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AUGUST 2013



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still tries new things

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His Legacy in the Making
The Ultimate Adventure
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**COMMON GROUND NETWORK'S
SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE**
Community Spotlight



Some of the many school supplies purchased for the School Supply Drive.

The projects of the Common Ground Network are designed to pull together the entire community to provide basic resources to ensure quality of life for the low-income residents of Mansfield. The school supply assistance program is funded by donations from Mansfield churches, organizations, individuals and businesses. The program has grown from helping approximately 324 children in 1999 to providing assistance to more than 560 children in 2013. For more information visit www.commongroundmansfield.org, email or call Chad Crafton @ 682-429-9288.



Volunteers gathered to assemble donated school supplies for the underprivileged students in MISD.



Lisa Stewart helped with the school supply drive which gives on average \$25 worth of school supplies and a backpack to less fortunate students in the Mansfield ISD.



Suzy Herrmann, Common Ground volunteer, Phil Stover, Common Ground volunteer and Liz Wright (Mansfield ISD) contributed time to the program in July.



Rick Herrmann, Emily Herrmann, Rylie Cawthorn, Libby Moore, Keller Stewart, and Andrew Cawthorn (front) enjoyed giving their time in community service in the annual School Supply Drive.



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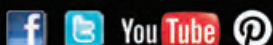


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ON THE COVER



The Parsons family loves spending time outdoors.

Photo by Vanessa Polozola.

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Editor's Note

Dear Friends,

It's almost that time again. Fresh school supplies are being bought, teachers are readying their classrooms and school bus engines are revving into life. The school year is about to start again.

This month, you might notice we have done something a little different in the magazine by dedicating this issue to the people who make our schools so special and unique. You'll see stories of both remarkable students and teachers.

But since school doesn't start up again until August 26, there's still time to enjoy summer nights with friends and family in our many parks and fields. You can even take a class at the Mansfield Activities Center, where a number of opportunities for preschoolers to senior adults are offered. You can enjoy tennis, guitar, ceramic or zumba lessons. More information is on their Web site.

Enjoy the rest of your summer!

Mikaela

Mikaela Mathews
MansfieldNOW Editor
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A Love of Learning

— By Mikaela Mathews

Give Linda Zumwalt a classroom, a handful of eager second-grade students and a computer and watch her passion overflow. Linda feels comfortable being silly with her students, reading to them and watching their faces light up as they learn something new. "I like working with the kids. It's just fun to see them catch on to a new concept or skill," Linda smiled.

For 35 years, Linda has been teaching, and her passion shows. In 2012, she was awarded the MISD Elementary School Teacher of the Year award. She was so shocked she had won the award that she started out her acceptance speech saying, "Well, if you all were second graders, this would be much easier."

Ever since Linda was 5 years old, she knew she wanted to be a teacher. "I just liked school. Even as a kindergartener, my teachers would ask me, 'What do you want to be?'"

"I would always say, 'I want to be a teacher,'" Linda shared. Although neither of her parents were teachers, she credits them for her long commitment to teaching. "They were immigrants from Switzerland and just always instilled in us a hard work ethic," she explained. "It was just expected that we would do well."

Linda met her husband of 43 years in Bremerton, Washington, her home state. "He was stationed in the Navy,



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and his carrier came into Washington for repairs, so that's how we met," Linda described. He was shipped away for a year after the couple had met, and when he returned, they got married. Together, they have three children and seven grandchildren, as well as a home on an acre in Rendon. The couple has lived there ever since they moved to Texas over 30 years ago.



Linda's teaching career began in Seattle, where she taught for several years. After staying home for a few years as her children grew up, she couldn't resist going back to teach. She decided the easiest way was to be a substitute teacher and slowly ease her way back into the classroom. After a conversation with her children's principal, Linda was quickly put to work. "I told the principal I want to start teaching, and I should sub to ease my way back in," Linda smiled. "She said, 'Okay. I need a kindergarten teacher tomorrow.'"

Soon after, Linda started substituting long-term at Alice Ponder Elementary School. When a second-grade teacher on leave decided not to come back, Linda took the job and stayed for 18 years. When Mary Jo Sheppard Elementary School was opening eight years ago,



Linda started teaching at the new school and has been there ever since.

Creating an atmosphere of fun and learning is important to Linda. In the corner of her classroom sits a wooden rocking chair from which she reads to her students. Reading is one of her favorite subjects. "I like to read out loud to them," Linda smiled. "Right now, I'm reading *James and the Giant Peach* out loud to them. It's a great story." Even the children love sitting in the rocking chair. "When they have independent reading, where they read to themselves, you'll see two of them squeezed in there. They just like to sit there," Linda laughed.

On some days, the second-grade students in Linda's class don't even sit in their seats. "Sometimes, they can sit on the floor to do some work, and we do small group activities also, so that it's not just me up front teaching the whole time," Linda explained. Students also get awards for good behavior, such as bringing a stuffed animal to school,

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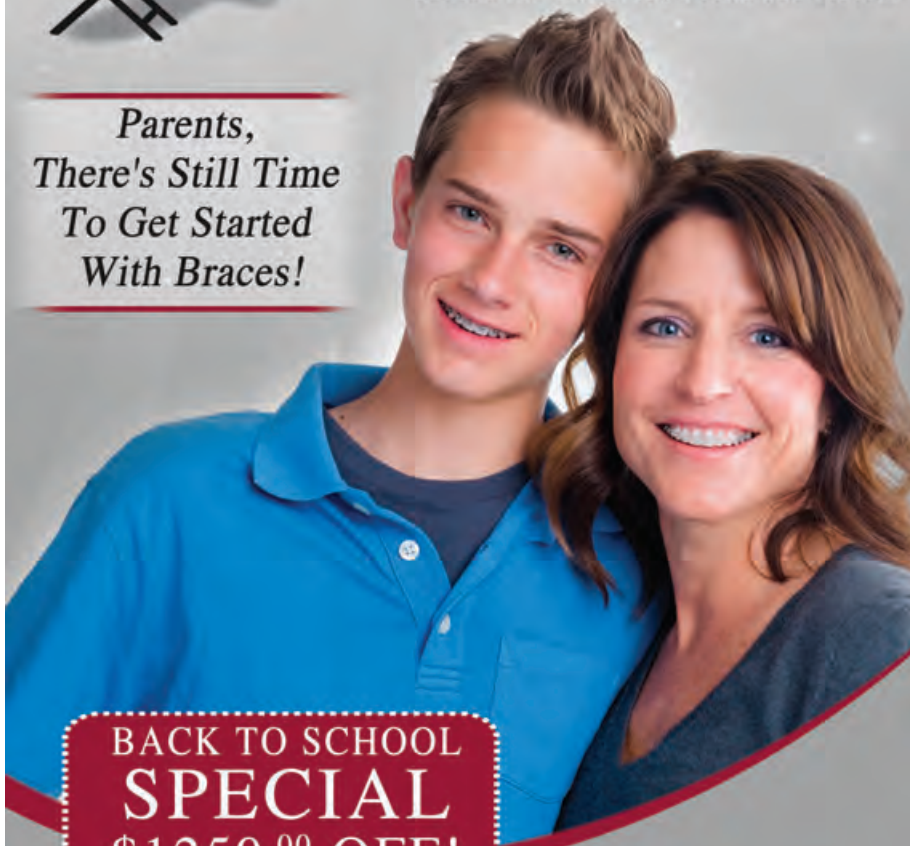
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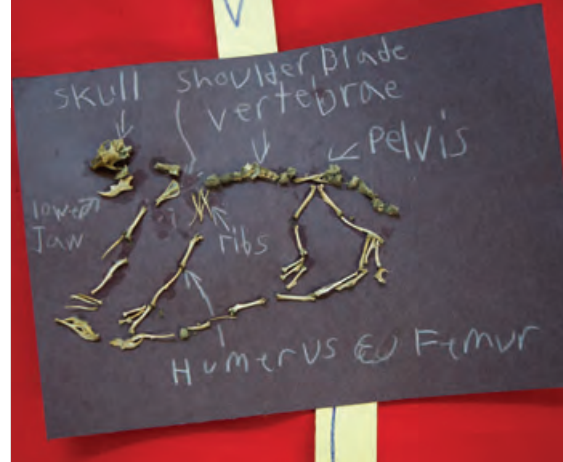
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stinky feet day (where students can take off their shoes in class, provided they are wearing socks), show-and-tell on Friday or lunch with Linda.

Even though Linda has been teaching for many years, she loves trying new ideas. She changes nearly every project and activity in her classroom each year. "I'm always ready to jump in and try something new," she remarked.

This tenacious aptitude for learning led her to apply for a grant with the district for a document camera. The camera allows her to put a book or her student's work under the camera, which will then project it onto the whiteboard. At the time, not every classroom had this piece of equipment, and Linda believed it could be helpful for her students.

In order to apply for the grant, Linda connected the use of the camera to a project with her students. The second graders would dissect sanitized owl pellets for bones and re-create the skeletons of what the owl ate. Students could view the skeletons with the document camera. Shortly after Linda applied for the grant, the district awarded her a document camera, and Linda continues to do this project year after year.

Linda's fellow second-grade teachers are often amazed at Linda's ongoing desire to try something new. Susan



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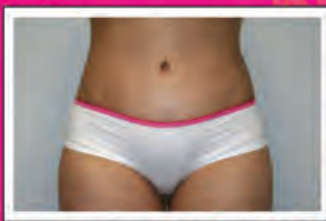
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Sheridan, a second-grade teacher at Mary Jo Sheppard, explained, "She makes learning fun because she's so interested in learning."

Louellen Brown, also a second-grade teacher at Sheppard, echoed Susan. "When the school got all this technology in the classrooms, she was one of the first people who really went out and dove into it," she said. "She always goes the extra mile for her kids."

Many of Linda's students, some of whom are already grown with children of their own, benefitted greatly from her use of technology in the classroom. "Linda taught both of my daughters," said Olga Felan, another second-grade teacher at Sheppard. "They enjoyed being in her class, and the technology was a big thing that really impacted them."

Kellie McCashe described her 16 years as a second-grade teacher and working with Linda as encouraging and informative. "She's introduced me to a lot and taught me a lot about technology that I have brought into my classroom," Kellie explained.

Because of this, Linda acquired a reputation for being innovative. "I know there are a couple of people who say, 'Well, let's wait until Linda does it and we'll see how it works,'" she laughed.

Linda's philosophy on teaching is that every student has potential. "All of these kids can learn. You have to find their style of learning, because they don't all learn the same way," Linda explained. As such, this second-grade teacher incorporates music, poems or any other creative way to teach her students. "Every one of them has the potential to learn," Linda explained. "I just have to take them from where they are and work with them to help them realize their potential." **NOW**

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SELF-SUFFICIENCY

— By Mikaela Mathews



Venture into the First United Methodist church in Mansfield on any Tuesday or Thursday night and you might find any number of events happening. One of them would be a small group of adult students pouring over homework, listening to their instructor and chomping down on a free meal. You would find the instructor reading a story from the Bible about a man or woman who had a rough time in life, but still made it through with their heads held high. You would find a business leader answering questions as a part of a panel or an unemployed woman practicing for her upcoming job interview. In short, you would find the Jobs for Life program.

The program began in the fall of 2012 when Leadership Mansfield, an organization of the Chamber of Commerce, approached both Teresa Washington, program director at the Wesley Mission Center, and the executive director of the Wesley Mission Center, Teresa Sherwood. They asked what the biggest needs of the community were and how they could



Teresa Washington (above) and Paulette Tutor (below) are empowering people on the **journey** to self-sufficiency and **wholeness**.

The journey is the reward

help. The answer, without a doubt: jobs. "What does our community need? Jobs, jobs, jobs!" Teresa Washington explained. The unemployed were having a difficult time paying bills and feeding their children. But the Wesley Mission Center didn't want to simply write a check for those who needed to pay rent and move on. They wanted to teach skills and a work ethic for life-long success.

So the pair set out to find a program to do just that. Since Jobs for Life is a national program, they were able to visit other sites that had already implemented the program. They were pleased with what they found and quickly rallied a panel of business leaders with Leadership Mansfield and an army of volunteers for food, childcare, and to be mentors. Their mission statement is empowering people on the journey to self-sufficiency and wholeness. The program helps people who are either unemployed or are looking for a better job with twice a week meetings, homework and mentors, who are called champions.

One of the participants who has benefitted greatly from the program is Lisa Chasteen, a single mother of five children. "If I had to choose between winning the lottery and taking this class, I would choose this experience," Lisa smiled. For her, the greatest aspect of the program is the support group. "It pushes us to grow," she described. Lisa hopes to eventually find a job working in real estate.





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“If I had to choose between winning the lottery and taking this class, I would choose this experience.”

Her champion, Gail Hartin, agreed with Lisa. “It’s about a community coming together,” she said. “It’s very encouraging.”

Debbie Key is another champion, who became a mentor when the program began. Debbie recalled one of her



students being very shy at first. "At the first meeting, she was very timid and quiet. She was afraid to look me in the eye," Debbie remembered. "But by the end, we were like long-lost cousins! She walked taller. There was a transformation, and it was thrilling." Debbie further explained how the Jobs for Life program gave her student a breath of fresh air that changed her life. Now, Debbie is a part of the meal team that provides free meals for the students every week.

Paulette Tutor, the coordinator for Jobs for Life, has enjoyed seeing students gain confidence throughout the program. "We want to hone in on their God-given talent, so that they aren't just making a living, but enjoying what they do, too," she explained. Much of her job is screening and coordinating the volunteers and making relationships with community business leaders. Often, these leaders come to the meetings to give advice, and sometimes, one thing will lead to another, and they may even hire students. "Often, it's just about who you know," Paulette said. "So we encourage the students to find jobs by networking."

But, Teresa Washington and her staff understand the program wouldn't happen without the work of dedicated volunteers. "This is an opportunity for people to give back and use their gifts by being a mentor, serving food or just helping outside the box." Teams with the Jobs for Life program include the champion team, meal team, course instructors, student relations (those who make sure students maintain appropriate boundaries



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with their champion and who provide emergency financial assistance if needed), business relations team (those who work to establish positive relationships with area businesses) and the prayer team.

Before each meeting, students are treated to a free dinner, provided by area restaurants or volunteers. Students with children are also blessed with free childcare. Teresa believes allowing students to bring their children can have a very positive impact. "The kids can see their parents educating themselves, getting dressed up, standing taller. It can affect a generation to come. Even the kids want to start volunteering too," Teresa explained.

Becoming a student with Jobs for Life



is well-earned, however. For the spring 2013 session, 13 students applied and only seven were accepted. Students must be willing to both participate and learn. Those interested fill out an application and participate in an interview before a panel of judges. "We don't want to scare them," Teresa explained. "But we want them to be classroom-ready." All of the students currently in the program are also residents of Mansfield and are required to dress business casual for each class.

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Tessa Pierce is a Certified Public Accountant with over 17 years of experience in accounting and finance. She has worked for small and large publicly-held companies, as an auditor at Deloitte & Touche, and as a VP of a multi-billion dollar private investment fund doing both capital management and financial reporting. Tessa has a BBA in accounting from the University of Oklahoma and an MBA in finance from Dallas Baptist University.

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The Mission Center hopes to help those in the city, for the city.

The program fits into the Wesley Mission Center's model of programs as it works to empower people instead of simply writing a check. “We don't want them to remain in poverty,” she explained. “We want them to rise up and increase their hope and dignity. We want them to leave a legacy with their children.” Teresa believes in converting people in need into partners. A large portion of her job is counseling clients and evaluating which program would best fit them. “I get excited when I wake up in the morning, thinking, Which program do I get to put people in today to help them?”

The Mission Center hopes to keep the Jobs for Life program small in order to give their students all of their attention. “We want to monitor our students and cater to their needs,” Teresa explained. In order to keep the class size small and still reach as many people as possible, however, Teresa hopes to expand the program to another site where there can be multiple classes with multiple teachers. “We want to send it out to grow,” she explained. “And see it build as a part of the community.” **NOW**




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The CASA

AT HOME WITH *Chad and Allison Parsons*

— By Mikaela Mathews



“¡Bienvenidos! Mi casa es su casa” reads a sign that hangs in Chad and Allison Parsons’ kitchen. It’s one of the first things visitors see, and they immediately know they are in the company of friends. Translated, the sign means “Welcome! My house is your house,” and it’s exactly this welcoming attitude the Parsons weave throughout their home.

Terra cotta walls combined with ornate Mexican tiles give their home a Spanish flair. Decorating in this way was initially Chad’s idea. “We enjoy Mexico. We love the people and the culture,” Allison explained. “Chad had this idea, so I just ran with it.”

The living room, dining room and kitchen are all one large room and create a very open atmosphere. Chad and Allison, with their two teenage daughters, Abby and Audrey, wanted a home where people could easily gather. Being highly involved in their church, the Parsons often invite people over for dinner or fellowship. “We knew we would gather a lot of friends and family, and we just wanted an open concept where everyone could be a part of anything we’re doing,” Allison explained.

In their living room, Allison displays an impressive wall of crosses, which reminds the family of their deep faith. “We



always knew that the foundation of this home was Christ,” Allison explained. “And, we always wanted it to be open to others.” Their living room, designed for fellowship and deep conversation with several seating areas, does just that.

Behind the living room is a guest room. Lining those walls are photos of their daughters from infancy to the current day. Also behind the living room, is a study/library that connects to the master bedroom. Dark wood bookshelves, filled with books, march across one side of the study.

On the other side of the hallway and in one corner, a small tribute to Oklahoma University (OU) rests. Although the walls are a shade of orange, Chad still named it his “OU corner.” As graduates of OU, the Parsons take great pride in their alma mater. “I had a lot of fun decorating in here,” Chad laughed. “I went and got these old *Sports Illustrated* magazines with OU covers and framed them.” Chad and Allison’s degrees from OU also hang on the walls in the room.

The couple met in the dorms at OU during their freshman year and dated throughout college. After graduation, Allison moved to Dallas while Chad finished his master’s degree. Being a native Texan, Allison couldn’t stay away from Texas. “I knew once I graduated from OU, I wanted to get back to Texas,” she explained. Shortly after Allison’s graduation, Chad proposed, and they were married nine months later. Recently, they celebrated 18 years of marriage.

Although the interior of the Parsons home is very



comfortable, the family spends a majority of their time outdoors. "We like the outdoors," Allison smiled. "This is where we live. We love it." The swimming pool, complete with blue Spanish tiles, is in the center of their backyard. To the left, a nearly completed outdoor kitchen allows for parties and outdoor relaxation. Their teenage girls also have outdoor

adventures with a creek behind their home, a trampoline and zip line beside the creek. And, because their girls are artistic in nature, a ladder painted blue by the girls sits against a tree for them to gain access to the zip line.

Indoors, a spiral staircase leads to the second story with the girls' bedrooms and a small TV room. Surrounding the



TV room is the girls' artwork from over the years. "I have some little artists in here, that's for sure," Allison laughed.

At the top of the staircase is a stained glass cross. For the Parsons, this is the most important feature of their home. Allison worked with an artist to construct the cross by choosing the different colored glass to create a unique mosaic look. The cross also faces west, so as the sun sets each evening, the family

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is reminded of their faith. In addition, the Parsons wrote Bible verses over the doorframes before it was painted in order to dedicate their home.

The Parsons initially settled in Mansfield because of the small community it offered. "We knew we wanted a small-town feel and a smaller school for our children. When Mansfield was younger and smaller, that was the draw for us," Allison shared.

Now that the Parsons have lived in Mansfield for several years, they believe there was another reason for their settling in this town. "It became more about our faith," Allison explained.

The Parsons became heavily involved in Walnut Ridge Baptist Church (WRBC), when they first moved to Mansfield and eventually helped start another church in Midlothian. After coming back to WRBC when the new church was growing, the Parsons helped to start yet another service called The Gathering at WRBC. "I never thought our lives would be helping start up churches because I feel



so unequipped,” Allison smiled. “But, it’s been a great journey for our family.”

Even though Chad works as a small business owner and Allison as a busy stay-at-home mom, the family still makes time for their church commitments. They are currently on a launch team for the new service. “I love seeing new people come to visit, then return and get plugged in,” Chad explained.

In addition to their two daughters, the Parsons family also includes three furry friends.

“Our dogs are a big part of our lives,” Chad laughed. The three are named Harley, (Bob) Stoops and Boomer. Stoops and Boomer were both named in honor of their beloved university.

Audrey and Abby stay busy with their school activities. Abby is a sophomore, involved in cheer and golf. Audrey, who is in eighth grade, is a swimmer and volleyball player.

Although Chad and Allison are devoted fans of OU, their daughters haven’t turned that corner yet. “One daughter wants to go to A&M University while the other wants to attend Texas Christian University. Allison laughed. “We try to get them to say *Boomer Sooner*, but they just laugh it off.”

From the stained glass cross to the crosses hanging on the wall, the Parsons have made their faith evident throughout their entire home. As part of that faith, they make their home as welcoming as possible. “We want our girls to want to hang out with their friends here,” Allison shared. “We want a place where we can share it with others.” **NOW**



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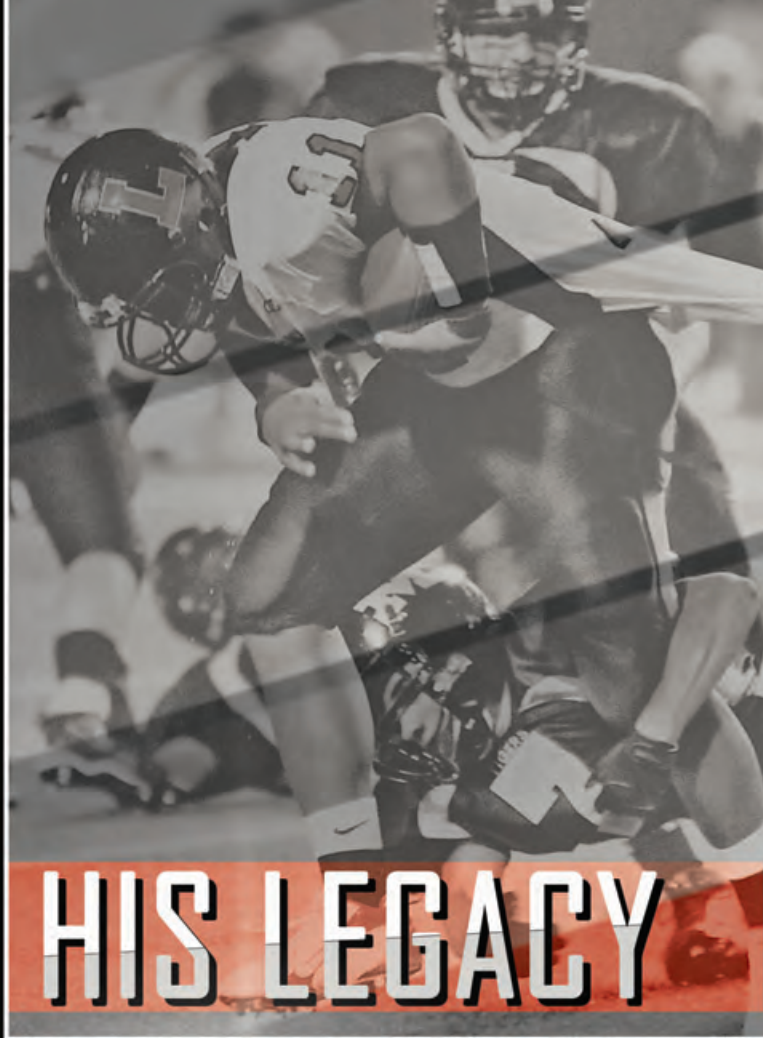
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IN THE MAKING

— By Carolyn Wills

Legacy High School athletics coordinator and head football coach, Chris Melson, knows what it's like to win a state championship. "I've tasted it on my own and as a coach," he said. In his hometown of Ada, Oklahoma, he played on the winning Ada High School football team, and after graduating from college, he returned to help coach the Ada Cougars to three championships in a row.

"Winning a state championship is difficult for any team — especially in Texas," he stressed. This is a coach, though, who admits to having a lot of dreams in his life and being blessed to have lived many of them. "After 20 years of teaching, I have a lot of good memories and success stories. Now I'm dreaming about the Legacy Broncos winning a Texas football championship," he smiled. "We're working toward that. To have the team play in Cowboy Stadium with the whole school supporting them would be fun."





But, winning state championships is only part of Legacy's athletic mission. The full mission is to win championships based on relationships built with teammates as we work hard today for our future. The mission was established when Coach Melson joined Legacy High School in 2007, when the school was brand new. Today, the Broncos athletic department has 13 head coaches, a staff of 35 and a program encompassing baseball, basketball, cross country, football, golf, powerlifting, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, track and volleyball.

"It's a privilege to work with young people every day," Coach Melson said. "If there is anything I or my staff can do to help them to be successful, that's our goal." He knows the impact sports can have in a young life. "I played football from third grade through college," he said. At the University of Oklahoma, he was quarterback and, later, a wide receiver for the Sooners and a four-year letterman.

Coach Melson graduated in 1992 with a teacher-certified degree in business education and mathematics and returned

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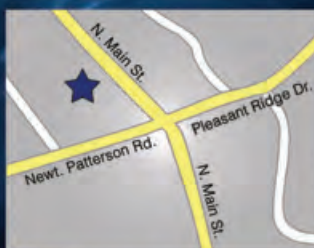
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to his hometown for his first job. "I taught in Ada for four years and then moved to Rockwall, Texas, for nine years, making my way up the coaching ladder. My first head coaching position was in Electra, Texas, for two years. Next, I was offered this position at Legacy High School. I've just finished my sixth year here, and I love it."

His mother was a teacher, and his father was a high school coach for 41 years. "My father was a strong influence in my life," Coach Melson said. "He motivated me, and I hope that I motivate others. I speak to groups quite a bit, often at Fellowship Christian Athletes events. I tell funny stories, teach a principle or two and just have a good time."

One of his stories comes from Electra. "Michael was a foster child and everyone's whipping boy," Coach Melson began. "As a sophomore, he was a big kid and an outcast. One day driving down a road, I passed him. I turned my car around, introduced myself and asked why he wasn't playing football. He said he played in the band. I told him he could do both. Michael started playing football as a junior and was terrible, all 6-foot-2-inches and 250 pounds of him. By his senior year, though, he had developed into a 280-pound star, and helped take his team to the regional championship game. He became first team all-district. He went on to the military, served our country, married a loving woman and is earning a degree in pre-med. We nicknamed him U-turn," he laughed. "If I hadn't taken that u-turn, Michael might have missed



"The whole team has strong potential. The season kicks off this month, and our hopes are high for a winning year for the Broncos."

that sense of belonging, purpose and confidence against many odds. That's why we coach," he stressed. "If we can make an impact and the guys have a good life, we're doing our jobs."

As passionate as he is about sports, coaching and speaking, the most fun in Coach Melson's life is centered on being a dad and husband. "Judy and I have been married for 19 years," he said. The two met in college. "Judy was a teacher until last year," he explained. "She dreamed of starting a calligraphy business and now she has. Her gift is beautiful handwriting, and she really enjoys it."

The couple has three children. Their daughter, Kyler, is 17 and now a senior at Legacy High School. "She's a cheerleader and works at Spring Creek Barbeque," Coach Melson said. "Kyler is caring and serving, and I'm very proud of her." The Melson boys, 12-year-old Jorden and 11-year-old Major, are one grade apart.

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Coach Melson and his daughter, Kyler, cheer each other on.

"They're best friends and manage to turn everything into a game," he smiled. "When we do things as a family, we always have a blast." The family enjoys camping and fishing, skiing in Colorado, going to the beach, eating dinner together and spending time with their 3-year-old Boston terrier, Abby. "She's a smart little dog," he shared. "She snorts, runs in circles and is fast and funny. She's Kyler's best friend, and she's a winner."

Undeniably, there is a special energy and presence about Coach Melson, and he is the first to say that faith is integral to all that he does. For more than six years, he has served as a deacon and teacher of an adult Sunday school class at his church. "We love our church," he said.

He's also pretty fond of his truck. "I've gotta have a truck," Coach Melson laughed. "My first car was a 1968 Chevy pickup truck." He's also a fan of the Denver Broncos NFL football team. "Maybe it's because they're also Broncos," he smiled. "Growing up, my favorite team was the Dallas Cowboys — Roger Staubach was the greatest."

Mansfield and the Melson family make for a strong team. "I would like to stay here forever," Coach Melson said. "The longer you stay in a community the more impact you have. We're very happy here. Whether this is to be our forever home is in God's hands."

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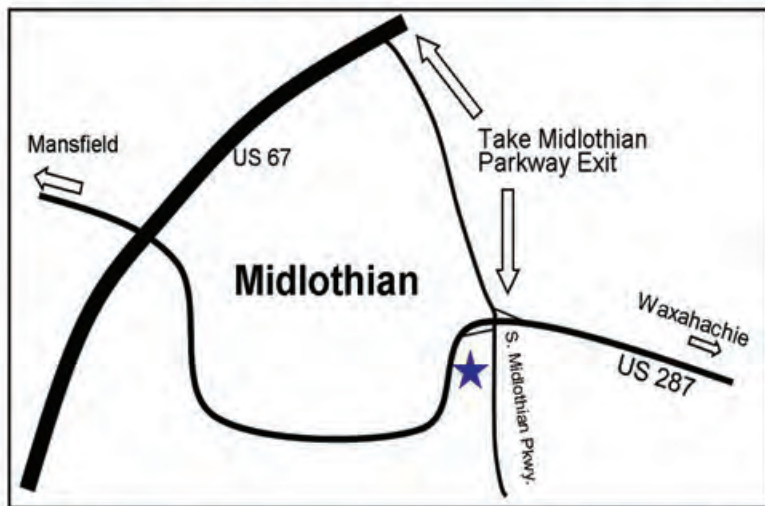


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As for the upcoming football season, he's very excited and hopeful. "In 2009, we went all the way to the play-offs," he said. "That was our best year, and we're looking forward to doing it again." Legacy High School is currently categorized as a District 15-4A team. Coaching high school sports means dealing with the ever-flowing effect of players who graduate and the critical need to develop and deepen a team. "We're starting with a new quarterback for 2013," Coach Melson said. "He's showing good promise, and the whole team has strong potential. The season kicks off this month, and our hopes are high for a winning year for the Broncos." **NOW**

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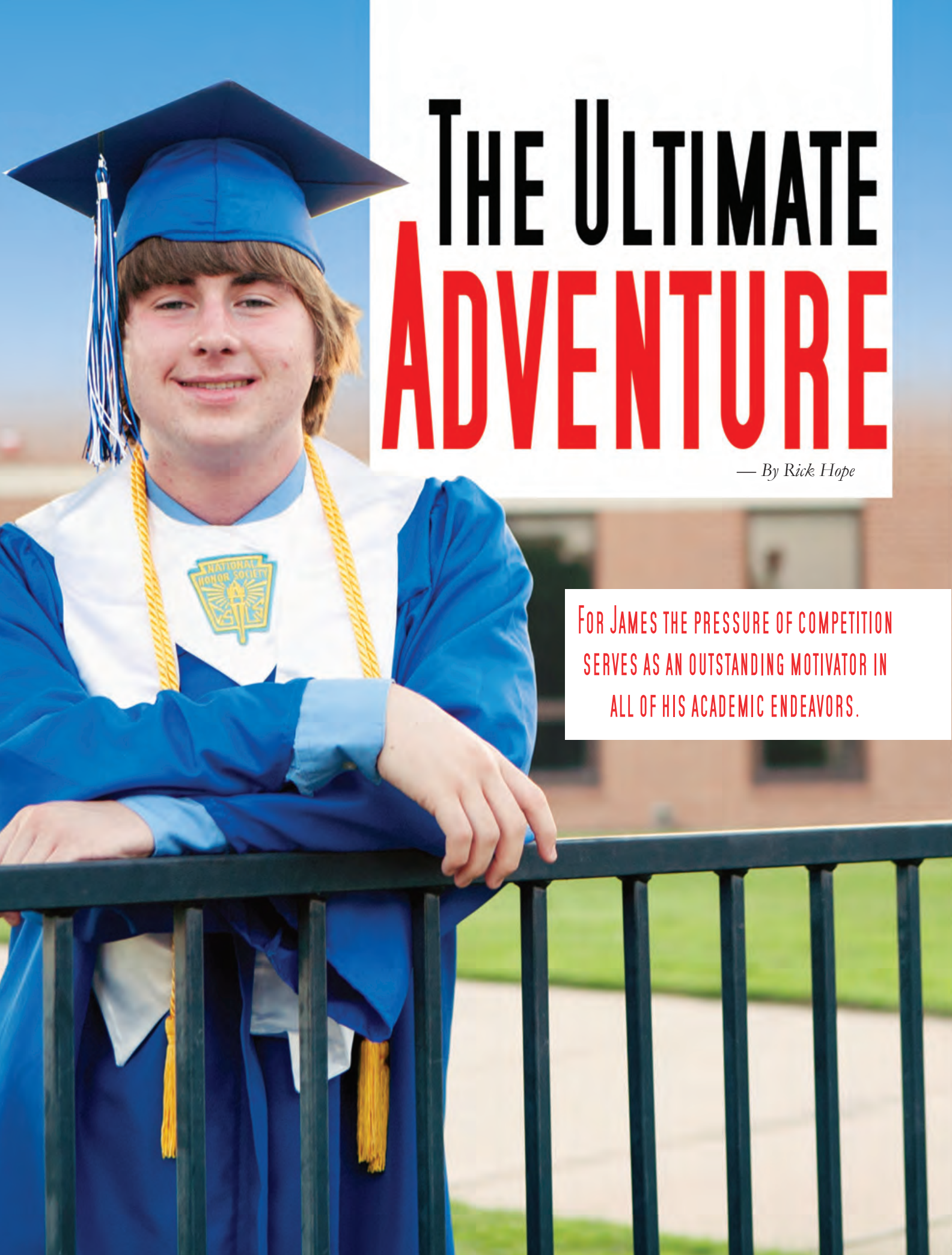
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— By Rick Hope

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He looks like just an average high school student. He sounds like one, as well. He has a girlfriend, and his favorite spare-time activity is "goofing around." But in truth James Smith is not your average high school kid. In fact, he ranks third highest in the state in two academic subjects.

As a senior at Summit High School, James recently earned bronze medals in both science and music at the Texas Academic Student Decathlon in San Antonio. According to their Web site, the United States Academic Decathlon (USAD) is a program that provides high school students an opportunity to experience the challenges of rigorous academic competition through participation in team activities. In addition, the USAD involves members of the business/industry as active supporters of a program promoting academic excellence. In the 16 years since its inception, students from the state of Texas have participated in the competition, and teams have won 10 national championships, placing second four times and third twice.

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C students scholarships. "I am on the A team!" James said with a smile. However, he is quick to point out all students learn how to push their limits and expand their borders. "One C student beat the entire B team," he added.

The students compete in 10 different events, which include math, science, history, art, music, economics, essay, interview, speech and language and literature. Each year, the different subjects focus on a different aspect. For example, this past year, those competing in the science field answered questions regarding the space race. This year, genetics will be the field of focus. In music, the chosen field last year was



Russian music. "I can tell you the basics in 18th century music composition," James admitted.



But science and music are not what hold James's attention. His first love is history. In fact, his plans before graduation were to attend The University of Texas at Austin and major in history. His goal is to someday teach history on a university level. Specifically, he would love to teach history about "some country that nobody ever really talks or knows much about."

The decathlon has helped spur that passion in James. "I went from knowing (former Russian Premier) Stalin to the entire lineage of the Romanov Czars," James stated as an illustration of the benefits of the decathlon.

His least favorite subject would have to be math. "The whole concept of X frustrates me," James said. "It's like Satan decided to really throw people off by putting the alphabet in math." In spite of that,



James was the second best performer in the math category of those on his team. "I knew a few calculator tricks," he confessed.

For James, the pressure of competition serves as an outstanding motivator in all of his academic endeavors. "Goals help me a lot," he said. "It helps to have something to

shoot for."

Last year, that pressure and those goals helped James become the third best in



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the state in two different subjects. And the team from Summit High School was the 10th best team overall in the state. "We felt such pride because we had worked so hard," James remembered. "We were beaming!"

For James, learning is an adventure. "It's fun to know things," he shared. One fun learning experience was a time when he and his girlfriend were at the Dallas Zoo. The zookeeper offered free food to feed the giraffe [if someone answered all the questions correctly]. James was able to allow his girlfriend that opportunity by answering every question the zookeeper threw at the crowd. "If there is something new to learn, I want to learn it," James said with excitement. Currently, James is thinking about taking up the banjo simply because "too many people talk about playing the guitar, but very few people try to master the banjo."

Another subject James has been dabbling in is mnemonics. Mnemonics involves devices or methods used to aid the memory. James read about an individual who memorized up to 1,500 digits in one hour. "I haven't got there yet," James quickly added. Right now, he memorizes material by "reading through it two or three times. That's another benefit of the decathlon," he continued. "It helps you figure out how you learn best."

Some of James' best friends are on the decathlon team. "They are interesting people, to say the least," he said. "I imagine I will keep up with most of them in the years to come. In fact, I will make a point of keeping up with some of them throughout the years." They grew close

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having study parties complete with pizza. "We got really silly sometimes. We even sang songs out of tune on purpose."

As is probably evident, James comes from a family who places a high priority on academics. His father, Greg, is a professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His mother, Ellen, is a nurse at Baylor Surgicare. James has one sister, Hannah, who just completed her junior year in high school. "She is one of my best friends. We are very close."

His faith has played a big part in his academic pursuits. "After all," he said, "where is humanity without God?"

James also encourages people to always listen to criticism. "It helps you grow, and in my opinion, it's God's way of speaking through others."

What does a student of that caliber and with that wit do for a summer job? James delivers pizza. "It's easy money," he admitted. "You don't do much, and you get paid a lot."

Prior to graduation, James was planning on spending his summer working at Philmont Scout Ranch, with an assignment yet to be given. "I'm an Eagle Scout," James said. "I'm really looking forward to this opportunity."

And where does James see himself in 10 years? "I'd love to be teaching in New Zealand! That's a country I've never been to, so I'd be learning as I helped others learn." One thing is certain. Wherever James goes, learning will always be an adventure. **NOW**

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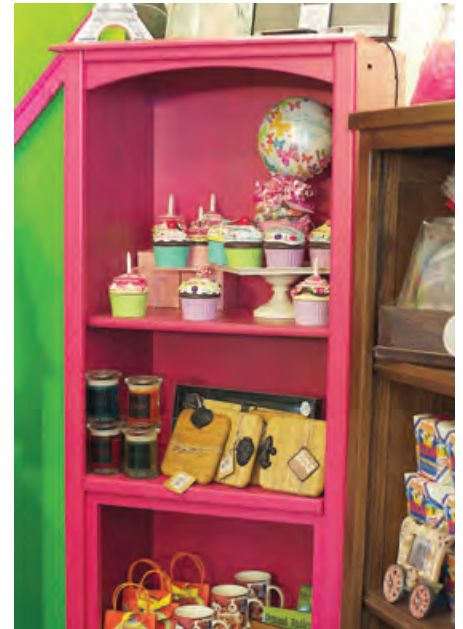


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Jenny Conrad has no short supply of cute and fun gifts.

Shop Local, Gift Local

Jenny Conrad and her team create memorable and unique gift baskets.

— By Mikaela Mathews

Ever since its humble beginnings inside a garage, Conrad Creative has always had one mission: think outside of the box. They do so by creating customized luxury gift baskets, centerpieces and marketing pieces for businesses. “I try to always look for different things that are exciting and will make the recipient say, ‘Wow, that’s really cool,’” explained Jenny Conrad, owner and founder of Conrad Creative.

Gift baskets can be used to welcome a new baby, celebrate a birthday or send a high school senior off to college. Customers can come into the store and select from various baskets or boxes, as well as gift items. The selections placed inside a customized gift basket include drink mixes, meats,

cheeses, cookies, cans of soda, candy, bags with various shapes of pasta and other items. Conrad Creative will wrap the basket in the store so customers can leave with it in their hands.

For those who would rather rely on the creative expertise of Jenny and her team, customers can choose a price point and a theme. “Our specialty is in custom gifts,” Jenny described. “We make them to the price point of the buyer and include their favorite things.” An example was a request for a green, healthy-themed basket. Jenny packed gardening tools, packets of seeds and healthy fruit items into a unique tin basket.

Conrad Creative also offers an assortment of premade baskets for teachers, new moms and those celebrating a birthday. Carefully wrapped snack mixes are also available for purchase and can even be customized with a logo for corporate customers or as favors at a party.

Corporate clients also benefit from Conrad Creative with their custom-marketing gifts. "We brand the gifts so when the business drops them off, people will remember them," Jenny said. "People are more willing to take a brochure from a business if there's a little gift to go with it. We come up with creative ideas based on the industry to help people remember them."

With her background as a marketing director, Jenny understands the power of marketing tied with a bow. Recently, she designed a gift basket for a homebuilder using a mini Crock-Pot to hold chili mixes and helpful kitchen utensils as gifts for new homeowners. The Crock-Pots were even customized with the builder's logo. Other gifts included a picture hanging set and measuring tape, customized with the builder's logo.

Jenny finds great joy not only in creating unique gifts, but also using her talent to help breast cancer surgery patients. She donates kits to help patients recover after their surgery through her nonprofit organization called the Ultimate Healing Kit. "We have a nonprofit that basically raises money through different events for the kits," Jenny explained. "And then we donate the kits to hospitals and surgery centers. So if someone is undergoing a mastectomy or lumpectomy, then they get a kit from us with everything they need to help them heal."

After spending several years in Jenny's garage and some time in a show room, Conrad Creative now sits comfortably along Main Street in downtown Mansfield. "We love being a part of downtown Mansfield," Jenny smiled. "There's so much going on down here with the festivals, and the other merchants are so nice. We really feel like a part of the city." **NOW**



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Everyone is all smiles at the Mansfield Bible Church's Special Needs Prom.



Michael Martin Murphy received a key to the city during his concert at the Farr Best Theater.



Tara Spridco, Janna Campbell and Denae Jaksik have fun with clothes at the Girl Scout's Bio Beauty Scientist camp.



Jalab and her daughter, Adalyn, enjoy the pool on a hot summer's day.



Marcy, Bailey, Morgan and Kelyn show off their stained hands after tie dying tee shirts.



Doug and Rhonda Clark serve homemade ice cream on the Fourth of July.



Jake and Cole Williams read to Winston at the Mansfield Library as a part of the Pet Partners program.



Matt and Cami Walker volunteer their time at Vacation Bible School at their church.

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Will You Be Able to Retire When You Want?

Despite the soaring stock market of the past few years, some Americans are nervous about their ability to retire comfortably — or even retire at all. Consider these somewhat sobering statistics:

- Almost half of American workers report being “not too confident” or “not at all confident” about being able to afford a comfortable retirement, according to the Employee Benefit Research Institute’s 2013 Retirement Confidence Survey. The 28 percent who say they are “not at all” confident is the highest level recorded in the 23 years of this survey.

- Between 2010 and 2012, the percentage of people 45 to 60 who planned to delay retirement rose to 62 percent from 42 percent, according to the Conference Board, a nonprofit business membership and research organization.

If you’re in either of these groups — that is, if you’re concerned about having enough resources to enjoy your retirement years or you’re afraid you’ll have to work longer than you anticipated — what can you do to possibly alleviate your worries?

Your first step is to get specific about your retirement goals. Have you set a target date for your retirement yet? If so, how many years until you reach this date?

Once you know when you want to retire, you’ll need to come up with some sort of price tag for your retirement years. By taking into account your hoped-for lifestyle and your projected longevity, you should be able to develop a reasonably good estimate of how much money you’ll need as a retiree. You may find it helpful to work with a financial professional — someone with the tools and experience to plug in all the variables needed to calculate your retirement expenses.

Next, review your retirement savings vehicles, such as your 401(k) and IRA. Are

you contributing as much as you can afford to these accounts? Are you increasing your contributions when your salary rises? Within these vehicles, are you choosing an investment mix that can offer the growth you’ll need to accumulate a sufficient level of retirement savings?

Even after you’ve maxed out on your IRA and 401(k) or other employer-sponsored retirement plan, you can find other tax-advantaged vehicles in which to invest for retirement. Again, your financial advisor can help you evaluate the ones that may be suitable for your needs.

Still, even after maximizing your investments, you may come up short of what you’ll need, given your desired retirement date. Consequently, you may need to consider working a couple of extra years. If you like your career, you may find that moving out your retirement date isn’t so bad — you’ll bring in more earned income and you may be able to delay taking Social Security, which would eventually result in bigger monthly checks. Plus, you could postpone your withdrawals from your 401(k) and IRA, giving these accounts more time in which to potentially grow. (Keep in mind, though, that once you turn 70 1/2, you’ll have to start taking money from your 401(k) and your traditional IRA.)

In any case, do what you can to retire when you want, but be flexible enough in your thinking so that you won’t be shocked or dismayed if you need to slightly extend your working years. By “covering your bases” in this way, you can be ready for whatever comes your way. **NOW**

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Todd Simmons is an Edward Jones representative based in Mansfield.

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Tick Fever

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Summertime means many things to creatures. For insects, warm weather signals a time to eat and breed. When they go about their business, far too often they cross paths with humans to our detriment. One species that can wreak havoc is ticks — specifically the American dog tick and Rocky Mountain wood tick. With their bite, they can transmit Rocky Mountain spotted fever, a bacterial disease, to humans. The infected ticks carry the bacterium *Rickettsia rickettsii*.

When campers and hikers go to forested areas or fields, they are at a higher risk of coming into contact with these ticks. Where the dog tick is common, owning a pet increases the risk. Many times a person does not even know they have been bitten, as the bite is usually painless. The longer a tick is attached, the higher the risk of becoming infected. If crushed while still attached or if crushed between the fingers, there is a possibility of the secretions causing an infection.

Initial symptoms occur within two to 14 days after being bitten, and the person may feel as if they have the flu. Not all of the symptoms are experienced by everyone. Some of the symptoms experienced are: headache, high fever, muscle aches, nausea and vomiting, fatigue and rash. The rash usually begins on the wrist and ankles spreading into the palms, feet, up the arms and legs and into the torso area.

Early diagnosis is very important. Rocky Mountain spotted fever can cause serious complications and can be fatal if treatment has not begun within the

first five days of symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends Doxycycline as the first line of treatment for this disease. With clinical examination and medical history, hopefully your health care provider can get enough information to begin treatment even before the rash begins.

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases lists these prevention guidelines: “To help prevent Rocky Mountain spotted fever, you should avoid walking in areas of tall grass and brush where there may be ticks. If you do go into these areas, be sure to:

- Wear light-colored clothing.
- Tuck your pants legs into your socks so ticks can't get up inside your pants legs.
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt and tuck it inside your pants.
- Spray insecticide containing permethrin on boots and clothing. The effects will last several days.
- Apply insect repellent containing DEET to your skin. Because DEET lasts only a few hours, you may need to reapply it.
- Look for ticks on your body, including in your hair, when you return from hiking or walking.
- Check children and pets for ticks.” **NOW**

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



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August 10

Elvis Anniversary Show with David Allen: 7:30 p.m., Farr Best Theater, 109 N. Main St. \$15-\$20. Celebrate Elvis' Anniversary with a tribute by David Allen. For more information and tickets, visit www.FarrBest.com.

August 11

Baptism Bash: Noon-8:30 p.m., Hawaiian Falls, 490 Heritage Pkwy, S. Walnut Ridge Baptist Church will host the event for those wanting to be baptized. For more information, contact Jody at (817) 473-1461.

August 12 — 23

Clothing and School Supply Drive: Eterna Health Food Store, 120 N. Walnut Creek Dr., Suite 150. New clothing and supplies will

be available to families in need. For more information, please call (682) 518-1931.

August 12 — 16

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August 15

Preschool craft party: 9:30-11:00 a.m., Mansfield Activities Center, 106 S. Wisteria St. \$6/child or \$5/child with MAC card. Parents are free, but required to attend and participate. For more information, visit www.mansfield-tx.gov/departments/parks/rec/mac/.

August 17

Don't Forget to Feed Me kick-off event: 11:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Petco, 2041 U.S. 287. An event to distribute pet food to financially strained pet owners. For more information, go to www.DontForgetToFeedMe.org or contact Teresa Washington at (817) 473-6650.

August 22

Chamber Luncheon: 11:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m.,

Walnut Creek Country Club, 151 Country Club Dr. \$25 for non-members, \$30 for members. Networking opportunities available. Speaker will be U.S. Congressman Joe Barton. To register or for more information, contact Amy Wood at awood@mansfieldchamber.org or call at (817) 473-0507.

August 30

Friday Night Respite: 6:30-8:30 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 777 N. Walnut Creek Dr. Free. Child care is provided for children with special needs and their siblings. For more information, contact Alice Alt at alicea@fmcmm.org.

Outdoor Movie Night: Creekwood Church, 260 N. Miller Rd. Free. Bring blankets, lawn chairs, coolers and snacks — whatever it takes for you to get comfy on the lawn and enjoy a family-friendly movie. The show will start just after dark.

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In The Kitchen With Kelle Kirkland

— By *Mikaela Mathews*

Kelle's inspiration to cook has always been her dad. Growing up in a home where restaurant-quality meals were served regularly, Kelle learned how to follow in her father's cooking steps. "We grew up eating things like sweet and sour pork and sour cream enchiladas at home," Kelle explained. "Even now it is very hard for me to order a steak out, because it never lives up to my dad's."

The most important aspect of cooking to Kelle, though, is love. "Cooking brings everyone into your kitchen, and it is these times that warm my heart," she described. "I grew up in a loving family that loved to cook and was blessed to marry into a family that carries on those traditions also." **NOW**

Daddy's Pancakes

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup milk
- 1 Tbsp. baking powder
- 1 egg
- 4 Tbsp. sugar
- 4 Tbsp. margarine or butter, melted
- Pinch of salt

1. Mix all ingredients together in a large bowl.
2. Preheat griddle to 350-450 F; pour mix onto griddle in pancake-size portions.
3. Flip over when pancakes bubble in center. Cook until golden brown.

Taco Soup

- 2 lbs. ground beef
- 2 cups onions, diced
- 2 15 1/2-oz. cans pinto beans
- 1 15 1/2-oz. can pink kidney beans
- 1 15 1/2-oz. can whole kernel corn,

drained (may use frozen corn)

- 1 14 1/2-oz. can Mexican-style stewed tomatoes
- 1 14 1/2-oz. can diced tomatoes
- 1 14 1/2-oz. can tomatoes with chiles
- 2 4 1/2-oz. cans diced green chiles
- 1 4.6-oz. can black olives, drained and sliced
- 1 large green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 1 1/4-oz. package taco seasoning mix
- 1 1-oz. package ranch salad dressing mix
- 1 14-oz. can of beef broth
- Corn chips, as desired**
- Sour cream, grated cheese, chopped green onions and/or pickled jalapeños, for garnish**

1. Brown the ground beef and the onions in a large skillet. Drain excess fat; transfer mixture to a large slow cooker or a stockpot.
2. Add next 12 ingredients. Cook on low for 6-8 hours (or simmer over low heat for about 1 hour in a pot on the stove).
3. To serve, place a few corn chips in each bowl

and ladle soup over them.

4. Garnish with sour cream, cheese, green onions and jalapeños.

Chocolate Meringue Pie

- 4 Tbsp. cocoa
- 1 cup + 6 Tbsp. sugar (divided use)
- 6 Tbsp. flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 2 1/2 cups milk
- 3 eggs, separated
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 9-in. pastry shell, baked

1. Preheat oven to 300 F
2. Combine cocoa, 1 cup sugar, flour, salt and milk in double boiler. Cook, stirring frequently, until thickened. Stir in beaten egg yolks. Cook for 2 minutes. Add butter and vanilla. Let it cool.
3. Turn into pie shell after cooling.
4. Beat egg whites until foamy; add remaining sugar, 2 Tbsp. at a time, beating until blended and stiff peaks form. Spread on filling.
5. Bake for 20 minutes.

Crawfish Corn Bread Stuffing

Yields 10 servings.

- 1/2 cup butter
- 3 cups onion, chopped
- 2 cups celery, chopped
- 2 cups red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 cup green bell pepper, chopped
- 1 cup green onion, chopped
- 1/2 tsp. each cayenne pepper, black pepper, white pepper
- 1 Tbsp. chopped parsley, chopped
- 1 lb. crawfish tails
- 2 boxes of Jiffy cornbread, cooked and cubed
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups chicken broth
- Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease a 9x12-inch casserole dish.
2. Melt butter in a heavy skillet; add onions, celery and peppers.
3. Cover and cook until vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally.
4. Stir in green onion, seasonings and parsley.
5. In a large bowl, stir together crawfish, vegetables and corn bread.
6. Add eggs and chicken broth. Mix thoroughly. Add salt and pepper.
7. Bake for 1 hour.

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