

Waxahachie NOW

MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2025

Riding Into the Sunrise

Hannah Sipes has
trails to blaze

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

Sudoku

Featured Business:
Morgan Orthodontics

In the Kitchen With
Sherry Lozano

2025 Crossroads
of Texas Festival
Shopping Guide

Her Own
Xperience

Pat O'Connell goes from
paranormal to the page

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Adventures in ...

So ... my doctor said I need to eat more of my vegetables at breakfast and lunch. Today, we tried a recipe for a carrot cake smoothie. It wasn't a difficult recipe, but the results were less than stellar.

It had milk, a frozen banana and one small carrot, some spices and was sweetened with one pitted date. On first tasting, all I could detect was banana ... and a certain bitterness. We added more carrots and some honey. It was too runny, so we added more almond flour and some cream. Still nasty.

We divided it up and drank it. It did *not* taste like carrot cake. It was still thin. And gritty. It got all down between my lip and gums. I'm still trying to get it all out as I write. There's this aftertaste — a sort of residue of failed dreams. Not a favorite. Do not pass

go. Do not collect \$200.

If you're big on smoothies (which I really do like, when they're good!) maybe you'd like to share two to five of your favorites in an upcoming "In the Kitchen With..." cooking feature. I'm sure yours are good. This one was a definite ...

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ON THE COVER



Hannah Sipes shows her Miss Teen bling on that cowboy hat.

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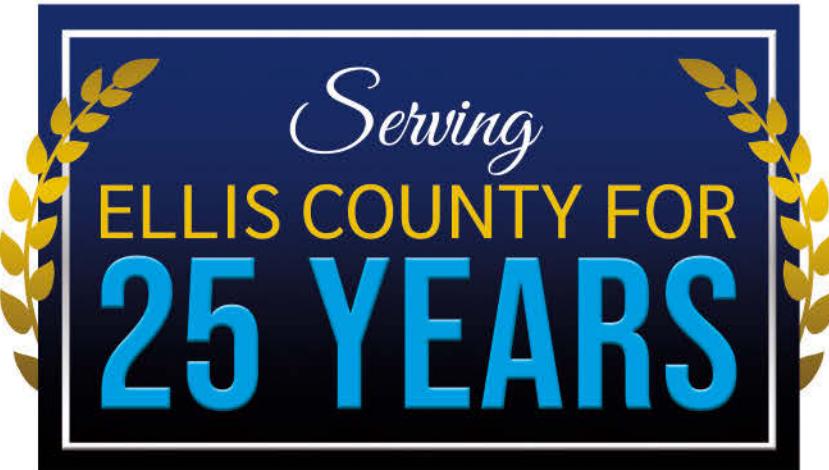
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RIDING INTO THE SUNRISE

— By Adam Walker

Hannah Sipes likes horses — a lot. She's the past president of the Silver Spurs, a part of the Ellis County 4-H Club, and will continue working with the club this year as an equine ambassador with 4-H's Texas Youth Livestock and Agriculture. It all started with convincing her dad to let her go to horse camp. That led to regular lessons in riding. "I started with lessons once a week and leasing a horse from the trainer," Hannah said. "Then I bought my first horse, Ruby. She's a POA. I fell in love when I saw her."



"POA is Pony of the Americas," Hannah's mother, Stacie, explained. "The breed began with a cross between an Appaloosa and a Shetland. They are bred to be an all-around horse with a breed motto of *the versatile breed*."

Ruby is now 15. Hannah's newest horse is Waylon, a 2-year-old gelding. "They have extremely different personalities," Hannah reported. "Waylon just goes with the flow. He's chill and always happy if you're touching him. Ruby is just ... not. She has opinions, and she expresses her opinions. They both try to protect me, and both try to make me happy. Ruby is more treat motivated. Peppermints are her favorite. She reacts like, 'Is it for me?' when she hears the wrapper crinkle in my pocket."

"Or thinks she does," mom added. "Sometimes, it's a piece of paper or a bag of chips."

"Waylon prefers petting. He's so happy when he gets scratches. Honestly, my favorite part is the bond," Hannah shared. "You build trust with the horse, and they give it back to you. They're really smart. Ruby tries to do the rides without instruction. But she doesn't always know when she's wrong. When you come up to a jump, you're going over, whether the horse goes or not!"

Hannah and her horses compete in several events, including English, Western, Ranch and Futurity, which is about showing



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off young horses. "I did two shows over the summer that were all youth showing their futurity projects. It's amazing how far a horse can come in a short time. I started riding Waylon in March. By July, he was showing how much he trusted me."

She's also the current Miss Teen of the Ellis County Livestock and Rodeo. "We compete in three sections: horsemanship, interview and modeling. As the winner along with the queen and princess, we interacted with the guests before the rodeo." They were introduced as the royalty of the rodeo and awarded the ribbons for the Peewee Rodeo. "I'll pass my crown on to the next Miss Teen in the spring, when I'll help prep the next contestants." The crown for this honor is, appropriately, large enough to wear on the brim of a cowboy hat.

As last year's president of the Silver Spurs club, Hannah had a lot of duties. "I helped plan the meetings and the educational activities and represented the club at 4-H County Council meetings," she explained. "We do a lot of community service. We assembled birthday parties in a box — a cake mix, streamers, balloons and stuff — for Waxahachie Care. We volunteered at the animal shelter. And we make Christmas cards ... there are lots of horse stickers and glitter involved."

Julie Hinz, the manager of Flying Dollar Ranch and sponsor of the Silver Spurs, has only good things to say about Hannah. "From the time Hannah first came to riding lessons, at a very young age, to the Flying Dollar Ranch, it was evident she was determined to be the best she could be in the equine world. As a competitor, she puts in the work needed at home to be successful in the show arena. But even more impressive are her leadership skills! She is quick to step up and teach others at the barn, serve as an officer in 4-H and teach and volunteer state-wide as an equine ambassador."

Recently, Hannah has been learning horse judging. "I hadn't done it until three or four years ago. You take a class about what the judges are looking for, then you have to look at the horses and try to score them. Your scores are compared to the actual judges' scores to see who can get the closest to the official judges' scores. And we have



to justify our scores. I'm also doing hippology." That may sound like a Harry Potter class at Hogwarts, but it's serious business. "We learn the parts of a horse, the different muscles and their diseases. Then we're quizzed on it. For the test, we have to ID infected hooves, do multiple choice about disease symptoms, show hands-on how to lead a horse, take their temperature, put on their equipment. We have to make speeches if we advance to the final round."

The point of all this is preparing students like Hannah for horse-related careers. "The Texas 4-H Equine Ambassador Program was designed to empower high school students to become knowledgeable leaders, confident communicators and passionate advocates for the equine industry," Kelley Ranly, from Texas A&M AgriLife Service, explained. "This program allows high school students from across the state of Texas to gain advanced skills in advocacy, communication and equine science through unique, hands-on experiences and learning opportunities. Additionally, these exceptional young people are charged with giving back to their communities through teaching, mentoring and community service. Their impact reaches far beyond the arena, strengthening the future of the equine industry, agriculture and leadership across Texas."

Hannah is making good use of these opportunities, since she wants to pursue a career as a horse chiropractor. "I want to major in animal science and maybe become an equine veterinarian, but I think I want to focus on chiropractic treatment and massage. I still want to show horses, but I don't know where life will take me. Wherever I end up, I want it to involve horses." **NOW**

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Dr. Laura Morgan has been straightening teeth for children and adults in Waxahachie for many years. "Next year, I'll have been an orthodontist for 30 years," she revealed. As a child with crooked teeth, she was fortunate to have Phase I and Phase II orthodontic treatment. After dental school, she chose to undergo orthognathic surgery to further improve her smile. These experiences led her to want to become an orthodontist and create confident smiles for others.



Dr. Laura Morgan grew up in Lubbock and attended West Texas State University where she played basketball and received her Bachelor of Science degree. She continued her education at The University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio where she graduated valedictorian with her Dental Degree. She then attended Medical College of Virginia to receive her orthodontic certificate. She met her husband, a fellow dentist and native of Waxahachie, while in dental school. They moved to Waxahachie in 1998 for Dr. Mark Morgan to practice with his father, Dr. Mackey Morgan and for Dr. Laura Morgan to open her orthodontic practice. They have raised three children who all graduated from Waxahachie High School.

Treatment modalities Dr. Laura Morgan offers include traditional silver brackets, clear brackets and Invisalign. "I see patients age 7 to 70-plus and love getting to know each of them. It is so special to see transformation in smiles and confidence throughout treatment. I now love treating children of previously treated patients."

Dr. Laura Morgan uses the latest technology in her

orthodontic practice. The iTero scanner replaces previous gooey impression material with a camera that takes pictures of the teeth and creates a model that can be 3D printed to fabricate appliances and retainers. "I-CAT imaging allows us to see 3D radiographs to evaluate teeth and bones," she said.

Dr. Laura Morgan is very proud of her highly trained, experienced team. "From their first phone call, throughout their visits to the office, the dental team creates a wonderful environment that makes the patient feel like they are family," she said. With the team's amazing customer service, Morgan Orthodontics has been voted the Best Orthodontist in Ellis County for the past five years.

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Morgan Orthodontics is deeply involved in the community. Her team enjoys volunteering at Waxahachie Care, Habitat for Humanity and with the Adopt a Classroom program. They support many local school programs and have an Angel Tree every year. "We enjoy serving Ellis County and giving back to the community that has given so much to us."

The goMO logo can be seen around town. "I like to say it stands for Giving Others More Opportunity, through a confident smile that opens many doors," she said. Morgan Orthodontics provides complimentary consultations with no referral needed, accepts all major insurances, accepts Care Credit and offers interest-free financing. If you are looking for an orthodontist, Dr. Laura Morgan and her team would love to talk to you. **NOW**

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Zoomed In: Luke Habermacher and Kaeli Lynn

By Adam Walker

Luke Habermacher and Kaeli Lynn are friends from Houston. He's a student at Oklahoma Christian University. She's a student at Nelson University. They meet up for a few matches of pickleball on the courts next to the Salvation Army whenever they can. This sunny afternoon was perfect for some court time.

"He taught me how to play," Kaeli informed. "But I play more often than he does now. I'll be graduating from SAGU — well, Nelson — in December. I'm a player on the softball team, and all the softball girls come here to play three times a week. It's a lot of fun."

"We like these courts," Luke agreed. "They're nice, and it's a fun game. We enjoy playing when we can."



Mariachi Lindo Tejas performs on the bridge by Railyard Park.



Ana, Alfred, Alex and Sofia Macias take Fluffy for some vaccines.



Navarro College holds a ribbon cutting for its nursing program.



Blue Magpie Consulting and Mediation and The Listening Place celebrate their grand openings.

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Amanda Cagle, Tynan Shadle, Jordan Lucier and Bill Irwin of the Texas State Historical Society visit the Ellis County Historical Farm for possible designation as a state historical site.



Folklorico dancers prepare to perform for the Hispanic Heritage Festival hosted by ECHO.



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A photograph of a vintage black pickup truck with a flat tire. A child in an orange shirt and shorts is looking at the tire. The truck has "PROBLEM CHILD" written on its side. The background shows a parking lot with other vehicles.



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Smothered Pork Chops and Potatoes

CookingNOW IN THE KITCHEN WITH SHERRY LOZANO

— By Adam Walker

Sherry Lozano is the mother of a big blended family. "My husband had five kids when I met him. I had two. Then we had three together. I am, by no means, a professional cook, but I learned to cook for a large number of people from my fireman grandfather. Feeding others is what I love to do. I season with my heart, and cooking is my love language. We love Mexican food, due to the kids' heritage, but since my husband's heart attacks and cancer, I do try to cook healthier. But we still cheat and have comfort food. I have four kids still at home. I currently homeschooled the youngest, so he is also learning to cook." She also enjoys reading and camping. [NOW](#)

Smothered Pork Chops and Potatoes

3-4 lbs. boneless pork chops cut into bite-size pieces
2 cups bite-size pieces of potatoes
1 tsp. Lawry's Casero Total Seasoning
1 tsp. Kinder's Seasoning The Blend
1 Tbsp. oil
1 10.75-oz. can cream of mushroom soup
1 10-oz. can Ro-Tel
1/2 can heavy cream
Splash of liquid smoke
Sprinkle of chicken bouillon



1/2 to 1 cup carrots
1 stick butter
1 medium head of cabbage, cut into chunks
Chicken bouillon, to taste
Kinder's Seasoning The Blend, to taste
Cajun seasoning, to taste

1. Fry the bacon until almost done.
2. Add all vegetables, except the cabbage. Let this fry up a little. Add the butter.
3. Add the cabbage; stir to combine. Season with chicken bouillon and seasonings. Cook until the cabbage reaches desired doneness.

Calabaza, Elote y Queso

Oil

1 small onion, chopped
2 Roma tomatoes, diced
3-4 medium size chayote squash, peeled and cut up
1 14.75-oz. can sweet corn, drained
1 cup chicken broth
1 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
1 1/2 tsp. onion powder
1 1/2 tsp. cumin
1 pkg. panela cheese, cut into bite-size pieces

1. In a deep pan, add enough oil to coat the bottom. Sauté the onions and tomatoes for about 3 minutes. Add the squash; cook for 3 more minutes.
2. Add the corn; cook for 3 minutes. Then add the broth and seasonings.
3. Cook for 30 minutes on low with the lid on; stir occasionally. After 30 minutes, uncover; add the cheese and stir. Cover; let cook for about 5 minutes. The cheese will not melt completely.

1. Combine the pork and potatoes with the seasonings.
2. Heat the oil in a deep pan; brown the pork and potatoes.
3. Add the soup and Ro-Tel. Pour the cream into the cans and swirl around to remove any remaining soup or Ro-Tel. Add to the pan. Add the liquid smoke and bouillon. Cover; cook on low heat until tender.

Fried Cabbage

1/2 lb. bacon
1/2 to 1 cup onion
1/2 to 1 cup bell pepper



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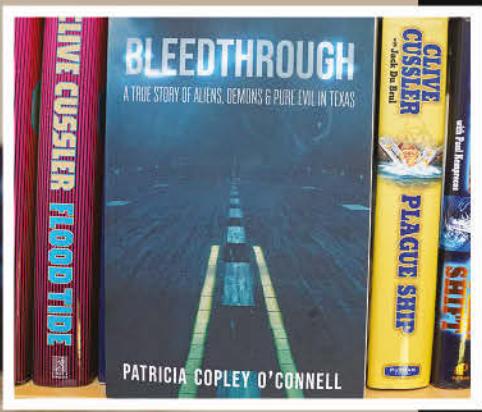
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HER OWN XPERIENCE

— By Angel Morris

“My brother, Jim, was born in a sanitarium,” Pat O’Connell recalled with a smile. It was just another name for a hospital at the time, but considering the unusual path Jim’s life would take — a path Pat herself would eventually be drawn into — the allusion to questioned sanity seemed apropos. Even comical.

Pat and Jim grew up in their family’s historic Connecticut home built in 1735 on Old Boston Post Road. “It was haunted, of course. Sightings included Benjamin Franklin, the Marquis de Lafayette and a man dressed in leather patches who our mom saw outside in a tree, though Daddy couldn’t see him, even standing right next to her,” Pat recalled.

Pat would later learn there was, indeed, someone called “The Leather Man” who traveled the main road between New York and Boston, staying at one home per night doing odd jobs for room and board. “This house is where Jim’s extraterrestrial experiences began,” Pat said.

Jim would go on to have many otherworldly adventures — including UFO sightings and alien abductions — some of which he documented in a film, *Terrestrial Extras*. “He embarked on a mission to help others with similar disruptive experiences,” Pat noted.

Jim formed “Xperiencers,” a team of investigators with similar encounters, and developed a TV series to showcase their “cosmic scavenger hunt ... following alien clues across the country. Jim had a wild and crazy life, and he helped hundreds of people make sense of abduction experiences,” Pat said.

Jim died suddenly on September 9, 2015, while researching the extreme paranormal experiences of a Texas aircraft repair technician, a story Pat would later tell. Since his death, Pat has continued to help abductees connect with one another, while building her own writing career serving a variety of industries, from RFID, telecommunications, aerospace and antivirus software, to monoclonal antibody therapeutics.

Pat developed training for nuclear reactor operators at Comanche Peak power plant. And she managed a communications department for Amtech, the company that invented the TollTag.

While developing ethics training for NASA and 110,000 defense-industry employees, Pat saw the space shuttle Atlantis being built. And on one occasion, an engineer on an urgent project told her to write the user manual first, and he’d make the device work the way she said. “You see, writing for a living can be a lot more fun than people imagine,” she credited.

“I’d like to tell parents and teens that there are rewarding careers available for people with competent communication skills. There is a

practical value to English and journalism classes. And being a writer, in a variety of capacities, is a legitimate career."

Now semiretired, Pat enjoys making informational videos, helping others write and publish their books and writing her own books. Her most recent release, *BLEEDTHROUGH: A True Story of Aliens, Demons, and Pure Evil in Texas*, is a tribute to her brother's final investigation.

Pat also heads a team on the hunt for a buried alien body. This year, armed with sophisticated technology and guided by a military bomb technician, the new Xperiencers.com team hopes to finally recover whatever was buried, ideally without triggering the booby traps that may have been set.

Unfortunately, the man who claimed to have buried the alien died a year after Jim's death, leaving the team to use all possible resources, including remote viewers, and to plan for all possible contingencies in their search. Pat hopes to turn over the reins of the team to another generation after this year, so she can focus on her first love: creative writing.

Besides authoring three novels, Pat has been in them, too. Friends of late author, Clive Cussler, Pat and daughter, Megan, were characters in two of his best-selling novels: *Flood Tide* and *Atlantis Found*. During one of Cussler's trips to Texas, they organized a lunch at Red Oak High School, where a small group of staff, including then-principal, Russ Schupmann, met Cussler and got autographs.

Today, Pat sometimes speaks at UFO Conventions and on paranormal podcasts. Mostly, she finds comfort in her quirky little office, and adventures inside her own head, inventing worlds that have never existed for novels.

For those looking for a career, Pat recommends communications fields. "Investigative journalism is a dying art that desperately needs brave new practitioners to keep everybody else on their toes. Meanwhile, user guides are frustrating, and training often fails to create competence. We can do better."

Through her paranormal investigations and her work, Pat's goal is always to help others. "They say if you love what you do for a living, you'll never work a day in your life. I truly love my work and will keep doing it as long as I have universes in my head and fingers to document what I see there. It can be a roller coaster," Pat said, "but it's one I'd gladly stand in line for over and over again just for the thrills." Now

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9		8			2	4		

Medium

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10/11

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Saturdays in October

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\$10/kids. 2:00-10:00 p.m.,
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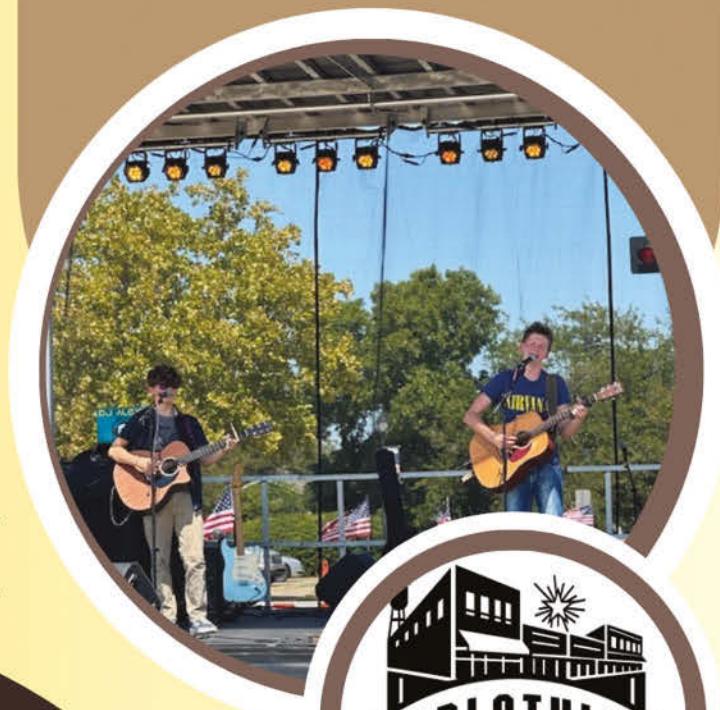


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