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September 2010

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Gary Livingston makes history as the first Hawk mascot for the new Red Oak High School.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

Editor's Note



Hello, Red Oak Folk!

For parents and school children everywhere, September means settling into a back-to-school routine. How wonderful for Red Oakians to see the Texas Education Agency rank Red Oak Independent School District as "Recognized"—home to four "Recognized" and three "Exemplary" schools this year.

In the district's honor, *Red OakNOW* highlights the local teen donning a brand new Hawk uniform and spreading his wings as the magnificent new high school's mascot. We also feature two educators who bring excellence to the classroom in the form of fine arts and the art of math.

Even local firefighters believe in ongoing education, as you will see in this month's interview with the city fire department's wellness coordinator. And a local woman shows how cooking lessons pass through generations.

Bravo to ROISD and everyone inspired to keep learning. Help me share other inspiring stories by sending your suggestions to angel.morris@nowmagazines.com. The best-read stories are in *Red OakNOW*!

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Red OakNOW Editor

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New High School New Hawk

— By Angel Morris

Gary Livingston makes history this year as the first mascot to represent the new Red Oak High School (ROHS) campus. Even better, the Hawk suit is all new, too. And with the school year now in full swing, Gary is ready to spread his Hawk wings.

“I attended a weeklong mini cheer camp before tryouts and made up my own routine — I performed to the song [from] *Space Jam*,” Gary said. While the 16-year-old was the only one to try out for mascot this year, he was still required to perform in front of judges, pass a cheer evaluation and prove he could display certain emotions while in the Hawk uniform. “Even though I was the only candidate, I was very nervous waiting for the official results. When I realized I was a shoe-in, I thought how cool it was to be the very first Hawk mascot at the new high school!”

In preparation for his mascot debut, Gary attended cheer camp at the University of North Texas the first week of August. From sessions designed for mascots, Gary said, “I learned some great moves,” to add to his repertoire. And he is practicing another routine to surprise his audience: “I really want to learn Zac Efron’s dance from the movie *17 Again*. It’s hilarious!”

Besides rooting on the home team, Gary considers his primary mascot duty firing up Red Oak fans. “The best part is making people smile and laugh — being crazy and silly and knowing that I am supposed to be acting that way!” he said. Another perk? “I get to hang out with a bunch of cheerleaders all the time — 16 girls, and I’m the only guy!”

While his last class period each day is dedicated to mascot practice, Gary also juggles a number of other activities. His favorite class is CMAT — a computer animation course — and he is also a member of Renaissance, National Honor Society and band. “I’ve been in band for five years. I’m in ‘the pit,’ where I play the bass drum and gong. I also play the bassoon,” Gary said. “One of my favorite memories is when I met my best friends — Aaron, Matt, Gabi, Kat and Kevin — at the Red Oak Intermediate School’s Band Night. We all met in the intermediate band program, but really got to know each other in junior high band and we are still the



Gary Livingston spreads his wings as the new ROHS mascot.



best of friends today. It’s nice to have friends you’ve known almost your whole life.”

Reflecting on other ways Red Oak has impacted his life, Gary said ROHS band director Richard Thomas pushes him to be his best and his former biology

teacher, Jessica Guerrero, convinced him he could do anything he set his mind to. As a result, Gary said he plans to attend college and study forensic science. “Like *CSI* (the TV show),” Gary explained. Gary also admitted being a huge fan of another show. “I’m a total *LOST* junkie! I’ve seen every episode at least twice.”

Gary has less TV time these days, however, with his new Hawk identity. Instead of watching famous folks on TV, he



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has taken on some celebrity status himself. "Even before the school year was officially underway, a lot of people I didn't know recognized me as the new mascot," Gary said. "Of course, my mom does tell everyone she comes in contact with."

Gary's mom, Bo, added, "I am so proud of his accomplishments. Watching him working at church or playing in the band or helping at volunteer events, has brought me immeasurable joy. He is a special young man. I can't wait to see what God has planned for him next!"

Support from his close-knit family may help when it comes to fulfilling his mascot duties. "You have to depend on your family and friends in order to survive and thrive in this world. Nobody should be alone ... I am very close to

"The best part is making people smile and laugh — being crazy and silly and knowing that I am supposed to be acting that way!"

my family," Gary said. "We depend on each other for support, acceptance, encouragement and friendship."

Gary's family shares his enthusiasm for all things Red Oak. He is a former student of Red Oak Elementary, Shields Elementary, Red Oak Intermediate and Red Oak Junior High. His mom teaches third grade locally, and siblings, Tristan and Nick, are both ROISD students. Only dad, Jeff, ventures out of Red Oak for his Arlington hotel management job. The family has lived in the community for seven years. "I like the family feel of Red Oak. It's big enough that you don't know everybody, but you do know most of the people," Gary said. "It's cool to walk into Brookshire's or Whataburger and your friends are there, too."

The Livingstons attend Arlington Seventh Day Adventist Church, where Gary is also very involved. "I see my friends at church as a really big, extended family. I am a part of the media ministry and enjoy helping with outreach events," Gary said.

With an obvious enthusiasm for everything he does, Gary is fulfilling the ROHS motto of "embracing one's

dreams” and has slipped into the role of mascot with ease. “It isn’t really in my nature to sit back and just go with the flow. I have always liked to lead. I like to be a part of planning events,” Gary said. For the past two years, Gary has put his organizational skills to use as team captain for the ROHS Relay for Life Team. “My duties included attending planning sessions with our school’s sponsor and other community members,



organizing fundraising and walking in the actual overnight event.”

For now, Gary’s efforts are focused on making school spirit soar. “It is important to have school spirit because it shows the whole world that we are proud of one another’s achievements. When our team is doing good, we support them. When they aren’t, we still support them ... as a way to encourage one another,” he said. “The students of Red Oak are proud of our successes as a school district. Plus, it never hurts to have a whole bunch of people in the stands ... kinda scares the competition a little bit.”

While every mascot is proud of his school, Gary can take special pride in being the first Hawk of a new Red Oak High. And his family has found special joy in rooting for Gary. “I am so proud of my son for being the Red Oak Hawk,” Jeff said. “My boys and I have always loved Friday-night football games and having Gary out there on the field leading the cheering for our favorite team is just the coolest thing ever!” **NOV**

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MAKING IT THEIR OWN

— By Alana Williamson



At Home With Dale and Wendy Vaughan

When Dale and Wendy Vaughan moved into their custom country-style home in Ovilla in 1988, shortly after the birth of their third child, they planned on living there for five years. Twenty-two years later, the Vaughans are still in the home, but a lot has changed. In April 2009, they began an extensive, hands-on remodeling project that lasted nine months and included updating every room in their five-bedroom, three-bath home.

When the Vaughans moved from Colorado, where they met on rival teams during a powder puff football game at the University of Southern Colorado, the couple was so focused on finishing the home as quickly as possible that they did not have the opportunity to add their own unique touches. “At the time we built the house, we spent money on square footage, since the children were so little,” Wendy said. In 1993, they added an extension that included a children’s play room, a home office and a utility room. Their most recent remodeling project was a challenge in more ways than one.

Dale and Wendy decided to hire a sole contractor instead of a crew to handle the renovations. This decision was based on their desire to remain in their home while the work was completed. In addition, the Vaughans shared the labor for the project. They took on the preparation tasks, such as scraping paint, wallpaper and tile, in addition to painting the walls at the completion of each room update.

Modernizing the couple’s master bath was the first step in the remodeling process. The original bathroom was carpeted with only a small shower. The Vaughans first had their shower enlarged, and then updated by replacing the floor to ceiling shower door. They added an oversized, raised tub and replaced the carpet with ceramic tile. New fixtures, lighting and fresh paint completed this stage.

For the master bedroom, they decided to use artifacts brought back and inspired by their South African safari excursion. They hung a wildebeest skull over their bed and tribal masks on the adjoining walls which they retextured and painted a cream color. The couple decided to replace the carpet in this room and their other bedrooms and add hardwood flooring in the living and dining areas. Each bedroom also received fresh paint and a retextured ceiling.

For the rest of their home, Wendy chose to



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portray a Tuscan theme. "I spent a lot of time on the Internet researching what was classic Tuscan, such as the colors," she explained. After their contractor installed custom-made cabinets and granite countertops, she painted the kitchen walls copper and added a faux finish. Wendy also helped design the pattern for their unique slate backsplash above

their stove. LED lighting was installed above the countertops and inside the corner china cabinet. "The hardest part of the remodel was living with a kitchen that was totally ripped up," Wendy said. During the kitchen remodel, which included replacing all of their appliances, Wendy created a makeshift cooking area in the living room. For three months, she prepared meals on a long table using only a toaster, microwave, Crock-Pot and vegetable steamer.

Wendy homeschooled their children

from kindergarten through 12th grade in what is now their formal dining area. Changes in this room included new fixtures, wooden blinds and a chandelier. The couple also replaced all of their furniture. They added a brown leather living set and a counter-height table in the breakfast nook. Even these additions were chosen as part of the Tuscan theme.

Wendy requested that their contractor add wooden beams to the ceiling of their living room to give it a country Italian feel. They also removed their floor-to-ceiling brick fireplace and added a mantle above their wood-burning stove. The decor also includes an antique Victrola, which has been in their family for more than 50-plus years. Wooden baseboards were also added in the living and dining areas.

Dale, an avid hunter, described the period as an extended camping experience. His pastime was reflected in the next stage of the remodel, and involved converting the former playroom and den into a "man cave." Heads adorn all four walls of the large living area, and the hide of the wildebeest that hangs in the couple's bedroom rests on the

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floor. This room, leading off the kitchen, opens up into Dale's home office. He works in the water filtration industry and is involved in temporary water treatment and remediation projects. He volunteers with conservation organizations and a youth mentoring program. Wendy is a part-time bookkeeper, and the couple attends Grace Church of Ovilla.

Dale and Wendy had little problem finding ways to reflect their personalities and interests in their home. "The outdoors is a strong emphasis with me, so we had to blend it with hers," Dale said. Wendy added, "It would have been awkward for me to go with anything but earthy tones

to complement his hunting decor."

Upon entry into the Vaughan home, family and friends can immediately see the difference. They replaced their stained glass door with a full metal one complete with a glass see-through window. "Our company is very surprised by the changes," Wendy said. "It feels good to know we created something with a 'Wow' factor."

Interestingly, the renovations almost did not occur at all. "Two summers ago, we started investigating into buying a new home and put money down," Wendy said. "We later backed out, and decided to remodel this home."

Dale called this a blessing because soon after, the housing market collapsed, and the couple knew they would have had difficulty selling their current home. They did, however, use much of the advice given to them by a Realtor who told them what should be changed before putting their home on the market. "We agreed with the suggestions because

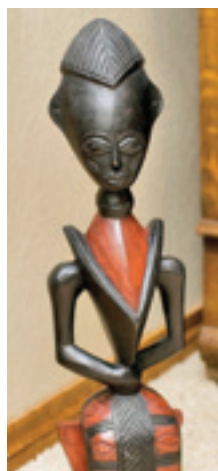


we knew the house was very dated," Wendy said.

Now it is in line with current trends. "It's definitely state-of-the-art now," Dale said.

Though Dale and Wendy admit it was difficult parting with the sentimental aspects of the home, such as painting over their children's crayon markings, they are pleased with the remodel. The nine-month-long process was an even greater accomplishment because they personally worked to make their home

not only up to date, but a better reflection of themselves. **NOW**



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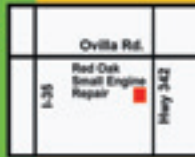


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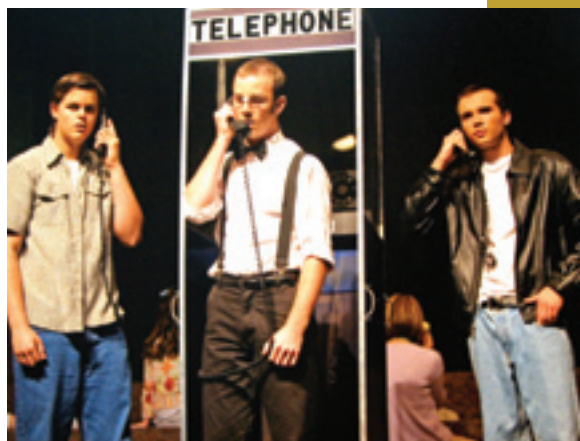
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Directing the Future

— By Sydni Thomas



Show choir mania swept the nation this past year after FOX debuted its musical comedy *Glee*, which follows the overly dramatized trials an Ohio show choir must face in its attempt to make it to the top. The real reason show choirs, theater groups and speech teams are making a comeback is not the drama but, in fact, the dedication that teachers like Ovella Christian School's (OCS) Fine Arts Director Luanne Hays invest in their students.

Luanne teaches the high school speech, drama and choir courses, and also serves as the OCS academic and speech director for students participating in TAPPS competitions. The TAPPS Board named Luanne the 2009-2010 TAPPS-3A Fine Arts Teacher of the Year.

Wearing so many different hats at OCS takes up a lot of her time. "Fortunately, everyone in my family is a part of OCS," she said. Luanne's husband, Brad, is an assistant soccer coach, track coach and junior high Bible instructor. Their daughter, Jessica, graduated from OCS in 2008 and currently attends Howard Payne University where she plans to pursue a

degree in training. "Chance, our son, is a sophomore who actively participates in the drama program," Luanne added with a smile.

Before she came to OCS, Luanne taught English and literature at ChristWay Academy in Duncanville. Ever since she was a senior in high school, Luanne's goal was to become a teacher. She went on to attend Dallas Baptist University where she was active in the music department, singing and playing the piano. "I never wanted to turn those talents into a career," she admitted. "My first love was literature, and I wanted to share it with high school students."

Luanne began her 11th year at OCS this fall. She was initially hired to teach senior English and eventually became the head of the department. The school had previously done a few theatrical productions, but they did not become a regular occurrence until Luanne began teaching a drama class during her first year. Under Luanne's direction, the drama class debuted with a performance of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

While literature was Luanne's first love, the arts became a new challenge for her. She found that drama was just an extension of the literature she loved. After the previous choir director resigned, the

theater and choir productions were combined into a yearly musical held each spring. When the opportunity to build a fine arts department was presented, Luanne left the English department. "I have this real desire to grow things," she said. "Working with the fine arts allows me to have a different relationship with the students."

Luanne has directed 10 productions now, including the widely known titles: *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Cinderella's Glass Slipper*. Shortly after *High School Musical* swept the nation, the students at OCS decided to take on the challenge of recreating the phenomenon on their own stage. To date, it has been their most successful production.

She came into the program with a five-year plan. Winning was important for each group, but Luanne's first priority was to grow a program that helped students find a way to express themselves through their own art. Some of her former students have gone on to tour with the musical *Annie*, intern at a fashion magazine and attend some of the nation's best universities for theater.

In order for the program to be successful, big risks were taken. She did not want to create preconceived notions about any of her students, letting *them*

Arts**NOW**

prove how dedicated they were to the program. When casting a musical she would sometimes choose a student who was not the clear-cut choice. "I like to groom kids who don't think they can do things and show them they can shine and excel," Luanne said. "I've taken big risks by choosing some of these students. Then they succeed and see what can be accomplished."

Once her five-year plan was met, Luanne began dreaming of what they could achieve next. She has never had a problem finding budding thespians and musicians for her musicals, but students shy away from speech activities. "A big goal for me now is to see students overcome their fears of speech giving and writing," she said. "I want to see them accomplish so many things."



"I want to see them accomplish so many things."

Luanne credits her peers at OCS and in surrounding school districts for the success this department has achieved. Not too long ago, Luanne had to pay her civic duty serving on a jury. It was the spring and the musical was coming up fast. To her dismay she was chosen to serve, but as fate would have it, she ended up being seated next to a fine arts teacher from the Midlothian Independent School District. A relationship was formed that led to the sharing of costumes, props and ideas. Luanne believes that without these relationships they would not have had many of these great opportunities. "So many people have invested in helping us and we couldn't have succeeded without them," Luanne said. "I want to be willing to help others like they've helped me, because if we just hold it in to ourselves it isn't reaching other people." **NOW**

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Cardiovascular Disease: **Deadlier Than Fire**

— By *Sydni Thomas*



The aroma of fresh bacon sizzling in the skillet flowed throughout the room where stacks of pancakes drizzled in maple syrup lined the table, garnished with sides of fried eggs and sausage. This was a common breakfast spread seen in firehouses across the nation, including the Red Oak Fire Department, until a disheartening study conducted by the United States Fire Administration about the health, fitness and fatalities of fire protection personnel was released.

According to the study, the leading cause of death, at an overwhelming 44 percent, was heart attacks and cardiovascular disease. It seems cardiovascular disease is deadlier than fire. In distant second was trauma at 27 percent. After the findings were released, the Texas Commission on Fire Protection created the Fire Service Joint Labor Management Wellness-Fitness Initiative.

In hopes of causing a change amongst themselves and the community, the Red Oak Fire Department joined the wellness movement about 10 years ago. In the past six years, it has taken a more serious role among the crews. Fire Chief Eric Thompson appointed Lieutenant Casey Greene as their wellness coordinator. Casey, along with fellow firefighters Holly Cook and Josh Nichols, attended the 40-hour Cooper Clinic Fire Service Fitness Specialist Course in Dallas in order to come back and train the department. “We implemented the Cooper program in 2007 and looking at the numbers this year, our guys have cut two to four minutes off of their mile-and-a-half,” Casey said. “It took a couple of years to get it moving, but our numbers are going down, which means our cardiovascular health is getting stronger and that is a vast improvement.”

After attending the course, guidelines were established to test the firefighters’ physical endurance and on-the-job abilities yearly. Complete physicals also became a requirement. The Cooper Clinic created a physical endurance assessment where participants are required to run, do pushups and sit-ups, and other obstacles within time constraints. During the second



From Left to right: Gabriel Guerrero, Jason Harris, Casey Greene, Scott Oakes and Josh Nichols.

assessment of the year, the Physical Agility Test simulates on-the-job situations. Participants must wear their required uniform and gear, which weighs around 65 pounds, and perform tasks like victim dragging and hose hoisting and stacking. “Think about lying in bed at 2:00 a.m. and the alarms go off. You’re going 200 miles an hour giving it everything you’ve got,” Casey said. “The first 15 minutes on a fire ground is equivalent to the average workers’ 40-hour week.”

To prepare for these tests their first task was to change the eating habits in and out of the station. Grilled foods replaced the original fried, fatty ones. Eating out became more of the occasional splurge than the norm. The department is young, the average age being 30, and both Eric and Casey hope that through this program lifestyle changes develop. So far, nutrition has been the hardest part of the program to adopt. “The fire service is known for its traditions, and one of those is we like to cook and eat,” Eric said. “It takes five to seven years to establish a tradition and culture, and that is what we’re doing here, especially with the younger guys. Hopefully, we can prevent some unnecessary medical problems in their future.”

The next step in their program was to focus on endurance, strength and flexibility by creating a mandatory workout session. Each shift is required to participate in a one-hour workout as long as it does not interfere with a call. Since there is not a gym on the premises, the department works out at Anytime Fitness. They have 24-hour access and the department covers the cost.

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"It's important for our community to know exactly what we're doing at the gym for an hour or two a day," Eric said. "We are trying to provide the best customer service we can by taking care of ourselves. It's also just as important for us to be interacting with our community in these types of situations to let them know we aren't just hiding out at the station."

The department has seen a significant increase in its effectiveness and strength. Cardiovascular disease is down in the department as well as other injuries because of the wellness program. "We've had one or two instances where we were able to catch some stuff in our guys, and it has saved us and them a lot," Eric said. "When someone is out because of



an illness or injury, it's really hard on the team. We don't have the manpower to afford several guys out at once. By doing these preventative check-ups, staying physically fit and focusing on nutrition, we've saved money and are of better service to our community."

In the future, they would like to extend this program citywide for other departments who face physically challenging duties. "Our administration lets us take our engines out of service, sign them out as unavailable for that one hour of exercise," Casey said. "We've been very fortunate because not many administrations will do that for their workers. By caring for and maintaining ourselves, we are ultimately serving our community." **NOW**

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The Family Practice

Aycox Pearson Family Dentistry meets a full range of dentistry needs for the whole family. — By Alex Allred

One of the first things Dr. Corinne Pearson and Dr. Latricia Aycox did before opening their family dentistry practice was to decorate their lobby in a manner that most reflected their own personalities. There are no white walls or impersonal furnishings in the lobby area. Instead, “We chose warm earth tones,” Dr. Aycox said. “We took our time, making sure to add all the personal touches.” Upholstered furniture, including a love seat, and a miniature refrigerator offering their patients a variety of water and juice bottles are among those personal touches.

On the walls are artwork and pictures personally selected by the two women, but the most important wall hangings are

beyond the lobby. Both women proudly display their diplomas from Baylor College of Dentistry, where they met, became friends and would later work side-by-side in the Martin Luther King Jr. Family Clinic in South Dallas.

While the work there could be both stressful and demanding, both Dr. Aycox and Dr. Pearson were deeply devoted to the importance of treating the whole patient. Beyond proper dental care, “We have their best interest in mind,” Dr. Aycox said. “It’s important that we always do our best for our patients. If we recommend work or treatment for our patients, it is something that we would also recommend to our own families.”

From left:

Corinne Pearson, Latricia Aycox; Christie Hobbs, Venissa Stevenson, Kasey Singleton and Jessica Tamez

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As the idea of opening their own practice together began to take form, they realized just how alike they truly were. Beyond their commitment to their patients and a strong communal spirit, “Professionally speaking,” Dr. Aycox said, “we want to be a well-known established practice in Red Oak. We want to be a family dentistry practice that can watch our patients grow up. We want to see them graduate from college, see them retire and still come back to see us!”

Aycox Pearson Family Dentistry continues to grow with more patient referrals. Its company Web site puts new patients at ease about different dental services, procedures and paperwork. But it is the laughter, the camaraderie and apparent joy for what they do that most resonates with their clientele. “We want to grow with our patients,” Dr. Aycox said. As she prepares for her own wedding this fall and Dr. Pearson shares stories of her young son, “family” is the overriding theme of their practice.

“In fact, we’re proud that we also see children,” she said, noting that Aycox Pearson Family Dentistry will see children as young as 6 months. “We really do work well with children. We know how to distract them and make them feel comfortable. And, if they just cannot relax, we take a break or even reschedule, but we never force them into anything.” The dentists offer a play area and the enticement of a treasure chest promising a wide variety of secret goods, as well as books and stuffed animals for children to hold for comfort if needed.

With a small staff of just six, “We knew that we wanted staff members with warm personalities, but who were also experienced in patient care. Respect is a big issue with us,” Dr. Aycox said. “Sometimes, the provider makes the decisions for a patient, but we don’t operate that way. We want to give you all your options. You make the decisions. We’re just here to help.”

As they strive to provide great care and comfort to their patients, Dr. Aycox confesses that even she visits the treasure chest. “Oh, sometimes I get things out of the treasure chest when I’m having a bad day!” she laughed, noting that everyone deserves special care. **NOW**







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Return on Investment

— By Janice C. Johnson

“I’m sure I learn more from the kids than they ever learn from me.”

“I got lost,” Linda Peterson said, “and got a job.” Freshly graduated from Southeast Missouri State University, she had flown into Dallas, accompanied by her mother, for an interview in Irving. “I took the wrong Beltline and ended up in Red Oak by mistake. My mother said that while we were here I might as well pick up an application — and lo and behold, I’ve been here 25 years!” Linda now teaches sixth grade Advanced Math at Red Oak Intermediate and finds the 90-minute classes provide an ideal time span for math. The students work above grade level, using the sixth- and seventh-grade STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) curriculum.

Linda expects a great deal from her students, and invests her energy in challenging them. She came to teach above grade level because, “My first principal taught, ‘Every child deserves one year’s worth of growth — so if they come in knowing your curriculum, it’s still your job to educate them.’” Linda pointed out that each concept she introduces will be brand new to some students but already familiar to others. To give each child the right level of challenge, she said, “I use a three-tier system, and pre-test for readiness before each unit.” This way she can accommodate all levels of ability at one time. “The whole goal is to not ever waste your time. So your whole hour-and-a-half is tailored to you. If I’m tailoring your education to you, then you’re growing.”

Linda emphasizes a strong foundation in the basics of math. “Either you work for your numbers or you make your numbers work for you,” she explained. “If I can teach you to make your numbers work for you, you’re going to love math. If you still have to learn things you should know by rote memory, you won’t love math. We do the same thing with money: Either you invest your money and let your money work for you, or you’re

always going to work for your money.” In fact, Linda uses money as the basis for many activities in her course. “When money is involved, you can make a kid convert a fraction better than anything — it matters to them,” she laughed.

Since Linda’s is a “pull-out” or niche program rather than a standard class, she does not teach as part



Linda Peterson treats some of her students to lunch at Ci Ci's.

of a team. This gives her the flexibility to design a course that meets her students’ needs, and she aims to teach the whole child. Beyond just math, Linda tries to impart a practical economic sense to her students. For that, she uses stock market curriculum from the National Council of Economics Educators. For most of the last 15 years, her students have played a 10-week interactive stock market game, now done online. Tracking their imaginary \$100,000 stock purchase teaches them about market forces.

Linda also invests in her students’ ethics and character. “You can be the smartest kid in the world, but if you’re in jail, it does you no good. I want my kids to feel good about doing what is right.” She stresses both responsibility and philanthropy. “We have a class motto: ‘To whom much is given, more is expected.’” And she leads by example: Each year her class adopts an Angel Tree family. Linda asks each student to invest from \$1 to \$10 in something that will turn a profit (the goal is to double



Education **NOW**

their money), then use the proceeds to shop for their Angel Tree family. Here, “They learn that it costs money to make money.” She takes one-fourth of the class out at a time to do the shopping. “I try to find a family that will ‘pass it on,’ and do that whole family’s Christmas. The kids are so proud of themselves — and they should be!” Linda knows that children’s honest efforts do more for their self-esteem than empty praise ever could. “Kids are smart. They know when it’s a ‘fluff’ comment. They like for people to feed their egos, who have made them work — so the feeding is true.”

Even while shopping, Linda shows her students practical, real-life skills: budgeting, balancing quality with value and viewing advertising and credit offers with skepticism. “They usually don’t understand that it costs money to borrow



From left to right Renee Bell, Deondre Gray, Linda Peterson, Bayleigh Attaway and Amy Mathis.

money. Many of them don’t know that when you use a credit card you have to pay that money back with interest.”

By applying math to real-life situations, Linda’s students enjoy learning. “I can work you a lot harder if you’re having fun,” she said. And they do work hard. With the solid foundation in math, common sense and character that Linda weaves into her curriculum, her students finish the year well on their way to a productive adult life. “These kids could probably go and fix the Gulf oil spill,” she said, “because no one has told them that they can’t.”

But the children are not the only ones who benefit from Linda’s investment. “I’m sure I learn more from the kids than they ever learn from me,” she said. “I’m very blessed. I love what I do; it’s like going to play every day.” **NOW**

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In The Kitchen With Patti Tunnell

— By Faith Browning

Ovilla resident Patti Tunnell comes from a family of talented cooks. Her sister, Judy, was a longtime bakery owner in Cedar Hill in the '80s and her daughter, Ashley, owns a bakery today. "My sister taught me how to stretch a meal for big families and a love for baking," she proudly said. "Now I have passed this on to my daughter who has just opened a bakery in downtown Midlothian and fulfilled her dream to

make her Aunt Judy proud."

Besides cooking, Patti enjoys the outdoors and time with her family. "I love to garden, and spend most of my time outside just loving what God and Mother Nature have blessed us with," she expressed. "My grandkids' visits keep me up-to-date on music, the latest fads and add a few years to my life with the joy and laughter they give to me." **NOW**



TORTILLA SOUP

1 onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
1 10-oz. can of Ro*Tel® tomatoes, drained
1 14 1/2- to 16-oz. can pureed tomatoes
3 cups chicken stock
1 tsp. chili powder
1 tsp. cumin
Salt, to taste
1 cup diced, cooked chicken
Bag of corn tortilla chips
Optional garnishes: diced avocado, grated cheddar cheese and sour cream

1. In a large saucepan, sauté onion and garlic in 1 Tbsp. of oil for about 5 minutes until onions are soft.
2. Add Ro*Tel tomatoes, pureed tomatoes, chicken stock, chili powder, cumin and salt. Heat to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 20 to 30 minutes.
3. Add cooked chicken and heat for about 5 minutes. Place chips in bowls, add soup and garnish with favorite garnishes. Makes 8 servings.

CORN CHIP CASSEROLE

1 whole chicken, cooked and de-boned
1 cup cream of celery soup
1 cup cream of chicken soup
1 cup Ro*Tel® tomatoes
1 cup cheddar cheese
1 11-oz. pkg. corn tortilla chips

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease 9 x 13-inch pan.
2. Mix all ingredients, except cheese.
3. Place in a pan; top with cheese. Bake until cheese melts.

QUESADILLAS

1 pkg. corn or flour tortillas
Butter
Cheese (cheddar and Monterrey Jack cheese)
Optional garnishes: chopped tomatoes, chili peppers, veggies or leftover beef or chicken

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Spread butter on tortilla; place tortilla butter side down on a large, ungreased cookie sheet; cover with cheese and garnishes.
3. Place another tortilla butter side up on top and bake until cheese is melted (10 to 15 minutes). Remove and cut into wedges.

CHOCOLATE TURTLES

1 pkg. milk chocolate cake mix
2/3 cup shortening
2 eggs
2 1/2 cups of pecan halves
1 tub of chocolate frosting

1. Preheat oven to 375 F.
2. Beat about half of the cake mix, the shortening and eggs in a large bowl on medium speed until smooth.

Stir in remaining cake mix.

3. For each cookie, place 3 pecan halves with ends touching in the center, on ungreased cookie sheet.
4. Place 1 tsp. of dough in center of each group of pecans.
5. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until centers are slightly puffy and edges are set.
6. Cool completely; frost with frosting. Makes about 5 dozen cookies.

PECAN PUFFS

1 cup butter
4 Tbsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. vanilla
2 cups cake flour
2 cups finely ground pecans
Powdered sugar

1. Preheat oven to 300 F.
2. Cream butter and sugar. Add vanilla.
3. Stir flour and pecans into the mixture.
4. Roll dough into small balls. Place on greased cookie sheets. Bake for 45 minutes.
5. Roll puffs in powdered sugar while hot.
6. When cold, roll again in powdered sugar.

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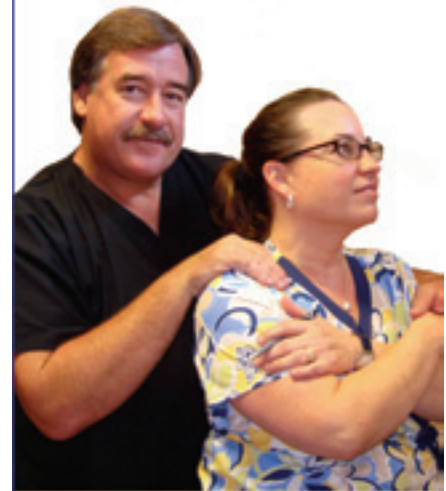
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Life Lessons

— By *Andrea Walton*

Mike Thompson died in a car accident leaving behind his wife, Amanda, their two boys and stiff financial challenges. “After that,” Amanda recalls, “I put the house up for sale and we moved in with my mother.” About six months later, she purchased life insurance on herself telling her agent, “I don’t want this to happen to my children.”

Amanda’s story illustrates how being without life insurance can leave families vulnerable to financial hardship. However, the need for life insurance is not limited to families.

When you’re single with no dependents, you may not need much life insurance. But you should at least have enough to cover final expenses, so your parents or siblings aren’t burdened with these costs. Once you’re married, you share a life and a home with someone else. Now if the worst happens, your spouse may be left with a rent or mortgage payment they can’t afford. At this point, it’s time for both spouses to get individual life policies.



When you have children, you have their future to think about. Life insurance can help your spouse keep up with child care and other expenses, as well as save for education and retirement. In retirement, life insurance becomes an important part of your estate plan allowing you to pass wealth to future generations or a charity.

There are two basic categories of life insurance — term and permanent. Term insurance can be purchased in large amounts for a small initial premium. It is well suited for short-term goals. Coverage lasts for a specified term. After this term has ended, it expires unless renewed by paying higher premiums.

Permanent life insurance provides a death benefit while the policy is in force. The premiums are initially higher than those of term insurance, but in many cases they can be cheaper over the life of the insured. Permanent life insurance usually builds up a tax deferred cash value and is well suited for long-term goals.

Whichever option you choose, make sure your policy coverage keeps pace with your life stage — now and in the future.

Andrea Walton is a State Farm agent based in Red Oak.

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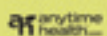
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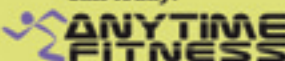
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All Month

Red Oak ISD Education Foundation Partnership Challenge golf registration: Golf tournament benefiting ROISD teachers and students is October 4 at Thorntree Country Club. To register, contact Karen Anderson at (972) 345-4021 or karen.anderson@redoakisd.org.

First and Third Mondays

Glenn Heights City Council meetings: 7:30 p.m., city council chambers, 1938 Hampton Rd., Glenn Heights. Call (972) 223-1690 or write citysecretary@glennheights.com.

Second Monday

Red Oak City Council meeting: 7:00 p.m., Red Oak Municipal Center, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. (972) 617-3638 or colguin@redoaktx.org.

Ovilla City Council meeting: 7:00 p.m., City Hall, 105 S. Cockrell Hill Rd. (972) 617-2489 or phiggins@cityofovilla.org.

Third Monday

Red Oak ISD School Board meeting: 7:00 p.m., Red Oak Elementary cafeteria, 200 Valley Ridge Dr. Call (972) 617-2941 or visit <http://www.redoakisd.org/>.

First Tuesday

PrimeTimers Senior Group meeting: 10:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Oaks Fellowship, 777 S. I-35 East in Red Oak. Open to all seniors. Fun, food and fellowship. RSVP (214) 376-8208.

Second Tuesday

Oak Leaf City Council meeting: 7:00 p.m., Oak Leaf Municipal Center, 301 Locust Dr. For details, call (972) 617-2660 or visit <http://www.oakleafatexas.org/city-council>.

First and Third Tuesdays

Red Oak Lions Club meetings: 7:00 p.m., 207 W. Red Oak Rd. (214) 864-8014.

Tuesdays and Thursdays

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

Every Wednesday

Family Story Time: 10:00-11:00 a.m., Red Oak Public Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. All ages welcome. Call (469) 218-1230 or visit www.redoakpubliclibrary.org.

Wednesdays and Thursdays

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

First and Third Thursday

Glenn Heights Lions Club meetings: 7:00 p.m., Bienvenidos Restaurant, 920 N. I-35 E., Lancaster.

September 6

New Morning Networker: 7:30 a.m.-8:45 a.m., Access Storage, 561 E. Ovilla Road. Call Tom Rogers at (972) 571-9299 for more information.



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Happening **NOW**

September 10-11

Founder's Day/Homecoming: Friday-night festivities begin at 7:00 p.m. followed by the football game at 7:30 p.m. Saturday activities include Hawk Hustle 5K beginning at 8:00 a.m.; parade at 9:00 a.m.; food and vendor booths all day at Red Oak High School, 122 State Highway 342. Contact Shelley Oglesby at (972) 617-0906, admin@redoakareachamber.org or visit www.redoakisd.org.

September 18

Lion's Club Pancake Breakfast: 207 West Red Oak Road. All-you-can-eat breakfast benefiting Lion's Club charities. Contact Les Mitchell at (972) 617-3198.

September 22

Red Oak Area Chamber Luncheon: Noon, Red Oak Municipal Center, 200 Lakeview Parkway. Cost is \$12 with reservations or \$15 at the door. Contact Shelley Oglesby at admin@redoakareachamber.org.

September 25

Ovilla's 25th Annual Heritage Day Celebration: 8:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m., downtown Ovilla. Fun for the whole family featuring arts and crafts booths, food and entertainment. Contact Kim Gutierrez at (972) 617-7262 or kgutierrez@cityofovilla.org.

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

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