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At Home With Corey
and Carma Morgan

2024 Holiday
Shopping Guide

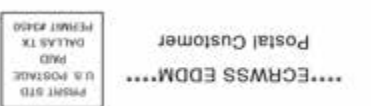
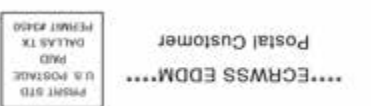
A Hot DIY Project

Enhance the coziness
of your backyard with
a new fire pit

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt
Sudoku

In the Kitchen With:
Jonathan and
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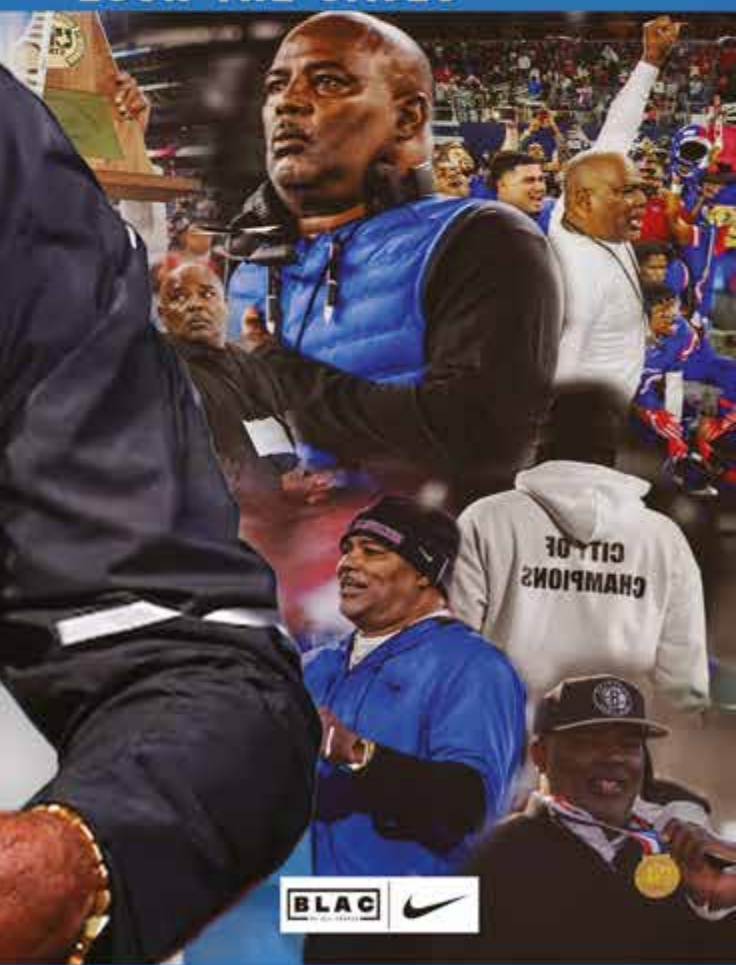
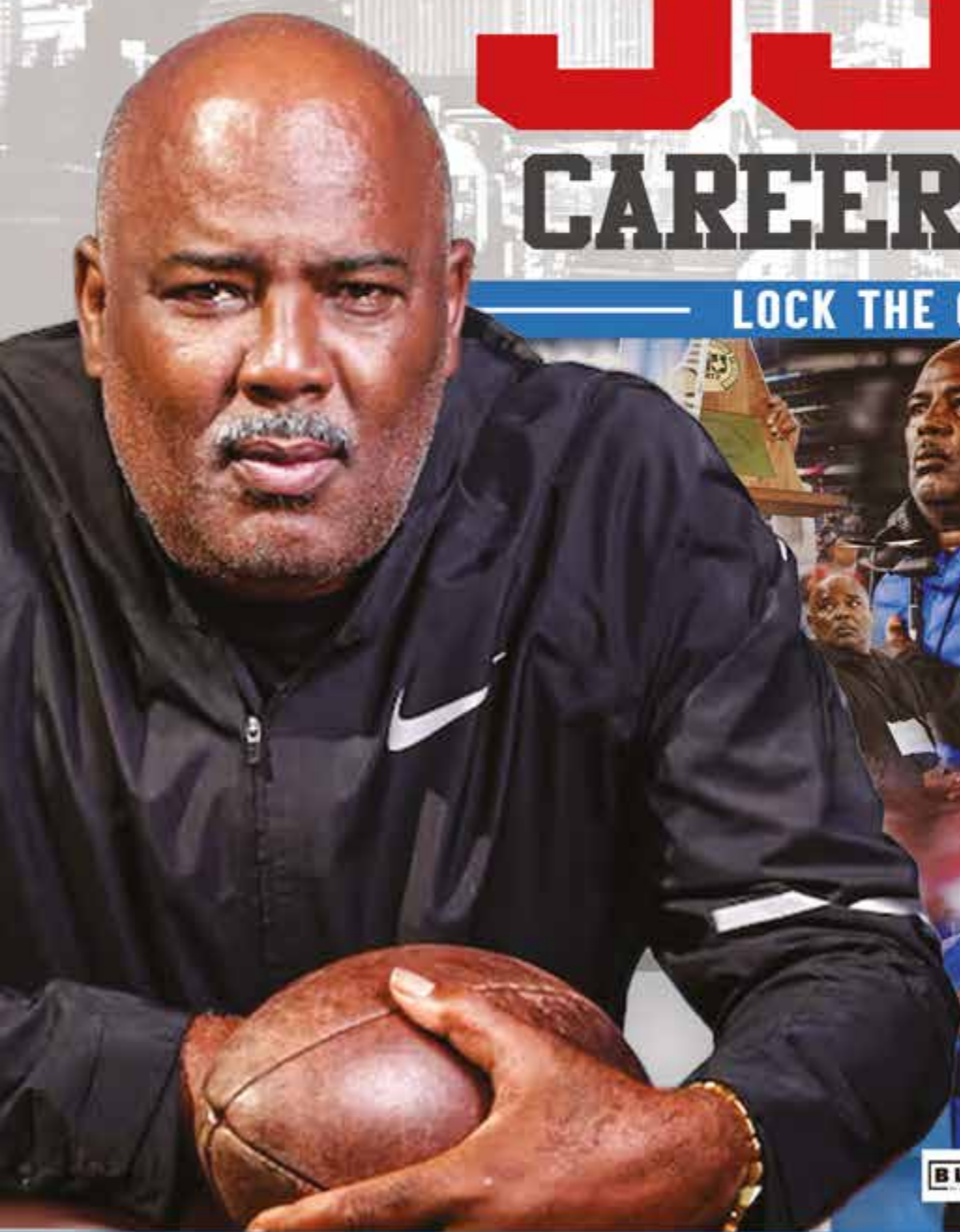
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newest techniques and technology. I'm also a native Spanish speaker. I grew up speaking both languages. Our YouTube videos explaining procedures are available in both English and Spanish."

Dr. Allala is proud of the service they provide at Serenity Advanced Dentistry. "I think we give five-star service. And I know my staff is five-star. We know what works and what doesn't. I know it sounds corny, but this is my life's work. Most of my staff have been with me for years, at different locations around DFW, before I came to Cedar Hill. I met Mariela seven years ago, in Pleasant Grove. It was my first job out of school. Racine has been with me four years, and Jazmine three years, both in Red Oak. Our newest team member is Jessica. She found us three months ago when she emailed me looking for an opportunity to shadow a dentist."

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Dr. Allala is a graduate of the Texas A&M School of Dentistry. "When I started there, it was still Baylor. My diploma has both names on it," she recalled. "I specialize in oral surgery, and we're really good at it. I'm nothing without my team. We do everything in dentistry. I like being well rounded. I enjoy being an overachiever, so I'm constantly taking continuing education, keeping up with all the

Serenity Advanced Dentistry has all the newest technology to make your experience convenient. "We have hospital-grade blood pressure machines, so we can do sedation. We also have intraoral scanners, so I can see inside your mouth, from every angle, before I ever go in for your procedure. We print dentures and place implants right here in the office. With our skills and strategies, most patients don't even feel our injections. We have TVs in every room to keep you entertained while we work. It's all about efficiency — working smarter, not harder. That's why I designed the floor plan of the office myself. And we're really big on sanitation and sterilization. It's important to maintain a sterile environment, which is why we're closed every Friday for deep cleaning the office and training."



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ON THE COVER



Carma Morgan loves decorating with red for Christmas.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

There's a song in the air ...

I love Christmas music. My collection includes literally hundreds of songs. There are a few of the silly Santa Claus and hippopotamus type songs, but most of them are the more serious sort. I have some songs in my collection that are over 1,000 years old, and others that are less than 10. I have Gregorian chants, Medieval madrigals, French folk songs, German works by Bach and Russian Orthodox chants. I have country, rock and rap Christmas songs that were written in those styles (not mutilated classics).

When I was teaching English to junior high and high school students, I taught a lesson on Christmas songs as poetry. I had one student complain that she didn't like Christmas music because it was "too happy." So, I introduced her to the "Coventry Carol," about the mothers mourning their babies killed by King Herod in the slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem. That's a part of the story we often skip over, but it's right there in the Bible.

Some of those old songs show deep theological understanding of what was happening, and what was at stake. Others, not so much. Songs like "The Cherry Tree Carol," which has the unborn baby Jesus talking to a magic cherry tree, and "I Saw Three Ships," which has ships sailing into Bethlehem, a town that sits high in the mountains of Judea, leave you wondering if the writers ever heard the story read out in church.

Still, some absolutely gorgeous melodies have been used to tell and retell the story. And to tell the story of what the season meant to the writer as he contemplated wandering in the snow, or she contemplated how bleak a winter can be.

... and a baby's low cry!

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!



Adam

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DECKING *the* HALLS

— By Adam Walker

Corey and Carma Morgan have been married for 27 years. For the last 15 years, they have called Cedar Hill home. “This is our second house in Lake Ridge,” Carma informed. “I’m grateful for my husband and our five girls. Three of them graduated from Cedar Hill Collegiate High School, one from Cedar Hill High School and our youngest is now a ninth-grader in the early college pathway.” Education is important to Carma, who spent the last 28 years as an educator in the Dallas, Lancaster and DeSoto ISDs. She’s looking forward to retiring at the end of this school year.

The family moved to their current house five years ago, during COVID. “Our first apartment was small enough that we moved in a day. As our family has grown, so has the space we’ve needed. Each move has taken a little longer. With this last one, I think I’m still unpacking! This house is 5,000 square feet and sits on a 1-acre lot. I like this house because it’s cozy and intimate. It’s a homey place for me, my husband, our daughters and their grandmother. I want space, but I don’t want it to feel hollow, like open concept houses do. Here, the stairs are tucked off to the side — not right in your face, the first thing you see when you enter. You have to come in to see the house. Everyone has their own corners in this house. It’s so peaceful in the mornings. I’m a homebody. Our home is where our story begins, where love grows, laughter echoes and memories last forever.”

Carma makes sure that homey, welcoming feeling transfers over to the holidays. “I love fashion and home decor, especially for the holidays. I decorate for all seasons: Halloween, Christmas, Valentine’s Day, Easter. I have seven trees this





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year. In a perfect Carma World, I would get that all done in one day — lies! I almost took myself out last year when I waited until after Thanksgiving to start decorating. This year, I started decorating for Christmas on November 1.”

Outside, as you approach the house, you’ll be greeted by a giant Santa waving jovially. He’s surrounded by an assortment of Christmas balls that must have fallen from his tree, some topiary packages and a mail box to get your letters to the big guy.

Carma’s current decorating theme is red, white and black — so you’ll see lots of peppermint candy stripes and lots of plaid. “A lot of my furniture is black, so the red and white accents work beautifully with that. For the sake of marriage, I stick with the same colors for several years at a time.” The tree in the entry starts the red theme off strong. It’s covered in red balls and bows, bringing the white in via some giant snowflakes. And the costume of a Black Santa. Silver joins the palette with a sleigh, faux presents and other sparkling accents.

To the left, the living room hosts a small tree with outsized silver and gold decorations — balls and poinsettias. A couple of friends of the Santa by the entry tree, stand guard over this one as well as spiffing up the coffee table.

To the left is the dining room. Here, the red and white decorations on the tree really pop against the black accent wall Carma covered in antique ceiling tiles. The table is decked with festive red, white and black place settings. A large red pickup truck delivers goodies, and a pair of red-flocked nutcrackers



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stand guard over packages, candlesticks and stemware alike.

The kitchen boasts a snowy wreath on every cabinet door. Gingerbread men frolic about among the candy houses and holiday-themed dishtowels.

The den is where white and black plaid comes to the fore. The mantel is festooned with stockings for everyone, including Gucci, the dog. “Corey is in charge of the stockings. That’s the one part of Christmas that he takes charge of,” Carma reported with a smile. “We’re all grown, or nearly grown. There are no grandkids yet, but we still do stockings for everyone every year. Corey makes sure everyone gets a toothbrush, some candy they like and a gift card. The girls still put out milk and cookies for Santa. I have a special plate just for that.”



There are other things the family does together at Christmas. “We always get matching pajamas. For several years it’s been all about silk, but this year, we’re going for something playful ... maybe a character theme. We always have breakfast together. Christmas is family all day long. It’s a time to slow down and reflect and prepare for the new year. I like getting to be lazy and driving around to look at the lights. When they were little, we always let the girls open one gift the night before. Now, we do name swaps with wish lists. It lets us all be intentional about our gift giving. The girls’ grandmother, Gigi, collects angels. The girls look forward to gifting her with a new angel each year. Oh, and we always watch *A Charlie Brown Christmas*.”

Christmas decorating is how Carma shows her love. “Some people like to cook or sew. I like decorating. It’s an expression of my love for home and family. My family doesn’t get involved much, but they’re very supportive. They send me pictures of decorating ideas all through the year to encourage me. This is my way of adding a little sugar and spice to our family.” **NOW**

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A HOT DIY PROJECT

— By Bill Smith



What could be more pleasant on a cool, late-fall-through-early-spring evening than being seated around your own backyard fire pit? As a do-it-yourself project, the task is not only relatively simple, but it's also inexpensive and can be completed in just a day.

You'll need some common tools for this project. Both a straight and a pointed shovel will come in handy. A level — ideally a two-foot level and a four-foot level. Have a two-by-four about three feet long to use as a screed. A rubber mallet will help align your stones, and something with which to tamp the base down is also needed.

Materials include retaining wall blocks (36 is a good number for an average fire pit), square concrete pavers might be used for the floor of the pit, but some people also use

gravel or lava rock. If you choose the pavers, get some pea gravel to fill in the gaps. One bag of sand or paver base should be adequate. Get a metal fire pit ring.

Site selection is the first consideration, even before driving to the local home improvement store to choose the materials. Find a spot that is relatively level, with a water source nearby and far enough from any structures that an unfriendly fire can be easily extinguished. It appears that 15 feet from other structures is a common distance, but it is always a good idea to check local building codes before you make your final decision.

Your fire pit may be round or square, with the round structure perhaps the most popular. Paving stones or retaining wall blocks are available with sides cut at an angle so that 10 stones joined tightly together will produce a pit about 25 inches in diameter, whereas 12 stones might yield 30 to 35 inches. The thickness of the stones will determine the final height of the pit, and a common design of a backyard pit is three stones high.

Some large home improvement stores may sell a kit

that includes the stones and a metal fire ring, including instructions and a diagram of the completed size of the pit. One might want to just get an idea of what size pit the kit will produce and make a few changes, or just purchase the kit and create a “stock version.” Creating your custom kit might prove to be a little less expensive, but you will probably want to include a metal fire ring with this project, so that should be the first thing to consider, since that will give you an idea of the size of your pit and how many retaining wall blocks you will need.

After you determine the location and purchase the stones and fire ring, you will need to dig a hole. Place the metal fire ring on the ground in your selected location, and surround it with the first layer of stones. Push the shovel into the ground at regular intervals around the stones to mark the circle. Then remove the blocks and dig the hole about seven inches deep inside the area you marked.

To make sure you have a firm, level base, put sand or paver base in the hole. If you are on clay soil, drainage could be an issue, so you might want to dig another, deeper hole in the middle and fill it with gravel to provide a place for excess water to go. Use a level and a screed (a two-by-four works fine) to make sure the base is level and tamp the base down firmly.

Place your first row of stones around the inside of the first hole and make sure the top is level. You can always add a little sand or paver base under part of the individual stones or take a little away to get the first row as level as possible. If the first row is level, the next rows should be also.

If you haven't already put the metal fire ring in place, do it now, then add your next two rows of stones. The project could be considered complete at this point, but some builders like to add either heat-resistant adhesive or mortar to hold the stones in place.

Well done! Now it's time to bring out the marshmallows and make some s'mores! **NOW**

Sources:
1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pWffhXndXr4>.
2. <https://www.hgtv.com/outdoors/landscaping-and-hardscaping/how-to-build-a-fire-pit-for-less-than-100>.



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Zoomed In:
Dwight Perry

By Adam Walker

Dwight Perry is the principal at Bessie Coleman Middle School in Cedar Hill. “I absolutely love being the principal at BCMS,” he beamed. “This role holds personal significance for me, as I’m deeply invested in our community and school. I’ve had the privilege of watching many of our scholars grow and mature into incredible young people. This is also where my journey as an administrator began, and this year, my first class of sixth-graders will be walking the stage in May. It’s an honor to serve our community and all stakeholders.”

Maybe that’s why his staff celebrated him with a basket of all his favorite things for National Principals Month. They also teased him a bit with “Dress Like Mr. Perry Day.”



Minister Patricia Coleman of The Jubilee Church of DeSoto (third from the left) celebrates her birthday with Ann Woodberry, Carolyn Campbell and Phyllis Stevenson.



Antwanette Lynn and Benjamin Landrey help Tackle Childhood Cancer.



First Methodist School students and staff dress up as their favorite community helpers.



Options Real Estate opens their new offices in Duncanville.



The Friends Place team, Legs Miserable, raised more than \$2,600 for the fight to end Alzheimer's.



Camilo Ortiz helps Duncanville get ready for Christmas.



Exchange students Byron Cupido, from the Netherlands, and Juliette Vandenbrouck, from Belgium, make their mark at CHHS.



The Society of St. Vincent de Paul of North Texas provides much-needed classroom supplies for teachers and scholars in DeSoto ISD.

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CookingNOW *In the Kitchen With* JONATHAN AND BECKY ADAMS

— By Adam Walker

Jonathan and Becky Adams are a husband-and-wife baking duo. “I have a background in baking through many years of growing up,” Becky explained. “I was doing this already for my family from a young age. Then I taught Jonathan about various cooking and baking styles and methods.”

“Baking is what brought us together over 10 years ago, and it’s something we enjoy getting to do together,” Jonathan added. “Whether it’s sweet or savory, we like to do it all. We bake all kinds of breads and sweet treats, taking out all the filler ingredients that, at one time, did not exist in these foods. We decided to open our own home bakery business last October, Adams Family Farm. We’re always making adjustments to make each bake better.” **NOW**

Old Fashioned Chocolate Fudge

3 cups granulated sugar
2/3 cup cocoa
1/4 tsp. salt
1 1/2 to 1 3/4 cups whole milk
1/4 cup unsalted butter
1 tsp. vanilla

- 1.** Line a 9x5-inch bread pan with parchment paper.
- 2.** In a medium heavy saucepan, stir together the sugar, cocoa and salt. Add the milk; stir with a wooden spoon, stirring all the way to the bottom. (Do not use a whisk or a metal spoon.)
- 3.** Cook over medium heat, continuously stirring, until the mixture starts to boil,

approximately 15 minutes.

4. When the mixture reaches a boil, turn the heat to low-medium and continue to cook, without stirring, until the temperature reaches 234 F (112 C) to 236 F (113 C). Approximately half an hour.

5. When it reaches the temperature above, immediately move it off the heat. Keep the thermometer in the mixture adding the butter and vanilla. Do not stir.

6. Cool to 136 F (58 C). This will take approximately another half an hour.

7. When the mixture reaches 136 F (58 C), begin to mix the melted butter and vanilla into the mixture, stirring all the way to the bottom, until it begins to lose some of its glossiness. Approximately 3-5 minutes.

8. When you notice a small change in the glossiness, pour immediately into the lined pan; let it cool down completely (The pour timing is extremely important. If mixed too long it may seize, meaning it does not want to pour and comes out as a block. You may attempt to reheat this mixture in the same pan back up to 234 F (112 C) to

236 F (113 C), adding a small amount of milk, and cool again to 136 F (58 C). If you pour too early, the mixture will not firm up in the pan). The fudge can take 3 hours to overnight to fully set.

9. Cut the fudge into squares; store in an airtight container at room temperature.

10. You can also freeze the fudge in a double bag that is well-wrapped. Fudge can be frozen for up to 3 months, stored in an airtight container for 2 weeks at room temperature or in the fridge for 3-4 weeks.

Oatmeal Peanut Butter Cookies

- 1 1/4 cups brown sugar**
- 1 cup white sugar**
- 1/4 tsp. salt**
- 2 tsp. baking soda**
- 3/4 tsp. vanilla**
- 12 oz. peanut butter**
- 1 stick butter, softened**
- 3 eggs**
- 1 cup chocolate chips (optional)**
- 4 1/2 cups oats**
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour**

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F
2. Mix the brown sugar, white sugar, salt, baking soda, vanilla, peanut butter and butter in a stand mixer or with a hand mixer until thoroughly combined.
3. Add the eggs to the mixture. Add the chocolate chips, if desired.
4. Add the oats and flour to the mixture. Texture here is key. You want the mixture to be firm enough to hold together. If your mixture is too runny, or is not holding together, add more flour, a little at a time, until it does (1/4 cup at a time).
5. For large cookies, fill a 1/4 cup measuring tool and place the dough spaced 4 inches apart on an ungreased cookie sheet.
6. Bake the cookies for 17 minutes. When fully baked, take them out of the oven and wait for them to cool completely. They are more susceptible to crumbling than other types of cookies if not allowed to cool properly.

To search for more great recipes from any of the 9 NOW Magazines publications, visit www.nowmagazines.com.

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"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life;" John 14:6
"Ye must be born again" John 3:3

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1. God so loves you. John 3:16
2. You have broken the law of God. "For sin is the transgression of the law," 1 John 3:4; Romans 3:10,23
1. The penalty of your sin is separation from God in the lake of fire. Revelation 20:14-15; Romans 6:23
2. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for you by dying on the cross. Romans 5:8 "Christ died for us."
3. All you must do is by faith ask the Lord Jesus Christ to come into your life. John 1:12; Romans 10:13

Pray this prayer: Dear God, I know I am a sinner and am sorry for all my sins. I believe you died on the cross, you were buried, and rose again the third day to pay my sin debt. I now trust you and you alone for my salvation. Thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen

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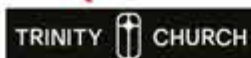


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Turkeys were found on pages 6, 10, 15, 18 & 34.

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12/5

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12/6

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12/7

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12/10

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12/14

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12/18

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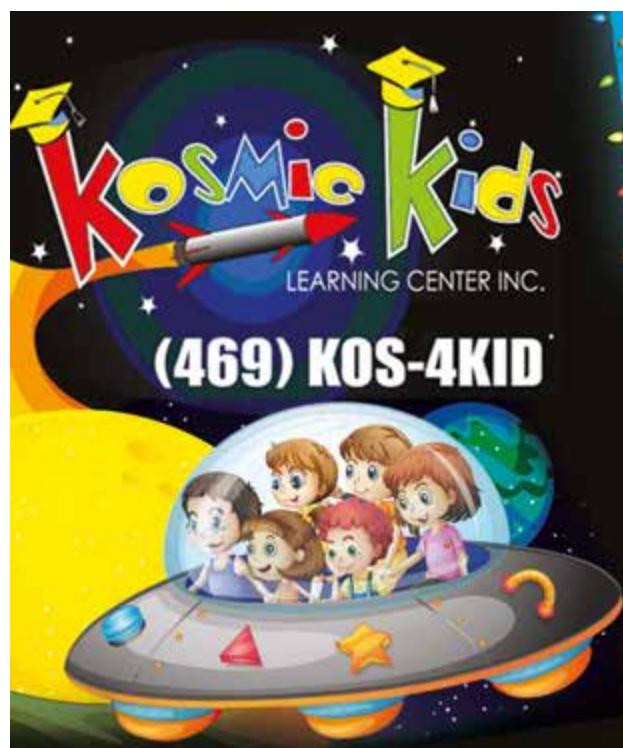


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