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DECEMBER 2023

Next Level Holiday Spirit

At Home With Wayne
and Joan Akeley

2023 Holiday
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In the Kitchen With
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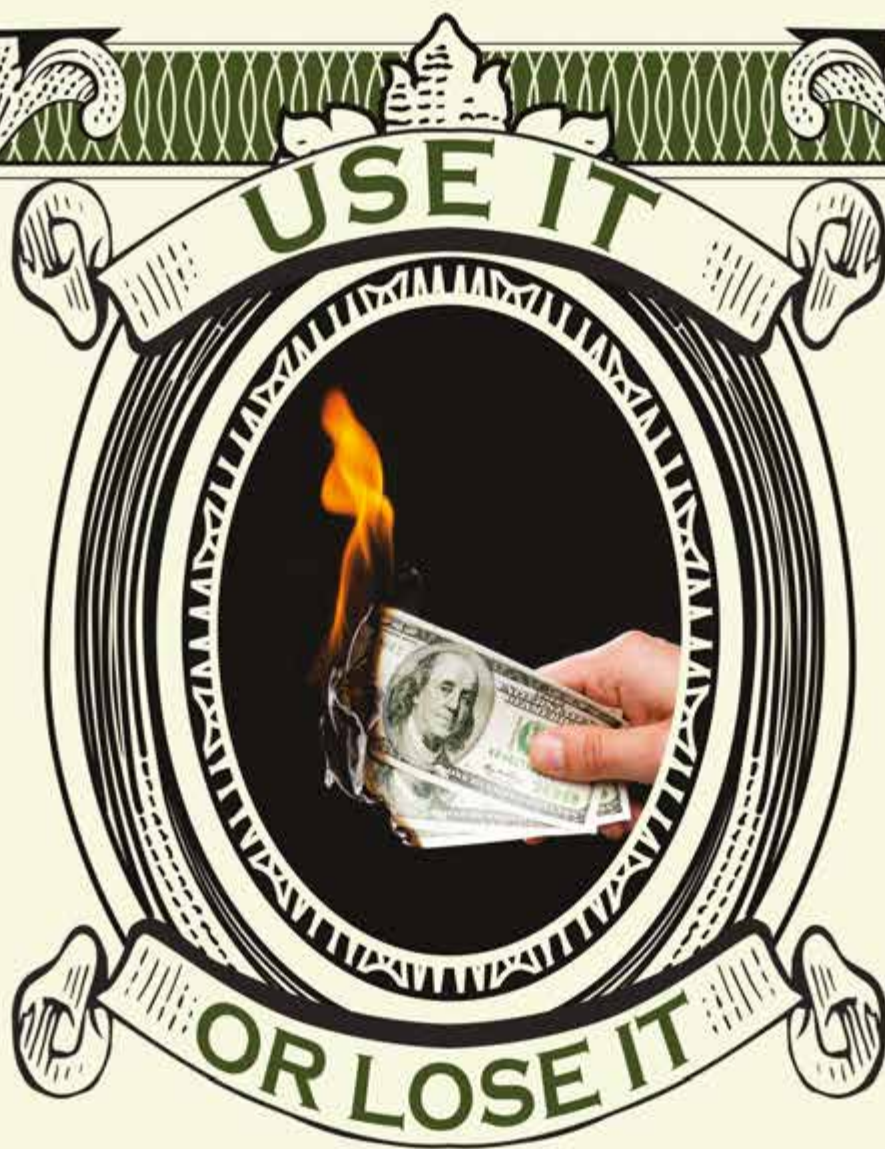
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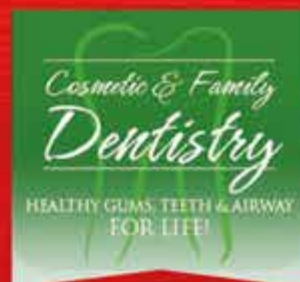


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ON THE COVER



A family of elves welcomes the holiday spirit at the Akeley abode.

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Amber

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Ho-Ho-Howdy, WeatherfordNOW Readers!

As we are smack dab in the middle of the holiday season, I hope you are discovering opportunities to spend quality time with friends, loved ones and possibly a few strangers this December, building new memories to hold dear. Whether you are decorating the Christmas tree, lighting the menorah, volunteering in the community or cozying up inside to stay warm this season, enjoy every minute of it.

As 2023 wraps up, I am reflecting on all the changes, the accomplishments and even the challenges I have experienced. I encourage you to take a moment to ponder on all that has transpired in your life over the past year. Did you reach or far exceed your goals? Did you overcome tragedy? Did you take that trip or lose those extra pounds? Did you change habits to improve daily life or discover a new hobby?

If we reflect back on the promises we made to ourselves and compare them to the actual truth of the present, we might just find a new perspective — one that offers contentment or one that asks a little more from us for a better future. Each year, I seem to fall short of reaching a few goals I have set for myself, but I choose to focus on what I have accomplished and try again on the others left unfinished.

It never ceases to amaze me how versatile the human spirit is. We have our ups and downs, our successes and our failures, but that is life — an opportunity to learn and grow as we strive to experience everything it has to offer.

Season's greetings!

P.S. The publisher and staff of NOW Magazines would like to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and the happiest of holiday seasons!

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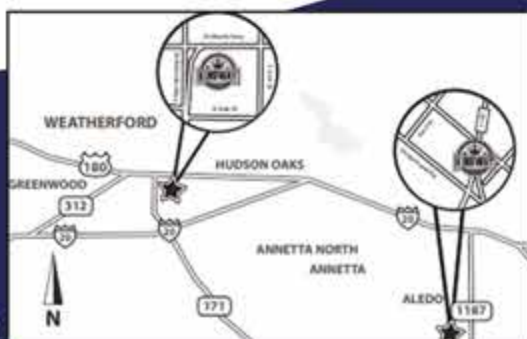
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NEXT LEVEL

Holiday Spirit

At Home With Wayne and Joan Akeley

— By Amber D. Browne

Decorating one's home adds another level to the festivity of the holiday season. Much of the holiday decor still displayed today has long been a tradition across the globe. From decorating the Christmas tree to hanging stockings on the mantel, these small acts increase joy and provide lifelong memories for many.

For Weatherford couple Wayne and Joan Akeley, holiday decorating is not only a fun pastime, it is a way of life. Regardless of the holiday, their home is chock-full of festive decor. During the Christmas season, they strive to lift the spirits of anyone who passes by or enters their abode by showcasing their inventory of decorations. Visitors are often amazed when they step inside during the holidays.

Their main decorating season begins in August when they pull out the fall decor boxes and get to work adding multi-colored foliage to windows and atop kitchen cabinets. Everywhere visitors look, they notice scarecrows, pumpkins and orange, red or yellow decor. On October 1, Halloween takes over the house. The decor returns to fall before Thanksgiving, and the day after Turkey Day, all of the decorations are packed up in labeled boxes to make room for Christmas. They have dedicated the attic above the garage and a second-floor room — one side stacked to the ceiling with fall boxes and the other with Christmas — to store all of their decorations. In the middle? The rest of the holidays: Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Easter and Independence Day.

The couple began their decorating traditions during their first year of marriage in Massachusetts in 1972. "We just love to decorate," Wayne said. "She has everything labeled, so it's easy." Joan takes photos of where the decorations are placed and adds labels to the items and storage boxes, so they know the exact spot for each piece.

Each year, Wayne and Joan enjoy taking a trip down memory lane while unpacking all of the ornaments and other holiday decor. Wayne's focus is the lighting and inflatables outside of the home, but he always lends a hand to help Joan reach the higher shelves and tops of cabinets. "You've got to be careful. We have to use the ladder all the time," he said. "She stays down below and hands me the things. It's a two-person job."



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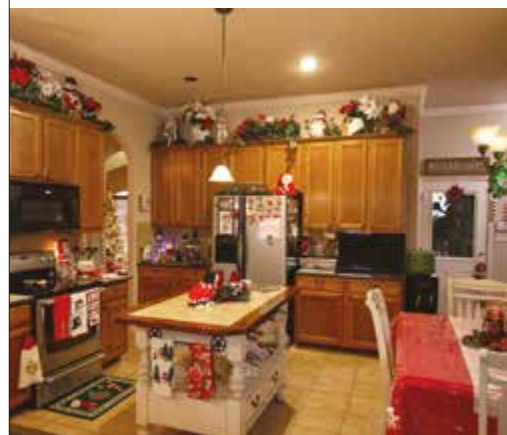
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Outside, passersby can glance at nearly 30 holiday inflatables, plus a few friendly reindeer. The Akeleys live near Mary Martin Elementary School. "We love to see kids. They walk down here from the school and make comments, and their parents stop and take pictures at Christmastime next to the blow-ups," Joan said.

Christmas wreaths are carefully hung in several places on the exterior of the home, as well as on walls and above the fireplace indoors. The interior of the home is dotted with red and white poinsettias. A front study with a wall-to-wall bookshelf holds snowmen, a seasonal, light-up Mickey Mouse and other festive figurines. This room houses one of Joan's favorite holiday decorations, an antique manger that once belonged to her parents. Santas display their jolly characteristics throughout the home, and a family of elves lends mischievous grins. If guests cozy up on the couch, they can take their pick of holiday pillows and blankets.

With more than 800 ornaments in storage, Wayne and Joan try to find a way to display all of them. Since moving to Weatherford from Granbury 17 years ago, they downsized their Christmas tree. They added a white metal tree to the living area on which to hang some of their more special ornaments from their travels, their time in bowling leagues and from family members. Larger glass ornaments are hung near the ceiling of the foyer and hallway to showcase their colorful beauty.

The kitchen is full of festive decor from a Christmas cat cookie jar and holiday towel sets to ceramic snowmen and Santas. Lighted garland along the staircase handrail guides guests upstairs as they notice small, stuffed animals sitting quietly atop each step.





Joan previously spent months setting up a Christmas village of houses, trees, mountains and winter scenes in a room on the second floor. She no longer takes on the project and is now starting to sell some of the pieces. "I'd have to start in July to put it up!"

After 51 years of marriage Wayne and Joan still get that glimmer in their eyes when sharing the story of how they first met — at a telephone lounge in Massachusetts. "They had a telephone at each seat, and if you saw somebody you like, you could call them and say, 'Hi, how are you? Want to dance?'" Wayne explained. Joan was out with her friend, and Wayne gave her a call at their table. They danced all night. After a few dates, they stopped seeing each other. Fate would bring them together five years later at the same telephone lounge. They have been together ever since.

If possible, Wayne and Joan travel to Massachusetts during the holidays to visit family. However, their trips have slowed since COVID. They often get together for the holiday with Wayne's poker buddies and Joan's friends from Bunco. They have a holiday gift exchange and share dinner. Her go-to dishes are deviled eggs and turnovers. "Up North, I just made the minced meat and the apple, but down here, I have to make the peach," she smiled.

Their house, adorned in the traditional red, white and green Christmas color scheme, puts everybody in the holiday spirit. As they continue adding to their collection each year, Wayne and Joan, both in their early 80s, do not appear to be slowing down on their decorating habits. "Everybody who comes here, they all look around and say they can't believe it," Wayne said. Decorating for the holidays is something they both enjoy. "We work well together. It's just a nice time, Christmastime." **NOW**

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— By Amber D. Browne

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Zoomed In: The Turnbow Family

By Amber D. Browne

The 2023 holiday season will be a joyous occasion for the Turnbow family, who will celebrate their first Christmas in their home near Lake Weatherford since suffering a devastating house fire in December 2021. "We are definitely excited to spend our first Christmas back!" Lili Turnbow shared.

Two years ago, Will and Lili Turnbow were running an errand when they received a call from their daughters, Sydney and Hannah, who were home when the fire erupted in the attic. Everyone got out safely, but the house suffered extensive damage.

"During this tragic time, we experienced so many lows but also an abundance of kindness from friends, neighbors, our church and the community," Lili said. "The community of Parker County blessed us so much, and God showed us His abundant love."



Chelsea Dorman and daughter, Rynlee, shop local vendors at the Merry Mamas event in Aledo.



Linda Hidalgo (3rd), Patricia Harder (1st) and Randy Loyer (2nd) are recognized as the winners of the Weatherford Art Association's October Artists of the Month.



Surrounded by family, Pastor Curtis Jefferson receives the annual Roger's Roo Pride Award at a Weatherford High School varsity football game.



Texas Trooper Russell Lynn Boyd, a Weatherford College graduate who was shot and killed during a traffic stop 40 years ago, is memorialized with a granite bench on the WC campus.



Students at Austin Elementary in Weatherford celebrate World Kangaroo Day.



Owner Jessie Boyd and his wife, Katie, host a grand opening party for Embellishments in Aledo.



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CookingNOW *In the Kitchen With* KAIYA CABELLO

— By Amber D. Browne

When she is not concentrating on academics at Aledo High School or playing volleyball on the court, Kaiya Cabello spends much of her free time baking desserts. “If I have a bad day, am stressed, bored or really anything, baking always uplifts me,” she said.

Recipes found on Instagram and Pinterest are just a starting point for Kaiya. “I make these recipes my own by measuring with my heart when it comes to ingredients like chocolate chips, cinnamon or sprinkles.”

Kaiya has always enjoyed cooking, but baking became her focus at age 13. With tips from family and through trial and error, she has developed her skills. She considers baking a love language. “I’m always eager to bake for friends and family and really anyone who will eat it!” **NOW**

Spiced Chai Cake With Cream Cheese Frosting

Batter:

3/4 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
4 large eggs, room temperature
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 Tbsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1 Tbsp. cinnamon
2 tsp. ginger
2 tsp. cardamom
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1/8 tsp. black pepper
1 cup buttermilk

Frosting:

1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
4 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
3 1/2 cups powdered sugar
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 cup blackberries (optional)
2 Tbsp. chopped pistachios (optional)
2 tsp. candied ginger (optional)
2 cinnamon sticks (optional)
1 tsp. black sesame seeds (optional)
Edible gold leaf (optional)

1. For batter: Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease and line three 6-inch or two 8-inch cake pans with parchment paper; set aside.
2. In a standing mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating between each addition. Beat the batter until it is pale yellow. Mix in the vanilla extract.
3. In a separate bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, salt and spices. Alternate folding the flour mixture and the buttermilk into the sugar mixture until combined.

4. Pour the batter evenly into the prepared cake pans; bake 25-30 minutes, or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool before frosting.
5. *For frosting:* In a standing mixer with a paddle attachment, cream the butter and cream cheese until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the powdered sugar, vanilla and salt; whip about 1 minute to combine.
6. To assemble the cake, place one layer on a plate. Top with a large dollop of the frosting; spread evenly. Add the second and third layers, frosting in between each. Frost the outside of the cake with the remaining frosting. Top with your choice of optional garnishes.

Red Velvet Chocolate Chip Cake

Batter:

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbsp. cocoa powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 cups granulated sugar
- 4 eggs, room temperature
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
- 2 1/2 tsp. red liquid food coloring
- 2 to 2 1/2 cups chocolate chips
- 1 1/3 cups buttermilk
- 1 tsp. vinegar

Frosting:

- 8 oz. butter, room temperature
- 8 oz. cream cheese, room temperature
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 7 cups powdered sugar

1. *For batter:* Preheat the oven to 350 F; line the bottom of two 8- or 9-inch round pans or three 6-inch round pans with parchment paper. Butter and grease the sides; set aside.
2. In a large bowl, sift together the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt; set aside.
3. In a standing mixer with a paddle attachment, beat together the oil and sugar until combined, about 2 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating until light and fluffy. Add the vanilla extract, food coloring and chocolate chips; mix well.
4. In a separate bowl, stir together the buttermilk and vinegar; set aside.
5. Alternate adding the dry ingredients and the buttermilk and vinegar mixture to the wet ingredients in 4 different additions. End with the dry ingredients. Do not overmix.
6. Divide the batter between the prepared pans; bake 25-30 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean. Cool completely.
7. *For frosting:* In a stand mixer with a

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Double Chocolate
Peppermint Cookies

- 1 cup light brown sugar, packed**
- 1 egg, room temperature**
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract**
- 1 tsp. peppermint extract**
- 1 cup all-purpose flour**
- 1/3 cup cocoa powder**
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda**
- 1/2 tsp. salt**
- 3/4 cup white chocolate chips**

mixture, stirring until just combined. Gently fold in the white chocolate chips. Do not overmix.

5. Scoop roughly 1 1/2-inch spheres of dough onto a cookie sheet, leaving about 2 inches of space between each ball of dough. Bake for 10-12 minutes. Cool to room temperature on a cooling rack.

6. For dip: Place the white chocolate and coconut oil over a double boiler; stir gently until melted. Dip each cookie into the white chocolate. Sprinkle with crushed peppermint candies. Place back on the cooling rack until the chocolate hardens.

paddle attachment, cream the butter and cream cheese until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the remaining ingredients; whip to combine, about 2 minutes.

8. Place the first cake on a plate; top with a large dollop of frosting. Spread evenly. Add the second and third layers, frosting in between each. Frost the outside of the cake with the remaining frosting.

Double Chocolate Peppermint Cookies

Dough:

1/2 cup unsalted butter, room temperature

White Chocolate Dip:

- 7 oz. high-quality white chocolate, chopped**
- 1 tsp. coconut oil**
- 1/2 cup crushed peppermint candies**

1. For dough: Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper; set aside.

2. In a medium bowl, cream the butter and brown sugar until the mixture becomes light and airy. Mix in the egg, vanilla and peppermint extract.

3. In a separate bowl, sift together the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt.

4. Add the dry ingredients into the butter

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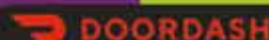
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Yuletide **CONTEST**

— By Angel Morris



Of all the activities available for families during the holidays, the traditional custom of building gingerbread houses has regained popularity in recent years. With the advent of gingerbread house kits, this fun-for-all-ages activity is as easy as choosing your favorite frostings and candies to add to pre-built structures.

Traditionalists can still build the houses from scratch themselves, of course, starting with structural gingerbread dough or even graham crackers. Today, however, packaged kits that provide the basic pre-built house allow all ages to join in the fun on a level playing field.

While spending time together building a single house can be enough, some families take the tradition to new levels by making it a friendly holiday competition. Here are a few ways to implement your own family gingerbread house-building contest.

SUPPLIES

Boxed houses. If you're going the pre-built route, simply stop in your neighborhood grocery or chain store where you'll find a variety of boxed houses from small to large. These typically range in size and shape and include many tube icings, as well as a variety of decorative candy pieces.

Decorative items. Families may set a dollar amount in advance and let each participant shop for additional decorative items — these may be candies or craft items, such as pipe cleaners, stickers, popsicle sticks, small ornaments, etc.

Theme. To increase the opportunity for creativity, some families choose a unique theme in advance, around which participants design their houses. Themes may be Christmas related or more unique.

Some theme possibilities include: Texas Christmas, My Favorite Movie or House of the Future. Families can decide if everyone follows the same theme or if each individual comes up with his/her own theme and announces the theme upon the contest's end.

Timing device. Make sure you have an oven timer, cell phone alarm, clock or watch available.

SET UP

Building surface. Make sure your building surface is well-covered to allow for easy clean up. Towels, newspaper or poster board are inexpensive ways to cover tabletops.

Lay out supplies. Open one gingerbread house box for each participant or team. Family members can compete against each other individually or establish teams such as boys vs. girls, children vs. parents, etc. Place decorative icings and candies at each building station — either those that come in each gingerbread kit or the candy/craft items purchased in advance.

THE CONTEST

Criteria. Agree on the criteria by which each house will be judged. For example, best theme, most creative, most traditional, etc.

Pick judges. Agree on who will be the judges. Perhaps you want to invite neighbors over to vote, or you want to post images on social media for friends to rank their favorites. To be fair, you should not indicate which family member designed which house.

Prizes. Decide what prize the winner receives. Maybe it's bragging rights for the year, a homemade trophy to keep in one's room or the opportunity to open a Christmas gift earlier than anyone else. Perhaps the winner gets to choose which house he or she actually wants to eat. Prizes need not cost money. The more creative, the better!



Time. Choose the amount of time you want to allow for construction of the gingerbread houses, and make all participants aware of start/stop times. Set the timer, and start decorating! It will be fun to watch one another's houses come to life and see how creative individuals or teams can be.

Upon completion, let the agreed upon judging commence, followed by an awards ceremony. Eating the houses together can wrap up the contest, or the gingerbread houses can be displayed on a dining room table for the rest of the season — not only making a one-of-a-kind decorative holiday display, but also as a reminder of the fun time enjoyed by the family.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY TIP

If your family might enjoy this type of contest but is not interested in eating the completed product, you may consider buying the gingerbread kits after the holiday and saving them for next year. Post-Christmas clearance sales means you can purchase the houses for 50, 75 and even 90 percent off retail prices.

Decorative candies can also be bought after the holidays on deep discount. Making gingerbread houses is a great Christmas activity to do on a budget. **NOW**

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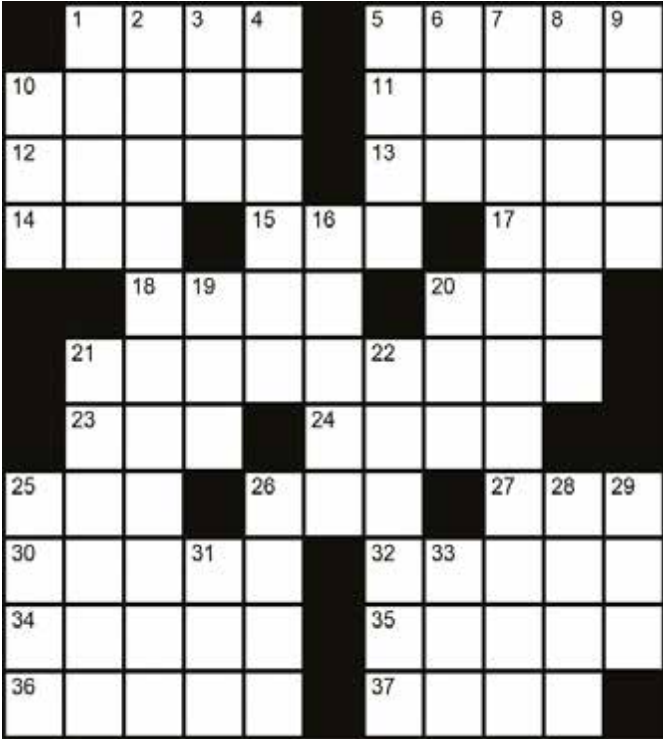
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Across

- 1 Natural bandage
- 5 "America's Most Wanted" presenter John ---
- 10 Trite and tiresome
- 11 Gem state
- 12 Exclusive group
- 13 Unpaid worker that never tires
- 14 Eccentric
- 15 Cut and dried grass
- 17 Saturn's wife
- 18 Decorated
- 20 Front end cover on a car

- 21 Excels
- 23 Drug also known as "ozone"
- 24 Involved with
- 25 It regulates flyers
- 26 Bring to bear
- 27 Hoppy beer
- 30 No fun
- 32 Shun
- 34 It's an honor
- 35 They are often checked
- 36 Short literary composition
- 37 Act fresh

Down

- 1 "Deal!"
- 2 Dr Cid reacts about ways to pay
- 3 Mandela's party
- 4 When that time arrives
- 5 Lean and muscular
- 6 Commotion
- 7 Noon burials arranged for bodies in the workplace
- 8 Patronize
- 9 Strong attraction
- 10 Head honcho
- 16 Ethiopia's capital, --- Ababa.
- 19 Bottle top
- 20 Discontented shout from the bleachers
- 21 Suit passed out
- 22 Untrustworthy people
- 25 Celebrity
- 26 Grotesque
- 28 Oil pipeline inserts
- 29 Lifeblood of TV and the web
- 31 Baseball league below the Majors
- 33 Through

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

Medium

					4		5	3
				5		9		
	2			8	7			
2						8	6	
9				7	3			4
		4	6	1				5
								6
1	5						8	
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Through 12/2

Spirit of the West Show:
Artwork by the Weatherford Art Association. **Tuesday-Wednesday, Friday-Saturday:** 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; **Thursday:** 10:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m., Doss Heritage and Culture Center, 1400 Texas Dr. dosscenter.org.

Through 12/30

Radiance at the Ranch:
Spend an evening driving through this holiday display that features a trail of two million lights. Ticket prices and times vary. Parker County Sheriff's Posse, 2251 Mineral Wells Hwy. Buy tickets and get more information at radiancechristmas.com.

Through 12/31

Holiday in the Park Pathway of Lights:
Enjoy a magical evening with the family at this free event. 6:00-9:30 p.m., 503 Santa Fe Dr. experienceweatherford.com.

12/1

Tree Lighting, Santa's Workshop & Movie:
This free holiday event includes train rides, stage performances, food trucks and more. 5:30-8:30 p.m., Gene L. Voyles Park, 3248 Inspiration Dr., Hudson Oaks. hudsonoaks.com.

Careity Celebrity Cutting 2023:

Support the Careity Foundation's work within the cancer community. 7:00 p.m., Will Rogers Memorial Coliseum, 3401 Lancaster Ave., Fort Worth. Find ticket info and other details at careity.org/events.

12/2

Christmas on the Square and Light the Night Parade:

Attend to kick off the Christmas holiday season. Vendors: 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.; parade: 6:30 p.m., Historic Downtown Weatherford. weatherford-chamber.com.

10th Annual Christmas on the Tracks:

Enjoy train rides, a bounce house and slide, pictures with Cowboy Santa and more. 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., Peacock's Feed & Boutique, 122 W. Water St., Ste. J. peacocksfeed.com.

Aledo Arts & Crafts Fair:
Shop unique gifts from dozens of artisans. 11:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m., Downtown Aledo. aledotx.gov.

Christmas Tyme in Aledo:
Enjoy attractions with holiday food, fun and entertainment. 5:00-9:00 p.m., Downtown Aledo. aledotx.gov.

12/3

Holiday Memorial Service:

Join Galbreath Pickard for this 19th annual event that will feature a guest speaker, entertainment and refreshments. Bring an ornament for the memorial tree to honor a loved one. Free. 3:00 p.m., 913 N. Elm St. RSVP at (817) 594-2747.

12/7

Let's Jingle & Mingle:

This 3rd annual fundraiser will feature food, entertainment, Santa, local vendors and \$5 hay rides. \$10 includes dinner and hot chocolate bar. 6:00-9:00 p.m., Weatherford Senior Center, 1225 Holland Lake Dr. pcco.org.

12/8-12/9

Grease:

Enjoy a musical featuring characters from Rydell High's senior class of 1959. Tickets are \$10. **Friday:** 7:00 p.m.; **Saturday:** 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., Weatherford High School's Durant Auditorium. (817) 694-7996 or vancoevents.com/BZEA.

12/9

Holiday Market:

Over 50 local vendors with deals and holiday fun. 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Westside

Antique Marketplace, 12301 Camp Bowie Blvd., Aledo. westsideantiquemarketplace.com.

Christmas at the Castle:

View Christmas decorations during a free tour at Texas Pythian Home. 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m., 1825 E. Bankhead Dr. pythianhome.org.

Photos With Santa:

Children can share their Christmas wishes with Santa, grab a free photo and make crafts. 12:30-2:30 p.m., Weatherford Public Library, 1014 Charles St. (817) 598-4150, weatherfordtx.gov/142/Library.

Candlelight Tour of Homes:

The Heritage Society returns with the 40th annual Tour of Homes. Visit historical locations where history comes to life. 10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. parkercountyheritagesociety.com.

Second Fridays

Parker County Women's and Newcomers' Club:

Social hour: 9:30 a.m.; meeting: 10:30 a.m.; lunch: Noon, Weatherford College Emerging Technologies and Workforce Solutions Building, 225 College Park Dr. pcwnc.org/monthly-meeting.

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

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