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July 2008

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Sacrifice
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Class Act

**Simplicity
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**More Than
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*On the Cover:
Tom Lichtenwalter captured
his brother's sons on a day at
the rodeo.*

Photo by Ivey Photography.

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Subscriptions are available at the rate of \$35 per year or \$3.50 per issue. Subscription and editorial correspondence should be sent to: *MidlothianNOW*, P.O. Box 1071, Waxahachie, TX 75168. For advertising rates and other information, call (972) 937-8447 or e-mail us at: rhensley@nowmagazines.com.



Midlothian NOW

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

The signers of the Declaration of Independence pledged, "For the support of this declaration, with firm reliance on the protection of the divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor." This same spirit of faith, determination and love of country resides today in the hearts of many who sacrifice for us in perilous places. One of the ways they serve is in the Iraq War. Michael Falls is a young man the Midlothian community can be proud to call its own. Read his compelling story in this issue.

Contributing to excellence is kindergarten teacher, Sharon McDonald, who specializes in print and literacy. Check her out in EducationNOW. Simplicity can be a good thing. In ArtsNow, Tom Lichtenwalter shares some of his beautiful "simple" paintings.

Be careful with the fireworks on the fourth and have a good one!

Betty Tryon

MidlothianNOW Editor



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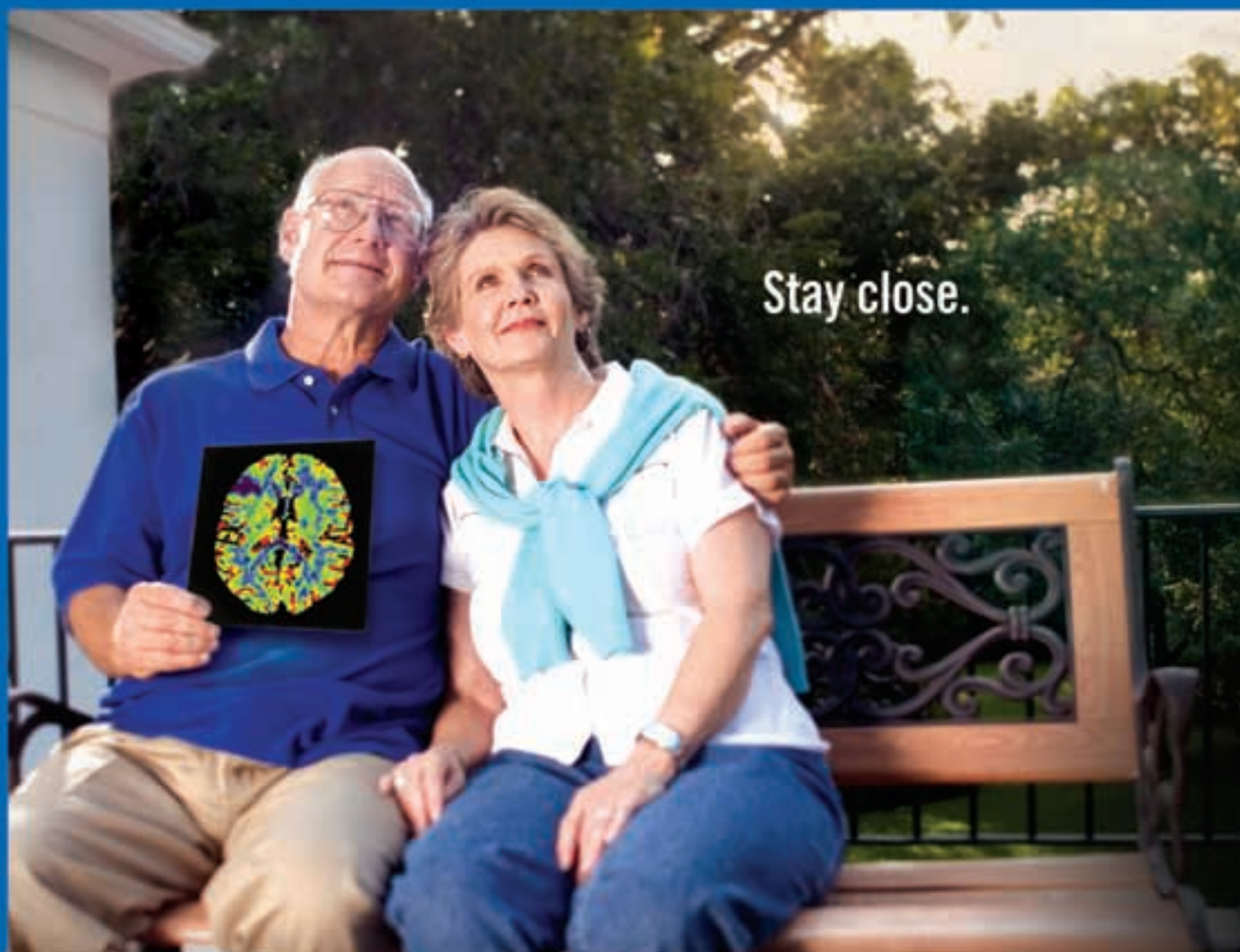
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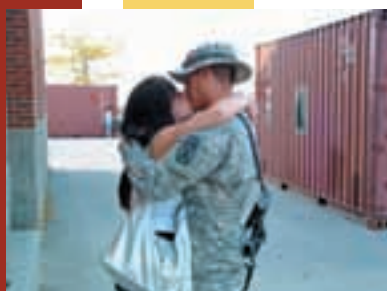
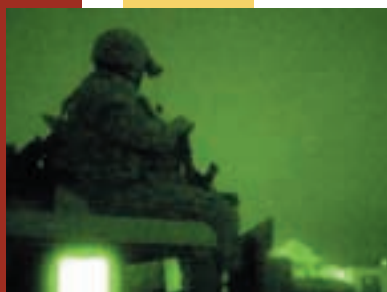
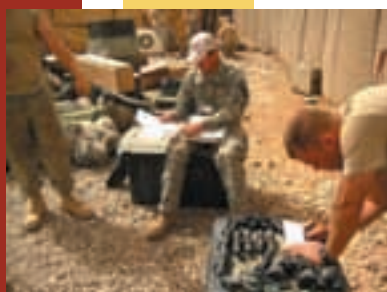
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Service and Sacrifice *With Honor*

— By Betty Tryon

In the midst of the rockets, grenades, bullets and extremists, some of Midlothian's finest serve with big hearts and true grit. One of those currently serving is Michael Falls, 2nd Lieutenant in the Infantry. "My unit, Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade combat Team and 10th Mountain Division was deployed on September 8, 2007, en route to the vicinity of Kirkuk, Iraq. I am an Infantry Rifle Platoon Leader."

Michael's responsibilities are impressive and dangerous. He, by necessity, must engage the enemy to detain/destroy al-Quida and the Islamic Army of Iraq forces. He has been thoroughly trained in preparation for his mission. As a 2006 graduate from Texas Tech University and Army ROTC (Reserve Officer's Training Corps) commissionee, he completed the Infantry Officer Basic Course, Airborne School and Ranger School at Fort Benning, Georgia. He listed some of his responsibilities: "I actively

execute dismounted operations. I conduct patrols, ambushes, raids on individual targets and security through proximity. I also have the responsibility of overseeing the security of seven villages or towns within our battlespace, as well as establishing an effective infrastructure and essential services."

His job is not exclusively within the boundaries of his troops. As a leader, he

must connect with the leaders in the area. Elaborating, Michael said, "Most days I meet with local leaders, Muktars (local village representatives), Imams (religious leaders in villages) and city council members. The typical dialogue usually consists of helping alleviate the power, water and agricultural problems for that respective village, which are usually the

same [needs] as the next [village]. I conduct assessments of local schools to verify the needs of the district and produce a report outlining exactly what they need. I also discuss local security issues



and how to improve them by utilizing Iraqi police and the Iraqi army."

All of this activity has produced positive results related to the future of the Iraqi citizens. Listing a few of his accomplishments, Michael stated, "I have currently helped jumpstart water projects for two towns, along with a power substation in another. When I get a chance during city council meetings, I try and educate the members on how to effectively establish a local economy that can be self-sustained without the help of the Kirkuk Provincial Government." Michael



hesitates to take personal credit for the good things that have occurred. He simply refers to the work as a part of what an infantry soldier does.

As you can imagine, the environment and the efforts necessary to perform the job can produce stress. Relieving stress in such a perilous location can be a challenge. "There really isn't a whole lot to do to relieve stress," he stated. "We do have a makeshift weight room where most of the soldiers spend their time. We just had a computer and phone center established, but without a regular rotation of qualified people to maintain it, the phones and computers are down."

The living quarters for Mike and his platoon would probably not win any awards for amenities, but for now, it is home. He explained, "My platoon and

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I live in four metal Connexs, which are modified to hold our soldiers. We sleep on wooden bunk beds we built from wood supplied. We do throw the football around quite a bit, and many of my soldiers play the guitar. However, on a COP (combat outpost) like ours, there is usually more work to be done in order to maintain the patrol base. I personally do not have a lot of free time. Most platoon leaders don't."

When asked about the very human emotion of fear, Michael brushed it



aside by saying, "Combat is surreal. It is an adrenaline rush. There is really no way to explain it unless you have experienced it. I don't want to sound like I have all of these war stories because I don't. Being calm and collected as a leader is vital in order to maintain command, control and effectively engage the enemy. During the first three months of the deployment, we were receiving indirect fire from mortars and improvised artillery every other day. We have been targeted by rockets on multiple occasions, with one hitting one of my trucks. Thankfully, it did not detonate. Grenades were commonplace at almost every single city council meeting we attended in our particular town. VBIEDs (Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device — roadside bomb) have become a usual tactic."

In such an environment, inevitably someone gets injured or worse.



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Michael agreed, "This deployment, we have had 19 casualties in our company and eight of those were key leaders in the company. The thing about soldiers in combat is we all seem to pick ourselves up, lick our wounds and then head right back out there the next day. That is a tribute to the men of my platoon and company. I personally take all of these events and try to learn how to mitigate them the next time."

For every soldier on duty, there are many people back here in the states, who love them and wish them well. Michael is no exception. The support of his loved ones keeps him strong. "My



fiancée and I keep in regular contact, as well as my family. They understand the mission and what we are doing here. The support they generate back home is more than I could ever ask from anyone else. When the days are long and burdensome, hearing the loving sound of my fiancée's voice calms me and reminds me that the support is stronger than ever."

Even though Michael's job is potentially life-threatening, he is proud to be a part of the team. He said, "I have the most fulfilling job in the Army. Being an infantry platoon leader in combat is the most rewarding experience of my life; I am honored to serve the men of 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company, 1-87. Whether [or not] you agree with the war, please understand, my men sacrifice life and limb every day to see the mission accomplished and help the Iraqi people. We are proud to serve the American people and humbly do so without reserve."

Well said, well served, well done. To Michael and those who serve with him: Thank you. **NOW**



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Unforgettable Family Fun

— By Sandra McIntosh

Just standing on the porch nearly 17 years ago, Sam and Lisa Combs knew the keys to the historical three-bedroom, two-bath home would open the doors to their future as husband and wife. Their wedding was slated for July 19 and they were in the market for a place in which to merge their lives together as one. “We looked in the window and said, ‘Let’s buy it,’” Sam said, explaining that they had not even walked through the two-story abode when a love for the home began to grow within them. “It was home the moment we moved in,” Lisa added, with a smile. “We all loved it, problems and all.”

To sit back and listen to the couple retell their love story, you have to return to the days before Sam asked Lisa out on their first date. He grew up in Duncanville and was the owner of a video store. “I grew up in Cedar Hill,” Lisa laughed, as the memories began to flood her mind. “I lived in Midlothian with my two boys and was working in Duncanville at a beauty salon two doors down from Sam’s video store.” Needless to say, she began cutting

At Home With Sam and Lisa Combs





his hair, and he began renting movies to her on a regular basis. "We dated four years, and we were only married a month when we moved into our new home," she added.

The prairie-style dwelling was built back in 1915 by Dr. Sewell as a wedding present for his new bride. The upstairs was going to be completed as the couple had children, but sadly, they never did. As time went on, the home sold and had several owners. A couple of buildings were added in the back in the 80s, making for prime rental property. When Sam and Lisa purchased the home, it was in the early stages of restoration, but the attic that was to be home to the Sewell children was still nothing more than a huge floored space. "We lived in two rooms when the four of us moved in," Lisa explained. "We hung broom handles across the





French doors so we'd have a closet."

They are proud of what they have been able to create over the years. Lisa feels her home is cozy and complete, but because of its age, it will need lots of continued attention. Sam, on the other hand, agrees to disagree. "It's still not finished," he said, as Lisa added, "I told you he'd say it was still a work in progress." As soon as they settled into a routine, the hard work got underway. The remodel was not limited to one



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room at a time. The popcorn ceilings were removed in the entryway and the now Coca-Cola kitchen, and Lisa is hopeful that one day the popcorn affect will be removed from the ceiling in the formal dining room, too. The walls received a fresh coat of paint. Carpet was pulled up to unveil the hardwood floors beneath. Lisa, using her passion for sewing to the best of her ability, designed and handcrafted all the curtains and window treatments

throughout the home.

Cleaning up five wood-burning fireplaces became another major undertaking. "After we'd been here a while, Sam crawled up into the fireplace in the dining room," Lisa said, explaining that someone before them had bricked the fireplace up from the inside. "When the bricks came out, so did years of soot." The house was covered in a thick, black dust and Sam came out looking like a

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raccoon, with two white circles around his eyes. They also converted the upstairs by adding three bedrooms, a bathroom and a laundry room. "All the things added upstairs are true period pieces," Sam said, referring to the bathroom sink, commode and antique claw-foot tub, which they found in the storage building out back. "We scavenged and hunted until we found exactly what we were looking for," he added.

The two columns flanking each side of the tub were found in the attic and put to good use. The wedding dress displayed in one corner was found at an estate sale. "We are junkers, and we believe in using everything we have," Lisa said. "Sam likes the electrical stuff, and I have a love for the true antique furniture pieces." Mixing their two passions has made for one beautiful home, which boasts of at least one clock in each room — all of which are



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in working condition thanks to Sam's patience and expertise. Intermingled are auction, garage sale and estate sale finds, which lend to the eclectic feel Lisa was going for from the very beginning. "I can see something at a garage sale for \$1," she said. "I come home, paint it and put it exactly where I envisioned it going."

Today, with their two boys, Brad and Blake, grown and gone, Sam has



reconverted two of the five bedrooms. He now has a downstairs study and his home office upstairs. In the study, visitors will be entertained by a cylinder-type phonograph that remains in pristine working condition. They can also hear tales of a time when Sam did not know the value of what he had in a certain bamboo fly rod. "It belonged to my dad," Sam explained. "Until I was told of its monetary value,



I was beating the bushes with it."

Other collections include: Lisa's Archie jelly jar glasses, framed "Mottos for Mothers" samplers and handmade quilts found in nearly every room of the home, as well as on the front porch and on the screened-in porch which overlooks the backyard, filled with greenery, flowers, birdhouses and brick walkways. "I collect things that make me smile and bring back happy times," she said, referring to the quilts purchased at a family garage sale at the age of 18. Lisa also collects Lucy dolls, including Desi, Fred and Ethyl, which date back more than 20 years. One of Sam's most prized collections is found on the walls in his home office. "I collect vintage movie posters," he said, pointing to Errol Flynn, John Wayne and Charlie Chaplin posters from the early 1930s. "He also collects Dallas Cowboy footballs that have been signed by the whole team," Lisa proudly stated.

They tried to sell the house two years ago and the boys would not hear of it. "They told us they have to be able to come down those stairs on Christmas morning," she said, adding the marks and indentations from skateboards and roller blades do have sentimental value. Sam and Lisa's home is a collection of more than just things. Throughout the years, it has become a collection of special moments filled with love, laughter and unforgettable family fun. **NOW**

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Simplicity at Its Best

— By Betty Tryon

**“My preferred medium
is watercolor.
It’s hard and I like it.”**



The young boys were dressed for any serious cowboy wrangling that might come their way. Their shirts were a tad too big, as were their cowboy hats, but it did not make any difference. They had something important to do —enjoy the day at the rodeo. The moment, titled *Pardners* and captured in watercolor by their granduncle, Tom Lichtenwalter, makes a heartfelt impact because of the simplicity of the painting. “I like to keep things simple,” explained Tom. “I don’t want a lot of things competing with the figures in the picture. I do a lot of children. Usually, figures capture

my interest. I can’t do real portraits, but I do pencil well.”

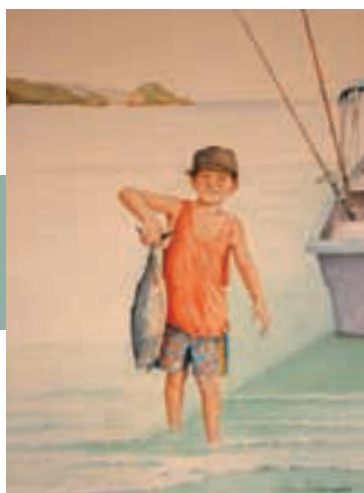
One of Tom’s grandchildren takes center stage in another painting titled *Sam’s Big Catch*. The child, a triumphant grin on his face, is holding a fish almost as large as he is — once again showing Tom’s love of keeping it simple. “This painting is the combination of three different photos. My kids are always excited when I do one of their kids.”

Tom first started painting in eighth grade; everything he learned is self-taught. “My preferred medium is watercolor. It’s hard and I like it. The colors are brighter. Using oil for oil

ARTS NOW

painting, you can cover up mistakes but with watercolors you have to start all over again."

Like most artists, Tom has a space he calls all his own. In his studio, he finds a refuge from the world. "Painting keeps me sane," he laughed. "I have to be careful because I could get lost in there. Once I was working in my studio, looked at the clock and it was 5:00 a.m. and I had to go to work that day! My favorite time to be in the studio painting is on a Saturday



morning or in the middle of the night, although I am getting too old for that. If I am on a roll, I'll put on Jimmy Buffet," he said smiling at the thought.

Tom also loves to listen to jazz players. His first painting was an oil painting of a jazz player done in black and white. Hanging in his home are four pictures he did of jazz players. All four paintings are striking in a unique eye-catching manner. Three of the paintings are in watercolor and one is an oil painting. With a black background, the only thing you see on the painting is a white sketched outline of the jazz player and his instrument.

So far, Tom has not entered any of his work in art shows, citing the time factor. "If I retired, I would do shows," he stated. "I probably have done no more than 100 pictures. In the last

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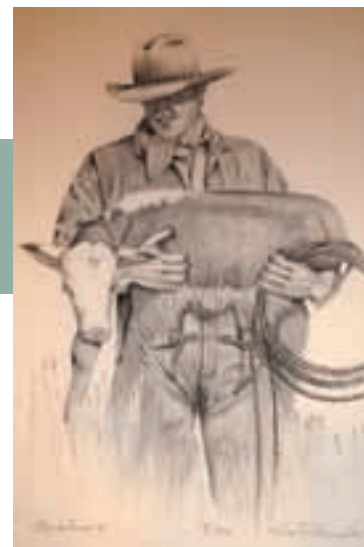
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eight or nine years, I have turned out a lot more. The reason why I have not done more pictures is because of working full time and raising a family. I don't have 10 hours a day to work with this."

Advertising in *Cowboys & Indians* magazine and on the Web site Coupralux are the only advertisements for his paintings so far. "In the *Cowboys & Indians* magazine, about two or three years after the ad had run, a lady called and said she had saved the advertisement because she wanted to buy the picture. I no longer sell the originals, just the

"I like to keep things simple."



prints. Coupralux makes quality giclée prints of my paintings."

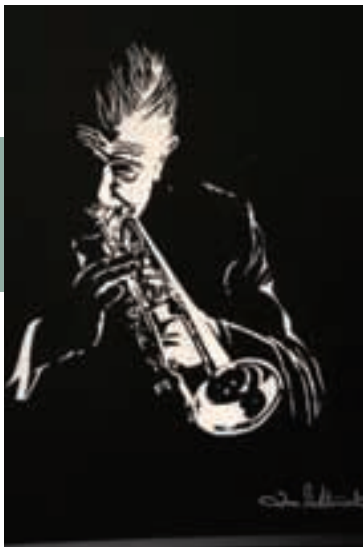
As Tom has painted more over the years, his confidence has grown also. "When I was painting a picture, I used to ask people what they thought of this or that. Now I don't show something until it is finished. Because I enjoy painting, I do it for myself, not to please anyone else. When I think I am done with a painting, I will leave it alone, come back in a week or two with a fresh eye and change something about it. I do appreciate my wife Susan's comments: she has a good eye."

ARTS NOW

Tom did not pursue an educational background in artwork. He went to North Texas University and University of Texas at Arlington for his education, where he studied business and marketing. His practical approach was he needed to make a living for his family. "I remember this extremely talented artist who used to sell his work on the street. His work was incredible, and I thought if he can't make a living doing this then I certainly couldn't! My painting is more of a hobby."

Even though he does not make his living selling his paintings, in most

"Painting keeps me sane."



of his business ventures through the years he has managed to incorporate an element of art in his work. During his earlier employment, he worked as a commercial artist and in marketing. LTV (Ling-Temco-Vought) was one of the companies that employed him as a commercial artist. Tom said, "This was before computers. We had to draw the illustrations and do the graphic designs that had to be typed, cut and pasted."

Even though Tom does not paint for his livelihood, he still manages to create beautiful, simple works of art that bring him pleasure. **ARTS NOW**

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David Albertson, Star Student
Marilyn Hopkins, Star Teacher
(David's 10th Grade Science/Chemistry Teacher)



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Photo Place: University of Texas at Austin: Science & Research Institute



Stefan Berthelsen, Star Student
Ellen Hayden, Star Teacher
(Stefan's 10th Grade Science Teacher)



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Brennen Cody, Star Student
Annette Hall, Star Teacher
(Brennen's 10th Grade Reading Teacher)



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Taylor Daugherty, Star Student
Andrea Chapman, Star Teacher
(Taylor's 10th Grade English Teacher)



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Garin Elwell, Star Student
Peggy Davidson, Star Teacher
(Garin's 10th Grade Language Arts Teacher)



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Arturo Espinoza, Star Student
Jay Johnson, Star Teacher
(Arturo's 10th Grade World History Teacher)



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Aaron Craig, Star Student
Nena Challenor, Star Teacher
(Aaron's 10th Grade Science Teacher)



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Nathan Larson, Star Student
John Seale, Star Teacher
(Nathan's 10th Grade Science Teacher)



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Brett Lund, Star Student
Lorilyn Worley, Star Teacher
(Brett's 10th Grade Science Teacher)



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Academic Achievement and Teaching Excellence

Ryan Looney, Star Student
Patti Spillers, Star Teacher
(Science/Physical Science Teacher)



Photo: Spillers and Looney
Photo Place: Star, 2007 University of Science and Technology

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John Seale, Star Teacher
(Health/Physical Science Teacher)



Photo: Seale and Mourey
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Laura Truett, Star Teacher
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Photo: Hill and Cass
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Photo: Waddell and Truett
Photo Place: Star, 2007 University of Science and Technology

James Nelson, Star Student
Leigh Dopson, Star Teacher
(Science/Physical Science Teacher)



Photo: Nelson and Dopson
Photo Place: Star, 2007 University of Science and Technology

Jordan Schwartz, Star Student
Patti Spillers, Star Teacher
(Science/Physical Science Teacher)



Photo: Spillers and Schwartz
Photo Place: Star, 2007 University of Science and Technology

Andrew Rowell, Star Student
Brady Gibson, Star Teacher
(Science/Physical Science Teacher)



Photo: Rowell and Gibson
Photo Place: Star, 2007 University of Science and Technology

Lauren Wessa, Star Student
Mary Ann Pinkston, Star Teacher
(Science/Physical Science Teacher)



Photo: Wessa and Pinkston
Photo Place: Star, 2007 University of Science and Technology

Sports
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Class Act

— By Alex Allred

Chris Ransbottom is not the way he is by accident. At a very early age, his father died an unexpected, tragic death, leaving his mother, Kim, to care for him alone. While his grandfather served as a strong male role model, he did live out of state. Kim had to be strong enough for two. As Chris grew, he watched his mother work a variety of jobs, always trying to better herself and give him what he needed. “She works harder than anyone I know,” Chris said of his mother.

In fact, today Kim is holding down a job at Starbucks, as well as working as a masseuse, while going back to school full time to earn her bachelor’s in nursing. “That’s who Chris is, too,” said Gary Braeseke, a professional instructor, member of the Professional Golf Association and new owner of the local driving range, The Ridge. “He is always reaching out for knowledge. He is always working on his swing, his game and is always inquisitive.”

He is also very grateful. While many teenagers expect things to be given to them, Chris understands that those things worth having must be worked for. Anything else, he said, is a gift. “Nothing comes easy,” Chris said. “You have to work for what you want. That’s just the way it is.”

As recent as last year, while shopping for back-to-school clothing, he identified a couple of items he hoped to have. “But he had tried on a bunch of things, so I asked what he thought about the other outfits,” Kim said. When Kim told him that she was prepared to buy all the clothing, he teared up. He truly had not expected anything beyond a pair of shorts and a shirt. “He’s the best child any parent could ask for,” she added.

There are others who concur. Teachers, counselors and coaches, all agree he is a rarity. “He’s a great kid,” Gary said. “We love having him around here. He’s willing to put in the hours and the time, and he’s always helpful.”

Whatever values Kim instilled in her son, his love of sports “is all his own,” she laughed. “Since he was little, he was all about sports and writing.” At the age of 3, he would read the scoreboards and loudly report to audience members on strikes, base runs and home runs. Much to her chagrin, Chris chose the Green Bay Packers as his beloved football team, despite Kim’s love of the Dallas Cowboys, and became



“He is always working on his swing, his game and is always inquisitive.”

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Sports NOW

a “bona fide cheese head.” Kim was also forced, she said, to watch ESPN so that she could text message Chris on what was happening in the world of sports. While out on the golf course, he would have to know what was going on with baseball, football, track and soccer. “He can’t get enough of sports.”

**“He’s a great kid,
We love having him
around here. He’s
willing to put
in the hours and
the time and he’s
always helpful.”**



“My mom and I both always thought I’d go into the ministry,” Chris admitted. He leads a Bible study at the high school, “but I just haven’t felt the calling.” Instead, he felt the pull of something else. When Chris discovered that his father loved golf, he became interested in the sport. Other than that, he had had no real connection with his father. His paternal grandfather, Gerry Ransbottom, was a professional

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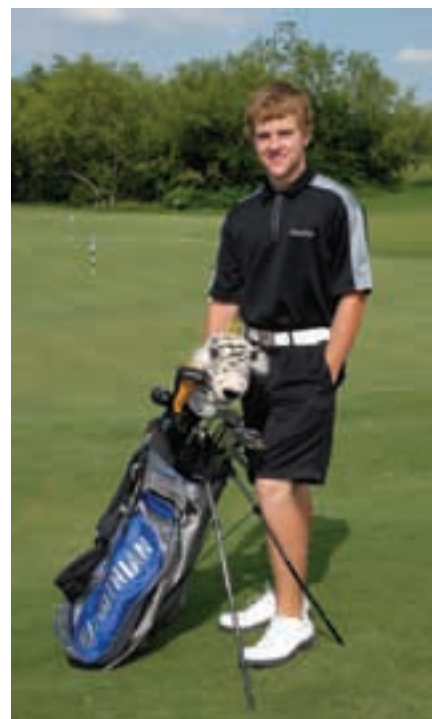
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golf instructor during the late 1980s and early '90s. It was natural that golf became a way of bonding with both his father and paternal grandfather. It was in his blood.

As a freshman, Chris made the varsity golf team, displaying a natural talent and a great work ethic. Entering his senior year at Midlothian High



School, he has consistently placed in the top 10 throughout the Dallas metroplex, but rather than talk about his own successes, he prefers to talk about his teammates. He praises his high school coach and continuously gives thanks to those who have helped him along his journey. He also enjoys discussing the dynamics of the game: how it can be both an individual and team sport, how it demands full and constant attention as "the conditions are never the same and your game can never be perfect." Yet, he strives for perfection. He is always looking for the greatest angle, the best shot.

Ironically, this is just what he got. When a photographer from the high

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school staff was unable to attend a football game, Chris was asked if he could fill in. As a lover of photography, he was a natural behind the lens. He quickly discovered his true passion in sports photography and was asked to be the new sports editor for his senior



“Nothing comes easy. You have to work for what you want. That’s just the way it is.”

year. Without question, Chris accepted, attending a journalism conference. “It was beyond point and shoot,” Chris said. As a budding sports editor and photojournalist, he learned everything about layouts and spreadsheets. Suddenly, his dreams have gone beyond the golf course. Although he began his athletic career in Little League as a baseball catcher and developed into a standout on the golf course, Chris has never met a sport he did not like.

Today, his options are wide open. He is gifted as both athlete and photojournalist, as a teammate and editor. But whatever it is he does, he said, he is ready to put in the work, and whatever it is, he will be most grateful. **NOW**

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Business NOW

Art Under Water

— By Betty Tryon



Art can be found in the most unusual places. Everyone can identify with a painting, sculpture, poetry or music as art; however, art exists even under water. The beautifully colored fish, the position of the rocks and coral, even the poisonous anemones, lovingly placed all add up to a thing of beauty.

A true artist in his chosen profession is Richard Ware, performing in his line of business, The Fish Physician. Rich designs and maintains some of the more beautiful and creative aquariums in our area. "I like to redesign aquariums. I can't paint or draw, so I use statues and rocks for my art," he said.

Rich did not grow up longing to be an aquarium designer, but fish have always been one of his interests. He explained, "A guy came to our house when I was about 9 years old and set

up an aquarium. It was primarily my parent's responsibility, but I took over and really liked doing it. I came up with the name 'The Fish Physician' because of a book I read in high school called the *Fish Doctor*. I never thought I would do this for a living."

Joining him in his venture is his wife, Lisa. In 2003, Lisa assumed more responsibility in the business than she had originally planned. She explained, "Rich had an

injury that prevented him from working, so I had to step up and work the business. At the time our children were 5 months and 5 years old." Lisa did a great job with the business, and Rich gained valuable experience, as well. According to him, "For four months I had to take

care of the home and the kids. I think husbands would really respect their wives if they had to do their jobs."

Lisa stated, "We are blessed to have a business people love." Rich agreed, "The neat thing about our business is we are into quality not quantity. We want to have a personal relationship with every client. Some of the aquariums we manage in Midlothian are at the Citizen's National Bank, Savor, Tim Tobey's State Farm office and at Baylor Medical Center. I like creating something unique to the location. I look at what type of clientele we are designing for. Obviously, the aquarium in a pediatrics office will look a lot different than one designed for a high-end dental office. I also look at how much or how little maintenance they want or need."

Both Lisa and Rich are gifted in what they do best. Rich loves working with fresh water fish. He can also take care of salt water fish. Lisa's specialty is coral and marine reef aquariums. "Our



Business NOW

experience brings a sense of intuitiveness to the business,” Lisa said.

She also mentioned the intelligence of the fish. “People need to realize that these are live animals. Fish are very territorial, especially the African cichlid. Salt water fish need more space. You are creating a tiny ocean to have a nice balance, to make an environment similar to what they came from.” Rich concurred, “There is no such thing as fish politics. If you take out an aggressor, another one takes over. The fish know who feeds them. I’m told that thousands of people can come in and walk by the aquarium and the fish pay no attention to them, but when I walk in they all turn towards me. They know me.”

The fish can appear to be somewhat oblivious to the surroundings, but they see as well as we do. Sometimes, when

“The neat thing about our business is we are into quality not quantity. We want to have a personal relationship with every client.”

an aquarium is in an office with children, they will bang on the glass to get their attention. Rich cautions against this because it hurts them. They feel the pain of the pounding in their sensory system.

The Fish Physician’s motto is “Bringing nature to you.” If you would like to have a tiny bit of the ocean in your home or office, you can contact them at (972) 617-5771. Visit their Web site at www.thefishphysician.com. **NOW**



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Education NOW



More Than the Three Rs

— By Betty Tryon

On the first day of kindergarten, emotions run high. Laughter and squeals of delight are certainly a part of the commotion. Of the range of emotions, which can rule the day, none can take precedence over tears. Sometimes the tears are from a child who is fearful, and sometimes they are

from mom saying goodbye to babyhood, as her child takes a giant step into the world. It helps if there is one person who can make sense out of it all. At Mountain Peak Elementary School, Sharon McDonald, kindergarten teacher, guides both child and parents through that giant step.

Fears can be alleviated as they step into her classroom. The bright colors and a multitude of images promise many exciting moments of learning mixed in with fun for the school year. She states, "From the minute students walk into my room, I love to immerse the kids into the world of reading by flooding the room with print. I find children then begin to read the words and use them in their writing."

Sharon resonates energy and enthusiasm in approaching her job. Her personality makes her the perfect kindergarten teacher. She likes to play as much as they do! However, as with all good teachers, there exists an educational component to every game. Smiling she said, "I teach concepts with toys. What I enjoy is that they learn as they play games. I don't just give them a graph sheet to work; we do both. I enjoy reading, writing and math, especially when I can do a lot of manipulatives with it."

Sharon's "manipulatives" are things the kids can do with their hands as they learn. She explained, "Kindergarten lends itself to using manipulation and involving all of their senses to help them learn." Part of her teaching plan embraces weekly themes. For example, one week in March, the dinosaur took center stage in all of the subjects, such as writing and arts presented that week. "We used the dinosaur for all of the skills. It hits their interest, especially for this age level. It also helps them build a knowledge base and gives them a better understanding of different subjects. The students enjoy using a wide variety of manipulatives to practice math skills. We pretended the dinosaur laid eggs, which were jelly beans, then we graphed them on a graph sheet. Students also found the area and perimeter of a dinosaur's footprint. Dinosaur manipulatives were used with plastic mountains to practice addition and subtraction skills."

Education NOW

In honing their computer skills, Sharon will have the students go to a dinosaur Web site. They have a computer class, but Sharon will bring in laptops once a week for each student. Parents interested in what sites their children are visiting online at school can go to the homework online site for a listing of everything viewed in class. Computer work proves to be necessary even in kindergarten, because they are coming into the school more computer literate.

One reason Sharon uses manipulatives so frequently is because she is competing,



in a sense, with high-tech images on the computer and television. Both elements of technology are very much a part of the average kindergartener's life. "You have to be dramatic," she said. "My biggest role is to encourage reading at home. This is very much a visual world. A teacher has to have a lot of visuals. I also do whatever I can to stimulate listening skills. I may blindfold them and have them listen to sounds. For example, I will drop dinosaurs in a can and they will tell me how many sounds they heard."

Doing different things throughout the day is another way of keeping a kindergartener's interest. The size of her classroom provides Sharon with special opportunities to keep the day interesting. "I am excited about this room. I can have two group areas for writing or reading centers and one

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Education **NOW**

area for one-on-one activities, such as playing math games. It helps when you change their environment to move things around."

With her dad and sisters involved in education, Sharon continues the tradition of teaching. She graduated from Concordia University in Nebraska in 1986 with a pre-K through eighth grade certification. Although she has

"From the minute students walk into my room, I love to immerse the kids into the world of reading by flooding the room with print."

many years of experience in teaching, the work never grows dull.

Every school year, Sharon has the pleasure of starting another group on their educational road. "I like watching them learn to read and write, to see that twinkle in their eyes. At the beginning of the year they are so young, but I believe you can never set expectations too high. I like to keep challenges high. By the end of the year, those certain goals you've set, they have met. They get to hear and share things they have never experienced before. Kindergarten is more than the three Rs. I feel blessed teaching in Midlothian. I have very supportive parents. It is a blessing to watch the kids grow and start them out on the road to future success." **NOW**

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Around Town NOW



A ribbon cutting, top left, was held at Sonic Drive-In. Longbranch students, top right, posed after having their faces painted. Serendipity celebrated their first anniversary recently. During the celebration, Mandy Daley, second row left, presented the grand prize to Cheryl Mills. Riley "Riles" Stover, second row left center, posed while trying to cool off while watching a game on a very hot Saturday afternoon. Baxter fifth graders and staff, second row right center, had a "cook-out day" to celebrate the end of TAKS testing. TXI's Midlothian Cement Plant and Quarry, second row right, were presented with a Sentinels of Safety Award at the recent South Central District Joint Mine Safety and Health Conference in Oklahoma City. Several students and staff from J.A. Vitovsky, bottom left, showed off their costumes as they paraded down the halls.



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Around Town NOW



Team Tigers, top left, celebrated after learning they were the undefeated first place champions in a local softball tournament. Longbranchers, top right, played many games and had a great deal of fun during their annual field day event. Science in the Movies, second row left, wowed students from Mt. Peak as they learned about movie stunts and special effects. TXI Midlothian Cement had four teams in the recent Midlothian Relay for Life event. One of the four groups, second row right, were proud to display the TXI banner. The Midlothian Middle School Problem Solving Team made up of students from both Walnut Grove and Frank Seale middle schools, bottom left, competed and won first place in the International Problem Solving Competition held in Lansing, Michigan. J.A. Vitovsky students, bottom right, participated in a Cinco de Mayo parade.



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Cpl. John Piwe's marine unit was adopted by LeAnn Miller's third grade class at Mt. Peak Elementary School. John, top left, came by for a visit to thank them before school dismissed for the summer. Luke Petrishen, top center, was the stilt walker who stood more than eight feet tall during Vacation Bible School at The Lighthouse. Mrs. Kemp's first grade class, top right, had a great time at Baxter's field day. Three people from the United Kingdom, second row left, attended Farmers Market and wanted to pose for a photo with the Ellis County Bluegrass band. Heather Petrishen and Jason Watson, bottom right, entertained those attending Vacation Bible School at The Lighthouse. The Team Cats 8U group, bottom left, took a silly photo after they received their trophies.



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Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning

IN THE KITCHEN WITH KRYSTAL WILLIAMS

Being a University of North Texas student in Denton has not slowed down Krystal's joy of cooking. "I enjoy one-pot recipes or casserole dishes," she mentioned. "Being a student, I don't always have time to make three to four dishes for meals." Krystal's Chicken Spaghetti recipe is her favorite dish to fix for others. "I have to call people over to eat because there is always so much," she said. "Not to toot my own horn, but it is always *so* good!"

As a child, Krystal loved helping her mom and Granny in the kitchen. She gives credit to the Easy Bake Oven she received one Christmas in giving her the inspiration to spread her cooking wings. "It was the best gift," she said. "I could bake without anyone's help or permission." **NOW**

To view more of your neighbors' recipes, visit our archives at www.nowmagazines.com.

RED, WHITE AND BLUEBERRY CHEESECAKE

1 9-inch graham cracker pie crust
1/4 cup butter, melted
16 oz. cream cheese
1/2 cup white sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 eggs
2 cups fresh blueberries
1 cup fresh strawberries, quartered

WHIPPING TOPPING:

1 cup heavy cream
1/4 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Preheat oven to 425 F. Brush the graham cracker crust with melted butter. Bake until edges are just golden, about 6 - 8 minutes. Cool slightly on a wire rack. Reduce oven temperature to 350 F. In a medium bowl, beat cream cheese, sugar and vanilla with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Add eggs; beat until well combined. Fold in 1 cup of the blueberries and 1/2 cup strawberries. Pour mixture into prepared crust.

Bake until set, about 40 - 50 minutes. To prevent over browning of crust, gently cover with aluminum foil during the last 25 minutes of baking. Cool completely on a rack. While cooling, make your homemade whipping cream. Whip cream until almost stiff with a blender. Add sugar and vanilla; beat until cream holds. Spread over top of cooled pie and decorate with the rest of the blueberries and quartered strawberries!

CHICKEN SPAGHETTI

3 - 4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, either grilled or boiled
1 16-oz. package spaghetti or fettuccine (whichever you like better!)
2 tsp. olive oil
2-3 Roma tomatoes, finely diced
1 bell pepper, finely diced
1/2 pint pkg. mushrooms, sliced
1/2 sweet yellow onion, diced
1 14.5-oz. can condensed cream of mushroom soup
1 8-oz. pkg. cheddar, finely shredded or cheddar mix

Preheat oven to 350 F. Finely dice the chicken breast

halves and put them aside. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Add pasta and cook for 8 to 10 minutes or until al dente; drain. In a large sauté pan, drop in olive oil, tomatoes, bell pepper, mushrooms and onions. Sauté for 10 - 12 minutes on medium heat; put aside. In a large casserole dish, mix together the noodles, chicken, sautéed vegetables, soup and half of the finely shredded cheese bag. After mixing the ingredients together in the casserole dish, place the remaining cheese on top and cover with foil. Place in the oven for 15 minutes, or until the cheese is fully melted and enjoy!

CALDO DE POLLO (MEXICAN CHICKEN SOUP)

6 - 8 chicken drumsticks
2 - 3 quarts of water (must cover chicken)
salt, pepper, cumin (to taste)
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 large sweet onion, halved and quartered
3 carrots, sliced
2 celery stalks, sliced
3 large ears yellow sweet corn, halved
4 - 5 red potatoes, halved then quartered

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1 green cabbage, chunked
1 large sweet onion, halved and quartered
1 1/2 cups rice
cilantro to garnish
lime wedges to garnish

Rinse and dry chicken; place in stockpot. Cover with water; season with salt, pepper, garlic cloves, onion and cumin. Boil about 25 minutes on medium heat. Add the carrots, celery ribs, corn and potatoes; cook until vegetables are near tender. Add the cabbage and rice (add more salt if needed and add pepper). Let simmer for about 10 - 15 more minutes, or until the rice is fully cooked. Serve and garnish with cilantro and lime wedges. Adjust to taste with lime wedges.

PINEAPPLE CREAM PIE "BERNARD'S PIE"

1 8-oz. crushed pineapple
1 8-oz. Philadelphia Cream Cheese
1 3.5-oz. pkg. vanilla Instant Jell-O pudding mix
1 8-oz. tub Cool Whip
1 graham cracker pie crust

Mix the pineapple, cream cheese, pudding mix and 1/2 cup of Cool Whip together in a mixing bowl. When fully mixed, pour into the graham cracker crust and top with the remaining Cool Whip. Put in the refrigerator for an hour to cool, then serve!

BAKED ASPARAGUS

3 Tbsp. butter, melted
12 fresh asparagus spears
2 Tbsp. Parmesan cheese
1/2 tsp. salt
1/8 tsp. pepper
1/8 tsp. oregano

Heat oven to 375 F. Put melted butter in 8-inch dish. Line bottom with asparagus spears. Mix cheese and seasonings. Spread evenly over asparagus. Cover and bake for 45 minutes.

SALMON BURGERS

1 1-lb. can salmon
1/2 cup onions, chopped
1/4 cup butter, melted
1/3 cup dry bread crumbs
2 eggs
1 tsp. mustard
salt and pepper, to taste
1/2 tsp. minced garlic
4 hamburger rolls

BURGER TOPPINGS:

purple onion
Boston lettuce
Roma tomato
avocado

Drain liquid from salmon; break into small pieces. Put into a bowl for later use. Sauté onions in butter. Mix onion, bread crumbs, eggs, mustard, a pinch of salt and pepper, garlic and salmon. Form into patties; fry on medium heat for 3 - 4 minutes per side, until fully cooked. Place on hamburger buns and top accordingly.

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Murals (Buen Fresco): Danny Philips
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Get More Value

— By Tim Tobey

Finance NOW

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There are advantages to having your car, home and family protected by the same insurance company. Switching all your policies to one well-respected insurer might save you time and money, not to mention the convenience of having only one number to call for questions or claims.

Many insurance companies offer a range of discounts that vary by state. Be sure to ask the agent about the availability and amount of any discounts offered by the insurer. Here are some common discounts you should know about:

- **Multiple line:** Your premiums may be reduced if you have more than one policy with the same company or family of companies that covers your car.
- **Good student:** Full-time students (high school or higher) maintaining at least a "B" average may qualify for reduced premiums.
- **Multiple car:** Your premiums may be reduced if there are two or more private-passenger cars in the household insured by the same company or family of companies.

These are just a few of the discounts that may save you money. Once you have considered price, think about the quality of service you expect. The best value should save you both time and money. Here are a few things to consider:

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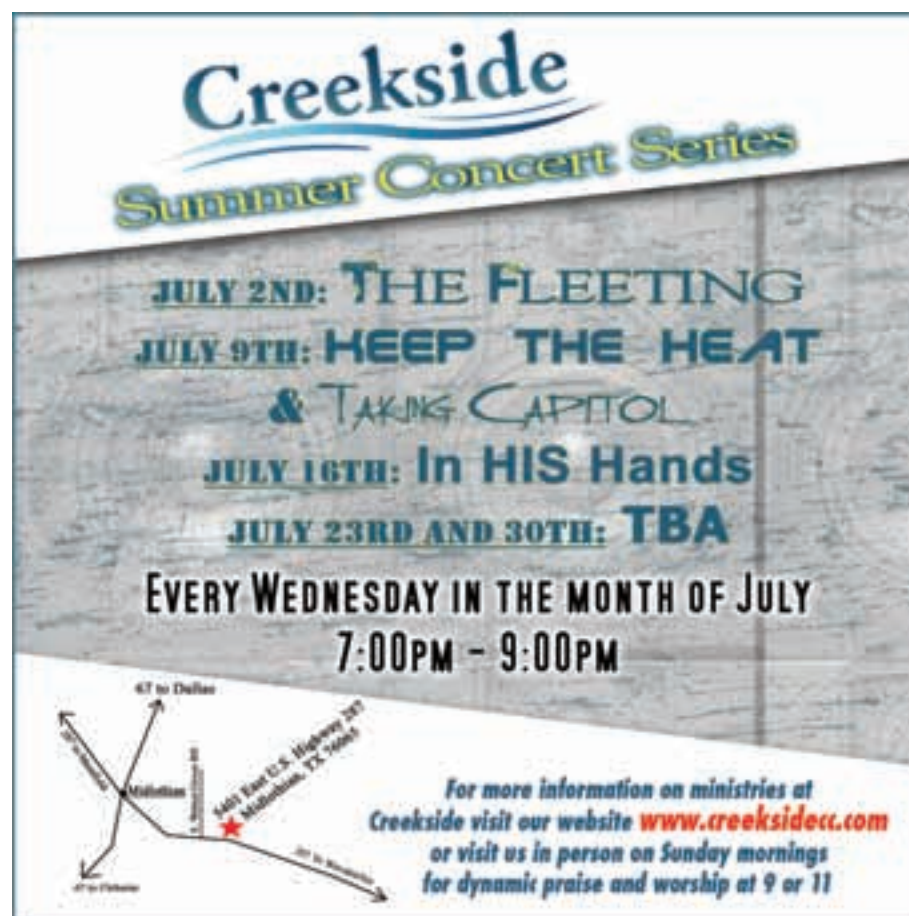
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- Is the insurer available to discuss your needs and help customize a package of services that is best for you and your family?
- Do you feel confident in the insurer's financial stability and ability to pay if your family suffers a loss?

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Tim Tobey is a State Farm agent based in Midlothian.



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Health NOW

Studies Offer Warning and Hope about Nutrition for Youths

**Norwegian study
decries effects of sugar
on teenagers; US study
says multivitamins help.**

— By Dr. Brad Collins

The opening line of a McGuire Sisters' pop hit of the 1950s went like this: "Sugar in the morning, sugar in the evening, sugar at supper time..." According to researchers at the University of Oslo in Norway, far too many teenagers are taking that advice literally today, and the long-term effects on their physical and mental health are just beginning to be uncovered.

The Norwegian researchers examined the eating

habits — including intake of soft drinks with sugar — of 5,000 teenagers. The participants in the study, all ages 15 and 16, were then given a questionnaire designed to gauge their mental well-being. The researchers found a strong correlation between soft drink consumption and mental health problems. This association remained significant after adjustment for social, behavioral and food-related disorders.

The study revealed that hyperactivity and distress were more prevalent in teenagers who consumed an inordinate amount of sugar-based drinks, and those who drank four or more soft drinks a day displayed increased symptoms. These

findings emphasize the need for young people to limit their consumption of sugar

— especially the sugar-loaded soft drinks that so many teens crave.

However, not all the news is bad for today's teens. The University of Minneapolis School of Public Health studied 2,761 high school seniors to explore the correlation between multivitamin supplement use and lifestyle decisions. The study, which was

published in the December 2006 edition of *The Journal of the American Diabetic Association*,



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Health NOW

established that teenagers who take multivitamin supplements are more likely to exhibit a healthier attitude toward life — including a greater willingness to exercise and eat more nutritious foods.

Vitamins are not magic pills, but it was clearly evident in the study that vitamin users were more likely to be involved in school and extracurricular sports. They also watched less television per day and were less likely to be smokers or to be overweight. This is not rocket science. If you want to lead a healthier life, both physically and mentally, the equation is simple. Be fit. Eat right. Think well. It is a credo that applies to people of all ages and walks of life. **NOW**

*Dr. Brad Collins
Midlothian Chiropractic*



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July 2008

Community Calendar

Every Tuesday

Midlothian Rotary Club meeting: Noon, Midlothian Civic Center, 224 South 11th St. (972) 775-7118.

Second and Fourth Tuesdays

Midlothian City Council meeting: 6:00 p.m., City Hall, 104 West Avenue E.

First and Third Thursday

Midlothian Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th St. (972) 775-7118.

Every Saturday in July

Waxahachie Downtown Farmer's Market: 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Franklin Street between Rogers and College. Produce, plants, jams, jellies and other goods available. For more information or to become a vendor, contact Anita Williamson at (972) 938-2101, ext. 198.

July 1

Joint Airport Board meeting: 4:00 p.m., Mid-Way Airport, 131 Airport Drive.

July 3

Fundraiser for the Senior Citizens Food Pantry: 5:00 p.m., Midlothian multipurpose football stadium. Event is free, donations welcome. Great singers and entertainment for the whole family with bouncing booths, face painting and other children's activities. Food and drinks available. Contact Vicki Massey at (972) 723-6177.

Small Business Committee meeting: 9:00 a.m., Chamber offices.

Fourth of July Fireworks: Dark Thirty; Sponsored by Citizens National Bank. For more information, please call the Midlothian Chamber at (972) 723-8600.

July 4

City offices closed.

Cowboy Church of Ellis County hosts "4th of July Family Fun Day," 2374 W. Hwy. 287 Bypass, Waxahachie. Please call (972) 935-9801 for more information.

Independence Day Event at the Texas Motorplex. Drag racing, fireworks. Grand Funk Railroad will be performing. Call 1 (800) motorplex or visit www.texasmotorplex.com.

July 5

Waxahachie Songwriters Saturday in the Park: 7:00 - 10:00 p.m. at Chautauqua Auditorium by Getzendaner Park. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. (972) 938-9990.

July 8

The Navarro College SBDC will sponsor a workshop called "Starting a Small Business" from 10:00 a.m. - noon on small business startup basics. It will be held in the Citizen's National Bank Community Room, 310 N. 9th Street. This workshop is free of charge and is presented by Robin Lasher, director of the Navarro College Small Business Development Center, which is a partnership program with the U.S. Small Business Administration. Registration is required, as seating is limited. To register, call Dottie Ueberroth at (972) 937-2174 or e-mail dottie.ueberroth@navarrocollege.edu.

July 9

Ambassador Meeting: 11:00 a.m., Conference Center.

July 10

Chamber Board of Directors meeting: 11:30 a.m., Chamber offices.

July 11

Waxahachie Summer Moonlight Movies Under the Stars: 9:00 p.m., downtown at East Franklin St. between Jackson and College St. Bring your blanket or lawn chair. (972) 937-7330, ext. 198.

July 12

SETTLES Nature and Science center: 9:00 a.m. - noon at Pettigrew Academy, 806 East Marvin Ave., Waxahachie. Featuring the Dallas Zoo Nature Exchange. Free children's event. (972) 923-1633.

July 12 and 14

Community Computer Classes: Internet Basics - Keyword searching, Web addresses and new tools from Google. July 12: 10:00 a.m. to noon. July 14: 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Contact Librarian Susie Yarbrow at Susie_Yarbrow@Midlothian-isd.net or (972) 775-3417, ext. 1061 or 1057 for more information.

July 12 - 13

Waxahachie Trade days, located at the Ellis County Expo Center, next door to the Cowboy Church of Ellis County, will be open Saturday from 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. and Sunday from 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. For more information, call Dean Worley at (903) 286-0183, e-mail waxtradedays@yahoo.com or visit www.waxtradedays.com.

July 14

Midlothian Development Authority meeting: 5:30 p.m., MISD Administrative Offices, Room 126. (972) 775-3481.

Park Board meeting: 6:30 p.m., Development Services Administrative Conference Room, 101 W. Avenue F.

July 15

Planning and Zoning Commission meeting: 7:00 p.m., City Hall Council Chambers.

July 16

Ellis County Christian Women's Connection, affiliated with Stonecroft Ministries, monthly luncheon at the Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Hwy. 287 at I-35 East, Exit 401B, Waxahachie. All women are welcome to join us for a lovely and relaxing luncheon, a special feature and positive and uplifting speaker. The cost is \$13.00, all-inclusive. Nursery vouchers are available for those with young children. Reservations are preferred, however, walk-ins are welcome as well. To make reservations, please contact either Kay at (972) 937-2807 or Mary at (972) 937-9984, or e-mail Kay at windchime@charter.net no later than Sunday, July 13.

July 17 - 19, 24 - 26

Duncanville Community Theatre presents *Leading Ladies*, a comedy written by Ken Ludwig and directed by Jerry Ayers. Call (972) 780-5707 or visit www.dctheatre.org.

July 18 - 19

Ellis County Quilt Show 2008: Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Circle. Visit www.cqguild.org for more information.

July 18 - 20

Heart of Texas Arts and Crafts Show, Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Lane. Friday: 3:00 - 8:00 p.m. Saturday: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Sunday: 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. \$3 admission for adults. Children under 12 are free. (903) 217-8081.

July 21

Regular School Board meeting: 6:30 p.m.

July 21 - 31

Texas Soaring Association 2008 World Class Nationals 1-26 Championship Contest. For more information, contact Norm Miller at (214) 642-5053 or e-mail normmiller11@mac.com.

July 23

Midlothian Community Blood Drive sponsored by Carter Blood Center. Northwest corner of Midlothian City Hall from 8:00 a.m. to noon. Anyone is welcome to donate. Please contact Tina L. Raz at (972) 775-7127 for more information.

July 24

Midlothian Community Development Corporation meeting: 6:00 p.m., 1 Community Circle.

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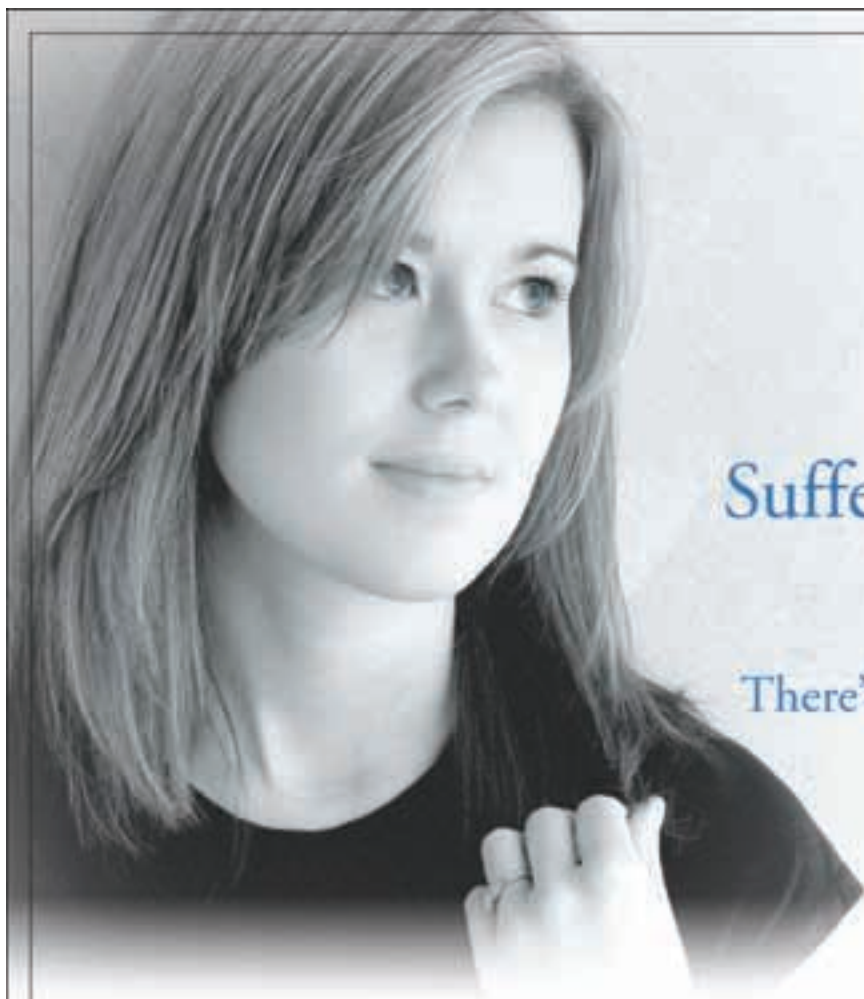
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