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M A G A Z I N E

NOVEMBER 2025

## Fate by Numbers

Bethany Joseph answers the call to pursue still life painting

2025 Holiday Shopping Guide

In the Kitchen With Maggie Loudermilk

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

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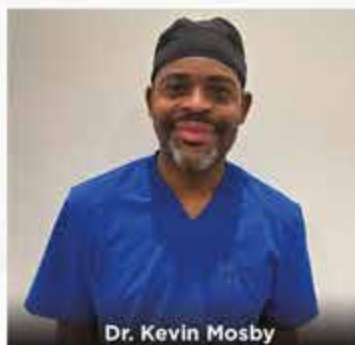
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Emma

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

*Pass the cranberry sauce!*

If you automatically heard an off-key Linda Blecher singing, "We're having mashed potatoes," then you're my kind of person. Of all the things I can think of that I am grateful for the most, sitting on my couch with my two favorite people, while *Bob's Burgers* plays in the background has to be in the top three.

There's something special about just existing around the ones you love, without the pressure to entertain them. These people are the ones who don't care if your home is a wreck, if you're wearing pajamas in the middle of the afternoon or if the only food you have in your pantry is a box of mac and cheese. And they know you don't judge when the roles are reversed. They see you at your best

and worst, and after they haven't seen you in a while, you pick right back up where you left off.

This Thanksgiving, I am looking forward to spending time with my favorite people, and I hope you get the chance to do the same. Remember to give thanks for good food, good memories and, as Linda continues to sing:

*Thank you for being there!*

November 2025  
Volume 19, Issue 11

## ON THE COVER



*Bethany Joseph spreads beauty like oil paint.*

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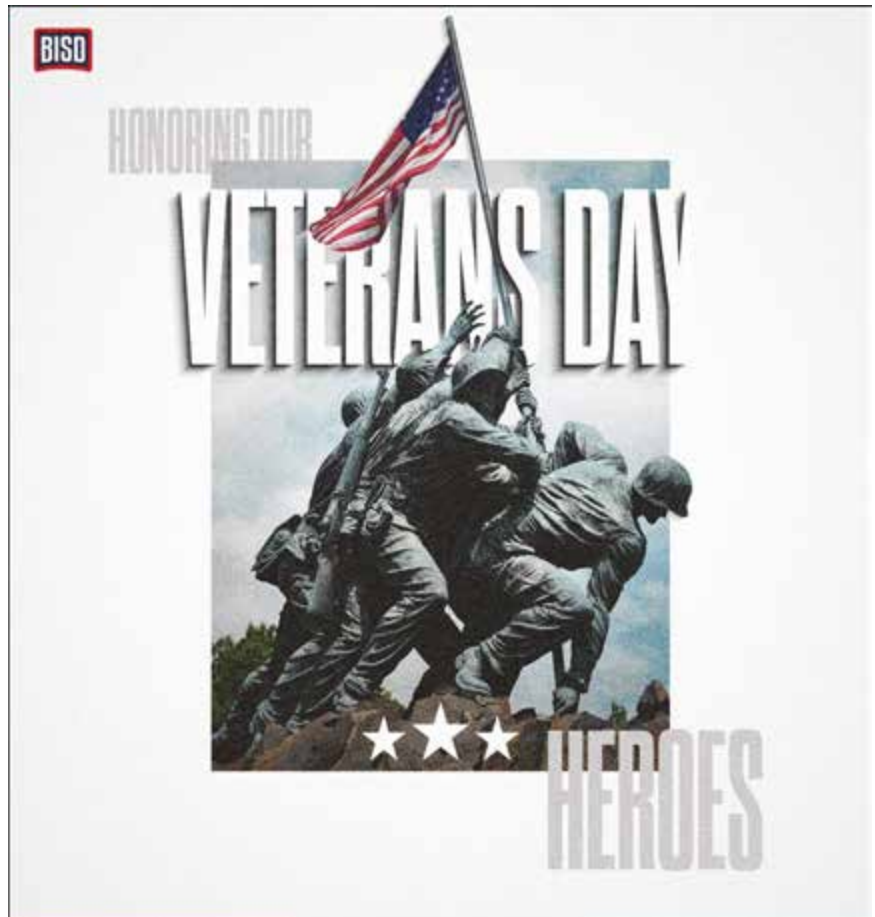
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SCAN ME



*"I grew up in a home full of my family's paintings," still life painter Bethany Joseph said. "I'm a fifth-generation artist. I loved it from when I was little. We used to do painting Saturdays with my dad." While spending weekends learning the basics of painting alongside her siblings, Bethany indulged in fanciful dreams of becoming a professional painter, unaware that one day, she'd make those dreams come true.*

After graduating college with a business management degree, an opportunity to attend a three-month-long workshop at an academy in Florence, Italy, opened up. "That was like the beginning of it," she stated. "Then, after working in sales for a year, I went to Scotland for a one-week art workshop."

# Fate by NUMBERS

— By Emma McKay



In Scotland, Bethany received a call from God to extend her stay for another six months to continue pursuing art. "It was like the Lord said, 'You need to be an artist. This is what you're supposed to do.'" Panicked, she called her parents to share this news. "I wanted them to say, 'That sounds crazy. Don't move to Scotland. Don't be an artist. You're crazy.' And instead, they said, 'Yes, this is what you're supposed to do.' That scared me even more." Despite her fears, Bethany quit her job in the States, so she could continue training in her discipline.

Upon getting engaged to her husband, Zach, Bethany explained to him that her life's calling was to be an artist. "He's been incredibly supportive," she said. During the three-and-a-half years she attended classes at Fort Worth's Texas Academy of Figurative Art as a full-time student, she wasn't able to work a job to help fund her education. "It was very, very costly. In order to let me continue to go full time and complete the program, Zach got a second job. Every semester, he would be like, 'The Lord's gonna provide. We're gonna







figure this out.' Each semester was like an act of faith, and he worked his tail off because he knew that was my calling," she smiled, appreciatively.

"When I get started painting for the day, I don't want to stop." Throughout the day she works on a still life and a portrait at the same time, switching between the two easels periodically. "When I'm in that downward cycle on one of them, I'll go find excitement on another painting."

Even though Bethany paints for hours at a time, her attention to detail and her medium of choice demand multiple weeks of work before one oil painting is completed. "One portrait takes me a month. I'm painting from a picture, and it's a lot faster because it's stationary." Her still lifes, however, take around two to three months to finish because she sets up a scene for reference. "When I paint from life, I go to one spot to see what the picture looks like from that vantage point. Then I go to my easel, and I draw it. It's not as simple as a picture that's



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right beside me, and I'm one-to-one transferring it." During this process, she cannot move her easel, for even the slightest shift could alter the objects' placements or the lighting in a painting. "A lot of times, the objects I'm painting are intricate. I painted a salt shaker recently. Because it's reflective, it had oranges and blues and reds and greens. Then it had small details and dints, and it was tarnished. Trying to get all that takes forever."

Bethany adores utilizing color palettes and moods. "I prefer darker colors, and an Old World feel to the

paintings," she said. She juxtaposes the unique antiques she curates with the life the fruits and vegetables give to achieve her vision. Over the course of working on one of her favorite paintings, *Iron and Brass*, the head of garlic she'd been depicting sprouted. "I ended up painting the sprout in the garlic, because it was showing that there was some sort of life."

Bethany prefers crafting scenes of tranquility, rather than those of chaos and heightened negative emotions. "Being an artist is doing what God does daily. He's an artist, and He uses the paintbrush of nature to make beauty," she shared. "I want to make beautiful things for people just like God makes beautiful sunsets for us." She hopes people find peace and reprieve from the world around them when viewing her art.

While she predominantly sticks to oil painting, occasionally Bethany draws with charcoal or graphite as she learned in art school. "You start with graphite. Then, you move to charcoal and white chalk, and then you move to painting. It's a slow progression to train you to

see value, where light is and where shadow is," she shared.

When she's not working in her studio, Bethany teaches portrait painting to high schoolers at Texas Academy of Faith and Arts. "I think it is incredible to see students who have a talent to get to develop that even further. I'm [painting] professionally, not just part time. If I had a professional artist as my teacher in high school, that would inspire me, so I can only hope that I can encourage them to keep pursuing art after high school. I want them to keep creating."

One of Bethany's goals as an artist is to show her work in a gallery. "For an artist, which gallery you go with is a really big deal. It speaks to the style or the quality of art you do," Bethany explained. Last year, she achieved one of her goals by signing with an Austin-based wholesaler, which sells her paintings to interior designers and hotels. "I like the idea of pieces that can be passed down to generations and as an heirloom piece. I want people who behold [my paintings] to see them for decades and not lose excitement." **NOW**

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# BusinessNOW

## Jircik Medical Group

— By Emma McKay

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Since opening his practice on June 15, 1987, at Texas Health Huguley Hospital, Dr. Frank Jircik has dedicated himself to keeping Burleson and the surrounding communities healthy. Having graduated at the top of his class at Texas Tech in 1977, earned his M.D. at The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston and received the Midas Touch award for his excellence in the humanistic dimensions of medical care during his residency at the University of



New Mexico, Dr. Jircik knows how to treat his patients with knowledge and compassion.

“As an internist, I see people who have serious medical conditions: diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, COPD, asthma, thyroid issues — almost any type of nonsurgical related medical problem,” Dr. Jircik explained. Nurse Practitioners Cari Naukkarinen and Brenna Young also offer dementia care, dermatological care, medically supervised weight-loss plans and general medicine, as well as at-home visits.

On top of coordinating the medical assistants and medical scribes, Courtnie Sanders, the office clinic coordinator, who has been working with Dr. Jircik for 25 years, also schedules at-home visits for Nurse Practitioners Jessica Nelson, Cari and Brenna. “A lot of patients, when they get older, have limited mobility. It’s something I think the patients appreciate, and the practitioners enjoy providing at-home care,” Dr. Jircik commented.

Public Relations Advocate and Insurance Coordinator Bobbie Gilley, who has been working with Dr. Jircik for 26

years, helps ensure that each patient enrolled in the Medicare Advantage Plan receives the necessary quality care measures available to them. “She knows who’s coming in, and what every patient needs.”

Dr. Jircik understands the serious nature of being in the medical business, so in order to relieve some of the seriousness, he enjoys making the people around him happy. From the moment they walk into the waiting room, patients are greeted by a bright array of seasonal decor, all of which is set up by Dr. Jircik’s wife, Sheri Jircik. “Every month or so, she comes in and redecorates the whole office. Patients love it.”

**“A lot of patients, when they get older, have limited mobility. It’s something I think the patients appreciate, and the practitioners enjoy providing at-home care.”**

To keep his employees feeling lighthearted, Dr. Jircik leads daily morale practices in the form of trivia questions, riddles and jokes. “They do really hard work, and it’s very demanding. It can get you down,” he admitted. “So, I need to keep morale up. We keep each other laughing and happy.”

“Dr. Jircik is truly the best provider and employer. Bobbie and I are very grateful,” Courtnie explained.

Dr. Jircik works to show his patients that he cares about them and their needs, so they can feel comfortable and confident with the medical care they receive. “When I’m with a patient, I want to make them feel like they’re the most important thing in the world to me,” he explained.

Dr. Jircik is proud of all the work his team does building trust with their patients. He especially enjoys getting to work with some of the same people for over 25 years. “They literally know all my patients. When the patient calls with a problem, whether it be medical or insurance, they know who to get in touch with and how to help the patient deal with that.” Dr. Jircik hopes that whatever needs patients come in for, they receive the utmost quality of care. **NOW**

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Zoomed In:  
Chris Landry

By Emma McKay

After his Army friend took his own life, veteran Chris Landry felt distraught. Shouldering the rucksack he'd worn during infantry endurance marches, he walked until he calmed down. "I just wanted to get out of the house," he said.

Memorial Day a year later, Chris wrote the names of his fallen buddies on an American flag he wanted to retire, stuck it in his rucksack and marched six miles with some of his veteran friends to the Veteran Memorial Plaza.

Over the past three years, Chris has grown the Ruck March, inviting veterans and everyone to join. "We put on four a year: Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Veterans Day," he informed. "I've made friends I would've not otherwise known."



Paola Rios, Julieta Favela, Camila Favela and Leandro Rios build blocks at the Burseson Public Library garden.



Jaslene and Lily Moore spend a weekend afternoon out with their family.



Texican Internet Radio enjoys DJing Burseson's Hispanic Heritage Festival.



Burseson Swifties jam to some of Blondie's beloved hits at Swift Night Out.





Julia Olivares and Scott Miller grab coffee at Daydream Coffee.



Mayor Chris Fletcher welcomes Paris Bagette CEO and Chairperson Hur Young-in at the ground breaking ceremony for the new manufacturing plant.



Joshua and Josh Parker enjoy spending a day out at Mayor Vera Calvin Plaza together.



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— TALES OF TEXAS —

# THE BUILDING WITH 3,528 STORIES

— By Virginia Riddle

*His childhood idol was a fellow Texan, Audie Murphy. A child of sharecroppers, Roy Benavidez became a Green Beret during the Vietnam era. Wounded, he survived to be deployed again, and in 1968, almost single-handedly, rescued a reconnaissance team, earning the same medal as his childhood hero — the Medal of Honor.*

A serene lake in Arlington, Texas, provides a place for visitors to the National Medal of Honor Museum, which opened in March 2025, to reflect. Visitors rise to an elevated exhibit deck, supported by five concrete columns representing the U.S. Armed Forces and the over 40 million men and women who have served throughout the country's history. However, the brief overview film, *The Courage Within*, shown on a 360-degree screen, and the exhibits and interactives are dedicated to the 3,528 men and women who have received the Medal of Honor.

Texas was chosen for the museum's location due to its central location in the United States; the DFW airport; the museum's addition to the Arlington Entertainment District, host to many visitors; and Texas' sense of patriotism. The National Medal of Honor Foundation, guided by the Medal's core values of courage, sacrifice, commitment, integrity, citizenship and patriotism, funds and operates the museum and its Griffin Institute as well as the National Medal of Honor Monument in Washington, D.C.

Signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln in 1861, the Medal of Honor has a long history of representing extraordinary courage and character, both of which are represented in full story, high-definition screens in the *Moments of Action* exhibit. A Huey helicopter lets visitors learn how machines have helped in military actions in the *From Rails to Rotors* exhibit. Enter *Dustoff* for a virtual reality ride aboard a Huey or have a conversation with a Recipient through an AI-facilitated interactive, *Conversations: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Lives*. Cases, which stand throughout the deck, feature artifacts from different Recipients' service days and tell their stories.





At the entrance level, visitors can enter the Griffin Institute to do research or develop leadership skills, visit the café for a lakeside lunch or purchase books and other items from the gift shop. Guided tours are available, and Smartify allows guests to learn about the medal in several languages.

Some Recipients have played interesting roles in service to our country and had their medals removed and restored during different periods in history. Dr. Mary Walker, a woman Army surgeon during the Civil War, was the first woman Recipient in 1864. Her medal was revoked because she was never officially commissioned into the Army and was later restored in 1977. In 1872, William Frederick Cody, better known later as “Buffalo Bill,” also earned a Medal of Honor. Like Dr. Walker, Buffalo Bill Cody’s medal was deemed “unwarranted” in 1916 but was restored in 1989.

The most decorated U.S. soldier in WWII, Audie Murphy, a sharecropper’s son, was born in Hunt County, Texas, in 1925. As a child, he helped feed his 11 siblings by hunting small animals. Initially rejected by the Navy and Marine Corps for being underweight and underage, Murphy eventually was accepted by the Army after falsifying his age. During his action in the European Theater, he was recognized with 33 awards and citations including three Purple Hearts, the Distinguished Service Cross and the Medal of Honor. Murphy published his autobiography, *To Hell and Back*, in 1949. A bestseller, the book became a movie in which Murphy played himself. He went on to appear in 44 movies during his career and became a successful songwriter. He was also a victim of insomnia and nightmares which would later be known as PTSD. Murphy died in a plane crash in 1971 and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

U.S. Army Master Sergeant Roy Benavidez, returned home from Vietnam, recovered from his injuries and served until his retirement in 1976. The rest of his life was spent in public speaking and mentoring children to find their purpose in service to their country. He died in 1998 and is buried in Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in San Antonio, Texas.

Every story in the National Medal of Honor Museum is of service above and beyond the call of duty. What enabled these ordinary people to do the extraordinary? Hopefully, visitors of all ages will come away inspired to “awaken the extraordinary within.” **NOW**

Photos courtesy of the National Medal of Honor Foundation-Corey Gaffer Photography.

Sources:

1. DeLong, Kent. War Heroes. Praeger Publishers, Westport, Connecticut. 1993.
2. <https://www.mohmuseum.org>.
3. Brochure. National Medal of Honor Museum.







Croquetas de Jamón  
(Ham Croquettes)

# CookingNOW

## IN THE KITCHEN WITH MAGGIE LOUDERMILK

— By Emma McKay



“Cooking is my love language,” Maggie Loudermilk stated. “If I like you, I’m gonna feed you.” While teaching English in Spain, she was exposed to all sorts of dishes and styles of cooking she hadn’t experienced before. The self-described foodie enjoys learning new techniques and cuisines by taking classes, especially when she travels abroad.

As Centennial High School’s culinary teacher, Maggie shares her love of cooking with her students. “I once lit my hair on fire,” she admitted. “I tell that story a lot to get my students to put their hair up!” She also helps her own kids experiment in the kitchen. “I cook with my kids a lot — especially my son, Gabe. He’s 4 and incredibly stubborn and fearless. He whisks, sautés, you name it.” **NOW**

### Croquetas de Jamón (Ham Croquettes)

- 4 Tbsp. salted butter
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 medium onion, finely diced
- 1 pinch salt
- 1 pinch nutmeg
- 8 oz. Serrano ham, finely diced
- 1 scant cup all-purpose flour
- 4 cups whole milk
- Oil, for frying
- Flour, for breading
- 2 eggs, beaten
- Panko breadcrumbs, for breading

1. Heat the butter and olive oil in a thick-bottomed pan over medium-high heat for

- about 2 minutes. Add the diced onion; sauté for a few minutes, until it just starts to color, then add a pinch of salt and nutmeg. (Don’t add too much salt, as the Serrano ham is already salty.)
2. Add the diced ham; sauté for 30 seconds. Add the flour; stir continuously until the flour turns light brown. Don’t stop stirring, or the flour will burn!
3. When the flour changes color, gradually add the milk 1/4 cup at a time, stirring constantly. It should take about 15-20 minutes to add it all.
4. Turn off the heat; let the dough cool to room temperature.
5. Place the croquette dough inside a buttered bowl or dish; cover with plastic wrap, making sure the plastic touches the surface of the dough to prevent a skin from

- forming. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours, but preferably overnight.
6. To make the ham croquettes, gently shape them into little logs with a tablespoon and your hands.
7. Heat a pan of oil on the stove. You can also use a deep fryer. Bread the croquettes by tossing them in flour, rolling them in beaten egg and then coating them with the breadcrumbs.
8. Fry the ham croquettes in the hot oil for 5 minutes, turning them halfway through, so they brown evenly. Drain on paper towels to catch excess grease; let them cool for a few minutes. Enjoy immediately.

### Champiñones al Ajillo con Chorizo (Spanish Chorizo and Garlic Stuffed Mushrooms)

- 1 1/2 lbs. baby bella mushrooms
  - 2 Tbsp. olive oil (divided use)
  - 12 oz. Spanish chorizo, minced
  - 1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
  - 1/2 red bell pepper, finely diced
  - 3 cloves garlic, finely minced
  - 1/2 cup dry breadcrumbs
  - 4 oz. soft goat cheese
1. Preheat the oven to 350 F.
2. Remove the stems from the mushrooms. Finely chop half of the stems; either discard the remaining stems or reserve them for later use. Brush the top of the mushroom caps with 1 Tbsp. of olive oil; place on a lined baking tray.
3. Place a large skillet over medium heat; add the remaining olive oil. When the oil is heated, add the minced chorizo; sauté until the meat is turning golden and releases the fat, about 3 minutes.
4. Add the mushroom stems, diced onion and bell pepper and continue to cook for another 3 minutes, stirring constantly.
5. When the onion turns translucent, add the garlic and breadcrumbs; fry until the breadcrumbs become golden brown.
6. Take the skillet off the heat. Gently fold in the goat cheese; spoon the mixture into the mushrooms caps to create little mounds.
7. Bake for 25 minutes, or until lightly browned on top. Serve immediately.







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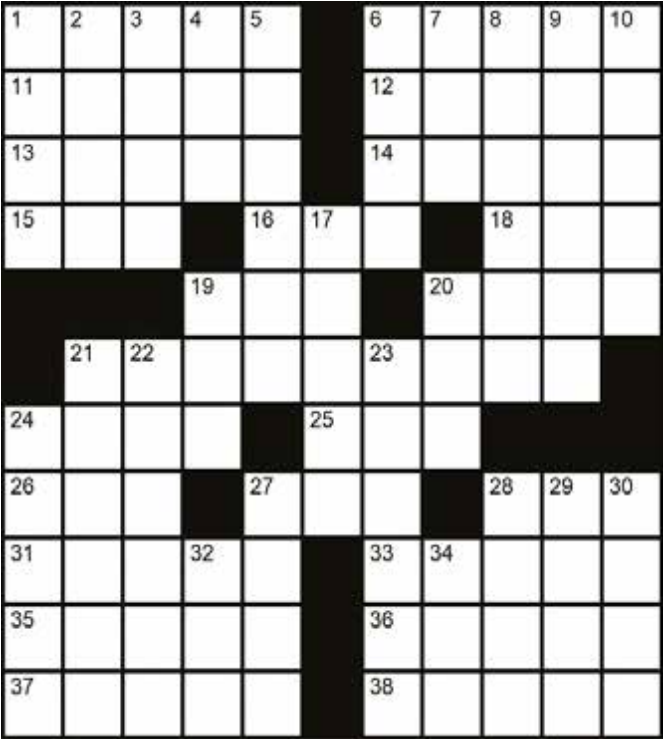
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# Crossword Puzzle



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## Across

- 1 Obama's youngest
- 6 One Note ---
- 11 Florida Keys, e.g.
- 12 Check for fit
- 13 Detroit gridders
- 14 Oak-to-be
- 15 Testing place
- 16 Kind of port
- 18 Kissing in public, perhaps, briefly
- 19 Hesitator's syllable
- 20 Claim against property
- 21 San Francisco sight
- 24 Duration
- 25 Wee boy
- 26 "It's pretty, but is it --- ?" (Kipling)
- 27 Government agency controlling one-eighth of the country
- 28 Army detectives
- 31 Supple
- 33 Incongruity
- 35 Muzzle
- 36 "Bronco Billy" co-star Sondra ---
- 37 They might be smashed as Tom gets drunk
- 38 Persuades
- 10 UN head before Ki-moon
- 17 Nose
- 19 "Ode on a Grecian ---" (Keats)
- 20 Type of TV screen
- 21 Burst of speed
- 22 Military display
- 23 Some Sri Lankans
- 24 Chip dip
- 27 Takes a chance
- 28 Narcotic shrub
- 29 Deep black
- 30 Treats with tinctures
- 32 Sing wordlessly
- 34 Rank

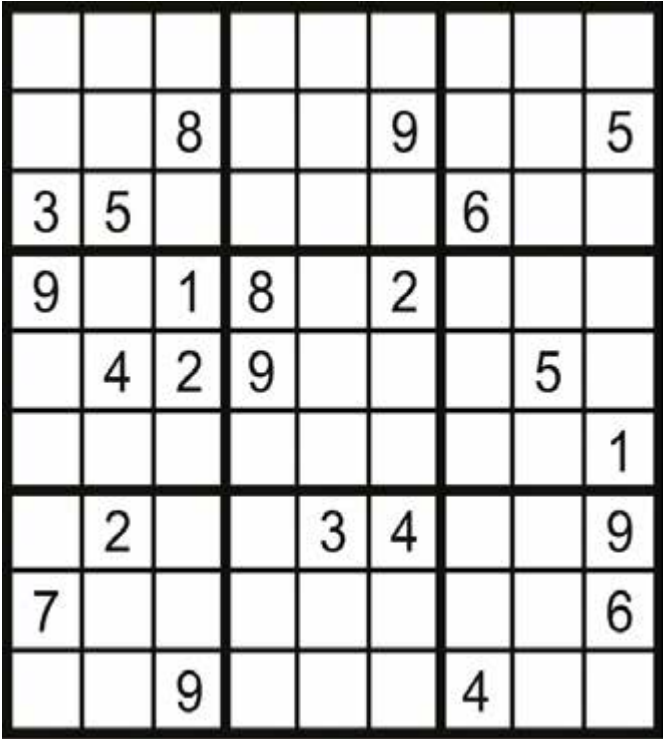
## Down

- 1 Ledge
- 2 Home to billions
- 3 Grubby guy
- 4 Cackleberry maker
- 5 Suppose Sue mixes it with Sam
- 6 Brief attempt
- 7 Curve
- 8 Short-sightedness
- 9 Place for a patrol

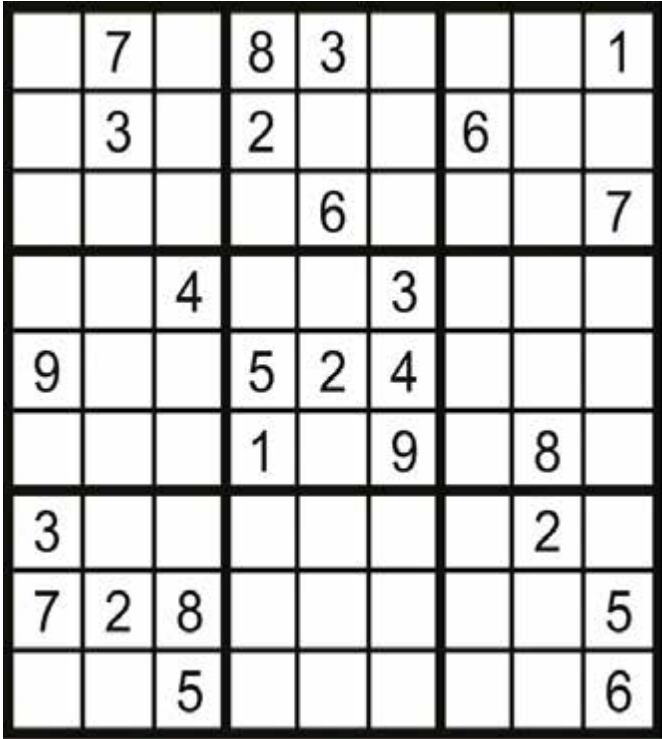
Online versions and solutions available at [www.nowmagazines.com](http://www.nowmagazines.com). From our Homepage, click on the Features tab. Click on the Crossword-Sudoku tab. Click on a puzzle to view solutions.

# Sudoku Puzzle

Easy



Medium



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# Happy THANKSGIVING

## 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

### Jigsaw Puzzle Contest:

Each team (2-6 people) should bring a new, unopened, 500-piece puzzle. Staff will collect the puzzles, and hand them out to each team randomly. The first team finished or most complete at 7:30 p.m. wins. First 20 teams will compete. Ages 18 and up. Free. Register in person by 5:45 p.m.; contest: 6:00-7:30 p.m., Senior Activity Center, 216 SW Johnson Ave.

11/6

### Harvest Brunch:

Enjoy a delicious brunch, connect and hear exciting updates about Harvest House's mission. Try your luck with raffles. Browse beautiful fall décor, and capture memories at the festive photo spot.

Admission is free, but reservation is encouraged. 10:00-11:30 a.m., Pathway Church, 325 NW Renfro St. For more information or to reserve your spot, visit [yourharvesthouse.org](http://yourharvesthouse.org).

11/8

### Military Veterans Tribute:

Come honor the service and sacrifices of military veterans at the city of Burleson's 15th Annual Military Veterans Tribute. Free. 10:00 a.m., Veterans Memorial Plaza, 298 E. Renfro St.

11/8-11/9

### Far Out Family Campout:

Burleson Parks and Recreation invites you and your family to spend a night in the great outdoors. There will be a nature hike, bird walk, craft, hot dog dinner and s'mores. Bring your own tent and lawn chairs. \$30 per family of five, \$5 for each additional family member. Noon-9:00 a.m., Russell Farm Art Center, 405 W. County Road 714.

11/13

### Senior Center Fall Festival:

Experience a cozy afternoon of delicious food, friendly competition and fall-themed fun! Free entry, but registration is required for lunch. Lunch: 11:30 a.m.; games: noon-1:30 p.m., Senior Activity Center, 216 SW Johnson Ave. Register in person or by calling (817) 295-6611.

11/14

### Russell Farm Cooking Social:

Learn to cook the perfect steak and pick the best cut when shopping for your own kitchen from Chef Nori from Burleson Brunch House. After cooking, stick around to mingle and enjoy the incredible meal you created! \$75 per person. 5:00-7:00 p.m., Russell Farm Art Center, 405 W. CR 714. Reserve your spot at

[burlesontx.com/2545/Russell-Farm-Cooking-Social](http://burlesontx.com/2545/Russell-Farm-Cooking-Social).

11/15

### Recycling Event:

Bring your electronics, tires and paper for shredding to the city's recycling event! Clothing donations accepted for Harvest House. Special request for gently used coats and jackets. Only available for Burleson residents. Proof of residency is required. Free. 8:30-11:00 a.m., Municipal Service Center, 725 SE John Jones Dr.

11/18

### Gilmore Girls Trivia Night:

Coffee, trivia and a little small-town charm — what more could a Gilmore want? Team up and join the Burleson Library for a cozy night of trivia, food and fun. Ages 14 and up. 6:00-7:30 p.m., Grumps Burgers, 108 S. Main Street.

11/21

### Old Town Picture Show:

Bring your own blanket or lawn chair, and get ready to enjoy the show! November's movie is the 2003 Will Ferrell film, *Elf*. Free. 6:00 p.m., Mayor Vera Calvin Plaza, 141 W. Renfro St.

11/22

### Gospel Jam:

If you love Southern Gospel

and Bluegrass Gospel music, this is an evening you won't want to miss. Enjoy live music by request, and feel free to bring your own instrument to join in. Free. 6:00-9:00 p.m., Senior Activity Center, 216 SW Johnson Ave.

11/25

### Outdoor Movie Night:

Grab your blankets, lawn chairs and your best "Defying Gravity" vocals for an unforgettable night under the stars! Journey to the merry old Land of Oz with Elphaba and Glinda in the "Popular" musical *Wicked!* Sing along. Enjoy free popcorn and experience the magic like never before. 6:00-8:30 p.m., Burleson Public Library, 248 SW Johnson Ave.

11/29

### Craft Fair and Bake Sale:

Come Christmas shop handmade items from local artisans. 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., Cedars of Elk Drive, 155 Elk Dr. For more information, call Patricia Sartori at (817) 876-4928.

*Submissions are welcome and published as space allows. Send your current event details to [emma.mckay@nowmagazines.com](mailto:emma.mckay@nowmagazines.com).*





# WORTHWHILE WALK

— By Angel Morris

*With the pleasant fall temperatures in Texas, it's not too late to plan a nature walk activity with the kids. Tranquil time outside is a great way to lessen the stress and anxiety that can come with the holidays, for adults and children alike. Even if you're more of an "indoorsy" person, a little outdoor adventure can remind you of the beauty around you, and highlight the gifts just outside your door.*

Whether you're walking at a nearby nature preserve, community park or just in your own neighborhood, a nature scavenger hunt is one way to engage children outdoors. Downloadable printables abound online, or you can make your own list of things to hunt related to your area. Also bring bags, baskets or boxes for collecting. Potential scavenging items include types of insects; different shaped leaves; acorns, feathers, pine cones or rocks; colors or textures (hard, soft, fluffy, slimy); and even particular sounds (animals, birds, insects).

Upon returning home from your scavenger hunt, you can further engage children by making crafts with the items you collected. Place a sheet of paper atop leaves or pieces of bark and, with oil pastels or peeled crayons placed down on their sides, roll over the items to create colorful etchings. Or, lightly paint the tops of leaves and use them as paint brushes to press their designs atop sheets of paper. If desired, you can label the type of tree your leaves and bark are from.

Laminating completed etched or painted sheets allows them to be used as wipeable placemats for meals and serve as not just conversation pieces, but also reminders of your outdoor adventure for years to come! You might also use hunted items to create art glued atop construction paper: Leaves might become the wings of a bird, bark the body of animals or flowers might be placed in the hair of a hand-drawn fairy.

Acorns, pine cones, sticks and leaves can be crafted into people-like figures with markers and a bit of glue, or they can be made into mobiles (hung from sticks with yarn) or dioramas (making nature scenes inside shoe boxes). Clay nature prints — made by pressing flowers or leaves into air dry clay shaped into circles or squares — can become ornaments, magnets or even necklace pendants. Rocks can be painted with melted crayons (rocks must be heated first) or with regular or glow-in-the-dark paints to decorate backyards and patios. They can also be decorated with inspirational messages to give as DIY gifts for Christmas and New Year's. Side note: Search "The Kindness Rocks Project®" for another way to expand on your family nature walk!

If you don't want to cart home tangible items from the list and/or need to keep track of non-tangibles like noises, make your nature walk an "eye spy" hunt instead, perhaps checking things off your lists as they are discovered rather than collecting them. Pro tip: Binoculars and magnifying glasses make your eye spy game that much more successful and fun!

As always, advanced preparation can make any family activity go more smoothly. Some common-sense advice for nature walks with young children include wearing closed-toe shoes and insect repellent, carrying water bottles and healthy snacks and packing a first-aid kit. Keeping a towel and change of clothes in the car is extra-smart in case of muddy adventures.

Whether you make a plan or take an impromptu nature walk, the most important thing is the time together in nature. Games, arts and crafts are bonus family fun, but certainly aren't required for an enjoyable trip through the trees. If all you do is find a spot to sit, close your eyes and listen to the sounds of nature, consider it a valuable memory-making moment! **NOW**

Sources:

1. <https://artfulparent.com/13-nature-walk-activities-for-kids-and-free-nature-scavenger-hunt/>.
2. <https://artfulparent.com/five-nature-based-art-ideas-for-toddlers-and-preschoolers/>.
3. <https://www.firefliesandmudpies.com/5-tricks-for-enjoyable-nature-walks-with-children/>.





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## **Downtown Christmas Carriage Rides**

Friday - Saturday  
Dec. 12-13 and Dec. 19-20  
For more information: [downtownwaxahachie.com](http://downtownwaxahachie.com)

## **YMCA Santa Run**

Saturday  
Dec. 13 | 9 am  
Registration information: [waxahachieymca.org](http://waxahachieymca.org)

## **Santa Craft Beer Stroll**

Saturday  
Dec. 13  
At Participating Downtown Merchants

## **Historic Christmas Tour of Homes 2025**

Saturday - Sunday  
Dec. 13-14 | 1 pm - 7 pm  
Tickets online: [downtownwaxahachie.com](http://downtownwaxahachie.com)

## **Pajama Story Time at Railyard Park**

Friday  
Dec. 19 | 2 pm



Scan here for a complete list of events!



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## Lowest Cost. Best Care.

Bring this ad for a  
**Free Rabies Vaccine**

with the purchase of a basic round of vaccines.



Coupon Code: FR4NM

111 N Greenville Ave, Suite A  
Allen, TX 75002

1235 Northwest Highway  
Garland, TX 75041

2400 SE Green Oaks Blvd  
Arlington, TX 76018

1856 Precinct Line Rd, Ste 108  
Hurst, TX 76054

713 Sunset Blvd  
Denton, TX 76201

106 Conveyor Dr, Suite 100  
Joshua/Burleson, TX 76058

2401 Westport Pkwy, Suite 140  
Fort Worth, TX 76177

1302 S. Main St #114  
Weatherford, TX 76086

Good for one free rabies vaccine with the purchase of the basic annual vaccine package valued at \$25.

Cannot be combined with other offers. Expires 06/01/2026.