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# Red Oak NOW

M A G A Z I N E

June 2008

**Rockin'  
and Rulin'**

**Living Her  
Truest Life**

**Following  
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**Fun, Fearless  
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**Eric and Tabatha  
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## Editor's Note

### Dear Readers

June is here, and with the heat comes the best time to kick life into high gear! With so many things to do for summer vacations, there are many options to ensure this summer is a memorable and thrilling one.

Through these pages we present residents who live their lives in the realm of high speed and fun every day. First meet local adventure racer Malea Jaffe, who loves to participate in exciting competitive events from cross country running to mountain climbing. Then enjoy some high-energy music by local guitarist Kevin Snearly. Kevin not only thrashes his guitar, but also encourages his music students to enjoy their lives one riff at a time. Afterwards, burn some rubber with local father and son late model racers Skip and Colby O'Neal. Finally, meet local instructor Art Fagan, who not only teaches us how to test and tune our cars, but to enhance our lives by living it to its fullest.

May this issue encourage you to make this a high-performance summer full of extraordinary memories!

Diana Merrill Claussen, Red OakNOW Editor    dclaussen.nowmag@sbcglobal.net



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# Living Her Truest Life

— By Jaime Ruark



Adventure racing is a sport quickly growing in popularity. According to the United States Adventure Racing Association (USARA), it is a phenomenon that is sweeping the nation. The challenges of adventure racing are a combination of two or more disciplines including navigation, cross country running, mountain biking, paddling and climbing.

Local teacher, Malea Jaffe, is an avid adventure racer. She is a lover of nature and a marathon runner, trail runner, road racer and cyclist. "I have competed in some short-road races (some 5ks, very short distances), but I'm not really competitive on road races. I just do it for fun," she said, with a smile. "I'm really more interested in trail running. I like being out in the dirt and the trees. It's mentally more relaxing and stimulating at the same time."

With her husband of 31 years and teammate, Roger, Malea runs half and full marathons, including the recent Oklahoma City Memorial Marathon this past April. These races keep her in the shape required of an adventure racer, and they keep her outdoors where she loves to be. "In January, we ran a 50k, which is an ultramarathon. We ran at the Bandera Trail run, and it was brutal. Thirty-one miles of just incredible hills — it was one of the hardest things I've ever done," she shared. "It was amazing though, with beautiful country. I loved it."

The length of the race did take its toll on the couple, and



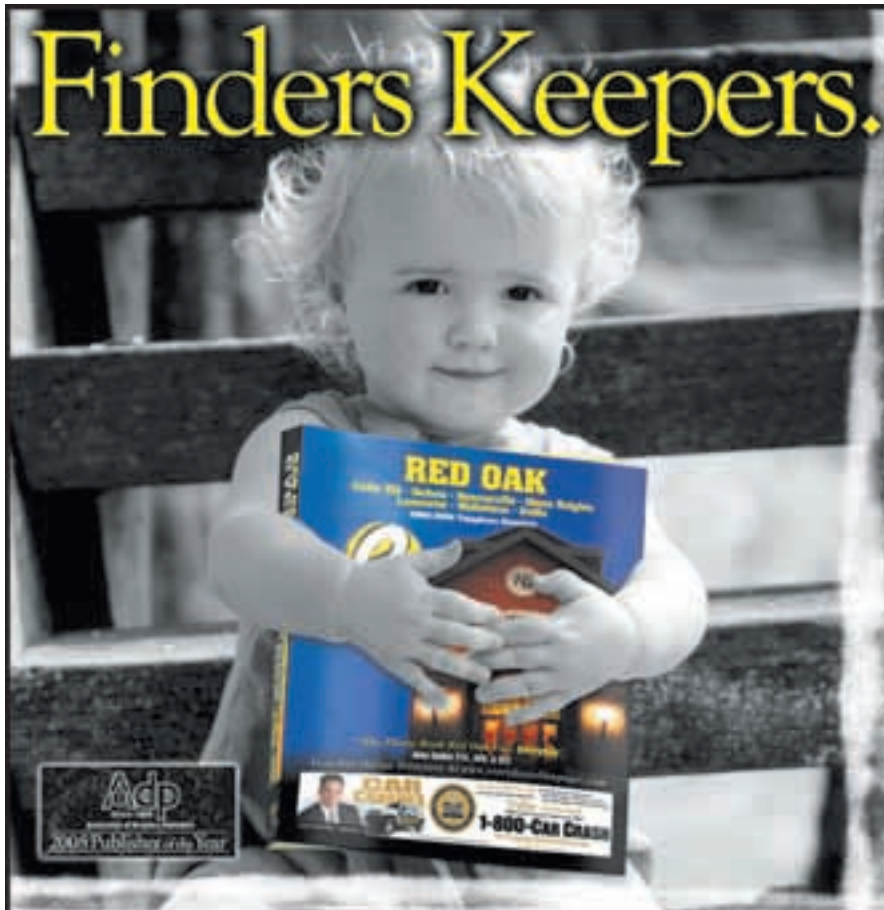
Roger began to have some pain, which forced them to slow their pace. "We were making really great time until my husband had some serious cramping issues at about mile 15," Malea recalled. "We had decided we would do this together no matter what, so we'd walk, and then we'd stop, and I'd massage his legs, and then we'd run some more. It took us just over nine hours, and it felt like an eternity, but we finished, and we weren't last!"

Malea's interest in adventure racing began a few short years ago when she was working out at the YMCA with friends. "They knew some people who had done adventure racing, and I was very intrigued by that. It sounded like a lot of fun, so I went with some friends down to Lake Whitney and observed the beginning of an adventure race, and I just thought, This is the coolest thing ever," she enthused. "So I joined up with a team who are really good about training people who have never raced before. They're called the Chubbies, and there's a man who has been racing forever by the name of Dub who is a great teacher. He took me in and I started training with him."

She was all smiles when asked to explain how an adventure race works. "Some people consider adventure racing a triathlon gone chaos. There's basically three disciplines: kayaking or paddling; trekking, which you can run or walk; and mountain biking. Usually, they'll have something extra



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in the race to split up the pack or just to add an extra challenge, like repelling or rock climbing, or even crazy things like puzzle solving," she detailed. "The coolest part of the race for my husband and I is that, throughout the whole thing, you're navigating. At the beginning of the race, they'll give you some coordinates and some clues and a topographical map. You have to be able to read a map and use a compass, while pacing yourself."



**"I'm really more interested in trail running. I like being out in the dirt and the trees."**

At first, Malea was training on her own, but Roger was quick to follow her down the adventure path. "My husband joined me because he said he would never see me otherwise," she laughed, "so he got a bike and started riding with me. Dub took us under his wing and trained us in the basics. We started with the Chubbies and have progressed and formed a new team called the Hounds. Teams consist of anywhere from 2 to 4 people, and you all stay together and work together. You usually can't be more than 100 feet from each other or you're disqualified, so it's all about teamwork."

The type of physical endurance needed for these races does not come easily. Malea and Roger train so they can withstand both the physical and mental demands. "We train for races by running a lot for the cardiovascular strength, and we bike when the trails are open," she said. "I train once a week

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on my road bike, and I run four to five days a week, anywhere from 25 to 40 miles a week. I lift weights as well."

There are often times when the mental training can be more difficult than the physical endurance, but Malea finds motivation from many sources, including her daughters, who encourage her to be her best. "My oldest daughter, Jessica, is 'miss organic girl' and has me hooked on organic foods, which has helped a lot in training," she said proudly. "My youngest daughter, Sarah, is a professional musician. When my husband and I are out training, we use our iPods to listen to her music a lot. The other night, we were running about eight miles, and the wind was in our face, and I was just having the hardest time. I had one of Sarah's songs on, and I think I played it six times in a row to get me through this one stretch of hills."

Adventure racing for Malea is all about having fun, but it is also a choice she and Roger have made to help them stay in shape. "We have chosen to be healthy as long as God allows us to be. We both enjoy the way we feel when we're working out. I know that sometimes people don't have that choice, but we want to do whatever we can now, so that when we get into our older years we are healthier than if we'd sat in front of the television all our lives," she expressed. Her racing teammates also make everything worthwhile. "I enjoy the people we work out with because everyone is very motivated. The camaraderie is very encouraging. In our training and every race we compete in, our goals are to always finish and to have fun. It's not about how fast we are; it's about having a good time."

On the wall of Malea's classroom is a favorite quote by Henry David Thoreau: "Our truest life is when we are in our dreams — awake." With a smile that shows she truly is living her dreams, she said, "Sometimes when we are in the middle of a race and we're just having so much fun, I think, This is my life! This is it! This is the best." **NOW**



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# Creating Enchantment

— By Diana Merrill Claussen



## At Home With Eric and Tabatha Chovanetz

At the end of a long and winding driveway sits Eric and Tabatha Chovanetz's fairy-tale manor. A pair of matching lion statues guard the home's fabulous and immense rustic entry. This manor's mythically inspired and giant-sized doorway is large enough to fit any fairy tale character wishing to enter this welcoming and enchanting home. The door is also our gateway to experience the journeys, stories and 4,200 square foot residence of this local Red Oak area family.

"We bought this lot in 1998," Erik said. After the purchase, Erik and Tabatha decided to build their home themselves. "All of the local builders in the area said I couldn't build a house within my four month time frame, but I did," he beamed.

The Chovanetz's held a vision regarding many of the details they needed their home to encompass. So, before the process began, they were faced with a dilemma. "One night I said, 'I'm not going to let either of us sleep until we narrow down our house plans.' So we picked our top five," Tabatha said.

Originally, they imagined their home to be one story with a bonus room for entertaining. "It ended up as a two story with all of the bedrooms on the first floor," Tabatha said. "The second floor has our game room, media room, cedar closet to store my Christmas items and a scrapbooking room." The reasons for these modifications from their original plan are pure and sweet.

"This house is our investment," Erik shared. "Our philosophy was to build the house for our son, Rylee, and our future children. We also wanted our home for enjoying life with our extended family and friends." Tabatha nodded in agreement and added, "When we

built the house, we decided it would be our forever home." Creating an enduring and endearing dwelling for their brood came down to just one thing: "We wanted the kids to have the stability of a home place," Erik shared.

So their journey began. "We first laid the foundation and started building in June 2003," Erik said. They then moved in four months later and shortly thereafter adopted their daughter, Ava, who is now 4 years old.

Upon entering this fabulous family





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built manor, it is immediately clear the Chovanetz's addressed every detail regarding their storybook dwelling. Every tale has a beginning, and the legend of this amazing residence begins after passing through the home's solid African Mahogany, custom wrought-iron-hinged front door. "When I found the whole door and frame in Canada I had them ship it here for me. I love that big huge door," Erik said.

Living within their dream home has held magical memories for the family

every step of the way. At first glance from the foyer, the living area is colossal and holds many cherished treasures. The Austin Stone column between the entry and parlor greets visitors and leads them to a plethora of rooms to explore. The front library holds many custom-built bookcases, and a lovely living area welcomes and encourages further discoveries to be made.

Stepping from the front section of the home into the living room brings additional thrill and excitement, especially when it is evident the



Austin Stone has magically gathered around the large and inviting fireplace and scrolled mantel. The sights within this thrilling and spacious room stir a frenzy of excitement, especially while viewing the built-in entertainment cabinet complete with niches and bookcases. "We really wanted something for our television and our pictures," Eric said. "I also wanted a place to exhibit my collection of Disney snow globes," Tabatha added.

From there, the wonderment of enchanting details and family living

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falls together in what is as exhilarating as a Disney World-inspired, ticker-tape parade. After strolling through the living quarters, guests will find themselves submerged in a tropical gourmet kitchen with its very own island. "All of the cabinets and wood frame doors within the kitchen and throughout the home are oak and were designed by Tobar Cabinets and myself," Erik said. The kitchen is also complete with an appliance garage, solid granite countertops and a dual oven. "My favorite thing is to bake," Tabatha

shared. "I also love to cook our many family recipes during the holidays."

The Chovanetz home is truly their castle, a fabled idea that becomes a reality upon viewing a complete wall within the kitchen and dining area constructed entirely of stone. "We used 25 tons of Austin Stone all throughout the house," Erik shared.

Off from the kitchen is the playroom, which delightfully leads to the children's bedrooms, complete with themes and special magical touches. Rylee's "Surf Shack" themed room is full of beachy fun. "Erik built the surfboard on Rylee's wall," Tabatha shared.

Ava's "Pretty in Pink" room includes a Teddy Bear swing Erik made with custom draperies created by Tabatha's grandmother. "She literally looked at a

picture of the curtains and made them herself," Tabatha beamed.

After visiting the children's rooms, a stairway displays many illustrations and memories from the family's adventures and travels. The top of the charming stairway opens onto the second floor, full of rooms dedicated entirely to delightful fun and merriment. Tabatha's scrapbooking room is complete with numerous cabinets, and her special cedar storage closets encompass both floors of the home. The game room and media room are full of mesmerizing amusement for those of any age. Each corner within the home

leads to a new sense of excitement and awe, and every member of the family loves living within the walls of this wonderful, dreamlike home. **NOW**



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**ARTS  
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# Rockin' and Rulin'

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Art can be presented and appreciated by those from all walks of life. Although a picture, sculpture or performance may mean something different to everyone, each entity possesses a door which can open into the center of one's soul. This is the beauty and meaning of the arts, and the way in which they should forever invoke inspiration and appreciation in the hearts of creators and audiences alike.

Some say the art of music can touch any listener's soul down to the core. Through the ages, the history of instrumental and vocal compositions has been known to invoke emotion in the hardest of hearts, while being credited as the catalyst for many historical actions throughout our history.

In the words of Beethoven, "Music should strike fire from the heart of man, and bring tears from the eyes of woman." Whether through song or strum, a good harmony has the power to soften even the gruffest of society. "Musical notes are a musician's letters to a word," shared local guitar enthusiast Kevin Snearly. "The musician then forms words by linking each note together and creating melodic musical sentences."

This local musician knows about the musical arts and the power it can hold. It has impacted his life since he was a small boy. "My mom was always singing in the choir or playing the piano," Kevin said. His interest in the arts seemed natural for him from the beginning. "I started playing the violin when I was 6 years old," he said. "Later, I turned that violin on its side and started plucking it like a guitar. By third grade, I started playing the electric guitar." Eventually, Kevin bought his first guitar. "I got that guitar for \$20 at a garage sale," he smiled. "I would then pick it up and learn the chords and scales."

During that time, Music Television (MTV) became popular and watching music videos catapulted Kevin into the world



of true musical appreciation. "I was really into recording the videos," he recalled. "I would record them while watching and listening to them over and over." Kevin said he would especially watch the guitar players and their hands while they were striking chords on their instruments. "I just kept working at it until I would find myself strumming for four or five hours a day," he shared.

Once Kevin advanced in his talent, he found he was not only in love with music, but with all of its vast artistic forms. Although he played on his own, and with many local bands, "I still didn't know what I wanted to do in life," he said. That was until he enrolled in music courses at Cedar Valley College (CVC). "I had moved to Dallas from McAllen, Texas, just to go to CVC," Kevin shared. "I later graduated with a recording degree and just got better and better."

Kevin did not realize just how far his skills had come until he started receiving high recognition. "I was given awards from my school and a few nice compliments too," he humbly shared, explaining how important music became to him. "My friends would ask me to go out with them, but I would always stay home so I could pluck and play. I'd just



## ARTS NOW


sit in my apartment all day practicing techniques. I love it, and I love doing something I love!"

Just what is Kevin doing now? He has become quite a well-known guitar teacher within our area and currently instructs at a local music facility. "I have about 60 students and teach six days a week," Kevin shared. "I love working with my students and really enjoy seeing the looks on their faces when they finally get something. Teaching really gives me a lot of joy, especially when you see the students progress. It's a beautiful thing. Currently, my youngest student is 9 years old, while my oldest is in her 60s."

Kevin's love of music and appreciation has continued to grow over the years. "I've played funk, punk, rock, hip-hop, R&B, bluegrass, jazz, '40s, '50s and even Tejano," he shared. At one point, Kevin was afraid the music industry was beginning to fade. "The music scene had been going downhill," he said. "Thank God for Guitar Hero. That game saved rock 'n' roll."

Besides teaching, Kevin has plans to learn more himself and to further his talent and musical diversity. "When I'm not teaching music, I'm listening to it and playing it," he said. "Until recently, I was performing in three bands, and I played all over the country. We even had corporate sponsors. I recently quit those groups so I can concentrate on getting better. In addition to teaching, my personal goal is to perform in a band where I am the worst one in it," he added, hoping to learn more from better players.

"When I don't play, I really miss it," Kevin shared. "Playing guitar is my creative outlet, and it's even helped me through some tough times. It's almost like my punching bag. I just pick up my guitar, pour my heart into it and eventually feel better while making beautiful music all at the same time." **ARTS NOW**



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**Sports**  
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# Fun, Fearless Family

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

For most of us, driving can often become mundane. Local resident Skip O'Neal, however, not only enjoys getting behind the wheel, but is especially eager to get into his race car.

The O'Neal family's need for speed started in the '60s with Skip's dad, Gene. "My dad raced before I was born," Skip said. "I remember when he used to race a '67 Camaro and a '55 Chevy. Dad was a Chevy man." Their shared love of cars led Skip to begin driving at a very early age.

"I flipped my first car at the age of 14 when I wasn't supposed to be driving," Skip said with a smile. "I then had to wait until I was 16 to get another car. I was good after that." During school, Skip was also on the football and wrestling teams, and worked for a racing engine company. He could also be seen helping his dad at the tracks while watching him set many world race records.

It was not until 1981 that Skip decided he wanted to be a drag racer. "During that time I raced a 1974 Z-28 with a 454 big block and nitrous," Skip shared. "You know, street racing was hot and heavy around this area." After Skip started winning races and learning more about the industry, he decided to try racing from another perspective. In 1986, he became the crew chief for former National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) Top Alcohol Dragster driver Kyle Henley.

During his NHRA job, Skip was able to travel the country for the Henley team, making big name racing friends like Shirley Muldowney. "I got a picture with Shirley and her dog, Skippy," he said, laughing at the fact that he and Shirley's dog had the same name.

Several years after his NHRA journey, Skip decided to come back home to Texas and open his own business. "I had worked at the race engine shop since I was in high school



Colby (left) and Skip (right) O'Neal share their love for racing.

and ended up there for 13 years," he shared. "So after being a crew chief I decided to open my own engine shop right here in Red Oak." He also decided to change his racing affiliation. "I guess you could say I grew out of drag racing," Skip shared. "It also seemed like the auto industry had just died."

With this realization, Skip decided to make a change in his racing life and started "running" in super late models. This jump from competing with two cars on the track to competing simultaneously with multiple vehicles was something Skip had always wanted to attempt. It would require him to also go from racing on a concrete track to one made of dirt.

Since that decision, Skip's love of the sport has grown and flourished, and racing in the Super Late Model Series has been a very exciting and rewarding

experience. "Once I got onto the track, I found myself racing all over the place," Skip said.

"When Skip's awesome, he's awesome," family friend and local racing legend David Langley said. "I knew Skip back when his dad was drag racing and winning everything in





## Sports NOW

sight. He comes from a long line of winners, and has been very successful in his life and in racing."

Skip's racing successes have mainly been within the state of Texas. "I am in the top 10 of featured wins at Devil's Bow Speedway in Mesquite," he said regarding his Super Late, 600 HP car. "The car has a limited type engine, but it is still fast. I can get up to 105 mph on the straightaways. These days, though, I'm pretty much a local racer and stay in the area. I also try to spend my time at home whenever I can," he added. Skip is not into chasing the points anymore, but he still races for the thrill of it. "Some people go hunting, fishing or work in the yard," Skip said. "I race because it knocks the edge of the week off of me."

Racing is also a very family oriented sport. "We go out to Devil's Bow and it is good clean fun," he shared. "My oldest son, Colby, has been going to the races and helping me at the track since he was little." Colby now attends the fire academy, and started racing in the Limited Modified classes in 2007. "Rooting for Colby at the track is just like starting all over again," Skip said. "Cheering for him on the racetrack takes me back to when I'd stand on the sidelines when he was playing soccer."

Skip and his wife, Holly, also have a 9-year-old son, Ethan, who loves seeing his dad racing around the track. "Ethan really loves the races. Sometimes the kids have more fun than the parents," Skip added.

There used to be a time when Skip was religiously at the track. Nowadays, this doting father and husband makes sure everything is in perspective. "Last year, I missed a bunch of races going to Oklahoma University games to see my 19-year-old daughter, Courtney, who is an OU cheerleader," Skip proudly smiled. While racing is important, Skip's family is priority, and he is glad to be the patriarch of this fun, fearless, family! **NOW**

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## Business NOW



*Ronni Nicholas and her staff work hard to create a loving environment for the children at Empowering Word's New Destiny Children's Center.*

Walk through the front doors of Empowering Word Christian Center and you just might notice something a little bit different than a regular churchgoing experience. “We are friendly, loving and real,” the church’s daycare director, Ronni Nicholas, beamed. “The purpose of church is to get right with God and to develop a relationship with Him and your brothers and sisters in Christ.” No matter what your background or who you are, Empowering Word welcomes everyone from all walks of life.

“A lot of people sometimes fall into the trap that you have to dress or act a certain way, or put on a certain persona,” Ronni said. “So many times you go to a church and are looked down on because you are not wearing

the ‘right’ clothes. Our Pastor Duane Thompson dresses in jeans, so if you are looking for any trappings of religion, you won’t find it here. At Empowering Word, we want everyone to feel comfortable.”

Many believe when it comes time to finding a church family, it is important to seek a place that helps bring you into a relationship with God. Empowering Word’s pastors say their church’s motto is to never condemn, but to simply speak in love.

Located at 118 South 342 in Red Oak, there are many groups for all ages that meet at Empowering Word. “Every other weekend, our Kidzspot outreach travels to local neighborhoods,” Ronni shared. “This outreach is a good way to meet your neighbors. We bring

a bounce house, play games, hand out flyers and perform puppet shows for the children within the community.”

Whether you are looking for a child friendly church or simply a place to worship, Empowering Word serves everyone from infants to the elderly. They offer a plethora of programs, such as their Women of Worship program and their Ladies Breakfast, while the men get together to go fishing or play softball on the Waxahachie church league.

If you are looking for a couples, singles or youth group, Empowering Word has something to assist everyone in meeting new friends. Many of the singles groups meet together for coffee and fellowship. “Currently our couples are learning a series called ‘Laugh Your



## Business NOW

Way to a Better Marriage,” Co-pastor Jill Thompson, said.

Throughout the school year Empowering Word also provides daycare and preschool, as well as before and after school programs through their New Destiny Children's Center. “Through the center we prepare the children to be lifelong learners,” Ronni shared. “Our curriculum includes Scripture, Bible study and prayer, and we teach the children in a safe environment where they feel secure while learning and growing.”

For the youth, there is the Ignited Ministry, where young people get together for wholesome fun and at times assist those less fortunate within the community and abroad. “This summer the youth will be going on a mission trip to Belize,” Pastor Jill said. “They will meet up with other kids, work in a church and assist in building a youth ministry.”

During the summer, Empowering Word will provide a Vacation Bible School program where the children will go on field trips and receive continued learning to help them retain their educational skills and to prepare them for the upcoming school year.

Within the walls of Empowering Word are many who love to help the community through an outreach ministry called Project Blessing. Through this ministry, the church has been known to do construction and yard work for the elderly, while also assisting families who have experienced tragedies such as a house fire. “Ultimately it comes down to us being the hands here on earth to do God's work,” Ronni said. “That task is gigantic.”

To learn more about Empowering Word, please call (972) 617-8335. They would love to see you for their 10:00 a.m. Sunday service or their Tuesday prayer and Wednesday service, which both start at 7:00 p.m. **NOW**




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## Education NOW



— By Sandra McIntosh

If you are looking for the auto shop at Red Oak High School, the faint smell of exhaust fumes and the clinking sound of wrenches being returned to their tool boxes will let you know you have successfully arrived at your destination. The sound of one man's voice can be heard over all the other's in this state-of-the-art, hands-on classroom. "Hey guys, hurry up and get this place cleaned up," auto shop teacher Art Fagan said. "The bell is about to ring." There is a slight sternness to his request, but the students quickly respond by following his instructions without question or complaint. They finish up by extending warm wishes to their teacher, who has also become their mentor.

Even as a young man, Art loved working on automobile engines. Graduating from Lancaster High School in 1977, he went straight to the local Chevrolet dealership. "I was put to work immediately," he remembered. Two years later, he moved to the Ford dealership. A decade would pass before a representative from Lancaster High School would make the call that inevitably changed Art's life. "A teaching position had opened up at Lancaster High School's auto shop," he explained. "I applied for the job and they hired me." Art went from earning a commission to the role of high school educator.

Returning to where his passion was born challenged Art in more ways than one. "Lancaster challenged me," he said. "It was a great learning opportunity." It was also at Lancaster

that Art first began teaching students from Red Oak.

"Kids from Red Oak were contracted out to Lancaster's facility," he said, further explaining that the auto shop class grew in popularity, thus prompting Red Oak to build their very own facility. When the building process began, Art was offered the position in Red Oak. "I told them the only way I'd leave Lancaster was if the program at Red Oak was top-notch," he said with a smile. "I wanted the best and as you can see, I got the best."

After 17 years in Lancaster, Art relocated to Red Oak as the following school year began. That was three years ago, and he fondly remembers how the first half of that school year was spent. "The building wasn't finished

when school started," he said. "We went back and forth from the library to the unfinished building." Art and his crew of young men were able to help with the completion of the overall design while spending time assembling furniture and equipment. The outcome is one that Art is very proud of. "It's one of the best auto shops in the state," he added.

Art teaches two three-hour classes per day with as many as 25 students per class. Since auto shop is an elective, the students in the first-year class have made the conscious choice to attend. "They want to be here," Art explained. Second-year students, electing to take the class again to further their knowledge, only make the class after Art gives his stamp of approval. "We not only help them learn a valuable trade," he said, "we also help them find jobs where they can put their skills to good use." Because of the popularity of Art's auto shop class, there are 36 students on the waiting list for the coming year.

First-year students spend four to six weeks in the classroom, where they learn the most important aspect of Art's auto shop — safety. "They must score a 90 or above on the quiz," he said. "They will pass the test before going out on the floor." Needless to say, Art's record of 21 years without a serious accident proves that the safety of his students has always come first. Second-year students help Art run the program. Since the auto shop classes are a mixture of new



## Education NOW

and seasoned students, those in the program for a second year are learning leadership responsibilities as they are paired in teams with the younger students. "Other schools keep the two classes separated," Art explained. "I have come to realize how beneficial the combined classes are. We are not only teaching them a trade, they are also learning all-important life skills."

Nearly all major tests are administered orally. "I test one student at a time," he said, "in an interview-like atmosphere." Art asks them questions that need detailed answers. "I have found great success in oral testing," he added. Today, Art is concentrating on hands-on,



group teaching. In doing so, he is reaching the special needs population of auto shop. "I learned I was missing so many kids," he said, referring to the "all academic" way he taught prior to Red Oak. "I've gained valuable knowledge on how to include all my students, regardless of their level. It's all about helping every student find success."

In the beginning, Art laughed when friends and family told him he had found his calling as a teacher. Today, he accepts that title with pride as he continues to encourage students to further their education after high school. "It's all about attitude and work ethic," he said, perhaps not fully understanding that he is the example of which they are following. **NOW**

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## Around Town NOW



Tony Daniels, top left, took time out to sit down and sign his son up to participate on a local team. Members of the Red Oak peeewee football team, top left center, helped with the sign-up process. Amber and Evelyn Bishop, top right center, enjoyed a bright and sunny day. Mrs. Keane, top right, took an award back to Eastridge Elementary for possessing the most spirit. The 2008 Education Foundation Gerry Ann Fun Walk/Run, second row left, started with a bang and over 1,200 participants. Steve and Karen Williams, second row right, helped find homes for some local kittens. The ROHS cheerleaders, third row left, earned a trophy at the walk/run event for the most participation from an organization. RO peeewee cheer coaches Olivia Slaughter, Lori Thompson and Faryn Ragsdale, bottom left, enjoyed volunteering at a recent event. The Backyard Bandits, bottom right, enjoyed some post-game treats.



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## Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning

### IN THE KITCHEN WITH BOBBIE SULLIVAN

#### CREAM CHEESE DANISH

2 cans crescent rolls  
2 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese  
1 egg, separated  
1 cup sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla

#### GLAZE

1/8 cup powdered sugar, more or less for desired coverage  
2 Tbsp. milk

Layer a 9 x 13-inch baking dish with several rolls from a can of crescent rolls. Mix together cream cheese, egg yolk, sugar and vanilla. Spread over crescent layer. Cover mixture with remaining can of crescent rolls. Beat egg white until stiff and spread over top layer. Bake at 350 F for 35 minutes. While cooling, prepare glaze by mixing powdered sugar and milk to desired consistency. Drizzle glaze over top.

#### TEXAS CHOCOLATE CAKE

1 stick butter  
1/2 cup oil  
1 cup water  
4 Tbsp. cocoa  
2 cups sugar  
2 cups flour

2 eggs  
1 tsp. vanilla  
1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
1 tsp. baking soda  
1/2 cup buttermilk  
**GLAZE**  
1 stick butter  
1 16-oz. box powdered sugar  
4 tsp. cocoa  
8 Tbsp. milk

Combine butter, oil, water and cocoa in a saucepan; bring to boil and set aside. Mix sugar and flour in a large bowl. Add in cocoa mixture. Add eggs, vanilla, cinnamon, baking soda and buttermilk; mix well. Pour into a greased 9 x 13-inch baking pan. Bake 350 F for 25 to 30 minutes, until it turns loose from sides of pan. Prepare glaze by melting together butter, powdered sugar, cocoa and milk. Ice the cake while warm.

#### JIFFY NO-BAKE COOKIES

1 stick butter  
2 cups sugar  
3 Tbsp. cocoa  
1/4 cup milk  
2 tsp. vanilla

3 cups raw Quick-Cook oatmeal  
1 cup coconut (optional)  
1 cup pecans, chopped (optional)

In a medium saucepan mix butter, sugar, cocoa and milk; bring to boil. Boil for 1 minute. Remove from heat. Add vanilla, oatmeal, coconut and pecans; mix well. Drop on wax paper by teaspoons. Let cool.

#### HASHBROWN POTATOES

4 medium potatoes  
1/4 cup onions, chopped  
1/2 medium sweet red pepper, chopped  
2 Tbsp. flour  
1/2 cup milk  
1/4 tsp. salt  
pepper, to taste  
1/4 cup butter

Bake potatoes at 350 F for 1 hour until done, or pierce potatoes and microwave 12 to 14 minutes. Cool slightly; peel and cube. Place potatoes in a bowl; add onions and peppers. In another bowl, combine flour, milk, salt and pepper until smooth. Pour over potatoes and toss. In a large skillet, melt butter. Add potato mixture and cook over medium heat for 15 minutes until golden. Makes 6 servings.

**M**arrying her high school sweetheart, Charles Sullivan, straight out of high school made learning to prepare meals essential for Bobbie. Since then, having two children, Haley and John, and six grandchildren, cooking has become a joy. The holidays bring togetherness to her kitchen, with all the grandchildren happily helping. "They like to help add and stir in the ingredients," she said. "Even the boys like to help."

When it is a pretty day, you can usually find Bobbie outside gardening. "I am an outside person," she claimed. "I love gardening. That's my thing!" With her daughter living across the pond, a grandchild or two can usually be found helping her in the garden. She admits spending time outside with her family is where she is the happiest. **NOW**

To view more of your neighbors' recipes, visit our archives at [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).



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## Finance **NOW**

# Health Savings Accounts: A Tax-advantaged Way to Reduce Health Insurance Costs

— By Andrea Walton

Included in the Medicare Prescription Drug legislation signed into law in 2003, was a gift to people looking to reduce their health insurance costs. It's called the Health Savings Account, or HSA. Since that time, HSAs have grown in popularity and have become a way for consumers to keep the costs of their healthcare down.

The concept of HSAs is simple. First, to be eligible for an HSA, you must purchase a high-deductible health plan (HDHP). An HDHP is generally a plan that has an annual deductible of at least \$1,000 for self-only coverage and at least \$2,000 for family coverage. In other words, you pay for routine medical care like doctor visits, while insurance covers catastrophic medical expenses. Since you accept more of the expense of your healthcare, your premiums will be substantially lower.

This is where the HSA comes in. An HSA is a separate account into which you can deposit pre-tax dollars. In 2008, the maximum annual amount you may contribute to your HSA is \$2,900 for individuals and \$5,800 for families. If you are age 55 by the end of the year, you may contribute up to an additional \$900. Medicare enrolled individuals cannot contribute to an HSA.

To be eligible for an HSA, your high-deductible health plan must have a deductible of at least \$1,100 for an individual

HSA (i.e. self plan) or \$2,200 for a family HSA (i.e. family plan). Also, the HDHP must have a maximum out of pocket expense of \$5,600 for a self plan and \$11,200 for a family plan.

You may take federal income tax-free distributions from an HSA to pay for qualified medical expenses including doctor visits, eye and dental care and even qualified long-term care insurance premiums. Any money not used in the year can remain in the HSA and continue to grow tax deferred; it's not a "use it or lose it" type of account.

If you withdraw money for something other than qualified

medical expenses before you are 65, the withdrawal will be taxed as ordinary income and subject to an additional 10 percent tax penalty. At age 65, the penalty tax no longer applies; however, funds withdrawn will be taxed as ordinary income if used for non-qualified medical expenses.

An HSA can be an effective financial tool, particularly for those who are uninsured or underinsured, small business owners or anyone facing the challenge of affording quality health insurance coverage. To find out if HSAs are right for you, talk to a financial services professional who knows your needs. **NOW**



*Andrea Walton is a State Farm agent based in Red Oak.*

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## Health NOW

# Health That is Skin Deep

— By Betty Tryon

As the hot, summer days wear on, concern for the health of your skin usually reaches its peak. The skin carries the honor of being the largest organ of the human body. With such a large area, surprisingly, many of the problems encountered with it are easily remedied. That is primarily because the skin has the ability to rejuvenate and regenerate itself. A basic understanding of the general anatomy of the skin gives insight into this process.

The skin consists of three layers. The top layer, epidermis, is the skin you see. It constantly forms new cells. These new cells replace the old ones. This top layer of the skin also contains the pigment melanin. This pigment gives the skin its color and causes it to tan by producing more melanin when exposed to the sun.

The second layer of the skin lies beneath the epidermis and sustains the health of the skin because the blood vessels located there provide oxygen, nourishment and temperature regulation for the skin cells. The nerve endings are found there, as well as the sweat and oil (sebaceous) glands. Also located in the second layer is collagen, a protein that provides support to the epidermis.

The third layer houses the subcutaneous fat, which holds the adipose (fat-filled) cells and provides insulation to keep our

bodies warm. The depth of the third layer varies depending upon how much fat an individual possesses. This layer is where cellulite forms.

For healthy, radiant and glowing skin, there are some simple guidelines to follow. Eat healthy well-balanced meals, drink plenty of water and get a moderate amount of exercise every day. To keep skin clean requires twice-daily cleaning with whatever facial cleanser you feel most comfortable. Moisturize after every cleansing with the product that works best for you. The different types of moisturizers are numerous and you can easily find one tailor-made for your skin type. When you venture outside, wear sunscreen for protection, SPF 15 or higher is recommended. Apply at least 30 minutes before exposure to the sun. Proper protection will save you from not only skin cancer, but also premature aging.

The skin's incredible ability to shed and produce new cells can easily correct many problems. For example, many over-the-counter products can reduce the appearance of light wrinkles. They include: microdermabrasion products, products containing alpha-hydroxy acids and chemical peels. More extreme measures require the assistance of a professional — laser resurfacing, botox injections, dermabrasions and dermal fillers.

Knowing how to care for your skin and correct minor problems can restore vitality to skin and maintain that healthy look for many years to come. **NOW**

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





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# June 2008

## Community Calendar

### First and Third Tuesdays

Red Oak Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m. at 207 West Red Oak Road. (972) 617-3577.

### Tuesdays and Thursdays

Alcoholics Anonymous: 7:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 Red Oak Rd. Non-smoking. (972) 617-9100.

### Second Tuesday

Wagon Wheel Saddle Club meeting, 7:30 p.m. (972) 223-8118. [www.freewebs.com/wagonwheelsaddleclub](http://www.freewebs.com/wagonwheelsaddleclub).

### Third Wednesday

Ellis County Christian Women's Connection luncheon: 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Hwy. 287. Cost: \$13.00. Vouchers for child care available. (972) 937-2807 or (972) 937-9984.

### Third Thursday

American Business Women's Association meeting: 5:45 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center. (972) 938-0703. [stephanie@customcaregivers.com](mailto:stephanie@customcaregivers.com).

### Last Thursday

DeSoto Art League meeting. [www.desotoartleague.com](http://www.desotoartleague.com).

### First Saturday

Red Oak Fire Rescue CPR classes: 9:00 a.m. Register in advance. (469) 218-7713. [www.redoaktx.org](http://www.redoaktx.org).

### First and Third Saturday

Family Story Time: 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m., Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. (469) 218-1230.

### Every Monday in June and July

Summer Reading Club: 7:00 - 8:00 p.m., Red Oak Public Library. Register at library. Performances by a magician, yo-yo champion and live animals. Weekly prizes awarded. [www.redoakpubliclibrary.org](http://www.redoakpubliclibrary.org).

### June 1 - 2

Best Southwest Baseball USSSA Class A North Zone Tournament. All Red Oak hosted games will be played at Lindsey Park. [www.redoakbaseball.com](http://www.redoakbaseball.com).

### June 7

Mid-Way Regional Airport's Annual Pancake Breakfast Fly-In: 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Breakfast tickets: \$6.00. (972) 923-0080. [www.mid-wayregional.com/links.html](http://www.mid-wayregional.com/links.html).

### June 14

City of Red Oak Trash-off: 7:00 - 11:00 a.m., ROHS football parking lot. Open to Red Oak citizens only. (972) 576-3414. [jwae@redoaktx.org](mailto:jwae@redoaktx.org).

Ovilla Garden Club's Garden Tour: 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Tour starts at Ovilla Heritage Park, FM 664 and Main Street. Tickets: \$10 in advance or \$12 the day of the tour. Plant sale and refreshments. Vendor space available. Call

Bobbie Mason (972) 742-0738 or Carolyn Ross at (972) 743-1878 for information and tickets.

### June 17

Ringling Brothers clowns, Slappy and Monday, will read and perform at 1:30 p.m., Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. (469) 218-1230. [www.redoakpubliclibrary.org](http://www.redoakpubliclibrary.org).

### June 20 - 22

Summer Balloon Classic, Mid-Way Regional Airport in Midlothian. Fifty balloons take to the skies. Continuous aviation entertainment throughout the day. Free to the public. \$5 parking. [www.summerballoonclassic.com](http://www.summerballoonclassic.com).

### June 21

Red Oak Pee Wee Football Association to host New Player "Play Day" at Red Oak Junior High's football field. All children must be registered with the league prior to event. (972) 576-2211.

### June 28

Red Oak White and Blue Independence Day celebration at Red Oak City Park. Activities: 5:00 p.m. Fireworks: 9:30 p.m. Volleyball tournament and chili cook-off. (469) 218-1202.

*For more community events, visit our online calendar at [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).*

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## Join Us For Men's Health Day

**M**ost guys like to take charge, be in control. That is, until it comes to their health. When was the last time you had a check-up? Do you know your cholesterol numbers? How about your blood pressure?

Baylor Medical Center at Waxahachie invites you to join us for Men's Health Day - a morning devoted solely to male health.

We have physicians giving a health talk at the top of each hour 9:00, 10:00 and 11:00. **Call 1-800-4BAYLOR to get more information and to reserve a spot.** Seating is limited so call today!

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*\*For a more accurate reading, do not eat or drink anything after midnight before the screening. You may take your regular medications as directed.*

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