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Red Oak NOW

Ovilla • Glenn Heights • Oak Leaf
MAGAZINE

September 2008

Art for All

Power of Positivity

Leaving the Nest

Ice Escape



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At Home With
Rich and Lisa Ware

Red Oak Independent School District Tax Rate Rollback Facts

This document is not intended to advocate that you vote for or against the rollback election, but instead to inform you of facts about the issue that you may find useful in making your own decision.

Benefits of a Tax Rate Rollback

A Increase Funding from the State

In 2006 the Legislature passed House Bill 1, restricting school districts to only two methods of raising money to keep up with inflation and pay for state mandates:

- 1) increased student population (comes with increased costs), or
- 2) an increase in tax rates with voter approval.

Unless one or the other happens, Red Oak schools will have no additional annual money to cover rapidly escalating cost increases.

Effective now, following the enactment of House Bill 1, when the District's property tax revenue increases, state funding decreases by essentially the same amount.

Approval of the Tax Rate Rollback will gain Red Oak schools an additional \$1.6 million in state revenue each year to ensure excellence in education. This will maximize the investment of the local tax dollar.

B Increase Fund Balance

The Fund Balance of ROISD at this time is \$2.5 million, which is below the recommended amount for a district the size of Red Oak. With rising costs in operations, there is no additional money in the budget to add to this fund, unless the budget is cut. Passing of the tax rate rollback election would allow ROISD to add to the fund balance and to keep operating without borrowing money when state payments are delayed.

Tax Information

School district property taxes are composed of two separate rates: Maintenance & Operations (M&O) and Interest & Sinking (I&S). The M&O tax rate is used for daily operations such as salaries, utilities, equipment, and supplies. The I&S tax rate is levied to service the district's debt payments. These two tax rates are added together to get a total tax levy. During the June 30 Budget Meeting, the Red Oak ISD Administration discussed a plan to restructure the 2008-2009 tax rate in order to increase revenue which would be used to fund teacher and support staff salary increases and bring the General Fund balance closer to the amount recommended by state funding officials.

During the 2007 Bond Program, the projected tax rate for the 2008-2009 school year was planned for \$1.54 (\$1.04 M&O / \$0.50 I&S). After careful financial planning and construction cash flow analysis, the district was able to set the 2008-2009 tax rate at \$1.50 (\$1.04 M&O / \$0.46 I&S), which is \$0.04 less than the original projection. By restructuring the tax rate to \$1.17 M&O and \$0.33 I&S, the district would receive additional revenue from the State Tier II funding system. The total tax rate would remain \$1.50, which is an increase because of the bond program, not the tax rate rollback.

C Increase Staff Base Pay

1. To be competitive with other districts
2. To attract and retain quality teachers

Area District Salary Comparisons

District	# of Teachers	Salary Differences (+ above ROISD base) (- below ROISD base)
Mansfield	28,130	+ \$6,500
Lancaster	435	+ \$4,600
Midlothian	453	+ \$2,925
DeSoto	605	+ \$2,500
Ennis	372	+ \$1,500
Waxahachie	437	+ \$1,300
Corsicana	394	+ \$1,000
Red Oak	339	
Maypearl	76	- \$6,480
Palmer	89	- \$7,000

Early Voting: September 24-October 7

Election Day: October 11th

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If you vote FOR the ROISD Tax Rate Rollback....



You'll be voting FOR the same overall tax rate.

The district will increase the M&O portion of our property taxes (used for maintenance and operations) by 13¢ and decrease the I&S portion (used for principle and interest payments on bonds) by 13¢, **keeping the overall total rate the same at \$1.50.**

\$1.50 total	
M&O	I&S
\$1.04	\$0.46

Rate before rollback	M&O	I&S
Rate after rollback	\$1.17	\$0.33

You'll be voting FOR raises for all our teachers and staff, as well as a healthier balance in our General Fund.

A higher M&O rate will allow ROISD to receive an additional \$3M in state funding. This will be used as follows:

- \$1.1M — raises for teachers, nurses, librarians, counselors, and all other school staff (currently we are below the median level for our area)
- \$500,000 — added to the General Fund (which currently sits well below the recommended value)
- \$1.4M — operational costs, purchasing property, and debt payments



Early voting: September 24-October 7 Election day: October 11
For more information, go to VoteForROISD.com

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Photo by Terri Ozymy.

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Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

This month our communities will celebrate their heritage and local history. Through this issue, we would like to celebrate a few of the many talented people who help enhance our local communities and everyday lives.

First, we will visit the home and magnificent gardens of Rich and Lisa Ware. Their creative twist on all things floral is sure to inspire any outdoor lover! After visiting the Wares, we will travel to the natural outdoor studio of local teen, Katie Graves. This young and talented artist uses many different mediums to create her positive and captivating artful expressions. Then we will meet Danette Howard, whose personal story of triumph over tragedy led her to pursue her talents and inspire many. Lastly, let us honor each other, especially those who make a difference in our communities like local special needs teacher Bobbie Crisman.

Besides being full of talent, these are just a few of our many residents who are all heart!

Diana Merrill Claussen
Red OakNOW Editor
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Local residents have been taking advantage of a nationwide trend by turning gold into cash.

Kendall Wiley, owner of Wiley's Diamonds and Fine Jewelry, said he has been buying gold and diamonds for the last 28 years. Since gold prices have soared, he has been buying thousands of dollars worth of gold weekly. The increase in market value for gold is allowing people to get more money out of it than in previous years. The last three or four months have been record highs.

People have turned to selling their used gold for several reasons. Some people genuinely need to sell because of expenses. Some just want to clean out their jewelry box of unwanted items, and many want to trade it in and upgrade to white gold or a new piece of jewelry. Others may just need some extra spending money for that Aruba vacation.

Whatever the reason seller beware! Be as cautious with selling your valuables as you were in making the purchase. Think twice before mailing in your goodies in response to a Internet ad or TV infomercial. As the old saying goes, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Sell only to reputable jewelers or buyers you trust, so you know you will get the most for your gold and diamonds and will not be taken advantage of.

Wiley mentions that if you are even thinking about selling your old gold, now is the time, it's just a smart thing to do. At our store, we actually increase our offer if it is going toward a new purchase, repair or custom design. We had a lady in our store today who traded in all her gold toward the purchase of her daughters' class ring and another cashing in for new school clothes.

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September 13th

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Barbara Featherston
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Methodist Charlton Medical Center
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“They saved my life,” says Barbara Featherston, referring to the nurses and physicians on the medical staff at Methodist Charlton Medical Center who treated her for blood clots in her lung and legs. “From the emergency room to the operating room, I received care on just about every floor in the hospital, and they were all really super.” Barbara was so touched by the compassion and quality of care she received, she now volunteers in the cardiopulmonary rehabilitation center. “I’m so proud to be a part of all the good things they are doing at Methodist Charlton,” she beams. Barbara’s story is just one of many reasons why Methodist Charlton Medical Center is a place where life shines bright.

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Power of Positivity

— By Diana Merrill Claussen



In October 1995, Danette Howard was driving her compact car to work. "I had to turn around and go back home because I had forgotten my uniform tag," Danette shared. After she reached her home and headed back toward work, "I was driving over a hill, and on the other side of the hill, was a street maintainer grating the road," Danette said. "It pulled out in front of me and my car ended up going underneath it." She was a mile-and-a-half from her home.

Since Danette never showed up to work, her manager made a concerned call to her mother, Cynthia. "The Highway Patrol came into our front yard," Cynthia said. The officers said they did not think Danette would pull through. "The grater took off the whole top of the car, plus they had to pull her out," Cynthia remembered. For seven weeks, Danette was in a coma due to her injuries and serious swelling of her brain.

"Her neurologist had almost given up on her until they [used] an intercranial pressure monitor [to check] the brain swelling, and it showed us good results," Cynthia said. "The swelling eventually started going down." Through her journey and healing, which involved a five-month hospital stay, Danette went through various types of physical and life skill rehabilitation processes. She also went through hyperbaric treatment, which

uses oxygen to heal injuries and wounds, to assist in healing her badly bruised brain.

After she was released from the hospital, "I had to relearn how to do everything again as an adult, such as walking, swallowing, eating and talking," Danette explained. Toward the end of her hospital stay, Danette spoke again for the first time since her accident. When the nurse brought Danette back to her room from having an X-ray Cynthia encouraged her daughter to thank the nurse for her help. "So she did," Cynthia shared.

Since the accident, Danette and Cynthia have taken life one day at a time. "There have been lots of prayers," Cynthia shared. "My recovery is an ongoing process," Danette added. With short-term memory problems, "I mainly remember the people in my life like friends and family more-so than specific situations." She especially remembers the support she received from her mom and grandmother, Betty.

"Her grandmother took her to therapy every day," Cynthia shared. "She is a godsend."

Today, Danette, Cynthia and Betty all work together in the wellness profession. In 2003, Danette went back to school and received her Associate in Sciences degree, after which she went on to attend massage therapy school. "I always wanted





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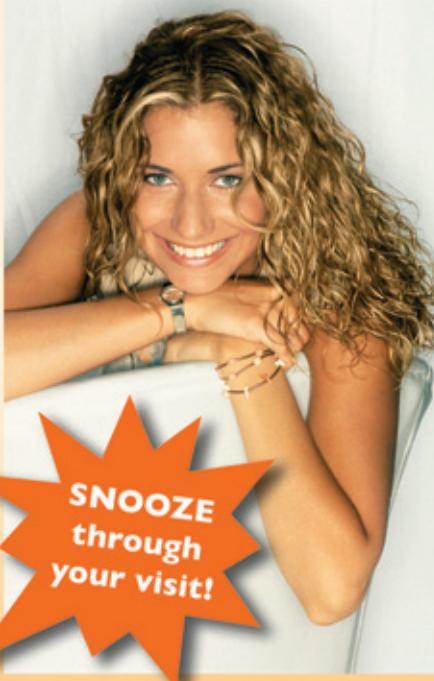
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to be in the medical field," Danette said. "Before my accident I was in my third year as a premed student at the University of Colorado at Boulder."

Danette has since been trained in Swedish massage and stone therapy. "I get the importance of caring for our bodies," Danette said. "Although she can no longer go into the medical field, she can help people through her massages," Cynthia smiled. "Somehow, she just knows exactly how to help people."

"I have an innate sense of what needs to be done," Danette added when describing how she is "tuned in" on how best to help others and meet their needs. She not only helps those who visit her, she brings positivity to those she meets every day. "The people at our church tell me Danette makes them feel special, even when they're having a bad day," Cynthia proudly stated. "I feel very much at peace in doing what I'm doing. It has been a rocky road, but I am finally inline," Danette smiled.

Since she has found her calling, Danette could not be happier while effectively making an inspirational difference in the lives of others. "I do feel that everyone has a purpose," she said. "They have something they were put on the planet to accomplish. I believe it is why I came through my accident. I was saved [able to live] for a purpose. My purpose is an ongoing discovery," she beamed. "The wreck served as a wake-up call to realign my focus."

"I think Danette is truly amazing," Cynthia said. "She has a purpose on this earth, and she will fulfill it because she is very determined." Danette's determination and personal motto is to never give up. Although she still has short-term memory problems, her soft-spoken, heartfelt message is to help others, and she uses the trials and tribulations from her accident to effectively and literally touch the hearts and lives of many.

"I love Danette; she has been such a blessing to me," close friend Wendy Depperschmidt said. "She is very tuned in with people's emotions and is

very sensitive to people and their needs.” The Depperschmidts and the whole community have shown a lot of love and support to Danette and her family. “I feel very embraced and empowered by the love of our community,” Danette reflected. She and Cynthia credit many within the community who are like family to them. “They support us and are always there for us,” Cynthia stated.

Danette learned many valuable lessons through her accident that have helped her in the present and will positively take her into her future. Besides continuing to study more about massage, “I would love to help teach people the benefits of massage therapy,” she said. She also wants to encourage the medical field to learn more about brain injuries.

“The brain is an incredible computer system that determines all function,” Danette shared. “Everything that happens goes through the brain. The medical industry really needs to focus more on treating diseases instead of just the symptoms.”

When Danette’s injury took place, hyperbaric therapy was not considered part of mainstream medicine. Therefore, by the time Cynthia learned about the therapy from a chiropractor, it was almost too late in Danette’s healing process. Before the first hyperbaric treatment, a PET scan of Danette’s brain was ordered. After her last treatment another scan was performed.

“The last scan showed a drastic decrease in “hotspots” on her brain,” Cynthia said. At times, mother and daughter used to wonder if the benefits of hyperbaric could have been even greater if Danette’s medical team had informed her of this treatment option earlier on.

Instead of continuing to wonder, they have chosen to focus their energy on the present by helping and encouraging others. When a person is going through hardship, “The best thing to do to help them is to listen,” Danette said. “Encourage and empathize, but never sympathize. Nothing is impossible; you just need to keep encouraging them.” **NOW**

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At Home With Rich and Lisa Ware



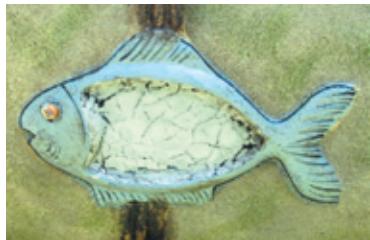
Finding Club Utopia

— By Sandra McIntosh

It may sound a bit cliché, but it was definitely love at first sight for Rich and Lisa Ware. “We spotted each other across a crowded bar,” Lisa said, smiling at the memory that is still as clear as if it were yesterday. That first meeting came after Rich had completed his tour of active duty with the United States Army. “I was in the 82nd Airborne for four years. I served as an Airborne Ranger,” Rich said, explaining how blessed he feels to have been able to travel the world before meeting his soul mate. Serving in the Reserves lasted another five years, but the courtship was much shorter — 18 months to be exact. “We married on May 23, 1992,” Lisa added.

To fully grasp the love they have for their three-bedroom, one-and-a-half-bath home located in Ovilla’s historic district, one must go back to their days as teenagers. Rich grew up in Kessler Park, a subdivision close to Oak Cliff, while Lisa grew up in the mountains of Colorado. Their first home as husband and wife was in Oak Cliff. When they began to consider moving south, they both agreed that city living was no longer a priority. They wanted a serene, tranquil place in the country; a place in which to rear their two children, Stoy and Aspen, now 10 and 5 respectively. “This house had been on the market for almost a year when we bought it,” Lisa said. “The giant pecan trees and the spectacular view overlooking Red Oak Creek and Rocky Falls were the deciding factors.”

They both agreed the house was secondary to the nirvana they found in the natural areas surrounding the home’s exterior. “Growing up in Colorado, I knew I wanted nature all around me,” Lisa said. “We even have our own white water rafting out back!” They spent their first night in the home on April Fool’s Day, 1999.



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Over the years, Lisa has found many hours of solace digging in several gardens, while Rich finds his reprieve mowing the acreage after a busy day at the couple's home office. "I have one area for vegetables, one filled with herbs, one designed to attract butterflies and the wildflower meadow we just planted last spring," Lisa expressed. "While Rich mows, he contemplates life," she stated, laughing as she also mentioned the oversized sombrero he wears to protect his head from the sun's harmful rays.

The home's rustic, eclectic interior is a reflection of the family who dwells within. The surroundings are relaxed, friendly and inviting. Peacock feathers displayed throughout are a subtle

reminder of the family's small outdoor collection of peacocks, in both Indian blue and Pinguoe white, while the 140-gallon aquarium separating the living and dining areas is the subject of many conversations, what with its beautiful coral, exotic fish and moray eels. "It's a collection of the things we like," Rich said. "Everything in the home reminds us of things we've enjoyed and have experienced."

They are looking forward to remodeling their home in the future. Their goal is to "go green." "We want to be environmentally cautious," Rich said. "We love our surroundings, so we want to be environmentally friendly when we do finally start the remodel."

Enlarging the aquarium is also high on the list of things to be done, especially since the fish have started to outgrow their current watery haven. "The eels need a new home," Lisa said, as she fed them partially frozen shrimp. "When we first got the eels, they were as long as mini rulers. Snowflake is now 36 inches long and five inches in diameter. Zebra is probably 30 inches long and three to four inches in diameter."

For Lisa, learning about the aquarium's inhabitants came after Rich experienced a freak volleyball accident at the age of 39. "When he tore his ACL [anterior cruciate ligament], we had to switch roles," she said, referring to the four months following the injury. "Rich became Mr. Mom and I became the Fish Physician, while also keeping up with my yoga instruction." Everything Rich knew, he verbally passed on to his wife during this time. Now, they work as a team in the family owned and operated business.

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add warmth to an already charming home. History of both families can be found in the scrapbooks that have lovingly been compiled by Lisa, to one day be given to her own children. Since the view to the great outdoors is "priceless," window curtains can only be found in Aspen's room and in the home office.

The door leading into the master bedroom is original to the home. "The glass has been etched," Lisa mentioned.

"It's something we will definitely keep in the remodel because of its historic value." Aspen's room is fit for a little princess in shades of pink, accented with the "Year in the Life of Holly Hobby" quilt hand-stitched by her maternal grandmother prior to her passing. Stoy's room is decorated for the young athlete. A Texas Karate League championship trophy is proof positive of Stoy's second place ranking in the state of Texas. "He even breaks boards," Lisa proudly said. "The secret is to go with the grain of the wood."

When asked about the uniqueness of the children's names, the couple laughed. The name, Richard Stoy III, came from Rich's side of the family, by way of a world traveler who worked for his great-great-great-grandfather. The name skipped only one generation along the way. They searched long and hard for a name that was right for their daughter. "Out of nowhere, Rich came up with Aspen Rainne," Lisa recalled. "We were going to call her Rainne until

we met her and then we decided to call her Aspen after the beautiful trees of Colorado that remind me of home."

Rich's philosophy on life is simple. He wants to have peace of mind. To hear him reminisce, he has found that and so much more with Lisa, who he feels closely resembles Darryl Hannah from the 1984 movie *Splash*, and his children, who also love living a simple country life in Ovilla. As parents, Rich and Lisa share the same vision when it comes to rearing their children. "Respect and responsibility," he said, "are the two most important qualities we want our children to possess."

As people who love people, Rich and Lisa also get a great deal of satisfaction entertaining others. They have used the backyard as the perfect backdrop for family, friends and neighbors, as well as the local garden club. "Sitting back here is very relaxing," Lisa said, as Rich just sighed in agreement. "It's tranquility at its best," he added. "This is our Club Utopia."



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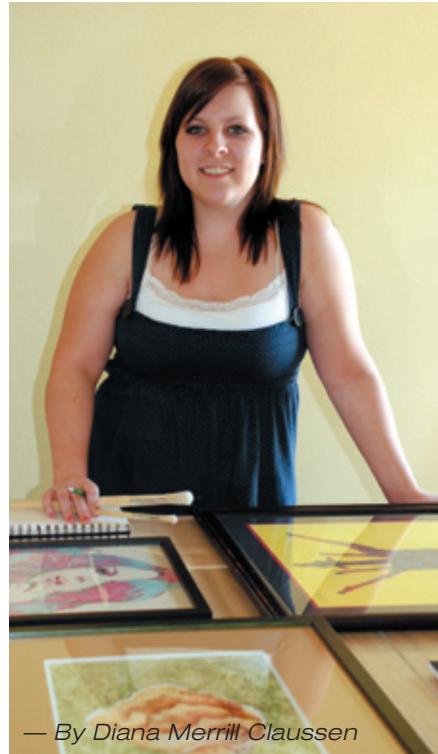
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Art for All



— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Many talents can be used to enhance society with positive self-expression. From dance to poetry, song to script, art is a fantastic form in which to not only enrich your community, but to also improve yourself.

For high school senior, Katie Graves, art is not just a hobby; it is a large and important aspect of her life. Katie's parents, Tom and Carrie, both grew up in New Mexico. Their roots and artistic flare are not only reflected through their Southwest-style home, but in both of their children, 14-year-old Sam and 17-year-old Katie.

"Tom used to draw and create watercolor postcards," Carrie said. "When Katie was little, she would play with pieces of paper and create stories by drawing pictures in little books. Then when she was 4, we bought her her first easel and she used it until it fell apart. She was always drawing," Carrie beamed.

"Long before she ever had training, Katie would take her easel outside and paint flowers," Carrie shared. "That is

when we realized she had a God-given ability, and we wanted to let her flourish in it." Since those earlier days, Katie has expanded her artistic talents and has greatly grown in the drawing and painting realms.

By the time Katie was 11, she was known for creating master prints and watercolors on superior papers, which she would then present as gifts for friends and family. "One of my first pieces was a print of a bunny that I created on recycled art paper and then gave it to my best friend as a gift," Katie shared.

From the ages of 8 until 14, Katie not only attended art classes through her school, she also received private instruction. "My teacher in Duncanville, Zann Brumit, would train us in technique," Katie said. "It was good to take lessons, and it has helped me to branch out."

Katie now attends a private school in DeSoto and, "During school, my art teacher has us use many tools besides pencil and watercolors," she shared. "We created oil paintings, carved and

made stamps. In the past, our teacher would also have us work outside and paint whatever we would see."

Through her school, Katie has traveled internationally to cultivate her love of art. "They took a group of kids to England during spring break," Carrie said. "That's when Katie realized she was interested in photography because while she was there, she took a lot of pictures." Many of her photos were of the museums, the city's architecture and of Westminster Abbey. Through her school's programs, Katie has traveled to Paris and Spain and has also increased in her talent.

"I work in pencil, color pencil, watercolors, pastels, photography, linoleum and sewing," Katie shared. She also uses different tools such as Saran Wrap to create textures within her work. Besides drawing animals on canvas and occasionally adding marker highlights on to her Jack Russell terrier, Jacko, Katie enjoys re-creating people and nature on her canvas. There are pictures of people who are inspiring to her, some of whom she knows, others

she has just seen in magazines.

Katie's people portraits are definitely creative, imaginative and exciting. The attention to detail and poignant touches she includes in her work are, at times, mesmerizing.

There is a representation of Kurt Cobain, [the deceased lead singer of the music group Nirvana] in charcoal pencil. From the detail of the drawing to Cobain's expression, to the piercing and hypnotizing pull the viewer feels of Cobain's gaze, the drawing seems lifelike. Katie really has a talent for accentuating features such as eyes, and creates surreal amounts of depth to all of her pieces.

Such talent has in no way gone unnoticed. Katie has won numerous awards for her creations. "I have competed at the State Fair of Texas and in the Texas Association of Parochial and Private Schools academic and art contests," Katie shared. "I placed second in the state for still life drawings. My school has also hosted a statewide art competition where we received honorable mention."

Currently, Katie's work is on display at Northwood University [where she recently placed first with her pastel ballerina drawing], and at the White Rhino coffee shop in Cedar Hill. Although Katie can display her work in Cedar Hill, "It would be so terrific to have an art venue here in Red Oak where artists can display their work as well as congregate," Carrie said.

"Art is such a good thing that any kind of person can be a part of," Katie added. "Art is stress relieving and also helps people become more confident in their accomplishments. Finding a positive way to express yourself is definitely a good thing." Another positive aspect regarding art is that it "builds more of a tolerance [and appreciation] in people while bringing cultures and communities together to find common ground," Carrie stated.**NOW**

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Ice Escape

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

Children these days are faced with big adversities and many challenges which at times can seem to be unbearable and unfair. At times, we may ask ourselves what our children need. Sometimes, the answer to that question can be found by remembering what we needed when we were their age.

Since understanding is key to communication, it is up to adults to find constructive ways to assist children through the situations of life. Helping them to overcome their obstacles inevitably teaches many valuable lessons while building confidence. Local teen Cody Alonso believes he has found just the right outlet to positively deal with life, burn off steam and stay active and out of trouble all at the same time.

"I started playing soccer when I was 5 and roller hockey when I was 9 years old," Cody said. "I played soccer for 11 seasons, and I would play roller hockey at the skating rink in Duncanville." It was not until the eighth grade that Cody decided to trade in his round skating wheels for the metal blades of ice skates. Since that decision, he has found the perfect outlet to help him be the well-rounded 18-year-old he is.

Cody currently plays for multiple teams through Midlothian High School and Dr Pepper StarCenter in Duncanville. When he is not on the ice, Cody works part time at the center's pro shop. "I sharpen skates and sell hockey equipment," he said.

Cody's mom, Robin Rich, is a single mother of three and believes ice hockey provides a bigger positive influence for Cody than she could have ever imagined. "I like the structure and discipline hockey has given him; it keeps him out of trouble," Robin said. "He spends so much time at the rink he has no time to get into trouble — especially since all of his friends do what he does."

Ask Cody why ice hockey is good for him, and he is full of fun and surprising answers. "I like hockey because you don't have to wait your turn," he smiled. "I also like the roughness.

What other sport can you fight in and only be penalized for two minutes?" he asked. Although Robin assures fighting is not in Cody's nature, fighting on the ice "has been an outlet of stress relief for Cody," she said. "As a goalie, he is not allowed to participate in fighting, but when you step in his space, 'crease,' you are fair game," she added.

Cody agreed that when he is on the ice, he is doing his job. "When a puck comes down to my goal, that means the five guys on my team have all made mistakes," he said. "Your team then relies on you to make up for those mistakes. As the goalie, you are the extra man, so you get to play by your own rules, and you have to protect your space. I will only get in a fight if it is to help my team members."

You might think that Cody would have experienced many major injuries playing this sport. "He has been cut, piled on, sat on and jabbed with sticks," Robin said. The players are so padded with gear, that Cody's injuries on the ice have been fairly minor. "Just bruises, I haven't broken any bones," Cody shared. "One time, I did get hit in the mouth with a puck though." His permanent retainer protected his teeth from getting knocked out.

"Hockey is like a body contact free-for-all," Robin said.

"It's a thrill for a mom watching her son playing a sport when he is involved in one-on-one contact," Robin said. "It's both exciting and scary, especially being the mother of a goalie, because the other players are charging at him as fast



as they can skate with a stick and a puck. Sometimes, I just jump out of my seat screaming [at the referee's calls], or cheering for the team."

Cody's coaches have helped him hone his skills while providing positive male influence. "Being a single mom is not easy when you are raising three," Robin admitted. Two of her three children are teenage boys. "It's hard when they don't have that male influence in their lives every day. In situations such as when his grades are dropping, you have to rely on the coach. No pass, no play."



Ryan with coach Ryan Phiffer.

Coaches Ryan Phiffer and Cliff Parker, are dedicated to their teams and to Cody both on the ice and in life.

Cody's longtime friends from Red Oak support him as well. "Justin Miller and Lance Brown from Red Oak High School have been on my team with me for two years," Cody shared. Robin said that friendships, coaches and hockey have helped her to create such a well-rounded young man. Cody and all of Robin's brood are also thoughtful to the needs of others and highly insightful. Cody's younger brother, Jacob, provided insight to why hockey is a perfect sport for his talented big brother. "Hockey helps him build his character," he shared. "Cody's whole life revolves around hockey ... and food," Jacob grinned. **NOW**

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Fun, **FIT** and *Female*

— By Diana Merrill Claussen

With the stresses of household, family and occupational responsibilities and commitments, we at times forget the necessity of living a balanced life. Healthy diet and exercise habits are vital to living in a balanced or homeostatic state. It Figures fitness center at 107 West Ovilla Road offers many services which can help you achieve optimum health and wellness. Focusing on personal fitness and nutrition counseling, the owner, trainers and staff at this local "ladies only" facility are not only into



Owner Lori Green, trainer Didi Raney and friends enjoy the circuit and classes at It Figures.

fitness, but having fun, too.

"When I first started It Figures, we were the first facility in the area which catered to ladies only," owner Lori Green said. Lori not only wanted to create a place to work out, she wanted it to include a safe and supervised area for the club members' children to play. "We have a child care room here at the

facility so that moms can enjoy their work out without guilt," Lori said.

Soon after the female-only facility opened, Lori reconnected with a friend from the past. Didi Raney drove by the fitness center and decided to stop in for a visit. "When I walked in and saw my friend, Lori, from high school, I decided to join the gym to work out," Didi said. "Later, I started working here at the facility."

The gym's innovative ideas and programs have flourished. The "no men allowed" rule is more for privacy than exclusivity. "We don't allow men in the gym for several reasons," Lori said. "Women feel more at ease because of it, especially for some of our members who are from diverse cultures. We are very protective of our women."

"We want our ladies to be free to do what they want to do, while not having to be concerned about anyone else," Didi agreed. "It's a girls' club."



The It Figures staff encourages members of all age groups to relieve stress and have fun at the same time. The Groovin' Girls class is geared toward girls of a younger generation — 5- to 12-year-olds. "Girls like to dance, so we started this dance fitness workout just for them," Lori said.

This fun and freedom may be achieved in many different ways. There are several classes for ladies of all ages and walks of life. "Our 7:00 a.m. low-impact class is a favorite with seniors, while our high-cardio Zumba [Latin dancing] class always packs the house," Lori said. From strength and circuit training to dancing at a Zumba or belly dancing class, ladies of the area are now free to go "respectfully" wild!

"It Figures is a motivating haven for me," Didi said. "It Figures has created a soft spot in my heart, because I have had to deal with the same weight issues as our members," Lori said. Since the gym's opening, Lori has lost 70 pounds. Her personal experience helps her assist her clients, while her staff is required to maintain fitness certifications.

In addition to their fitness and training classes, they provide another highly necessary service. "I am a certified nutrition counselor," Lori said. Helping her clients learn how to eat for their blood type is a vital aspect when it comes to obtaining optimum workouts and ultimate health.

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Leaving the Nest

— By Alex Allred

Bobbie Crisman would like for people to see her job in the same manner she does. She does not work with children who have special needs and demands. Rather, she works with children who have much to offer and have brought her an extraordinary amount of satisfaction and joy.

As Bobbie enters her ninth year as a special education teacher at Wooden Elementary School in Red Oak, her enthusiasm for her students and their progress is just as vibrant as it was the first day she came to work. Though, she admits, she is now a bit more seasoned.

"For me, this is where my heart is. The children are

tremendous," Bobbie said of teaching and of her students. She frequently referred to her students as "my little hummingbirds," and "my kiddos." Bobbie's affection for her students is so apparent that it is instantly clear why and how she has been effective with the children with special needs.

While she did not always know she wanted to be a special educator, Bobbie did know she wanted to give back to her community and give aid to those who most needed help. Ironically, she did this by working with adults with special needs. "It was an integrative program to help them become more independent with feeding and self-care programs," she said. In many instances, Bobbie saw adults who had been provided very little skill or opportunity in the way of caring for themselves. Their lives were more difficult because of this lack of opportunity.

For this reason, after she earned her teaching certificate, Bobbie made a silent pact with herself. She would teach her students independence, self-worth, dignity and pride. "I'm

very strict," Bobbie said, referring to her teaching style in relation to her students. "I expect them to meet my challenges and go above that. I don't let them get away with anything." As she recalled how helpless many of the adults she once worked with were, she said, "But not my kiddos. To them I say, 'Oh, you're going to have so much more!'"

Her husband, Mark, a supervisor of a refrigeration design company, and her own children, Haden, 17 and Adrienne, 15, are very supportive of the kind of dedication it takes to give Bobbie's "hummingbirds" what they need to be successful. In fact, "Mark does the cooking. He doesn't like my casseroles," she confided with a laugh. Sharing meals as a family and spending quality time with her children is Bobbie's way of re-energizing herself so that she can give everything she has to the students she loves so much.

"It really takes a village," Bobbie said. "It's a true statement." While she does not accept that her work is any more special than anyone else's, she is quick to give praise to those around her. Principal Robert Sellman, Coach Deb Harner, Theresa Gossett and the entire teaching staff earn great accolades from Bobbie but, "I work with two paraprofessionals who are the best. They don't have teaching certificates," Bobbie explained, "but, by golly, they are hands-on!" Like Bobbie, both Pam Roberson and Tammie Wilson devote countless hours, during and after school, to their young charges.

From teaching the children how to hold a pencil or scissors to basic motor and communications skills to reading, writing and arithmetic, the demands are constant. "We have some difficult children who come through, and it takes all hands

Education **NOW**

on deck," Bobbie said. "Because so many of them are nonverbal, we have to adapt to the needs of each child. Each kid brings to you a different bag of tricks; you just have to unlock that bag — somehow, someway."

Many times, the search for that key can take months, even years. "You don't know what to do, but keep trying different ways. You have to be very creative."



Some students require the bare basics — even learning how to play with a toy — while others, she said, "just had a slow start in life." Suddenly, with key in hand, the students blossom under her guide and "others ask why they are even in my class."

Today, Bobbie can still remember when she was in elementary school and how curious she was about the students who were labeled "special needs." "When I was a kid, there was always that class down the hallway. You never knew what they did in their class, but with us, you see us! We're in the computer lab, in the assemblies, in PE and in the library." Bobbie believes it is essential to remove the mystery and let the other children see that her students — her little hummingbirds — are really no different.

As the new school year is underway, you can bet that Bobbie, Pam and Tammie are searching for new keys. While they strive to teach growth and independence to some, they are preparing their fourth-graders to move on. "We even have a graduation ceremony, with cap and gown," Bobbie said proudly. And if all goes well, she will get to watch yet another one of her little birds leave the nest. **NOW**

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Missy Waggoner, top left, sold items to support the Coconut Cruisers. Craig Jennings of the Red Oak Baseball and Softball Association, top left center, met with parents of prospective players. Boopsie the Clown, top right center, stopped by the library for a visit. KLTY 94.9, top right, made a live radio appearance during the summer. The Gonzalez family, second row left, enjoyed a day in the sun. The Coconut Cruisers, second row right, will be participating in this year's Susan G. Komen 3-day cancer awareness event. Lindsey Cargile, bottom left, had a great time playing with a poodle puppy. Community leaders, third row center, met to make plans for this year's National Night Out event. A professional yo-yo and top spinner, bottom center, made an appearance at the Red Oak Library. The Story Time Theater from North Richland Hills, bottom right, presented the *Legend of Pecos Bill* at the library.

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Look Who's Cooking

— By Faith Browning

IN THE KITCHEN WITH ROBYN BRYANT

ITALIAN MEAT FILLING

1 1/2 lbs. lean ground beef
4 - 5 cloves garlic, minced
1 1/2 lbs. sweet Italian sausage, removed from casings
1 pkg. frozen spinach, thawed, well-drained, chopped
pinch of nutmeg, to taste
salt and pepper, to taste
1/2 cup Parmesan cheese

Brown ground beef in a large pan. If pan is too small, use a pot. Remove from pan leaving about 2 Tbsp. of drippings. Add garlic and sauté until soft. Add sausage to pan and brown, breaking up meat to resemble ground beef; drain sausage. Add ground beef, spinach, nutmeg, salt and pepper to pan; cook for 15 minutes. When slightly cooled, add Parmesan cheese and stir until completely blended. Filling can be run through a food processor or blender to make it less lumpy.

TOMATO SAUCE

1/2 small onion, diced
4 - 5 cloves garlic, minced
1/4 cup butter
2 Tbsp. olive oil
2 large cans crushed, peeled tomatoes
1 carrot, grated
1 celery stalk, diced
1 tsp. each — basil, oregano, parsley
(Use fresh if you have them.)

1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper, or to taste

Sauté onions and garlic in butter and oil until soft and translucent. Add the two cans of tomatoes, carrot and celery. Cook over medium heat for 30 minutes. Add the spices the last 15 minutes. Run sauce through a ricer if you like a smoother sauce. If sauce is too thin, add one small can of tomato paste.

LASAGNA

1 lb. ricotta cheese
1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated
1/2 pkg. frozen spinach, thawed, well-drained, chopped
2 eggs, beaten
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
pinch of nutmeg, to taste
1 lb. ground beef, cooked and drained
tomato sauce (recipe above), separate 3/4 for ground beef,
1/4 for top and bottom
1 box lasagna noodles
2 cups mozzarella cheese, shredded

Mix ricotta cheese, Parmesan, spinach, eggs, salt, pepper and nutmeg together until well blended; set aside. Mix ground beef with enough tomato sauce to make it moist, but not runny; set aside. Boil lasagna noodles by box directions; drain and spread on linen cloth. Add enough plain tomato sauce to bottom of a deep 9 x 13-inch pan to cover. Layer the lasagna as follows:

Being from Italian descent has perpetuated Robyn's love for pasta dishes. Although she loves any Italian dish, her cappelletti recipe is her favorite. "This dish originates from a providence in Italy that my father's family is from," she proudly stated, "but most of my Italian recipes were handed down from my grandmother to my mother and then to me."

Standing on a chair helping her mother mix cake batter is a fond childhood memory for Robyn. The loving influence of her mother and grandmother has given her many rich traditions she can pass on to her children, Tyler, Hannah and McKenzie. "We still have my great-grandmother's old copper bowl and wooden rolling pin that dough was made with," she recalled. "There were no food processors back then." 

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noodles, cheese filling, meat sauce, mozzarella cheese. Repeat this 3 - 4 times, depending on the pan size and what you prefer. Finish with noodles on top, cover with plain sauce, and then sprinkle with remaining mozzarella cheese. Bake for 25 minutes at 400 F or until heated thoroughly. Cover with foil if needed.

MARASCHINO ALMOND BITES

1 3/4 cups almonds, ground (use food processor)
3/4 cup sugar
2 egg whites
several drops almond extract
1/2 lb. jar Maraschino cherries, well-drained
1 cup almonds, sliced and lightly crushed

Mix together the ground almonds, sugar, all but 2 tsp. of the egg whites and a few drops of almond extract; work into pliable (not crumbly) almond paste dough. Preheat the oven to 425 F. Line 2 baking sheets with nonstick parchment paper. Have a bowl of cold water ready. Dip your hands in the water; put a walnut-sized piece of almond paste in the palm of your hand. Roll with the palm of the other hand until smooth; flatten. Put 1 cherry in the center and ease the almond paste around it. Roll in sliced almonds. Repeat with the remaining cherries, almond paste and almonds until all are used up. Place the Marasche on the parchment paper and bake for 8 minutes. Leave to cool and set for a few minutes; transfer the Marasche on the paper to wire racks. Leave until completely cold. Makes about 24 cookies.

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Midlothian Conference Center Arts Council

ART SHOW

Fri. & Sat., Sept. 26-27 - 10a-4p
Sun., Sept. 28 - 1p-3p

Entry form deadline is Sept. 19, 2008
Submit to P.O. Box 1910 - Midlothian, TX 76065
Hand deliver paintings to Midlothian Conference Center
Sept. 18 from 1-8pm

Exhibitor Divisions:
Amateur (painting for pleasure) Advanced (sell or teach your work)

Cash Awards in each division
Ribbons for Honorable Mention &
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Open to the public

Contact Mary Rustin at the Center
(East of corner of Mt. Zion & South 14th)
www.midlothiancenter.com • 972-723-7919
or email: midconfctr@aol.com

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September is Life Insurance Awareness Month

— By Andrea Walton



If you were no longer there to provide for them, would your family be able to keep their home? Could your children attend college? If you answered 'no' to either of these questions, it may be time to look at your life insurance coverage.

September has been designated Life Insurance Awareness Month by the Life and Health Insurance Foundation for Education (LIFE). The Foundation is encouraging people to examine their life insurance policies to determine if they are adequately protected.

While your needs may vary, the 2004 Human Life Value study conducted by LIFE found that the average life value among U.S. citizens was \$803,788. A male's value, meaning the economic value to others, was nearly \$1 million, while a female's value was over \$660,000. While the life insurance need is not as high as those values, the average life insurance policy for males in the study was closer to \$300,000 while women had \$165,245.

Life insurance can be the foundation of a sound financial plan, especially given the continuing need after the death of a breadwinner. Think of it as a safety net should a wage earner die unexpectedly. In addition to that, permanent life insurance may accumulate a cash value that can be accessed while you are still living. While any loans from a policy will accrue interest and diminish the cash value and any subsequent death benefit, the proceeds could be used for any number of reasons.

Life insurance can be one of the most important purchases you make. Take some time during Life Insurance Awareness Month to examine your life insurance needs. **NOW**

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Saturday, September 20
Ellis County Youth Expo Center
Hwy 287, Waxahachie
Free Admission, Free Parking Doors open at 10:30 am - 8pm

Live Auction
Featuring: A ride aboard a Russian MIG jet
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• Vendor Booths
• Washer Tournament
• Silent Auction

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All proceeds benefit St. Joseph Catholic School in Waxahachie. Sponsorships available - all donations are tax deductible. www.oktoberfestwaxahachie.com for more information and contacts.

September 2008

Community Calendar

Every Monday

Celebrate Recovery meeting, First Baptist Church of Red Oak, 103 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-3591. www.redoakcelebraterecovery.com

First and Third Tuesdays

Red Oak Lions Club meeting, 7:00 p.m., 207 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-3577.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

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

Third Wednesday

Ellis County Christian Women's Connection luncheon, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Waxahachie Country Club, 1920 W. Hwy. 287. Fee for lunch. Child care available. Register by September 14. Call (972) 937-2807 or (972) 937-9984.

Wednesdays and Thursdays

Senior Citizens Club meeting, 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m., 207 West Red Oak Rd. Games, exercise and activities. (972) 576-2777.

Second Thursday

American Cancer Society Support group meeting, 7:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 600 West Red Oak Rd. (972) 617-9100.

Third Thursday

American Business Women's Association meeting.

www.abwa-empoweringwomen.org.

Last Thursday

DeSoto Art League meeting. www.desotoartleague.com.

First Saturday

Red Oak Fire Rescue CPR classes, 9:00 a.m. Call early to register. (469) 218-7713. www.redoaktx.org.

First Friday

Worship Jam, 6:30 p.m., Bubba Que BBQ's front porch.

First and Third Saturday

Family Story Time: 3:30 p.m.- 4:30 p.m., Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. All ages welcome. (469) 218-1230. www.redoakpubliclibrary.org.

Every Saturday

Downtown Waxahachie Farmers Market, 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Produce, plants, jams, jellies and other goods available. (972) 938-2101, ext. 198.

September 1

DFW Free Day of Yoga, Ovilla Wellness Center on Hwy. 664, Glenn Heights. Classes held mid morning through early evening. If you did not get the info in time, you may get a rain check. Contact Lisa Ware at (214) 532-0776, yoga4love@yahoo.com or visit www.yoga4love.net.

September 13

Red Oak Founder's Day, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m., Red Oak City Park. Sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

This year's Founder's Day is in conjunction with the High School's homecoming celebration. Parade, games, a homemade ice cream competition, food, vendors and music. www.redoakareachamber.org.

September 20

St. Joseph's Catholic School's Oktoberfest, 10:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m., Waxahachie Expo Center. Free to public. Entertainment, games, prizes, raffle and baked goods contest. www.oktoberfestwaxahachie.com.

September 26 - 28

Midlothian Conference Center's Annual Amateur and Professional Art Show, 1 Community Circle Dr., Midlothian. Contests and exhibitions. (972) 723-7919. www.MidlothianCenter.com.

September 27

City of Ovilla Heritage Day, 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m., 105 S. Cockrell Hill Rd., at the ballpark behind Ovilla City Hall. Free to public. For information or booth rental, call (972) 617-7262.

Red Oak Pee Wee Football Association games, 8:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m., Gerald J. Ford Football Stadium, Southern Methodist University campus, 5800 Ownby Dr. (972) 576-2211.

For more community events, visit our online calendar at www.nowmagazines.com.



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www.sos.state.tx.us, any City Hall in Ellis County, any County Tax Office, or at the Ellis County Elections Office located at 106 S. Monroe, Waxahachie, TX • Call (972) 923-5195 for information



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