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Editorial Assistant, Rachel Smith | Writers, Sean Doerre . Derek Jones
Rick Mauch . Virginia Riddle . Todd Simmons . Zachary R. Urquhart
Editor/Proofreader, Angel Morris

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla | Artists, Kristin Bato . Morgan Christensen . Martha Macias . Brande Morgan . Anthony Sarmienta

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Directors, Chris McCalla . Brande Morgan
Photographers, Lori Baur . Joy Elmore

ADVERTISING

Advertising Representatives, Lori O'Connell . Keri Roberson
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ON THE COVER

Greg Potts and his mountain biking friends perennially search for the challenge in the trail.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Melissa

Melissa Rawlins
MansfieldNOW Editor
melissa.rawlins@nowmagazines.com
(817) 629-3888

Through our school days, we're rubbin' off the haze.

This time of year, it seems the entire world is thinking, *Back to School*. Even I, who have no children and can only imagine returning to daily classes through the eyes of others, cannot help but notice that everyone is in a tizzy to help the younger generation get a good start on the new routine. Dads and moms are rearranging their schedules. Children are adjusting their attitudes, bus drivers their mirrors. Teachers are redecorating their classrooms, while nutritionists, chefs and custodians are restoring their dining halls, and principals are resurrecting their passion.

At the college level, students and professors alike are re-examining their ability to balance work with life, while getting the most out of each interaction. At the extra-curricular level, yoga, art and cooking classes promise revival.

August seems to be a time of refining even for all the businesses supporting the educators and the learners. Shop windows are full of items retailers have polished, considering them worthy of our hard-earned dollars because they will somehow accentuate our efforts to make ourselves better than we were yesterday. Options for self-improvement abound.

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HOW HE ROLLS

— By Melissa Rawlins

Greg Potts' fun-loving nature draws him into multiple areas of Mansfield life. From family to business, he's dedicated and diligent — so downtime is vital. He finds it through mountain biking, boating and wakeboarding on Joe Pool Lake, as well as playing disc golf in parks and on the 23 acres where his fellowship, The Community at Lake Ridge, has begun construction on its new church building.

After 23 years' experience decompressing via disc golf, Greg knows to tote his portable disc golf basket whenever the church has one of its tailgate parties on the land. "We bring trucks, canopy tents, folding tables, barbecue pits and games," Greg said. "I bring a bunch of putting discs for the kids to use. The grown-ups can get competitive with it, as well."



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The tailgate parties are a time when all of TCAL gets together to hang out, enjoy good fellowship and a sampling of foods and desserts. Greg is one of the biggest kids there. While socializing with his children and wife, along with 800 others, he has forged important friendships with a number of the men. A few of them discovered they share a passion for biking all over the Metroplex. Greg goes with them, and with friends who aren't from TCAL, to favorite trails at Cedar Hill State Park, North Shore Trail in Grapevine, Boulder Park Trails in Oak Cliff, Oak Cliff Nature Preserve, Big Cedar Wilderness Trail in Dallas, River Legacy in Arlington and Sansom Park in Fort Worth. Biking up to three times a week, their main deterrents are muddy trails on rainy days.





Mountain biking is more than having fun, Greg believes. "It takes you away from your home life temporarily and into a life of fellowship with men. As men, we need this time, and we get to help each other in times of struggle and celebrate with each other in big wins."

Greg calls this "doing life together," and such is the support system Greg has enjoyed since joining TCAL. "The Community at Lake Ridge started with the goal to reach the unchurched and the de-churched," Pastor Brian Swiggart said, explaining their mottos are "No Perfect People Allowed" and "As Comfortable As A Great Pair Of Jeans." "These have helped TCAL create a culture that is real, casual and comfortable, while helping people discover a genuine, authentic faith."

Greg is loved at the 11-year-old church. "He cares deeply for people, is a highly engaging person and highly involved in serving," Brian said. "His positive personality makes him a great leader and the life of the party at many things we do."

Greg knows the beautiful thing is that partying is no longer what it once was in his life. "I was saved at the young age of 7," always begins the testimony he now shares with youth he mentors into making good choices. His core values were established while serving in youth group and watching his mother. She consistently served in church

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ministry while rearing Greg in their middle-income household in Victoria, Texas, where he watched his father play in the church worship band after working long hours all week.

At a young age Greg decided he wanted to make money. At 15, he got his first company job with Chick-fil-A. At 19, he moved to Arlington, and at 23 became a new home salesperson for Grand Prairie subdivisions.

Nine years later, "I was still sowing my wild oats and not in church." He met and married Wendi, and they were briefly involved in TCAL until a short-lived real estate job took them to San Antonio in 2008. The market did not go his way due to the recession setting in, but in 2010, Greg was offered a job as a sales manager for a DFW home builder. "I got back and started from below ground zero," Greg said. "I had to rebuild credit, self-esteem and faith. That's when you get back to God, you know."

When he and Wendi re-entered TCAL, they joined their first community group. Greg, Wendi and their daughters, Zoe and Sydney, were "doing life" with families seeking the same kind of support that the Potts family needed. Each month they all get together — kids included — in one home for a fellowship meal and a devotion time. The next week the women go out to dinner, sharing their experiences and helping each other. The following week,



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the men do the same. “We take the final week off, and then wash, rinse, repeat,” Greg said, adding that their community group uses the GroupMe app for sharing prayer requests and praise reports. “We are all there for each other, and we will drop whatever we are doing to lean in for our CG.”

Through community life, Greg has seen his personal life change. “Once the Lord delivered me from alcohol, my mountain biking went to a whole new level,” Greg said, adding that his real estate business has also taken off since he started living clean. “After I started Social Realty the Lord impressed upon me that in order for its SocialAnthropy vision to be fulfilled, I would need to fully commit to Him. That process began in early 2016.”

Before then, Greg’s early-morning bike rides were accompanied by mild hangovers incurred from the prior night’s bottle of red wine. “My attitude and excitement toward mountain biking definitely changed, and I began to appreciate the nature around me because I was able to focus on the beauty of God’s design.”

Now, Greg passes on the secrets of how he rolls to 11th- and 12th-grade boys at TCAL. As their mentor, Greg gives the youth advice, encouragement and motivation, while helping them navigate the transition from high school to the world. Two of them interned with Social Realty this summer, so Greg could invest more in them and give them a start toward finding good jobs. Wouldn’t you know, one of them already has a position working for Greg’s starting point: Chick-fil-A. **NOW**

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Balcony views of the rolling golf course beyond. A veranda built for entertaining and relaxing. Three custom-tiled lounge chairs within a pool where one can relax to the sounds of water falling — this is Mark and Christie Mitchell's Mediterranean-style home tucked into the heart of this growing city. "We like to feel like we're on vacation even at home," Christie explained.

The couple met in July 1994. A Kansas native, Christie, then employed by IBM, had been transferred to Los Angeles, California, and Mark had accepted a job in the area. They had moved within two weeks of each other and met three months later at a nearby beach. They married in Las Vegas, where most of their family was located at the time and celebrate their 23rd wedding anniversary this October.

Another move took them to San Francisco by the bay, but once the couple's daughter, Jessica, was born, they started looking back eastward toward Texas. "We wanted to raise Jessica among family and with solid values," Mark recalled.

"We were always having to travel on holidays to be with family," Christie added. "My mom was working on us to move here during each visit we made. It was a good move because Jessica's an only child, but she and her cousin are like siblings to each other."



— By Virginia Riddle

SPA TIME



It was 15 years ago that the couple made the move to Texas and their beautiful custom-built home. "Our builder kept sending me pictures, but I drew the front and back of the house the way I wanted it," Christie remembered. During the construction phase, she was flying back and forth from California to Dallas each month to pick out everything. "I finally had to quit my job two months before the



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move to get everything done,” she said.

The family has loved the results of Christie’s choices, and Mark has enjoyed taking landscaping duties. “I like to do everything myself, except the mowing and edging,” he said. “I’m



very particular, so I spend Saturdays in the yard, and then I relax.”

The couple replaced the backyard lawn six years ago with a patio, outdoor kitchen and bar, dining area and landscaping that helps provide privacy and protection from stray golf balls.

Busy defines this family. Mark graduated from the University of Delaware and has worked for Henkel 26 years as a chemical engineer. The University of Kansas was Christie’s undergraduate degree choice, followed by Southern Illinois University where she earned a master’s degree. She

works from her home office when she’s not traveling the globe as a consultant for Accenture.

Hosting Jessica’s friends for parties and girls’ sleepovers has been a joy. Jessica is a 2018 Mansfield High School honor graduate, where she played varsity basketball. She’ll continue her education at Texas A&M University this fall, majoring in interdisciplinary studies with an eye toward teaching special education students. Jessica volunteered through her school and the family’s church, First United Methodist Mansfield, and worked as a counselor at Camp Thurman.

Hosting family and friends, especially during holidays, has made for some of the Mitchells’ best memories. Much of the entertaining takes place on the lit patio with its separate dining room overlooking the golf course and the outdoor kitchen and bar with its custom tile work. “We saw this design while on vacation






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in Mexico," Christie explained.

A spiral staircase sweeps from the broad entry to the second-story landing. "Group photos are taken on that staircase," Christie said.

The great room, with its massive fireplace, is another spot for entertaining and is where wedding photos from their Red Rock, Las Vegas, wedding are displayed. "We spend a lot of time here," Christie explained. A nearby guest bath also acts as a safe room that's designed to survive an F5 tornado.

"Our dining room is usually the starting place for parties," Christie explained. Her great-grandmother's china is displayed and used. A walk-through butler's pantry contains the wine cooler, and the kitchen's ample counter space and island allow for a lot of cooks to help. A pool entrance with an extra bath and shower is just beyond the informal dining area.

Christie's home office floods with morning light through the bay window. "I had fabric wallpaper applied to the walls to provide sound insulation," she explained. Beautiful built-in cabinets provide plenty of storage space.

"I office with the golf cart in its garage," Mark quipped. The driveway's basketball goal provides practice for Jessica and plenty of fun at parties.



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The master bedroom is decorated in Tommy Bahama style, completing the home's resort theme. It has a fireplace and view of the patio and pool. A stained and frosted glass window provides natural lighting and privacy in the master bath, while a walk-in closet organizes Christie's collection of shoes, handbags and jewelry. "Shopping's my fun hobby," she admitted. "Someday we'll downsize!"



Mark's built-in salt water aquarium is a peaceful focal point of the upstairs game room with its fireplace, pool table, bar and poker table. A hidden door leads to the exercise room. Additional doors lead to the balcony with its view of the golf course pond. "We eat up here sometimes," Christie said. "When we married, Mark promised I would always have a view of water. We've lived on the beach, on the bay and now we have a pond."

Jessica's bedroom suite has themes around travel, *Harry Potter* books and *The Walking Dead* TV series. Her bath is reminiscent of her parents' graduation gift — a trip to Paris, France. Today, Jessica's former playroom is the hangout area for friends. Her collection of a LEGO village and treasures Christie has brought home from her business trips are on display. Two guest bedrooms and baths complete the upstairs.

Ski trips to Crested Butte, Colorado, and amusement park roller coaster rides provide vacation fun for this family. But it's at home where Mark, Christie and Jessica will forever be on vacation. **NOW**



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The Power of Pet Therapy

— By Derek Jones

Having owned her own company since 2002, Judy Love Rondeau has never been one to sit still for long. Upon retirement, she found the adjustment difficult. “I really wanted a part-time job just to keep me busy,” she relayed. “However, I found no one wanted to hire a 65-year-old retiree, and I became very frustrated.”

Not being one to give up, Judy began looking for a way to integrate her passion for volunteering into her new life. Judy explained, “I was busy volunteering at DFW Airport as an ambassador when I discovered there was a need for pet therapy dogs. I knew this would be a perfect fit for me and my West Highland White Terrier, Mr. McDuff.”

Excited about this discovery, Judy registered herself and Mr. McDuff in The Alliance of Pet Therapy Dogs program in North Dallas. They finished the certification

process in January and now volunteer at Methodist Mansfield Medical Center. Mr. McDuff can be found cheering people up at the hospital every Monday. Judy smiled, “People at the hospital are, many times, going through unimaginable hardships, and it is amazing to see their faces light up when they see Mr. McDuff and are able to pet him for a few minutes.”

One of Mr. McDuff’s most important contributions is the joy he brings to children in the hospital. “I have these cards with Mr. McDuff’s picture on them and biographical information on the back,” Judy shared. “Kids are overjoyed to pet him and get a card from Mr. McDuff.”

It is not just the patients and visitors of the hospital who enjoy the company of Mr. McDuff. “The staff absolutely loves and adores him,” Judy stated. “They are all so supportive of the therapy dog program.”

Judy is quick to point out she is not the only one spreading joy with a pet at the hospital. “Every day of the week there is a different dog and handler volunteering at the hospital and giving a little love and joy to others,” she said.

Recently, Judy and Mr. McDuff have also been volunteering at The University of Texas at Arlington, where several therapy dogs and their handlers may be found at the university library on the first Wednesday of every month. "You know, we can have as many as 200 students lined up the stairs just waiting in line to pet the dogs," Judy laughed.

As to why all the attention from college students, Judy said, "Usually, it is during tests or finals, and it seems petting Mr. McDuff has a calming effect and allows students to focus better. You know, the dog has a great time with the students."

"PEOPLE AT THE HOSPITAL ARE, MANY TIMES, GOING THROUGH UNIMAGINABLE HARDSHIPS, AND IT IS AMAZING TO SEE THEIR FACES LIGHT UP WHEN THEY SEE MR. MCDUFF."

Not only is Judy busy volunteering with Mr. McDuff, she has also written the book, *Finding the Silver Lining: Baby Boomer Lessons in Life and Mortality*. The tome, which documents her own struggle with retiring in the baby boomer generation, hit bookstores this summer. "Writing the book was very cathartic for me," Judy stated. "I hope some of my experiences can help others."

Judy encourages young and old to consider ways they can help others. "If you have passion and time to volunteer, and your dog has the right temperament, going through the therapy dog certification is so rewarding and incredibly fun," she said, pointing out that it is not just for retirees. "More and more places are wanting therapy teams, and younger people should definitely check it out."

As for what is next for Judy and Mr. McDuff, Judy stated it perfectly: "We will continue to spread joy to others every chance we get." **NOW**

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MOVING FORWARD

You could say James Arnold is “driven” by some advice he received years ago when he first got into the school transportation business. It’s something he thinks about each day as fleet manager of the Mansfield ISD transportation system. “When I first started at Grapevine/Colleyville, somebody said to me, ‘Our cargo is irreplaceable,’ and that stuck with me,” James said. “You can replace boxes you’re hauling on a truck, but when it’s 64 kids on a school bus, that can’t be replaced.”

With that in mind, James and his co-workers, including the first female transportation director in the school district’s history, Lauren Cady, have made the MISD transportation department one of the best in the state. They transport 13,000 students daily with nearly 150 routes, have a fleet of 271 vehicles and service seven cities — Mansfield, Arlington, Grand Prairie, Burleson, Venus, Kennedale and Fort Worth. “Our motto is ‘Driven to serve,’” Lauren said. “We’re not scared to be forward thinkers. That’s what makes us a successful department.”

The MISD mechanics department is the only one in the state that has received the Automotive Service Excellence Blue Seal. “It is one of only four in the entire United States,” James said.

This happens when at least 75 percent of the mechanics become ASE certified (two years verifiable experience and pass a test). This is the second year for them to have this honor. “To go from no mechanics certified to 75 percent is fantastic,” James said.



WARD

— By Rick Mauch



James Arnold, Lauren Cady and Prince Ray are proud of MISD's transportation department.



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Another thing that separates the MISD department from others is it has commercial driver license examiners on staff. They are one of only 16 in the state to be so qualified. They are able to train new drivers and then administer the Texas Department of Public Safety commercial license tests themselves, saving the department time in getting new drivers onto routes.

“After training new drivers, we would schedule them for testing at the Fort Worth and Dallas DPS facilities. These tests were being scheduled four to five weeks away,” said Prince Ray, MISD safety trainer/accident investigator. “We were then approved to take our new drivers to Wichita Falls to test because we could usually schedule them within a week or two. As soon as Texas approved the third-party testing program, we jumped at the chance to become certified testers.”

The program was implemented in MISD last fall. Getting approved was a rigorous process, but Lauren said it was worth the work. “We had drivers who would wait up to two months to take their test. Now,

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we can do it in under a month,” she said. “Ninety-eight percent of our transportation employees are certified to drive, including office staff and mechanics, only six out of 265 aren’t.”

Prince added, “It’s an absolutely wonderful process that we have now because we can actually take someone who has no bus driving experience at all and have them ready to go and tested within seven business days of actual hands-on training. Fourteen days after they receive their commercial learner’s permit, they can be tested.”



James admits being a little overwhelmed when he first joined MISD after being in Grapevine/Colleyville ISD for 11 years. “It was a culture shock. I came from a small little shop with 54 buses and three mechanics to this growing district,” he said. “There were a few days when I questioned my sanity,” he added with a smile.

James settled in. After two years as shop foreman, he was promoted



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to fleet manager. He now manages a shop foreman, 11 mechanics and a shop helper. And, of course, there are the many bus drivers.

Prince said being a part of the MISD transportation family is special and includes a notable variety of people, such as veterans, former police officers, nurses, business owners, etc., all sharing the same goal as James, Lauren and the district — safely transporting students. “You will never know the joy of seeing a child who once rode your bus as a first-grader and is walking across the stage now as a senior, and they shout out to you and thank you for your years of dedication,” Prince said. “That is an awesome feeling.”

And though the progress of MISD has raised the bar for other departments, James said there is always room for improvement. Lauren insisted that is part of what makes him special. “James is a lifelong learner, always looking for more ways to grow and improve, ways to make us better, safer. That’s where we make big strides,” she said.

“I will always be in transportation. That’s my niche,” James said. “You get that yellow in your blood, and it’s hard to get rid of it.” **NOW**

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KENNETH MENDENHALL

— By Melissa Rawlins



Kenneth Mendenhall and his wife, April, are on the back patio at least four times a week. Family and friends know if they see the garage door open, they're welcome to come in for a drink. Ken will be grilling on the Big Green Egg, with 3-year-old Winton playing nearby.

Ken's favorite cook is his adopted grandmother, Jean Levins, who taught him butter makes everything better. "She lived in the house we are now in, and I lived next door. I would come home after school and sit in the kitchen with Jean while she cooked, and we talked about the day," Ken recalled. Later, she advised him on menus to please anyone's tastes. Not surprisingly, the Mendenhalls enjoy variety, and here they share their secret recipe for grilled artichokes. **NOW**

Steak

1 2- to 2 1/2-lb. bone-in, New York or rib-eye steak, cut 2 1/2 inches thick
3 Tbsp. coarse sea salt
Ground or cracked black pepper, to taste
1 stick unsalted butter
1 shallot, chopped
4 cloves garlic
8 oz. mushrooms, sliced
1 Tbsp. thyme

1. Season the steak with salt and black pepper; allow the meat to sit at room temperature for 1 hour. Preheat oven to 500 F.
2. Heat a cast-iron skillet over high heat until you are scared to even touch the handle. (Make sure your smoke alarms work.)

3. Cook/sear the steak in the heated skillet over medium-high heat until a dark crust has formed, about 2-3 minutes per side. Reduce the heat if the meat is browning too quickly. If you prefer a lighter outside crust, reduce the time slightly.

4. After each side has browned, you may lift the steak with tongs and brown the edges, also.

5. Return the steak flat in the pan. Transfer the skillet to the oven; cook until an instant-read thermometer reads to desired doneness. Oven cooking time will be anywhere from 5-8 minutes, depending on the desired doneness of your steak. For medium-rare, the thermometer should read 130-140 F. Be aware that the temperature will continue to rise after removing the steak.
6. Add the butter, shallots, garlic, mushrooms and thyme to the skillet; let the butter melt.

Using a hot pad and large spoon, spend about 2 minutes ladling the butter mixture over the steak. Save this butter/mushroom mixture to serve over steak after it has been sliced.

7. Transfer the steak to a plate using tongs. Do not use a fork, or the juices will run out. Cover loosely with foil. Do not cut, peel or poke. Let the steak rest about 10 minutes.

8. Slice the steak across the grain; serve topped with the butter mixture.

Grilled Artichokes

1/4 cup water
4 large artichokes, trimmed
1/4 cup olive oil
1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
1/4 cup garlic, minced
Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Fill a large pot with 2 inches of water. Place steamer basket inside pot; put the artichokes on top of the basket. Bring to a boil; cover and reduce temperature to medium. Steam 25-35 minutes, until you can pull a leaf away from the artichoke heart with a gentle tug. To double check, pull the leaf between your teeth.

2. Remove the artichokes; let them cool. Using a very sharp knife, turn each artichoke upside down and slice it in half.
3. Put olive oil, balsamic vinegar, garlic, salt and pepper in a gallon-size plastic bag. Shake to combine. Add the artichoke halves; seal and mush around so the marinade coats each artichoke and gets between their leaves. Marinate in the refrigerator overnight, or for as long as you have time. (Even half an hour helps.)
4. Grill the artichoke hearts on a medium-hot grill, cut side down, for 5-6 minutes. Flip over; grill another 3-4 minutes.

Spicy Black Bean Salad

- 2 10.5-oz. cans black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 16-oz. container pre-made pico de gallo
- 1 avocado
- 2 fresh limes
- 1 English cucumber, peeled, sliced and quartered
- Garlic salt, to taste
- Black pepper, to taste

1. Mix all ingredients together in a bowl. Chill for 2 hours before serving.
2. Can be served with tortilla chips or eaten as a side dish.

Grilled Chicken Popper

- 4 jalapeño peppers
- 4 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 4 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, grated
- 1 bottle barbecue sauce (We like Rudy's Sissy Sauce.)
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 12 pieces bacon, uncooked

1. Slit each jalapeño in half lengthwise; deseed. In a small bowl, combine the cheeses with 1 Tbsp. barbecue sauce. Fill each jalapeño with this mixture.
2. Cut chicken breasts open without slicing all the way through. Set one stuffed popper in each chicken breast and fold to close.
3. Wrap each chicken breast with 3 slices of bacon; secure with toothpicks. Rub all sides of chicken with barbecue sauce.
4. Place stuffed chicken breasts on the grill; baste with more sauce as desired. Cook until the internal temperature reaches 160 F. Let rest 10 minutes prior to serving.

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Facebook: Joe's Family Restaurant

Hours: Monday-Saturday: 6:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
Sunday: 7:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Joe's Family Restaurant feels so cozy, people enjoy spending time there with friends, family or even alone. And for those who like the rich taste of real butter on their homemade biscuits, all they have to do is ask.

Of course, regulars who come twice a day, seven days a week, don't have to ask. The waitresses know their names and their tables are set for them as soon as they arrive in the parking lot. Owner Heidi Dubose hires people who care about the people they serve.

"It's all about the customer," said Heidi, who designed the menu for health as well as taste. "If you're on a low-sodium diet, we have special seasonings. If you're diabetic, we want you to be able to eat. Our brown gravy is gluten free, and all but two of our soups are gluten free."

Cooking with a lot of cornstarch, versus flour, Joe's Family Restaurant cooks are quite skilled. Heidi supervised the innovation of the restaurant's new Tuscan Soup. Trying the recipe at home first, she then cooked it at Joe's and let the employees try it. If they approve, then some of their regular customers will try it and make suggestions until everyone is satisfied. "We try to listen, because I know that's what I would want. That's what my grandma did, and that's what my dad did," Heidi said.

Taking the opportunity to run this store five years ago, Heidi can work every position including dishwasher,

if necessary. Her grandmother opened the first Joe's Family Restaurant in Irving 50 years ago. Her father runs the restaurant in Watauga, which has been there 20 years. The Mansfield location is 14 years old. Working alongside Heidi are two of her children. Her son, Alex Dubose, washes dishes and her daughter, Alyssa Dubose, acts as hostess and waitress.

All 17 employees work as a team. "I am most grateful for the customers who have supported us through all the Broad Street construction," Heidi said. She and her team enjoy supporting community organizations, plus local schools' fundraisers. Next month, Joe's will once again cater the Lake Ridge Senior Breakfast. "In the past, we've opened after hours to cater the Mansfield High School football banquet," Heidi said. "They want pancakes and eggs for dinner!"

Joe's food is just like home cooking, because it is all made from scratch. Cooks begin making the biscuits, gravy and pies at 4:30 every morning. Then they turn to preparing the yummy breakfast enchiladas.

While Heidi has been busy bringing back the traditional Joe's Family Restaurant menu, she's also added the chicken fajita omelet, as well as more vegetarian options, at customers' requests. Each November, Joe's team prepares 2,500 pies. "The week of Thanksgiving, our kitchen is open 24 hours per day because we're producing all those pies for the community," Heidi said.

Ask her to add you to her mailing list, and you'll receive notice of Joe's daily specials via email and Facebook. And if you don't know what to order, try one of Heidi's favorites: the chicken fried chicken, the pot roast sandwich or the classic club. Then be sure to tell her what you thought. At Joe's Family Restaurant, everyone is always willing to listen. **NOW**

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TravelNOW Peach Perfect

— By Sean Doerre

It's impossible to visit Gillespie County, Texas, without getting directly to the heart of the Texas Hill Country. Its focal point is Fredericksburg, a place founded in 1846 by German settlers. This small-town Texas community continues to provide a unique blend of Texan hospitality and German tradition.

Fredericksburg is well-known for award-winning wine. In fact, the Texas Hill Country was designated one of the 10 Best Wine Travel Destinations in 2014 by *Wine Enthusiast Magazine*. With more than 40 wineries and tasting rooms in the Fredericksburg area, numerous wine tour companies and special wine events like the Fredericksburg Food & Wine Festival, Fredericksburg is at the center of Texas Wine Country.

With more than 150 shops, boutiques and art galleries lining historic Main Street, Fredericksburg is also a premier shopping

destination, offering the best of home decor, Western wear, fine art, kitchen wares, linens, antiques and more. On the weekend of the third Saturday of every month, Fredericksburg Trade Days features more than 400 vendors in seven barns and acres of shopping opportunities, along with great eats and live music in the Biergarten. Great food and wonderful dining is a fixture in Fredericksburg with more than 80 restaurants that feature everything from regional Texas Hill Country cuisine to German and Bavarian, to Tex-Mex and Italian, as well as numerous fine dining restaurants.

Gillespie County is one of the top peach-producing counties in Texas, and from mid-May through early August the town is filled with roadside stands selling peaches and other seasonal produce. Fredericksburg is also home to Wildseed Farms, the largest working

wildflower farm in the United States and a destination for any nature enthusiast.

Enchanted Rock, the second largest granite dome in the United States and a designated International Dark Sky Park, is located just outside of Fredericksburg and offers miles of hiking trails, rock climbing and a 360-degree view of the Texas Hill Country from the top of the Summit Trail.

With more than 700 historically significant structures preserved in the Fredericksburg historic district, history surrounds the city. The Pioneer Museum Complex provides a glimpse of early life in Fredericksburg through historic homes, a log cabin, an authentic Sunday House, a one-room schoolhouse and more.

The National Museum of the Pacific War, dedicated to all who served in the Pacific during World War II, also honors hometown favorite Navy Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz. The 6-acre museum complex includes the George H.W. Bush Gallery, the Japanese Garden of Peace, the Memorial Courtyard and the Plaza of Presidents. Just down the street, is the Pacific Combat Zone, which recently underwent an \$8 million renovation and hosts living history demonstrations eight times each year.

In addition to historic attractions, Fredericksburg is always brimming with activity from more than 400 special events, concerts and festivals held annually. Typical Fredericksburg events and activities include Oktoberfest, live music at Luckenbach Texas, Fredericksburg's Fourth of July Parade, summer horse racing, the Hill Country Food Truck Festival, the Stonewall Peach JAMboree, First Friday Art Walk, the Gillespie County Fair and more. Fredericksburg has more than 1,100 hotel and motel rooms, more than 1,200 bed-and-breakfasts/guesthouses, and several RV parks and campsites ready to welcome travelers with plenty of warm, Texan hospitality. **NOW**

To plan a trip to Fredericksburg and the Texas Hill Country, or request a free visitor information packet, visit www.VisitFredericksburgTX.com. Photo Credit: Fredericksburg Convention & Visitor Bureau.



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Where Comes the Bride?

— By Zachary R. Urquhart

In a time gone by, most weddings tended to be at one of a few locations: churches, the courthouse or the family's backyard. Today, though, almost anywhere could be a wedding venue. If you are getting ready to plan a wedding, there are some new and unique locales to consider.

Something Old

- *Barns are back in style.* Trending with the popularity of house remodeling shows over the last decade or so, weddings in rustic farmhouses and barns are becoming more and more common. You can look for places online or reach out to friends who live in rural areas. You might be surprised how easy it is to find a barn you can use. With some old-world style lighting, a simple large shed can become an idyllic wedding sight.

- *Church is in session.* A unique spin on the tradition of a religious setting is to have your ceremony in an old church building. There are churches that are no longer functioning for local congregations, but that are available for special events. And if you are willing to host a destination wedding, you can find such buildings across the country.



Something New

- *Trendy restaurants make great wedding sites.* If you live close enough to a big town with cool restaurants that are only busy in the evening, you might be able to reserve the place for an early wedding time. What is even better, you will have a place for a ceremony and reception all-in-one.

- *Find a venue near you.* People are sometimes surprised to learn how many beautiful venues are hidden just around the corner. With anything from simple buildings that have the necessary amenities to locations providing outdoor wedding scenes, there are often myriad options within a short drive. Many wedding venues offer an all-inclusive package, with much of the planning provided with this option.

Something Borrowed

- *Public spaces can be great for private events.* Local parks have gazebos or pavilions available to rent for private events. If you are expecting a smaller wedding party, this can be a cute, quaint way to have an inexpensive wedding. Some more recently built parks even have spaces built with events in mind, so a wedding at a park does not have to feel like a wedding at a park.



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• *If you book it, they will come.* If you want the beauty of an outdoor setting, but need a bigger venue, you can sometimes reserve the sports fields in your area during their off-season. With a little decorating work, a large field can turn into the perfect wedding site.

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Something You

• *Somewhere that defines the couple.* Anything from a golf course to the outdoor chapel at a church camp from your childhood is perfect if you both think it is perfect. If you and your spouse-to-be are the adventurous types, maybe a bridge spanning the gap between two mountain peaks is the location for you. People may question your choice, but it is just that, your choice, so have fun deciding where to host the big day.

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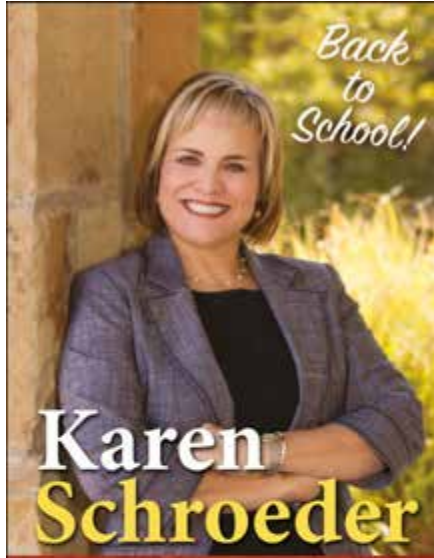
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Zoomed In: Sophia Houston and Victoria Hebert

By Melissa Rawlins

Practicing scorpions and scales in front of Dollar General, Sophia Houston and Victoria Hebert have fun preparing for their first cheer event of the fall. “It takes a lot of practice to get the body positions right,” said Sophia, a student at Newman International Academy of Mansfield. She and her friend, Victoria, both love “flying” at Rival Cheer Academy. But they often tumble and stunt at Sophia’s home, too.

Victoria also stretches every day, so she can perfectly perform the scorpion-to-scale. “I feel nervous when I hit the top,” she reflected, “but when I am standing up there, I feel proud and excited.” As she starts studies again at Tarver Rendon Elementary School, she devotes Tuesdays to stunt practice at the gym.



Joel Loya and Joanna Herrera get ready for a great day at PAS Salon & Barber Shop.



Sophia Sanchez is all smiles as she holds Luna Garcia at the 4th of July party held at the Sanchez home.



Local musician Brad Russell sings “The Party’s Just Getting Started” for people coming indoors because it’s hot outside.



Worley Middle School 8th-grader Kayla Butler is proud of The Right Stuff Award she received this summer at the Space Academy at US Space and Rocket Center.



The Torres family gathers for their shuttle ride to the city’s Rockin’ Fourth of July celebration.



Inside La Gondola, Anna Engel, Evelyn Masella and Patricia Lyons taste the pizza that will be served at the restaurant's new Bellucci, in Midlothian.



Lafayette Dennis speaks with friends about his first children's book, Gresham the Dreamer, during its launch party at Mellow Mushroom.



Lori O'Connell gets ready for a tour of the Texas sky in the Piper Cub flown by Ace Rawlins.



Ryan Guthrie orders a \$7 Flight from Justin Watson, one of the owners of Dirty Job Brewing.

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MISD Back to School Bash: 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., MISD Center for the Performing Arts. For details, contact (817) 299-6354.

Silver Star Gala: 7:00-11:00 p.m., Villagio Resorts, 9001 CR 528, Burleson. Put on your denim and diamonds for cocktails, dinner, live music by Run for Cover plus live and silent auctions, all in support of All Star Equestrian Foundation. RSVP to (817) 477-1437 or marie@allstarequestrian.org.



Paddington 2: 8:00 p.m., The LOT Downtown, 110 S. Main St. Fifteen minutes after sunset, the story of a hard working but clumsy talking bear hits the screen. Free. (405) 250-1947 or www.thelotdowntown.com.

8

Nature Play: 10:30 a.m., Elmer W. Oliver Nature Park, 1650 Matlock Rd. Free program encouraging creative play outside without screens or cords. Children and their parents practice imagining, building and creating with bamboo. Contact Mansfield Activities Center, (817) 728-3680.

9

Business Unplugged 5:00-7:00 p.m., 2700 E. Broad St. – in the Café (enter doors closest to the Women's Center). Sponsored and hosted by Methodist Mansfield Clinic, come with your dancing shoes. (817) 473-0507.

Movies on Main: 9:00-11:45 a.m., Farr Best Theater, 109 N. Main St. Enjoy the flick *The Emoji Movie* for only \$1 per person. Visit farrbesttheater.com.



9 — 11

Household Hazardous Waste Collection: **Thursday** and **Friday**, 3:00-7:00 p.m.; **Saturday**, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Mansfield Environmental Collection Center, 616 S. Wisteria. Contact David Macias, (817) 276-4239.

15

MISD first day of school.

16

Third Thursday: 5:00-10:00 p.m., Historic Downtown. Enjoy the Thirsty Thursday Fun Run at Stephen's Bar and Grill as part of the evening, when downtown retailers stay open late and food trucks open their windows. Singer/songwriter Jesse Rasanen plays at 7:30 p.m. at the Farr Best Theater. Participate in Mansfield's revitalization. downtownmansfield.org.

17

GED Class enrollment: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Mansfield Mission Center, 777 N. Walnut Creek. An instructor from Tarrant County College leads this 24-person class, which starts in September and lasts 10 weeks. Childcare and dinner

provided. (817) 473-6650 or email charleneh@mansfieldmission.org.

30

Mom's Coffee Talk: 9:00 a.m., First Methodist Mansfield, 777 N. Walnut Creek. Childcare is available. www.fmcm.org/momscoffee.

30

Coffee & Crayons: 5:00-8:00 p.m., Mansfield Activities Center, 106 S. Wisteria St. Teachers fill boxes with school supplies, bellies with snacks and minds with conversation while trading the room supplies and décor that they've finished with. \$5. Contact Mary Jones, (817) 728-3680.

Ongoing:

First Mondays

Mansfield Area Marines: 7:00 p.m., Fat Daddy's Sports and Spirits Café, 781 W. Debbie Ln. Active duty, retired, honorably discharged Marines and FMF Corpsman are welcome. Contact George Miller, (817) 705-7984.



Mondays — Fridays

Senior Lifestyles Program: 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Mansfield Activities Center, 106 S. Wisteria. If you're age 55 or older, enjoy vital services as well as life-enhancing activities such as devotional singing, bridge, ceramics, exercise, bingo, games, crafts, Red Hat Society and dance classes. Day

trips are also planned for participants, as well as parties and restaurant excursions. Contact (817) 728-3680, ext. 3687, for more information, as well as details on how to volunteer in support of local seniors.

Mansfield Mission Center Market: By Appointment, 777 N. Walnut Creek Dr. To meet dietary needs, families may choose their own grocery & toiletry items. Call to make an appointment to shop: (817) 473-6650.

Mondays — Saturdays

Mansfield Mission Center Thrift Store:
Monday-Friday: 9:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.,
Saturday: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., 703 E. Broad St. (817) 225-4868.

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The Fit Club: 9:30-11:00 a.m., Walnut Ridge Baptist Church. Ages 55+ relieve stress and maintain balance,

focusing on cardiovascular endurance, strength, balance and flexibility (yoga). Kelly Myers, (512) 963-3440.

First Fridays

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

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Saturdays

Burleson Farmers Market: 8:00 a.m.-noon, 217 W. Renfro St. Bring your family and support your local producers of fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy, baked and canned goods and crafts. www.burlesonfarmersmarket.com.

Saturdays through October

Farmers Market: 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., 206 Smith St. For more information about the cheeses, crafts, baked and canned goods, flowers, herbs, vegetables and meats available, visit www.mansfieldfarmersmarket.net.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to melissa.rawlins@nowmagazines.com.



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Am I Stuck With This Old Policy or Contract?

If you own an old insurance policy or annuity contract, there may be a way to trade it in for a new and improved one. Just because the policy comes with a contract does not mean you are stuck with the old policy. Sometimes, tax implications may impact decision making for investors. There is a way to trade old policies and contracts for new and improved ones. A 1035 exchange allows life insurance policy owners and annuity contract owners to exchange an old policy or contract for a new one from a different insurance company without tax consequences. The exchange must meet the requirements of Section 1035 for the transaction to be tax free. Over the years, insurance policies and annuity contracts have changed. Owners can possibly upgrade their old policies and contracts with improved benefits and lower costs.

A 1035 exchange applies only when it involves the same contract holder and the same type of contract. It gives the contract owner the flexibility to find another contract that may feature lower costs, a higher death benefit, improved income for retirement or simply more investment choices. The cost and availability of insurance depends on factors such as age, health and the type and amount of insurance purchased. Before surrendering your old life insurance policy, make sure that you are still insurable. Also, evaluate old annuity contracts in detail before making changes to make sure the new contract is better for your current situation.

Rules governing 1035 exchanges are complex. For insurance policies, you may incur surrender charges from your old annuity contract or life insurance policy. In addition, you may be subject to new sales, mortality and expense charges or surrender charges for the new contract or policy. Consult your financial professional or your tax preparer before making any exchanges.

Annuities also have contract limitations, fees and charges, which can include mortality and expense risk charges, sales and surrender charges, investment management fees, administrative fees and charges for optional benefits. Annuities are not guaranteed by the FDIC or any other government agency. They are not deposits of, nor are they guaranteed or endorsed by, any bank or savings association. Any guarantees are contingent on the financial strength and claims-paying ability of the issuing insurance company. Withdrawals reduce annuity contract benefits and values. The investment return and principal value of an investment option are not guaranteed. Because variable annuity subaccounts fluctuate with changes in market conditions, the principal may be worth more or less than the original amount invested when the annuity is surrendered. Always seek the advice of a financial professional before making any changes or investments. **NOW**

Variable annuities are sold by prospectus. Please consider the investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses carefully before investing. The prospectus, which contains this and other information about the investment company, can be obtained from your financial professional. Be sure to read the prospectus carefully before deciding whether to invest.

Todd Simmons is a registered representative with, and securities are offered through LPL Financial, Member FINRA/SIPC. Investment advice offered through 360 Wealth Management, a registered investment advisor, and separate entity from LPL Financial.



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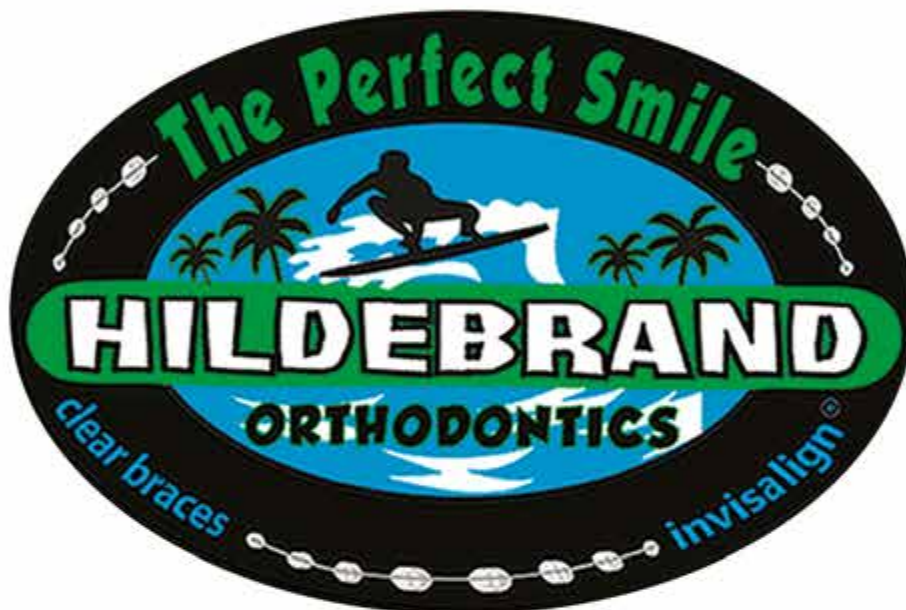
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