

SouthwestNOW

M A G A Z I N E

FEBRUARY 2025

Champion for Children

Shelonda Weaver is a
Hero for DeSoto ISD

Be My DIY

A child's handmade
card is the best valentine

In the Kitchen With
Brandie Hernández Putman

Also inside:

Scavenger Hunt
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Shelonda Weaver, DeSoto Chamber of Commerce's Woman of the Year, makes educating DeSoto youth her priority.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Black History Month ...



Adam

Adam Walker
SouthwestNOW Editor
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It's a great thing to have — a month devoted to highlighting the contributions of Black Americans to science, the arts, history, progress and change. But it's a shame so many of us only pay attention during this one month. Black history is something to celebrate and emphasize all year long, because the many and varied contributions of Black people to American society don't stop when February ends.

As a child, I remember reading biographies of famous Black men like the inventor George Washington Carver and the educator Booker T. Washington. I also knew about W.E.B. Du Bois, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King Jr. and quite a few athletes and entertainers. But I was older when I learned about writers like Phillis Wheatley, Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou. And I was much older when I learned about Bessie Coleman, Katherine Johnson and Madam C.J. Walker.

This is history we should all know and celebrate. But there are Black Americans working today who are adding to the story of this nation. Barack Obama and Kamala Harris were political firsts. Guion Bluford and Mae Jemison were astronaut firsts. Neil deGrasse Tyson has spent years popularizing science and worked to demote Pluto to a non-planet.

A few years ago, DNA testing revealed that I have an African ancestor somewhere on my dad's father's side of the family, probably from what is now Nigeria. I haven't been able to find this person. He or she lived before the end of slavery, so the records will be hard to find, if they exist at all. But the genes are there, telling the story.

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Champion CHILD

Shelonda Weaver was born at Parkland Hospital while her mother was in Texas, visiting from California. She was raised in California, but spent lots of summers here, with her grandmother. When she was 30, she moved to the area, settling in DeSoto. She's involved in everything: vice president of ambassadors at the DeSoto Area Chamber of Commerce, sergeant at large for Rotaract under the Rotary Club, on the board for DeSoto Dining and Dialogue, on the board and commissions for Keep DeSoto Beautiful, president of the women's ministry at her church, vice president for membership of Concerned DeSoto Citizens. If something needs doing, she's in there.

But her strongest passion is the education of DeSoto's young citizens. "I raised my children here. They all attended DeSoto ISD schools. Even though my kids are no longer in school, my last one graduated in 2024, I'm still involved at DeSoto ISD," she said. Involved is an understatement. Shelonda is the president of the PTSA, at the high school, where the students are able to join the PTA and advocate for themselves. She's been a member of PTA for more than 30 years. She's the vice president of the Council of PTAs.

Shelonda is involved with Dads on Duty and Moms on a Mission, two groups of parents who show up at school to greet the kids as they arrive, volunteer at lunch with them and just let them know that someone is there watching out for them. When DeSoto ISD was facing truancy issues, Shelonda partnered with Acapulco restaurant. "It was an academic challenge for any student whose grade was below a 70 to go to class and raise their grade above 70. Acapulco gave us 300 gift certificates worth \$15 each. That's community!"

Community is a big word for Shelonda. It's at the center of all she does. And she believes in the service running both



n for REN

— By Adam Walker

ways. She likes to find ways for the students to give to the community, too. “Every fall and spring, I organize a day with the DeSoto Parks and Rec Department and Keep DeSoto Beautiful for the youth to pick up trash. They get community service hours and invest in their own community. This last year, I got Acapulco and Chick-fil-A to donate gift certificates for the students who collected the most trash.”

Shelonda has had a working relationship with Parks and Rec for years. “The year my youngest daughter was starting at East Middle School and my twins were starting ninth grade, I was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer that had metastasized into my bones. It did not stop me. I organized a breast cancer walk here in DeSoto with their help. They allowed us to use Zeiger Park and set up a tent for us. They

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advertised it and brought awareness. The partnership with them, the PTSA and Rotary has been phenomenal.”

The PTSA understands how important it is to keep seniors focused on graduating, so they organize several events just for them. “Senior Sunrise is at 6:30 a.m. on the first day of school. The police chief brings a drone. City dignitaries come. Local churches show up. There are donuts and colas. It’s a big celebration to kick off their senior year. Senior Sunset closes out the year with watching the sunset, and we give out gift cards donated by community partners.”

Shelonda also spearheads Project Graduation with Trustee Christy McKissic. “We partner with the community to celebrate our seniors’ achievement in finishing four years of high school. Jostens and the PTSA help with their caps and gowns if they can’t afford them. We have kids without support. They’re in foster care or have been abandoned. They’re not athletes or on the National Honor Roll, but they made it. Should they walk without a cord? We make sure they all have

a silver cord for community service. Last year, we were able to give every graduating senior a blanket to mark their achievement.”

When DeSoto moved the ninth-graders back into the high school and moved their early college and P-TECH programs into the old ninth grade building, Shelonda organized a spruce up for the campus. “Parks and Rec donated tools, mulch and plants for the landscaping, but we didn’t know what we were doing. So Plant Daddy came and taught us how to put in flower beds. Now there’s a gardening club at the high school,” she said.

When the golf program needed to be revitalized, Shelonda got Walmart to donate the uniforms and clubs. “We put on a tournament and raised funds for the program. It’s an opportunity for our students to win scholarships to universities.” When the bus drivers needed recognition, Shelonda got Starbucks to donate coffee. When the police officers needed to be noticed, she partnered with Starbucks again. The PTSA and the mayor pro tem partnered with Chick-fil-A to give the teachers

150 gift cards at Christmas.

Shelonda saw all the needs in the school and started gathering with other concerned parents at the high school flag pole to pray for the schools. “We meet every Monday morning at 7:00 a.m. Different pastors in the community come to lead us in prayer for the schools and the city.” That has now grown to five locations around the city. “Groups have met at the Chamber of Commerce, the old Albertsons, Wintergreen and 35 and at Parkville and Hampton.”

All this hard work to see DeSoto’s kids succeed has led to recognition from the state of Texas. Shelonda recently received the Heroes for Children Award from the State Board of Education. She’s the only person from DeSoto ISD ever awarded this honor and the only Black woman in this group of inductees. “MLK said, ‘If I can help somebody as I pass along, if I can cheer somebody with a word or song, then my living will not be in vain,’” Shelonda reflected. “My primary objective is to bring the community to the schools and the schools to the community.” **NOW**

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On November 2nd of last year, the LakeRidge Charitable Foundation held our 16th annual golf tournament. Since 2008, the LakeRidge Charitable Foundation, with the support of sponsors, players, and volunteers, has been helping local charities close their funding gaps through our annual golf tournament.

The LakeRidge Charitable Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2008. The Foundation began as a community golf event designed to bring neighbors together. Expanding into an outreach from the LakeRidge neighborhood, the event grew into a formal nonprofit supporting local worthy causes. The Board of the Foundation is composed of LakeRidge neighbors: Chad McCurdy, Candice McCurdy, Kay Davidson, Lynn Davidson, John Marinos, Bill Pierce, Mary Tengra, and John Monroe.

The secret to the success of the tournament, and the ability of the Foundation to fulfill its mission, are the partners and the people who have joined us on this journey. **Baylor Scott & White Orthopedic and Spine Hospital - Arlington** has partnered with the Foundation as the Title Sponsor of the tournament since 2019. Having BSWOSH as our Title Sponsor has been a cornerstone upon which we have been able to create tremendous success and make a huge difference for a number of charities in the area.

This year, we had four new sponsors that joined our effort: **Fuel City** joined as a Platinum Sponsor, **Wildwood Development** joined as the Goodie Bag Sponsor, **Frost Bank** joined as the Golf Cart Sponsor, and **Centralized Production** joined us as the Putting Contest Sponsor.

We had two Silver Sponsors this year: **Hillwood Development, and Bedrock Homes**. Both of these have supported our efforts for multiple years.

We had six contest sponsors this year. The chipping contest was sponsored by **Mprinted.com**. **Dial One Johnson** sponsored the men's closest to the pin. **Clark-Patton Insurance** sponsored closest to the pin for women. **Citizens National Bank** sponsored the longest drive for men. **Earthworks** sponsored longest drive for women. As mentioned previously **Centralized Production** sponsored the putting contest.

We had three combination Pin Flag and Hole Sponsors this year: **PlainsCapital Bank, John & Sharon Monroe, and Chad A. McCurdy Cedar Hill City Council Place 4**. We also had 5 hole sponsors in 2024: **Charles Pest Control, Joshua Homes, LandWorks, Fountain Freedom, and Hilco Electric**.

These sponsors, along with the many golfers who played in this year's tournament, allowed the LakeRidge Charitable Foundation to provide approximately \$20,000 in support to local charities. The charities supported this year by the LakeRidge Charitable Golf Tournament include: All Pro Dads, Bridges Safehouse, Cedar Hill Shares, Mission Cedar Hill, and Cedar Hill Disabled American Veterans Chapter 240. The Board of the LakeRidge Foundation and the LakeRidge Charitable Golf Committee are quite honored to have served again this year.

We hope you will consider joining us for our next tournament to be held Nov. 1, 2025, at the Tangle Ridge Golf Course inside LakeRidge.



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Zoomed In: Thomas and Barbara Haskins

By Adam Walker

Thomas and Barbara Haskins reached a rare milestone, celebrating 60 years of marriage. “We met in high school in Virginia in 1956. We married on December 22, 1964,” Barbara explained. “It’s been a blessing. We’ve gone through some events that we thought we couldn’t endure, but we did. And there’ve been more ups than downs. We transferred from Virginia to Texas in 1975 because Thomas was in the U.S. Navy.

“We raised our daughters here, and Tina and Lynn both graduated from Texas A&M at College Station. When he retired in 1980, we thought we’d return to Virginia, but we stayed in Duncanville. We stay in contact with friends and relatives. For our anniversary, we’d planned a trip but decided to stay home and celebrate with friends, food, games and reminiscing.”



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Gary Lloyd presents Mark Wynne with a new treasure to restore.



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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**

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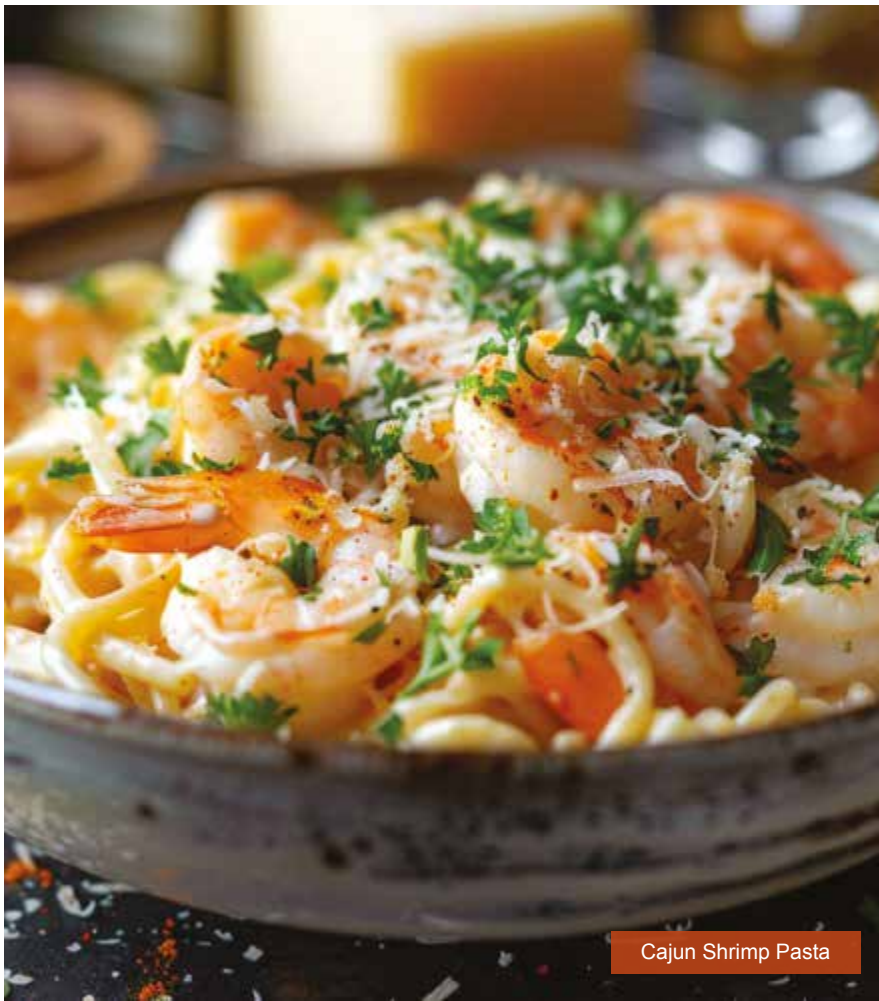
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Cajun Shrimp Pasta

Cajun Shrimp Pasta

Cajun Seasoning:

- 1 Tbsp. paprika**
- 2 tsp. garlic powder**
- 2 tsp. salt (optional)**
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper**
- 1 tsp. dried thyme**
- 1 tsp. onion powder**
- 1 tsp. turmeric**
- 1 tsp. black pepper**

Shrimp Pasta:

- 1 pkg. sausage of your choice**
- 1 lb. medium-size shrimp, deveined and peeled**
- 1 16-oz. box pasta of your choice**
- 2 sticks unsalted butter (divided use)**
- Fresh Parmesan cheese (optional)**

- 1.** For the Cajun seasoning: In a bowl, mix all the ingredients.
- 2.** For the shrimp pasta: Cut the sausage into bite-sized pieces.
- 3.** Season the shrimp and sausage with half of the Cajun seasoning.
- 4.** Cook the pasta in a pot until tender; drain and set aside.
- 5.** Return the noodles to the pot, add 1 stick of butter and the remaining seasoning. Stir well to combine.
- 6.** In a large skillet, melt the remaining stick of butter over medium-high heat until foamy. Add the seasoned shrimp and sausage to the skillet. Cook for 5-7 minutes, until the shrimp is fully cooked.
- 7.** Add the cooked shrimp and sausage with the butter to the noodles in the pot. Stir everything together. Garnish with Parmesan, and enjoy your dish!

Sweet Potato Rolls

- 7 Tbsp. unsalted butter**
- 3/4 cup milk, warmed to 100-110 F**
- 2 1/4 tsp. fast-acting yeast**
- 1/2 cup sweet potato puree**
- 1/4 cup dark brown sugar**
- 1 large egg, room temperature**
- 1/2 Tbsp. fresh sage, chopped**
- 1/2 Tbsp. fresh thyme, chopped**
- 2 tsp. cinnamon**
- 2 tsp. turmeric**
- Pinch of black pepper**
- 2 tsp. nutmeg**
- Pinch of salt**
- 4-5 cups bread flour, leveled**

- 1.** On the stove, heat the butter until it has a rich, nutty aroma and a beautiful golden-brown color. Transfer the browned butter to a glass bowl; set aside until only warm to the touch.
- 2.** Using the whisk attachment of a stand mixer, combine the warm milk and yeast. Mix until combined; allow to set 2-5 minutes to bloom.

CookingNOW IN THE KITCHEN WITH BRANDIE HERNANDEZ PUTMAN

— By Emma McKay




“Food plays a significant role in shaping our mood and environment,” said Burleson resident, Brandie Hernandez Putman. Memories of her family gathered around the dinner table, enjoying her grandfather’s food, inspired her love of cooking. “The food was so good that we’d end up playfully fighting over the last buttermilk biscuit or piece of fried chicken.”

She gained and perfected her culinary expertise through lessons from her grandparents, summer classes at The Culinary School of Fort Worth, training from past jobs and experimenting with new recipes. Now, as an advanced culinary arts teacher, Brandie shares her love and knowledge of food with her students at Duncanville High School. “I have the opportunity to teach my students how to bake, make mother sauces from scratch and so much more.” **NOW**

3. Once foamy, add in the sweet potato, browned butter (reserve 2 Tbsp. for later), brown sugar, egg, sage, thyme, cinnamon, turmeric, black pepper, nutmeg and salt. Mix until well combined.
4. Switch to the dough hook attachment; add 2 cups of flour. Mix to incorporate.
5. Add more flour, 1/2 cup at a time, mixing on medium-low speed until a soft dough forms. If the dough seems too sticky or dry, adjust with a small amount of flour or milk as needed. Knead the dough with the dough hook for 5-6 minutes, until it is slightly sticky but pulls away from the sides of the bowl. The dough should be soft after kneading. Press it with your finger — if it slowly bounces back, it's ready to rise.
6. Shape the dough into a ball; place it in a large, buttered bowl. Cover with a tea towel or plastic wrap; let it rise for about 1 hour, or until doubled in size.
7. Punch down the dough gently to release the air. Divide the dough into 12-16 pieces, depending on the size you prefer for the rolls. Shape each piece into a ball by stretching the top and pinching the bottom.
8. Place the shaped rolls in a buttered 9x13-inch baking dish. Cover; let rise in a warm place for another 30 minutes, or until double in size.
9. Bake the rolls at 350 F for 20-25 minutes, or until golden brown.
10. Melt the reserved brown butter in the microwave. Brush the tops of the warm rolls with the butter; sprinkle with flaky salt. Serve warm and enjoy.

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

Medium

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

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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.

2/1

Stars & S'mores:

Campfire, stargazing and guided night hikes in the canyon. \$30-\$35.

6:00-9:00 p.m., Dogwood Canyon Audubon Center,

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2/2

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2/5-4/9

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2/6

Mayor's Prayer Breakfast:

Come pray for Cedar Hill. 7:30-9:00 a.m., Sims Recreation Center, 310 E. Parkerville Rd.

District Spelling Bee:

See who gets the last word. 6:30-9:00 p.m., DeSoto High School Auditorium, 600 Eagle Dr.

2/9

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2/15

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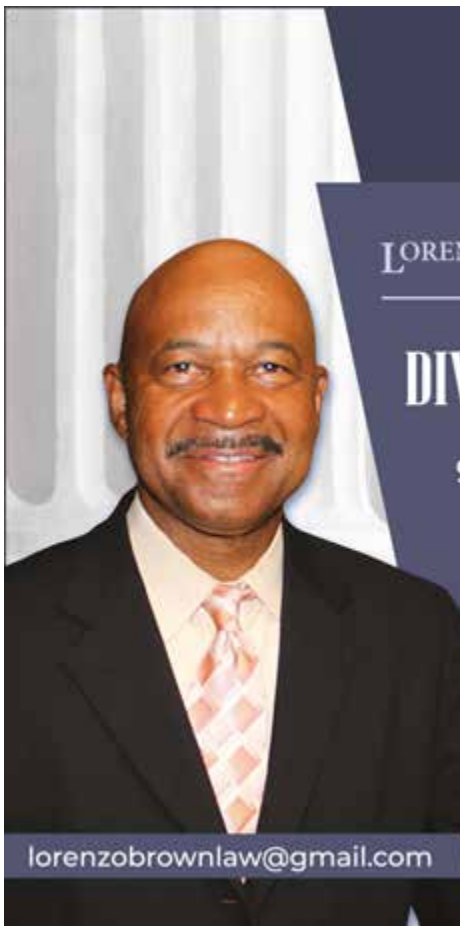
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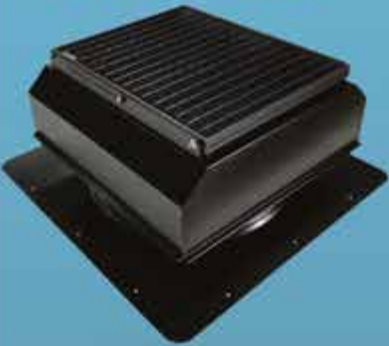
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