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OUTLOOK

Volume 18 Issue 1 • Dripping Springs, Texas • April 2021

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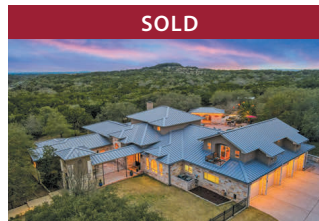
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Renewal

Early spring is such a glorious time but you have to pay close attention. Every day, almost every hour in April brings something new to our outdoor landscape. New blades of bright green grass pop up from the earth by the minute. Fat flower buds on wisteria vines burst into full bloom overnight. And we begin to see dangling chrysalis transform into beautiful butterflies and take flight.



This is life waking from its winter's sleep and being born into the caressing arms of the warming sunshine. Everything feels new, fresh and full of expectation, ready to grow to reach its greatest potential. It reminds me that we, no matter our age, experience renewal at this time of year too. We have reawakened from our hibernation venturing out into the inviting warmth.

And if we are consciously aware, we can make choices that rejuvenate us physically, mentally, and spiritually. Maybe we decide to recommit to a passion we felt long ago. Something worth rekindling. Something worth the time and effort because it resonates with who we truly are. Or perhaps we've discovered a new, exciting aspect that we intuitively feel needs to be explored. Now is the time to start. The energy surrounding us as growth surges forth propels us forward.

Of course we can launch a new project or reclaim one any time. Early spring just makes it easier, and more fun. Because we have caught the wave of renewal. We can feel the movement under our feet and smell it in the air. We see it change moment to moment and hear it unfolding if we're paying attention.

I hope you enjoy all that this season can offer. Thank you for joining us.

Victoria

DSOutlook.com



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Pedal Ranch Publications

Dripping Springs Outlook

CALENDAR of EVENTS

- Every Sun. 12:30. Christ-centered anxiety/depression Hope Group Zoom Meeting. Contact Marsha Young at 512-738-5109.
- Every Mon. 12pm, DS Rotary Club meets at Flores, 2440 E Hwy 290 W. For more information visit DrippingSpringsRotary.org.
- Every Mon. 9am All Abilities Chair Exercise, Dripping Springs Community Library, 501 Sportsplex DR, 512-858-7825 or DSCL.org for info. No exercise on library holidays.
- Every Sun. 12:30. Christ-centered anxiety/depression Hope Group Zoom Meeting. Contact Marsha Young at 512-738-5109.
- Every 1st Mon. DS Ag Boosters meet in Ag Building behind DS Middle School at 7pm. Visit DSAgBoosters.org for updates.
- Every 1st & 3rd Mon. 6:30pm, Lions Club meets at Dripping Springs Ranch Park located at 1042 Ranch Road 12. Across from the DS Elementary School. For information call Sharon Goss at 512-923-8630 or email dslionsclub@gmail.com.
- Every 2nd Mon. G.O.D.S. Moms. Free Childcare. Contact Joanne Thomas at 512-894-0581 for more details.
- Every 2nd Mon. Dripping Springs 4-H Club meets at 6:30pm at the Ag Booster Building (located behind DS middle school).
- Every 3rd Mon. Eastern Star meets at Rambo Lodge at 7:30pm. Call Kathy Clark for more info, 512-858-7004.
- Every 3rd Mon. 7pm. Hill Country Centering Prayer Community meets at a local residence. Call Myra at 512-496-1531 or Sharon at 512-413-3248.
- Every Tues. 6:30pm Toastmasters of Dripping Springs meet at Pioneer Bank, 100 Creek Rd. Visitors welcome. For more info visit DSToastmasters.com.
- Every Tues. 5:30pm Al Anon meeting is being held at the Dripping Springs Presbyterian Church, 26650 Ranch Road 12. It is a general discussion meeting. Childcare provided.
- Every Tues. 6pm Nar Anon Family Group at Friendship Creekside Fellowship 14455 Fm 1826. Nar Anon is a 12-step program for family and friends of drug addicts. We share our experience, strength and hope.
- Every 2nd Tues. Bluebonnet Auxiliary meets at 2pm at Hill Country Care Nursing and Rehab Center, 1505 W. 290. Call Janice Ruyle, 512-264-2538 for more information. Volunteers needed. The Bluebonnet Aux provides entertainment and special events for the residents of HCC.
- Every 2nd, 3rd and 4th Tues. 7pm, DS Boy Scout Troop 101 meets at the DS United Methodist Church. Call Tim Short at 512-743-2537.
- Every 4th Tue. Artists Alliance of the Hill Country meet alternating between The Barn on 4000 Bell Springs Road in Dripping Springs and Artists studios. For more information visit ArtistsAllianceHC.com.
- Every Wed. - Sat. Noon-3pm, Dr. Pound Pioneer Farmstead and Museum is open for tours. Call 512-858-2030.
- Every Wed. Farmer's market at the Triangle, 3-6pm. For more info contact CityofDrippingSprings.com or 512-858-4725.
- Every Wed. at 8:30am. The Hill Country Christian Business Networking Alliance meets at El Rey. For more info visit Hill Country Christian Business Networking Alliance (HCCBNA) on Facebook.
- Every Wed. 5-6pm. Christ Centered Prayer, meditation and class. McArthur Hall Meeting Room #1, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church 6000 FM 3237. For more info call 512-847-9956
- Every 3rd Wed. Dripping Springs Cook-Off club meetings in the VFW hall in Dripping Springs. For more information call Michele Ryon 512-299-7455.
- Every 1st Thur. 7pm Vince F. Taylor American Legion Post 290 of Dripping Springs invites all eligible veterans to 101 Old Fitzhugh Rd. For information call 512-858-5637.
- Every 1st Thurs. 6-7:30pm, Nonfiction Addiction Book Club at the Dripping Springs Community Library, DSCL.org, 512-858-7825. Newcomers welcome. Email AdultServices@dscl.org for details.
- Every 1st Thur. Apr.-Dec. *First Thursday Dripping Springs*, merchants extend their hours until later in the evening and have a variety of specials which might include one-day sales, special activities, food, music and art. For more info visit FirstThursdayDrippingSprings.org.
- Every 3rd Thur. at 7pm, Thirsty Thursday is co-sponsored by the City of Dripping Springs and New Life Lutheran Church at City Hall, 511 W. Mercer St. Area poets, musicians, songwriters and storytellers share work. For details call 512-858-2024.
- Every 3rd Thur. 7pm, DS VFW Post 2933 invites all eligible veterans with foreign service to 101 Old Fitzhugh Rd. Call 858-5637.
- Every 3rd Thur. 7pm, Family Support Group for family members, parents, adult children, and partners of individuals living with a mental health condition. Meets at St. Martin de Porres Catholic Church, Room 1. Contact info@namicentraltx.org for more information.
- Every 4th Thur. 6pm, Photographers of Dripping Springs meets at the Holy Spirit Episcopal Church, 301 Hays Country Acres. Visit Photographersofds.us or on Facebook.
- Every 2nd Fri. Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) group meets at 9am at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Spirit (301 Hays Country Acres at Hwy 290W). Childcare available. For information call 512 858-4924 or email DrippingSpringsMOPS@gmail.com.
- Every 1st Sat. On or after the full moon, 7:30pm, Rambo Masonic Lodge 426 meets. Dinner at 6:30pm. Call 512-858-7177.
- Sun. April 4, Easter

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Magnesium's cognitive benefits

by Edwin Dossman



Scientists have been convinced that increasing magnesium levels in the brain can potentially prevent or reverse some age-related deterioration that contribute to cognitive decline and dementia. The unique form of magnesium L-threonate has been shown to boost brain magnesium levels when taken orally due to its ability to cross the blood brain barrier.

Magnesium is an essential mineral found in varying amounts in a variety of plant and animal-based foods. It has been found to be essential for about 80% of the body's metabolic functions. Magnesium plays an especially critical role in the brain, where it protects the functioning of synapses – the communication connection points between brain cells.

For people to learn and form memories, synapses must have a property known as *plasticity* – the ability to adapt and change in response to a stimuli. Declining synaptic plasticity is a major contributor to loss of cognitive function in older age. Magnesium can help stop this decline.

In studies with adults 50-70 years old, with some level of cognitive impairment, they received 1500-2000 mg daily of magnesium L-threonate or placebo for 12 weeks.

At the end of the study, subjects who were treated with magnesium L-threonate had an improvement of overall cognitive ability

and their *executive functioning* – ability to plan and make decisions – was restored to nearly normal for their age.

Magnesium L-threonate offers tremendous promise to aging people who seek to maximize their neurological potential. We are pleased to have available Neuro-Mag from Life Extension, a high-quality magnesium L-threonate based product in capsule and powder form. Visit one of our Wellness Consultants at our Dripping Springs Pharmacy or our Lamar Plaza Drugstore in Austin for all of your wellness needs.

Be well.

Edwin has a BA in Sociology / Anthropology from Texas Tech University and has been a Wellness Consultant for over 25 years and is very knowledgeable about human physiology and wholistic approaches to health.

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What does your body need to function properly?

by Breca Tracy, PhD



At REGENERATE we have several programs and protocols to get you to total wellness. Depending on what your wellness goals are or in general your 2021 goals, have you put thought into what your body needs to function properly on a daily basis? Have you had your blood work analyzed? Do you know what your deficiencies are? Whether you have the

answers or are looking for them, we'd love an opportunity to walk you through what might help you reach those goals. Are you ready to start taking care of your skin, your whole body wellness, or maybe just performance in general?

REGENERATE has plenty of options for you. Did you know a simple vitamin program could help you regain your energy, help kick start weight loss, help you get through those seasonal allergies, or simply kick that cold to the curb? A healthy immune system can make all the difference.

At REGENERATE we focus on getting your body – whether internally or externally – back to where it once was; functioning like it once did. Are your goals to increase quality of life? Do you have joint pain? Do you need to lose weight? Are you driven by appearance or performance? At REGENERATE we focus on you!

If we can't help meet your goals, we will help find someone that can! Come chat with our team to discuss how we might be able to get you back to feeling, performing and/or looking youthful again.

We have a very unique team of experts here in Dripping Springs. Come see us, call us, or email us! Dr. Breca Tracy currently serves as Director of Science & Operations at REGENERATE Dripping Springs. Breca has resided in Dripping since 2007 after obtaining her Ph.D. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. Contact us at 512-368-4548, 800 Hwy 290 W, Building F, Suite 200. www.naturalhealingtx.com.

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Physical therapy and concussion management

by Dr. Jeremy Kethley, PT, DPT

Concussions are serious injuries – considered a mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), generally occurring during a forceful blow to the head or whiplash injury. The CDC estimates 1 in 14 high school athletes will suffer a concussion annually, with many cases going unreported.

Concussions have a variable presentation of symptoms and may cause physical, functional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms which can last anywhere from hours to years. Generally, initial symptoms include loss of consciousness, headaches, dizziness, loss of concentration, blurry vision, nausea, confusion, and mood changes.

In recent years, many of you may have heard of the long term effects of having a number of concussions – most famous in professional athletes. Long-term effects include post concussion syndrome (PCS) and chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE). Post concussion syndrome is diagnosed when patients are suffering from the long term effects of a concussion which can include fatigue, chronic headaches, vertigo, and muscle weakness. Chronic traumatic encephalopathy is now more well known due to a recent study finding it in deceased boxers and NFL football players. CTE is a form of early onset dementia due to a great number of blows to the head over a period of time.

As you can see, concussions are not an injury to be taken lightly.

For a number of years, medical management has been prescribing the patient 7-10 days of rest. However, recent advances in research have determined a multidisciplinary approach from a number of medical professionals including physical therapy. Physical therapists will have the ability to help establish a diagnosis, monitor progress through treatment milestones, and determine return to function/sport decisions.

Physical therapy treatments are able to reduce the time between injury and return to function/sport. The first two days following a concussion should consist primarily of rest. It is extremely important to reduce any risk of suffering another concussion during this time to avoid further damage. Cardiovascular and aerobic exercise via stationary bicycle should begin 2-3 days following a concussion with monitoring by a physical therapist. Functional and sport specific training may begin once the patient meets certain milestones and the patient may return to sport once they are symptom free with both cognitive and physical exertion.

If you or a loved one suffer a blow to the head, please do not self-treat, consult your physician and see a physical therapist.

Jeremy has been practicing and serving the Dripping Springs community for the past 17 years in Dripping Springs. Kethley Physical Therapy has two locations at both ends of Dripping Springs and they have eight physical therapists ready to help you or your athlete.

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Oral cancer bites

by Ron S. White, DDS

April is Oral Cancer Awareness Month. Approximately 42,000 people in the US will be newly diagnosed with oral cancer in 2021. The good news is that dentists are trained to detect signs of oral cancer during routine examinations. Early detection provides the best opportunity for a cure. Sadly, only half of all

patients diagnosed with oral cancer survive more than five years.

Oral cancer often starts as a tiny, unnoticed white or red spot or sore anywhere in the mouth. It can affect any area of the oral cavity including the lips, gum tissue, cheek lining, tongue, and the hard or soft palate. Anyone can develop oral cancer with the incidence of oral cancer increasing after age 40.

Oral cancer screening is a routine part of each dental examination. Regular check-ups, including an examination of the entire mouth, are essential in the early detection of cancerous and precancerous conditions. You may have a very small, but dangerous, oral spot or sore and not be aware of it.

During the examination, a flat, painless, white or red spot or a small sore may be noticed. Although most of these are harmless, some are not. Harmful oral spots or sores often look identical to those that are harmless but testing can tell them apart. Dentists often will notice a spot or sore that looks harmless and does not have a clear cause. To ensure that a spot or sore is not dangerous, your dentist may choose to perform a simple test, such as a brush test.

A brush test collects cells from a suspicious lesion in the mouth. The cells are sent to a laboratory for analysis. If precancerous cells are found, the lesion can be surgically removed if necessary during a separate procedure. It's important to know that all atypical and positive results from a brush test must be confirmed by additional testing.

People who use tobacco have a high risk of oral cancer. Combining alcohol with tobacco greatly increases the risk. Early detection is the key so schedule your routine dental visits twice a year!

Dr. Ron White is located at 4189 E. Hwy 290. He has served Dripping Springs Smiles for over 15 years. He and his team strive to provide comfortable, compassionate care in a calm and luxurious office. Appointments can be scheduled by calling 512-858-LOVE Your Smile (5683).



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Some exciting changes are happening at The Piazza Center

by Rocco C. Piazza, M.D

To better expand our patient services and enhance the quality care you've come to expect from The Piazza Center, we have doubled the size of our clinic. Our new Center is not too far from our prior clinic – and it is spectacular. We have specifically designed the new clinic around our core service values of

excellence, safety, wellness, hospitality – so that we may create a lifetime relationship with you.

Where did we go?

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On the more immediate front, we now specialize in Visia™ Skin Analysis which allows us to create annual plans using medical grade skin care and treatments. In addition, we have acquired the most advanced technologies so that we may continue to achieve your skin health goals including Profound Microneedling with Radiofrequency to tighten the skin of the face and neck as

well as both Sciton ProFractional™ and Contour TRLT™ Micro-LaserPeel Technology.

We're thrilled about being able to make our patient care even more special. We look forward to having you join us on this journey.

Rocco C. Piazza, M.D is a Diplomate of The American Board of Plastic Surgery, a member of the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, as well as a national spokesperson for the ASPS. Call 512-288-8200 and visit the web site www.ThePiazzaCenter.com.



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Virus times: *Flexibility is the name of the game*

by Leslie Tourish, LPC

“What a long, strange trip it's been.” Indeed. While that quote is from the 1970's Grateful Dead song “Truckin” it works today as well. We have been going through strange times this past year. Yet as more people receive their vaccines, our lives are slowly opening up. While we're

more than ready to get back to our lives as we remember them pre-pandemic, there's a hesitancy as we feel our way forward. Because whatever happens, our lives are changed and there is no turning back the clock.

As we go forward it can be helpful to check in with the ancients such as Marcus Aurelius, the Roman emperor and philosopher. From his works, *Meditations*, he wrote:

“Remember that to change your mind and to follow someone's correction are consistent with a free will. For the action is yours alone – to fulfill its purpose in keeping with your impulse and judgment, and yes, with your intelligence.”

We've had a year of hearing from medical experts, political leaders, editorial opinion writers, family, and neighbors. That's a whole lot of voices to sift through and often with conflicting information. But what's important is not to have an unmovable will in forming our beliefs but an adaptable will. Not only is it okay to change your mind – in many cases for survival – it may be necessary. Because facts and circumstances can change as a situation and knowledge evolves. This is what Aurelius was referring to – it's not a character flaw to change your mind, which he viewed as a sign of flexible strength tied to a person's reasoning of current situations.

While it might be nice if there was some sort of clear cut *yes, do this, but don't do that*, in reality there are just too many variables

that don't fit neatly into columns and rows. Do we travel and visit family? Do I go to the gym? Do I return to the office to work in person? Do we eat inside at a restaurant? That's when we have to calculate our odds and make a personal decision. And sometimes on the fly.

For the first time in over a year, I've decided to start seeing clients in person at my practice. It's a risk, but I've gauged that if I've had my vaccines, I only see people who are similarly vaccinated, and we wear masks, then the odds are favorable. And honestly, it's taken some adjustment to seeing my clients in person again rather than from my computer screen. For one thing, I have to wear way cuter shoes than my sneaks. Which points to how quickly we can adapt to something new, such as Telehealth sessions. Some clients have even said they prefer Telehealth sessions and want to keep that format because it works for them. All of this points to one of the most powerful abilities in our emotional toolkit, our flexibility to adapt.

Leslie Tourish, LPC, is a Dripping Springs psychotherapist in private practice. To contact Leslie, please go to www.LeslieTourish.com or www.LATourish.com



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Why so scared?

by Diana Ozimek

Did you know your puppy will go through fear periods? These are major developmental stages and the outcome can stick with the puppy the rest of its life.

The first fear period comes around 8-10 weeks old. This also happens to be the time when puppies may be coming to

their new home. It's very tempting to have the neighborhood come out and meet the new pup but you will want to be very thoughtful in your actions during this time. Your goal is to properly expose, socialize, and support your puppy to build confidence and positive experiences. Be careful of overwhelming your puppy – taking them to the playground to meet a group of overexcited children is probably a bad idea. Letting them observe sights and sounds from a comfortable distance while being rewarded with treats is a much better idea. Deliberately setting up meet and greets with a couple of people or a new dog who will give the puppy a calm, positive experience will help them build confidence during this time.

The second fear period comes during adolescence. It can start anywhere from 8-14 months (on average). Your outgoing puppy may start retreating, huffing, barking, or growling at things they were fine with before. A random fire hydrant or trash can is suddenly something to worry about. You may see them become leier of strangers. If you've set up a training foundation with your puppy you will be able to use these skills and your communication

system to support them and work them through the process. They will be more willing to trust your lead and default to things they know bring a positive outcome. Never pressure your puppy to go into a situation they aren't ready for. Instead, look at the situation and decide how you can improve it on the spot or next time it's encountered. All of our puppy programs include confidence building and exposure exercises to help raise a balanced dog.

Diana Ozimek is the owner and lead trainer at Good Dog in the Making. She is excited to bring her puppy training expertise to her new community and help families raise a confident, well mannered dog. www.GoodDogintheMaking.com, 773-899-1960, training@gooddoginthemaking.com



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Cushing's disease

by Frank Shuman, DVM

If your older dog is drinking and urinating more than usual, it could be caused by a variety of reasons such as Cushing's disease, also known as *hyperadrenocorticism*. Usually caused by a tumor in the pituitary gland, it is far more common than we realize but because of

the complex diagnostic testing required it is underdiagnosed.

Often owners report that their first clue was their dog wanting to go out at night to urinate. The disease causes extreme thirst, so a dog with CD tends to drink tremendous amounts of water and urinate frequently. As the disease progresses, dogs lose muscle and become weak. Owners might notice a thinning of the skin, lesions on the skin, and hair loss on the flanks, neck, and perineum. Obesity and lack of energy are also symptoms.

Cushing's disease is a naturally occurring syndrome but it can also be caused by administering excessive amounts of prednisone or dexamethasone for prolonged periods. Certain breeds are at a higher risk of developing CD. Annual bloodwork and urinalysis are a good screening tool for Cushing's disease. Cushing's can be confirmed with a dexamethasone suppression test. Ultrasound examinations also allow the veterinarian to determine whether a tumor is present and in the pituitary gland or the adrenal glands.

The location of the tumor dictates treatment. More than 90% of dogs with CD have a pituitary-gland tumor. Only millimeters in size and often benign but problematic because it manufactures and

releases uncontrolled quantities of ACTH, which stimulates the adrenal cortex to release excessive amounts of cortisol. We treat most dogs with pituitary-based CD with medication.

Adrenal-based CD – which thankfully is the rare form of the disease – is more concerning and best treated with surgery. About one-half of these tumors are malignant, growing aggressively and metastasizing quickly. Surgical excision of a malignant adrenal tumor is unlikely to be curative. If it is a benign growth, surgery may cure it but the surgery is a complicated procedure. Once treatment has been initiated, the symptoms of CD should begin to dissipate, starting with a decrease in drinking in one week or so. Other symptoms may take longer to improve. Treatment creates a better quality of life for your dog and can extend their life multiple years.

Frank Shuman IV is the Medical Director at Drippings Springs Animal Hospital, serving the area for over 30+ years. Located at 1520 E. HWY 290. He can be reached at 512-858-4787.



Frank Shuman, DVM

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Edible beauty

by Karen Laine,
Para-Medical Aesthetician



There are many options bombarding us with claims of being the Fountain of Youth. Edible beauty is taking the skin care industry by storm. What is fact and what is *snake oil*? The science on how our bodies utilize vitamins, minerals, and proteins makes a convincing argument for *you are what you eat*.

Rarely do we think about feeding the skin, which is the largest organ of the body. What does it need? What does it use? My approach to treating skin is an inside-outside approach which is based on topical treatment appropriate for the issue and internal nutrition to stimulate healing regeneration, protect against damage, and add resiliency to skin.

Collagen: A protein that makes up 75% of our skin and works with elastin. These two make up our connective tissue which makes up a large portion of a human body. Supplementing with collagen can help reduce or improve wrinkles, help bones and joints, and hydrates skin. Complete protein sources include beef, chicken, eggs, and bone broth.

Antioxidants: Found in multiple food sources and supplements such as A, C, and E. Antioxidants protect and heal skin and help brighten, moisturize, and soothe. Dietary sources include fruits, select veggies, berries, and leafy greens.

B vitamins: Most of the time when you see hair, skin, and nail supplements, they contain the three most important nutrients, biotin, vitamin C, and B12. Most B vitamins are for cell proliferation, carbohydrate metabolism, anti-inflammatory reactions, and

help keep skin hydrated. Food sources include almonds, dark leafy greens, whole grains, and eggs.

Healthy fats: Omega-3 fish oil, often thought of for heart health, is excellent for reducing inflammation, maintains the skin barrier, and combats damage from the sun. Food sourced for essential fats are fatty fish such as tuna, mackerel, and salmon, chia and flax seeds, walnuts and avocados.

A well-balanced diet is the best way to get proper nutrition your body requires. Always buy the best quality you can afford – organic, locally raised foods, if possible. However if you have food allergies, a picky eater, or dietary convictions, high quality supplements are the best insurance policy for your nutrition. Do your research and consult a medical professional, especially with underlying health conditions. Edible beauty is an excellent way to slow the aging process.

Karen Laine is a para-medical aesthetician and makeup artist with 23 years experience. Contact her at 512-847-8052. Her office is located at 120 Joe Wimberley Blvd. Suite 106, in Wimberley.

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How a British gardening show saved our lives

by Deborah Carter Mastelotto



It snowed in Texas. Not just a few flakes, melting as they hit the ground like we've had before, but blizzards, flurries, drifts several feet deep, and ground frozen rock-solid.

Now, it's difficult enough for us Hill Country gardeners to grow anything in limestone, caliche, and alkaline soil, as it is. We persevere through 100 degree

heat for months, amend our soil with compost and plant agaves and succulents everywhere. We're tough, but this below-zero weather, no electricity, and broken pipes almost broke us, collectively. Almost, if not for a TV show.

Once the power flipped on, so did our televisions and the show I began watching compulsively, religiously, was/is *Gardeners' World*. It's a British gardening show and its host is England's favorite gardener, Monte Don. Monty talks about the eternal wisdom of gardening and his dogs, and stands in snow and rain and all kinds of real weather while assigning us a weekly gardening chore. Real chirping birds begin each episode and, before I know it, the trauma of the nightly news disappears. But it's not just me – it seems the entire world has discovered *Gardeners' World* was the perfect way to get through a pandemic. Viewership was the highest in five years last year. BBC Studios, who produces the show, even

decided it was an essential public service.

Gardening was one of the few leisure activities the pandemic couldn't take away. Suddenly we were all aware of our gardens (or lack there of) especially since so many of us were stuck working from our homes and staring out our windows. Both the U.K. and the United States experienced a huge gardening boom in 2020. During the pandemic *Gardeners' World* went from comfort food television to being indispensable to our emotional well being.

Gardeners' World is Great Britain's longest running television series. Its 33-episode season follows the growing season from Monty's 20 acre almost-out-of-control garden and assorted historic and neighborhood gardens. When Monty is working in his garden, we never hear background music, we get lingering close-ups of a flower or trees rustling in the breeze, or his dogs. But the best thing about the show, for me, this year, was the snow. It snows in England, it snows a lot. And when the sun shines, even in England, the snow melts, the birds sing, and the garden resurrects itself. It reminds us that to plant a garden is an act of faith, and our frozen gardens will come back to life. No weather is forever, no crises lasts, and "to plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."

Deborah Carter Mastelotto is a pathological entrepreneur, a minor student of quantum physics, unapologetic observer of human nature and undefatigable advice-giver. pinkchronicity.com. Pink West Salon located at 511 Old Fitzhugh Rd. 512-447-2888



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Legacy

by Albert Gonzalez

My wife and I were blessed last month with our first grandchild, February 28, Michael Józef. We are glad he didn't arrive a week early as we all know the challenges we faced with the weather, roads, and Covid. Mother and child are home, healthy and happy.

Now I have the awesome opportunity to sow into that child's life financial security for his future. I have several strategies I can take to create a pool of money for his education and beyond. But I also know this will not be my only grandchild, so I'm carefully crafting a plan to not become cash flow strapped when the others come into our lives.

Grandparents can be the custodian of the 529 plan. But there are considerations that need to be understood. If a college offers federal needs-based financial aid, then the student must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to apply for it. This provides the schools a report on the Expected Family Contribution.

Up to 5.64% of family assets, including any 529 accounts they own, are included in the determination of the student's Expected Family Contribution. Grandparent-owned 529 plans are not considered in the FAFSA until actual distributions are made. In such instances, up to 50% of distributions from a grandparent-owned 529 plan are considered in aid decisions by colleges.

On the surface, it seems like it's not a good decision for grand-

parents to fund a 529 plan. However, that's not necessarily the case. Fortunately, there are planning strategies that provide a way for families to maximize the benefits of grandparent owned 529 plans without negatively impacting needs-based federal student financial aid.

While each family's situation is different, how one pays for college is complicated. Given the magnitude of the expense, it's important to thoughtfully plan a course of action to make the most of available financial aid and family assets. There are other methods to save. I look forward to discussing with you a plan for your family and make the best possible decisions about creating a legacy plan with confidence. Call me.

Al Gonzalez, MBA is a Senior Vice President/Partner with JTL Wealth Partners. He's affectionally known as "the Love Doctor" to his clients, as he helps them provide security for themselves and their loved ones. Al is a Financial Advisor with JTL Wealth Partners and securities are offered through LPL Financial. Member FINRA/SIPC



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Litigation: "My lawyer sold me out!"

by Roland Brown

You are about to read one of the first articles I wrote for this publication eleven years ago. It is still pertinent to dealing with your lawyer.

"My lawyer sold me out."

Heard this? Maybe at the coffee shop the morning after a buddy's final hearing in the case he's been telling you about for months? Valid

complaint? Probably not, but, as with all professions and occupations, there will be a few bad apples so you cannot dismiss it entirely. What causes a client to feel that the lawyer he or she hired *sold them out*? How can you avoid falling victim yourself to the perception, or worse, the reality of being *sold out* by your lawyer?

Let's begin with the proposition that most lawyers are honorable, dedicated individuals who seek the best possible outcomes for their clients. You probably know a lawyer you would trust completely. That lawyer is more likely to be the rule rather than the *bad apple* exception. Most *sold me out* complaints arise from a negotiated settlement rather than a trial. Your buddy may tell you that while waiting on the trial to begin, the parties went to a conference room and negotiated. He may say that after a bit, both lawyers stepped out of the room to talk privately, and then his lawyer took him aside and said that he should accept the other side's proposal because it was a sure thing and might be better than what the jury


would do.

Since settlements result from give and take, they often leave folks feeling they didn't get the result they had hoped for originally. Couple this with the sense that his lawyer leaned on him to take the settlement after having what your friend considered a cozy conflag out in the hallway with that *dirty scoundrel* who represented the other side and you have the recipe for *sold me out stew*.

To avoid these problems – *rest. Retain* a reputable lawyer – *expect* the unexpected – *stay abreast* of your case – *talk* to your lawyer (ask questions) and, if you become uneasy, perhaps another lawyer (a second opinion). I've mentioned before my older former client who long ago told me that "communication beats the world."

She was right.

Roland Brown is a litigation attorney with forty-plus years experience handling civil litigation throughout Texas. For more information call 512-847-2500 or visit RolandsLaw.com.



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Does writing a love letter ever work?

by Steve Mallett

In romance love letters are wonderful, but real estate love letters are something completely different. A real estate love letter is a letter written by a buyer, submitted with an offer to buy a property, in hopes that it will make the sellers swoon and fall in love. It typically starts out with:

Thank you for allowing us to submit an offer on your home! We wanted to introduce ourselves and let you know why we hope you choose our family to be your buyers.

What can it hurt, right? When every house for sale is getting 20 plus offers on it, you are desperate to stand out. You feel like you need every advantage short of hiring a mariachi band to sing while your offer is presented.

There can be issues with these types of letters though. The first is that sellers really don't care. This is a business transaction. If your offer is the highest, the letter may make them feel better about accepting, but they are not going to take \$25,000 less because your dog will really enjoy the back yard. If you want the house, offer the highest price you are able and willing to pay and live with the results. Agents who encourage love letters are making their clients feel like a lesser offer might be accepted if the love letter is mushy and convincing enough. It's like asking for a better deal on that

used car just because you're having a good hair day.

The second problem with these letters is that they invite possible bias in the transaction. Agents are held to a high standard of ethics that involve making sure no one is discriminated against in a real estate transaction.

If two parties make a very similar offer and the sellers choose one because they *feel better about selling to this group* isn't that possible bias? What if one party is a different race or has a different familial status? Should a seller be able to say *I can't choose them because I know my neighbors don't like (fill in the blank – race, country of origin, sexual preference etc)?* It might not be intentional but it's still discrimination based on something that should not be a factor in the sale.

Without the love letter an offer is just names and numbers in a contract. The seller makes an unbiased and objective decision on who will get to buy the property. If you want to win a bidding war on a house don't write a letter. Just offer more than anyone else. Not as romantic but real estate transactions are not supposed to be about love.

Steve Mallett has been selling real estate in Dripping Springs and Austin since 2003. His team can help with all of your real estate needs. Residential, commercial, farm and ranch. Call today 512-829-2062 or 512-627-7018.

How much risk should you take before retirement?

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor



Pat M. Woodman

If you're planning to retire in just a few years, you may be getting excited about this next phase of your life. However, your ability to enjoy retirement fully will depend, at least partially, on the resources you can draw from your investment portfolio. So, while you still have time to act, ask yourself if you're comfortable with your portfolio's risk level.

Your relationship with risk can change noticeably over time. When you started saving for retirement, you may have been willing to take on more investment risk, which translated into a relatively high percentage of stocks and stock-based mutual funds in your investment portfolio. As you know, stocks offer the potential for greater returns than other assets – such as bonds and certificates of deposit (CDs) – but they are also typically more volatile and carry more risk. But when you were many decades away from retirement, you had sufficient time to recover from market fluctuations. (Of course, there are no guarantees – it's possible that some stocks will lose value and never regain it.)

Now, fast forward to where you are now – closing in on retirement. Even at this stage of your life – and, in fact, even during your retirement – you will need some growth-oriented investments

to help stay ahead of inflation. Over time, even a low inflation rate, such as we've had the past several years, can erode your purchasing power.

So, the issue isn't this – *should I get rid of all my risk?* You shouldn't – and, in fact, you couldn't, because all investments, even the ones considered most *conservative* contain some type of risk, even if it isn't the risk of loss of principal. For instance, some investments run the risk of not keeping up with inflation. Instead, ask yourself these questions – *how much risk should I take within my portfolio? How much risk do I actually need to achieve my goals in retirement?*

Of course, there are no one-size-fits-all answers. Your anticipated new lifestyle might require either more or less income than you had originally projected – and if that's the case, you may need to adjust the risk level in your portfolio or make other adjustments.

Managing risk is a balancing act – and you may need to make some tough choices. But as long as you're aware of how much risk you can take, and how much risk you may need to take to reach your goals, you can develop a strategy that aligns with your objectives.

Pat M. Woodman, Edward Jones Financial Advisor specializes in helping individual investors and business owners reach their financial goals. He can be reached at 512-894-0665.



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Think about your water supply

by Randy Lawrence

With drought conditions and another Texas summer just a few months away, thoughts are turning to alternative water sources and more efficient treatment techniques. Even with forecasts predicting less than average rainfall, more homeowners are looking to the sky in

hopes of preventing interruptions to their water supply. Rainwater collection systems are designed and built into many new homes. Although it can be tricky, it is usually possible to incorporate rain collection into an existing structure. When used in conjunction with treated groundwater, the stored rainwater can ease the burden on our aquifers.

One downside to rainwater collection systems, besides a potentially limited supply, is the cost of installation. Once the system is designed by a professional, you will need gutters, downspouts, collection lines, storage tanks, a booster pump, and pressure tank, as well as proper filtration and disinfection equipment. For many homeowners, their budget requires them to consider other means of conserving water. Often, this includes replacing appliances and fixtures with more water-efficient models. One of the most commonly overlooked – and misunderstood – household appliances is the water softener. It can be difficult to know whether it is operating at maximum efficiency.

There has been a flurry of advertising aimed at those who have had a traditional salt-based water softener. Many of these products have existed for years and are simply repackaged and heavily marketed. Unfortunately, the results produced by these *alternatives* typically fall far short of the claims made by their distributors. This often leaves homeowners with no choice but to scrap their investment and start from scratch. The only proven method of removing calcium and other hardness minerals is traditional ion exchange softening, and that recent technological advances have made softeners far more efficient and user-friendly than ever.

In order to maximize the efficiency of your water treatment system, ensure that your equipment is up to date and that the settings accurately reflect your particular water conditions. An experienced technician can test your water quality, check the condition and performance of your system, and make any adjustments or upgrades which may be necessary.

Randy Lawrence is the owner of ProQuality Water Systems, a full service water treatment company. He is one of only six Class III Certified Water Treatment Specialists in Hays County (LIC# WT0002693). With over 20 years of experience he has serviced Wimberley and surrounding areas for over a decade.

Dripping Springs Chamber of Commerce Focus on Business:

Is your small business secure online?

by Andy Higgins

With the number of small businesses online today and the advent of professional hackers targeting their less secure nature, professional IT services have become a must, even for small businesses. *The business of hacking small businesses* is now one of the most lucrative for cyber-criminals; simply Google *small business hacking costs* and you will see that the average cost of a data breach for small businesses is \$200,000, potentially putting most out of business.

IMCollaboration is your local IT Services company providing secure IT services to meet small business' needs. For years, only large companies have had the luxury of the best that IT security had to offer; these same services were not readily available nor affordable to small businesses. Even today, most small companies don't have the IT staff to set up, implement, and manage their own secure IT services.

IMCollaboration covers all the bases for small business IT services, including secure setup and management for their computers, servers, network, wireless and remote access. Our goal is to provide our clients with a seamless solution, fixing issues be-



fore they become a problem by monitoring their company's computers, servers and networks, and by keeping all computers backed up and safeguarding them with managed antivirus software and secure networks at all times. IMCollaboration pro-

vides all this and works for you at a fraction of the cost of hiring your own IT staff.

Whether your company is 1 person or 50 people, we can offer you a free assessment of your current IT environment. This assessment will help identify possible issues and let you know what can be done to address any potential vulnerabilities.

Call us today for your free assessment with no obligation at 512-318-2240

IMCollaboration owner, Andy Higgins, runs his company, with his team, from his office in Shortmama's, the oldest building in downtown Dripping Springs. His career in the computer business has spanned 35 years, working for IBM, Bank of America and the Swiss Government along the way. You can contact him at andy@imcollaboration.com, www.imcollaboration.com or at 512-318-2240

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All good things

by Lindley Pond



Happy April and spring to you all. We have a lot to be thankful for this year. As the temps are warming, trees budding, grasses turning green, we are thankful for the freezes that graced our areas.

We might have lost a few things, but a freeze is nature's way to keep our balances in check and ensure that fruit trees will fruit and bugs won't be near as prolific. Hard year for the cedar pollen if it gets you... so goes living in the Hill Country!

Let's be thankful that we have another glorious spring upon us with which to enjoy the fruits of our labor – be it veggies we grew in a green house or with lights or our trusty perennial goodies popping their heads out.

We have the chance to see what worked and what didn't from our plan of last year. Landscaping and outdoor living is usually trial and error, hopefully more successes than failures. Moving into late spring, it's still a great time to come up with ideas that can be implemented now or with baby steps.

It's a wonderful time to install some of the bones that give us a palette to work within. Hardscapes can be planned out and installed, giving us a master plan to work with, coming up with ideas to take advantage of in the fall. That along with going easy on the pocketbook, make things seem a little less overwhelming.

With our ever unpredictable weather – be it freezes, drought, or heat – making the right choices can mean the difference between perfection and money flying out the window.

Enjoy the beautiful weather and take your time; all good things. If you need any help, we are here!

We're here to help fulfill your "outside dreams". Call us for a free consultation and design. Lindley Pond is owner of Lindley Pond Landscaping. We've been helping folks in Central Texas for over 15 years. Give us a call for design and installation of your new "lawn" at 512-775-1629. Or send me an email at lindleypond171@gmail.com.


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