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July 2010

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On The Cover

Paul Stephenson enjoys riding to raise funds for charities.

Photo by John Riley.

Editor's Note



Dear Friends,

On July 4, 1776, a group of 56 men, unanimously representing each of the 13 colonies, signed the *United States Declaration of Independence*. They did so knowing that the penalty for their action would be death if they were caught by the British. And the price was very high. Some were, in fact, caught and executed as traitors to the British crown. Others fought and died on the battlefield, had their homes destroyed, lost sons to the war or sacrificed their fortunes for the cause. Some who survived the Revolution died in poverty. With their lives and livelihood, they paid for our freedom.

They say that freedom is not free, and this is true. In each successive generation there have been brave soldiers who have paid the price to keep the dream of America — the dream of liberty — alive. As we enjoy the festivities, celebrating our nation's 234th birthday, be sure to thank a veteran, for in the words of Billy Ray Cyrus "all gave some and some gave all."

Happy Birthday America!

Becky Walker
Managing Editor
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Sonia Gooding,
Keela Narramore
and Rhonda Abshire
repurpose books to
raise funds for missions.

Transformed Books *Transform Lives*

— By Alana Williamson

One snowy day in February, instead of curling up and reading a good book, Keela Narramore decided to use her book for a different purpose. She came up with the idea to create picture frames from hardback books. After several prototypes and a great deal of trial and error, she perfected her transformations into unique craft items.

With the help of friends, Rhonda Abshire and Sonia Gooding, Keela has spent hundreds of hours repurposing books into a variety of standing frame designs. The creative friends sell the frames to raise money to help fund their mission trips to Mexico. The women are members of Extended Hands, a local ministry group of about a dozen women that frequently volunteer their time through charities in Mexico. The group has served in the Yucatán, among other areas since 2008.

In addition to attending church together at The Oaks Fellowship in Red Oak, all three have children who are now adults, and more time than ever to give back to others. “We were at a point where we said, ‘What do we do now?’” Rhonda explained.

Once they decided to use their free time to help others, their only challenge was covering the travel expenses. The three admitted that none of them have any special artistic talents, but they are excited about their new venture, called Off the Shelf. It is inspiring them in their own lives. The group came up with

the name because they take books off of shelves and use them to create their frames. They began by using books from Keela’s extensive home library and quickly recognized the unique way the books related to their own lives.

“They were just collecting dust and now they’re repurposed,” Keela said. “In the same way, lives can be changed and used again for a different purpose.”

For example, Keela mentioned how many people start out working in one area, but end up doing something completely different and rewarding. For her, this change has been working full-time as an accountant for many years, and now also working to serve those less fortunate.

The group has completed requests to make frames for various



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themes, occasions and uses. These include collegiate colors, bridal themes, baby arrivals, get-well frames and recipe holders.

One patriotic frame created for the Fourth of July from an autobiography of Roseanne Arnold, features red, white and blue scrapbook paper complete with stars and stripes. The pages are intricately folded inward and the entire cover has been painted red. One red ribbon glued around the bottom of the frame keeps the book closed and allows it to stand on its open edges. Another ribbon, glued at the top, holds the scrapbook clips. Keela used the clips to frame a message card that reads, "Responsibility is the price of freedom."

They use different sizes of books, from small, quick reads to large textbooks. The various sizes allow for different sizes of photos or message cards to be framed. Keela established a partnership with a local thrift store to help with their supplies. The store donates books to her that they are unable to sell. Other people have emptied out their boxes of old books to give to their cause, too. This helps the group in their fundraising efforts by keeping their costs down.

Keela houses the books along with various craft supplies at her home, and the group works around her dining room table creating the unique frames. Each frame takes about one hour to complete. "No two frames are exactly alike," Rhonda said. "Each is a unique work of art."

Sonia said the distinctiveness of each frame makes it difficult to choose which patterns and colors to use, though the process itself is easy to learn. Keela agrees that creating the frames is simple as long as the sequential steps are followed. First, she folds all of the pages of the book in a triangular fashion. Next, she covers each book with two to three coats of paint. Then, she selects, measures and glues paper on each side of the cover. After varnishing the entire cover, Keela embellishes it with various accessories, including ribbon, clips and trinkets.

All three women also use the repurposing process as a reading lesson. They admit it is hard to resist not reading the books as they fold the pages prior to designing. Once completed, the size and type of accessories used determines the costs of the frames. The group is also considering creating packages of

interchangeable inspirational messages to accompany the frames and allow for versatility.

Keela hopes that more volunteers will join them in designing the frames. She has a goal of 20 volunteers each week that would allow her to set up a repurposing assembly line. In addition to local help, several international charities have approached Keela with the idea of joining in the effort. For example, women in other countries, including Mexico and Thailand, could create frames as a means of employment. "We're excited about the idea of helping them help themselves," Rhonda said.

Even though her small craft project is growing to international heights, Keela remains focused on the group's humble and original goals. "We're not in it for ourselves," she said. "We want to use this to impact people here, in other states and overseas."

This Independence Day, Keela cannot help but recognize that the individuals they are reaching out to do not experience the freedom that she does. But she believes that with liberty comes responsibility and the need to make good choices. For her, one of those choices is being environmentally conscious. As a result, she is excited about how their project will help others look at reusing items in a new way. She even plans to use other recycled items, such as gift bags as backing for the frames and greeting cards in her future designs. "Buying used items is better than recycling," Keela said. "It has an even greater impact on the environment."

In an effort to ensure that the higher purpose of Off the Shelf is not forgotten, each frame will include an inspirational poem by local writer, Phylis Mourning, entitled "The Parable of the Used Book." The poem encourages the recipients to let God redesign their lives in the same way that used books are transformed for a different purpose. "It's important to live life to the fullest," Rhonda said. "It's never too late to serve because no matter how old you are, you have something to give."

It is from this giving that Off the Shelf emerged, and as Keela, Rhonda and Sonia hope, will continue to grow and inspire. "I find joy in everything now," Sonia concluded. "And it's all due to volunteering." **NOW**

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The Perfect *getaway*

— By Cari LaCroix



Jeff and Deanna Brogden are no strangers to hard work. Deanna helps friends run their business and Jeff is assistant superintendent for the Mansfield Independent School District. This busy lifestyle gave them the desire to build, so they could create an atmosphere at home in which they can slow down and enjoy family. Although their previous home had more land and a pool, maintaining it took up any free time they had. "We owned a pool before, and I didn't like taking care of it," Jeff said. "We chose this neighborhood for its green spaces, walking trail, park and swimming pool." They worked closely with the builder to make all their dreams come true. "The builder was so accommodating; we were coming to them every day with another idea!" Deanna admitted.

Deanna (holding Brownie), Jeff (holding Sadie) and Breanna "Bree" Brogden pose for a family portrait.



At Home With Jeff and Deanna Brogden

The couple has been married for 16 years, and their daughter Bree, will be attending Waxahachie Life School next fall. She and her mother share a love for traveling to concerts together. "It's a great way for us to have some mother-daughter time," Deanna said. Brant and Cord, the couple's oldest two, live in East Texas. The whole family enjoys water sports at the lake, such as boating, skiing and tubing. They also enjoy their pets, Brownie and Sadie. "We love our dogs; they're our babies!" Deanna said.

Just three years old, their two-story home sits on a corner lot. Constructed of brick and Austin stone, it has arched windows, three columns and a decorative front door. "This street happens to have lots of young people," Jeff said, "and also people who work in education."

Deanna agreed, "It's a nice, quiet neighborhood with people who share common interests." Jeff and Deanna joked that their home has three bedrooms and "the Bree suite," in which two bedrooms were combined for Bree's room. It also includes a formal dining, movie and game room, as well as a home office.

Entering the front door, the formal dining room is to the

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to fit into,” Deanna said, as Jeff added, “It doesn’t matter what we’re doing; every one ends up in the kitchen. We’ve hosted at least 40 people here at once!”

The kitchen has tile floors, with an island in the middle and beautiful flecked-marble countertops. A tiled

backsplash extends below the cabinets, lit by under-cabinet lights. “Those lights were one of Jeff’s projects,” Deanna said thankfully. Black appliances and a black sink have bronze oil rubbed faucets and hardware. A bar overlooks the breakfast table and a window seat aligns the table to one side, providing seating and storage.

A long olive-green accent wall pulls the room together. “This wall was actually a design flaw,” Deanna said. “We realized it has no outlets in it and we had all this space! So we had to figure out how to use it.” Now, handsome black shelving provides the perfect place for books, family photos and decorations. Signs describe the family’s appreciation for one

left. On the wall behind their dining table hangs a cross collection facing the front window. A china cabinet houses a collection of dishes that began with a set original to Deanna’s grandparents. “My grandfather gave my grandmother this set during the Great Depression, so when we got married, we registered for the same pattern so we could add to it,” Deanna explained. A guest bedroom to the left of the foyer has an antique sewing machine, another family heirloom.

With an open floor plan, the foyer, kitchen, breakfast area and living space all flow continuously together. The flooring throughout is hard wood, hand-scraped oak. “We wanted a space for everyone



another, reading “Laughter,” “The Simple Things” and “It is not the length of life, but the depth of life.”

At the end of the room, a wood-burning fireplace sits kitty-corner. With a beautiful mantel, it is made of the same Austin stone used on the exterior of the home. Ribbed, olive-colored couches are angled to enjoy both the fireplace and the flat-screen television. Beside the television sits an old kerosene floor heater that used to serve in Deanna’s grandparents’ farmhouse. “It was the only heat they had!” Deanna added.

A hallway off the living area leads to the master bedroom, garage and utility room. The master bedroom has oak furniture, stained a rich mahogany color. Their master bathroom is perfectly accommodating, with his and her sinks, cabinetry and closets. Marble countertops and a garden tub have bronze oil-rubbed faucets and light fixtures.

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Up the stairs, cut Berber carpet continues from the downstairs bedrooms. It leads to more rooms that showcase Jeff's handiwork, and also provide a great escape for the family. The "movie room" is one of his favorite accomplishments. "This is Jeff's thing; he did the room over a Christmas break," Deanna explained. Painted chocolate brown, it has a large framed-in area painted white for movies to be projected onto. Framed movie posters are hung on the walls. A brown leather couch, square ottoman and round chair face the screen. Surround-sound speakers are hung around the room. Jeff said jokingly, "My favorite places to shop are Best Buy and Fry's!"

Just beyond the movie room is the game room, with a pool table in the center. Four bar stools provide seating. Tin advertisement signs decorate the tan walls. An arcade-style video game sits



in one corner and a half-bathroom is located in another. "We had to swap out the door to the bathroom from the movie room so it could be entered from the game room, and the movie room would stay darker," Deanna explained.

Across the hallway is the infamous "Bree Suite," a space that is every girl's dream. "When we were building, Bree's room backed up to an open space that would have been created by a cathedral ceiling in the formal dining room downstairs," Deanna said. "We asked the builder if we could just close that off and make it another room upstairs." The end result is a bedroom with a sitting room, perfect for hanging out with her friends. Decorated in pinks, browns and animal print, it has fun furniture such as a papasan chair and a chair shaped like a high-heeled shoe.

The final upstairs rooms are another



Breanna (Bree) and Sadie in the 'Bree Suite.'

bathroom, and one last work-in-progress, Jeff's office. They hope to add more furniture and built-in shelves. Other goals include "a patio, more landscaping, rock pathway and maybe just a small patch of grass for the dogs," Deanna said.

"And a fire pit right in the middle of it!" Jeff added. Deanna explained, "We like to do projects together, we're hands-on." This willingness to work hard has resulted in a home that is the perfect place to escape and relax. **NOW**

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Katie King and Emily Hamilton get snow cones at the Donut House.



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Aidan Ramirez smiles as he plays at Laugh and Learn Day School at First United Methodist Church.



Zeplin Perez poses before taking a ride down the slide at Red Oak Park.



Brian and Aubrey Murphy grab lunch at McDonald's.

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A STITCH OF

Fantasy

— By Katrina D. McNair

While the world of swords, kings and fairies is one that our imaginations can take us to, for Red Oak residents Mick and Amanda Moreau, it is real — at least for a few months out of each year. Mick and Amanda are actors at Scarborough Renaissance Festival, held in Waxahachie each spring. Set in 1500s England, Mick portrays Mervin the Henchman and Amanda, Rhianna the Troll.

To get into full character requires, of course, the perfect costume. But, you will not find any store-bought masks here. The couple takes great pride in creating their attire with as much historical care and fantasy as they can. Mick and Amanda actually met at an actor's orientation for the Scarborough festival. "I had recently gone through a divorce and was looking for an outlet. I had an old friend that I knew from high school who suggested I audition," Amanda said. "He told me the group was like a big family and suggested it was a good place for me to be at the time. He was definitely right," she said, smiling at her husband. Prior to their first meeting, Mick, originally from New York, had acted in commercials and theater productions.

Though they both create their costumes, Amanda had to learn through trial by fire when she needed a costume, but had no seamstress. "I went to my mom's house and we put together some very basic pieces. Now, I've gotten to a level where I can put together a costume, even if I don't have a pattern. A lot of trial and error," she laughed.

Before a single stitch can be sewn, Mick and Amanda have to have an idea



"I look more like an executioner than a henchman."

of who their character is. The process usually begins with a sketch and can take two to three months to complete. Selecting fabric and accessories takes the couple from the Internet to local thrift stores and flea markets. For Scarborough, since it is historically based, more thought has to go into costumes, ensuring the pieces truly would have been worn and seen in that period. "During the Renaissance, it was a re-birth of the arts," Amanda said when asked what historical references are used to assist in their costume designing. "There are a lot of oil paintings and drawings from the time period. There's also a lot of literature. So, there are a lot of extremely detailed descriptions we can use." Mick and Amanda also reference images from an art form called wood cut prints, which were pictures carved into wood. The

images were then pressed onto paper or parchment.

Though imaginary creatures, Amanda had plenty of documentation available to her when coming up with Rhianna's troll attire. "There's a lot of folklore and mythology surrounding trolls," she said. "I do wear a corset, a period garment for a lady of the time. I do wear a charmeuse or a blouse that is period correct. I wear tights and the proper shoes. The belts and pouches would be just like any other person of that time period would wear, but I've gone to lengths to visually add layers to the costuming. I have a kind of tattered looking, tied-on skirt that has several different layers to it of various colors. I have what I refer to as my headdress, which is the horn and wig and everything that makes up the fantasy part of the character."

"I also have a dental appliance that a special-effects artist made for me with tusks, false teeth and false gums. It actually looks like it's a part of my mouth," she laughed. "It's very well-crafted."

For Mick, designing Mervin the Henchman's costume, one of his many characters, was fairly easy. "I put on a lot of black and weapons and a hood. I look more like an executioner than a henchman," he said, grinning. Though this one may have been an easy costume, Mick has more elaborate ones, including a handmade leather outfit he used to portray an American Indian during a previous Scarborough season. "There's not a machine stitch on it," he stated proudly. Impressive it must be, as Mick



Amanda Moreau creating necklaces for her children, Aidan & Miranda Ramirez.

has been told by several American Indians that the costume looks like something that should be in a museum.

Obviously, the couple invests significant amounts of time, care and funds into their costumes, bringing these magical, whimsical and historical people and creatures to life. Though they usually receive no monetary rewards, the smiles they bring to people's faces are payment enough. "It gives me an endless crowd of people to entertain in one place," Mick stated. "It's a challenge to come up with new ways to interact with them and leave them with a smile."

Nodding her head in agreement, Amanda chimed in as well. "I went in originally just trying to bring a little happiness to the world," she said. "We want to help create that step away from reality. It's nice to be a 35-year-old woman and get to play dress up. I think we allow people to just take a step back and enjoy themselves." **NOW**



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Life Cycle

— By Cari LaCroix

Paul Stephenson's passion for cycling is obvious. He estimates he has ridden over 100,000 miles in training, competitions and other events. He also helps train others for such events.

Paul and his wife, Lynn, have lived in close proximity to the Dallas area since 1988, and sports and fitness are a way of life. Two of their four children have competed in collegiate sports, and the other two are involved at Red Oak High School. He has actively trained with his wife, daughter, son, brother and sister. Paul recalls a conversation he had in 1986 with a friend who told him about a Hotter'N Hell bike ride in Wichita Falls in August. Paul agreed to try it, and has since ridden it every year since but one. He also has completed at least five races

of 60 miles or more every year since 1987.

With records to be proud of, Paul was the first to cross the finish line of his longest ride of 158 miles in a Fort Worth race, after eight hours and 12 minutes. "When I was racing, I'd ride every day of the week," he stated. Now instead of racing to set records, he enjoys riding to raise funds for charities such as the Leukemia Society, National Multiple Sclerosis Society and the Diabetes Association.

Paul has clocked hours both riding and running all over the States, taking in beautiful scenery in North Carolina, New Mexico and Hawaii. Since 1994, he has completed 11 marathons, running in Dallas, Austin, Fort Worth, Washington, D.C. and even Kona, Hawaii. While on vacation in Hawaii, Paul decided that he would try out the Iron Man route just for practice, while he had the chance. He laughed, "Why do you climb that mountain? Because it's there. I had to!"

Since Paul enjoys both cycling and running, one day Lynn pointed out that because he can also swim, he should try a triathlon. He took her advice and succeeded. He also enjoys adventure racing, which might involve kayaking, mountain biking and trail running, such as the High Tech Adventure Series at Joe Pool Lake.

Paul carefully thinks through his fitness regimen, finding time anywhere he can to train. For instance, he uses lunch breaks to run, swim or ride. On Thursdays, he even climbs the 10 flights of stairs in his office building 10 times. Each week, he aspires to swim 2,500 meters, run 10 to 15 miles and ride about 125 miles. He intentionally rests on Fridays, and practices his longest rides on Saturdays, riding FM roads anywhere between Italy and Sachse.

To beginners, Paul suggests finding



something you like, purchasing good shoes, starting out slow and having fun. Before running, one might simply walk as fast as possible for 30 minutes. Then, slowly build up and run segments between the walking. "If you hurt, stop or it's counterproductive. If you haven't exercised for 10 years, you're not going to get it back in 10 minutes." The most important advice he can give is to plan to exercise, writing it into your schedule. For an experienced cyclist considering a triathlon, Paul advises running one to two

miles after every bike ride, to train the body to immediately use the muscles in a different way.

Paul emphasized that a healthy lifestyle is not just about exercising. Getting plenty of rest and eating right are also important. "I pack a lunchbox in the morning, and I eat all day long." He listed fish, pasta and fruit among his favorites.

One of Paul's main motivators is the desire to live longer, stating, "I want to be around for my kids and grandkids; I want to be healthy." He tries to set a good example for them to follow. He joked, "When I turn 100 years old, I want to have some cake, have my kids put me on a bike and push me down the hill. That'll be just perfect!"

Paul is involved in the Texas Bicycle Coalition and the Greater Dallas Bicyclist Club. These organizations set up laws and promote bicycling safety and education, along with the friendships formed while cycling. "I love the camaraderie; we visit

"When I was racing, I'd ride every day of the week."

all the time while riding." He described, "I've hit it off with good people out there in bike shops and races. We talk God, politics, kids, wives and work."

He emphasized that these friendships provide great accountability. "You get faster and better by hanging with people who are faster and better!" He described how they look out for one another and offer a hand. Paul has ridden alongside cyclists, pushing them up a steep incline.

There have been close calls on the roads. As he was being loaded into an ambulance after being hit by a car, he told the driver, "We aren't leaving until you put my bike in, too!" Once, a dog ran in front of his bike, resulting in cracked ribs and a broken collarbone. He joked, "There are two kinds of cyclists: those who have crashed, and those who are going to crash!" Paul can be proud that he has never stayed down for long! **NOW**

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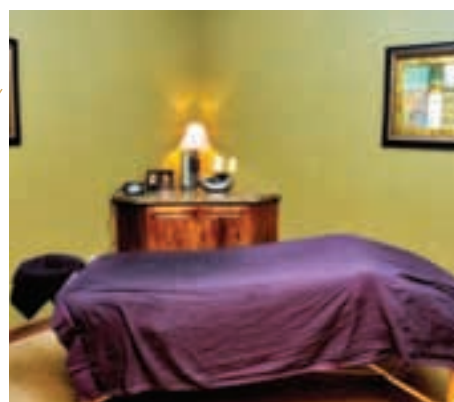
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Family *Matters*

Once you come through the doors of Red Oak Chiropractic & Therapy, you become part of the family. — By Alex Allred

Everyone complains about the weather and back pain, but few ever do anything about either. Dr. Curtis Begin did something about both.

When Dr. Bob Hollander and Dr. Mark Zuber opened Red Oak Chiropractic & Therapy, Dr. Begin leapt at the opportunity to leave the harsh winters of Iowa. "I wanted a change from the weather," he smiled. After earning a degree in business from Iowa State University, Dr. B., as he is known to his patients, graduated from the prestigious Palmer College of Chiropractic. "Red Oak," he said, "was a perfect fit."

Long before such achievements, however, Dr. B. was a victim of a bad back in high school. "I was involved in two car accidents within one month." The pain was debilitating, "and I literally could not function." But within two months, Dr. B. was mobile once again

thanks to a local chiropractor.

The result was twofold. It opened Dr. B. to the world of chiropractic care and made him especially attentive to low back problems. "It [lower back pain] is my area that I really focus on and have gotten great results," Dr. B. said. "We have a superb low back rehabilitation program."

In fact, Red Oak Chiropractic & Therapy has had excellent success treating headaches, whiplash, fibromyalgia, carpal tunnel, ear infections and even asthma, in addition to the traditional aches and pains in the body. "We're very proud of our physiotherapy and rehab treatments," said Office Manager Pam Thomson. A tour of the facility reveals state-of-the-art equipment that includes ultrasound, interferential electrical muscle stimulation, even an on-staff massage therapist.

According to Pam, it is the staff

From left:

Pam Thomson; Curtis Begin, D.C.; April Hamm and Mycak Mehlenbacher work as a team to provide the best possible care to their patients.

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Business **NOW**

that truly sets Red Oak Chiropractic & Therapy apart. "Once you come through our doors, you are part of the family."

"I like to really get to know my patients," Dr. B. said. With that family mentality, Dr. B. and his staff take the time to learn about their patient's lifestyle, family history and health. "Then it becomes my job to get them out of pain. We do a history, a consultation, a neurological and physical examination. We are never in a rush."

For staff members Pam, receptionist and rehabilitation therapist Mycah Mehlenbacher and massage therapist April Hamm, the good treatment goes both ways. "Our patients spoil us," Pam laughed appreciatively. Very often, patients bring in baked goods, cookies and sweet treats.

"They know when they come in here, it isn't just, 'You're in and you're out,'" Mycah said. "They know how much we care about them."

"You know, this is just like how you take care of your teeth or your car. You know what you need to do. It should be the same with your spine," said Dr. B, noting that just as a car needs a tune up, "same goes with the spine because you can't get a new spine."

It is for this reason that the Red Oak Chiropractic staff works as a team as each new patient (or family member) joins "the family." Tending to individual needs, patients are stretched and adjusted but also given exercise routines to encourage better health and recovery. April offers the final touch. "I let my hands do my talking and my seeing," April laughed.

Whether it is chiropractic care or massage therapy, however, "I think most people are surprised to learn how quick and easy the process can be," Dr. B. said. "They leave saying, 'Wow, I had no idea what I've been missing out on.'"

It is what Pam calls a "give-give" relationship, and Red Oak Chiropractic & Therapy is committed to giving back to the community through sporting events and the schools, including part-time employment for high school students interested in this field with the hope "to increase the awareness of what we truly treat and how we can help," Dr. B. added. After all, what is family for? **NOW**

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Musical Motivation

— By *Alana Williamson*

Music has been a part of Ellen Miller's life for as long as she can remember. Her mother taught her how to sing and play piano at a young age. She studied music in college, and she met her husband in a music store. Her musical journey most



recently brought her to Life School Red Oak, where she teaches music and piano lessons.

Ellen teaches choir at Life School Red Oak Secondary Campus. There are about 50 students in the choir, and it has been a challenge to Ellen because this is many of the students' first time singing in a choir. "I decided from day one that they were going to like it," Ellen said. "Now, they all have a good attitude about it."

Ellen often includes contemporary songs in the choir's performances, such as Kelly Clarkson's "Breakaway" and Miley Cyrus' "Party in the U.S.A." "I pick songs that they relate to," Ellen said. "My students learn how current music has evolved from composers in the past."

Ellen helps teach and plays piano for the elementary music classes and also plays piano for the sixth- and seventh-grade choir. Because choir is not a credit

course for the sixth- and seventh-grade students, Ellen helped find creative ways to motivate them to succeed in the extracurricular activity.

This past year, the middle school and high school choirs performed at Sandy Lake Amusement Park in Carrollton and at a spring concert for family and friends. Several students, including Ellen's high-school-age son, Logan, accompanied the choir on various instruments.

Ellen worked her second year at the Life School elementary campus in the mornings assisting the music teacher, Dana Sosebee, with grades two through four. Afternoons were spent teaching mixed choir at the secondary campus to grades eight through 11. In her first year at the elementary level, Ellen gained encouragement from her fellow instructors, which led her to pursue her Texas music teacher certification for kindergarten through 12th grades, thus landing her the position she began her second year and is looking forward to returning to in August.

She has high hopes for the future of the music program and looks forward to its growth. "The greatest part of teaching music is helping students discover their talents and providing them with the motivation they need to succeed," she stated.

After school, Ellen teaches private piano lessons at the elementary campus and also at her home in Cedar Hill. Her students range from the age of 4 to adults, and she teaches them for 30 minutes to an hour each week. Students begin taking short lessons and the time expands as the students advance.

Ellen begins by teaching them music theory and gives them tests provided by her professional organization, Dallas Southwest Music Teachers Association, which also offers the students opportunities for college scholarships. She admits that she does not want mediocre students and wants each one to excel. "Piano is the basis for all instruments, if they learn the theory then they can transfer it to other instruments," she explained.

Education **NOW**

Ellen also shows a great deal of patience with her students, taking time to ask them what type of music they would like to learn and teaching them according to their interests, in addition to their abilities. On weekends, Ellen directs the choir and plays the piano at First Christian Church in DeSoto, a position she takes great pride in.

She credits her mother for introducing and inspiring her musical career. She and her siblings would often perform with their mother as she sang and played piano at various events. Ellen began studying piano when she was 4 years old. Her musical interest continued through high school where she received a college scholarship. After receiving a bachelor's degree in music education and an Illinois teaching certification from Western Illinois University, Ellen received a graduate assistantship to obtain her master's degree in piano performance.

Ellen considered studying to become a concert pianist, but instead chose to continue teaching piano and performing, which in turn allowed her to share her gift with others. It was after this time that she began substitute teaching near her hometown of Trivoli, Illinois. After her husband, Larry's, career brought them to the Dallas area, she played piano for vocal college students at Dallas Baptist University for three years while teaching private piano lessons from her home.

Her work at Life School Red Oak has allowed her to delve deeper into music education and be with her children, who all attend school there and share her love for music. "I grew up in a very musical family," Ellen said. "I didn't have a choice whether to learn to play piano, and now I'm good at it." She in turn taught her children, daughter Alaina, and sons, Hayward and Logan, to play piano and sing. Logan also plays the guitar in a band, Chicago.Fly. "I have a desire to help others experience the enjoyment that I have with music," Ellen said of her career choice.

She also enjoys helping students discover how to use music to express themselves, and hopes that all of her students, those that sing and play piano, learn the value music can have in their lives. **NOW**

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In The Kitchen With Hillery Gray

— By Faith Browning

Growing up, Hillery Gray spent many memorable moments helping her father, a firefighter, prepare meals on his days off. “My father was my inspiration for cooking, but not my only influence,” she expressed. “My family and my parents, Ann and Ernie, keep my cooking and mind sharp by letting me experiment with new and old recipes alike!”

Hillery and her husband, Tim, believe

in spending most of their time with their children, Clifton and Bella, especially in the kitchen. “Cooking is a way to be responsible for what you and your family are eating and an easy way to keep your children’s palate developed,” she explained. “Let a child cook with you, and they will be so proud of the finished product you will be surprised what they are willing to eat!” **NOW**



CHICKEN ENCHILADA DIP

- 1 8-oz. block cream cheese, softened to room temperature
- 1 cup cheddar cheese plus 1/4 cup more for topping
- 1 8-oz. can chicken breast
- 1 7-oz. can green chilies, un-drained
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1 box Wheat Thins

1. Combine all ingredients in oven-safe 9-inch dish (A pie plate works well.) Top with 1/4 cup of cheese.
2. Bake at 350 F until bubbly and golden. Serve with Wheat Thins.

ENCHILADA SUIZAS PRONTO

- 4 chicken breasts
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 onion, quartered
- 1 jar prepared salsa verde
- 1 cup chopped fresh cilantro, divided 3/4 for enchiladas and 1/4 for top
- Juice of 1 lime
- Tortillas, corn or flour
- 1 cup Swiss cheese
- 1 cup Monterrey Jack cheese (Pepper Jack if you like it spicy)
- 1 cup sour cream

1. Poach chicken breast with bay leaf and onion. Discard bay leaf after cooking. Shred chicken.
2. Put 1/2 jar of salsa at the bottom of a 9 x 13-inch casserole dish. Put 1/4 jar of salsa in a bowl with chicken, 3/4 cup cilantro, lime juice and 3/4 cup of each type of cheese.
3. Warm tortillas in the microwave for 1 minute. Use the chicken mixture to fill tortillas.
4. Top enchiladas with remaining 1/4 jar of the salsa; dot with sour cream,

sprinkle with 1/4 cup cilantro. Cover with remaining cheeses.

5. Bake at 375 F for 25-30 minutes or until bubbly and golden. Serve with Spanish rice and refried beans topped with melted cheese.

BALSAMIC CHICKEN

- 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 4-6 cloves garlic (smashed with side of knife)
- 4 stems fresh rosemary
- 4 chicken breasts
- 1/4 -1/2 cup balsamic vinegar

1. In a skillet over medium heat, warm garlic and rosemary in the oil.
2. Add chicken breasts over garlic and rosemary; cook 4 minutes each side.
3. Add balsamic vinegar; cook 2 more minutes per side per chicken breast.

BROWNIES DELUXE

- 1 pkg. brownie mix (mixed per package directions)
- 4 oz. chocolate chips
- 1/2 bar favorite candy bar, chopped
- 1 cup pecans
- 1 cup marshmallows
- FROSTING:**
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, softened
- 1 1/2 cups powdered sugar
- 1/4 cup cocoa
- 2-3 Tbsp. milk
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

1. Mix brownies according to package directions. Add next four ingredients and bake as directed.
2. For frosting, beat butter in a small bowl until light and fluffy. Add sugar and cocoa alternately with milk. Beat until spreadable and add vanilla.
3. Top brownies with chocolate frosting for a deluxe brownie!

PANNA COTTA WITH RASPBERRY SAUCE

- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 Tbsp. unflavored powdered gelatin
- 3 cups whipping cream
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 1 bag frozen raspberries, thawed
- 1/4 cup sugar

1. Combine milk and gelatin in a small bowl; let sit for 3-5 minutes to soften gelatin. Pour into saucepan and heat until gelatin dissolves, but do not boil milk.
2. Add whipping cream, honey, sugar and salt. Stir until sugar dissolves.
3. Remove from heat and pour into (6) 6-oz. ramekins; cool in refrigerator at least 6 hours.
4. Place berries and sugar in food processor and process until smooth. Strain with a sieve into a bowl and top panna cotta with sauce before serving.

GARLIC MASHED POTATOES

- 1 head garlic, cut off top of garlic head and discard
- 1 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1 potato per person (4-6 potatoes)
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1/4 cup butter

1. Roast garlic with extra-virgin olive oil, salt and pepper in 400 F oven for 30-45 minutes.
2. Peel potatoes and boil until fork tender. Add milk, butter and roasted garlic (squeeze cloves out of roasted garlic head) to potatoes and mix until desired consistency. Use masher if you like chunkier potatoes and hand mixer if you like whipped potatoes.



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— By *Andrea Walton*

In today's busy world, filled with concern over the rising cost of gas and housing, many of us look for ways to get greater value for our time and money. One way you may not have considered is having all of your insurance needs taken care of in one place.

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:

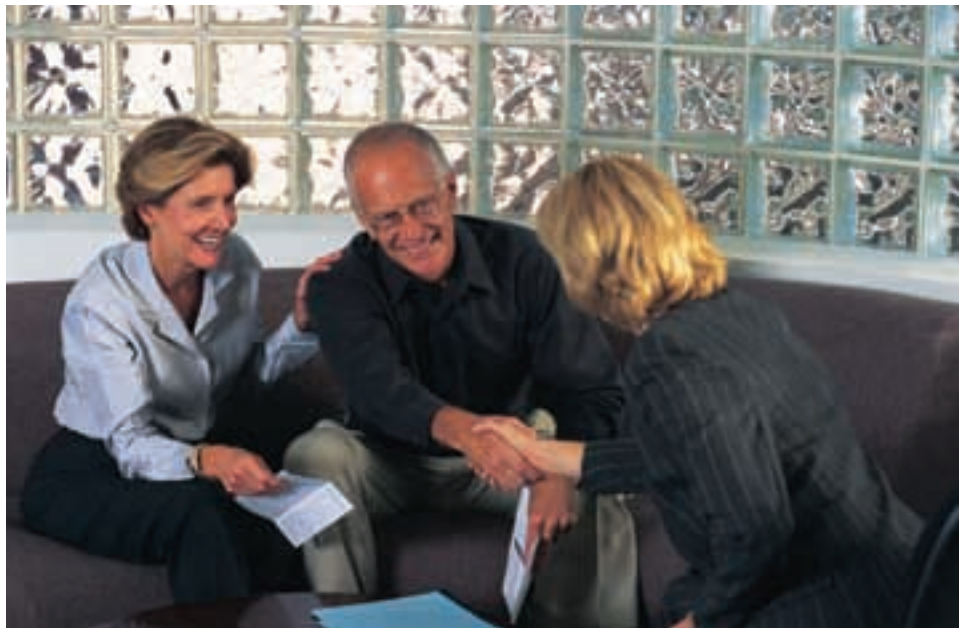
- **Multiple line:** Your premiums may be reduced if you have more than one policy with the same company or family of companies that covers your car.
- **Good student:** Full-time students (high school or higher) maintaining at least a "B" average may qualify for reduced premiums.
- **Multiple cars:**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

- **Do you have one person to call when you need help?**
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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?**
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Andrea Walton is a State Farm agent based in Red Oak.



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

First Tuesday

PrimeTimers Senior Group meeting: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Oaks Fellowship, 777 S. I-35 East in Red Oak. Open to all seniors. Fun, food and fellowship. RSVP (214) 376-8208.

First and Third Tuesdays

Red Oak Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd. For more information, call (214) 864-8014.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

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

Every Wednesday

Family Story Time: 10:30-11:30 a.m., Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. All ages welcome. Call (469) 218-1230 or visit www.redoakpubliclibrary.org.

Third Wednesday

The Ellis County Christian Women's Connection, affiliated with Stonecroft Ministries, monthly luncheon from 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. at the Waxahachie Country Club, located at 1920 W. Hwy. 287 at I-35 East (Exit 401B). The cost is \$13, inclusive. Nursery vouchers are available for those with young children. Reservations are preferred, but walk-ins are welcome. Contact Kay at (972) 937-2807 or windchime423@yahoo.com or Mary at (972) 937-9984.

Wednesdays and Thursdays

Red Oak Senior Citizens Club meeting:

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8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 207 West Red Oak Rd. Games, exercise and activities. Call (972) 576-2777 for details.

First and Third Thursday

Glenn Heights Lions Club meeting: 7:00 p.m., Bienvenidos Restaurant, 920 N. I-35 E., Lancaster.

July 3

4th Annual Red Oak White & Blue: 6:00-10:00 p.m., Red Oak City Park. Food, fun and fireworks.

First United Methodist Church and the city of Red Oak are sponsoring a Blood Drive in conjunction with the Red Oak, White & Blue Celebration. The Carter Blood Mobile will be parked at Red Oak City Park: 2:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. Please come by and donate. Call the church office at (972) 617-9100.

July 6

The Navarro College Small Business Development Center's free seminar "How to Start a Small Business": 10:00a.m.-noon, Waxahachie Chamber of Commerce, 102 YMCA Drive, Waxahachie. Pre-registration is required. To register, call the Navarro College SBDC at (972) 923-6425 or e-mail sbdc@navarrocollege.edu.

July 18

Heritage/Trades Day: 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Lone Star Cowboy Church. There will be lots of unique vendors, crafts and antiques. In addition, there will be children's activities including bounce houses, dunking booths, hay rides and mutton bustin'. Throughout the day, enjoy horseback riding and rodeo events and wild steer riding. Come join our church services inside the air conditioning from 8:30-10:30 a.m. Concession vittles will also be served. Come on out for a fun day of celebrating the cowboy way! www.lonestarcc.org.

For more community events,
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