Johnson is an artist well versed in pen and ink drawings, wood carving, pottery and quilting, but painting is her most recently acquired skill. "My sister and I found our first rocks during a trip to San Francisco. We brought them home and started painting them," Charleen recalled.

Though people have asked to purchase her rocks, she enjoys giving them to charity. She recently attended the Master Gardener Lawn & Garden Expo in Waxahachie and gave away these rocks, as well as a few hundred more. "I know many kids get drug along to this stuff, so hopefully these rocks will be just a little something cool for the kids," she said. Charleen also participates in a local group called Ferris Rocks.



Ovilla's Golden Chick is welcomed by the local business community.



Ovilla United Methodist Church Ladies of the '80s enjoy an afternoon out.



Abbigail Rodriguez nominated her ROISD HS teacher, Beth Griffin, as the 2018 Star Teacher.



Atwoods Ranch & Home celebrates their grand opening in Waxahachie.



Jason Crenshaw's family members, Paula Todd, Alex Crenshaw and Taylor Crenshaw, are among those in attendance at the Edward Jones open house in Ferris.



Kadyne Garland and Kyler and Kyndal McElhane, of Red Oak, get ready to ride and play games at a carnival in Waxahachie.



The Red Oak Area Chamber of Commerce welcomes Womovo Consulting.



Charlie Hatfield, newly elected president of the Ferris Chamber of Commerce, addresses the attendees of the first meeting.



Pauline Loera with her baby daughter, Daenerys, visits the Diggers & Decker Family Funeral Home booth at a Red Oak event.

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Calendar

May:

4, 5

First United Methodist Church
Shred-it Document Disposal:
4:00-5:30 p.m., **May 4**; 10:00 a.m.-
noon, **May 5**, 505 W. Marvin St.,
Waxahachie. On-site shredding of
any paper documents for minimal
donations. Suggested donations are
\$20 for a 13-gallon bag and \$10 for
smaller containers. Proceeds benefit
mission work.

5, 6, 12, 13, 19, 20,
26, 28

Scarborough Renaissance Festival:
2511 FM 66, Exit 399A and I-35E.
Festival is set back in the time of
King Henry VIII with arts, crafts,
vendors, food and entertainment. For
more information, call (972) 938-3247
or visit www.srfestival.com.

5, 12, 19

Reading, Math & Staar Test
Comprehension Classes 10:00 a.m.-
2:00 p.m., Teachers Who Tutor, 3323
Ovilla Rd., Ovilla. Call (972) 515-8883
for details.



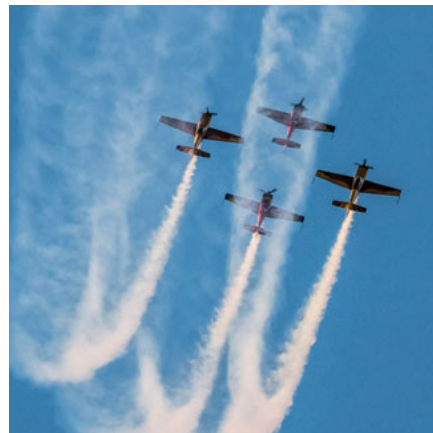
11

Red Oak Chamber of Commerce
Golf Tournament: 7:00 a.m., Old
Brickyard Golf Course, Ferris. \$150/

person. Cash and prizes awarded.
For more information, contact
Shelley Martinez at (972) 617-0906 or
admin@redoakchamber.org.

19

20th Annual Corsicana AirSho: 8:30
a.m., gates open; noon, show begins,
Corsicana Municipal Airport. \$10 per
person or \$20 per carload. Veterans
and military personnel and their
families are free.



25 — 27

National Polka Festival: Ennis. Visit
NationalPolkaFestival.com for full
event details.

June:

2

Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-in:
8:00-11:00 a.m., Mid-Way Regional
Airport. The event includes classic
airplanes and fighters, helicopter
rides, CAF vintage airplane rides,
fly-overs, Midlothian Classic Wheels,
Gold Wing Road Riders, live music,
children's activities and more.
Breakfast tickets are \$6 for adults and
children 8 and above. Children under
8 are \$3. Parking is free. For more
information, call (972) 923-0080 or
visit www.mid-wayregional.com.

Ongoing:

Third Mondays

Red Oak Book Club: 6:00 p.m., Red
Oak Public Library. Open to all adults
21+ living in the Red Oak area. For
more information, call (469) 218-1230
or email redoakbookclub@gmail.com.



Tuesdays

Writing for Enjoyment Group
meeting: 12:30-1:30 p.m. For
location of the meeting and more
information, call (469) 383-5365 or
email joanpomero@att.net.

Lariat Bridge Club: 6:30 p.m., Boy
Scout Cabin, 1139 Brown St.,
Waxahachie. For more information
or to confirm the meeting, email
Shari at weatherscf@yahoo.com or
call (505) 270-4017.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

North Ellis Co. Outreach assistance:
9:00 a.m.-2:30 p.m., 205 S. Main
St., Ferris. Assistance is for Red
Oak and Ferris residents. For more
information, call Denise Butler at
(972) 617-7261.

Ferris Public Library Story Time:

11:00 a.m., 301 E. 10th St., Ferris. Pre-
school children and their caregivers
are invited for stories. For more
information, call (972) 544-3699.

Wednesdays

Red Oak Library Toddler Story Time:
10:00-11:00 a.m., Free Crafts, story

time and learning games for children 18 months-5 years and their parents. Call the library at (469) 218-1230 for more information on all library events.

Wednesdays and Thursdays
The Red Oak Senior Citizens Group: 8:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd., Red Oak. Join for games and activities. Light breakfast provided both days. Lunch provided on Thursdays. \$2 per week membership fee. Call (214) 864-9014 for more information.

Thursdays
SYNERGY: 11:30 a.m., Sparacello's Deli, 600 Methodist St., Suite 3120, Red Oak. A time for business owners to network. Everyone welcome.

Third Thursdays
Ferris Lions Club meeting: 6:30 p.m.,

Scout House in Mutz Park, 201 E. 10th St., Ferris.

Third and Fourth Thursdays
God's Woven Hearts Ministry: 7:00 p.m., Lone Star Cowboy Church, Red Oak. Join in on efforts to gather and create items for homeless veterans and visit the elderly to do crafts and have fellowship. Feel free to bring your talents and attend a meeting. For more information, call Peggy Butler at (214) 417-1173.

Second Saturdays
Red Oak Opry: 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m., Lone Star Cowboy Church, 1011 E. Ovilla Rd., Red Oak. Tickets sold at the door. \$12 for adults; \$5 for children. For more information, visit www.redoakopry.com.

Ferris Police Department's Coffee with a Cop: 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.,

I45 Donuts, 502 E. 8th St., Ferris. Spend time visiting with your local police officers. Get to know them and express your concerns. For more information, call (972) 544-2233.

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

Fourth Sundays
Prayer Shawl Circle: 10:00 a.m.-noon, First United Methodist Church of Red Oak, 600 Daubitz Dr. For more information, call Beth Norris at (214) 392-0732.

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

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Creating a Legacy

— By Virginia Riddle

Busy blooming where planted is exactly what Charles Pulliam is doing at work and as a community volunteer and leader. “I have the opportunity to lead and have an impact. The needs are great. It can be overwhelming, so I get my full dose, along with like-minded people here, in helping others,” Charles said.

An Indianapolis, Indiana, native, Charles found his way to Texas twice, courtesy of the U.S. Air Force, with stops in Germany, Missouri and Colorado. Retiring after eight years of service spent in integrated avionics and obtaining the rank of sergeant, Charles began a career in the corporate world and then with Katy ISD in the Houston area. He remarked, “Serving in the military helped me figure out who I was, and I also discovered I like people more than technology.”

Graduating *summa cum laude* with a B.B.A. degree from LeTourneau University and an MBA from Dallas Baptist University, Charles is well equipped for his position as Life School’s chief development officer. “My primary role is to serve as Life School Foundation’s chief executive while gathering resources and making connections for the sustainability of this institution and its mission,” Charles explained.

Charles volunteers as vice president of the board of directors of Community Council of Greater Dallas, Top Investors Committee Board of Advisors and with Waxahachie CARES, Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce Leadership Committee, Waxahachie Project, Habitat for Humanity, Leadership Southwest and the Texas Food Bank. With his wife, Jeneé, he has a ministry at The Avenue Church for “nearly newlyweds.” “It was a recent honor to speak at Live to Lead,” Charles said.

With both his avocation and passion centered around building leaders with character through strong leadership, Charles made that statement the mission of Battle Creek Athletes, a nonprofit he and his 18-year-old son, Everett, founded in 2016. Practicing FFAW (flexibility, fundamentals, attitude and work), athletes play football during a weeklong camp each year. “Every kid does every skill during the week,” Charles said.

Everett and his 16-year-old sister, Addie Jo, are both students at Life School. Charles and Jeneé have one grown son, Daniel, who lives in Houston and one grandson, Greyson. When not working or volunteering, Charles loves spending time with friends and family, especially traveling and playing golf.

“My Life School teammates are so passionate about the impact we need to make in changing the culture and reaching across the nation. It’s a thrill when kids come to me to show their improving grades and when I hear positive comments about former students in the workplace.” Charles added humbly, “I’m allowed to be successful.” **NOW**

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