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RANCH RECORD

News for the Residents of Blackhorse Ranch



SPECIAL NEEDS EXPO RIGHT IN OUR OWN BACKYARD!

The Community of Faith 2nd Annual Special Needs Expo will take place February 23, 2018 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Everyone knows that parenting is a difficult job, even in the best of times and under the most favorable circumstances. But, moms and dads with children of special needs face an entirely different set of challenges that often redefine the meanings of parenthood, stress, anxiety, and isolation. In fact, it has been said that their life is very similar to the pressures felt by soldiers in combat.

Knowing that, and responding to a desire to address the situation in 2016, Cassie Kraus, the current Special Needs Director at Community of Faith, sought out Mark Shook, Senior Pastor, and Bradley Thomas, Connections Pastor of Community of Faith, and posed her idea. Cassie wanted to provide some much-needed assistance to families yearning to attend worship services or other church functions but were unable to do so because their children required special considerations.

Cassie received overwhelming support to create a program that not only addressed the needs of parishioners, but has grown to offer collaborative, family-centered assistance to caregivers in other parts of Texas and as far as Louisiana.

Sharing her personal understanding of the issues, Cassie said, "As the parent of a child with autism and a former special education professional in Cy-Fair, I was well-versed in the challenges parents face trying to make their way through the special needs maze.

"We were delighted when we found Community of Faith. Their warm welcome and willingness to work with us to address some of our unique challenges offered us an environment of understanding and respect—one in which we thrived." Continuing, she said, "The special needs community, as a whole, is very small, and when you find a church that is willing to work with you and that looks at each child as their own, that's huge. As the parent of a child with different abilities, it was comforting to find people willing to walk that journey with you who are striving to find the best outcome for your child and to see him or her as a unique individual."

Bradley chimed in, "Our special needs ministry has been operating full tilt for about a year and a half now. Cassie brought expertise,

heart, and connections to the team, which has added the necessary foundation to create a welcoming, dynamic, family-centered environment.

"We sponsored our first 'Special Needs Expo' last year and over 200 families participated. With Cassie's unbelievable network of organizations willing to step in and provide the needed framework of access, information, and resources, 50 vendors worked diligently to help families get connected and feel supported.

"This year, we're hoping the Expo is attended by anyone that has a need or a desire to help." He emphasized, "They don't need to go to our church. Our goal is that our Special Needs Ministry continues to build a reputation as a key contact when families need help with parenting, family interaction, physical or emotional well-being, or disability-related support.

"As advocates for children and adults with special needs, whether it's autism, Downs Syndrome, MS, behavioral challenges or anything in between, we want Community of Faith to be their 'go to' for support and acceptance—the organization that brokers partnerships and relationships for families.

"Community of Faith is unique in that we have made a substantial investment in personnel, equipment, rooms, volunteers and other resources to meet the growing need.

"We recognize that the parenting of a special needs child is 24/7. There is no downtime. Not only do we provide opportunities to get them connected to resources, but we also offer opportunities to walk in friendship with them.

"For example, once a quarter, Cassie facilitates a 'Special Needs Family Night Out.' She and her team come up with a unique event where they create a safe and stimulating atmosphere with fun activities, like story time, games, bounce houses, and relationship-building activities for the children and their siblings.

"Parents can confidently leave and enjoy a few hours of freedom to

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(Continued from Cover)

do whatever they want. If they're going to go home and take a nap, that's great! If they're going to go shopping, out to eat, or to a movie they are free to choose.

The Community of Faith 2nd Annual Special Needs Expo will take place February 23, 2018, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

"The way it works is families will check in at the lobby and filter through the multipurpose room where they will have the opportunity to visit with an assortment of vendors, such as therapies, estate planning, school districts, transition services, and adaptive sports (such as cheerleading and gymnastics).

"Attendees will find a variety of resources for families just starting out as well as families entering those adult years. The culmination will be speeches from field experts."

In closing, I asked Bradley, "Plain and simple, what is the ultimate purpose of the Expo?"

Without missing a beat, he said, "Our goal is for hundreds of families living in and around Cypress—members of Community of Faith or not—to know they have a friend. We want every family living with a special needs child to know that they are not alone, and they have someone who will walk with them every step of the way in raising their children all the way up to adulthood."



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10TH ANNIVERSARY SALUTE TO OUR HEROES GALA



On February 3, 2018, the Cy-Fair Educational Foundation (CFEF) will celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Salute to Our Heroes Gala at the Omni Hotel Houston Westside. North Cypress Medical Center Hospital is the Missing Man Underwriter for this gala

honoring the brave men and women who have served to protect our freedom and liberty. The evening includes a Missing Man Table and Honors Ceremony to honor our missing loved ones [or missing comrades in arms, for veterans].

Station & Ayers Insurance Services & Consulting is the Edward Station Memorial Photography Sponsor. Memorial Hermann Cypress is a Brigadier General Sponsor. VIP Reception Sponsors include ACU of Texas and Houston Methodist, and Hightower Electric Company is the Floral Sponsor.

Salvatore "Sal" Giunta, former U.S. Army Staff Sergeant, is the evenings guest speaker. Giunta was presented with our nation's highest military decoration—The Medal of Honor—for his heroic actions during combat in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan on October 25, 2007. His courage and leadership while under extreme enemy fire were integral to his team's survival and led to his selection as the first living recipient of the Medal of Honor since the Vietnam War and the eighth service member to receive the nation's highest military decoration for valor in Iraq and Afghanistan.

CFEF was established in 1970 as a non-profit to raise money to fund a scholarship for high school graduates in the area. Over the past 47 years, the Foundation has grown tremendously through the efforts of the Board of Trustees and the generosity of the Cy-Fair Community. The Foundation has awarded over \$7.5 million in scholarships to 1600 graduating seniors. CFEF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, all contributions are tax deductible, as allowed by the law.

Sponsorships and tickets are available for Salute to Our Heroes Tickets Must Be Purchased in Advance: \$125 individual; \$75 veterans

For more information please contact marie@thecfef.org or visit our website at www.theCFEF.org.



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MAKE YOUR HEART HEALTH A TOP PRIORITY

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. February is Heart Month, and cardiologists affiliated with Memorial Hermann Cypress Hospital hope people will use this time to focus on their heart health.

“Long-term heart health is all about making small, healthy choices every day. Many of the risk factors for heart disease are preventable, so the earlier you can start making healthy choices, the better. However, it is never too late to start,” says Ahmad Aslam, M.D., a cardiovascular disease specialist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Cypress.

The American Heart Association offers these tips for a heart healthy lifestyle.

1. **Eat Smart-** A heart healthy diet includes a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, and skinless poultry. For those looking for a specific diet, the AHA recommends the DASH eating plan.
2. **Move More-** It's recommended that people get at least 150 minutes of physical activity a week. That averages to 30 minutes a day, 5 times a week. Walking is a great place to start.

3. **Quit smoking-** Smokers have a higher risk of developing many chronic disorders that can lead to coronary heart disease and stroke. Talk with your primary care physician about ways to quit smoking and available resources.

“It's also important that everyone know the signs of a heart attack. Major signs include pain or discomfort in the chest, one or both arms, back, neck or jaw. People having a heart attack can also experience shortness of breath, nausea, or light-headedness. If you think that you or someone you know is having a heart attack, you should call 911 immediately,” says Dr. Aslam.

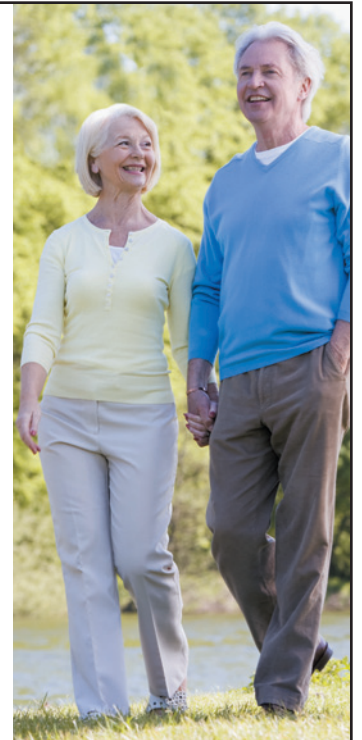


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CLUB TRACK TEAM REGISTRATION FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL

Now in its 31st year, the Northwest Flyers Track Club is accepting registrations for all middle and high school athletes for the spring and summer 2018 season. The team is sanctioned by USA Track & Field, and offers a full program of "track" events such as sprints, hurdles, middle distance, distance and relays, and "field" events such as long jump, triple jump, high jump, discus, shot put and javelin and pole vault. It is an excellent "off-season" program for young athletes who currently compete on their middle school or high school track teams.

The team was founded 31 years ago by local Olympic gold medalist Fred Newhouse to foster the development of youth track & field in the northwest Houston area. In July, 2017 the Northwest Flyers had one of its most successful competitions ever at the Junior Olympics in Lawrence, KS.

In order to register, athletes must first attend one of the orientation sessions in late March/early April, 2018, which are listed on the team website at www.northwestflyers.org. For additional information about the team, email linette.roach@sbcglobal.net and "Like" the club on Facebook.



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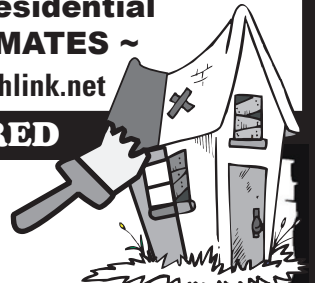
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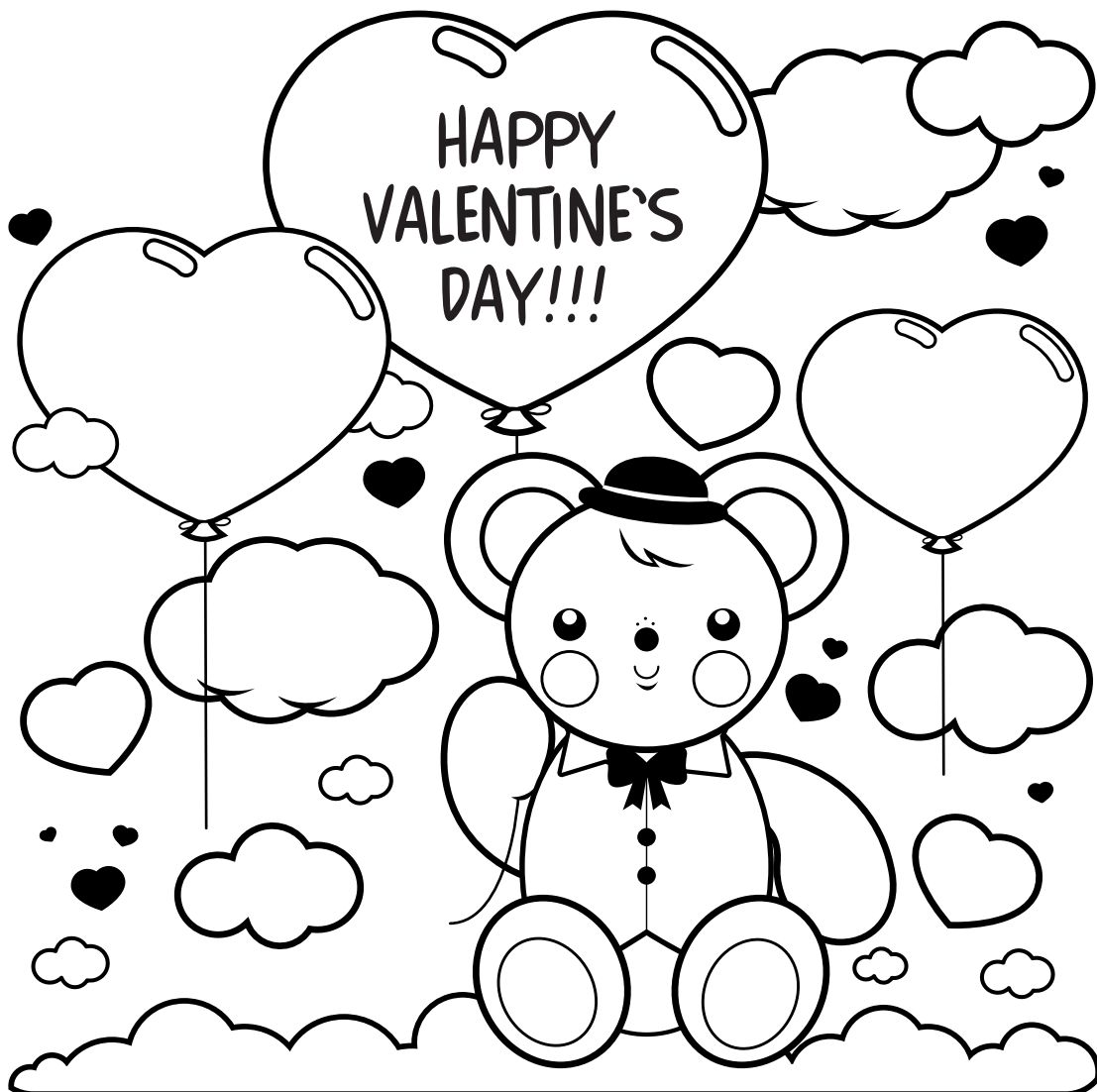
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