

MansfieldNOW

M A G A Z I N E

OCTOBER 2025

From Double Dutch to Doctorate

Lizette Roldan-Otero
relentlessly pursues
excellence

In the Kitchen With
Jennifer Holmes

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

Featured Business:
Budget Blinds

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Sandra Walters
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sandra.walters@nowmagazines.com
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Mansfield Family,

As I continue my morning walks, greeting neighbors and checking them off the attendance list on my phone, I can't help but notice how the weather brings such peace and calm. The hot summer days are behind us, and this spring-like air is a refreshing gift.

During these walks, I'm reminded of the excitement that comes with the food of this season. October's table is abundant and inviting. Whether it's the sweetness of apples, pumpkin — the iconic symbol of autumn — or the brightness of cranberries, these foods remind us that harvest season is about slowing down, gathering close and relishing every bite.

In our home, pumpkin-spiced desserts, soups and hearty Sunday dinners spark joy. My family especially loves Hostess Iced Pumpkin Cupcakes, which have

become a fun little tradition. We have taken selfies with the cupcakes when we have discovered them in the store. Throughout the week, someone in the family will share a recipe or picture of a seasonal treat that tempts us all to indulge.

What do you like best about October? Are there any traditions you continue? Do goodies begin at the beginning of the month or close to the end? Are they sweet or savory?

Have a fantastic month, whatever you choose to do!

October 2025
Volume 20, Issue 10

ON THE COVER



Lizette Roldan-Otero recounts her story of perseverance.

Photo by
Lori Baur.

Publisher, Connie Poirier
General Manager, Rick Hensley

EDITORIAL

Managing Editor, Becky Walker
Mansfield Editor, Sandra Walters
Office Assistant, Kristin Bato
Writer, Todd Simmons
Editors/Proofreaders, Rachel Rich
Virginia Riddle

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla
Artists, Kristin Bato . Beth Davis
Martha Macias . Anthony Sarmienta

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Director, Chris McCalla
Photographer, Lori Baur

ADVERTISING

Advertising Representatives,
Bryan Frye . Dustin Dauenhauer
Kelsea Locke . Linda Moffett
Linda Roberson . Karen Schaefer
Jeremy Young

Billing Manager, Angela Mixon

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From Double D Doctora

Lizette Roldan-Otero's life has been shaped by two cultures. Her parents met in Chicago, only to discover they grew up in the same small Puerto Rican town. Both moved to the U.S. mainland in search of opportunities but always dreamed of returning home. Eventually, they married and welcomed Lizette, making her proudly American and Puerto Rican.

From a young age, her energy was boundless. As a toddler, she mastered jump rope, favoring double Dutch and spending hours outdoors and at the local recreation center. Television, which she jokingly called "the black box," never appealed to her. Movement was her passion.

"I grew up speaking both English and Spanish, often serving as my parents' translator," she said. "I thought in both languages constantly — English in public and Spanish mainly at home. Translating wasn't a chore. It's second nature."

School quickly became her sanctuary. "I hated summers because it meant no school," she remembered. "I loved structure

"On the playground I played hard, but in the classroom, I was focused."

atch to te

— By Sandra Walters

and learning new things. By first grade, I could add, subtract, multiply and divide — often doing my sister's homework just for fun." She also helped her mom calculate the bills, and this opened her eyes to the family's financial struggles. Determined to change her future, she set her sights on college, planning to become a doctor, but not a medical doctor.

Then, at age 9, everything shifted. Lizette's parents decided to return to Puerto Rico. "I was devastated," she recalled. "It felt like my life was over." After they moved that August, she asked her older cousins where the recreational center was, only to be met with blank stares. Her cousins replied, "We don't have that here." The fact that there was no rec center surprised her because she desired to play and make friends.

When she enrolled in school, she was considered a *gringo*. Even though she spoke fluently in Spanish, she couldn't write or read in Spanish, so they teased and laughed at her. But within six months, she became proficient in both. "Students in the Puerto Rican school system are classified in 10 academic groups, with group 1 being the highest academically, and group 10 being the lowest," Lizette admitted. "My perseverance and determination earned me a place in Group 1."

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In eighth grade, she recalled her math teacher saying she wanted to have her as a student because other instructors thought she was smart. But she didn't believe that was possible because Lizette was extremely loud on the playground. "Some may have described me as a savage, but I was an athletic nerd," she laughed. "On the playground I played hard, but in the classroom, I was focused."

After completing high school, she enrolled in the University of Puerto Rico. She married while pursuing her college degree and later discovered she was expecting. After giving birth to her daughter, she earned her bachelor's degree. Then life took another turn — Lizette and her husband divorced. Being adamant about moving forward, she discussed options for obtaining a doctoral degree with her college advisor. He informed her about an opportunity at Howard University, an HBCU in Washington, D.C. She visited the campus along with the advisor and was sold. Lizette chose to continue her graduate studies there.

At 25, she and her 3-year-old

daughter moved to the U.S. mainland, without a day care provider or knowing anyone here. So, she studied during every available moment, especially after her daughter went to bed at 8:00 p.m. "I was depressed because Puerto Rico is sunny all year. I missed having 12 hours of sun a day and speaking in Spanish," she said. The adjustment was hard until she befriended a student from Barbados who understood her struggle.

She focused on her studies and raising her daughter, so she didn't date — until life took another unexpected turn. When her daughter was preparing to spend a year in Puerto Rico with her father, Lizette's car was stolen just 10 days before she left. A police officer came to take the report. Before knocking on her door, he prayed, "Let this be a beautiful woman who is trying to make things work." They struck up a friendship and soon discovered deep connections. Both were single parents raising daughters, and both of their families came from the same region in Puerto Rico.

She remarked, "I loved his family before I loved him. My daughter



immediately had grandparents who assisted with pick-ups and drop-offs when she returned." She dated George Otero for years while she remained focused on graduating from Howard University with a doctorate in atmospheric science in 2006. Now they have been together for 21 years and married for 15 of those years.

Lizette and her friends can be seen running in the neighborhood while preparing for the next 5K run. She never stops pushing herself and encouraging others. She continues to demonstrate tenacity, adaptability and immense pride in the life she's built. **NOW**

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Annsleigh Johnson is ready for some college football.

Zoomed In:
Brice Butler and Abbie VanHeel

By Sandra Walters

It was a night filled with joy as Brice and Abbie officially became engaged, surrounded by their families. “These two are truly made for one another, and our hearts are overflowing with joy as we welcome Abbie into the family,” said Christi Butler, Brice’s mother.

The evening featured a heartfelt surprise proposal, followed by a celebration honoring both Abbie’s birthday and the couple’s engagement. “Brice orchestrated everything so beautifully, creating a night that will be remembered forever. Watching them begin their lifelong journey together is such a blessing,” Christi added.

To make the occasion even more special, Brice gifted Abbie and her mother a mother-daughter photo shoot, capturing the day’s magic. With wedding planning now on the horizon, the excitement is only beginning.



Isabella Baldwin says strike a pose as she takes a picture with her camera.



Jordyn Lydia and Kaliyah Gaither are cousins who cheer for Lake Ridge.



James Descoteaux displays his swimming skills at the natatorium.



Enslie Bowland knows how to take the perfect picture.



Addison and Megan York model as they share a smile.



Rhys Hamilton enjoys time at the park.



Winton Mendenhall wins big as he plays for Mansfield Youth Baseball.



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Focused on the Future:

Mansfield Celebrates the Opening of Fields at Station 63

The City of Mansfield in partnership with KemperSports and REV Entertainment, celebrated the reopening of Mansfield Sports Park, formerly Big League Dreams, as Fields at Station 63 on Sept. 6.

KemperSports and REV Entertainment worked with the City since January 2025 to rebrand and reimagine the park, reestablishing its position as an elite tournament destination. The reopening celebrated this new management partnership and the facility's multimillion-dollar renovation aimed to elevate both the player and spectator experience by integrating state-of-the-art technology, improving

safety, and expanding the functionality of the field, concessions, indoor facility and spectator areas.

The new name, Fields at Station 63, pays homage to nearby rail lines that helped shape the City's early growth as well as the ZIP code, 76063. However, Fields at Station 63 is more than its name. It represents a future of exciting programs and events that will continue to bring Mansfield together.

Design work is currently underway on phase two of the renovation, which will add an inclusive Miracle League Field to allow players of all abilities to participate.



*Grand Opening Event
September 6, 2025*





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Common Table Returns For Year Two: Connecting Mansfield One Conversation at a Time

The City of Mansfield is bringing back the Common Table for its second year.

This event aims to bring together Mansfield's community leaders, individuals from across the political spectrum, religious faiths, ages, and cultural backgrounds for a facilitated conversation aimed at fostering connection across the city. Common Table will take place at 6 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 21, at the Grand View Mansfield.

This year, participants can expect to share a meal and guided art activity centered on the theme of celebrations and traditions. Don't worry, attendees do not need to be an artist to participate. There will be opportunities for all skill levels.

Those interested will need to complete the interest form from the QR code below no later than Oct. 10, 2025. Participation is not guaranteed, as the interest form will

help organizers ensure that a cross-section of our community is represented.

Please note that participation will be prioritized for residents of the City of Mansfield.

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— By Sandra Walters

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Joseph Elder grew up working alongside his siblings under the Texas sun in the family’s parking lot paving business. Hard work is innate. After marrying Raquel, Joseph took a part-time installer position at Budget Blinds in Waco. It quickly became clear he was earning more there than in his full-time job. “I was making more money than I ever imagined,” Joseph recalled.



A full-time opportunity opened in Mansfield, and the couple relocated to DFW, while Raquel worked at Mansfield Methodist as a radiology tech. Four months later, they were offered the chance to buy the Mansfield franchise. The previous owner offered to finance it. “We wrote up the paperwork and paid it off in two-and-a-half years,” Joseph said.

“We bought a business before we bought our first house,” he laughed. “We lived below our means to stay out of debt. I drove an old Honda and parked it down the street when I visited clients for consultations.”

Now, Joseph and Raquel have owned and operated their Budget Blinds business for 12 years. “We give all the glory and honor to God,” Joseph acknowledged. “We got great advice from family, took Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace classes at church and learned from other business owners.” Their business was built on faith, discipline and service — one window at a time.

Budget Blinds of Mansfield is a full-service operation with a fleet of wrapped vehicles — far from parking his old car down the street. This location has a showroom and a

dedicated team: Office Manager Jaymes Murphy and Installer Seth Foster. The team guides customers through every step of the process. Because every home and all needs are different, Joseph and Jaymes prefer to meet clients in their homes. There, they take precise measurements, discuss goals and present curated sample books featuring hundreds of styles and materials — whether the goal is more privacy, better insulation, light control or a fresh new look.

“Now, Joseph and Raquel have owned and operated their Budget Blinds business for 12 years.”

“Education is a big part of what I do,” Joseph said. “I take time to explain how each option affects the price, function and feel of the room.” For clients seeking advanced features, they offer motorized drop screens, aluminum shutters for added security and plantation shutters for insulation and design. Budget Blinds products come with a five-year, no-questions-asked warranty. Faux wood blinds and shutters also include a lifetime color-fastness guarantee — perfect for families with kids or pets. Prospective customers are encouraged to visit the Budget Blinds showroom or explore options online.

With so many possible combinations of styles, textures and functions, an in-home visit is the best way to discover what fits your lifestyle. Whether you’re renovating, redecorating or simply updating your window treatments, Budget Blinds is ready to help. Reach out and uncover what they have to offer. Free in-home consultations can be scheduled with Joseph or Jaymes for homes in Mansfield, Burleson and Kennedale. **NOW**

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Evaluating Your Investments and Your Advisor

How do you determine if you are happy with your investment portfolio? What makes you think your financial professional is doing a good or bad job? Many times, investors compare their portfolio returns with what the media reports about general stock market indices. The problem with that is unless you only own what is included in the index, you are not making a fair comparison. A better idea might be to set goals with monetary and time elements then measure your progress against those goals. For example, I would like my IRA balance to be \$100,000 by December of 2030. Another goal might be, I would like to take \$1,000 monthly from my portfolio without reducing the total balance. Now you and your financial professional can develop a plan to help reach specific goals.

When evaluating your investments, another idea is to accurately assess your risk tolerance. Risk tolerance can help determine the types of investments to use based on how much gain or loss you expect over time. If your risk tolerance is low and your portfolio includes aggressive stocks and mutual funds, you might not be pleased with the volatility you experience.

Something else to keep in mind is that most financial advisors have multiple ways or platforms to invest your money. You can

pay up front commissions or sales charges. Some platforms are fee based where an annual fee is charged on the value of your account on a quarterly basis and is deducted from the account. Another idea is to set portfolios based on your risk tolerance. Other platforms have separately managed accounts that allow you to hire a third-party money manager to actively trade the account for a fee. Never assume your advisor only has one or two ways to help you. Always ask if there are other ideas that can help you pursue your goal.

Finally, investing is not just about stock, bonds and mutual funds anymore. There are many exchange-traded funds that meet certain needs or niches. Some companies offer structured notes and market-linked CDs that can provide downside preservation from principal loss. In some cases, annuities might offer a way to help you work toward your financial goals and provide a comfortable income for retirement.

Ask your advisor if there are different ways to invest your money. Be open to new ideas and opportunities. Keep your expectations reasonable. Set realistic and attainable goals. And remember, the portfolio is your money, so be proactive in communicating with your advisor, ask questions, make suggestions and be a partner in your plan. **NOW**

All investing involves risk including loss of principal. No strategy assures success or protects against loss.
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Tiramisu

CookingNOW

IN THE KITCHEN WITH JENNIFER HOLMES

— By Sandra Walters



“I never took any cooking classes outside of home economics. However, my mother took culinary arts, so we ate a variety of amazing dishes for dinner, such as cabbage rolls, stuffed peppers and chicken à la king. Also, older women are the source of many of my recipes. When I like a meal, I inquire about how it was made and then pledge to secrecy,” Jennifer admitted. “I feel honored when people share these treasures with me.”

Now, her children choose the weekly menu and prepare the meals nightly. She finds satisfaction in witnessing them create delectable dishes. **NOW**

Breakfast Jambalaya

- 1 lb. andouille sausage, sliced
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 bell pepper, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup long-grain rice
- 1 14.5-oz. can diced tomatoes
- 2 cups chicken broth
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste
- Cajun seasoning, to taste
- 4 eggs
- Green onions, chopped

1. Brown the sausage in a large skillet. Remove from the pan; set aside.
2. Sauté the onions, bell peppers and garlic in the same pan until softened. Stir in the rice, tomatoes, chicken broth and seasonings. Bring to a boil; then reduce the

- heat. Cover; simmer for 20 minutes.
3. In another pan, fry the eggs sunny-side up.
 4. Stir sausage into the jambalaya.
 5. Serve topped with eggs and garnished with green onions.

Caprese Stuffed Chicken

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves
- 4 slices mozzarella cheese
- Olive oil
- Balsamic glaze

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Cut a pocket into each chicken breast. Stuff with cherry tomatoes, basil leaves and mozzarella cheese.

2. Drizzle the stuffed chicken with olive oil. Bake for 20-25 minutes until the chicken is cooked through and the cheese is melted.
3. Garnish with balsamic glaze before serving.

Tiramisu

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup mascarpone cheese
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup strongly brewed coffee or espresso, cooled
- 2 Tbsp. coffee liqueur (optional)
- 24-30 ladyfinger cookies
- Unsweetened cocoa powder

1. In a large bowl, beat the heavy cream until stiff peaks form.
2. In another bowl, whisk together the mascarpone cheese, granulated sugar and vanilla extract until smooth. Gently fold the whipped cream into the mascarpone mixture to combine.
3. In a shallow dish, combine the cooled brewed coffee or espresso with the coffee liqueur, if using.
4. Quickly dip each ladyfinger cookie into the coffee mixture, ensuring they are moistened but not soaked. Arrange a layer of dipped ladyfingers in the bottom of an 8x8-inch square dish. Spread half of the mascarpone mixture over the ladyfingers; smooth with a spatula.
5. Repeat with another layer of dipped ladyfingers and the remaining mascarpone cheese mixture.
6. Cover; refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight to set.
7. Before serving, dust the top generously with unsweetened cocoa powder. Slice and serve chilled.



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- Virginia Woolf



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