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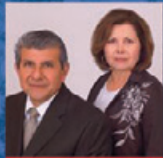
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ON THE COVER



Art and music make Rebekah Downing feel at home.

Photo by Amy Ramirez.

CONTENTS

January 2014 • Volume 9, Issue 1



6 Seeing R.E.D.

A local artist and musician proves doubly talented.

10 Making Resolutions Stick

Stay on track to reach your weight-loss goals with these small steps.

16 Charm and Cupcakes

At Home With David and Julie Weyand.

22 You Are Their Voice

Rhodie Rawls believes in fighting for others.



30 BusinessNOW

32 Around TownNOW

36 CookingNOW

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Editor's Note

"There's gold in them thar hills!"

January is on record as the month gold was discovered in California back in 1848, and the "rush" was on. In the year that followed, some 300,000 folks were dubbed '49ers as they flocked to the state in search of their fortune. Today, January still holds golden promise, when we set out to find ourselves anew. Perhaps we make grandiose resolutions or simply appreciate the opportunity for a fresh start.

While January wasn't always the official beginning of the calendar year, Romans made the change in part to honor the month's namesake, Janus — the god of beginnings — whose two faces allowed him to look back into the past and forward into the future. However *you* choose to mark the occasion, may there be things good as gold in "these here hills" for you!

From all of us at NOW Magazines, have a bright and beautiful New Year!

Angel

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eeing R.E.D.

— By Angel Morris

Some individuals are gifted with artistic abilities, while others enjoy musical talents. A smaller group of people are born with both. Rebekah Elizabeth Downing is one of those doubly talented few. Born February 25, 1990, in Houston, Rebekah is of Colombian-Canadian descent and moved with her family to Red Oak in 2002. Now 23, she is juggling teaching art to locals alongside her own musical performances.

“I’ve been a big music fan since I was a kid, and I wrote a few classical and ragtime piano pieces, but I didn’t actually start taking it seriously until I started singing in 2009,” Rebekah said. “Since then, I have been involved in multiple band projects. I’m working on a solo thing right now. I love performing.”

Also a lover of music videos and movies, Rebekah has starred in a few low-budget films and would like to participate in more. After six years of advanced art classes, however, she turned to teaching in 2006.

“I have taught all ages of students, including adults, and prefer teaching privately as opposed to group lessons, because everyone’s learning style is different,” she said.

Her own style developed early on. “I have always been interested in art, ever since I was really young,” she said. “I remember being 4 years old and watching *Looney Tunes* and Disney cartoons and intently studying the characters and their expressions, so I could draw them later. I drew all the time.”

Rebekah started off cartooning, usually with a pen or marker or “whatever I could get my hands on,” she said. “My favorite things to draw at that point were animals. At restaurants, I would draw on the tablecloth if they would let me.” At her seventh birthday party, she received a notepad and a set of colored pencils. “I spent the rest of the party doodling instead of playing with my friends,” Rebekah recalled. “I was sort of anti-social, but I was really well-known when I was in elementary school, because I was ‘the girl who draws.’”

At age 10, Rebekah began taking realistic drawing classes. “I absolutely loved going to art class, and my skill improved dramatically the six years I took them. Since

“I like using vibrant colors with lots of movement, and I love the color red, which happens to be my initials!”



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then, I have dabbled in a variety of mediums, but pencil, pen and ink and collage mediums will always stand out as my favorites.”

As a child, Rebekah was obsessed with the Middle Ages and completed a variety of medieval projects with her family. “I think I still have shields, helmets, castles and swords floating around the house,” she said.

Rebekah won a blue ribbon at the State Fair of Texas when she was 12, for a pencil drawing of a cat and, since then, has placed seven times at the State Fair and won ribbons and awards in numerous other art shows around the Metroplex. Her students have also won awards in the State Fair and the Ellis County Youth Art Show, and even though a number of the students have graduated from her class, they tell Rebekah they are continuing to pursue art.

Today, Rebekah admits to a certain morbidity in her art and said people tease her for her many drawings of brains and skeletons. But she also enjoys drawing celebrities and time-period art.

“Most of my realistic pencil drawings are of people’s faces. I love drawing eyes. They might be my favorite thing to draw,” Rebekah said. “I have drawn a few famous people, such as Audrey Hepburn and Tom Waits, and I love psychedelic art. I think the ’60s were awesome. If I were to time travel, I would choose the ’60s.”

Many things inspire Rebekah to start a new art project, such as comic

books, stop motion, puppets, cult and “B” movies, vintage movie posters and album artwork. “Really, the littlest thing can trigger an idea! I have always been attracted to the surreal or bizarre, so I make sure to surround myself with weird art so that when I need inspiration, I don’t have to look very far,” she said. “I’m also fascinated with the subconscious, so I draw a lot of inspiration from my dreams. My paintings are very surreal and dreamlike and often have spiritual themes. I like using vibrant colors with lots of movement, and I love the color red, which happens to be my initials!”

Noting Ralph Steadman, Salvador Dali, Dr. Seuss, Gustav Klimt, William Blake and Miguel Aguilar among the artists who influence her, Rebekah has always been open to artistic teamwork. “I have collaborated with local banjo maker Chuck Lee on some banjo inlay designs, have done many pencil drawing commissions and band promo fliers, including those for local bands such as The Royal Savages and The Phantom Sensation, and am currently working on a book of mixed-media poetry,” Rebekah said. “I always have a project going, whether it’s a hyper-realistic black-and-white portrait, a surrealistic painting or a wacky ink cartoon.”

Instead of typing her collection of poems, Rebekah scribbled them down with an ink pen and added other elements, such as cartoons, old photographs and odd magazine cutouts. She then compiled these poems into a book titled, *What Goes Down Must Come Up*.

Rebekah plans to continue teaching, playing music, writing and possibly experimenting more with film. She encourages everyone — even those who consider themselves “un-artsy” — to experiment for fun.

“Playing with art can improve your mood. I have done a lot of study on colors and how each color invokes a different mood. Colors have compatibility with other colors and are attracted to their opposites, like people,” Rebekah noted. “I also think it’s possible for each color to have a different note on the scale. Can we hear colors and see sounds? Maybe. I think there’s something for everyone in art ... you just have to find your medium. Everything is full of creative potential!” **NOW**



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MAKING

RESOLUTIONS

STICK

— By Jill Rose

Be realistic.

With the New Year comes a clean slate and a chance to start over. Bad habits and lifestyle choices can be altered with resolutions and goals, and the not-so-great living of the last few months slowly becomes a memory. Whether you want to work out or eat healthier, resolutions can help change your life for the better. Follow these simple guidelines, and this year your healthier resolutions may stick.

You have probably made hundreds of yearly resolutions, yet given up within a few months. Frequently, giving up is due to unrealistic expectations of quick achievement. When setting goals, it's easy to get carried away with grand ideas, but this can set you up to fail. Although it would be amazing to achieve our goals in just weeks, realistically, it will take time — especially when it comes to weight loss. Excess weight/fat did not show up overnight, instead it culminates from decades, or even a lifetime, of poor eating habits. Losing 10 pounds may take you six months or more. Adjusting your goals to your current situation and



not where you want to be in a year, will prove a key to success. Perhaps you plan to run a marathon, but have never run farther than a mile. Break large resolutions like this into smaller, attainable goals: running a 5K in three months, a 10K in six months, a half marathon in nine months and a full marathon in a year. Breaking goals into smaller increments allows you to reach milestones quicker and will motivate you to continue.

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Find your true motivation.

In order to stick to your resolutions, you have to be honest about your motivations. Motivations rooted in pleasing others often result in frustration and disappointment. Determine what motivates you — not others — in order to do well. Find your true motivations by asking yourself the following:

Why do I want to live a healthier life? To feel better? To look better for a special event? To impress someone?

Am I afraid of taking risks or failing?

What has stopped me from keeping my resolution in the past?

What can I do differently this year?

When thinking of giving up, what will I say or do to keep my resolve?

Answering these questions first will not only clarify your true motivations, it will prepare you for obstacles.

Write it down.

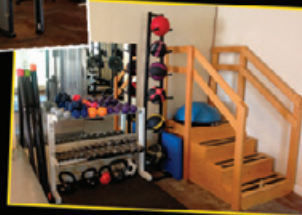
While setting realistic goals and determining your motivations may seem like a no-brainer, writing them down is crucial. This is a great way to visualize what you want to accomplish. Write your goal on a sticky note and post it somewhere highly visible, like the bathroom mirror or refrigerator. Seeing what you want staring back at you every day helps keep you focused.

Do you want to eat better and lose weight? Awesome! But what changes will you make in your day-to-day routine to obtain your goals? Will you cut out junk food? Eat more fruits and veggies? What is your weight-loss plan? Will you eat less, work out more or a little bit of both? When and where will you work out? Although these are basic questions, they make obtaining your desired result possible. By mapping out your strategy for achieving your goal when you make your resolution, you can see the work it will take and visualize what you want.

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Monitor your progress.

Perhaps the most vital part of sticking to your resolution is monitoring your progress. If your resolution is to eat better, keeping a food journal is an absolute necessity. No longer is it necessary to write down everything you eat in an actual journal. Apps like MyFitnessPal and LIVESTRONG.COM allow you to record foods quickly and easily, while monitoring your calories and macronutrients. The key advantage is accountability, providing a visual reminder of your progress and warning you when you begin to veer off-path.



If losing weight is your goal, use a journal to monitor your weights and measurements. Most fitness experts advise weighing and measuring once a week. Just a reminder: If you are lifting weights or participating in a muscle-building program, it's not wise to use the scale as a monitoring device. While muscle and fat weigh the same, muscle takes up less space. In the process of converting fat into muscle, you will lose

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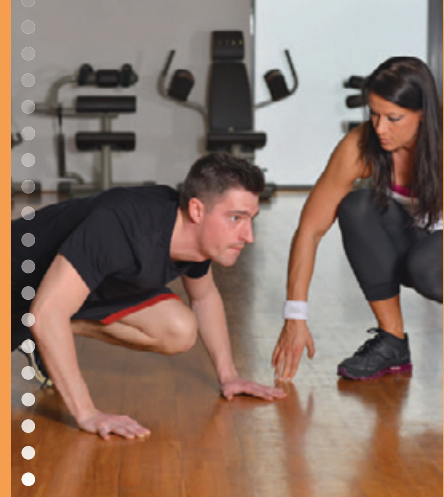
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inches but may not lose pounds. Because of this, measure around the widest part of your hips, arms, calves and stomach (the area right below your belly button). This more accurately measures change for those participating in strength training programs.

Accept that you are going to mess up.



Making life changes — no matter how big or little — is hard. Whether with work, kids or just life in general, mistakes are made. Workouts are missed. Cookies are eaten. Things don't go as well as planned. Using these obstacles to convince yourself the goal is too hard makes it easy to give up. Accepting you can't always adhere to your plan can make it easier to achieve your goals. Modify your resolution/goal as needed. If you plan to work out five days a week but you can't find the time, adjust your goal to three days a week. Once you get into a routine and working out becomes second nature, adding an extra two days down the road will be a breeze. Keep the faith and hang in there, because in the end you will be glad you did. **NOW**

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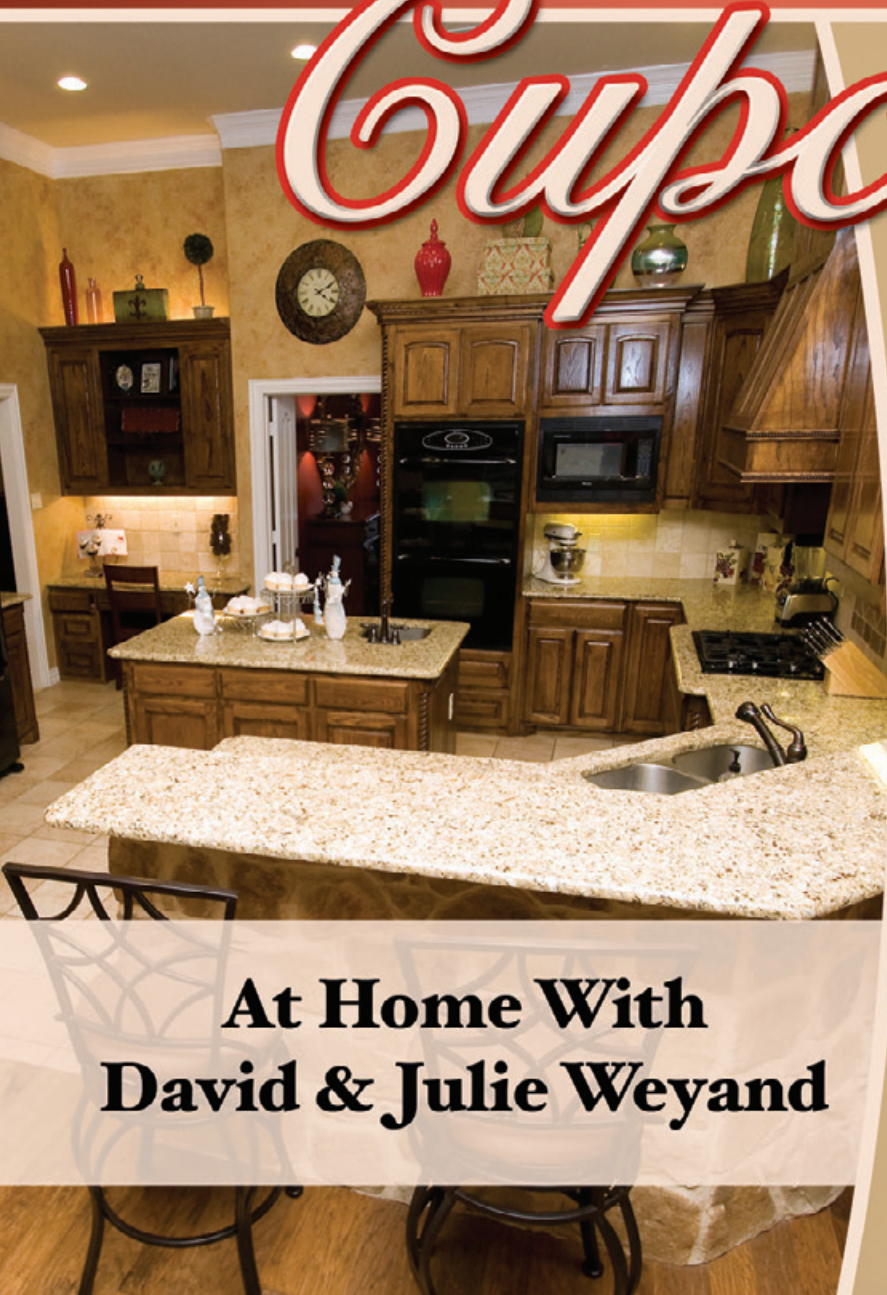
— By Sydni Thomas

The freshly manicured lawn and flowerbeds filled with cheerful seasonal plants give David and Julie Weyand's Ovilla home a "visitors are welcome" vibe. Inside the brick and stone house, the smell of Julie's freshly baked treats reassures guests that this house was made for entertaining. "I love a home filled with people," David said. "It's why we chose this house. We can have a lot of people over at once and fill these rooms."

Originally, they considered building a new house, but after touring their current home, they knew it was exactly what they would have built — without all the decisions that building a house involves. The open floor plan is spacious and includes Julie's dream kitchen. "Everything was what we were looking for in a house," Julie said. "Even though it was a little bigger than what we really needed, we knew that in the years to come we might need the extra space for family."

While decorating her home, Julie wanted a feeling of family to be evident. She used many pieces handed down from her mother and grandmothers to give the space

**At Home With
David & Julie Weyand**





some family history. One such item is a show-stopping mirror placed in the formal dining room, right off the entryway. Tables generally get credit for making formal dining rooms beautiful, but this hand-me-down mirror steals the show. "The mirror hung in my parent's living room when I was a child. I was thrilled when she gave it to me. I also received several other mirrors from my mom that I have used throughout the house," Julie said. "I took them and gave them new life by repainting them. In the master bedroom, I wanted to feature some of my favorites. I painted them white and placed them across from the window to bring more light into the room."

Both David and Julie have their own favorite rooms. David's is the living room, where natural-toned decor with pops of dark red make the room feel warm and cozy. A soft leather couch sits directly



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across from the custom-built media cabinet with intricate details that the builder had installed. A treasured family heirloom trunk serves as a coffee table. The trunk had belonged to Julie's grandmother, who brought it from Sweden in the late 1800s. "Everything she owned was packed in there when she came to America," Julie added.

The family enjoys coming together and watching movies in the evening. "We can bring in extra chairs so more people can gather in here for small group Bible study and fellowship," David said.



"Nothing makes me happier than having this room filled with people, conversation and laughter."

Julie's favorite room is the kitchen. The builder carried the details from the wood media center into the kitchen with matching cabinets and granite countertops. Julie's desserts are well-known around town, and she contributes her baking skills to auctions and parties whenever she can. Cabinets wrap around the room, giving Julie plenty of counter space for her creations, including her cheesecakes. She also has a large island in the middle

of the room for more preparation space. David installed a flat-screen TV just above the pantry, so Julie can watch her favorite cooking shows.

"When we moved in, I just walked the room over and over trying to decide where things should go," Julie said. "There is so much room in here, and I love it. I have so much fun coming into the kitchen and whipping something up to share with other people." Julie also enjoys preparing dinners for guests and serving them in her dining room. "A good meal sets the ambience for conversation," she said.

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Over the past year, the entire family entered into a stage of reinvention. David began working for Marketplace Ministries, Inc., a corporate chaplain company servicing businesses and corporations in the Dallas and Fort Worth areas, as well as nationally and internationally. David leads a team of 30 chaplains, who visit corporate institutions to provide prayer and support for employees. He also began his second master's degree in Christian Ministry, with a concentration in counseling and chaplaincy at Dallas Baptist University.

Recently, Julie was named director of client services at the Downtown Pregnancy Center in Dallas. The center offers free services to women, including pregnancy tests, STD testing, sonograms and educational programs. Clients can shop at the Wee Care Shop for diapers and baby items that have been donated by local churches and donors. "Volunteers are the mainstay for our ministry," Julie said. "I enjoy working alongside them as we give women hope."

David and Julie are thankful for this new season of life. "The irony about serving others is the blessing you receive in return," Julie said. "That truth is found in God's Word: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).

"We believe that our lives are about serving Christ and others," David said. "We are both wired that way and enjoy helping in any way we can. Everyone has needs physically, emotionally and spiritually. That's what connects us as humans."

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Ashley, Andrew and Adam, the couple's three children, were reared with that mindset. The family would use their vacations as a chance to go help people across the world. Mission trips to Haiti, Dominican Republic, Hungary, China and Mexico have taught their children how to get out of their comfort zones. "We are hoping to take a mission trip to the Dominican Republic together in the fall. We have all been there, but at separate times."

Ashley, a graduate of Liberty University, recently moved to Farmington, New Mexico, to teach language arts to sixth- and seventh-grade special needs students. She has a passion to impact students while giving them a love for reading. Andrew, who attends DBU, manages a White Rhino Coffee Shop in Cedar Hill. He also serves in the National Guard. Adam, a business major, attends Tarleton-Midlothian and works at Hibbett's in Waxahachie. Adam is an avid sportsman and plays on local softball and soccer teams. He also enjoys helping younger athletes sharpen their baseball skills.

Even with their children grown, David and Julie could not imagine leaving Ovilla. They attend church at First Baptist Dallas and are involved in the Acts 2:42 Class. They also attend a small group Bible study with neighbors who attend First Baptist Dallas, as well. They love the Ovilla community. "We have been here for 14 years," David said. "This is home for us. While neither of us are from Texas, originally, we can't imagine living anywhere else." **NOW**

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YOU ARE THEIR VOICE

—By Callie Revell



Rhodie Rawls has lived in Waxahachie for the past 30 years with her family. She and her husband spent 12 of those years as foster parents for children in need in Ellis County. Sixty-five foster children and five adopted children later, Rhodie knows her calling is fighting for abused and neglected children. Her passion led to her current position as executive director of CASA of Ellis County.

CASA stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates. When children are removed from their homes, the judge working the case appoints a CASA volunteer as their guardian ad litem. This allows the volunteer to become the child's voice in the legal system and fight for the best possible outcome for the child. A CASA volunteer obtains information about the child's case from all involved parties and presents the information to the judge in court. The goal of a CASA volunteer is to move a child through the system as quickly as possible and into a safe, permanent home.

In 1977, Seattle Superior Court Judge David Soukup started CASA as a way to better understand children in the foster care system on a case-by-case basis. "He had all these children who had been taken away from their families," Rhodie explained. "He was having to make lifelong decisions for children without enough information." Today, CASA has spread across



the country and boasts more than 77,000 volunteers. "It's in every state now, so it works," Rhodie stated.

CASA of Ellis County is now in its 10th year serving Ellis County. In the beginning, the idea of starting a branch here began with its central ideal — having a passion for caring for foster children. "We had 65 children come through our home, and there was no CASA program in Ellis County when we were foster parents," Rhodie said. "As a foster parent, we really don't have much of a voice. I felt like I needed to be their advocate, because often these kids just don't have a voice."

Rhodie knew Ellis County Judge Bob Carroll, who, at the time, heard many Child Protective Services (CPS) cases. Judge Carroll saw a need for improvement and learned about CASA from other judges. After forming an initiative to bring it to Ellis County, he asked Rhodie to serve on a steering committee based on her interest in CASA. "As a foster parent, I didn't know much about CASA, but during those 12 years and 65 children I had two who had CASA volunteers. I saw what their involvement was and how neat it was that they had someone who cared about them in the community." Once CASA was established, Rhodie was eventually asked to step in as executive director.



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**“As a foster parent,
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much of a voice.
I felt like I needed to
be their advocate
because often
these kids just
don’t have
a voice.”**

At first, Rhodie was hesitant to accept the position. “I thought my ministry was taking care of little children. That’s what I wanted to do, but with CASA I had an opportunity to impact every child in Ellis County who goes through foster care.”

CASA works well, because volunteers are assigned to children in their own community. After recruiting volunteers, CASA trains them to be, according to Rhodie, a “voice for children going through the system.” Volunteers not only visit with the child, but many times will become involved in the child’s life like teachers, parents and counselors. “As a CASA volunteer, you are an advocate for that child,” Rhodie added.

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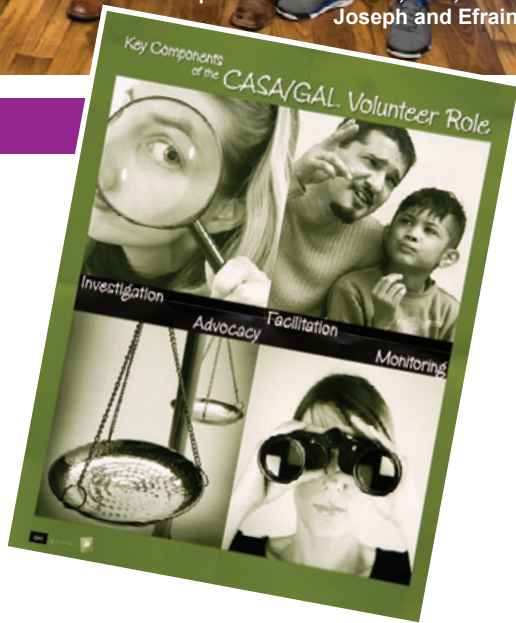
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Rhodie and Don Rawls (center) pose with their adopted children: Mikie, Iven, Ezzie, Joseph and Efrain.



much overburdened system. Their caseworkers might have 30 or 40 kids on their caseload, and we only assign our volunteers one case at a time, but that's what makes it work," Rhodie explained. "That's the beauty of it." A child who might be just a name on a piece of paper to someone gets the full attention of a trained volunteer who is there to advocate and serve them.

"The kids who have CASA volunteers seem to have much better outcomes in the system than those without one. Statistics prove it," Rhodie said. "They don't get lost in the shuffle or linger in foster care." Rhodie believes in the merit of a responsible adult representing a child in the legal system. "At least we know that somebody is looking out and making the best recommendations to the court, so when the judge has those difficult decisions to make, he has all the

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**“I love kids, and I’ve
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facts about the child,” she pointed out.

“We’re very fortunate in Ellis County. We have a great CPS department.” CASA is a program set up to complement CPS and foster programs, and it is working. “In Ellis County, we serve 100 percent of the kids,” Rhodie said proudly. “Only a handful of counties in the state have been able to do that.”

CASA’s signature fundraising event for the year is their Share the Love Gala. The fourth annual Share the Love Gala will take place at the Waxahachie Civic Center on February 15 and is open to the public. A silent and live auction will benefit CASA of Ellis County. The night will also offer fine dining and entertainment. Attending the gala is an excellent way to show support of CASA and its goals for the communities of Ellis County. “We also need auction items and sponsors,” Rhodie added.

However, CASA has an even more pressing need. “We need volunteers,” Rhodie admitted. “We always need a pool of volunteers to pull from because things

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happen. Right now, almost every active volunteer is on a case, and we're currently training a new group of volunteers." To become a CASA volunteer requires 30 hours of training after an extensive interview process and background check. CASA volunteers do not need any type of legal or social work background to be considered. As the population of Ellis County grows, the number of children in the foster care system increases causing CASA to have a greater need for volunteers than ever before. Those interested in becoming a volunteer can find an application on the CASA website: www.casaofelliscounty.org.

For Rhodie, becoming involved with CASA changed her life for the better. "I seriously cannot imagine doing anything else with my life," she said. "I love kids, and I've always worked with kids. I feel like it's an opportunity to make a great impact on so many little lives."

Rhodie encourages anyone interested in CASA to become involved and start fighting for abused and neglected children in the community. "If not us," Rhodie insisted, "then who?" **NOW**

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G & H Glass & Carpet is a Christian, family-based, -owned

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A Hard Freeze

— By Betty Tryon, BSN

Who knew something so numb could eventually hurt so much? Unfortunately, that revelation comes to many frostbite victims. Exposing yourself to hazardous weather can bring regrettable consequences, one of which is frostbite. Frostbite occurs when the skin and underlying body tissue is damaged due to extremely cold temperatures. There are several stages of frostbite beginning with frostnip, which causes minimal and reversible injury to the skin, to severe frostbite, which causes extensive and permanent damage.

With frostnip, the skin is pale and numb and can usually be resolved with a warm water bath. With frostbite, the skin is white, blue and/or mottled and feels hard or frozen depending on the degree to which the area is affected. Medical attention is required. The areas most affected are the exposed areas of the body — hands, feet, nose and ears. Some of the signs of frostbite are:

- Sensation of pain at beginning of frostbite
- Progression of numbness depending upon exposure
- May feel wooden or numb
- Pale with waxy appearance
- Blisters
- Swelling

If you suspect frostbite, get out of the weather immediately to a warm and dry place. Take off all wet clothes. Wrap in a warm blanket. Do not

use heating pads or fireplaces. They are risky and not recommended. Do not rub the area. Do not walk on frostbitten feet. Children must be carried. Walking on frostbitten feet can cause more damage to the tissues. As the area rewarms, it can have a burning, stinging sensation. Sometimes, the pain is intense and may require medical intervention for resolution. As skin rewarms, there is the possibility of blisters. Cover the blisters with protective gauze and do not pop them.

Contact your physician or go directly to the emergency room. All frostbite should be evaluated by a physician immediately. You especially should not delay if you see any of these symptoms: running a fever over 101 F, development of blisters, development of thick drainage, blue or black areas, loss of sensation and/or feeling sick.

The best way to treat frostbite is to avoid getting it. Keep a careful eye on the forecast if you need to go out. Dress warmly in layers. Use mittens instead of gloves. Cover your head and wear a cap that covers your ears or use ear muffs. Change immediately any part of your clothing that becomes wet. Limit your time in the freezing temperatures. By paying attention to detail you can avoid the painful lesson and consequences of frostbite. **NOW**

This article is for general information only and does not constitute medical advice. Consult with your physician if you have questions regarding this topic.

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Throughout January

Meals on Wheels: How about making volunteerism one of your New Year's resolutions? Volunteers are sought in the Ferris and Palmer areas to deliver meals to shut-ins in these communities. Contact Lisa Deese at (972) 351-9943.

January 2

Local Author Group: 6:00-7:30 p.m., Museum Room, Red Oak Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. A discussion/critique group run by local author Donald Horne.

January 6, 13, 20, 27

Hot Yoga Community Class: 5:45-6:45 p.m. Dynamic Yoga for Love Studio, 558 Bluebird Lane, Red Oak. Beginner to advanced levels welcome; modifications offered for various body types and ages. Donations accepted. Visit yoga4love.net.

January 11

Red Oak Opry: 7:00 p.m., Lone Star Cowboy Church, 1011 E. Ovilla Rd. Adult tickets \$10 at door. Visit redoakopry.com.

January 14

342 Networking Group: 7:30 a.m., Denny's Restaurant, 408 N. I35 Service Road,

Red Oak. Breakfast and business owner networking. Business owners from all communities welcome. RSVP to Melton McKown at (214) 244-2329.

January 16 — 18

Wizard of Oz: 7:00 p.m. **January 16-17**; 2:00 and 7:00 p.m. **January 18**, Red Oak High School Performing Arts Center, 122 S. Hwy. 342. Previous musical productions include: *Grease*, *Singin' in the Rain* and *Little Shop of Horrors*. Children and senior citizens, \$7; adults, \$10. Visit www.rohstheatreboosters.org for more information.

January 18

Ferris Trade Day: 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., downtown pavilion, South Main and West Sixth streets, Ferris. Vendors welcome. Call (817) 992-9204 to rent vendor space.

January 20

MLK Day: Check city websites for community building closures.

Book Club: 7:00-8:30 p.m., Red Oak Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy. Email sandyg@aircanopy.net for this month's book selection.

January 22

Chamber Luncheon: 12:00-1:00 p.m., 200

Lakeview Pkwy. Networking opportunity for local businesses. Members with reservations \$12; members without reservations \$15; non-members \$20. RSVP: katherine@redoakareachamber.org.

January 25

Bristol Opry: 7:00-9:30 p.m., Old Bristol Schoolhouse, Union Hill Road at Church Street, Bristol. Country music show featuring local singers and musicians.

January 27

Indian Trail Master Naturalist Chapter Meeting: 6:00-8:00 p.m., Ronald Reagan Room, Red Oak Library, 200 Lakeview Pkwy.

January 30

FirstLook of Ellis County annual fundraising dinner: Together for Life: 7:00 p.m., Waxahachie Bible Church, 621 N. Grand Ave., Waxahachie. Reservations are required. For more information, call (972) 938-7900.

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In The Kitchen With Melissa Hancock

— *By Angel Morris*

Melissa Hancock has many favorite recipes, but those inherited from family are most treasured. “When I prepare a family dish, it reminds me of that person. The women in my family really cook well!” Melissa said.

Recipes from her mom, grandmas and aunts taste great, in part, because of their sentimental value. “Recipe exchanging happens at family gatherings and always seems to include a secret ... how they are prepared, what a ‘pinch’ really means, adding extra of some special ingredient,” Melissa explained. “Even though my grandmothers have passed away, they remain with me as I cook their dishes for my immediate family. When I’m entertaining family and friends, I’m proud to say those inherited recipes are from the best cooks I know.” **NOW**

Family Burrito Bake

- 1 medium onion, coarsely chopped**
- 1 lb. lean ground beef**
- 2 Tbsp. Southwest seasoning**
- 2 garlic cloves, pressed**
- 1 11-oz. can whole kernel corn**
- 1 jar chunky salsa, any brand (divided use)**
- 1 16-oz. can refried beans**
- 3 Tbsp. water**
- 7 6-inch corn tortillas**
- 2 cups shredded Colby and Monterey Jack cheese (divided use)**

- 1.** In a deep covered baker, combine onion, beef, Southwest seasoning and pressed garlic. Mix well.
- 2.** Microwave, covered, on high 6-8 minutes, or until beef is no longer pink, breaking into crumbles halfway through cooking time; drain fat.
- 3.** In a bowl, combine beef mixture, corn and 1 cup salsa. Mix well.
- 4.** Combine refried beans and water in a bowl; mix well.

- 5.** To assemble, place two tortillas over bottom of baker. Cut one tortilla to fill any gaps as layers are assembled. Spread one-third of beans evenly over tortillas. Top with one-third of beef mixture and one-third of cheese. Repeat layers one time.
- 6.** Arrange remaining two tortillas over cheese. Top with remaining beans and beef mixture.
- 7.** Microwave, covered, on high 12-15 minutes or until center is hot.
- 8.** Top with remaining salsa and cheese. Let stand, covered, 10 minutes before serving.

Hot Artichoke Dip

- 2 6-oz. jars marinated artichoke hearts**
- 1 10-oz. pkg. frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained**
- 1 garlic clove, pressed**
- 1/2 cup sour cream**
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise**
- 3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese**

- 1.** Preheat oven to 375 F. Drain and coarsely chop artichoke hearts. Mix with remaining ingredients in bowl.

- 2.** Spoon mixture into baker. Bake 20-25 minutes, or until heated through.
- 3.** Serve with pita chips or fresh vegetables.

Tomato Basil Soup

- 8 cups fresh tomatoes (approximately 16 medium-size)**
- 1 46-oz. can Campbell’s tomato juice**
- 7 tsp. granular chicken bouillon**
- 20 fresh basil leaves**
- 2 cups heavy whipping cream**
- 1 1/2 sticks butter**

- 1.** Boil tomatoes to loosen skins (1-2 minutes). Peel and chop.
- 2.** Combine tomatoes, juice and bouillon in a large pot. Simmer 45 minutes.
- 3.** In small batches, process tomato mixture with basil leaves and return to soup pot over medium heat.
- 4.** Stir in cream and butter. Garnish with basil leaves.
- 5.** Serve with crackers, croutons or dollop of sour cream.

Cranberry-apple Crisp

Filling:

- 6-7 medium Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and sliced**
- 1 16-oz. can whole berry cranberry sauce**
- 3/4 cup sugar**
- 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour**

Topping:

- 1/4 cup nuts, chopped**
- 1 cup rolled oats**
- 1/3 cup packed brown sugar**
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour**
- 1 tsp. cinnamon**
- 1/4 cup butter or margarine, melted**
- Vanilla ice cream or whipped topping**

- 1.** For filling: Preheat oven to 375 F.
- 2.** Cut apple slices crosswise in half; place in 9x13-inch baker.
- 3.** In a bowl, combine cranberry sauce, sugar and flour; mix well.
- 4.** Pour cranberry mixture over apples; toss to coat evenly.
- 5.** For topping: Combine chopped nuts, oats, brown sugar, flour and cinnamon.
- 6.** Add melted butter to ingredients in bowl; mix well.
- 7.** Sprinkle topping over fruit mixture.
- 8.** Bake 35-40 minutes, or until fruit is tender.
- 9.** Serve warm with ice cream or whipped topping.

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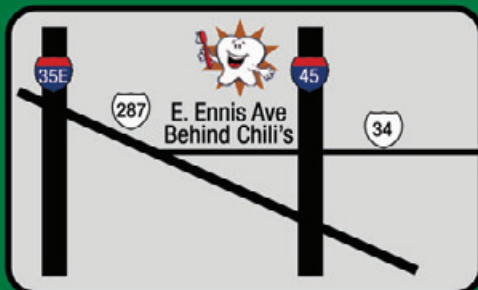
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