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FEBRUARY 2026

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In the Kitchen With Yvonne Layne

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February 2026
 Volume 21, Issue 2



Sandra Walters
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ON THE COVER

Constable Lee discusses her journey into serving the Tarrant County community.



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"The whole team at Divine Touch Medical is awesome. The atmosphere is relaxed, the front desk and technician are very kind and professional. They have a welcoming demeanor and always willing to help. My visit with Olivia Ciccone PA-C was awesome. Her energy and genuine manner made the experience very pleasant." Valenta (Oct. '25)



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A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair, smiling warmly. She is holding a vibrant red rose in her hand, which is visible in the foreground. The background is dark and out of focus.

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SECOND CHANCES MATTER

— By Sandra Walters

Sandra Lee openly speaks about a defining moment from her youth. At 19, while attending the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor on a basketball scholarship, she was arrested for shoplifting. She describes it now as a reckless game — something she and others did just to see whether they could get away with it. But the moment she sat in a jail cell, she felt a shift. She remembers hearing a voice in her spirit asking, “Do you want this to be your life?” Her answer was, “No.”

That experience never left her. It shaped her compassion, her drive and the way she talks to students today. She knows what it means to make a mistake, to feel lost and to choose a different path. She shares that story not to excuse the past but to show young people that bad choices don't have to define them.

Following college, Sandra and Kevin Lee married and had children. “I became a stay-at-home mom, and after my children enrolled in school, I got involved with the school system. My motive was simple — I wanted my kids to have a real shot at success,” she explained. One experience in particular pushed her further into advocacy. “A teacher repeatedly emailed me about

my son failing to turn in assignments, but I knew that didn't sound like him," she said. "After a while, I learned the teacher was misplacing his work. Other students were having the same problem, but unlike my son, they didn't have a parent ready to support them."

Sandra stepped in not only for her own child but for the students who didn't have a voice. She volunteered, supported teachers and helped parents who were confused or overwhelmed by the system. Eventually, she applied to become a teacher's assistant. "I took the role simply because I wanted to help, and it became the foundation for my career in student support services," she added.

Later, Sandra served as a truancy officer, a role that brought her face-to-face with families in crisis. She understood that absenteeism was less about disinterest and more about what was happening at home. She approached every case with humanity, curiosity and patience. With support from a judge, she began meeting with families who were struggling, volunteering her time to understand their stories, offering them resources to help.

Participating in PTAs, site-based management teams, nonprofit involvement such as the First Gen Scholarship program and a board member of R. Life Community Organization are all examples of her going beyond her assignment. Every step reflected her belief that communities grow stronger when people step up for each other, so before entering law enforcement, she spent more than 30 years in education.

In 2017, she was elected to the Kennedale City Council, where she also served as mayor pro tem. The experience taught her how local government works and how decisions made at city hall directly affect neighborhoods and families.

But even then, she never imagined herself in law enforcement. When she won the 2020 election for Precinct 7 constable, she was required to attend the police academy to earn her Texas Peace Officer License. Instead of simply meeting the requirement, Sandra excelled, graduating at the top of her class in July 2021. She said, "If I was going to lead, I had to lead well. Before then, I didn't even know how to hold a gun."



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Today, Constable Lee oversees a team of 12 deputies who carry out duties such as serving warrants, handling evictions, delivering summonses and supporting the courts. But she expects more than procedural performance. Her vision centers on community-supported policing, a model built on trust, visibility and partnership. Her office places a strong emphasis on bridging the gap between law enforcement and minority communities, youth programs that connect students with mentorship and positive role models.

She frequently speaks to students across Arlington, Mansfield, Rendon and Grand Prairie. When she walks into a room, young girls often light

up, seeing someone who looks like them in a position of authority. She treats these moments not as photo opportunities, but as quiet reminders of why representation matters.

Her story is not polished or scripted. It's real. It's rooted in hardship, second chances and hard work. "I have watched people with little to their name fight to survive. I've listened to children who were afraid to go to school. I have stood with families facing eviction or crisis. Every experience has shaped the way I lead. My mission is to be a blessing to my community. Whether I'm working alongside deputies, attending community events, supporting families or speaking to young people about choices and purpose, I carry the same message: Your past doesn't define you," Sandra stated.

She often says she's not in this position for a title or paycheck. For her, public service is personal. She credits her strength and drive to her father and mother, who pushed her to stand up, move forward and never quit. She also learned service from her father, who once ran into a burning house to save

a baby. Acts like that left an imprint, and she carries that example into her work.

Constable Sandra D. Lee, the elected Constable for Tarrant County Precinct 7, has built her career on service, accountability and an unwavering belief that every person deserves a champion. First elected in November 2020 and sworn into office on January 1, 2021, and then re-elected in 2024, she stands as the first woman and the first African American to hold the position in her precinct. Her achievement is historic, but what defines her most is the path she took to get there and the community she continues to uplift. Sandra means helper and protector, and she is living up to her name.

Sandra has called Tarrant County home for 34 years, raising three children with her husband, Kevin, to whom she has been married for more than four decades. Despite holding elected office, she laughs about how different home life feels. At work she carries the responsibilities of a public official, but at home, she's a wife of 43 years who still enjoys waiting on her husband hand and foot. **NOW**

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Zoomed In: Ezra Logan

By Sandra Walters

Ezra is 10 years old, and so is his dog, Lucy. His pug follows him everywhere, even into the car. “We grew up together, learning the world side by side. As I learned how to ride a bike, Lucy ran next to me as I peddled. We walk to the park, sit together after school, and nap on the couch often,” he said.

When Ezra is happy, so is Lucy. Also, when he is sad, she stays close. They understand each other without many words. Ezra’s mother said, “Lucy isn’t just a pet. She’s family, a shadow and a best friend. Wherever Ezra goes, she is usually right there.”



Michella McCoy enjoys her morning coffee.



Summer and Everly Anderson embrace for a photo shoot.



The Hunt and Braggs families celebrate life together.



Public servants work together in the community.



Dylan, Aylin and Lawrence watch the sunset at Joe Pool Lake.



Pastor Jon and Dr. Margaret Thomas of St. John Lutheran Church deliver donations to Mansfield Missions.



Ellie Johnson stands outside delighted by the beautiful day.

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www.nowmagazines.com 13 MansfieldNOW February 2026



Focused on the Future: Two Buildings Taking Shape

Check out these two major projects that are currently under construction.

Fire Station No. 1

The new Fire Station No. 1 is moving quickly. In case you missed it, this station will be located near the intersection of Walnut Creek Drive and Broad Street.

The 17,860 square foot, two-story, building features 4 bays, advanced air quality protection for firefighters, indoor and covered outdoor training areas, 12 dorms, a watch office, and two fire poles.

Fire Department staff was vital to the design process for the new station and provided input that was essential to the final design, including the firepoles to allow them to jump into action. This facility broke ground in January 2025 and is expected to be completed in spring 2026.

The new location will allow our firefighters to better respond to calls in this area because of improved roadway access compared to the 30-year-old Fire Station

1's current location in Historic Downtown Mansfield.

Animal Shelter and Service Center Expansion

The City of Mansfield celebrated the groundbreaking for a new animal shelter and expansion of the Chris W. Burkett Service Center in September 2025. This project is really taking shape.

The new facility will replace the current shelter located at Industrial Boulevard. With





cutting-edge amenities, Mansfield's furry friends will have 130 living areas for dogs, 135 cat kennels, medical facilities with extra recovery kennels, and of course, spaces for the community to meet their new family members.

The expansion of the Chris W. Burkett Service Center will provide much-needed space for staff with new offices and equipment storage areas.

Construction of the building is expected to be completed later this

summer. We can't wait for all the happily-ever-afters that will take place in this space!.

Like information like this? Sign up for our City e-newsletter to stay current on all the city happenings. Scan the QR code below or visit **MansfieldTexas.Gov/NotifyMe**.



Fun Fact

Did you know that this facility will be home to the first large-scale sculpture under the adopted Percent-for-Arts Program? The Percent-for-Arts Program was adopted as part of the 2023 Cultural Arts Master Plan. This program dedicates up to 2% of eligible capital projects to fund public art. This newest art piece will be unveiled later this summer.



A festive Valentine's Day background featuring a red and white polka-dot pattern. Decorative elements include several red and white striped heart shapes and a large red and white striped ribbon bow on the left side.

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— By Sandra Walters

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The Storage Hut was established in 1994 by Hal and Kathy Mueller. “At that time, we were half the size we are today. I can’t believe that was 32 years ago. Time has passed so fast,” Kathy said. “We were then one of only two storage facilities in a 4- to 5-mile radius. Mansfield has been our home for 37 years. We raised our family here and are committed to the well-being of this growing, thriving community.”

This storage facility is operated by a professional manager in a unique Southwestern-style office, offering climate-controlled as well as dry storage rental spaces. Kathy described their manager, Brooke Thompson, as a treasure.



“She’s the best manager in Texas and has become family,” Kathy added.

“Kathy and Hal are such great people and are so down to earth,” Brooke shared. “They are our extended family. They truly care about us, our community and our tenants. I’ve worked here for a very long time, and having this position has been a wonderful blessing. Hal and Kathy have given me the freedom to manage this facility like it’s my own, so I can do so with integrity. Many people find the Storage Hut office to be their haven and often come in to sit down to simply decompress. People may enter while having a bad day, but I want them to leave feeling better than they started. I learned from my mom and grandmother-in-law, the previous Storage Hut manager for 19 years, to offer people kindness no matter their circumstances. I am grateful to have watched the business grow and honored to have the opportunity to play a part in this thriving family-owned business.”

For more than three decades, Storage Hut has proudly served Mansfield as a family-owned and locally operated self-storage facility. Their focus remains the same: put

customers first while maintaining a clean, well-kept property that's easy to use and welcomes everyone. By blending long-standing local ownership with thoughtful, modern amenities, Storage Hut offers a storage experience that is straightforward and dependable. Whether you're storing household items, business inventory or seasonal belongings, they aim to make the process simple and stress-free.

The property is designed with usability in mind. Customers enjoy drive-up access, ground-floor units and wide roll-up doors that make loading and unloading easier. They offer seven-day access from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., along with on-site management to ensure the property remains well-maintained and easy to navigate. The business tagline is "Your hut away from home."

"Many people find the Storage Hut office to be their haven and often come in to sit down to simply decompress."

At Storage Hut, they want every customer to feel comfortable and confident — like it's truly their space away from home. The on-site management team is available Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and on Saturdays by appointment, to ensure people receive personal, attentive service. They are committed to making a client's storage experience a positive one from start to finish.

The facility offers a wide range of storage unit sizes, from 5x10 to extra-large 20x25 spaces. For items that require a temperature-controlled environment, climate-controlled units are also available, ranging from 5x4 to 20x10. If you need a reliable storage solution, call them or visit them online. The team is ready to help with both personal and business storage needs. **NOW**

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Death by Chocolate Brownies

CookingNOW

IN THE KITCHEN WITH

YVONNE LAYNE

— By Sandra Walters



“Baking hooked me early because I love seeing people smile when they taste my desserts,” Yvonne Layne said. Though she never went to culinary school, she learned by asking chefs questions, taking occasional classes and watching cooking shows.

What fascinates her most is how bakers choose certain ingredients and skip others. “I grab recipes from anywhere, then bend and twist them until they become mine. Homemade vanilla is one of my favorite flavors.” She also loves the texture and smell of freshly milled flours. Along the way, she won a National Recipe Contest with one of her cookie teachers. **NOW**

Death by Chocolate Cookies

- 1 stick butter**
- 1 cup dark brown sugar**
- 1 Tbsp. black strap molasses**
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract**
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla bean paste (optional)**
- 2 large eggs, plus 1 yolk**
- 1 box brownie mix**
- 1 box dark chocolate pudding mix**
- 3 Tbsp. cocoa powder**
- 1 Tbsp. instant coffee**

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 325 F. Grease a cookie sheet; set aside.
- 2.** In a standing mixer, combine the butter, brown sugar and molasses on medium speed until the mixture turns light brown.
- 3.** Add the vanilla extract, vanilla bean paste and eggs; mix on low speed.

- 4.** Add the remaining ingredients; mix on medium speed until combined.
- 5.** Place the dough in a bowl; cover with plastic wrap. Refrigerate to chill for 20 minutes.
- 6.** Remove the dough from the refrigerator. Spoon out tablespoon-size portions of the dough; roll each portion into a ball. Put the rolled dough balls on the prepared cookie sheet.
- 7.** Bake for 18 minutes. Allow to cool and enjoy!

Death by Chocolate Brownies

- 1 stick unsalted butter, melted and cooled**
- 1/4 cup dark brown sugar**
- 1 3/4 cups powdered sugar**
- 2 large eggs, plus 1 yolk**
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract**
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt**
- 2/3 cup Dutch processed cocoa powder**

- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour**
- 3/4 cup dark chocolate chunks**

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 350 F. Coat an 8x8-inch baking pan with nonstick spray; set aside.
- 2.** Place the butter, brown sugar and powdered sugar in a medium-sized mixing bowl; whisk until combined.
- 3.** Add the eggs, vanilla and sea salt; stir. Add the cocoa powder and flour and continue to stir.
- 4.** Add the chocolate chunks into the mixture; gently stir together. Pour the batter into the prepared baking pan.
- 5.** Bake for 20-25 minutes, or until it's toothpick clean. Enjoy!

Chocolate Cupcakes

- 2 cups sugar**
- 1/2 cup neutral oil**
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla**
- 2 large eggs**
- 1 cup buttermilk**
- 1 cup strong black coffee, room temperature**
- 1 tsp. sea salt**
- 1 tsp. baking powder**
- 2 tsp. baking soda**
- 3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder**
- 2 Tbsp. black cocoa powder**
- 1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour**

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 350 F. In a standing mixer, combine the sugar, neutral oil, and vanilla on medium speed.
- 2.** Add the next 6 ingredients; mix on low speed for a few turns. Add both cocoa powders and flour; mix until no dry powder appears.
- 3.** With an ice cream scoop, add the batter to a lined cupcake pan.
- 4.** Bake for 20-25 minutes, or until toothpick is clean. Allow the cupcakes to completely cool before adding frosting.

Chocolate Frosting

- 1 8-oz. block of cream cheese, softened**
- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened**
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla bean paste**
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract**
- 4-5 Tbsp. heavy cream**
- 1 cup Dutch processed cocoa powder**
- 1 box dark chocolate pudding mix**
- 2-5 cups powdered sugar**

- 1.** In a standing mixer, add the first 4 ingredients; whip on medium speed to combine.
- 2.** Turn off the mixer while adding the heavy cream, cocoa powder, pudding mix, and 2 cups of the powdered sugar. Set mixer on low speed to mix.
- 3.** Add more powdered sugar if a sweeter taste is preferred.

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- Virginia Woolf



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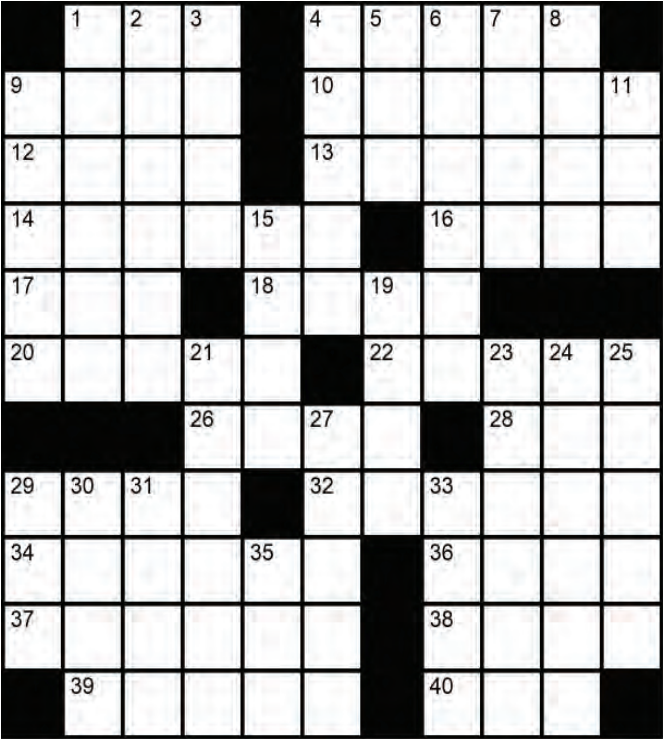
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Crossword Puzzle



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Across

- 1 Subject of "Take Me Home, Country Roads" (John Denver)
4 Mature
9 Yoko Ono's son
10 Dry up
12 Saber handle
13 Third sign of the zodiac
14 Instead
16 "... and make it snappy!"
17 Sum charged
18 Peruse
20 "... Remember" (Song from "The Fantasticks")

- 22 Hat he tweaked for a British Prime Minister
26 "Got it!"
28 Auto club, up north
29 Bridge, in Bordeaux
32 Fishing vessels
34 Schools
36 "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" author --- Harte
37 Uncivilized
38 Enticement to a trout
39 China brand
40 "Count me in!"

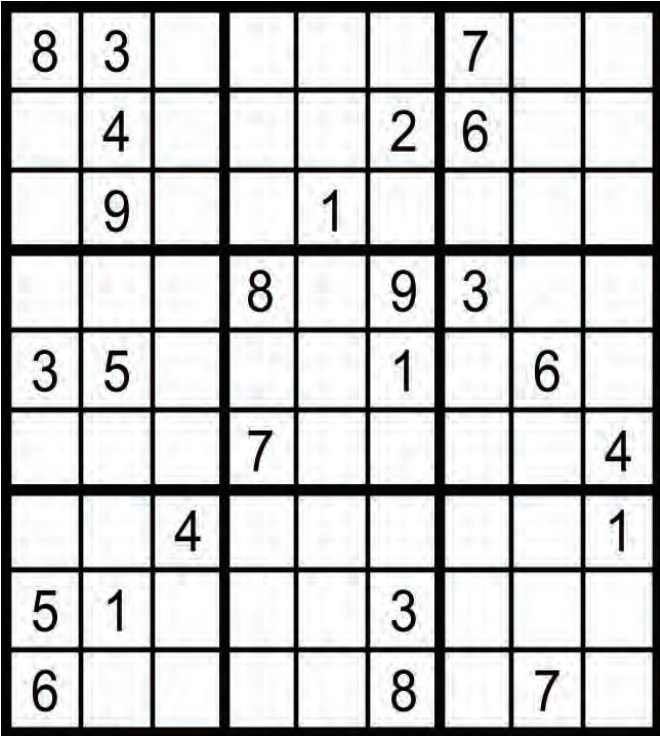
Down

- 1 "Mad Men" creator Matthew ---
2 Depression between hills
3 Against
4 Dispute
5 Owing
6 Like a teenager's bed?
7 "Daily Planet" reporter --- Lane
8 Albacore, for example
9 Loose dress
11 Apex
15 Greek love god
19 "Attention please ..."
21 Venetian art master
23 Gather
24 Skater all over the place for willing participants
25 Careless speed
27 Hudson automobile replaced by the Terraplane
29 Points
30 Spoken
31 Congregational part of a church
33 With skill
35 Save the Children, for example

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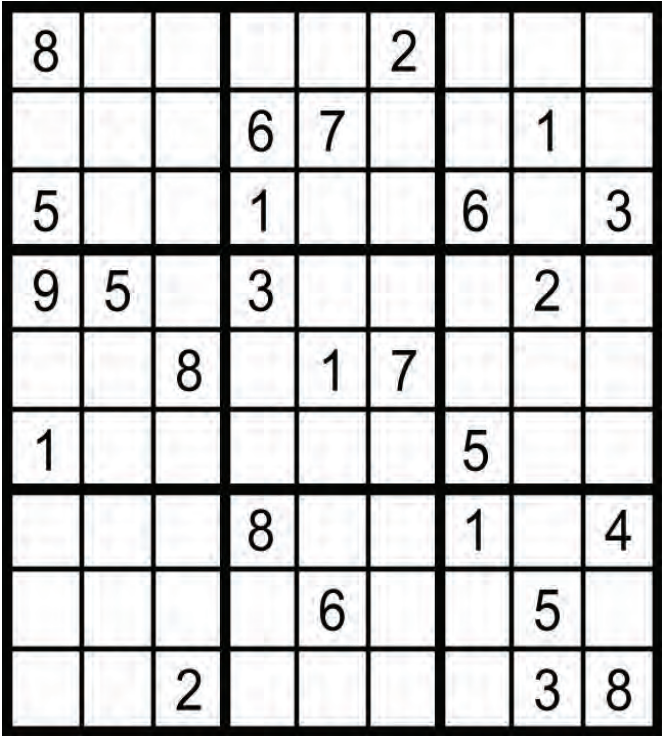
Sudoku Puzzle

Easy



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Medium



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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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