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FEBRUARY 2020

MERIDIAN *Community Monitor*

NEWS FOR THE RESIDENTS OF MERIDIAN

Why Not Host?

Read More on Page 2!



THE MONITOR

WELCOME

A Newsletter for Meridian residents

The Monitor is a monthly newsletter mailed to all Meridian residents. Each newsletter is filled with valuable information about the community, local area activities, school information and more. If you are involved with a school group, play group, scouts, sports activity, social group, etc. and would like to submit an article for the newsletter you can do so online at www.PEELinc.com or you can email it meridian@peelinc.com. Personal news for the Stork Report, Teenage Job Seekers, special celebrations, birthday announcements and military service are also welcome. Our goal is to keep you informed!

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(Continued from Cover)

The decorations are packed away, gifts have been exchanged and life is back to normal once again. Why not bring a little excitement into your life by hosting a foreign exchange student!

Each of our students is fluent in English, comes with their own spending money and health insurance. Most importantly, they come with a dream to spend a year in the US so they can experience life as an American teenager!

Hosting is a very great way of bringing new cultures into your family, home, school and community. Speaking as the host mom to 14 different exchange students, I can say that this is one of the best decisions I've made in my life.

STS Foundation accepts all of host families – from single parents, newly marrieds, empty nesters and same sex couples. **In order to host, you would need to meet the following qualifications:**

- **Host must be 25 years or older**
- **Pass a background check**
- **Provide food for 3 meals daily**
- **Ensure reliable transportation to and from school (bus is ok)**
- **A bed for your student**
- **A safe and loving home**

STS Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that places foreign exchange students with American host families. For more information about hosting, please contact Vicki Odom at 832-455-7881 or email at vicki.stsfoundation@yahoo.com.

SWING Networking Group

Promote your business with local independent business owners. SWING (South west Austin Inclusive Networking Group) has been meeting every Thursday morning from 8AM to 9:30AM at the Waterloo Ice House on Escarpment for 14 years.

We have no dues, no initiation fees, we don't take attendance. Just pay for your own breakfast. The more often you show up the better we get to know you. We are an inclusive group, we will enjoy competition. So, bring your business cards and a good attitude and let's get to know you.

If you want more information, contact Liz Jensen at 512-301-6966 or lizleej@gmail.com or Peter Berardino (The King of SWING) at 512-695-2334 or peterberardino@gmail.com.

Jenny Roan **FORGEY** *for* STATE REPRESENTATIVE



Erica Woodford Photography

Jenny is running to be your next State Rep and hopes to earn your vote in the Republican Primary.

Jenny is for:

- ★ Limited Government
- ★ Low Taxes
- ★ Pro-Business Policies
- ★ Transportation Solutions that Increase Road Capacity Immediately

Jenny has the experience and background to get the job done:

- ✓ Former small business owner
- ✓ Attorney
- ✓ Native Austinite and lifelong Travis County resident
- ✓ Former Congressional staffer
- ✓ Foreign Affairs degree from Georgetown University and Juris Doctorate from Baylor Law

JennyRoanForgey.com  JennyRoanForgey  @JennyRoanForgey (512) 676-5420

Early Voting: February 18-28, 2020
Election Day: March 3, 2020

Pol. Adv. Paid for by Jenny Roan Forgey Campaign

Selling this Spring? Things to Be Doing Now

By Dianne Field, GRI

The winter months are the perfect time to be preparing your house to sell. Treat it like a business. Your house is no longer just your home, it's an asset you are trying to get top dollar for.

Make Minor Repairs

Patch holes in the walls, replace broken appliances and change burnt out light bulbs. No problem is too small in the eyes of a potential buyer. Small issues send the message the home has not been well taken care of. They could also indicate to a potential buyer that there is other more costly neglect taking place- like water or mold damage.

Depersonalize and Declutter

The more personal your space, the less potential buyers can imagine themselves living there. Get rid of a third of your stuff--stash it in a storage unit if you have to. Clutter includes family photos, collections, travel items, and keepsakes. It's hard for a buyer to imagine their things in the space with yours cluttering every room.

Remove Polarizing Items

Polarizing items are political and religious items and should be packed away with your other personal things. Many people have strong feelings about these types of things, and you don't want a buyer to pre-judge your home based on your political or religious beliefs.

Update the Kitchen

Kitchens are probably the most important room in the house. They are also the most expensive to renovate. Investing a few thousand dollars will get you an 86% return, while a dated kitchen could knock a huge chunk off of the asking price. The fastest and most inexpensive update is to repaint cabinets and update hardware.

Add a Fresh Coat of Paint

Neutral paint tones appeal to a wide range of tastes and look fresh. Paint also has the power to add light to a dark room. Just resist the urge to be bold (save it for your next home). If you must add a pop of color, do so with a blanket or flower vase, not the fireplace.

Clean the Carpets

If you have carpets in your home, they need to be clean before you show your home. You can save money and rent a carpet cleaning machine or hire professionals — either way, the results will speak for themselves.

Improve Curb Appeal

You may not have the budget for a complete re-landscaping of your yard, but cleaning it up, including weeding and mulching, can make a big difference for potential buyers. Add some inexpensive flowers and clear out any excess to make a great first impression for an open house or showing. Ditto for power washing the exterior, especially stone and siding.

Fix Broken Items

If you have broken fixtures, it's time to fix them now, before a potential home buyer is turned off. Whether it's a stuck door handle or a broken toilet, now's the time to get it fixed.

Organize Closet Space

Every buyer is looking for a place to store all their things. Take

half of everything you have in the closets and put it in a storage unit. Then, neatly organize what's left in the closets to highlight the home's storage space.

Listing your Home for the Right Price

Find out what your home is worth, then consider asking fifteen to twenty percent less. No, it's not crazy! You'll have bids from multiple buyers. Buyers don't want to let that kind of deal slip away and are sure bid it back up to its worth.

Work with a Top Realtor

A big sale killer is working with the wrong realtor. Work with a realtor who is informed and can provide helpful services through the entire selling process. They should regularly monitor the multiple listing service (MLS), know what properties are going on the market, and know the comps for your neighborhood.

Take Professional Photos

With the internet and social media, the first impression of your home is going to be online, so you'll want to hire a professional photography company to take the images. Your Realtor can help you choose a company and the final pictures, as they'll know what pictures sell the best.

Clean-Up for Walk-Throughs

Clean like you've never cleaned before, and then keep it that way. Keep your bathrooms and kitchen impeccable, dust and mop, and wash the walls and windows until the day your house sells. Professional companies that specialize in deep cleaning are also recommended.

Lights On!

A dark house is just sad. Maximize the light in your home. Take down the drapes, clean the windows, and swap the lampshades and up the wattage in the bulbs. Do whatever it takes to let the light shine down on potential buyers!

No Pets Allowed

Not everyone is an animal lover. If a potential buyer walks in and sees a dog bowl, smells a litter box, or is picking hair off their pants hours after the Open House, they will think the house is not clean. In fact, a potential buyer shouldn't even be able to tell if a four-legged friend lives there or not. Plan and get your furry friend to a pet hotel or leave with a friend on the days you plan to show the home.

Smells Like Home

You should be able to eliminate any unpleasant odors after a good clean. Even if it's winter, open the windows and give the home time to air out. To add a pleasing smell, bake before an Open House, or light a fresh-smelling candle. Keep it subtle because anything too overpowering will smell suspicious like you're trying to hide something.

Special Touches

Fresh flowers, accent pillows, a new welcome mat--these little touches can amp up the welcome factor of any home and go a long

(Continued on Page 5)

(Continued from Page 4)

way with buyers. You don't have to go out of your way, either. Just a few here and there to make it feel more like home.

It's Always Show Time

Your house needs to be "show ready" at all times because you never know when a buyer will walk through that front door. You want your home to be available whenever they want to come and see the place. Keep the dishes clean and put away, beds made, and immediately clear clutter. It may seem annoying, but will get your house sold!

Leave Your House

Removing yourself is the ultimate depersonalization. You want to give buyers the freedom to open closets, inspect the rooms, and ask questions without feeling like they are snooping around. Before someone comes for a showing, open the windows, turn on all the lights and get yourself out!

Making First Impressions a Lasting Impression

Before they even walk through the door, buyers are judging your house. They should feel warm, welcome and safe as they approach the house. Do some inexpensive upgrades, such as adding light fixtures, replacing the mailbox, or sprucing up the landscaping with some colorful flowers. You can expect a 100 percent return on any money you put into your home's curb appeal.



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THE MONITOR

BAKED SPAGHETTI

Ingredients

- 1 package (16 ounces) spaghetti
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 jar (24 ounces) meatless spaghetti sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 5 tablespoons butter, melted
- 2 cups Daisy 4% cottage cheese
- 4 cups part-skim shredded mozzarella cheese
- Chopped fresh basil, optional

Directions

- Cook spaghetti according to package directions. Meanwhile, in a large skillet, cook beef and onion over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Stir in spaghetti sauce and seasoned salt; set aside.
- In a large bowl, whisk the eggs, Parmesan cheese and butter. Drain spaghetti; add to egg mixture and toss to coat.
- Place half of the spaghetti mixture in a greased 13x9-in. or 3-qt. baking dish. Top with half of the cottage cheese, meat sauce and mozzarella cheese. Repeat layers.
- Cover and bake at 350° for 40 minutes. Uncover; bake until cheese is melted, 20-25 minutes longer. If desired, sprinkle with basil.



Adding Yoga to Workout Regime Can Improve Your Fitness Goals

Implementing yoga into a workout routine can provide unique health benefits, said a Baylor College of Medicine physician and yoga enthusiast.

Yoga is a broad philosophy containing many different paths to achieve the goal of physical, mental and spiritual well-being, said Dr. Bobby Kapur, assistant professor of medicine at BCM and associate chief for emergency medicine at the Harris County Hospital District's Ben Taub General Hospital. In physical fitness, yoga is the practice of physical postures and breathing exercises that allow a person to strengthen the body and at the same time enter a meditative and relaxed state of awareness.

Yoga entails various positions, stretching and deep breathing. Practicing yoga can help a person improve flexibility, balance, limberness, blood circulation, and it can also relax muscle tension and fight infection, Kapur said.

A pair of hands holding a small globe of the Earth, with green leaves sprouting from the top. The background is a blurred green field.

GO GREEN

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Sweet, Luscious Snacks for Loved Ones

Valentine's Day Eats and Treats

(Family Features) Valentine's Day naturally brings thoughts of hearts, flowers, sweetness and love. Because it also occurs during American Heart Month, it's a perfect opportunity to start taking care of your own heart and the hearts of loved ones.

Part of the charm of the day's celebrations is in giving family and friends flavorful foods to enjoy from chocolates and candies to other sugary treats. However, the festivities don't have to be completely focused on unhealthy bites in order to make someone feel special.

This year, it can be easy to share in the fun of Valentine's Day by serving those you love with sweet, seasonal treats. For example, these Frosted Watermelon Cutouts make for ideal snacks for children and adults alike whether it's an after-school treat or a sweet dessert with just three ingredients, heart-shaped cookie cutters and minimal time spent in the kitchen.

If you're really looking to impress that special someone, this Watermelon and Chocolate Dessert Board calls for creativity and plenty of tasty morsels like berries, cashews, almonds and dark chocolate. Without any baking or cooking required, simply spread out the ingredients for a platter that's just as visually appealing as it is appetizing.

Both recipes include the benefits of watermelon, which boasts plenty of vitamin C to boost the immune system's defenses as a cholesterol-free, fat-free and sodium-free food. Plus, watermelon draws its red color from the powerful antioxidant lycopene (12.7 mg per serving), which may help protect cells from damage, and the healthy treat is American Heart Association Heart-Check Certified with just 80 calories per serving, making it the perfect centerpiece for Valentine's Day recipes.

Find more Valentine's Day inspiration and recipes at watermelon.org.

FROSTED WATERMELON CUTOUTS

- 1 seedless watermelon, cut into 1/2-3/4-inch thick slices
- 4 brownie bites
- 1 cup frosting (any flavor)

Using heart-shaped cookie cutters, cut shapes out of watermelon slices or simply use cut watermelon wedges, if desired. Top heart shapes with brownie bites and add frosting as desired.



WATERMELON AND CHOCOLATE DESSERT BOARD

Servings: 6-8

- | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|---|
| 1/2 | medium seedless watermelon, cut into wedges and cubes | 1 | cup strawberries, trimmed and halved |
| 1 | cup fresh raspberries | 1/4 | cup dried cranberries |
| 1 | cup fresh red cherries | 1/3 | cup roasted, salted cashews |
| 1 | cup coconut chips | 1 | cup chocolate covered almonds |
| | mint leaves, for garnish | 1 | bar dark chocolate, broken into squares |

On serving board, arrange watermelon in center and surround with raspberries, cherries, strawberries, cranberries, cashews, almonds, chocolate and coconut chips. Scatter mint leaves around board for garnish.





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