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M A G A Z I N E

JANUARY 2023

Rock Bottom to Recovery

Nikki Thomas uses
her experiences to
help others

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt

Crossword/Sudoku

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Nikki Thomas - recovered and standing tall.

Photo by
Memories by Melissa.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Happy New Year!

As these winter temperatures drop and the rain finally falls after such a long summer drought, I'm thankful I was able to go on two campouts recently with friends. Our state parks are beautiful treasures, which highlight the vast diversity of our wonderful state. We were lucky enough to secure sites at Lake Mineral Wells and Martin Dies, Jr. state parks. Both had ample water and hiking activities. The latter, with its bayous, swamps and pine trees draped in Spanish moss, sported alligators and other wildlife my dogs and I aren't accustomed to seeing so close-up. While my little dog, Jazz, takes all our travels completely in stride, Honey, my Louisiana Leopard Catahoula, had to be reassured that the armadillo rooting near my camper wasn't interested in harming us. The raccoons and armadillos at both parks had no fear of us and would come right into our evening fireside talks looking for handouts. They had to do with crumbs after we departed for lights out. My cousin, Ann Blankinship, joined me at Martin Dies, Jr. State Park, and we had fun, food and fellowship even though it rained two days of our four-day stay.

Corsicana came alive last month with all the lights and activities as part of the holiday season and the 175th Birthday Celebration. I hope everyone got a chance to walk or drive through Community Park, take family and friend photos at the Beaton Street Christmas tree and ride the Pioneer Village hayride. Kudos to the Parks and Recreation and Main Street folks for making this season even more memorable and enjoyable than ever before.

Love, peace and joy!



Virginia

Virginia Riddle
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ROCK BOTTOM TO RECOVERY

— By Virginia Riddle

These days, Nikki Thomas wakes to prayer while drinking her coffee. Every day, she fights against her drug addiction by practicing the 12 steps of recovery, helping others find their lighted way through that dark veil and, at day's end, she finds an inner peace and mission. "It's my faith in God's promise to Job ... trust the walk and everything that was lost will be restored and multiplied," Nikki said.


Hitting rock bottom happened one night when, as she watched her daughters sleep, Nikki was contemplating how to commit suicide. "The next day, I sent the girls to their dad and took all the opioids I could get," Nikki recalled. "I was using meth and opioids and had fallen down [their] rabbit hole. I had nothing left to lose, so I didn't care about anything."

An Arkansas native, Nikki was born to parents who worked hard and played hard. "My mom was an addict, and my dad left us when I was 5," she remembered. "I was a party girl in school who could still make great grades. I graduated high school, and my mom and I got to Corsicana where I needed a way to support us. I took a job in a club where I met my husband."

By her mid-20s, Nikki was married, and the couple were using recreational drugs and alcohol with his friends when the kids weren't around. "I was living the 'soccer mom' life and was on the honor roll at Navarro College studying to be a paralegal/prelaw major," she shared. "I wondered then why I was OK after using, and everyone else wasn't." Her opioid use started after being prescribed pain killers following a miscarriage. "I had almost died in surgery, but I felt normal with the pills," she explained. "When the drugs kicked in, I had sunshine in me, but I was becoming more reclusive because I couldn't quit." Her husband, after a motorcycle accident, also received pain medication prescriptions, giving Nikki easy access.

"I now understand the science of addiction and the physical and emotional symptoms."





Map showing the location of Sunset Cove Marina on the south shore of Richland Chambers Reservoir. The marina is located at the intersection of FM 1393 and FM 2859. Surrounding roads include HWY 31, HWY 287, and Farm to Market Rd 2859. Nearby towns include Mildred, Eureka, and Corsicana. The marina is situated between Goodlow and Farm to Market Rd 2859.

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Then the arrests and divorce came. In all, Nikki's record shows two felonies and several misdemeanor arrests for possession of a controlled substance and family disturbance. Her ex-husband gained custody of their daughters. "I had lost my identity as a mom," she said. She was spiraling further downward. "I was released on probation after serving 48 days in county jail but was arrested again. I served eight months before a hearing where I pleaded with then DA Lowell Thompson, who I knew from my paralegal studies, and Judge Putnam to let me go to a residential treatment center. I knew I needed to do this to fight for my life," Nikki stated. "I went first to a center in Granger, Texas, and then one in Austin. I had a lot of work to do and had to trust God."

It wasn't easy to return to Corsicana after treatment. "I had to come home and face life's skeletons. I had nothing — no kids, car, home, job, school," Nikki said. "I had lots of work to do, so I tapped into support groups. Opioids had made me feel everything was OK emotionally and physically. After I stopped using, I felt I couldn't control anything. Friends gave me a place to stay. I had known Susan Hale who had been my professor and who then owned the diner. I asked Susan for a job, and she gave me one. She was 100 percent supportive. Judge Davenport ate lunch often at the diner. He and his wife, Carole, and I had lots of discussions on the legal, moral and ethical aspects as well as the stigma and punishments for drug abuse and addiction.

Then Nikki was offered a job in the recovery community. "I now understand the science of addiction and the physical and emotional symptoms," she explained. "It took me four years after I returned to regain custody of my daughters who have been supportive of me, including making my story transparent to help others. They are my biggest critics and cheerleaders and deserve to walk through this new life's light with me. I had to prove to the court and my family I felt like I was in control again. My story is relatable to so many today, and telling it keeps me going forward.

"Getting my girls home and being able to re-establish my place in our community are two of my best



experiences. My absence while in treatment wasn't in vain. I've made amends to my family and friends, and I love being able to be there for the people I love and those who need me. I like making new friends and seeing my family heal. I've learned so much from being knocked on my butt. I'm learning who I am."

Nikki's biggest challenge in staying sober is that she knows because of her metabolism, she can be addicted and remain functional. She's considering a return to college and hopes to work with the DA Will Thompson's office to establish a Diversion Court, which will allow addicts to get residential treatment. Nikki works toward community education and the "embracement" of treatment before punishment.

She offers the following advice to those who have taken the path of addiction. "Call your addiction out for what it is. Being honest with yourself is the first step. Addicts lie to themselves and others because secrets keep us safe. The second step is to get help. Most of the time, there's a placement in a treatment facility even for a patient without insurance. Calling and reaching out doesn't usually result in immediate resources, but it's a start. You must get to the root cause of your mental health crisis or addiction. Life can get better. Just reach out and get help." **NOW**

Editor's Note: Nikki can be contacted at nicoleoaksrussell@gmail.com or (469) 951-6101.




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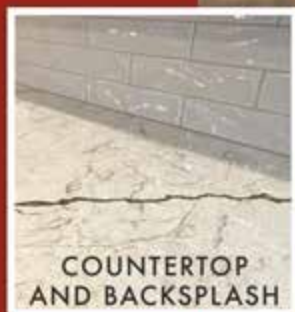
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— By Virginia Riddle

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Forming lasting relationships with sellers, buyers and local mortgage lenders is foremost in Jeff Hoover’s mind as he meets the needs of his clients. “I love meeting people and have lots of patience in finding just the right property and generating sales for my sellers,” Jeff stated. “I enjoy working with people and want the best for them.”

A Coldwell Banker Realty sales agent since 2019, Jeff has been a member of the CB Million Dollar Club every quarter



of 2022 with continued sales throughout Navarro County and the Dallas Metroplex. Coldwell Banker, established 116 years ago, opened its Global Luxury Office in April 2017, and Jeff is completing Global Luxury Specialist certification. Aiding Jeff in his desire to help people is CB’s Project North Star program which, according to a CB website, creates “expert agents who guide people home. The CBx Technology Suite provides agents with exclusive access to in-depth market data and advanced pricing tools that allow them to position homes to sell and strategically market to target buyers nationally.”

With the goal of becoming a real estate agent by age 18, Jeff began his career in California in 1999. A move to the Dallas-Ft. Worth Metroplex allowed him to become a loan officer and underwriter in the mortgage industry, giving him valuable experience relating to real estate. “An agent or broker has to be knowledgeable to make real estate transactions happen,” Jeff explained. “For instance, to help both buyers and sellers, I’m not worried about higher interest rates because I understand the mortgage programs available

and can structure the transaction to satisfy everyone. To aid sellers, CB has a program to help the seller revitalize their property by fixing it up, thus maximizing their profit. The CB programs are available to help people, so I'm able to grow my business."

"I love meeting people and have lots of patience in finding just the right property and generating sales for my sellers."

While Jeff primarily handles residential sales and leasing, he said, "Our office in Dallas can handle all types of real estate transactions." He's excited about the growth Corsicana is experiencing and the new construction around the Wal-Mart area. Jeff is a member of the MetroTex Association of Realtors, Texas Association of Realtors and the National Association of Realtors and adheres to the association and state licensing laws and rules. "I owe fiduciary responsibility and follow the ethics rules to make sure everything's done honestly, and I work to make sure contract deadlines are met in a timely manner," he said.

Being on call for buyers and sellers all the time necessitates occasional down time. Jeff likes to travel through the Western U.S. and to the Virginia/D.C. area. When on the road, his business continues through his Dallas office's manager, and Jeff returns refreshed and ready to serve again.

"I love people and enjoy listening to their stories, so I know better how to help," he said. "I'm happiest when I can turn their lives to happiness, sometimes during a most stressful time. Seeing the end goal, when a client's face lights up, that's exciting! They are ready to move, raise their family and live their lives totally satisfied with the transaction. Client and buyer satisfaction is my driving motivation to be in the real estate business and is always my focal point." **NOW**



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Zoomed In:
Brett Blanton

By Virginia Riddle

Having the benefit of raising a family in a small town near grandparents, Brett and his wife, Cheryl Blanton, moved to Corsicana 18 years ago. Now, he oversees their two businesses, Little Red School House and Corsicana Creamery. “Cheryl’s parents have been a great second string to help raise these kids, and I enjoy getting anywhere in Corsicana in five minutes,” Brett said. “I’m looking forward to experiencing Corsicana’s growth.”

A member of Corsicana First Methodist, Brett has led the praise band team. He volunteers through Carpentry for Christ. Fixing things, hunting, spending time with family and dogs, traveling, playing the guitar, writing songs and riding bikes and motorcycles are his hobbies, and at age 20, he motorcycled throughout Europe for a year!



Aimee Kasprzyk is initiated into the Alpha Rho Chapter, DKG.



Dantrell Sims takes a pause in his volunteering around his hometown.



Patrina Johnson became Sister Amanda Berry Smith in Navarro College’s Home Free.



The CFD firefighters share the new fire safety simulator trailer with James L. Collins Catholic School students.



Coyote Squadron Col. Ken Fling receives a VFW honor during his 100th birthday celebration.



Denise Bennett portrays Clementina Rind, colonial printer and newspaper publisher, for James Blair, DAR members.



Navarro College's John Deere Program student, Robert Wilkerson, and instructor, Alex Marantel, meet with NARFE Chapter 1191 members.



Lloyd Hickerson packs Kinsloe House for his Poodle Skirts, Bobby Socks & PONYTAILS presentation.

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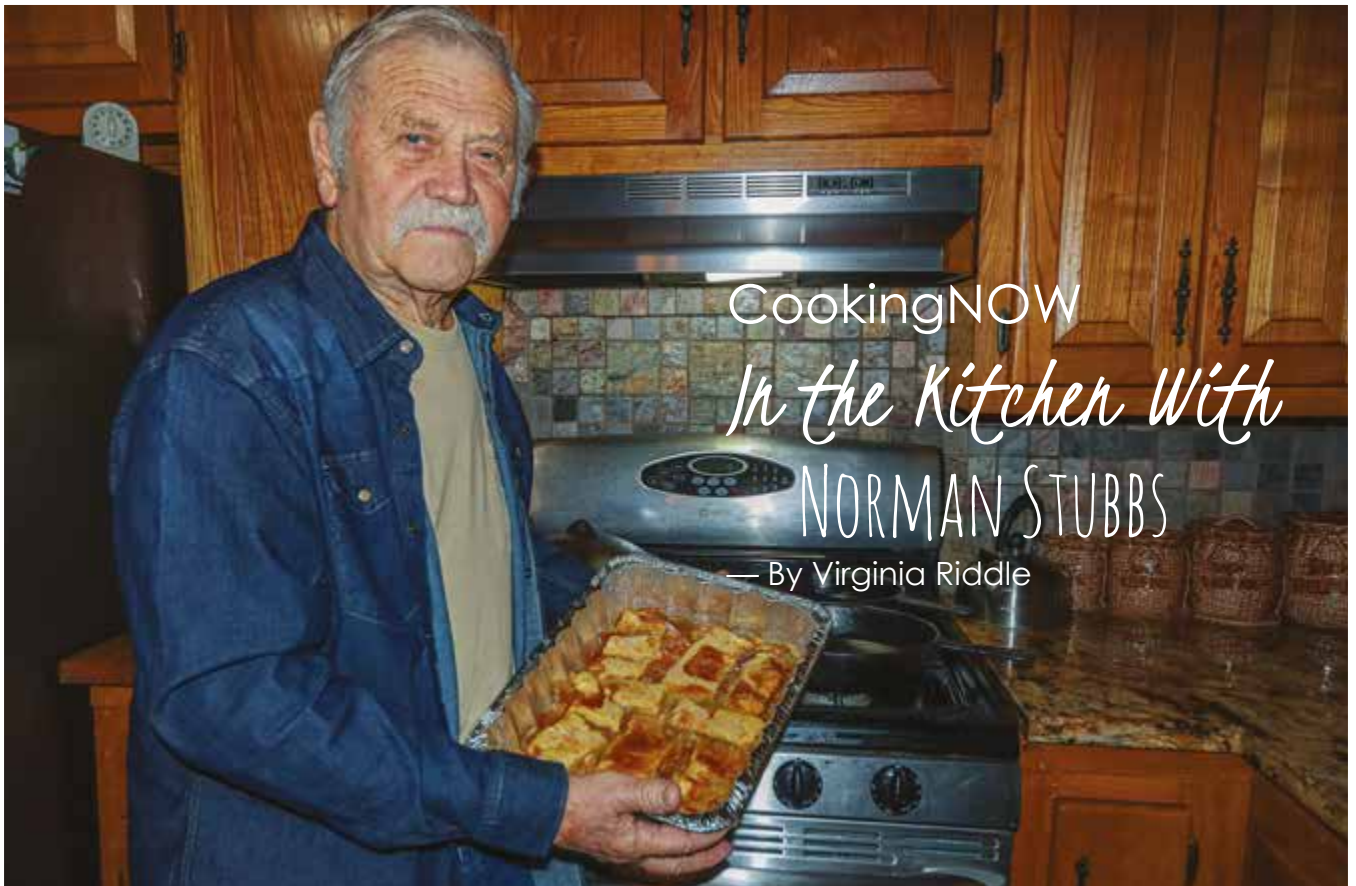
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Traditional black-eyed peas and cornbread usher in the New Year for the Stubbs household. Norman Stubbs started cooking at age 8 at his family's home in the Zion's Rest community north of Corsicana. "My mama, Mamie Stubbs, was raised at the Corsicana State Home," Norman said. "She learned to cook from her mother-in-law, Maggie, after she married my dad, Gene Stubbs."

Norman enjoys cooking with cast-iron at home or when camping. He uses family recipes, finds recipes in old cookbooks or he shared, "I'll have conversations with Google and Alexa. They help with recipes and help me learn about eating healthier. Google's pretty smart!"

A third-generation house painter, Norman enjoys cooking for friends and family. He added, "I like for people to like my cooking." **NOW**

Mama Mamie Stubbs' Orange Cookies

Cookies:

1/2 cup shortening
3/4 cup sugar
1 egg
1 1/4 cups flour
1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
2 Tbsp. orange juice
1 1/2 tsp. orange rind

Topping:

1/4 cup sugar
2 tsp. orange juice

1. For cookies: Preheat the oven to 350 F; grease a baking sheet. In a bowl, cream the shortening and sugar together until the mixture is fluffy. Add the egg; blend well.
2. Sift the dry ingredients together into another bowl; add to the creamed mixture. Add the orange juice and rind; mix well.
3. For topping: In a bowl, mix the sugar and orange juice until the sugar is dissolved.
4. Drop the dough by spoonfuls onto the baking sheet 2 inches apart; with a measuring spoon, indent the center of each cookie.
5. Drop 1/4 tsp. of the topping into each indentation; Bake for 8-10 minutes until the cookies are light brown. Remove from the oven immediately; let cool.

Quick, Easy and Delicious Goulash

2 lbs. ground meat
1 white onion, peeled and chopped
1 red onion, peeled and chopped
1 24-oz. can Hunt's Meat Flavored Pasta Sauce
4 pasta sauce cans water
1 10-oz. can Ro-Tel Diced Tomatoes and Green Chilies
1/2 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
1 16-oz. bag medium-size shell pasta

1. In a skillet, brown the ground meat and onions; set aside.
2. In a stew pot, add the pasta sauce, water, Ro-Tel, salt and pepper; bring the mixture to a boil.
3. Add the meat mixture; return the goulash to a boil. Add the pasta; boil the mixture until the pasta is tender.

Chicken and Dumplings

This recipe may be quadrupled.

1 chicken breast, stewed, deboned, pulled or chopped
2 cups flour
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. pepper

1/3 cup Crisco
Sweet milk, to desired consistency

1. Prepare the chicken in a stockpot; set aside, reserving the stock. Sift the flour, baking powder, salt and pepper together into a bowl. Cut in the Crisco until the flour mixture is soft with a pebbly look. Add enough sweet milk to make a soft dough; if the dough becomes sticky, add more flour.
2. Let the dough stand for at least 10-15 minutes. On a floured cutting board, roll the dough to about 1/16-inch thickness. Slice the dough into 2-inch squares; drop the squares in layers into the chicken stock and chicken, bringing the stock to a rolling boil. Allow the stock to boil over each layer of squares before adding another or they will stick together.
3. Cover the pan; cook for 12-15 minutes; let stand about 10 minutes before serving.

Cold Weather Stew

- 1 1-lb. bag carrots, peeled and cut into bite-size chunks**
- 1 5-lb. bag potatoes, peeled and diced (divided use)**
- 2 1/2 lbs. stew meat, Pike’s Peak or rump roast preferred**
- 1 white onion, chopped**
- 1 yellow onion, chopped**
- 1 24-oz. can Hunt’s Pasta Sauce**
- 1 16-oz. can Ro-Tel tomatoes**
- 2 8-oz. cans tomato paste**

1. Fill a stew pot 2/3 of the way up with water; add the carrots. Bring to a boil.
2. Add two potatoes; cook at least 20 minutes, or until the potatoes have dissolved.
3. Cut the meat into bite-size chunks; in a skillet, brown the meat and onions.
4. Add the meat mixture, remaining ingredients and the rest of the potatoes to the stew pot. Simmer until the potatoes are softened.

Quick Peach Cobbler

This recipe can be used for fried pies by shaping the dough into pie tins.

- Filling:**
- 1 20-oz. can peaches**
 - 1 1/2 cups sugar**
 - 1 stick butter**
 - 1/2 tsp. cinnamon or nutmeg**

- Piecrust:**
- 3 cups flour**
 - 1 1/2 cups Crisco**
 - 1/2 tsp. salt**
 - 1 tsp. vinegar**
 - 7 Tbsp. cold water**

1. *For filling:* Preheat the oven to 350 F. Into a saucepan, pour the peaches, 1 peach



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Quick Peach Cobbler

3 okra pods, sliced
Handful of fresh green beans
(or 1 14.5-oz. can)
Mild cheddar or mozzarella cheese,
sliced

1. In a steamer, bring the water to a boil; steam the kale for at least 5 minutes.
2. Add the remaining vegetables; steam about 3 minutes for soft food or remove sooner for al dente.
3. Serve with mild cheddar or mozzarella cheese slices.

can of water, sugar, butter and cinnamon or nutmeg; heat until the butter is melted and the sugar has dissolved.

2. For piecrust: In a bowl, mix the flour, Crisco and salt; cut together until the dough has a soft, small pebbly look.

3. Add the vinegar and water; mix well.

4. On a floured cutting board, roll out the dough; cut into strips.

5. In a treated baking pan, add half the peach mixture; top with half the dough

strips. Pour in the remaining peach mixture; top with the remaining dough strips. Bake until the strips are brown.

Steamed Vegetables

Any other desired vegetables can be added to this recipe.

Handful of kale

1 yellow squash, sliced

1 zucchini, sliced

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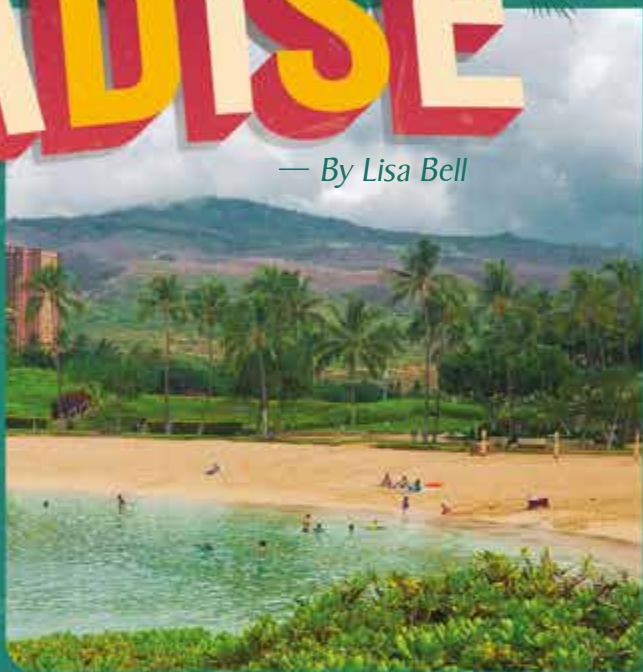
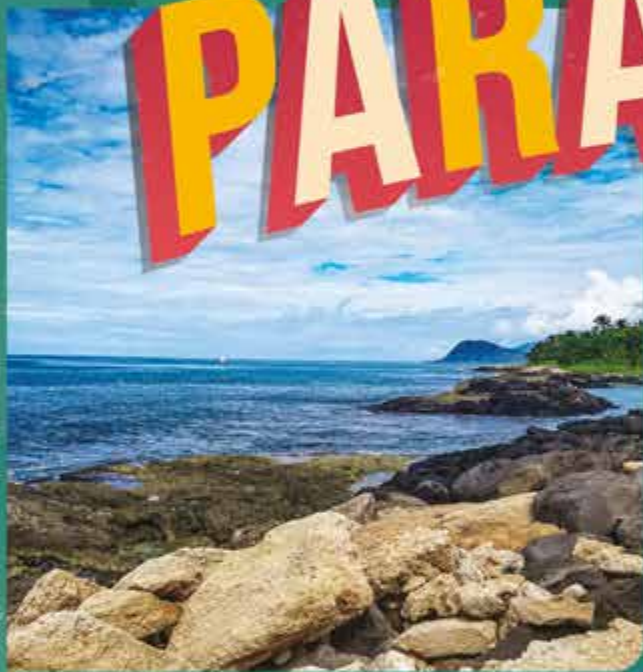
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Moments in PARADISE

— By Lisa Bell



A wonderful place to visit anytime of the year, the colder months in Texas might be the perfect time to escape to O‘ahu, Hawaii. One of the big four islands, O‘ahu, “The Heart of Hawaii,” offers a variety of activities. Of course, lying on the beach sipping a mai tai ranks high on the list of many visitors. Whether relaxing or ready to explore, with so many options, consider taking more than a week to get plenty of beach time alongside experiencing all the island offers.

From the renowned Waikiki beach to the North Shore for surfers, O‘ahu’s beaches in places like Ko Olina don’t disappoint. Many include lagoons where gentler waves allow for splashing in the ocean and snorkeling without having waves crash too hard. Although the beaches are public, private entities and resorts rent cabanas and chairs, and these beaches tend toward fewer crowds. For truly secluded beaches, you might need a local to point you in the right direction.

With blue water and waves crashing against rocks, don’t miss the sun rising or setting from the beach, while spectacular colors fill the sky. Or hop aboard one of the many chartered boats for a romantic sunset cruise. During early mornings, you might catch an exercise class or people walking or jogging beside the ocean. To satisfy your more adventurous side, try a hike

to the iconic volcano crater, Lē‘ahi, or one of the tropical mountain trails.

While many people seek the Polynesian Gardens, you might also want to visit places such as the Honolulu Botanical Gardens, the Waimea Falls Park and Dole Plantation. Throughout the island, enjoy bright flora and a variety of birds, and chickens run as free as any fowl. Every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, the Hawaiian Railway Society Sugar Cane Train runs from Ewa to Kahe Point, with a stop at Ko Olina for those who want to purchase ice cream. The fun two-hour trip includes a bit of sugar cane history.

Be sure to plan a day at Pearl Harbor, taking several hours to tour the museums and visitor’s center. As you walk through the recounted timeline, let your imagination take you to December 7, 1941. A surreal atmosphere of beauty mixed with sorrow covers Pearl Harbor, and few leave untouched by the experience.

For those who love city life, both Honolulu and Waikiki offer scores of shopping opportunities, restaurants and vibrant night life. But don’t neglect the outskirts, where smaller communities provide a taste of Hawaiian cuisine and culture. And don’t forget to book a luau for an unforgettable evening of food and a colorful presentation of multiple cultures and entertaining dancers.

Those who love shopping and souvenirs may want to stop by Aloha Stadium Swap Meet and Marketplace. Every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday since 1979, families gather to share cultural diversity with pride. Over 400 vendors, crafters and artists provide a wide selection of clothing, jewelry, Hawaiian souvenirs and exclusive art. Visit with local artisans and leave with more than you expected for your money. Go early, and wear comfortable shoes.

With so much to see on O‘ahu, you may not get to do everything in one trip. And that doesn’t include the other seven largest islands that represent the 137 Hawaiian Islands. Plan your trip in advance, and consider taking an extra bag for the flight home. **NOW**

For more information, visit www.hawaii-guide.com.

Photos by Lisa Bell.

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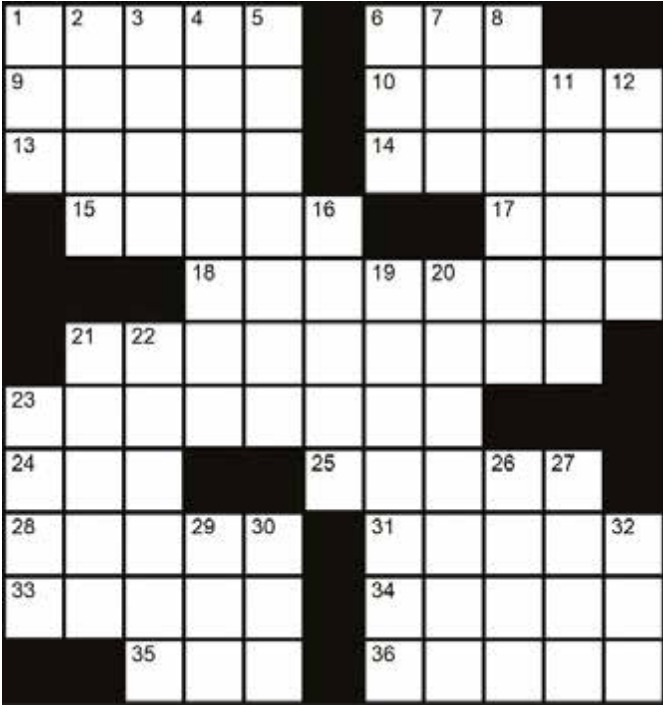


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Crossword Puzzle



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- Across**

 - 1 Mediterranean island
 - 6 To be unwell
 - 9 Beginning of a clarification
 - 10 Trial printing impression
 - 13 Priestess in "The Pearl Fishers"
 - 14 Portuguese saint
 - 15 Arrests
 - 17 Bachelor's last words?
 - 18 Went around
 - 21 Warlike woman
 - 23 Talk radio staple
 - 24 It replaced the Pan-American Union
 - 25 Diminish
 - 28 Wall recess
 - 31 Dogma
 - 33 Oversalivate
 - 34 Overused
 - 35 Grp. with panda logo
 - 36 Lake Placid's county
- Down**

 - 1 Artillery angular measure
 - 2 So be it
 - 3 Metal bikini wearer
 - 4 Afghanistan faction
 - 5 Study critically
 - 6 Computer prog
 - 7 "The Ballad of --- Hayes" (Peter La Farge)
 - 8 "Little Women" author --- May Alcott
 - 11 Ancient
 - 12 Every living thing needs it
 - 16 Plunder
 - 19 "The Kids Are All Right" actress --- Bening
 - 20 Chekhov trio
 - 21 "--- past a freckle"
 - 22 --- mule, a cocktail
 - 23 Doctor Who's Amy
 - 26 "Les Etats----"
 - 27 Safe
 - 29 Modus operandi
 - 30 "Lord of the Rings" character
 - 32 Country singer Ritter

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Sudoku Puzzle

Easy


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

Medium

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


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JANUARY

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.

1/4, 1/11, 1/21,
1/28 and 2/4

Navarro College Home Basketball Games:

Times vary, Wolen Special Event Center.
www.navarrobulldogs.com/sports.

1/5, 1/11, 1/17,
1/23 and 1/31

Presbyterian Children's Homes and Services Live Webinars:

These sessions will be for adults interested in adopting and/or fostering children. Times vary. For a link to the webinars, call (800) 888-1904.

1/11, 1/18
and 2/1

Kinsloe House Luncheon:

Noon, Kinsloe House, 618 W. 3rd Ave. For membership information or reservations, call (903) 654-0620.

1/17

MLK Breakfast:

7:00 a.m., Cook Education Center, 3100 W. Collin St. 1-800-Navarro.

1/26

The Music of Sam Cooke:

7:30 p.m., The Palace Theatre,

112 W. 6th Ave.
For more information, visit
www.corsicanapalace.com.

1/29

True Crime and Wine:

3:00-4:30 p.m., Cassaro Winery-Corsicana, 211 S. Beaton St. For reservations, call (972) 576-8662.

First Mondays

Piecemakers' Quilt Guild of Corsicana Meeting:

9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Westhill Church of Christ Family Room.
www.pggcorsicana.org.

Second Mondays

Impact Navarro Nonprofit Luncheon:

Lunch is available for purchase. Noon, Italian Village Restaurant. Facebook: Impact Navarro.

First and Third Tuesdays and Saturdays

Hope to Go Food Pantry:

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Second Tuesdays

National Active and Retired Federal Employees Chapter 1191 Meeting:

11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., rotating locations between Asian King Buffett in Waxahachie, the Sirloin Stockade in Corsicana and the Grand Ennis Buffet in Ennis. (972) 775-2463.

Savvy Seniors:

Complimentary lunch, games. 11:30 a.m., Corsicana Senior Center, 919 W. Park Ave. (903) 654-4980.

Corsicana Rainbow Girls & Pledges Masonic Youth:

For girls ages 7-20. 6:30 p.m., Corsicana Masonic Lodge, 201 N. 15th Street. Donna Dean, (903) 879-4305.

First Wednesdays

Mexia Woman's Friday Club:

Noon-1:00 p.m., Locations TBD each month. Facebook: Mexia Woman's Friday Club.

Wednesdays

Storytime:

10:30 a.m., Corsicana Public Library, 100 N. 12th St. Facebook: Corsicana Public Library.

Fourth Thursdays

Corsicana Newcomers Club Meeting:

11:00 a.m., Kinsloe House, 618 W. 3rd Ave. Annie Avery, (714) 345-6707.

Third Fridays

Better Garden Club:

9:00 a.m., Corsicana First Methodist Church, 320 N. 15th St. Facebook: Better Garden Club.

Second Saturdays

Mimosas at the Market:

10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Downtown Corsicana. (903) 654-4851.

Coyote Squadron Meeting:

10:30 a.m., Corsicana Municipal Airport, Christine.hall93@yahoo.com.

Third Saturdays

I.O.O.F. Trade Days:

9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., I.O.O.F. Event Center, 601 N. 45th St. (903) 872-7438.

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



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