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M A G A Z I N E

NOVEMBER 2023

Work in Progress

Author Paula Peckham shares her growth as a writer

2023 Holiday Shopping Guide

In the Kitchen With Avery Robertson

Also inside:
Scavenger Hunt

Crossword

Featured Business:
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ON THE COVER



Published author, Paula Peckham, relays the writing advice she received.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Pick up your pens, Burleson!

November, as many writers know, hosts NaNoWriMo, otherwise known as National Novel Writing Month. Writers from all over the world challenge themselves to write an entire novel in a single month, something I can't fathom being able to accomplish. If you are participating in this annual tradition, I wish you the best of luck.

With the rising use of artificial intelligence programs, I worry the work of writers is being taken for granted. Too often, I hear rumors of big corporations wanting to replace writers with AI, or readers of fanfiction (serialized fan-written stories based on pre-existing properties) using AI to finish writing strangers' stories. These rumors can be disheartening when you've poured months or even years into crafting a story.

I shared these fears with a published author and fellow writer, desiring her perspective on the issue. She reminded me that AI programs do not have the same heart or skill as human writers do. You might get a professional sounding email written by AI, but when tackling fiction, it can't compete.

She shared that the best way to combat the use of AI in fiction is recommending stories you adore to others. When people search for their next read, they tend to check what others have to say about the story to judge whether it's worth their time. After all, we can only read so many stories in a week, in a year or even in a lifetime, and wouldn't you rather spend that time reading something someone put their heart and soul into creating?

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"If you can't
find the
story you
are looking
for, write it."

Paula Peckham, author of the Christian romance novels Protected, A Father's Gift and Accepted, discovered she wanted to be an author after she had already established a career in math education at Burleson High School. At school, the teachers had an online chat forum called The Breakroom, where they wrote posts to each other, asking for service referrals, sharing news, etc. "I'd post funny little stories from school in there," Paula shared. "All the time, people would write back, 'You should write a book!' So, I started thinking about it."

Work in Progress

— By Emma McKay

Growing up, Paula loved reading. "In high school, romance was my favorite thing to read. So, I wondered, *If I were going to write a romance, what would I want it to be about?*" Although she'd read stories from just about every genre, she never read much Christian fiction. "My exposure to the genre was the Mitford Series by Jan Karon. While reading them, I'd have two reactions. On the one hand, the prayers Jan Karon wrote were inspiring. On the other hand, they made me feel ashamed. I'm never *that* good of a Christian. I wanted to read stories that show a relationship with God where you don't have to be perfect. God is going to love you anyway." So, she set about writing those kinds of stories because, "If you can't find the story you are looking for, write it," she said.

"People say, 'Write what you know,' and I agree with that to some extent," Paula said. "You bring authenticity to your story when you write from something you know. But how would I ever have a male character? I'm not a man. You can't take that to a literal extreme." This sentiment is perfectly exemplified when Paula decided on the setting of her novel. "I knew I wanted it to be set in Texas, and I prefer historical, even though it's a lot easier to write contemporary." Being Texas born and raised, she brings a level of authenticity to her writing. However, because she never lived in the nineteenth century, she must rely on extensive research to build the world her characters live in. "I had to research how big a covered wagon is, and what all could fit in it. What plants would be growing that could easily be harvested along the wagon trail?" It was a lot to learn, but this level of attention to detail is what makes a story come to life.



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"My first book took about seven years to write." While writing, she still worked as a math teacher, which demanded most of her time. "I'd have every intention in the world to write at least an hour every day, but work was too busy. My efforts would slowly trickle off to nothing." Summer and winter breaks were the most productive times for her. However, since she hadn't been able to write much over the bulk of the year, Paula struggled to remember all she had written. "I'd have to go back and read it, then I'd pick up from there. It took a while."

In the end, her first book totaled around 145,000 words. For reference, romance novels tend to fall between 50,000 and 90,000 words. "It wasn't until I joined a critique group and learned the business end of publishing that I realized that was too long." This is when Paula learned of the term "axe your darlings," which refers to cutting out unnecessary parts from your writing. "Every scene should in some form or fashion advance the story. If it doesn't, what's it there for? I cut out characters. I cut out full chapters — that hurt," she said.

One of the most helpful things Paula has found while writing is participating in critique groups. "I don't know how people write without being a part of a critique group. They always make it better: tightening things up, pointing out continuity errors. Everybody has a different point of view and a different thing they can hone in on." Although it was nerve-racking to share her work the first time, the group members taught her valuable things she hadn't known, such as not overusing specific words or writing scenes from only one character's perspective. "It's a learning



experience every time you meet. There are many little details about writing that make it better than just good. You can be creative, and you can be imaginative and have a good story, but skill must be there, too.”

There is no one correct method to writing. Some people thrive when opening a Word document and writing by the seat of their pants. Other people, like Paula, prefer to thoroughly plot their stories out. “I like to set up a spreadsheet,” Paula explained. “I put the word count at the top, then list the chapters in different rows. With a formula in the cells, I’ll type in how many words are in a chapter, and it’ll subtract that from my total word count, showing what percentage I have used. If I am supposed to be at the 25 percent point at a certain chapter, and I’m already at 30, I’ll know I’ve written too many words and need to rein it in.”

Inspiration can come from just about anywhere. When writing her debut novel, *Protected*, Paula was inspired by her three favorite stories — the *Beauty and the Beast* fairytale, Kathleen E. Woodiwiss’ *A Rose in Winter* and John Wayne’s *The Cowboys* — and the works of Jan Karon. When writing the following installments of the San Antonio Series, Paula drew inspiration from side characters introduced in *Protected* as well as historical information she stumbled upon in her research.

With five to six different story ideas rattling around in her head at a time, Paula has no intention of putting down the pen. Instead, she continues to write, continues to learn and continues to grow, because even though she’s a published author, “You never know what you don’t know until you know it.” **NOW**





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— By Emma McKay

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Cookies are a delicious treat that can bring friends and family together. This is the mindset of the workers at Crumbl Cookies. When accounting for the creation of the Burleson Cookies, the sentiment rings true. After visiting a Crumbl Cookies bakery in Utah, Amber Bradshaw was determined to open one in Burleson. With the help of her husband, Morgan, and her brother, Jordan Phillips, the family was able to make her dream a reality.



Crumbl prides itself on its gourmet cookies. From the dough to the icing to the jam, every component of the cookie is created with real, fresh ingredients in-house. “One of the things that makes Crumbl unique compared to other cookie shops is our open kitchen concept,” Morgan explained. Customers can watch the mixers, the ovens and the bakers in action from behind the glass service counters. “You get to see the magic that’s happening,” he emphasized.

Every day, they make hundreds of cookies from scratch, each batch being sold within a few hours. “You’re not getting a stale one that’s been sitting out for a few days,” Morgan assured. Once a cookie has been ordered, the bakers will place the final decorations on it before boxing it up to give to the customer. “Everything you’re being handed is as fresh as it can be,” Gena McKeithan, head shift lead, stated.

Crumbl offers nearly 200 different flavors of cookies. From standards, such as Semi-Sweet Chocolate Chunk, to entirely unique recipes like Cornbread, Crumbl has a cookie that will satisfy anyone. Unlike most bakeries, Crumbl does not offer all their flavors every day. Instead, each week, corporate

selects six different cookies that its stores will sell throughout the week, then a new set will be served the next week. “This is why we want you to come in every week — so you can try the different flavors and find your favorite,” Gena said. Once a month, Crumbl stores offer a mystery cookie, which management decides on. The week of the mystery cookie is the only time stores will offer something different than their other locations.

“Everything you’re being handed is as fresh as it can be.”

On the Crumbl Cookies app, users can confirm which cookies are being served each week and tag their favorite flavors. After tagging a cookie, the app will notify the user whenever it’s being sold in stores again. In addition to this, the app keeps track of the rewards, or “Crumbl points,” you accumulate with each purchase, and it allows you to order delivery or curbside pickup. “I get a lot of moms with babies that do curbside, so it’s a great option for them. They don’t have to get their baby out of the car to pick up their cookies, then try to balance their babies and their cookies,” Gena remarked.

“When we first opened, I was excited to do the cookie side of the business, but the longer I’m in it, I realize this is all about the people,” Amber admitted. The bakers at Crumbl enjoy interacting with the Burleson community and sharing freshly baked joy for all their celebrations. “It’s nice to be a part of this little sliver of people’s lives,” Amber said. Whether it be catering for your workplace party, showing your appreciation for your kids’ teachers or just because, give the gift of Crumbl Cookies this holiday season. **NOW**

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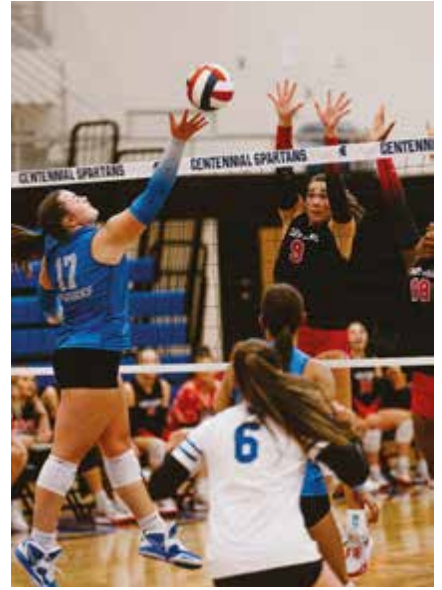


Zoomed In: Vaughn Schlegel

By Emma McKay

Despite having lived in Burleson for 26 years, Vaughn Schlegel only recently got engaged in the community. “I worked in Northwest Fort Worth. My wife and I would do stuff out of town. We lived here, but other than our neighbors, we didn’t know anybody,” Vaughn admitted.

After retiring early, Vaughn started attending Lion’s Club meetings. Now, having been a member for a year, Vaughn’s more involved in the community than ever. Since joining, he has volunteered for the elementary school vision and hearing screenings, co-chaired the annual Fourth of July Parade and helped build more than 300 beds for Sleep in Heavenly Peace. “You may not see it if you’re passing through, but Burleson has a tremendous amount of community involvement. People want to help each other.”



Burleson High School and Centennial High School face off in volleyball.



Community Manager Kristi Weaver and Kiley Rudge celebrate the opening of Depot on Main.



The team at Stewart Title of Burleson, along with their sponsors, throw a charcuterie board building party for their clients.



Landon and Lyla Babbitt go frog hunting at Warren Park.



Waylon Doherty and Faith Nugent play conductors at Mayor Vera Calvin Plaza.



Miranda Hanks and JC Sanchez get ready to work out at BRiCK.



Michela Francis, on behalf of Elk Creek, accepts slippers donated by Island Massage Spa Owner Sally Lorenzo.

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CookingNOW

In the Kitchen With AVERY ROBERTSON

— By Emma McKay

Cook-off competitor and high school freshman Avery Robertson discovered her passion for baking and grilling through her parents. “I’ve been baking with my mom since I was very young and started grilling with my dad, who is an award-winning barbecue pitmaster, when I was 9,” Avery said. “I try to cook with them as often as possible, so I can improve my skills in the kitchen and around the grill/smoker.”

When she was 10, Avery competed in her first Kids Q BBQ Cook-off and ended up taking home a Top Five Finish with her Glazed Pork Chops recipe. Due to school, Avery doesn’t get to compete often. However, she still finds joy in creating the perfect grill marks and trying out new recipes for her family. **NOW**

Glazed Pork Chops

4 thick-cut boneless pork chops
Kosmos Q Killer Bee Chipotle Honey BBQ Rub, to taste
Elk Creek BBQ All Purpose Rub, to taste

Glaze:

1 cup Texas Pepper Jelly Craig’s BBQ Sauce
2 Tbsp. Texas Pepper Jelly Peachy Peach Habanero Rib Candy

1. Season the pork chops heavily with Kosmos Q Killer Bee Chipotle Honey BBQ Rub.
2. Season the pork chops lightly with Elk Creek BBQ All Purpose Rub.
3. Heat a grill to 400 F.
4. *For glaze:* Mix the ingredients in a small saucepan. Heat until warm; do not boil.
5. Place the pork chops on a grill, basting with the glaze every 5 minutes.
6. Once the internal temperature of the pork chops hits 145 F, glaze one final time;

close the grill to allow the sauce to set for 3 minutes.

7. Pull the pork chops off the grill. Let them rest for a few minutes, then enjoy!

My Favorite Rib-eye Steak

2-4 rib-eye steaks
Kosmos Q Dirty Bird Hot BBQ Rub, to taste
Kosmos Q SPG (Salt Pepper Garlic) BBQ Rub, to taste
3 Tbsp. Kerrygold Irish Butter

1. Heat the grill to 500 F.
2. Trim the excess fat from the steaks.
3. Season the steaks lightly with Kosmos Q Dirty Bird Hot BBQ Rub.
4. Season the steaks moderately with Kosmos Q SPG (Salt Pepper Garlic) BBQ Rub.
5. Melt the butter in a small saucepan.
6. Place the steaks on the grill; let cook for 1 minute and 20 seconds. After that time, rotate the steaks on the grate 45 degrees; let cook 1 minute and 20 seconds longer. Flip the steaks over; repeat this step for the other side.

7. Lightly baste the steaks with the melted butter, trying not to remove any of the seasoning from them.
8. The internal temperature of the steaks should be around 130 F at this point, which is medium rare. Cook to the level of doneness you prefer.
9. Once the steak is done, pull from the grill; let rest for 3-5 minutes under a foil tent.

Pumpkin Nut Bread

- 3 cups flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup nuts
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 2/3 cup vegetable oil
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground cloves
- 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 4 eggs
- 1 16-oz. can pumpkin

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F
2. Grease only the bottom of any size loaf pan.
3. Using an electric mixer, mix all the ingredients in a large bowl on low speed, scraping the bowl constantly for 30 seconds.
4. Increase the speed to medium; mix for 45 seconds.
5. Pour the mixture into the prepared loaf pan.
6. Bake for 45-60 minutes, or until a wooden toothpick inserted halfway into the loaf comes out clean.
7. Cool for 10 minutes in the pan. Then loosen the sides of the loaves.
8. Transfer the loaves to a wire cooling rack until completely cooled. Slice and enjoy!

Oatmeal Chip Cookies

- 3/4 cup butter or margarine
- 1 cup brown sugar, packed
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon (optional)
- 1/4 tsp. ground cloves (optional)
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 3/4 cups flour
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 1/2 cups chocolate chips

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F
2. Using an electric mixer, mix the butter or margarine on medium-high speed for 30 seconds.
3. Add the brown sugar, granulated sugar, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon and ground cloves.
4. Beat in the eggs and vanilla until all



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Pumpkin Nut Bread

combined. Add the flour, rolled oats and chocolate chips.
5. Bake for 10 minutes.
6. Transfer to a wire cooking rack; let cool for 15 minutes.
7. Serve and enjoy with a glass of milk!

Chuck Roast Burnt Ends

1 chuck roast
Your favorite barbecue rub, to taste
(I use a combo of Meat Church Holy Cow and Meat Church Holy Gospel.)

2 cups beef broth
1/2 cup light brown sugar
1 cup your favorite barbecue sauce (I use Kosmos Q OP X-1 BBQ Sauce.)
1 stick salted butter, cut in 1/4-inch pats

1. Preheat a smoker to 250 F.
2. Season the chuck roast with the barbecue rub.
3. Smoke the chuck roast until its internal temperature reaches 170 F.
4. Once the internal temperature hits 170 F, place the chuck roast in a foil pan with the

beef broth. Cover the foil pan with foil.
5. Cook until tender (usually an internal temperature around 190-200 F).
6. Once tender, place the chuck roast on a cutting board and slice into 1 1/2-inch cubes.
7. Return the cubes to the foil pan, add the brown sugar and barbecue sauce.
8. Spread the pats of butter out over the roast.
9. Return the pan to the smoker for 15 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes.

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As the holiday season approaches, McKinney, Texas, transforms into a winter wonderland that captivates visitors and locals alike. Known for its small-town charm and festive spirit, McKinney offers a plethora of holiday activities, events and decorations that create an enchanting atmosphere to delight all ages.

Home for the Holidays Festival — November 24-26

McKinney's Home for the Holidays festival, held every Thanksgiving weekend, is a beloved tradition that kicks off the Christmas season. The event features an array of activities, including live music and dance performances, arts and crafts vendors and food trucks offering delicious holiday treats. Children can delight in visits with Santa Claus in his workshop. And families will not want to miss the spectacular community tree-lighting ceremony on Friday evening followed by a concert on the square. Admission to the weekend-long event is free.

Throughout the holiday season, families can enjoy the Christmas Carousel, kids workshop craft area, visits with Santa and taking family photos by the community Christmas tree on the downtown square. Of course, you will want to take some time to stroll around Historic Downtown McKinney to be enchanted by the festive storefront displays.

Christmas shopping in McKinney is a delight, as the city boasts an eclectic array of boutiques, specialty stores and

art galleries. Browse through the shops to find one-of-a-kind gifts for your loved ones, such as handmade jewelry, clothing, home decor, Christmas decorations, toys and artisanal chocolates.

After a day of shopping and exploring, enjoy the delightful dining options McKinney has to offer. From cozy cafes serving hot soups and sandwiches to upscale restaurants with seasonal menus, the city's dining scene caters to all tastes. Don't miss the chance to try some Texas-style barbecue, a local favorite, or indulge in a festive feast at one of the many restaurants offering special holiday menus.

50th Annual Holiday Tour of Homes — December 2-3 & 9-10

This year, Chestnut Square and the Heritage Guild of Collin County celebrate 50 years of this favored event that showcases several homes in McKinney's residential historic district. For this year's tour, there will be two sets of decorated homes, one set each weekend, and bonus stops and activities at Chestnut Square Heritage Village. In addition to the home tours, guests can enjoy tea served along with a full breakfast buffet in the recently renovated Bevel House. (Additional ticket required for this activity)

Holidays at the Heard — December 8-9

This annual event at the Heard Natural Science Museum & Wildlife Sanctuary brings the beauty of the holiday season to nature. Children can take part in activities and snacks in the museum while visiting with Father Christmas, then head out to the nature trails adorned with thousands of twinkling lights. Make sure to look for the animatronic dinosaurs that visit The



Heard each fall and winter, all decked out for the season. Bundle up the kids, and enjoy this one-of-a-kind family holiday experience.

Christmas Parade of Lights — December 9

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Beth Shumate
Communications Manager — Visit McKinney

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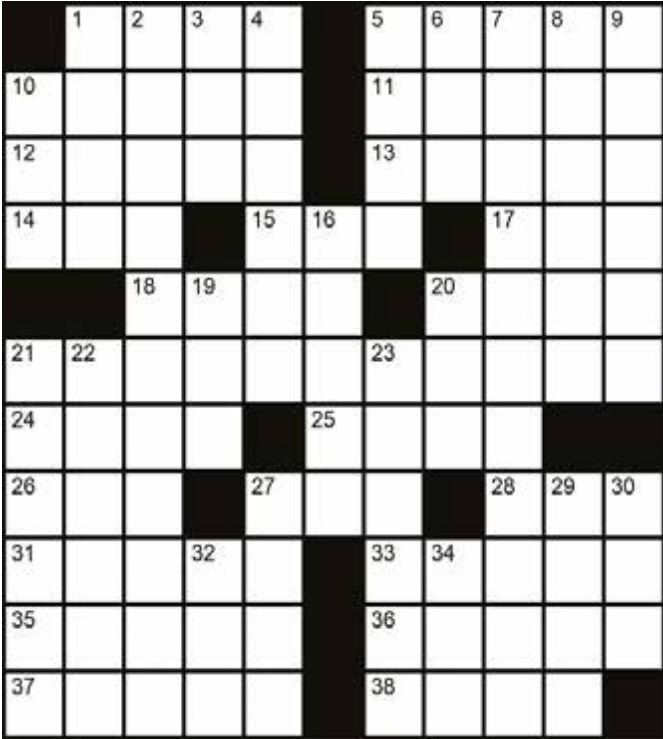


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Across

- 1 "House" and "Shooter" actor Omar ---
5 Frat-party wraps
10 Skateboarding jump
11 "Lummo" writer Fannie --
12 Icon
13 Efface
14 Military go-betweens
15 Devoted follower
17 Anonymous Jane
18 Follow closely
20 Sound of a finely tuned engine

Down

- 21 Swells
24 It stopped with HST
25 Wise one's call?
26 Kind of PC port
27 Creditor's statement
28 Online connector
31 Barrel bit
33 In unison
35 Old watchmaker
36 Kind of eclipse
37 Start over
38 1/2 fl. oz.
1 Patron saint of sailors
2 Some forms of packaging
3 Iron block
4 Believe it proper
5 At that time
6 Belonging to us
7 Marks on a measuring device
8 Arrange by type
9 Takes the tiller
10 Painting medium
16 Welcome to Hawaii!

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Easy

		1	5			2	9	
								1
	8	6			7			
3								4
		4	9		5			
			2	6		8		
					8			
	4					9		7
		9						6

Medium

4				2				
		3				9	6	8
	7	8			5		4	
	9				6	8		
				9			3	
		5			7	6		
	6				1		7	
				4				
7			6		2	1		

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NOVEMBER

Some events may have been cancelled or rescheduled while we were at press. Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

11/4

Recycling Event:

Bring your old electronics, tires and paper for shredding. We will also collect clothing for donation to Harvest House. Available to Burleson residents only, proof of residency required. 9:00-11:00 a.m., City Service Center, 725 SE John Jones Dr.

Power of Heels Holiday Bazaar:

Shop from over 75 vendors for unique Christmas gifts for your loved ones. 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Pathway Church, 325 NW Renfro St.

Art Class – Fall Collage:

Local artist Karen Kaiser will guide participants to create their own unique autumn collage/mixed media painting. Participants must be age 12 and up. \$30 per person, supplies included. Noon-1:30 p.m., Chesapeake Building, Russell Farm Art Center, 405 W. CR 714.

11/6

6th Annual Veterans Day Car Show:

Come check out classic and modern vehicles as well as hot rods, motorcycles and Jeeps. There will be a raffle and prizes. Free to the general public. \$25 and a toy donation for Kayleigh's Sleigh for participants. Registration: 9:00-10:00 a.m.; award ceremony:

3:00 p.m., Veterans Memorial Plaza, 298 E. Renfro St.

11/11

Red Chair Lecture Series:

Morgan Gieringer, the director of the Special Collection at UNT Library, will share information about the historical branding irons from the UNT collection. Snacks and drinks will be provided. This is a free event sponsored by Hill College and Friends of Russell Farm Art Center. 11:00 a.m., Russell Farm Art Center, 405 W. CR 714. To register, visit burlesontx.com/calendar.

Military Veterans Tribute:

The services and sacrifices of military veterans will be honored at this 13th annual city of Burleson event. 2:00 p.m., Veterans Memorial Plaza, 298 E. Renfro St.

11/17

Fall Fest at the Farm:

Celebrate all things fall with pumpkin walks, hayrides, games and more. Also, shop at a farmers market run entirely by kid entrepreneurs! This is a free event. 5:00-8:00 p.m., Russell Farm Art Center, 405 W. CR 714.

11/18

Fall Sidewalk Chalk Contest:

Come create a fall-themed

masterpiece outside the library. Contestants will be divided into two categories – ages 10-17 and ages 18-plus. Chalk will be provided. 9:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Burleson Public Library, 248 SW Johnson Ave.

12/2

Santa's Breakfast:

Join us for our annual breakfast with Santa. Guests will enjoy a pancake breakfast, making holiday crafts and, of course, visiting Santa himself. Tickets for children (3-12): \$5; adults (13 & up): \$7. Space is limited. 7:00-11:00 a.m., Russell Farm Art Center, 405 W. CR 714. For more information, visit burlesontx.com/events.

Craft Fair & Bake Sale:

Come shop for homemade Christmas gifts, goodies, fudge and more at Mariposa Senior Apartments' annual Craft Fair & Bake Sale. 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Mariposa at Elk Drive, 155 Elk Dr.

BTX-MAS:

Join the Burleson Rotary Club as they host their annual lighted Christmas parade followed by the city's tree lighting and drone show. This is a free event. 6:00-9:00 p.m., Mayor Vera Calvin Plaza, 141 W. Renfro St.

Tuesdays

St. Ann Quilters Group Meeting:

8:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m., St. Joachim Catechetical Center, 100 SW Alsbury Blvd.

Second Tuesdays

National Active and Retired Federal Employees:

Monthly meetings of NARFE Chapter 1191 feature guest speakers. Open to federal employees. 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., various locations. Follow on Facebook. rjcarey1@gmail.com.

Third Fridays

Sit & Stitch:

Calling all cross-stitchers. Bring a work in progress or come to learn. Must bring own supplies; feel free to bring a snack. 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Burleson Public Library. www.burlesontx.com/2245/Groups-Meetups.

Second Saturdays

Coffee Talk:

Spend your morning in fellowship at Calvary Church's monthly women's brunch. This is a free event. Registration: 8:45-9:00 a.m.; brunch: 9:30-10:00 a.m., Calvary Church, 700 McPherson Rd., Fort Worth.

Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to emma.mckay@nowmagazines.com.



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