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SouthwestNOW

M A G A Z I N E

JANUARY 2025

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Mayor Contreras
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Duncanville has a bright future.

Photo by
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Managing Editor, Becky Walker
Southwest Editor, Adam Walker
Office Assistant, Kristin Bato
Editors/Proofreaders, Rachel Rich
Virginia Riddle

GRAPHICS AND DESIGN

Creative Director, Chris McCalla
Artists, Jerri Akers . Kristin Bato
Martha Macias . Anthony Sarmienta

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photography Director, Chris McCalla
Photographer, Shane Kirkpatrick

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EDITOR'S NOTE



Adam

Adam Walker
SouthwestNOW Editor
adam.walker@nowmagazines.com
(469) 285-2008

I am Maximus Decimus Meridius ...

There's a meme going around that contrasts two dogs. One is brave and bold and ready for whatever life throws at him. The other is licking a window or sleeping upside down with his lips spread on the ground.

Russell Crowe's character in *Gladiator* is a strong warrior ready to take on life with sword in hand. He is an icon of manliness. My silver Lab, Murphy, is the Maximus dog — tall and strong and ready to bark at every corner of the yard to protect his domain. And those green eyes are a little scary.

The "My name is Jeff" line in the meme appears to be from a Channing Tatum character in *22 Jump Street*. The scene seems to be about a character who is an impostor in way over his head, who is getting no help digging out from his buddy. Abigail, my 9-month-old Golden Retriever, is more of a derp. The first time I quoted the meme at her, she did a big stretch and vibrated exactly on cue for, "My name is Jeff!"

I'm enjoying these silly memes, waiting to see what bizarre behavior the Jeff dog will exhibit. I've seen Chihuahuas with green yarn wigs and dogs tripping over sticks bigger than themselves and falling off couches while asleep. Some of my favorites have the same dog as both Maximus and Jeff. Murphy can be that way. You ought to see him sleeping on his back, everything to the wind. And he's fallen off the sofa more than once.

We all want to be Maximus — ready to take on whatever life throws at us in the new year. But far too often,

... My name is Jeff!

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WHY NOT?

— By Adam Walker

Duncanville’s Mayor Greg Contreras has been digging deep roots in the community for a long time. “My wife, Karen, and I have lived in Duncanville for 44 years,” he recalled. “My wife is a native Texan, from Houston. We met in California. Her job offered her a promotion that meant moving to the Dallas area. Neither of us had lived in this area before. We found a home we liked in Duncanville, and we’ve been here ever since. We raised our three kids here, and all of them went to Duncanville schools.

“When I started working for the city in 1990, I was one of three Hispanics working inside City Hall, and two of us did not speak Spanish,” Greg remembered. “I was the city’s building official, overseeing building inspections, code enforcement and health inspections. I also created Duncanville’s health department. Today, we have directors, assistant directors and superintendents who are Hispanic and were hired on their merits, not because they are bilingual. Over the last 10 to 15 years, the organization has become more diverse and representative of the community it serves. Joe Veracruz was Duncanville’s first Hispanic councilmember. Then, I was elected in 2021 to represent District 5, a heavily Hispanic district.

“When people started approaching me about running for mayor, I was looking for reasons not to. I was happy as the District 5 representative. But the outreach from the community was overwhelming,” Greg remembered about his decision to run. “I finally sat myself down and asked myself, ‘Why not?’ It was New Year’s Day, and I was sitting reading Scripture. That’s when I realized I’ve had a good life in Duncanville. I had every reason why I should run. I was blessed with being elected as mayor and continue to serve proudly.”

According to the 2020 Census, Duncanville’s demographics were 34.6 percent White, 30.6 percent Black and 43.1 percent Hispanic. “We are a diverse community: religiously, racially and by age. The community has selected a council that is more representative of that diversity. I’m very proud to be a part of the advancement of equal representation.



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"I ask that the Hispanic community continue getting involved, in order to see their concerns addressed. That's happening. During our last round of interviews for positions on boards and commissions, a lot of Hispanics applied and were accepted.

"With my years as a city employee, I bring a lot of institutional knowledge to the table. It's important not to overuse

that knowledge, and seem overbearing, but if you use it just enough, it's helpful. I want to assist in any way I can with the completion of Duncanville's comprehensive plan. It's important to stay in touch with where the citizens want to see the city go. How do we draw more people to our community located here between key roadways like I-20 and Hwy. 67? We want to bring more business to Duncanville, but the city is built out. A lot of thought has to go into it before we start redevelopment. We want to retrofit and reuse existing structures, so we preserve the look and feel of the community.

"My wife and I moved here and raised our children here because we saw a great future for our family in Duncanville," he recalled. "The young people living here today, want the same kind of future for their families. Their votes today are votes for their future. The council has to listen to the younger generation who choose to build their lives here when they tell us the things they want to see in their city. They want a dog park, bike trails and pickleball. We're working on developing

a bike plan to connect Duncanville with other cities. They want the city to be safer and cleaner. No one should be embarrassed about where they live, how their neighborhood looks.

"We're working on improving the library and the Senior Center. We want to improve the programs and activities we offer to our citizens.

"In our parks, the splash pad has been really popular. I think we are doing a good job of conveying the community's wishes. Rebuilding Kidsville, has been important. That park is really important to the community. A world-renowned artist, Hugh Hayden, recreated the old Kidsville as part of his exhibit at the Nasher Sculpture Center. He remembers it as a safe place in his childhood. We're looking at improvements to make all the parks better. We try to focus on each of the parks equally.

"Today, I drink way too much coffee. I like to meet with citizens over a cup of coffee, so that I can hear directly from them," Mayor Contreras added, "I like to turn those conversations into actions." **NOW**

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Sharon Poldrack shows her holiday spirit outside the DeSoto Library.

Zoomed In: By Adam Walker Myles Reed and Diana D'Amari

Myles Reed and Diana D'Amari welcomed skaters and would-be skaters to DeSoto on Ice. "I'm the cashier," Myles said. "And I help guard people on the ice to make sure they're being safe and help them up."

"Myles also takes care of the ice," Diana D'Amari added. "Last year, I taught the mayor to skate, and she brought a group of 50 elementary students to learn. When she saw me here again this year, she said she wants to bring another group! People don't know how to get on or off the ice or how to keep their balance if you don't teach them, but they get so excited when they see they can do it. I help them slow down and show them what they need to do."



Conductor Phyllis Edwards with Parties 2 U gives rides on the Christmas train through Armstrong Park.



Real Property Management in Duncanville holds their ribbon cutting.



Silas Felkins, Charles Mars Hearne and Liam Warren from First Methodist School Duncanville celebrate Veterans Day by wearing camo.



Duncanville ISD's Elementary All City Honor Choir performs holiday favorites.



The Cedar Hill Red Army Band finishes second at the National Championships in Huntsville, Alabama.



Larry Jemison trades driving an 18 wheeler for a CHISD school bus.



Paula Jones celebrates her 50th birthday with a drum circle at the Library in a Park.

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Darrell Babbitt, owner and operator of Superstar Collision, grew up in a family-owned paint and body shop in Dallas. His career began in the collision business in 1972. Since graduating high school, Darrell has been employed full time in the automotive/collision repair industry.



After working in management since 1987 at other high profile collision repair companies in the Dallas/Ft. Worth Metroplex, Darrell and his wife, Karen, made the decision to start Superstar Collision Center in 2006. "Superstar Collision is a true family-owned and -operated business including my wife, two sons, daughter-in-law and nephew. All are involved in the business in some capacity or another," Darrell said.


The average tenure of all management is 14 years. The relationship between Darrell and most of the management dates to the early '90s. One of the most significant differences between Superstar, or any family-operated business, and a corporation is that you are dealing with people who truly have a vested interest in doing things correctly and retaining the customer. A family-owned business will always be able to make a decision without having to consult with someone who is usually in another state or city, unaware of all the facts needed to determine how to best handle any given situation, from warranty/service issues to local sponsorships and/or purchases.

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Famous Tacos & More



Chief Maurice Jones





Chicken Enchilada Soup

CookingNOW

IN THE KITCHEN WITH LACY PHILLIPS

— By Adam Walker



Lacy Phillips loves cooking. “I can cook all day, as long as I have my music. I retired from nursing last June after 15 years as a labor and delivery nurse,” she said. She was 8 when she started cooking. “I learned from being in the kitchen with my mom. I grew up in Oak Cliff, and I have a Southern-Cajun type of cooking. I feel like my family heritage taught me to cook from the soul. I put love into all my dishes.

“I applied to the State Fair in 2021 and got in,” Lacy continued. “This was my fourth year as a concessionaire with my booth Mac Loaded. We do loaded mac and cheese. It’s a Fair fave. Watching the smiles on their faces with each bite warms my heart.” **NOW**

Chicken Enchilada Soup

- 3 cups chicken stock
- 1 10-oz. bag frozen corn
- 1 15-oz. can black beans, drained
- 1/2 small white onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 10-oz. can Ro-Tel
- 2 cups chicken, chopped
- 1 tsp. cumin
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne
- 1/2 pkt. taco seasoning
- 4 oz. Velveeta
- 1 cup sharp cheddar, shredded
- 1/3 cup sour cream, plus more for garnish
- Cilantro, to taste
- Tortilla strips, to taste

1. Bring the chicken stock to a boil.
2. Add the corn, beans, onions, garlic, Ro-Tel and chicken to the pot. Cover; cook on medium heat for 15 minutes.
3. Add the seasonings and cheeses to the soup; let cook for 10 minutes, until you have a creamy consistency.
4. Remove from heat; fold in the sour cream. Garnish with cilantro, more sour cream and tortilla strips.

Honey Dijon Chicken Thighs

- 1/3 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/4 cup honey Dijon mustard
- 2 Tbsp. minced garlic
- 6-8 chicken thighs
- 1 Tbsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- Olive oil

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F.
2. In a bowl, combine the wet ingredients, and the garlic.
3. Season the thighs with salt, pepper and garlic powder.
4. Heat a frying pan. Add the olive oil. Place the chicken in the pan, skin side down. Sear 3-4 minutes on each side. Once browned on each side, turn the heat down to medium; pour the sauce over the chicken. Allow to simmer 3-5 minutes. Baste the chicken. Place in the oven, uncovered, for 20 to 25 minutes to finish cooking.

Crab Spinach Dip

- 1/4 cup Parmesan, grated
- 1/2 cup mozzarella
- 1/2 cup smoked Gouda
- 1/2 cup white cheddar
- 4 oz. cream cheese
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- Salt, to taste

Pepper, to taste

1 Tbsp. minced garlic

1 12-oz. pkg. frozen spinach, thawed and drained

1 cup lump crab

1. Combine first four cheeses, reserving 1/2 cup.
2. To a medium saucepan, add the remaining combined cheeses, cream cheese and heavy cream. Cook until it is a creamy consistency; add the salt, pepper and garlic. Add the spinach; combine well.
3. Transfer to an oven-safe dish. Top with crab and remaining cheese. Cook at 450 F until the cheese is bubbly and brown.

Moscato Punch

1/2 container lemonade concentrate

1 bottle Moscato

1 cup water

1 bag frozen peaches

2 Granny Smith apples, sliced

10 strawberries, sliced

1 cup vodka

2 cups Sprite

1. In a pitcher, add the lemonade concentrate, Moscato and water; mix well. Add the peaches, apples and strawberries. Add the vodka and chill.
2. Right before serving, add the Sprite.

Crispy Cajun Breakfast Potatoes

2 cups chicken stock

4-5 medium potatoes, cubed

Avocado oil

1 tsp. salt

1 tsp. pepper

1 tsp. garlic powder

2 Tbsp. minced garlic

1/2 small onion, chopped

1/2 small bell pepper, chopped

2 Tbsp. butter

1 Tbsp. Cajun seasoning

1. Preheat the oven to 425 F.
2. On medium heat, boil the stock and potatoes for 10-12 minutes, or until tender. Drain the potatoes.
3. Spread the potatoes on a parchment-lined pan; drizzle with avocado oil, coating well. Season with salt, pepper and garlic powder. Add the minced garlic, onions and bell peppers; toss together.
4. Place in the oven for 30 minutes, flipping halfway through.
5. In a pan, melt the butter and Cajun seasoning. Drizzle on top of the potatoes; toss lightly to coat. Finish by broiling for 2 minutes in the oven.

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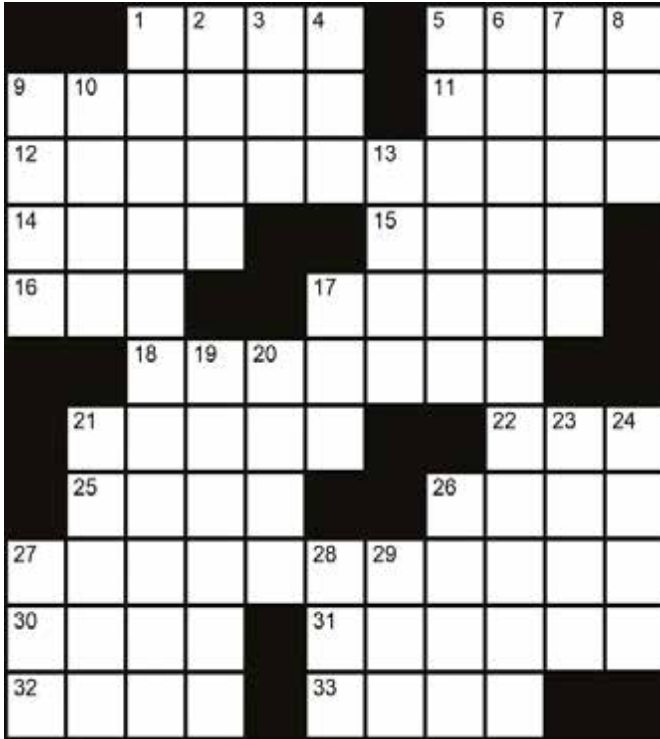
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Crossword Puzzle



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Across

- 1 Took a dip
- 5 "Trust ---" (Janet Jackson song)
- 9 They raise the pitch
- 11 Bok ---, Chinese cabbage
- 12 Hill product
- 14 Condo, for example
- 15 "The Cannonball Run" star Reynolds
- 16 Ft. Collins setting
- 17 Track prelims
- 18 Without being stated
- 21 Title for a lady

Down

- 1 Mad guitarist played as one of twelve on high
- 2 Formal legal document
- 3 Brown delivery firm
- 4 Ocean-height standard
- 5 Real
- 6 17th century European war
- 7 Cheers
- 8 Feminine half, in Chinese thinking
- 9 Urban renewal target
- 10 Cackleberry makers
- 13 Assist
- 17 "She Done --- Wrong" (Mae West movie)
- 19 Gets a little one a little later in life
- 20 Metal containers
- 21 Toulouse thousand
- 23 Mrs. Alfred Hitchcock
- 24 Hot Lips worked at one
- 26 North Atlantic hazard
- 27 U S M C noncom
- 28 French alternative to "café"
- 29 Bald patch patch?

Online versions and solutions available at www.nowmagazines.com. From our Homepage, click on the Crossword-Sudoku tab. Click on a puzzle. Click on the See All button to view solutions.

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HAPPY *New Year*

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.

Through 1/7

DeSoto on Ice:

Ages 4 and up, come enjoy the outdoor ice rink. Skate sizes from kids 8 to men's 13 available to rent. \$15. Times vary by day and time of month. See the city website: <https://ci.desoto.tx.us/>. Town Center, 211 E. Pleasant Run Rd.

Through 1/10

Holiday Grease Roundup:

Drop off used cooking oil. Do your part to keep things flowing properly. Free for Duncanville residents. **Monday-Friday:** 7:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m., City of Duncanville Service Center, 330 Shady Trail Dr., Duncanville.

1/11

Neighborhood

Collaboration Workshop:

Featuring a variety of sessions organized by city departments.

Choose three sessions, designed to foster collaboration and empower residents to make a positive impact in their neighborhoods. 9:00 a.m.-noon, City Hall, 211 E. Pleasant Run Rd., DeSoto. See the city calendar to register.

Prayer Labyrinth Walk:

Free. 1:00-3:00 p.m., Trinity United Methodist Church, 1302 S. Clark Rd., Duncanville.

1/16

Celebrate Duncanville:

Please join the Duncanville Chamber for a special evening to celebrate Duncanville. Black tie optional. \$60 per guest; reserved table of eight: \$525.

6:00-9:00 p.m.,

Hilton Garden Inn, 800 N. Main St., Duncanville.

For more information, call (972) 780-4990.

A Night at the Opera:

Featuring "The Unexpected DIVA" Tiffany L. Warren in Conversation with Michelle Stimpson. General admission: Free. Purchase books at TheDockBookshop.com. 6:30 p.m., Traphene Hickman Library, 450 Pioneer Trail, Cedar Hill.

**Tuesdays-
Thursdays**

Mr. Inks Art Class:

For ages 10-15. \$25/monthly or \$10/drop-in. 5:00-6:00 p.m., Sims Recreation Center, 310 E. Parkerville Rd., Cedar Hill.

Third Saturdays

Duncan Switch Saturday

Street Market:

9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., Main and Center streets, Duncanville. The event includes vendors, food and fun.

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

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SouthwestNOW Scavenger Hunt



Find 5 hidden
Balloons

in 5 different ads in this issue (not counting the one above).

Email the page numbers and specific ads where they are found, plus your phone number, by January 15th. To ensure your Scavenger Hunt answers go in the drawing, you must use the

Scavenger Hunt Email

scavenger.swn@nowmagazines.com

One entry per person.

WIN!

\$50 Cash Prize

Courtesy of:

NOW Magazines

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Winner must pick up prize within 30 days of drawing.

Christmas Bells were found on pages 13, 17, 26, 29 and 33.

December winner is:
Sharon Fry - \$50 Cash
from NOW Magazines

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