

HERITAGE

WINTER 2022



Azle
News



The
Springtown
Epigraph

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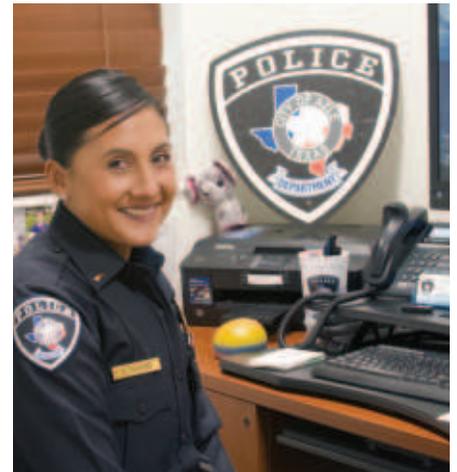
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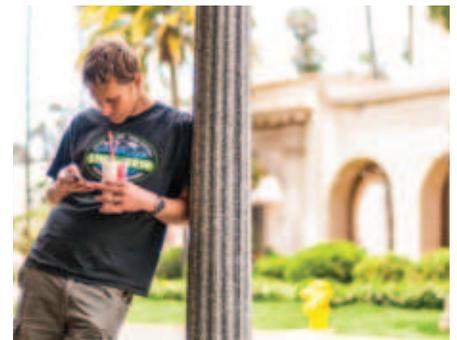
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COURTESY PHOTO

Pictured is the old Agnes schoolhouse circa 1900. The building burned down in 1926, and a one-story schoolhouse was built and operational in the following year.

[HERITAGE]

Agnes Community Association aims to preserve history, build community

BY MADELYN EDWARDS

Christina Adcock's work for the old Agnes schoolhouse is a labor of love.

The old school building is across State Highway 199 from Agnes Baptist Church. Since 1946, the schoolhouse has acted as a community center for Agnes.

Adcock recalled bringing her baby daughter – who is now 14 years old – to the community center during a trade day where people were selling old books and other items, and Adcock was able to meet people.

However, a couple of years later, she said everything at the center was shut down, and she was concerned about the historic building.

“The windows were knocked out on the side, and then we had that rain, that year it rained and rained and rained, and I just remembered that the wood floors were here, and the windows were open,” Adcock said. “I thought there’s going to be nothing left.”

She thought of the schoolhouse

building again while voting at Agnes Baptist Church, where the old church building was removed and eventually replaced with a new sanctuary. Adcock remembered being saddened by the historical loss.

“I said, ‘Man, I wish somebody would just do something. I mean, they might even do that to that old schoolhouse that we pass by every time we leave,’” she said. “And my kids said, ‘Well, Mom, why don’t you do something? They might if you don’t do something.’”

After that, Adcock got more involved with the community center schoolhouse and had a vision that involved classes and gardening at the center. In 2016, the community association board allowed her to be the administrator.

Since then, Adcock has been able to meet a lot of her goals. A well was drilled for the community center for free. A new roof was donated. Garden beds were built with concrete bricks donated by Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital in Azle and were set up by the Hudson Oaks H-E-B management team. Two Trail Life USA members picked the community center as their Freedom Award project, with one building the pump house and the other installing new doors, a porch and ramp.

More recently, a 2,500-gallon rain-water collection storage container was added to the property, which was part of a partnership with Tarrant Regional Water District and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

“It’s little by little, but it’s coming along,” Adcock said.

The community center has survived on donations, such as a piano, the pews in the building, books, games and craft supplies that are used for classes, Adcock said. Several various activities and classes have occurred at the center, and almost all the activities are free to the public.

“I did a lot more things before COVID. (With) COVID, I switched and became more community minded” by trying to respond to community needs, Adcock said. “Honestly, these past three or four months, I’ve been like, OK, let’s get back into things. I started doing a little bit more.”

Before the new roof was added, Adcock recalled coming to the schoolhouse with buckets to collect droplets of water when it rained and putting out fans to protect the original wood flooring. Being mindful of the history of the building is important to her.

“My ideas are for the community. It’s not like, ‘Oh, I’m going to paint the

walls blue,” she said.

The school in the current building was operational from 1927-1946 for children in all grade levels, Adcock said. Previously, a two-story building was in place before that, but it burned down in 1926.

After the school closed, the schoolhouse was sold to the Agnes community as a community association center. There were times when musicians would perform to audiences in the building. Adcock also said the center was used for quilters to craft together, and when someone in the community lost their home, they would make quilts to give away or raffle for donations for the families.

Steve Harris, who is on the Agnes Community Association board, grew up in Agnes in the 1960s when the schoolhouse was the epicenter for activities. He remembered riding his bicycle to the center to watch older men in the community play dominoes, and he attended Cub Scouts meetings there as well.



PHOTO BY MADELYN EDWARDS

Agnes Community Association administrator Christina Adcock holds a book of photos of community association events in the historic Agnes schoolhouse.



COURTESY PHOTO

In his Trail Life Freedom Award project, Garrett Powell led a team to replace all the exterior doors at the historic Agnes schoolhouse and rebuild the porch and ramp. It was done in June 2021.

Harris' goal for the community center is mainly about the preservation of the schoolhouse, which is one of the few recognizable Agnes landmarks.

"I would like to see it preserved as close to its original appearance as possible and maintained in such a fashion that it can be used for various community activities, including educational things, club meetings, family reunions, that kind of stuff," he said.

Harris would also like to see local school children have field trips to the old schoolhouse and maybe start a tradition of having a class there annually.

Getting back to a tight knit community in Agnes is a goal for Adcock, especially connecting people in the newer housing subdivisions with their neighbors. The activities are intended to give kids and families something to do that's local as opposed to driving elsewhere.

"In the days ahead, we just need to know our community," she said. "We need to know each other."

The community center is also a location for Garden on the Go, an initiative from Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital in Azle where locals can buy fresh produce. In Agnes, Garden on the Go takes place on the second Saturday of the month.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, produce was given out to the community for free, Adcock said.

"We were able to just bless the community, and we had cars lined all the way out to the streets because everybody was in their car, and we would just hand out bags of free vegetables," she said.

Harris praised Adcock's work on the Garden on the Go initiative.

"She was responsible for getting that deal going, and I think that one event alone has helped more people in that area than anything that's been done in that building in years," he said.

Harris said his 82-year-old mother, who is homebound, looks forward to the event every month. She cans some

of the produce, giving her something to do, and the event allows her to see a friend that she doesn't see often.

"That's a community thing. That's what a community center is good for," he said.

Garden on the Go sometimes includes local vendors selling their wares – such as soaps, jams, jellies, crafts, hydroponic lettuce – separate from the produce being sold.

"I'm of the age (that) I'd like to see that stuff more because that's the way it was when I grew up," Harris said. "People sold produce on street corners."

Adcock recalled a time during Garden on the Go when kids were picking onions that she had planted in one of the garden beds, and one child was particularly excited to pick onions. The child's mother reluctantly allowed it but came back the next week to pick more onions after enjoying the initial homegrown onion.

The center was able to set up gardens

for other people as well during the COVID pandemic to give people something to do amid the uncertain time, Adcock said.

As for kids, Adcock said gardening teaches them to eat healthy and to be patient.

“It’s also a test of patience,” she said “If you plant something, you got to wait until it’s grown. You got to take care of it.”

Among the classes and activities, Adcock has also initiated lessons about history aimed at homeschooled children as well as to other local kids.

“My motto is passing the wisdom of the older generations down, whether it be stories of Springtown or how people used to can or garden or sew, but just giving us skills,” she said.

Eventually, Adcock would like to pre-



COURTESY PHOTO

Abby Adcock participates in the Agnes Community Association’s economic fair that aimed to teach kids about the economics of spending and profiting.



serve the historic schoolhouse and add a metal building to the property for activities. Her idea is for the potential new building to have heating and air conditioning, so it could be used year-round. Continuing to fix the broken windows at the schoolhouse is also a goal as is adding play space for kids on the property.

To support the community center, people can donate to the Agnes Community Association at Pinnacle Bank. For more information about the Agnes Community Association, visit its Facebook page at facebook.com/people/Agnes-Community-Association/100081130040818/

COURTESY OF JOSHUA ADCOCK

Pictured is the historic Agnes schoolhouse photographed via drone. The old school building is across State Highway 199 from Agnes Baptist Church.



PHOTOS BY JEFF PRINCE

North Texas Ingredients produces Obie-Cue Texas Spice, a popular line of barbecue seasoning.

[COVER STORY]

Azle-based North Texas Ingredients relies on longtime employees for success

BY JEFF PRINCE

On a recent afternoon at North Texas Ingredients, an employee cleans a floor in an office while another employee tinkers with a 5,000-pound blender. In the warehouse, an employee uses tape to seal boxes of Obie-Cue spice. And nearby in the laboratory, a worker analyzes food products.

It's a typical day inside the 15,000-square-foot plant at 308 Commerce St. in Azle, where about 20 employees keep North Texas Ingredients ginning like a greased machine.

"The key to this whole operation is the employees," said owner Phillip Rodriguez, who founded the company in 1994. "If it weren't for these great people, this wouldn't work. Their dedication and attention to detail is critical to this business. I'm very grateful to them. Dedicated, caring workers are hard to find."

Local residents might be unaware of the business since it doesn't cater to walk-in customers. North Texas Ingredients began as a small spice blender

for local food processors and restaurants and evolved into a large-scale commercial provider that also services bakeries, grocers and delis, private labels, meat processors and e-commerce markets.

Employees create custom spices and functional ingredients such as meat tenderizers and moisturizers to make food taste its best. For instance, if someone sells hams and their hams aren't holding moisture during cooking, Rodriguez's crew can diagnose

the problem and provide a solution. Same if someone's fajita meat is dry or tough.

"I help them get their flavors right," Rodriguez said.

Sometimes achieving precise flavoring requires reverse engineering, meaning employees take a product and break it down in the lab to determine why it tastes a certain way and how to make things taste that exact same way consistently during large-scale production.

"It's all about taste and determining what the right spice mixture is," he said.

FRESH START

Phillip Rodriguez grew up in Fort Worth but attended high school in Springtown and still considers himself a Porcupine at heart. He earned a business degree at Stephen F. Austin State University in the early 1980s and afterward joined the family business, Rodriguez Festive Foods, in Fort Worth.

In 1993, he left to partner with two entrepreneurs and established Fortune Foods in Lake Worth. Three years later, Rodriguez left that business to create North Texas Ingredients, hoping to thrive as an independent owner and operator.

He and wife Melba were the company's only two employees during those early days, although they added Phillip's aunt Virginia Lara to the payroll as a packer eventually. The three of them were the company's only employees for the first year.

At the time, Phillip and Melba were living just outside of Azle and figured Commerce Street was a convenient spot to do business. Their three children attended Azle schools.

"It was close to home," Phillip said. "Commerce Street was the only commercial area in Azle, and there was a building to rent, so I rented it. It had a loading dock and the facilities I needed."

The building required plenty of refurbishing.

At the time, the structure was divided into three separate businesses, each containing about 5,000 square feet of space. Rodriguez leased a third of the building, and the other spaces were filled by a cabinet maker and a transmission shop.

Before long, Rodriguez purchased the entire building. After the cabinet shop closed, Rodriguez expanded his spice operation to that area. Then, the transmission shop moved across the street, and Rodriguez adapted the entire building into a precision production plant.

"I just expanded the operation," he said.

LONG LINE

The Rodriguez's first customer at North Texas Ingredients was Jim Risky of Risky's Barbecue in Fort Worth. The Rodriguez and Risky families are well acquainted, going back to the 1960s.

Describing the backstory of North Texas Ingredients, however, requires



An employee applies reverse engineering in the lab.

going back further still.

In 1917, Phillip's great-grandfather Florencio Rodriguez fled the Mexican Revolution and immigrated with his family to Fort Worth. He and his sons worked for years at the Swift & Co. meatpacking plants near the Stockyards.

Florencio's oldest son, Rodolpho, opened his first grocery store near the Stockyards in 1939. Rodolpho and wife Juanita made barbacoa, menudo, tamales and other Hispanic specialties and sold them to local customers.

In 1942, Rodolpho entered the military to serve in World War II, and Juanita operated Rodriguez Food Mart in his absence while raising the couple's children. After coming home from the war in 1946, Rodolpho resumed running the store with help from Juanita and the kids.

The five kids - Rudy, Ernest, Raul, Charlie and Alice - would help establish Rodriguez Festive Foods and produce tortillas on a commercial scale in the 1960s.

Their first customer was Pete Risky, father of Jim Risky.

Rodriguez Festive Foods thrived for decades, and the Rodriguez kids raised their own families. Many of those children joined the enterprise.

Phillip was the first to leave the family business and go out on his own. Turns out, his ambition was timely. In 2001, the Rodriguez family sold Festive Foods, and everyone went their own way.

Four years later, Phillip, his older brother, Ernest Jr., and their father, Ernest Sr., bought back a portion of the tamale business and began operating as Rodriguez Foods in Fort Worth. That company continues to thrive, and its employees include two of Phillip's sons, Nicholas and Lukas Rodriguez, both of whom graduated from Azle High School.

BREAKING AWAY

Being the first to break away from the Fort Worth family business was tough in the early stages. Phillip's first business in Lake Worth was a struggle. Opening North Texas Ingredients on



An employee boxes up product for delivery.

his own was an even bigger gamble. His production capacity at the new plant was about 300 pounds a week, and his first-year sales were \$20,000. That wasn't much money to support a couple with three children and a house payment.

These days, times aren't as tough. North Texas Ingredients generates about \$5 million in annual sales and can produce up to 60,000 pounds a week. Also, Rodriguez's many years in the food business have provided him valuable knowledge that he shares as a paid consultant.

"When people are having problems in their food plant, I go in and help them get back online," he said.

Rodriguez has worked hard to establish his Azle-based company as a premier producer of food products but stresses he couldn't have succeeded without a labor force composed of loyal employees. Most workers have been with him for 20 years.

"We are able to employ people that want to live in the rural setting or a smaller town and don't want to drive to Fort Worth to go to work every day," he said. "Most of them live here in Azle

or in Springtown or in between somewhere. They have been able to make a living, build homes, grow their families, all of that.”

With the business approaching its 30th anniversary in 2024, Rodriguez reflected on the past with a mixture of relief, pride, and a motivation to continue. He has never doubted his decision to establish the business in Azle rather than Fort Worth, particularly because of the labor force he has acquired.

“The cost of owning a business in Azle is cheaper than Fort Worth from an overall tax standpoint,” he said. “And I like the employees we have out here. We offer a good job in a good environment.”

Looking ahead, Rodriguez speaks with the same clarity and vision that he displayed all those years ago when he struck out on his own and staked his claim on Commerce Street. Although the business isn’t open to the public, mail order products and services are available through ntxspice.com.

“We are going to keep producing product and keep doing what we’re doing,” he said.

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PHOTO BY DON MUNSCH
Autumn Shepherd

A few good women

BY DON MUNSCH

The Marines aren't just looking for a few good men, they're looking for a few good people. Autumn Shepherd answered the call.

Shepherd graduated from Azle High School this past spring, and she wanted to be a Marine and joined after high school.

She recently discussed her experiences during a break period after boot camp. She talked at the Recruiting Substation Weatherford with Marine Corps Recruiter Sgt. Summer Brown.

Before the end of her junior year, Shepherd started talking to the Marines and then she was sworn in that

[PEOPLE]

Recent Azle graduate embraces Marine life, looks forward to next chapter

summer. Several weeks after graduation, she left - July 5 - to attend boot camp at Parris Island, South Carolina. Boot camp lasts 13 weeks, and she finished Sept. 28.

She said boot camp was “not at all” what she was expected.

“The (internet) videos, all you see is constant screaming,” she said. “But it wasn’t just screaming – they actual-

ly sat down and explained how to do things with you.”

Later, in an email, Brown said Shepherd referred to what people usually see from videos of Marine Corps Recruit Training, as they usually just see the drill instructors screaming at the recruits and “things look very chaotic through the videos.” But she agreed with Shepherd that it just shows one

side and the other side is depicted in which drill instructor Instructors mentor recruits without the screaming and chaos ensuing.

Shepherd knew she wanted she joined the military, and a Marine recruited her, and Shepherd discovered it was her best move to join that branch.

"I was like, you know what, I think that is the best branch just because it's harder, and I think it would be a bigger accomplishment with it being so hard," she said.

She recently left for Marine Combat Training in Camp Pendleton, California. MCT lasts four weeks. She then reported to her job school, which is aviation support. She was sent to Pensacola, Florida.

Brown joined in 2016 and has been at the Weatherford station since the end of June. Another individual recruited Shepherd, and Brown helped push her the rest of the way through.

The Marines are different from what the other branches offer, Brown said.

"There are a lot of different training environments," Brown said. "We do prepare them through our delayed entry program. We have them come in and they work out with us – one,

two or even three times a week. And then we have our pool functions which are our every second Saturday of the month."

The pool function operates as a way for the Marines to see where recruits are physically and mentally and track their progress.

Brown, who hails from Detroit, Michigan, said she joined the Marines in part because of financial issues in her family, as she did not want to attend college like the rest of her peers did back home. She thought the Marines would "be something different" and she thought of herself as a "black sheep" who would make her own mark.

The Marines were "a lot more" than she expected, Brown said. She said the Corps is "definitely a much bigger family than what I expected it to be, and I've made probably the best memories and the best friends since joining."

Shepherd said her family was supportive but at the same time, they wanted to make sure she checked out the other branches to ensure the Marines were her best choice.

"And after they realized that I was 100% committed to joining the Marines and not any other branch, they were really supportive about it," she said.

She said her grandfather was a Marine who eventually joined the Navy, and then Shepherd's half-brother was in the Navy. Brown is a first-generation Marine, and her grandfather served in the Army and his twin brother served in the Navy.

What did Brown's family think about her joining the Marines?

"At first, they were not about it," Brown said, chuckling. "They were like, ooooh. I did Air Force JROTC in high school and they thought, 'well, that's going to be it. She's going to go to college and do what she wants to do and go do her thing.'"

But she said "some things came up" and she decided to enter the Marines. Now, her family thinks "it's the coolest thing ever."

Both Shepherd and Brown would

like to be career military.

"For now," Shepherd said. "It depends on how my first four years go, and I'll decide on where I'll go from there." She is thinking about what school she wants to attend at this point and wants to wait before making any long-term choices.

Brown explained the recruiting process, which includes a physical screening. After passing physical screening questions, they will have the person complete a practice ASVAB, to see where they are educationally. If the individual meets both requirements, the recruiter will sit down and have an interview with the interested person to discuss what his or her goals and plans are in their life.

"We'll talk and see how the Marine Corps can help them achieve their goals and meet the needs that they're looking for," Brown said.

The Marines Corps will conduct a background check on a potential recruit, and prior to entry, a drug test is required. Men and women complete the same physical, rigorous training in boot camp. During recruitment, individuals learn about training and schools available, but no "job promising" is conducted, Brown said.

"But we will fight to make sure they get the job they want," she said.

Shepherd, who worked as a recruiter assistant in Weatherford in which she helped recruiters find interested people and spread the word of the Marine Corps, is definitely looking forward to her next stage in the Marines and what life is like outside boot camp.

"I can already tell it's way different," she said. "Not constantly getting screamed at is new."

She tells people interested in joining the Marines about her experiences, explaining she had difficulty with running, that she wasn't the best at all, but she still managed to make it through. People wanting to join the Marines should explore all their options before making their decisions, said Sgt. Yeicob Duran, recruiter for at the Recruiting Substation Weatherford.



PHOTO BY DON MUNSCH
Autumn Shepherd



PHOTO COURTESY EDDY SWANZY

Eddy and Margaret Swanzy are Springtown's biggest sports fans.

FANS FOR LIFE

BY JEFF PRINCE

If the Springtown Porcupines are playing, chances are good the Swanzyz will be there watching the action.

Which sport, you say?

All of them.

Eddy and Margaret Swanzy aren't there to watch their children or grandchildren play. The Swanzyz view every Porcupine as a beloved offspring of sorts. The longtime educators and coaches are both retired and 80 but never lost the love of sports, either playing them or watching them.

Eddy continues to train daily to keep

Eddy and Margaret Swanzy root-root-root for home teams

himself in shape to compete at Senior Olympics events, including pole vault, long jump, high jump, triple jump, shot put and javelin.

Margaret has endured painful knee problems and surgeries and is less active these days, although she can still climb bleachers at the Springtown gym

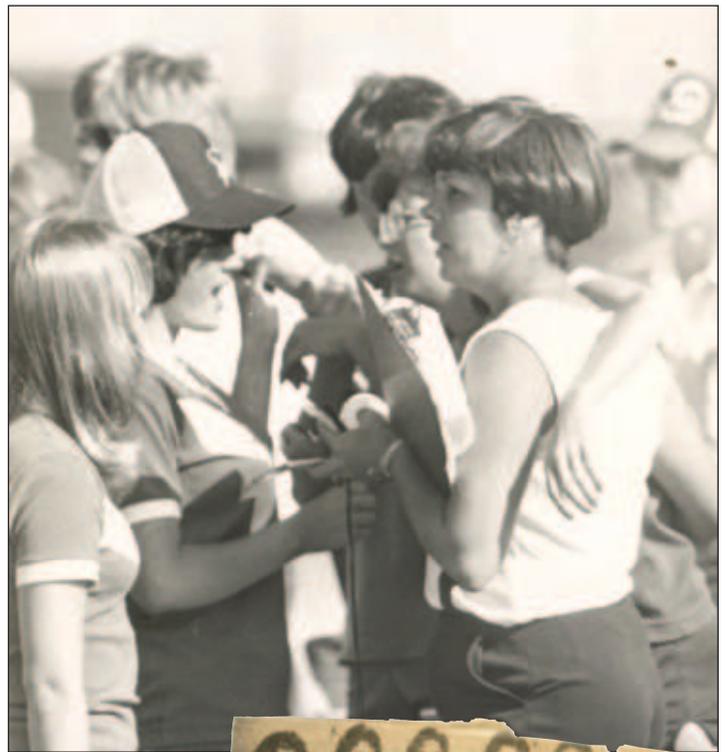
or Porcupine Stadium, sometimes using a walker or cane.

"They are definitely Springtown's no. 1 supporters," said Brinklee Dauenhauer, a volleyball standout and senior at Springtown High School. "They come to all our stuff. They are always there, ready to watch the games, track



PHOTOS COURTESY MARGARET SWANZY

Margaret Swanzy made the basketball team as a freshman at Weatherford College.



TOP: From right, Margaret Swanzy coaches her track athletes in 1982.

RIGHT: Second from left on front row, Margaret served as co-captain of the Weatherford basketball team.



meets and all that - even after having surgeries.”

Dauenhauer’s older sisters played sports in previous years, and the Swanzy’s watched them from the stands, too.

The couple pores through every edition of the Springtown Epigraph and cuts out photos and press clippings of athletes, files them in a folder, and hand delivers them to the kids at sporting events.

“They are really great people,” Dauenhauer said.

MARGARET SWANZY

Margaret grew up in Springtown as part of the Newby family who loved sports, especially basketball. Margaret’s father, Howard Newby, played

basketball in Springtown in the 1920s on dirt ground near what is now Wells Fargo Bank and passed along his affinity for the sport to his kids. Margaret’s older brothers and sister played basketball at Springtown High School in the 1940s and 1950s.

Margaret was not far behind.

“When I played in high school, we played halfcourt with forwards on one end and guards on the other,” she recalled. “I was a forward with my best friends Ann Taylor and Zanna Kirk.”

Margaret practiced at home by shooting balls at a rim attached to a tree. She became adept at hitting shots cleanly through the rim by practicing without a backboard or a net.

“That is how I learned to shoot the basket,” she said.

Margaret continued playing basketball at Weatherford College and was co-captain in her sophomore year.

As a junior, she transferred to UNT, played basketball, graduated early, married her first husband, and raised three sons. She coached basketball teams at three different churches in different states before she and her sons returned to Texas and settled in Allen, where she taught and coached eighth graders.

“I am happy to say that I had a winning basketball team every year,” she said.

Coaching and teaching weren’t her only duties. She rose early to drive a school bus.

In addition to basketball, she coached the girls track team. Now-



PHOTO COURTESY EDDY SWANZY

Eddy Swanzy clears the bar at a pole-vaulting event in Rosebud, Texas in 1958.

days, a junior high track team is likely to have several coaches instructing different events. Margaret coached them all. Overseeing numerous athletes in all their events after a long day of driving buses and teaching classes wasn't easy, but Margaret didn't take easy routes. She followed her heart.

In 1983, she remarried, and her new beau might have been an even bigger sports enthusiast.

EDDY SWANZY

A small town in central Texas named Rosebud is where Eddy grew up, and he was a sports hero to the community. Eddy graduated at Rosebud High School in 1960 as a three-sport letterman in football, basketball and track. He captained the football and basketball teams his junior and senior sea-

sons.

As a kid in the early 1950s, Eddy became a fan of the Rev. Bob Richards, a well-known athlete who made three U.S. Olympic teams from 1948 to 1956 and won the gold medal in pole vault twice, something no other pole vaulter has done.

Eddy emulated his hero and learned to pole vault using a 6-foot galvanized plumbing pipe for a pole.

"I would stretch a rope between two ladders for my bar and pretend I was Bob Richards vaulting in the Olympics," Eddy said.

In high school, he set the Killeen Relays pole vault record by clearing 12 feet. Moving on to college, he ran track and pole vaulted at North Texas State University in Denton.

A torn hamstring muscle ended his

college vaulting career but not his love for the event.

Over the years, he married, raised a family, worked in the private industry and served as an assistant track coach and physical education coach at South Garland High School.

After he and Margaret were married, they owned and operated Lighting World in Richardson. Margaret spent time watching her sons play sports at Richardson schools.

NO. 1 FANS

After retiring in 2003, Margaret and Eddy moved to Springtown to settle down for good.

"Sports are in our blood," Margaret said. "We attend most all sporting events, such as basketball, volleyball, football, track and baseball. This is why we are known as the biggest fans. We



love our athletes.”

The coaches and players appreciate the couple’s devotion to them and to one another. Earlier this year, school officials, coaches and students presented the Swanzys with an award recognizing them as Springtown’s top fans.

“They are the biggest supporters of Springtown kids in general,” said Springtown High School athletic coordinator Tye Adams. “We see them at every Springtown athletic sporting event. They are just super people to our kids. They support our kids no matter what and have been a mainstay for Springtown athletic boosters. I can’t say enough good things about how much they love our kids and how much our kids love them in return.”

In November, Margaret and Eddy drove to Peaster to watch the Springtown volleyball team contend in the regional quarterfinal playoff game against Stephenville. The contest was held on a Monday night, and Margaret had endured painful shoulder replacement surgery just three days earlier. Eddy was having trouble with his back and had planned to see a doctor the next day.

Despite their health woes, both were sitting court-side rooting for their favorite school.

“I’m not going to stay away,” Margaret said. “I don’t miss many games.”

PHOTOS COURTESY EDDY SWANZY

A 70-year-old Eddy Swanzy approaches and clears the bar in 2012.

She is scheduled for knee replacement surgery next.

“When you get to 80, you fall apart,” she said.

So, why would she travel out of town to sit on hardwood bleachers and cheer for the Porcupines while still recuperating from major surgery?

“I can hurt here as well as I can hurt at home,” she said.

She and Eddy and have been married to one another for 39 years. (They each had prior spouses with children but had no children together.)

In 2011, the 69-year-old Eddy began competing at the Texas Senior Games. Pole vault is his specialty, but he competes in multiple events. In 2013, he finished fifth in pole vault at the Cleveland National Senior Games by clearing 8 feet. Two years later, he won bronze medals in pole vault and long jump at the Minneapolis-St. Paul National Senior Games.

The medals and awards have continued ever since.

On Oct. 1, 2022, Eddy qualified for the 2023 Nationals to be held in Pittsburgh, Pa. Qualifying wasn't easy. Eddy had missed the Texas Senior Games meet in April, so he traveled out of state to compete at the Oklahoma Senior Games to qualify for Nationals. In Oklahoma, he won three gold medals, two silvers and a bronze.

When he isn't training, competing or clearing out shelf space for fresh awards, Eddy spends time with Margaret watching local kids compete. Over the years, Eddy has volunteer-coached pole vaulting at Springtown and Boyd ISDs. He continues to do so even into his 80s and despite a heart attack in 2019 and back surgery in 2022.

“Closing out the last chapter of my sports career, I have found the journey to be the highlight of my life,” he said. “God willing as long as I remain above the dirt and am physically able, I plan to continue competing in the Senior Games and doing my volunteer pole vault coaching. It has been rewarding to work with these young athletes. My wife and I have many parent friends and the kids we cheer and coach are like our own grandchildren.”



PHOTO COURTESY EDDY SWANZY

Eddy and Margaret Swanzly wear their T-shirts proudly displaying their affection for Springtown sports.



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PHOTO BY DON MUNSCH

From left to right, Chief Ben Hall, Dora Scudder and Lt. Kevin Rogers.

Scudder moves up in APD, sets sights on bigger goal

BY CARLA NOAH STUTSMAN

Some people who encounter Dora Scudder – who is 5 feet, 2 inches tall – might get the idea she is a pushover.

Those people may want to think again.

Her diminutive size is just one of several conditions the newly-promoted Azle police lieutenant has overcome in her quest to excel as a police officer.

“If you can’t hold your own looking the way I do, you’re going to get run over,” Scudder says, adding that a CPS supervisor in the Alpine area, where she began her career, frequently referred to her as “a firecracker.”

When her promotion from the rank of sergeant to lieutenant was announced in August, Scudder became the highest-ranking woman, as well as the highest-ranking Hispanic, in the Azle Police Department’s history. Prior to now, the late Marie Welch had set the benchmark for women in the department. Welch left the Azle PD in January 1980 as a sergeant. Richard Martinez, who retired in May 2017 as a sergeant, was previously the highest-ranking Hispanic.

But Scudder has no plans to rest on her laurels. While she’s excited about

her new role, she’s also rolled up her sleeves to tackle her new responsibilities with drive and determination – just as she’s done her entire adult life.

As one of two lieutenants who, along with Azle Chief of Police Ben Hall, make up the department’s command staff, she takes on the role of supervisor over Field Services – often referred to as the patrol division. Field Services also encompasses the school resource officers who serve in Azle’s public schools. Lt. Kevin Rogers, who has been over Field Services, now moves to supervise Support Services, which

includes communications, criminal investigations, animal control, the jail and evidence.

Early life

Born in Mexico, Scudder says she is extremely proud of her Mexican heritage, but is equally proud to be an American.

“Through my father’s hard work and dedication and hoping to give us a better way of life, we immigrated to the United States in 1998. My father worked full-time as a surveyor for a major construction company, while my mother dedicated her time to my siblings and me. I have two older brothers and two older sisters, making me the youngest of five,” Scudder said.

The family moved to the Texas border town of Presidio, where Scudder grew up and graduated from Presidio High School.

Now the single mother of an 8-year-old daughter and a 6-year-old son, she credits her children with giving her both drive and motivation.

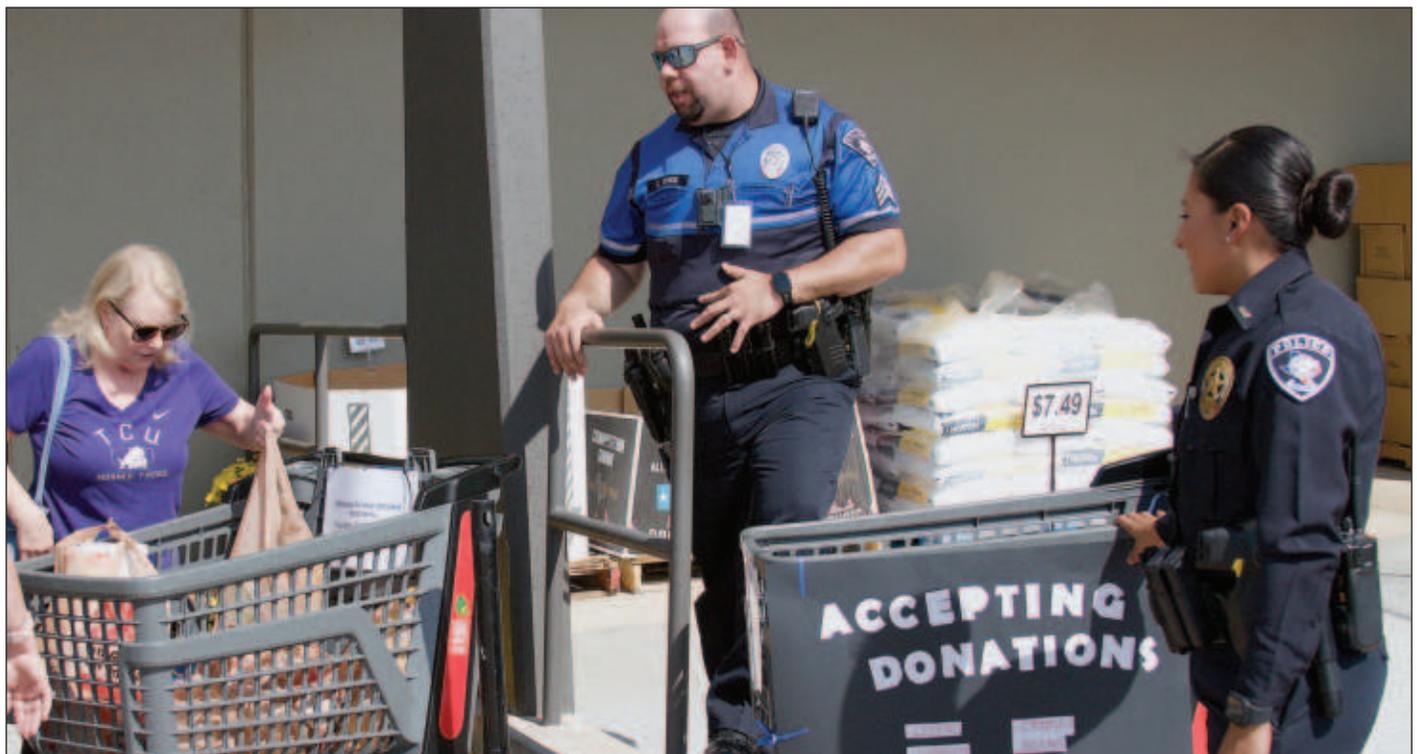
“They are wonderful kids, and I want to make them proud. I want them to know that with hard work and dedication, they can achieve anything they desire,” Scudder said.

The road to Azle

Following high school, Scudder attended the Sul Ross State University Law Enforcement Academy in Alpine, graduating in 2008. She also pursued her education at SRSU, where she focused on criminal justice studies. She earned a bachelor of science degree in criminal justice in May 2016, while working full-time.



Lt. Dora Scudder, left, explains to a Brookshire’s customer how she can donate staple food products to help the Community Caring Center during a “Fill The Shelves” drive in October.



PHOTOS BY CARLA NOAH STUTSMAN

Lt. Dora Scudder (right) works with Sgt. Eric Scheid (center) to collect food pantry donations from the public at Brookshire’s in Azle.



Lt. Dora Scudder's (left) promotion came with the promise of additional work hours. Here, she spends a Saturday at Brookshire's in Azle explaining to customers how they can donate to the Community Caring Center for a recent "Fill The Shelves" drive.

Initially torn between emergency medical services and law enforcement, she ultimately chose law enforcement because of her passions relating to domestic violence – something Scudder says is more prevalent in the Hispanic culture – as well as mental health issues.

Scudder says when she first showed an interest in law enforcement, essential people in her life told her she had no business in a male-dominated field.

"That only motivated me more and drove me to prove them wrong," Scudder said. "I hope my story inspires other women to reach their full potential in male-dominated field and non-male-dominated fields alike."

One example of the determination she had to succeed came about when it was time to take her final exam in a statistics class. Scudder's second child was two weeks old, but she needed to take that final in order to earn her de-

gree. So she packed up her newborn son and took him along while she took the test.

While living in the Alpine area, Scudder was employed by the Alpine Police Department, Brewster County Sheriff's Office and the University of Texas Permian Basin Police department. She also served as an emergency medical responder with the West Texas Ambulance Service. After moving to the DFW Metroplex, she worked for the Town of Westover Hills Police Department before making her move to the Azle PD in June 2017.

Scudder has quickly ascended the ranks, promoting to corporal in August 2018 and then to sergeant of October 2019. Her most recent promotion, to lieutenant, came in August of this year.

Glass ceilings

Scudder says she is thrilled to be in her new position, and that's partly due

to the immense support she's received from Chief Hall and Lt. Rogers, who has been a mentor since she arrived at the Azle PD.

"I am excited about the police department and what we will accomplish as a team in the future. I have also received tremendous support from the city administration and staff; it's great to know that people believe in you and support you," Scudder said. "The motto for our department is 'Our Community, Our Commitment' and I stand by this motto, as serving the community has always been my priority."

But Scudder may not be done breaking glass ceilings; she considers attaining the rank of lieutenant a stepping-stone toward her ultimate goal of becoming police chief someday. In fact, she plans to further her education in the near future in order to provide the best service for the department and community.

Policing in Azle

Although she's only been with the Azle PD a little more than five years, Scudder says she's seen a considerable increase in the population here. She thinks further projected growth is a significant challenge for the department.

"As a police department, we need to be conscious of the challenges that will present with the growth of our city," she said. "A significant challenge in policing is how the public perceives us. There are a lot of negativities centralized in the police. As police officers, we all abide by the same code of ethics. Our fundamental duty is to serve the community and safeguard lives and property. We must regain the trust of our communities and work together as one to make them safer."

However, Scudder recognizes that in Azle, the police still have the support and admiration of the citizens.

"Being a police officer during this time is difficult enough. We are fortunate to live and work in a community such as Azle, where we have overwhelming support," Scudder said. "The citizens are kind and generous when they see us in public and often express how thankful they are for our service."

Scudder is so pleased to be working in the Azle Police Department that she sees herself retiring from here someday.

"The City of Azle and the Azle Police Department have opened many doors for me in my career. As the City of Azle continues to grow, so will the police department. I foresee more opportunities for advancement with the department, not only for me, but also for the rest of the department."

Chief Hall, Lt. Rogers weigh in

Chief Hall and Lt. Rogers both say they are excited about Scudder's future.

"Dora is doing amazing things already and has demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice for the team. She has shown herself to be someone who leads from the front," Hall said in an email. "She has a servant's heart and is constantly trying to improve herself. We are lucky to have her."

Rogers described how Lt. Scudder has stepped up to take charge of the department's Crisis Intervention Team and Homeless Outreach Team.

"Both of those units are extremely important for the department and the community and she has invested a lot of time working with these two teams. Dora has also built relationships with both the Fort Worth PD and Lake Worth PD, gaining training and protocols for these units," Rogers said via email. "I am proud of her progression in the department but most importantly her passion to help the citizens in the community."



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Parker County Family Resource Center aims to help families navigate parenting

BY MADELYN EDWARDS

Toddlers wobbled around a big auditorium at Cornerstone Community Church in Springtown on a Wednesday morning.

With little mats in front of them and their parents or caregivers close by, they got ready for an activity that looks like yoga for young'uns with added musical elements.

The kids stretched, danced with scarves, rang bells, struck a triangle, tossed around a beach ball and listened to a story, among other activities. At the end of the program, the lights in the auditorium were dimmed, and they rested while the song "You Are My Sunshine" played.

This activity is called Kindermusik, and it's offered by the Parker County Family Resource Center, which has an office in Springtown. Kindermusik is one of several free developmental and parent groups for the community.

Mieke Brock, who oversees the parent education/parent engagement groups at the Family Resource Center, led Kindermusik that day. Before the group's activities started, she greeted parents and children as they arrived.

Brock said Kindermusik is meant to teach kids about not only musical rhythm and beat patterns but also following directions and a routine of transitioning from one activity to another. For parents or other caregivers, Kindermusik aims to help them bond with their child. The group also allows children to interact with other children of the same age and for caregivers to meet other families and realize they're not alone.

During the Kindermusik group, engaging with the children seemed easy for Brock as she used animated facial expressions and made sure that every child was included in the activities. One of her guiding principles is that children learn through playing, and she

encourages caregivers to play with their kids on their level.

"Don't be afraid to play with your children. Don't be afraid to get down on their level and teach them and not just hover over them," Brock said. "Get down on their level. Play with them and the more animated the merrier because kids learn through play."

And if a child doesn't behave well in the group, Brock said that's OK because they will learn the routine with time if they keep coming to the group consistently.

Less than a year ago, the Family Re-

source Center in Springtown opened in March with a simple goal to support families with kids ages 0-6 in the area.

The center is funded by a grant from the Department of Family and Protective Services under the branch of Prevention and Early Intervention and is part of Help Me Grow North Texas, which aims to ensure that early childhood services for young kids in North Texas are high quality and well connected, according to a previous Epigraph article.

Brock described the Family Resource Center as providing an "overall concrete



PHOTOS BY MADELYN EDWARDS

Mieke Brock, who oversees parent education/parent engagement groups at the Family Resource Center, lets every child in the Kindermusik group strike the triangle. Kindermusik is a weekly group for young children that involves music, dancing, stretching and play.

support system” for families.

“Parenting can be hard when you don’t have the support that you need,” she said. “There’s not a manual out there of the right way or the wrong way. There’s no directions, and every child is different. Instead of a straight linear roadmap, it’s kind of like a spiral map.”

The Family Resource Center includes a navigator to help families find the resources they need. At the Springtown office, Jennifer Riley serves that role. In general, Riley can help guide families with children ages 0-17 toward community resources.

“People don’t know what they don’t know,” she said. “If there is a need for anything else in the community in regards to maybe financial assistance, the groups we provide here, anything else related to child development or children, I can provide them with some resources for that.”

Riley also follows up with families to find out if the resources she suggested were effective or not and if their needs were met. She pointed out that her job is to provide information but not tell people what to do or what they need.

“When they need resources, it’s not my job to tell them what to do. It’s more of coaching them on what their options are and empowering the families to make the best decision for their child, for their family,” she said.

In addition, Riley does developmental screenings for children at the request of caregivers who are concerned about their child meeting certain milestones. After those screenings, Riley can provide resources and referrals to families regarding intervention or further evaluation.

The Family Resource Center staff is made up of people who reside in the Parker County area. This is a move made on purpose. Riley said being local gives the staff a familiarity with families in the more rural community they serve and know-how on how to approach their needs and challenges.

The center also has a parent advisory committee that helps lead the staff to address areas of need and interest.

“We really encourage parents to



The Parker County Family Resource Center hosted a Summer Learning Garden group for young kids during the summer. Pictured is parent education/parent engagement coordinator Mieke Brock allowing Knox Ford, 3, to sniff one of the marigolds before it was planted in the learning garden.

be part of that so that we know what our community needs and what they want,” Brock said. “If it’s a class that we do and they’re like, ‘We don’t like this,’ then we don’t do it. We try to cater toward what the parents want.”

Outside of the developmental and parent groups, people are welcome to visit the Family Resource Center as well. Brock described a time when a mother came to the center with her child and stayed for about an hour and a half just because she needed to be around people.

“She brought her daughter in and sat and played with the toys for a while and talked to us,” she said. “She needed that safe haven for a moment to take a break.”

Community Alignment Coordinator Jeanne Stevens stressed that the center aims to aid all sorts of people and families, not just those with social or financial needs. This includes groups as any family is welcome to attend with their children regardless of needs.

“We don’t want it to come across that they need to have a social need or

a financial need or any of those specific resource needs,” Stevens said. “We can simply be just a support to find them people to meet in the community.”

Stevens added that no one will be turned away from getting help at the center.

Brock described the center and groups as a judgement-free zone for parents and the center’s staff.

“This is like a home for me, too, not just work,” Brock said. “We support each other. We support our family, our community, and that makes it all worthwhile.”

Riley and Brock, who both have backgrounds in education, value the work that they do. Brock said she feels like her work at the center allows her to fulfill her purpose of supporting families.

“Every time a kid’s face lights up, I think it helps my face light up,” Brock said. “No matter what mood I’m in – if I’m happy or sad or lonely or in the best place in the world – when I see those kids smiling and they come in and the parents are happy to be here,



Kids in the Kindermusik group play with a beach ball at Cornerstone Community Church. The group also stretched, danced with scarves, rang bells, struck a triangle and listened to a story.

and they're like, 'Oh, I'm so glad to see you, Ms. Mieke. I really needed to come today,' those are those moments that I'm like, 'Yes, I'm making a difference.'"

Since it opened, Stevens said the center has already exceeded the first-year goals of the state funders, and feedback from families has also been positive. Stevens also mentioned the center's partnerships with Springtown ISD and Head Start at Cornerstone Community Action Agency have been helpful.

"I think the word is getting out as we are sharing with our community partners, people in Springtown. We're getting more referrals in, and so things that they're not able to assist with, we're able to fill in that gap for them," Riley said.

Stevens praised Riley's and Brock's work at the Family Resource Center, their passion and their efforts to reach out to the community.

"I can't say enough good about them," Stevens said. "They really go above and beyond."

Stevens' goals for the Family Resource Center are for it to continue to



Parker County Family Resource Center staff members, from left is Family Navigator Jennifer Riley, Community Alignment Coordinator Jeanne Stevens, and Mieke Brock, who oversees parent education/parent engagement groups.

grow, including with older kids and areas outside of Springtown, and to keep getting feedback from the community. People who are interested in joining the parent advisory committee can contact Stevens at jeanne.stevens@mhmrtc.org.

The Family Resource Center is open

from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday at 314 E. Fifth Terrace. The central Help Me Grow North Texas intake phone line to reach navigators is 844-NTX-KIDS or 844-689-5437.

To learn more about the center's groups, including Kindermusik, visit parkercountyfrc.eventbrite.com.

[LOCAL BUSINESS]

Mom-and-pop pop shop



BY DON MUNSCH

Frios Gourmet Pops in Azle in one sense lives up to the meaning of mom-and-pop business, although it is a franchise that is part of a national chain.

Leesa and Eric Wolf are parents who operate a Frios store in Azle and they sell popsicles, hence one could accurately say it's a kind of a mom-and-pop business, though not the traditional kind involving total independence and no connection with a chain or broader operation.

Frios Gourmet Pops sells delicious cold treats on a stick at its location on West Main Street in Azle. But much of its business is conducted outside its walls.

Leesa Wolf began the Frios Gourmet Pops franchise in Azle along with husband Eric, who has a full-time job. Leesa oversees the daily operations of the business, located in what resembles a stone cottage on 241 W. Main St., and the company's tie-dyed colored van helps its visibility. Frios offers not only treats in its store but also catering – including corporate catering – and parties and wholesale.

The local franchise's visibility was further enhanced when Wolf and her van were recently included in the shooting of "Yellowstone" episodes in Fort Worth. Previously, her business served pops to the crew of "1883," another television program.

Running a business has been a real treat - pun intended - for Leesa, as it brings something new every day.

"This has really been cool – it's way



PHOTOS BY DON MUNSCH

Leesa Wolf, owner of Frios Gourmet Pops in Azle, shows a popsicle to Sophia Weaver, 2, as her brother Barron, 6, ponders which treat he wants.

better than I ever expected it to be," she said about opening the franchise. "And now we're the No. 1 franchise in the company."

The company is based in Mobile, Alabama. Patti Rother, president of Frios Gourmet Pops, said her company has 50 franchisees with 56 territories across the country. In an email, Rother described Leesa Wolf as "incredibly tenacious. All of our franchisees in the DFW market tend to have the top sales for the company. Leesa had the top sales two months in a row and has had insane growth year over year. She continues to beat records and set the precedent for what is achievable."

Rother said the "entire DFW market is very strong" and the largest concentration of franchises is here and "it shows with our brand recognition and reputation. They are all incredible business owners."

People connect with the Frios pops in more than one way, she said.

"We talk about Frios pops in terms of how it makes you feel," Rother said. "Our hand-poured gourmet pops bring you back to the simpler times of life, the carefree days of childhood. They allow you to pause and indulge. They give you a minute with your kids to enjoy something delicious and give you a moment of connection. Our flavors are

craveable and made with fresh ingredients and gourmet inclusions.”

A new endeavor with fulfilling roots

Born in Oklahoma, Leesa moved with her family moved to the Metroplex and she grew up in Arlington, graduating from Arlington High School in 2002. She attended Tarrant County College, receiving her associate degree, and then moved on to Texas Tech University, where she earned her bachelor’s degree.

A registered nurse by vocation, she has worked in the emergency room and cath lab, specializing in critical care. She worked for a large health care system and worked as a float nurse, and during the pandemic, the company wanted her to drive around the Metroplex, including Plano and Frisco, to work. That amount of travel was not feasible given she lives in Azle; plus, she has to pick up her son from school. She has more than 12 years of experience as a nurse and still works as a nurse part time, about once or twice a month.

“My whole thing is I like helping people,” she said. “I like helping people and I like making them feel better and I like making them smile, and so this business kind of fits in with that. You make people smile. They either hire you to either come out with your truck or deliver, and whether it’s adults or

kids, they’re all so excited to see us.”

She said Frios operators are called Happiness Hustlers.

“We just sell happiness on a stick,” she said.

Her franchise opened last year – although she said the franchise has only gotten its footing in the last six to eight months - and it targets what she wants to go after, so she makes contact with places in the area, such as Fort Worth, Springtown and Weatherford. Her company will visit football games and community events, such as festivals. Frios had a presence at the Wild West Festival in Springtown in September. Leesa said her company intended to be at Christmas on Main Street parade in early December. Frios has been a presence at Stinger Field in Azle.

Business beginnings

During the pandemic, Leesa heard about a Frios franchise in Aledo and learned more about the business. She and her neighbors and family sampled some popsicles, and Leesa said they thought they were the “best popsicles ever.” She contacted the owner of the Aledo Frios store, and she began talks to open her own store.

“To be a franchisee, it doesn’t cost a lot,” Leesa said.

She showed a map with her territories and other franchise territories. She said a store owner has to buy the product and then a truck and that the

truck has to be outfitted. The owner minds the store.

“The freedom is nice because you make your own schedule and you can be as busy as you want or not as busy as your want,” she said.

Frios franchise owners around here can cover events of other Frios operators if and when needed, Leesa said. The Azle franchise has eight employees, and some people are seasonal. Leesa and another employee drive the truck.

The popsicle products are made in Mobile, Alabama – where the commercial kitchen operates – and the product’s concept is simple: Frios brass wanted to make something tasty, mobile and easy to eat.

“It just comes out of the package and it’s perfect every time,” Leesa said.

There exist more than 80 flavors and those flavors are rotated throughout the year. On hand in the truck are about 18 flavors. Fruit pops are made with real fruit.

“Another good thing about our pops is we don’t use high-fructose corn syrup,” Leesa said, noting there are not any dyes in most pops. Leesa stressed that her business offers real food and that it stocks something that will please various tastes or desires, such as for special diets or preferences, and she said Frios pops provide a better choice than what a normal ice cream truck would offer.

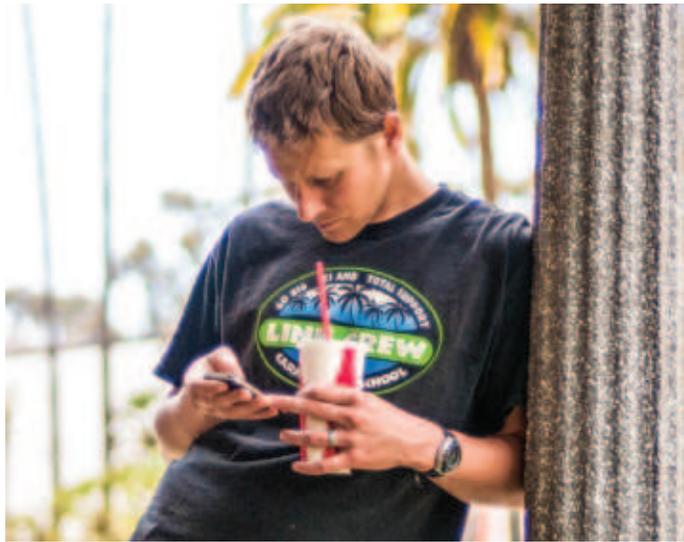
Frios conducts deliveries called pop drops in which popsicles can be placed in a cooler, and pop drops can be picked up at the store in addition to being delivered.

In the future, she hopes her store eventually will be “bigger and better” and have indoor and covered outdoor seating. At her store, if people buy 10 or more pops, they are charged \$3 a pop rather than \$4. If they buy six pops, they get 15% off. On the truck, popsicles are \$5 because of the overhead involved (gas and employee salary).

The store can be reached at 817-616-2892 and parkerco@friospops.com. The website is friospops.com/locations/fortworth.



Leesa Wolf, owner of Frios Gourmet Pops in Azle, stands in front of her business.



What is Tech Neck?

Tech neck, also referred to as text neck, is a new name for an old issue, neck pain that's caused by repetitive strain and injury to the muscles and other tissue structures of the cervical spine.

If you've ever spent hour after hour, day after day staring at your computer screen, you probably know the pain that is "tech neck." It's a term that's come to refer to the soreness, stiffness, and even injury that can result from bending your head downward to look at an electronic device for too long, according to New York-Presbyterian Hospital.

The ever-evolving screen technology we've come to love and even rely on lies at the root of tech neck, hence the nickname.

The average adult head weighs 10-12 pounds, which is supported by the bony structures, muscles, ligaments, and tendons of the neck. But when you tilt your head forward and look down, which is the common posture for texting, the weight of your head places 50-60 pounds of force on the neck. See picture above.

In a study published in 2019 in PLoS One that included survey data from more than 500 people, researchers found a strong association between the amount of time someone spent using their phone and the duration and severity of their neck pain. The study author recommended that people pay more attention to healthy sitting positions and the amount of time using

cellphones to potentially help cut back on neck and shoulder pain caused by device use.

Why is Tech Neck bad?

"Tech neck" can cause headaches, neck pain, pain in the shoulders, pain in the upper back, tingling or numbness in your hands, and even a loss of the natural curve of the cervical spine

Symptoms related to tech neck are typically mild in the initial phases and increase as the condition advances. The most frequently reported symptoms include:

- Generalized aching discomfort in the lower neck, shoulders, and upper back.
- Sharp, stabbing pain that's intense and localized in one spot.
- Headaches.
- Reduced mobility or stiffness in the neck, upper back, and shoulders.
- Increased pain when tilting the head forward and looking down to text.
- Jaw pain due to misalignment of the cervical spine.
- Tingling pain and numbness in the arms and hands, related to spinal nerve irritation and inflammation.

Treatment and Prevention of Tech Neck

- Raise the phone. Move the phone (and other devices) up closer to eye level so the head does not have to be tilted forward.



- Take frequent breaks. Spend some time away from the phone, or any type of head-forward posture. If needed, use an alarm or app to set automatic reminders to take breaks from hand-held devices.

- Stand up straight. Good posture, with the chin tucked in and shoulders pulled back, keeps the body aligned in a neutral position.

- Arch and stretch. Arch the neck and upper back backward periodically to ease muscle pain.

- Exercise regularly. A strong, flexible back and neck are more able to handle extra stress. Some research indicates that teenagers who are active in low-impact team sports or endurance sports are less likely to have neck pain.

- See your chiropractor. Chiropractors are specifically trained to treat the cervical spine in conjunction with the connection to the upper back and shoulders. They should give you home exercises, combined with stretching techniques to be able to work on this problem while not in their office.



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