

Returning to Richardson

Entrepreneurs find hometown is rich with opportunity

by Joy Rhodes
photography by Elizabeth Gonzalez

Whitney Eoff

Then: Richardson High School, 1995

Now: w.e. giggle, co-founder

3 words that describe

her best: joyful, thankful, encourager



There's nothing this Richardson High School alumna loves more than spending time with her husband, Stephen, and two kids, especially when the boomin' sound of the high school band signals the beginning of football season. "We love taking the five-minute walk with our three-year-old daughter, Olivia, and one-year-old son, Marshall, to the football games in the fall," said Whitney Marshall Eoff. "It's been fun to teach them the 'whoop' as they cheer on the Eagles already at such a young age!"

School spirit comes naturally for this former cheerleader and Miss RHS, and perhaps it's her perpetual positive attitude that fuels Whitney's career in greeting cards. Whitney and her mom own w.e. giggle (wegiggle.com). "Our motto is 'the card that greets you with a smile!'" said Whitney. "We hope to creatively

supply our retailers and friends with their paper needs so that the joy of sending and receiving handwritten notes is not lost."

With her creative hat on, Whitney draws and paints each design by hand, while her mom handles the logistics. "Mom has such an attentive eye to detail and is thorough at seeing things get done well," said Whitney. "We absolutely have a ball working together!"

Their fun-filled days are reflective in the company name, which transpired over dinner one night between Whitney and Stephen. "We went to a restaurant that had paper tablecloths, so we got out two pens and covered it with ideas. We wanted the name to be unique, but personal. At the end of the night, we had come up with w.e. giggle—the 'w.e.' being my newly married initials, and the 'giggle' being what we do most when our family is all together—laugh!"

Because Whitney grew up in Richardson, she was elated when Stephen's job moved them here a year and a half ago. "Richardson is like a charming small town with all the perks of a big city. We love our cozy neighborhood. We're excited about the great public schools in RISD; we love attending Spring Creek Pool in the summer where I grew up lifeguarding; and most of all, we treasure being so close to family!" ■

John Marshall

Then: Richardson High School, 1998

Now: Crossfit Richardson, founder and owner

3 words that describe him

best: loyal, easygoing, fun-loving



1998. Mark McGwire broke Roger Maris' record for hitting 70 home runs in a single season, and The New York Yankees took the World Series and won a record 125 games. Back in Richardson, John Marshall was graduating from high school and heading to the University of Alabama to play baseball.

Baseball was John's life...next to his family. Like his sister, Whitney Eoff, John is close to his family and sees them often





as they regularly work out at his gym, Crossfit Richardson (crossfitrichardson.com). "Both of our parents, along with Whitney, work out at the gym about five days per week," said John. "They are so involved that we get to share our passion with them daily."

Family prompted John and his wife Julia to settle in Richardson. After they married in 2004,

they lived in Alabama and Arkansas. But John's roots were here, and the city's economic growth was appealing. John agreed, "The move was inspired by family and an opportunity to start a business in a city I love and I am familiar with."

Crossfit is unique in that it "crosses" all skill levels so that every age and size can benefit from its services. Said John, "We run an intense training program that is scaleable to all levels of an athlete. We train 65-year-old grandparents, who simply want to keep up with their grandkids; we train 17-year-old high school athletes hoping for a college scholarship; we train police officers, firefighters, soldiers, and everything in between. It is an amazing program!"

What inspires John to stay fit? "I am motivated to stay fit because it makes me feel great and I have fun exercising," he said. "Crossfit, especially, provides a fun competitive workout environment for me to still feel like I am involved in sports at some level."

It may not be the major leagues, but he's the coach at this game. ■

Julie LaFollette

Then: J. J. Pearce High School, 1976

Now: Custom Jewelers, owner

3 words that describe her best: Christian, honest, outgoing

From sterling and stones to platinum and gold, "Julie the Jeweler" really does find pleasure in the small things. Julie LaFollette is the owner of Custom Jewelers, which is tucked in the Luby's shopping center off Campbell Road.



JULIE LA FOLLETTE
JJ Pearce High School 1976

She has called Richardson home for 45 years. Her parents moved here when she started first grade at Greenwood Hills Elementary. She was seven years old.

Today, Julie is 51 and says that her family has been her anchor. "I'm an only child and my parents are the world to me. I just don't see any reason to leave. It's a great community."

Her mother began the business in 1976, the year Julie graduated from J. J. Pearce High School. "I was an all-around student in high school," said Julie. "I played sports, organized the rodeo team, studied art, and I was vice president of the student council."

Her active involvement molded her into an eager student and future entrepreneur, but before joining her mom, she would receive an associates degree and work for a master jeweler for a year. The jeweler was from South Africa and boasted a long lineage of jewelry makers.

In 1991, Julie received her certification to grade diamonds from the Gemological Institute of America. She is also a bench jeweler, which means she can do repairs, sizing, and settings. Some of Julie's favorite creations though

have been old rings, necklaces or bracelets that she's made new again by remaking and replacing, or adding, a stone. "I love helping a customer create a beautiful piece of jewelry that will last a lifetime," she said. "I love everything about my job!"

But what makes "Julie the Jeweler" shine the most? "The people that I meet." ■



Michael Tannery

Then: J. J. Pearce High School, 1976

Now: Tannery & Company Wealth Management, president and co-founder

3 words that describe him best: focused, generous, positive

Perhaps his shaggy blonde hair and baby blue eyes turned heads at J. J. Pearce in the '70s, but today it's Michael Tannery's entrepreneurship that has garnered him attention. Michael





is the president and co-founder of Tannery Wealth Management (tannerywealth.com), a company that helps individuals and business owners achieve what Michael calls, True Wealth, or wealth that money cannot buy. Said Michael, "We developed a blueprinting process to create a personal life plan to meet the demands of an ever-changing financial life."

To summarize, the Five True Wealth

Blueprinting Steps are identifying what you value most in life; exploring what your purpose is; designing a compelling vision for your future; creating a personal mission statement; and setting goals and an action plan to implement your mission and achieve your vision.

Michael encourages his clients to embrace their values in order to achieve a sense of purpose. "Knowing your purpose fuels your passion and commitment and gives meaning to your life," he said.

What does Michael value most in life? "My family, my health, my friends and making a difference in people's lives," he said. "I aspire to leave a legacy that will contribute to the community."

Leaving a legacy, to Michael, is making a difference in the community that will be remembered for generations to come. He remembers those in Richardson who made a difference in his life, so he chose that same backdrop to open his business. "I opened my business here as a way to give back to those who gave to me when I was growing up in Richardson."

Excluding his college years, Michael has called Richardson home since 1962. After graduating from J. J. Pearce in 1976, he pursued a bachelor of business administration degree at Southern Methodist University. He married his wife Tina in 2000. Michael has three children that are also J.J. Pearce graduates—Chandler, 24; LynAlise, 22; and Hayley, 19.

Michael said that he has been an entrepreneur most of his life. Many of his jobs, including his first job as a paperboy, were taken up on his own initiative. That same drive has led him to success today...success beyond dollar signs. ■

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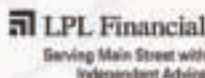
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