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JULY 2016

The Healing Power of LEGO

Mike Settlemyer
finds solace in the
creative process

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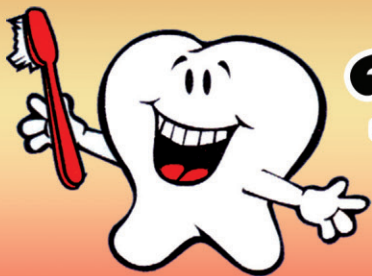
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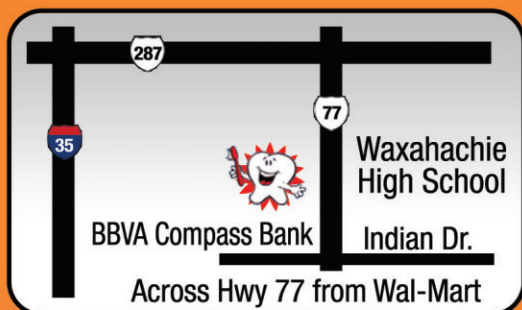
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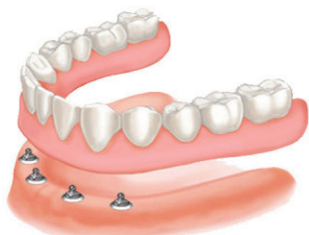
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ON THE COVER



*Mike Settlemeyer
spends his extra time
building with LEGO.*

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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Editor's Note

Happy Fourth of July!

Although she's a secular country recording artist, I've always been a fan of Martina McBride. I can so relate to the lyrics in many of her songs that are still heard today. "Independence Day" causes me to think about the freedoms I've been given in this life, while "Broken Wing" allows me to think on my personal guardian angel, the one who goes before me in all the situations I get myself into.

Being free to choose is a wonderful thing. As long as I choose wisely, my angel's wings are white, fluffy and free to soar to new heights. But, if I make a bad choice like I do so many times, my angel has to pick up the pieces that are left in the wake of those unwise choices. Consequences cause my angel to be battered and bruised, but never down and out. Even with a broken wing, my angel still carries my dreams, and "man you oughta see her fly!"

As you celebrate your independence, let your freedom ring!

Sandra

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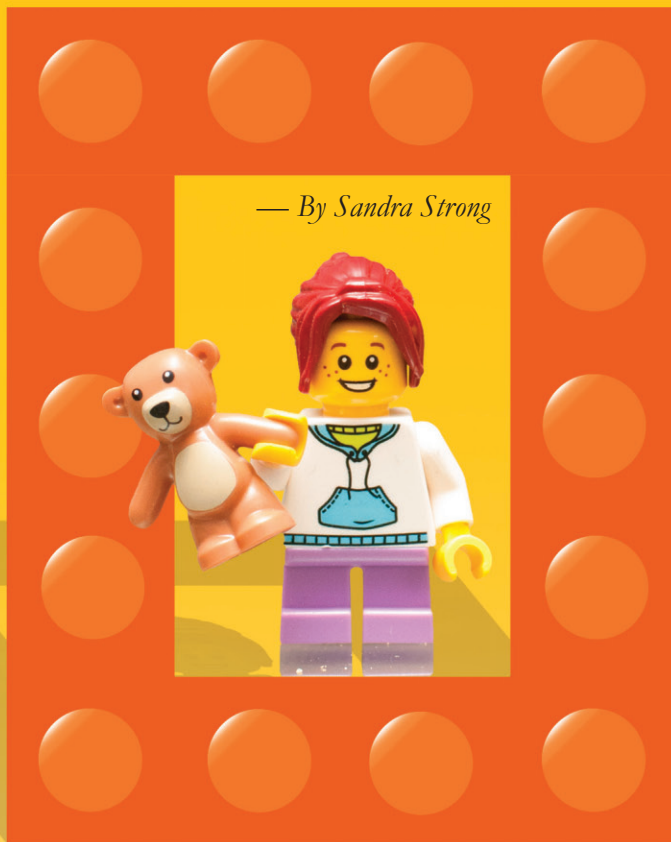
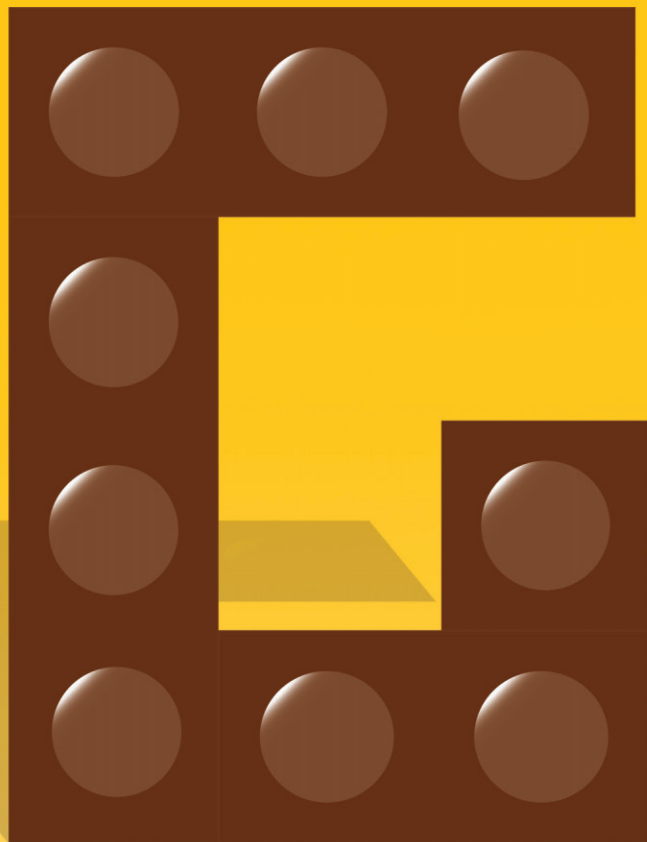
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THE HEALING POWER OF





— By Sandra Strong

Mike Settlemyer had a very close relationship with his maternal grandfather, the late Richard Smotts. They were like two peas in the same pod when it came to playing games and just hanging out with one another. Richard knew what his grandson needed in a friend and confidant, and it was his role to be all those things rolled into the one Mike called PaPa.

After his passing in April 2011, Mike and Tammy Settlemyer quickly realized the loss caused a void in Mike's life. "The two of them would share quality time with each other every day," Tammy said, referring to the time Mike and her dad spent in

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the back room at The Vacuum Shop on a daily basis. “Mike has always loved music and word search puzzles, and those did help some, but we knew he needed something more to get over his loss.”

To everyone’s surprise, that “something more” came to Mike just a few months later as a birthday gift from his paternal grandfather, also named Mike Settlemyer and also known as PaPa, who lives in Tennessee. “He sent Mike his first ‘big’ LEGO set,” Tammy remembered. “After spending no less than a month on the set, he told me how much he liked it.” Before long, family members and close friends began to gift Mike with one LEGO set after another. One of Mike’s cousins, who loved the building blocks as a child, sent him several small sets, all neatly packaged in individual bags with instructions for building included. “The small kits don’t take as long to build,” Mike said. “I finish them a lot faster.”

In fact, the bigger the kit, the better for Mike. He admits that he enjoys the challenges the larger kits provide. After opening every sealed bag in the first kit, Mike soon realized it was much easier and less stressful to follow the directions word for word and bag by bag with all the kits that followed. “What a mess we had with that first one,” Tammy admitted with a smile, “but we got through it.”

Mike is a mainstay at the shop with his mom on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, and he spends Mondays and Tuesdays working alongside his dad. It’s while working with his mom that he has the time to build his LEGOs. “I build at break time and sometimes during lunch time,” he explained. “Sometimes, I do need some help because my hands are too big for the smaller pieces.” During these times of



need, Tammy steps in to add the smaller pieces, so Mike can continue moving forward with whatever kit he happens to be working on at the time.

The larger kits will take Mike at least four weeks to build, and he knows without a doubt when he's put a piece in the wrong place. "He realizes when it doesn't look right or feel right. He stops right where he is and waits for help," Tammy shared, comparing the craft to knitting. "In knitting, you pick out the stitch you missed, and with LEGOs, you un-build to rebuild."

Most of the larger kits Mike constructs are gifts, chosen from a wish list he made from a catalog he picked up at the LEGO store in Tennessee during one of his annual summer visits with his PaPa, who purchases most of the larger

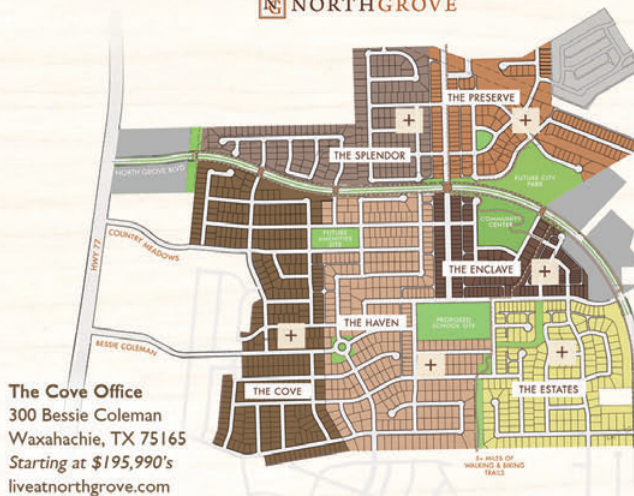


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kits for his grandson. "I make my list from the catalog," he reiterated. "I always know exactly what I want." His PaPa also knows what he wants, so he knows what to buy on Mike's summer visits that fall close to his July birthday or for Christmas.

"Mike keeps the LEGO catalog at the store," Tammy added. "He enjoys looking through it."

There are always about 20 LEGO builds displayed at the shop at any given time. The remaining kits can be found in his bedroom at home. Rotating newly built kits with older completed kits is something Mike has gotten very good at. "My favorite one is the courthouse with the apartment and pet shop," he stated. "Each floor has its own details. I had to build one floor at a time, starting with the bottom and working my way to the top."

"The 1891 courthouse scene is his pride and joy," Tammy said. "He leaves the ones that he is most proud of at the shop. Mike loves people, and it makes him happy when people ask him about his LEGO builds."

Other larger LEGOs displayed include a fire station, complete with its own

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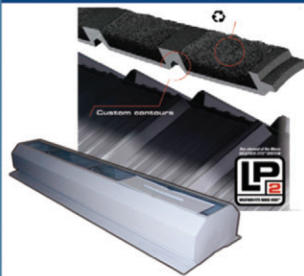
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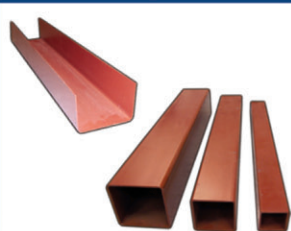


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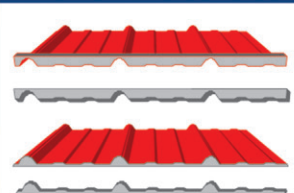


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helicopter and emergency vehicles; a rocket ship about to blast off; a pirate ship ready to set sail; an oversized castle with all the details in place and a dragon that looks as if it could actually breathe fire. Smaller builds include a sheriff's office and bank combination, a small architecturally designed building and a much smaller scaled castle.

Many times, the larger, more difficult kits include mechanisms in the building process that cause specific pieces to move, such as the main rotor blades on the helicopter and several pieces on his most recent build — a carnival with a dunking booth, ticket window and strong man — that is built out instead of up. Sometimes as Mike builds, he puts his headphones on, listening to the gospel music he so loves. "LEGO most definitely filled the void," Tammy explained, "but it has also helped Mike with his eye-hand coordination, as well as his fine motor skills."

Mike is a mainstay at the shop, always eager to help Tammy with the chores at hand. He works hard, but LEGOs allow him to relax. They've helped him get past the loss of his Texas PaPa while having something tangible to show those who come to the shop for repairs or to see the most recently completed model on display. Once he completes a kit that was purchased by his Tennessee PaPa, he takes a photograph and mails it to him, thus keeping him actively included in the entire process.

No one knew the healing power of LEGO when the building process of the first kit began, but Mike and Tammy are happy with the solace their son has experienced over the years. "He just needed something to do with his hands and mind to keep him occupied," Tammy said. "LEGO filled that void!" **NOW**

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For Belinda Henry, it may not be “lions and tigers and bears,” but her yellow brick road did meander toward kangaroos, pythons and hedgehogs, as this wildlife educator wows students of all ages with her menagerie. Jaxx, her kangaroo, is so locally famous that he once made the Channel 8 news just for hopping nonchalantly along Kirven Avenue in Waxahachie. “He is very socialized,” Belinda laughed. “Everyone should have a kangaroo. They don’t bark at your neighbors, and they don’t chew up your shoes.”

LIFE ENAGERIE

— By Stephanie Marchbanks



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Jaxx melts hearts far and wide with his velvety fur and kangaroo kisses, but Belinda has 20 other fascinating creatures in her collection. The list includes mammals, bugs, amphibians and reptiles, including an African spurred tortoise named Scooter. And with names like Igor, Jethro and Bubblegum, one wouldn't picture an emperor scorpion, a blue-tongued skink or a red-eyed tree frog, but such exotic creatures are exactly what guests see and touch at Belinda's exhibitions. Max, the tropical millipede, earns kudos for his "ick" factor, because he resembles a gigantic, black worm. But he is harmless, and attendees may hold and pet him, also.

For Belinda, this story actually began with her study of science, which yielded a bachelor's degree from Midwestern State University in Wichita Falls. She started working in the medical field, but the on-call hours proved too taxing once she had children, so she made the transition to teaching in radiology school. "I started to love teaching," Belinda remembered.

And then, employment for Belinda's husband, Kory, brought them to Ennis. With no opportunities to teach X-ray, Belinda explored her inner entrepreneur by starting a successful party-rental business called Confetti's. When Kory's career called them to East Texas, she sold the business and was again seeking direction in a new area.

In East Texas, Belinda ended up working at Sky Ranch, a Christian camp that is a Recognized School Programs Provider with a successful outdoor education division. Belinda was their nature center coordinator, whose job was to care for the animals and educate the fifth-graders who visited. And that's where she found her niche. "I got comfortable handling snakes, spiders and scorpions, and I realized through it all that I loved teaching, but my passion is really kids,"

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she explained. "Just seeing the kids' faces when you bring out the animals — there's just nothing like that."

Kory's job brought him next to Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie, and once again, Belinda was in a new area, looking for new opportunities. This time, she knew exactly what she wanted to do. She Googled "creatures," "animals" and "education," and finally, through a chain of events, officially became the Creature Teacher, a position she's held for four years.

Belinda lovingly transports her collection of animals to waiting fans of all ages at libraries, schools, camps, birthdays, daycare centers, hospitals and elder care centers. "By the way those kids respond, you would think I'm Taylor Swift," Belinda quipped. "They are shaking all over and squealing 'Creature Teacher!'"

Belinda is United States Department of Agriculture certified, and they strictly inspect her facilities to ensure the animals get the best care possible. Critters are kept in habitats and transported in carriers. Jaxx is a registered emotional support animal (ESA) through the National Animal Service Registry. This distinction allows him to visit hospitals and nursing homes. Jaxx can also legally fly on an airplane, sitting in the seat next to



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Belinda, although he has never done so. But if that day ever comes, he will certainly present an Instagram moment for nearby passengers.

Both Jaxx and Scooter wander freely in Belinda's lovely park-of-a-backyard — Jaxx hopping, socializing with guests or nibbling the grass, and Scooter ... well, moseying and craning his neck. When snacks of apples are put out, it's a race to see who gets there first. The last tally showed Scooter winning out.

Belinda's husband, Kory, and her three college-aged children support her completely in her mini zoo. Kaleb is 25 and soon to graduate from Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, after studying geology. Kameron, 21 and a chemistry student, will also soon graduate from Texas A&M University-Commerce. Madison is 20 and is studying nutrition at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. But Belinda's middle child has been especially involved. "Kameron's college job has been kangaroo sitting. Jaxx wears diapers, and changing them is a two-person job. Then, there is bottle preparation and other aspects of his care. Not many people can say they kangaroo sat through college, but he can," Belinda pointed out with a smile. "He's been a saint."

Belinda's giving nature has led her to volunteer through Wee Volunteer, a nonprofit group that puts on birthday parties for homeless children. Also, residents at East Texas Alzheimer's

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Association meetings have been delighted with Belinda's animals, from time to time. Earlier this summer, visitors enjoyed Belinda's critters for no charge at either the Lancaster Public Library or at the Ennis Public Library both as part of their summer reading programs.

Learning about Belinda's animals can be fascinating. Jaxx is a big red kangaroo, the largest marsupial in the world. He has been neutered and was adopted from a veterinarian in East Texas who raises them and is an expert in their care. Born hairless and the size of a gummy bear, he grew in his mother's pouch for six months before he could come to Belinda. He comes by name at bedtime and sleeps in a hanging, canvas pouch, into which he dives headfirst. He is not fully grown yet, and his bottle milk, which he loves, is special ordered online from Australia. "He's a big baby," Belinda admitted.

Jaxx's friends are just as interesting. Bullwinkle, the ball python, is 19 years old and was a rescue. He's good natured and great with children. Coldblooded, he likes warm laps, and eats frozen, thawed mice every two weeks. "He's like a lap dog," Belinda added. Prince Hairy, the lion head rabbit with long, fuzzy fur, was originally bred in England. Tumbleweed the hedgehog was also a rescue, donated by a school. He eats cat food and is nocturnal. His eyes are like round black beads that disappear when he rolls into a ball. Covered with cream-colored spines, he is always sniffing for bugs and worms. For protection, he does a jerking move that Belinda calls a "hiccup."

But in the end, Belinda's favorite thing is presenting to Christian schools and churches. "I explain to the students about God's awesome plan for the animals, because everything fits together perfectly," Belinda emphasized. "If one piece is missing, it affects everything." **NOW**

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Kindergarten Roundup

Thursday, August 4

*By appointment only**

Elementary Campuses: Kindergarten registration will be available during all regular registration days, but campuses will only offer Kindergarten screenings on August 4.

OPERATION: First Day of School

Saturday, August 13

8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Clift Elementary School



Bring Your Supplies Night

Thursday, August 18 from

5:30-7:30 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE: If required documentation has not been submitted to your campus, you will not be able to receive your child's classroom assignment. Documentation will not be accepted at Bring Your Supplies Night.

WISD RETURNING STUDENT REGISTRATION

August 1-14: Online for those registered with Family Access.

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You must submit required documentation to your child's campus to receive classroom assignment on Bring Your Supplies Night. See "New Student Registration" section for dates and times to bring your required paperwork.

Global High School Schedule Pickup

Freshmen and new Sophomores:

Friday, August 19, 1:00-5:00 p.m.

Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors:

Friday, August 19, 5:00-6:00 p.m.



**First Day
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August 22, 2016
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ALL CAMPUSES

WISD New Student Registration**

Elementary and Junior High Campuses: August 1-4, 8-12

By appointment only (9:00-11:30 a.m., 1:00-4:00 p.m.)*



Returning students' required paperwork may also be turned in during scheduled registration times.

Elementary campuses only: Returning students may turn in required paperwork and register for Family Access during special evening hours on Thursday, August 11, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Waxahachie Ninth Grade Academy and Waxahachie High School:
August 1-4, 8-12 *By appointment only* (9:00-11:30 a.m., 1:00-4:00 p.m.)*

**Walk-ins will be accepted, but students with appointments will receive first priority. Please contact your child's campus to make an appointment.*

***Please remember to bring proof of residency (a recent utility bill with your name and address on it) when you come to register your child. If you are not the child's parent, please bring proof of guardianship.*

Waxahachie High School Schedule Pickup

Seniors: Wednesday, August 17,
8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Juniors: Wednesday, August 17,
1:00-4:00 p.m.

Sophomores: Thursday, August 18,
8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Freshmen: Thursday, August 18,
8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Junior High Schedule Pickup

Tuesday, August 9, 2016

7th Grade: 8:30-11:00 a.m.

8th Grade: 1:00-3:00 p.m.

6th Grade: 5:30-7:30 p.m.
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Roses, along with proudly flying American and Texas flags, mark the entrance to Stanley and Sheila Jackson's country home and acreage. The paved drive winds its way by Stanley's themed raised-bed gardens. Hummingbirds and butterflies are easily attracted to feeders mounted on or near their home's front porch. "We love to sit out here on the swing and enjoy the peace and quiet," Sheila said.

The couple's son, Justin, who resides in Waxahachie, first saw the property and told Stanley about it, showing it to him on one of their back road drives. With a home in Duncanville at the time, Stanley and Sheila purchased their ranch to be an occasional getaway location and a place where Stanley could raise his Black Angus cattle. The couple's home began as a smaller metal structure in 2006.

Life has a way of changing plans, however, and today that original metal building has become the couple's





primary residence and has grown to nearly 7,000 square feet. There are barns, carports and Stanley's shop. Peach, apple, plum and lime trees are part of a growing orchard. Summers demanded the addition of a swimming pool around which Stanley has planted plumarias that remind them of the dogwoods of Henderson, Texas. "The plumarias give off a wonderful smell around the pool," Stanley said. Additionally, he has planted watermelon red crape myrtles and palm trees. Stanley and Sheila both graduated from high school in Henderson and met on a blind date through their moms who worked together.

"He's like his mom and grandmom — he puts a stick in the ground, and it grows," Sheila revealed.

Married for 38 years or as Sheila said, "All of our lives," the couple has raised Justin and their daughter, Jennifer,



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who lives in Midlothian, and they enjoy time spent with their five grandchildren. Stanley's construction firm is a family business, which includes Justin and Shawn, their son-in-law. "My dad was in construction for 60 years, so I was born and raised in construction," Stanley said. Sheila has worked for a ministry and in the post office, as well as having cared for parents the couple moved into the area.

Building or adding on to a home can cause tension in any marriage, and especially one where the contractor is your husband. "Stanley's the builder. I wanted it to be like Texas and wanted

it done right with an open floor plan and a pool. I got it all, so I'm happy," Sheila admitted. "Living here had been more Stanley's dream than mine, but now, I really like it. We can have the kids, grandkids and their cousins here, and there's room for everyone to do whatever they want. I'm glad I get to see my grandkids a lot."

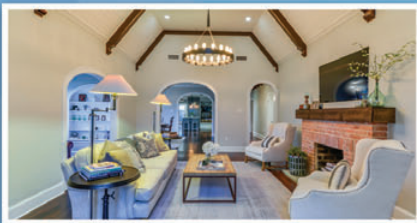
Beautifully landscaped, their home doesn't even look like the metal building it is. "We have a nice, affordable place even in retirement," Stanley said. Other benefits are low maintenance, less costly insurance and high energy efficiency

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that has been achieved with the extra insulation Stanley installed.

The home's front door with its Texas star sets the stage for the true Texas decor that lies beyond. Stanley attended The University of Texas at Austin and is a UT fan. He also holds membership in the Texas Rangers Foundation. Stanley and Sheila share a love of hunting and display their trophies throughout the home. "She has as many trophies hanging on walls as I do," Stanley said proudly.

Sheila's kitchen is a cook's dream due to its island with filled vegetable bins, longhorn wall sconces and her collection of crosses. "I love my kitchen. It goes with living on a ranch," she stated. The kitchen and informal living and dining areas create a large, open living space complete with a breakfast bar, distressed dining table and ample comfortable seating. "This is where we live most of the time," Sheila said. Wooden beams lined with limestone rock give the ceilings character.



Two guest bedrooms, each with their own bath, occupy one side of the hallway, opposite the master bedroom and bath, which sports an animal print theme. "It's a little foofoo, but we like it," Sheila said. One of the guest bedrooms is decorated for the granddaughters in even more foofoo style. The Jackson Family plaque displays three generations of given names.

The gathering/media room's seating is surrounded by Texas memorabilia including photos, a Texas flag, the Texas emblem and Republic of Texas money. A rustic table was created from an old door from Mexico. Its table runner has family photos and sayings.

Stanley's "man cave" features cabinets made from old barn wood. "Stanley's dad gave us the antique stove, so Stanley has continued to collect all these old things," Sheila said.

Adjacent to the man cave is another bedroom and bath created for the grandsons. It's furnished with Stanley's grandmother's rocker and a cabinet built by Stanley's dad from old barn wood. "I talked with my father-in-law and told him that my dad never made anything for me, so he made this for me," Sheila shared. "I had the best in-laws ever. They were another set of parents for me."

Sheila's workout room features another cross and worded wall plaque collection. "My daughter gave me the one that says *Queen of Everything*," Sheila said. "This is where I have my quiet time. The room is inspiring to me." Sheila also stays in shape through a Jazzercise class at a local gym.

Stanley enjoys the occasional round of golf, and swimming is another way the couple stays in shape. The pool area, complete with a hot tub, provides plenty of family fun times. The pool's lining is oyster shell in gunite. "It shimmers in the sunlight," Sheila said. The covered seating and pergola provides plenty of restful, relaxing moments, and an outdoor kitchen is in the works. A sign that Stanley created for Sheila states it all, *Sheila's Blue Moon Oasis*. Mr. Walter, the family's cat, enjoys this area and the front porch. "We love to share our home with people. It's a great entertainment spot," Sheila confided.

The couple is very involved in their church, and Sheila treasures her trip to Israel. "Stanley's got a big heart for young people and wants them to do something with their lives," she said. "He's built two orphanages in Uganda and has sent money each year since to sustain them."

Perhaps a sign hanging in the pool area sums up life on Stanley and Sheila's ranch. Every day is *Just Another Day in Paradise* — a paradise created by this family-loving couple. **NOW**

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LEAVE NO DOUBT

— By Melissa Swedoski

From long drives to short putts, the game of golf has enraptured and frustrated players for years. With the lure of a peaceful day in the great outdoors, the aesthetics of the game call to those who seek a challenge in a laid-back way. Others come to the game through the grace of heredity, enchanted by the joy of chasing the ball with a set of tiny plastic clubs, while tagging along with grandparents who played 18 holes under a bright, blue sky. Then one day, joy turns to passion, and a path to a professional career is set, as Baylie Paris has discovered.

Baylie is a typical 14-year-old, with a variety of interests, including school choir, student council, church, agriculture, community service and studies. When she has a golf club in her hand, however, she is razor focused, which led to her victory in the eighth grade girls division at the second Waxahachie Junior High School Golf Tournament, which was held in May. “I was really nervous, since it was my first time in a tournament,” Baylie recalled. “We were all standing at the number 10 tee box, and I said, ‘I guess I’ll go first.’”



My shot landed on the green. I got my confidence, and I started rocking." Baylie shot a 47 in the nine-hole competition, defeating girls from Waxahachie, Midlothian and Maypearl.

"A girl from Midlothian teed off, and I recognized the competition," Baylie said. "I knew they were not just going to give it to me, but you have to set your mind to your game." Having played the same country club course over 20 times with her grandfather, Baylie was comfortable, but a shank on one of the holes had her upset as she looked at all her family members in the crowd. "Baylie doesn't like to disappoint, no matter what," her dad, Phillip, explained.

"That's the Paris in her," joked her grandfather, Joe Paris, the man who introduced her to the sport and whom she calls, "PawPaw." Making her family proud is what drives her and pushes her to continue with the sport.



PawPaw Joe Paris is extremely proud of Baylie's achievements.

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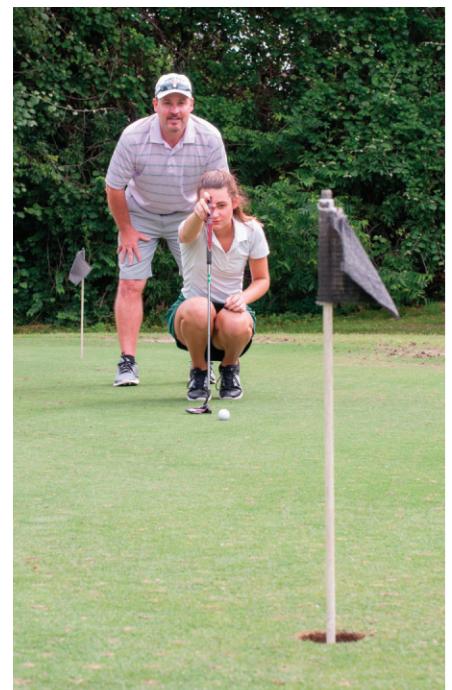
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When Baylie was 3 years old, Joe bought her a plastic golf set, and soon, "She was hitting it all over the yard," he said. A few years later, Joe took an extra set of clubs and cut them down, so Baylie could practice in the field across from his house. Then he started taking her to the practice range in Ferris. "She picked it up pretty fast," he said.

Baylie quickly added, "Took me long enough." Between third and fourth grade, she trailed her dad and grandfather on the golf course. The experience wasn't love at first swing. "I didn't enjoy it much at first," she said. "I was frustrated. I could never hit a ball. I just expected to be good." Joe bought her a junior Callaway



set, and two years ago presented her with a set of PING clubs. "I thought, There's no turning back now, I've got to get on it," Baylie said.

"She's learned to love the sport," Joe said.

Last summer, she played two to three times a week, and as she found herself getting better, she "started enjoying it a lot more." She added practice sessions with golf pro Mike Harville, and in the fall, she tried out to be on the inaugural eighth grade team for Howard Junior High. Her work ethic and skills caught the attention of Lady Indians Head Golf Coach Lonnie Gaylor, who let her practice with the high school team. "Coach puts me with the best golfers in Waxahachie — Paul Gonzalez and Victoria Garza — to test me," she explained. "It's nerve-racking." However, the practice routine paid off with the tournament win, as Baylie shared, "The high school golf coach texted afterward, and he seemed very pleased. That was cool," she added with a shy smile.

During the tournament, Baylie hit a 220-yard drive, 40 to 50 yards farther than any other girl, putting her in good position heading to high school, where ninth-graders can play on the varsity squad. "Volleyball gave her excellent core strength," Phillip shared. "It gives her real power in her swing."

Baylie played on the Howard volleyball team, as well as for a club team in Mansfield. Her last tournament in May,



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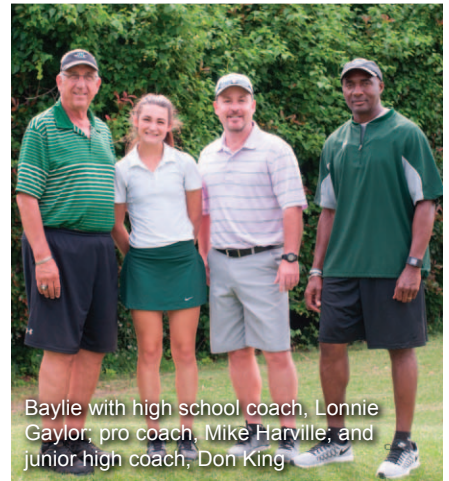
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Baylie with high school coach, Lonnie Gaylor; pro coach, Mike Harville; and junior high coach, Don King

however, was the end of her volleyball career, as she intends to focus on golf, “a laid-back, non-stressful sport,” she said. “I’m surrounded with girls and people who are really respectful.”

Her mother, Jamie, noted that golf is a “completely new etiquette for us, but also for her. It’s much quieter, and she’s very excited about it.”

After her tournament win, Baylie attended an LPGA tournament in Las Colinas, which solidified her desire to play in the pros. “I struggle with the mental game more than anything, and watching them helped a lot,” she explained. “I get frustrated, but I’ve got to learn to shake it off, because I’m very competitive. They had a routine, would refocus and move on.” That skill will be paramount as she takes her game to the next level this summer in tournaments sanctioned



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by the Northern Texas PGA Junior Tour. Her first tournament was June 2, playing at Keeton Park in Dallas. Baylie reflected on the opportunity, saying, "I knew there would be better girls, but that makes me better. It makes me want to work harder."

Jamie added, "Her main goal was to get out there and learn and be seen," as college scouts frequent Junior PGA events in search of talent.

After her four years at Waxahachie High, Baylie plans to attend Texas A&M University and play for the highly ranked women's golf team, which is why she attended Aggie Golf Camp in June, where she worked with A&M coaches, players and former players, many of whom play in the LPGA. All her efforts lead to her future, as she outlined, "My goal is the LPGA, so I'm going to attend A&M with a scholarship, make good grades and then become a pro."

Those who question her plan are met with a challenging stare. "People who doubt me really make me mad," she said. "Don't test me, because I plan on getting there one way or another."

Her grandfather, who introduced her to the game, bought her golf clubs and clothes, chauffeured her to practice and games, heartily concurred. "Our plan for her is to become a professional golfer, and whatever it takes, I'm ready. But I know she'll be a pro in anything she does." **NOW**

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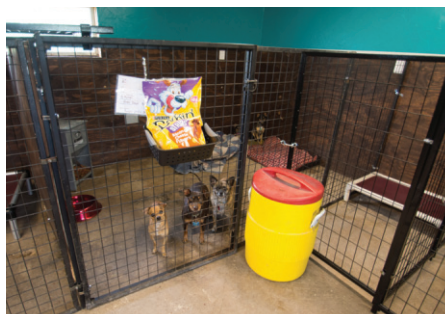
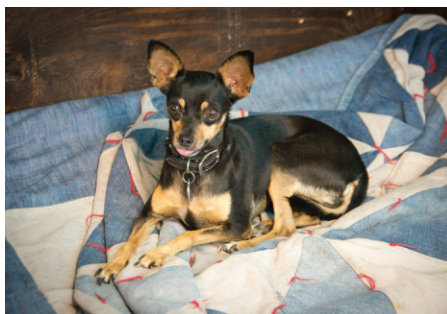
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— By Sandra Strong

To say Samantha Brock is quite fond of animals would be an understatement. Her love for animals is such that she's opened her business — Pet Lovers — to help others with in-home pet services that include 30-minute visits, overnight stays and the company's most recent offering — boarding. "We love your pets like we love our own," Samantha expressed. "We work with all types of pets from scales and feathers to fur."

After working for others in this same field, Samantha decided to venture out on her own in January 2014. That leap of faith grew quickly, making the need for extra help imperative. She immediately recruited her mom, Kim Brock, and her sister,

Rachael Brock. This family trio takes their job of pet care very seriously as they travel from Richland Chambers to Bedford and back again. "We go wherever the client needs us to go," she said.

Samantha may only spend five nights a month in the comfort of her own bed, but she wouldn't have it any other way. The rate at which Pet Lovers has taken off is what Samantha, Kim and Rachael refer to as "crazy amazing." Kim puts her time in during the day and early evening Monday through Friday. Samantha and Rachael's schedule is a bit more arduous. "Right now, Rachael and I are working 14 days on and two days off," Samantha admitted. "The goal is to work six on and one off." On top of

the hours Rachael commits to at Pet Lovers, she also holds down a full-time position elsewhere. Samantha has come to realize the steady growth will most definitely warrant the need for additional staffing, but for now, the Brock Brigade is making it work.

The 12 kennels Samantha currently has available for boarding include air conditioning, heat, music and a night light. Her five-year plan includes a large expansion in this one area. "I would like to have a larger building that would comfortably hold 30 kennels," she stated. "I would also like the building to be large enough to accommodate a doggie day care play area."

When the day for additional staffing does arise, Samantha will be looking for personnel who possess the same qualities found in her family members. "They will need to have a good head on their shoulders," Kim added. "And they will definitely have to love all kinds of animals."

Samantha, Kim and Rachael all have stories about their in-home care duties that can bring a smile to their faces, or a tear to their eyes. Samantha enjoys all animals that she comes in contact with in her business. "Animals just seem to be more open to new people," she added. "We've even taken care of cows, horses, birds, chickens and some reptiles. We love them all."

Animals bring something to the table that humans don't. Sometimes, people can be rude and uncaring. Animals show unconditional love. Animals may bark, moo, meow and whine, but they don't talk back. And most of the time, or at least with the Brock Brigade's experience, they take direction well. "They are sad to see us go when we have to leave," Samantha confessed, "but they are so excited to see us when we return."

Clients take specialized care with their pets, and the caring individuals at Pet Lovers want to extend that same care. Kim makes all-natural dog treats to leave as a "thank you" when a job comes to an end. Company T-shirts sport the logo, "We will always have room for one more!" "Every pet counts," Samantha reiterated. "They all matter!" **NOW**

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When It May Make Sense to Borrow Money

Few of us go through life without ever applying for a loan or borrowing money. Borrowing and repaying money can help you establish a credit history that will make it easier to get financing when you need it. But use credit judiciously, so it can help, rather than hurt, your finances. These examples help illustrate the difference between “good” and “bad” borrowing practices.

Good Times to Borrow

- *You're buying a home.* To make a home purchase, most buyers need a mortgage loan. This type of financing is often considered good debt because a home is an investment that's anticipated to increase in value over time. The caveat? Look at your entire financial picture before taking on a home loan, and make sure you're buying a home you can truly afford.

- *You're adding to your education.* If you're finishing up an advanced degree or need additional training to move ahead in your career, taking out a student loan can be a smart move. Shop around for the most favorable rates and repayment plan.

- *You're setting up a household.* You'll need some basics to begin with, such as a bed or a refrigerator. Essential appliances and furniture often can be purchased via installment financing through the store — but don't overdo. Not everything in your first place needs to be new. Thrift stores, yard sales and family members can be good sources of basic furnishings that tide you over until you can afford the items you want.

- *You're consolidating debt.* If you have several credit cards with high interest rates, it may make sense to get a loan to achieve a lower overall interest rate and smaller payments. But note: Put those cards away. Don't rack up new charges as you're paying off the consolidation loan.

Good Times to Wait

- *You want to buy extravagant holiday gifts.* It's never a good idea to borrow money — either through a loan or on your credit

card — to spend above your means. Temper your generosity and choose meaningful, less expensive ways to remember others at the holidays.

- *You'd like a nice wedding.* Taking out a loan to put on a lavish ceremony and reception that you can't truly afford could start your marriage out under a financial eight ball. Scale back your plans to fit your budget and focus more on the occasion than the show surrounding it.

- *You need a vacation.* Travel typically costs more than you think it will, and if you have to take a loan simply to go on the trip, you're better off finding more affordable ways to relax and recharge.

Good Rules of Thumb

- *Borrow only what you need.* While it's tempting to borrow more, you'll end up having more to pay back and risk undermining your budget.

- *Shop around for good rates.* Compare interest rates and payment terms. If you have a good credit score, you may be able to negotiate a better offer.

- *Pay off credit card balances every month.* Carrying a balance means you'll pay more for every purchase you make, in the form of interest charges on the amount.

- *Check your credit report once a year.* Knowing your credit score may help you secure more favorable rates. Get your annual report for free by visiting AnnualCreditReport.com. **NOW**

Neither State Farm nor its agents provide tax, legal or investment advice. Please consult your tax, legal or investment advisor regarding your specific circumstances.

Adam Rope is a State Farm agent based in Waxahachie.

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Taking a Vacation? Make It Easy on Your Feet.

Although rest and relaxation are the goals for most vacations, they usually involve a lot of walking, and a lot of walking usually involves sore feet. Walking is great exercise and one of the most reliable forms of transportation, but if your feet aren't in the best shape or you don't have the right shoes, too much walking can cause foot problems. Good foot care is essential if you plan to subject your feet to long periods of walking.

Some simple foot-care tips include:

- Wear thick, absorbent socks (acrylic instead of cotton).
- Dry feet thoroughly after bathing, making sure to dry between toes. Use powder before putting on shoes.
- Nails should be cut regularly, straight across the toe.
- Bunions, hammertoes or any other serious foot problems should be evaluated by a foot and ankle surgeon.

The right shoe is also important to healthy walking. The ideal walking shoe should be stable from side to side, and well-cushioned, and it should enable you to walk smoothly. Many running shoes will fit the bill. There are also shoes made especially for walking. Walking shoes tend to be slightly less cushioned, yet not as bulky and lighter than running shoes. Whether a walking or running shoe, the shoes need to feel stable and comfortable. Warm-up exercises to help alleviate any muscle stiffness or pulled muscles are also advised before walking. Loosening up the heel cords (Achilles and calf) and thigh muscles before a walk is especially effective. If you're not accustomed to long walks, start slowly and rest if your feet start hurting. And above all, have fun! **NOW**

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July 3, 4

19th Annual Grape Myrtle Festival, Pink Petals and Patriotism: **July 3**, Waxahachie Sports Complex: 5:00 p.m., tailgate party; 7:30 p.m., Tejas Brothers perform; 9:00 p.m., fireworks; **July 4**, downtown Waxahachie: 10:00 a.m., parade begins on College Street and ends with a picnic in the park at Getzendaner Park. Free admission. For more information, visit www.waxahachiecvb.com or call (469) 309-4040.

July 5, 19

Ellis County HEALS support group meeting: 6:30 p.m., 408 Water St. The group hopes to connect with survivors of suicide loss in Ellis County, while giving them a safe place to share their struggle and pain. For more information, email elliscountyheals@gmail.com or follow them on Facebook.

July 9

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association Chapter 1191 monthly meeting: 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Ryan's Buffet, Hwy 77. The event also includes a guest speaker. For membership information, call (214) 850-4783.

Trucks 'N Tunes: 6:00-10:00 p.m., downtown Waxahachie.

July 14

2nd Thursday Ladies Night Out: 5:00-8:00 p.m. Every month in downtown Waxahachie with participating merchants.

July 15

Summer Moonlight Movies presents *JAWS*: 9:00 p.m., downtown Waxahachie. Admission is free. Bring lawn chairs, blankets and bug spray. Concession stand on-site. For more information, call (469) 309-4111.

July 16, 17

Lone Star Cowboy Church of Ellis County 10th anniversary celebration: The event will offer many family activities, a ranch rodeo and a musical, "The Cowboy Ain't Dead Yet!" beginning at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday. For more details, call (972) 576-0900 or visit www.LoneStarCC.org.

July 21

Waxahachie Auction: 7:00 p.m., 212. S. Rogers St. For more information, visit www.waxauction.com.

Ellis County Amateur Radio Club: 7:30 p.m., Ellis County Sheriff's Office Training Center, 2272 FM 878, Waxahachie. For more information, visit www.wd5ddh.org.

July 29 — 31

Rumpelstiltskin Private Eye presented by the Waxahachie Community Theatre's Kid Showcase: Venue TBD. Tickets and the most recent venue information can be found by visiting www.waxahachiecommunitytheatre.com.

August 2, 16, 30

Ellis County HEALS support group meeting: 6:30 p.m., 408 Water St. The group hopes to connect with survivors of suicide loss in Ellis County, while giving them a safe place to share their struggle and pain. For more information, email elliscountyheals@gmail.com or follow them on Facebook.

August 6

Downtown Sidewalk Sale (Tax Free Weekend/Back to School): downtown Waxahachie.

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

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In the Kitchen With Joe Jenkins

— By Sandra Strong

Whenever Joe Jenkins ponders on recipes, ingredients and cooking, a stream of happy memories comes rushing back. “I have enjoyed cooking and preparing meals with simple recipes for many years,” Joe shared. “My memories are about grilling steaks and hamburgers on the patio and enjoying the results with family. Another tradition was camping throughout the United States with four children in the back of a station wagon.”

Many of the recipes Joe still enjoys preparing were compiled in *The Jenkins Family Recipe Book* that was printed in 2000. “It took six years to complete, and it consisted of 238 pages of all sorts of food and so many family memories,” he explained. “My love of cooking comes from the joy it brings to family and friends.” **NOW**

Key Lime Pie Cheesecake

- 1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese, softened and cut into small pieces
- 1 14-oz. can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 12-oz. pkg. frozen dairy topping, thawed
- 1 cup fresh squeezed lime juice (Microwave 3-4 limes at a time for 45-50 seconds to make squeezing the juice much easier.)
- 2 graham cracker pie shells

1. Combine cream cheese, milk, topping and juice together. Blend with electric beaters until smooth.
2. Pour into pie shells. You can also decorate the top of the pie with a slice of lime or a mint leaf.

Taco Salad

- 1/2 head lettuce, shredded
- 1/2 red onion, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, cubed
- 1 avocado, cubed
- 9 oz. Colby Jack cheese, grated
- 1 cup kidney beans, drained
- 1 10-oz. bottle Kraft Thousand Island Dressing
- 1 lb. ground beef, browned and chilled
- 6-8 oz. plain Doritos, crushed (divided use)

1. Toss all ingredients together in a large serving bowl, making sure to reserve half of the chips. Add the reserved chips to the salad just before serving.

Mattie Lou's Cream Cheese Sandwiches

Makes approximately 30 finger sandwiches.

- 2 8-oz. pkgs. cream cheese
- 1 1-oz. pkg. Original Hidden Valley Seasoning Mix
- 1 4.25-oz. can black olives, chopped

1. Let cream cheese stand at room temperature until it reaches a consistency that allows for easy spreading. You may gently heat it to speed the process up if needed. Mix remaining ingredients into the softened cheese.
2. Spread mixture onto thin slices of white bread. Cut each sandwich into three rectangular sections.

Walk to School Cookies

- 2 cups butter or margarine
- 4 cups flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla

1. Mix all ingredients together well. Pat into several long rolls. Wrap each roll in waxed paper. Place rolls in refrigerator to chill.
2. Slice dough and place on a cookie sheet. Bake at 325 F for 10-12 minutes. If desired, sprinkle with sugar while cookies are still warm.

Carmel Corn

- 2 cups dark brown sugar, packed
- 1 cup butter
- 1/2 cup light corn syrup
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 6 1/2 qts. popped corn

1. Mix sugar, butter, syrup and salt together in a heavy pan; heat to boiling.
2. Boil for 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add vanilla and baking soda. Mix thoroughly.
3. Pour mixture over corn in a large bowl. Stir to coat all kernels well. Spoon mixture onto two 15x10x1-inch jelly roll pans or 1 large roasting pan.
4. Bake at 200 F for 1 to 1 1/2 hours, stirring every 15 minutes. Let cool before placing in covered containers.

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

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