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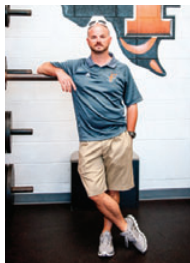
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Ferris High's football coach, Brandon Layne, is a mentor to his players.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

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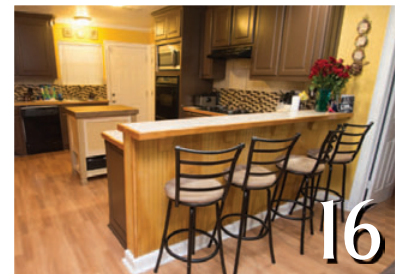
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Editor's Note

Where'd the summer go?

Another hot, Texas summer has come and gone, or rather, summer break has come and gone, since we all know the heat will linger through October. My kiddo is back in school and already asking when the first school holiday will be.

Just the other day I was noticing her watching cartoons on the couch, and her legs looked like they've grown a whole foot in the last month. I know it's only a matter of time before I look up again and she'll be a teenager. Lord help me. I miss her littleness so much! There's complete truth in the old cliché, "They grow up so fast." As we get increasingly busy and anxious about the next step or sports season in our little ones' lives we tend to miss out on the time they're actually growing up. So, let's take a vow to slow down and appreciate them where they are today, with no anticipation of the "next step" and the worry that will undoubtedly come with it.

Looking forward to telling your story!

Abby

Abby Rich

North Ellis Co. NOW Editor

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The MIEAS of \$

Coach Brandon Layne is “happy to be home.” Energetic and grounded, he puts his heart into the art of coaching. Only in his mid-30s, he is now in his second position as head football coach of a high school team, even though coaching was not always his plan.

He was a college-bound athlete. However, he tore his meniscus and ACL while playing baseball his junior year of high school just before football season. After being cleared by the doctor, his coach, Randy Matthews, returned him to his position on the football team the fall of his senior year. They went to the state championship that year. However, another surgery was needed in January, this time to repair new injuries to the MCL, PCL and LCL in his knee. The majority of his athletic scholarships were pulled. This was a great disappointment, but bouncing back, he decided to get a degree in physical therapy to help others get back on their feet and not lose their scholarship opportunities. He threw himself into this new career path rather than playing any sports in college.

Then, Coach Matthews called, asking him to spend his summer coaching 7 on 7. This opportunity was the turning point, as he realized his passion was in coaching. It was such a milestone opportunity in his life that he later named his first son after Coach Matthews. That fall, he changed his major to coaching, in order to pursue his true calling.

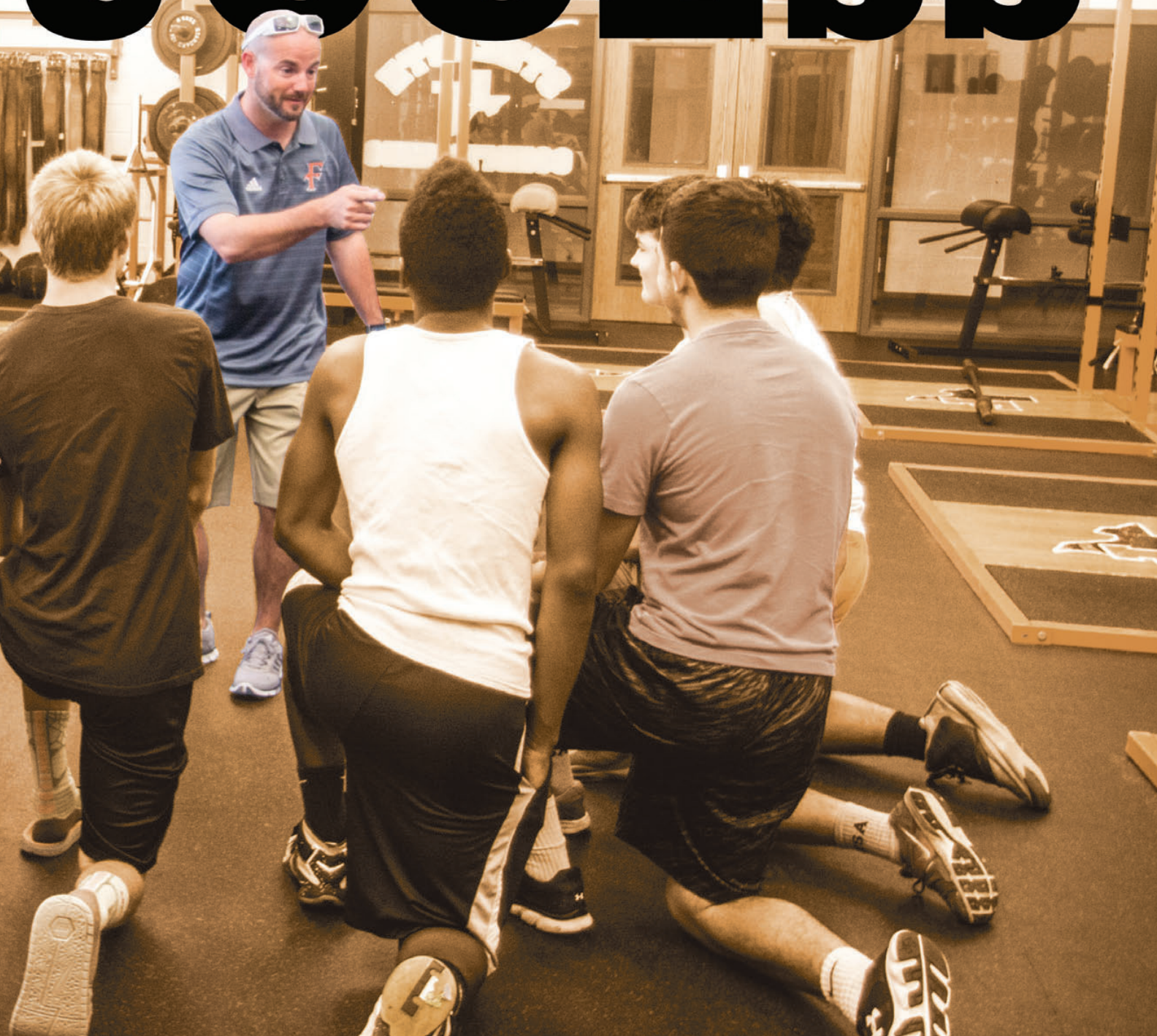
Brandon's first job out of college was coaching in Waskom, Texas. Later, he took his first offensive coordinator position in Teague, Texas. The team was 1-9 when he got there and averaged 18 points per game. Within one year, there was a huge turn around. They were 7-4, made the playoffs and lost the district championship by a revised extra point. They were also now averaging 31 points per game.

Next, he accepted a job at Ennis High School, where he would come to know Jack Alvarez, who became his most notable mentor and the namesake of Brandon's second child. They hit it off great. Brandon was only 26, but Coach Alvarez recognized his talent. “Jack has an aura about him. You can tell he is meant for greatness and has a special way of molding people,” Brandon said.



WIRE SUCCESS

— By Debbie Durling





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Brandon witnessed Coach Alvarez's character in front of everyone he came in contact with and every situation that arose. "Jack consistently chose character over talent, and he displayed character in his own life," Brandon added. "I told my wife I would never work for another head coach."

When Brandon went to Ennis, they were in a slump. They were not winning like they had in the 2000s. They went to 3-7 the first year. He credited this to the coaches coming together in support of Coach Alvarez, as they made a lot of changes in the character and culture of the team. The second year, Brandon was moved to offensive coordinator. "Coach Alvarez gave me a great opportunity," Brandon recalled. They were 8-3 and made the playoffs. During his third year in Ennis, they were 14-1 and lost the state semifinals to the eventual champion team, Aledo. In his fourth and final year at Ennis, they were 14-2 and became 5A State Champions.

It was after this final season in Ennis that Brandon was offered the head coach position at La Vernia, Texas. The first year, they went 7-5 and were bi-district champions and district champions. They won the first round of playoffs and lost in the second round by three points. La Vernia was already a great team, but a lot of the main players had graduated. Brandon was able to maintain a successful team. In one year, he was also instrumental in growing the boosters from 36 members to 250. This group, under his guidance, raised \$120,000, which was given back to the students in scholarships for graduating athletes and in the form of new equipment and travel expenses. He also saw 11 of his athletes receive full scholarships from universities. He was excited about the future in La Vernia, that was, until he got a call from Ferris.

While he was coaching in Ennis, Brandon's wife, Sarah, taught in Ferris. They became very fond of the people and the town. It felt like home. So, when the call came asking if he



would be interested in being the head coach for Ferris High School, they could not resist.

Brandon credits his success, at such a young age, to great opportunities given to him by the great men he served; being raised by a family with high morals and standards; and a rich heritage of faith, which he and his wife have carried on with their two boys. Brandon also credits much of his success to Sarah. They have been married for 12 years. "She picks up and goes wherever I am called and treats team members like they are our own kids," he said. "She is my chameleon. Whatever my world is requiring, she adapts and becomes that."

He also added that if the team loses, she feels it, and if the team wins, she celebrates. On Brandon's desk sits a picture of the state championship win. Brady Matthew, their first son, is wearing the medal, and he and Sarah are relishing the moment together. "Brady really gets into the life of coaching, too. He was only 3 years old when we lost the semifinals game to Aledo, but he can tell you play-by-play how we lost it," Brandon admitted.



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Even though one of Brandon's challenges could be overcoming perceptions based on his age, it only takes getting to know him to see that he is much more than a football coach. He strives to be a great husband, father, man of faith, mentor and teacher. He carries the strong values instilled in him by his family and mentor coaches to the students and players in his charge. He believes one of the key elements to building a great team is communicating clear expectations. This needs to be done upfront, and a plan for accountability needs to be laid out. "I communicate my plan and my confidence that the plan works," Brandon said.

He also builds relationships. Brandon and his wife have the team in their home, and he always looks for something that connects him with each individual player. Finally, he believes everyone wants to be part of a winning program. "If you are losing games, you are losing kids to hallways and the streets," he said with a serious tone.

Even though he does not gear his program to winning being everything, he believes every piece of the puzzle leads to success, so more people can be influenced. "They want to be with a winner. If we are winning, I have a chance to impact them," he stated. "Trophies represent my wins. Changed kids are my successes." **NOW**

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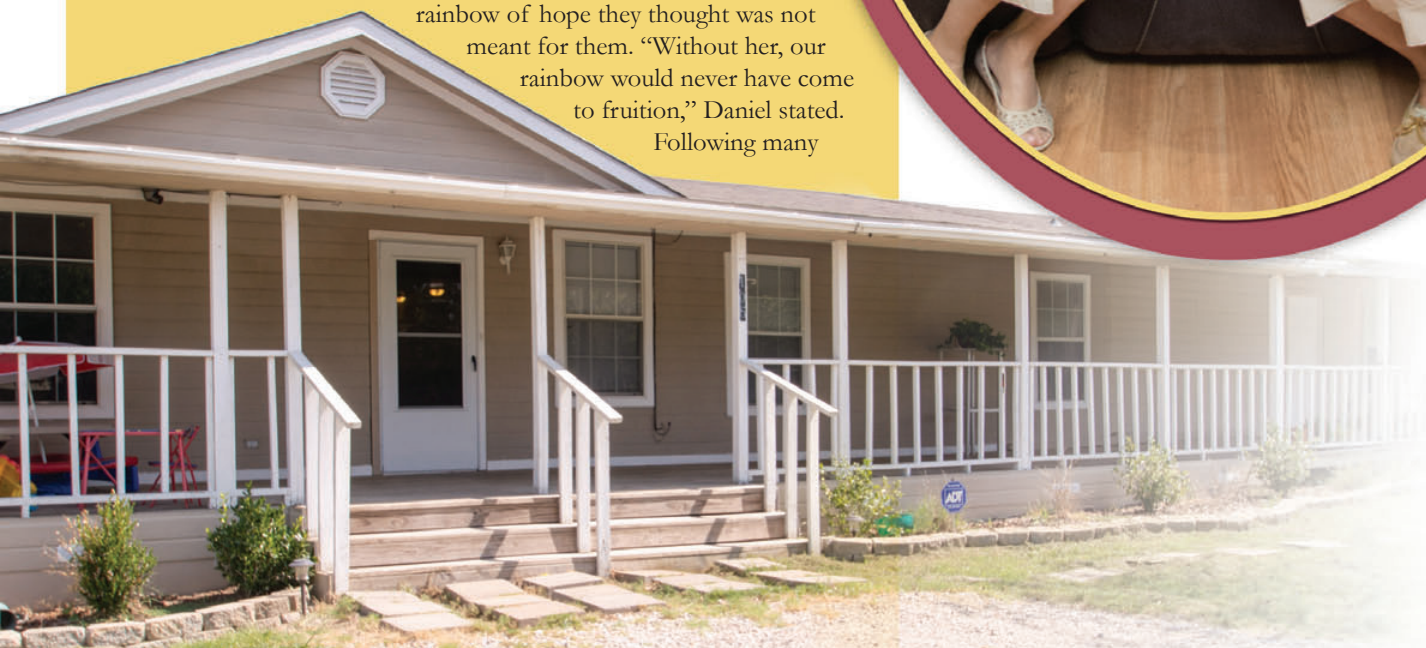
— By Sandra Strong



AT HOME WITH *Daniel & Gracie Garza*

When exchanging vows in 2002, Daniel and Gracie Garza embarked on married life carrying the same hopes and dreams as so many young couples. They wanted a home filled with laughter and the pitter-patter of children's little feet. "We made a home for Destiny and Vanessa," Gracie said, referring to Daniel's two daughters, now 19 and 18 respectively, "but we wanted a baby of our own." They were looking for the proverbial pot of gold at the end of their rainbow, and after more than a dozen years of trying, they were on the verge of giving up.

As the years seemed to fly by, Gracie became pregnant many times. But each pregnancy ended in miscarriage. Dr. Mika Thomas, an OB/GYN in Dallas, was the angel that turned the family's storm into the rainbow of hope they thought was not meant for them. "Without her, our rainbow would never have come to fruition," Daniel stated. Following many





tests, Gracie became pregnant once again. Daniel Jr., who answers to DJ, was born on December 23, 2014. "We brought him home on Christmas Day," she shared. "That was one amazing Christmas for all of us!"

"DJ turned our house filled with tears into a home full of joy," Daniel added.

Daniel and Gracie spent their childhoods growing up in Ferris, so making a home for the family in their hometown seemed natural. The home they share now as a family of six — with the sixth being Gracie's mom, Esmeralda Torres — didn't always boast of five bedrooms, four bathrooms and a game/entertainment room. When they purchased the home in 2006, it offered 1,400-square-feet of living space. After a lot of elbow grease, long hours and hard work, the home now offers the family 2,614 spacious square feet. The open floor plan they created in the many renovations they did themselves makes the home perfect for the family gatherings they enjoy hosting. "We did the remodels while living in the house," Gracie admitted. "We added two bedrooms, two bathrooms and the guest room that also serves as the game and movie room."

The additions were designed for Destiny and Vanessa. Daniel and Gracie wanted them to have their own rooms — rooms that could give them privacy, while representing their unique and individual styles. It was toward the end of the remodels that the couple learned they were pregnant with DJ. Prior to this time, Destiny and Vanessa had been Gracie's reason for getting out of bed each morning. "They were my grace and mercy during those years of loss," she confessed. "I needed them as much, if not more, than they needed me."

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When they first learned of their little miracle, one main wall had already been removed. It wasn't long before a second wall came tumbling down to allow ample space for their "little miracle." On his homecoming, DJ slept in a small nursery close to the master bedroom. Today, his room is a testament to the family's love of baseball and the Texas Rangers. One special wall is dedicated to DJ's first year of life. "We hung that banner at his 1st birthday party," Gracie said. "There are 12 flags that document month-by-month memories."

Destiny's room is currently a work in progress. As she moves into young adulthood, she is going from pink with

zebra accents to something predominately silver. Vanessa's room is turquoise, highlighted with the chevron print that is so popular today. Esmeralda has her own bedroom and bathroom at the back of the home. "I don't know what I'd do without my mom," Gracie said. "She is my rock. She's the one who has kept me grounded."

When the remodeling first began, Gracie knew she wanted an oversized kitchen. She got that and so much more. Whether cooking for her immediate family or preparing a large meal for extended family and friends, Gracie has everything she needs from the large pantry and double ovens to the butcher block island and



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massive counter space. The kitchen and dining area open to the family's favorite room in the house — the living room.

The living room's main feature is the family's most cherished wall — a wall of framed family photographs, which is the first thing visitors notice when walking in the front door. "I want to make changes, but I don't know where to begin," Gracie admitted. "I find it hard to replace any of the photos, so I just keep adding to the wall." The room is large enough to allow Daniel and Gracie to rearrange furniture, while also lending the necessary room for DJ to be an active "almost 2-year-old." Above the bar area that separates the living room from the kitchen is another frame with several photographs of DJ before he was born. "Since he was a high-risk pregnancy, I had lots of sonograms,"





Gracie said, as Daniel nodded his head in agreement. "It was a good thing to see him grow. It allowed me to have some peace during the pregnancy."

The master bedroom is a sanctuary of tranquil relaxation for Daniel and Gracie. In the center of the main wall, hanging verbiage reads, *Family is where life begins and love never ends*. This is the mantra the family lives and loves by. Words have power and hold weight for the couple as a second plaque reads, *After every storm, there is a rainbow of hope*. They know this all too well, but when they look at DJ, the memories of those tough years seem to be fading.

As comfy as they've made the inside, the outside is just as inviting. The long front porch with spindle railing is a nice place for DJ to play, while the rest of his family watches in wonder. The back porch was designed for large gatherings with ample space for the extra seating they always need when they entertain. The enclosed game/entertainment/guestroom is the place Daniel goes to watch his beloved Texas Rangers and Dallas Cowboys on an oversized projector screen. The bar area with its *Tito's Bar* sign is in honor of Daniel's dad. "My dad's memory is alive and well in this room," Daniel said. "The guitars hanging on the wall are also in memory of Dad."

Building a home can be lots of work, but building a family can sometimes be even more difficult. The home that was once void of squeals, giggles and the pitter-patter of little feet is now overflowing with the love of a very close-knit family. Some say there's a pot of gold at the end of every rainbow, but the Garza family knows that's not really true because they found something much more precious than gold at the end of their rainbow — they found DJ. **NOW**

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Forlorn, hungry, lost or abandoned — all future furry friends arrive at the Ellis County SPCA with a story that will never get told. But once in the care of Stephanie Shuster, the shelter's manager, and Mary Scianna, the assistant manager, dogs and cats experience a renewed hope in mankind. "We get animals that look like they haven't eaten in weeks. Their hair is matted and dirty, and their nails are so long," Stephanie revealed. "Sometimes, we get whole boxes of kittens that were thrown away. It's sad, but true. Some people will do anything to protect their livestock but will abandon a dog or cat."

County residents call for help or bring strays to their city's animal services. There's a \$50 surrender fee if someone has to give up a pet to the ECSPCA, but normally, the animal is a stray. "We have contracts with Palmer, Venus and Maypearl, but ECSPCA covers all of Ellis County," Stephanie said. "We have to charge fees because the organization is private — not governmental." City and county law enforcement officers often transport animals to the shelter. "The officers are really friendly and helpful around the shelter. We work as a team," Stephanie added.

"We use their muscles," Mary agreed.

Both ladies are fairly new to their positions, having served for less than a year. Stephanie and Mary want to improve the shelter's adoption rate this calendar year over last year's fairly successful statistics. "There were 432 animals adopted last year, and that figure doesn't include those that went to rescue groups. We only can take dogs and cats. There's currently no space for animals like other small mammals or birds. Our shelter would not be a safe, stress-free environment for them," Stephanie said.

ECSPCA participates in Clear the Shelters, a nationwide adoption program. "We work through large vendors and television stations that do public service

ER

— By Virginia Riddle



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announcements," Stephanie said. The shelter works with animal rescue groups, promotes foster homes for animals and uses Facebook and a website to market the dogs and cats to new owners.

"For a reduced \$30 fee, we will microchip a dog or cat, so they can be reunited with their family, if they become separated and lost," Mary said.

The group also works through PetSmart Charities Cats for Adoption, another nationwide program. "On Saturday and Sunday, twice a month, we hold adoptions at the Waxahachie PetSmart," Stephanie said. "We are now fully staffed with three full-time and five part-time employees and have volunteers who help during those adoption times." They often offer animals for adoption during local festivals and other occasions.

A dog or cat in residence at the shelter will be fed twice a day, have fresh water and occupy one of the 55 kennels for dogs or the 16 kennels for cats. Stainless steel was added to the quarantine room, a recent remodeling project. "Animals stay in the rabies quarantine for 10 days, if they have bitten or scratched someone. The area is now easier to disinfect and keep clean," Stephanie explained. Every Monday, a vet checks each shelter animal.

Every afternoon, it's social time when the dogs are walked. "We are always looking for volunteers to help with this activity, too," Stephanie said. Kelly Snyder is a volunteer and also the volunteer coordinator. Volunteers come in all ages starting at ages 10-15 with a parent present or 16-18 with a signed parent waiver. "We have two sets of moms and kids who bathe dogs, as well as high school students who volunteer," Stephanie said.

Other volunteers serve on the ECSPCA board. A 10-year board member and resident of Ennis for the past 43 years is Patsy Erwin. Besides serving on the board, Patsy bathes dogs,



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The SPCA team believes in a forever home for every animal.

counsels potential adoptive families and delivers dogs to their forever homes. "We aren't affiliated with SPCA, so fundraising is very important."

Patsy, along with other board members: President Terri McGrath; Martha Weedon; Susan Kosoris; Dr. Nancy Carter, DVM; Judge Bob Carroll; Ron Brown; Christopher Bennett; Louis Ponder; Tony Bennett; and Brent Lemon help organize the annual Paws in Paradise gala. "We move the event yearly to a different major town in the county," Patsy said. "The gala has always been a very successful event, which includes a dinner and a silent and live auction." A nonprofit, the organization receives monetary donations, as well as donated gift cards, blankets and towels, copy paper, cat litter, leashes and collars, animal toys, wide-bottomed bowls, dish and liquid laundry soaps and newspapers. Area companies donate pet food, washing machines and plumbing and air conditioner repairs. Memorials in pets' names provide another funding source. "People are happy to help," Patsy said.

The shelter, founded in 2004, moved to its current location on FM 878 in Waxahachie 12 years ago. Open Tuesday-Saturday, from 11:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., and




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on Sunday, from 11:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., the shelter welcomes those who wish to adopt their next great furry friend. "The animals up for adoption have already been vaccinated, dewormed, microchipped and checked for heart worms. If we have sterilized the animal, the adoption fee is \$100, if not, it is \$75, and the adoptive family has to sign an agreement to get the pet sterilized," Stephanie explained.

"We have a great relationship with local veterinarians for low-cost spaying and neutering," Mary said.

"Kids especially like to look at and touch the animals," Patsy said.

"I love to see the interaction with the animals and see the kids' faces light up when they fall in love," Mary said.

Potential adoptive homes are screened. "We make sure there's a fence, and that the size of the pet fits the home situation. We don't want to set a dog or cat up for failure," Stephanie said. "Instead, we have people who come back with their pets to let us see how well they are doing."

"We work through educational programs in area schools to teach kids the joys and responsibilities of owning a pet," Patsy said. "We are also looking into starting a possible therapy pet program. Every dog isn't 'eye candy,' so funding, space and finding volunteers and forever homes is challenging," she added.

"Nobody does this job unless they have a deep love for animals. We always want them to find homes," Stephanie related. "Most of us have done the dirty work of running a shelter, but it's always a joy to see an animal, after coming in here so dirty and frightened, find its forever home." **NOW**

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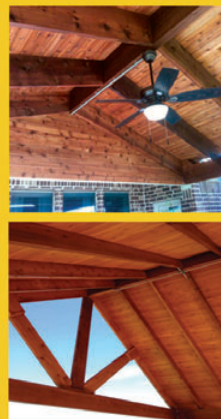
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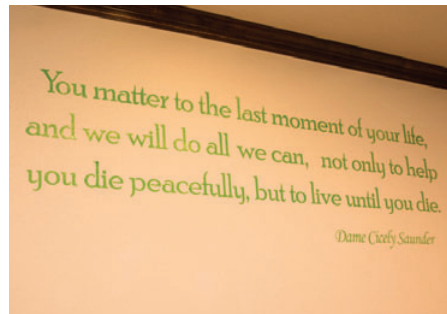


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Executive Director Sandra Townley, Medical Director Dr. Jeffrey Astbury and the team at Bristol Hospice not only care for patients, they also offer comfort and care to family members.

A Reverence for Life

At Bristol Hospice Pathways, it's hometown folks taking care of hometown folks. — By Virginia Riddle

Living life to its fullest with comfort provided by caring professionals and family is what hospice is, and for the staff of Bristol Hospice Pathways, the mission statement — all patients and families entrusted to our care will be treated with the highest level of compassion, respect and quality of care — is very important. “Our staff goes above and beyond all expectations,” stated the Bristol Hospice executive director, Sandra Townley, BSN, RN.

Founded 13 years ago as Lighted Pathways, the hospice was purchased by Bristol Hospice in 2012. “Renamed Bristol Hospice Pathways and still employing staff from Lighted Pathways, the focus has been the same, as far as caring for families emotionally, spiritually and physically,” Sandra said.

The staff of 37 includes Medical Director Jeffrey A. Astbury, MD, FACP; administrative personnel, such as the volunteer and bereavement coordinators; chaplains; social workers; therapists; and the nursing staff. Patients in 17 area counties from East to Central Texas are served by hometown, familiar faces.

Services offered include pain and symptom management, counseling and support services, therapy, skilled nursing care, volunteer and hospice aide services, outpatient and continuous care services, inpatient and respite care services and Namaste Program services. All Bristol Hospice services are licensed and certified at the state and federal levels.

“It’s a joy being part of a collaborative team that meets

regularly to discuss our patients who have life-limiting conditions. Bristol has a great group of people to work with," Dr. Astbury said. "We're able to keep them comfortable and functional." Payment methods include Medicare Part A, Medicaid and third-party insurance.

"We also support the patient's family at home," Sandra said. "Hospice is a benefit to everyone. We spend time instructing patients and their family members, and we keep patient/nurse ratios low to allow time for education and connection with our staff. It's doing the little things that makes the difference."

Bristol Hospice Pathways participates in the We Honor Veterans and the Vets for Vets programs. "It's therapy for our vets who are visited by volunteers who are veterans or other volunteers who truly care," Sandra explained. The veteran volunteer helps patients talk about their military service and fill in the information in a beautifully bound book, which becomes a family keepsake.

In cities where there's a Chamber of Commerce, Bristol is a member, as well as holding membership in the National Hospice Care Organization. The hospice has been voted No. 1 Reader's Choice 2016 in the *Waxahachie Daily Light*, and polling of patients' caregivers places Bristol Hospice Pathways in the top DEYTA 100 hospices nationwide in previous years. Dr. Astbury is a member of the Ellis County Medical Society and the National Association for Homecare & Hospice. He also is responsible for his patients' care at Baylor Scott & White Hospital in Waxahachie.

Dr. Astbury received his degrees from The University of Texas at Austin and UT Southwestern Medical Center and served his residency at Parkland Hospital in Dallas. An internist, Dr. Astbury stated, "I enjoy practicing small-town medicine with the resources of Baylor Scott & White Hospital. It's much more personal."

With deep roots in the area, Sandra is in a master's program at The University of Texas at Arlington. "Hospice care reaffirms my faith that I was meant to do this job," she said. **NOW**



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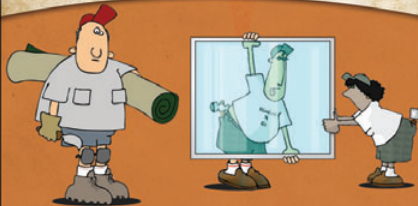
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September 10

Red Oak's 38th Founder's Day: 9:00 a.m., Watkins Park, 101 Live Oak. Event will include a parade, entertainment, food vendors, games and more. Admission is free. For more information, call Shelley Martinez at (972) 617-0906 or visit www.redoakareachamber.org.

Girl Scouts: Ferris Recruitment: 6:30-8:00 p.m., First United Methodist Church, 101 Redbud St.

September 13

Girl Scouts: Red Oak Recruitment: 6:30-8:00 p.m., First Methodist Church, 600 Daubitz Dr.

September 17

14th Annual Oktoberfest hosted by St. Joseph Catholic School: 10:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Ln., Waxahachie. Free admission and parking. The community-wide event will offer food, fun and entertainment for all ages. The event features children's games, silent and live auctions, raffle drawings, biergarten, German food, BBQ, live music and shopping. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/stjosephoktoberfest.

September 22

North Texas Annual Giving Day: 6:00 a.m.-

midnight. This is an online giving event for people across the nation (and the world) to come together to raise as much money as possible for North Texas nonprofits on one day. In seven years, North Texas Giving Day has pumped more than \$119 million into the communities of North Texas. For more information, visit www.northtexasgivingday.org.

September 24

Ellis County Emergency Preparedness Fair: 9:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m., on the square in downtown Waxahachie. Are you ready in the event of an emergency? Come learn more in a fun environment. The event is free and will also offer free hot dogs, jump houses and much more. For vendor or general information, call (972) 825-5190 or visit www.co.ellis.tx.us.

Ovilla's Annual Heritage Day Celebration: 9:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m., located behind City Hall and the police station. Guests are invited to participate in the parade and/or booth rental, or just enjoy the festivities: music, crafts, fun activities for the young ones and food vendors. For more information, visit www.cityofovilla.org.

"World of Water": 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Chautauqua Auditorium, Getzendaner Park,

Waxahachie. The fun, free event will include keynote address by ocean explorer Fabien Cousteau and many exciting programs and demonstrations of water. For more information, visit www.WaxahachieChautauqua.org.

October 1

Paws for Reflection Ranch 4th Annual Round Up Fundraiser Event: 6:30 p.m., 531 Montgomery Rd., Midlothian. Dinner, drinks, live music, dancing, silent auction. \$35/person by Sept. 15 or \$45/person after Sept. 15. This is an adult only event. For more information or donation and silent auction ideas, call (972) 775-8966. Visit www.pawsforreflectionranch.org or call for tickets.

October 8

4th Annual Dentistry From the Heart: 7:30 a.m., official registration begins, Waxahachie Family Dentistry. For more information, call the dental office at (972) 937-4370.


Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to abby.rich@nowmagazines.com.

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In the Kitchen With Becky Walker

— *By Rachel Smith*

Being the only girl out of four kids, Becky Walker began helping in the kitchen at a young age. Growing up in the Dallas area, she learned how to mix various ingredients to adapt dishes to her own taste. “My hometown influenced my love of Southern and Tex-Mex food,” she said.

Becky is an experimental cook, creating new dishes for amazing people in her life. While visiting family in Missouri, she sought hot peppers to make guacamole. However, exploring four local grocery stores still left her emptyhanded. So, she improvised using sweet peppers. “It was amazing how well everyone liked it,” she said. “I myself was impressed with how good it turned out!” Later, she added hot peppers as well, creating her Four-pepper Guacamole recipe. **NOW**

Four-pepper Guacamole

Adjust heat to your liking by using more or less of the hot peppers.

2-3 Hass avocados

Hellman's Real Mayonnaise, to taste (No substitutes, as it will change the flavor.)

1/2 small white onion, chopped

1 Roma tomato, diced

1 serrano pepper, diced

2 dried red chilies, crushed

1/2 red bell pepper, chopped

1/2 orange bell pepper, chopped

2 cloves garlic, minced

Lime juice, to taste

Chili powder, to taste

Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Peel and pit avocados. Add the flesh of the avocado to a large bowl and mash. Add

enough mayonnaise to make the mixture smooth, but not runny.

2. Add next 7 ingredients; stir to combine. Add lime juice and seasonings to taste; stir and enjoy.

Becky's Chicken and Rice

2 cups water

2 Tbsp. butter

1 box Zatarain's Yellow Rice

Vegetable oil (enough to cover bottom of skillet)

1 small white onion, chunked

1 medium green bell pepper, chunked

3 cloves garlic, minced

4 boneless/skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1- to 2-inch pieces

Lemon pepper, to taste

Oregano, to taste

Garlic powder, to taste

Sweet basil, to taste

Salt and pepper, to taste

1. Boil water and butter; add rice. Return to boil; reduce heat and simmer on low.

2. Heat oil in a large skillet. When oil is hot, add onion, bell pepper and garlic; sauté until tender.

3. Add chicken. When chicken begins to brown, add spices; cook until completely done and brown on top.

4. Cook rice about 25 minutes; let sit for 5 minutes to absorb liquid. Once chicken is done, add rice to skillet. Cook until all liquid is absorbed and rice takes on a brownish tint.

Perfect Apple Pie

Crust:

2 cups all-purpose flour

1 tsp. salt

2/3 cup shortening

5-7 Tbsp. cold water

Filling:

3/4 to 1 cup sugar

2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour

1/2 to 1 tsp. cinnamon

Dash ground nutmeg

Dash salt

6-8 Red Delicious apples, pared, cored and thinly sliced

2 Tbsp. butter

1. For crust: Sift flour and salt; cut in shortening until pieces are pea-size. Sprinkle 1 Tbsp. water over part of the mixture.

Toss with fork; repeat process until all is moistened. Form into two balls.

2. Flatten first ball on a lightly floured surface by pressing with the edge of your hand 3 times in both directions. Roll from center until 1/8-inch thick.

3. Lift pastry by rolling over rolling pin; unroll over pie plate; gently press into dish. Trim pastry evenly with rim of pie plate. Repeat step 2 for top crust.

4. For filling: Combine first 5 ingredients; mix with apples. Fill pie shell with mixture; dot with butter.

5. Lift top crust over well-filled pie. Trim 1/2-inch beyond edge of dish. Cut slits in the top crusts to allow steam to escape. Tuck top crust under the edge of the lower crust. Flute edge of pastry as desired. Sprinkle with sugar and bake at 400 F for 50 minutes or until done.

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