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ON THE COVER

An unexpected encounter transformed Tomas Haggard's spiritual journey for the better.

Photo by
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March – Music in Schools, Youth Art, and Texas History Month
Mar. 15-19 – Spring Break
Mar. 29 – Staff Development Day (No School)
Mar. 30 – ROISD School Board Meeting

Details at RedOakISD.org

EDITOR'S NOTE



Rachel

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It's time...

As the clock ticks, life constantly changes around us. During spring, while basking in the glories of nature, I catch myself envying caterpillars, as they hide away in their cocoons, free from the demands of time. Sometimes, the appreciation overwhelms me, as I stare for a moment and join them in their solitude before they fly away as butterflies.

Like those sweet butterflies, it's now time for me to leave. Once a young college student pursuing my English degree, I have transformed into a magazine editor — my dream job. But the time has come to take on new challenges, as Ty and I begin a new life in Tennessee.

Life is a collection of experiences — experiences I had the privilege of sharing with you. I got to learn how to plant flowers and paint pictures with you. I got to know the woman next door helping her neighbors put food on their tables. I laughed at the jokes you played at the office and cried when you expressed the hardships you faced yet overcame.

It's been a brilliant adventure, full of excitement, sentiments and a few more friends with whom to share some much-needed laughter. I will forever be grateful for everything I've learned while being your editor.

I don't shed tears because I am leaving. I smile because I was here. I will always cherish each story that makes Ellis County the most amazing place to be. All of you are a vital part of the communal puzzle — and every one of your stories matters. Thank you for sharing them with me. For old times' sake ...

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PHENOMENAL FAITH

— By Rachel Rich

With a servant's heart, Tomas Haggard lives in an extraordinary way. He is not shy to hardship, but despite his struggles, his faith and prayer have kept him moving forward. His life certainly didn't turn out as planned, but with his many sacrifices came a journey he will not soon forget.

Tomas could spend hours telling stories of his blessings and how he has overcome his obstacles. "Over the years, I have learned to rely on God for basic needs," he explained. From simple printer and computer needs to insulin supplies, he continually learns how to stretch his faith and be grateful for everything he has.

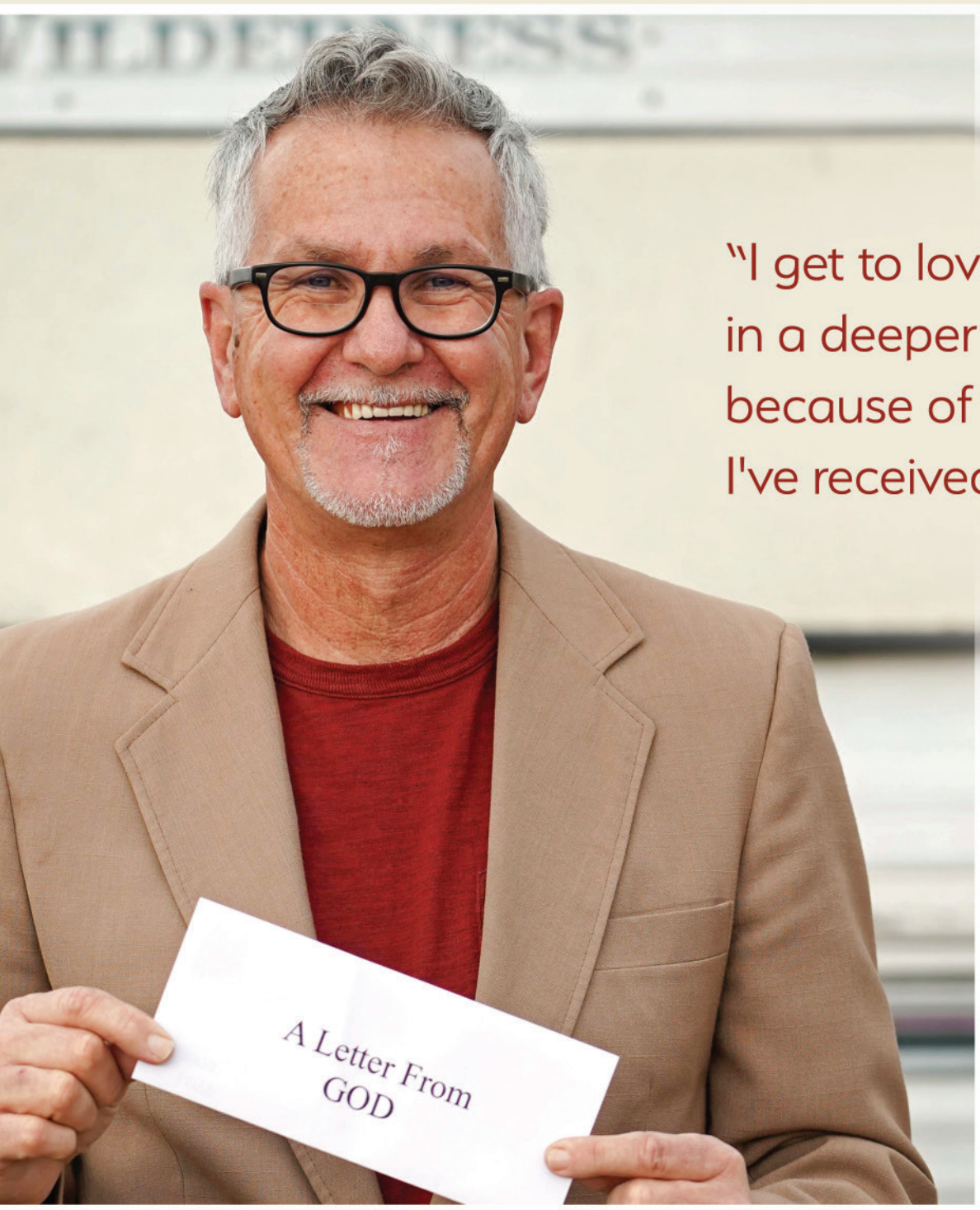
Although he is devoted to loving everyone and helping them when and where he can, his journey didn't begin there. "I went through a time when I was doing my own thing. I was writing for a motorcycle magazine. Motorcyclists wanted all their stuff in the papers, so I got invited to exclusive parties and clubs. They loved me, and it was so cool," he said. Tomas still loves motorcycles. "I would love to be part of a motorcycle ministry someday," he added.

During his days of "doing his own thing," Tomas also became familiar with the ways of a shaman. "Underneath my studio apartment was a magic store. There was a guy who did card readings. He showed me how to become a rune reader. I could see shapes in the runes, and eventually everywhere else, too."

Then, his life took an unexpected turn. "One day, I was working at a catalogue place, and I befriended a girl sitting next to me. I needed a ride home one Saturday after work." She invited him to church. "I was reluctant, but I accepted. I was the dude that showed up with long hair, earrings, a medicine bag around my neck, tie-dye shirt, jeans and sandals — to church!" he laughed. That day changed his life. He found himself up at the front getting prayed for. "The speaker told me God was proud of me, and that He was going to take all the things I'd been through and done and use it to reach people nobody else could reach."

He decided to go all in with his love for people and his faith. Facing challenges like living in his car at one time or going up to strangers, as an introvert, to love on them and pray for them, Tomas has learned to live day by day relying on God to provide. Today, he sets up his little white tent, turns on his camera and preaches about





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because of the love
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God's love and acceptance each Saturday morning on Facebook through his page, Tomas Haggard Prayer Ministries. "No one is coming to the service right now — COVID-19 doesn't help that — but anyone is welcome to join me," he said. "I always have open seats!"

Now living in Red Oak, Tomas takes the opportunity when he can to go around Red Oak and hand out his "love letter from God," consisting of scripture verses like John 4:8, John 3:16 and 1 John 4:19. "I like John," he laughed. "If you take out the references and read it as one piece, it is a love letter from God to us. I also have a Spanish version I hand out, as well."

Although he accepts all who befriend him, Tomas feels a special connection with the Hispanic community. "I haven't learned Spanish yet, but I am getting there. I plan to read the Bible all the way through in Spanish. I also want to change my name to Tomas. My legal name is Thomas, but the Hispanic community is where I believe I should be right now, and they all call me Tomas," he said with a smile.

Through his passion for helping others, he has come a long way in learning about himself. "There have been times when I had to rely on God's provision to get me to other areas to do ministry."

One of his biggest scares came one hot Texas day when he walked into town. "I didn't realize it at the time, but I was going into insulin shock after I made it back home," he said. "I remember laying down in my bed in the afternoon. The next thing I knew, it was evening, and a storm blew in and destroyed



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my tent. I had too much insulin and not enough sugars in my body, so I recovered after eating and drinking something. I realized that God pulled me out of shock and kept me from going into a coma and dying that day." He knew then that he still had a purpose.

Tomas offers more than his prayers and encouragement to others. When he can, he likes to help in other ways. "Once, I was at a gas station, and this homeless man was asking for money. I had been homeless before, begging for money like him. I am thankful to have a roof over my head now," he said with tears in his eyes. "I went up to him and said, 'I don't have much, but I'll give you what I do have.' I handed him \$5. I'll never forget the look on his face. That was the best \$5 I ever gave."

Striving to be the best minister he can be and help everyone have a brighter day, he attempts to have faith that everything will be alright. "I get to love others in a deeper way because of the love I've received," he said. Equipped to handle his darkest moments, he now has the strength to persevere and an infectious love that spreads to everyone who crosses his path. **NOW**



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• *Tales of Texas* •

REMEMBERING BUFFALO SOLDIERS

— By Angel Morris

While the first regular Army regiments made of African-American soldiers are officially celebrated on July 28 with “Buffalo Soldiers Day,” it is fitting to recognize them during Black History Month, as well. The U.S. Army’s first peace-time, all-Black regiments were established by Congress in July 1866, honoring the significant contribution of some 200,000 Black volunteers to a Union victory in the Civil War.



About a year-and-a-half after the war, six peace-time regiments for Black enlisted men were created: "The 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Infantry regiments (consolidated in 1869 into two infantry regiments, the 24th and 25th)," as documented by blackpast.org.

"Soldiers of these regiments between the Civil War and World War I have come to be called 'Buffalo Soldiers,'" the site notes. It outlines that while most of the regiments' officers were white, they were also led by five Black men, including Henry Flipper, who was not only the first Black West Point graduate, but also the first African-American commissioned officer of the Buffalo Soldiers. He went on to earn a 2nd Lieutenant Army commission.

In 1999, Henry was posthumously pardoned by President Bill Clinton for an "unduly harsh and unjust court martial and dismissal from the Army," according to the National Veterans Memorial and Museum.

Buffalo Soldiers helped win dozens of battles against Native Americans, and served in Cuba with Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders. Buffalo Soldiers protected National Parks, served as park

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rangers, guarded roads, settlements and stage coach stations, among numerous other efforts.

History.com reports that "about 20 percent of U.S. troops participating in the Indian Wars were Buffalo Soldiers," battling in at least 177 conflicts. Buffalo Soldiers also went on to defend the U.S. border with Mexico during World War I. Between the Civil War and World War I, records suggest 23 Buffalo Soldiers received the Medal of Honor.

In the last decades of the 19th century, the Buffalo Soldiers regiments formed a special kinship with the state of Texas, where Fort Davis became their Regimental Headquarters. The 9th Cavalry was first to occupy the fort, which was abandoned by the Union during the Civil War.

Soldiers spent the summer of 1867 constructing a new fort and protecting travelers. Joined by three Buffalo Soldier units over the next eight years, the men proved invaluable in many ways, not the least of which was "constructing over 91 miles of telegraph line west from Fort Davis," blackpast.org notes.

"They arrived at the post in 1867 when western Texas was still very open to attack by raiding Apaches and Comanches. When the 10th Cavalry left in 1885, peace largely prevailed," the site explains.

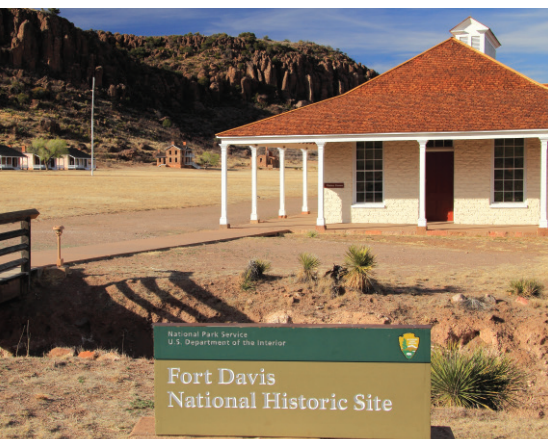
While trained for overseas combat during World War II, Buffalo Soldiers were deactivated in 1944, and in 1948, racial segregation in the military was eliminated by executive order of President Harry S. Truman. According to history.com, the Buffalo Soldiers proved their worth with "the lowest military desertion and court-martial rates of their time."

Those numbers speak to the lore by which these Black men garnered the name Buffalo Soldiers, with some suggesting they were so dubbed by Native American tribes who held the buffalo in high regard. According to



history.com, another theory is that the soldiers bore resemblance to buffalo with their dark skin and curly hair. Whatever the origin of the name, it led to the 10th Cavalry adopting the buffalo upon its crest in 1911.

Today, the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum in Houston is “dedicated to exploring and displaying the stories and contributions of African-Americans in the military by way of performing and visual arts, educational programming and exhibitions.”



When open, the museum offers educational programs exploring the contributions of African-American military personnel, such as the Buffalo Soldiers. Historical re-enactments, military-inspired art exhibits and group tours are just some of the ways the museum continues to keep the spirit of the Buffalo Soldiers alive. The reggae song, “Buffalo Soldier,” also commemorates the efforts of these men, who were slaves or descendants of slaves, fighting for a country that stole them from their own. **NOW**

Sources:

1. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/buffalo-soldiers/>
2. <https://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion/buffalo-soldiers>
3. <https://nationalvmm.org/>

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Zoomed In: Justin Bullard

By Rachel Rich

While most middle schoolers experience personal growth during these crucial years, Justin Bullard and his classmates have also endured a pandemic at Life Waxahachie Middle School. But he isn't worried by the threat, as his school is well cared for. "I think that my school is very clean," he shared. "The facilities people at my school are always cleaning."

Justin does his part, working on his assignments in a socially distant environment. As he smiled behind his mask, he explained, "I am glad I don't have to be at home all day. I can interact with my teachers, and they are there whenever I need them."



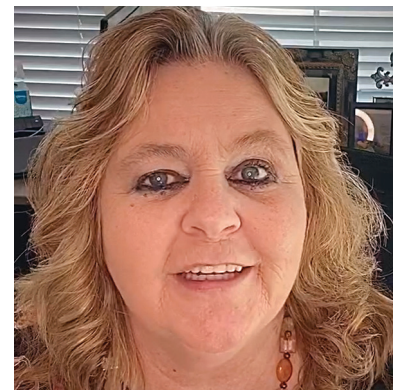
Ken and Judy Ray, Ovilla natives, check out a local senior living center for a loved one.



Julianne and Nora Newby watch a movie with their pet guinea pigs.



Red Oak Hawks take the field at Globe Life Park during the Region I, Division I State 5A Quarterfinal Playoff game against Mansfield Summit.



Lisa Burkes shares mortgage tips with Red Oak residents to help them make smart decisions.



Glenn Heights Mayor Harry Garrett jump starts a city council virtual meeting discussing fun new developments to come.



Ashten Mcbrayer playfully informs everyone that her kids have escaped, and she's hiding in the bathroom. Send help!

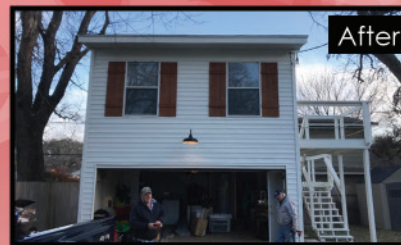


Red Oak cheerleaders pump up school spirit.



Mr. Logan enjoys reading fun school-related stories to the kids.

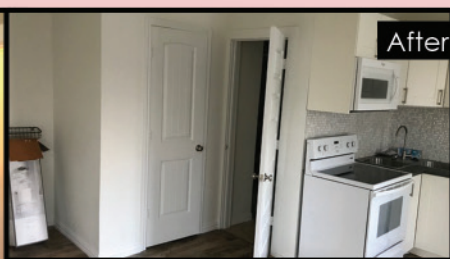
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A woman with dark hair, wearing an orange textured sweater and dark pants, stands behind a table in a kitchen. On the table are a bowl of cookies, a vase of flowers, and a decorated cake on a stand. The background features a pegboard with various kitchen items.

CookingNOW *In the Kitchen With* ANITA GUTIERREZ

— By Rachel Rich

Anita Gutierrez's cooking journey derived from needed "me" time. "Cooking allows me to express myself," she explained. "My favorite thing is the decorating!"

When she first baked for others, a sweet lady contacted her about a banana pudding. "The pudding was perfect!" she enthused. "But it fell in the car. I messaged her that I would hate to give it to her like that." To her surprise, she still bought it. "Now, I know how to properly transfer desserts," she said with a smile.

Whether professionally or personally, she loves recreating people's personalities within desserts. "I also find inspiration from my dad, who passed away suddenly nine years ago. Whenever I create something, I always think, *Is this something Dad would approve?* He had a sweet tooth, that I inherited!" **NOW**

Marble Cake

Vanilla Batter:

3 cups all-purpose flour
3 cups granulated sugar
2 1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
2 sticks unsalted butter, room temperature

7 egg whites

1 1/2 cups buttermilk, room temperature
2 tsp. vanilla extract
1/8 cup vegetable oil

Chocolate Batter:

1/3 cup unsweetened baking cocoa
1/4 cup granulated sugar

1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. baking powder
2 egg whites
1/4 cup buttermilk

Chocolate Fudge Swirl:

1 cup chocolate chips
1/4 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
1/4 cup heavy cream, room temperature

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Line 4 8-inch round cake pans with parchment; grease with nonstick baking spray or butter and flour.
2. For vanilla batter: Mix all dry ingredients in a stand mixer with a paddle attachment until fully combined.
3. Mix chunks of room-temperature butter slowly into the dry mix, on a low speed, until no large chunks of butter remain and the mixture becomes crumbly.
4. Pour in egg whites; mix on low until just incorporated. Mix in the buttermilk on a low speed. Add the vanilla and oil; mix at a low speed until fully incorporated. Scrape down

the sides of the bowl with a spatula; beat on medium speed for about 30 seconds.

5. Pour half of the batter into a separate bowl; set aside.

6. For chocolate batter: Mix the baking cocoa, sugar, salt and baking powder into the remaining batter. Add egg whites and buttermilk; mix on low speed until smooth.

7. For chocolate fudge swirl: Combine the chocolate chips, butter and heavy cream in a microwavable bowl. Heat in 2 30-second intervals, stirring in between. Allow the mixture to sit for 1 minute; stir until smooth. Set aside to cool.

8. Alternate spoonfuls of chocolate and vanilla batter into the prepared cake pans, filling them roughly 1 inch high with batter. (I like to use a digital kitchen scale to make sure each pan has the same amount of batter.)

9. Add small drops (about 1 inch in diameter) of the chocolate swirl on top of the cake batter. Drag a small offset spatula or butter knife through the batter in horizontal and vertical lines to create a marbled pattern.

10. Bake for 33-35 minutes, or until a skewer comes out clean. Allow to cool for 10 minutes; run an offset spatula around the perimeter of the pan to separate the cake from the pan. Add frosting of your choice between each cake layer and on the top and sides.

Cowboy Cookies

3 cups all-purpose flour

1 Tbsp. baking powder

1 Tbsp. baking soda

1 Tbsp. ground cinnamon

1 tsp. salt

1 1/2 cups unsalted butter, room temperature

1 1/2 cups granulated sugar

1 1/2 cups light brown sugar, packed

3 eggs

1 Tbsp. vanilla extract

3 cups semisweet chocolate chips

3 cups old-fashioned rolled oats

2 cups sweetened flaked coconut

2 cups pecans, chopped

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Line baking sheets with parchment paper or with a silicone baking mat.

2. In a medium bowl, whisk together the first five ingredients; set aside.

3. In a large mixing bowl, beat the butter on medium speed until smooth and creamy, about 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the sugars; continue to beat until light and fluffy, scraping the bowl as necessary, about 3 minutes. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in the vanilla extract.

4. Reduce the mixer speed to low; gradually add the flour mixture, mixing until just combined. With a wooden spoon or large

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White Chocolate Cake With
Vanilla Bean Buttercream

rubber spatula, stir in the remaining ingredients.
5. Scoop dough with a cookie scooper onto the baking sheets, spacing them about 3 inches apart. Bake until the edges are set but the middles still look light and puffy, about 12-15 minutes, rotating the sheets halfway through. Cool cookies for 10 minutes; enjoy!

White Chocolate Cake With Vanilla Bean Buttercream

Cake:

3 cups all-purpose flour

3 cups granulated sugar
2 1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
1 cup unsalted butter, room temperature
1 cup pasteurized egg whites from a carton (or about 7 egg whites)
1 1/2 cups full-fat sour cream, room temperature
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/8 cup vegetable oil
1 cup white chocolate chips, melted and cooled

Vanilla Bean Buttercream:

3 cups unsalted butter, room temperature
11 cups powdered sugar
1/3 cup heavy cream
1 tsp. vanilla bean paste
1 tsp. salt

1. For cake: Preheat oven to 350 F. Line and grease 3 6-inch pans with parchment rounds.
2. Mix together all dry ingredients in a stand mixer with the whisk attachment until fully combined.
3. Mix chunks of room-temperature butter slowly into the dry mix on a low speed. Continue to mix until no large chunks of butter remain, and the mixture becomes crumbly.
4. Pour in egg whites; mix on low until just incorporated.

5. Add the remaining ingredients; mix at a low speed until fully incorporated.
6. Scrape down the sides of the bowl with a spatula; beat on low speed for a few more seconds. The key is to mix until the ingredients are just incorporated, so that the batter isn't overmixed.
7. Divide the batter evenly between the prepared cake pans. Bake for 33-34 minutes, or until a toothpick comes out clean.
8. Place semi-cooled cake layers into the freezer for 45 minutes, to accelerate the cooling process. Once the layers are fully cooled, carefully flip the pans; remove the layers from the pans.
9. For buttercream: Beat the butter on a medium speed for 30 seconds with a paddle attachment until smooth. Slowly add in the powdered sugar, 1 cup at a time. Alternate with small splashes of cream.
10. Once fully mixed, add in the vanilla bean paste and salt. Beat on low until the ingredients are fully incorporated, and the desired consistency is reached.
11. If the frosting is too thick, add additional cream, 1 tsp. at a time. If the frosting is too thin, add more powdered sugar, 1/4 cup at a time.
12. If you plan to color the buttercream, add gel food coloring once the frosting is fully made, and beat on low until it reaches the desired color.

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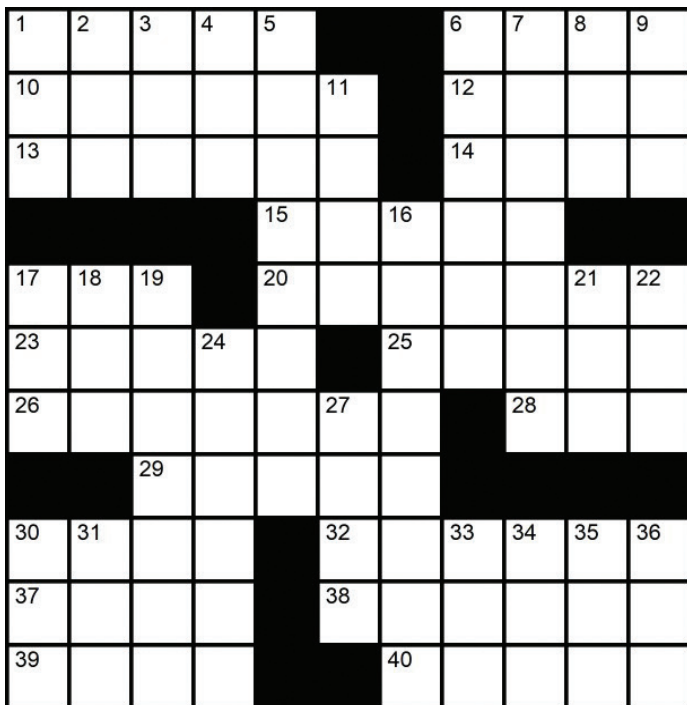


Photo by Shane Kirkpatrick.



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Crossword Puzzle



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Across

- 1 "I'll eat --- if I'm wrong!"
- 6 "Shane" star Alan ---
- 10 Eccentric old fellow
- 12 Type of race car
- 13 Cloak mental confusion
- 14 Franklin flew one in a storm
- 15 Alleviates
- 17 Big Blue
- 20 Rely on
- 23 Drain by percolation
- 25 Commodious
- 26 Food company in Battle Creek, MI
- 28 Panthers and Rams group
- 29 Ocean capsized this small boat
- 30 Hammer god
- 32 Reply to "Have a good day!"
- 37 After stating your intentions, --- the -
- 38 Oil-rich former Portuguese African colony
- 39 "I guess the joke's --- "
- 40 Dumps

Down

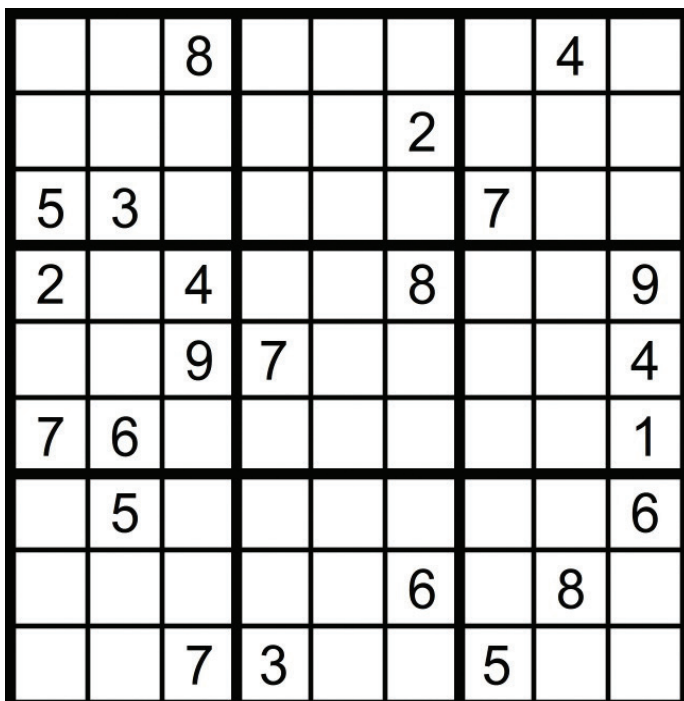
- 1 Studio with lion logo
- 2 Assenting vote
- 3 Coop layer
- 4 Antiviral drug
- 5 Marathon TV program
- 6 In this manner
- 7 "Mother's Day" actress Jennifer ---
- 8 One of Rachel Carson's targets, now banned
- 9 Coloring material
- 11 Raise
- 16 "Go get him ---!" (Shakespeare, Macbeth)
- 17 Class
- 18 Social gathering
- 19 --- X, assassinated activist
- 21 Global financial body
- 22 Largest US city
- 24 "2001: A Space Odyssey" author
- 27 Painter of "La Maja Vestida"
- 30 Snake eyes
- 31 Chinese dynasty at the time of Christ
- 33 "Gross!"
- 34 End of a golf club
- 35 Former
- 36 Western Hemisphere political forum

Solutions on page 28

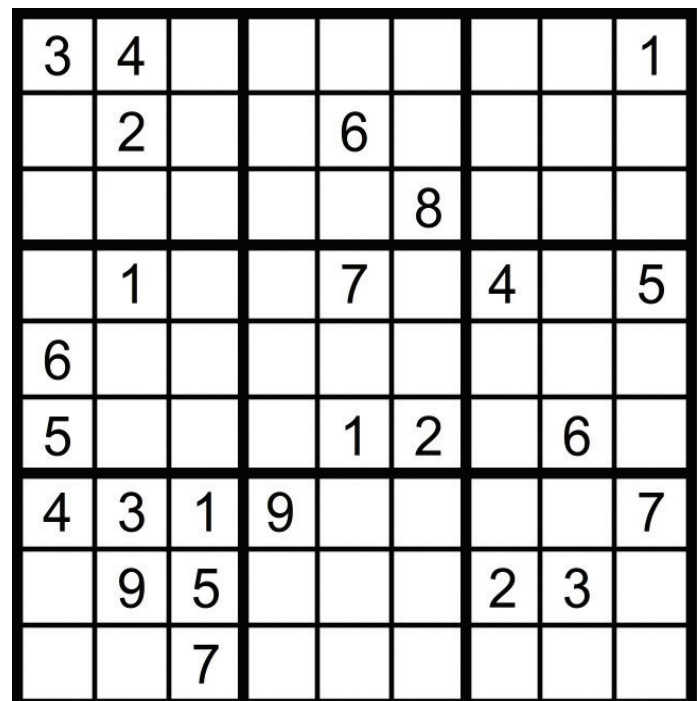
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Sudoku Puzzle

Easy



Medium



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Solutions on page 28



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Winners must pick up prizes
within 30 days of drawing.

Hot chocolate mugs were found
on pages 3, 5, 9, 15, 17

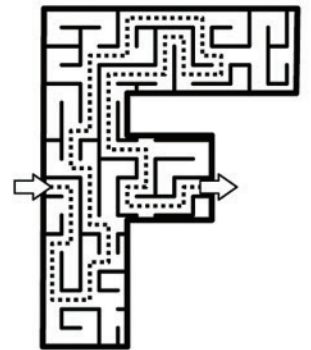
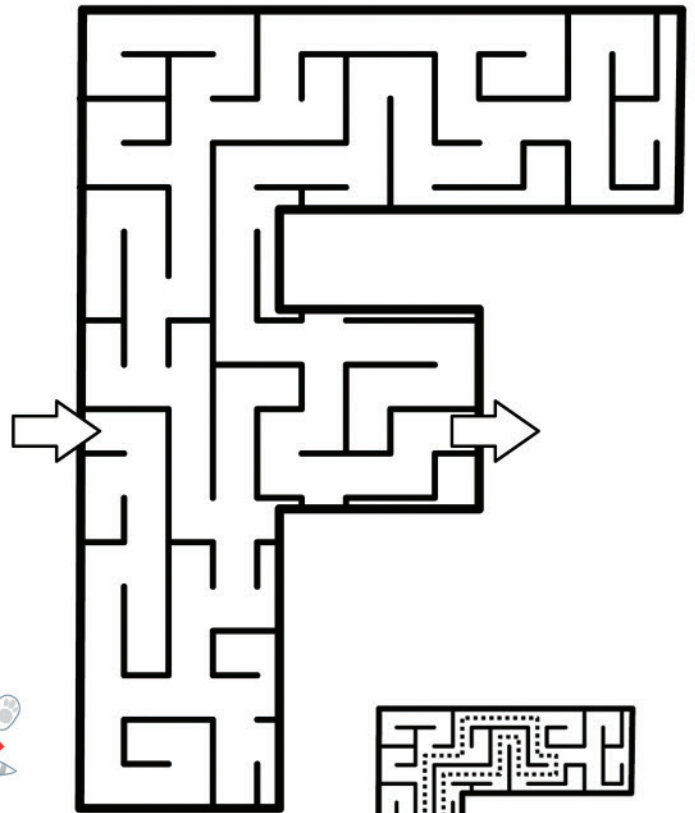
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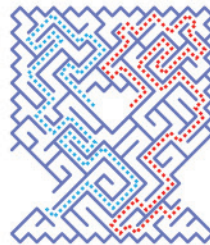


Kids' Fun Page

Help friends to meet in the middle of the Valentine maze.



ANSWER:



"Fill in the missing numbers"

10	-	6	=	
-				+
=				=
6	+		=	9

7	+	3	=	
+				+
				5
=				=
	-	5	=	

3	+		=	
+				+
				9
=				=
6	+	10	=	

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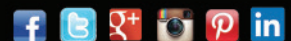
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2/6

A Night for Love 3:

Garden of Love: Come and enjoy a night of comedy, stories, performances, fashion and dancing. Formal attire.

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2/12-2/28

Life's Little Miracles:

Live theater. The last in "The Greatest Generation Trilogy." The lives of the Erhard family

after Pearl Harbor continue in Mathis, Texas. Anna and Caleb have been married, but she hasn't seen him since their brief honeymoon in Corpus Christi. Theatre Rocks!, 505 NW Main St., Ennis. For tickets, visit www.theatrerocks.com. (972) 878-5126.

2/21

Kelly Moore Music Ministry:

10:30 a.m., Stagecoach Cowboy Church, 356 FM 55, Waxahachie. For more information, visit www.kellymooremusicministry.com/events-shows.

Tuesdays

Line Dancing:

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Crossword - Sudoku Solutions

1	M	2	Y	3	H	4	A	5	T		6	L	7	A	8	D	9	D
10	G	E	E	Z	E	11	R			12	I	N	D	Y				
13	M	A	N	T	L	E				14	K	I	T	E				
						15	E	A	S	E	S							
17	I	B	M			20	T	R	U	S	T	I	N		21		22	
23	L	E	A	C	H			25	R	O	O	M	Y					
26	K	E	L	L	O	G	G			28	N	F	C					
				29	C	A	N	O	E									
30	T	H	O	R				32	Y	O	U	T	O	O				
37	W	A	L	K				38	A	N	G	O	L	A				
39	O	N	M	E						40	S	H	E	D	S			

Easy

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

Medium

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



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~ 1 Corinthians 13:13 ESV



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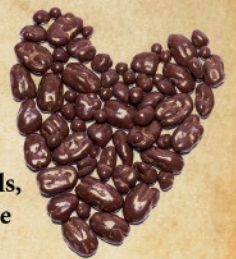
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