

Short-Order COOKS

Chef teaching kids to be half-pint hosts

BY RICK MAUCH
HOOD COUNTY NEWS

As Laura Bush (no, not the former first lady) reaches into her oven, several sets of young eyes watch intently. They can't wait to see the finished product of something they were creating a little while before.

Then, comes the ultimate test. They and some guests try the burrito treats, along with some sliders (mini-hamburgers) and an ice cream dish. All were part of that day's agenda in the Cooking Is Fun Kids Cooking Camp hosted by Bush.

"I just love seeing the light in a child's eyes when they learn something in the kitchen," said Bush, a chef who owns a local cooking and catering business.

This was the first of three camps Bush is hosting this summer for ages 6 and up in her home. Ironically, on this day the camp featured all boys, but to Bush a chef is a chef.

"I want both of my kids to know how to mow the yard and how to cook," said Bush. "The most famous chefs in the world are men."

Justin Jackson, 12, has entertained thoughts of being such a chef one day.

"I just like making good food," said Justin. "I've been doing it as long as my parents would let me in the kitchen."

"Sometimes I'll incorporate different ingredients and experiment, like pancakes and ice cream."

His mother, Michelle Jackson, is a happy beneficiary of her son's cooking skills. He especially likes to be creative with scrambled eggs.

"He cooks an awesome breakfast," she said.

Noah Baca, 12, has also done experimenting in the kitchen, and thought it would be a good idea to learn a few new things from Bush.

"I like food, so I was interested," said Noah. "I'd like to try and make cheesecake someday."

The camps aren't only about food and cooking. Bush teaches safety and sanitation in the kitchen, along with being properly prepared before taking the first step to making a meal.

For example, when walking through the kitchen with a knife, a person should yell loudly "Sharp." When walking through with something hot, shout "Hot pan."

"I learned you should never walk with a sharp knife holding it up," said 9-year-old Lucas Quirl. "I also liked mixing up the meat (for the burritos). I do it for sloppy joes at home."

His father, Marcus Quirl, remembers taking a

cooking class when he was younger.

"I thought it was pretty cool," he said. "I think it's pretty cool to teach kids this young how to cook."

Bush said learning to cook at a young age is not only fun for the youngster, but the entire family can enjoy the experience.

"I've got a really good friend, and every Sunday a different family member cooks dinner," said

Bush. "It's fun and a really nice experience for them to share."

And, in these economic times when both parents typically work, it can be refreshing to have someone else do the cooking at the end of the day.

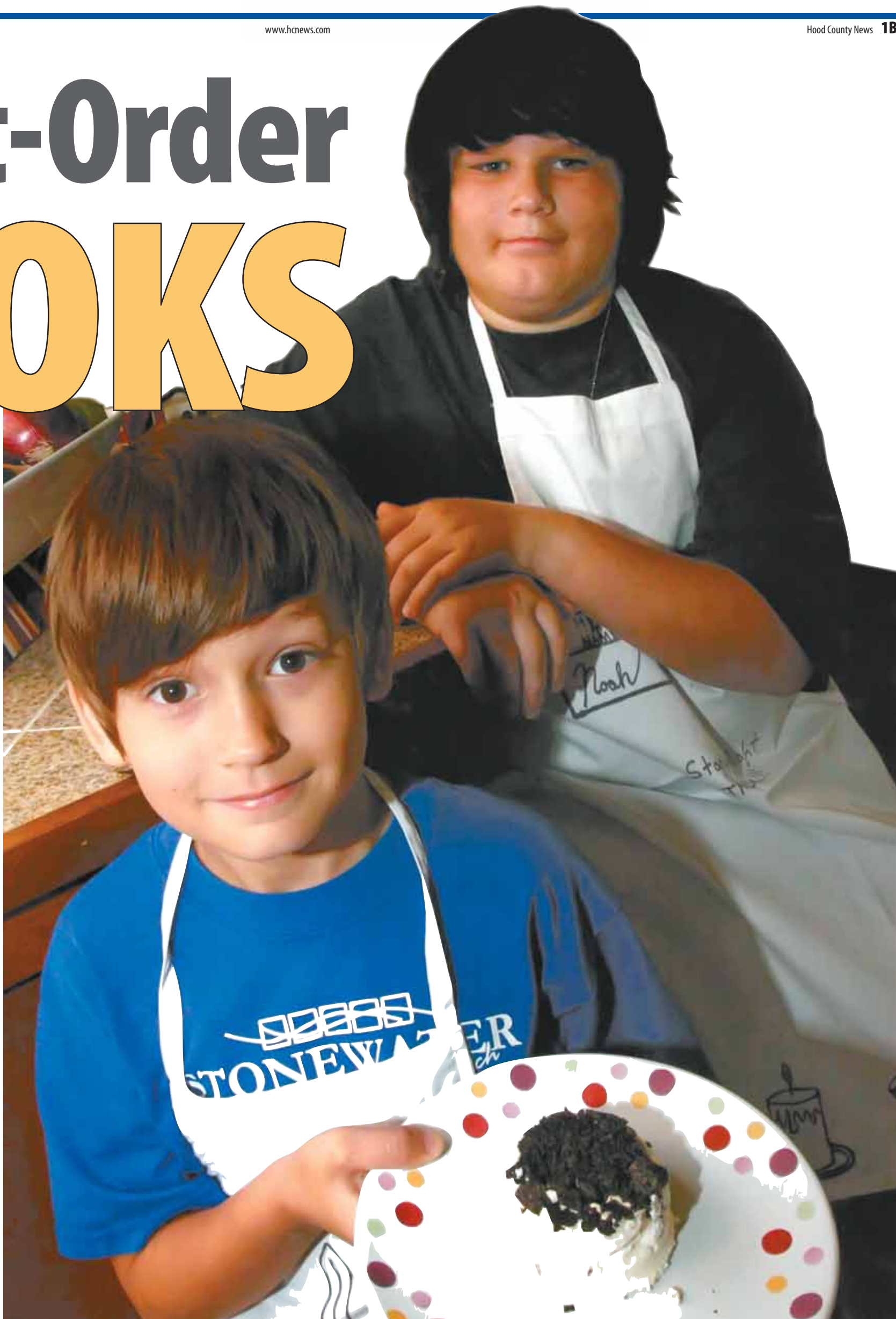
"There's a generation that's been missing the kitchen experience, and I want to teach them to appreciate that environment," said Bush. "What a

neat thing it is to equip a child with the ability to surprise mom and dad with dinner."

And, Bush said, learning to cook can be healthy for children.

"Kids will eat what they help prepare," said Bush. "If you've got a picky eater, get them in the kitchen."

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LOOK WHAT I MADE: Lucas Quirl shows off an ice cream pastry he created while fellow camper Noah Baca looks on.

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AND NOW IT'S READY TO BAKE: Cooking class instructor/chef Laura Bush helps Lucas Quirl put a homemade pound cake in the oven as they prepare a dessert.

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COOKING IS FUN KIDS COOKING CAMP

AGES: 6-up.

REMAINING camps: July 7-8, July 21-22.

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EVERYBODY READY TO DIG IN?: Noah Baca holds up a heaping helping of sliders created by he and his fellow campers.

