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## On The Cover



Curtistene McCowan and her husband, Leon, sit in the school named after them.

*Photo by Opaque Visuals.*

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# Editor's Note

*Fall is here!*

Hopefully, that means cooler temperatures. I imagine most people are settling back into routines made up of school schedules, carpools, fundraisers and all the things that make for structure after the busy summer "lull."

Fall makes me think of apples, scenic mountain road trips to see the aspens and the urge to cook again. I only like to cook when it's cold ... pleasant aromas equate warmth to me. Fall is a good time to re-evaluate and restructure habits. Other people must think so, too, because September is Better Breakfast Month, Classical Music Month and National Courtesy Month. September 6 is Fight Procrastination Day and the 30th is National Mud Pack Day.

I'm not much of a breakfast fan, unless it includes a Dutch Baby and fresh-squeezed orange juice. But I do like classical music and courtesy. I will probably put off fighting procrastination though.

Wonder what your fall will bring?

*Beverly*

Beverly Shay

*SouthwestNOW* Editor

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1:30 PM WWS Jazz Band  
2:10 PM Tommy Winger, Ph.D. Navarro College  
A Short History of Oil and Gas in Our Region  
2:15 PM Old Fashioned Slogans  
3:45 PM Howard Garrison, Dean of Academic Affairs TCU  
Geology of our Region  
4:30 PM Woodstock Community Theater  
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by F.B. Reganston  
5:15 PM Panel Discussion on the pros and cons of the oil industry  
6:15 PM Dinner Break  
6:45 PM TACU Jazz Band Performance

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# Golden Oldies

— By Angel Morris

*While called the Silver Serenaders, many members of this senior adult choir are well into their golden years. A concert at Dallas' Meyerson Symphony Center September 18, in fact, marks the 30th anniversary of performances by the group whose members' average age is 74.*

"We will perform a marvelous new work by composer Charles F. Brown entitled 'I Shall See Thy Face,' written especially for our choir," artistic director, Jim Palmer, said. "The second half of the concert will be lighter fare featuring all the styles of pop music the choir has sung during the last 30 years."

The Silver Serenaders of Texas was established September 17, 1981, at Cliff Temple Baptist Church in Dallas, when only a few other senior adult choirs existed in the U.S. Jim and his wife, Betty, approached their church with the idea of forming the group, after attending a Southern Baptist

Convention conference where Jim heard his first senior choir perform.

"At that time, we called them the Sunset Serenaders because the church was on Sunset Street, Sunset High School was just up the street and because 'sunset' represented our senior years. We had 52 people come out for our first rehearsal," Jim recalled.

In 1995, the group changed its name to Silver Serenaders, as it evolved from a church to a community choir, inviting

members of all denominations, with Jim remaining at its helm. A singer since his days at Sunset High School, Jim had been in glee club at Baylor University, where he earned a master's degree in history. He later earned a master's of church music from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"During this period, I became minister of music at a church in Richardson, where I remained for seven-and-a-half years," Jim said. After a move to Oak Cliff brought him to Cliff Temple



*"We're a nonprofit Christian choir and, on purpose, we sing all kinds of music."*



Baptist, Jim led the junior high choir, the college and career choir and then the Templos Junior Choir for a decade. "Then we started the Sunset Serenaders, and I really found my niche."

Joining the choir involves "showing up, filling out a card and being faithful to rehearsals," Jim said. Rehearsals take place each Monday from 4:00-6:00 p.m. at Hillcrest Baptist Church in Cedar Hill. There is no audition involved. "Just give me a warm body and a willing, dedicated person, and I do the rest in teaching music," Jim explained. "We invite those who have never sung in a choir and, of course, those with vast musical experience and all those in between."

Even following this loose format, Jim said the group continues to improve. "When people realize we are a serious choir, not an 'old folks' choir," he explained, "they want to be a member. We attract more and more seasoned musicians," he continued. "Secondly, those who joined years ago have grown in confidence and become fine musicians."

Perhaps it's the three-fold mission that affords the group continued success: to witness for Christ through musical arts, to promote U.S. patriotism and to encourage community service. "We're a nonprofit Christian choir and, on purpose, we sing all kinds of music. Our concerts consist of 50-percent sacred music and the other half is patriotic or jazz, country or pop, classic western or rock — whatever our mood is," Jim said.

This eclectic style seems to please patrons. "Our audiences are usually



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astonished to see our choir of older members sing an hour-and-a-half concert completely from memory," Jim said.

Audiences from New York to Israel, have responded with standing ovations, including one lasting nine minutes following the group's premier performance of a senior adult musical called *More Than Ever Before*, showcased at a conference of choirs.

"That was one of my proudest moments — to be applauded by 2,000 of my peers," Jim recalled. "But it's a rarity



for us not to receive a standing ovation wherever we might perform."

Notable performance sites include New York's Carnegie Hall; the National Christian Church in Washington, D.C.; Carpenter Hall in Irving; and Hawaii's largest Catholic senior center. The list also includes a number of hotels, more than 100 churches and at least 10 colleges and universities.

"But one of my favorite performances was at a small church in East Texas, with no choir loft and seating for 100 people. We decided to surround the audience by making a circle around the four sides of the little sanctuary," Jim recalled. "I stood in the middle directing and our sound enveloped the audience. It was surreal."

While their songs bring listeners to their feet, Jim notes that a number of choir members sit during every concert. "Some are on walkers or in wheelchairs and are unable to stand for any length of time ... so they sit," Jim said. "This inspires me to give my all for these seniors who have overcome physical issues and continue to be faithful and make genuine contributions to our group."

One particular inspiration is 96-year-old choir member, Jean Clardy, who



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was at that first meeting in 1981. “She is almost always present for rehearsal and never fails to memorize our music. She is an example of dedication and love for the Silver Serenaders that is unsurpassed,” Jim reflected.

With the advanced age of many in the choir, the group has shared some 100 members’ deaths. The deceased are



dubbed Golden Serenaders by remaining group members, who insist the departed now sing in “our Father’s heavenly choir.”

“More than one member has chosen to be buried in their choir uniform,” Jim noted. “I will never forget the first time this occurred, and it led me to believe the Silver Serenaders Choir was a most important part of their lives. I knew then that my work was not in vain ... that we really made a difference.”

For his dedication to the group, Jim has never taken remuneration. “To be paid for my loving hobby,” he said, “would have spoiled everything.” October 1, he will retire as Serenaders’ artistic director but continue on as a choir member alongside his wife. He calls Betty “the real musician of the family” and notes she has performed on keyboard at every Serenaders’ concert. “She is the reason I have been able to direct this choir all these years,” Jim said, encouraging others to be part of the group that has brought them both such joy.

“The Silver Serenaders of Texas Adult Choir is a wonderful, friendly, loving organization. If you have wanted to be a part of a group like this, do not delay,” Jim said. “Join us, and before long a spark will ignite in you, making you a living flame of performance and a choir member of merit and joy. It will change your life!” **NOW**



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# EAGLE EXPRESS



## 2011-12: The STAARt of something big!

### DeSoto ISD launches 'STAARt of something big' campaign with new testing

On August 16, DeSoto ISD launched "2011-12: The STAARt of Something Big" at the annual employee Convocation! The theme, a play on the new STAAR testing which replaces TAKS testing this year, also launches the district into a new era with a feel of confidence and unity. The district continues to push toward exemplary learning for all students! While ratings change, budgets change, leaders change, curriculum changes and even teachers change - students remain the same! As educators, and a district, we must meet them where they are and then push them to new heights!

In addition to the new campaign, DeSoto has some changes in leadership. With the voluntary exit agreement being decided by the Board and Superintendent Kathy Augustine, the 2011-12 school year was launched with Acting Superintendent Levatta Levels at the helm. In addition, three cabinet members retired this past year and, as a cost savings, their duties have been absorbed by other current cabinet members and staff.

The 2011-12 annual budget will not use the district fund balance for the first time in over five years. The balanced budget includes savings in health insurance, custodial expenses, job attrition, frozen longevity pay, utility expenses, reduced budgets, secondary staffing ratio changes, elimination of signing bonuses and closing the tax office and one administration building. The savings, combined with the federal Edjobs funding of \$1.5 million, will offset



Acting Superintendent Levatta Levels leads the district Convocation.

both the previous budget deficit of \$2.9 million and state reduced funding of \$3.2 million this year. We were able to do all this without mass position cuts, salary reductions or furlough days!

We have built a solid foundation in DeSoto ISD - one where Eagles soar in academics, athletics and extra-curricular activities! But, we and our community expect more! Our goal is to deliver more! Monday, August 22 - the first day of the 2011-12 school year - we welcomed back the 9,200 students of DeSoto ISD.

### District scores stay high, ratings hold for two years in transition

Based on the 2010-11 TAKS scores, after the state discontinued the projection and growth measures used the last two years, DeSoto ISD earned the Acceptable rating as a district. Achievement levels were consistent with 73% of district cells even or increasing passing percentages over 2009-10. Of the seven cells that decreased - all were within three percentage points and four of those cells are still at the recognized level or above. The district completion rate increased to 92.5% and the district dropout rate is 0.1%. The district would have remained Recognized had the state not removed the projection measures. Campus ratings will also remain until 2012-13.

The new STAAR tests will include the same grade level tests for grades 3-8, but grades 9-12 will begin taking end-of-course tests while grades 10-11 will continue with TAKS until they graduate. For more information, visit the STAAR Portal for Parents online.



#### 2010-12 TEA Ratings

<b>Exemplary School</b>	Cockrell Hill Elementary
<b>Recognized Schools</b>	
Amber Terrace Elementary	The Meadows Elementary
Frank Moates Elementary	Northside Elementary
Woodridge Elementary	Ruby Young Elementary
<b>Acceptable Schools</b>	
East Middle School	McCowan Middle School
West Middle School	DeSoto Freshman Campus
DeSoto High School	

### calendar of events

September 5 - Labor Day Holiday  
October 3 - State Fair Day; Staff Development  
October 10 - Early Release  
November 21-25 - Thanksgiving Holiday  
December 19-30 - Winter Break; School resumes Jan. 2

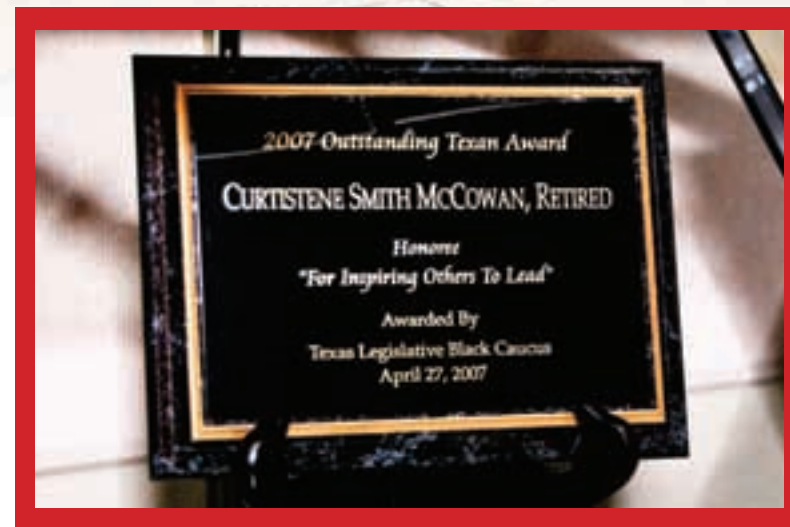


# A School with *Her Name*

— By Beverly Shay

*Curtistene McCowan has been involved in almost everything in DeSoto. She has been such an amazing volunteer in the community and within DeSoto Independent School District (ISD) for so many years that a school bears her name. "I would have never sought such an honor," Curtistene was quick to remark, yet she is most definitely pleased and honored. Curtistene S. McCowan Middle School is the first DeSoto school to be named in honor of a volunteer, but then few have volunteered within an ISD for 30 years.*

Curtistene is not the only member of her family constantly involved in volunteer work. She and her husband, Leon, were founding members of Concerned DeSoto Citizens (CDC), both have served as president at various times over 22 years. They are quite involved in their church, Kirkwood Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, where Leon chairs the board of stewards and coordinates CIT (communication, information and technology). Curtistene is on the church board of trustees and serves as volunteer coordinator. "Our faith is very important to us," she remarked. Curtistene was charter president for the DeSoto Education Foundation and still serves on the board of directors "to promote other leaders." Promoting others is a particular passion of Curtistene's. "Through the Education Foundation, you can touch every school in the district," she succinctly stated.





Curtistene is understandably proud of being the first African-American to be elected to public office — board of trustees — in DeSoto, and equally proud of her appointment to the Texas Southern University's board of regents by Governor Rick Perry, in 2007, and reappointed in 2009. Leon also served on the board of trustees for Texas College in Tyler for 20 years.

Not surprisingly, school was where it all began for Leon and Curtistene. Leon lived in Jefferson, Texas, in town, and Curtistene lived in the country in the community of Smithland, but they attended the same high school. Leon admitted it was probably love at first sight. "She was so smart and outgoing, as well as being an athlete and a star on the basketball team." What really drew them together was being in marching band. Leon played clarinet, and Curtistene was the majorette. They began dating in the 10th grade and have been married 45 years.

"Leon was very studious and disciplined, yet kind. He was such a gentleman, respectful of young ladies and everyone. He loved to work, and because he was such a high achiever, he managed to balance full-time work, family and school," Curtistene inserted.

Curtistene earned an associate's degree in business at El Centro College and her bachelor's in business administration at Dallas Baptist University. "She's not the late bloomer she thought," Leon declared. "She just waited until I had finished my education in 1975." Leon's education includes a B.A. in sociology from Wiley College and a master's from North Texas State (now the University of North Texas) in public administration.

They are justifiably proud of both of their sons. Danny Sebastian, now 44, works for the FAA as an electronic technician in engineering services. He and his wife, Angie, live with their daughter, Taylor, 11, in Cedar Hill. Danny also has two daughters, Tiana and Kirsten, from his first marriage to Felicia. "Tiana and Kirsten's maternal grandfather also has a school named after him," Curtistene remarked.

Leon Curtis, now 36, is married to Stephanie. He serves as RCRA waste

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manager for Texas Military Forces in Austin and director of adult ministries at St. James Missionary Baptist Church, while also working on his doctorate in servant leadership studies and ministries.

Leon and Curtistene initially lived in Houston, where Leon was a management specialist with Reynolds Metal. "I thought we would stay there, when Leon was recruited to bring in more minorities by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. After six months, in 1970, we decided Leon should work with the USDA in Dallas, where he provided management training in food and nutritional services," Curtistene recalled. In 1976, he transferred to U.S. Health, Education and Welfare (now called U.S. Health and Human Services). Since 1991, Leon has been regional administrator, responsible for the administration for children and families in Region VI, a five-state region in the Southwest. He provides executive leadership for program funding, oversight of their technological systems, as well as leadership coordination and collaboration for some 68 programs, such as: Head Start, child welfare, fatherhood and child-support programs and the youth agency. Obviously, he is very good at doing so.

"We believe if you invest in people, they will invest in you," Curtistene commented.

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assets through educational training in jobs, home ownership and savings plans. Our goal is to get them off government assistance and into an independent lifestyle. Since 1999, we have seen an 85-percent success rate," Leon stated.

Once in Dallas, Curtistene found a job as a thrift store cashier for Continental Baking Company. She soon transferred to a new store as a supervisor. By 1972, she worked temporarily as a clerk/typist at the Federal Trade Commission. She was soon promoted to consumer protection assistant. "As I gained experience and proved myself, my career path advanced incrementally to investigator and then to top position as senior investigator, from which I retired in 2005. I investigated fraudulent business activities. Some of my work involved anti-trust concerns and even some undercover jobs," she explained. "But I also did consumer and business outreaches, which involved public speaking and training workshops concerning consumer protection matters. In addition, she worked as an Equal Employment Opportunity counselor."

Their move to DeSoto came in 1977. "We were looking for a quieter, sort of country place to live and good schools. Our oldest son was in the fifth grade, but our younger son had not yet started school. That was when I began to get involved in PTA. By the time Leon Curtis was in eighth grade, I was PTA president and, later, on the high school PTA board. Both Leon and I volunteered with the band and athletic booster clubs, although I had more time for it than Leon did," she remarked.

One reason for Curtistene's intense involvement within the school system stems from her childhood. "I saw educators and principals as an extension of my family," she recalled. "My dad died when I was 8, so our income was limited. But my principal and my teachers made sure my family was able to participate in everything, even when we couldn't afford to. They really cared. So having an opportunity to give back is really important to me. My mom always told us, 'Charity begins at home.' This community is our home. We love it here. And Leon is very supportive of my volunteer work, because he sees how happy I am." **NOW**



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# From *Chief* to Comedian

— By Beverly Shay

*These days, when people retire, they just aren't as old as they used to be. Some retirees are moving on to their next career or their third career. Or, they kick back and become more of what they have always been, but had to keep slightly under wraps, while maintaining their professional image. Perhaps in the case of former Duncanville Police Chief Michael Courville, now known simply as Maurice the Cajun, his propensity for entertaining others with his Cajun humor has always leaked out.*

Michael, whom we will refer to from here on as Maurice, was born in Carencro, Louisiana, now a suburb of Lafayette, the Cajun capitol. He and three brothers and two sisters were reared in the Sunset area, about eight miles away, by his stay-at-home mom, who kept their home filled with an entourage of women, whose hair she did. His dad was in construction. Sadly, when Maurice was 14, his mom died. He left to join the Air Force at the age of 18. Four years of service in the Air Force Police brought him from Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio to New Mexico, Alaska, Spain, Canada and Nebraska, where he met his wife.



Perhaps it was inevitable that Maurice would end up both as a Cajun humorist and a law enforcement officer. His next door neighbor in Sunset was the chief of police. "I saw all the people who went to him for help after dark," Maurice related. "He never turned anyone away. He tried to help everyone."

Maurice, smitten with a young Nebraskan woman named Sandy, married her and stayed on in Lincoln where he worked for the police. "I got three parking tickets while I was taking my civil service exam," he recalled with a grin. Obviously, those tickets hindered neither his desire, nor his qualification for police work. He and Sandy stayed in Nebraska for four years.

"What ended up getting us to Dallas was a trip through the South we took over Christmas and New Year's. On New Year's morning, we woke up in Dallas — it was 70 degrees!" Maurice exclaimed, with amazement etched on his face. "I went home, gave my notice and came down here in April of 1970. On May 1, I started with the Duncanville Police Department, even though I didn't have that job when we came down here. "Most police departments hire in October at the start of their fiscal year. So what began as a temporary position became the very job I retired from 26 and one-half years later, in June 1996."

So what draws someone into law enforcement? For Maurice it was two-fold: "I like helping people, and I like telling them what to do. You see, when the police are called, it's because things have gone wrong, and people need to be told what to do next," he explained. "I see people at their worst and get to help bring them back."

Although Maurice started out as a patrolman, he retired as a police chief, a position to which he was appointed in 1979.







"I still remember the car ride Marcus Harrington, city manager at the time, asked me to take. The former police chief had died unexpectedly. Everyone was wondering what would happen. Marcus took me to see Dr. Peel, the pastor of the Duncanville First United Methodist Church. Upon entering Dr. Peel's office, Marcus requested that the reverend pray for the new police chief," Maurice related, noting it was a humbling experience.

As police chief, Maurice enjoyed joining others in impacting the community through church, the Chamber, school and PTA involvement. "Both my wife and I were acknowledged with lifetime PTA awards," he stated simply. He was part of implementing Project Graduation, a program to provide a safe, chaperoned, post-graduation party for seniors. He has also been active in the Citizens Police Academy and Citizens on Patrol.

With retirement 17-and-a-half years after his appointment as police chief, Maurice had the opportunity to be involved in the Police Chief Association. Never one to do anything

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halfway, Maurice became the executive director, started, managed and edited the association's biannual magazine, *Texas Police Chief*. He also authored *Texas Police Chiefs Association Fiftieth Anniversary Pictorial History* covering 1958-2008. His work as executive director with the association took them to the Austin area for four years, but then they returned to Duncanville.



Maurice is justifiably proud to have a son in law enforcement, as well. Not only is his oldest son, Marc, a Frisco police officer, he founded and is president of the Dallas Defenders Football Club, a semipro football team, which plays in the National Public Safety Football League. The mission of the Dallas club, comprised of police officers, firefighters, EMTs and detention facility personnel, is to provide monetary support to families of police officers and firefighters who have been killed in the line of duty in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, to raise funds to benefit youth in our surrounding communities and to increase community awareness through sports, in order to deter youth from gang involvement.

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Maurice is equally proud of his son, Craig, who is with an accounting firm in Lewisville. Maurice and Sandy enjoy their 11-year-old twin granddaughters, Haley Jean and Loryn.

In 1987, Maurice found himself at a banquet in Galveston, where the project director wanted Cajun humorist/chef, Justin Wilson, to be the speaker. Maurice related well to his humor and his stories. Justin challenged Maurice to begin telling his stories in a more public forum. In 1995, Maurice found himself back in Opelousas, one of the oldest cities in Louisiana, at an international Cajun joke-telling contest. With nine competitors, Maurice took the championship. He's been telling his Cajun tales ever since.

"The secret is the dialect," he confided.



"I have it down." Stories come from his background, but also from the Internet. I have to tell a story every Friday at the Lions Club, so I let them know that everything I tell was told me as the truth." Maurice's tales are just another reflection of who he is. Maurice has also made three CDs and a DVD, so others may enjoy his Cajun humor at their leisure.

"I have always loved everything I did every day," he reflected. These days that enjoyment involves caring for his wife, who is in advanced stages of multiple sclerosis, with some help from Sandy's mother, Yvonne Engstedt, and caregiver Christine Velasquez Jones. His selfless service, which impacted so much of the community, is now flowing in-house toward the love of his life. Yet he still sparkles with good humor, *joie de vivre* and service toward others and the ever-present story or two about some hapless soul in the bayou. **NOW**

*Editor's Note:*

For more information about Maurice the Cajun, e-mail [mauricethecajun@aol.com](mailto:mauricethecajun@aol.com).



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# An Artist's Vision

— By Jeremy Agor

## AT HOME WITH Bill and Anita Hall

*For 30 years, Bill and Anita Hall lived in a cozy home in Arlington, close to their commercial art business and well-suited to rearing their family. With them approaching retirement and their home being paid off, they had a desire to wind down their business so Bill could focus on creating and selling fine art pieces, which had always been his passion. To do this, they decided to sell their home and find one that better suited their tastes. “We didn’t want a “cookie-cutter”*

*home. We wanted it to fit our needs and our own personalities. We wanted an office, a fine art studio and a place for Bill’s mother,” Anita explained. “We spent a year looking at houses and became aware that nothing we looked at had the features we wanted, so we started talking about building a house that would have those features.”*

“When we first got married, we saw the towers out in Cedar Hill and rode out one day to find them. We hadn’t been out here before, and we loved it,” Bill said. “We couldn’t afford it then, but when we could, we started looking out here again. We fell in love with this lot and bought it. All of a sudden, we had to design and build a house, so we started budgeting like mad.”

Bill and Anita began building in 1999, with Bill doing the design work and much of the construction himself. Unfettered by the constraints of architecture training, he designed the







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home as an artist would, including building a scale model of his vision so Anita could better visualize how the home flowed. The contractors they hired even used it as a reference. The full-size result of Bill's vision, completed in 2001, is a bright, spacious home designed to be comfortable and functional as a gallery for Bill's fine art pieces.

The four-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bathroom home sits on a large, wooded lot, located in the lowest point in the neighborhood, which gives it a secluded feel. The lot has plenty of trees and a small creek running through it. The home has an open floor plan and is wheelchair-friendly because Bill's mother, who lives with them in her own space in the finished basement, has arthritis and may need a wheelchair someday.

The first thing visitors see in the spacious entryway is a soaring ceiling with niches on the facing wall. Several of Bill's large art pieces grace the walls and nestle in the niches. The



couple maintains an office filled with a lifetime's worth of awards, artwork and photographs. They wanted to be able to use the entryway, so they added a door that leads out to the garage. "We put our office near the front of the house because it creates a natural separation for us. When we leave the office, even though we're only going to a different part of the house, we feel like we're

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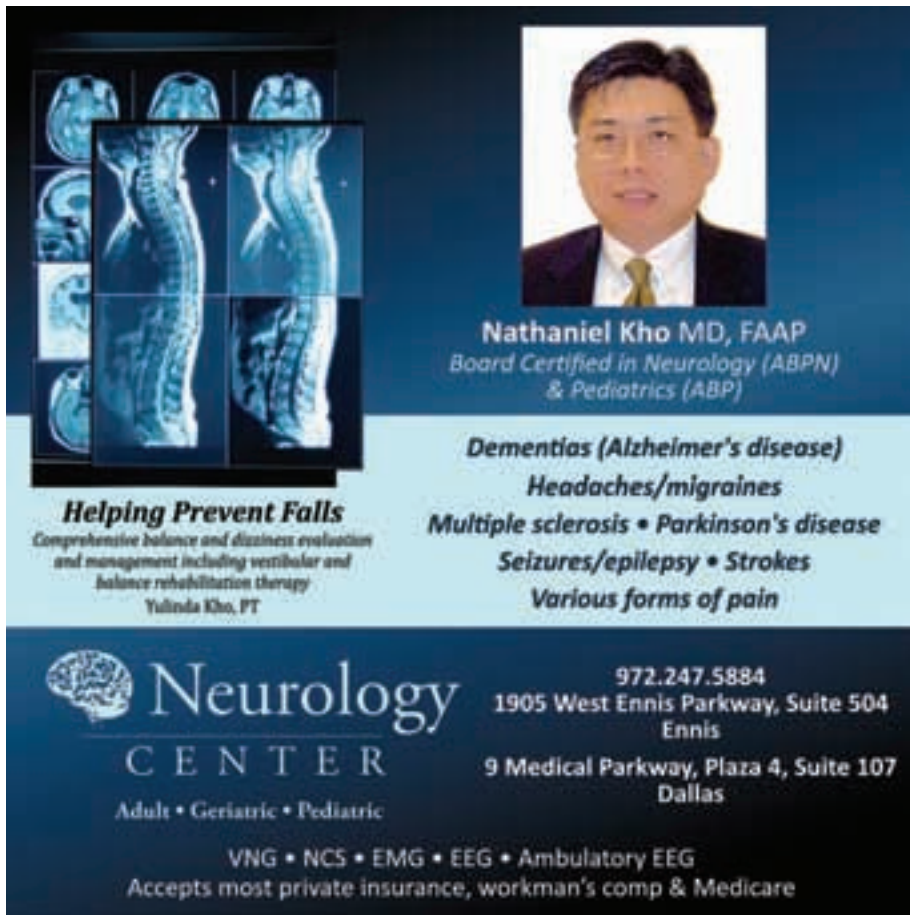
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leaving work behind,” Bill explained.

Bill and Anita put a lot of effort into making their home energy-efficient. The home office features narrow, low-E windows that break up the space but allow plenty of light and make it easier to insulate. The house’s walls are six inches thick and filled with rigid foam and wood sheathing, which adds structural strength, while sealing the outside of the home. Cool ply decking for the roof and a radiant barrier in the attic keeps the highest parts of the house cool no matter how hot it is outside.

The open kitchen invites family and friends to gather there. Bill painstakingly cut and carved a curved pattern into the tile backsplash, which continues onto the front of the breakfast bar, though he chose to use broken tile on the bar because the kitchen backsplash was so difficult. He and Anita chose to use tile throughout because it is easy to clean and will last longer than carpet. Bill even chose to build the supports for a table in the informal dining area near the kitchen out of tile. The tile on the floors is a neutral color, but there is a twist. “I hate monotony, so Bill cut out arrows from darker tiles and broke up the lines with them,” Anita laughed.

Beyond the kitchen is a modern, yet cozy, living room, the focal point of which is a floor-to-ceiling fireplace, television and sound system, and artfully built clock. Upstairs is an unfinished loft area, which will house a library and more art and be accessible via a spiral staircase. Off the living room is a formal dining room.

The master bedroom is a place of solitude and has a large master bath with a handicap-accessible, no-threshold shower and cabinets built into the walls to make the best use of space and maintain the aesthetic appeal.





In the finished basement is a large room that features a dance floor made of Italian porcelain tile, complete with a disco ball. There are smaller rooms at either end of the space: one is a spacious home gym and the other is Bill's mother's bedroom, which she decorated herself. One side of the dance floor has a large kitchen and wet bar. The other side opens to Bill's art studio — large, very bright with large doors to the outside to allow Bill to move his art effortlessly. The studio also has plenty of storage for his supplies and completed works. "I work with cement. It's a mix of painting and sculpture. When we were building the house, I learned how cement takes different forms. I buy all my art supplies at Home Depot," Bill admitted with a laugh. "I pour the cement on Hardie Board, then add pigment and shape it, carve it and polish it."

A final feature in the master bedroom, on the first floor well worth mentioning, is a narrow piece of old Sheetrock, framed and mounted on the wall among the art — a piece of Bill and Anita's former home. On it are the lines they drew when measuring the heights of their children — now ages 33 and 34 — as they grew up. While the Sheetrock is the only tangible reminder of their Arlington home, there's still an emotional tie to it: "The layout of our new home is almost exactly the same as our first house, just bigger and multistory," Bill said.

"We've been commercial artists since 1970," Anita added, "but Bill has always had fine art in his heart. He was one of the founding members of 500 Expo — an exhibition space for up-and-coming artists in the Dallas area," Anita said.

"And now that our business is winding down," Bill said, "I can devote the majority of my time to fine art." **NOW**

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## A Nice Little Niche

*Believing everyone is someone, Missi Armstrong strives to have something nice for each person who comes into her gift shop.*

— By Beverly Shay

For a little over a year, a nice little gift shop has been expanding its way into the heart of Duncanville, offering all manner of enticing gifts. “I wanted to provide gifts, particularly unique customized items, something different and personal,” confided Missi Armstrong, owner of And Everything Nice. Missi spent years learning the retail world, beginning with her degree in marketing from Baylor University. “I have worn every hat in retail: buyer, assistant manager, store manager, district manager, merchandise coordinator, human resource manager and payroll clerk,” she recalled.

Missi mostly grew up in Grand Prairie. She met a young man named Danny on a blind date while she was attending Baylor,

“even though he was an Aggie,” she revealed. “My sister’s boyfriend was determined to find a date for me, so he could date just my sister.” Although the attraction was immediate, Danny had to wait 15 years for Missi to explore the world of her retail career dreams, before they married nearly 10 years ago. Her dreams took her to Allentown, Pennsylvania, where she worked for Hess’s Department Stores as a designer dress buyer. Working in New York was a dream come true. Later, while working in Nebraska, she returned to the Dallas area for a class reunion, where she “re-met” Danny and decided to move back. More retail experience included working for Old Navy, Victoria’s Secret and the Bombay Company. Missi also served as



## Business **NOW**

the Women's Initiatives director with the American Heart Association.

Missi opened her gift shop in August 2010 and has built up a broad range of items. Examples of items found in the store include: ladies accessories, such as Vera Bradley and DaVinci beads; housewarming gifts, such as Tyler candles, dip chillers and mixes from Country Home Creations; and baby and wedding gifts and accessories. Many items can be personalized or monogrammed in-house, often with a one-day turn-around. Custom designs can be machine-embroidered. And Everything Nice carries a small selection of men's gifts, including monogrammed ties, as well as a line of hand-drawn invitations, cards, stationary, crosses, T-shirts and quilts. Many items are under \$20. Every item purchased receives a free one-letter/one-name monogram.

Second only to providing fun, quality merchandise is Missi's desire to ensure very personal customer service. "We know most of our customers by name. If we haven't met them before, by the time they walk out the door, we know them, and their families, as friends by their next visit. I really want to help them find just the right gift," Missi stated. Her 1,400-square-foot shop is chuck full of all kinds of goodies to guarantee a browsing-good time. "If we don't have what you're looking for, we certainly will make every effort to get it."

Missi's faithful sidekick in the shop is Pat Whitten, a former school teacher (for 17 years), who promotes Missi as much as she does the merchandise. Other nice cohorts include Vickie Hunt, Sharon Rodgers, Sondra Wilcox and Marilyn Alden, who is the dedicated personalizer. "No one can personalize like Marilyn," Missi boasted. "She adds her special touch to wedding gifts and accessories and her famous one-of-a-kind Christmas ornaments, which will be available the first week of September. Marilyn drives down from Rowlett three days a week, just to work here!"

So, whether you are looking for home decor items, a unique and personal gift, jewelry or just a good time browsing, check out And Everything Nice. You will probably find they live up to their name. **NOW**



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A group of kids hang out and have a blast at the park.



Crawford Park Pool WSI Meredith Davis teaches a swimming lesson to Chaitan Ravi and Olivia Vittrup.



Cedar Hill Chamber members hold a ribbon cutting to welcome BT Studio, the gentleman's barbershop where Old World tradition meets contemporary style.



Big John's Nursery employee Raymond Morales waters the bougainvillea bushes.



USPTA Coach Martha Franklin with a group of summer youth tennis students.



Derek Palizay receives his favorite cup of joe from his wife, Jordan, at White Rhino Coffee.

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*LaJauta Dauda talks on the phone while getting a shampoo from Raw Cut's Tiffany Cuington.*



*Dr. Olusanya, owner of Charter Medical Center, recently celebrated 35 years of service to his patients.*



*Keaton Speaks and Todd Sims beat the summer heat and bowl a few games in the A/C at AMF DeSoto Lanes.*



*Star Car Wash employee Jamelle Johnson puts the finishing touches on a blue Mustang.*



*Representative Christine A. Horne, GLA (pictured) cuts the Chamber ribbon for America's Business Benefit Association, a nonprofit association that endorses specific Health & Life Benefit plans.*



*USPS mail carrier Victor Dunn makes deliveries in the brutal summer heat.*

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Nicholas Alvarez enjoys his first time at the circus with his cousin, Kennedy Williams.



Duncanville police officers and department veterans, Ross Dobelbower and Jeff Etesam, compete in the annual Texas Police Games and earn top prizes in the pistol competition.



The Villa at Mountain View residents, Richard Shearer and Gladys Jefferson, fish at Lakeside Park with Marquis Ross.



Stuart Boston, Jed Urban and Timothy Revette stop for a photo on their way to the Public Library and Recreation Center.



Diego Mireles changes the gas prices at the 7-Eleven on Main Street.

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## Healthy Aging Month

Americans are living longer. Life expectancy in the U.S. is now 78.7 years, as compared to a life expectancy of only 47 years in 1900. Almost three-fourths of Americans live to be elderly. Can life expectancy be improved further? Other countries, such as Japan, already have higher life expectancies than the U.S.

But are American seniors healthy? Among the aged in the U.S., seven of every 10 deaths are from heart disease, cancer or stroke. These are followed closely by respiratory diseases, most attributable to smoking. Despite declines in these diseases over the last 20 years, there is still significant room for improvement. Prevention of disease through healthy lifestyle choices, such as: better eating habits, exercise programs, smoking cessation and stress reduction, could not only improve longevity but also productivity and well-being.

Quality of life is an important consideration in any discussion of lengthening life span. Few people would consider a longer retirement full of debilitating ailments as progress. That situation would place high demands not only on the person who is ill, but on their loved ones, as well as on the American health care system. Among *The National Report Card on Healthy Aging* indicators still needing improvement are reducing obesity, eating enough fruits and vegetables, getting enough exercise and improving oral health. Other areas of focus are preventing cognitive decline, reducing falls and reducing ethnic disparities in chronic disease and treatment.

For most Americans, getting enough food to satiate hunger is not a daily problem. Nine percent of poor families report “sometimes” not having enough food, and only two percent of poor families report “often” not having enough to eat. Understanding the importance of a well-balanced meal is often a greater health issue. Increasing fresh fruit and vegetables, decreasing fat and refined grains in the diet increases vitamin and mineral content and decreases empty calories.

Physical activity greatly improves overall health. Not only does it help curb obesity, but it also improves memory and concentration and elevates mood. A 20-minute walk improves mood for two hours! Exercise also improves sleep, increases energy levels and improves the quality of sexual experiences. Most experts agree that 30 minutes of exercise per day should be a goal for almost everyone. Areas to focus on include: strength, endurance, balance and flexibility.

Chiropractic care has a lot to offer seniors. It can lower blood pressure, reduce the aches and pains of arthritis, restore joint mobility and improve sleep. Your chiropractor can help you start an exercise routine that's right for your joints, muscles and nerves.

Take charge of your own health. Jack LaLanne put it best: “I don't care how old I live; I just want to be living while I am living!” **NOW**

*Leah Pittmon, B.S., D.C. • Pittmon Family Chiropractic Center*



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## Be Aware of Key Benefits of Life Insurance

You may be unaware of it, but September is Life Insurance Awareness Month. And while a whole month may seem like a long time to focus on life insurance, it's actually a good opportunity for you to realize the important role that life insurance can play in your life.

Unfortunately, many people don't have sufficient insurance. A recent report by LIMRA, a research and consulting group, shows the following:

- Individual life insurance ownership among U.S. households has reached a 50-year low.
  - Three out of every 10 households (about 35 million households) currently have no life insurance — an increase of 11 million households since 2004.
- These figures help explain why the nonprofit LIFE Foundation coordinates Life Insurance Awareness Month each September. Simply put, many people don't realize how many ways that life insurance can help them and their families.

To be specific, life insurance can:

- **Educate your children** — If you were to die prematurely, your life insurance policy can pay, in whole or in part, your children's college education. And if you live a normal life span, life insurance can help to pay for your grandchildren's college education.
- **Pay off your mortgage** — If you have sufficient life insurance, the death benefit can pay off your mortgage, so your family wouldn't have to move.
- **Help pay for your spouse's retirement** — Your spouse might be counting on sharing some of the money you eventually withdraw from your retirement plans — such as your 401(k) and IRA — to help with his or her own retirement. If you were to die early, your spouse, as beneficiary, would receive the

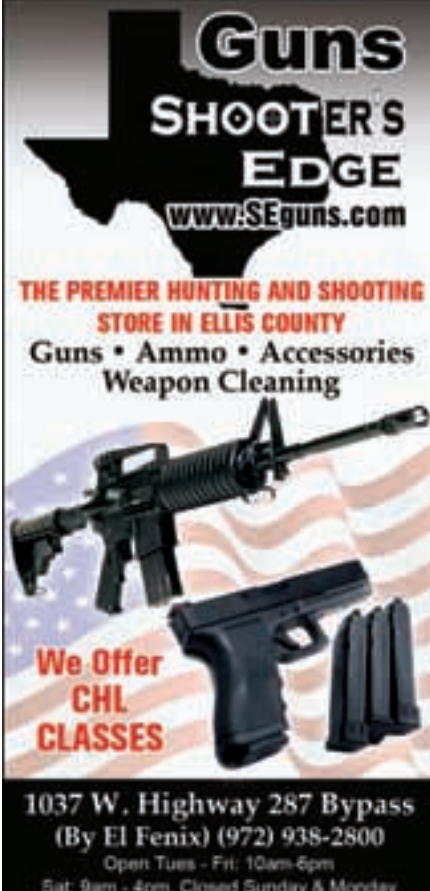
existing account balances in these plans, but your future contributions would, of course, die with you.

- **Help pay for your retirement** — You don't even have to die to reap some benefits from your life insurance. If you've purchased some form of permanent life, you have the opportunity to build a cash balance. And through policy loans or withdrawals, you can tap into this cash to help you pay some of your expenses during retirement.
- **Help you leave the legacy you desire** — Life insurance can be an important part of your estate plans. To use life insurance properly for estate planning, consult with your legal advisor.

Of course, one big question that you may ask is this: How much life insurance do I need? You've probably seen those estimates that say you should have insurance that's worth a certain number of years times your annual income. While this might not be a bad estimate, it's not a hard-and-fast rule for every single individual. The amount of insurance you need will depend on a variety of factors: your age, income, size of family, value of home, employment situation and so on. Your financial advisor can help you determine the level of insurance that's appropriate for your needs.

Now that you've seen how life insurance may help you over the years, and you've got a sense of how to determine the amount of coverage you need, you can appreciate the message behind Life Insurance Awareness Month. So take it to heart, and make sure you've got the proper insurance plan in place. **NOW**

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# Calendar

## SEPTEMBER 2011

### September 4

DeSoto, DeSoto ISD and Youth Football pep rally: 7:00 p.m., Grimes Park, 501 E. Wintergreen Rd. Meet Coach Mathis and his Eagles, hear Don Diego and see Independence Day fireworks. (972) 230-9651.

### September 8

Music in the Park (free): 6:30, DeSoto Town Center amphitheater. Gospel and jazz artists: Andrea Dawson and Paul Ramsey. (972) 230-9651.

### September 10

Cedar Hill Schools Class Reunion: 1:00-5:00 p.m., Old Bray Gym in Cedar Hill. Group photos: 2:00 p.m. 50th reunion for class of 1961. Eva Roberts (972) 217-0202 or Jettie Vincent (972) 291-4902.

### September 10, 11

Grand Opening: Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center at Cedar Hill. September 10: 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. September 11: Noon-5:00 p.m. Explore the Best Southwest's newest outdoor attraction: guided hikes, building tours, guest speakers, animal encounters and children's activities. Details at [www.dogwoodcanyonaudubon.org](http://www.dogwoodcanyonaudubon.org).

### September 11

3rd Annual Friends of Tri-City Animal Shelter Gala: 2:00-6:00 p.m., Enchanted Memories on the Hill, 1331 S. Cockrell Hill Rd. Tickets: \$55: lunch,

silent /live auctions and entertainment. Call (972) 291-5335 for more information and ticket locations.

### September 12

DV Education Foundation Championship for Children Golf Tournament: 1:00 p.m., Thorntree Country Club.

### September 17

Lela Evan's Googling for Genealogists: 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., DeSoto Public Library. Free. Details: (972) 230-9661.

### September 19

First Annual DeSoto City Manager's Corporate Golf Challenge at Thorntree Country Club benefiting DeSoto Parks and Leisure Services youth programs. Register: (972) 230-9648 or [www.ci.desoto.tx.us/golf](http://www.ci.desoto.tx.us/golf) by **September 9**.

### September 20

Louis Lamar's Plan for Your Future — Understanding Long Term Care Insurance: 6:00 p.m., DeSoto Public Library. Details: (972) 230-9661.

### September 22-24

DeSoto Arts Commission presents Indiefest at the DeSoto Town Center. Tickets/details: [www.desotoartscommission.com](http://www.desotoartscommission.com).

Music in the Park (free): 6:30 p.m., DeSoto Town Center amphitheater. Country and blues: Joe King. (972) 230-9651.

### October 1

9th Celebrating Life Foundation Sister to Sister Festival and 5K Run/Walk: 6:00 a.m.-noon, CH Recreation Center. Breast cancer education and 5K Run/Walk. (972) 501-9981, ext.110 or [www.celebratinglife.org](http://www.celebratinglife.org).


Music in the Park Concert — Vocal Trash: 6:30-8:30 p.m., Valley Ridge Park Amphitheater, 2850 Park Ridge Drive. Band uses instruments recycled from trash; environmental booths; demonstrations and info on going green.

Bridges Safehouse Inc.'s annual pancake breakfast: 8:00-11:00 a.m., Ninth Grade Center on W. Beltline Rd. The public is invited. Cost: \$10/adults; \$5/children 12/under.

### October 8, 9

Cedar Hill's 74th Annual Country Day on the Hill. **October 8** Old Settlers Reunion: 4:30-8:00 p.m. Cost: \$5. Schedule for **October 9** at [www.countrydayonthehill.org](http://www.countrydayonthehill.org)

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your event details to [bshay.nowmag@sbcglobal.net](mailto:bshay.nowmag@sbcglobal.net).*



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## In The Kitchen With Patricia Seifert

— *By Beverly Shay*

Patricia Seifert, a teacher at Canterbury Episcopal School, defines cooking as “a way to relax, while doing something with a definite start, finish and immediate reward. Leftovers extend the pleasure.” She is self-taught with guidance from her mom in her early years, a cooking class with Joanne Weir during a week in Italy, along with inspiration from cooking shows and cookbooks. “I like to buy what looks good and fresh. I grow basil, which seems to find its way into many of my recipes.”

Patricia loves trying different cuisines, such as Indian, Thai, Italian, Moroccan and German. “I cook for my vegetarian daughter, carnivorous son and easygoing husband, who will eat anything I prepare!” she shared. Other hobbies include reading, swimming, travel and online chatting with international pals. **NOW**

### Aunt Mary's Italian Plum Cake

**1 cup butter**  
**1 cup sugar**  
**4 large eggs, beaten**  
**1/2 cup nonfat Greek yogurt (optional)**  
**2 cups flour**  
**2 tsp. baking powder**  
**1/2 tsp. salt**  
**12 Italian plums, halved lengthwise, pitted**

#### **Topping:**

**1 tsp. ground cinnamon**  
**1 cup sugar**

**1.** Preheat oven to 325 F (350 F for metal pan).

**2.** Lightly grease a 9 x 13-inch pan with butter.  
**3.** Cream butter and sugar; beat in eggs and yogurt. Stir in flour, baking powder and salt. Spread batter in pan.  
**4.** Arrange plums, skin sides down, evenly over the batter.  
**5.** Mix the cinnamon and sugar; spread mixture evenly over cake.  
**6.** Bake for 40 minutes, until topping is melted and fruit bubbles. Serve warm.

### Baked Tilapia With Lemon Herb Crust

**2 slices whole grain bread or 1 large roll**  
**1/4 tsp. salt**  
**1/8 tsp. ground black pepper**

**1-inch-long strip of fresh lemon peel, white part (pith) removed**  
**1/3 cup loosely packed, mixed fresh herb leaves: flat-leaf parsley, dill, basil, thyme, tarragon or cilantro**  
**1 clove garlic**  
**2 Tbsp. light mayonnaise**  
**2 Tbsp. nonfat plain Greek yogurt or reduced fat sour cream**  
**4 tilapia or barramundi fillets (1 lb.)**  
**2 tsp. fresh lemon juice**  
**Cooking spray**

**1.** Preheat oven to 425 F.  
**2.** In a food processor, pulse bread with salt, pepper and lemon peel until small crumbs form. Set aside.  
**3.** Pulse herbs, garlic, mayonnaise and yogurt in processor until a paste forms and the garlic disappears.  
**4.** Line a baking pan with foil; spray with cooking spray. Arrange fillets on foil; sprinkle with lemon juice. Evenly spread top side of fillet with mayonnaise mixture; cover with bread crumbs. Spray with cooking spray.  
**5.** Bake 15-18 minutes, until crumbs are golden and fish flakes easily. Serve immediately.

### Corn and Fennel Sauté

**1 Tbsp. canola oil**  
**1-inch chunk fresh ginger, peeled and minced**  
**1/2 sweet onion, diced**  
**1 leek, pale green and white only, diced**  
**1 bulb fennel, white only, diced**  
**2 ears fresh sweet corn, removed from cob**  
**1 dried red chili pod, broken up, or 1 tsp. crushed red pepper flakes**  
**Salt and pepper, to taste**  
**1 Tbsp. butter**  
**1 tsp. fresh lemon juice**

**1.** Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet. Sauté ginger and onion 1-2 minutes on medium-high heat, stirring frequently. Add leek; reduce heat to medium. Cook, stirring frequently, until leek and onion begin to caramelize. Add fennel and cook another minute, letting moisture from the leeks emerge.  
**2.** Add corn and dried chili; stir corn gently. Cover, raising heat if necessary, to release the corn's moisture. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Remove from heat when corn is tender crisp. Dot with butter and squeeze lemon over all; stir.





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