

EnnisNOW

MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 2025

Hoop Dreams

Byron Anderson works on leveling up his game



In the Kitchen With Kayla Hill

Also inside:
Scavenger Hunt
Sudoku

Featured Business:
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Byron Anderson dreams of one day coaching basketball and teaching English for EISD.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Young Love!

That's the title of a song that was a No. 1 hit in 1957, but the words are timeless. In his day, Sonny James was one of the best ballad-singing artists. His style easily crossed over between country and pop charts, and during his heyday, he charted no less than 72 releases, including 16 straight *Billboard* singles. Many of his hits appealed to listeners because they addressed the perils and pitfalls of young love.

"Young Love" is about a first love. My first love was when I was 9 years old. I just knew it would last forever. When Valentine's Day came around that year, I scraped together all the cash I could from my paper route and went to Hesser's Drug Store to buy the biggest, heart-shaped box of assorted chocolates I could find. I added a card that was sure to win her heart.

I signed the card in my best fourth-grade cursive and rode my Stingray bicycle like the wind to her house. The closer I got, the more timid I became. She did not know she was my girlfriend. I chickened out before I could make the delivery. Stealthily, I put the candy and card on her front porch, rang the doorbell, and ran back to the Stingray.

At school the next day, she didn't say anything, so I thought maybe some crook stole the candy before she found it. Then I found the note, taped to my locker. It wasn't a valentine. The note said, "My Daddy said you should never ring his doorbell and run away like that again." Our relationship ended before it ever got started. I'll bet her father ate the candy, too.

Happy Valentine's Day!



Bill

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HOOO DREA

Byron Anderson's earliest memory of playing basketball is as a 5-year-old child. "We played in a kid's league at Tabernacle Church," he recalled. "I was not focused solely on basketball then, and I also played football in junior high. When Head Basketball Coach [Jerry] Mason came, we decided to go full-time basketball and work toward a scholarship." This is Coach Mason's second stint as a coach in Ennis, as he was here about 20 years ago as an assistant basketball coach.

Byron's dedication and work ethic stand out. "BJ is a junior, and this will be his second season as a varsity starter," Coach Mason said. "He hasn't missed one summer, offseason or preseason practice the last two years and is working really hard to perfect his craft and become one of the best guards in the DFW area."

Byron explained that his nickname is "BJ" because his father has the same name. The "J" stands for "junior." He also mentioned that Coach Mason still "has game." "We played a three-point shot game, and he hit eight or 10 in a row," he recalled.

Early in the season, Byron said, "I think this year could be my break-out year in basketball. I started last year as a sophomore, and I learned a lot, especially about guys who were bigger, stronger and faster than me. I learned that lifting weights to get stronger is important, and I had not seen that as being an important part of basketball before. Strength makes a difference."

Byron plays point guard, and it is a good position for his height of 6 feet. "I'd say my best asset is being unselfish with the ball. I like to get my teammates involved, but I am also learning how to score more points. Coach Mason and Coach Hunter are really breaking the game down for me. As far as our team goes, the main thing we are looking forward to is making a playoff run. If the team comes together and bonds, we could get some of those gold trophies," he said.

Because most of Byron's family played football, including his Uncle Marlon Jones, Jr., who many Lion football fans remember, he said it was kind of funny that he did not play much football. Another sport he enjoys is swimming. "I like

OP MS

— By Bill Smith

going to the Townhouse Apartments where my grandma stays to swim in their pool,” Byron said. “If there was a high school swimming team, I would probably pursue that in addition to basketball. I think one of the reasons I like swimming is because I don’t really like to be around a lot of people. Swimming is my getaway.”

English is Byron’s favorite subject. He is currently in Ms. Angel Grayson’s AP English class. “I enjoy English. One of my favorite things about it is writing essays, because I get to find out about things I was not previously familiar with. When I go to college, I will probably major in English, though I have thought about studying business as a back-up plan. I would love to come back to Ennis and coach basketball and teach English. I think I could make studying English fun for kids,” he said.

Another school activity Byron is involved in is AVID, which stands

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for Advancement Via Individual Determination. According to the EISD website, AVID is an elective class based on writing as a tool of learning, which would be a joy for Byron because of his affinity for English, particularly composition. The course is designed to further his preparation for college. Byron said, "One of the things I have struggled with is staying organized, and AVID helps with that. We also have the opportunity to take the SAT test during

our junior year instead of waiting until we are seniors."

Though he still has plenty of time to consider college, Byron has already visited Tarleton State University at Stephenville. "My cousin, Zion, is there and walked on to play football," he explained. "I went to visit him, and he showed me around. I liked everything I saw there, so it will be one of the colleges that I consider."

A native of Ennis, Byron really likes

living here and hopes to return after he finishes college. While many young people dream of leaving smaller towns for bigger cities when they graduate high school, he doesn't feel that way. "I have a friend who talks about going somewhere else," he reflected. "But I like the small town and the calmness of Ennis, compared to big cities."

Family is an important part of Byron's life. "I was an only child until three years ago, when my mother had twins, so now I have two little brothers. That changed things a little bit," he said with a grin. "My father and my grandfather have a lot of influence, too. We attend Mt. Zion Baptist Church. It is important enough that Papaw drives up from Brenham to go with us every Sunday."

Ms. Grayson summed up her description of her student, saying, "On the surface, Byron is perceived as a quiet, reserved person, but when given the opportunity, it is easy to see that he is an incredibly insightful individual who works hard and consistently pushes himself to be better. Byron is an honest young man and a true example of what it is to be an Ennis Lion." **NOW**



Angel Gallegos was diagnosed with Vanishing White Matter (VWM) in 2009. VWM is a terminal disease that causes the deterioration of the brain. While VWM typically strikes young children, she has an even rarer adult-onset gene mutation. Tragically, for most children, the life expectancy is months to a few years. To our knowledge, Angel is the oldest person living with VWM. Through the VWM Families Foundation's work and their fundraising efforts for research, great strides have been made to help our children. Please join the fight. Proceeds will support the VWM Families Foundation's research grants and family resources.






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Isaac Dominguez, owner of Ennis Nutrition, helps people start the year off right.

Zoomed In: Gracen Harris

By Becky Walker

The Ennis Lions' 4-star ESPN prospect wide receiver Gracen Harris recently signed with Mississippi State University. Today, he is already enrolled at MSU, having completed his high school graduation credit requirements by taking summer classes and dual credit high school classes during the fall and spring semesters of 2024. "He's a very respectful and extremely competitive young man," said Offensive Line Coach Zach Clark.

A wide receiver throughout his high school career, Gracen also played wildcat quarterback to give the Ennis Lions a boost. Besides football, he played varsity baseball for three years and was a regional qualifier in the triple jump and long jump, with a personal best of 47 feet, 1 inch (triple jump) and more than 23 feet (long jump). Wide Receiver Coach Chase Willingham said, "Gracen was a truly special talent that will not only go down as one of the best WRs to walk the halls of Ennis High School, but one of the best WRs in Texas high school football history."



Alondra Barrientos, Rafael Mendiola and Maritza Barrientos walk three miles at Lions Park to get their steps in.



Lakeridge Villas, a new 48-unit community that offers a blend of style and comfort, holds a celebratory ribbon cutting.



Allison, Georgia and Edie enjoy playtime with Tiffany Sarmienta at Tiff's Tiny Tots.



Novah Holley enjoys the park trip her mommy and daddy promised her.



Romero's on Main baristas, Veronica, Brittany and Citlali, serve up coffee and smiles on a cold winter day.



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Aline Whatley is animated when she recalls learning to use a “calculator” before the days of calculators. “It was an adding machine back then — the kind you punched the numbers and then pulled a handle down. I started



doing office work in my dad’s furniture store in Dallas. His bookkeeper, Lovelle, got me started, and I drew the ten-key numbers on a piece of paper to practice.

“I started doing taxes out of my home for neighbors and friends, and all of it was by hand with no computers. Most of it was done on a yellow legal pad. Then in 2001, Steavy Jakubik wanted to help me formalize my business. I had been doing her taxes for several years. She owned a building that had previously been a gasoline station on the corner of Kaufman and Lampasas. She was so kind to not even charge rent until I got the business running.” The business was called APlus Bookkeeping & Tax Station, but we recently changed the name to APLUS Bookkeeping & Tax Service.

“We had an error on our first business card. We have prided ourselves on keeping our fees as low as possible. One of the best parts of being in business for myself was being able to set my own prices, and I just could not charge exorbitant rates for simple forms that only took 10 minutes to complete. So, our first business cards were supposed to read, ‘We do more for less,’ but they actually read, ‘We do less for

more.' I still have one of those cards in a frame with the first dollar we made!"

Aline added that her daughter, Michelle Mach, who recently purchased the firm, really joined the team in 2013. "She picked up the business very fast. She learned things that I did not teach her because she knew where to go to get the information. All of our employees have had that trait. If they thought I would be the only source of the answers to their questions, I would not hire them. They show initiative by finding the answers from other sources."

"I started doing taxes out of my home for neighbors and friends, and all of it was by hand with no computers."

Most of the APlus employees have been part time over the years, working in the evenings after working another job during the day. "I might see 50-60 people a day, and Linda Dai was our only full-time employee. We like to say we grew the business like the old shampoo commercial that said something like 'one customer told two friends, then they told two friends, and so on ...' We are very proud of the reputation for fairness and honesty that we have."

The success of the business led to Michelle and her husband, David, buying the building at 1004 W. Lampasas, which opened in May 2024. "We have done some major renovations already, and we continue to expand it as we speak," she said.

Of course, the business uses computers now, which Aline says she never did, staying with the legal pad. "The old way was more time consuming, but you still need background knowledge with the computers," she opined.

Michelle says people often mistake her voice for Aline's when she answers the phone, and she wouldn't have it any other way. "Some clients have adamantly said they wanted only Mom to do their taxes, but now they realize that I'm just like Mom," she said proudly.

Aline concluded, "Everyone I put in place to take over, I trained. They are knowledgeable and will continue the tradition of fairness, honesty and accuracy." **NOW**

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Watch Out for Investment Scams

When you invest, you'll find that knowledge is power. The more you know about your investment choices, and who is offering them, the better prepared you'll be to make good decisions. And this diligence can also help protect you against investment scams.

How widespread is this activity? Consider this: Investment fraud losses totaled more than \$4.5 billion in 2023, according to the FBI's Internet Crime Report. Here are some common types of scams:

- **Cryptocurrency** — Not all cryptocurrency offers are scams, but many are. The scammers will contact you via social media, claiming they've made a lot of money in crypto and are willing to help you do the same. They may direct you to a website or app to invest, but the "company" taking your money may not even exist, and, after taking your money, may disappear.

- **Investment programs** — These programs claim to have "proven" strategies that can enable you to get rich by investing in financial products. But these strategies are dubious at best and can cost you thousands of dollars that could otherwise go into an investment plan based on your goals, risk tolerance and time horizon.

- **Real estate** — Typically, a real estate scam tries to get you to invest in a "world-class" or "luxury" property development, but these properties may take years to build, if they're built at all. Also, various real estate "seminars" claim they can teach you how to get wealthy by buying and selling real estate, but these programs are expensive and usually worthless.

- **Gold and other precious metals** — Scammers who call themselves "rare coins"

merchants may try to sell you gold coins, bullion or other types of precious metals, claiming that these assets will always go up in value (which isn't true) and that "now is the best time to act." You can find legitimate ways to invest in precious metals, possibly through mutual funds, but you'll need to determine whether these assets can be an appropriate part of your investment portfolio.

So, how can you avoid these scams? Here are some suggestions from the Federal Trade Commission:

- *Don't be pushed into snap decisions.* Scammers will pressure you to act quickly because "space is limited" in an investment offering or a "special deal" won't last long. If someone won't give you time to consider an offer, it's not worth considering.

- *Be suspicious of "risk-free" claims.* All investments carry risk, and no variable investments can claim to provide "guaranteed returns." If an individual or organization downplays the risk of an investment and doesn't want to provide risk disclosures, just walk away.

- *Ask about licensing or registration.* Legitimate investment professionals must be registered with the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) and be licensed by your state's securities regulator before they can sell you any investment product. You can check the status of an individual or firm by using FINRA's BrokerCheck tool at brokercheck.finra.org.

- *Do some research.* You can search online for the name of the company or individual offering you an investment opportunity. By entering terms such as "review," "scam," "fraud" or "complaint," you may well find that other people have experienced problems or been victimized.

To achieve your financial goals, you'll likely need to invest for decades. So, be wary of scammers who claim to offer a shortcut to success. **NOW**

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones, Member SIPC. Jeff Irish is an Edward Jones representative based in Ennis.

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Hamburger Steak With Country Gravy

Hamburger Steak With Country Gravy

Steak Patties:

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1/2 cup breadcrumbs
- 1 egg
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. soy sauce (optional)
- Pepper, to taste
- Salt, to taste
- Onion powder, to taste
- Garlic powder, to taste
- Kinder's Buttery Steakhouse Seasoning, to taste
- Kinder's Woodfire Garlic Seasoning, to taste
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil

For gravy:

- 4 Tbsp. butter
- 1/4 cup flour
- Cayenne pepper, to taste
- Garlic powder, to taste
- Onion powder, to taste
- 3 cups milk
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper taste

1. *For steak patties:* Preheat the oven to 300 F.
2. In a large bowl mix the meat; breadcrumbs; egg; Worcestershire sauce; soy sauce, if using; and seasonings. Shape into decent-sized patties, roughly 5.
3. Heat the oil, preferably in a cast-iron skillet (any will do though) at medium heat. Brown the patties on both sides.
4. Place the browned patties on an oven-safe cooking sheet; place them in oven for approximately 15 minutes until fully cooked.
5. *For gravy:* In the same skillet over medium-low heat, melt the butter; whisk in the flour, cayenne, garlic powder and onion powder. Whisk until golden brown and fragrant.
6. Slowly add in the milk, whisking continuously until thickened. Add the salt and pepper and other seasonings to taste.

CookingNOW

IN THE KITCHEN WITH KAYLA HILL

— By Bill Smith



“While growing up, I learned some of what I know about cooking from my mom, but now I’m teaching myself new techniques and recipes,” Kayla mentioned. “I scroll on Pinterest to find new recipes. I usually make them once based on the recipe, then the next time, I make changes that sound good to me.”

She primarily cooks for her fiancé and her two beautiful daughters. Occasionally she has the opportunity to cook for other family members and friends when they drop by.

“I’ve got stories galore of failures,” she said. “I recently tried to make chile rellenos. I spent about three hours preparing the peppers, and then my egg mixture wasn’t what it needed to be. It didn’t stick to the peppers and melted off while frying. It was one of the worst heartbreaks I’ve ever had!” **NOW**

Sheet Pan Chicken and Potatoes With Honey Garlic Sauce

Honey Garlic Sauce:

- 3 Tbsp. butter
- 1/2 cup honey
- 2 garlic cloves, minced (I use a forkful of “jarlic.”)
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste

Chicken and Potatoes:

- 1 lb. yellow potatoes (You really can use any kind, but yellow potatoes are my favorite.)

Olive oil, enough to coat the potatoes and chicken
 Garlic powder, to taste
 Onion powder, to taste
 Pepper, to taste
 Paprika, to taste
 Kinder's Buttery Steakhouse Seasoning, to taste
 Kinder's Woodfired Garlic and Herb Seasoning, to taste
 2 chicken breasts, cut each one in half

1. *For sauce:* In a medium pan, melt the butter; stir in the honey, garlic, salt and pepper.
2. Bring to a boil; reduce the heat; let simmer for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat; set aside.
3. *For potatoes:* Preheat the oven to 400 F.
4. Start by cutting the potatoes into sixths, making sure they are all roughly the same size.
5. Add the potatoes to a medium-large mixing bowl, and add some oil to coat, as well as all seasonings listed in the ingredient list to taste.
6. Evenly spread the potatoes on a sheet pan; place in the oven while preparing the chicken
7. *For chicken:* In the same mixing bowl you used for the potatoes, add the chicken breast halves. Add oil to coat, and the same seasonings, to taste.
8. Remove the sheet pan with the potatoes from the oven; slide the potatoes to one side.
9. Place the chicken down, and fork tenderize the chicken breasts.
10. Drizzle the honey garlic sauce over the chicken breasts; place in the oven.
11. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through and the potatoes are tender.

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Be My DIY

— By Angel Morris

Handmade Valentine cards for a classroom giveaway not only save money, but they are a great way to tap into your child's creativity and occupy them for an afternoon. If getting started is a challenge, however, it can help to offer a few prompts for kids to copy or build upon.

Your first step, however, is to round up construction paper, markers, crayons and any other craft supplies that may come in handy. If your child wants to put their cards in an envelope, keep the size of the envelopes you have on hand in mind when cutting construction paper for cards. The less your child has to step away to find necessary supplies, the smoother the card crafting will go!

If kids have a hard time getting started on their own, it can help to create a few sample cards for them to follow. You might ask them to think of their favorite movie character, a game they





enjoy playing or even popular slang among their classmates. These are great jumping off points for messages to include on valentines. If all else fails, here are a few simple themes to consider:

Tic-Tac-To My Heart. After cutting paper to the size that will fit your envelopes when folded in half, have children write the words “You Won ...” atop the front of the card. In the remaining space of the card, draw a tic-tac-toe board (also known by kids today as a hashtag symbol). Cut out three red hearts and glue those in boxes diagonally down the board. Fill in some of the remaining squares with X marks. On the bottom of the card front, the words “My Heart” complete the message. Children can write “Happy Valentine’s Day!” inside, or just sign their name.

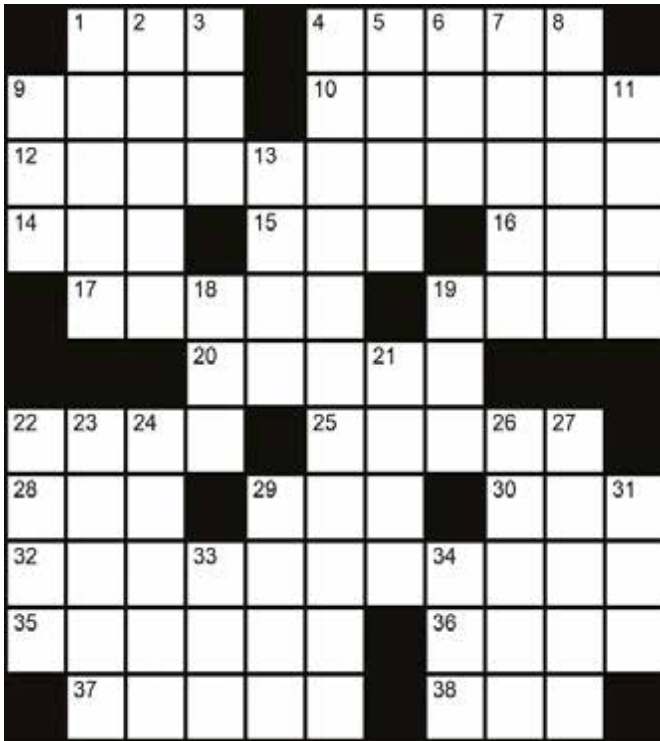
Puzzle Perfect. Have children draw two connected puzzle pieces. Draw one half of a heart within one puzzle piece, completing the rest of the heart on the other piece, so that one full heart is seen across the two pieces. Draw the pieces

large enough so that they will cover a good portion of the front of the card when cut in two. Color the heart, then thickly outline the puzzle pieces in black. Cut apart the two puzzle pieces, gluing one piece in the center of the card front, and the other on the inside of the card. Children can write a variety of messages related to puzzles on the card, such as (outside) “Our Friendship,” (inside) “Is a Perfect Fit!” Or (outside) “Like a Puzzle Piece,” (inside) “You Complete Our Class!”

Lucky in Love. Help children cut out four small hearts from green construction paper, then glue them atop the card front in the shape of a four-leaf clover, drawing a stem to the ground. Write something like, “I’m SO Lucky ...” atop the card. Inside, cut out a single red heart, also drawing a stem from it to the ground. The inside message can be any variation of why your child feels lucky: “You’re My Friend,” “You’re My Classmate” or, even, “You’re My Valentine.”

Remember, you can always go with a smiley face heart on the front and “Happy Valentine’s Day!” inside. Simple is heartfelt, too! **NOW**

Crossword Puzzle



CrosswordSite.com Ltd

Across

- 1 Upper limit
- 4 Tires
- 9 End of a radio alphabet
- 10 On the contrary
- 12 Now and then
- 14 Controversial driving video game
- 15 Go on to say
- 16 "Catfish: The TV Show" host --- Schulman
- 17 Japan's "City of Water"
- 19 Breathe convulsively
- 20 Irritably impatient
- 22 Turkey

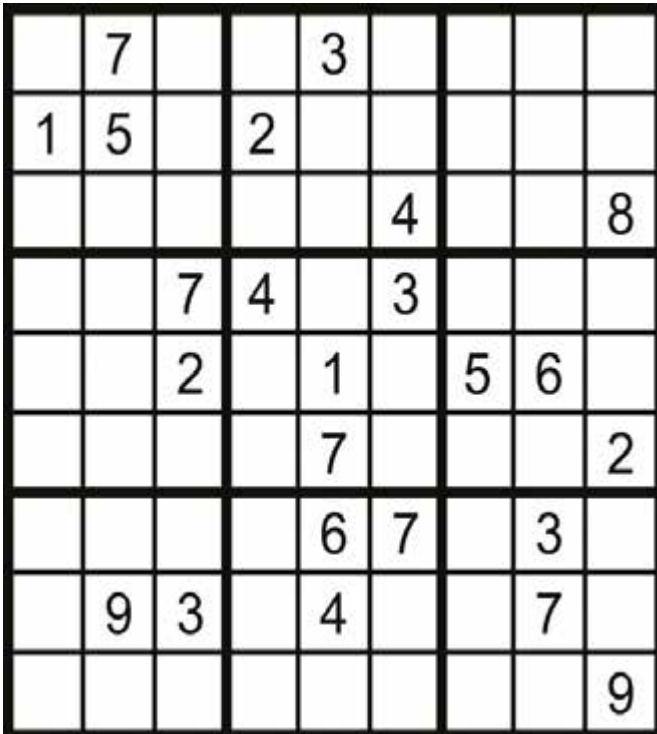
Down

- 1 Film script words between scenes
- 2 Assumed name
- 3 Groan-causing wordplay
- 4 "Steps in Time" autobiographer
- 5 Augment with something superfluous
- 6 Rugged four-wheeler
- 7 African republic preceded by the Ashanti Empire
- 8 Monica ---, stabbed during a tennis tournament
- 9 Take a sharp turn
- 11 Your answer is requested
- 13 Remove
- 18 Organization for Nadal and Djokovic
- 19 Where to work on a six-pack?
- 21 A whole lot
- 22 First word of "The Marines' Hymn"
- 23 Angler's equipment
- 24 Bo's master
- 26 Gut bugs
- 27 Poppy Pomfrey at Hogwarts, for example
- 29 Yankees' legend --- Rizzuto
- 31 "Adios!"
- 33 High ball
- 34 Media organization which disseminates "ideas worth spreading"

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

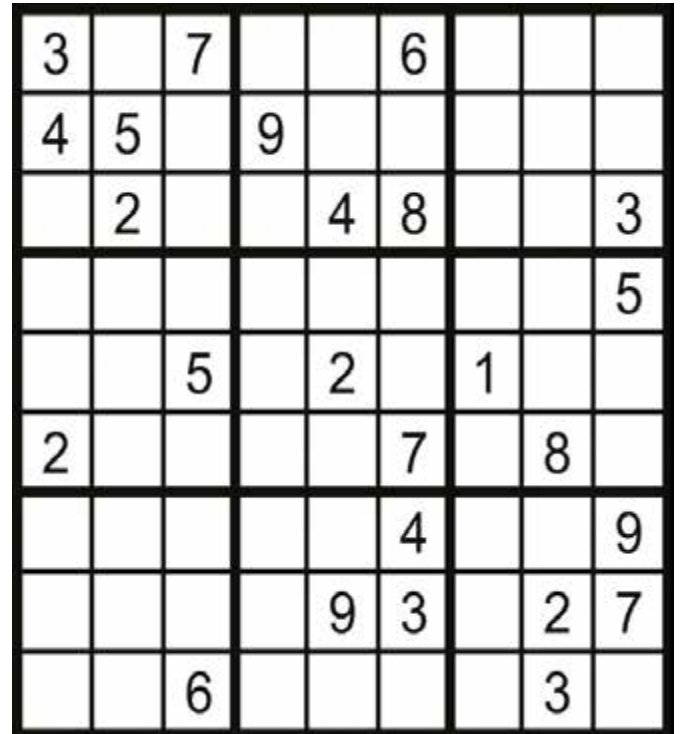
Sudoku Puzzle

Easy



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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.

2/7-2/16

Leaving Iowa:

Recommended for ages 13-plus. **Fridays, Saturdays and Thursday, 2/13:** 7:30 p.m.; **Sundays:** 2:30 p.m., Ennis Public Theatre, 113 N. Dallas St. For tickets, visit <https://ennispublictheatre.com/shows/leaving-iowa/>.

2/7-2/23

Cabin Fever:

A Texas Tragicomedy: Adults: \$18; senior adults and students: \$15. **Fridays and Saturdays:** 7:30 p.m.; **Sunday, 2/23:** 2:30 p.m., Theatre Rocks! 505 NW Main St. Order tickets at <https://www.theatrerocks.com/>.

2/8

Dancing With the Ellis County Stars:

Benefits Texas Baptist Home for Children. 6:00-9:00 p.m., Grand Ballroom, Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Lane, Waxahachie. Purchase tickets and vote at <https://tbhc.org>.

2/15

18th Annual Ennis Czech Music Festival:

Features Jodie Mikula Orchestra, Czech and Then Some, The Moravians and Ennis Czech Boys. Admission: \$10; kids 12 and under: free. Noon, Sokol

Hall, 2622 E. Hwy. 34. ennisczechmusicfestival.com.

2/16

Black History Program Fundraiser:

Featuring Guest Speaker Dr. Opal Lee, "Grandmother of Juneteenth." Door prizes. All proceeds go to the George Washington Carver Alumni Association of Ennis Alumni and Scholarship Fund. Donation: \$20; students under 16: Free. 3:00 p.m., San Jacinto Auditorium, 501 N. Gaines St.

2/21

Mentors Care 2nd Annual

Purse Fundraiser:

Benefits Mentors Care. Gucci raffle, bingo and silent auction. Tickets: \$75 each; table of 8: \$550. 6:00-9:00 p.m., Waxahachie Civic Center, 2000 Civic Center Lane, Waxahachie. visit <https://www.mentors.care/2025-purse-bingo-fundraiser>.

2/28

Casino Night Fundraiser for Angel Gallegos:

7:00-11:30 p.m., City of Rice Event Center, 305 N. Dallas St., Rice. (903) 519-0274.

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

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