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A delicious patriotic creation by Tambra Schulte.

Photo by Shana Woods.

Editor's Note

Hello Midlothian,

The month of July brings out our best displays of patriotism as we wave the flag, light up the sky and chomp our way through innumerable hotdogs. As we celebrate, remember what it cost us. President Ronald Reagan once said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free." May God protect those who stand and fight for our freedom. We are grateful.

Join the Senior Food Pantry fundraiser on July 3 as they celebrate the Fourth at the Midlothian Independent School District Multipurpose Stadium. Admission is free, lots of food, activities and fireworks!

Betty Tryon
MidlothianNOW Editor



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Back Pain is Behind Her.

Regular exercise is a big part of Debra Moody's life. So when increasing back pain threatened the certified public accountant's fitness routine, she set out to see why something just wasn't adding up.

Originally diagnosed with a bulging disk, the 46-year-old Mansfield resident recalls, "I was doing squats with too much weight about five years ago. I felt something was wrong, but managed to keep it under control with regular workouts and core strengthening."

"That seemed to work," she says. Until 2009 when the pain got progressively worse. "It was a herniated disk that had compressed a nerve root in my back. I was losing feeling in my leg. It was really crippling. Even the pain medicine wasn't helping," Moody painfully recalls.

After months of chiropractic therapy, steroid treatments, strength training, and even decompression therapy, "nothing helped because the disk was so damaged," she explains. Surgery was the next step, so Moody went to Methodist Mansfield Medical Center for her procedure.

"After surgery, I experienced immediate pain relief and didn't even finish my pain medication."

The surgery was a very pleasant and trouble-free experience all the way around," she confides. "Plus, the nurses were great and very attentive." Afterward, Moody was advised to take it easy.

"No bending, twisting, or housework," she says. Admittedly a tidy housekeeper, "Not cleaning my house was the most difficult part after surgery!" Thanks to her successful discectomy, Moody resumed her fitness regimen—and housecleaning—in record time. "I'm back in the gym five to six days a week, although I'm more careful now," she smiles.

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—Debra Moody
Debra Moody, local resident and Methodist Mansfield Medical Center back and spine patient



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TO KOREA AND BACK

**“What I saw I’ll
always remember for
the rest of my life.”**

— By Betty Tryon

A simple football game may have saved Russ Vinson’s life. It was during the Vietnam era and Russ had joined the military. The Army had agreed to put him through journalism school, and he would work in the communication department of the Army. Two weeks before reporting, he was notified that the journalism school was closed and he had to choose something else. He chuckled, “I chose military intelligence because my dad was a highway patrolman. I went to El Paso for boot camp and then to Fort Gordon for AIT (advanced individual training) in MP (military police) school. In Fort Gordon, my guardian angel stepped in on me. Two weeks before we were finishing school, I was playing a pick-up game of football, and I got my knee dislocated. I had to lie in the hospital for a couple of days. While I was there, the guys



that I was with in AIT, every one of them to the letter, got sent to Vietnam. Since I was delayed, I got sent to Korea. If I hadn't been playing football that day, I would've been sent to Nam (Vietnam)."

During that time, if you signed up for three years, you were given the opportunity to say where you wanted to go. Russ said, "I told them, 'If I'm not sent to Nam, then overseas I'd like to see Germany; stateside I'd like to see the West Coast.' They wrote it all down. I got orders to go to Korea, and when I left

Russ described his time in Korea as "more of a mental game than anything else, especially sitting in the tower for so many hours."

Korea, I came back to the East Coast. So I never got to see Germany or the West Coast!" he finished laughing.

Russ spent 19 months in Korea, and his first assignment as part of the MP was to man a 30-foot tower near the border of North Korea and maintain surveillance for eight to 12 hours a day. His job as the first line of defense was to report anything unusual happening on the north side. Russ described his time in Korea as "more of a mental game than anything else, especially sitting in the tower for so many hours."

One of the drawbacks to his time in Korea was not being able to speak the language; however, the military in South Korea made their MPs available as translators. Russ stated, "We were told not to tell the Koreans anything about

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what happened on the base. You might be talking to a North Korean and not know it. We very seldom went out on our own, always had a partner and we always carried a weapon.”

Russ worked in the towers for six months and then transferred to the middle of the country for regular MP duties. One of the things he remembers

“When the Statue of Liberty waved back at me, I knew it was time to head for Texas.”

the most was the cold. He explained, “I’ve never been so cold in all my life. It would be cold for months, and then the monsoons would come. As MPs, one of our morning duties was to raise the flag. More than once, we had to take out our nightsticks and beat the ropes because they would freeze every night.”

The weather was not the only thing Russ had to face in adjusting to a new country. He stated, “I don’t know how it is now and everything may have changed, but when I was there, everything was mud in the villages. It was not unusual to see discarded military tents or discarded military stuff used for their shanties. There was no running water. The kids were always dirty and hungry. They loved the GIs because when we walked through the villages, we always gave them candy or money. Humongous rice paddies surrounded the villages. After 19 months, I could not stand to look at a bowl of rice. I remember the smell because of the waste. They had horse-drawn wagons the soldiers called honey-dew wagons to carry the waste away to use as fertilizer for the rice paddies. You need to see how people like this live to appreciate what we have. They were just trying to make things work the best they could, and it was really heartbreaking.”

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In addition to the struggle of living in a strange and unsanitary country, Russ and the other soldiers had the added burden of what was happening back home with so many citizens disagreeing about the validity of the war. He added, "You have to remember, it was the Vietnam era and you're over there [Korea] reading about everything going on in the States — about the peace movement and anti-war protestors. Flying home, you got the looks. It felt strange and you did feel a little bit of betrayal." Although Russ did not have to face active combat, he was ready, if necessary, to serve in that capacity. "The military trains you for combat," he stated. "That is the military's function. I felt sorry for the returning veterans because I knew what they had been through. I was over there, and I did my job. The military is an 8-to-5 job, but you're on the first line, too. That's true whether you were in Korea or Germany. People need to hear about people in that era, that just because we didn't go to Nam and we didn't carry the burden, we were [still] there. The common denominator to every vet I have talked to is saying, if you think you have it bad, go visit a VA hospital and see the wounded coming in missing arms and legs. I don't know if I would've made it back from Nam; I don't know."

Russ' final stop in the military, after Korea, was New Jersey. He joked, "When the Statue of Liberty waved back at me, I knew it was time to head for Texas." Returning to Texas, after visiting and catching up with family and friends, he then had to face the sadness of realizing others he knew didn't make it back. Russ went to work in Dallas in graphic arts and reared a family. Now retired, because of a massive heart attack years ago, he spends his time helping out at the Midlothian Senior Citizen Center, the Senior Food Pantry and with his wife, Becky, and their five children.

Russ' time in Korea gave him a new appreciation for life back home. "What I saw I'll always remember for the rest of my life. If nothing else, it toughens you up. The military teaches you responsibility and helps you grow up. I would encourage any young man or woman to go in the military because it's good for you. It's character building, and it will let you see you don't have it so bad." **NOW**

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KEEPING UP WITH THE PORTERS

— By Alex Allred

AT HOME WITH TOM AND MARY PORTER

Whoever coined the phrase, “keeping up with the Joneses” would have long forgone the notion of keeping pace with the Porters. It is an impossible task as Tom, a retired Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent and photography and aviation enthusiast, and Mary, an educator turned entrepreneur and former newspaper columnist, have done it all.



The proud new great-grandparents are a fun, adventuresome couple with the tremendous communal and familial spirit that is so rarely seen today. It is appropriate, then, that Mary describes her home as "a blend of old and new." Indeed, the majestic house is a standing tribute to their ancestry and newest grandbabies, to their great sense of patriotism and their own neighborhood,



and to the life they once had as a young couple and their retirement years.

When their three children, now all grown with families of their own, were respectfully 5, 4 and 3 years old, Mary was home with the children while juggling a part-time writing career and tutoring children with physical disabilities. The Porters had been living in Indiana when Tom became an agent with the FBI. While Tom's solid performance with the bureau landed him a transfer to Dallas, his unusual certification earned him the distinction of becoming one of

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the first FBI pilots in Dallas and, later, head of FBI's aviation department. By the early 1970s, the FBI realized the benefits of using aircraft, for example, while in pursuit of a kidnapper. "It was too easy to be made in a car," Tom said. Because Tom had already possessed a pilot's license, a passion he pursued after his stint in the Navy with the Patrol Bomber Squadron in the 1950s, he was a natural.

But while Tom held his course with the bureau, "I switched careers every seven years," Mary smiled. A true artist, Mary has always tested her own creativity. She taught kindergartners through high school, worked as a real estate agent and an executive secretary. It was when she was a real estate agent that she brokered her first deal for an airplane as a 20th anniversary present for Tom. Only Mary could have wheeled and dealt a payment plan for a vintage 1964 Cessna 206.

"But on the way home," Mary recalled with certain glee, "Tom said, 'Now what am I going to get you?' and I said,

"Well, I really want a four-slice toaster."

"And she got it!" Tom joined in. "Top of the line, from Sears!"

In truth, Mary has always gotten what she wants. (And, yes, she really wanted that toaster.) She is a visionary with a keen eye for detail. Take, for example, her home today. "This is the house I envisioned when I was 20 years old," Mary said. So when Tom and Mary prepared their move from Desoto to Eagles Nest Estates, a community of aviation enthusiasts, in 2000, Mary designed the home. From the 17-foot-high ceilings to the sweeping walkway with a library that opens up to a second-story balcony, Mary chose the primary colors of blue, yellow and white. Large portraits, of both Victorian women and modern landscapes, a blend of old and new, decorate the house. While the open living area is filled with furniture made of rich, deep woods that date back to both Tom and Mary's grandparents, including family portraits of Tom's great-grandparents, the white woodwork from the stair banisters and upstairs library offers the

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perfect combination. It is both regal and homey.

The white woodwork is a theme that runs throughout the home including the kitchen, with white cabinetry to offset the blue tile and countertops, and the master bedroom, which emulates a quaint bed-and-breakfast room complete with pillow cases, shams and curtains all sewn by Mary's own hand. French doors lead to a back patio, while an extra-wide doorway leads into the enormous master bath. "We made sure to have this when the house was built," Mary explained. Looking toward their senior years, "one of us might be in a wheelchair." Though always forward thinking, this is also part of yet another family joke. "His side of the family lives to be very old," Mary said, explaining that her side is not so fortunate. "So, I've already picked out his new wife."

"Yeah," Tom shrugged sheepishly, "I can't wait to see her."

This is not a routine for the benefit of a visitor, but how Tom and Mary live their lives. They tease and play, though they are complete opposites. Tom is an avid runner, recently completing a half marathon with his son and logging over



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20 miles per week, while Mary is a book aficionado. He is the ultimate G-man who likes to see what is before him, while Mary is already redecorating the house in her mind. The master bath is still a work in progress.

Tom's grandmother's washstand and medicine cabinet are set inside the master bath, an old that blends beautifully with Mary's new. A refurbished bench dresser and brightly colored towels are coordinated with the hand-stenciled designs of a yellow picket fence, flowers and butterflies.



"When I was painting this," Mary laughed, "Tom asked me, 'Are you okay? You're spending a lot of time in the bathroom!' He had no idea what I was doing."

During the construction of their house, Tom would often drive out to Midlothian to see it for himself, only to come home and excitedly ask Mary, "Have you seen it?" But she already had, from the moment she laid out the blue

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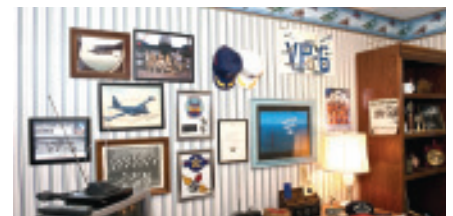
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prints. This, of course, would include two upstairs bedrooms, Tom's office, which plays host to his own antique camera collection, a dark room and library.

Tom's own vision is outside the house. Sitting on the back of their one-acre lot is a private airplane hangar. Although Tom finally sold his Cessna 206 last year, the hangar now houses a friend's airplane. It also has its own impressive workshop and second office area for Tom, which includes photographs and decorations from his days in both the Navy and FBI. "It's Tom's Fun House," he smiled. Mary affectionately calls it, "Tom's Shrine."



Truly, the entire Porter home is a fun house. While immensely proud of their home, the material items within are only that. Their true treasures are the memories that lie within the walls. Long running traditions of family outings to the circus, hilarious holiday letters that parody life in the "Cement Capital of Texas," large gatherings of friends and sleepovers with grandchildren are the perfect combination of old and new that makes the prospect of keeping up with the Porters so delightful. **WOW**



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Delicious Creation

— By Betty Tryon

Tired of working until 11 o'clock every night at the grocery store, Tambra Schulte decided she had enough of that and went searching within the store for a different department with better hours. "I was getting ready to graduate from high school, and the jobs that were open were in pharmacy or cake decorating. I thought, *Well I have high school art, so I'll try cake decorating.* That was 22 years ago."

Before moving to Midlothian and taking a job at Busy B's Bakery, Tambra was working for the largest bakery in Colorado. It proved to be the best training ground for her future career of cake decorating. "All of my skills that I have today I attribute to working with so many other talented cake decorators and learning tricks of the trade from them. Decorators are all different. The more

people you get to work with, the more knowledge you are going to attain in this career."

Tambra's skills were fine-tuned in doing the work every day. She stated, "I learned 100 percent on-the-job. You get better with the experiences that you have. My experience came from great people. I am really good at replicating pictures, whether it's from cakes that I've done in the past, or they bring in a picture and say, 'I want this exact cake' or a picture from a Web site."

Cake decorating has become even more popular with the proliferation of cake decorating shows on television. Many of the creations seem to defy gravity. Tambra said, "I'm old school, and I try to keep the entire cake edible. You watch the cake shows, and they use wood and build the platforms with PVC pipes. I understand why the bigger places do it that way because it's for show and gravity takes effect with cake, so you have to build these platforms. But, I found out that people really appreciate the fact that they are paying for cake and not pipe and other products that aren't



edible. I'll use sticks for support. My support is very small compared to what they use. I am not a carpenter. I am a cake decorator."

Tambra works diligently to give others what it is they want in a cake design. She understands the trust a bride places in her skill and expertise to create an exceptionally beautiful cake for the wedding. "I try to accommodate what it is they want," she acknowledged.



"The bride wants to have this 'ahhh' moment. Your wedding should be the best day of your life. Little girls dream of this moment most of their lives. They want their wedding day talked about for months to come. Most of the time, they come in with their ideas, and then I tweak them to make them work." One of the wedding cakes Tambra made was an exquisite design of baroque and harlequin swirls. She explained, "The bride brought in a picture that was on a card she received. The cake was round, and we came up with the idea to make squares and alternate sides. One side was white, the other one brown. The brown side had white decorations and the white side had brown decorations."

Some of Tambra's most creative concoctions are her 3-D cakes. These are cakes where the design is not drawn on the cake but is actually shaped to represent an object. One of her designs was a cake shaped like an airplane. The body of the plane was dough rolled like

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a log and then carved into the shape of an airplane. The wings were Styrofoam covered with icing. Tambra stated, "The father-in-law had been a pilot. Sometimes it's the story that brings the cake to life."

Another of her 3-D designs was of Cookie Monster from *Sesame Street*. Tambra made him in a sitting position and eating chocolate chip cookies.

"If you are having a party, the cake is usually the centerpiece and is themed around the person you are celebrating."



What is incredible about this cake is the "fur" on the body of the cake looked very realistic. "I painted the fur with a paintbrush," she explained. "It is all about pressure. If you do it too hard, then you'll pull the icing off. Cake decorating is a lot about how hard you squeeze or push. I can do almost any animal out of icing. It just depends on how I'm pressing."

A particularly interesting design for one of her cakes was a Louis Vuitton purse. Shaped exactly like a Louis Vuitton bag with the same coloring and design of the real thing, the cake came complete with a zipper on top. "People get a cake for a reason. It's a celebration. If you are having a party, the cake is usually the centerpiece and is themed around the person you are celebrating. It's really cool to see the expression on someone's face, their overwhelming joy. It's great that just a little simple cake can make someone's whole day. I just have fun with it. It makes it all worthwhile." **NOW**

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One "Sick" idea

— By Alex Allred

Pastor Don Phillips will tell you that God moves in mysterious ways. After all, it was, he believes, how a hurricane led him to build a skating park in his church.

In another state, Army veteran Terry Franklin was working alongside a woman to rebuild homes following the destruction of Hurricane Rita. "She was Pastor Don's mother," Terry said. "She started telling me about her son and some of the work he was doing here." So, when his work was done in Louisiana, Terry packed his bags and headed for Midlothian. It was at the Overcomer's Fellowship Church that Terry conceived the idea to build a skate park, but it was Pastor Don who leapt into action.

"I saw it as a way to reach out to the community," Pastor Don said. Specifically, it was a way for him to reach out to those who have often been unfairly judged.

"He just came up to us one day," Gabriel Soto recalled. For Gabriel and his friends, who are often chased off by annoyed adults who do not see the finesse of a concave fakie or understand the time needed to execute the perfect fakie full cab flip, Pastor Don was heaven sent. "Most people just see us as skating rats," Gabriel said. "I was kind of a bad kid. I was hanging with the wrong crowd."

Pastor Don saw more. He saw great kids and a great opportunity. But there was a catch. "I wanted the boys to learn to work with their hands. I wanted them to build something that could belong to them."

He converted a large warehouse that



"I saw it as a way to reach out to the community."

belongs to the church into a workshop where local teenagers from middle to high school ages devoted Friday evenings to building two half-pipe skating ramps. "For a lot of them," Pastor Don smiled, "it was the first time they had a tool in their hands."

Under the supervision of Terry, Pastor Don, former youth director Michael Roth

and new members Brenda and Johnathan Terry, two things happened. The teens flourished and a skating park began to take shape. In fact, the men all rolled up their sleeves and built the skating park alongside the boys. Suddenly, young men who previously described themselves as being "bad" or "in trouble a lot" were confiding in the men, making and



keeping appointments and learning to trust.

Two more things happened. More young people began to show up, and Pastor Don's growing skating community welcomed each newcomer with open arms. In fact, they are a family developing new relationships.

"I can only cruise," Erin Summerland said, one of the few girls in attendance. She has begun videotaping skating stunts to create a montage.

"You can do more than that," said Big G, another skater who describes himself as falling into a bad crowd before Pastor Don came along.

"Our skater community is coming together," Gabriel said, "Even if you're the worst skater here."

"Hey! Don't talk about me like that," Big G joked, as others were quick to weigh in with who can do what — who can "drop in" or "hang" or "grind." The

And it is here that Pastor Don performed his "sickest" (that means "coolest") move.

comparisons are not competitive but, rather, are listed as a source of communal pride, but no one is more proud than Pastor Don.

Though Pastor Don has absolutely zero interest in getting on a board himself, he is learning the lingo and appreciating every athletic move and maneuver his "kids" show to him. "By building these ramps," he said, "we changed lives."

"We looked at the need, instead of looking away," he shrugged. And it is here that Pastor Don performed his "sickest" (that means "coolest") move.

Once a month, in exchange for using his facility, his skaters are asked to feed the homeless. They helped Pastor Don build what they call a Homeless Locker, which stores food and clothing items to be donated to the needy. "The idea was to get them involved in service, in giving back," Pastor Don said, "but it's really given them purpose."

For Pastor Don and his wife, Heather, the entire venture has been about faith.



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"We spent our life's saving on this," he said, adding that they are currently talking to lawyers about liability issues for his young skaters and possible injuries. In the meantime, a ping-pong and pool table have been donated to the youth center, along with an air hockey table and a basketball hoop.

On a typical Friday night, there are any number of games going on in the youth center, while the constant rumble



of skaters on boards echoes through the warehouse. But midway through the evening, Pastor Don calls for a "breakout session," in which the teens "can share how they can make a difference," Pastor Don said. "This is what it is all about. We want to pass the baton."

Following one breakout session, Big G made his way over to Michael. "Whaddup dog?" he grinned, sticking out a hand for a special skater handshake.

"It might not seem like much, but that handshake means so much," Michael said. It has all been about building a skating park, "yet it is so much more." **NOW**



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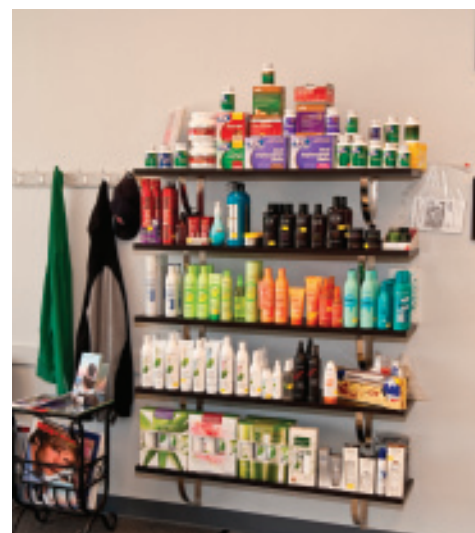
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Quick Cuts gives haircuts quickly and inexpensively. — By Betty Tryon

Norma Campos, owner of Quick Cuts, wants your next haircut to be as painless as possible. That includes not having to wait for a long time for your haircut and going easy on your wallet! She said, “I want to try and help people because I know haircuts are expensive. This is good for families with a lot of kids. Haircut prices go up and up every year. I want to keep my prices low to help everybody.”

Norma went to Ogle School of Hair-Skin-Nails in Arlington and has been cutting hair for 10 years. During that time, she honed her skills in a salon in Mansfield but eventually wanted to own her own business. Her previous place

of business had a non-compete policy stating no one working there could open a business within a 10-mile radius. Norma never signed the policy, but honored the spirit of it and moved away as a sign of respect for her former employer. “I am really happy in Midlothian,” she stated. “The customers are very nice, friendly and very loyal. I had some trepidation about opening a business in this economic climate, but business is thriving. I cannot believe I have so many customers in just one year. Customers say they are happy with us; they like it that we have experience and tell us that we are doing a good job.”

From left:

Standing left to right: Rachel Christie, Norma Campos, and Minnie Blanco. Seated: Ivonne Dominguez.

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"I want to try and help people because I know haircuts are expensive. This is good for families with a lot of kids."

came out of school. They would take 25 minutes for a simple little boy haircut. I tell them it takes awhile, but if you do it right, you don't have to go over and over the same spot. When I first came here, I had to hire people with experience. I needed people with experience because it was a new business, and I wanted to make sure that the customer left happy. Norma's business has grown so well this past year that she now has four professional and experienced stylists working with her.

Quick Cuts offers many specials to their customers. Norma explained, "Our haircuts are the more affordable ones in town. They are \$11.00. Kids' haircuts are \$10.00. Seniors' are \$10.00. Our Midlothian police officers, firefighters and Hilco employees get a \$2.00 discount. We also have a frequency card. When a customer pays full price for nine haircuts, the 10th haircut is free. It works pretty good for a big family."

Naming her salon Quick Cuts sums up what she does. She gets the customer in and out quickly and satisfied. No appointment is necessary, unless it is for a formal style for a special occasion such as a wedding or prom. Visit Quick Cuts for your next haircut if you want it done professionally and quickly. **NOW**



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Harmony... PASS IT ON

— By Betty Tryon

Upon entering Mt. Peak Elementary School, one is treated to a large mural of a boy and girl happily walking along holding smiling buckets. The buckets are overflowing with contents such as love, kindness and giving. The mural is symbolic of a theme that Principal Karen Childers wants to penetrate the minds of every student. “Every year, I read a new book to every class in the school, but for the kindergarteners, I read *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*” she said. Karen explained that in the book, “Everybody carries an invisible bucket, and all day long your job is to fill that bucket. The way you fill it is by being kind and nice to others. What you don’t want to do is dip from other people’s buckets. Bullies are bucket dippers that think they can fill their bucket by dipping from others, but they can’t. This is something we talk about all the time.”

It is a simple concept of being considerate of other people’s feelings that kindergartners can grasp and continue to carry with them through their school years. Having the lesson presented to them in such a way and reinforced throughout the school year takes care of many possible discipline problems. Karen’s method of conveying this shows that the teacher inside her is alive and well. “I was a teacher in the classroom for 24 years,” she stated. “I never went into teaching thinking I would become an administrator. I knew that if I ever did get into it, I would want to be in the classroom a long time. I always appreciated other principals who had classroom experience. Teaching is still in my heart and where my center is. I have been a principal for six years and the teaching part guides me with what I do now. I think the teachers appreciate that.”

Karen taught first grade for 19 years and second grade for 5 years. She understands the needs of teachers. “When I ask the teachers to do something, they know that I’m not asking them to do something I wouldn’t do myself,” Karen said.



Considering how well she has done in her chosen career, it is surprising that Karen only went into teaching because her best friend did. However, after getting into the program, Karen loved it. She graduated in 1980 from the University of North Texas. Twenty-four years later, she remembers her first day on the job as a principal. She acknowledged, “I was scared to death. There was a lot of learning that first year. A lot of my success comes from La-Shea Slaydon, my assistant principal; she is my go-to person. Margo Hughson, the secretary, is my other right hand, even the custodian, Sheryl Walker — I can ask them to do something and come back two weeks later, and they have it done. I didn’t have to do it all by myself; I could depend on others when I needed them.

“We are a family here,” Karen shared.



Education **NOW**

"Mt. Peak is not just a place to go to work. Those good relationships with teachers trickle down to the students. Every year, I always buy a gift for the teachers to start the year. The last four years, my gift was a shirt with the logo of what we will be doing that year. We wear them on Mondays. We are all in this together and the theme ties us together. Teacher morale is a big focus of mine, not just Teacher Appreciation Week, but all through the year. For example, letting them wear jeans for a day. You let a teacher wear jeans for a day and they feel so appreciated," she laughed.

Karen wants the parents of her students to know she is accessible, and she considers it important to listen to them. She stated, "There have been times when a parent came in because they were concerned about a policy or teacher or

"Everybody carries an invisible bucket, and all day long your job is to fill that bucket."

something I may have done. We may have disagreed about what happened or even the consequences, but because we listened to each other, they left OK. I think parents are sometimes hesitant to come in with issues because they don't want something to come back on their kid, but I love it when parents come in and ask questions. It's OK to ask those tough questions, and parents should ask them, because we need to be accountable for what we do. I never think I know everything, but I feel a responsibility to share why we do things. Our parents trust us and, hopefully, they know the door is open, and I welcome those questions."

There is a thread of harmony, which Karen tries to maintain within the environment of the school day. It goes from the imaginary smiling buckets the children fill with kindness toward each other, to the teachers and showing them appreciation, to making sure the parents know her door is open to them. She said, "Cohesiveness is our goal, and we are doing fabulous with that." **NOW**



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In The Kitchen With Lauren Fraga

— By Faith Browning

Since Lauren Fraga was a young girl, she has loved to cook. She started out cooking with her grandmothers and developed into a future chef in high school. At that time, the Food Network had become popular and her father had become obsessed with the programs. “He loved to watch *Emeril Live*,” she recalled, “and he always wanted me to try out new recipes that we saw on the show.”

Lauren decided to attend culinary school her sophomore year of college. “I love to bake! I seriously considered majoring in pastry arts at culinary school, but I didn’t want to limit myself,” she explained. “I loved culinary school, and now I really enjoy teaching, but I wanted to have a family and knew I would never be able to make both work.” **NOW**



PAELLA

1 3-lb. chicken, cut into small pieces (about 12), or about 4 chicken breasts
2 tsp. kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1/2 cup olive oil
1 1/2 cups chopped andouille sausage
1 1/2 cups yellow onions, chopped
6 Tbsp. garlic, minced
1 1/2 cups tomatoes, chopped, peeled and seeded
3 cups uncooked Arborio rice
1/2 tsp. saffron threads, steeped in 3 Tbsp. hot water
6 cups white chicken stock. If preferred, substitute 1 cup white wine for 1 cup stock
3 small (1 to 1 1/4 pounds each) lobsters, lightly steamed, cut into serving pieces
36 mussels, scrubbed and debearded (optional)
18 medium shrimp in their shells, about 3/4 pound (optional)

1. Sprinkle chicken pieces evenly with salt and pepper. Heat oil in a large, deep saucepan over high heat. The bigger the pan the better; this makes a lot! Add chicken and sear until brown on all sides, about 4 minutes. Remove from pan into a covered dish.
2. Brown the sausage and place with the chicken. Add onions, garlic, tomatoes and rice to pan; sauté for 2 minutes.
3. Season with salt and pepper. Stir in saffron and simmer 1 minute more. Add stock; stir well and bring to a boil. Cover and cook 4 minutes.
4. Add chicken and sausage and cook 5 minutes more.
5. Add lobster, tucking pieces into rice; cover and cook 4 minutes.
6. Optional: Add mussels and shrimp, cover and cook until rice is tender and shellfish are opened, about 3 minutes. Discard any mussels or clams that have not opened.

CHICKEN MARSALA

4 chicken breasts
Salt and pepper, to taste
1/2 cup flour
Olive oil
1 small onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 1/2 cups baby bella mushrooms, sliced

1 1/2 cups Marsala wine
1 cup chicken stock
3 sprigs fresh thyme, pull the leaves off and add to the sauce
3/4 cup heavy cream
1 Tbsp. butter
1. Season chicken with salt and pepper; dredge with flour.
2. Heat oil in a heavy-bottom skillet and brown chicken on both sides. Remove chicken from pan and set aside.
3. Add onion, garlic and mushrooms to pan and sauté until onion becomes translucent, about 5 minutes.
4. Deglaze the pan with the wine; cook about 1 minute; add chicken stock. Place chicken back in pan and cook until done, about 10 minutes. Add thyme and heavy cream and cook until sauce becomes thick. Finish with the butter. I like to serve this over mashed potatoes; the sauce kind of acts as a gravy. You can also serve with pasta.

MIXED GREEN SALAD WITH GOAT CHEESE, HONEY ROASTED PECANS AND BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE DRESSING

PECANS:

1 cup pecan halves
1/4 cup honey

DRESSING:

1 cup balsamic vinegar
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper, to taste
1-2 cloves garlic, minced
2 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves pulled
1 Tbsp. brown sugar

SALAD:

4-5 cups mixed greens, washed
1 pkg. goat cheese, sliced or crumbled
1 pkg. dried fruit (cranberries or cherries) or 1 pear or apple diced

1. Spread pecans on a greased baking sheet and drizzle with honey. Bake at 350 F for about 10 minutes, until pecans are lightly browned and honey is melted. Let cool and then remove to a Ziploc bag sprayed with Pam. This will make it easier to break them apart.
2. Blend all dressing ingredients in a food processor until combined; season to taste.

3. Top mixed greens with cheese, fruit and pecans and serve with dressing.

CHORIZO AND SHRIMP STUFFED PEPPERS

6 poblano peppers
4 Tbsp. vegetable oil
1 lb. chorizo, crumbled and cooked
1 jalapeño pepper, minced
1 small onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 lb. shrimp, peeled and chopped
2 cups Monterey Jack cheese, grated
1 cup cheddar cheese, grated
1/2 bunch cilantro, washed and chopped
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Place poblano peppers on baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool. Once cool, cut top 1/4 of chilies off and remove ribs and seeds.
2. In a medium saucepan, heat oil and chorizo; cook for 3 minutes. Add jalapeño, onions and garlic. Cook until translucent, then add the shrimp; cook until shrimp turns pink, about 2 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool for about 15 minutes.
3. Add cheeses and cilantro; season with salt and pepper. Mix all ingredients together. Stuff each pepper with 1/6 of mixture and place back in oven until cheese is melted, about 10 minutes; remove and serve.

LINGUINE WITH GRAPE TOMATOES AND BASIL

1 pkg. linguine
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 med. yellow onion, diced
4 cloves garlic, minced
1 16-oz. pkg. grape tomatoes, washed and halved
1 pkg. or about 3-4 oz. fresh basil leaves, chiffonade (roll into a cigar and slice into thin ribbons)
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Cook pasta in a large pot of boiling water.
2. Heat oil in a large skillet, add onions and garlic; cook until translucent. Add tomatoes and cook about 2 minutes.
3. Add pasta to skillet and toss to coat. Add basil and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately with fresh grated Parmesan cheese and a crusty loaf of bread.

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While enjoying these lazy summer days and having fun in the sun, remember that your eyes need just as much protection as your skin. Your eyes are exposed to the UV rays that can cause Photokeratitis also known as corneal sunburn. UV-A rays penetrate deep into the eye and UV-B damage the surface of the eye. Wearing dark sunglasses does not protect your eyes, in fact, they can cause further damage. The pupil of your eye dilates (opens more) to compensate for looking through a dark lens thus allowing UV rays to penetrate more surface of the interior of your eye. Purchase glasses for yourself and children that are rated blockage 99%-100% UV-A and UV-B rays — "blocks harmful UV rays" tells you nothing, so don't pay for nothing, pay for something! Another feature to consider are wrap around glasses that block UV rays from entering from the side of your face. And again, wear a hat with those cool shades!

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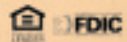
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Do Not Drink the Water

— By Betty Tryon, R.N.



Those happy days of summer spent splashing in the pool without a care in the world may not be so carefree. The closing of public pools because of contamination brought Recreational Water Illnesses (RWI) to the forefront. RWIs occur when swallowing or having some contact with water that is contaminated with pathogens (germs). These pathogens may be bacteria such as shigella and E. coli, or parasites such as Cryptosporidium, Giardia or even some viruses. The most frequent symptom is diarrhea along with fever, vomiting and stomach cramps. After exposure to polluted water, skin, eye, ear and respiratory symptoms are all indicative of a possible infection.

One of the most common ways these germs are spread is from humans suffering with diarrhea entering the water. Even barring the occasional “accident,” anyone with recent diarrhea will have enough germs on their bottom to easily contaminate the water supply. To lessen the probability of becoming ill from RWIs, do not swallow the water! Even a small amount can be devastating. Many people think pool water is safe because it has been treated. On the contrary, some of these pathogens can live for several days in chlorinated water. Even with a perfectly maintained pool, it is impossible to prevent all RWIs because you cannot control every circumstance of what gets into the water.

Therefore, if swimming in a public pool, please remember that it is a communal venue. If someone is ill or careless, you may not know it. It is not always evident when fecal material gets in the water. Water that is treated with chlorine is not a substitution for good personal hygiene. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) recommends showering with soap and water before swimming. Wash your hands after using the bathroom. Please consider others and do not swim if you are ill with diarrhea. Parents of small children need to be especially vigilant and offer frequent potty breaks to avoid accidents in the water. Clean the bottom with soap and water before entering the pool.

Swimming pools are not the only water venues susceptible to this problem. Hot tubs and Jacuzzis are particularly vulnerable to the spread of waterborne diseases because the high temperature of the water causes the chlorine to evaporate more quickly. Lakes, rivers, springs or ponds carry an even higher risk. Any number of pollutants can foul the water such as sewage, animal waste or even a heavy runoff from a recent rain. It may be inconvenient to practice due diligence when the water and good times beckon. However, being careful may not only keep others from becoming ill, it will keep you safer, too. **NOW**

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

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July is Crape Myrtle Time

— By *Nancy Fenton*

Look around at all those gorgeous, blooming trees! If you do not have some crape myrtle trees, try them. There are varieties for every space, taste and color preference. They can run from 2 feet (miniatures) to 20-plus feet (tree size). They are all ultra-hardy and do very nicely on natural rainfall after the first year. The key is to pick your color and know the maximum height you can tolerate in the space you are considering for planting. Do not plant 20-plus foot trees under your power lines!

Texas A&M recommends some good varieties for our mid-Texas areas. Their sizes and names are as follows:

RED

2-3 feet	Pocomoke
3-6 feet	Dwarf Low Flame
5-12 feet	Cheyenne, Tonto
10-20 feet	Comanche
20-plus feet	Arapaho

PINK

3-6 feet	McFadden's Pinkie
5-12 feet	Caddo
10-20 feet	Osage
20-plus feet	Biloxi

PURPLE

2-3 feet	Velma's Royal Delight
3-6 feet	Dwarf Royalty
5-12 feet	Zuni
10-20 feet	Lipan
20-plus feet	Muskogee, Wichita

WHITE

5-12 feet	Acoma
10-20 feet	Byer's White
20-plus feet	Fantasy, Kiowa

You will notice not all sizes have all colors available. Take your pick of size and color. Buy from a reputable nursery. Ask if they will take it back if it is not the right size and color. Good nurseries will! Plant the tree in the full sun and water thoroughly each week until the days no longer hit 85 degrees or higher. All new plants need special care and crape myrtles are no different. Your investment in thought, time and money will bloom and bloom and bloom! **NOW**

Nancy Fenton is a Master Gardener.





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COWBOY CAPITAL

— By *Becky Walker*

Nestled away in the beautiful, but rugged Texas Hill Country less than an hour west of San Antonio, is the little town of Bandera. Known as the “Cowboy Capital of the World,” it was the staging ground for the last of the great cattle drives in the 1800s, and is famous for its strong rodeo tradition, dude ranches and horseback riding. In fact, many national rodeo champions have called Bandera home.

Here in this town, which prides itself in keeping the Wild West alive, it is not uncommon to see a horse tied to a hitching post or entertainers in period costume. Each Saturday, re-enactments of gunfights take place near the courthouse and horse-drawn wagons offer tours of the downtown area.

If music and dancing spark your interest, there are plenty of local honky-tonks, or you could drop in on an old-fashioned jam session, held every fourth Friday at the Silver Sage Corral. If apple picking is more to your liking, you might think about a mid-July

visit to Love Creek Orchards located about 20 minutes away in Medina. (Call 830-589-2588 ahead of time to be sure the crop is ready for picking.)

Historical tours emphasize the area’s unique blending of Indian, Mexican, Polish and Western cultures, and much of the local architecture is Polish — including St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, the second-oldest Polish Catholic church in the United States.

Scenic drives offer views of canyons, rivers, winding roads and wildlife. Over 200 species of birds have been identified in the area. The Lost Maples State Natural Area in northwestern Bandera County preserves the Big Tooth Maple, a variety of maple not normally found in other parts of the state. Axis deer, feral hogs and wild turkeys make Bandera a

favorite place for hunting. Information regarding hunting leases may be obtained through the Bandera Visitors Center at (830) 796-3045 or (800) 364-3833. If you love the great outdoors, Bandera just might be the vacation spot for you! **NOW**



Happening **NOW**

First and Fourth Monday

School Board Meeting: 6:30 p.m.

Third Monday

Ellis County Aggie Moms: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie First United Methodist Church, 505 W. Marvin. For more information, see our Web site: www.elliscountyaggie.com.

Fourth Monday

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County meeting: 6:30-8:00 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 Grand Ave.

Every Tuesday

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

GED Class: 6:00 p.m., Meadows Library, located at Midlothian High School.

Second and Fourth Tuesdays

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

Third Wednesday

The Ellis County Christian Women's Connection, monthly luncheon: 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Hwy. 287 @ I-35 East (Exit 401B), Waxahachie. All women are welcome. A special feature and a positive, uplifting speaker. The cost is \$13.00, inclusive. Nursery vouchers available. Reservations are preferred. To make reservations, please contact either Kay at (972) 937-2807 or windchime423@yahoo.com or Mary at (972) 937-9984 no later than Friday, June 11.

First Thursday

Midlothian Area Historical Society, 7:00 p.m., Meadows Library, located at the Midlothian High School. Contact Kathy Robinson at (972) 723-2755 for more information.

ABWA – Empowering Women Express Network monthly meeting: 6:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center, 1 Community Circle, Midlothian. Please RSVP at www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org for more information.

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Happening **NOW**

First and Third Thursday

Midlothian Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., Midlothian Civic Center, 224 S. 11th Street. For more information, call (972) 775-7118 or to RSVP call (972) 723-0017 or e-mail julia_mainplace@sbcglobal.net.

July 3

Senior Citizens Pantry Fourth of July celebration/fundraiser: 5:00-10:00 p.m., Midlothian Multi-Purpose Building. Entertainment and food; fireworks promptly at 9:30 p.m. Admission is free but donations accepted. Fun for entire family! Independence Day Fireworks Display by Citizens National Bank. Contact Vicki Massey (972) 723-6177 for donations and more information.

July 4

Happy Fourth of July!

July 10

Hazardous Household Chemical Waste Disposal. The mobile "Crud Cruiser" travels to area neighborhoods to collect leftover household chemicals. A voucher must be purchased at the Utility Billing office at City Hall to participate.

Movies in the Park: 8:30 p.m. (dusk), Hawkins Spring Park. Featured movie: *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs*. Free admission. Concessions available.

July 16-17

Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County annual quilt show: 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Midlothian Conference Center. There will be door prizes, silent auction and a raffle quilt. Additional information on our quilt show and the Creative Quilters Guild of Ellis County can be found at www.elliscountyquilters.com.

July 24

BAM - Bike Around Midlothian featuring 10-, 24-, 45- or 60-mile routes: 7:00-10:00 a.m., All ages may participate; 17 and under must be accompanied by an adult. All participants must wear a helmet. Midlothian ISD Multi-Purpose Stadium, cost \$25.00 in advance; \$35.00 after July 17. E-mail info@bamride.com for more information.

For more community events,
visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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“Recognize me?”

“The biggest change is how I look at the world,” says Fercina Fudge, who had gastric bypass surgery at Baylor. “I walk into a room now, and I don’t have to look around to see if I’m the fattest person there,” she says. After struggling with weight most of her life, Fercina says, “I knew I had to make a change....it was affecting my blood pressure, my joints. There were so many things I couldn’t do.” Now, Fercina says, “not being recognized is a fabulous thing.”

For a physician referral or for more information about weight loss services at Baylor Waxahachie, call **1.800.4BAYLOR** or visit us online at BaylorHealth.com.

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