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NOVEMBER 2025

Strong Arm Armstrong

A diagnosis
strengthened this
athlete's resolve

In the Kitchen With
Rusty Bailey

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

2025 Holiday
Shopping Guide

Featured Business:
Blue Mint Thai & Asian Cuisine

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Angel

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Avoid the scroll toll ...

We are not made to ingest all the news of all the world at all times, but thanks to the worldwide web, it can be difficult to avoid. I'm definitely not the first to suggest how important it is to put down your phone and disconnect from social media. November is a perfect time to challenge ourselves, however, to do just that.

Less time online means more time to focus on what's right in front of you — the friends and family that you can see and touch physically, not digitally. It can be easier to find your gratitude when you're not bombarded with more information than you were ever meant to consume — when not constantly comparing your life to others, and when you focus less on politics and more on purpose.

This month, every time you start to log in, consider these simple suggestions that may make you feel optimistic rather than overwhelmed: Take a walk. Read a book. Send an old-fashioned thank-you note. Bake. Start a gratitude jar. Draw, paint or garden. Dance. Write a bucket list. Donate from your closet. Go thrifting. Volunteer. Take a bubble bath. The opportunities are endless ...

Get offline and shine!

November 2025
Volume 21, Issue 11

ON THE COVER



Recovering from a rare condition made Ryder Armstrong more focused on the baseball field than ever.

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STRONG A *Armstrong*

— By Angel Morris

When Ryder Armstrong's arm began to hurt in middle school, the multisport athlete was advised to give it some rest. Passing out during basketball practice, however, would lead to the knowledge that he'd suffered a stroke due to multiple clots in his arm, one of which eventually traveled to his brain.

"I looked up and saw two basketball goals. The next thing I knew, I was on the floor. I was taken to the emergency room, where I was unresponsive for three hours," Ryder outlined. "I heard people talking but couldn't respond. Finally, I was able to communicate again."

Ultimately, Ryder was diagnosed with thoracic outlet syndrome, a rare

condition caused by compression of blood vessels or nerves between the collarbone and first rib, causing pain, numbness or tingling of the arm, hand or shoulder. It's attributed to anatomical variations, repetitive motions or injury.

"I asked the surgeon if I was going to be able to finish my basketball season, run track and play baseball. He said, 'Son, I am trying to save your arm and maybe your life right now,' Ryder recalled. "My dad blamed himself and said, 'I'm sorry I pushed you so hard.' I told him I wouldn't change a thing. I loved baseball and wanted to continue if possible.

"That's when I put my trust in God. The surgery took 10 hours. A bypass was done at my elbow. Several blood clots and my first rib were removed."

Ryder's vascular surgeon had performed a similar surgery on professional baseball player and Texan Jim Morris, about whom the movie, *The Rookie*, starring Dennis Quaid, was made. "It wasn't the surgeon's first rodeo, but it was still a traumatic experience for me and my family," Ryder said. "I later autographed a baseball for the surgeon and told him, 'I'll be OK whatever curve ball life may throw me.'"

Ryder's activities were limited for six months. "I had to take blood thinners and couldn't play sports," he admitted. "I didn't know if I would get back to the level of athlete I'd been, but I set my mind on progressing as much as I could."

Ryder kept the promise he made to himself, going on to play baseball at Midlothian High School. He earned the name Flo Ryde as

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a freshman. “Coach Hastings called me that because the ball coming out of my hand looked smooth and effortless,” Ryder recalled.

He said MHS Varsity Coach Rodgers acknowledged his competitive fire. “He wrote me a congratulatory note saying my desire for success was my greatest attribute. He wrote that the program and himself as a coach were better for my having been a part of the team,” Ryder remembered.

Coaches with high standards encouraged Ryder to push himself throughout his life. “My outside strength and conditioning was brutal, mentally and physically. This training was under the instruction of two former NFL defensive backs, Rod Jones (Cincinnati Bengals) and Mike Adams (Arizona Cardinals), who said I was the only baseball player able to survive their workouts. Many tried, but they all wound up quitting,” Ryder noted.

Ryder shared that he went 11 and 2 his senior year as a starting pitcher, tying the most wins by MHS pitchers in a single season. After graduation, he went on to play at Cisco Junior College. “I’m working on a business degree and am focused on progressing to the highest level possible for me in baseball. Knowing becoming a Major League Baseball player is extremely difficult, I need a backup career, and a business degree can open many doors,” he said.

Ryder believes classes in accounting, finance and economics will be useful if he were to coach or manage select baseball teams. “I love baseball and would enjoy working in the baseball



world in the future," he said.

In the meantime, Ryder hopes to transfer to a Southeastern Conference college team after completing junior college unless he gets drafted. Regardless of how long his baseball career may be, he recognizes the gift it was to return to the sport he loves. "Throughout the whole experience — the diagnosis, the surgery, the recovery — God was with us. I encourage anyone struggling with health conditions to maintain a strong faith in Him," Ryder shared.

Ryder also emphasized the importance of seeking the best medical expertise regarding your own condition, pursuing therapy, setting goals and celebrating small successes. "These things are why I'm 100 percent able to do all I could before the surgery," he credited.

Credit also goes to Ryder's family — his father and grandparents in Midlothian, as well as his mom, sister and maternal grandmother. "I've had an abundance of support from family, coaches and friends. My dad motivated me to be the best I could be," Ryder acknowledged. "He told me to stay out of trouble and get good grades. I owe him for my work ethic. And for countless hours and money spent on coaches, select baseball and travel."

Former MLB players Mike Bacsik and Leon Roberts not only enhanced Ryder's baseball skills as coaches, but helped him set and achieve realistic goals. "Through conversations and by example," Ryder noted, "they instilled life skills that will be useful no matter what path I take." **NOW**



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David is proud of his team's years of experience in the industry. "Together, we

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"Together, we have more than 100 years of experience. My dad and my uncles were all roofers. I worked summers with my dad since I was a teenager, but I got into this full time in 2012."

David looks at his business differently. "We're a small business with Christian values. I set out to always do the right thing. I have given free roofs to people in real need, like an elderly lady who had holes in her roof. She didn't have the money to fix it, so she just wanted us to tarp it. I decided to re-roof her house for free. We're a business, and we're about making money, but we're also here to help. I want to help my family, but also the community."



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— By Angel Morris

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Midlothian is the newest home to the authentic flavors of restaurant Blue Mint Thai & Asian Cuisine. Since 2023, Mike Wilson has continued the tradition of its original owners, the Amaratana and Ochajaroen families, who



opened the eatery with a goal of bringing their homeland's authentic cuisine to Texas.

In 2008, the original Blue Mint Thai & Asian Cuisine opened in Mansfield and became a local favorite by sharing recipes passed down through generations. "Guests continue to enjoy a warm hospitality and signature, bold-flavored dishes here," Mike shared, describing crowd favorites like Crazy Drunken Noodles, Crispy Spring Rolls, Golden Pouches (Crab Rangoons) and Pad Thai.

A retired Air Force Security Forces commander and retired Arlington police detective, Mike saw an opportunity to increase the restaurant's community engagement and was proud to partner with its owners. "Together, we built Blue Mint Thai into a nationally recognized brand," Mike attributed.

In May, Mike opened a fast-casual version of the eatery in Midlothian and announced the restaurant as an Official Asian Restaurant Partner of the Texas Rangers at Arlington's Globe Life Field. "Midlothian is my current hometown, and the support here has been overwhelming," Mike credited. "And I served the Arlington community for nearly 20 years. Giving

Midlothian, Arlington (coming soon) and Mansfield locations feature core Blue Mint Thai offerings, including takeout and catering, while adjusting each environment to its city. “The Rangers were looking for a high-quality restaurant partner and a fresh and unique concept that aligned with their values, and Blue Mint Thai answered that call,” Mike noted.

Sponsorship of Midlothian sports teams, support toward the Arlington Police Department's Back the Blue initiative and financial donations to the Ellis County Child Advocacy Center are just a few ways Blue Mint Thai gives back. The company also launched the Blue Mint Thai Foundation this year to encourage youth leaders, law enforcement and veterans. "Many of the restaurant's leaders today are first responders or veterans. We understand what it means to serve. It's not just about food or profits. It's about always serving others and the community first."

Mike points to three thriving locations and a kiosk with a major league sports team as evidence of success; a success of which he is proud to be part. “We focus on our core values of Integrity First, Servant Leadership, Unconquerable Mindset and Extreme Accountability at Blue Mint Thai ... and it’s working,” he said. “Giving back to the people in our communities is icing on the cake.”

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Zoomed In:
Timothy Duke

By Angel Morris

A Midlothian High School senior, Timothy Duke is a recent winner of the Dallas Winds Brass Fanfare Competition. His composition will be played by professional musicians at the Meyerson Symphony Center this month. “I wanted to write a fanfare that stayed true to my writing style. I also considered what an audience would enjoy,” Timothy shared.

A four-year member of the Panther Band Regiment, Timothy’s favorite memory is performing at the State Marching Contest last year. “It was a tremendous honor, and the fact that I got to perform with some of my best friends made it even more memorable,” he said.

Accepted to Stephen F. Austin State University, Timothy hopes to major in music composition. He aspires to compose for bands one day.



Angela Hayes with The American Legion Women’s Auxiliary dresses as Eeyore for a Halloween-spirited motorcycle ride.



Officer Delle and Officer Garcia represent Midlothian Police Department at the 2025 Women of Law Enforcement Annual Conference.



A Heritage High School football player visits with T.E. Baxter Elementary students after a reading session together.



At Stonegate Church, Lively Needham, Caitlin Carpenter and Abigail Jackson display the book, The Quest for the Best, by Pastor Jimmy Needham.



Talon Simmons and Sisera Tran prepare to work with patients at Midlothian Medical and Sports Center.



Heather Thornton prepares for the Ellis County Habitat for Humanity Festival of Trees that raises money for those living in substandard housing.



Amy Monson with her granddaughter, Charlotte Wemhoner, play the cup game at Midlothian Civic Center's fall festival.

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2 Tbsp. parsley, chopped
1 Tbsp. rosemary
1 Tbsp. thyme
1 Tbsp. sage
Zest of 1 lemon
Zest of 1 orange
1 tsp. kosher salt
1/2 tsp. black pepper
1/2 tsp. smoked paprika

Baste (optional):
2 Tbsp. butter
1 Tbsp. wine or lemon juice
Pinch of herbs

1. *Note:* Brine 12–24 hours ahead of time to cook.
2. *For brine:* Simmer all the brine ingredients, except the cider, to dissolve salt and sugar. Let cool; add the cider and ice to chill. Submerge the turkey; keep cold 12–24 hours.
3. *For smoking setup:* Apple or cherry wood, plus a bit of pecan; preheat the smoker to 275 F.
4. *For the butter:* Slice the tops off the garlic heads. Drizzle with olive oil; wrap in foil. Roast at 400 F for 40 minutes until soft. Let cool; squeeze out the cloves, and mash and mix them with the butter, herbs, zests, salt, pepper and paprika.
5. Remove the turkey from the brine; rinse and pat dry. Remove the backbone; flatten by pressing breastbone until it cracks.
6. Loosen the skin over the breast and thighs; spread the butter under and over the skin and lightly inside the cavity. Smoke breast-side-up with a probe in the thickest breast part.
7. *For baste:* Combine baste ingredients, if using. Baste hourly. Target temps include: breast at 160 F; thigh at 175 F (resting, it raises to 165 F and 180 F).
8. Let rest, loosely tented, 30–45 minutes before carving.

CookingNOW

IN THE KITCHEN WITH RUSTY BAILEY

— By Angel Morris



Rusty Bailey connects with people through food. “Cooking is about bringing people together and sparking conversation. I’m always asking, ‘How can I make this better?’ It keeps me creative and learning,” he said.

As worship pastor at Harvest Hill Church, Rusty pours into people through music and ministry. He also owns 828 Designs, a custom pool and landscape company creating unique outdoor spaces — another way of bringing people together.

Rusty has lived in Midlothian since 2000. He and his wife of 18 years, Lara, have two children, Allie and Austin. “It’s been amazing to see the community grow and evolve,” Rusty noted, “while still maintaining that welcoming, close-knit feel that makes it such a special place to call home.” **NOW**

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4 bay leaves

1 onion, quartered
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For more information: downtownwaxahachie.com

YMCA Santa Run

Saturday
Dec. 13 | 9 am
Registration information: waxahachieymca.org

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Saturday
Dec. 13
At Participating Downtown Merchants

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Saturday - Sunday
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Check with individual organizations or your city or Chamber websites to verify dates and times.

11/1

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11/8

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[www.midlothian.tx.us/533/
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2460 Hwy. 287 N. • Mansfield

(Northbound service road – between Callendar Rd. & Turner-Warnell)

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