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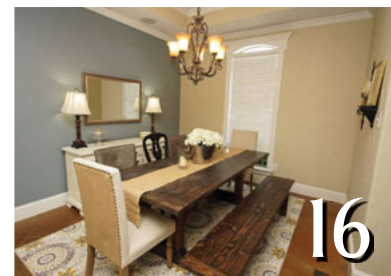
*Kenda Hooker's daughter, Koralyn, is forever in her heart.*

*Photo by Shane Kirkpatrick.*

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## Editor's Note

*What will you do this summer?*

Students have enjoyed summer freedom for a little while, but soon we will start to see those "back to school" displays in the stores that let us know time is short. I'd like to challenge us all to reach outside of our own little worlds and make a difference in the lives of others with the remainder of our summer days. Consider volunteering with a formal organization or just informally

in whatever arena you can find.

Reach out to your elderly neighbors, your animal shelters and your church to find out how you can help. It really doesn't matter what you do, big or small. Just do something. It will make a big difference for someone else.

We have all been given special talents. How will you use yours?

Have a wonderful month!

*Jill*

Jill Martinez

North Ellis Co. NOW Editor

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# HEA SHE'S GOT

*Kenda Hooker was born with an atrial septal defect, a "hole" in the wall that separates the top two chambers of the heart, but it wasn't discovered until she was 3 years old. In 1985, she had an open-heart surgery that saved her life. For the most part, she grew up normally.*

After she married, her doctors cleared her to have children. Her boys, Asa, Abram and Asher, have healthy hearts, but her girls, Karis and Koralyne, were both born with congenital heart defects. Koralyne was born with hypoplastic left heart syndrome. Karis was born with an atrial septal defect like Kenda.

Though few in number, Koralyne's days are well-documented. She was cared for by the amazing staff in the NICU at Cook





— By Jill Martinez

# RT

Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth, but her heart longed for heaven. After spending 108 days on earth, she joined the angels on July 25, 2012. "I felt there was a reason why this was in my life. I wanted to honor Koralyn's memory, so I searched for a way to do this," Kenda said.

In 2014, as Kenda looked for ways to channel her grief, she found the Congenital Heart Walk. She traveled to Central Texas in early 2015 to meet





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with people from the walk's national office and see what the event was all about. She enjoyed herself tremendously and knew she wanted to be a part of this organization.

Though the walk took place in many cities around the United States, the Dallas-Fort Worth area did not have one. "I was puzzled. I thought DFW was large enough to have one, so I emailed and asked about it. They told me it was because they didn't have anyone to co-chair the walk, so I signed up," Kenda said.

Now, most of Kenda's free time is spent planning and organizing the DFW Congenital Heart Walk. Because she is a stay-at-home mom, she works from home, mostly communicating through email, phone calls and the Internet. There are things that require getting out and about, like when she works on securing sponsors for the event. "I am an introvert. It stretches me to do all the social parts that come with this, but I do it for my kids," Kenda commented.

Of course, Kenda couldn't organize this event on her own. Her co-chair, Kathryn Osteen, and a committee of at least 10 more people, play specific roles to help get the job done. Some focus on the social media side of things, while others round up volunteers, and much more.

After almost 10 months of planning and preparation, the first DFW Congenital Heart Walk was held in April 2016 at the Katherine Rose Memorial Park in Mansfield. Though this park isn't centrally located in the Metroplex, it is great for this event, since it can easily accommodate the 5K walk. "The Mansfield Parks and Recreation people are wonderful to work with," Kenda said with a smile. "We love hosting our event there."



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The first walk was a great success. A total of 388 walkers raised \$34,000 which benefits The Children's Heart Foundation and the Adult Congenital Heart Association. "Many people complimented us on what a great job we did. It takes so much to put these walks on, so that felt good," Kenda said.

In May of this year, Kenda and her colleagues conducted their second annual walk. There were so many fun activities for families to take part in. Many costumed characters, including Stormtroopers, Disney princesses and the Texas Rangers' mascot, Captain, circulated and took photos with participants. A petting zoo was set up along with a vintage fire truck provided by Keller Williams Fire Group, and of course, playground equipment was available to keep the little ones entertained. Coloring, face painting and LEGO building were also available. "Not everyone can participate in the walk, but families want to be at the event together, so we provide a wide range of activities to make the day enjoyable," Kenda informed. This year's walk had over 400 participants and raised over \$41,000.

Many participants talk about why they walk. For most, they want to create awareness of congenital heart defects. According to the American Heart Association, over 1.3 million Americans have a heart defect, including 40,000 children who are born with them every year. Despite this, most people don't know much about CHD. Participants also want to give and receive support through this event. For families who are caring for or have lost members with heart defects, this event serves as a way to bond with others who walk in similar shoes.

Some walkers participate as individuals, but others form teams. Kenda's family has formed Team Kay Kay. As many teams have done, they made T-shirts to represent their group. "The team name represents

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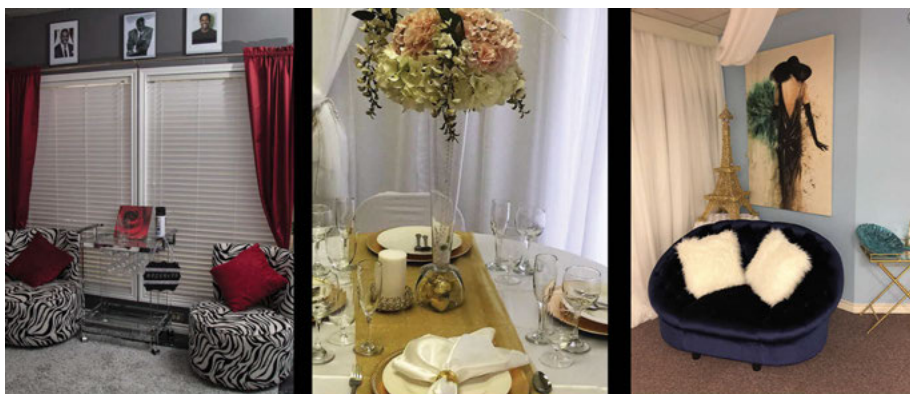
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our daughters, Koralyn and Karis, and my mother, Kay, who was my support system and has since passed away,” Kenda explained. Team Kay Kay is made up of immediate family members, cousins, friends and fellow church members. Kenda knows firsthand that CHD affects more than just the patient, and she is happy to be able to support myriad families who now participate in the walk she co-chairs.

There is no cost to participate in the walk, but all are encouraged to raise at least \$100, which earns them a walk T-shirt. This money helps to support the two organizations the walk benefits, so they can continue to fund research and supply resources to affected families. Every walker or team can set their own goal, and prize incentives are offered at various levels.

Kenda doesn't just co-chair the Congenital Heart Walk, as great as that is. Each year, she and her family commemorate Koralyn's birthday by supporting various charitable organizations. For the anniversary of her first birthday, they gathered 108 pairs of shoes — one pair for each day of Koralyn's life — and donated them to Shoes for Orphan Souls. In subsequent years, they have supported the Ronald McDonald House and Cook Children's Hospital, two organizations that served their family in their greatest times of need. They have achieved some lofty goals by putting social media to work for them. “Facebook has really helped us to spread the word about our annual projects,” Kenda noted.

Believing that God works all things together for good, the Hooker family continues to march onward, choosing to find healing through meeting the needs of others. It's the way they put the pieces of their hearts back together again. **NOW**

*Editor's Note: To learn more about the Congenital Heart Walk, visit <http://www.congenitalheartwalk.org>.*

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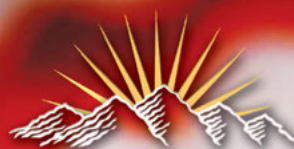


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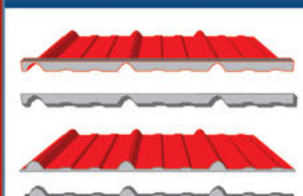


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# FOSTERING FA

At Home With Matt and



Matt and Amy Billington recently settled into their home in the gated Glen Eagles Community of Ovilla. Their 4,200-square-foot home is a place where they come together and bond as a family. The exterior, composed of brick and white stone, is reminiscent of the Tudor style, featuring an arched, wooden door that leads the way inside. "We wanted to have a pool," Amy said. "We love spending time outside, so the pool will give us hours of fun."

Matt enjoys making his home efficient and "smart." He has installed seven Alexa-enabled devices around the home, and he uses a Nest thermostat, which "learns" their habits and adjusts to their specific lifestyle needs.

When hosting dinner guests, the Billingtons entertain in the formal dining room. An iron chandelier hangs from a double tray ceiling. A farm table and bench, which Matt built, is surrounded by an eclectic group of chairs. The area rug beneath pulls in the muted blue wall color and the russet stained concrete flooring. A white buffet topped with two lamps waits to serve nearby.

In the home office, built-in shelving fills one wall, while Matt's desk and a leather couch occupy the opposite side of the room. Matt is a sales manager for Fastenal, a fastener distribution company, where he has worked since 2006. His office serves as a home base when he is not visiting the stores he oversees between Mesquite and Denton. An orange accent wall brings vibrance and energy to this room. Amy has been a school teacher since 2008.

— By Jill Martinez

MILLY  
d Amy Billington



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The living room provides an intimate setting for the church home group Matt and Amy host. The fireplace and built-in entertainment center share a wall. An olive couch, dark leather chairs and two more accent chairs provide seating. Matt built the coffee table at the center of the room from repurposed fence posts. "Making things out of wood is a hobby of mine. I enjoy seeing what I can do with bits and pieces," Matt shared.

The kitchen and breakfast nook are the hub of the downstairs space. Kitchen cabinets and the island are trimmed in twisted rope moldings and are topped

with black granite. "The girls like to sit on the stools at the island to have their breakfast in the morning," Amy said. The family enjoys evening meals together, which Amy prepares after busy days.

Flours-de-lis, representative of Amy's Louisiana heritage, can be found throughout the living space. The half bath, decorated with black and white toile wallpaper, further emphasizes her Cajun French background.

Matt and Amy met at SAGU in Waxahachie while they were both students there. Their relationship budded, and they were married in 2001. Many things have changed throughout the years, including their address and their family size, but their love for each other remains firm. "We are currently approved to be a respite home, but we are hoping to take in a foster child soon," Amy shared. Their hearts and their home are big enough to take this on.

The bedroom reserved for the foster child lies in wait for its occupant. It has a Jack-and-Jill bath, which is connected to Emma and Crosby's bedroom. Emma is a high-energy gal, and Crosby is a busy toddler, so the room suits their natures.

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Matt built a bunk bed for the children. To get into her bed up top, Emma uses the rock climbing stones. To get down, she takes the slide. A play area, which includes monkey bars on the underside of the bunk, is housed next to Crosby's bed.

Jordan, the oldest sibling, enjoys a room all to herself. Light turquoise walls and Eiffel Tower accents give the room a French flair. Jordan has participated in gymnastics in the past, but is currently enjoying volleyball and soccer. She takes after her dad, who also enjoys playing sports.

The spacious master bedroom gives Matt and Amy a comfortable retreat in the evenings. Serving as a headboard for their king-size bed is a large, wall-mounted, wrought-iron piece with a square geometric pattern. An oversized armchair sits in the bay window area, the perfect place to read and unwind. The adjoining bathroom is just as spacious, boasting dual sinks, a double shower and a jetted tub. Every comfort desired is available for the masters of the house.

"We call the upstairs our weekend home," Amy said with a chuckle. "We hardly get up there during the week, but we relax and enjoy family time there on the weekends." Truly, the upstairs provides a sanctuary from the hubbub of daily life. A living area, outfitted with brown leather chairs, provides a lovely view of the backyard. Just off this area, the girls turned an oversized storage closet into their arts and crafts room. "When we bought the house, there was an old drafting table in this closet. The girls thought it would be great to use when they were feeling creative," Matt explained.



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An extra play space with a small trampoline, buckets of toys and a rack of dress up clothes supplies the children with numerous ways to expend their creative energies.

The best part of the upstairs is the theater room complete with multi-level floor space furnished with comfy couches and chairs. Matt set up a projector and a large screen, so they can enjoy family movies together. Just outside the theater room is a sink, microwave, small refrigerator and popcorn machine. Thematic decor including movie reels and a director's clapboard complement the area.

Finally, the upstairs contains a bedroom and bathroom, which is great for housing guests. "Sometimes, my dad will come to visit. He loves it up here because he has everything he needs," Matt said. "It's almost like a little retreat for him."

The immense backyard is an oasis for this family. The pool is the central attraction, of course, but a trampoline, playscape and large wooden spools are available for the kids to romp around on as well. Under the covered patio is a dining set and wooden bar with stools that go with it. A flat-screen TV and speakers, which are connected to the indoor sound system, supply entertainment. "We enjoy being outside and hosting our guests in this space," Amy said.

Two fur babies complete this family. The Billingtons simultaneously adopted a dog and a cat. They felt it only fitting to name the canine Luke and the feline Lorelai. They are great friends who have been given a wonderful home and family.

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# A Desire to Serve

— By Virginia Riddle



*What's in a name? For Ludwingke "Lud" Pastor Rios, the answer to that question is in the life he's living. Born in Masaya, Nicaragua, Lud was named for classical composer, Ludwig Van Beethoven, and given the middle name, "Pastor." His parents must have known something as they held their firstborn, since Lud has fulfilled his given names by becoming minister of worship at Community Baptist Church in Ferris. Many roads of experience have brought him to this church. "I'm a city slicker by nature, but my wife, Kellee, and I wanted to go to a church that could really use us in its ministry," Lud recalled.*



Lud's journey of many roads began when he and his parents came to the United States when he was a 1-year-old. "The Sandinistas were in charge, and there was lots of violence. My family wasn't safe. A missionary had visited my parents' church and lived in Dallas at that time. He helped us come to the U.S. as political refugees with only the clothes on our backs. We lived in a tiny apartment in a house in the Oak Cliff area of Dallas. There were nine other people living in the house. I grew up poor and learned English by watching *Sesame Street*," he remembered.

His formal education began in neighborhood public schools. "My heroes and mentors were my teachers," Lud explained. Two more sons would be born to his family. "Everyone in my family has been very interested in education and are consumed with being American," he explained.

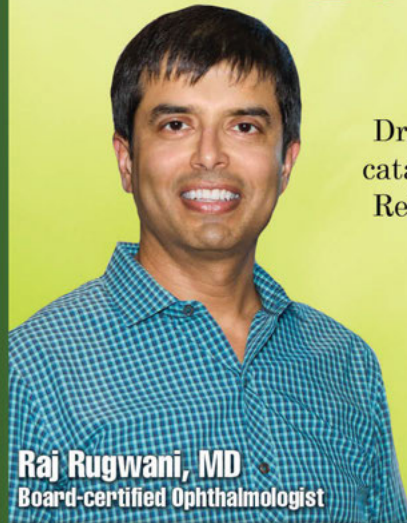
Following the fourth grade, when he started to learn to play the violin so he could skip gym class and learn to play the *Lone Ranger* theme song, Lud's musical talent was noticed. He was chosen to attend Dallas ISD's Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts. "My violin teacher performed with the Dallas Symphony and the Meyerson Symphony Center was across



the street," he said. He also took some graphic arts classes, and at age 14, Lud started serving in his church's music ministry. "I was always playing something in church and leading the singing," he said. However, he admits the last thing on his list of career callings was music ministry. "It's the hardest thing to hand everything over to God and then wait, but everything in my life was lining up for where I am today," he explained.

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Following high school graduation, Lud attended Dallas Baptist University as a pre-med and computer science major. Dr. Gary Cook, the university's president at the time, took note of him after hearing him perform on the violin. He encouraged Lud to attend Baylor University, since DBU didn't have a violin program. Lud only had the weekend to prepare for a music scholarship and get enrolled in classes at Baylor. With a lot of practice that weekend, Lud landed the violin scholarship!

His studies at Baylor led to a Bachelor of Music degree, and while later serving as a graduate assistant, Lud earned a Master of Music degree. His days at Baylor also afforded Lud the opportunity to court a fellow student, Kellee. The couple has been married for 12 years and are parents to 1-year-old Elizabeth. "Kellee balances me," he said.

Lud's musical talents have given him many opportunities to travel internationally and perform with other talented artists. During his summers as a student, he performed as a violinist with the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America at the White House for President Clinton and President George W. Bush and at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He's enjoyed performing with Dr. Sue

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Mitz, who's on DBU's music faculty, and Lud performs with his two brothers in area venues. "I am fulfilled as a musician by learning new repertoire and through the excitement of seeing the audience's response," he admitted.

Following Baylor, Lud returned to DBU to work in the fine arts department and started his career as a graphic artist. Along the way, he also earned an MBA from Louisiana State University. Today, in addition to his church ministry, Lud serves as creative director

*"The people in this church are real."*

of Left Angle Studio in Dallas. He also serves on the DBU board of trustees.

It was about six years ago that Lud had an epiphany to serve. "I heard about Community Baptist Church through its financial secretary. The pastor, Dr. R.E. 'Mickey' Moriarty called, and after being a member of large churches in big cities, I came to serve here where I pass cowboys riding horses on the road."

That was in 2013, and since then CBC has been Lud and Kellee's church home. He rehearses and directs the praise team and praise band, while accompanying them on the piano. Lud sings bass or baritone. "We rehearse Wednesdays and Sundays and have extra rehearsals for special music, such as cantatas. I appreciate Brother Mickey giving me the freedom and responsibility for experimenting with different types

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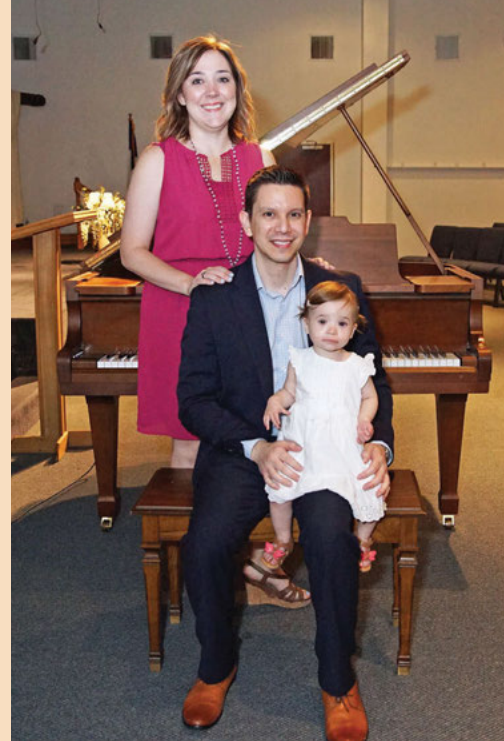
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of music," Lud said. The two even collaborated on the writing of a new Christmas cantata that was performed last December — Brother Mickey wrote the script and Lud composed the music. "It was one of our most attended worship services," Lud remembered. "I love to research old and new music. For the past two years I've focused on experiential worship, but we use both traditional and contemporary music hymns.

"The people in this church are real," Lud added. "With about 300 members now and an attendance that averages 90-100 on Sundays, we've grown a lot in not only numbers but in other ways. The future of any church isn't to adapt and survive but to hold to its true beliefs." In addition to his musical talent offerings, Lud has used his design knowledge to update the church nursery, and Kellee, a nurse by profession, can be found running the church's media system.

When not working, Lud spends time with his family who all live in or near the Metroplex. He is teaching Elizabeth to speak Spanish and is enjoying his role as a new father. "I love seeing a bit of my soul in Elizabeth every day," he said. Lucee, the family's German Shepherd, likes being with Elizabeth, too. "Lucee naps with the baby," Lud added.

"As an instrumentalist, I'm basically a blank canvas," Lud concluded. "There are infinite ways to arrange music with just those eight notes — infinite combinations. Duty depletes, but I do what I do out of love. That's energizing!" **NOW**



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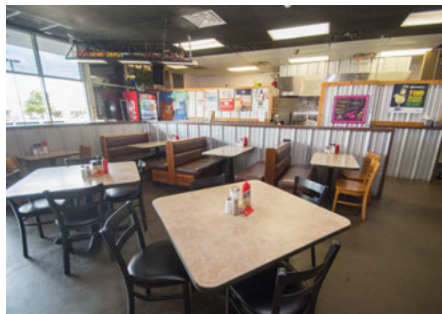
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— By Jill Martinez

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Bobby has experience in the technological side of running restaurants and also specializes in culinary arts, having attended El Centro's Food and Hospitality Institute. "I'm a foodie. I love teaching my staff how to make great-tasting dishes," Bobby stated.

Barry and Bobby are at the restaurant just about every day of the week, pouring their hearts into their business, so their employees and customers want to come back for more. "We model hard work for our staff. We won't ask them to do something we won't do," Barry said.

The women of this family play supporting roles as well. Barry's wife, Julie, helps with bookwork on the weekends. Their daughters, Jennifer Flodder and Christina Pick, help with bookwork and advertising.

The Hill family strives to make The Lone Star Burger Bar & Café a family-friendly place where locals can get good food at a great price day or night. "We have lots of repeat customers because our menu is diverse. I call some of them our 8-9-10-day-



a-week customers,” Barry said with a grin just as Jim, one of those customers, walked in the door. He had been there for breakfast and was back for dinner.

Breakfast is a popular choice. Their S.O.S. platter is a house specialty, made with beef, not sausage, in the gravy and served on toast or biscuits. They give samples to everyone who comes in. Fold-over omelets are made from fresh eggs whipped to the right amount of fluffiness.

**“WE HAVE  
LOTS OF REPEAT  
CUSTOMERS  
BECAUSE  
OUR MENU IS  
DIVERSE.”**

Servings are large, so no one leaves hungry. “We don’t charge for a split plate, and we don’t charge extra for jalapeños. *It’s Texas!*” Barry exclaimed. If customers order a split plate, their kitchen staff will separate everything up for them. It’s the little things that make a big impression.

Lunch and dinner menus feature several burgers. “We use a local beef company out of Fort Worth. The meat is fresh when it gets to the restaurant, which makes the burgers taste great,” Bobby remarked. Additionally, they serve chicken fried steak, onion rings, fries, steak fingers and chicken fingers, which are all made in-house.

“We want to be local. It’s our shtick,” Barry commented. The bar features Texas brands, and, of course, Lone Star beer is served. Even the top shelf items are Texas-based.

Repeat customers come to laugh, have a good time and stick around a while. They describe themselves as being like a local Cheers Bar, unlike the big national chains. Barry said, “We treat our customers like they are walking into our home.” **NOW**

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*Jo, a dental instructor with Training Academy 4U, provides hands-on training with dental assistant students.*



*ROHS FFA member Ryan Pickard helps Eastridge Elementary student Miles Artis during Kindergarten Rodeo Day.*



*Mr. Ragsdale introduces Rodney and Betty Perth as they prepare to perform at the Senior Luncheon.*



*Sulemma Lopez enjoys herself as she gets an upclose look at a Red Oak fire truck with firefighter paramedic Zach Jones.*



*Bella Noice sells her artwork during Market Day, an event for 4th and 5th grade Ovilla Christian students to sell their goods.*



*Son, Geoffrey Alexander, and husband, Ted Benavides, pose with Aretha R. Ferrell-Benavides as she receives the NFBPAA Marks in Excellence Award.*



*The ROISD Education Foundation visited SAGU to thank them for their support.*



*Ferris Fire Department's Tyler Griffith reads to pre-K students as part of a lesson on fire safety.*



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# A Shock of a Sting

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Those pesky bugs! They just love us, whether or not we love them in return. They bite us, sting us, stick us and scare us out of our wits. To many people, they are a nuisance, but others see the great benefits of having insects on this planet and consider the downside as a mere inconvenience. However, some bugs are crawling, flying death traps for humans. When that situation exists, great care needs to be taken.

The usual culprits that can set off an allergic reaction in humans are bees, wasps, fire ants, yellow jackets and hornets. According to the American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology, “The red or black imported fire ant now infests more than 260 million acres in the southern United States, where it has become a significant health hazard and may be the number one agent of insect stings.”

There is a normal reaction to insect venom that can be somewhat traumatic, but will not necessarily be an allergic reaction. Most people will have a normal reaction to an insect sting with symptoms of pain, redness and swelling. An allergic reaction is when your body overreacts to an allergen (any substance that causes an allergic reaction or specific hypersensitivity). The allergic reaction causes the same symptoms of pain, swelling and redness, only the coverage is beyond the site of the sting. You may experience itchiness or hives and/or a feeling of warmth in the area. If it progresses to the point that you begin wheezing, having trouble breathing, difficulty swallowing, swelling of the facial area, dizziness, weak and rapid

pulse and clammy skin, you may have anaphylaxis. This is a serious, life-threatening allergic reaction and requires immediate medical attention.

For someone in anaphylactic shock, there is no time to waste. Call 911. If the person carries epinephrine, sometimes referred to as an EpiPen, it needs to be administered right away. Even if symptoms improve, medical attention should still be received. Those symptoms could come back. Have the person lie down, elevate their legs and loosen any tight clothing. Cover them with a blanket or whatever material is handy. If any nausea or vomiting is present, turn them on their side. Do not have them eat or drink anything. If they stop breathing, administer CPR until emergency help arrives.

In order to avoid insect stings, do not make yourself a target. Avoid activities at dawn and dusk. When outside, wear insect repellent. Don't wear bright colors. Avoid perfumes, scented hairsprays, deodorants and lotions. If you are stung and have a generalized reaction, see an allergist for follow-up and treatment. **NOW**

#### Source:

<http://acaai.org/allergies/types/insect-sting-allergies>

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

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### July 1, 2

Independence Day GAZEBO-A-THON: 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., 100 Town Plaza, Ferris. From 6:00-9:00 p.m., a DJ will be serving up tunes.

### July 12

Paws for Fun Summer Day Camp: 9:30 a.m., Paws for Reflection Ranch, 5431 Montgomery Rd., Midlothian. Call the ranch at (972) 775-8966 or email [pawsforreflection@att.net](mailto:pawsforreflection@att.net) to register.

### July 13

TSTC Registration Rally: 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., 119 N. Lowrance Rd., Red Oak. People interested in taking fall semester classes should attend. Please visit [www.tstc.edu](http://www.tstc.edu) for a list of materials to bring along. Call (972) 617-4040 if you have questions.

### July 29

Ferris ISD Back 2 School Fair: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Ferris High School, 1025 E. 8th St., Ferris. This even is a great opportunity for Ferris families to prepare for the new school year. In addition to fun activities like a car show and bounce houses, free haircuts, school supplies, and low-cost immunizations will be offered. Contact Taylor Oster at

(972) 544-3858 or [toster@ferrisid.org](mailto:toster@ferrisid.org) for more information.

### Ongoing:

#### Third Mondays

Red Oak Book Club: 6:30-8:00 p.m., Red Oak City Hall/Library. For more information, email [redoakbookclub@gmail.com](mailto:redoakbookclub@gmail.com).

#### Fourth Mondays

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

Glenn Heights Chamber of Commerce meeting: 7:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m., 1938 S. Hampton Rd. Food and drinks provided. For more information, contact Cyndy Powell at [cyndy.powell@glennheightstx.gov](mailto:cyndy.powell@glennheightstx.gov)

#### First and Third Tuesdays

Red Oak Lions Club meeting: **First Tuesdays:** noon, Cancun's, 273 E. Ovilla Rd. **Third Tuesdays:** 7:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd. For more information, call (214) 864-8014.

Glenn Heights City Council meeting: 7:00 p.m., in the council chambers, 1938 S. Hampton Rd.

### Wednesdays and Thursdays

The Red Oak Senior Citizens Group: 8:30 a.m.-noon, Lions Club Building, 207 W. Red Oak Rd., Red Oak. Call (214) 502-9747 to RSVP by **Wednesday** for \$2 lunch on **Thursday**.

### Second Saturdays

Red Oak Opry: 7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m., Lone Star Cowboy Church, 1011 E. Ovilla Rd., Red Oak.

### Third Saturdays

Ferris Trades Day: 101 S. Main St., Ferris, 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. For more information, call Tina Miller at (817) 992-9204.

Self Defense Class: 9:00-11:00 a.m., 301 Locust Dr., Oak Leaf. Must call (972) 617-2660 to RSVP. Wear loose fitting clothing.

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [jill.martinez@nowmagazines.com](mailto:jill.martinez@nowmagazines.com).*

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## In the Kitchen With Ami Jo Burrow

— *By Jill Martinez*

Ami Jo Burrow, an Ellis County native, has enjoyed being in the kitchen all of her life. “I have a picture of myself baking with my aunt when I was 4 years old,” she said.

These days, Ami adapts recipes from cookbooks like *Southern Living*, or she invents her own. Her cooking can be described as down-home with a Cajun flare. “I have been told that I could go easy on the cayenne pepper,” she said with a grin.

It gives Ami great joy to prepare meals for her family and friends. At family gatherings, she would be remiss if she didn’t bring Maw-Maw’s chocolate cake. “Every time I make it for a family gathering, my grandmother swears it tastes just like Maw-Maw’s did. When she says that, it really warms my heart.” **NOW**

### Maw-Maw’s Chocolate Cake

*Cake:*

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) salted butter**
- 1/2 cup Crisco**
- 1 cup water**
- 3 tsp. cocoa powder, heaping**
- 2 cups all-purpose flour**
- 2 cups sugar**
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract**
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten**
- 1 tsp. baking soda**
- 1/2 cup buttermilk**

*Icing:*

- 1 lb. powdered sugar**
- 6 Tbsp. whole milk**
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) salted butter, softened**
- 6 tsp. cocoa powder, heaping**

- 1. For cake:** Mix butter, Crisco, water and cocoa in a medium saucepan; bring to a boil, stirring for 1 minute in the same direction. Remove from heat.
- 2.** Sift flour and sugar together. Slowly add to boiled mixture, stirring in the same direction.
- 3.** Add vanilla to the lightly beaten eggs; gently stir into the batter. Mix baking soda with buttermilk; slowly add to the batter.
- 4.** Pour batter into a greased 9x13-inch pan; bake at 350 F for 25 minutes.
- 5. For icing:** Mix all ingredients together with an electric mixer on high until well-blended.
- 6.** Dollop icing all over warm cake. Spread with the back of a spoon to cover the whole cake.
- 7. Note:** Let cake cool completely with icing on it before serving. This gives the icing a great texture.

### Macaroni and Cheese

- 1 cup (2 sticks) salted butter**
- 1/2 cup flour**
- 1 tsp. salt**
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper**
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper**
- 1/2 Tbsp. dried minced onion**
- 1/2 Tbsp. minced garlic**
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce**
- 4 cups milk**
- 4 cups cheddar cheese (divided use)**
- 16 oz. elbow macaroni, cooked al dente**

- 1.** In a medium saucepan, melt butter on medium heat. Whisk in flour a little at a time, stirring constantly until it is bubbly and golden in color.
- 2.** Stir in spices and Worcestershire sauce. Add milk; stir for 2-3 minutes until sauce becomes thick and will coat the back of a wooden spoon.
- 3.** Remove from heat; add 3 cups of cheese, stirring in one cup at a time. Once cheese is incorporated and melted, stir in cooked macaroni.
- 4.** Place in a 9x13-inch pan; top with remaining cup of cheese. Bake at 350 F for 20 minutes, or until the top is lightly browned.

### Bar-B-Cups

- 1 lb. lean ground beef or turkey**
- 1/2 medium onion, finely chopped**
- 2 tsp. black pepper**
- 1 tsp. garlic powder**
- 1 cup KRAFT ORIGINAL Barbecue Sauce**
- 1 pkg. 10-count Pillsbury Grands! Juniors canned biscuits**
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese**

- 1.** Brown meat over medium heat with onions, pepper and garlic powder until no longer pink. Drain excess grease; stir in barbecue sauce until well-mixed.
- 2.** Place biscuits in between two sheets of parchment paper; roll out until they are 4 inches in diameter. Place flattened biscuits in a greased muffin pan. Fill each cup evenly with meat mixture.
- 3.** Bake at 400 F for 10 minutes. Remove from oven and sprinkle each cup with cheese; return to oven until cheese is melted. Let cool 5 minutes; use the end of a butter knife to remove from pan.

To view recipes from current and previous issues, visit [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com).



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