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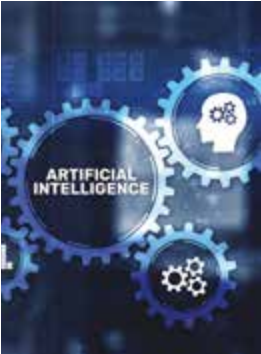
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EDITOR'S NOTE

Baseball season again?

Remember that cold snap we had last year, toward the end of October, as the Rangers were on their way to winning their first World Series? It only lasted for a day or so. Wouldn't you like February to be more like October? I know I would! Fall is my favorite season of the year. It seems like the weather is so much more predictable for going outside.

It surprises me that Spring Training begins this month. Yep, the Dodgers and the Padres have their first Cactus League game on the 22nd, then all 30 teams have their first game on the 24th.

My grandfather was a great fan of baseball. We used to kid him about having one game on TV while listening to two others on little AM transistor radios with an ear bud from each one in each ear. It was amazing how he could tell you at anytime exactly where each game stood, such as, "It's the bottom of the seventh. The Yankees are leading the Cubs 3-2. There is one out. Ford is on second and Mantle is at the plate. The count is 2-1." Papa just loved it that much.

Papa could not understand why I did not love it like he did. I only played one year of Little League ball, much to his chagrin, and I played a little church-league slow-pitch softball as an adult. Papa passed before the Rangers made it to Texas. How I would have loved to go to a game in Arlington with him!

The Rangers taking the series made a fan out of me. I hope they are still in the running in October.

Play ball!



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Watch any NFL football game, and you will probably see a commercial about how football schedules are developed using artificial intelligence. Delving further behind the scenes, there are YouTube videos describing how many variables and “rules” are being simultaneously considered by numerous computers to produce a schedule that is fair to the various teams and entertaining in prime-time television markets. The end result is ultimately played out this time each year at the Super Bowl, and it is broadcast into living rooms across the world.

Jenny Vidrine and Tia Hensley are two local residents who have considered some of the effects of artificial intelligence on business and education. Jenny has been an insurance agent for many years, but recently taught at Paul Quinn College and served for a while as vice president of academic affairs after completing her doctorate in business administration. Tia has been an advance placement English teacher for several years and recently entered school administration as GT/intervention coordinator. She also recently defended her thesis for her master’s degree in English.

“In composition, we have to realize that the only thing AI can produce is what has been put into it. We are often looking for creativity or subjectivity, which includes opinion, emotion and feeling. Computers can generate facts and data but cannot express how a passenger train carries a person to their destination the way a great author can and make you feel like you are riding along on the train with them,” Tia opined. “Great literature comes from authors who can manipulate language to make the inexpressible, expressible.

“So, while AI programs like ChatGPT might be used as a starting point for generating ideas or perhaps lesson plans, they cannot offer what we expect from students. I’m just not impressed by AI’s best writing.”

Jenny recently brought a presentation about the AI and ChatGPT to her local Lions Club meeting. As an example of the ability of AI to learn common tasks, she referred to a computer learning to play chess, understanding the moves and strategy involved. After challenging a number of chess masters, it was concluded that none of them could defeat the artificial intelligence of the computer.



— By Bill Smith

Ethics may be at the heart of the argument for using AI in the education arena, but it carries over into many other venues as well. In September 2023, the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary took up the issue of potentially regulating artificial intelligence. Sen. Richard Blumenthal, chairman, mentioned that AI would be used in producing everything from automobiles to drugs to children's toys. While there are regulatory bodies such as the FTC, FAA, FDA and the Consumer Product Safety Commission that oversee the safety of these products, the committee is looking at further regulation regarding their use of AI. Sen. Blumenthal mentioned that the state of Connecticut has an "Office of AI." One example in the hearing was of workers being replaced at a Wendy's drive-thru. The speaker pointed out the negative aspect of that, but also pointed out the potential positive aspect of the person who was replaced by AI then moving on to a position that would require creativity, and not just pushing buttons.





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Jenny sees the prevalence of AI as the beginning of a societal shift. “I argue that the last time one this large occurred, it was with the emergence of the written word for the masses after Gutenberg invented the printing press.” While admitting that she knows little about the science behind AI, she continued, “But it touches my life every day, has redefined commerce and industry and will shape our understanding of reality going forward.”

Recently, a video ad appeared on social media with a popular celebrity endorsing a name-brand stand mixer with the promise to the consumer that they could obtain one “free.” All they

had to do was pay the shipping and handling costs. What a deal, if only it were not a scam perpetrated with the use of an AI generated video that took clips of the celebrity speaking and manipulated her speech to create the fake endorsement. In the realm of music and art, AI can produce a “new recording” of songs by an artist by manipulating their voice from prior recordings. Can a new masterpiece by da Vinci or Michelangelo be far behind as AI “learns” to produce their unique brush strokes?

Last March, an open letter was signed by AI experts, scientists and entrepreneurs, including Elon Musk, calling for a pause on development of new AI technologies that would exceed the model GPT-4. The thought is that the technology is evolving too fast, and it is being released before potential risks can be evaluated. As prominent in the tech community as are the people who signed the letter, it is interesting to note that some of the major companies, such as Microsoft and Google, did not respond to requests for comment on the letter.

So, the jury is still out on what the long-reaching effects of this relatively new technology will be, but there is no doubt that it will affect all our lives in some way. Farmers recognize it may reduce waste and produce more food with self-driving tractors, robots harvesting crops and herbicide applicators that know the difference between the good crops and the weeds. All of this seems positive, unless it also results in fewer workers being employed.

Tia is also a youth worker at her church. Last year, ChatGPT was used to help set up a rhyming scavenger hunt for their young members attending summer camp, and the results were fun and enjoyed by the campers. Obviously, there are some lighthearted uses for this evolving challenge. Stay tuned and stay involved to see what the future holds! **NOW**

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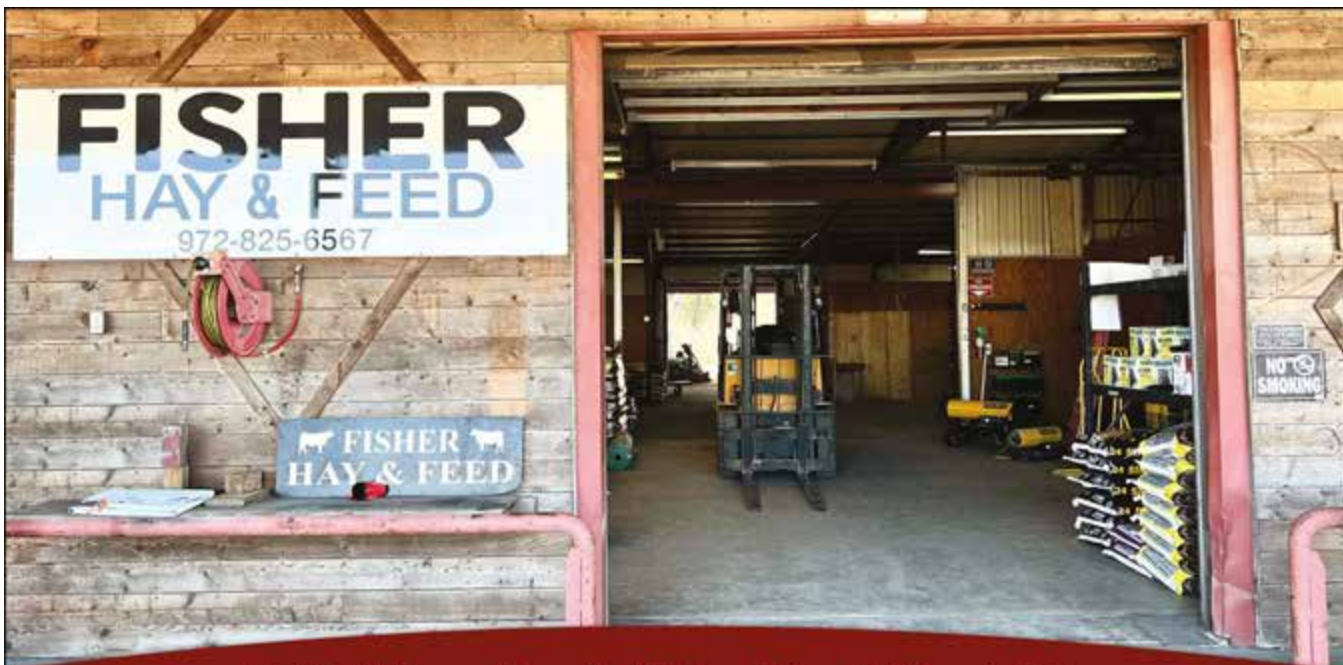
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Zoomed In:
Lida McNealy

By Bill Smith

For more than 40 years, Lida McNealy served alongside her husband as he pastored New Hope Missionary Baptist Church. Today, she still spends much of her time living in the church parsonage, as well as maintaining another home.

As a child growing up in Mississippi, she experienced much of the Civil Rights Movement firsthand. Her home church, Belle Flower Missionary Baptist Church, was the site of several Civil Rights meetings. “In 1966, Dr. King spoke at our church, and I still have the video,” she mentioned. “I also met several other leaders of the time, including Ralph Abernathy and Andrew Young.”



Pastor Booker T. Washington Jr. speaks at the Galilee Missionary Baptist Church groundbreaking.



Kate Keener welcomes 2024 with a smile and some cool glasses.



Members of the Men’s Brown Bag Bible Study at Baylor Baptist Church resume their meetings in 2024.



Speaker John Kaiser is introduced by NARFE member Rebecca Jones.



Shane Wigley is back in the gym for the new year.



Miguel Gonzalez and Alexis Alvarado welcome patrons to Planet Fitness.



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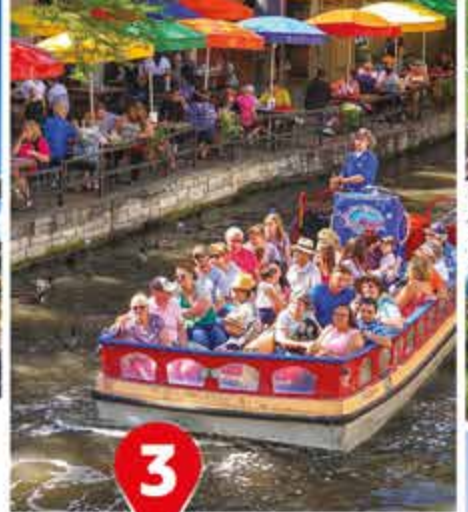

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TOP 5

Texas Travel Destinations

FOR 2024

— By Amber D. Browne

With New Year's resolutions still fresh on the minds of many, travel might top the list for 2024. The great state of Texas has an abundance of travel destinations across its nearly 269,000 square miles. From the Chisos Mountains of Big Bend National Park to the spring-fed Comal River in New Braunfels, The Lone Star State does not disappoint. Here are five great places to visit this year:

#1 Big Bend National Park

This national park has been fascinating visitors since 1944. The best time to visit Big Bend National Park is late fall through early spring, as the summer months are extremely hot. Guests can camp, hike the mountain trails, birdwatch, stargaze and simply enjoy time in nature.

#2 Space Center Houston

Space Center Houston offers more than 400 artifacts to explore. With rockets and a collection of spacesuits, hands-on experiences, historical films and live demonstrations, visitors can spend all day soaking up the fun. You can check out Mission Control and the Astronaut Training Facility by taking a NASA Tram Tour to NASA Johnson Space Center.

Don't forget to stop by the gift shop for some freeze-dried ice cream and other space-related merchandise. Check the Space Center Houston website to view a calendar of upcoming special events and ticket pricing.

#3 San Antonio River Walk

First envisioned by Robert H.H. Hugman in the early 1920s, the San Antonio River Walk provides visitors with ample opportunities to enjoy food and drink, shopping, nightlife and more. It was not until 1939 that construction crews broke ground on the river project with Hugman, otherwise known as the Father of the River Walk, serving as architect to develop the area for flood management and to increase tourism.

The 15-mile stretch of river now includes three main sections. The

Downtown area boasts restaurants, hotels, retail space and boat tours. Museum Reach just north of Downtown includes hotels, residences and a number of museums. The section south of Downtown, Mission Reach, is a woodland habitat that connects several UNESCO World Heritage-designated missions.

#4 Comal River in New Braunfels

The Comal River is considered the shortest river in Texas, at 2.5 miles, and stays a constant 70-72 degrees. When entering the river at Prince Solms Park, the first splash of cold water is a shock, but your body acclimates as you float on a tube toward the tube chute. If you choose to forgo the chute, you can walk around and return to floating down river through several small rapids.

Disposable items, such as sandwich baggies, cans and water bottles are no longer allowed on the river, so be sure to pack reusable containers for food and beverages. Wear a hat, sunglasses, sunscreen and, if necessary, grab a waterproof bag to store important belongings. Paid parking is available at the park, or you can catch a shuttle from one of the local tubing outfitters.



#5 Fort Worth Stockyards

The historic Fort Worth Stockyards has been a staple in North Texas since it was established in 1849 as an outpost for cattle drives along the Chisholm Trail. In recent years, more hotels were added to the area, and horse and mule barns underwent restorations to create Mule Alley.

New restaurant concepts and trendy shops add to some Stockyard staples — Billy Bob's for all of your honky-tonk needs and Cowtown Coliseum for an evening of rodeo. Visitors can ride a mechanical bull, take a ghost tour, taste some wines and catch one of the twice-daily cattle drives of the Fort Worth Herd. Paid parking is available if street spaces are occupied.

No matter your interests, Texas has much to offer. So, have fun exploring The Lone Star State! **NOW**

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\$50 Cash Prize

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Winner must pick up prize
within 30 days of drawing.

Penguin was found on
pages 3, 9, 17, 23, 27

January winner is:
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CookingNOW

In the Kitchen With

BECKY WALKER

Becky Walker recalls pulling a chair up next to the stove and learning to cook by watching her mom. “But I really learned to cook when Mom was on bed rest expecting my youngest brother,” she related. “I started cooking when I was 9 years old.”

Having grown up in Dallas, she learned to love Mexican and Southern cooking. “I have a lot of family recipes, but I also like to experiment in the kitchen. Sometimes, it works out nicely, like my Almond Pound Cake With Caramelized Mango Glaze. However, during COVID I tried making pear preserves like Aunt Dot, my grandmother’s sister, used to make, but without her recipe. When they cooled, I had something akin to concrete! That experiment will never make the family cookbook I hope to write someday.” **NOW**

Green Chicken Enchilada Soup

2.5 lbs. chicken breast
1 28-oz. can green enchilada sauce
1 24-oz. can chicken broth
2 cups Monterrey Jack cheese
4 oz. cream cheese, cubed, room temperature
1 cup half-and-half or heavy cream
4 oz. salsa verde

Salt, to taste
Pepper, to taste
Avocado slices, to taste (optional)
Cilantro, to taste (optional)
Sour cream, to taste (optional)
Tortilla strips, to taste (optional)

1. To a Crock-Pot, add the chicken, enchilada sauce and broth. Cook on low 6-8 hours.

2. Thirty minutes before serving, shred the chicken, and return it to the pot. Add the cheese, cream cheese, half-and-half or cream, salsa verde, salt and pepper. Stir until the cheese melts. You can add additional salsa verde, to taste.

3. Top individual bowls with sliced avocado, cilantro, green onions and sour cream, if desired. Add strips of crisp tortillas, if desired.

Cranberry Orange Pork Roast

1 2- to 3-lb. pork roast
4 slices thick-cut bacon
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
1 14-oz. can whole berry cranberry sauce
1/2 cup Kraft Classic Catalina Dressing
1 Tbsp. soy sauce
5 Tbsp. orange marmalade
1-2 tsp. tapioca flour
Water
1 yellow onion, sliced
1 lb. baby carrots

1. Wash the roast; pat dry. Wrap the roast with the bacon. In a skillet, brown the roast

in the oil on both sides. Carefully lift the roast out of the skillet and transfer it to a Crock-Pot.

- 2. In a bowl, mix the cranberry sauce, dressing, soy sauce and marmalade together. In a cup, mix the tapioca flour and a little water. Pour into the sauce; mix to combine.
- 3. Surround the roast with the onions and carrots. Cover with the sauce.
- 4. Cook on high for 6 hours.

Almond Pound Cake With Caramelized Mango Glaze

- Cake:*
- 2 sticks butter, room temperature
 - 1 cup shortening
 - 3 cups sugar
 - 5 eggs
 - 3 cups flour (divided use)
 - 1/2 tsp. salt
 - 1/2 tsp. baking powder
 - 1 cup whole milk
 - 1 tsp. vanilla
 - 1 tsp. almond extract

- Glaze:*
- 2 mangoes
 - 1 cup sugar
 - 1/2 cup water
 - 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter, chilled
 - 1/4 tsp. vanilla extract
 - Almond slivers, to taste

- 1. For cake: Preheat the oven to 325 F. Grease and flour a Bundt pan; set aside.
- 2. In a large bowl, use a hand mixer to cream together the butter, shortening and sugar.
- 3. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating after each addition. Be sure to scrape down the sides of the bowl after mixing in each egg.
- 4. Alternately add the flour, salt and baking powder with the milk and extracts.
- 5. Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake for 1 1/2 hours to 1 hour, 40 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes. Turn out onto a cake plate; let cool.
- 6. For glaze: Peel and coarsely chop the mangoes.
- 7. Combine the sugar and water in a skillet. Cook until the sugar dissolves. Continue cooking for 3 minutes, or until golden; do not stir.
- 8. Add the butter; stir. Add the mangoes; stir. Cook 10 minutes or until the mangoes are lightly browned and thickened, stirring frequently. About halfway through the cooking time, add the vanilla extract.
- 9. When thickened and gooey, spoon over the cooled cake. Top with almond slivers.

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

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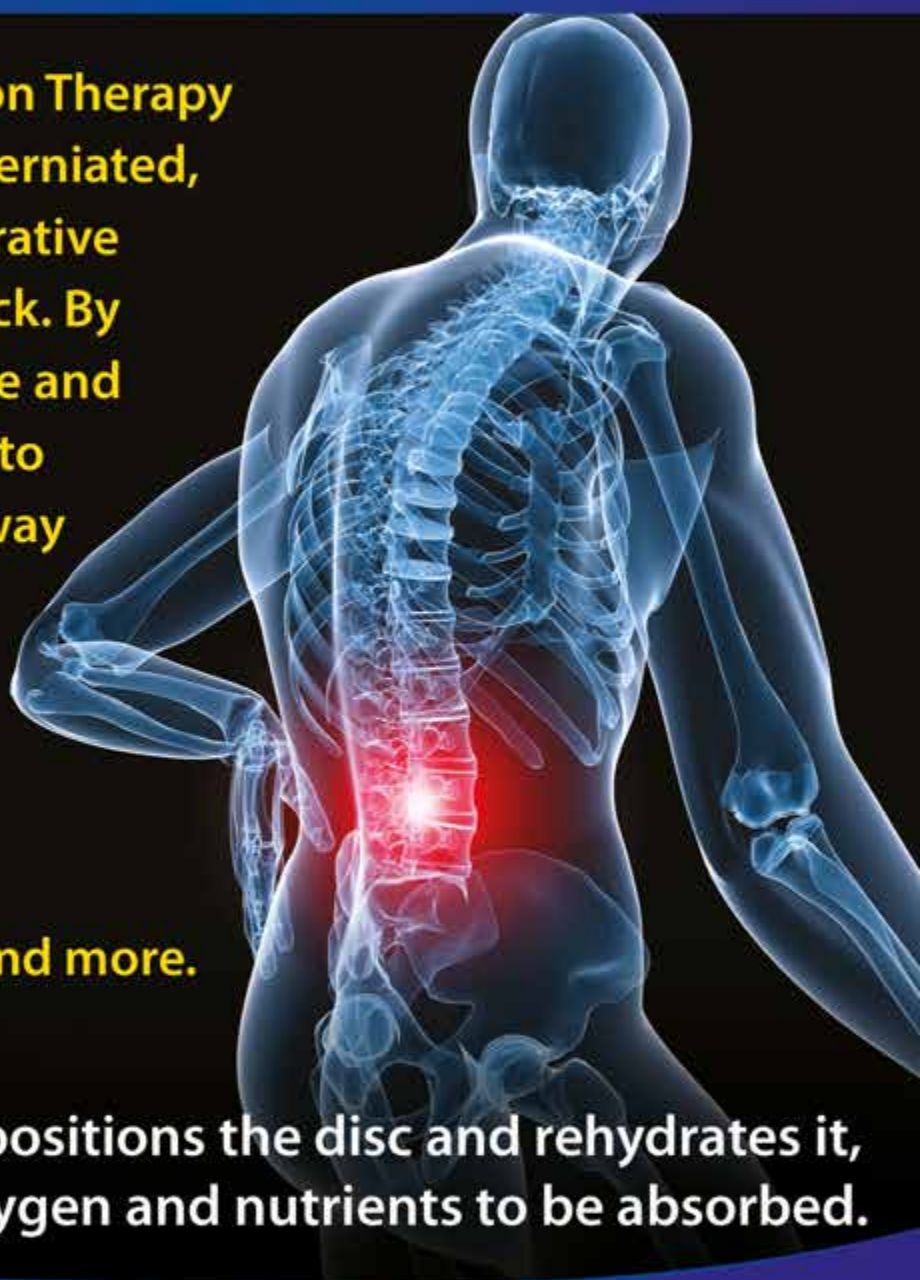
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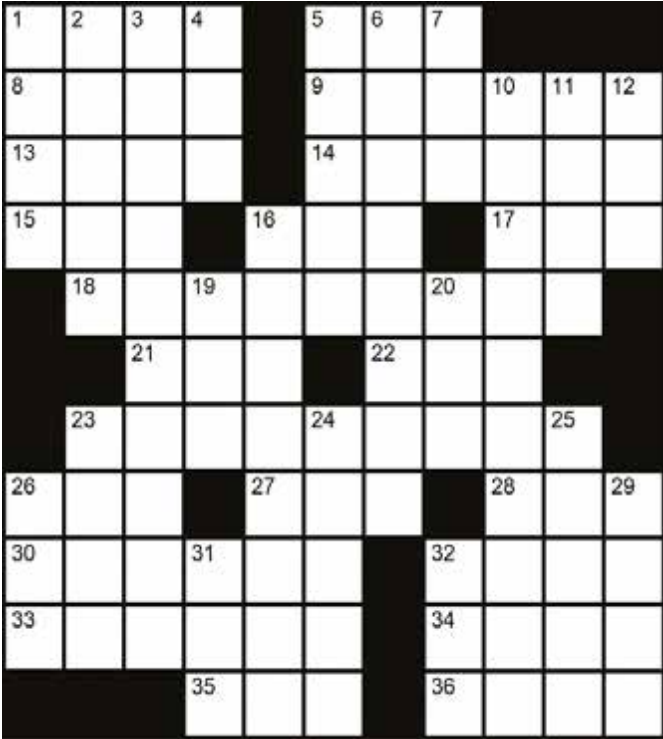
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Across

- 1 Boston's Faneuil ---
5 Inlet
8 --- Lackawanna Railway
9 Blood poisoning
13 Day of jubilation
14 Some of the "Bounty" mutineers were found here
15 Feature film channel
16 Artillery angular measurement
17 Tennis call
18 Problem-solving code

Down

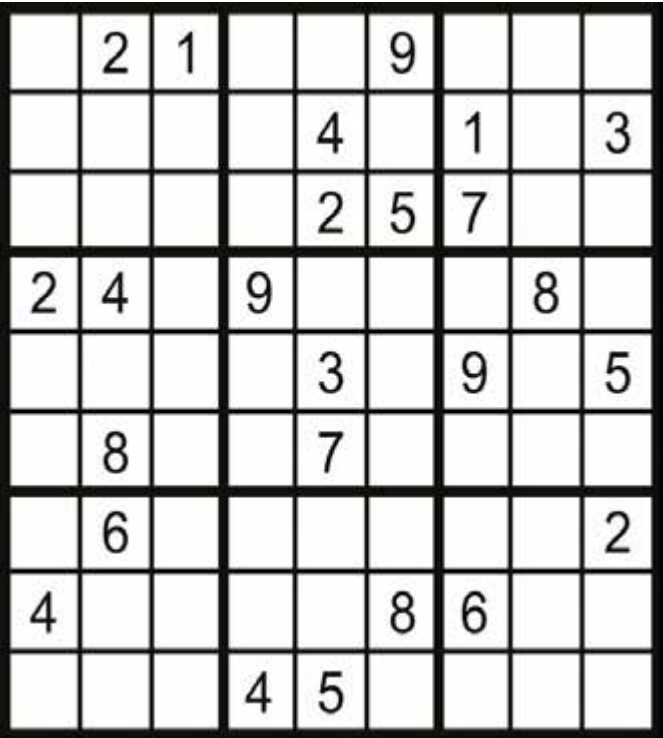
- 21 Unagi, at a sushi bar
22 Guide letters for "Homeland" channel
23 Very important
26 "Gentle" bear
27 Long-leaved lettuce
28 Heart chart
30 Handy
32 And others
33 Solidified lava
34 "A Bug's Life" Princess
35 Social competition
36 Every clarinet has one
1 Heave
2 Circus Maximus, for example
3 Tots smashed stolen tile
4 Shelter
5 Up and about
6 A-listers, not regular down to earth types
7 Dash info
10 Dark outline named after a French Minister
11 Separate article
12 Be in session
16 Atomic cluster
19 Special someone
20 Bardic "however"
23 High plateau
24 "Angel Has Fallen" actor Nick ---
25 Edible flatfish
26 Familiar address to a fella
29 More than willing
31 "Awesome!"
32 Vase handle

Crosswordsite.com Ltd

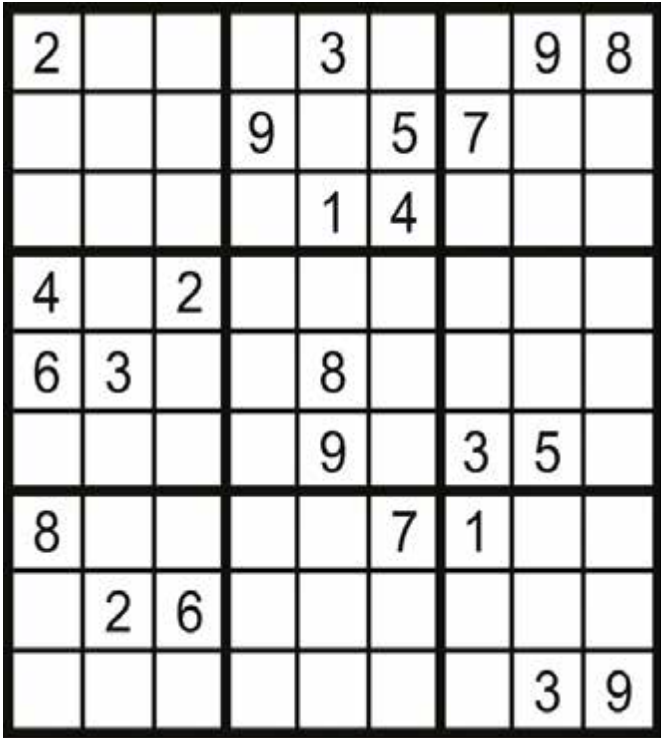
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Sudoku Puzzle

Easy



Medium



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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.

FEBRUARY

2/9-2/25

The Last Romance:

Play by Joe DiPietro, directed by Larry LeMaster. This is a heartwarming comedy about love and its power to transform. Theatre Rocks!, 505 NW Main St. For tickets and showtimes, contact the theater at (972) 878-5126 or Suzanne@TheatreRocks.com.

2/10

Beads & Bling Mardi Gras Masquerade Party and Fundraiser:

Presented by the Ennis Chamber of Commerce. SPIST Lodge #25, 1901 E. Ennis Ave. For more information, contact jennifer@ennis-chamber.com or call (972) 878-2625.

Ennis Retired School Personnel Meeting:

The program will be about health awareness. 11:00 a.m., Ennis ISD Board Room, 303 W. Knox St. For more information, email EnnisRSPA@gmail.com.

2/11

Super Bowl Party:

Live music, appetizers, sub sandwiches, drink specials and bring a covered dish if you like. 1:00-10:00 p.m.; live music by David Slovak & Friends: 2:30 p.m., SOKOL Clubroom, 2622 E. Hwy. 34 (back entrance). For more information, see www.sokolennis.com or contact fundraising@sokolennis.com.

2/16-2/25

Wedding Bells:

Play by Alan Bailey and Ronnie Claire Edwards. Four garden club ladies meet a young girl who has come to their little Texas town to marry an infantryman before he ships off to World War II. The women impulsively decide to throw the girl an elaborate wedding, and their lives and friendships are thrown into turmoil as they race to accomplish the nuptials in one frenzied afternoon. Recommended for ages 13-plus. Ennis Public Theatre, 113 N. Dallas St. For tickets and showtimes, call (972) 878-7529 or email info@ennispublictheatre.com.

2/17

Ennis Czech Music Festival:

This indoor event is a day filled with great music, dancing, food and drinks. Dance to four fabulous polka bands including Czech and Then Some, The Ennis Czech Boys, The Jodie Mikula Orchestra and the Moravians. The SOKOL kitchen will be serving Czech classics all day, including klobase and sauerkraut. Adults: \$10; children 12 and under: Free. 1:00-10:30 p.m.; full fried catfish dinner: 4:00-7:00 p.m. for \$13, SOKOL Hall, 2622 E. Hwy. 34. Contact ennisczechmusic@yahoo.com for more information.

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



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If you are an adult who is afraid of going to the dentist, or even just a little extra anxious, Serenity Advanced Dentistry may be just what you are looking for. "We do a lot of sedation dentistry, mostly for adults," Dr. Allala explained. "It's kind of my niche. Many adults may have some pretty serious anxiety about going to the dentist. They may not even seek care. They'd rather be in pain. I provide a place to take care of these people. When patients elect to get treatment, we lower the statistics of people living in pain. I like being able to contribute to improving people's lives."

"Coincidentally, a lot of people who are anxious about going to the dentist are also people who don't have good insurance. That's a bad combination. I have membership plans for patients without insurance, and really good discounts on implants and dentures. A membership might not be necessary if you only need one simple procedure, but if you need sedation and a lot of work, it really pays for itself."

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

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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